

Psychodynamics of Mother Daughter Relationship: Degrees of Deprivation, Oppression and Dispossession in Doris Lessing's *Under My Skin and The Grass is Singing*

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Abstract

Contextualized within psychoanalytic feminist concern, this study aims at fathoming out various dynamics operating at psychoanalytic level within the mother daughter relationship which are liable of affecting the daughter's level of attachment and intimacy with the mother in the texts of Doris Lessing. A view into the phenomenon of motherhood, mothering, mothering and varied dynamics of mother daughter relationship is provided by the study. The research opines that contemporary works like those of Lessing provide a fresh stance of the mother daughter dyad by breaking all kinds of idealized boundaries. The authorial voice explored herein is that of the daughter but analyzing the position and stance of the mother as an independent entity, factors behind her failure in mothering that lead to matrophobia is another possible approach for research that is still not treaded upon.

Key Words: *Psychoanalytic feminism, motherhood, matrophobia, Doris Lessing*

I: Introduction

Lessing's works provide a private niche to the author where she discloses in prominence her conflicted and struggling relationship with her mother. The paradigm of mother daughter relationship and its psychodynamics including explanations about the developmental stages of the relationship between the mother and the daughter, human behavior of the two in the context of relationship formation and maintenance, psychopathology where the daughter feels isolated and the psychoanalytic dimensions of treatment of this particular relationship, primarily in the world of psychoanalytic and feminist literary history unfold that the phenomenon of mother daughter relation holds immense complexity and layers of intricacies in the feminist discourses. The presence of a mother figure in discourse that has daughter's authorial voice has always and ever been probed into, discussed and analyzed in literature and has deep historical roots since the time of Greeks. Mother daughter relation has always enjoyed being of significance, at times appearing titled as 'Electra Complex' after Sophocles' *Electra*

while at others emerging out as the phenomenon of ‘Matrophobia’ as titled by Sukenick and carried on further by second wave of feminists (Hallstein 2010).

II: Literature Review

Lessing’s works *Under My Skin* and *The Grass is Singing* hold a place where feminist and psychoanalytical thought can be seen as embedded and merged within the texts. Highly subjective, self representational and autobiographical narrative mood of the texts highlight the element of self understanding on part of the Doris Lessing as Lynda Scott points out (Scott 2013). Anca Georgescu also states her opinion that life writing has enabled Lessing to deal with difficulties of her life using a subjective method (1998). Lynda Scott says about Doris Lessing’s attempt of writing the truths and confessions of her life as more tilted towards being literary therapeutics. She expresses Lessing’s stance in the following words:

She [Lessing] is able to recreate past selves and commune in an inner dialogue with earlier and necessarily fictive selves while constructing a coherent text that represents a healed and unified self at a particular instant in time. Because an individual's perception of her or his self is forever changing and the unconscious realm is a dynamic one, the self-representational text is also a historical artifact, and may be likened to on-going records of therapy sessions. (Scott 2013)

Motherhood and mothering has been explored by feminists after the subject appeared to hold significant importance in the discourses and fiction at the end of twentieth century (Hallstein 2010). Shilpa propounds that it cannot be stated that mother daughter dyad is tilted towards either of extreme sides. According to her in both the lives of the mother and the daughter, the relationship observes a continuous transition. “Each life stage for both mother and daughter represents new challenges and opportunities for new relational integrations” (Shilpa 2010). This is primarily why the mother daughter discourse itself obeys a path that is somewhat away from being uniform in its treatment of mother daughter relationship.

The empowering and oppressive dimensions of maternity as well as the complex relationship between the mother are depicted in *Of Woman Born* which is credited to be one of the first feminist texts to explore motherhood, mothering, and matrophobia and is widely acknowledged and credited by contemporary feminist scholars in this realm (Hallstein 2010). In Europe and European texts, works by Adrienne Rich, *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* and Alice Walker’s Essay “In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens’.” These works can be termed as turning points in understanding of mothering, motherhood and mother figure particularly in European texts. Nancy Chodorow’s *The Reproduction of Mothering* which also came up in 1970’s deals extensively with the issue of gender polarities and the identity issues between the daughter and the mother especially those that affect the daughter.

III: Discussion

3.1: Ambiguous and Ambivalent Mother Daughter Relation in Self Representation works of Lessing

In Doris Lessing’s works mother daughter relationship stands out quite prominently as far as its complications and conflicting presentations on the part of the author is concerned. To best figure out the psychodynamics of mother daughter relation in Lessing’s self representational work and the psychotherapy that

she aims to do of the feeling of matrophobia resultantly, it is integral to know that at what levels and at how many possible ways Lessing's treatment of a daughter's relation with her mother operates primarily as depicted by her through her writing or in other words what are the dynamics psychoanalytic and psychological that operate within mother daughter cross. Lessing purposely delineates a stance where daughter's relation with the mother is conventional and unconventional at the same time, resultantly adding more depth to it. "The mother daughter relationship has been described as most ambiguous, ambivalent, and challenging than any of the other three parent child dyads (mother-son, father-son, and father-daughter) (Shilpa 2010). This ambiguity and intricacy is what is prominent with the treatment of Lessing as well. According to Boyd, "no matter how much feminist theory has attempted to define female sexuality outside Freud's sexist theories, one thing remains intact: the ambivalent nature of the mother daughter relationship" (Boyd 2013). The ambiguous relation with her own mother sees its various dimensions in self representational writings of Lessing where the protagonists are struggling women with the phenomenon of motherhood as Lessing herself had been all her life. The spice of inter relation and inter subjectivity allows a profound analysis of the mother daughter relationship.

