

Chapter Six

Conclusion

Lessing presents a sensitive picture of the way a girl, a woman in love, a wife, a mother, a divorced woman, and an old woman suffer at the hands of men along with their own acceptance of their subordinate fate due to unequal distribution of power, labour, and rights. Through her novels, she explores women's enslavement to conventions and also tries to expose the hypocrisy, self-interest, and selfishness of men. For most men, in the novels, their lust and sexual pleasure are more important than anything else.

Most women, in the novels of Lessing, are shown to suffer from humiliation, guilt, and alienation from their bodies. Despite being independent women, Anna, Molly, Ella, Julia, and other female protagonists feel insecure in the world without a man in their lives and believe that men are their protectors and saviours. Beauvoir feels that social customs have forcefully alienated a woman from her own self and turned her into an erotic object. It is this society that has built an aura around a woman's physical beauty quite contrary to men who do not alienate themselves in dresses or any other activities.

Beauvoir writes that a girl can free herself from male obsession by studying, taking parts in sports, undertaking professional training, involving in social and political activities. Beauvoir and Lessing both point out that women are denied several privileges which men enjoy as Beauvoir writes, "It is a criminal paradox to deny women all public activity, to close masculine careers to them, to proclaim them incapable in all domain, and to nonetheless entrust to them the most delicate and most serious of all undertakings:

the formation of a human being” (Beauvoir 581). Both girls and boys should be raised equally where both the parents also share equal responsibilities only then “the child would feel an androgynous world around her and not a masculine world” (778). Beauvoir also writes that children should be granted freedom so that they can mingle with other children which would develop a sense of harmony in them.

Both Beauvoir and Lessing feel that efforts are required by a girl to oppose and to shut bad memories deep inside her. Beauvoir writes:

No upbringing can prevent the girl from becoming aware of her body and dreaming of her destiny; the most one can do is to impose strict repression that will then weigh on her for her whole sexual life. What would be describable is that she be taught, on the contrary, to accept herself without excuses and without shame. (Beauvoir 351)

A girl should be prepared to face her menstruation positively rather than seeing it as a hindrance or a shame by providing proper sexual education to her. She should be given equal opportunity to prove her worth in work and sports which will reduce the ‘inferiority complex’ in her. The boys should be taught to give equal respect girls and not to treat them as passive objects which, in turn, will stop women to consider themselves as given.

A child is taught to submit and kneel before the authority, to rely on other people’s opinions and decisions which makes the child “a prisoner of the assumptions and dogmas of his time, which he does not question, because he has never been told they exist” similarly, men also use certain texts and scriptures to subdue women (Lessing *GN*

15). From the very beginning, a child is trained to think in terms of comparison, success and failure which Lessing calls “a weeding-out system” because it is a kind of system that creates competitors in which the winners are chosen while the weaker are discarded (15). Same is true with the male child who is always taught that his female counterpart is weak and he can always gain success as he faces no threat from women. Instead children should be made aware that they are being indoctrinated with “an amalgam of current prejudice and the choices” of a particular culture and they should protest being “moulded and patterned to fit into the narrow and particular needs of this particular society.” (16)

Beauvoir has pointed out that a woman is taught, guided, and conditioned by certain institutions. Education and customs limit the grasp of a woman over universe which, Beauvoir believes, can be achieved by emerging in ‘sovereign solitude’ within it and a woman should learn from “the practice of abandonment and transcendence” (Beauvoir 765). Angela Carter writes, “There is the unarguable fact of sexual differentiation; but separate from it and only partially derived from it, are the behavioural modes of masculine and feminine, which are culturally defined variable translated in the language of common usage to the status of universals” (qtd. in Bhargava 8). A woman’s behaviour and attitude is checked and controlled by the authorities and she is bound in her culturally defined role right from her childhood till she dies. Women are groomed to receive opinions and adapt themselves to these opinions just like Kate, Julia, Julie, Mary, Anna, Frances, Alice, Sylvia, and other women in the novels of Doris Lessing.

A woman is taught to accept masculine authority and is given readymade ideas that the male world is transcendent reality and she is expected to denounce her unconventional behaviour. Due to which, she writes, “One woman will find satisfaction

in housekeeping, folding laundry in her closet, the other in the headiness of adventure” so she suggests that women should follow their temperament instead of forcing themselves to do any kind of work. (Beauvoir 631)

The lives of most women “seemed for ever shrouded in grey rain” (Lessing *LA* 250). Most of these women feel the pull of puppet strings on themselves and try to snap those strings, but in the course of event most of Lessing’s protagonists give up their struggle just as Sarah quotes from Shakespeare and tells Henry, “We know what we are but we know not what we may be” (260). The irony lies in this and it is necessary for women to realise the difference between what they have to become and what they are guided to become. On reading the novels of each decade it is observed that a sense of maturity can be seen in the protagonists of Lessing where, initially, women succumb to societal pressure while, in her later novel, there is a struggle against the oppression, but at last these women turn to their well defined traditional roles of becoming ‘women’.

