

I. Life and Works of Doris Lessing

The Summer Before the Dark (1973) is one of the Doris Lessing's well crafted novels. It tells the moving story of a woman's coming to terms with aging. Kate Brown, the female protagonist of the novel and the 45 year old mother of four children, has lived her married years accommodating her husband's choices and needs of her children. Perhaps Kate's most interesting insights revolve around how women appear to others.

In the summer of the story, events unexpectedly move further. Kate Brown, without family responsibilities leaves her house and remains alone in London for the first time since her marriage. First of all, her role is that of a doctor's wife; then she works as a highly paid professional translator; then again, is a wealthy British tourist in poor villages in Spain. In each of her incarnations, people respond differently to her. Her experiment is repeated by her new friend, Maureen, a young woman faced with the same choices Kate had had to make twenty-five years earlier. When Kate decides to return to her house at the end of the novel, we know that she has changed.

From beginning to the end, the whole novel indicates the condition of the main character, Kate Brown who struggles throughout whole life. She leaves not only her home but also different places where and when she keeps on struggling to obtain her goal.

At first, she is fed up of her married life which restricted and dominated her desires. So she engages herself in different activities like language translator in Turkey, with young lover in Spain, back to London and sharing a room with a younger woman totally separating herself from her family. She wanders here and

there but she can not get her self identity and therefore, can not lend meaning to her life. So, this present research is basically focused on this search for identity.

Doris Lessing was born in Persia (now Iran) on October 22, 1919. Both of her parents were British. Her father had been crippled in World War I. However, he was a clerk in the Imperial Bank of Persia and her mother had been a nurse. Later, in 1925, her father was lured by the promise of getting rich through maize farming, the family moved to the British colony in southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Doris's mother adopted to the rough life in the settlement. Energetically trying to reproduce what was, in her view, a civilized Edwardian life among savages but her father did not and the thousand odd acres of bush he had bought failed to yield the promised wealth. From Mrs. Lessing's autobiographical and fictional writings it is clear that while the farm turned out to be no happy haven for her parents, it became their imaginative daughter's lucky spiritual home.

Lessing has described her childhood as an uneven mix of some pleasure and much pain. The natural world which she explored with her brother, Harry, was one retreat from an otherwise miserable existence. Her mother obsessed with raising a proper daughter, enforced a rigid system of rules and hygiene at home. Then Doris was installed in a convent school where nuns terrified their charges with stories of hell and damnation. Lessing was later sent to an all girls high school in the capital of Salisbury from which she soon dropped out. She was thirteen and it was the end of her formal education.

In 1937, she moved to Salisbury where she worked as telephone operator for a year. At nineteen she married Frank Wisdom and had two children. A few years later, feeling trapped in a persona, she left her family remaining in Salisbury alone. Soon she was drawn to the likeminded members of the left Book Club, a group of

communists' who read every thing and who did not think it remarkable to read.

Gottfried Lessing was a central member of the group, shortly after she joined; they married and had a son.

Like other women writers from southern African who did not graduate from high school, Lessing made herself into a self-educated intellectual. She recently commented that unhappy childhoods seem to produce fiction writers. Paul Schluter writes on Lessing's own opinion: "Yes, I think that is true. Though it wasn't apparent to me then I was just thinking about how to escape, all the time" (3). The parcels of books ordered from London fed her imagination, laying out other worlds to escape into. Lessing's early reading included Dickens, Scott, Stevenson, Kipling; later she discovered D. H. Lawrence, Stendhal, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky. Bedtime stories also nurtured her youth: her mother told to the children and Doris herself kept her younger brother awake spinning out tales. Doris's early years were also spent absorbing her father's bitter memories of World War I, taking them in as a kind of "poison".

As far as her political field is concerned, Mrs. Lessing was involved in leftist politics in Rhodesia as a Marxist but not as a card-carrying communist. Three years after coming to England she joined the communist party, but although she left the party in 1956. Her search for 'a world ethic' did not end with the recognition that the Marxist 'dream' had turned into a nightmare, unlike many disenchanted writers.

Doris Lessing, a reputed female novelist, contributed much to the field of English literature. Her works cover more than a half of century exploring the relationship and realities of people. Among her works, *The Grass is singing* (1950) was accepted at once and acclaimed as one of the outstanding novels by a post war English writer where she has presented a character, Mary, who gets divided between two selves: one self which conform to the social rules, another one which struggles to

get free from the male dominated social boundary that restrict her freedom. The result is mental breakdown and death. The various factors are responsible for the destruction of Mary's self. The plot, tone and setting are properly arranged for the portrait of her self in crisis, which is in between the society and Moses, black boy. The society is a cause of restricting her freedom to have complete attachment with the boy.

Likewise, *the Golden Notebook* (1962) is Lessing's feminist manifesto. Lessing becomes firmly identified with the feminist movement. The novel concerns Anna Wulf, a writer caught in a personal and artistic crisis, who sees her life compartmentalized into various roles: Women Lover, writer and political activist. Her diaries written in different colored note books correspond to each different part of herself in regard to a women life. Anna eventually suffers a mental breakdown and it is only through this disintegration that she is able to discover a new wholeness. This event is somehow similar to Mary in *The Grass is Singing*. These two novels apparently signify that what many women were thinking, feelings, experiencing came as a great surprise. At least we notice that Anna Wulf tries to live with the freedom of a man in Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*.

The books in *The Children Violence* series (1952-69) are strongly influenced by communism and rejection of a domestic family role which explores exhaustively the theme of the 'free woman'. The novels are autobiographical in many ways, telling the story of Martha Quest, a girl brought up in Africa who marries young despite her desperate desire to avoid the life her mother has lead. The second book in the series, *A Proper Marries* (1954), describes the unhappiness of marriage and Martha's eventual rejection of it. The sequel *A Ripple from the storm* (1958) is very much a novel of the thoughts, exploring Marxism and Martha's increasing political alertness, after then, Lessing's novel advocates the feminist view.

The Memoirs of Survivor (1974) is an even more remarkable book and equally as mature. It is the memoirs of a nameless woman who has survived “it”; a nameless war that has left the cities of England empty shells. The narrator retells how she lived through this period, how she came by a child. Later she contrasts what she calls “personal” moments of experience with others that she labels “impersonal”. Both reside in the world behind the wall. The protagonist’s memoirs end with her account of how they somehow came through the darkest times, and realized that the worst was over that something new would be built. This book is about mystical moment transfiguring mysterious and a consummate end for this crafted book.

In late 1970s and early 1980s, Lessing turned almost exclusively to writing fantasy and science fiction in *The Canapos in Argos* series. Lessing’s more recent novels have continued to confront social taboos and challenge preconceptions generating many different and conflicting opinions. *The Good Terrorist*, awarded the W. H. Smith Literary Award (1985), has been written on political concerns. *The Fifth Child* is concerned with alienation. It talks about human attributes. The acclaimed first volume of her autobiography *Under My Skin* (1994) won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize and followed by a second volume *Walking in the Side*. Her fiction *The Ben, in the World* (2000), a sequel to *The Fifth Child and the Sweetest Dream* (2001) which follows the fortunes of a family through the twentieth century set in London during 1960 and contemporary Africa. Her latest book *The Grandmother* (2003), a collection of short novels centered on an unconventional extended family and the *Time Bites* (2004) essays based on her own experiences. Her stories and novels set in African background talk of the dispossession of black Africans by white colonials and expose the sterility of white culture in southern Africa.

