



A Philosophical Study of the Selected Novel 'The Grass is singing' by Doris Lessing

Narendra Kumar Singh

(Ph.D. Research Scholar, C.S.J.M. University, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh)

Abstract

This study examines the concept of a philosopher via the lens of one of Doris Lessing's books. Through her writing, she has the power to transform the minds of those who read it, as well as ourselves and the world in which we live. The quest for self-discovery and self-abnegation pervades her characters' psyches. Existentialism's long-held belief is that philosophy should tackle real-world happenings and difficulties, such as death, birth, sex, and crime. There is a long history of existentialism in philosophy. During the twentieth century, this philosophical school of thinking became widely accepted. The focus of this book is on the lives of the individuals it profiles, and how they devise new strategies for living on their own. Existentialist philosophy emphasizes the importance of identifying and exercising one's own free will. Despite having lived through some of history's most horrific periods, Nobel winner Doris Lessing captured many of those memories in her fictional writings. The existentialist school of thinking has had a significant impact on literature. As Doris Lessing delves thoroughly into this philosophical subject, she effectively communicates the characters' feelings of isolation and alienation. These existentialist themes, including identity crisis, meaninglessness, and cultural traditions, are explored in this research by Doris Lessing's characters in her works. They are regular folks who battle with the tensions and concerns of life's diseases in her novels. An incredible ability to communicate the evils of our planet may be seen in her art. Inequality in the workplace, a dysfunctional male-female dynamic, a need for self-identity, and sexism all play a role in women feeling oppressed. Mary Turner, the protagonist of Doris Lessing's "The Grass is Singing," endures several types of tyranny throughout the novel. This research explores the characters' mental pain and how their concerns help them develop as individuals. In this way, the significance of human feelings, connections, and events is emphasized. This author affects her audience and contributes to their intellectual development. People in Lessing's stories are capable of dealing with existential concerns, elevating humanity, and improving their circumstances.

Keywords: Philosophical, Isolation, Anxiety, Emotions, Relationships, Situations. Alienation

Objectives of the Study:

This study's key objectives are to:

- i) Just to drive home how all human experiences are direct outcomes of our being.
- ii) Because of the hardships they experience, the novel's heroes are compelled to establish their sense of self-identity.
- iii) Because existentialist philosophy is a suitable framework for literary analysis.

Introduction

Following is a detailed analysis of Doris Lessing's novel *The Grass Is Singing*. According to critics and readers alike, this is one of Doris Lessing's finest works. For as long as we can remember, our minds have been searching for answers to the mysteries of life and our existence. With the increasing feeling of unease and unhappiness in contemporary life, existentialism or existentialist philosophy arose, especially in Europe. This school of thought is mostly concerned with the nature of the human being, as well as the choices and conflicts he or she faces during their life. Existentialists believe that the only way to uncover the meaning of one's life is to give up one's genuine self.¹

The quest for one's self is common among those who are uncertain about their own identity. Authenticity may be a need for someone fully aware of the risk of losing touch with their uniqueness. Since authenticity has a negative connotation, conventional knowledge in psychology indicates the following: It is only in this situation that one realizes the necessity of retaining one's actual identity and making it a driving force in one's life. When we feel that we are losing our sense of ourselves and our sense of self-identity, we begin a quest for ourselves. Philosophers who believe in authenticity like to probe and analyze themselves because of the weighty existential difficulties that they face. They want to get to the bottom of the deepest, darkest parts of themselves and the pain they encounter in their daily lives. In the words of Jean-Paul Sartre, "one is neither what he or she is nor what he or she is not" until one engages in frequent self-reflection.²

Sometimes, an unpleasant event might leave a person feeling that their existence is meaningless and that their life is a waste of time and energy. An outstanding illustration of this approach to existentialist philosophy is seen in Doris Lessing's novel *The Grass Is Singing*, in which the protagonists face their desires to rescue themselves. This book contains an example of existentialist thought. Their mission is to liberate themselves and uncover the meaning of life. This choice to resist society to go on this adventure has resulted in a situation of social isolation and alienation for the persons involved. Mary Turner, the wife of a farmer near Ngesi, was found dead on the porch of his house this morning." Mary Turner, the protagonist of *The Grass is Singing*, is one such figure. Mary is only one of many." The murder of Richard Turner's wife, Mary, was discovered. "When the grass begins to sing, you've arrived at your destination. Existential philosophy is most known for the phrase, "Existence comes before essence." Emotional and physical problems may affect even the healthiest individuals on the globe. As a consequence, he lives in a surreal world devoid of any sense of purpose. This concern in the individual's experience was shared by both Sartre and Kierkegaard On one side, "subjectivism" means that "the individual subject is free, yet he cannot escape human subjectivity," Jean-Paul Sartre explains. Because of hindsight, existentialism's full significance may be recognized.³

Author Doris Lessing is well-known for her penchant for digging deep into the psyches of her protagonists. The fact that she couldn't escape reality and take responsibility for her actions was a result of spending so much time trying to understand how other people's minds worked. A heavy toll is taken by the film's lead character, "The Grass Singing." In the beginning, she was a victim of society, but she later became a victim of her marriage to a farmer who lacked love and connection, Dick Turner. She has a husband. Both of these things conspired to bring her down. Throughout her childhood and adolescence, she faced the disadvantages of living on her own.⁴

