MOVEMENT FROM GROUP AFFILIATIONS TOWARDS
INDIVIDUAL MORES IN WOMEN WRITERS OF AFRICA

by

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APPROVAL

This Dissertation written by
POONAM GARG

is approved as fulfilling part of the
requirements for the award of
The Master of Arts Degree
in
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by

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DECLARATION

I certify that this dissertation is my own original work and that it has not previously been submitted for a degree at this or another University.

Signature of Student ...........
(Miss Poonam Garg)
ABSTRACT

'Feeling it like it is and has been is as valuable as telling it like it should be; its an articulation of the previously inarticulate. Seeing our own images gives us heightened confidence in our existence'.

--Margaret Atwood

The dissertation traces an important aspect of the works written by the two women writers of Africa; Mariama Ba and Doris Lessing, with the occasional references of the other authors. The aspect is from group affiliations to individual mores. The focus is on women's search for self-identity and their attempt for self-actualisation. In this context, their expectation as an aspect of exploitative society, is examined. The movement is given a direction which reveals individuals rejecting the manipulative and impersonal group affiliations and moving towards personal and individual choices.

The dissertation divides into three phases:

The Communal
The Protest
The Individual

The first phase deals with the investigation of a woman writer, Mariama Ba in relation to the group. She dwells on a woman's image and deep-rooted problems facing her in society. She depicts the ideology of the group, the group's influence on her and to what extent she feels responsible to the group. In Ba's work, a woman's self does not exist in the eyes of society.

In the second phase, Mariama Ba protests against the social set-up but does not openly challenge it or break away from it. However, she does show resentment to the traditional values and makes an attempt to find happiness.
The third phase moves towards the individual phase. Doris Lessing stands for those writers who estrange themselves from the group and openly challenge the traditions. Doris Lessing suggests alternatives to group affiliations and projects her women characters searching for personal values. Regarding this, Lessing deals with women's personal dilemma, and claims that self-awareness has alienated women from both the society and themselves. They are now involved in introspection and a search for personal experiences, and believe that the demands of one's personal conscience are a trustworthy guide to serious behaviour.
Preface and Acknowledgements

Cheri Register says retrospectively in 1980:

'Ten years ago, our position was clear: we would challenge critics' claims of objectivity and their belief in the neutrality of literature as aesthetic construct. We would expose the misogynistic stereotyping of women in the classics. We would rescue female writers from oblivion and get them into the canon. And we would prove, especially by interpreting coded messages in Victorian novels that women have never really been content.'

('Literary Criticism' Signs 6, 1980) p. 268.

But recently the 'position' has taken a turn. Women writers have moved from the traditional concept of sexual relationship to revolution and are finally making attempts to recognise the idea of androgyny which seems to be the ideal salvation for the betterment of the sexual relationship and thus the society.

The writers have been suggesting and we ourselves feel that women, in general, should become aware of the manipulative and impersonal influences of the family and the community which aim at hampering their sense of individuality. They should try, inspite of all the hindrances, to move out of the group and find their own identities. The self-identity, if actualised should involve the rejection of dependency and taking over the responsibility for the self and its actions seriously. In women writers of Africa a flame of consciousness to free themselves has lit up but the direction has yet to form. Writers like Doris Lessing, Bessie Head, Olive...
Schreiner and Buchi Emecheta have succeeded in revolting against the inherent sexual attitudes but have not yet managed to relate themselves to the new image of man and society. They still have to go to some extent to explore the possibilities of androgynous relationships. The changes in the mentality of women characters in their works are exposed but there is very little attempt to reveal the changes that may have occurred in men. The pressing objective, therefore, is to realise that restrictions on women have always entailed a corresponding, though perhaps less obvious, set of restrictions on men as well. In this context, if men do not try to release women, women then should liberate themselves from 'the prison of gender' through means of self-actualisation.

However, the basic thrust of change favours a greater equality of the sexes. Both men and women have changed and want to change. New values are emerging along with new technologies and economic arrangements. A society should be on the horizon which works for rather than against the historic liberation of women. A painful question that arises through all sorts of situations in the works of women writers is - Why have the women, in virtually every culture, been dominated, violated, restricted, restrained or, at least, subtly controlled by men?

