

## I. Contextualizing Doris Lessing's novel

This research work in Doris Lessing's novel *The Cleft*, focuses on the subversion of the gender roles prevalent in the modern society. By positing female as the origin of modern society Lessing attacks the contemporary reality; the male is primary/senior and female the secondary/junior. Lessing denies or challenges binary and biological gender. For this, Lessing depicts all powerful female tribe, the Cleft, who live in a coastal wilderness free from the need, knowledge and complication of men. The Clefts exist in harmony; are impregnated by the tides of the moon; bear only female children and hence, are spared from the implications of gender that permeate modern existence. The Clefts play an initiative in the construction of the society populated with dual tribe that is male and female (the Cleft and the Monster/ the Squirt). The Cleft functions as the first caretaker, teacher and the savior of male. The Cleft being female performs, the primary deeds, takes initiative in almost all sphere of the society, in contrast of the contemporary reality of present society.

Doris Lessing is an established name in the field of literature. Born in October 22, 1919 in Persia to British parents, she is the author of nearly 50 books. She has earned her reputation as a notable prose stylist and a writer whose work defies categorization. She was awarded with Nobel Prize for literature in 2007. Reacting on the decision of awarding her with the Noble Prize, she had given a famous sarcastic comment to *The London Review* as, "As, they have nothing more to give to an old mother, so, they are giving me the Noble Prize. I accept it not for me but for them who have decided to award to me" (22). Several of her novels are numbered among the modern classics. Lessing's early fiction criticizes colonial attitudes toward race, politics, and women's role in society.

Lessing is engaged in a lifelong process of self-education, becoming involved with all the important intellectual and political movements of the twentieth century: Freudian and Jungian psychology, Marxism, feminism, existentialism, mysticism, sociobiology, and speculative scientific theory. All these interests appear in her fiction, which consequently serves as a record of changing climate of times. She has also displayed in her writing an increasing anxiety about humanity's ability to survive. "The Grass is Singing" is her first novel (1950).

"The Golden Notebook" (1962) was Doris Lessing's real breakthrough. The burgeoning feminist movement saw it as a pioneering work and it belongs to the handful of books that informed the 20<sup>th</sup>-century view of the male-female relationship. It used a more complex narrative technique to reveal how political and emotional conflicts are intertwined. The style levels of differing documents and experiences mix: newspaper cuttings, news items, films, dreams and diaries. In later novels, such as "The Summer before the Dark" (1973) and "Love, Again" (1996), Lessing extended her exploration of female experience into the lives of older women who tried, not always successfully, to accommodate independence, sexuality, and aging. Nonetheless, Lessing stands in a curious relation to feminism. Though, she remained interested in the vexed relations between the sexes. In recent decades, Lessing has mostly departed from the realistic mode of her masterpieces of the 1960s and 1970s, instead offering fables and fantasies set in imaginary times and places. The post-apocalyptic "Mara and Dann" (1999) and its sequel, "The Story of General Dann" and "Mara's Daughter, Griot and the Snow Dog" (2006), are set in a primitive Africa, while what was once Europe has only partially thawed out from an ice age.

For readers who enjoy such speculative play with pre- and post-history, *The Cleft* provides a diverting view of the evolution of the human race—as long as one

finds amusing the rigid gender roles that define *Clefts and Squirts*, the absence, with a few exceptions, of individualized characters, and the vast sweeps of unrecorded time. In Lessing's view, contemporary women lack a sense of history, and she has, in an odd sense, set out to correct that omission with *The Cleft*, a fiction set in a period that predates written records.

The story is narrated by a Roman historian, during the time of the Emperor Nero. He tells the story as a secret history of humanity's beginnings, as pieced together from scraps of documents and oral histories, passed down through the ages. Humanity was made up, in the beginning, of solely females who reproduced asexually. These females were a calm race and had few problems. They lived by the sea and were partially aquatic. They called themselves Clefts - after The Cleft - a fissure in a rock which the females deemed sacred, and which had a resemblance to the female vagina. One day, a cleft gave birth to a male child - to what the clefts dubbed a Monster. This caused such a fright that the boy was killed by the clefts. But more monsters were born, and the clefts left them on a rock to die. Eagles, which lived nearby, saw the dying babies and swooped down and carried them off, to deposit them in a nearby valley where they were then suckled by beneficent deer. The children gradually grew older and able to feed for themselves. Soon, as more boys were brought by the eagles, a tribe emerged. The harmony of the sexless community, the cleft is suddenly thrown into jeopardy.

In this fascinating and mesmeric novel, Lessing confronts head-on the themes that inspired much of her early writing: how men and women, two similar and yet thoroughly distinct creatures, manage to live side by side in the world, and how the troublesome particulars of gender affect every aspect of our existence.

Praising the novel for its exotic imagination and rich storyline, Kate Wheeler writes, "Unsentimental, full of details that seem to combust completely". Her delicate realism helps us recognize, with compassion and awareness, the stories and feelings of which our own lives are composed of" (23). The novel is a rich depiction of mythological setting, which has a multiple layer of interpretations. In consideration to these rich interpretive skills, Robinson Anne opines:

*The Cleft* has an exciting horn of plenty, which has given rise to a great numbers of interpretations. Reviewers focus on the sheet breadth of Lessing erudition; her treatment of the past; her skill in balancing genres such as the Romance, the fairy tale, myth and female issue in the quest; her ideas about contemporary literary criticism and the evocation of the rich tradition depicted in the story takes her into a level of peak. (25)

The novel is probably the most complete, though it raises numerable issue in concern to literary genres of fair and fests of love and mysticism.

In "Women's Review of Books, vol-25," Roberta Rubenstein claims that *The Cleft* is the defamiliarization of the contemporary society. Rubenstein is of the view that the defamiliarization is made to acknowledge that the language and the custom are the later construction. Vocabulary doesn't precede the experience of the then society. Rubenstein states:

Lessing defamiliarizes the early encounters between the sexes by avoiding such contemporary terms as passion, desire, and love.

Similarly, the words for certain events and activities including sex itself—are virtually absent from the chronicle, as if to suggest that the experiences preceded the vocabulary for them (6).

The characters in the novel learn from the events. The complicated construction of the contemporary society is absent in the novel, which has made it smooth, fair and calm society.

Professor Karim Nayemia criticizes the novel to be the imaginative failure. In “Doris Lessing Studies, V-27”, Professor Nayemia states, *The Cleft* is much preoccupied with history and prehistory, as though its imagined land is aglow with every kind of picture and, against that background the people of the past play out and records their actions. According to Nayemia,

My cavil with *The Cleft* is not for its unfashionable sexual politics—Lessing is nothing, if not a contrarian—but for its several imaginative failures. One would like to remark that every episode is fitted into the fable's general structure, like the timbers of a ship. The effect of the verbal surface is often one of vagueness and imprecision. The landscape—the physical patch of land with its forests, cliffs, caves, rivers, streams, shores, tunnels and rivers—does not become intimately known (35).

The setting of the novel is so vague that, the reader faces difficulties in drawing its imaginative picture. The worth of the beauty of the setting does not matter unless the reader can feel it. Though the narrative gives every detail, it has failed to become friendly to the readers.

Similarly, Michael Greaney in *Contemporary Fiction and Uses of Theory* sees the work as an outcome of notion of viewing the text from multiple angles. He writes:

Stories run parallel in the novel, from the historical sense to the day. In correspondence to the unearthing the love affairs of the historical couple, there runs a love story woman with woman in a land where the

males are restricted. It is a fair depiction of the explicit identification of ancient mysticism that reaches a new height in the postmodern era.

(87)

The novel takes in the form of a mystical setting amid the female world, where the birth cycle to relationship is systematized. For him, the novel provides a glimpse for approaching the ancient history. He also emphasizes on the importance of mysticism in this postmodern era, where identification of the individual has been mechanized.