3.2: Mother as Emanating Source of Identity for the Daughter

Nancy Chodorow states about the role of a mother figure in a daughter's life in following words: "Women define and explain themselves relationally, especially in relation to mother issues" (Chodorow 1978). The mother figure thus becomes the emanating source of the identity of the daughter to which she continually relates and has to link back all her life. It colors the very making of the individual no matter how much time elapses for the newly born from being removed at the umbilical cord and fending ways in the world. The urge to go back to the womb is experienced by an individual at any time of his life no matter what the gender of the child is. The mother acts as a source and the connection that continually attracts the created being towards itself. She is all defining and all encompassing and that is why Chodorow is of the opinion that the definition of a daughter is actually taken consciously or unconsciously but directly from her mother (Chodorow 1978). Here, the role of a father or siblings enjoy their respective domains, with complexities of a different nature but the gender to gender flow of identity and personality traits is experienced perpetually and unhindered between a mother and a daughter.

3.3: Hatred of the daughter for the Mother

Relationships grow with the passage of time while there are some that undergo humongous changes as time elapses. Shilpa elucidates that research has made it vivid that mother daughter relation does not enjoy uniformity in terms of the strength of the bond between the two. Corroborating to it is the notion that this relation is fluctuating and an ever changing bond as time elapses and growth takes place (2010). Lessing immaculately describes the ups and downs and complexities of her relation with her mother to an extend of blunt expression of hatred that at one time she had for her and the burden that the mother on the other hand felt her to be. In her self-representational works starting it all from her birth to the time she has reached past being a mother, Lessing is clear, sharp, pithy and honest till root.

My mother chatted on and on...how all her talents were withering unused, how the little girl in particular (she was so difficult, so naughty!) made her life a total misery. And I was a cold flame of hatred for her. I could have killed her there and then. (UMS 30)

The lines definitely echo not only the mother being uncomfortable regarding Lessing but also a severe and extremist reaction from the daughter so much so that Lessing feels a desire to kill her mother. There are moments when her relation with her mother is at a decline particularly after she leaves the home at the age of twenty six. Before this time, the mother's constant influence on her provides a conflict between the two. After her mother's death, Lessing defines her subjectivity in relation to her mother at various moments of her life, aiming simultaneously to untangle her diffused identity with that of her mother and understanding her difficult relationship with her mother. This is also true to Mary Turner in *The Grass Is Singing* who is unable to get rid of the memory of the struggling life of her mother when she was young. Mary envisages her life with Dick Turner in relation to her mother's life with her husband in Southern Rhodesia. (GIS 79) Therefore, she manages to bring out the relational similarities between herself and her mother as two such objects that have to make the ends meet by remaining within the resources both mentally and financially. Therefore, it can be stated that at various stages of her life the dynamics of daughter's way of seeing and viewing her mother undergo a drastic change.

3.4: Psychotherapy by Re entering the Realm of Babyhood

The ambivalence in relation with the mother is evident with Lessing when she reenters the realm of her baby hood in *Under My Skin*. Lessing explores her life of past in relation to her mother's brought up for her as an aim of psychotherapy. She however does not share soothing memories as a baby girl. Developmental psychologists consider the early ages of a child to be of significant value as the process of bond formation initiates during this stage (**Shilpa 2010**). The loved ones surrounding the child are responsible for determining the quality and strength of bonds which the baby will possess when it grows up (**Shilpa 2010**). Chodorow also sustains that the girl is caught up between loving her love object and simultaneously feeling anger and envy towards her (**Shilpa 2010**). The Object Relation theorists opine that the daughter views the mother as an object of care, love, guardianship and attains her nurturing through her mother in her formative years (**Daniels 2013**), Lessing uniquely though, is unable to have a wholesome experience of being taken care of by her mother as her 'guardian' during her babyhood in particular. Associated with initial events of repulsion and hatred of her mother towards her who already had a boy's name decided and planned at her birth and was not expecting her as her first child, Lessing in consequence, depicts a sense of phobia towards her mother. The feeling of matrophobia surrounds and defines her course of action in later part of her life as well. She feels a sense of fear and repulsion towards her mother, both emerging out of the danger of repeating the mother's life. Since psychodynamic theory encapsulates psychoanalytical thought, it is significant to relate Freud's view point here. Freud argues that the tussle between mother and daughter is mainly because of the intensity of the relationship of the two (**Shilpa 2010**). The mother and the daughter as two human beings of the same gender and sharing one of the closest bonds with each other seek and demand immense quantities of love, care, affection, obedience and sincerity from each other. The one failing party, totally shatters the expectations of the other. The mother, Emily in *Under My Skin* falls back in providing to her daughter what she craves for. She is never able to realize that Lessing can be a substitute of Harry or that the daughter is equally important as the son. Lessing thus picks on this and all her later decisions in life are all a reaction to the failed expectation of her mother that she was not awaited by her.

3.4: Cyclical bondage between mother -daughter

The strength of the bondage between a daughter and mother is as cyclical and repetitive as Lessing explores it in *Under My Skin*. It is cyclical in the sense that the daughter becomes or has to become a mother at a time in her life. This is a reality that she cannot evade. In the same context, the relationship is also repeats

itself. A woman in different stages of her life as a daughter, sister, wife and mother has to undergo same circumstances with slight differences (**Woolf 2000**). The story of a woman is wholesomely same with slight variations. When Lessing puts her protagonist in identical socio economic and socio political milieu as that of her mother or her own life for that matter, the heroines like Mary Turner tend to repeat life of the mother that they are based on (Rich 1986).“Matrophobia is a legacy which runs in the family...” (**Georgescu 1998**). It would not be wrong to call it hereditary and the mother transfers her deprived sense of love to the daughter and the daughter, since has never felt the pure essence of motherhood and motherly love cannot share it with her generation. Jung asserts that the “unlived life” of one or both of the parents has the greatest and strongest influence on the child’s psyche (**Schwartz 2013**). The life of love never experienced by Lessing’s mother is a sensitive issue for Lessing too. Chodorow calls the process of mothering as dependent upon number of factors including the past personal and brought up history of the mother herself and her bondage with her natal family (**Georgescu 1998**). Maude already came from a past history of being weakly mothered and she infuses the same into her own daughter who is perhaps is sensitive enough to feel it and tries to cure it her own way. Lessing writes her autobiography *Under My Skin* to claim membership of her own life and to have a control over her own history and past that memory allows her to recall.