This work brings into notice some of the important aspects of the works of the African women writers - Doris Lessing and Mariama Ba. It outlines the movement and points out a direction leading hopefully towards a better future for both man and woman.
I acknowledge my debt to my supervisor, Dr. Steven P.C. Moyo, Director of Institute for African Studies, whose interminable guidance and encouragement enabled me to write this dissertation.

My special thanks is to Dr. J.B. Shyam for his confidence in me and for his stimulating discussions on various aspects of my topic which helped to strengthen my work.

My thanks also to my father, Mr. K.C. Garg for reading the script as many times as I asked him and making suggestions. I am also grateful to my friends Priya Darshini, Joyce Jorgensen, Eric Chifunda, Nishi Kent and Valentine Mwale for giving me inspiration and suggestions.
To my sister

Monica
0.0 INTRODUCTION

'... each generation of women writers has found itself, in a sense, without a history, forced to discover the past anew, forging again and again the consciousness of their sex. Given this perpetual disruption and also the self-hatred that has alienated women writers from a sense of collective identity, it does not seem possible to speak of a movement.'

Yet, one must and this is indeed the thesis of this study: that when viewed against the preponderance of certain themes which predominate in their works and over a period of time, women writers of Africa do, in fact, constitute, if not merely evince, the existence of a movement, albeit an unconscious one.

This movement is from group conventions and prohibitions, growing towards greater individuation. This arises out of self-awareness, self-realisation and a drive toward self-actualisation. The movement viewed from the perspective of the role and place of the self or individual divides into three phases:

a) The Communal Phase
b) The Protest Phase
c) The Individual Phase

Showalter Elaine, in her evaluation of the English literary history, mentioned the three phases as 'Feminine', 'Feminist', and 'Female'.
0.1 THE COMMUNAL PHASE

The Communal Phase, otherwise known as the 'group' phase represents that context when the collective beliefs and attitudes predominate over and above all else. In this phase an individual is no more than a mere limb in the body of the society and its institutions - the family, the community or the tribe. Here, as is clearly shown by women writers an individual merely fills a predetermined place in the system that provides what are conventionally believed to be a coherent set of mythological answers to existential questions. Religion, thus, comes into play, not only to account for the felt existential alienation but also to provide the individual with a world in which a meaningful place is offered and a promise of salvation is guaranteed. In this context, the individual must entirely succumb to the societal structure and follow, sometimes blindly, its set patterns. Any attempt to get out of this grip, in effect, becomes an effort to break away, thereby, ushering in what is viewed in this study as a movement away from the group.

This outlook on reality and the operations of the society vis-a-vis the individual as noted in this phase are quite evident in early written African literature. The subordination of the self to the group is eloquently depicted even in the literature by early male writers. It seems, for instance, that owing to the fear generated by or associated
with the imposition of an alien colonial culture, it became not fashionable but imperative to depict the self within the community. Thus, desperate attempts to highlight the communality of African culture as an invincible, accommodating culture were made. At the same time, however, these male writers projected women as marginal to the society and as generally docile, and without any will to stand out. For example, in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Uchendu, one of the traditional leaders underscores this perspective when he says to Okonkwo:

'We all know that a man is the head of the family and his wives do his bidding. A child belongs to his father and not his mother and her family. A man belongs to his fatherland and not to his motherland.'

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African women writers, on the other hand, add new dimensions of life to the older concept of 'self'. Since women are the exploited creatures they are mostly concerned with the down-to-earth, and deep-rooted problems that dog them in the male-dominated society. In the words of Flora Nwapa, the Nigerian writer, women writers in Africa succeed in bringing'... into perspective the day-to-day experiences of life as lived by ordinary women and men.'