Positing *The Cleft* as the parody and the pseudo-history, Elizabeth Bear has criticized the alternative of Doris Lessing in the, *The Washington Post*. According to Bear the treating of the ancient history in rough manner has failed to convince the reader. She states;

the historical sections of the book are told in an unconvincing manner. I suspect they were meant to have an air of fable, as of antique retold tales too misty to be recalled accurately. Instead, they seem thick and meandering, a kind of narrative oatmeal, and the societies constructed are so naïve that they too lack energy.

The new insight forwarded by Lessing has no any poignancy for Bear. There are lots of loopholes where we can suspect the deduction of the novelists.

However, the true acknowledgement of the vision posited by Doris Lessing has not been made yet. The true spirit of the novel is in some sense the attempt for the empowerment of female in this falsely mechanized world. The contemporary society has eschewed the identity and existence of female. The compact blend of ancient history with present event in the novel has somehow questioned the eschewal. For blurring the eschewal the novel should be viewed from the insight of gender studies.

Gender studies views the division prevalent in the society as the constructed one. Hierarchy which exists in this modern society between male and female; implies masculinity and femininity; through which different roles has been casted between male and female is the construction according to the power position of male. Additionally, the virtue of masculinity is not only the property of male; this virtue can be present in female also because the virtue implies bravery, protective and decisive. These qualities can be traced in the clefts depicted by Lessing, who are female tribe. The further discussion of gender theory and its implications on the text *The Cleft* is done in chapter second and third respectively.

Thus, the method of categorizing different roles in accordance of sex is false denotation, which seems useless in this postmodern era. Hence, the traditional gender role which has been derived for both male and female is at the verge of extinction.

## II. Subversion of the Gender Roles

### Gender

Gender refers to the roles and responsibilities of men and women that are created in our families, our societies and our cultures. That means, it is the socially constructed and culturally determined characteristic associated with women and men, the assumptions made about the skills and abilities of women and men based on these characteristics, the conditions in which women and men live and work, the relations that exist between women and men, and how these are represented, communicated, transmitted and maintained. Thus, gender is the social organization of sexual difference, which constructs and determines the person's biology, which is culturally valued and interpreted into locally accepted ideas. Gender identities and associated expectations of roles and are therefore changeable between and within cultures.

Sex, and gender: two terms whose usage relations and analytical relations are almost irremediably slippery, but in fact, they are quite distinct entities in the reason sex is anatomical category which has the meaning of a certain group of irreducible biological differentiations between members of the species 'Homo sapiens', where as gender is the far more elaborated, more fully and rigidly dichotomized social production and reproduction of male and female identities and gender might be independent to biology and has psychological and cultural connotation. In this sense, sex is fixed, unchangeable and anatomical in origin which refers to the physical difference of the body where as gender is socially constructed role and responsibility assigned to males and females based on the perceived differences of sexes. Eve Kosofsky Segwick in her essay "Gender criticism" writes:

Sex has had the meaning of certain group of irreducible biological differentiation between members of the species, 'Homo sapiens', who



are XX chromosomes and those who gave XY chromosomes. Sex in this sense is chromosomal sex is seen as relatively minimal raw material based on social construction of gender (Segwick 272)

According to chromosomal definition, only one chromosome out of forty-six determines sex. sex, thus is only the natural biological coupling, which doesn't establishes male and female as binary opposite identities rather establishes slight differences. But, now the societies have ignored the underlying realities between male and female sexes and have given high emphasis on socially constructed selves of male and female which is called masculinity and femininity respectively.

Definition derived from the gender conception in the society has paralyzed the chromosomal definition of sex. Gender has confined the identities of individual in the society and it has mostly overpowered on female where they are still imposed of minimal attribution. Enhancing this concept Segwick writes,

. . . .chromosomal sex is turned into and processed as, cultural gender, has tended to minimize the attribution of person's various behaviors and identities to chromosomal sex and to maximize their attribution to socialized gender constructs. (Segwick 274)

In the process of construction and reconstruction of Identity, males are maximized of their attributes and females minimized. So while talking about sex, we instead of internalizing their biological differences, internalize the constructed identities. Thus Segwick in essay "Gender Criticism" writes, "Sex is however, a term that extends indefinitely beyond chromosomal sex, that its history of uses often properly be called gender is only one problem" (274).

Gender is a kind of social institution. Like other social institutions, it also exhibits the social relationships. Its structure is made up according to the social

structure. In general, our society is structured with male centered ethos. It means a rule of male: a patriarchal society which always tries to show the male supremacy. In *The second sex* Simone de Beauvoir says that because of the biased ideology, the patriarchal society labializes the female as 'flesh' and male as 'soul'. The flesh cannot transcend but soul can easily. To transcend, females need the mercy of males. So, in the opinion of the society, they are secondary or second sex. But de Beauvoir opposes the conventional belief about the gender.

Simone de Beauvoir in *The second sex* also tries to distinguish sex and gender saying, "one is not born, but rather becomes a woman; gender is the effect of social and cultural processes" (qtd. In Cranny-Francis et. al. 5). She further writes,

No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine. (281)

Beauvoir here is harshly attacking the gender system created by the society (patriarchal). It is the society which has created clothes of minimal attribute (feminine attributes) to female which the born female baby is imposed to wear. Thus growing up of that baby is the process for being a woman till her death. Judith Butler writing in the same line of Simone de Beauvoir declares that "all gender is, by definition, unnatural" in her early article, "sex and gender in Simone de Beauvoir's *second sex*" (35).

Judith Butler departs from the common assumption that sex, gender and sexuality exist in relation to each other. According to her idea one who is biologically female is not compulsorily expected to display 'feminine' traits and to desire men. She claims that gender is 'unnatural' and for her there is no necessary relationship

between one's body and one's gender. She also argues that sex and gender are discursively constructed and that there is no such position of implied freedom beyond discourse.

### **Gender Roles**

Gender roles are the certain tasks and responsibilities that are destined to the individual in accordance of their respective gender category. As gender is a social construction, it has roughly categorized the individuals of any society into two groups. They are male and female and in gender distinction, it is tagged as masculine and feminine. The categories are made in regard of social position and power. After the birth of the child either boy or girl the roles are embedded on them. The roles are not biologically predetermined rather are the locally defined attributes of masculinity and femininity. They can change over time and vary within cultures. In the surface level the construction seems general as it is closely intertwined with the biological difference, but if we analyze them, we can find a unhealthy result which reveals the subordination of one of the category, and it is not other than the category of female (feminine).

The roles predetermined by gender category results in the subordination of female. The distinction is not made for the equality of both the sexes but to discriminate one. Thus this distinction is the product of power relation. The power relation gives the supreme position to the powerful one. Here from the hitherto male owns the powerful position. The social construction which is practiced till today from the hitherto is the production of the male and it is done, not for the equal division of labor but to advocate the supreme power of male. This kind of gender discrimination is practiced as if it is natural because of its long time use. Such social construction controls female by locking them within four wall of the kitchen, giving the role of

child minders and providing works which do not have any surplus. Procreation difference is not real cause of women's exploitation but its justification. In her text Judith Lorber writes;

Women are subordinated in all industrial societies not because they are child bearers or child minders but owners, managers and governments depend on them as low paid accessible, responsible workers. They are primary child careers not because of their procreative capabilities but because they are economically disadvantaged and have little choice but to do unwaged work of social reproduction (287-88).

The society has not given equal access to the female in comparison to male in all the institutional spheres. So females are left behind only to become child bearers or child minders or procreating machine, producing without taking any wage.