After observing most of her famous fictions or works we come to conclusion that it is too early to assess Lessing's place in literary history. Her imagination is too rich. What can be said is that she is deeply concerned with the human condition and hungry to explore new dimensions to redefine relationships. Her novels try to reach us how better to manage our world. Basically, in her novels women's suffering pains, exploitation as well as their struggle and search for their identity in male dominated society have been portrayed.

Critics on Doris Lessing

Doris Lessing set her novels in Africa addressing the politics of gender and later was involved in the feminist criticism. She was a writer about race relation in Africa or a woman writer writing for, and about women. Wide popularity and a more serious critical appraisal came with the publication of *The Golden Notebook* in 1962. As the scope of her novels has extended to embrace a variety of genres, so the quantity and range of Lessing criticism has grown, particularly in the United States.

After reading Lessing's works, a critic R. H. Thrope focuses on humanity and placing them in their social, political and historical contexts. Thrope invites the reader to recognize the actually and potentiality of Lessing's vision, commenting:

[...] her African writing is not limited by the world "African", because she never yielded to the temptation to treat the "color problem" simplistically, but kept instead a clear compassionate eye upon the humanity of all she portrayed, her work transcends the relatively brief episode of white settlement and places it in firm perspective as one of the seemingly tragic histories of universal distrust and hostility between races, creeds and classes. (427)

Rubenstein adopts a Jungian approach to the major novels up to 1979 of Lessing, interpreting them as exploration of consciousness and positioning Hegel, Marx and Jung respectively as Lessing's philosophical, political and psychological mentors. She believes in Lessing's multiplicity of ideas in her works. Her thesis is that: "while the focus of a particular novel may appear to be political, social, psychological, feminist or mythic the common denominator in Lessing's fiction world is the mind: the mind discovering, interpreting and ultimately shaping its own reality" (427).

Lessing's writing crosses the boundaries of fiction which enter into the field of science fiction. Including this ideas Carol Simpson Stern assures that she is the writer of woman suffering, class conflict etc. He further comments on her works:

Doris Lessing's writings extend the boundaries of fiction experiment with different genres, explore the worlds of Affrica, Britain, and space, and offer a socio-political and cultural commentary upon the postmodern world. She is a descendent of those 19th century women writers who made poverty, class conflict, women's suffrage and slavery the subjects of their novels. She is a writer of epic scope and startling surprises. Her novels range from social realism to science fiction with brief forays into speculative mysticism and fables of horror. (559)

Marien Vlastos, commenting the nature of novelist and her impact on her novels, opines: "Lessing believes not in heart but in psyches [...] Lessing may be seen not only as social analysts but also social visionary prophets of contemporary culture" (246).

Aforementioned criticisms obviously prove that Lessing basically accumulates the suffering and pain of women under the domination of patriarchal society and their search to be free from such societal fence of male chauvinism. Many of her works raise the issue of equality of female. Not only this but racial discrimination, psychological dilemma, horror are the subjects which come under the important issue of Lessing's works.

Doris Lessing's remarkable and compact novel, *The Summer Before the Dark* (1973), has drawn the attention of many critics since its publication. When the book first appeared in print, commentators studied it in the light of their own prejudices and preconceptions. Commenting on the theme of Lessing's fiction Laura Hoffeld writes: "Lessing is regarded as one of most genuine post war writers in English. Her novels, short stories and essays have focused on a wide range of twentieth century issues and concern from the politics of race to the politics of gender and sex" (11).

The title of the novel is very symbolic. So, many critics have given their own opinion about its title some claim that the title itself is positive and other take it negatively. Regarding its title *The Summer Before the Dark* M. Klein explains:

As we read this novel, we often search for signs of the significance of its title. Many times by the end, that significance becomes clear.

However, as has been the case for many readers of *The Summer Before the Dark*, reconciling the title and the ending can sometimes become a problem. As the first words of a text, the title sets the stage for our reading and interpretation of words that follow. (228)

Another critic Charmaine Wellington takes its title in positive way. He compares other novels with this novel claims that "The dark" using here is signified in the sense

of positive like her other works. He further mentions: “Darkness is positive image in much of Lessing’s fiction, and that ‘the Dark’ in this novel represent the inner world that Kate reintegrates with her outer self (7)”.

Some critics argue that this novel is about the choices. The choice of woman is to discover herself and tries to find out who she is. Viewing the novel as discovery of women St. Andrews writes, “A good choice, then, is her short novel *The Summer Before the Dark* about the journey of self discovery of a suburban woman of forty five, the novel contains familiar Lessing themes” (20).

This novel is about the tension too. The tension through out the novel is between Kate’s exploration of inner space and the literal journey. Therefore, expressing the idea of this tension Walter Pozner mentions:

Lessing uses Kate’s memories of a privileged girlhood spent in England and Africa as well as her memories of her marriage to map deftly the social constructs which shape the life of a middle class woman. Kate Brown’s life among words and people bred to use and be used by words’ spurs her to take a non-verbal stand by not dying her hair. (56)

This novel was written in that time when England was in power failures. On the other hand, Kate Brown faces painful acknowledgement of her new condition. She is no longer needed by her family. Observing this situation Linda Eileen Chown explains, “As *The Summer Before the Dark* opens, Kate Brown, wife of Dr. Michael Brown, is thinking about her life. The time is the early 1970s. While England is being hit by power failures and strikes, Kate is being hit by her new circumstances” (107).

None of the critics who talk about *The Summer Before the Dark* above, focus on the Issue which I want to focus. So this present study aims at different aspects which have not been yet research. My stance here is to prove the novel as the depiction of the search for identify of woman.

II. Feminism: Search for Female Identity

Meaning and context

This chapter makes general survey of feminism, feminist criticism and female identity based on which the interpretation of Doris Lessing's, *The Summer Before the Dark* will be studied. Feminism is related to the feminist social movement that seeks equal rights for women giving them equal status with men and freedom to decide.

Feminism is a doctrine related to images and ideas advocating women's rights for the equality of sexes, identity and freedom. Feminism tries to redefine women's activities, works and goals from a female perspective. It emphasis on the centrality of women's position, against their being relegated to a secondary position in the society. It seeks to liberate women from the subordination of men, and to reconstruct society in such a way that patriarchy is eliminated. And it attempts to create a culture that is fully inclusive of women's desires and purposes. It demands equal rights and opportunities for women in a political, economic, social, psychological and individual sense. Now feminism represents one of the most important social, economic and aesthetic cannon of modern times.

It is relevant to see some definitions regarding feminism in order to arrive at a basic clear cut concept of the term. In that respect, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* describes the word feminism: "The belief and aim that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men; the struggle to achieve this aim" (466).