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In the works of African women writers the communal phase is a revelation of the archetypal novel of submissive feminism. The woman character idealises a symbol of perfection, that is she has to be self-denying and self-abnegating. Her attempt...
to seek fulfilment is at once thwarted by the collective attitude. In this phase, there are also variations: there are women who are completely ignorant and lead meaningless lives as is shown through Farmatta, Modou's sisters, and Seynabou in Ba's *So Long A Letter* and others who are treated like slaves, such as Ossai in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*, and Nru Ego in *The Joys of Motherhood* and Ojebeta in *The Slave Girl*, both written by Buchi Emecheta. Most women in this phase have, however, started moving away from the slave-like image towards an 'angel' image. A writer like Flora Nwapa depicts women in her Oguta society who openly refuse to be ignorant and act like slaves. They self-assert themselves and fulfill their choices. At the same time, they have to entirely yield to their customs and roles, becoming almost like angels in the manner in which they religiously uphold the social ethos and status quo. People discussed Efuru as:

'A good woman who has good words for everybody. A good woman who greeted you twenty times if she saw you twenty times a day.'

This type of woman seems to understand dignity only within the communal patterns.

0.2 THE PROTEST PHASE:

While the traditional image of a woman in communal society is delineated through an elaborate description of her day to day experiences and, in some measure, independent from the male-world, women authors do at the same time intimate
protest against the established order. This is the protest phase. Here subtly women question the '... mythic concept of women without an inner consciousness, inner needs, and inner conflicts,' and emphasise the need for women's social independence. Women authors thus begin to expose the group as they move towards self-awareness. This is no easy task as often they find it difficult to break away from the discipline and order established by traditions, as Lauretta Ngcobo has pointed out:

'There is the invisible cord that keeps tugging and pulling at the will of African womanhood, and women will not set herself free. She compromises and will not break free'.

In the protest phase, three distinct types of women emerge. There are those like Ramatoulaye in Ba's *So Long A Letter* and Kate in *The Summer Before The Dark*, who strive to be angles, discover and become aware of the self. The author in such instances tries to find an answer to the women's identity by analysing both the group dynamics and the place of the awakening women who is still viewed as remaining strictly within the group. Then, there are those who, despite their individual awareness are, at the same time, too weak to fight the established order. In the end such women become mentally alienated and often end up experiencing psychic disturbances which Ba through Jacqueline characterises as '... strange and varied manifestations of neuro-vegetative dystonia.' Thirdly, there
are women who refuse to be angels and leave the society altogether. For these women, the only alternative is to self-actualise themselves outside the society. Aissatou, to whom, Ramatoulaye writes the letter is a case in point. Similarly, Odah Obi in Buchi Emecheta's Second Class Citizen, leaves her Nigerian society altogether and goes away to London. African women writers, not unlike their English counterparts, revolt against male orthodoxy, they repudiate restrictions, oppression and inherent traditional norms and values, to such a degree that their works become much more than a literature of escapist sensationalism, which is also traditional in that it does, to some extent, realistically contribute to a sense of self-definition, self-expression and assertion of a characteristically women's consciousness. Showalter's observation is apt when she writes about women writers who simply protest, that they:

'were not important artists. Yet in their insistence on exploring and defining womanhood, in their outspoken hostility to men, the feminist writers represented an important stage, a declaration of independence in the female tradition.'

