

Doris Lessing's Personal Pilgrimage from Communism to Sufism

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Abstract:

This paper chronicles Lessing's journey from her early involvement in the London Communist Party to her disillusionment with Marxist theory after the Hungarian crisis of 1956. It discusses her major works, such as "The Grass Is Singing" and "The Golden Notebook," which challenged traditional narrative structures and investigated the complexities of identity and consciousness. With vivid imagery and symbolism, the abstract highlights Lessing's ability to depict diverse domains, including colonial Africa, social disintegration, and mental breakdown.

The contributions of Lessing to literature are recognised, and her unique perspective as a Marxist feminist author is emphasised. The abstract also discusses her 2007 Nobel Prize in Literature and her reactions to it, illuminating her independent and unyielding nature. Lessing's writing voyage paralleled her personal development throughout her life, from political activism to a profound exploration of inner and outer space, which ultimately led her to Sufism.

Keywords: Disillusionment, Sufism, communism, inner space, exploration.

Introduction:

The Nobel Prize Academy correctly referred to Lessing as "that epicist of the female experience," describing her as someone "who with scepticism, fire, and visionary power has subjected a divided civilization to scrutiny."

For the past six decades, Lessing, a novelist from the United Kingdom, has investigated the unsettling junction of political and the personal.

The secretary of the Academy, Horace Engdahl, was quoted by Reuters as saying that Lessing's work had an influence on other authors and literature. He stated that the academy has been thinking about her for the position of laureate for many years. "Now the moment was right. Perhaps we could say that she is one of the most carefully considered decisions in the history of the Nobel Prize," Engdahl said to the news service. "She has opened up a new area of experience that previously had not been very accepted in literature. That has to do with female sexuality." "She has opened up a new area of experience that earlier had not been very accepted in literature."

Lessing continues by saying that she has never been a pessimist and doesn't see many reasons to be optimistic, but she does believe that the ship has a small possibility of missing the reefs once more practically everywhere. It is essential to begin with children and to encourage them, irrespective of their ethnicity or group affiliation, to accept themselves as complete individuals. People who lack self-

assurance and confidence are unable to converse or discuss difficulties. Lessing is of the opinion that politicians ought to know, appreciate, and comprehend their fellow humans, in addition to having greater foresight than they already do.

The Communist Bent And Disillusionment:

Around the middle of the 1950s, Lessing became a member of the London Communist Party. She took a vehement stance against nuclear weapons as well as governments based on race in South Africa and Rhodesia. Due to the negative writings she had written, she was banned from entering Africa for many years. This demonstrates how significant her word was because great precautions were taken to prevent her from travelling back to the nation where she was born. After joining the Communist Party in Africa, Lessing became disillusioned with Marxist theory after the Hungarian crisis of 1956, an event that was denounced by a number of British intellectuals.

After her marriage to Mr. Lessing ended in divorce, Doris Lessing and her son Peter relocated to London so that she might pursue a career as a writer. Her first book published in the United Kingdom, *The Grass Is Singing*, was out in 1949 and was about a white farmer's wife and her black servant. Ms. Lessing drew inspiration for her early works from her youth spent in colonial countries. In both the United States and the United Kingdom, Ms. Lessing's works have been published by HarperCollins for more than twenty years. Jane Friedman made this statement about Doris Lessing at the annual international book fair: "for women and for literature, Doris Lessing is a mother to us all."

Lessing is the author of a number of other books, such as "The Good Terrorist" and "Martha Quest." *Alfred and Emily* was the final book published by Lessing in 2008. She is an author of science fiction, and some of her later works reflect her interest in Sufi mysticism, which she interprets as relating individual destinies to society. She believes that this is the case.