Across the world, female are treated unequally and less value is placed on their lives because of their gender. Female's differential access to power and control of resource is central to the discrimination in all institutional spheres; the household, market and state. Within the house women and girls can face discrimination in the sharing out household resources including food, sometimes leading to higher malnutrition and mortality indicators for women. At its most extreme, gender discrimination has lead to son preference, expressed in sex selective abortion or female feticide. In the labor market unequal pay, occupational exclusion or segregation into low skill and low paid work limit women's earning in comparison to those of men of similar education levels.

The gender discrimination and subordination of women has become the intrinsic part of modern social order. Males subordinate the female by exploiting them as "workers, sexual partners, child bearers and emotional nurtures in the market place

and household” (Lorber 293). So “the unequal distribution of power property and prestige between women and men is how part of the structure of modern societies” (Lorber 292). The national policies also do not seriously implement the laws of gender equality because the power holders (male) have the fear that there will be end of women exploitation.

Naturally, female are gifted for the role of mother, thus they have to bear the great burden of childbirth and child rearing. Female has a greater contribution in the continuation of the human race. This contribution deserves the credit on the part of female. The society instead of credit provides subordination. The biological difference between male and female body is transmitted in to political or cultural sphere. This transmission misreads the women’s contribution. Janet Saltzman Chafetz, for example, argues that “specialization in the productive/ public sphere undergirds superior advantage and conversely, specialization in reproductive/domestic forms the basis of extensive disadvantage” (118). She argues that women have to bear the great burden of childbirth, childcare and housework but they are never given more advantages, rather their contribution of continuing the human race in the world becomes the mean of subordination. In term of procreation and sexuality, male and female are different. This difference has great effect on female because due to the difference they are sidelined from any higher position in any sector of society. Acker writes:

It is man’s body, its sexuality, minimal responsibility in procreation and conventional control of emotions that pervades work and organizational process. Women’s bodies female sexuality, their ability to procreate and their pregnancy, breastfeeding, and child care, menstruation and mythic “emotionality”—are suspect stigmatized and

used as grounds for control and exclusion to function at the top of male hierarchies requires that woman render irrelevant everything that makes them women. (152-53)

Joan Acker here argues that the biological or natural differences female have is considered as the disabilities. The unique traits which female bear is treated in the comparison of male and are claimed as the 'other'. They are excluded from the access of the institutional spheres to be tagged as disabled.

A person either knowingly or unknowingly follows the gender roles. For the individual gender construction starts with assignment to a sex category on the basis of what genital looks like at birth. The very sex category becomes gender status through naming, dressing and socialization. In our society in addition to male and female, the status can be transvestite and transsexual but these are not regarded as natural. The feelings of gender roles start from the childhood through different experiences, consciousness, relationships and so many other aspects. Then the process of gendering and the social outcomes are legitimized by religion law and other social factors. Moreover, literature, language, myth, belief and many other subjects are the constructions of the society which are governed by male and they also work as the factor for the advocacy of male supremacy. In literature males treat females as mysterious and strange, which in turn gives the misrepresentation. So de Beauvoir writes in *The Second Sex*:

Literature always fails in attempting to portray mysterious women; they can appear only at the beginning of a novel as strange, enigmatic figures but unless the story remains unfinished they give up their secret in the end they are then simply consistent and transparent persons. (42)

Beauvoir here wants to say that the concept through which female are perceived is based on false essence. As the males become unable to understand females they call them mysterious. Since females are not similar to males they call females 'others'. But she harshly attacks this concept and writes those males are also mysterious as females cannot understand them. Due to lack of reciprocity to judge female, male bound them as essential others. This is what to say; a misrepresentation. This misrepresentation is due to the hitherto created discourses which are produced from the power positions.

The misrepresentation has devalued female in a lot. According to Nietzsche, the discourses are made not from the true conception rather with the intention of 'will to power'. Following Nietzsche, Michel Foucault defines discourse as a guiding force which produces the way for what we speak, act and interpret and is always controlled and created by power. In the concrete sense discourse is the act of representing something. Foucault writes:

Discourse of an era, instead of reflecting preexisting entities and orders, brings into beings the concepts, oppositions and hierarchies of which it speaks; that these elements are both products and propagations of 'power', or social forces, and that as a result, the particular discursive formations of an era determine what is at the time accounted 'knowledge' and 'truth' as well as what is considered to be criminal, or insane sexually deviant. (188)

Discourse is not merely linguistic sign but it is a long set of expression which constitutes shape of things in which it is speaking of. It defines what is real and what is unreal through the eyes of power holders.

Thus, up to today since hitherto female are misrepresented, devalued and are casted with certain value which delivers low to them. It is not other due to gender. The gender constructions have given or imposed on them particular roles which always keep them in secondary position. The traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong nurturing and decisive but they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing and submissive. These gender roles have been used very successfully to justify such inequities which still occur today as excluding women to leadership and decision making positions, paying men higher wages than women for doing the same job and convincing women that they are not fit for careers in such areas which are vital such as mathematics, engineering and so on. Though different anti-discriminatory laws have been passed, the laws are frequently side-stepped. The laws seem sexist. However, this type of discriminatory behavior has been charged largely since the emergence of feminism. The feminist like Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf, Showalter have attacked such discriminating values. Besides feminism, gay, lesbian and queer criticism, has also subverted such values of social system. They have defined sexuality in more dynamic and discursive manner. They not only oppose the oppression of male in the society but also subvert the whole system. They have replaced the hitherto believed unitary concept of heterosexuality with the concept of homosexuality. From hitherto, sexuality refers to the direction of somebody's sexual desire towards people of opposite sex, but, gay, lesbian and queer criticism subverts this concept, thus they opposes the unitary model of sexual character. They argue that the unitary model serves to reify inequality between men and women in the society in the disguise of different gender roles.



## **Subversion of gender roles**

Feminism is a gender-based political movement which happened in the 1960s with the target to reject and subvert all existing traditions favorable to gender ideology. Feminism defines woman as the people who are either oppressed or suppressed or deprived of the freedom of self-oppression. The growing movement sought to change society's prevailing stereotypes of women as relatively weak; passive; docile; emotional and submissive. Feminists want to achieve greater freedom for woman to work; to broaden both women's awareness and their opportunities to the point of equality to men. The existing stereotypes and traditional gender roles have been used very successfully to justify the prevailing inequalities; which still occur today; as excluding woman from equal access to power. By subverting such stereotypes and gender roles; feminism is committed to struggle against patriarchy and hitherto existing gender ideology. There are certain traits and qualities that are naturally endowed to both male and female. The concept of "femaleness" is revealed to female body and female experience is natural or can also be called biological. But, the concept of "femininity" is not essentially natural but is a cultural product; it is gender based psychological concept which refers culturally acquired sexual identity. And the images of woman in this male dominated society are described or analyzed in accordance of their "feminine traits" but not the "femaleness" traits. Such motive of male is only to oppress or suppress female by depriving them from their freedom and identity. Thus, feminist rejects the concept of femininity; because the concept had added many false essences in female. Such type of false essence has created a contradictory image of female in the society. Female is deprived of being female because the biased society treats female as an inferior male.

Roman seldon states that; “patriarchy subordinates the female to the male or treats the female as an inferior male” (137). The image of female is at stake. Contradictory essence is put on them. At the same time, women are beautiful and stupid, perfect and awful, mother and prostitute, goddess and demon. As Sheila Ruth claims; “This bifurcation of images is called the Mary/Eve dichotomy. Woman is represented as being at once a manifestation of the desire and an incarnation of evil” (87). Such contradictory representation of woman by man shows that man is ambivalent towards women. Women are associated with goddess in one hand and with demon on the other or the woman is the mother of god as well as traitor of the Eden Garden. This ambivalent nature of man is not other than a politics to possess women. He wants to possess women at any cost, either by giving higher essence or by dominating. He wants to define himself as “subject” who represents humanity by defining women like their “object”. This “othering” according to Beauvoir mystifies women’s qualities and pushes her in isolation. In her celebrated book; “*The second sex*” Beauvoir states, “This humanity is male and man defines women not as herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being” (xviii).

