

**ACCELERATING EVOLUTION OF SPECIES IN DORIS LESSING
CANOPUS IN ARGOS : A CRITIQUE****Dr. D. N. Ganjewar**Associate Professor, Research Guide & Head
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Kille Dharur Dist. Beed [M.S.]**Abstract**

The present research paper is a critique of Doris Lessing's Canopus in Argos as a sequence of novels in search of the evolution being aided by advanced species for less advanced species and societies. The novels take place in the same future history. The novels give a detailed picture of requisition of scientific evolution from the beginning to the contemporary status of the species. It no doubt provides the origin and evolution of humanity and their consequences. Thus, the paper applies to the history and its causes for the evolution of species in the world. It is the first part of the Critique as regards the first three sequence novels of Doris Lessing in Canopus in Argos.

Keywords: Doris Lessing, Evolution, species, origin of humanity.

Doris Lessing is a distinguished Nobel Prize in Literature-winning novelist. Her novel, *Canopus in Argos* is a sequence of five science fiction books. Their major thrust is to depict a number of societies at different stages of development, over a great period of time. The focus here is no doubt on accelerated evolution being aided by advanced species for less advanced species and societies. The novels take place in the same future history. Each novel covers unrelated events, with the exception of *Shikasta* and *The Sirian Experiments*. They unfold the story of accelerated evolution on Earth through the eyes of

Canopeans and Sirians respectively. When Doris Lessing began writing *Shikasta*, she intended it to be a 'single self-contained book'. But, as universe developed, she found she had ideas for more than just one book, ended up writing a series of five novels.

No doubt, The *Canopus in Argos* series falls into categories of social or soft science fiction ['space fiction' in Lessing's own words [1]]. It is termed so because of its focus on characterisation and social-cultural issues.

Re : Colonised Planet 5, Shikasta [often shortened to *Shikasta*] is a 1979 science fiction novel by Doris Lessing. It is the first book in her five-book *Canopus in Argos* series. *Shikasta* is also the name of the fictional planet featured in the novel.

The novel, *Shikasta* posits the history of the planet. Actually, *Shikasta* [an allegorical Earth] is the planet that is under the influence of three galactic empires, Canopus, Sirius, and their mutual enemy, Puttiora. The book is presented in the form of a series of reports by Canopean emissaries to *Shikasta* who document the planet's prehistory, its degeneration leading to the 'Century of Destruction' [the 20th century], and the Apocalypse [World War III].

Shikasta draws on the Old Testament and is influenced by spiritual and mystical themes in Sufism, an Islamic belief system in which Lessing had taken an interest in the mid-1960s. The book represented a major shift of focus in Lessing's writing, from realism to science fiction, and this disappointed many of her readers. It received mixed reviews from critics. Some were impressed by the scope and vision of the book, with one reviewer calling it as an audacious and disturbing work from one of the world's great living writers. Others were critical of the novel's bleakness, that humanity has no free will and that their fate lies in the hands of galactic empires.

The story of *Shikasta* is retold in the third book of the *Canopus* series, *The Sirian Experiments* [1980], this time from the point of view of Sirius. Shikasta reappears in the fourth book in the series, *The Making of the Representative for Planet 8* [1982], and the Zones, briefly mentioned in *Shikasta*, are the subject of the second book in the series, *The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five* [1980].

Canopus, a benevolent galactic empire centred at Canopus in the constellation Argo Navis, colonises a young and promising planet they name Rohanda [the fruitful]. They nurture its burgeoning humanoids and accelerate their evolution. When the Natives are ready, Canopus imposes a 'Lock' on Rohanda that links it via 'astral currents' [2] to the harmony and strength of the Canopean Empire. In addition to Canopus, two other empires also establish a presence on the planet: their ally, Sirius from the star of the same name, and their mutual enemy, Puttiora. The Sirians confine their activities largely to genetic experiments on the southern continents during Rohanda's prehistory [described in Lessing's third book in the *Canopus* series, *The Sirian Experiments*], while the Shammat of Puttiora remain dormant, waiting for opportunities to strike.

