

Liberating Literature in the Golden Notebook

Dr. L. M. Swarnalatha,

Assistant Professor, PG & Research Department of English, Vellalar College for Women, Thindal, Tamilnadu, India

Abstract: Every beginning should initiate with some sweetness in it as per our culture. Let me begin my research paper with a notable personality who won the Noble Prize in Literature in 2007. In the maze of women's writings Doris Lessing is the personality who speaks out the universal language of women's emancipation. The history of 'female literature' would have had a much wider scope today, if it was not for woman's supposedly inferior position that did not allow her to develop any artistic qualities. However, female writers in the eighteenth and nineteenth century found a way to insert a critique in their stories which provides an implicit way to express their disapproval. *The Golden Note Book* can be considered as an attempt to expose the emotion of a woman who chooses to be "free". *The Golden Note book* was published in 1962, at the time when second wave feminism began to emerge and one year before Betty Friedan's path-breaking novel "The feminine mystique (1963)". The novel received the feminism bible of the women's liberation movement. Doris Lessing can be designated as a pioneer in discerning social trends, anticipating rather than merely confirming them. The Golden notebook is highly intellectual, politically involved "free women" preceded the women's liberation movement. In *The Golden notebook*, the key issue which we mainly dealt with is human relations, especially relationships between men and women as a key image of modern humanity, through which women are liberated in literature and as well as in society.

Keywords – Liberation, Feminism, Female Tradition and Representation.

LIBERATING LITERATURE IN THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK

The narrative strategies of twentieth-century writing by women are the expression of two systemic elements of female identity: a psychosexual script and a sociocultural situation, both structured by two major traits, situated in the gendering process and in the hegemonic process. This signifies that a female character in twentieth-century novels is situated in an environment where she both has to deal with gender prejudice in her personal life and in society as a whole. (BlauDuplessis, 1985) which can be viewed as a theme in *The Golden Notebook*. The very structure of the novel makes the theme reach; it reflects not only the fragmentation of Anna's inner world, but also the chaotic society she lives in. Doris Lessing, employed woman as the first person narrator of the novel. She has certainly served as spokeswoman for women's rights in her life and work. After women receive the license, tremendous phenomenon directly illustrate a series of problems in women's political life. Compared to traditional women, the 'Free Women' of *The Golden Notebook* enjoys free professional life, but they don't get deserved happiness although they walked out bravely from the kitchen. The relationship between women and children is also a big issue in the crusade of feminism. Feminism has successfully provided the equality of parental rights to women. But the right couldn't produce harmonious relationship in the lack of 'fathers' protection' between women and children. Lessing's novel tells us that males are not the enemies of women but they are their collaborators.

Women's writing, particularly in *The Golden Notebook* is about the fact that women are assessed from a completely different point of view if we compare it to men. It seems that female authors of the present era are still pushed on a marginal position or overlooked passively. Women's writing has always been inscribed with definition to men. Subsequently, if a woman writer didn't get a place in the dominant society, it means her work is being described as inferior, inadequate or negatively connoted as 'feminine.' Social conventions are mirrored in its ideology and plot structure of a certain society. Doris Lessing was crowned as icon of the feminists by Women's Liberation Movement. The present novel epitomizes "Second Wave Feminism." The protagonists of the novel are "Free Women" who had embodied the modernity of late fifties. They are divorced, they make lovers and have a career, they want an independent life and obtain the same liberty as men enjoys. This personal story is encompassed by their political engagement as communist. As communism in the end failed to engender social change, the upcoming women rights movement did succeed in altering society profoundly, by conflating the personal and the political. In brief, the personal is connected to the political.

In the present novel the reader meets with Anna and Molly; two articulate women with a shared political (communist) interest. Both dealing with problems related to their love, life as well as motherhood. Anna has written a successful novel *Frontiers of War*, for which she still receives royalties and therefore she is free for volunteer service in parties. Molly, another character, is a minor actor of the theater. Both are divorced and entrusted with the care of a child. Janet and Tommy, after a year of separation, caught up with each other, and soon it becomes clear that Tommy is a worrisome teenager, and Anna is dealing with a writer's block. Anna Wulf Freeman, before her marriage experiences a mental breakdown, thinking as if the world around her is falling apart. She experiences her own reaction as normal, against the chaos and horror surrounding her. Anna tries to take control over her life. She resolves her writers block by writing in four different notebooks "and not one because, as she recognizes, she has to separate things off from each other, out of fear of chaos, of formlessness and of breakdown." (Doris Lessing: *Essays, Reviews, Interviews*, 3) She has a red notebook concerned with her communist politics; a black notebook to record her life in Africa in 1940s, a blue one as diary and finally a yellow notebook in which she creates her fictional alter-ego. Paul has an alter-ego for Ella and Julia has an alter-ego for Molly.