Feminists claim that women are defined in term of their “lackness” relatively to the quality of men. In the view of men, women lack male authority, male power and male sexual organs. Man privileges masculine sexuality as mental issue of feminism is the recognition of such biased structure of society, by imposing them certain norms and roles. Feminists try to uproot it or wipe it or subvert it. They argue that women are also complete like man or more than them. There are certain female experiences which are completely unknown to male like menstruation, pregnancy.

Feminism got existential touch by the text *The Second Sex* (1949) written by Simone de Beauvoir. The 20<sup>th</sup> century French existential feminist harshly attacks the

concept of gender in her book. She argues that the concept of gender is based on male ideology and it is constructed only to show female secondary. According to the ideology male is 'subject' who is assumed to represent humanity in general, and woman is a weaker sex or second sex, who is object (like commodities) to male. Women are considered as the essential 'other'. She states that "the myth of this mysterious otherness has justified numerous abuses. Though men and women are indeed mysterious to each other, men see the world "from their point of view as absolute" (93). To this Beauvoir says that, by categorizing women as other men want to take advantage of women, to say mystery is nothing but the failure of proper communication. Also she claims that male is egocentric, so they create negative images about female by creating different myth. Male creates the myth that, female cannot exist without male, since they are junior male, and female must have to come under the clutch of male. But Beauvoir defies it by stating that "the myth is one of those snares of false objectivity into which the man who depends on ready-made valuations rushes headlong."(999) For Beauvoir myth is only the false essence which is created to exploit female.

Feminist criticism becomes the distinctive and concrete method to literature in 1970s after the publication of *Sexual Politics*, the major book of feminist criticism, by Kate Millet. According to Millet this patriarchal system is sustained with the power gained by physical, political, government and so many other agencies. To destroy each and every thread of constructed power, females need to struggle with hard effort. Millet writes;

Our society, like other historical civilizations, is a patriarchy. The fact is evident at once if one recalls that the military, industry, technology, sciences universities, avenue of power within society, including the

coercive power of the police, is entirely in male hands. As the essence of the politics is power, such realization cannot fail to carry impact . . . . . if one takes patriarchal government to be the institution where by that half of the populace which is female is controlled by that half which is male. (Millet 54)

Male has upper hand in all the institutional spheres. So he rules females for his purpose. But Millet wants to defy such system and appeals females for the collaboration. She argues that female are also equally capable to male but due power politics they are disfigured and misrepresented. Only the way they can acquire the lost position is to fight against the male ideology and subvert it. The historical civilization of sexism should be demolished.

Feminism takes a critical stance in providing the critique of the mainstream of 'the norm' of what as a mere description or analysis of 'what is given', but from the point of view of skepticism. Its critical stance takes the form of a critique of misogyny the assumption of male superiority and centrality. Feminists consider that 'social and political theory was and for the most part still is written by men, for men and about men'. "The falsely universalized MAN, who is supposed to represent us all, cannot acknowledge its gender specificity, its masculine particularity" (Chris Beasley 16). This means that feminism is a critical stance that decentres the assumptions of the mainstream in terms of centre (men) –peripheral (women). It not only decentres the usual assumptions about what is central and what is at the margins, but also shifts the subject of the analysis, in that the notion of women is placed centre stage (Beasley-16). This occurs, even when feminists, question the validity of this sexed identity. Feminists focus, in short, on that which is deemed, marginal/ peripheral. However, with the emergence of what Chris Beasley calls Post modern feminism, not only,

feminists reverse the traditional hierarchy and focus on women / the feminine, rather intend to destabilize the very conception of identity and the binary identities (such as men and women) ( Beasley 24). In 1990s and 2000s the writers like Judith Butler, Sedgwick, Donna J Haraway question speaking as women, or for women.

In her updated essay, “A Manifesto For Cyborgs: Science, Technology and Socialist Feminism in the 1980s” Haraway uses the cyborg metaphor to explain how fundamental contradictions in feminist theory and identity should be conjoined, rather than resolved, similar to the fusion of machine and organism is ‘cyborgs’. “A Cyborgs Manifesto” is also an important feminist critique of capitalism. A Cyborg does not require a stable essentialist identity. It is a hybrid of machine and organism. Haraway states that, “we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short we are Cyborgs” (150). Defining cyborg she writes,

A cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction. Social reality is lived social relations, our most important political construction, a world-changing fiction. The cyborg is a matter of fiction and lived experience that changes what counts as women’s experience in the late twentieth century. (Haraway 150)

Haraway is counting all the human beings as the cyborgs which have no any distinct identity. According to her the cyborg is a creature in a postgender world: it has no truck with bisexuality. (Haraway-151) She is imagining a world without gender, so she states,

It is an effort to contribute to socialist-feminist culture and theory in a postmodernist, nonnaturalist mode and in the utopian tradition of

imagining a world without gender, which is perhaps a world without genesis, but maybe also a world without end. (Haraway 151)

Haraway is attempting to disassociate female from the given and necessary embodiments. But not complete disassociate from ecofeminist value. She appeals women for breaking out the traditional stereotypical images. So she writes, “I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess” (Haraway 157). “The cyborg is a kind of disassembled and reassembled postmodern collective and personal self, this is the self feminists must code” (haraway-155). Haraway argues for the importance of rearrangement in worldwide social relations in a brand new way. She sees the need of fundamental changes in the nature of class race and gender in an emerging system of world order analogous in its novelty and scope to that created by industrial capitalism.

Similarly as next variant of post modern feminism, Judith Butler writes on the discursive limits of sex. She draws from a wide range of thinkers and writers to describe sex as interpellation (Althusser), performative (Austin), signification (Freud, Lacan), constructed (Foucault), and recitable (Derrida). Her celebrated book *Bodies That Matter* (1993) is a genealogy of the discursive construction of bodies. She wants to destabilize heterosexual hegemony. She considers that gender, sexual difference and race are connected vectors of power. She in the text analyses how racial, sexual and gender norms may be subverted. Her elaboration of a politics of subversion linked to an antagonism to identity politics has provided a significant contribution to Queer Theory. In short, Queer Theory arises out of same-sex sexuality (gay and lesbian) as well as to some extent out of feminist politics.

Butler argues that gender identity is ‘performative’ to stress that no interior essence, no ‘real’ self exists. Gender is ‘performative’ because it has no ‘real-ness’ at all, no natural core. She states,

It is an effect of a 'decidedly public and social discourse' which requires the relentless reiteration of various gender acts/styles which make gender seem real/eternal/ a deep truth of our lives, by repetition. Gender, 'is a fabrication' a 'truth effect'. Here identity is a fantasy – that is, imagined and experienced as set in immutable concrete—which supports power. (Butler-119)

Butler writes that all the identities are the produced ones, though they seem real. Thus she advocates that the task is not to enjoin a gender identity like women, which attends to a singular difference from men, or even to invoke multiple identities like lesbian, black women and "third world" women, which acknowledge differences between women.

Such destabilization of gender categories, identities and roles, pave the way for the liberation of female from the clutch of male ideology. It in some sense can be termed as the empowerment of female. This concept of empowerment of female (feminine power) is closely related to the concept of female masculinity. Female masculinity is against the male masculinity, meaning, the domination of male no longer prevails. It is the female, who were having an active role inside the house, and, traditionally, sex was the weapon of male to prove his ultimate supremacy; however, which is fast collapsing.

In an anthology *Boys in Contemporary Culture* edited by Paul Smith, he suggests, "Masculinity must always be thought of in the plural as masculinities defined and cut through by differences and contradictions of all sorts, regardless of sex identities" (32). Smith notes that masculinity is not the singular essence related to male only. Rather it should be understood in its plural form which reinforces activeness, strongness, rationality, and so on. Thus, masculinity is not only the

property of male but also the property of female and others. Female is independent being like male who can perform anything equals to male. Not only independent they can exist in the world without male also.

