

**Reflection of Fragmented society on Anna in the Golden Notebook by  
Doris Lessing.**

**Tripti Thakur**

Ph. D Scholar, Department of English

Jaipur National University

Jaipur, India

**ABSTRACT**

*This study presents the international acclaimed novel of Doris Lessing. Doris is a British writer. Her treatment of cultural phenomena in her writing makes her recipient of the Nobel prize in 2007. She is a social activist. Her novel reflects the drawbacks of society and fulfills the gap of an ideal society. She always takes challenges to keep her each work pioneer of its kind. This study explores how social and cultural phenomena is reflected on personalities of society. Reality of society is the action of society. Whatever changes and perception society has reflected on the member of society. Literature is the mirror of society so the finest art of portraying the society becomes literary work and Lessing has mastery over it. So this study explores how Anna reflects the society.*

**Keywords :** Culture, Fragmented, Female, consciousness.

Doris Lessing is a British novelist, poet playwright librettist, biographer and short story writer. She is a British Nobel prize winner best known for her novel *The Grass is Singing*, and her series of novels *Children of Violence*.

She was born Doris May Tayler on 22<sup>nd</sup> 1919 in Kermanshah, Russia to captain Alfred Tayler, a world war I veteran and Emily moved Tayler, a nurse. In 1925 the family moved to Zimbabwe to farm. Doris attended the Dominican Convent High School until she was fourteen. After that she is self educated. She began working as a nursemaid and began to sell short stories to magazines at the age of fifteen. In 1937 she took a job as a telephone operator. Then, she moved to Salisbury, England, and married Frank Watson at nineteen. They had two children, but Lessing left the family after a few years, while still living in Salisbury. They divorced and she remarried and had another child. When her second marriage ended she moved to London in 1949 with her youngest son. Her first novel was *The Grass is Singing*. Doris Lessing published several books in the 1950s, before her breakthrough book was published in 1962, *The Golden Notebook*.

She has written on such themes that makes her unique in literary terms. She made her debut in 1950 with the publication of *The Grass is Singing*. She got international fame on the publication of the publication of *The Golden Notebook*. This novel is regarded as most important literary work on feminist terms. Critics and reader regarded her as feminist after the publication of this novel but she rejects to be labeled to one genre. She is a fantastic reader and writes on pioneer themes through her lifetime. Being a member of society she observes the society and its drawbacks so to reform the society she reflects the deep human emotion in her writing. After reading her writing one can observe her way of writing as a social reformer and a haler.

In this study Lessing portrays the protagonist Anna. It presents the problems of female of modern age. Women are fragmented under the influence of fragmented society. Orthodox patterns; customs, expectation of society define the personality of women. On its publication *The Golden Notebook* was taken as one of the key texts for the feminist movement. The novel poses many problems of a modern and free woman. It is a story about Anna. She has separated from her husband Max Wulf and has a daughter Janet. Anna suffers from mental breakdown and in the last heals herself through inner consciousness. She lives with her friend Molly in a flat. Molly is an actress, separated from her husband Richard and has a son Tommy. Lessing has written in the preface about the shape of the novel as:

“There is a skeleton, or frame, called *Free women*, which is a conventional short novel, about 60,000 words long, and which could stand by itself. But it is divided into five sections and separated by stages of the four Notebooks, Black, Red, Yellow and Blue. The Notebooks are kept by Anna Wulf, a central character of *Free Women*. She keeps four, and not one because, as she recognizes, she has to separate things off from each other, out of fear of chaos, of formlessness of breakdown. 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*.”(Lessing, 7)

Anna and Molly lead a life of their own choice. These women enjoy absolute freedom and independence because they are not bound by marriage. Although these women has gone through the experience of marriage but now

pity the other housewives who are denied this freedom and criticize the husbands. On the other side Anna wants a man to depend on because she feels fragmented. She is utterly dissatisfied about her life.

Anna considers herself a free woman but she is much bound to the conventions of society as a woman. She enjoys preparing food, cleaning and looking after children more than her work of writing. She even blames herself when her lover goes to another woman. Becoming so fragmented she projects herself in her writing through Ella. Patterns of fragmented society like female dependence on male and overall freedom of men regarding marital and extra marital relationship forces Anna to deal with her traditional female emotions.

Anna is a writer. She keeps four notebooks in which she keeps the record of her life as a woman, lover, writer, political activist. Black, Red, Yellow and blue and the essence of them all together in a fifth, gold coloured notebook that is golden notebook. Black notebook is about Anna's experience in central Africa, before and during World War II. Red notebook is about her experience as a member of communist party. Yellow notebook is ongoing novel based on Anna's life and affair. Blue notebook is about personal records, dreams and emotions. Golden Notebook is the attempt to tie all four coloured notebooks.

She has divided and distributed her life into four coloured notebooks. These books reflect the fragmented nature of her consciousness. At this stage, Anna thinks that she has to depend on a man to "complete" her. Anna achieves unity of her divided self by accepting it. This makes her free from her emotional dependence on men too. At the end of the novel Anna

integrated her divided experience into single notebook. The Golden Notebook corresponds to her achievement of unity and wholeness of self. Thus Lessing presents Anna emerging as a New Free Woman.

**Conclusion:**

So the above study explains how Anna becomes a victim of fragmented society and her action reflects the fragmentation of society. The concept of equal rights and opportunities for all is a parallel concept in reality and fiction. Lessing has portrayed Anna as a free woman but under the fragmented circumstance of society she divides herself and in the end with the help of her lover she reconnects her identity as a unified entity. She was fragmented but turns out as a free in the last.

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