For many millennia, the Natives of Rohanda prosper in a Canopean induced climate of peaceful coexistence and accelerated development. Then, an unforeseen 'cosmic re-alignment' puts Rohanda out of phase with Canopus which causes the Lock to break. Deprived of Canopus's resources and a steady stream of a substance called SOWF [substance-of-we-feeling], the Natives develop a 'Degenerative Disease' that puts the goals of the individual ahead of those of the community. The Shammat exploits this disturbance and begin undermining Canopus's influence by infecting the Natives with their evil ways. As Rohanda degenerates into greed and conflict, the Canopeans reluctantly change its name to Shikasta [the stricken]. Later, in the book, Shikasta is identified as Earth, or an allegorical Earth.

In an attempt to salvage Canopus's plans for Shikasta and correct the Natives' decline, Canopean emissaries are sent to the planet. Johor is one such emissary, who takes on the form of a Native and begins identifying those individuals who have not degenerated too far and are amenable to his corrective instructions. Johor then sends those he has successfully 'converted' to spread the word among other Natives, and soon isolated communities begin to return to the Pre-Shikasta days.

But, without the SOWF and Shammat's influence over the Natives, Canopus is fighting a losing battle and the planet declines further. By the Shikasta's 20th century, the planet has degenerated into war and self-destruction. Johor returns, but this time through Zone 6 from which he is born on the planet [incarnated] as a Shikasta, George Sherban. As Sherban grows up, he establishes contact with other Canopeans in disguise and then resumes his work trying to help the Shikastas. But, famine and unemployment grow, and anarchy spreads.

On the eve of World War III, Sherban and other emissaries relocate a small number of promising Shikastas to remote locations to escape the coming nuclear holocaust. He also takes part in the trial of all Europeans for the crimes of colonialism. Europe has been conquered by China, but he persuades people that Europe was not the only offender. The war reduces Shikasta's population by 99% and sweeps the planet clean of the 'barbarians'. The Shammat, who set the Shikastas on a course of self-destruction, self-destruct themselves and withdraw from the planet. The Canopeans help the survivors rebuild their lives and re-align themselves with Canopus. With a strengthened Lock and the SOWF flowing freely again, harmony and prosperity return to Shikasta.

In the Mid-1960s Lessing had become interested in Sufism, an Islamic belief system, after reading *The Sufis* by Idries Shah. She described *The Sufis* as 'the most surprising book [she] had read', and said it

‘changed [her] life’. [9] Lessing later met Shah, who became ‘a good friend [and] teacher’. [9] In the early 1970s, Lessing began writing ‘inner space’ fiction, which included the novels *Briefing for a Descent into Hell* [1971] and *Memoirs of a Survivor* [1974]. In the late 1970s, she wrote *Shikasta* in which she used many Sufi concepts.

Shikasta was intended to be a single self-contained book, but as Lessing’s fictional universe developed, she found she had ideas for more than just one book, and ended up writing a series of five. *Shikasta*, and the *Canopus in Argos* series as a whole, fall into the category of soft science fiction [‘space fiction’ in Lessing’s own words [1]] due to their focus on characterization and social and cultural issues, and the de-emphasis of science and technology. Robert Alter of *The New York Times* suggested that this kind of writing belongs to a genre literary critic Northrop Frye called the ‘anatomy’, which is –

“a combination of fantasy and morality”. [13]

Actually, Gore Vidal placed Lessing’s ‘science fiction’ ‘somewhere between John Milton and L. Ron Hubbard’. [3]

Shikasta represented a major shift of focus for Lessing, influenced by spiritual and mystical themes in Sufism. This switch to science fiction was not well received by readers and critics. By the late 1970s, Lessing was considered as one of the most honest, intelligent and engaged writers of the day, and Western readers unfamiliar with Sufism were dismayed that Lessing had abandoned her rational worldview.

George Stade of *The New York Times* complained that –

“Our Grand Mistress of lumpen realism has gone religious on us”. [2]

The reaction of reviewers and readers to the first two books in the series, *Shikasta* and *The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five* [1980],

prompted Lessing to write in the Preface to the third book in the series, *The Sirian Experiments* [1980]:

“I would so like it if reviewers and readers could see this series, *Canopus in Argos: Archive*, as a framework that enables me to tell [I hope] a beguiling tale or two; to put questions, both to myself and to others; to explore ideas and sociological possibilities.”
[16]

Shikasta has been called an ‘anti-novel’, and an ‘architectonic novel’. [26] It is the story of the planet Shikasta from the perspective of Canopus. It is presented as a case study for ‘first-year students of Canopean Colonial Rule’. [2] It contains a series of reports by Canopean emissaries to the planet. The extracts are derived from the Canopean reference, *History of Shikasta*, and copies of letters and journals written by *Selected Shikastans*. The history of Shikasta is monitored by the virtually immortal Canopeans, from Rohanda’s prehistory, through to Shikasta’s “Century of Destruction” [Earth’s 20th century], and into Earth’s future when the Chinese occupy Europe and World War III breaks out. The novel purports to be the true history of our planet.

