

## Female Identity and Patriarchal Structures in Doris Lessing's *The Summer Before the Dark*

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### Abstract

Doris Lessing is an eminent novelist of a wide range of themes which include feminism, Marxism, Sufism, and science fiction. In the arena of feminism, she vividly portrays the lives of women belonging to the elite class and the structures of patriarchy surrounding them. She also delves deep into the lives of female characters where she finds that even independent women are under the clutches of patriarchy and severe sexism. *The Summer Before the Dark* is one such novel in which Lessing depicts the life and identity crisis of a middle-aged housewife amidst one summer when she finds herself abandoned by her members of the family. Her life is a scenic arrangement of being a mother and wife and a hostess for everyone who gets associated with her in any form but at the later stage of her life, she has a higher understanding of her own self and identity. Thus, this paper intends to study the journey of loss and regaining of a woman's identity in the patriarchal structures through reading the novel *The Summer Before the Dark*.

**Keywords:** motherhood, patriarchy, sexism, feminism, identity.

### Searching for identity among the ruptures of the patriarchal society by a middle-aged housewife

*The Summer Before the Dark* (SD) deals with a middle-aged woman, Kate Brown who is stuck in twenty-five years of static married life. After Kate married Michael, she starts playing the role of housewife for years. She performs her duties diligently by providing the most delicious food and a comfortable home environment for her husband and her children. She keeps herself busy in providing them comfort and has learned in her entire journey the qualities of endurance, and patience. She has also developed other feminine attributes of a housewife like self-control, self-discipline, self-denial, and compassion. Lessing asserts that marriage does not provide fulfillment in the lives of women. She says about Kate that she has lost her dignified self and what she would have become, "If [Kate] she had not married, she would probably have become something special in her field? A lecturer perhaps? Women did not seem often to become professors" (SD 18). So, marriage has been a negotiation for Kate that had created a negative impact on her life and values. Ultimately, after so many years of servitude, Kate experiences a terrible existential crisis. She has intentionally chosen to embark on conjugal life and for this, she has given up her higher studies. She discovers her husband's diverse affairs and feels pain about it. She realizes one day that she is no longer needed by her husband and she feels disgraced:

But the point was, she was feeling dismissed, belittled, because the problem of the house was being considered so unimportant.

And when her committee was over, what would she do? It was being taken for granted she would fit herself in somewhere - how very flexible she was being, just as always, ever since the children were born. Looking back over nearly a quarter of a century, she saw that that had been the characteristic of her life - passivity, adaptability to others. (22)

The state of marriage starts disintegrating when Kate realizes that her marital life has been a compromise in the past years where all kinds of investment whether emotional or providing time and affection were on her part or her duties. In the past, she has performed the stereotypical roles of a wife and mother which at present brings her private upheaval. She is invaded by public affairs and feels vulnerable facing those affairs. While reflecting on her marital life, she perceives that it is in the stage of breakdown as she has sacrificed herself on the daily basis for the sake of her children, husband, and social associates. Now, at this stage, she no longer has a connection with her internal self as she has been injured by a longer period of neglect. She also ponders how much she has come to dislike her husband for his casual adulterine and frivolous attempts to act like an immature young man.

Kate's life revolved around her husband and her children completely. This brings her life to mental trauma and distortion, and so in this state of her life, when she is alone encountering people at the conferences, she refuses to abide by the dictates of her nature to find her values. Instead, she follows her husband's path of infidelity and embarks on a journey with a young man, Jeffrey. On her trip with Jeffrey, Kate finds an opportunity to reflect on her sexuality. Kate and Jeffrey fail to establish any real relationship which certainly indicates that the affair is of detrimental quality to her journey toward the quest for self. Moreover, this relationship does not accommodate any of the enriching and satisfying patterns and features of a compatible man-woman relationship. As a couple, Jeffrey and Kate have little to give to each other, and their choices are diverse which cannot be aligned to create a blissful relationship. Jeffrey himself lives in little reality and is more inclined towards the world of pretension and snobbery. He becomes a distraction the moment Kate decides to spend some time with her own self. There is little motivation behind their attraction and being together, other than the fact that he was there and wanted a woman and so, Kate is unable to resist this provocation. Jeffrey is a reflection of masculine stereotypes and he attracts single and lonely women. So, Kate is victimized immediately by this orthodox and rigid pattern of patriarchy. She embarks into the role and this kind of relationship for the same reason that she has sensed for others in her entire life being a mother, wife, and hostess. For Kate, it is easier and she is comfortable in this role than asserting a sense of her own self in the outer world. The meaningless trip and the relationship with Jeffrey indicate Kate's growing selfhood and the entire journey makes her a detached woman. She is gradually becoming less involved with the affairs of the outer world. She gets one of the most important lessons in her life that life is not about sexual relationships but a better comprehension of life comes with self-reflection. Jeffrey's illness forces Kate to get away from him in recurring incidents, and she wants to spend time alone in introspection. This vacation makes Kate aware of her conventional attitude towards men and she visualizes the neglect of her own true self. Kate becomes a completely different person, and what she holds within herself does not correspond to her apparent demeanour. In this regard, in the article, "Doris Lessing's Use of Satire", Lorelei Cederstrom opines:

Kate Brown sees both the inner and outer world, the ego and the self, with the same lack of depth. What was Kate before the outer authorities took hold of her? Before she became a wife and mother, Kate remembers a *jeune fille* in a white dress, who was sexually attractive but had neither warmth nor sympathy. The latter attributes were developed later, to fit the role she played as wife and mother, a smiling stewardess. . . . While Kate no longer wishes to live within the social stereotypes of wife and mother, she is also rejecting an integral part of maturation and self-development. The personality, as it grows, learns to accept new patterns, occasionally selfless ones, as the ego moves toward an embracing, all - connecting selfhood. Kate is neglecting an important part of selfhood, the establishment of cosmic connections through love, which she might encounter doing the very thing she eschews. . . . (137)

Simone de Beauvoir in her landmark book *The Second Sex* emphasizes the presence of a profound imbalance in the gender roles of society. Though gender norms are reinforced culturally and institutionally it is within the household that children first learn about gender roles. Women are indoctrinated from childhood that they exist to serve men and their existence is under male dominance hence they experience sexism in day-to-day life. Women are limited in the role they play in society and are thus enforced to accept definite traits and coping mechanisms that have pushed them even further to inferior positions in society. The otherness of women is hence institutionalized in various social institutions such as family and marriage. Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* explains:

One is not born, but rather becomes, woman. No biological, psychical or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes on in society; it is civilisation as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between the male and the eunuch that is called feminine. Only the mediation of another can constitute an individual as an *Other*. (293)

So, in the intact process of servitude, Kate has lost her identity as she has sacrificed herself daily by choking her inner self and sabotaging her desires due to the patriarchal ideologies that have become a part of her inner reality. Thus, she cannot distinguish and experience with her naked eyes the orthodoxy that has been working imperceptibly in her life for a long time. She is not able to be benefitted from the things that she would have acquired and done for herself. When she begins her journey to search for her true self, she loses her integrity in serving the people who begin to selfishly associate with her. Later in her journey of self-perception and introspection, she becomes an enlightened woman by defying the demands of others, and her journey of searching for self acquires wholeness and complete integrity.

### **Narratives of motherhood and the loss of independent female identity**

There is a supposed gap between the idea of an ideal mother and the act of mothering. Adrienne Rich in *Of Woman Born* defines patriarchy as “an identifiable sexual hierarchy”, claiming that this system has historically arranged and controlled maternal expectations, leaving mothers powerless to live up to or alter impossibly ideal maternal norms (xxiv). She asserts that motherhood is sustained by patriarchy, and patriarchy uses the institution of motherhood to maintain its secondary value. Rich argues that motherhood as an institution is invisible because it is not made up of concrete objects, and it is the silent mechanism of the patriarchal set-up.

Women choose the role of mothering because they have been conditioned to believe that they will have no value if they are not mothers, and are worthless if they don't sacrifice their lives for their children. They are made to believe that they will stop being 'real women' if they go against the normative roles assigned to their gender by the patriarchal society. The rules of this institution are rigid which further motivates women to suffer in silence and agony. Mothers are held to such man-made moral standards that they have to ignore their personal well-being, for the perpetuation and progression of the patriarchal institution. Rich locates the cause of a mother's dialectical powerlessness in patriarchal oppression, explaining that the "language of patriarchal power insists on a dichotomy: for one person to have power, others - or another - must be powerless" (67). Within this dichotomy, if those who establish maternal expectations are powerful, then the women who attempt to function within these expectations become powerless.