On October 22, 1919, she was born under the name Doris May Tayler in what is now the country of Iran. Her father, Alfred Cook Taylor, was a British Imperial Bank of Persia employee who was injured during World War I, and her mother, Emily Maude Taylor, was a nurse. Both of her parents were born in the United Kingdom. Her father was a soldier in World War I. After that, he was unsuccessful in England. He found it to be somewhat congested. When the men returned home after their time spent in the trenches, they found that they were unable to cope. He requested that his bank change his course of action. He was given a transfer to Persia, where his family lived in a magnificent mansion that also had apartments and horses. Lessing recalls them as having been

It is a beautiful day outside. I just found out recently that this community is abandoned. It's a sign of the times that this place is an ancient market town with exquisite architecture. Nobody picked up on it. There is too much destruction for anyone to care. After that, they sent him to the terrible city of Tehran, where my mother was overjoyed to become a part of the "legation set."

Mom cherished each and every second of her life. The daily dinner gatherings were something that Lessing's father abhorred. He went back to the usual routine. They went back to England in 1924, at which time the Empire Exhibition—which is mentioned in certain works of literature—must have had a significant impression on them. The Southern Rhodesian exhibit featured enormous ears of maize and corncobs, as well as phrases such as "Make your fortune in five years" and other alluring claims. Lessing's father, a romantic at heart, prepared to leave everything behind. As a result of the injuries he sustained in fighting, he was awarded a small pension of approximately five thousand pounds and relocated to a faraway country to work as a farmer. As a young boy, he spent his time in the teeny-tiny

town of Colchester working on his family's farm. In 1925, the prospect of financial success in the maize farming industry drew him to the veld of Rhodesia. The family moved to Southern Rhodesia, which was then administered by the British and is today known as Zimbabwe. Doris's mother valiantly attempted to recreate a civilised Edwardian existence in the midst of savages in the colony, but Doris's father did not, and the roughly one thousand acres of jungle he purchased did not yield wealth.

Her Experiment with Science-Fiction:

The story told by Lessing's father was very typical during that era. When Lessing began writing *Shikasta*, she says in her memoirs, "It took me some time, but it struck me quite forcibly how many wounded ex-servicemen, both English and German, were out there." Lessing continues by saying, "My father was not the only soldier who never, ever forgave his country for what he saw as promises made but betrayed; for these soldiers were many, in Britain, France, and in Germany, Old Soldiers who kept that bitterness until the day they died." These people were naive and idealistic; they felt that the war was being fought to put an end to war.

Lessing reflects on a childhood filled with both happiness and melancholy in equal measure. Her monotonous life was brightened whenever she went hiking with her brother Harry in the woods. Her mother was so focused on bringing up a respectable daughter that she was preoccupied with enforcing tight rules and hygiene at home. She also sent Doris to a Catholic school where the nuns taught the students about damnation and hell. Later on, Lessing left her secondary education at an all-female institution located in Salisbury, the capital city. At the age of thirteen, her formal education was finished. Lessing is another author who educated herself independently, following in the footsteps of Olive Schreiner and Nadine Gordimer. She recently stated that unhappier childhoods make for better writers of fiction. That is correct, although at the time I didn't understand what you meant. Writing wasn't as important to me as getting away from it all."

Her mother read bedtime stories to the children, and Doris kept her younger brother awake with stories. London book parcels provided her with an escape into other worlds. "We are all of us made by war," Lessing said, "twisted and warped by war, but we seem to forget it." Doris absorbed her father's harsh World War I recollections as "poison."

Lessing ran away from her mother when she was fifteen years old and took a job as a nursemaid. Her employer gave her access to books on politics and sociology, and despite her dissatisfaction with her tardy suitor, she entertained elaborate romantic fantasies. Two of her short pieces were eventually published in South African publications.

Lessing challenged her view that people cannot resist their time as a form of defiance against the biological and societal forces that forced her into marriage and children. She claimed that a generation of women from her mother's era stopped living when they had children, and that the majority of them became neurotic as a result of the disparity between their schooling and their reality. Lessing believes that writing made her freer than other people. Writing is a way for her to separate the raw, individual, and uncriticized, and the unexamined, into the realm of the general.