This is subversion of gender roles: I will use this tool to analyze the text, *The Cleft*.



### III. Gender reading in Doris Lessing's *The Cleft*

Doris Lessing, in her novel, *The Cleft* subverts the existing gender roles by depicting all powerful archaic female tribe, the cleft. Lessing challenges the existing norms of gender, which are constructed, in accordance of male favors. The contemporary society is ruled with the gender biased ideology, where female are given the limited floor. Female are both deprived of power and property, instead are restricted only up to the four walls of kitchen and treated as the child rearing machine. But in a way Lessing is dissatisfied with the contemporary gender ideology of society and is presenting female all powerful by subverting the norms of society. Lessing invents a cult of ancient female called the clefts and posits that the primal human stock was female.

Social reformers and thinkers are of the opinion that both men and women properly, in one's absence, the other is incomplete, women covers half the sky of the world. The progress of the world rests on the equal progress of well-being of both the sexes; but in practice, there is vast difference between these two components of society, women are completely dominated by men, and are defined as the half men. Against the ideology of contemporary society, Lessing posits her invention of complete women. She turns upside down, the existing gender ideology by depicting the cleft, all powerful tribe of women who are complete in themselves. In a way she subverts the existing gender norms, where male are primary and female are secondary, but in her novel *The Cleft*, she posits that the primal human stock was not male.

The society has much unavoidable confrontations regarding female. The society always stands in the antagonistic line regarding the existence of female. So, Lessing is picking up the archaic story (a myth/ history) to free female from the

confrontation of the biased society. The society sees the individual with its gendered eyes. The gender ideology has categorized human society into two; the primary male and the secondary female. This categorization is not qualitative and natural but is the construction of power position. Thus Lessing presenting a mythical story wants the subversion of the existing norms of gender ideology. In the story she has presented the individual are free from sexual intrigue, free from jealousy, free from petty rivalries; a society free from men. The society of the myth is populated with a tribe of women called the cleft. They have no need and knowledge of men. The childbirth is controlled, through the cycles of the moon, and they bear only the female children.

The story is unfolded with a boneless framing narrative - a nameless Roman scholar, apparently living in the age of Nero, sits himself down to translate and analyze a number of written fragments which purport to recount the beginnings of human civilization. He also traces the mythic story with his present reality. He observes the confrontation between a male and female slave. The man is clumsy, the woman furious; the woman penitent, the man contemptuous. The man walks off, certain to return to her bed later, a scene that sums up the eternal battle of the sexes. He first opens, however, by observing a contemporary spat between lovers that 'seems to [him] to sum up a truth in the relations between men and women': his slave, Lolla berates her young lover Marcus for being careless with his oxen and, when he ignores her, launches into a tirade of hysterical nagging.

For some reason Marcus' tenderness with the oxen annoyed Lolla even more. she stood, watching, while the others girls were carrying past her the produce from the cart, and her cheeks were scarlet and her eyes reproached and accused the boy. He took no notice of her (5).

They fight; he goes about his business; she cries helplessly; later they have sex. This domestic tiff inspires our Roman to finally write the disturbing 'history' of the foundation of human life - the microcosm of Lolla and her lover becomes the mythical macrocosm of the beginning of time. The promised 'truth' about the relations between men and women. Women nag and nurture, men are careless and are only fond of exploring and discovering.

The narrator confesses many things in the development of the story. He encounters many difficulties in analyzing the material he had. He is conscious about the fact that his hard labor will not get any credit rather it will be attacked and charged as spurious. The documents he had were even based on oral records and some of the reported events were abrasive too. It was a great challenge for him because he was going against the Christian dogma. Pondering the myth of men's descent from women, he questions the controversial story advanced by the early Christians of his era. The Christians insist that the first female was brought forth of the body of male. Female were thus not the primary human beings rather the secondary ones. Female were for the need of male. God had created female out of the limb of male for caring the male, for feeding male. Roman Seldon states that; "patriarchy subordinates the female to the male or treats the female as an inferior male. The narrator states that;

Perhaps it has felt that an account of our beginnings that makes females the first and founding stock is unacceptable. In Rome now, a sect – the Christians – insists that the first female was brought forth from the body of a male. Very suspect stuff, I think. Some male invented that – the exact opposite of the truth. (27)

The narrator here problematizes the bible which insists male to be the precursors of female. Lessing is opposing the reality which the contemporary society claims with

the help of bible and presenting the alternative one so that the female can transcend their present subordinated identity.

In the prefatory note of the novel, Lessing explains about the authenticity of the myth, that she took her cue from a scientific article. Though some of Lessing's fable is playful and imaginative, too much of it backpedals through decades, if not centuries, of women's progress. Lessing deserves credit for imagining the details of an alternative history of the transformative evolutionary leap from one to two sexes (if that was the case) and the origins of gender role differentiation and social organization. Still, unless we read the entire fable as parody, we must accept the view that the stereotyped notions that feminists of recent decades have labored to challenge have sources so ancient that they are virtually engraved in our natures. Thus in the prefatory note she states;

In a recent scientific article it was remarked that the basic and primal human stock was probably female. And those males came along later, as a kind of cosmic afterthought. I cannot believe that this was a trouble free advent. The idea was grist to an already active mill, for I had been wondering if men were not a younger type, a junior variation. They lack solidity of women, who seem to have been endowed with a natural harmony with the world. I think most people would agree with this, even if a definition would be hard to come by. Men in comparison are unstable, and erratic.

The contemporary society has made the stereotype of female that they are timid, irrational. So as to counter this stereotype Lessing has clearly claimed that male are also not perfect rather are unstable and erratic in comparison to female. Female lack some sense of solidity but it doesn't mean they are imperfect. The present

contemporary society devalues female and provides the junior status to that of male. But if we deal historically male is the junior one. It is the exploitation of the society that made female weak.

The narrator also states the present status of females in his society. He found dual identity of females; one the higher, as goddess and another inferior of the witch or bitch. Women are associated with goddess in one hand and with demon on the other or the women is the mother of god as well as traitor of the Eden Garden. He finds himself in confusion with this double standard of society, and becomes skeptic of societal doings. He states:

I have always found it entertaining that females are worshipped as goddesses, while in ordinary life they are kept secondary and thought inferior. Perhaps this take on the task of telling the tale of our real origins which, as you will see, does have elements of legend. (27)

This contradictory representation of woman by man shows that man is ambivalent towards women and hesitates to provide the fixed individual identity. The personal choice of women is either undermined or suppressed. To say the contemporary society is unhealthy to talk about the healthy position or the status of women.

The narrator shows the present status of female by talking about the background of his own wife Julia. Julia in one event asks her mother that why she is treated differently than her brothers. Why she is only asked to perform the work of kitchen but not her brothers. “She had asked her mother why she was always ordered to feed and wash the babies but her brothers were not. Her mother simply said this was how things were”(58). Julia is arising question against the system of society where the female are confined between the four walls of the kitchen.

The narrator suspects almost all the customs and doings of the society telling that they all are the later invention. His contemporary society never cares about the individual existence of female. The society gets lots of inspiration from the dead noble persons and such persons are respected by adopting their life styles. But the narrator finds no any respect for the noble ladies. ." He draws "evidence" for his view from oral legends, termed Memories that have been passed down the generations. Because they have survived with few discrepancies, he trusts their authenticity. Only occasionally, when essential details are missing, does the narrator speculates about what might have occurred, scrupulously identifying himself as the author of such interpolations. The narrator thus mostly has presented the history where there is agreement of both male and female.