The novel *The Summer Before the Dark* by Doris Lessing is engrossed with the maternal experiences of Kate Brown in the patriarchal framework of society. Kate Brown is an attractive, intelligent, happily married mother of four children, and resides in a house in the London suburbs. Her role as a mother is dominant and reiterated in the novel as she is endowed with the motherly qualities of nursing, rearing, and servitude. These duties of a mother have become an essential part and parcel of her life and thus, she cannot think about her life without her children. She has formed a perception about her life that nothing is alterable and she has to perform her maternal role her entire life. In this process,

she had had to fight for qualities that had not been even in her vocabulary. Patience. Self-discipline. Self-control. Self-abnegation. Chastity. Adaptability to others - this above all. This always. These virtues, necessary for bringing up a family of four on a restricted income, she did slowly acquire. She had acquired the qualities before she had thought of giving names to them. (SD 102-3).

Kate's children are gradually growing up and are getting busy with their set of burdens of life and there is no place for her in their lives. Her husband works in America for an extended period and leaves her alone to fulfill his plans for the summer. The sudden departure of her husband and her children for various summer sojourns puts her in a strange situation as she has never lived her life in their absence. She suffers from ambivalent feelings of loneliness, rejection, and separation and so,

this was the first time in her life that she was not wanted. She was unnecessary. That this time in her life was approaching. . . . It is not possible, after all, to be a woman with any sort of mind, and not know that in middle age, in the full flood of one's capacities and energies, one is bound to become that well-documented and much-studied phenomenon, the woman with grown-up children and not enough to do, whose energies must be switched from the said children to less vulnerable targets, for everybody's sake, her own as well as theirs. (23)

Kate has served her husband and her children throughout her life. She harbours a doubt that she is mistreated by her children because she is an incapable mother, hence her children refuse to provide love and affection to her and so she feels guilty about it, and feeling "guilty seems

almost a definition of motherhood in this enlightened time” (110). Kate perceives the fact that her family has no desire for her as she is considered a lifeless object and hence, discarded when she is of no use to them. She enormously becomes helpless and is left alone even after giving her best years to her family and especially her children and “in fact she always did, always had, scaled herself down” (11). Everyone is so busy with their planning that nobody in the family spares time to think about her when she will be left unaccompanied.

Kate was good at multiple languages like Italian, French, and Portuguese and so this quality of hers, made her accept a temporary job as a translator at a conference in London for an organization called Global Food. She diligently does this task of translation at her workplace and thus, she starts enjoying her work well, as she was habituated to the work of hospitality as she had already served in the role of her being a mother. She engages herself with one of the main organizers of another conference in Istanbul. The experience of being a mother is so much ingrained in her self that it extends itself from her children to the international delegates of Global Food, and she mothers them all. Her considerate and warm nature even taking care of small needs comes to light from her homely nurture and care. Though taking care of minute details is not part of her job but it becomes a desired thing with all the visiting delegates. This quality of fostering is admired by the organizers, and Kate is given a promotion in the job which is to last only one month. So she “had become what she was: a nurse, or a nanny, like Charlie Cooper” and “[a] mother. . . . a parrot with the ability to be sympathetic about minor and unimportant obsessions” (33-34). In this context, Lorelei Cederstrom in the essay, “Doris Lessing’s Use of Satire” says:

[Kate] her life, home, and family are cardboard cut-outs, like illustrations from an advertisement - stereotypes so banal they are satiric. Even Kate's new job, which could have been a meaningful move out of the collective for her, involves an organization which is sketched in bold, farcical outlines. At work for ‘Global Foods,’ Kate is as easily manipulated as she was at home. She falls into whatever role the bureaucracy demands of her with little problem. She becomes at work exactly what she was at home [mother]. . . . (135-36)

