
Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook: Re-envisioning the Fragmented Four Notebooks

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Abstract

Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* (1962) unravels some of the elevated issues such as sexual abuse, political repression, single parenthood and quintessential socio-cultural reality of women's liberation. Anna's notebooks transparently elaborate the individual's personality and self-introspection that force anyone to fight for the injustice and inequality between man and woman in this present society. Lessing's Anna through her short stories, in all her notebooks is searching of her real identity. She expressed Anna's character that caught in a whirlpool of sexual betrayal, trauma of rejection, disillusion of jovial life, political encumbrance and atomization of social activities. Lessing's optimistic outlook in this novel clearly highlights the humanistic approach towards society about the unfair condition of women in this dominating world of men. Lessing wants to realize the society that the modern world must understand the rights of children and freedoms of mothers who live in unorganized culture where women are still facing the imbalance distribution of rights and freedoms as compared to men.

Keywords: quintessential, encumbrance, atomization, political repression, humanistic approach

Introduction:

Doris Lessing one of the most recognized figures in the history of post-war English fiction. She was born in British family in Kermanshah, Persia, on October 22, 1919 and at the age of five, emigrated to Southern Rhodesia with her family. She faced her struggling life from childhood and due to life-corroding competition, her family dissuaded her from luxuries and comforts. She also witnessed two immature marriages having three children. Her literary career also fluctuating with it but she observed a bulk of stock as experience and stories within and awaiting to write it on the paper. That undeserving thing happened, when finally, she settled in England in 1949, with manuscript of *The Grass is Singing* as her first step in that writing world. Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* was a big leap that changed the whole scenario of her popularity. In 1960s, the status of her work also compared with George Eliot who wrote *Middlemarch*, a revolution for women in this dominating society but at different time and place.

Meanwhile writing about *The Golden Notebook*, she had already written series of short stories and poems but that was only present in the form of fragments which were in discarded form of writing. But when Lessing overcame from social and political practice of short stories then she well organized her book into four notebooks and the major benefit about the book was the protagonist who was a woman. And the issues were highlighted from a woman about women's way of living in male-oriented society. Not only in this book even in other books also the shed of her own life that can be easily recognized. Lessing strongly said that autobiographic writings were the experiences and from those contents only a writer could pick up the ideas and proceed it on the bases of further imagination.

The Black Notebook

It was divided between two sub-topics as Source and Money. The former had broken sentences, words and description of physical Africa through letters but the latter had interviews, translations and a synopsis about Frontiers of War with Peter Carey, a trained pilot who was posted in Central Africa. She represented the setting of this notebook by Rhodesia that was the soft corner for Lessing as an observer. The plot had shown the greedy white settlers and the poverty-ridden Africans by a short story of an Englishman having an affair with primitive black woman. The story clearly highlighted the fragmented society and the fragmented attitudes of the people

as they were dividing into smaller and the smallest fragments that couldn't be mended in future.

She talked about the truth of writing content for a 'novel' or a 'short story.' If it was formless, straightforward and simple, it was not going to be published and not even called a story. That she always felt ridiculous in their writer's block. The characters she chose were common like Jimmy, Paul, Ted and Willi and herself as Maryrose. Introducing herself made her extraordinary from other authors.

The Red Notebook

The red notebook is based on the Communist Party meetings, interviews and possessions across the country and formatted as diary entry with date on top of the writing with month and some year. Her interest in Communist Party could be seen in most of her writings. She mentioned some names like Comrade John and Comrade Bill that assured the reality of her writing about the 'New Statesman' and 'The Times' that were active journals around 1950s. That notebook was short as compared to others because they were in diary formats and extremely based on the press conferences and interviews about the Communist Party of that time. She wrote about the affair of Anna and Michael both were the Party members but it ended soon. Anna admired Comrade Stalin and she told the Party members that the Party's policies had many mistakes and errors that affected Britain also due to unhealthy behavior towards communist colonies.