3.5: Daughter’s Amplitude of Presentation in text:

Viewing mother daughter and author’s relation in *Under My Skin* and *The Grass is Singing* from narrative and narrator’s point of view, an important perspective of Matrophobia, is the amplitude of presentation provided to either of the mother or daughter figure. Up till now, literature has explored mother’s perspective from daughter’s point of view. The mother is a virtually, physically and emotionally absent figure due to number of causes like travel, death, illness or emotional distancing (**Nadeau 2013**). With Lessing, daughters get the primary importance and they are central to the plot whereas the mother is secondary although greatly influential. This aspect of the author, where the mother is blurred and seen through the daughter can also be taken as matrophobia. The female narrator makes her personality the nucleus of experience and fails to acknowledge the mother figure in its own right (**Hallstein 2010**). *Under My Skin* has the presence of mother in the form of those monologues like “Moon Moon” and “Starth Starth” (UMS 32) which the deceptive memory of the author recalls and imagination colors whereas *The Grass is Singing* views the mother of Mary Turner as an entity of past that can be re expressed only through flashbacks as when Lessing recalls Mary’s thoughts in third person, “Mary knew, even as a child, that her mother complained for the sake of making a scene” and “she...enjoyed the luxury of standing there at the bar while the casual drinkers looked on...” (GIS 33). Apart from the monologues or flashbacks, Lessing presents no maternal discourse in her *Under My Skin* and *The Grass is Singing*. Instead it is through the writer herself that the reader views and interprets the story. There is a simultaneous urge to stay intact to the identity of mother and to tear away from her. Her protagonists however try to enact a separation from their mother and make an attempt to envisage themselves as a separate beings, projecting themselves with their own ‘Self’ in the external world and not connected back to the chain of motherhood. Even in the absence of a distinct mother voice, the mother is a strong presence that contains the potential of paralyzing both worlds of the daughter -the one which is permanent and present and the other that is aspired for.

3.6: Identity Formation of the Daughter

Matrophobia causes splitting of the Self of mother and daughters from each other (**Rich 1986**). Identity formation is crucial in early stages of the development of a child. The early stage of a daughter’s life is the Mirror Stage as Lacan puts it. In this stage, the mother becomes the reflection of the baby daughter and she sees

herself reflected in the mother and forms her mental representation of 'I' or the Self (**Lacan 2013**). This image which reflects back becomes the ideal for the child to which she aspires and strives for all her life. The mirror stage operates both ways for the daughter and the mother in *Under My Skin*. If Lessing sees in her mother the creator and savior of her existence then the mother sees an extension of her existence in her daughter. The level of expectation between both of these women achieves its zenith during the Mirror Stage. The daughter views a god mother in the face of her mother whereas the mother seeks imperfection in the woman that is born out of her. The distorted sense of self inherited by Lessing from her mother goes with her a long way till she is of age. The mother's poor practice of motherhood leaves deep impressions on the daughter. Rich is of the view that for a drowning daughter mother is the source of all those clues that explain to her what it takes and makes to be a mother. (**Rich 1986**). Lessing almost never gets any clues on maternity from her mother. As a teenager, she most hates in her mother "her pressure, her insistence, her close jealous supervision, her curiosity – all the pathetic identification of woman whose gratification is only in her children" (UMS 112). The fissured conception of mothering and motherhood leaves severe impressions upon her. The poor relationship between Lessing and Emily has a lifetime impact for both of them. Particularly as a teenager, another aspect of her life which explains her emotional turmoil is related to sexuality and her mother's manipulation of her feelings as an oppressor through and through. Recalling her "erotic longings" as a teenager, she says that "it is [her]belief that some girls ought to be put to bed, at the age of fourteen, with a man even as much as ten years older than they are, with the understanding that this apprentice love will end" (UMS 185). She argues that if she had been provided with such an "apprentice love" she would not have spent her adolescent years in this state of longing which she says "is a kind of homesickness, perhaps for past and not future Edens. It is an illness, incapacitating" (UMS 186).

Lessing's mother Emily appears to suffer from a conflict between her self-preservation and the maternal feelings nature has embedded within her (**Georgescu 1998**). For her mother, Lessing is "a little girl... [who] made her life a total misery" (UMS 30). With the birth of a daughter, Emily finds no solace or happiness but feels her sense of maternal self to be challenged. Lessing states her birth as a hard experience for her mother, "My mother had a bad time. It was a forceps birth" (UMS 8). The same conflicted mother figure haunts her self-representational writings including *The Grass is Singing* and *Martha Quest*. The conflict faced by Mary, Martha and Lessing is the conflict of generations that moves from generation to generation and is a gulf between the daughter and the mother that is never satisfactorily breached (**Schlueter 1986**). Lessing suffers from the same matrophobia which her fictional character Mary and Martha suffer from and this is revealed through psychoanalytic study of the narrative discourse of both *The Grass is Singing* and *Under My Skin* (**Georgescu 1998**). More explicitly, Martha and Mary suffer from matrophobia because Lessing felt it in her life and she consciously inculcates it while coalescence of life and literature takes place. Lessing re tells the tale of herself and her mother which is a story that "has indeed been written, although it is not found on the surface but submerged in depths of literary texts" (Hirsh & Evelyn 204) in which language becomes that medium that expresses past by re capturing it and allows the reader to analyze the psychosis and neurosis of the author's persona embedded within it.