The society has codified a woman as inferior which is the reason why she tries to dominate and contradict men. The conflict arises when a man wants to remain the sovereign subject, superior, and an essential being and refuses to recognise woman as his equal, resulting in an aggressive attitude of defiance from her. Beauvoir writes, “Two transcendences confront each other; instead of mutually recognizing each other, each freedom wants to dominate the other” (Beauvoir 770). Beauvoir feels that this difference between a man and a woman is baseless as she asserts that a man is also “a flesh”, a passive being, and also “the plaything of his hormones” as he also listens to his desires while a woman is “consent, voluntary gift and activity” (779). She asserts that woman just tries to seek transcendence rather than dragging man into immanence.

Beauvoir feels that the idea of asserting one's sovereignty over the other is the main reason for strained relations between couples, but if the couple will respect each other's freedom then this tension can be reduced. She says, "To posit the Woman is to posit the absolute Other, without reciprocity, refusing, against experience, that she could be a subject, a peer" (Beauvoir 275). She also quotes from Rimbaud's letters that a woman will be able to achieve the status as human being only when she is completely free from her "infinite servitude" and she is allowed to live "for herself and by herself." (qtd. in Beauvoir 284)

Anna writes, "The fact is, the real experience can't be described. I think, bitterly, that a row of asterisk, like an old-fashioned novel, might be better" (Lessing *GN* 549). Lessing feels that it is difficult to describe experiences just as Beauvoir also notices that some part of a woman always goes unnoticed and unrepresented. Braidotti writes that Beauvoir feels that the main motive of women's movement should be to represent "devalorized and misrepresented entity" in their works (Braidotti, *Nomadic* 411). Though it is difficult to describe experiences of women in words because the pains felt by them are indescribable, yet the women writers have truly portrayed the disturbances in the lives of women and Doris Lessing reflects these problems in her works. Lessing has given the readers a glimpse of these pains so that people can become aware of what women are suffering from which is clearly seen in the repetition and overlapping of names of many women in the novels as she is trying to find out the common solution. She says in "Guarded Welcome", in the appendix of the novel, "Apparently my reporting of how women criticized men was a revelation." (Lessing *GN*, P.S. Ideas, interviews and features 14)

Jesse Matz writes, “*The Golden Notebook* is a novel with six sections, each devoted to a different aspect of a woman’s effort to find independence and freedom” (Matz 112). Anna is in search for an individual identity apart from her role of a wife, mother, and a beloved. But this also leaves her with the feeling of insecurity and her need for a man in her life. All free women are shown to be dissatisfied with their earlier marriage and are betrayed by their lovers still they want to get married. Similarly, other protagonists of Doris Lessing are trying to search for the true meaning of freedom and Beauvoir also tries to define this true meaning of freedom in *The Second Sex* which is “a feeling”, “a commitment that goes beyond the instant” and both writers feel that it completely depends on the individual to choose it or let it slide away (Beauvoir 524). Freedom can be achieved only when decisions are taken at free will and not yielding under any pressure.

Though the Yellow Notebook, part of *The Golden Notebook*, is written by Anna about Ella but the merging of two identities of Anna and Ella, shows that the sufferings of women are common and there is a need to embrace the differences among themselves to identify common problems. Women, like Anna as a writer and other independent women, insisting on sexual freedom should be portrayed by writers. The gradual change is also seen in the portrayal of her characters where women are trying to live their lives on their own term, but they also face exploitation.

Both Lessing and Beauvoir have shown how women and myths are always interrelated and they are worst enemies of each other because myths are created to subdue women while these women follow it unquestioningly accepting their subordination. For example, Zoonen remarks, “Femininity is supposed to be composed of emotionality,

prudence, cooperation, communal sense, compliance etc. Masculinity supposedly is the opposite rationality, efficiency, competition, individualism, ruthlessness etc” (Zoonen 30). The other myth is that women are inefficient to write novels, but, Lessing, as a woman writer, has experimented with the structure of the novel and does not confine herself to a prescribed tight structure which she accepts was difficult and traumatic.

Beauvoir feels that the notions of femininity are artificially defined by customs and fashion in woman which makes her incapable to achieve anything in her life. She feels that a woman should renounce these constricting customs to discover her ‘new’ self, but this does not mean that woman should completely renounce her femininity because, for her, a woman who refuses to perform her feminine role, in order to avoid mutilation, is in a way repudiating and mutilating her sex, and is “renouncing part of her humanity” (Beauvoir 739). A woman is described as mediocre, mean, shy, petty, lazy, frivolous, and servile and is confined to four walls by limiting her horizon. Beauvoir compares this situation of a woman with that of a prisoner for whom rose jelly and perfumed baths have no importance. The solution which Beauvoir offers is that a woman should not be shut up in a room as she will be criticised for her narcissism or egotism just like Mary in *The Grass is Singing* or she will remain cut off from the outside world.

Moi feels, “In Volume One of *The Second Sex* Beauvoir sets out to assail and destroy patriarchal myths of femininity” as femininity is “the result of slavery and is the antithesis of freedom” and Beauvoir is also against imposition of “a given, pre-existing standards of femininity on the divergent and different experiences of real women” (Moi 209-211). Through biological process, Beauvoir tries to prove that “it would not be possible to posit the primacy of one sex concerning the role it plays in perpetuating the

species” (Beauvoir 48). She suggests some solutions which can change the course of the life of a woman as she writes on the condition of woman in love, “The ideal would be, on the contrary, that each human being perfectly self-sufficient, be attached to another by the free consent of their love alone” (523). She also suggests that the difficulties of the first experiences can be overcome if love or desire generates total consent from the partners where they share a reciprocal relationship.