That hungry, angry heart refused to be appeased? Lessing's parents frequently discussed the possibility of moving back to England from their farm in Rhodesia, which was difficult, but the Great Depression of the 1930s prevented them from doing so. "How could we return to England during the Slump?

Hungry, angry heart refused to be appeased?" Lessing writes in her autobiography, *Under My Skin*, about her miserable childhood. Many passages in the book describe Lessing's early

Despite having a difficult childhood, Doris Lessing is known for writing fiction that is largely autobiographical and based on her experiences in Africa. Lessing has written about the clash of cultures, the gross injustices of racial inequality, the struggle between opposing elements in an individual's personality, and the conflict between the individual conscience and the collective good, drawing from her own personal experiences.

Her first marriage, at the age of nineteen, was to Frank Wisdom, a civil servant much older than herself. She gave birth to a boy and then neglected him. He reacted like young Doris—angry and confused. Another child followed. She drank excessively, had affairs, and mistreated her husband (much of this was written in *A Proper Marriage* 1954, Marth Lessing). Her second spouse was Gottfried Lessing, a German immigrant who was a communist.

After becoming a member of the Communist Party, Doris wed Gottfried Lessing in 1943. Gottfried came from an affluent Russian family of assimilated German Jews who became Germans after the 1917 revolution and Jews after Nuremberg. According to his wife, Gottfried was "the embodiment of cold, cutting, Marxist logic," a "cold, silent man" "who read everything, and who did not think it remarkable to read." Everyone was afraid of him.

Gottfried encouraged Martha Quest's writing but didn't like it. "What I liked best about myself, what I held fast to, he liked least." Martha Quest married Gottfried to save him from enemy alien internment and stayed in a "unhappy but kindly marriage" to bolster his British citizenship application. They divorced in 1948 when his application was denied. Gottfried was killed in 1979 during a coup against Idi Amin as East German ambassador to Uganda.

Lessing is considered to be one of the most important authors to come out of England after World War II. In her novels, short stories, and articles, she has written about a wide range of topics from the 20th century, such as race politics, family and individual roles, and science fiction from the late 1970s and early 1980s. Charu Sharma says:

Post-modernist writers, like Lessing, mirror themselves and their life throughout their writing. She was a Marxist feminist, and as a result, the women she writes about are intelligent political people.

She believes that class, race, and colour are more oppressive than sex.

She considers herself a unique individual at a specific time and place who could have turned out otherwise. Lessing is an intuitive fiction writer who discovers things. Her books have been influenced by Communism, Sufism, and Science-Fiction, but two contradictory impulses show throughout: to demonstrate that nothing is permanent; to insist that nothing really changes.

She never makes any assumptions and examines all angles, both in her professional and personal life. She is of the opinion that the circumstances of her life may have been different had she been a different kind of person at a different time and in a different location. Communism, Sufism, and science fiction have always been influences on her writing, but two opposing drives demonstrate that nothing ever changes.

Lessing admits, "If you write in bits, you lose some very valuable continuity of form. An undetectable inner continuity." The Noble committee called Lessing the "epicist of the female experience." Lessing replied, "I can just see somebody sitting there thinking, "What the hell are we going to say about this

one? She doesn't like being called a Feminist so what'll say?" so they scribbled that."17 Lessing was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature

After relocating to London, she published her first book, a short story titled *The Grass Is Singing*, in the year 1950. The story is about a white woman's horror of a black servant and is set in South Africa. After this, she published three more novels in the 'Children of Violence' series, all of which are autobiographical: *Martha Quest*, *A Proper Marriage*, and *A Ripple From the Storm*.

Growth of Consciousness:

After the Children of Violence series (1951-1959), which was a conventional bildungsroman (novel of education) about Martha Quest's consciousness growth, came *The Golden Notebook* (1962), which was a daring narrative that attempted to adapt the climate of ethical judgement found in nineteenth-century novels to twentieth-century ideas about consciousness and time. This narrative was written in response to the success of the 'Children of Violence' series.