In an attempt at some kind of classification, histories of feminism have talked about the historical appearance of strong feminist movements at different moments. So giving the definition of feminism R. Delmer points out the clarification of its meaning:

There are those who claim that feminism does have a complex of ideas about women, specific to or emanating from feminists [...] it is by no means absurd to suggest that you don't have rights to equal treatment, and that not all those supportive of women's demands are feminists. In this light feminism can claim its own history, its own practices its own ideas, but feminists can make no claim to an exclusive interest in or copyright over problems affecting women. Feminism can thus be established as a field but cannot claim women as its domain. (13)

M.H. Abram in his *Glossary of Literary Terms* brings some issues indicating what is feminine and what is masculine are merely the cultural constructs generated by the omnipresent patriarchal biases of our civilization. Western society is pervasively patriarchal male centered and controlled and conducted by male perspective. He further explains:

From the Hebrew Bible and Greek philosophic writings to the present the female tends to be defined by negative reference to the male as human norm, hence as an other, as a kind of non-man, by her lack of the identifying male organ, [. . .]. (290)

Feminism conjures up various images and ideas regarding the women's issues. In spite of diversity feminism is often represented as a single entity and concerned with gender equality and freedom. Another critic, bell hooks adds some critical dimension to make clear these terms:

To me feminism is not simply a struggle to end male chauvinism as a moment to ensure that women will have equal rights with men, it is a commitment to eradicating the ideology of domination that permeates

Western culture on various levels sex, race and class to name a few and a commitment to reorganizing U.S. society so that the self development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion and material desire. [194]

Feminism is a perspective that seeks to eliminate the oppression, inequalities and injustices imposed upon women. Feminism is the study of position of women in which women are not characterized in terms of men's needs regarding pleasure, provision of services children etc. rather its ideology is that rights, privilege, status and obligations should not be determined by gender and it is a movement which crosses class and race boundaries. To make all of this idea clear Chris Beasley collected some definition as follows:

Dictionaries usually define it as the advocacy of women's rights based on a belief in the equality of the sexes and in its broadest use the world refers to everyone who is aware of and seeking to end women's subordination in aware of and for any reason feminism origination in the perception that there is something wrong with society's treatment of women. (27)

After observing all of these definitions we come to conclusion that themes explored in feminism include discrimination, stereotyping, oppression by patriarchy. Feminist theory aims to understand the nature of inequality, domestic violence, sexual harassment, power relation etc. It is culturally specific and addresses the issues relevant to women of that society.

Feminism covers broader scope and concept which includes different aspect of humanity despite its focus on the issues of women. So, different schools of feminists

have come up with different interpretations of feminism. But the bottom line is feminism started as a movement to challenge the discriminate which made them unequal to men. Therefore, it has been concerned in some way with other theories too, For example, Marxist, psychoanalytic and diverse post-structuralist theories. In spite of its broader meaning feminism can be studied on the basis of three different schools.

1. British school of feminism

This school of feminism is associated with Marxist and social feminism. Marxist and socialist feminist link gender inequality and women's oppression to the capitalist system of production and the division of labor consistent with this system. These feminist thinkers saw the main reason of gender inequality in the unequal distribution of capital. Beginning from the issue of the underpayment of women, limited employment of women in income-generating sources and sexual harassment of female workers by male workers at factories, Marxist feminists go to the point of defining the position of women in terms of socio-economic basis. They place women as proletariat and men as bourgeois so propose to wage a war against that unequal distribution to disrupt the socio economic structure. As a result, economic hierarchy would be dismantled.

Socialist feminism sets out to bring together the dual knowledge of oppression under capitalism and of oppression under patriarchy into a unified explanation of all forms of social oppression. So it describes a unified system referred to as 'capitalist patriarchy'. Further more, capitalism depends on the production of women who work as housewives and mothers. And women's work as consumers of goods and services for the household becomes a major source of capitalist profit-making.

Cora Kaplan, Juliet Mitchel, Mary Jacobus and Rosalind Loward are some of the British feminists who combine Marxist theoretical interest in the production and ideology of literature with feminist concerns for woman's writing.

2. French school of feminism

French feminism is centered on the issue of human neurosis of Freud which is psychoanalytic and destructive in its nature. Freud talks about the formation of unconscious of women to discover the fundamental difference in dream images seen by man and women. He again mentions attributes egoist ambitious dreams to man and erotic dreams to women. So Freud's analysis is gender biased. Feminists call Freudian analysis a phallogocentrism and phallogocentrism. The phallus breaks up the close and interconnecting world of mother child. It is considered that patriarchal oppression of women is founded on the type of negative constructions associated with Freud's theory of female sexuality.

Another French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan opposed traditional Freudian concern of repressed desires and sexual drive in human unconscious. However, his arguments framed with male formulate but it defied some male centric notion in psychoanalytical study. Psychoanalytic feminism question the assumption that feminist can only be seen from the point of view of phallic culture. French feminist assume that language constitutes human reality social and sexual identities. So studying the Freudian and Lacanian arguments they put on their logic against their depiction of woman psyche as neurotic, vulnerable and lack of rational faculty. French feminists believe that female offers a possible procedure for subverting and marginalization mechanism of power, breaking it up.

Many psychoanalytical feminists have adopted myth criticism and utilized it for their purposes. Feminist myth critics oppose forming of myths which have been shaped for the welfare of men and with the view of dominating women. Feminist myth critics even criticize Northrop Frye for ignoring gender in his classification of myths. They support pre-Greek myths which have lot of example of matriarchal norms and values in the societies. But they reject Greco-Roman myths as male constructed.

Most of radical French feminist are connected to the rhythms of the female body and to sexual pleasure. Julia Kristeva's, "From one Identity to Another" (1975) and Helen Cixous's "The Laugh of Medusa" are the two prominent essays to psychoanalytic and deconstructive feminism that breaks with tradition is a political act of dissidence and given revolutionary force.

3. American school of feminism

This school of feminism take the text as the result of historical experiences either it is emotional, political, social or psychological. It focuses on how to raise the female consciousness through the help of literature. The American feminists keep on their effort by using the language in the process of close reading and replace with their own language.

However, modern feminist writing in the United States took their stimulus from the civil rights and other protest movements. Man enjoys power to control women. In the field of political power too, feminists believe that males have historically dominated the females to express their identity and role in the society. Women have been compelled to remain in private sphere.

The American school of feminism tries to obtain their goal in two ways. First feminist group refers to gender aware reading that focuses on women along with their experiences which is known as 'gynocritism'. Next feminist critique indicates the gender aware reading that opens patriarchal assumptions, stereotypes and values.

Therefore, American models of feminists seek for their social and historical position of female writers. The major feminists of American school of criticism are Elaine Showalter, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar etc.

Although it is almost impossible to deal in detail about all types of feminisms , some types are- radical and liberal feminism, black and lesbian feminism, post-colonial feminism, gender feminism, third-world feminism etc. Let us talk in short about liberal and radical feminism.

Liberal feminism includes all those who campaign for equal rights for women within the framework of the liberal state. Public citizenship and the attainment of equality with the men in public area are central issues for liberal feminism. It asserts that women can do anything what men do. Liberal feminists emphasize reform of the society rather than revolutionary changes. On the other hand radical feminism offers a real challenge and rejection of the liberal orientation towards the public world of men. It chooses women to put on primary concern. Their goal is to receive/gain control over their own bodies biology value and celebrate them. Elaine Showalter is the precursor of radical feminism.

The above mentioned feminism has helped us to generate arguments and justify the protagonist of Doris Lessing's novel *The Summer Before the Dark* why she searches her identity in the male dominated society by challenging the existing norms and values of that society. This idea of feminism has given us the chances to know

that many critics have commented the novel as a good piece for feminist issues. It has clearly shown the way to understand female psyche, and identity of woman.