Beauvoir also suggests that physical love cannot be treated either as absolute end nor a simple means, it rather should play “an episodic and autonomous role in all human life” (Beauvoir 480-81). She further writes, “The economic and sexual union of man and woman is a matter of transcending towards the collective interest and not of individual happiness” (461). Beauvoir suggests that the asymmetry of male and female eroticism can be settled if a “woman feels both desire and respect in a man” or if a man “covets her in her flesh while recognizing her freedom” helping the woman to recover her “essentialness at the moment she becomes object, she remains free in the submission to which she consents” (426). This would lead to a happy relationship where there is “a reciprocal generosity of body and soul” and “alterity no longer has a hostile character”, where man’s vanity and woman’s timidity is bypassed. (426-27)

Beauvoir offers a solution where love for a woman can bring equality for her if “[a]n authentic love should take on the other’s contingency, that is, his lacks, limitations and ordinary gratuitousness”; where it is not “a salvation”, but “an inter-human relation”; where it is founded on “reciprocal recognition of two freedoms; each lover would then experience *himself* [oneself] as *himself* [oneself] and as the other; neither would abdicate *his* [each other’s] transcendence, they would not mutilate themselves;

together they would both reveal values and ends in the world” (Beauvoir 711, 723 emphasis added). She writes that a woman will be able to find repose in love only when she loves a man in her strength and not in her weakness where she tries to find herself instead of completely submitting or resigning herself to him or escaping from it.

Beauvoir feels that “a pact of freedom and sincerity would abolish one of the defects of marriages” (Beauvoir 611). A good marriage rejects the company and conditions of love and the best possible relationship can develop only when both of the sexes recognise each other as peers. Balzac says, “Love is the union of desire and tenderness, and happiness in marriage comes from a perfect understanding between two souls” (qtd. in Beauvoir 465). Beauvoir also feels that a cordial relation between a man and a woman will be established if a man would see peer in his lover rather than slave. A woman should not be told to seek god in man rather she should see in him a friend and a partner. There are many couples now who have formed a well balanced life where they do not care about their own victory or loss. Beauvoir believes that both the partners need each other and the problems between them will be solved if they take pride in each other’s freedom.

Beauvoir, in her book *The Second Sex*, questions the hypocrisy of institutions where, on the one hand, abortion is termed as a criminal offence, while on the other hand, no measures are taken when forced motherhood results in bringing miserable children in the world or when poverty affects their health or when they are tortured in ‘reform schools’. Secondly, the institution refuses to accept that the foetus belongs to the mother or that she has right on it, but once the child is born, it is presumed that parents will have to look after it. Beauvoir writes, “It must be pointed out that the same society so

determined to defend the rights of the foetus shows no interest in children after they are born . . .” (Beauvoir 538). She also questions the morality of people where, on the one hand, the foetus is preserved, while on the other hand, people are sent to war to face death and their lives are not considered to be precious.

Beauvoir offers a critique of religion as she believes that religion is also created by man for his own advantage as any protest will be curbed out of the fear of God and it is believed that a woman will dedicate her immanence to God. Religion acts as a powerful tool in the hands of men to subside woman by creating the fear of punishment, discipline is maintained in her. A woman becomes “a docile tool in supernatural hands” and is misguided that equality of the sexes could be achieved through religion as “it cancels out the privilege of the penis” (Beauvoir 675-76). The Church keeps the check that God never authorises a woman to escape from male guardianship. She is taught to live in submission without disobeying or protesting.

Savita Halappanavar, who had to lose her life in 2012, because she was denied the permission of abortion, is the clear example of the hypocrisy of the Church. Beauvoir also rejects the notion of Church that foetus has a soul and the gates to paradise are closed to it without baptism whereas the deaths of infidels, victims of Inquisition, criminals, and soldiers are ignored completely. She raises pertinent questions during her time which are still unanswered and left untouched by the authorities.

Beauvoir feels that motherhood cannot be taken in complete freedom by a woman because she is not allowed to procreate or abort as she pleases. Secondly, the lack of child care centres for working woman forces her to give up her job to enjoy motherhood. A

woman has to accept marriage as part of her life in order to enjoy motherhood as motherhood is an important stage in a woman's life. Beauvoir writes that reproductive function will not be seen as natural servitude, will be taken as "a freely assumed responsibility", or a "productive work" when maternity leave are granted and paid to the mother by the state or the employer (Beauvoir 451). Nancy Chodorow in her book *The Reproduction of Mothering* offers a theory of parenting where she proposes the involvement of men in child-rearing and nurturing role as against the patriarchal notion of linking violence and masculinity with men.

Beauvoir feels that though few women are unhappy, bitter, or unsatisfied with their lives, yet, if these women are psychologically, morally, and materially secured and are ready to take responsibilities whole heartedly, without feeling any pressure, and try to seek transcendence through their motherhood, it will surely lead to a healthy relationship between the child and the mother. Beauvoir suggests that motherhood should not be forced upon a woman and that she should be given the freedom of choice through birth control and legal abortion so that she does not become the victim of forced motherhood under any circumstances. She is also against those who term woman as coquettish, or amorous, or lesbian, or ambitious just because she is childless. For a better future of a child, a mother should be a "complete person" and not "a mutilated one", who achieves self accomplishment through her work. (Beauvoir 582)

Beauvoir suggests that a working woman will have the easiest pregnancy as she will not be self-centered and her struggles and efforts will give proper upbringing to her children. The only problem this working woman, sometimes, faces is misbalance between her role as a wife, as mother, and as working woman, which Beauvoir writes, is due to

social neglect as there are few opportunities provided to woman in sharing the responsibilities of children because “[m]asculine guardianship is becoming extinct” (Beauvoir 451). But if several child care centres are opened and men share equal responsibilities in raising their children, or men are granted paternity leave, the lives of working women will become easy.