Shikasta alludes to the Old Testament, Gnosticism and Sufism. It is drawn on several Judeo-Christian themes. Lessing wrote in the book’s preface that it has its roots in the Old Testament. Her SOWF [Substance-Of-We-Feeling], the ‘spiritual nourishment’ that flows from Canopus to Shikasta, is also a word she invented with a pronunciation similar to ‘Sufi’. A reviewer of the book in *The Los Angeles Times* said that Shikasta is a ‘reworking of the Bible’, and the Infinity Plus website draws parallels between the Canopeans and their emissaries, and God and his angels from the Old Testament.

A *New York Times* reviewer wrote that the ‘outer space’ where the Canopeans come from is a metaphor for ‘religious or inner space’. Thelma

J. Shinn, in her book *Worlds Within Women: Myth and Mythmaking in Fantastic Literature by Women*, described the struggle between Canopus and Shammat, played out on Shikasta, as the ‘eternal struggle between good and evil’, [31] and the ‘Degenerative Disease’ that strikes Shikasta as a metaphor for the original sin. Lessing said in an interview that the final war [World War III] at the end of the novel is the Apocalypse. Phyllis Sternberg Perrakis wrote in *The Journal of Bahá’í Studies* that Shikasta is the –

“symbolic rendering of the coming of a new prophet to an earth-like planet”, and “relates it to Bahá’í principles”. [2011: 34]

In brief, the novel shows the realistic picture of deterioration of social values. Even, the images of Shikasta prepare a favourable atmosphere of the perils of futility and loss with reliable screeching sound in the background. This no doubt shows that they have reduced the civilization to wasteland swallowing the virtue and good sense. This situation again restores the slavery and wilderness that has become the keynote of science fiction society.

The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five is a 1980 science fiction novel by Doris Lessing. It is the second book in her five-book *Canopus in Argos* series, the first being *Shikasta* [1979]. *The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five* was first published in 1980. In December 1992, the five books in the *Canopus in Argos* series, including *The Marriages*, were published in a single volume entitled *Canopus in Argos : Archives* by Vintage Books in the United States. *The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five* has been translated into several other languages including Dutch, French, German, Spanish, Swedish and Turkish.

The novel takes place in three of six metaphysical Zones that encircle the planet Shikasta [an allegorical Earth], and concerns two ordained marriages that link the patriarchal Zone Four with the matriarchal Zone Three, and the tribal Zone Five. The story is told from the point of view of the

matriarchal utopian Zone Three, and is about gender conflict and the breaking down of barriers between the sexes. Lessing called the Canopus in Argos series ‘space fiction’, but *The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five* is generally referred to as feminist science fiction.

The novel is influenced by spiritual and mystical themes in Sufism, an Islamic belief system in which Lessing had taken an interest in the mid-1960s. The zones are said to correspond to Sufism’s different levels of consciousness, and symbolise the ‘Sufi ladder to enlightenment’. [2] Lessing was criticised for abandoning her traditional fiction and switching to science fiction in her *Canopus in Argos* series. Notwithstanding this criticism, *The Marriages* was generally well received by critics, with some reviewers calling it one of Lessing’s best works on the topic of gender conflict.

In the opening book of the *Canopus in Argos* series, *Shikasta*, Lessing introduced six metaphysical Zones [akin to cosmological planes] that encircle the planet Shikasta [an allegorical Earth [nb 1]]. [9] These Zones, numbered One to Six, each represent different levels of spiritual being. *Shikasta* only deals with Zone Six, the innermost and least pure of the Zones, which one commentator described as –

“a kind of purgatory in which humans wait out the time between incarnations on earth”. [10]

Adjacent Zones in the numerical sequence border each other, from Zone Six [the lowest] up to Zone One [the highest and purest], each with a terrain more mountainous than the previous.

Three of the Zones in this spiritual landscape feature in *The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five*, which Lessing describes as self-contained ‘countries’, each with their own ‘societies’. Zone Two, highest in the spiritual hierarchy, is located high in the mountains at the

edge of Zone Three, which in turn occupies the hills bordering the lowlands of Zone Four, which is adjacent to the flat desert terrain of Zone Five.

