

Chapter Four

Journey of Womanhood in Three Phases: Woman in Love, Married Woman, and Divorced Woman

The journey of womanhood which passes through three phases seems to be fascinating, but it has its own challenges when it comes to reality. When a girl steps into womanhood and falls in love, she turns herself into a coy and shy woman and submits herself to her lover completely. This woman in love then tries to seek fulfillment and completeness through her marriage as she has been taught that marriage is her destination. This coy and shy woman then turns into a docile, meek, and passive woman and happily devotes herself completely to her husband and her family. But soon, when this phase ends and all the dreams of being a married woman shatter due to various reasons, this joy and pleasure seeking woman is forced to opt for a divorce. The plight of these women is discussed in this chapter.

Several magazines teach the art of flirting and catching husbands to girls. “From the eighteenth century on, conduct books for ladies had proliferated, enjoining young girls to submissiveness, modesty, selflessness, reminding all women that they should be angelic” (Gilbert 816). A girl is taught to behave in a coquettish and submissive manner to her lover, but is warned that if she is too loud, indulgent, or free in persuading her lover, she will repel him. The woman is often torn between two conflicting emotions, that is, her pride which makes her frigid towards her lover and her desire to look seductive and docile to flatter and keep her lover. But she forgets that male desire is fleeting and

once it gets satisfied a man finds another woman while the wife or the beloved suffers from the pangs of separation, envy, longing, and jealousy. Anna does not like Willi Rode, but continues living with him, while he likes to make women dance to his tune. She flirts with Paul to make Willi jealous and deludes herself into believing that she is happy with Paul, who is sure to betray her.

A girl is always “*married, given*” by her parents while man has an option to “*marry*” and to “*take*” wife, to marry late, or not to marry at all (Beauvoir 454). She is compelled to accept her predefined roles as naturally given. Jeffrey, a thirty two years old man, has no restrictions from the family and does not like to choose between either-or situation of either marrying or choosing his freedom. Gayle Rubin writes that a woman is forced to become “a domestic, a wife, a chattel, a playboy bunny, a prostitute, or a human Dictaphone in certain relations” (Rubin 770). Anna, perturbed by her lover, Saul’s affairs, is happy to be called “a real domestic woman” by him. (Lessing, *GN* 498)

Ella, the protagonist in *The Yellow Notebook* part of *The Golden Notebook*, writes articles for women’s magazine about dress, cosmetic, and “getting-and-keeping-a-man kind” which she hates, but has to do it (Lessing, *GN* 163). She confines her life to her son, Michael and to her home, but her boss, Patricia, wants Ella to come out of her shell, to dress up properly, to look attractive, and advises Ella to go on a holiday to liberate her from the torment of love. Ella feels that she does not want to be “on the market again” by flaunting herself as an object to be sold to which Patricia replies, “It’s no good taking that attitude-that’s how everything is run, isn’t it” (164). An independent woman is made to believe that she needs a man in her life and Ella accepts that “this business of not having

a man around” doesn’t suit her referring to her attraction to Paul Tanner, a doctor, whom she meets at Dr. West’s house. (177)

Woman in love chooses her enslavement and subordinate position wholeheartedly and abandons herself in love to be integrated into her lover’s existence while she looks for qualities like physical strength, elegance, wealth, intelligence, authority, and social status in her lover. Susan, in *Love, Again*, who replaces Molly as Julie in the play *Julie Varion*, falls in love with Stephen and acts coyly, sacrificing her “little-girl quality” to impress Stephen, but feels disheartened by his rejection (Lessing, *LA* 237). Stephen accuses her of committing adultery after marriage and finds the generation gap between them as Susan is outspoken, feminist, modern, talks openly about health issues while he is conservative and clings to his old moralities.

In Paris, Anna meets Mr. Brun who torments Elise, his fiancée, with his wandering eyes while Elise seems to ignore this humiliation as she is ‘feminised’ into the role of a passive and cordial wife; a wife not jealous of her husband’s affairs; and a wife attending her husband’s friend with a smile while Mr. Brun finds this marriage as a noose tightening his neck and wants to marry her only for money. Seeing the submissive nature of Elise, Anna remarks, “I would rather be dead than in this woman’s shoes” because this woman is earning well and can lead a comfortable life (Lessing, *GN* 281).

Sarah is subjected to the acute inspection of Stephen when they meet for the first time. She realises that Stephen dislikes angry and rough women and rather wants them to be appealing and appeasing. Gradually, they feel that they echo and mirror each other and feel a bond developing between them. Sarah yields to Stephen’s invitation to his house

where he takes her arm with a “confident masculine proprietorship” though she faces conflict between her pride of not accepting his invitation as he is in love with someone else and her desire to provide comfort to this appealing man. (Lessing, *LA* 61)

Beauvoir writes that woman seeks confirmation of what she was in past, commits her future to her lover, and subordinates her transcendence to him becoming his “vassal and slave” because she believes that the lover is the centre of the world (Beauvoir 708). This kind of love leads the woman to self-mutilation because she is happy being at the second place “as long as it is *her* place” (710). There are moments when Alice realises her subordinate position to her boyfriend, Jasper, and wishes to put her foot down because her life has been “dragged over a waterfall, or into an abyss” by Jasper, but still she spends most of her time ‘in perpetual wait’ for Jasper to return her love (Lessing, *GT* 292). She musters up the courage to refuse paying for his expenses; stops taking his commands; and tries not to commit herself to him, but as soon as she sees Jasper, her anger melts away. Two contrasting pictures of Alice are portrayed where she is passive, docile, meek, timid, and submissive to Jasper, while she is also shown to be strong and a woman who manages things independently. It is remarked, “Forty years of *being women* will boil through them, and leave them as they are now, heavy and cautious, and anxious to please.” (12 emphasis added)

Beauvoir feels that love comes in “incomplete, bruised, trifling, imperfect and false forms” to woman in love (Beauvoir 701). Even a proud career oriented woman is forced to “be gentle and passive” and she is taught “manoeuvres, prudence, trickery, smiles, charm and docility” to seduce her lover (720). When a woman fails in profession, she seeks refuge in love, but vice versa is not possible for her. Saul Milt, a man with no

commitment, warns Anna not to fall in love with him as he admits that he likes to feed and suck on the vitality of women. Despite being warned by Molly about Saul, Anna falls in love with him and admits that she wants to revive her feelings of loving a real man which she is unable to do her whole life.

If the lover breaks a relationship, his prestige is never tarnished and he moves out of relationships easily, especially, when his mistress talks of marriage while the woman faces boredom, abandonment, resentment, hostility, and frustration when she endlessly waits for her lover who does not come. A man considers the love act as a service rendered to him by a woman while he enjoys playing the role of the master in it. Ella succumbs to Paul's charms, becomes subservient to him, and clings on to him despite hating his company. She feels that she cannot live without him due to which she suffers physically, emotionally, and sexually in this relationship. Paul encourages Ella to have affairs, but also accuses her for doing this just to find a way to separate from her.

Beauvoir writes, "Marriage is the reference by which the single woman is defined, whether she is frustrated by, disgusted at, or even indifferent to this institution" (Beauvoir 451). The future of a woman is thought to lie in marriage as Rubin remarks, "Individuals are engendered in order that marriage can be granted" (Rubin 782). Sarah's grandmother, a shy and frightened woman, faces the challenge of going to another country to marry her fiancé as her ultimate goal is to become "a memsahib." (Lessing, *LA* 7)

It is told to a woman that "to marry is an obligation, to take a lover is luxury; it is because he has solicited her that the woman yields to him" due to which marriage is imposed imperiously on the girl than on the boy and even if she is working, she is forced

to give up her professional and social life for marriage and home (Beauvoir 608). Molly decides not to take up acting again until Tommy recovers completely from his suicide attempt. To ward off this isolation, she brings a director to her house to have a masculine shoulder, but the haunting presence of Tommy does not let her do so.

Marriage is thought to be a taming tool for wild women because, after marriage, it is expected from them to be mild, meek, and submissive. After the abandonment of Paul and Remy, Julie is offered a proposal of marriage by Philippe Angers, a fifty years old man, a widower with grown-up children, and the master of the printing works. He thinks of redeeming her by meeting her openly to prove that he does not bother about her wild past while the society is waiting for the moment when this vagabond and disturber of minds, that is, Julie, will be turned into a harmless, a pacified, and a controlled woman.

Beauvoir writes that marriage offers an asymmetrical situation for a man and a woman because marriage is the only option given to a girl to gain status in the society as someone's wife otherwise she is rejected for being a "social waste" which compels parents to marry off their daughters (Beauvoir 453). Molly enjoys being referred by her maiden name, Miss Jacob, by the milkman, but her ex-husband, Richard objects to it as he feels that despite being divorced, his ex-wife should continue using his surname. He remarks, "Yes-and you call yourself Miss Jacobs. Miss. In the interests of your right to independence and your own identity-whatever *that* might mean. But Tommy has Miss Jacobs for a mother." (Lessing, *GN* 39)

Mostly, Lessing's novels have unusual beginnings where female protagonists are described in terms of their actions. Sarah Durham, in *Love, Again*, is introduced as "a

shadow” and “not a young woman”, but an alert, active, fair, and middle-aged woman (Lessing, *LA* 1). She is a young widow and her marriage lasts only for ten years. A woman is forced to follow “unwelcome social disciplines” so, she keeps her younger self locked into some dark corner of her heart and keeps herself busy with her children’s upbringing and works tirelessly on plays. (124)

The novel, *The Golden Notebook*, begins with the statement “*Anna meets her friend Molly in the summer of 1957 after a separation . . .*” where Anna is introduced as a divorced woman while her friend, Molly, is introduced as a woman who loves to gossip on telephone (Lessing, *GN* 25). Molly is shown waiting for her ex-husband in her flat whom she marries at the age of eighteen because she feels the need of security and respectability in society. Initially, Molly supports and motivates her husband who has been disinherited by his family from the property, but once he gains a stronghold, he finds Molly “immoral, sloppy and bohemian” (36). Her marriage lasts only for a year after which Richard marries Marion.