The positive side of Beauvoir is that she does not deny the rights of a man over his child. She feels that a woman needs masculine support to accept her new responsibilities, but a woman will devote herself happily to her child only if a man devotes himself to her. She also warns woman not to overburden her husband with responsibilities which would drive him away from her. Beauvoir writes that a pregnant woman is “no longer sex object or servant, but she embodies the species, she is the promise of life of eternity; her friends and family respect her. . . .” (Beauvoir 558)

In Doris Lessing’s novels, economically independent women do not enjoy equal status with their husbands or even lovers. An independent woman is looked at with jealousy by other women while she condemns other women of her class who are leading parasitic lives. Marion feels jealous of Anna for being ‘free’ while she, herself, feels caged by her family and is unable to pay attention to her looks. She says to Anna, “You are what I want to be-you’re free, and you have lovers and you do as you like” (Lessing *GN* 251). Marion is mistaken to see Anna as a self-sufficient woman and non-vulnerable to men as Anna is subjected to many lewd remarks after divorce and still she wants to have man in her life.

A woman, who works outside the home, is denied her autonomy and prestige as she is treated as a simple member of the family when she returns home and her income is considered to be an extra income. Beauvoir feels that a woman will not be able to achieve anything until she gains complete economic equality for which it is first necessary to prohibit “marriage as a ‘career’ for the woman” (Beauvoir 535). She also supports the idea that a man should allow his wife to work in order to reduce economic burden on himself and the woman should also work freely instead of taking her work as an additional source of burden or fatigue apart from her marriage.

It is believed that a woman awaits man’s presence and submits herself blindly to him as he is her whole life whereas the woman is just one element of a man’s life and he takes pride in her submission. Beauvoir suggests that a woman should exist for-herself where her economic independence will make her enjoy equal status with her lover. She writes if a young woman is “engaged in an undertaking worthy of a human being, she knows how to be as active, effective and silent, as ascetic, as a man” (Beauvoir 659). She becomes the vassal to man though she thinks of herself to be his idol.

Beauvoir suggests that, for a successful and happy relationship, there should be equality, modesty, and generosity between a man and a woman, with no place for feelings like that of victory and defeat, where the act of love is based on mutual understanding. Though this might be difficult to achieve as the man wants to feel superior, yet in near future the circumstances can be created where it can be realised. For example, these days many men are comfortable with their working wives and they are able to “find a guarantee of their own independence in the partner’s occupations” (Beauvoir 750). These men have understood that a working wife frees her husband from

the conjugal slavery as she also contributes something in the expenses of the household rather than seeing her income as 'extra' and 'unnecessary'.

Beauvoir feels that it is not enough for a woman to gain voting rights to achieve independence rather economic autonomy would liberate her from the slavery which either she is forced to accept or she does it out of her own will. She feels that a woman can get the guarantee of her "concrete freedom" only through her work as she can challenge the patriarchal system and her parasitic existence (Beauvoir 737). A woman, then, does not require man as the mediator between her and the universe and it helps her in regaining her transcendence. She is not allowed to do so as she faces exploitation at the hands of men even at her workplace, but Beauvoir feels that a woman should be strong enough to defy these roles to gain economic and social autonomy in her profession.

A woman should accept and should allow herself to grow old gracefully because it is useless to fight against time to maintain charm. Beauvoir writes, "From the day woman agrees to grow old, her situation changes" if she learns to accept herself as an "asexual but complete: an elderly woman" (Beauvoir 640-41). She suggests that a woman should be ready to battle with two major problems which are the inevitability of time, that is, ageing and the other is life itself, that is, to keep a place on the earth. Beauvoir suggests that a grandmother should maintain warm affection, love, and care for her grandchildren without the idea of possessing her/him entirely and should play the privileged role of 'guardian' in her/his life. The conflict over the rights of the child will be over if she does not lay claim over it, or does not try to fulfill her own dreams through the child, or she does not sacrifice the future of the child for her own selfish purpose.

Beauvoir writes, “It is sometimes surprising to see the strange getups elderly women like: tiaras, lace, bright dresses and extravagant necklaces unfortunately draw attention to their ravaged features”, so she suggests that an old woman should dress elegantly, where the colour, the cut of the dress and other things should add to her beauty (Beauvoir 587-88). Beauvoir feels that relying on objects to beautify oneself is another major mistake which an old woman commits. She wants that this woman should not be affected by the comments and remarks drawn from men for her age and rather should be comfortable with her skin and body.