Cederstrom's opinion suggests that Kate is aware of the fact that it is not merely her skills of translating in she is good and which have earned her promotion, but her motherly qualities which she provides at the institution and it have kept her there longer than what she demanded. This awareness aggravates Kate because she realizes that even on her professional front her role is limited to what she has been doing for a very long period and knowingly or unknowingly, she cannot resist the state of motherhood. Kate’s realization and awareness do not allow her to oppose the role and she cannot gather the courage to get out of this structured role of motherhood. She is broken to such an extent that she cannot openly admit her feelings about her children, and their treatment of her as a mother. The inner restriction that she carries from the motherly role and affection towards her children is discriminated against when she embarks on an illicit affair with a young man, Jeffrey. She goes on a European trip with him and does not feel comfortable playing the role of a lover. To hide her emotions, she starts comparing the young people on the beaches, and at times even Jeffrey, to her children. Jeffrey’s interest in the



beach girls makes Kate aware of the trivial nature of their relationship. Kate has repeatedly played the role of a mother rather than having an affair with Jeffrey and this can be justified here:

[I]f she had been asked then what scene or set of circumstances would be best calculated to bring home to her a situation, a stage in life that she *must* recognize, no matter how painful, then she might have chosen this: to stand on the edge of a mile of soiled and scuffed sand that glittered with banal moonlight, watching a hundred or so young people, some younger than her own children, beside a young man who – it was no use pretending otherwise – made her feel maternal. Almost she could have said: There, there, it will be better soon, and hugged him. She was actually thinking like a mother. . . . (SD 91-92)

The trip with Jeffrey brings out a phenomenal change in Kate's nurturing self. During her trip with Jeffrey, she for the first time tries to control her overtly maternal feelings which have dominated her entire life. After her encounter with him, a new journey for Kate begins in her quest for her identity to find a new and true self. In the due course of time, she starts feeling the dissatisfaction that the stereotyped roles have brought upon her and had been dominant in her life till then. It was very difficult for Kate because she has become part of the stereotypical society and finds trouble relinquishing the maternal associations with Jeffrey. To become detached from him, she keeps on reminding herself that he is a grown-up individual and capable of taking his own decisions. The affair with him becomes disappointing when Kate gets stuck in rural Spain with Jeffrey who falls ill. He refuses to take Kate's advice to see a doctor and believes himself to be strong enough for the trip. Though she feels he is not so strong enough, she asks him again to visit the doctor. Kate says to Jeffrey, "You are sick. Do you hear me? You are ill. You've got to let me put you into bed and get you a doctor" (121).

The trip to Spain with Jeffrey gives her a different experience of motherhood and she accepts it readily, as this experience is very different from her past experiences of herself as a mother. At this time, her care towards Jeffrey is not associated with pain and hopelessness, which she has experienced hitherto in her role as a mother. Jeffrey's illness plays a significant role in the process of her self-realization by making her aware of her submissive tendencies, which have been brought upon her by many years of her experience as a mother. She is still afraid to accept the submissive aspects of mothering from her past life. She finally decides to rise and make herself free from all the responsibilities, which even include taking care of Jeffrey's health. She can think about herself now, and so she looks back at her life and reflects on the point from where her life took a drastic shape after her marriage, followed by the subsequent negative impact of motherhood on her personality. She feels that in "between Kate the girl who had married Michael and Kate of three years ago which was when she had become conscious there was something to examine, the rot had set in" (97). Lessing here places a voice and experience on all mothers who have to sacrifice their wishes for maintaining and balancing their families and receiving no acknowledgment in return.

Kate begins to see that the state of motherhood and the roles played by a mother become a source of objection and liability rather than a loving concern. When the roles of mothers are carried on beyond the needs or desires of those who are mothered then it impacts the mother's life and identity deeply. Jeffrey cannot appreciate Kate's love and care because he is sick. Thus, after performing so much of motherly duties and getting involved in the same pattern

ceaselessly, Kate is not rewarded. She receives no support and hence, she begins to evaluate her role as a mother objectively. The maternal virtues which she has developed to meet the needs of a growing family have become unnecessary now. Kate becomes alone and then, she begins to assess the patterns of motherhood that she has developed with difficulty, but ultimately all those qualities had become unnecessary and unwanted as she points out:

For why should it be necessary for a mother to be there like a grindstone at the heart of everything? Looking back it seemed as if she had been at everybody's beck and call, always available, always criticized, always being bled to feed these – monsters. Looking back at her own adolescence she could see nothing similar. (99-100)