Beauvoir writes that a man takes least interest in domestic interior as he has access to the entire universe whereas the woman is locked into the conjugal community and “she takes by becoming prey, she liberates herself by abdicating; by renouncing the world, she means to conquer the world” (Beauvoir 483). For a married woman, the home is an ideal abode of happiness; it “becomes the centre of the world”; it is her “earthly lot, the expression of her social worth and her intimate truth”; it “reflect[s] her individuality while bearing social witness to her standard of living”, so she invests most of her time decorating and maintaining it by spending her husband’s money, still she is made to believe that “she *does* nothing she avidly seeks herself in what she *has*” (483-484). This

is a thankless job which is without rewards, honour, or autonomy. Anna feels that married women suffer from “the housewife’s disease” and finds herself preoccupied with the thought “I-must-dress-janet-get-her-breakfast-send-her-off-to-school-get-Michael’s-breakfast-don’t-forget-I-am-out-of-tea-etc-etc.” (Lessing, *GN* 298)

Stephen’s wife, Elizabeth is adept in tackling and managing situations in the house well. Once, in a party thrown by her husband, she expects three hundred guests, but when thousand guests turn up, she handles the situation calmly. Stephen enjoys throwing parties to his surroundings and expects Elizabeth to support him not only in organising and arranging things for the party, but to entertain his friends also with her ‘obligatory’ smile and she works “exactly according to expectation” of fulfilling wifely social duties (Lessing, *LA* 242). She is discouraged by Stephen when she wants to learn dance and music and is disapproved of horse riding because this is considered to be a manly one.

Beauvoir writes that the obsession of cleaning or nervousness and resentment is the outcome of the inability of a frigid and frustrated woman who wants to dominate her solitary and empty existence, and to challenge time and world. This household work is an endless task for her, but loneliness also leaves her frustrated. After leading a lonely life, Mary becomes obsessed with the idea of cleaning and removing the discoloration of the zinc bath tub as she is unable to bear any dust or dirt and overstresses herself as well as her servant with it. To reduce this obsession and to bring some relief to her monotonous life, Dick asks her to accompany him to his farm which she does obediently.

Alice, an active member, changes the face of the House No. 43 and makes several arrangements and runs to every nook and corner to settle various issues regarding the house in which they are staying along with other inmates. Beauvoir remarks that a woman tries to give and involve everything into the work to yield good results. Despite all these efforts, Alice is not allowed to take certain decisions and her work is considered to be a waste of time in comparison to the participation of other inmates in demonstrations. She feels disheartened and an outsider while everyone else is sharing experiences. Jasper remarks later, “While you play house and garden, pouring money away on rubbish, the Cause has to suffer, do without” (Lessing, *GT* 160). Ashcraft also remarks:

The public realm is commonly seen as the legitimate site of production of politics, the more “natural” turf of men/masculinity. Divorced from “real” labor, the private sphere is linked to intimacy, sexuality, reproduction, emotion and domestic concerns, deemed the expertise of women/femininity. (Ashcraft 404-405)

Alice is subjected to Andrew’s “warning masculine pressure” when she tries to convince him to save the House No. 45 from demolition by improving its living condition (Lessing, *GT* 144). Instead, he tries to lay his claim over her by holding her tightly in his grip and his condescending remarks, about her relationship with Jasper, sting her heart. The biggest shock comes to Alice when she finds that Jasper is leaving her alone with Bert to join some other mission. All her life she clung to Jasper and now she is abandoned by him for revolution.

Beauvoir writes that a woman is taught to find personal satisfaction by keeping her house spotless whereas the man may keep it shabby. Before marriage, Dick does not decorate the house as he feels that it is a woman's job and after marriage, he expects Mary to maintain the deplorable condition of the house with torn curtains and broken window panes. Mary decorates the house and waits for "Dick's look of approval and surprise" when he comes back from work. (Lessing, *GS* 61)

"For women, the home is a site of social relations that are structured by power and inequality. It is the location of unpaid labour, domestic violence, abuse, victims of male aggression" (Dowell 15). Mary adjusts herself to a particular routine and embraces her duties conscientiously as she is expected to welcome Dick's guests, to strike rapport with their wives, to spend her time in sewing, embroidering, whitewashing, scrubbing, sweeping, and polishing the things. But when she is finished with renovating the house, the idleness and monotonous life, the hot and humid weather, and the torment of unrepaired ceilings, make her more irritable. Contrary to this, Sarah does not take pride in housewifely skills and cleans her house only once a week. She is accused by her brother, Hal for being shabby, for piling up things, and not keeping them properly in the house.

Even if a married woman has a maid/servant at her home, she likes to do things herself or monitor work done by her maid/servant due to which she finds no relief from the work. When Mary starts curtailing Samson's theft and becomes rigid towards him, Samson, unable to bear his slavery to a woman, the second sex, or being supervised by her, quits his job. Later, Dick hires a servant, Moses, while Mary is left with no work which brings a feeling of dissatisfaction in her and she prolongs doing the same work which, earlier, she finished within few minutes.

Beauvoir asserts that a woman dreams of cleanliness and feels victorious after achieving it, but this is a kind of battle which never leads to victory rather it brings endless recurrent fatigue for her because the result is not positive as things, at home, will again be dirty, dusty, and torn and she is subjected to these endless and repetitive activities like the torment of Sisyphus until her death. Beauvoir remarks, “Eat, sleep, clean . . . the years no longer reach towards the sky, they spread out identical and grey as a horizontal tablecloth; everyday looks like the previous one: the present is eternal, useless and hopeless.” (Beauvoir 487)

Kitchen is always considered to be a woman’s territory which becomes clear when Colin welcomes Sylvia and offers her things which are ready to eat as he remarks, “This is not really my territory, it’s Frances’s . . .” (Lessing, *SD* 328). A woman devotes her time in kitchen preparing food and delicacies while men sit and enjoy eating those. Barry also feels helpless when his wife is away and shows that he is doing a great favour to his wife by preparing the meal in her absence while the same work done by the wife gets ignored. He is full of criticism for his wife and her habit of “gadding”, that is, visiting places leaving him alone (380). “It is only in the guests’ mouths that the cook’s work finds its truth; she needs their approval; she demands that they appreciate her dishes, that they take more; . . .” (Beauvoir 496). Rebecca bears a welcoming smile on her face and is happy playing the role of a subservient woman in the name of religious disguise as she is made to believe that by serving Father Mc Guire she is serving God.

A wife prepares food and guarantees the stability of her husband’s meals and sleep, unlike Anthony, Theresa’s husband, who does not expect his wife to serve him hot meal if she returns late from the meetings rather he prepares the food in *The Good*

Terrorist. In the same novel, Jasper introduces Alice, to other inmates of the House no. 43, as a woman who knows how to feed people the required amount of food in a manner which would save money. She is introduced in terms of her great cooking skills, but is never praised for her management at other fronts. Alice becomes a housemother to the inmates of House No. 43, and does cooking, shopping, and house-keeping for them. Gayle Rubin remarks, “Housework is a key element in the process of reproduction of the laborer from whom surplus value is taken” (Rubin 773). At one point of time, Alice realises that women will always be preoccupied with works like cleaning the house or looking after children while men will enjoy laying back, taking rest, sitting idle, or showing themselves busy in politics. The dichotomy between ‘inactivity’ of ‘men’ and ‘activity’ of ‘women’ is clearly drawn right at the beginning of the novel.

Mary is also instilled with the idea that she has to cook so she takes a cooking book to impress everyone as is remarked that “this was clearly the first thing she had to learn” (Lessing, *GS* 60). Mary is asked to pour tea by Dick as he says, “But that is your job now” and he watches her with proud delight when Mary obeys him (54). Even Samson leads Mary to the kitchen as he feels that she is the right owner of it. This delight of Dick is further highlighted in the statement, “Now she was here, the woman, clothing his bare little house with her presence, he could hardly contain himself with pleasure and exaltation” (54). She is expected to prepare, wait, and serve hot supper to her husband as soon as he comes from work.

Edna is visited by an Inspector of School, Mr. Edward Phiri, who does not seem to give attention to women and rather wants Cedric to talk to him. Phiri tries to create tension between women by showing his surprise that Edna cooks well only with the help

of listening to a radio programme on cooking especially aired for poor black women. But Edna does not lose her rationality and replies curtly saying, “This poor white woman listens to women’s programmes. And if your wife is too good for it then she is missing a lot” (Lessing, *SD* 406). The boomerang bounces back at Mr. Phiri leaving him speechless and he tries to avoid her as his hatred and dislike for strong woman comes forth. This ends only when Cedric offers Mr. Phiri to show his farms and dam.

A woman is supposed to satisfy the male’s sexual needs, a ‘service’ rendered to the husband, whereas for the husband it is just “the execution of a contract” (Beauvoir 614). Everytime when Johnny comes up to Frances with some demands, she gives in to his persuasion and agrees to do what he asks her to do. She welcomes him and all his friends while serving them food as she is shown to be a weak-hearted person. The reasons cited for this acceptance are that she wants a father for her children and secondly, she is sex-starved. This might not be true in her case because if she wants to establish physical relationship, she could have easily found a new man for it. She is even forced to look after Johnny’s step daughter, Tilly and his second wife, Phyllida while he is off to Cuba adding to economic burden on her.

It is believed that when a woman avidly pursues sexual pleasure, she is frustrated and is sexually unsatisfied, but for Beauvoir, this sexual pleasure is “the devastating triumph of immediacy” (Beauvoir 659). Paul, in a complaining mode, accuses Ella of not loving him at first sight and rather loving him only when he first made love to her. Later, he blames her for keeping him away from his wife and children. He thinks of her as a sexually craved woman because of long separation from her husband. She tries to prove this wrong when she stops paying him attention or shrinks away from him which hurts

his 'sexual pride'. He remarks, "Odd isn't it, it really is true that if you love a woman sleeping with another woman means nothing" which clearly shows that man has no emotional attachment to women. (Lessing, *GN* 191)

A husband wants to "assert his independence" in marriage and resorts to extramarital affairs (Lessing, *GN* 471). Richard, fifty years old man, does not feel any decline in his sexual desire, but a woman of this age would surely have been confined to play the role of grandmother sacrificing all her desires. His male pride is hurt and wounded when Marion escapes from his clutches. Through the failed marriage of Richard and Marion, Lessing shows that Richard is opportunistic, exploitative, and indifferent. A man takes pride in having affairs, but the same is not allowed to his wife as it becomes a matter of dishonor for him. He does not think the same about his mistresses, who are also wives of someone and are betraying their husbands.