Feminists have argued that motherhood has the capability to oppress the one being mothered (Hallstein 2010). In the same context however contrary to it, if motherhood is expressed wholeheartedly without any reservations then it can be a source of growth, rapid and healthy emotional progress of the child. Motherhood, so "is a complex site of women's oppression and a potential location for women's creativity and joy" (Hallstein 2010) which depicts that mothering works in two entirely opposite ways. Rich opines in her book *Of Woman Born* as stated earlier, that patriarchal or oppressive motherhood leads to extremely tragic consequences particularly when it comes to the context of mother daughter relationship (Rich 1986). The mother exercises her

authority over the daughter in all possible ways becoming the microcosm of patriarchy. Apart from modern fictive works like those of Doris Lessing under consideration, post modern and various postcolonial postmodernist texts vividly delineate the phenomenon of a daughter being doubly oppressed which includes firstly, the oppression faced by her due to being the member of the fair sex and secondly as a daughter. Feminists argue that a mother often times becomes the source of patriarchy where she exercises her own will over the daughter. Mary Turner expresses through flashbacks of her past how her mother prohibited her from doing certain things primarily because she was British English. The mother never allows her to mix with the Rhodesian children hence Mary would “linger there for hours, staring at the piles of sticky colored sweets...looking covertly at the little Greek girl whom she was not allowed to play with, because her mother said her parents were dagos” (GIS 32). Mary’s mother inculcates and gifts her daughter the conception of racism simultaneously making her daughter attuned to stay away from the colonized, create psychological fences and maintain her Whitish identity. The later part of the novel, *The Grass Is Singing* is based of Mary being unable to stand the Black slaves near or around her (GIS 67). She never gets rid of the superiority complex of her race which was germinated in her in the formative and developmental years of her life through her other.

The psychodynamics of forcing ‘will’ upon the daughter affects the daughter in two fold way. It either makes the daughter totally dependent upon the mother with no decision power of her own or it turns her into a rebel against the forced wills of the mother. In the former, as an adult when the daughter has to part from her mother, she considers that she is being “abandoned” by the mother. She seeks for emotional nurturing from her mother all her life to which this parting seems shunning away of the daughter by the mother. Corroborating to this, daughter’s psyche gets harmfully hurt due to mother’s role as a patriarch. In the latter, the daughter strongly feels an urge of taking her own road to life. Lessing has to create separation between herself and her mother to exercise her will on her life. She allows her children to stay separated from her so that she does not force herself on them and make them seekers of decision in matters of their life. If in the first scenario, abandonment on part of the mother takes place, in the second, it is betrayal on part of the daughter that has to be committed for surviving the sense of self and maintaining independence. “A daughter has to betray her mother if she has to exert her own authority” (Flax 2013). Lessing treats the second consequence of forced will upon the daughter by making her heroines ‘runners away’.

The motif of leaving home, be it husband’s or parents’ home is recurrent in Lessing’s works particularly *Under My Skin; The Grass Is Singing and Martha Quest*. In the first case, the daughter bids farewell to their maternal home while in the second, they run away from the memory and repetition of the memory of the mother. These daughters run away from their mother due to two reasons. Firstly, to prevent the mother from being an ever present resident in the memory of the daughter with an aim of operating from there imperially and secondly, to create as much distance that they completely forget the mother and do not look like her or become her mirror. Woolf’s opinion is aptly justified in this case of Lessing’s presentation of her female protagonists. “We think back through our mothers” puts Woolf in her Essay “A Room of One’s Own” where she expresses that a daughter is never able to do away without being affected by the personality of the mother. Woolf asserts that it is not only the mother but the lineage goes back to the grandmothers and to their mothers (2000). Thus, Lessing’s daughters clearly depict this awareness and that is what makes them suffer the haunting presence of their mother, her life and fear of repeating the same life. Mary when totally disappointed from her life with Dick, one day, impulsively runs away back to the city life which was the colorful abode of her unmarried life of past. She rebels, though is unsuccessful in the long run. She feels that it merely took her a moment to “transport away from the farm life” and finds herself in the next moment as “running half the way” accompanied with an exaltation that she could run off the pavement” and finally be at ease (GIS 99). Woolf is of the view that a woman can “nurture the entire world” only if she nurtures her own path and her own self. (“A Room of One’s Own,” par 4).

Depicted through *Under My Skin*, the reader finds that Lessing herself leaves her home in order to become a nurse maid at the age of twenty six. Martha in *Martha Quest* also flees away which all depict how the recurring motif of running away of these protagonists links back to the innate fear to repetition and revision of the life and acts of the mother. These protagonists make an attempt to run away from their destiny which they realize is pre planned and pre determined in the shape of the mothers' lived lives. Change is the slogan raised by these women with a belief that change begins within. "When she (Lessing) is hopeful about female identity, she is optimistic about change" (Greene 25). The generation gap between Lessing and her mother also acts as a source of creating conflict. Lessing disapproves of a woman's life devoted solely to home. She sees her mother as a woman who is confined within the four walls of her home. In short, she is afraid to repeat her mother's destiny, stuck with domesticity" (Scott 12).