The Golden Notebook, Lessing's most renowned and important work, was about a writer's split identities (political, literary, and sexual). It sold millions of copies and prophesied the revolt with its proclamation that every door opens to a strident, frantic, and inaudible scream. *The Golden Notebook* was about a writer's divided selves and was about a writer's divided selves.

The Golden Notebook is a novel by Doris Lessing that is 640 pages long and follows the protagonist, Anna, a woman who is deciding what is important in her life while going through a breakdown and breakthroughs. "It's a touchstone book for my generation and for a lot of women of every generation," adds Ka. "It's also a touchstone book for men." While I was reading that book, it felt as though I could spend the rest of my life there.

"Ms. Lessing's novel broke the mould in 1962 when it was first published. Even now, it's hard to imagine another piece of work that fuses sex, politics, and emotional breakdown so completely and with such honesty and frankness." The most astonishing and intriguing aspect of this novel is how it takes the reader through a genuine emotional breakdown. This novel is a masterpiece.

"Even with the nontraditional form that Lessing chose, the novel is not difficult to understand or follow. The author finds a quiet beauty in the simple language." The reader can easily find themselves settled in. The reader is shown fragments, memories, emotions, and opinions thrown together. However, the relationship that forms between them is what the reader must figure out and learn from.

The main character, Anna Wulf, is a rising literary star who merges the real and the imaginary into four color-coded notebooks. In summary, *The Golden Notebook* is a work of fiction about the chaotic process of producing fiction, and it makes an unsuccessful attempt to intertwine numerous novels into one.

Anna tries to convey the entirety of her experience in a new notebook (Golden notebook) after realising that these four notebooks fail to capture her whole self. The reader is bewildered to discover that he or she has been reading this novel the entire time—a glimpse of what Ms. Lessing presented at the beginning of the novel, 'Free Women'.

If you let it, this book will change you. "But *The Golden Notebook*, if read carefully, soulfully, and with introspection, will force the reader to struggle right along with Ms. Lessing's Anna Wulf in search of the real self. If you let it, this book will change you." Doris Lessing referred to this novel as a failure due to the fact that it only names the issues and briefly explores them.

Since the publication of *The Golden Notebook* in 1962, Lessing has had an uneasy relationship with the women's movement, which claimed it as a founding document, and a positively hostile relationship with

the academy, which claimed it as a prototypical postmodern novel. She has maintained a wary distance from her most enthusiastic feminist disciples, dismissing critics as fleas on the backs of writers.

They argued that I wrote about racial issues, communism, women, the mystic experience, space fiction, and so on and so forth; yet, I wrote about the same topics. Our society's inclination to fragment drives people to crisis and despair, which is something that I sought to convey in *The Golden Notebook*.

Lessing herself has long denied that *The Golden Notebook* was written for the liberation of women. During an interview, she cites an early line in the novel – "everything's cracking up" – as a message well beyond the breakdown of traditional male-female relationships. Referring to the book's nonlinear structure, she calls it as a way of looking at things from all different angles and not just from the straight and narrow. 'In interviews since the '60s Lessing has referred to this novel as her "albatross." Its success has haunted her career through subsequent years of much critical disapproval.' No one can deny this fact that her novel *The Golden Notebook* has been a turning point in the life of Doris Lessing. A writer who was taken lightly till now was debated over by the critics. The narrative style of the Martha Quest novels of 'and then-and then' had changed. A new self had come into being. Lessing herself in the Preface of *The Golden Notebook* has written, "I was so immersed in this book, that I didn't think about how it might be received [...] All sorts of idea and experiences I didn't recognize as mine emerged when writing. The actual time of writing, then, and not only the experience that had gone into writing, was really traumatic: it changed me." Emerging from this crystallizing process, handing the manuscript to the publisher and friends, Lessing learned that she had written a tract about the sex war, and fast discovered that nothing she said then could change that diagnosis. Lessing further said that the novel had to set among socialist and Marxists, because it had been inside various chapter of socialism that the great debate of her time had gone on; the movements, the wars, the revolutions, had been seen by the participants as movements of various kind of socialism, or Marxism, in advance, containment, or retreat but Marxism and its various offshoots had fermented ideas everywhere, and so fast and energetically that, once 'way out,' it had already been absorbed, had become part of ordinary thinking. Ideas that were confined to the far left, thirty or forty years ago had pervaded the left, twenty years back and had provided the commonplace of conventional social thought from right to left for more than ten years. Something so thoroughly absorbed was finished as a force- but it was dominant, "I decided that to give the ideological 'feel' of our mid century [...] and in a novel of the sort I was trying to do, had to be central."