Men mostly leave their wives either when they get pregnant or when their purpose is fulfilled and then they search for real women for seeking sexual satisfaction, unlike castrating women. Anna and all other married women are subjected to humiliation and betrayal and still they continue to devote themselves to men. Anna is used as a means by Nelson to arouse jealousy in his wife. Johnny leaves Phyllida to marry a real comrade, Stella Linch and says, "I have a right to a woman who is a real comrade. For once in my life I am going to have a woman who is my equal" (Lessing, *SD* 161). He wants a puppet that would act according to his desires. Even after leaving Phyllida, Johnny claims his right over her and instructs her not to indulge in fortune-telling because he finds it an insulting profession. Saul also believes, "It is a writer's duty to betray his wife, his

country and his friend if it serves his art” (Lessing, *GN* 385). He hates his family and never settles down with any woman.

Marion, the second wife of Richard, bears the brunt of his betrayal for the sake of her family. Richard advises her to find a lover for herself thinking that nobody will be interested in a mother of three children, but when she finds one who is ready to marry her, Richards feels insecure and tries to woo her back by pretending to be faithful to her till she abandons her lover. Then he starts behaving like “an Old Testament prophet” talking about morality and immorality, calling her a whore, and not allowing her to free herself from his clutches until he, himself, wants to marry his secretary, Jean (Lessing, *GN* 46). If a woman decides to leave her unfaithful husband, she is not respected by other men and people like Willi, hand them books suggesting women to adjust themselves according to men’s desires and to bear all the problems.

Paul’s wife, Muriel, suffers as her husband is unfaithful to her and does not spend time with his family, but she does not walk out of the marriage. She comes to light only when Ella starts feeling jealous by the presence of ‘the shadow of the third’ following her everywhere. This shadow, Muriel, is an alter ego of Ella representing those qualities which are missing in Ella. Muriel is the traditional wife who loves to read women’s magazine which qualifies her as a good wife and a good mother according to Paul. He expects Muriel to wait for him at home, to keep him happy, and to submit herself completely to him when compared to Ella who, he thinks, wants to have lover at her feet.

Dorothy Mellings, married to Cedric at a young age, is abandoned by him for a new woman, Jane. Dorothy has to give details of her expenditure whenever she takes

money from him. Later, she is unable to bear her expenses due to her complete dependence on her husband who pays no alimony to her and is forced to leave her large house. Cedric offers her to stay with him and his new wife, but Dorothy refuses because she wants to live an independent life now. Hal, in *Love, Again*, is also unfaithful to his wife, Anne, as he feels dissatisfied with her and Anne leaves him and moves in a flat with Joyce. Hal realises his mistakes and tries to console her, but in vain. The “long-suffering, tired, exasperated” Anne transforms herself into a woman who tries to live her life independently, looking after her daughter while Hal finds another woman showing no remorse or guilt over his separation from Anne. (Lessing, *LA* 333)

The attitude of the husband makes woman frigid when he torments her by assuming the thankless role of initiator, instead of being a lover to her. The other reason traced out by Beauvoir for frigidity is when a woman tries to assert her domination and pride in a relationship. Even during the conflict between husband and wife, it is the wife who has to subordinate herself to her husband, but “the scorn, antipathy and rancor” leads to the development of frigidity in a wife (Beauvoir 507). The other reasons identified by Beauvoir regarding frigidity in women are “resentment, spite, fear of pregnancies, and abortion trauma” (436). Kate feels that her sex life with Michael is purely on the basis of physical needs with no emotions involved in it which makes her frigid. She describes her condition with a person who is served heavy meal when that person is not hungry while Michael satisfies his needs even outside marriage. She feels being dragged by an undertow into something against her wish, referring to her affair with Jeffrey.

Beauvoir writes that many girls who decide to marry against their wishes “keep a secret and obstinate resistance in their deepest hearts” and spoil their married lives

(Beauvoir 460). Mary is relieved by the idea of escaping a honeymoon as she dreads any physical relation with a man and later, hates “the great connubial bed” which reminds her of “the hated contact in the nights with Dick’s weary muscular body” (Lessing, *GS* 146). She becomes frigid towards him due to which they do not share amiable relationship.

If a virgin wife is persuaded or respected to an extreme, she becomes frigid to a man who takes pleasure in her pains. Ella marries George because he courted her violently for a year, but she feels sexually repelled by his compulsive sexual craving and is unable to defy him boldly. He suffocates her, cages her, imprisons her, and even takes away her will to react. She feels worn-out and doomed to “some unavoidable repetition of the experience with another man” making her fearful and repulsive while her husband takes pleasure in this repulsion which develops “hopeless psychological deadlock” between them leading to their breakup (Lessing, *GN* 173, 172). She walks out of her marriage of compromise, but is also filled with ideas that she cannot live without a man and if ever she will meet any man, she will be forced to find the prospect of lover in him.

De Silva has nailed his wife with forced pregnancies leaving her bankrupt so that he can wander freely anywhere. He plays a love game with women where he pretends to be in love with them, but asks them not to respond to his love. As soon as a woman responds to his actions, he flees from her because he wants to love a woman “without having to give something back in return” (Lessing, *GN* 437). Anna gets involved with him while being aware of the fact that “men create these things, they create us” referring to women who like to be overpowered by men in terms of sex (439). Still, Anna does not mind preparing breakfast for this man who is sure to leave her frigid.

“[I]f the lover is also young, a novice, shy and an equal the girl’s defences are not strong”; if she looks at the “physical love as a game”, and “hold[s] on to the disgusts, phobias and prudishness” then she remains in “a state of semi-frigidity” forever (Beauvoir 415-16). After the conference ends, Kate panics at the thought of returning to and staying in London all alone for two months. So she accepts Jeffrey’s offer to go to Konya with him, instead of staying in Turkey, an unsafe place for a lonely married woman. Despite being novice, Jeffrey does not compromise with his masculinity and proves it by making love to her though in a child-like manner. This act invokes two personalities in her simultaneously where on one hand, she feels her ‘femininity’ being challenged, outraged, and insulted when Jeffrey does not make love to her, while on the other hand, she feels maternal towards him and not that of a beloved when he is sick.

To remind herself that she is the beloved, Kate makes love to Jeffrey, but longs for her husband as she believes that she is attuned very well to her husband due to which she finds no love involved in this relationship. Lessing also remarks that Kate has “absorbed sex, the physical, into the ordinary and easy expression of emotion, a language of feeling” and she thinks that this has to be followed by mature couple, but this sexuality for Jeffrey is horrifying as he understands only fantasy and romance and blames women for castrating him. (Lessing, *SBD* 79)

If a woman is not confident about her partner’s love, then also her eroticism is paralysed. Ella does not see marriage as a kind of battle against man, but her dream of marrying Paul is shattered when he rejects her, abandons her, and goes to Nigeria without informing her after which lovemaking becomes a mechanical thing for her. Paul destroys “the knowing, doubting, sophisticated Ella again and again he put[s] her intelligence to

sleep, and with her *willing* connivance, so that she floated darkly on her love for him, on her naivety, which is another word for a spontaneous creative faith"; he drains out all her joy and energy, and makes her feel like "a snail that has had her shell pecked off by a bird", and creates agoraphobia, fear of public, in her. (Lessing, *GN* 197 emphasis added, 282)

After the rejection, Ella opens herself to be picked up by any man at random or flirt with them turning into "a bitter spinster" (Lessing, *GN* 399). She suffers from "sex desire in vacuum" and lives only in a fantasised world while feeling humiliated at the realisation that she is 'dependent' on men for "having sex", for "being serviced", and for "being satisfied" (401). She is in search of a man, who can truly love her where her "sexuality could ebb and flow" as she believes that "a woman's sexuality is, so to speak, contained by a man, if he is a real man; she is, in a sense, put to sleep by him, she does not think about sex" or that "man's desire creates a woman's desire" (401-02). The rejection from Michael makes Anna realise her fault when she reads her own diary entries. She feels struck with emotions and writes, "I was a woman terribly vulnerable, critical, using femaleness as a sort of standard or yardstick to measure and discard men. . . . I was an Anna who invited defeat from men without even being conscious of it." (421)

Alice, a thirty-six years old woman, has been with Jasper for fifteen years, but they never marry or enjoy any physical relationship. Everyone suggests her to find a better man, but Alice does not pay attention to this piece of advice. It is remarked, "It was too much. Love, without; they were *sorry* for her" hinting to sympathies she drives from other people due to Jasper (Lessing, *GT* 45). She gets jealous about her Aunt Theresa's "vivid, varied and temptuous" sex life with her husband and is desirous of Jasper's love,

but contends herself saying, “We are together . . . This is like a marriage; talking together before going to sleep” (36, 89). She is reprimanded for encroachment and he warns her saying, “You are in my *space*. You know we don’t get into each other’s space” (46). The idea of ‘my space’ and ‘each other’s space’ is what a woman is taught to respect right from her childhood and not to lay claim over ‘her space’. Alice is not allowed to show her affection for Jasper until he is in a mood to do so as her “sudden blast of her love” is seen as an outrageous act. (158)

Adultery is seen as a breach of contract for both parties and it is believed that a married woman has no right to sexual activity outside marriage as her desire and pleasure are superseded by the interest of society whereas the man can enjoy these pleasures. This leads to the development of many sexually frustrated women and the pains of pregnancy add to their woes. This is the reason why Kate, first, refuses to go out with delegates to their country as she is made to feel that this friendship is all an illusion.