What rescues a woman is female friendship where women are united by a “kind of immanent complicity” creating a kind of “counter-universe whose values outweigh male values” where each seeks help from other “to define a sort of ‘parallel law’, a specifically feminine moral code” (Beauvoir 599). Linda R. Williams suggests the idea of “intra-generational solidarity” as is also suggested by Alice Jardine who feels that it will surely “erase the power of differentials bound up in the relationship of debt between mother and daughters, towards a totality of unified radical feminist intellectuals” (qtd. in Williams 53). Sisterhood is a concept to fight against the male hegemony by supporting each other cutting across various barriers like age, race, class, colour though it might be seen as a threat by many and they may be termed as lesbians.

Ella stays in her friend, Julia’s house with her son, Michael, and lives a passive life where Julia is a dominating woman and a mother figure to her while Ella likes to ‘being’ dominated but also tries to protect Julia from unknown problems. If this bond of friendship would have developed much stronger then Ella might not have to rely on men for emotional support especially Paul. But Paul accuses Ella of sharing a lesbian

relationship with Julia to separate them so that she would seek emotional and mental comfort in him. Ella decides to move out of Julia's house which sours their friendship where Ella is blamed to use Julia for her needs and dumping her, but this decision has been hard for Ella too who sees it as if a daughter is leaving her mother's house with a heavy heart. This also ends the speculation that these women are lesbians as they are now approached by several men for affairs. But a woman should show her faith and belief in the concept of sisterhood which will surely redeem her.

Similarly, Molly, a mother figure to Anna, is strong and dominating. They both complement each other where Anna faces writer's block and Molly encourages her to write and not to throw her talent away because Molly has left painting, dancing, acting, and scribbling while Anna motivates Molly to continue her acting. These women question terms like 'insecure' and 'unrooted' as they feel no harm in being emotional. They feel more spontaneous solidarity with each other than with men, but, gradually, this relationship also becomes hostile when these women try to assert their own individuality. Both are divorced and support each other and they are ironically called as 'free women' or lesbians which Anna hates.

Lessing offers a criticism of the effect of globalisation and the hypocrisy of the society which leads to the changing of certain rules for women. Once where bikinis, bare legs, bare shoulders, and unmarried couples were banned years ago, by a country, has, now, lifted up this ban succumbing under the power of money. The hotel, where Kate and Jeffrey go, in the novel *The Summer Before the Dark*, has a highly moral Catholic Hotel manager who is disgusted and offended by the lovers and their act of copulating as openly as cats and dogs. He is sad to look at this place becoming corrupt, ruined, and

debased by these acts. But he has to keep his disgust aside to welcome guests into “his *clean and honourable* premises, his beds, his bars, women with men not their husbands, would smile, bow, chat, wish them good day” showing no signs of disapproval or discomfort to make profit in business (Lessing *SBD* 73 emphasis added). This goes on to prove the statement by John Emerich Edward Dalberg-Acton, “Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely” as money has also made him immoral. (Dalberg-Acton)

In *The Good Terrorist*, men are shown to be passive as is reflected through their “passive and trusting” posture and they are always ‘in waiting’ for Alice to accomplish all the work rather than being ‘men in action’ (Lessing, *The Good Terrorist* 42). They show themselves to be busy with men’s talk regarding politics and exclude Alice from it though Alice gives them idea of organising a Congress to consolidate and formulate their policies regarding the revolution and undertakes the sole responsibility of organising it, inviting people, and making arrangements for their comfortable stay and food. This clearly shows that this woman is more sensible in terms of politics than men, who just wander around from places to places motiveless.

Alice is shown in action, right from the beginning, and makes this group of “disbelieving and jubilant communards” shameful for their inactivity while accomplishing almost impossible task herself with the help of Philip, but she is misused and exploited by men only to realise this later (Lessing *GT* 42). Alice and Pat are involved in physical labour, considered as masculine work, as Pat remarks, “I left one squat because I did all the work. Not just men, either-six of us three women, and I did it all”, but she is shocked to see Alice becoming immune to her oppression while Alice

defends herself saying, "It's always like that. There's always one or two who do the work" (56). Alice, too, gets tired and irritated at her own condition, but raves and rants out alone.

Stephen is the doppelganger of Sarah just as Septimus Warren Smith, a 30-year-old, shell-shocked First World War veteran, is for Mrs. Dalloway in Virginia Woolf's novel *Mrs. Dalloway* though they never meet in life. In *Love, Again* Stephen meets Sarah and share each other's problems. Stephen can be seen as alter ego of depressed Sarah and it is he who commits suicide only to make Sarah live just like Dr. Septimus Smith. Sarah could see that Stephen is living a life similar to Julie and is "always on the fringes of life, unaccepted by it, unacceptable" (Lessing *LA* 69). He believes that he will not be able to face the reality and is happy living in his own world of illusion. He seems to be absent-minded and Sarah comes to his rescue despite feeling the emptiness and hollowness in her heart due to her own problems.

All disappointments and discouragement of Sarah are imposed on Stephen and the moment when Sarah is extremely stressed due to her love pangs for Bill and Henry and she feels like ending her life, the pressure is transferred to Stephen leading to his suicide just as Septimus kills himself only to release Mrs. Dalloway from the pressure because till the end of the novel she stays alive. Stephen is unable to bear the pain of heartbreak though it is expected from men to be stronger in the matters of love, yet he turns out to be emotional in this matter. She receives a diary of Stephen in which she realises that Stephen has been enduring the same pain as Sarah does, but the only difference is that Sarah survives all her pangs and pains in love and she emerges out as a victorious woman while Stephen is shown to succumb to his problems.