Prominent Feminist Criticism

“Women Liberation Movement” is the origin of ‘Feminist Criticism’ in the Eighteenth Century and there has been a continuous agitation for women’s rights-political, economical and cultural, the freedom and equalities of sexes in the Eighteenth and the Nineteenth century. However feminist criticism is actually a part of discourse of the new feminism emerged in Europe and America in the late 1960s to revive political and social issues of women. It emphasizes a different kind of reading to literature breaking the traditional monolithic way of examining literature from feminist point of view. The task of feminist criticism is to concentrate in women’s access to language in the lexical range from which words can be selected on the ideological and cultural determinants of expression. Toril Moi has indicated the advantage of recognition of feminist criticism and theory which are useful to learn social institutional and personal power relation between the sexes. She further says: “feminist criticism then is specific kind of political discourse, a critical and theoretical practice, committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for genders in literature” (204).

Feminist criticism questions about phallogentric ideologies, attitudes and male interpretation in literature and criticism to attack the male notions of values in literature and criticism. To subvert the complacent centuries of patriarchal culture, it offers critiques of male authors and representations of men in literature, and also privileges of women writers.

In the Nineteenth century, women had come across various challenges as the writers in the society. Feminism became a dominant approach in literature only in the late Nineteenth century. It had two centuries struggle for the recognition of women's cultural roles and achievements. The campaign was earlier started formally through the writing of Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792). Wollstonecraft opines that a woman or a girl is affected by the misinterpretation of the life style of society. Their learning is mere repetition of the some conventional ideas but not creative one. According to her, in the novel, a boy is depicted as an active person where as girl is presented as passive beauty. They read such novels and make an ideal picture of male and female in their mind. Not only this but she also claims for the political and social rights of women and goes beyond of strictly patriarchal and society. She advocates that mind does not know sex and blames that society views for women in the role of convenient domestic slaves and luring mistress by denying their economic independence and encouraging them to be docile and attentive to their look to the exclusion of all else.

In American, Margaret Fuller had agitated for women's movement in the middle of the Nineteenth century. In her well-known book *Women in the Seventeenth Century* she has depicted how women have been marginalized in our society. In the end of Nineteenth century J.S. Mill writes a pamphlet entitled "The Subjection of Will" in which like Wollstonecraft and Margaret Fuller seeks more equality and greater freedom for women.

Twentieth Century major feminist writers like Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir had made a great contribution in the field of feminist theories with their major famous works. Woolf, in her *A Room of Her Own* (1928) has explored the situation of women writers explaining how women are imprisoned with in the

domestic premises and are stopped from trying the pen. Her central argument is that women do not have money and a room of her own where they do not have separate space for writing. The social and economic obstacles extended before them always obstructed the women's creativity. She attacks that a patriarchal society has prevented women from realizing their creative possibilities. She asserts that libraries can be locked but freedom of women mind can not be locked. In her essay "The idea of the Angel in the House" called for women to be sympathetic, genuine and unselfish. She says that the literary genres were made by men for their own utilization not for women. Only the novel gives women workable space and even then the form has to be reworked for its own new purpose expressing the female body and experiences.

There was also Dorothy Richardson's very important twelve-volume stream of consciousness novel *Pilgrimage*. The first volume of this book appeared in 1915 and the last in 1917. In these volumes, Richardson brought unpunctuated female prose and caused Virginia Woolf to observe that Richardson had invented the psychological sentence of the feminine gender.

Feminist criticism is a politically powerful tool whose main task is to make the patriarchal society realize that their rigid rules and regulations to make women conscious of the age. Feminism accepting Foucauldian theory claims that power being exercised by men who pretend to have knowledge about everything including women. A power relation varies according to circumstance and the power of men no longer holds constancy.

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) established the principles of modern feminism. She focuses upon the pitiable condition of women in patriarchal society stating that where a woman tries to define herself, "The main theme of the book is that what is masculine and feminine in identity and behavior are largely

cultural constructs that were generated by the pervasive patriarchal biases of our civilization” (1994).

The whole culture sees women merely the negative object or “other” to men as dominating ‘subject’ who is assumed to represent the humanity in general. She assures that neither woman’s biological or psychological make up is responsible for the inferior condition of women. It is the society that has made women subordinate.

Encountering through different crosscurrents like the ‘Suffrage Movements,’ ‘Liberation Movements’ and ‘Civil Rights Movements’ feminism took shape as a concrete feminism with its ideological core, power and status. Kate Millet analyzed the sexual politics of literature in her *Sexual Politics* (1969). By ‘politics’ Millet signifies the mechanism that express and enforces the relations of power in society. She analyzed that western institutions have manipulated power to establish the dominance of men and the sub ordination of women. In her books she also attacks the male bias in Freud’s psychoanalytic theory and the fictions of D.H. Lawrence, Norman Mailer, Henry Miller showing their aggressive phallic selves and degrade women as submissive sexual objects.

Elaine Showalter is an American literary critic and teacher and founder of gynocritics. She is famous for her feminist criticism *A Literature of Their Own: British women Novelists from Bronte to Lessing* (1977) where she has created a critical framework for analyzing literature by women.

She categorizes the past and present of literary history of women by dividing the three stages of women writers. They are ‘feminine’, ‘feminist’ and ‘female’. The period between 1840 to 1880 is feminine period. This stage marks female voice but immensely influenced by male literary tradition. They wrote keeping their effort to

equal those intellectual achievements of male culture. There was a trend of writing in male pseudonyms because there was no place for female in the literary tradition. They could not revolt against male domination. George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell and Bronte Sisters belong to this phase.

The second phase clearly demonstrated the determined efforts for political and social equality. This phase was represented by Woolf in which women did not remain silent. They found their domination in different sides of life and revolted against the male domination. It is the very phase from which they also got their voting rights. This phase dated from 1880 to 1920 including the writers like Elizabeth Gaskell, France Trollope and Olives Schviener.

The third stage is 'female' dated from 1920 to present which seeks the independent identity and existence of women. In this phase the dependency on opposition is being replaced by a rediscovery of women's text and aesthetics. They give up both initiation and protest because females realize that these two terms are the forms of dependency. Dorothy Richardson, Katherine Mansfield and Rebecca West were the most important early female novelist in this stage.

Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar started an extensive study of women writers and set up a feminist literary theory. Their prominent work *The Mad Women in The Attic* (1979) is one of the influential books on historical study of feminism. In this book they concentrate on the figure of the suppressed female connotes to the realization of female identity.

They oppose Harold Bloom's model and named it patriarchal. They claim that his theory is male oriented and more than Bloomean anxiety women's anxiety are the problems appeared in the process of socialization which is dominated by males. They

talk about the social anxieties, physical and mental illness crossing the boundary of Bloomean theory of anxiety of influence.

When we observe the development of whole feminist literary criticism we can find the existence of feminism from the very earlier literary history. At first females were presented as stereotypical figures. Continuously women writers became conscious and insisted for a literature of their own. Finally there is a radical thinking of the conceptual ground of literary study and try to revise the accepted theoretical assumptions based on male literary tradition.

Woman's Identity

The term identity has several facets of meaning. It is the conscious woman's 'will' that conceives herself to be and wills to act that gives her an individual identity. In this sense, woman is nothing else but what she makes of herself and her identify is first of all what she conceives of herself. It is whatever meaning the individual assigns to herself.