So, I shall end the explanations and come to my attempt at a history' one that both clefts and Monsters, males and females, would agree to. Immediately I confront a problem. I wrote there Males and females. Males are always put first, in our practice; they are first in our society, despite the influence of certain great ladies of the noble Houses. Yet I suspect this priority was a later invention. (28-29)

He also offers an account of a scene he once witnessed between his own young children, when his daughter discovered that she lacked the piece of anatomy prized by her younger brother. The now-clichéd Freudian nursery scene can only be read as parody.

Doris Lessing with her mouth piece the Roman narrator presents the parody of the contemporary society. The story begins ages and age ago, but time does not exist before and during the copying of the scrolls. He reminds that long ago has no real context in trying to date the event that are outlined, at some time, in some place a

community of 'sea' women lived on a small beach surrounded by high cliffs and mountains. We are told that all this happened 'ages ago - no one knows when' at least twenty times in the course of the narrative. These creatures had no capacity to think, to be curious, doesn't want to explore, to wonder why about anything. All they knew was to swim, sun themselves on the rocks, eat what the sea provided and give birth at the behest of the cycle of the moon. They are named as the 'Cleft'. The word *cleft* refers not only to the women as a group and to the obvious detail that distinguishes female anatomy but also to geographical feature of their island, a cut in The earth associated with the mysteries of the menses and birth as well as, in an even earlier time, human sacrifice.

The word 'Cleft' produces double meaning in the narrative. First the name of the community with smaller initial letter 'c' and second the name of the mountain which stands in front of their dwelling place with capital initial letter 'C'. The mountain has the opening in the top which is described like the female genital organ. It seems that the resemblance which the author has made in the description of the rock is intentional. She has attempted to arouse feminist consciousness by presenting the unique setting. The rock which is described as the 'Clefts' has vital relation with the cleft. The narrative says;

The Cleft is that rock there, which isn't the entrance to a cave, it is blind, and it is the most important thing in our lives. It has always been so. We are the Cleft, The Cleft is us, and we have always made sure it is kept free of saplings that might grow into trees, free of bushes, it is a clean cut down through the rock and under it is a deep hole. Every year, when the sun touches the top of that mountain there, it is always

the cold time, and we have killed one of us, and thrown the body down from the top of The Cleft into the hole (11).

The rock described as the Cleft is related to their custom and ritual. The community takes care of the rock because the happenings in the rock plays major role in their life. The community has made the division of work so that nothings happen haphazardly. There is the group of cleft watcher who looks after the happenings of the rock. The rock is also related to their rituals of giving birth to the child. At this point the reader becomes clear why the rock resembles with female reproductive organ.

The narrative describes that how the female of the community gets pregnant. The pregnancy process has also a major relationship with the moon. When the moon is at its biggest and brightest shape the individual of the community should climb up above the rock. The narrative of one of the cleft says;

We have to watch The Cleft, when the moon is at its biggest and brightest we climb up to above The Cleft where the red flowers grow, and we cut them, so there is a lot of red. And we let the water flow from the spring up there, and the water flushes the flowers down through The Cleft, from top to bottom, and we all have our blood flow (9).

By presenting this unique and archaic system of getting pregnant and child rearing, Lessing posits the single society free from the intricity and complexity of male. She is arguing for the society free from the exploitation and domination of male; a society free from the clutch of male.

According to the narrative human life began with the 'clefts', an exclusively female species of humanoid that crawled out the sea 'ages ago' and propagated parthenogenically. That is: they spontaneously gave birth to girl-babies at intervals,



exposing the deformed or sickly ones and raising the healthy ones to adulthood but in a disinterested, passive sort of way. Indeed, these females didn't do much at all really.

The narrative from the side of the boys (Squirt) says:

They lay on rocks, the waves splashing them, like seals, like sick seals, because they are pale and seals are mostly black. At first we thought they were seals. Singing seals? We had never heard seals sing, though some say they have heard them. Then we knew they were the Clefts(29).

They clung to the familiar shoreline, inhabiting a short stretch of rocky beach and a couple of caves; they ate fish and seaweed; they lolloped in and out of the sea; every now and then they sacrificed one of their number to 'The Cleft', the nearby rock formation that resembled their genitalia. They had no names, formed no interpersonal relationships and expected nothing from life. Importantly, and as the Roman historian keeps reminding us with irritating frequency, they had no sense of urgency because they had no sense of time and they had no sense of adventure because nothing changed or needed to be changed.

The whole novel moves, around the life styles, doings, and behaviors of these cleft. Lessing's main intention to depict, the mythical community the cleft, is to message that social norms and values are within the territory of power which is circled by discourse and later it remains as conventions till other social norms and values are created. The cleft in then time had their own discourse and conventions. They could no more become able to save them, after the appearance of the male. As in the community of cleft the conventions were constructed for their own easiness and accordingly. But after the appearance of male, their conventions came to stake as they had to share the world with new birth that was males. Such convention in the society

devaluates individual existence. Lessing is conscious about the truth of the contemporary society which is neither true nor false. It is a construction in favor of power holder and in contemporary society male is in power. Anybody who dares to challenge the construction he/she will be outcaste from the society. If we forget everything about the constructed norms, values, truth, discourse and power, society will remain single where everybody will get equal place for living life. The community of cleft, which Lessing has depicted, is in the way free from the complexity of the construction of the contemporary society.

The community of cleft is introduced with the representative character Maire. Maire introduces herself as the family member of cleft watcher. She narrates many things about the cleft like, ritual of giving birth, way of living. She also talks about the confusion of their origin.

The clefts did not know when their kind had first crawled from the waves to breathe air on the rocks, and they were incurious. They did not think to wonder or ask questions. They believed – but it was not a belief they would defend or contest - that a Fish brought them from the moon. When was that? Long, slow, puzzled stares (31).

They do not know when the first time they crawled to the earth. Also they do not know that they were the babies born out of either moon or the fish. From the Maire's narrative the readers come to know that the cleft does not need male for reproduction. In contemporary society, female gives birth only after the sexual intercourse between male and female, that is female must need male for reproducing a child. But by presenting Maire's narrative Lessing is shadowing the necessity of male.

According to the maire's narrative, community of cleft not only does not need male but they even do not have any knowledge of male. They were pleasant with their

own system of society. There was division of work. Some of the cleft used to watch the Cleft; some catch fishes, some net makers, fish skin curers' seaweed collectors and so on. Maire says:

No I don't know how many of us there were then. Whenever then was. There are these caves, as many as I have fingers and toes, and they are big and they go back a long way into the cliffs. Each cave has the same kind of people in it, a family, the Cleft watchers, the fish catchers, the net makers, the fish skin curers, the seaweed collectors (10-11).

The cleft had no any particular name but were identified according to their work. For example: the person who watches the Cleft was called the Cleft watcher.

Contemporary society values male as the ruling individual without whom no any institution, state is regulated. In all sphere of society male plays the major role. But in the narrative the society exists without male. The cleft has not seen any male till now. The narrative counters the definition of the contemporary society about the existence of male and female.

However, this watery feminine world was shattered by the birth of a child with a penis. An unforeseen catastrophe brings about the fall in this Book of Genesis; from which trauma after trauma after trauma ensue. A "monster" is born with bumps and lumps and a thing like a pipe. The cleft were too much shocked with such type of birth. They compare the body of the new born baby with their own but they find it to in deformed shape. So the baby was called deformed baby. The baby had a pipe which sometimes looks like a sea squirt. The situation hurdle the cleft as the birth of deformed babes was increasing in number.