Summer in *The Summer Before the Dark* symbolises the youth and freedom while dark symbolises old age and bondage. Kate realises that all women are in invisible chains and have to follow instructions of what to do and what not to do. They are made to think in terms of their family while the man of the house never feels concerned towards his family in most of Lessing's novels. Kate has several dreams regarding a seal lying stranded and helpless among dry rocks on a cold hillside and how she tries to save it by facing the harsh climate, her own wounds and fatigue, and wounds of the seal. This may be symbolic of the problems faced by women and they can fight those only if they want to, while the seal may symbolise her, a person who is struck in harsh weather, is lost, and needs a helping hand to make her come out of her subordinated position to live life on her own terms. The scars may symbolise her difficulties and problems to remind her that the way to freedom is not easy while encouraging her to fight against harsh conditions to release the seal into the sea or rather herself from subjugation of anyone.

One problem identified by Beauvoir is that a person takes the blame for his failures on himself, but in case of a woman, other people are responsible for her failure and she is forced to take the blame on herself. The problem is because woman "forge the chains" themselves while man does not wish to be burdened by those chains (Beauvoir 751). A woman feels duped when she realises that the promises made to her are still unfulfilled and hence shows resentment towards male world. The main problem is that both the sexes see themselves as victims of the other and they blame each other for their unhappiness, but Beauvoir feels, "Meting out blame and approbation is useless" because "the wrongs of one do not absolve the other" (771, 774). A woman blames a man for creating a passive object in her by asking her to give up everything and for not granting

her freedom while the man blames the woman for readily accepting these roles and for taking everything from him rather than giving anything in return.

If Beauvoir presents the case of a woman she also writes that a woman should respect the male universe because “if she contested it entirely, she would feel in danger, and without a roof over her head” (Beauvoir 661). She critiques woman who is always against someone or something and is unable to identify real evil principles and expects others to get rid of these principles where the husband becomes her perfect victim as he embodies masculine universe and is held responsible for all the wrongs meted out to her and in return she sets herself up as martyr just as is observed in case of Mary in *The Grass is Singing* and Phyllida in *The Sweetest Dream* and other protagonists.

The other problem identified by Beauvoir is that a woman does not have any autonomous domain and is unable to assert her own truths which could be different from that of men. Her ability to negate the values available to them and to denounce masculine set of values in a hurried manner, is criticised by Beauvoir. It is believed that a woman has no hold over the male world because she lacks expertise in logic and technology, but Beauvoir feels that “reason becomes an insidious form of violence” in the hands of man and he “pompously drums his code of virtue and honour into her” (Beauvoir 666-667). Beauvoir examines that a “woman lacks sense of the universal” which seems to her “a confused collection of individual cases” because a woman rejects “logical principles and moral imperatives” and is “skeptical about the laws of nature.” (670)

Beauvoir does not spare those women who commit treason by making themselves objects as demanded by men and also at the same time feigning pleasure. A woman has

an ambivalent attitude towards her body also where it is seen as “an opaque presence”, a threat, “hysterical”, and on the other hand, it is for her “marvellous double”, “a work of art”, and the promise of happiness” (Beauvoir 672). A woman also has an ambivalent attitude to men where, on the one hand, they are seen as tyrants and egoists, while on the other hand, they are also seen as liberating heroes which is clearly reflected in case of women in love in Lessing’s novels.

Beauvoir examines various situations which guide woman and her behaviour where a woman is doomed to repetition of daily tasks. She critiques those bourgeois or aristocratic women who just “parrot conventional wisdom” and do not hesitate to sacrifice their independence also (Beauvoir 679). She feels that the individual who claims to be a subject can act in this world whereas a being who is doomed to immanence will not be able to do so as she explains:

Closed off in the sphere of the relative, destined for the male from her earliest childhood, used to seeing him as a sovereign, with whom equality is not permitted, the woman who has not suppressed her claim to be human will dream of surpassing her being towards one of those superior being, of becoming one, of fusing with the sovereign subject; . . . the one designated to her as the absolute, as the essential. (Beauvoir 700)

Beauvoir writes that a pleasant future should be opened up for a woman instead of obstacles that “accumulate gratuitously on her path” (Beauvoir 779). Sara Ahmed also writes, “There is a desire that the future should not simply be a repetition of the past,

given that feminism comes into being as a critique of, and resistance to, the ways in which the world has already taken shape.” (Ahmed 236)

Beauvoir is quite advanced according to her times she lived in as she talks about Ecofeminism much before this concept has developed. As an ecofeminist, she talks about how nature can bring equality with woman and writes, “. . . in the midst of plants and animals she is a human being; a subject, a freedom, she is freed both from her family and from males. She finds an image of the solitude of her soul in the secrecy of forests. . . .” (Beauvoir 387)

Beauvoir suggests that while creating a piece of work a thoughtful effort is required for which women should “put their confidence in spontaneity” (Beauvoir 760). A woman should not be timid, discouraged, or disturbed by the least criticism which can motivate her to perform better in future. The writers should be sincere and should not be influenced by their narcissist tendencies which lead them away from real representation and they might hide the truth from public. The problem lies when a woman overreacts and becomes irritated by her vocation as “she cherishes herself without daring to construct herself” as is observed in case of Anna in *The Golden Notebook* (760). In pursuing their goal of self-affirmation, women do not “abandon themselves to the contemplation of the world” and they consider art only as a means to exhibit themselves publicly. (760)

Beauvoir believes that future is wide open for women writers and writes, “The free woman is just being born; when she conquers herself” (Beauvoir 767). She critiques Rimbaud who believed that if woman’s infinite servitude is broken and if she starts living

‘for herself’ and ‘by herself’ and if man gives her the required freedom, only then she will become a great poet as she will be able to explore “strange, unfathomable, repugnant and delicious things” (767). Beauvoir feels that men will never give women their freedom and all the possibilities for women have always been stifled and lost to humanity and therefore there is a strong need to take her own chances.