The story opens when the Providers, the invisible and unidentified rulers of all the Zones, order Al•lth, queen of the peaceful paradise of Zone Three, to marry Ben Ata, king of the militarised and repressive Zone Four. Al•lth is repulsed by the idea of consorting with a barbarian, and Ben Ata does not want a righteous queen disturbing his military campaigns. Nevertheless, Al•lth descends to Zone Four and they reluctantly marry. Ben Ata is not used to the company of women he cannot control, and Al•lth has difficulty relating to this ill-bred man, but in time they grow accustomed to each other and gain new insights into each other's Zones. Al•lth is appalled that all of Zone Four's wealth goes into its huge armies, leaving the rest of its population poor and underdeveloped. Ben Ata is astounded that Zone Three has no army at all.

The marriage bears a son, Arusi, future heir to the two Zones. Some of the women of Zone Four, led by Dabeeb, step in to help Al•lth. Suppressed and downtrodden, these women relish being in the presence of the queen of Zone Three. But soon after the birth of Arusi, the Providers order Al•lth to return to Zone Three without her son, and Ben Ata to marry Vahshi, queen of the primitive Zone Five. Al•lth and Ben Ata have grown fond of each other, and are devastated by this news.

Back in Zone Three, Al•lth finds that her people have forgotten her, and her sister, Murti• has taken over as queen. Disturbed by the changes she sees in Al•lth, Murti• exiles her to the frontier of Zone Two. Al•lth, drawn by its allure, tries to enter Zone Two, but finds an unworldly and inhospitable place and is told by invisible people that it is not her time yet. At the frontier of Zone Five, Ben Ata reluctantly marries Vahshi, a tribal leader of a band of nomads who terrorise the inhabitants of her zone. But Ben Ata's marriage to Al•lth has changed him, and he disbands most of his armies in Zone Four, sending the soldiers home to

rebuild their towns and villages and uplift their communities. He also slowly wins over Vahshi's confidence and persuades her to stop plundering Zone Five.

When Arusi is old enough to travel, Dabeeb and her band of women decide to take him to Zone Three to see Al•lth. This cross-border excursion is not ordered by the Providers, and Ben Ata has grave misgivings about their decision. In Zone Three the women are shocked to find the deposed Al•lth working in a stable near Zone Two. While Al•lth is pleased to see her son, she too has misgivings about Dabeeb's action. The bumptious women's travels through Zone Three evoke feelings of xenophobia in the locals.

After five years of silence, the Providers instruct Ben Ata to go and see Al•lth in Zone Three. At the border, he is surprised to find a band of youths armed with crude makeshift weapons blocking his way. Clearly, they want no more incursions from Zone Four. Ben Ata returns with a large army and enters Zone Three unchallenged. He is not well received, but finds Al•lth with a small band of followers who have moved to the frontier of Zone Two to be close to her. Ben Ata and Al•lth reunite. He tells her of the reforms he has introduced in Zone Four and his taming of the 'wild one' from Zone Five.

One day Al•lth enters Zone Two and does not return. But, the changes set in motion by the two marriages are now evident everywhere. The frontiers between Zones Three, Four and Five are open, and people and knowledge are flowing between them. Previously stagnant, the three Zones are now filled with enquiry, inspiration and renewal.

The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five is told largely from the point of view of the matriarchal utopian Zone Three, which places the novel in the category of feminist utopias or feminist

science fiction. *The Canopus in Argos* series in general falls under the banner of soft science fiction, or ‘space fiction’ as Lessing called it, due to its focus on characterization and social and cultural issues, and the de-emphasis of science and technology. Comparative literature professor Robert Alter suggested that this kind of writing belongs to a genre that literary critic, Northrop Frye called the ‘anatomy’, which is ‘a combination of fantasy and morality’. [29] Author Gore Vidal placed Lessing’s science fiction between John Milton and L. Ron Hubbard. American screenwriter and film director Frank Pierson called Lessing’s science fiction ‘mythic tale[s]’ that are closer to Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* and Herbert’s *Dune* than works by Clarke and Asimov. A British writer, Graham Sleight said that *The Marriages* comes closest to Ursula Le Guin’s works in the way that both Lessing and Le Guin scrutinise societies. Sleight compared *The Marriages* to Le Guin’s science fiction novel *The Dispossessed* [1974], saying that each revolves around conflicts between differing worldviews, namely the Zones in *The Marriages*, and Anarres and Urras in *The Dispossessed*.