Exercising of the power of the mother in her own realm also becomes significant factor in determining the psychodynamics of the mother daughter relation. In the circle of family, "the daughter sees the mother as both powerful and powerless" (Flax n. pag.). She views her as an entity that has considerable control over her circumstances. However, the daughter is unable to fathom out the inevitable dominance of father and mother's husband in the family, the daughter finds her mother herself letting power going away from her hands and simultaneously becoming a desperate seeker of the lost power and becoming a woman who lets go of her will power and does nothing to make it stay with her and practice it. This is true to Lessing's own mother in *Under My Skin* and Mary Turner's mother in *The Grass Is Singing*. Lessing presents a mother who is both hopeful and hopeless about her life. This intrigues the psyche of the daughter who fails to understand such behavior of the mother since mother is the model to which she looks. It is unintelligible for Mary as to why her mother always had to act as a martyr and cry sorrowfully on the plight of living below the poverty line. Mary gauges that her mother had full potential of contributing something to the family and there are times when the mother's coquettish attitude towards the customers gives second thoughts to Mary regarding viewing her mother as helpless or full of strength. Her mother's married life is narrated by her with the words and phrases like 'resentment', 'complaining', 'parading her sorrow', and 'father and mother fought' (GIS 33-34). The memory of her mother's life stays fresh for Mary and she is reminded of it strongly when she herself reaches the age and circumstances as that of her mother. Mary's life with Dick Turner is similar to the life of Lessing's own mother with her husband. Lack of understanding, love, devotion or care is the common factor that unites the two pairs. What leads Lessing to re create a pair that resembles her own parents clarifies how deeply the relationship of her parents affected and touched her psychologically. Just like Lessing's mother who has the talent or creativity to take the family out of financial miseries, Mary also realizes that she can manage a better, efficient and sound business individually and show Dick Turner the places where he is wrong. However, Mary is unable to do so just like the way Lessing's mother is unable to do so. There are instances when she identifies with her mother, but mostly she tries to distance herself from her parents because she is terrified by how weak and pitiable they turned out to be: "It was not my parents' strength that threatened me, it was their weakness" Lessing exclaims in her autobiography (UMS 189). More than living the kind of life that her mother had, Lessing fears to repeat the helplessly domestic life of her mother. A life stuck with domesticity is nightmarish for her (Scott, par 12).

According to Rich as well, daughter's fear of becoming like the mother is mainly due to mother's falling back to the second class status, turning herself into a victim and not exercising her power (Rich 244). The mother allows inevitable circumstances to prey upon her and disturb her psychologically and emotionally. Emily, Lessing's mother never gets rid of the memory of her fiancé who is usurped in war. Her present life with Lessing's father is unattractive for her. As a daughter, Lessing witnesses the manner in which her father's sexuality is suppressed by her mother's cold behavior. This also leaves a mark on her, especially since her father

tells her about it and she has nothing else to think other than wishing that her father should have never shared all this with her though she “was flattered I was his confidante” (UMS 186). At this moment, Lessing feels sorry for her regarding her past and present. According to Lessing this is a problem many marriages suffer from; after getting children, women become so absorbed and obsessed with them that they forget their husbands: “They may very well love their husbands, (UMS 187). Rich puts it this way that these daughters view their mothers as having taught a sense of compromise accompanied with self-hatred. The mothers do try to struggle and win themselves away from it but are unable to do so (Rich 235).

Virginia Woolf opines that it is not only the mother to whom the daughter links while remembering or referring her life in connection back but she, saying it more aptly, goes back to the entire generation of her grandmothers and so on and so forth (Abel 617). In a scenario where mothers have had ambivalent relations with their mothers, the cycle repeats and goes on and on. There seems to be an endless chain of women tied ambivalently to their mothers, who replicate this relation with their daughters. (Flax n. pag.) Each daughter is the replica of her mother or her grandmother for that matter. Doris Lessing presents her mother as a daughter who is unloved when she is a daughter. Regarding her own mother Emily, she says ironically, “She had not known love as a child, and was making sure we would not be similarly deprived” (UMS 25). Her mother’s monologues in which she states she did not use to breast feed Lessing and make her starve reveal the disturbed psychological state of an unloved daughter who during the course of years becomes a loveless mother to her own daughter. Object Relation theorists put forward that neither the mother nor the daughter can get away with the bond that they have mainly because of the “anatomical sameness” that they have (daughter well being) (Daniels n. pag.). The mother thus is unable to move past the deprivation offered by the bond and this is why, perhaps, Lessing becomes another Emily for her children and this is precisely why the fictive mother Mary is childless. The only time she feels an urge to have a baby is when she realizes that the life at the bush would eventually crush and shatter her completely and she requires dividing her attention when she has nothing to do (GIS 134). Her maternal instinct also becomes alive however this happens only occasionally as initially she completely rejects the reality of giving birth and growing up children of and for Dick.

In order to fathom out the dynamics between herself and her mother in *Under My Skin*, Lessing does not only look back upon her relationship with her mother, she even goes on analyzing her parents' past and their relationships to their families. Emily's mother whose name was also Emily died when Lessing's mother was three years old which hints at the conviction that Emily never had any tangible or concrete memory of her mother loving or caring for her. Jamaica Kincaid’s one of the fictive pieces *The Autobiography of My Mother* starts with following symbolic words, “My Mother died the moment I was born...” (Kincaid 1). This shows that the absence of a mother in daughter’s life is one of her most sensitive issue. These writers like Kincaid, Plath or Lessing are so deeply affected by the physical, emotional or natural absence of their mothers in their lives that they pick up the material of their life and write it out as autobiographies. In Emily’s case, the immense sense of being abandoned by the mother is reinforced and she makes sure that she deprives her daughter the way she was herself shunned away. It is questionable as to why she does this or whether she does this consciously or unintentionally. In addition, the pattern of repetition is quite prominent here. Later in her life when Lessing creates distances with her own children, this is how she justifies it by saying that the reason she left her children was to “break some ancient chain of repetition” (UMS 262), which was “this secret doom that was inside me – and which had brought my parents to their pitiful condition” (UMS 263). In another interview when talking about abandoning her children of her first marriage she replies in these words, "While it was a terrible thing to do, it was right to do" (Allardice, par 10). This shows that Lessing as a mother never nurtures a sense of grief or regret on been distanced from her children. She feels that staying close and being indifferent to the child affects the child more negatively than maintaining separation.

The psychodynamics of mother daughter relation also reveal the personality traits that a daughter inherits from her mother and has no control over them whatsoever. Despite of being critical of her mother, Lessing, in the role of a daughter is generous enough in describing the attributes of her mother. “She was endlessly adaptable and attentive. She had too much energy, capacity for her situation. Her fate should have been to run a large organization, hospital or even an industry, “On the farm she burned herself” (qtd. in. Greene 5). Lessing resembles her mother and carries some of the positive features of her too. She is a confident woman as far as from what *Under My Skin* reveals to the reader. Lessing’s mother Emily rebelled against her father in order to practice her own desires and wishes and this is what Lessing herself does as well. She knows she has her own way of living and viewing life even as a teenager and she does not at all want her mother to interfere, spoil or ruin the way she wants to live her life.