Secondly, identity is the meaning of the individual on a part of groups or communities of various kinds. In fact, even when the single individual defines herself or is some how related to. In choosing to create or conceptualize an image and identity, the individual creates a universal image of women in general. The individual does so in terms of common values that defines individuals in her society. The individual conforms to the collective behaviors and common codes in gaining this social recognition. It is her social identity. From the social point of view, the self is expressed as the group level as well as at the personal. Personal identity is based on idiosyncratic life experiences and individual traits that make each individual distinct

from all others, whereas social identity refers to the identity of the individual as a social member.

Identity involves reference to the essential self, including values of behavior, attitude, experience and belief of the individual as a social member rather than a simple reference to mere 'appearance'. That includes not only the individual's evaluative and effective components such as self-evaluation and self-esteem but also the society's recognition of her. The loss of one or more attributes of recognition for instance, one's job, title or prestige, definitely threatens the identity of the individual.

In Doris Lessing's novel *The Summer Before the Dark*; the protagonist' Kate Brown is the representative of woman trying to quest her identity under the oppression of male dominated society. Its critics argue that the notion of identity is itself fundamental to the analysis of oppression. So through the self realization of the protagonist, Lessing suggests the women's awareness and self consciousness to their own. Because of the social construction, Kate Brown is in minority and sub ordination but she challenges the social norms and values of patriarchal society which always keeps in its effort to put her in certain boundary.

Self perception, Self Realization: Awakening

Self perception is associated with our individuality, what type of person we are, especially the way we normally look or feel. Our self-perception is not fixed which changes time and again which brings self realization and awakening. It shows the actuality of potentiality consist in the self. Self realization and self perception are directly or indirectly linked to each other.

In *The Summer Before the Dark*, Lessing presents the changing self perception of her protagonist, Kate Brown. At first she leaves her house and remains in the

rented room engaging in different places to get the new life. But in the end of the novel, she decides to return her house being confident and mature due to her many more experiences which changes her self perception because she strives to differentiate her position in her society. She doesn't like to follow the patriarchal norms and values of the society as other woman. She seeks self reliance and self identity in the society. She leaves her house, takes a job as translator for Global food in Turkey, her subsequent trip to Spain and affair with younger man, returns to London sharing a flat with younger woman gives her many more experiences and realizations. . She tries to understand herself and society through different activities. The realization of self awakes her about her position and identity in her society.

III. Search for Female Identity in *The Summer Before the Dark*

Man Woman Relationship: Subordination of Females

Certainly the world of human being is characterized by the man-woman relationship regarding many social institutions like marriage, family, and kinship. This relationship stands as a stamp that features the world of satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Since our society is patriarchal, it locates a man to a higher position than a woman. It exists in two levels that constitutes either before or after marriage. Before marriage, the father and brother guide her and practice the hierarchical relationship. After marriage, it becomes the matter of practice for the husband and other members of in-law family. However, being not married does not work to eradicate this deeply rooted discrimination between man and woman. Because marriage is a necessity as Levi-Strauss regards it as a form of human communication through which social communities come into being. Similarly Alka Saxena observes women's position:

Women are indeed living at the mercy of men at present a woman's identity depends on the men who come in to he life lies in the hands of her father, husband or son, depending on whether she is unmarried, married or widowed. The men determine her fate, make decisions on her behalf and decide what is good or bad for her. (23-24)

Here, we try to examine the relationship of the woman character to the patriarchal structure of Doris Lessing's *The Summer Before the Dark*. Before her marriage, she was brought up by her grandfather. Her grandfather was rigid and dominated her since her childhood. She had never thought of going against his views,: "Her grandfather was old-fashioned and his attitudes towards woman strict. Kate had never dreamed of

fighting an old man whom she lived, why bother? She was only there for such a short time"(17).

Marriage plays an important role in the lives of Kate Brown in the novel. Of course marriage marks a turning point in the lives of any man and woman. In patriarchal society women are not empowered to decide the destiny of marriage that is getting married, coping with marriage and denying the marriage. It happens because of the inferior social status and restricted access to education and employments that they are given to. Kate Brown's position in her family too as a wife and mother to serve the member of house:

A woman in a white dress, white shoes, a pink scarf around her neck, standing on grass. Now here was an area of choice, conscious, deliberate: her appearance was choice, all exquisite tact, for it was appropriate for this middle class suburb and her position in it as her husband's wife. And, of course, as the mother of her children. (11)

The married woman comparatively suffer more than the unmarried ones. Thus marriage becomes not a fulfillment of the self but a symbol of their confinement within the boundaries marked out for them by men through centuries.

Kate Brown, the protagonist of the novel, is married to Michael Brown who is the doctor of neurology. She is tormented by her husband and domestic work since she entered into his house as a new bride. How she domesticized is expressed: "A woman stood on her back doorstep, arms folded, waiting for a kettle to boil"(5). Under compulsion, being a house wife, she works as a servant: "She took the kettle in one hand, the coffee pot in the other, and left the back garden for the kitchen"(8).

She is an educated and intellectual woman but it is too difficult to get away from the oppressive patriarchal society because of the cultural construct. As a result, narrator comments: "If she had not married she would probably have become something special in her field, a lecturer perhaps, women did not seem often to become professors (18)" .

We find most marriages are proved to be unions of incompatibility. Men consider themselves rational whereas women are sensitive and emotional. Women characters are shown to be dependent on many ways. When any sort of disruption or detachment occurs in relationship that results in a total loss of woman's self. About the situation and emotion of Kate Brown the narrator comments:

She ought to have been thinking, perhaps, about her condition, about the cold wind she ought to be examining the violent and uncontrollable swings in her emotions about her husband, her children- particularly her husband. For now that she had so much time- she felt as if she was doing nothing, or very little, her days were emptier than they had been for years. (36)

Kate Brown is middle-aged and has a problem: "with not so much as a room of her own" (22). Her problem, however, has more sociological than cosmic implications. No longer needed by her family and from her home which her husband has left for the summer, she is forced into 'private stock taking' (9) and into recognizing that her unease is very much related to her gender-role, her role of wife and mother:

The small chill wind was blowing very definitely, if still softly enough: this was the first time in her life that she was not wanted. She was unnecessary that this time in her life was approaching she had of

course known very well for years. She had even made plans for it. She would study this, travel there; take up this or that type of welfare work. It is not possible, after all, to be a woman with any sort of a mind and not know that in middle age, in the full flood of one's capacities and energies, one is bound to become that well-documented and much studied phenomena, the woman with grown -up children and not enough to do. (22)

As far as the title is concerned, it sets the stage for our reading and interpretation of the words that follow. Some readers who see the ending of Doris Lessing's *The Summer Before the Dark* as predicting a dark future for Kate Brown seem to have taken their cue from these primary textual words. For example Alison Lurie calls Kate's return home to her unfaithful husband and ungrateful children: "A puzzling unsatisfactory conclusion that both this fatalistic ending and the title seem to suggest that for most women there is no escape from the prison constructed for them by society and their own sexual vulnerability (18)". Because the title and the ending seem to support this pessimistic view. Critics who see the novel as more optimistic have found it necessary to reconcile their interpretations with the title. Charmaine Wellington writes that darkness is a positive image in much of Lessing's fiction and that "the dark" in this novel represents the inner world that Kate reintegrates with outer self. But these optimistic interpretations are unable to resolve the title without essentially rewriting it.