The smooth and pleasant community fell into havoc due to such birth. The first monster was seen as an unfortunate birth fault, and that babe was set to be eaten

by the eagles. “[C]an you wonder that when the first babes like you were born we put them out for the eagles?”(12)

The cleft were conscious about the limit of their number. They used to throw the deformed and damaged babes on the killing rock, the sloping rock just past the Cleft. “We didn’t keep damaged babies, and we didn’t lip twins.”(12) Also the cleft had lots of affection to their dwelling place. Maire in her one narrative says, “[H]ow could we move from The Cleft? This is our place, it has always been ours.”(12)

Between the lines of the above paragraph we readers can find the feminine consciousness of the author. The community never celebrates the arrival of new child who were later discovered as male, rather was rudely treated and mutilated. They thought those births to the curse of nature to them. The babes were totally out of the shape if they compare with themselves. They also try to bring some of the babes to form by cutting the penis but it did not work. They did not get any idea than to leave the babes on the killing rock so that the eagles can take out of their sight. The following narrative makes clear, how the cleft compare the born babes to themselves and define in turn.

Now look at The Cleft, we are the same, The Cleft and the Clefts. No wonder you cover yourselves there, but we don’t have to. We are nice to look at, like one of those shells we can pick off a rock after a storm. *Beautiful* – you taught us that word and I like to use it. I am beautiful, just like The Cleft with its pretty red flowers. But you are all bumps and lumps and the thing like a pipe which is sometimes like a sea squirt (11-12)

The cleft were out of the knowledge of the function of such pipe like structure in front of male body. They were far from the knowledge of sex and reproduction through

sexual intercourse. As they do not need male (no knowledge till) for reproduction they claim that the penis of those babes is useless. So they call it squirt.

Maire in her next narrative talks about the gift provided by nature to the cleft. She talks about the lack in those new babes whom the cleft call 'Monsters'. The cleft were gifted by nature to be the mother. Without cleft no new baby will be born. The following narrative Maire tells about it:

Yes, I know you can't give birth, only we Clefts can give birth, and you despise us, yes, you do, but without us there would be no monsters, there would be *no one at all*. Have you ever thought of that? We Clefts make all the people, clefts and Monsters. If there were no Clefts, what would happen – have you really thought about that? (16)

Maire claims that if there were no cleft there would no one at all. The cleft are mothers to all. They were the origin of whole people in the earth. Lessing here is highlighting the importance and peculiar quality of female with the narrative of Maire. It is the counter to the contemporary society which has tagged female as the 'second sex'. In next narrative Maire tells that; "if these Clefts were not mothers, then what were they? They were the mothers of Clefts and Monsters, mothers of us all, our ancient mothers". (86)

The contemporary society has defined female with lack. Certain stereotypes are derived for women those prove their lack. But Lessing goes against this social discourse and claims that female bore own qualities, it is not the lack but the nature. Lessing defending female posits that not female but male have the lack. Male lack the thing like; motherhood, affection, love, care and so on. Male totally lacks these feminine instincts and remains dependable on female for these instincts. ". . . they

had that gift, that gave birth to new clefts and to Monsters too, but the boys, the males, could not make people” (89).

The number of boys (monsters) was totally depended on cleft. The deformed babes whom the cleft threw to the killing rock are not eaten by the eagles but were taken to nearby valley where the monsters turn to be boys. The valley was like that of cleft populated only with the deformed babes. The boys fear from the cleft and remain in a distance. The boys were conscious that only the cleft could give birth to a baby either boys or the cleft. They also were conscious about their population and rude treatment of the cleft so always look after the eagle whether they are bringing new born child or not. “[W]ithout the Clefts there would be no new arrivals in the eagles’ claws, there would be no Squirts”(40). They were so vulnerable. Nothing was in their hand except to wait. Every time if any of the monsters died they used to feel threatened. “The records we have of that time speak of their fear.”(90) The boys were living always in lack and threat. They longed for the girls, whom they expected to come walking down the mountain. There were lookouts posted so that when they came they would be welcomed.

The boys had already had the experience of sexual intercourse, as once they had performed a mass rape. So they were always haunted by the sexual hunger. They always felt something lacking. They were restless and their squirt always changed its shape and size. In this section of the novel Lessing has become active and more subversive. The contemporary society always defines female with lack but here Lessing is defining male with certain lack. The boys living in the valley felt something needing and lacking. The only supply of that lack and need was with the cleft. The boys were in anxiety. So sometimes they crept along the rocky hill to see the shore of the clefts.

The males – with their restless, ever-responding squirts, which were sometimes large, sometimes limp, but mostly stiff with need, so that it was unpleasant for them to bump into a bush or tall grass -- did not know that their hungry wanting, their need, was the voice of their own Squirts down there, but felt as if it were their whole selves that wanted and needed. They fought each other for no good reasons. One of them, finding his squirt getting in the way, tied his lions up with eagles' feathers, and with leaves, and they began competing with each other to make the most attractive aprons. (88)

The cited narrative clearly draws the situation of the boys in the valley. The boys were anxious due to their sexual hunger. The psychoanalytic theory of 'penis envy' by Sigmund Freud has been altered in this section with 'vagina envy'. The theory has defined female as irrational and erotic. But Lessing turns upside down the theory by positing male as erotic and needy.

'There is certainly some of this in the novel, but in no sense are these characterizations uniformly true. For example, it is Maire who overcomes her fear and seeks out the Squirts; the Squirts are too afraid to seek out the Clefts. It is Maire who saves the young Squirts from the plot of one of the Old Shes. It is Maire who comes to understand that circumstances have changed; that they old ways are passing. It is Maire who helps other Clefts broaden their view of the world. This causes a conflict between some of the younger Clefts and the Old Shes. This is much more about the conflict between new understanding and old thinking than about gender, but it helps to overcome the stereotype posted by the patriarchal society that female are timid and less innovative. Despite the fear she became able to break the antagonistic

relationship with the boys whom she at first, says 'terrible creature'. The following narrative of Maire tells that;

She made herself go forward, but slowly, but did not know how to signal that she did not mean harm. These were the creatures the Clefts had tormented and tortured and even mutilated, she herself had taken part in the work. They had seen her now, and were crowding together, facing her; she could see their faces turned upwards, staring, frightened. They were not threatening her, but now they were smiling nervously, uncertain, as she was. She stood there in front of them, not knowing what to do, and they stood looking at her. (51-52)

The narrative says, how Maire, one of the clefts encounters the group of the boys in harmless condition though it seems fearful. It was not the Squirt but the Cleft who did something. If she had not the curiosity and some sense of innovation, what could have happened no one can measure? Only this imperative and courageous role of Maire opened the door for new circumstances. After she reached the valley she for the first time knew the use of the alien body part in front of the boys. As she was driven by curiosity, she put out a hand to touch the protuberance of one of the Squirt. The terrifying thing which had been horrible to her for her previous life rose up into her hand and she could feel its throb and pulse. "What had driven her here was an imperative alien a moment she and this alien were together, and his tube was inside her and behaved as its name suggested" (52). This is how the first fine sexual intercourse happened between the Cleft and the Squirt. This paved the way for the birth of new generation's boys and girls, who were more active and fast growing.

Maire from that day of visiting the valley knew the meaning of the birth of the deformed babes. Now she also knew what the actual relationship should be between



the cleft and the squirt. She after her return to the shore narrates everything to her nearest friends about the happening. One of the names mentioned in the narrative is Astre. She was afraid if the old cleft would know about the event. Because the old cleft used to think that the Squirts were enemies to them. Once the old Clefts whom the narrator tells old Shes, made the plot to kill the Squirts. But Maire with help of Astre and other clefts loyal to her save the Squirts from the plot. "Maire knew she was in danger: the smell and tension of threat was strong. She knew there was a plot of some kind."(119) Maire presents herself as the savior of the Squirts. This action of saving the Squirts shows the ingenuity of Maire. The narratives tell that it was only Maire who was conscious about the need of both the Cleft and the Squirt.