Kate feels like an infidel and feels like “a raving lunatic” who is bound up in binaries like “love, and duty, and being in love and not being in love, and loving, and behaving well and you should and you shouldn’t and you ought and oughtn’t” and decides to enjoy her holiday with Jeffrey for which she repents later as he is too young for her “twilight condition” (Lessing, *SBD* 216, 66). Kate finds this journey painful and tiring, but cannot back out from it as it is her choice. She feels like standing “on the edge of a mile of soiled and scuffed sand that glittered with banal moonlight” (80). With Jeffrey, she finds herself surrounded by “dryness and repetition” of what she has experienced with Michael, feeling like a turtle losing the direction after laying eggs due to an atom bomb or like a seal moving away from water. (67)

Beauvoir writes, “Patriarchal civilisation condemned woman to chastity” while man enjoys being the master and a subject in marriage (Beauvoir 397). A man is allowed to establish relationship even with slave women, but a woman is socially degraded or is put to death if she involves herself in any such relationship just as Mary. Mary dislikes natives, but her feelings are aroused when she sees Moses taking bath because of her frustrated and dissatisfied married life. In order to hide her guilt and her feelings, and to restrain her from this “dark attraction”, she acts harshly towards him as she feels like “a taut-drawn thread, stretched between two immovable weights” or as if she is standing on “a battleground for two contending forces” (Lessing, *GS* 154, 148). “The formal pattern of black-and-white, mistress-and-servant had been broken by personal relation” and a “new human relationship” develops between them and she finds love, care, and comfort with him (144, 157). She starts using flirtatious tone with him and is overpowered by him to an extent that Moses moves with “easy, confident, bullying insolence” (167). Mary transfers her need of love and support to Moses, but “her unforgivable closeness with that native must be obliterated.” (Maslen 6)

The novel, *The Grass is Singing*, begins with a news report of the murder mystery of “Mary Turner, the wife of Richard Turner, a farmer at Ngesi” and Richard is later referred as Dick (Lessing, *GS* 9). Mary is, initially, introduced in relation to her husband without any identity of her own, without any description, and is referred to as “a stiff shape under a soiled white sheet”, symbolic of her infidelity, whose murder is presented through yellow journalism (16). For some people, the murder is ordinary news or a matter of gossip while for others it is an omen or a warning. There is “silent, unconscious agreement” behind the murder of Mary because she defies the white customs by having

an illicit relationship with a black native (10). These people have sympathy for Dick, but they are filled with “a fine fierce indignation” for Mary. (11)

When a married woman has an affair, all hell is let loose, but the society never questions the married man who has several liaisons. The attraction towards Alan has to be curbed by Kate out of the fear of committing adultery. She is taught that “no *really* married woman sets thermostat for Tom, Dick and Harry” while, for Michael, there is no harm in having “infinite series of casual friendly sexual encounters” (Lessing, *SBD* 38, 63). She is asked to control her wishes and desires symbolised as ‘thermostat’ and remembers the agreement with Michael that they will have an “out-in-the-open discussion” and will not blame each other for not filling their deep hungers so that there are no chances of risks, difficulties, problems, or embattlements in their marriage (92). Kate endures assault and humiliation bearing intolerable pain, jealousy, anger, and disgust due to Michael’s affairs. When she is with her friend, Mary Finchley, she feels that all these blueprints, psychological observations, and manifestos are useless. For the success of her marriage, she gives credit to her luck and not to her own efforts which has made her married life run smoothly.

A married woman adopts her husband’s name, religion, class, world, and family, but does not become his equal. The woman does not have her identity of her own and neither is she allowed to have one. Women, in the novels, are introduced in their physical terms whereas men are introduced in terms of their rationality, strength, and their professional abilities. For example, Roy Strether is introduced as a “paradigm of competence”, a stage manager, who is solid and large, but is untidy, clumsy, and slow (Lessing, *LA* 11). He is shown to earn his living by painting houses. His marital status is

revealed much later where he tries to bring back his wife who has left him for her lover. But this is only his version of the story while the story from his wife's side is never mentioned. Patrick Steele is described in terms of his 'feminine' qualities as a "volatile, shrill and moody", "bird-like" homosexual, but not in terms of his expertise of creating brilliant background scenes for plays. (11)

Mrs. Boothby, in *The Golden Notebook*, is introduced in terms of her husband's name and as a woman who has accepted her husband's order quietly. Although she overstresses herself in looking after the preparation of food for the guests in her husband's hotel, yet she does not get the chance to run it independently. In terms of morality, she is taught to look at homosexuals as perverts due to which she cannot bear Jimmy kissing Paul, George, or the cook. Mrs. Boothby also wishes to have a shoulder of a man to rely on and feels jealous to see Stanley obeying Mrs. Lattimore.

Mrs. Lattimore, introduced in terms of her husband's name, is a plump woman of forty-five having "exquisite hands and slender legs"; a woman suffering at the hands of her husband; a woman who takes refuge in drinks and affairs to forget her marital pains while her husband is a "big bad-tempered commercial type", a "steady brutal drinker", who treats his wife like a dirt and torments her with brutal words like 'whore', 'a barren bitch' or 'a street girl' (Lessing, *GN* 135). She does not have a child with whom she could share her miseries so, she develops a fascination for Stanley, a twenty-three year old man, who believes that woman is an object of entertainment. She makes him follow her orders, but she also acts coyly by drooping her "black Irish eyelashes at him" (136). They play the role of mother and son for the public, but share a strong sexual bond in

private. Myra Lattimore does not realise that her happiness is momentary as this youth will leave her for another woman.

George Hunslow's wife is also unnamed in the novel. She is a hardworking woman, looking after four parents and her three children and is occupied with the household works to an extent that she does not get time for her own recreation or private moment with her husband. She is living a poor life while George enjoys his affairs, especially, with African women. She has accepted the burden passively and does not mind being tied down and trapped by the family without a single hope of release. She is a working woman, but her job is in danger due to her husband's ill deeds once his illegitimate child comes into the public while George, a forty years old sensualist and charming man, still, feel he has the ability to attract women. He wants women to submit to him as he enjoys sleeping with several women. Anna's need of a dominating man in her life like George overcomes her decision to live an independent life. Though she wants to have sexual experience with a mature man, yet she hates being trapped by his virility and dominating attitude.

Phyllida, the second wife of Johnny, is introduced as a hysterical, tall, and thin woman with badly dyed reddish hair, long needle like nails, and is described as "dynamo of emotional energy" by Andrew (Lessing, *SD* 58). She has been forced by her first husband to read revolutionary texts just like Johnny does with Frances though both these women are least interested. She accuses Frances of snatching Johnny from her, without realising that he goes to Frances not out of love, but to seek favour from her. Since she does not have proper education, she suffers from psychological imbalance, and she

believes in spending her husband's money which makes her completely dependent on other people for their physical and monetary help.

Kate Brown, a forty-five years old woman, is first introduced as 'a woman', as 'a wife' of a respectable doctor, and 'a mother' of four grown-up children, with three sons, Stephen, James, and Tim and a daughter, Eileen. Her name is revealed little later in the novel as she is introduced as Kate Brown, Catherine Brown, or Mrs. Michael Brown where her final name suggests her marital status. She is shown standing with arms folded and waiting for the kettle to boil but also for something or someone which can change the course of her life. This 'waiting', a typical characteristic of a woman, is perpetual and endless. The woman who thinks about her marriage as "a charming, almost whimsical sacrifice to convention" in her early years, now, feels how "custom allots certain attitudes" like "the oil-power, the balancer, the all-purpose family comforter" to a woman (Lessing, *SBD* 88, 204). Beauvoir writes:

In one sense, her whole existence is a waiting since she is enclosed in the limbo of immanence and contingency and her justification is always in someone else's hands: she is waiting for a tribute, men's approval, she is waiting for love, she is waiting for gratitude and her husband's or lover's praise; she expects to gain from them her reason to exist, her worth and her very being. (Beauvoir 665)

Kate's life comes to a standstill due to her "interminable situation" of "dwindling away from full household activity into getting old" and feels trapped in attending her husband's and children's guests; washing dirty utensils and clothes; looking after her

house and family while she wants to get rid of it by experiencing something different and wonderful (Lessing, *SBD* 9). She has been set up to perform certain functions like a machine acting out her part of managing, arranging, organising, adjusting, ordering, worrying, and fussing about how things work at home. Once when she visits a zoo, she relates her situation to those seals who have adapted themselves to the atmosphere by making up little games “to vary the tedium of their captivity” as Kate tries to seek pleasure in doing household chores. (222)

Sarah, married to Alan Durham, is left poor and without relatives when Alan dies. She was not allowed to take up a job when Alan was alive, but now, accepts the job of a freelance writer, which she dislikes, for the sake of her traumatised children. The initial phase of being a widow does not come easy to her, but gradually, she finds it a boon to sleep alone without indulging in any sexual activities. She has to suppress her feelings for other men because she is a widow and has no right to love.

Henry, in *Love, Again*, married to a woman whose name appears much later in the novel, that is, Millicent. She is described as a small woman, pretty, and blonde, with philosophical look, a woman who refuses to be “diminished by ancestral magnificence”, and a “demented female cat” that is ready to kill her kittens only when it is driven mad by certain circumstances (Lessing, *LA* 293, 244). She uses commanding language with her husband while giving him orders. It is difficult to tell that Millicent is truly a liberated woman just because she speaks strongly with her husband because the way she is treated at home is unknown to the readers. Beauvoir writes:

Custom dictates the compromise between exhibitionism and modesty; sometimes it is the neckline and sometimes the ankle that the 'virtuous woman' must hide; sometimes the young girl has the right to highlight her charms so as to attract suitors, while the married woman gives up all adornment. . . . (Beauvoir 588)

Beauvoir writes, "In her evening dress, the woman is disguised as woman for all the males' pleasure and the pride of her owner" (Beauvoir 589). Paul wants to see Ella in glamorous clothes and to seek pleasure through his sight, but she refuses to do so out of the fear of arousing his jealousy when she will be gazed by other men. When Anna meets Mr. Reginald Tarbrucke, who wants to make a film out of her novel, *Frontiers of War*, she plans to give a lady writer look, but decides to be her own self. She offends him by making his fun and laughing hysterically as against the "subversive laughter" which is expected from women. (Lessing, *GN* 266)

Dress is considered to be an important aspect to reflect social status among friends, family, and relatives. As a host, Mary suffers with agony over her old cups and tiny tray, and over a faded cotton frock. The pitiable look in the eyes of Mrs. Slatter makes Mary shrink from within. But if some women defy these set notions of dress they are termed as masculine like Alice who has dusty hair, unclean hands and nails, she wears a man's army jacket, and faces a condemned look from other women for her unconventional look. But while meeting the authorities, Alice dresses up prim and properly and chooses to meet women officials in every department, like Mrs. Whitfield in the electricity department as she believes that she will easily understand her problem.