Kate thinks that the trip with Jeffrey will become a mistake in her life and finally, she returns to London. The family home has been rented. So, she stays at a hotel and becomes drastically ill. Kate begins to lose her sanity and becomes alienated and feels dejected. She tries to make sense of her existence and ponders why her life no longer holds a meaningful purpose. She takes a room in a house occupied by a much younger woman, Maureen. It was during her stay in Maureen's flat that she reaches the final limits of the detached state of motherhood. She ascertains that she will assert her desires and utilize her talents for her happiness and will become a mother who will not sacrifice herself completely for her children and family. Through the relationship between Kate and Maureen, it becomes inevitable that Kate now has a lesser degree of involvement because she feels that she has spent herself and wasted her life in the state of motherhood and mothering. The assertion and realization of Kate's true self are manifested by the grey band on her hair as:

She saw herself in windows; her body was back in recognisable shape. Her face had aged. Noticeably. They could hardly fail to notice it. What should they say? Pretend it hadn't happened: you look marvellous mother! The light that is desire to please had gone out. And about time too . . . Her hair – well, no one could overlook that! (269; ellipsis in source)

Lessing voices for the liberation of middle-aged women in this novel. The story is the expression of Kate's pain and anguish as she grows older and is left alone by her family. Lessing gives sarcastic treatment to the subject matter of this novel and offers insightful observation regarding how a woman after many years of service to her children and family becomes unwanted and undesired in her family, and how she struggles against the patriarchal confines of society. In this novel, Kate as a woman has always indulged in proffering services but the moment she decides to go on a quest for her own true identity, she comes back transformed. By the end of the summer, Kate, who was living behind a protective camouflage of feminine charm associated with the patriarchal snobbery has now become illumined with the subtle realities of the social norms, cultural confinement, and moral policing of the patriarchal society, which was imposed on her for being a woman.

### **The patriarchal family and identity crisis**

Michel Foucault insists that power is everywhere, not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere. Every individual comes under the power grid as it is the constraining inter-relationship that exists in society. The interaction among individuals cannot

occur outside the power structure of society. So, it becomes evident that power is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared because it is pervasive and present everywhere in the societal environment in which human beings act as subjects and agents. In the words of Michel Foucault:

Power relations are rooted in the system of social networks. This is not to say, however, that there is a primary and fundamental principle of power which dominates society down to the smallest detail; but, taking as point of departure the possibility of action upon the action of others (which is coextensive with every social relationship), multiple forms of individual disparity, of objectives, of the given application of power over ourselves or others, of, in varying degrees, partial or universal institutionalization, of more or less deliberate organization, one can define different forms of power. The forms and the specific situations of the government of men by one another in a given society are multiple; they are superimposed, they cross, impose their own limits, sometimes cancel one another out, sometimes reinforce one another. ("The Subject and Power" 793)

Additionally, Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* is important for the understanding of concepts related to family, society, and gender relations where she argues that patriarchy is a political institution that relies on the subordinate roles of a woman. Millet believes that women are subjected to artificially constructed ideas of the feminine and that all aspects of society and culture function according to sexual politics that encourages women to internalize their inferiority until it becomes psychologically rooted in them, further claiming that the primary institution of patriarchy is family (33). She explains that the "chief contribution of the family in patriarchy is the socialization of the young (largely through the example and admonition of their parents) into patriarchal ideology's prescribed attitudes toward the categories of role, temperament, and status" (35).

Furthermore, Susan Moller Okin in her book *Justice, Gender, and the Family* argues that inattentiveness to the family has been a mistake. The structure of a family has enormous effects on one's prospects in life. She believes that the allocation of gender roles in the family based on biological sex is due to the way one is socialized into gender roles. She argues:

[M]arriage and the family, as currently practiced in our society, are unjust institutions. They constitute the pivot of a societal system of gender that renders women vulnerable to dependency, exploitation, and abuse. When we look seriously at the distribution between husband and wives of such critical social goods as work (paid and unpaid), power, prestige, self-esteem, opportunities for self-development, and both physical and economic security, we find socially constructed inequalities between them, right down the list. (135-36)

In *The Summer Before the Dark*, Lessing tells about the significance of family and the balance, a middle-class housewife should create between herself and her family. It also depicts that a family based on a patriarchal system acts as a hindrance in the path of a woman's realization of her complete identity. Kate Brown in the novel justifies this through her inner and outer journey in her explorations and reflections of the world. The novel also depicts the limitations of a middle-class wife and emphasizes that although they are intelligent, they are burdened by the work of household chores and are dependent on their husbands for economic support. During their role as housewives, they become accustomed to their domestic affairs and



it becomes difficult for them to completely get rid of their familial responsibilities. It is also difficult for them to start their own independent lives. If Kate would have been given a choice then certainly she would not have chosen such a large family with so many people and this is evident in these lines:

But she did not want to spend the summer in another family, that was just cowardice. In her room, before going to sleep, she looked at its neatness, its indifference to her, and thought that yes, this was much better than her large family house, than Rose's house, full, crammed, jostling with objects every one of which had associations, histories, belonged to this person or that, mattered, were important. This small box of a room, that had in it a bed, a chair, a chest of drawers, a mirror - yes, this is what she would choose, if she could choose . . . she dreamed. (*SD* 34; ellipsis in source)

This novel portrays the problems of women in middle age. After Kate's tenure in her job and her involvement with a young man, Jeffrey, she returns to her family which vindicates the fact that a short escape and separation is not a good solution for her identity crisis. It is further revealed that the repercussions of a male-dominated society force Kate to finally return home after a series of explorations and reflections in the outer world. When Kate decides to return home, she is a completely changed person and the members of her family have to adjust according to her new temperament. The change within Kate is symbolized by her hair which is originally thick and red, then dyed to recover its youthful colour, and finally, it has turned grey. In her book review, Susan Radner comments on the role and choices of a middle-aged woman in the family by pointing out:

This novel is important for several reasons: it shows a middle-aged woman as the center of a story, not on the periphery as someone's mother; it is a serious exploration of the choices faced by middle class, middle-aged women; and it is an analysis of how women think. Throughout the novel Kate is "trying on" ideas like so many dresses off a rack" and using women's metaphors (such as shopping) and women's syntax to do so. Lessing writes Kate's statements as questions? e.g., "Perhaps she had been insensitive?" to show the tentative nature of her thinking process. Thus the novel can be taught for its subject matter, as well as an example of how women use language. (qtd. in Radner 44)

Being a woman and victim of patriarchy, Kate Brown always dressed perfectly so that everyone likes her appearance. She is obedient to her husband and to please him and her children she attires herself in a white dress, white shoes, and a pink scarf around her neck. She would wear something like a muu-muu or a sari or a sarong with straight hair to her shoulders. During the afternoon time on the lawn, she prepared coffee for her husband wearing shoes and stockings, and used to call him but her real choice was to go barefooted to serve him coffee and discard her stockings. She did not follow her instincts for appearance as she has seen her children disliking her for giving importance to her instincts. In a middle-class family, a woman has to adapt and live according to the choice of family members because in such a family the role of a woman is confined and she remains limited to being a husband's wife and mother of her children. She has no right to speak, disobey or discard the demands of her husband and children. In the novel, when Kate's husband and her children no longer need her as they have their arrangements for the summer, Kate cannot resist and raises her voice for her self-dignity.

Consequently, she becomes a useless, redundant, and abandoned woman for her family. She is persuaded by her husband to opt for the job of translator and vacate the house as her husband decides to rent the house from June to the end of September. This forces Kate to become homeless for three months after her office hours. Kate doesn't agree with her husband but cannot stop him from forcing her.

The women are mistreated by their families though they spend their precious time on them and sacrifice for the well-being of the entire family members. They rely on their husbands for economic survival and so they don't get the right to speak and decide anything on their own. The core work of their lives is to look after the whole family and they spend little time on themselves. Likewise, her entire life, Kate is dependent on people's reflections about her, and she has always looked for their consent to build her self-confidence. After long years of satisfying her family's requirements and desires, she compares herself to a dog:

She saw, as she had in so many mirrors, a woman with startling dark-red hair, a very white skin, and the sympathetic eyes of a loving spaniel. (Dislike of her need to love and give made her call herself dog, or slave; she was aware that this was a new thing for her, or she thought it was.) (SD 48)

Kate finally returns home after her journey because she thinks that she still needs her family and her family needs her but she realizes that she should make a balance between her family and herself. Lessing in this novel has brought a different angle of a woman's family life where she is in a critical stage of her life and cannot withdraw herself from her duties and suffers an existential crisis in her life. So, to maintain her identity and take care of her family, she should not lose herself and must realize her importance and then indulge in familial matters. Ultimately in the novel, Kate Brown achieves a higher plane of understanding and experience with lots of learning and explorations in her journey in one summer.

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