The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five differs from the other books in the *Canopus in Argos* series in that it reads like a fable and is set in a metaphysical, or ‘psychic’ space, outside the rest of the series’ ‘normal’ space / time universe. The story concerns two ordained marriages that link the patriarchal and militaristic Zone Four with the matriarchal and egalitarian Zone Three, and the tribal and barbaric Zone Five. It focuses on, what *Time Magazine* reviewer, Paul Gray calls, the –

“struggles between men and women and the dimensions of sex and love”. [2008: 34]

Literary critic Diana Sheets says that the book is about overcoming gender differences and opening up new possibilities. She argues that the premise of the story is that –

“cosmic order is ideally realized when men and women cross the gender divide and attempt genuine communication - sexually,

emotionally ... thereby setting the preconditions for the attainment of enlightened consciousness.” [2008: 13]

The marriages were ordained by the Providers because the zones had stagnated and the birth rate of both humans and animals had fallen. The renowned author, Thelma J. Shinn says that, as in *Shikasta*, Lessing’s –

“pessimistic view of human capabilities still keeps control in a benevolent power rather than in the hands of the individual”. [1986: 35]

But, after a push in the right direction, the individual triumphs: Al•lth and Ben Ata initiate changes in both their own and their neighbouring zones.

A well-known literary academician, Jayne Ashleigh Glover says that while Zone Three on the surface appears to be a feminist utopia, Lessing shows that it is far from idyllic. The story narrators, the Chroniclers of Zone Three, question their zone’s behaviour and attitudes, and warn of the dangers of stagnation. Al•lth, upon returning to Zone Three, is shunned by its inhabitants for failing to attend to their zone's needs, and Zone Three’s stasis manifests itself in xenophobia when Al•lth brings back new perspectives, followed by visitors from Zone Four.

Glover sees Al•lth, Ben Ata and Vahshi as allegories for their respective zones, and the marriages between them as marriages between the zones, as stated by the title of the book. The Author, Müge Galin says that Al•lth functions according to the nature of Zone Three rather than as an individual. [1997: 40] Galin also argues that the six zones correspond to Sufism’s different levels of consciousness. Both Al•lth and Ben Ata are able to experience other levels of consciousness when they travel to each other’s zones, but Al•lth can perceive and experience the neighbouring zone far deeper than Ben Ata because she is from a higher zone / level of consciousness. [1997: 41] Galin says that on the – “Sufi ladder to enlightenment”, [2] those on higher rungs must pull up those on lower

rungs. Thus, Al•lth can only move to Zone Two after she has pulled Ben Ata up to Zone Three.

Next is *The Sirian Experiments*. It is a 1980 science fiction novel Lessing. It is the third book in her five-book *Canopus in Argos* series. It continues the story of Earth's evolution, which has been manipulated from the beginning by advanced extraterrestrial civilisations. The book was shortlisted for the Booker Prize in 1981.

The Sirian Experiments relates directly to the first book in this series, *Shikasta*, which is the history of the planet Shikasta [an allegorical Earth] under the influence of three galactic empires, Canopus, Sirius and their mutual enemy, Puttiora. *Shikasta* is told from the Canopean viewpoint. *The Sirian Experiments* [subtitled *The Report by Ambien II, of the Five*] tells the story of Shikasta from the Sirian point of view and describes the activities of Sirians on the planet and the strained relations of Sirius with Canopus.

Lessing stated in an afterword in the next book in this series that *The Sirian Experiments* and *The Making of the Representative for Planet 8* were inspired by her 50-year fascination with the ill-fated 1910-13 Antarctic expedition of Robert Falcon Scott [Christopher, Lehmann-Haupt:1982: 7]. Because of its focus on characterisation and social / cultural issues, and the de-emphasis of technological details, *The Sirian Experiments* is soft science fiction, or 'space fiction' as Lessing calls her *Canopus in Argos* series. Robert Alter of *The New York Times* suggested that this kind of writing belongs to a genre literary critic Northrop Frye called the 'anatomy', which is 'a combination of fantasy and morality' and that –

“presents us with a vision of the world in terms of a single intellectual pattern.” [Alter, Robert: 1981: 9]

Lessing has stated that she has used this series as a vehicle to –

“put questions, both to myself and to others”
and to “explore ideas and sociological
possibilities.” [Lessing, Doris: *Preface* : 11]