When a woman is forced to embrace duties which curtail her freedom, she leads a conflicting life, either she rejects her femininity by dressing up badly or like a man and hesitates between chastity, homosexuality, or a provocative virago attitude; or she conforms to the notion of femininity by dressing up well and by flirting with men. But in both cases she is agitated and feels scattered. Molly, a tall big-boned woman, appears boyish with her boy cut hair; she loves to wear trousers; likes to guise herself in various ways like femme fatale, hoyden, or siren due to which she repels men as they believe that a woman should be well dressed just like her friend, Anna who wears neat and delicate clothes. Kate is conditioned according to the conventions and dresses up appropriately, to look pretty, healthy, and a serviceable woman, for a family afternoon while she wishes to walk bare foot over the grass, to discard her stockings, or to wear “something like a muu-muu or a sari or a sarong”, but the fear of rejection by her family stops her following her heart or asserting her independent identity of being ‘Kate’. (Lessing, *SBD* 11)

Mary Finchley, an alter ego of Kate, a strong woman, does whatever she likes, wears whatever she wants to, and does not care about looks of hatred, disgust, and dislike from her children and society, or being called savage for her outrageousness. She flings her hat, shoes, and gloves in the garden and does not mind showing her bare legs or being stared at by men. She is interested in reading detective, adventurous, and animal stories and does not read books on household skills like other women. What Kate lacks and what she is unable to do, Mary does so without being bound by any social conventions and Mary represents the wild and uncultivated part of Kate. Mary believes in the idea, “You fancy a man, he fancies you, you screw until one or the other is tired, and then good-bye, no hard feelings . . .” which is an act of defiance against the norms (Lessing, *SBD* 214).

For the first time, the readers observe that a man, Mary's husband, has no name and is rather introduced in term of Mary.

When two men discuss over any issue they neglect the presence of any woman and she becomes an invalid for them. When Dick discusses his problems with Charlie regarding Mary and her issues with the niggers, Charlie feels that a woman loses her patience if she stays in the farm for a long time. Men have categorised language and manner of talking into two parts, that is, men's talk which is serious while women's talk is meaningless for them. Bert uses a "curt, stern and pure" voice insisting on his 'masculine' standards with people and when he meets Jasper, they get occupied by their 'men's talk' or their 'manly made-up laughs', ignoring and excluding Alice completely from major decisions about politics as Jasper remarks, "Oh Alice, ideology is simply not your line" (Lessing, *GT* 8, 102). Kate also feels excluded and alienated while Michael seems to expand in front of his acquaintances.

The wife, in early years of marriage, tries to admire and love her husband unconditionally, but she is shattered to find that her husband and her children can get along without her, leaving her lonely and abandoned. Kate misses her family when she in Istanbul, but her pangs are at once assuaged when she realises that her presence is not required in her family when compared to the organisation in which she is "already blooming, expanding, enlarging." (Lessing, *SBD* 52)

There is no guarantee of happiness for a woman in marriage as "it mutilates her and it dooms her to repetition and routine" where ideals like "renunciation" and "devotion" are celebrated in her (Beauvoir 532). Edna Pyne, a white farmer's wife, feels

lonely when her friends leave her to settle in better countries while she is forced to live in “a desert of maleness” (Lessing, *SD* 398). She wants to leave the farm, but cannot do so because her husband, Cedric, wants to sell off his farm at huge price. Edna hopes to strike a rapport with Sylvia by helping her in the treatment of patients, but the communication gap between them remains as Edna does not show her eagerness to help her while Sylvia, who is in dire need of helping hands, does not ask Edna to join her immediately.

Mary needs a break from her distraught farm life and wants to make money in the town or to go on a holiday, but she feels bound by the “conventionality of her ethics, which had nothing to do with her real life” (Lessing, *GS* 97). The bitter, sharp, rude remarks from people regarding her failed married life creates a gulf between what she was before marriage a “shy, aloof, yet adaptable girl with the crowds of acquaintances” and what she is, now, a despairing, raving, ranting, and dissatisfied woman (97). Lessing clearly remarks, “It was a feeling of being out of character that chilled her, not knowledge that she had changed” (97). She has become completely aloof from the outside world and finds the only connection with it through newspapers.

Beauvoir writes that deprived of her magic weapons by nuptial rites, economically and socially dependent on her husband, the ‘good wife’ is man’s most precious treasure and she is shown to others to display man’s powers, while the man delights in his domination over her. Mary is shown as a prize won in a contest by Dick to his friends and even his servant, Samson while Mary bears this indignation and feels outraged “at this casual stockmarket attitude” where a thing is examined and bought by its value and its usefulness (Lessing, *GS* 57). Cy Maitland, in *The Golden Notebook*, takes pride in possessing and displaying the prettiest girl of the town, the beauty which has

made several men drool over her even after being a mother of five children. He keeps her as a prized possession to be displayed for other men so that they could feel jealous of him while he seeks satisfaction outside the marriage leaving his wife frigid.

Beauvoir feels that a husband “‘forms’ his wife not only erotically but also spiritually and intellectually” and passively shapes her and “he educates her, impresses her, puts his imprints on her” (Beauvoir 199). Andrew marries a beautiful American child bride, Mona, to ward off rumours about his being a homosexual. He shows her as his prized possession while Mona takes the pleasure in introducing herself his personal assistant. A beautiful woman is always assumed as a trophy for a man who ‘owns’ it and she becomes ‘a woman to be desired’ for others.

Johnny marries four times only to find a “good material” for him and he wants to make a communist out of her or the one who does not protest to his demands (Lessing, *SD* 12). He wants to impose his whims and fancies onto his wife and if she refuses to do so, he heralds abuses and accusations at her, just as he calls Frances “a political cretin, a lumpen petite bourgeois, a class enemy” when she refuses to be a part of communist party (13). He blames her for being politically obtuse and embarrassing him in front of his friends, while he is least bothered about her interest in theatre and Frances is forced to give up this desire which seems to her like closing the door on romance.

Politics is solely considered to be male field and suggestions from Frances are ignored completely by Johnny. Jasper feels that Alice has no right to know about his political moves and is also snubbed by Bert. These men involve women in political groups only when they are required, but if these women start asking questions or take

independent decisions, they are chided and ignored. Alice gets frustrated from being excluded from 'major political activities' while she also wants to relax and thinks, "To sit quietly, just thinking, a treat, that. *To be yourself*-nice. Guilt threatened to invade with this thought: it was disloyalty to her friends" (Lessing, *GT* 110 emphasis added). She desires to be what she is in real which is hindered by her sense of duty and responsibility.

Molly's involvement in politics is not considered a serious venture by Richard and once Marion starts taking interest in politics with the help of Tommy, she is blamed by Richard for neglecting her family, outdoing him, and he threatens her for divorce. She also faces opposition from her own mother and sisters while she feels that a new Marion is born in her and feels guilty of not recognising this positive side. She leaves Richard saying, "I don't have to think. I'm not going back. What's the use? I don't know what I ought to do with my life, but I know I'm finished if I go back to Richard" (Lessing, *GN* 455). This is a bold step from her, but she owes her gratitude to another man, Tommy, who makes her realise her mistake of spoiling her own life.

Beauvoir talks about the effect of economy in the relationship and points out that some couples create an illusion of perfect equality among man and woman which is not possible as long as the man has economic control. She writes that economic evolution of women disturbs the institution of marriage because women are attuned to be on their knees in front of their partners and do not want to humiliate them with their success. Women do not have their eyes fixed on a particular goal due to which their progress is "timid and uncertain" (Beauvoir 754). Kate feels awkward with the idea that she will be the bread earner of the family and will share expenditure with her husband equally once her salary becomes almost equal to her husband's.

Though woman might perform better than man, yet she will always be underpaid which is the reason why she gets tempted to think that she has the right to be supported by a man when certain professions are unrewarding and also finds marriage to be a better prospect for her. Both Anna and Molly raise their children without any support of men, still they are preoccupied with the idea of marriage and are ready to sacrifice their talents, but, ironically, they advise each other not to do the same.

Woman is always subjected to whims and fancies of men, just as Bill, in *Love, Again*, kisses Sarah, but he is shocked when the same is reciprocated by her. Being overtaken by strong women, Bill turns to weaker women who can be charmed by him easily. Derek Carey, friend of Johnny, in *The Sweetest Dream*, comes to London only to seek sexual pleasure from women while Franklin is shocked to see girls and boys sleeping together because it is a sin in his country. This creates an impression in his mind that girls are easily available for him. It is seen, in this novel, that people who call themselves revolutionaries are worst exploiters of women as they move with girls only to satisfy their sexual needs while these girls are made to act demurely.

Beauvoir writes that women lose out in arguments with their husbands because of the experience the husbands are exposed to the world whereas women do not have the chance to acquire a thorough 'culture' or knowledge of the world as she feels that "it is not because of an intellectual defect that they [women] have not learned to reason: it is because they have not had to practice it" (Beauvoir 510). A strong woman like Ella is disliked by men because they do not want to lose their superior position. Richard also hates being outwitted by Marion and finds himself to be a victim of his wife as he is deprived of physical pleasures from her.

Anna, the successful writer, is also seen as a challenge to the sexual superiority and dignity of Saul because he has lived in a society where women are 'second-class citizens' while he takes pleasure when Anna serves and flatters him. Michael dislikes thinking, intelligent, and critical Anna and her being an 'authoress' as he believes that women and novels cannot go together. He also hates women dressed up in man's attire due to which Anna is forced to choose feminine clothes when she is with Michael. Anna seems to have no claim over her work too as she is approached by many people who want her novel *Frontiers of War* to be adapted into a film or a serial with changes according to their audience. One of them, the male director, wants to rename it as *Forbidden Love* because, for him, the love between people of two different classes is immoral.