Each and every notebook is written in the first person narrative and covers the years from 1950 to 1957. The present novel is the fifth notebook which is called *The Golden Notebook*. The present novel is about the events which have taken place in the same year. In the notebook, out of five sections, there is a section entitled "Free Women." *The Golden Notebook* is a synthesis of her blue diary and a final "Free Women" section. In the present novel, Anna's split is symbolized in four notebooks, and her split is actually conflated in *The Golden Notebook* section. Anna transfers her split to her lover Saul Green, but he is even more

fragmented within himself than Anna is. "They are crazy, lunatic, mad etc. They break down into each other, into other people, break through false patterns they have made of their pasts, the patterns and formulas they have made to shore up themselves and each other, dissolve" (4). At the end of their affair Saul Green gives Anna the theme of her next book, which begins with "the two women were alone in the London flat," exactly same as it was in the beginning of the real novel *The Golden Notebook*. Anna gives Saul her *Golden Notebook* and at last which is the theme of her next book. The first sentence of the novel is written in it as: "on a dry hillside in Algeria a soldier watched the moonlight glinting on his rifle." "Pressures, inner and outer, end the notebooks; a heavy black line is drawn across the page of one after another. But now that they are finished, from their fragments, can come something new, *The Golden Notebook*." (Preface of *The Golden Notebook*, vii) Almost at the end of *The Golden Notebook* section, Anna looks back at her life in the form of film sequences, the film which runs on by a project director. She names each section of her life as; "the Mashopi film," "the film about Paul and Ella," and "the film about Michael and Anna" etc. It is here where Anna is finally able to confront herself with the chaos her life has confronted. "Time had gone, and my memory did not exist, and I was unable to distinguish between what I had invented was all false. It was whirl, an order less dance, like butterflies in a shimmer of heat, over the damp sandy beach." (151)

The book in its beginning resembles the "Free Women" section, but later on it is reduced to mere incomplete fragments. When Anna starts her yellow diary about Ella, she contemplates: "I see Ella, walking slowly about a big empty room, thinking, and waiting. I, Anna, see Ella. Who is of course, Anna? But that is the point, for she is not. The moment I, Anna, write: Ella rings up Julia to announce, etc., and then Ella floats away from me and becomes someone else. I don't understand what happens at the moment Ella separates herself from me and becomes Ella. It is clearly the moment when Anna starts to fall apart; Lessing stops her right before the point of suicide." (179) Instead of a coherent narrative on Ella, the last entry of the *Yellow Notebook* comprises nineteen fragments of possible stories. Each story is entitled "a short story" or "a short novel" and dates or carefully noted down or omitted. Then Anna's diary follows *Blue Notebook*, where amongst other things her love affair with Saul Green is described. This affair seems to contain the semen of the nineteen stories that preceded it. It is not clear why Lessing has put the ideas of the story first, and then she experiences, why these stories have come out. But it might be a last indication of how Anna's mind has got fragmented. Through the character of Anna, Lessing questions the appropriateness of realist forms to represent the fragmented nature of modern reality, and the crises of belief with which intellectuals on the New Left had to grapple. In abandoning conventional narrative, *The Golden Notebook* also explores the relationship between language and ideology and the possibility of the new revolutionary literary form. *The Golden Notebook* is a highly self-conscious and experimental work, as Doris Lessing herself has claimed: "The *Golden Notebook* was a carefully constructed book. And the way it's constructed says what the book is about..." Yet after the book was published 1962, "... very few people have understood" (Doris Lessing: *Essays, Reviews, Interviews*, 79). The book was mainly praised for Lessing's perspective representation of women's consciousness subsequently; the book was almost exclusively defined as a work that has left its mark upon the ideas and feelings of a whole generation of young women.

Since the last two centuries, women writer and their writings have gone through some substantial changes. Although burning with a creative energy like some of her other male contemporaries of the nineteenth century, she has confined herself to the sidelines of a patriarchal society. Where she was valued only on account of her marital and domestic obligation; she was not entitled to many rights. Maybe she has written a manuscript under a male pseudonym for acceptance; maybe she has burned or buried her manuscript because of the afraid of the consequences it might have after, or maybe she implicitly inscribed a counter narrative by which she would manage to articulate some of her ambitions. To express artistry as a woman she often designates an oppositional choice for their fictional heroines, according to their limited options in society. A choice between marriage and death, for there is no compromise being offered to them. Gradually, women gained more rights and subsequently more freedom of choice. During the First and Second Wave of Feminism women fought for egalitarianism, compared to men's privileges. Although many battles have been won, *The Golden Notebook* proved that women were not liberated completely. As Lessing imbedded her protagonist in the bigger social picture of the society, she managed to depict the way men and women related to each other in that time in a very accurate manner. Maybe Anna Wulf succeeded in achieving wholeness eventually, she did not, however, succeed in finding a way of living, where she can have a satisfying love life and at the same time deal with society's, or men's, prejudice about "Free Women". Anna has not been able to free herself from determining patterns and stereotypes, yet. Still the question of identity remains throughout women's life from birth to death no matter we are fighting to overthrow the role patterns that society has imbibed on us.

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