In the course of her illustrious 60-year literary career, Doris Lessing has guided her readers into a number of very distinct realms, including colonial Africa, the confused emotions that tie men and women, social disintegration, mental breakdown, and even nuclear disaster.

Lessing's reading in preschool included works by Scott, Stevenson, Kipling, the Lambs' Shakespeare, and Dickens. (During her time period, "children were not patronized" but rather encouraged to try things that were beyond them.) Now she read contemporary fiction, in particular works by D.H. Lawrence, and the great Russians. By the time she was eighteen, she had written two apprentice novels.

She has highlighted her two dogs and two cats in her autobiography, *Under My Skin*, and has been an animal lover ever since she was a youngster. Lessing is the author of two books titled *Cats* and *On Cats*, both of which are about her cats.

In her acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize, Doris Lessing described young black Zimbabweans teaching themselves to read off jam jars in a country where a paperback costs the equivalent of several years' worth of wages. As a result of the Labour government's decision to cut funding for Book Aid

International (BAI), an organisation that promotes literacy in developing countries by exporting secondhand books, Lessing is incensed.

Lessing is considered to be one of the most important authors of the 20th century. She is known for her ability to evoke a wide range of environments and moods through the use of symbolism, imagery, and detailed, realistic descriptions. F. Scott Fitzgerald once referred to her work as having "tension and immediacy". Some argue that her enlightened portrayal of marriage and motherhood, anti-apartheid stance, and experimentation with genre and form have made her exciting—and She claims that she became a writer out of frustration, which is something that many other writers also do. She could have been a good farmer, a doctor, or anything else.

According to Thomas F. Staley, director of the research department at the University of Texas that maintains Lessing's archives, one of Lessing's greatest strengths "were her piercing social commentary, which was so much a part of her novels." Lessing's archives are held at the University of Texas. It attracted interest in her work all across the world.

Lessing has produced around 60 works in the genres of poetry, science fiction, theatre, and opera, making him more varied and prolific than Dickens. She had only published one novel when she moved to London, and it was called *The Grass is Singing*. Because of its positive reception, she was quickly accepted into London's intellectual and literary circles.

She was stunning, and just like everyone else, I couldn't take my eyes off of her. Since she was around 15 years older than I was and a novelist who had won awards, she was able to teach me things about writing that I didn't know. She was a talented cook and had intimate dinner parties at her house, during which we sat cross-legged and ate food that she had prepared on a variety of plates. She was like the best of her characters in that she cared about her friends, she had an enormous amount of intelligence, and she didn't put up with crap.

A number of prestigious literary awards have been bestowed upon Lessing, including the Somerset Maugham Award (1954), the Prix Médicis étranger (1976), the Osterreichischer Staatspreis for European Literature (1981), the Shakespeare-Preis der Alfred Toepfer Stiftung F. V. S., Hamburg (1982), and the W. G. Sebald Prize (1984). James Tait Black Memorial Book Prize (1995), Los Angeles Times B. H. Smith Literary Award (1986), Palermo Prize (1987), Premio Internazionale Mondello (1987), Premio Grinzane Cavour (1989), and Los Angeles Times B. H. Smith Literary Award (1986).

Doris Lessing was doing some supermarket shopping close to her London home when the Swedish Academy made the announcement that she had won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2007. Lessing, angry, said that she would conduct an impromptu news conference after learning about the honour, which was waiting for her when she returned from the store where she had been.

