

How Mary is prejudiced in *The Grass is Singing* by Doris Lessing

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ABSTRACT

This study presents the literary work of Doris Lessing. Lessing is a British writer. Her literary works expose the reality through the blending of relationships of family and society. Her scheme and theme of writing are investigative and critical. Lessing has chosen outstanding variety of feelings and emotions to expose impulse of human being. Her depiction of expectation and reality from female point of view is unbeatable in cultural and contemporary literary scenario. The selected novel explores the pre judgments of female protagonist and society in various aspects. So, this study explores the mentality of female regarding her self dependence.

Keywords: Prejudiced, impulsive, feminism, culture fragmentation.

Lessing was born Doris May Tayler in Persia (Iran) on October 22, 1919. Both her parents were British. In 1925, the family moved to Southern Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, which was then a British colony. Her father became a maize (corn)

farmer. Doris was sent to a convent school and later a high school in Salisbury, the capital city. She dropped out of that school when she was thirteen and received no more formal education. She was a voracious reader of the great English and Russian novelists, such as Charles Dickens and Leo Tolstoy.

Lessing left home when she was fifteen and worked as a nursemaid. She also began writing short stories, two of which were published in a magazine in South Africa. 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. She moved in left wing political circles, where she met and married Gottfried Lessing. They had one son.

In 1949, Lessing moved to London with her son and published her first novel, *The Grass is Singing* in 1950. Her writing was set in Africa in the 1960s and 1970s and exposed the inequities of colonial rule. During this time, she was banned from entering Southern Rhodesia or South Africa because of her communist activities. In 1962, she wrote *The Golden Notebook*, one of the novels for which she is best known. From 1950 to 2008 she has written more than fifty novels. Her last novel was *Alfred and Emily*.

The Grass is Singing portrays the story of Mary. The novel starts with a factual account of Mary's death. Later chapter unfolds the mystery of Mary's murder and causes of her such end. It shows how social customs, culture and atmosphere changes one's life. Mary is married to Dick a farmer. She doesn't fit in society.

Mary Turner is an intelligent and modern woman but has her own prejudices. She falls prey to the society. As a wife of an unsuccessful farmer Dick

Turner, she caught up in dry life. She gets murdered by her black servant Moses. She is a member of conservative English society of South Africa. Misery and poverty of her childhood make her emotional, prejudiced and frigid. Although by the time she achieves financial independence but she is conservative.

Mary leads a happy life as a typist in town. Free as any man; intelligent and efficient enough to stand on her own. Mary does not feel like entering into any emotional relationship with men. She is presented in the novel as,

“A woman of thirty without love troubles, headaches, back aches, sleeplessness or neurosis. She did not know how rare she was.” (Lessing, 38)

She enjoys the club of unmarried girls. She is the daughter of a boozing workman in the railways and a mother made bitter by the prevailing poverty. By the time Mary achieves financial independence as a typist in town, she has already become an emotional cripple, repelled by intimacy, preferring the ‘impersonality’ of a solitary existence. She associates marriage and family to her unhappy childhood. She remembers home as a wooden box shaken by passing trains. Her father coming home red eyed fuddled, mother in poverty and sufferings.

She hates her father to avenge her mother’s sufferings. She remains indifferent and emotionally untouched even after her marriage. Mary feels relieved to find that she felt nothing for her husband Dick. Though Mary likes other people’s children, she shudders at the thought of having any of her own. She loathes the sight of native women with their children hung to their backs, like monkeys. Thus Mary Turner is free from the traditional feelings for things like marriage family and children.

Mary resents relationship regarding marriage but when she overhears a friend commenting on her dressing sense, personality and views about marriage, she gets depressed and impulsive. Just after that incident she changes her dressing and starts searching a husband. So, to keep herself fit in the trends of society she moulds herself just to look like a member of women at her age. She marries Dick Turner a farmer very soon after few meetings with him. This all happens just because of Mary's pre perception about role of female in the fragmented society.

On the farm Mary is unhappy with Dick. Mary is firm, intelligent, independent and emotional on the other hand Dick lacks resolution. He is a weak personality.

Lessing presents Mary's prejudice thinking about her husband like,

“She needed to think of Dick, the man to whom she was irrevocably married, as a person on his own account, a success from his own efforts. When she saw him weak and goal less, and pitiful, she hated him, and the hate turned in on herself. She needed a man stronger than herself, and she was trying to create one out of Dick. If he had genuinely, simply, because of the greater strength of his purpose, taken the ascendancy over her, she would have loved him, and no longer hated herself for becoming tied to a failure.”
(Lessing,127)

Leading an unhappy married life Mary becomes so impulsive and aggressive that she starts hating the natives and whiplashed a native Moses on the farm. As a representative of white colonial society she doesn't hesitate to hate and even whiplashed Moses. This act is a symbol of showing the superiority of whites and inferiority of natives the black. So she does all so under the influence of her superiority of being a white woman but inside she keeps a fear of Moses response.

When Dick is unwell, he hires Moses as a house servant. Mary attracts toward Moses. He works all day and serves both Dick and Mary more than need. After being whiplashed on his face he is same regarding obedience to his masters as he and all the natives are also prejudiced about the gap of whites and black, superior and inferior, master and servant.

Mary's too much dependency on Moses once makes him feels special and next time one order by Dick helper Tony on the farm to leave the house crashes all the dignity of Moses. Even Mary who before seeks Moses more than her husband seeks Tony as a door to her Salvation. All this makes Moses to murder Mary on a stormy night. Mary somehow knows that her earlier behavior for Moses shall cause negativity to her and this pre prediction becomes true in the last part of the novel.

Feminism is all about equality of sexes, and all the opportunities. Being a female all the female have this sense of freedom like men in the society but opposite of feminism in reality females are suppressed after becoming educated and financially self dependent. A woman has to do all her chores and has to get married and bear children. So these pre judgments of society for female makes a woman prejudiced.

Conclusion-

On the behalf of above study it is clear that Mary is infect prejudiced from the beginning till her tragic end. All of her pre judgments create her life into hell. After having created a new, free, self dependent life in the town because of her pre occupied ideology, she disturbs her life and meets such end. Lessing has presented the character of Mary and all other characters too prejudiced as Dick was also prejudiced about his failure in farming. Tony is also prejudiced about the relationship of Master and servant.

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