Another dimension to the act of learning from past experiences of living an unhappy relation between the mother and the daughter and abstaining from repeating them in terms of same quality of relation in future is quite interesting to probe into as far as Lessing is concerned. Lessing, through writing her life in the form of an autobiography has managed to get rid of her complexes regarding her relation with her mother. The question here becomes apt that if Lessing has been able to move past the bitter childhood as a teenage or baby daughter that she had had then why does it become evident through *Under My Skin* that she has been a ‘runner away’ from her own children as well. The reply comes out to be the fear to becoming her mother all over again and like history repeating itself, she would have unconsciously exercise the same treatment that was experienced by her through her mother. Second wave of feminists have dwelled extensively upon such a situation (Hallstein 35-36). As already discussed, the mother figure has an authority over the daughter and is the source of daughter’s identity formation, Sukenich, who used the term matrophobia in her work on Lessing(Greene 3) provides a different perspective of it by relating that it is “the fear not of one’s mother or of motherhood but of becoming one’s mother” (Hallstein 37). Lessing does accept the fact all her life that she has been colored the way her mother was. She appears to be a believer in determinism where the inherited traits are determined naturally and nurture has but little role to play. The fear is also that of identification with the one that one does not want to be identified with but has no control or authority over it.

The adult woman who is mother, in particular, continues to exist only in relation to her child, never as a subject in her own right. And, in her maternal function, she remains an object, always distanced, always idealized or denigrated, always mystified, always represented through the small child’s point of view. (Hirsh 167)

Here, as Hirsch points out, the mother does not enjoy an identity of her own. She is but a creation of the imagination and experience of the daughter. Her existence is in relation to the daughter who has full freedom of viewing her in her own particular way. The mother’s treatment of the daughter and practicing her motherhood enables the daughter to either idealize the mother or possess an enigmatic view of her. Lessing’s fiction presents the daughter’s point of view in bildungsroman fashion. Through stages of development, the daughter gets her definition through her mother and in return defines her mother on the basis of the quality of her motherhood and womanhood. Lessing’s subject matter is the figure of the mother but the dynamic, mobile and ever living is the presence of the daughter.

Lessing as an adolescent had to wage and fight innumerable battles between herself and her mother. Shilpa argues that if during childhood the daughter looks at her mother as a role model then during adolescence she sees her competitively (Shilpa 2). The struggle is initiated on trivial issues as to what to wear or eat. Doris assumes an independent stance in her decision making and decides for herself what she wants to do. However, her clothes could never please her mother and were always in defiance to what her mother wanted her to wear. “My fourteenth was a make or break year, a sink or swim year, a do or die year, for I was fighting for my life against my mother. That was how I saw it. That was how it was” (UMS 155). She did not view her mother a life saver or a protector as a teenage but as hindrance or obstacle in exercising her own will freely. She also developed an obsession with her body as an adolescent which her mother strongly disapproved of; but the more the mother disapproved, the more the deviant attitude became powerful and the more the daughter became engaged in such rebellion. All this deepened the anger that Doris felt for her mother and made her even more determined to fight back. As a result, the main drive in her life was never to resemble her parents particularly her mother in any way. She repeatedly tells herself that she has the power to be unlike her parents in all possible ways.

Mary hates to remember her mother while Martha vows ‘never to be like her mother’. The question then becomes apparent that what the daughter should then become like once her mother fails her as a role model? In the fictive narratives of Lessing, particularly *The Grass is Singing* flashbacks of mother and mother’s life symbolize the struggle in daughter’s own life at the very moment. It is in crisis times that the daughter is reminded back of her mother’s life. The moments when the daughter fails as a wife or a mother, she thinks of her mother as a failure. She feels that her fate is repeating for her the same situation which was experienced by the mother particularly the struggle in marital life. Mary unconsciously speaks in the voice of her mother when she is totally out of control regarding the troublesome life with Dick Turner. She realizes that this voice was coming direct from her mother when she used to quarrel over on being forced to live in utter poverty (GIS 79). She is able to relate her hateful and sordid life with the one of her mother. She has no pity for her life as Mary is conscious to the fact that she consciously threw herself into getting married at the time when she was pretty, a friend of all and life was gay. Therefore, she herself is the culprit of ruining her life and this is precisely the reason why Lessing has no accommodation of the idea that perhaps Emily was not responsible for the kind of life that she thought she is forced to live.

Lessing, as a daughter also undergoes a conflict of intimacy versus isolation. “Isolation at its core is pathology” (Fleming 13). Though Erikson applied this stage to a married couple, it can be understood in context of any such pair that enjoys a relationship. Clear cut identity formation of both participants in the pair is essential for creation of Intimacy between the two. The repeated patriarchal influence of Lessing’s mother’s opinion upon her continually infringed upon her freedom.