The Yellow Notebook

It was based on the manuscript of *The Shadow of the Third* very attractive characters such as Patricia, Julia, and the protagonist, Ella who worked for women's magazine. She also answered those letters that came in several hundred about the problems faced by the women. The character of Ella was very sensitive and always reserved in herself and didn't want to be involved in any matters. She had a long – term affair with Paul Tanner for almost five years who was already married. Her emotional and sexual attachment with Paul slowly changed into a mechanical and technical sex. Sex is truly very emotional for women. The women get irritated when men express technically Lessing as Anna as Ella represented the state of mind of that woman who separated from her husband and faced trauma while upbringing her child. And met a person who admired you in that position and motivated you for everything but at last left you because he was over from his side or now you didn't look pretty

and you didn't have good dressing sense. Having realizing every notion of pain and cramps then also Ella, a woman awaited for Paul who left that place living his wife also that some day he would come to her and accepted her. Anna's yellow notebook deliberated the true picture of a woman if it Indian or Western but both have true heart for whom they loved.

The Blue Notebook

This one also show some resemblance with the red notebook as per its writing style as diary entry but it's the mingle of Anna's life events of that time and the headings of a newspaper about the bomb blast of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and its affect in different part of the world. She was presenting the day to day life affecting news of that time also. Anna talked about his husband Max and their separation after a year. Some of the disputes of Tommy and Molly and how she got an affair with Michael that she mentioned in 'Black Notebook'. After that the arrival of Saul Green who came as renter and then became a family member but at one moment he also shed anger and depression in Anna's life but everything shot out at the end. Other hand, she had given a vast account on the blast in lethargic way in between the story of her life.

The Golden Notebook

It starts with some scramble words by Saul Green but this book is completed by the contribution of both Saul and Anna. The starting line of this novel- 'The two women were alone in the London flat' was suggested by Saul. And Anna gave him the first line of his story- 'On a dry hillside in Algeria, the soldier watched the moonlight glinting on his rifle'. While analyzing the sub topics of *The Golden Notebook*, Anna flash back the whole subtopics' stories one by one in her dreamy film as the projectionist reviewed the whole past on the screen about Paul and Ella, Julia and Ella, Michael and Anna, Molly and Anna, Mother Sugar, Richard, Tommy and Dr. West in glimpse and then vanished. All these flashes back helped her to write that novel and Saul also motivated her to write about the reality without any hesitation and rumors.

Free Women

This subtopic in this novel has five sections as numbered from one to five. The novel starts from 'Free Women 1' and ends on 'Free Women 5'. As the first

sentence of the novel suggests about the two women alone in the London flat and how the two face the ups and downs of their complicated life easier and somehow declares themselves as Free Women. Each section of 'Free Women' about the conversation between Molly and Anna and their problematic life and children. Lessing has separated this section from other notebooks section. The story of Anna and Molly can be seen in continuous flow without any interruption. As per the story, they both wanted to get married but Molly was quite upset about Tommy and Richard's pressure on him. Anna wanted to write but didn't want to write the chaos or fragments of her mind. So, she divided those fragments into four notebooks. And this section, she called as 'Free Women' while reading all her sections, it was crystal clear that Anna suffered a lot and realized that a man and woman relationship only exist to dominate by a man sexually and mentally. In this part, she expressed all her emotions up to brim and how after facing the societal sign of divorced woman, betrayed by the man one after another in search of love. And eventually both settled in their life but not fully satisfied with it only trying to adjust themselves for their children's future and need.

Conclusion

As per Lessing's point of view, *The Golden Notebook*, was the revolution that started for women's identity and women's consciousness in the society and in upcoming fields. The benchmark in Lessing's writing about this book in which new version of political and aesthetic way is shown as Anna compiles her fragmentation of writing scrambles into four extraordinary notebooks. Every aspects of women's life is presented if it is bad, vulgar or even humiliating. She visualizes the trauma from Anna as a writer to Anna as a person. The process of writing her own experiences gives Anna a kind of relief and helps her in overcoming into a new soul.

One of this Lessing's work acts as the milestone for modern feminist movements in the twentieth century that focus on the woman's way of looking at life through her observations but didn't get same response as compared to man's way of looking at life in this similar world that acts different according to the given circumstances.

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