Although several critics have suffered interpretations of "the dark" they have not considered other possibilities for what "the summer" may represent. They have unquestioningly accepted it as denoting the summer of Kate's journey. Kate's journey occurs in the summer, however, the summer of 1973 is not the only one represented in

the novel. Another significant summer in the fictional life of Kate Brown can be considered in relation to the title, the summer that occurred twenty-five years earlier in 1948 at the grandfather's house in Lourenço Marques. She was there for an entire year but what she remembers of that time is one particular summer scene, "of Kate Ferrira, in her thin white embroidered linen dress fanning herself with an embroidered silk fan on the verandah of her grandfather's house"(47).

At first, it may seem that the dark is simply the time of Kate's marriage, during which she had, as Ralph Berets writes, "lost contact with her own goals, objectives and needs by sacrificing them for her husband and children"(127). But when we examine each reference of the earlier summer, we find that the dark has a more specific referent-motherhood or rather, the dementia that it has become for Kate Brown. During her journey in the summer of 1973, Kate continually recalls and examines elements from her past. In her memory, she returns again and again to the summer of 1948. As she compares her present self with the girl on the verandah; she recognizes how motherhood has changed her and how it has become an obsession. Her recognition of how "dark" the motherhood has become allows her to escape from the mother role and allows us to predict an optimistic future for her, free from the confines of this role.

The narration of the events of the summer of 1948 interrupts the chronological story of Kate's present summer journey. These chronological deviations or as narratologist Gérard Genette calls them, "anachronies" emphasize the earlier summer. Although relating events out of chronology is not uncommon in fiction many stories begin with a character in the midst of a crisis and then flash back to tell about earlier events-these earlier events must be considered significant or the story would not be interrupted to relate them.

The Summer Before the Dark is dominated by the female character and the plot of the novel centers on their activities and position of in relation to other male characters. While Kate Brown starts her job in the Global Food being a language translator she would be like a kind of machine herself, into her ears would flow one language, and from her mouth would flow another:

She was beginning to see that she could accept a joy in this organization or another like it, for no other reason that she was unable to switch herself out of the role of provider of invisible manna, consolation, warmth, 'sympathy', not because she needed a job, or wanted to do one. She had been set like a machine by twenty- odd years of being a wife and a mother. (47)

The position of the woman in the society was very weak having no individuality, freedom, will and desires. Maureen, a lover of Philip and friend of Kate has also the submissive position in the society and basically in front of him. She has not own decision rather seems distressed because of the domination:

Maureen was being drawn towards him, because of his deliberate dominance. At the same time, she was repelled. She stood indecisively there, pale, almost ill. At last she turned to look at Kate, who shook her head, But Philip at once commanded, "You too. Come on, Mrs. Brown. There's something I want you both to see." (202)

Kate Brown tries to receive love and new choices of life with the different accompany in her life. Where ever she moves or travels she could not get satisfaction from the social convention. Male characters are found lacking in showing genuine love and respect towards women. They never try to understand them. Instead men enjoy the

freedom, plunge themselves in drink and expect women to silently receive them. So women have suffered in silence waiting patiently for the day to come when they will be treated with respect and love in the true sense. Kate Brown wanders different places but does not obtain her goal and proper place to live happily. So she imagines of soup kitchen. Kate went back into the kitchen and said to the Maureen, "Do you know what? I'm unemployed! There's nothing for me to do. What do you advice? Social work? Soup kitchens? Global Food? -that's soup kitchen I suppose"(231).

In *The Summer Before the Dark* the protagonist is the most sufferer. Essentially her journey of suffering commences since the day of her marriage with Michael Brown. Her heart intolerably suffers because of her husband's irresponsible attitudes and behavior and the treatment of in - laws who suppress her find themselves safe with their subjugation to patriarchy.

Aforementioned incidents of the novel make us clear that Kate Brown does not have her own self at the beginning of the novel. She is known in the connection with her husband, children and family. Her identity is constructed by the patriarchal society.

Kate Brown's Awakening and Changing Self Perception

Kate Brown had passed her life in grandfather's house before her marriage .She had very hard restrictions and limitations in her life. The society where she grew up, believed that women were for the pleasure and assistance of men. The woman had to depend on men for everything, especially for identity that is the social definition of who they are. The environment of there is quiet contrasting to that of severity of her own background: "The strictness of her grandfather was excessive in this colony, so that on more than one count Kate's behavior, her position seemed like a willful or

whimsical plaything, probably undertaken with the intention of being provocative.
(17).

Her later life too did not provide her complete freedom. She had to do the most for other or her family not for herself. As a result, she becomes aware as to how her life has been changing; “My god, my whole life has changed talking about a passion of love or hate, a marriage, a testing job of work. My life has changed because I have changed” (7).

At first, she realizes that her role is thought to be complementary of men. She has to fulfill her feminine functions. The women have to depend on men for everything, especially for identity i.e. the social definition of who they are. Her duty is only to prepare the tea and tray in her hands to serve her husband and his friends. Later she raises question about her choosing, “It does go on and on! That's what's wrong: there must be something I could be seeing now, some course of action I could choose --- choose? When do I ever choose? Have I ever chosen?” (10).

Alan Post is a male character but he plays a vital role for awakening Kate Brown to her oppressed status in the society. He teaches her to break the social limitations and encourage her with confidence to violate the social norms and values. His teaching her to take the job has greater significance in the unreasonable conflict between her exterior world- the role of wife and mother that society has imposed and interior reality of emotion and sexuality which initially are asleep and awakened through the course of the novel which makes her strong and enables her to face towards male:

What she was feeling was a kind of panic knowing this made it worse.

It was stupid and irrational to feel frightened. What of? This was not

something she could have confessed to anyone, not even Michel that when actually faced with a job, quite an ordinary sort of job after all, well within her powers, and obviously only for short time she felt like a long-term prisoner who knows she is going to have to face freedom in the morning. (18-19)

Kate's dreaming symbolically is an escape from the social conformity and oppression and it is a resurrection in a new world with matriarchal domination and her individual self-formation. Through the symbol of seal she is indicated that her problem and searching her identity. All the details suggest the seal's peculiar appropriateness as a symbolic form for the energizing inner self, grounded in the unconscious, linked with a primal state of being and emerging occasionally from that fluid primacy to encourage the conscious self along its journey towards self-awareness. Like the private self some kinds of seals have recently fallen into the category of an endangered species: a point Kate plays upon in her frequent references to the seal's threatened condition.

As a whole, this offers a strong evocation of the plight of the middle-aged woman in the sexist society, particularly of the sort of woman who has acted all her life in complicity with the patriarchal demand that she remains only as a sexual toy. Once discarded for a more enticing as punishment for the sin of growing old. Some interesting cross references are made to an earlier action where both Kate and the seal were threatened by wild animals leaping from cages where the outside world is viewed as hostile and frenzied and the substitution of the peasant villagers for the wild animals renders the later episode even more painful. To be bestial forces outside the human community is quite different than being pressed by such forces embodied

inhuman form. The first situation touches upon a universal human dilemma, one that transcends sexual role: every person's soul is subject to threats by natural forces:

She was becoming drawn into the air of the action so that even when awake she recognized atmospheres, flashes of feeling if that was the word-that came from the dream, from the seal. She has always been as good terms with her dreams, had always been alert to learn from them.

(124)

The above mentioned incidents awaken Kate to her position in the universe as a human being and recognize her relation as an individual to the world within and about her. She feels that it was not a condition of life which fitted her and begins to struggle against the social convention to the construction of her own self.