Lessing was quoted as saying to the media, "I don't care; this has been going on for 30 years." "I've won all the prizes in Europe, every bloody one, so I'm delighted to win them all. It's a royal flush. I'm 88 years old, and they can't give the Nobel to someone who is dead, so I think they thought it would be better to give it to me now before I pop off. "

During the speech she gave after being awarded the Nobel Prize, Lessing provided a description of Rhodesia. She mentioned how the people there wait for books to be supplied by a variety of sources, but they are unaware of the dearth of life in which they find themselves. She stated, "Writers are sometimes asked: "How do you write?" A word processor? A typewriter that uses electricity? A feather? What's that?The most important question is, "Have you found the empty place you need to write? If a writer is unable to find this space, then the poems and stories they create might as well be stillborn. When authors

get together, they always discuss this creative space, this other time. Have you found it?" Are you holding on?"

When a new writer emerges, the first question that is asked about them is not how they write or whether they can maintain their literary aura. Instead, the question that is asked is, "Is she good-looking?" If the writer is a man, the question that is asked is, "Charismatic? Handsome?" We joke about it, but it is not a joke. This fresh discovery is garnering praise, and it might even be rewarded monetarily. The poor people's ears are where the buzzing of hype first starts. They are lavished with praise and attention, and they are taken on international excursions. We veterans, who have been through it all, feel bad for this newcomer because they have no concept what is actually going on, and we are terrible for them. They feel gratified and content with the compliment.

We older writers would like to ask those young writers, "Have you still got your space?" Many famous young writers haven't written anything new in a long time or haven't written what they intended to write. your internal self, in which alone you may dream and in which only you can hear your own thoughts. Don't let go—hold on tight! "

Before the Swedish Academy celebrated her "scepticism, fire, and visionary power"⁴¹ in October 2007, Doris Lessing's name was near the top of the list of the best living writers who had not won the Nobel Prize in Literature.

Conclusion:

Lessing has a very determined, independent and unexpected stand on survival. Lessing travels a lot. Her purpose of traveling is basically promoting her books. Lessing, who traveled to China in the '80s, is characteristically as interested in the country's own literature as in its embracing of her writing. Her admiration for Xiaolu Guo, author of *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary For Lovers*, also shows how the relentlessly unclubbable Lessing is drawn to exiles: she has spent much time with them in London, and at one stage her home became a welcoming point for Africans escaping from countries that would later take them back as leaders. 'Today she talks about a prominent Zimbabwean businessman who turned down a position in Mugabe's government and now lives in council accommodation in London ('I'm not going to say where; the Mugabe regime has long fingers'). Back in the '50s those she entertained included Kenneth Kaunda, the founding president of Zambia. One exile told her he had been warned about her by the British secret services; they asserted that she was involved in dangerous conspiracies with Arabs ('that was such a joke – I wasn't!'). She was also classed a 'prohibited immigrant' in Rhodesia, so despite now being one of literature's most respected figures, she knows all about being considered a political undesirable.' *Four Visits to Zimbabwe* (1992) describes her four visits to Southern Africa, between 1982 and 1992. Her autobiographical volume *Under My Skin* (1994) depicts her childhood in Zimbabwe and *Walking in the Shade: Volume Two of My Autobiography* (1997) covers the years from 1959 to 1962.

I don't see it as a "instead." The popular picture of me at the moment is, "Here is this very political woman, extremely active politically for nearly all of her life, and now she's become a mystic." First of all, I have not been active politically for the majority of my life. Since I've been in England, I've been writing. And my studying of Sufism is very much in this world.

Doris Lessing's personal pilgrimage from Communism to Sufism spans three continents and a world war, sixteen novels, more than a half-dozen volumes of short stories, four nonfiction books, four plays, and a book of poems. It also covers the personal journey from politics to inner space and the more recent

impersonal journey from inner to outer space. Many people fear that Doris Lessing has achieved the Sufi goal too well.

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