What I feel, when I put myself back in this or that scene is a raw *loneliness, isolation, anxiety*. I was a defended observation post. I felt, in short, like everybody does, until we make little places for ourselves in a group, family, a gang, where the cold air does not blow so cruelly on tender skins. (Emphasis added UMS149)

This quote depicts Lessing to be dealing with aloofness and anxiety in the stage of intimacy vs. isolation as related by Erikson in 1963. The sixth stage of Erik Erikson’s theory of Psychosocial Development extends from late adolescent till early middle age. The stage is named as Intimacy versus Isolation (Fleming 3). This period

includes the teenage life or the early adulthood of an individual where he or she is exploring and trying to understand personal relationships. Erikson believes that commitment and security are achieved by an individual due to the successful completion of this stage. Intimacy in any personal especially close relation is also developed at this stage that ultimately strengthens personal identity. Therefore, distorted sense of 'Self' is resultant to poor establishment of bondage with relations and this also causes a sense of loneliness, isolation and depression for lifetime (Fleming 4). As a teenage girl Lessing tries to establish her place in the world. She is aware of the contradictions in the behavior of her parents but she is also conscious of the divisions of her own personality. She has two identities which she calls "Tigger" and Hostess" in *Under My Skin*. In addition to these there is third and a more private identity of hers which is named the "observer" in her autobiography. The "Hostess" emerges out as her social or external self who is "bright, helpful, attentive, receptive to what is expected" (UMS 20); whereas "Tigger" is a part of "Hostess": This personality is extrovert and expected to be dynamic, brash, jokey, clumsy, and ever ready for a good sport, that is, to laugh at herself, objectify her own self, apologize and confess inability. Tiger is thus a projection and aspect of Hostess. These varieties of identities are self created and perform their role when required.

During her years at school, Lessing is evidently caught up in her fight between intimacy and isolation. The danger of this stage is isolation, which is the avoidance of contacts which commit to intimacy as the theory puts. Had Lessing not taken the step of leaving her parents, her creative part must have never come light and she might have been caught up in traumatic experience of isolation. There are moments in her life time where she is seen preferring to run away or escape as discussed earlier. At her teenage, she decides to leave school and plunge towards isolation. She attempts to run away from her first husband and also divorces her second husband. Formation of a long term and healthy relation appears to be challenging enough for her. Mary in *The Grass Is Singing* is also an escapist firstly she runs away from people around her who consider her abnormal on account of still being unmarried, secondly she runs away from the bush after taking an impulsive decision in order to prevent her complete destruction and prevent by the farm and thirdly by retiring into insanity in order to avoid the irritating state of affair of being caught up in the whirlpool of Blacks' mixed repulsion and attraction. Hence, it becomes clear that Mary just like Lessing fails to establish an intimacy with the situation in which these women are placed to survive and become sufferers of anxiety, coldness and alienation, in short isolated.

The role of father is integral in a daughter's life especially when a comparative analysis is made regarding daughter's relation with the mother and then with the father. The father is the guardian, support and sense of strength. The presence of father acts as a leveler or a balancing agency. Moreover, the father's love enables the daughter to locate if she suffers from lack of love from her mother's side. From an early age, Lessing strongly feels a lack of love from her mother's side. She views her father to be her "ally", "support" and "comforter" (UMS 31). Her autobiographical work *Alfred and Emily* recounts her parents including the life of her father and affected by World War and struggling as a farmer and the life of her mother whose true love was drowned in English Channel. Lessing's interview regarding the book clearly highlights the development of her understanding of the situation of her parents. She exclaims that it was much early in her life that she could empathize with her father as one being badly affected by the aftermath of war and that she could understand as to why her father was furious at his life. However, regarding her mother, Lessing states, "It took me much longer to realize that my mother was badly damaged too" ("Entertainment").

Mother also acts as a figure that constitutes significant part in formation and well being of the home. Lessing's concept of home is also blurred by her mother's conception of home. Traditionally, home depicts the identity of an individual and with Lessing this identity formation could also not develop the way it should have

been. She remains caught up between her life on the bush where she felt a homely touch and her mother's constant attempts to protect her from developing an association with the African land. This made her state later in her life that Africa, for her will be her spiritual home forever (Thorpe 1). The mother wants to instill purely British values in her children but forgets in the process that the children are being reared up in Black, African and colonized locale. The daughter must fight this overwhelmingly oppressive power of the mother (Brancato 21). Lessing's childhood home is that of the farm whereas her mother referred to Britain as their home. Lessing could thus never relate to the British land as the homeland and felt a sense of wilderness and rupture in the creation of the identity of home. "That England they talked about, all that green grass and spring flowers and cows as friendly as cats – what had all that to do with me?" (UMS 82). In her description of the house's interior, she juxtaposes her mother's very English Liberty curtains with the "pale grey mud of the walls" which was left "un whitewashed, because it looked so nice with the Liberty curtains" and also with the "dressing table of petrol boxes, painted black" in her parents' bedroom (UMS113-114). Lessing's father is depicted to be more critical towards England, where he could not make his name and future, he readily falls in love with raw and untamed natural beauty of Africa and he is able to enjoy the nature in Africa. Lessing's mother on the other hand always pines for her home country, idealizing everything that is British. The mother projects a distorted image of motherland to the daughter. The reality to which she never comes to term, she inculcates the same to the daughter. A divided sense of home is what Lessing nurtures because of her mother's sighs over staying away from England. It would not be shocking to presuppose that had Mary given birth to children, they would have also ended up in a chaos as to whether their real home is the farm which their father loves or the land that has been left behind by the mother for which she yearns with passion and whether she is required to treat Blacks the way their father used to do or like their mother who as personified in Mary labels Black to be dagos.

Concerning the human behavior of the daughter in relation to her mother, a chain of disapprovals of both the absence or presence of the mother is observed. The daughter becomes indifferent or desensitized to the entity of mother primarily because she has no positive or constructive role played in her life expect for bringing her to the world. With Lessing however, even the experience of birth is not that pleasant. Emily disapproves of any positive presence of her mother in her life and similarly Lessing does not share bright memories of her mother in the autobiography. Related to this is the case with Mary Turner where she remembers her mother as a sufferer and akin herself to her only at times of trouble and struggle. These mothers have failed to leave sound impressions of the lives of the daughters due to which the daughter disapproves both of the presence and the absence of the mother. These daughters have nothing good to offer about their mothers and are managing to understand the complication in the relationship.