Kate Brown seems to be lived in between two opposites' poles of life. She had her earlier experience of severity in her father's house and at present after taking the job in Global Food, is observing the freedom of expression of the woman. She was thinking that after all it would be a release and a relief to breathe that easy impersonal air for while. Her friendship with Alan Post and atmosphere of intimacy among the women teach her the worth of women love and sexuality. Her job of Global Food, at first makes her realize her status in society in connection to other people. These all play the role of the medium for changing Kate's perception about her identity and value of self.

Kate Brown's perception about locality her 'self' is not stable from the very beginning to the end of the novel. She only knows that her self is suppressed and exploited in society as a woman and tries to create her separate identity with individual self by rebelling against the social convention. She expects achieving

selfhood from one way and experiments over it. But when she fails, she looks for another way. Her frequent failure of achieving a complete selfhood doesn't make her loose the confidence. Instead of surrendering before the social conventions, she rather collects a new finding from each of her experimentations which gradually awaken her for moving ahead in her course of self-discovery.

Search for Identity

The awakening of Kate Brown leads her towards the search for self identity defying the male constructed identity in the patriarchal society. She recognizes her self and values as a woman that are in this text understood as limiting and stifling because they are the only choices deemed socially acceptable for women. In discovering and fully experiencing the pleasure of sensuality and solitude, Kate discovers a sense of self separate from patriarchal demands. Her awareness of self is kindled in her heart and she starts searching for her position in the world. She knows that a woman and a man have equal status in the broader spectrum of universe. But it is surprising to see an equally autonomous human being acting and living without her interest. Society and religion, as forms of patriarchy, bind women to the restrictions of their gendered identities. But Kate's new found identity is much stronger than that of a 'mother-woman'. In the course of the searching her self-identity she takes many radical actions which society doesn't accept easily.

In the opening scene of the novel Kate Brown spends her life, to serve her family. As a result, she realizes her condition, "I couldn't like to be a child again" (5). Before this, she silently followed whatever her husband ordered to do. Gradually she understands her domination and keeps on her effort to be free from the chain of patriarchy. In that process, she meets Alan Post, her husband's friend who manages the job in Global Food. The night before she reports to her translating job for the

international agency Global Food Kate stays up all night practicing her Portuguese making, "a conscious effort to win back memories of her grandfather sitting on the verandah of a stone house in a deep garden full of flame trees and lilies" (24). By forcing her to recall the language she learned in her youth, the translating job begins Kate's mental journey to her past. Grace Ann Hovet and Barbara Lounsbury write, "Her outward movement into the world of language is also an inward movement. For Portuguese, the language in which she remembers herself, is the language of her youth [. . .]" (41). The translating job also leads to a physical separation from the family home, the first necessary step toward shedding the mother role.

In the next chapter, after Kate has been promoted from her position as translator for Global Food, she uses her salary to buy some new clothes and for other things whatever she likes which is her new experience of her life. Sometimes looking at the mirror, she compares her reflection to the image of herself as a young girl and find that what she sees is, "not different from the equipment with which she had attracted a dozen young men nearly quarter of century ago [. . .]" (37). In a further effort to regain her youth, Kate has her hair dyed the same color it was then. She leaves the hairdresser in this way: "with a very dark red haircut so that it felt like a weight of heavy silk swinging against her cheeks as she turned her head. As she remembered very well it had once done always. Shortly after this evocation of her young self" (39).

Kate realizes that she has for the first time in many years time to think, "after all, how many years had it been since she had had time to think- nearly twenty five years (40)". During the time she spends at her grand father's, she had, as she is doing now in some extent. After twenty five years of thinking of everyone else, Kate starts

to regain the ability to contemplate something other than the needs of her family. Her physical freedom from her children allows her to regain some mental freedom.

Kate's new image brings her the attention of men which she soon learns she can encourage or repel simply by how she sits. The control over their response to her triggers another recollection, a subjective retroversion of, "Kate Ferreira, in her thin white embroidered linen dress smiling at some young men whose eyes were all over her" (45-46). She wonders if that girl on the verandah has been sympathetic, a warm personality, terms often used to describe the present Kate Brown, both as a mother to her children and in the role of tribal mother for Global Food. She begins to realize that these traits were not those of Kate Ferreira but of Kate and they had "been created by the interminable disciplines of being wife, mother, housekeeper" (46). Accepting a job had seemed, at first, to be an opportunity to move into a different role, but maternity is so firmly entrenched in Kate that even this job becomes a mother role: "she had been set like a machine by twenty-odd years of being a wife and mother" (47). Because she realizes that working for Global Food would be only a continuation of that role, she tries another means of escape and heads to Spain with Jeffery, a younger man, who is almost immediately stricken with a mysterious illness.

While Jeffery sleeps, Kate spends the first night in Spain sitting up until almost daybreak, thinking about her past. She recalls the climatic moment of three years ago when her youngest son Tim, "then a tumultuous sixteen, had turned on her at the supper table and screamed that she was suffocating him" (86). That event had made Kate realize that her role in the family was changing. Her family had come to regard her as an old nurse who had her years to the family and must now be put up with. That scene, "was the begetter of this summer's event" (94). Because it had allowed her the freedom to accept the translating job. The memory of Tim's outburst

an event triggered by Kate's obsessive mothering, leads her to the memory of herself the before motherhood changed her.

She remembers a girl who had been "all vital energy and individuality"(89). But she recalls five years and three children later she had been "tempted to cry out that it had all been a gigantic conrick" (90). Nothing had prepared her for how much motherhood would demand of her and now as she looks back at that time, she sees the young girl who entered that role "as a sort of fatted white goose"(90). She begins to see what motherhood had required that she became:

With three small children, and then four, she had to fight for qualities that had not been even on her vocabulary. Patience. Self-discipline. Self-Control. Self-abnegation. Chastity. Adaptability to other -this above all. This always. These virtues, necessary for bringing up a family of four on a restricted income, she did slowly acquire. (90)

As she now considers these qualities and sees how she had suppressed the individuality she had in her youth, she wonders if they really were virtues:

But virtues? Really? Really virtues? If so, they had turned on her, had become her enemies. Looking back from the condition as a girl when she lived with Michael, it seemed to her condition as a girl when she lived with Michael, it seemed to her that she had acquired not virtues but a form of dementia. (91)

Kate recognizes, as it were "The Dark" that motherhood had become for her. In the summer of 1948, she had been a young, confident, courageous girl but "through the long grinding process of always, having to give attention to detail (. . .) into an obsessed maniac. Obsessed by what was totally unimportant"(93). This obsession to

be a good mother is the long period of darkness Kate entered after "the summer" of her youth. As St. Andrews writes "Kate now finds herself facing the matricidal influence of her children and she must break the bonds of her children's powers to construct and to define her" (21).

Kate's awareness allows her to break free from "the dark" that the mother role had become. Viewing "the dark" in the title as the madness of motherhood allow us to predict that the summer of 1973 will not be followed by another period of darkness.

In the reference to her youth, we see that Kate becomes fully aware of how she had lost herself in the mothering role. We also see that she is breaking free from this obsession. She feels as if she were just coming around from a spell of madness that has lasted all the years. Since that point in early adolescence when her nature had demanded she must get herself a man, that point in time when as Betsy Draine writes, "Adolescence had oriented her whole being toward the demands of procreation"(125). Because of her new awareness, the drug has begun to wear off and all those years now seem like a betrayal of what she really was.