0.3 THE INDIVIDUAL PHASE
This phase naturally evolves from the protest phase. The women writers no longer protest but are concerned much more with projecting of life as they see and understand it. This entails making shifts in the priorities of self and society away from the impersonal and manipulative aspects of life, to a more realistic and unbiased appraisal of it. Women
writers in this phase, seem more psychological in their approach than social and they mirror a psychic reality of their own, a view so effectively described by writers like Karen Horney (Feminine Psychology), Erik Erikson (Womanhood), R.D. Laing (Innerspace), to mention only a few. If the protest phase evinces a kind of schizophrenia against male syndrome and male 'bildungsroman' and a move towards, feminism, the individual phase is an assertion, a declaration of a female 'syndrome' in which a woman's point of view, approach, insight, experience, perception, and values are mastered and articulated giving rise to a female 'bildungsroman' which is built around a woman's entire life cycle and development. A number of women writers of Africa reveal this phenomenon. Doris Lessing, Bessie Head and other individuals face dilemmas amidst the forces of the society. Through the characters in their works they paint a complex picture of a self-assured woman, who is fully aware of the social situation in which she lives. Thus, in this phase there are several variations which categorise women. Firstly, there are women like Maureen in Doris Lessing's The Summer Before The Dark and Alice in A Propoer Marriage, who have bohemian instincts but do not evince an ability to analyse themselves and their lives. Secondly, there are those who through moments of revelation personal experiences and inner conflicts move away from group affiliations towards self-fulfilment within the milieu of the society. They do this by battling with conformity and dependency. For example, in Doris Lessing's Children of Violence, Martha is set on endless searches for freedom. The third category is of women who aim at becoming liberated fully from the social, economical
and, to some extent, political trappings but also realise that it is virtually impossible to acquire such an absolute overall freedom. Anna and Molly in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* typify this category as they feel a sense of victory and defeat juxtaposed in their lives. Finally, there are the extreme cases like Mary in *The Summer Before The Dark*, who views all such efforts by women as a waste of time. These types of women are usually hedonistic and destroy human values.

IN CONCLUSION

The dissertation reveals a movement which is critically (and not historically) traced in the works of women writers of Africa; Mariama Ba and Doris Lessing. The books under consideration are *So Long A Letter*, by Mariama Ba, and *The Summer Before The Dark* and *A Proper Marriage* by Doris Lessing. The characters in their works are referred and analysed as the authors' mouthpieces and voice their concerns. Mariama Ba, from Senegal wrote only one novel, *So Long A Letter*, in 1984 and died in 1985, 1 year thereafter. Her letter referred to as 'a diary novel' seems to be more a dictum for women who are on the verge of acquiring liberation and inspires courage and determination. Ba exposes the strain of repression, that women undergo in her African-Moslem society. She encourages women to search for a meaningful life, inspite of all the disillusionments and disappointments they suffer in male dominated world. Although her belief in freedom for women is strong, she seems to remain doubtful. This is expressed near the end of the book when she writes in the words of Ramatoulaye, her protagonist:
'My heart rejoices each time a woman emerges from the shadows. I know that the field of our gain is unstable, the retention of conquest difficult; social constraints are ever present and male egoism resists. Instruments for some, traits for other, respected or despised, often muzzled, all women have almost the same fate which religion or unjust legislation have sealed.'

Doris Lessing, from Zimbabwe, in her works under analysis The Summer Before The Dark (1973) and A Proper Marriage (1964) (second book in the five series of Children of Violence) deals with the very nature and operation of most of the basic institutions of the society: femininity, marriage, pregnancy, motherhood, and ageing. She emphasises particularly on the awareness of the quality of life and cultivation of the self. She seems to think that "self" is a combination of its identification with the body and its inseparability from the society. At the same time, however, she views the 'self' as a multiplicity, an island of its own with various facets, dimensions and expressions. It is evident from her own words when she says that the theme of the Children of Violence '... is a study of the individual conscience in its relationship with the collective.'

The objectives of this research are to:

i) Trace the trend or movement where group affiliations are subsiding and individual mores are emerging more strongly.

ii) Examine stereotypes and roles in terms of how women writers project men and women relationships within the social-economic context - that web of role-expectations in which women are enmeshed - and whether they succeed in portraying women as beings with an identity separable from that of others - whether one's spouse, one's family, or one's community.

iii) Reveal the possibilities or alternatives suggested by the two writers. How they suggest women to relocate themselves to move away from older ties and constraints towards personal identities.
Show hope towards androgynous possibility of the man and woman relationship. As is expressed by Carolyn Heilburn:

'More and more women, many men, are to realize that the delight inherent in male-female relationships whether in conversation or passion, is capable only of enhancement as the androgynous ideal is approached.'