Alfred and Emily appears to make Lessing empathize with the state of the people that the autobiography refers to. However, the dwelling upon on mother figure in fiction does highlight and suggest that it is only by learning to love her mother again, by recuperating a love disrupted by the patriarchal colonial order, can a woman claim her own identity. In her second volume *Walking in the Shade* which was written in 1997 after her mother died, Lessing turns out to overwhelmed with pain and grief, she contemplates and relates if she could have behaved and acted differently with her mother. She realizes that had her mother been was still alive, she would have been the same, but now that she has become old herself, she imagines that she could understand and communicate better with her mother. She feels her mother to be fairly comprehensible to her now at this moment of her life when she is almost as wrinkled as her mother was. Lessing words have an impulsive charge when she wishes to put her arms around her mother but interestingly it is not Emily as Lessing's mother that she empathizes with but the little Emily who lost her mother as a baby girl. Who had to fend all her life in a wilderness of being a child who never has the feel of maternal love and was left to be brought up by servants, unloving stepmother and a cold dutiful father. Lessing does not remember and recall her

mother as a mother but as a baby girl and teenage daughter whose life was full of deprivations. Jungian analysis of such a situation is the one of fathoming out “infantile neurosis” not the child who is the receiver but in the mother who must have had traumatic experiences in her life as a child (Jung 139-140). Hence, it is clear that a daughter’s identity does not thrive in isolation or negation. It establishes itself in acceptance. Lessing tries to establish her sense of self by writing her Self out and giving prominence to the mother figure. She formulates a creative narrative in the shape of her autobiography and fiction in order to conceptualize her sense of self.

It is in such a situation that the daughter realizes that she lacks a concrete conception of pure womanhood or motherhood and her archetype of a mother is distorted. In Jungian conception of the “Mother Archetype”, the mother is associated with “maternal solicitude”, “sympathy”, “magic authority”, “wisdom”, “spiritual exaltation” and all that is “benign, all that cherishes and sustains, that fosters growth and fertility.” (Jung 139-140). Lessing and Martha are unable to relate to the positive archetype of their mother however, the other side of the Jungian Archetype, where the mother figure symbolizes darkness, mystery, anything that is terrifying and escapable” is well related in the context of their mothers. The life, its memory and the fate of the daughters based on the one of mothers is terrifyingly inescapable for the daughters. The daughter then has to live her life at its various stages and theorize her way of living life in her own way. She keeps on comparing her attitude towards life to that of her mother. At times, she feels her voice taken over by her mother’s voice. There is one conception of the mother which is universal whereas the other notion is more personal and psychological. Lessing and her protagonists move about with the very personal perspective of their mothers. They present their mothers, colored with their subjectivity and in the way as they see her and not as an existence of her own who is torn between her circumstances and her psyche. In *Under My Skin* though, the mother is shown in relation to the father and also in relation to the brother. But, the main contention behind doing so is to deduce that the father, Alfred is as unhappy with the wife as Lessing is with the mother. Similarly, her mother’s outlook towards the brother Harry is highlight because Lessing wants to maintain a comparative depiction of mother’s attitude towards a male child and a female one. The mother thus becomes a symbolic patriarch who finds daughter to useless enough in the main stream. This is how Lessing is able to portray the complete persona of the mother. She projects the mother figure in various dimensions and analyses as to where she falters to be the archetype of the mother.

In his book *Doris Lessing: The Poetics of Change*, Greene is of the view that Lessing’s fiction is “visionary” and “revisionary” where in order to understand the life and Self of the protagonist, he or she must step into the realms of imagination and moving to the other world are necessary for survival and formation of identity. Lessing advocates the freedom of the daughter but she simultaneously advocates connectedness along with autonomy. Why is it so that the daughter dwells upon the life and memory of her mother to such a large extent and why is it so that the daughter has such a concrete idea of the circumstances of her mother’s life that when the cycle of repetition occurs, she is able to relate to it at once. The being is simply that Lessing propounds what Rich calls an inevitable linkage between the daughter and the mother. In spite of a matrophobic projection of mother daughter relationship Lessing does not express denunciation, rejection or shunning away of the presence and memory of mother in daughter’s life. She, contrary to it, seeks to get an answer to all those questions that created complexity in her relationship with mother. She aims at psychotherapy of her matrophobia and there are clear and vivid clues that Lessing as an author, leaves for the reader where it is obvious that she is sitting back, giving herself a moment to contemplate and ponder over the intricate nature to her relation with her mother. Relating truth of her life through an autobiography there are degrees of confessions, evasions and acceptance on her part when she analyzes her place and role on the pair of herself and her mother in a relation that is timeless and naturally connected till she breathes.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the psychodynamics of mother daughter relationship with the various degrees of oppression on part of the mother, deprivation in terms of the exchange of love and dispossession on part of the daughter, in the fiction and autobiography of Doris Lessing reveals the prominently complicated debate or tussle between two women, one of which is born of the other and the crucial role that identity of both plays in this regard. The daughter's development from babyhood to becoming a mother is colored by her experiences of maternal love. Through various stages of growth during her life Lessing portrays how her relation with the mother kept on developing and more importantly changing. Lessing's relation with her own mother and that of her protagonists bring to light the aspect of Matrophobia which makes the daughter conscious of preventing her identity from being fissured or repeating mother's life in any way. The mother becomes a defining source in the life of the daughter and significantly affects her concept of womanhood, motherhood, family and home. Here, the father also becomes important who acts as a comparative agent while measuring love or lack of love from the mother. The debate of the tussle or conflict between daughter and mother and Lessing's treatment of this issue is ongoing however, the psychotherapeutic tinge in it is quite prominent. Feminists including Nancy Chodorow and Adrienne Rich and psychoanalytic theories of Object Relation and Development provide varied dimensions of understanding it but Lessing's treatment of the phenomenon is deep and dense. She invites for a more thorough penetrating into the issue where the act of mothering becomes increasingly dynamic, volatile and critical as far as it has been projected in her works.

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