Stephen's masculinity does not allow him to read Julie's journals and discards them as writings of self-defence and accusations towards men because subjective work, by a woman, is never considered a piece of literature. He hates Julie's cold intelligence as he feels that she is slamming a door in his face. This shows that men will never accept any strong reactions from women. Sarah, an expert in fitting the dialogues of Stephen in a play, also pretends to take time doing so because she does not want to outdo Stephen and to make him feel that his contribution in the play is inconsiderable.

Beauvoir feels that a woman knows and chooses herself not for her own 'self' rather she is made to live and is defined in terms of being for a man which is considered to be the essential factor of her concrete condition. If a woman chooses herself, she is surely rejected by the society just like a woman delegate from North-Africa, in *The Summer Before the Dark*, described as a gorgeous bird, is judged as unwomanly because she is indifferent, sharp, and unsympathetic, but she is kept in the organisation because

her presence is indispensable. Ironically, women delegates in the conferences are very few when compared to male delegates which shows that the professional ability of a woman is considered to be less than that of man.

Anna and Molly like to sit freely stretching their legs enjoying their comfortable postures when they are alone because they are not allowed to do so when they are in the company of men. It is also considered a taboo for a woman to talk about sex openly, but Lessing's protagonists do not hesitate in talking about it. Anna talks freely about the incompatibility of two people with each other, but they might enjoy their physical relations with other people. Julia, a plump but energetic actress, is dissatisfied with her profession, but likes to go out and enjoy, does not believe in binaries like good/bad or strong/weak, and is unperturbed in being called an immoral woman.

Beauvoir writes that a woman is given to man, she saves, restores, nourishes, heals, strengthens, she is seen as heaven's portal. Stephen is mesmerised by Molly's beauty of being "the solid, creamy-fleshed, lightly freckled girl" when she plays the role of Julie for a play and tries to woo 'the Julie' in her to satisfy himself that he could achieve Julie while completely ignoring the real identity of Molly (Lessing, *LA* 138). He wants women to gratify his sexual needs, but when Molly refuses to respond to him in a docile manner, his pride is hurt as his belief that "a good many women fall for me" is shattered, and he accuses her of being sexually craved for Bill (205). He is unable to take his rejection in a positive manner.

A woman is always cast in merciful, tender, and gentler roles where frivolity, lying, coquetry, perversity, and ignorance are seen as her embellishments. Mrs. Boothby

becomes an object of gaze for Paul, Willi, and Jimmy and they speak of her in condescending terms, referring to her buttocks that “shelved out abruptly” and her bosom which is “high like a shelf in front” while she accepts these insults passively (Lessing, *GN* 97). She is neglected by her “hard-drinking money-loving husband” due to which she develops a secret passion for young Paul and likes to be subjugated and bullied by him (73). She thinks about hitting back Paul and Willi in their own manner, but lets herself be swayed by Paul’s polite manner.

As soon as Kate reaches London, she longs for her home; craves for her husband’s body and intimacy; wants to rely on him even though he is unable to devote time to her, and is ready to forgo and forgive him for his affairs. She knows that it is madness, but she chooses a prison for herself. Her desire to be free from her home is overpowered by her need to fly back to her own cage as if she is stepping from her ashes like a phoenix, but only to be a housewife and a mother. It is remarked, “Her sexuality-in a vacuum, and unsupported by what she thought, by what she felt, by what she expected of the future-was a traitor to her conviction that now, at this time, she had only one duty to think about what her life had become, what it was going to have to be” (Lessing, *SBD* 120). She feels that her body, her dreams, her needs, and her emotions have been channelised and accommodated according to her family. At the end, she gives up her struggle against her bondage and believes that she is happy being passive and submissive woman though she is upset of being an old woman bent low and weighed down by the burdens of her family.

Beauvoir calls wife a “feeble echo” of her husband because of her acceptance of her role of being an obedient wife to her husband (Beauvoir 520). A man is conferred

upon the role of initiator in almost all relationships whereas a woman is “grasped” and “she is no longer free to dream, to withdraw, to manoeuvre: she is given over to the male; he disposes of her” (405). Mary becomes weak in front of Tony Martson who seems to have acquired the role of the protector releasing her from the clutches of Moses as he immediately asks Moses to leave the job for his misbehaviour while Mary does not have the courage to do so. Mary does not realise that dependence on any man will make her vulnerable to his betrayal.

Whenever Jasper applies force on Alice; kicks her hard for associating him with feminine words; tightens his grip around her wrist, she never protests against him as she goes weak in her knees in the matter of love. It is remarked, “There always had been these moments between them when she had to give way, against reason, against sense: he simply had to win” (Lessing, *GT* 162). She feels tied to him like “a tight cord of anxiety that vibrated *to his needs, never hers*” (170 emphasis added). Though she is going past her age of bearing children, he is not interested in marrying her and forces her to sacrifice the idea of marriage and motherhood by reminding her that “real responsible revolutionaries should not have children” and she should keep aside her selfish motives (171). It is remarked, “All this sex business, she thought, was like that! Anything to do with Sex! It simply made people unbalanced. Not themselves. One simply had to learn to keep quiet and let them all get on with it!” (249)

Jasper is always in search of Alice’s weakness so that he can claim his possession over her. He is like a parasite who continues sucking the blood of Alice and her family without acknowledging it because he believes that he has the right to take each single penny out of the rich middle class. Alice leaves her comfortable life to be with him and

has to rely on stealing things from her mother's house or her father's office when he is unable to provide any monetary help for the expenses. She is vulnerable to Jasper's anger, frustrations, cold and furious gaze when he fails to become a member of political parties or when she does not give him the stolen money.

It is believed that man embodies transcendence whereas woman is related to immanence while Beauvoir asserts that "all human existence is transcendence and immanence at the same time; to go beyond itself, it must maintain itself; to thrust itself towards the future, it must integrate the past into itself; and while relating to others, it must confirm itself in itself" (Beauvoir 455). Still, a husband is considered the mouthpiece of a woman just as is observed in case of Julia who is not allowed to raise her voice regarding her preferences like she is not allowed to decide about the future of her son and is not allowed to "set her will against Philip's" decision to move to a larger flat (Lessing, *SD* 28). This tradition of being a mute and passive wife continues from generation to generation in the name of maintaining peace in the house.

Similarly, Kate is expected to adjust herself to the busy schedule of her husband and cannot say anything about Michael's decision of letting the house on rent for few months while they are away. She finds that "passivity", "adaptability to others", "living inside the timetable of other people's needs", becoming "a sponge for small wants year after year", and being dragged into different "patterns of behaviour" are the virtues which she has acquired, but now these seems to her like a form of dementia as her life revolves around her children only. (Lessing, *SBD* 21, 84, 89, 92)

Beauvoir writes that a woman owes her virginity and fidelity to her husband as marriage is considered to be a considerable benefit for a woman, but her sacrifices like leaving past, her parent's house, and adopting new responsibilities, go unnoticed. Kate's grandfather, a patriarch, does not treat his wife as an individual and imposes his decisions on her. This unnamed woman, described as beautiful, perfect, and a skilled woman, performing her roles of being "a wonderful mother, a cook for the angels, a marvellous, marvellous being, all warmth and kindness, with not a fault in her", fails to realise that a woman is imposed with qualities only to be betrayed and insulted. (Lessing, *SBD* 17)

Julia visits Eton and faces the worst kind of humiliation when her own identity is subdued behind being Philip's wife or Jolyon's mother. She has to forgo her own German identity; has to embrace English culture and customs; has to formulate her life according to the status of her husband, a diplomat. Later, Philip regrets his decision of marrying a German woman as he is barred from several important posts and his career is at stake. They start feeling cold vibes between them as Julia feels that Philip has stopped sharing several things with her and she feels like living with an enemy planning to destroy her country while she has to agree with him being his wife. She does not have any friend to consult about this problem as she is confined to her home.

Accepting the role of a wife is a difficult task for a woman as she has to leave her family while the society waits for the signal of her virginity after the wedding. She has no hold over her destiny and her condition is described by Beauvoir as, "In the solitude of the new home, tied to a man who is more or less a stranger, no longer child but wife and destined to become mother in turn, she feels numb . . . she discovers the boredom and blandness of pure facticity" (Beauvoir 499). She detests her physical relations with her

husband and becomes bored after few days or years leading to the development of “psychasthenic”, a psychological disorder characterised by phobias, obsession, compulsion, or excessive anxiety. (503)

Nelson’s wife, in *The Golden Notebook*, an attractive and beautiful woman with striking bold features, is a pleading, submissive, and neglected wife while Nelson is aggressive and challenging. She is described as a woman carrying an air of superficial self-assurance, but is nervous and frightened deep within as she feels tied to Nelson by “the closest of all bonds, neurotic pain-giving” where pain acts as an aspect of love and not pleasure or happiness (Lessing, *GN* 433). She is bullied, humiliated, and mocked by him in front of their guests while Nelson takes pride in being victorious over his wife in verbal battle. He asks Anna to dance with him, who readily accepts this offer and agrees to ‘play’ the role of his mistress, due to which, his wife feels locked in “some permanent controlled hysteria” regarding his betrayal (428). Nelson does not leave his wife because she is his prized possession in the matter of beauty.

Anna feels an emotional void creeping in her which is difficult to fill and wishes to live in her myths and dreams out of the fear of living a better life. She dreams of taking on different disguises as “the malicious male-female dwarf figure, the principle of joy-in-destruction” where Saul is her counterpart in it (Lessing, *GN* 518). Her subjugation is reflected in her dreams where she is forced and condemned to play all female roles which she has refused all her life. She wants to separate what is old, cyclic, recurring history and myth from what is new, but is incapable of doing so due to Michael’s betrayal.