With the passing trains, Mary remembered her father's red-eyed and befuddled return home; with the thought of marriage she recalled her mother's anguished face at her children's funeral; and with the thought of children, she remembered her mother's anguished face at her children's funerals; it was anguished but dry and stony. Even though Mary enjoyed spending time with other people's children, the idea of having her own made her feel anxious.⁵

After that, she was married to a farmer called Dick Turner. He has no idea what Mary Turner wants. She intends to make the most of every day of her existence. Poets and fine dining are among her favorite pastimes, as well as a night on the town. She's a big fan of city life. That makes her feel at home and connected to the community, which fascinates her. Even though her husband was solely focused on farming, she found the polished ambiance of the city to be intriguing.

The countryside brought back wonderful memories for her since she grew up in a small town. She was enamored with and at ease with the neighborhood. In contrast, Dick Turner was not a fan of the neighborhood. To his dismay, several stores were offering trendy attire for well-educated women and pricey imported food in the town's commercial center. Constraining to a small area was a dreadful prospect for him. Finally, he opted to leave rather than destroy the scenario.⁶

For Mary to live a long and happy life, she wants to savor the little pleasures of life. There's no arguing with Dick on this one. As a result of her husband's departure, she has grown increasingly alone and lonely. The works eloquently reflect Mary Turner's existentialist journey. With the book, Doris Lessing had a weapon against the many omens of doom in her society. She made it a mission for her characters to challenge the absurdities of their culture. It's via Lessing's books that we get a glimpse inside the psyche of a woman attempting to make sense of the world. Her characters need minimal requirements to survive. To be as human as she is, her characters seek to be like her. It is the dream of Mary Turner to live a calm life. This girl simply wants to be left alone, and she doesn't care what other people think. The foundation of her relationship with Dick is a set of mutually beneficial compromises on both sides. Relationships like theirs are built on reasoning alone, not based on passion and adoration. She knew he wasn't hers. she knew it deep down within.⁷

Dick and Mary Turner are complete opposites in terms of their life objectives and ambitions. According to Lessing, an emotional iciness problem may be caused by a variety of factors. Here, established gender norms, along with traditional concepts of sexuality and intimacy, all play a role.⁸

Because of her ability to write fiction, Lessing has been able to combat the dominant culture and social norms of her day. Using her protagonist's viewpoint, Doris Lessing aims to expose contemporary society's discrepancy in the treatment of women. Despite her existentialist aspirations, a patriarchal society forces Mary Turner to live a meek and conformist existence, which condemns her to an unhappy ending. A woman's potential is constantly confined by the patriarchal society in which she lives. In Lessing's novel The Grass is Singing and Mary's wretched circumstances, existential concepts like these are tough to read about because of their depiction throughout the book.⁹

Conclusion

Lack of affection, trust, and understanding in Mary Turner's personal and marital lives intensify her mental breakdown. Doris Lessing's work is replete with allusions to disintegration. When it comes to love, Mary is never satisfied with the affection she receives from her family and friends. As a result, she spends most of her adult life seeking love elsewhere. Her life has been a sequence of misfortunes and disappointments. Because of a lack of real love and dedication, Mary and Dick's marriage is short-lived. All of this eventually leads to Mary's downfall as a wife and person throughout her life. Existentialism has always been a major inspiration for writers of realism. Doris Lessing is widely regarded as one of the greatest existentialist authors. When it came to portraying the sickness and how it had an impact on this person's life, I thought she did a fantastic job! That person's sense of alienation, loneliness, and pain came over clearly in her writing and performance.

¹ Joshi, Arun. *The Foreigner*, New Delhi: Orient Paperbacks, p. 97. 1993. Print.

² Golomb, Jacob, In Search of Authenticity: Existentialism from Kierkegaard to Camus, New York: Routledge, p. 21. 1995. Print.

³ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Existentialism and Human Emotions*. Trans. Bernard Frenchman. New York: The Wisdom Library, pp. 16-17. 1949. Print.

⁴ Lessing, Doris. *The Grass is Singing*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher, Fourth Estate edition. 1950. Print.

⁵ Lessing, Doris. *The Grass is Singing*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher, Fourth Estate edition. 1950. Print.
Golomb, Jacob,

⁶ Lessing, Doris. *The Grass is Singing*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher, Fourth Estate edition. 1950. Print.

⁷ Anca Georgescu Elena, Stanescu Angela, Popa Gabriela. (2011). "Cultural and Psychological Border Crossing in Doris Lessing's The Grass is Singing." *International Journal of Arts and Sciences* 4.1: 26. Web. 23-06-2017.

⁸ Golomb, Jacob, In Search of Authenticity: Existentialism from Kierkegaard to Camus, New York: Routledge, p. 21. 1995. Print.

⁹ Lessing, Doris. *The Grass is Singing*. New York: Harper Collins Publisher, Fourth Estate edition. 1950. Print.