Analyses of works of women writers reveal that their protagonists are just as equal to men in all things that matter today - brains, courage, drive, humour, creativity, responsibility and perseverance. Thus, it can be said that women characters do in their own way put pressure on society to change in the direction of a more decent and human world in which differences between the sexes matter less than they have hitherto done. It can thus be possible to hope that Virginia Woolf's idea of androgyny may come true if both sexes met each other halfway. Woolf explains that:

'If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when the fusion takes place, that the mind is fully fertilised and uses all its faculties. Perhaps, a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine.'
CHAPTER 1

The Communal Phase

In the communal phase, emphasis is mainly on the group and not the individual. An individual is integrated into the complex networks of the group. She, thus, becomes a part of collective consciousness and common identity. The group is hierarchical and so individuals fall naturally into their roles. They develop interrelationship within the sphere of the family, the neighbourhood, the community and the tribe as a whole. The members identify themselves with the group and get emotionally attached to it. That is, they try to uphold the group values, norms, and institutions religiously. Margaret Peil writes while describing Durkheim's idea of 'mechanical solidarity':

'Just as every bicycle is much like every other bicycle, so a society based on mechanical solidarity consists of individuals, making similar contributions. There tends to be a minimal division... more important there is a shared collective conscience (a sense of belonging to a group more important than any individual) which strongly upholds common norms, values and institutions.'

The African writers who feature prominently in the communal phase including Mariama Ba, Flora Nwapa, Buchi Emecheta, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thiongo, to mention a few, generally, project this group concept in their early works. Looking at Ba's *So Long A Letter*, Ramatoulaye, the protagonist writes a letter, 'a prop in my distress' to an old friend Aissatou, in which she intensely feels that she must ensure not her own but the community's survival. She is made to feel that she belongs to
the group and cannot act against it. When Modou, her husband
betrays her, she does not leave him. She feels that she should
move away like Aissatou her friend did when she was rejected by
her husband, but does not. She praises Aissatou '... even though
I respect the choice of a liberated woman, I have never conceived
of happiness outside marriage.'\textsuperscript{15} Chinua Achebe's \textit{Things Fall
Apart} is another example in which the survival of the community
is shown to be paramount. Achebe depicts Okonkwo as the repre-
sentative of the collective Ibo consciousness. Both Ramatoulaye
and Okonkwo try hard to uphold the tradition of the group, although
Okonkwo, unlike Ramatoulaye does not have the ability to analyze
himself. He grows up into the image of a man expected of him in
the society: a man of power, prestige and wealth. Despite this
outlook, however, Okonkwo entirely succumbs to the norms and
values of his community. In the Ibo community, a sign of weak-
ness or womanliness (in man) is outrightly condemned. Okonkwo
poses as a hard man and firmly rejects any show of emotions
and feelings. He grows up to hate his father, Unoka, for his
benignant qualities and acts obsessively against them. To quote
an example, he takes a brutal hand in killing Ikemefuna, a
son given to him by the society, because he fears that he will
be called weak in the eyes of the society. And, moreover, it is
the decision of the authority and the oracle which he will not
dispute in any case. A conversation between Okonkwo and Obierika,
his friend, reveals his absolute sense of loyalty to the group:

'Whenever the thought of his father's weakness and
failure troubled him he expelled it by thinking
about his own strength and success. And so he did now. His mind went to his latest show of manliness. "I cannot understand why you refused to come with us to kill that boy" he asked Obierika.

"Because I did not want to" Obierika replied" I had something better to do."

"You sound as if you question the authority and the decision of the oracle, who said he should die."

"I do not. Why should I? But the Oracle did not ask me to carry out its decision."

"But someone had to do it. If we were all afraid of blood, it would not be done. And what do you think the oracle would do then?"

"You know very well, Okonkwo, that I am not afraid of blood... What you have done will not please the Earth. It is the kind of action for which the goddess wipes out whole families."

"The Earth cannot punish me for obeying her messenger." Okonkwo said ... "That is true" Obierika agreed. But if the Oracle said that my son should be killed I would neither dispute it nor be the one to do it."

Thus, we see that Okonkwo unflinchingly supports the group while Obierika begins to question it.