To denounce dependence is already a kind of liberation for women, but their writings should serve the real purpose of the upliftment of other women and should try to adopt “the disinterested attitude that opens up wider horizons” (Beauvoir 763). Once the illusions and lies are exposed, it is the duty of the writers to ponder over these and to re-create truths and to discover true meanings just like Beauvoir herself has done in her book *The Second Sex* and Lessing in her novels. Those women who cannot challenge and question the human condition lack the courage to denounce the contradictions of the world, but Doris Lessing has shown a spark of protest in her protagonists depicting the true picture of the lives of different women at various stages. Just as Anna writes:

It’s a small painful sort of courage which is at the route of every life, because injustice and cruelty is at the route of life. And the reason why I have only given attention to the heroic or the beautiful or the intelligent is because I won’t accept that injustice and cruelty, and so won’t accept the small endurance that is bigger than anything. (Lessing, *GN* 551)

Instead of ‘I’ it should now be ‘we’ and women should stop enduring injustice collectively just as Anna remarks, “The fight with my various forms of dissatisfaction tires me; but I know this is not a personal fight” (Lessing, *GN* 324). Beauvoir also feels

that “justice can never be created within injustices” and that one cannot speak of a woman in general as of the eternal man because the situations in which women are living are quite different (Beauvoir 775). She writes that a woman should try to seek new paths by refuting the limits of her situations as “resignation is only a surrender and an evasion; for woman there is no other way out than to work for her liberation” which should be “collective” and she should demand for “the economic evolution of the feminine condition” (680). She critiques those women who work for individual liberation as their efforts are ridiculous and pathetic because they are trying to convert their “prison into a heaven of glory” and their “servitude into sovereign freedom”. (680)

Beauvoir writes, “Instead of assuming her existence, she contemplates in the heavens the pure Idea of her destiny; instead of acting, she erects her statue in imagination; instead of reasoning, she dreams” (Beauvoir 672). Women are conditioned to withstand any kind of suffering just by praising their “calm tenacity of their passive resistance” (657). For this, women have to enable themselves in order to justify their existence as subjects to bring about “collective change” (777). Shashi Deshpande also writes, “It is not necessary to walk out [of marriage], or to commit adultery, or divorce to show defiance. The main point is taking responsibility for one’s decision (Deshpande 17). bell hooks feels that one should never forget ones past but try to break its hold. Jodi Dean, in *Feminine After Identity Politics*, talks of ‘reflective solidarity’ which refers to interconnections which reach beyond the given ties and communities to encompass the plurality of the voice of the past, present, and future. It is better to recognise the differences of each other.

Beauvoir writes that emancipation of a woman can be achieved only when she is free from her domestic work and when she takes part in production on a large social scale. A woman has to realise, as Beauvoir writes that “humanity . . . is an historical becoming; it is defined by the way it assumes natural facticity” (Beauvoir 769). She writes that ‘a living harmony’ with reality based on peace with one’s self is required for a feminine universe, that is, “perfection in immobility, the immediate justification of each element as part of the whole and her passive participation in the totality” which can help in achieving true liberation. (673)

Toril Moi talks about Jenny Turner who complains that modern feminists lack courage and a real interest in history and the world around them, but Turner praises Simone de Beauvoir and writes, “*The Second Sex* took great courage to write. That’s the sort of courage women need to find again, to look at everything afresh” (qtd. in Moi 200). *The Second Sex* has raised certain problems which are relevant still today and many feminists are trying to solve those. Beauvoir does not want a woman to take any particular identity and rather wants her to be free. The main aim of a woman should not be to repudiate the claims of her family but to realise her inner strength and to break her silence against her oppression.

Many people contrast feminine world with the masculine world to find out the differences to which Beauvoir feels that “women have never formed an autonomous and closed society; they are integrated into the group governed by males, where they occupy a subordinate position” and the problem for a failure of strong feminism is that these women are “united by a mechanical solidarity only insofar as they are similar” and “they do not share that organic solidarity upon which any unified community is founded”

(Beauvoir 653). The idea of forming a 'counter-universe' is an illusion as this will be formed within the parameters of the masculine world and women are unaware of the fact that they belong to this male world.

Women challenge this world as they believe that this world has been shaped, ruled, and dominated by men due to which women are unable to emerge as subjects. Women, in their powerlessness, ignorance, and blind faith, respect laws made by men and follow them unconditionally. They still seek the company of men who make them suffer just as is observed in the novels of Doris Lessing. "Only a free subject, asserting himself beyond time, can foil destruction; this supreme recourse is forbidden to the woman" (Beauvoir 658). These women do not learn from their failures due to which they are unable to defy males and lack conviction.