Kate demonstrates her freedom from the mother role by leaving her ill and not improving lover, Jeffery and returning to London. Betsy Draine writes that deserting Jeffery is, "an act that the former Kate would have judged as inconceivably heartless and irresponsible and is the first sign of her success in leaving behind her maternal role (102)". She realizes that she owes Jeffery nothing and that the only way she can help him is by neglecting herself, which she will no longer do.

At the Bloomsbury hotel, Kate receives some much needed mothering herself. As Walter Poznar writes, "minister expertly to her needs, for they too have been taught all the arts of consolation and kindness that had characterized Kate's role, both

as a mother and at Global Food" (56). They give Kate the attention she could not get from her family, they care for her just as she had cared for the stray "the winter after that dramatic scene with her son Tim"(96). Having confronted and rejected the obsessions of motherhood, Kate must now deal with the other issues facing her marriage and old age and the scene on her grandfather's veranda is not replayed in the hotel.

After she leaves the hotel and moves in with Maureen, Kate's relationship with young woman, writes Laura Hliffeld, "is a kind of testing ground for her new way of seeing herself outside of the mother role"(11). Kate's lapse into motherly skilled management (on learning of her son Tim's early return) motivates Maureen to reject Philip's proposal of marriage. Kate refuses, however, to mother the girl and recognizes how successful she has been at shedding the mother role. She was thinking that she had indeed made a long journey in the last months. Before it she could not have sat quiet, while a girl her daughter's age wept with misery because of her, Kate's, power to darken her future.

Kate's relationship with Maureen shows how she will be able to relate to her own children now that she has freed herself from the obsession of motherhood. Although Maureen had become one of her children and she felt for her as she did for them. She realizes that she is able to relate to the young woman as an adult rather than as a child. She can talk to Maureen about absolutely anything face her as her complete self, rather than in little bits as she had faced her children. The relationship shows Kate that she will be able to relate to her own children in the same way after she returns home.

This novel paints a very dark picture of motherhood and causes us to wonder what message Lessing is giving us about the maternal role. Is motherhood a "gigantic

conrick"(90) that lures unaware young women into a "long grinding process"(93) that turns them into "middle-aged women whose faces and movements [---] are those of prisoners and slaves" (92). Throughout the novel, marriage and motherhoods are associated with images of imprisonment. Experiencing the freedom of being able to sleep until noon, Kate recognizes that for years she has been "living inside the timetable of other people's needs"(85). At one point Kate remembers motherhood as similar to being "locked for ever in a large box with four perpetually exploding egos"(87).She compares breaking free from the maternal role to getting out of a cage. Motherhood is entrapped in a role that turns a young woman into a mothering machine destined to outlive its usefulness and then be treated "like an old nurse who had given her years to the family and must now be put up with"(93).

After all, the ultimate goal of mothering is the independence of our children. We constantly work toward a time when we will no longer be needed, at least at the level of involvement that precipitates her revelations about the confinement of the mother role. Perhaps, for Kate Brown, at this point in motherhood, viewing the many years of mothering as a form of imprisonment from which she wants to escape is necessary, even psychologically healthy for, "the woman with grown-up children and not enough to do whose energies must be switched from the said children to less vulnerable targets, for everybody's sake, her own as well as theirs"(22). Such a view may be a necessary step toward accepting the inevitable independence of the children and the end of that role. It is, quite naturally, much easier to let go of something one is destined to lose if it is viewed in a negative light. Kate, however, is able to move beyond this view.

Kate and her friend, Maureen, search Kate's memory for happiness and the stories she tells the young women center on these happier moments of motherhood.

When they meet a young mother on the street and face an image of motherhood at its worst, Maureen asks why she never remembers similar scenes from her past. Kate's response indicates that her period of viewing motherhood on all darkness is ending, "Kate was going to say. Because nothing like that ever happened. But she walked on in silence, trying to remember if it had" (223). In earlier sections of the novel, Kate's past recollections about motherhood had dwelt on the negative aspects; she now has difficulty remembering them.

This is after all, what Lessing told us at the beginning of the novel: "for there is no doubt at all that there does persist the feeling and it is probably the deepest one we have, that what matters most is that we learn through living" (8). As Kate lives through the "Shortened, heightened, concentrated time" (9) of the summer of 1973, her physical journey becomes a mental journey to her past. As she travels back to the summer of 1948, she learns about herself and regions parts of herself that she had almost forgotten. St. Andrew writes to this end, "She reclaims the girl she was and the woman she is, fusing her past and her present so that she can create a full future" (23).

Therefore, she thinks that there is no meaning of life with proper identity. It gives her a sense of living. She finds herself in a new land that gives her a sense of freedom.

This description makes us clear that at the end, Kate realizes that a thing to which she loves most also is temporary and will ultimately leave her. For her fulfillment of desire now, she knows that she must include them in her life. This is the rule of nature. She wanders through life lost yet determined to give meaning to her life. But soon realizes that the outward garb, the outer personality and appearance are not what matters. What matters is the inner strength, the will to manage life on her

own terms. She returns as a mother to her home realizing that she can regain her identity from her home. She comes back strong with realization and determination.

IV. Conclusion

In a patriarchal society, for years the women have lived under protection of either parents or husband or their sons. This pattern of life outwardly makes women's lives safe and smooth but actually slavish and dependent on men. Now along with other various factors, the new education has awakened women. They have started thinking of independent and self-reliant life.

Modern women who have grown along with their consciousness find futility and emptiness of these long-preserved notions and taboos. Thus the modern women are striving to be free and self-reliant. While fighting against the established old system women pursue different methods and strategies to liberate them. But the patriarchy always dominates them, their rebel confronts a sense of failure and they suffer infinitely. This suffering and alienation have become the condition of women during their life.

In this context, *The Summer Before the Dark* is a book with many layers. When taken strictly for face value, it is an engrossing tale of a young woman's journey from her house to Turkey and her journey through Turkey. However, when examined more closely the book it becomes a masterful narrative of Kate Brown's search to find herself.

The protagonist Kate Brown, to attain her self and independence, breaks the traditional chains like marriage, motherhood and family. But in the beginning of novel, performing a role of innocent good wife and mother of four children, she awakens to the new consciousness. Kate Brown realizes that to achieve a free self is not possible without breaking the orthodox social norms and values. She knows that the identity of women is handicapped by the domination of male authority. Therefore,

she takes many actions not only by destroying social values but also in the process establishing values of her own. She rejects the traditional role of female as 'mother-woman' and reconstructs alternative oppositional role of a free-woman which longs for a life with personal emotions individuality and self-identity.

While searching her identity, she encounters different steps in order to realize her position in the society. At the beginning of the novel, Kate Brown performs her duty as the traditional women. At the time, females were taken as husband's possession, second sex and submissive. They limited themselves to women were not conscious about the self, household territories and closed circle. But she found mistakes in the structure of the society and the concept of the male towards female in the course of relation to other characters.

Lessing's *The Summer Before the Dark* Shows the conflict of the women's identity in the male dominated society. Kate Brown keeps her effort to establish her identity throughout the novel but she is disturbed by the norms and values of society. However, this novel immensely portrays the problems of woman's identity and her effort to achieve it. The whole novel is the struggle of a single woman. After varied experiences she comes back mature and stronger, a victorious woman. Her victory lies in her realization that to gain and maintain one's identity is not wander in search of one's personality but live by the set of norms and values one identifies and gives importance to.

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