A woman is expected to wear a smile regularly on her face forgetting her pains only to give a warm and soothing effect to the environment. The smile of a woman is subdued and she is instructed not to roar with laughter like Kate, who has learned to smile differently on different occasions. But when Kate is with Mary Finchley, she enjoys rolling and yelling with laughter in the absence of her husband, family, or guests, but when she stays with Maureen and starts using forbidden words, she feels as if she is entering into a “self-forbidden, self-censored” territory (Lessing, *SBD* 189). Women seem to follow Foucault’s idea of panopticism, where subjects are self-regulating and self-disciplined, as if under surveillance, a form of discipline in terms of committing crime. They are being moulded in a fashion that this seems natural to them.

The wife is not allowed to do any constructive work and even the meaning of her existence is not in her hands as Beauvoir feels that a wife will carry out her works happily as, for her, the most important thing is to perform her duties to keep her husband happy. This is the reason why Charlie Slatter does not like haughty women and hates Mary as he remarks, “She’ll come off her high horse. Got ideas into her head, that’s what’s wrong with her. . . . The pair of them need some sense shaken into them” (Lessing, *GS* 81). He is a patriarch who is hard and harsh towards his wife and keeps her subjugated which he expects from every husband to do.

The husband likes to remain sovereign in the relationship and tries to “exaggerate feminine incapacity” while she accepts this subordinate role though a woman may run business and home very well in her husband’s absence (Beauvoir 512). He feels that his wife is under obligation to devote herself completely which she should not expect in return. Dick never shares his responsibilities of farms with Mary as he thinks that no one

can argue “against figure, and his calculations” (Lessing, *GS* 87). He also feels that Mary does not have any experience or any right to instruct him in this matter. Dick is deeply absorbed with the idea of bee-keeping while Mary remains in the state of dim mindlessness as this seems “a flimsy foundation” to her (86). Still, she adjusts herself to Dick’s abrupt decisions and gives few suggestions, but he does not adhere to those facing huge monetary loss due to his miscalculations. Dick moves into “passions of hostile self-defence” and feels that Mary has no right to “thwart his well-meant but unfortunate efforts” (91, 92). But Mary proves this wrong when she successfully keeps chicken to make some money to buy clothes.

For women, it is thought that “thinking is more of a game than an instrument; lacking intellectual training, even intelligent, sensitive and sincere women do not know how to present their opinions and draw conclusions from them” which makes them feel that “[l]ogic in masculine hands is often violence” (Beauvoir 510). When Anna is part of a communist party she acquires the traditional role of a coy woman out of the fear of being shot dead. John Butte hands over his book to her for review, but he is not ready to take any criticism from her. So Anna gives up playing the role of the critic realising the futility of the debate as she says, “I will challenge him, and he will argue. The end will be the same, because the decision has already been taken. The book will be published” (Lessing, *GN* 309). This refusal of Anna pricks his pride and ego of fighting his way through an informed opposition. Anna is made to believe that she is not philosophically well-established to present her own views in the Party which forces her to leave the party.

Beauvoir feels that even if the wife is working, she is expected to look after the house and to raise children all alone without showing any signs of tiredness. She is,

hence, torn between self-affirmation and self-effacement because she wants to handle both her personal life and professional life efficiently. She is expected “to put her existence in his [husband’s] hands, and he will give it its meaning” or to find the meaning of her life in marriage as she is “carried by man’s mediation through the universe and limitless time” (Beauvoir 481). A woman is taught to make her husband feel that he has married a real woman. It is believed that the only advantage a working woman gets is that she is self-sufficient and does not require monetary help from men when they leave her.

Frances raises her children independently in a wretched and meager home rarely visited by Johnny still, she continues living with the hope that this would end soon. After his abandonment, she has to rely on her mother-in-law, Julia for expenses of her sons while she also takes up a small job in the business of making theatre sets and costumes for the sake of her children. She is paid very less amount for her minor role as an actress and is forced to take up the job of a freelance journalist. The dilemma in her continues whether to choose between her desire of being an actress or the profession where she is paid adequately.

Even when Kate is in a job, she is recognised as ‘Mrs. Michael Brown’ though she wants to prove her own capability. The Global Food organisation needs translators who know Portuguese well and Alan approaches Michael, Kate’s husband, with the offer for Kate. She feels “as if suddenly a very cold wind had started to blow, straight towards her, from future” or she feels like a “long-term prisoner who knows she is going to have to face freedom in the morning” because she has never been allowed to work outside home (Lessing, *SBD* 19, 18). Kate’s self-doubt creates the conflict between ethics at work and at home due to which she feels trapped in an organisational marsh with no way out of

it, but she accepts this job as it offers a completely new world to her. At one point, she misses her husband and her family, but, at the very next moment, she is happy being away from them. Even Anna, in *The Golden Notebook*, feels the pressure of “Mrs. I-Have-to-be-Good-At-Everything-I-Do” and is disappointed when she is unable to produce good piece of writing. (Lessing, *GN* 7)

Kate starts playing the role of a nurse, a nanny, and a mother to many delegates and as a translator, she acts like a multilingual machine and a skilled parrot translating one language into another. The mother in her is used as a bait to attract delegates as she uses loving sympathy for them which has been “the oil of her function in her home” (Lessing, *SBD* 41). She has been “*created* by the interminable disciplines of being wife, mother, housekeeper”, her managerial skills are utilised by Charlie in work, and he forces Kate to play the role of “provider of invisible manna, consolation, warmth, ‘sympathy’” and of “the ever-available, ever-goodnatured, popular Kate Brown” which she has been doing since twenty years. (45 emphasis added, 47, 53)

This job does not give Kate, the required freedom from her ‘performing’ roles and she regrets the decision of joining it. Moreover, Charlie befools her for making her feel privileged while taking out his work for free. Lessing raises a question and writes, “Was is that for twenty-five years she had been part of that knot of tension, the family, and had forgotten that ordinary life, life for everyone not in the family, was so agreeable, so undemanding?” (Lessing, *SBD* 30). This moment of realisation about her forgotten self is important as she has ignored and sacrificed it completely for the sake of her family.

'Free' word has several connotations for different women where Kate wants to be free from her conventional roles and her job while Charlie wants her to be free so that she could continue as translator. For Julia, this word is useless because of the mentality of men who categorise women as good and bad women while, for Ella, it means that men are free to have several sexual liaisons with women, but a woman is not free to do so. For some women it has different meaning they feel that Anna and Molly are emancipated while for men these women are 'free' to have affairs with them. For Anna, it means to do anything because "if we lead what is known as free lives, that is, lives like men, why shouldn't we use the same language?" (Lessing, *GN* 59)

The clashes among the couples arise when ". . . each consciousness seeks to posit itself alone as sovereign subject" while "reducing the other to slavery" (Beauvoir 163). Mary's mother always fights with her drunkard husband as he expects his wife to sit at home and raise children on the left over money. Stephen and Elizabeth feel a communication gap as he feels that she is insensible to his weaknesses while she feels neglected by him. The growing madness of Stephen of being possessed by dead Julie and Elizabeth's earlier failed marriage force her to move on with a woman, Norah, whom she can rely on as she has now lost faith in heterosexual relationships. Stephen disapproves of this lesbian relationship because it is not according to the norms of the society. He admits that he would have accepted Elizabeth going back to Joshua, her former lover, but he will never accept the hideous relationship between two women. Men try to demarcate these women as "*La Belle Dame Sans Merci*" because these women are seen as threat to the society (Lessing, *LA* 132). Men think that they are redeemers of lost females or lesbians and they will provide protection, support, and love to these vulnerable women.

For a man, marriage brings material inconveniences as his wife becomes an additional person to feed whereas he can gratify his sexual needs outside also, but “it is a definitive accomplishment of his existence” (Beauvoir 457). A married woman is described as an “inessential mediation” in the lives of her husband and her children (497). Ella’s father seems to be unsatisfied with his wife and hires a woman for him, but his morality does not allow him to talk about this to his daughter. His family, marriage, and blood ties seem unreal to him and he wants to be free from all these ties while forcefully tying down his wife to the hearth.

Montaigne comments, “[T]o love one’s wife too well is to shit in your hat and put it on your head” (qtd. in Beauvoir 464). But a man realises the importance of his wife only when she takes some extreme step. After Mary leaves Dick and goes to the town, Dick becomes deeply solicitous, gentle, and tolerant towards her as he realises that the presence of Mary alone gives him motivation to work. It is only at these moments that Mary feels her hold over her husband and she speaks to him in a new warning tone cautioning him not to ignore her. But this is also a mere illusion as she feels like a ‘queen’ who can endear any hardship in her life. She does not realise that she is betraying herself in accepting to live in such miserable conditions.

Beauvoir writes that a woman loves man in illness because then he becomes an object to be taken care of. “Woman loves man to be passive flesh and not a body that expresses subjectivity” (Beauvoir 516). Mary tries to shoulder Dick’s responsibilities when he gets ill by taking active interest in managing his farm. She feels the “sensation of being boss” and regains her confidence in her ability to rule, order, and command at least eighty black workers, and, later, paying them money (Lessing, *GS* 112). She finds

that Dick's inability and incompetence, to begin things and leave them unfinished, is the major cause of his failure. She is "filled with vindictiveness and a feeling of victory" when she handles two fronts, the farm and the house, efficiently despite facing resentment from the natives as they find it demeaning to take orders from a woman as it is remarked, "They worked reluctantly, in a sullen silence; and she knew it was because they resented her, a woman, supervising them." (115, 111)

But, Mary is disillusioned with this fleeting joy because she does not realise that this will end as soon as Dick gets well and resumes his work while she will be relegated back to home. On the one hand, Dick feels proud to see Mary involved in the problems of the farm, but at the same time, his pride comes in his way once his mistakes are being pointed out. Dick wants to "take up the reins again as if her sovereignty had been nothing, nothing at all" (Lessing, *GS* 121). John Ruskin also remarks that "the woman's power is not for rule, not for battle, and her intellect is not for the invention or creation, but for sweet orderings of domesticity" (qtd. in Gilbert 816). Mary, gradually, withdraws from these affairs because she feels that if she demonstrates her superior ability then Dick will take a defensive stand. Instead she wants a man who can take "the ascendancy over her." (Lessing, *GS* 127)

Jeffrey's illness limits Kate's idea of journey and she is neither able to visit places nor she is able to leave him alone. She believes that she has contracted with him for her physical pleasure which she is unable to get. She thinks of giving him some money for his treatment and leave, but checks herself out of the fear of hurting his masculinity and succumbs to his pressure to continue their journey. Finally, her patience breaks out when she herself becomes ill and she decides to leave Jeffrey. Kate is not a reactionary and is

unable to “step into the air and soar off and away”, away from her burdens and responsibilities (Lessing, *SBD* 104). Despite having rebellious attitude, she goes back to her family realising that it is useless to spend time in “assessing, balancing, weighing what we think, we feel” (219). She laughs at her own decision, but does not want to give it a second thought and is ready to forget the time spent with Jeffrey and Maureen.