While Lessing’s switch to ‘science fiction’ in the late 1970s was received by all, [Lesley, Hazelton: 2008: 10] the series in general has drawn positive criticism. Two reviews of *The Sirian Experiments* in *The New York Times* said that Lessing achieves –

“... a largeness of vision beyond the horizon
of the conventional novel.” [Alter, Robert:
1981: 19]

And that it has –

“... some playful moments and some splendid
ones. It is interesting, however, primarily
because Doris Lessing wrote it.” [Leonard,
John: 1981: 22]

Time on the other hand, which had spoken highly of the first two books in this series, [Gray, Paul: 1979 & 1980] felt that this one –

“may be a small misstep on a long journey.”
[Gray, Paul: 1981: 14]

The novel embarks on the major character which are Sirius, The Five – peer group of five senior administrators of the Sirian Colonial Service, Ambien II – one of the Five, Sirian representative to Rohanda, Canopus, Klorathy – senior Canopean Colonial administrator, Nasar – permanent official on Rohanda, Shammatt and Tafta – Shammatt representative to Rohanda. The Sirian Empire, centred in the Sirius star system, has advanced technology that made their citizens effectively immortal [barring accidents] and sophisticated machines that did almost everything for them. But this technology came at a price: many Sirians became afflicted with ‘the existentials’, a debilitating malady that left them feeling worthless and with no reason to exist. To overcome this

problem and give its people ‘something to do’, Sirius embarked on a conquest of space and colonised many planets. But, they also encroached on territory of the superior Canopean Empire that led to a costly war, which Canopus won. As a gesture of reconciliation, Canopus returned all the captured Sirian territory and invited Sirius to jointly colonise a new and promising planet called Rohanda [an allegorical Earth]. Canopus took the northern continents and gave Sirius the southern continents.

Ambien II, one of the Five who run the Sirian Colonial Service and also govern the Sirian Empire, represents Sirius on Rohanda. She sets in motion a series of bio-sociological and genetic experiments where large numbers of primitive indigenous people from Sirian colonised planets are space-lifted to Rohanda and adapted there for work elsewhere in the Empire. In the north, Canopus nurtures Rohanda’s burgeoning humanoids and accelerates their evolution. They also put a Lock on the planet that links it to the harmony and strength of the Canopean Empire. Canopus keeps Ambien II updated with reports of all their work, but she is suspicious of Sirius’s former enemy, seeing them as a competitor rather than a partner, and is unable to correctly interpret them.

Then, an unforeseen ‘cosmic re-alignment’ breaks the Lock and Shammat of the malicious Puttiora Empire begins by exploiting the situation and by corrupting Rohanda’s Natives. Canopus, seeing Rohanda decline, renames the planet Shikasta [the stricken]. Sirius, unconcerned about Canopus’s troubles in the north, continues to refer to the planet as Rohanda.

In an effort to foster better relations with Sirius, Klorathy, a senior Canopean Colonial administrator, invites Ambien II to observe events in their territory. Ambien II, eager to learn more about Canopus, agrees. As Rohanda evolves and civilisations come and go, Ambien II and Klorathy meet several times to watch Rohanda’s degeneration. Canopus does what it can to help communities, but with Shammat’s evil and a broken Lock, they make little progress. From time to time Klorathy requests Ambien II’s help and while

working on the planet, she meets Nasar, another Canopean official. She also encounters Tafta, the Shammat commander on Rohanda, and at one point nearly succumbs to his corruption.

Ambien II eventually abandons the Sirian Experiments in the south when they are overrun by Shammat. The Five want her to abandon Rohanda altogether, but she has become too attached to the planet and is warming to Canopus and seeing the error of her [and Sirius's] ways. The Five question her ties to their former enemy, but when she tries to explain herself, they do not hear what she is saying, just as she initially could not hear what Canopus was saying. The Five then send her to Planet 13 on 'corrective exile' to write a report on what has happened to the novel. When she later releases the report, the Five issues a statement denying the authenticity of Ambien II's work.

In brief, all these three novels represent a fair number of science fiction sequence novels. They denote corrective situation of species. Their accelerating evolution is seen throughout these three sequential novels. Doris Lessing no doubt mentions the authentic side of these species and the causes of their evolution in the world. Thus, the paper is an honest effort to put these three texts of Doris Lessing as the best examples of Science Fiction.

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