Maire takes another initiative of visiting the valley. This time she does not go alone but with her friend Astre and newly born boy. This time she not only keeps sexual relationship with the boys but also teaches many things to the boys. She and her friend Astre teaches the boys how to speak because up to that time the grown up boys also used to speak the childish language. The author in this section of the novel presents female as the first teacher of male. Maire and Astre not only teach to speak the fine language but also teach how to clean the living place.

Astre and Maire sat on the log, with the boys around them, and they spoke sentences, slowly, carefully, easy to hear and repeat. It was already evident that two languages were developing, one being learned from these new arrivals, and one high and childish, which was how the very first community of boys had to speak. They spoke like children, even as little children, and how they did dislike what they heard from each other. Maire and Astre had to be there, to teach them language,

teach them how to keep their shelters clean – and to mate with them  
when their tubes grew alert and pointed at the girls. (75)

The narrative gives the detail how the boys were taught by Astre and Maire. The boys used to feel awful, if they compare their language with that of Astre and Maire. The language was too much childish. Also they (Maire and Astre) tear branches from the trees and use it as brooms to sweep the dirt of their living place. They sweep the dirt of bones and flesh to the edge of the river. This is how they also teach the first lesson of housekeeping.

None of the above significantly challenges the novel's gender determinism. Maire adapts to new circumstances, she does not create them. I'm sure you'll agree that change-making/adaptation is another aspect of the male/female dichotomy. Further, she defends the young squirts because she is maternal and nurturing, because she is motherly. The squirts do not have these instincts themselves. They let children fall in rivers and in fires because it is not innate in them. She is notable in her willingness to change, but not in the nature of her changefulness. This is still decidedly 'female' in the arrival of the Squirts is a new, important event, and it causes profound changes in the way some Clefts think. Note that this new thinking is not "learned" from the Squirts; it is caused by having new things to consider. "The arrival of the Squirts changes everything, but not because they are superior (in many ways they are far less wise than the Clefts), but because they are different. When presented with new options, many of the Clefts engage in new behaviors. Thus we have Clefts who explore side by side with the Squirts the deadly interior of the world.

The third part of the novel focuses on two characters, one male and another female, who have inscrutably Celtic or Anglo-Saxon names -- Maronna and Horsa. These two may in fact represent several persons, lines of descent wherein a series of

leaders bear the same name. These two, and their tribes, come into conflict over the sort of things that couples would fight over in a stereotypical sitcom: The woman thinks the man does not take care with the children, the man can't see what all the fuss is about. "Don't you care about us? Maronna demanded weeping" (164). The men are shortsighted and careless; the women are able to predict disaster but curiously unable to do anything more useful than lie about on rocks and catches fish.

‘Are you trying to kill off all our children?’ Shouted Maronna, and Horsa, who had never until thought this moment that the small boys would of course try to follow the example of the big youths, shouted that there was no need for her to shout and scream, he would make sure the practice stopped at once.(164)

The narrative makes clear that the relationship between the two clans was quite cold. Maronna is the leader from the side of the Cleft and Horsa from the side of the Squirt. Both of them blame on each other and the relationship was becoming problematic. The cleft had the quality of motherhood and the care. They were conscious of the fact that their future was on the small babes who tomorrow become adult and the generation goes on. But the boys only loved to explore and invent new things and place. They were innovative but do not care about the result of misshapen.

Once, Horsa set out for the exploration with his helpers. Maronna tries to stop him showing her disagreement. But Horsa does not stop. He longs for discovering a new place which is in his dream. But the trip becomes quite unsuccessful rather he gets life taking injury in his leg. His helpers misbehave him due to his disabled condition. In the mean time the words of Maronna haunts him and feels the need of her. Many of the boys are lost and many die due to their careless behavior. At last, Horsa returns to their place with rest of his helpers. He discovers the meaning of the

words of Maronna. Though Horsa discovers new fine dwelling places he becomes unable to save the life of many of his partner.

After the return, Maronna asks him about the rest of the boys, who had not arrived. Horsa bows his head, which informs her about the event. She screams and accuses Horsa for killing her little boys. “You are so careless, you don’t care. . . .” (257). He stands trembling; he was at this moment limp with the grief. He genuinely feels the enormity he had committed. He silently confesses his crime, and Maronna understands that.

In the end, these two great leaders come to an epiphany that boils down to "we have nothing in common, but we need each other. Both of them understand the need and lack of each other. The following narrative shows the situation of the reconciliation between two clans the Cleft and the Squirt;

Tenderness is not a quality we associate easily with young men, life has to beat it into us, beat us softer and make malleable than our early pride allows. Horsa saw Maronna, as he had not before. Perhaps he had felt her more than seen her, as an always accusing critical presence, he saw this trembling girl, still streaked with the white powder, though her face was washed with tears. She was in such distress, so helpless: he grew up in that moment, and stood forward to take her in his arms as she opened her arms to him. (257-258)

The narrative tells about the genuine care of both of the leaders for each other. It is the door for the start of smooth society populated both by male and female with equal intensity. We can say it the beginning of the modern society.

It seems to me that the narrative is not about tension at all, but about reconciliation. The historian is not attempting to discern a 'truth' for its own sake, but

to create a creation story that matches his own experiences in life. (Lessing also makes this point in her preface remarks: that the idea at the root of 'The Cleft' made sense to her.) Hence he is first inspired to investigate the early histories after observing the gendered behavior of his slaves. His motive is to explain these behaviors, to some sense to interrogate or subvert them. Thus, he is tracing the clumsy mirroring of his own gender observations and the cleft/squirt dichotomy throughout.

Lessing throughout the novel talks about the innate qualities of both the Cleft and the Squirt. She is not the man-hater neither she has any antagonisms with male. What she posits in the novel is the importance of innate and natural qualities. The contemporary society is drowning due to its focus on the cultural constructs and social discourse. It had shadowed the innate qualities of human beings especially of female. Female have certain natural roles which are their innate qualities. But, the contemporary society which is male centered has exploited female in regard of those innate qualities. Also the society has some discourse, neither true nor false which has suppressed and confined females into certain roles which are construction in favor of male. Thus, the novel is an attempt to rescue.

#### IV. Conclusion

As gender studies signify the prevalent distinction in the modern society is the constructed version of the society, the superiority of the male is only due to the marginalization of female. The modern society has failed in the true judgment on the side of female. Doris Lessing tries to subvert such exaggerating judgment which is based on false essence. Modern society has created different hierarchy that has stigmatized female. Lessing through the depiction of powerful female tribe the cleft raises questions against the constructed structure of modern society in her celebrated novel *The Cleft*.

Positing that, the primal human stock was female rather than male, Lessing invents a cult of ancient women called the Clefts, a name derived, in part, from that essential part of female anatomy. The story of the Clefts is bookended by the journal of a Roman historian, who interprets ancient documents stating that females were originally impregnated by "a fertilizing wind or a wave," to give birth to female children. In fact, there was no need of male for the female. The complex sexual intrigue of male was later invention of female tribe themselves. Also Lessing in the course of the novel shows the timid nature of male who were always frightened with female. It is the courageous step taken by one of the cleft named Maire whose approach to the valley of male; the squirt, opened the door for start of new a pseudo-modern society populated with both male and female.

The novel moves around, the two different tribes the cleft and the squirt. The cleft works as the caretaker and life giver to squirt. The males are totally dependent to female for everything. Once when the males setup themselves for the exploration of new place they were wounded and victimized in so extreme manner and return to the female again for leaving again.

Males at last acknowledged the true importance of female. Thus, the society was established in inter-relationships.

To sum up, the inferior position given to female is provisional, established by gender biased society. The division of the roles is totally based on own construction of male. Moreover, the notion of masculinity and femininity itself is wrong, because masculinity is related to bravery, protective and decisive nature of individual; it is not the birth virtue of male. The tribe cleft in Lessing's novel is feminine in sex but masculine in virtue and are perfect weapon for subverting the traditional gender roles prevalent in the modern society.

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