“Confined in denial, in cynicism, she lacks a positive use of her strength; as long as she is passionate and living, she finds ways to use it: . . .” (Beauvoir 528). Ella feels wearied down by “a weight of fatigue” of emotion which she has been carrying all her life (Lessing, *GN* 286). Miles remarks:

When the man withdraws his presence, his comfort and companionship, the woman almost ceases to exist; she needs the continual validation of a male society which decrees that she is nothing on her own. All the problems of Lessing’s Anna, psychological, sexual, social, and professional originate in this sense of denial. (Miles 125)

Mary also starts feeling caged in the house and turns to nature to find solace, but feels “weakening into self-pity”, bruised, and beaten (Lessing, *GS* 80). Though Dick and Mary try to put their differences behind, but the resentment against each other always remain in their hearts as Lessing also feels that a woman who will marry men like Dick will either become mad or will turn bitter for not being able to take out her anger.

Beauvoir writes, “. . . the woman kept confined, isolated, does not have the joys of a comradeship that involves pursuing aims together; her work does not occupy her mind, her education did not give her either the taste or the habit of dependence, and yet

she spends her days in solitude; . . .” (Beauvoir 598). Similarly, it is remarked in *The Golden Notebook* that only few people know that “to lock a human being into solitary confinement can make a madman of him [her] or an animal” (Lessing, *GN* 537). Anna realises that “emotion is a trap, it delivers you into the hands of society, that’s why people are measuring it out” while she feels foolish to let her emotional side, especially her attachment with Michael, overcome her rational side while people around her have “a quality of measured emotion, coolness” and she admits, “What fools we are, perpetually, eternally, and we never learn, and I know quite well that next time it happens I’ll have learned nothing” (478, 441). She writes, “It is in me Anna betrayed, Anna unloved, Anna whose happiness is denied, and who says, not: Why do you deny me, but why do you deny life?” (519)

Anna writes, “In a world as terrible as this, limit emotion. How odd I didn’t see it before” and she tries to build an attitude that “stems from an assumption that people can be expected to be courageous enough to stand up for their individual thinking” (Lessing, *GN* 478, 494). Lucas feels that Anna will not be able to find any solution to her conflicts as he writes, “At the heart of *The Golden Notebook* is the question of how, indeed whether, her protagonist, Anna can resolve what she comes to perceive as conflicting demands upon her: as writer, lover, mother, demands that, as she tries to comfort them, become increasingly preemptory.” (Lucas 557)

“The wife shut up in her home cannot establish her existence on her own; she does not have the means to affirm herself in her singularity: and this singularity is consequently not acknowledged” (Beauvoir 584). Kate is unable to achieve anything due to her marriage, an impediment for her career, while Michael is shown to do a great

favour by allowing her to translate works for him and for his friends. When Frances is offered to start her own theatre in Havana by Fidel, Johnny stops her as he believes that Frances is fit only to solve familial problems.

“The chains of marriage are heavy” and women feel the terror of being trapped and tamed by domesticity, because “the male world is hard, there are sharp angles, voices are too loud, lights are too bright, contacts brusque” (Beauvoir 527, 599). Julie has great respect for her future husband, Philippe and imagines her life as his wife preparing food for him and doing other things, but the feeling of confinement leads her to drown herself in the pool. The society does not see beyond marriage and family or that a woman has lot more important things in her life than only being called as someone’s wife. Kate knows it well that she is in a trap and ponders over it, “I’m telling myself the most dreadful lies! Awful! Why do I do it? There’s something here that I simply will not let myself look at” (Lessing, *SBD* 15). Julia faces several imposed decisions by her husband, Philip and does not want Frances to undergo the same abominable treatment so she encourages Frances to rise for herself and to fight against her oppression. Audre Lorde says that “instead of acquiescing to the dominant/subordinate, good/bad, superior/inferior, this hierarchical indoctrination, women must learn to relate as equals across differences. . . .” (qtd. in De Shazer 899)

Kate does not have the power to choose her career at her will as she thinks, “Choose? When do I even choose? Have I ever chosen?” just as Beauvoir also remarks that “freedom has only a negative form” for a wife (Lessing, *SBD* 10; Beauvoir 534). When Kate goes to Spain, she tries to savour each minute of her journey which is “a long span of freedom”, without any pressure, or compulsion to go to bed early, or to rise early,

or worry about the preparation of food for the family (Lessing, *SBD* 153). She could have “claimed the right to freedom” much earlier provided she had been active and bold enough to do so all alone (84). Beauvoir feels that a woman is able to realise her mistake of not listening to her heart’s desires only when she is alone and gets time to ponder over her life.

Kate realises that her marriage is an illusion and says, “*Growing up is bound to be painful . . . My first child, you know . . . But I was in love! . . . Marriage is a compromise . . . I am not as young as I once was*” or “*love is a woman’s whole existence*” and “*there has to be give and take in any marriage*” or marriage is the “gigantic trick, the most monstrous cynicism”, and a woman is expected to give more into the marriage than to take from it (Lessing, *SBD* 5, 5, 13, 89). She has also become “more uncomfortably conscious” of “time-honoured phrases” which might not go along with her personal feelings (6, 5). She feels she is in crucible by learning certain conventions which, in turn, bind her into eternal slavery and repetition of household activities.

Realising the futility of the relationships, Anna says to Molly, “Both of us are dedicated to the proposition that we’re tough . . . a marriage breaks up, well, we say, our marriage was a failure, too bad. A man ditches us-too bad we say, it’s not important. We bring up kids without men- nothing to it, we say, we can cope” (Lessing, *GN* 86). Anna is judged by the society in terms of her success and failure regarding love, marriage, men, and profession. A woman gives up her studies and job as soon as she is married because she is shown to be less committed to her career and, rather, is more concerned with her physical appearances, holding back her personal ambitions except for few women.

Balzac says, “A wife is what her husband makes her” (qtd. in Beauvoir 512). Balzac also writes that men dupe and delude their wives in treating them like slaves, but making them feel like queens of those works. The other reason for divorce is when the man ignores the dreams, fantasies, nostalgia, and emotions of his wife. As soon as a divorced woman starts talking to a man, she attracts the attention of the public and is judged in terms of morality and immorality just as happens with Ella when she starts talking to Paul. She thinks of Paul as her rescuer and is delighted to see that he removes her frigidity, but she is ignorant of the fact that he shows his inattention and impatience to ‘frilly’ petticoats.

A divorced woman or an independent woman is always subjected to the jokes, humour, and bawdy remarks like Anna who is called as ‘love’, ‘duck’, ‘dear little Anna’, ‘dear little girl’ by men at the grocery and is subjected to a brutal sexual inspection of Saul Green, an American tenant, who stands in a “lounging” cowboy position with “thumbs hitched through his belt” and fingers pointing to his private parts posing like a “sexy he-man” and pretending not doing so (Lessing, *GN* 484). Later, Anna succumbs to his charms, throws away all her defenses, and sleeps with him as he is capable of “quick insight into a woman” (482). He refers to woman in terms of “a broad, a lay, a baby, a doll, a bird”, or in terms of her body parts seeing her “as a sort of window-dresser’s dummy or as a heap of dismembered parts, breasts, or legs or buttocks”, or calling her “bloody Englishwoman” and a good “lay” for him. (490, 504, 508)

Saul takes the privilege to lecture Anna about the dangers, pitfalls, and rewards of a woman living alone and feels that it is his duty to redeem women from their loneliness. He advises her to look for a man, but warns her not to find happiness or fidelity from

him. Anna likes '*being* lectured' by him while Saul does not like to be dictated by anyone or being "shut up, caged, tamed, told to be quiet" (Lessing, *GN* 545). Saul even restricts her to laugh and says, "Women of your age don't laugh, you're all too damned occupied with serious business of living." (553)

Anna feels that it is useless to complain about not remarrying or to repent her decision of living alone. Anna questions and examines her condition realising that she is living like a deprived woman, forgetting love, joy, and delight and gives up her defenses at the first approach of men like Nelson, De Silva, or Saul Green. Women are made vulnerable to emotional outbursts as they are attached to their husbands and other men, despite being betrayed by them.

Women are made to believe that independent women and single mothers cannot raise their children single-handedly and are sarcastically called as 'free women'. The men are always on prowl to search for 'free' women so that they can enjoy their sexual adventures with them, despite being married men. A Canadian script-writer sleeps with Ella to show his virility and to boast of having a mistress despite having a beautiful wife while Ella is left with the feeling as is described, "My deep emotions, my real ones, are to do with my relationship with a man. One man . . . I am always coming to the conclusion that my real emotions are foolish." (Lessing, *GN* 283)

Most of Lessing's novels show men to be least concerned about the welfare of their children and hand over the complete responsibilities to their wives. If a woman gathers up the courage to act according to her will and not to be puppet in the hands of men then surely her condition will improve. She will not be a fool to pay tribute to certain

conventions and social demands. The woman, in order to avoid disappointment, should not wait for an external event to renew or justify her life rather she should create opportunities on her own to bring changes in her monotonous life.

This chapter has made an attempt to present the kaleidoscopic journey of a woman full of love, lust, flirtation, romance, submission, mixed with duties, challenges, confinement, pitfalls, faith and loss of faith, hypocrisy in relationships, domination of men and subjugation of women, subjection to whims and fancies of men, men's claim to sovereignty, frigidity in women, conflict, dilemma, abandonment, separation, realisations. The journey does not end here and will proceed describing the next stage in the life of woman, that is, motherhood and old age in the next chapter.

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