Elaine Showalter in her essay "Feminism and Literature" writes despite many differences among women of the world, women have confronted the problems of "subjectivity, essentialism, integrity and intertextuality" and have "located in their own texts and cultures the particular images, metaphors, genres and structures that define literary difference" (Showalter 199). She also emphasises on the "mutual interests to bring out social change" to start afresh as a new unit as she, further, writes, "But when we look at them together, we see similar patterns of shared tropological system, and a shared history of opposition, resistance, self-representation and accommodation to the dominant culture." (199)

Beauvoir feels that the need of the hour is to place one's pride above "sexual differences" so that a woman can discover her true self and writes, "As long as she still

has to fight to become a human being, she cannot be a creator” (Beauvoir 767). Rosi Braidotti writes, “Not only did Beauvoir’s phenomenological approach emphasize the need to think through existence and experience but she also stressed the structural value and the structurally discriminatory force of the concept of ‘difference’” (Braidotti, *Feminist* 196-97). Braidotti feels that Beauvoir believes in Hegelian idea of overcoming the dialectic of domination where self is considered as a sovereign subject while the other is reduced to an inferior category. Beauvoir tries to establish a bond of solidarity between herself and all other women as she writes:

When finally it is possible for every human being to place his pride above sexual differences in the difficult glory of his free existence, only then will woman be able to make her history, her problems, her doubts and her hopes those of humanity; only then will she be able to attempt to discover in her life and her works all of reality and not only her own person. As long as she still has to fight to become a human being, she cannot be a creator. (Beauvoir 767)

Feminism does not mean to forgo home and tradition to work outside it is rather to create a balance between work and home. “It is not a question of abolishing the contingencies and miseries of the human condition in her but of giving her the means to go beyond them” (Beauvoir 779). Jasbir Jain also remarks:

It [feminism] is not just the discovery of the self, the exploration of the past, the correction of history, the shaping of epistemological systems which are of significance but also of participation in the product, and the

acceptance of new definitions of space and freedom, so that the centre and margins do not appear as antagonistic, hostile, mutually exclusive categories but acquire sufficient fluidity to enlarge each other. (qtd. in Bhargava 5)

This idea can surely help in achieving an equitable society. A small change in the position of women worldwide and the importance given to their experiences will surely bring change in the views of others. Beauvoir offers an appropriate solution which can change the face of world as she writes:

To recognise a human being in a woman is not to impoverish man's experience: that experience would lose none of its diversity, its richness or its intensity if it was taken on in its inter-subjectivity; to reject myths is not to destroy all dramatic relations between the sexes, it is not to deny the significations authentically revealed to man through feminine reality; it is not to eliminate poetry, love, adventure, happiness and dreams: it is only to ask that behavior, feelings and passion be grounded in truth. (Beauvoir 282)

Some people may discard the solutions offered by Beauvoir as utopian, but she feels that until and unless one is not given a chance to prove one's worth, everything would seem beyond the reach and she suggests that it is useless to shed tears for the marvellous past rather one should embrace the coming future with a smile. The revolts against the oppression by women have led to their partial emancipation. Now what women need is to "pursue their rise and the success" which will encourage them to

achieve social and economic equality bringing in them “an inner metamorphosis”.
(Beauvoir 780)

There are several similarities between Lessing and Beauvoir whether it is their restricted and controlled childhood or their lives affected by political events due to which both have tried to define woman and the problems faced by her in her life. Both of them have felt that feminism has become narrow and restricted so they deny being feminists at all. Feminism as a whole has failed as it has strayed away from its goal that’s why Doris Lessing denies writing feminists text. In the Preface to *The Golden Notebook* she writes:

I don’t think that Women’s Liberation will change much though-not because there is anything wrong with its aims, but because it is already clear that the whole world is being shaken into a new pattern by the cataclysms we are living through: probably by the time we are through, if we do get through at all, the aims of Women’s Liberation will look very small and quaint.

But this novel was not a trumpet for Women’s Liberation. It described many female emotions of aggression, hostility and resentment. (Lessing, *GN* 8)

Lessing also presents her views regarding feminism through Frances, in *The Sweetest Dream*, who writes articles on people getting influenced by “fashionable feminism” which builds itself on the principle of hating someone everytime (Lessing, *The Sweetest Dream* 226). Just as the author, Lessing, Frances does not want to align herself to certain feminists who find men as their enemies and oppressors. The feminism of

1960s, in its nascent age, is compared to a young girl who has dressed up according to the norms and is very excited in attending a party, but tries to seek attention of people by showing that she has not worn any knickers. But when she grows up and is reminded of this incident, she is surprised and discards it as an act of naivety and foolishness. This is to show how people generalised things and targeted all men as enemies.

Both Beauvoir and Lessing have tried to trace how women are exploited, subdued, subjugated, and marginalised by men at various stages of their lives. They feel that there is a dire need to acknowledge sexism in daily life and to challenge, deconstruct, and eliminate the notions of femininity and masculinity as biologically determined categories to create an equitable society for both men and women. Both of them have also shown how only 'collective change' can really bring change in the society for which there is a need to respect differences among them while embracing each other with those differences. Instead of universalising the bitter experience faced by women, there is a need to focus on the problems at local and grass root level and gradually, moving on to global level.

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