Women, in the communal phase, are generally projected as inferior role-players and captives of male monopoly. This is particularly true of the early works by male writers. As shown in Things Fall Apart, men exercise authority over women as Okonkwo puts it:

'No matter how prosperous a man was if he was unable to rule his womenfolk and his children (and especially his women) he was really not a man.'
A woman in Achebe's society becomes ripe enough to get married at sixteen and sometimes even earlier, and her marriage terms are bartered by her father whose decision she cannot question. A man can choose any number of wives he wishes and can treat them as he wants. Okonkwo treats his wives as non-identities and goes to an extent of beating them.

Women writers, while not approving, also reveal that women exist only as functions and fulfilments for men's needs and desires and that, it is men who actually instill in them the complex of submissiveness and defensive perseverance. They are, in other words, emotionally blackmailed by both men and society to believe that their ultimate goal or purpose in life lies in the service of the institution of marriage; the man and his family being the centre point. In Ba's *So Long A Letter* Modou's funeral ceremony is an illustration of how a woman is reduced to a non-identity. The wives of a dead man are put in a tent with a wrapper pulled over their heads and set up for the occasion. Ba describes the picture thus:

'This is the moment dreaded by every Senegalese woman, the moment when she sacrifies her possessions as gifts to her family-in-law; and worse still ... she gives up her personality, her dignity, becoming a thing in the service of the man who has married her. No sister-in-law will touch the head of any wife who has been stingy, unfaithful and inhospitable.'

Ba seems to suggest that in some cases a woman becomes a little worthy only through the regard shown to her by the amount of money she receives. She has to be self-denying in her life to achieve this kind of social certificate. However, it is still the family-in-law who take the money and '... leave us utterly destitute, we who will need the material support.'
After marriage the woman becomes the property and a kind of means to her family-in-law. A man is treated almost like a semi-god and his weaknesses are exposed only after his death. The widows are left with heavy and unfinished responsibilities. These women as projected in Ba's society are hardly able to overcome their emotions and burdens when they find themselves approached by various suitors. They are expected to start all over again the cycle of sex and procreation. Most women writers show sexual ethics pivoting on polygamy as a system in which, women are shown to be not only the victims of men but also of women themselves. Ba in _So Long A Letter_, strongly seems to feel that polygamy is the central core of all women's problems in her Senegalese society. In a note sent to Douda Deing, Ramatoulaye writes:

'You think the problem of polygamy is a simple one. Those who are involved in it know the constraints, the lies, the injustices that weigh down their consciences in return, for ephemeral joys of change.'

Ramatoulaye finds herself questioning the values of her society when Modou, her husband, decides to marry Binetou after twenty-five years of their life together. Jacqueline, a minor character suffers mental disorder because her husband flirts with women endlessly and without any respect for her. Aissatou leaves the society because of Mawdo's marriage to Nabou. Similarly, Flora Nwapa exposes the strain of polygamy in her Oguta society. Nwapa's protagonist and eponyms of her two novels, Efuru and Edu, seem to accept it as part of their lives. Efuru tells Ossai:

'If he wants to marry a wife, I shall be only too happy. Infact, I had been thinking of it for sometime for I have not had a second baby....'
In Nwapa's society it is a duty of a barren wife to recruit a co-wife for her husband. If she doesn't the society does by constantly pushing her towards it. The wife, often, chooses a co-wife early so that she will not be pushed in the background or asked to leave. Efuru chooses Nkoyeni as Gilbert's second wife and later decides to take a third wife. She tells Ajanupu (p.272) that Nkoyeni was giving them trouble and so they needed a woman to compete with her. By acting against an ideal image of a polygamous wife Nkoyeni becomes a non-entity, an object of replacement. Efuru herself suffers anxiety when Adizua spends most of his time with another woman. She thinks,

'There is a woman behind this difference. A woman whose personality is greater than mine... I must face facts... If mine was greater he would not have left me!'

Thus, a man forces a woman to start acting and thinking of herself as an accessory. She finds herself in competition with other women who are more beautiful than her. A woman becomes a man's plaything to appease his momentary indulgence. A vivid condition of a woman in a polygamous society is shown by Ousmane in Voltaire (1962) in a story 'Ses Trois Tours' where Ngoumbe's dawning awareness reveals her helplessness. Ngoumbe's time of happiness is short-lived. She becomes Moustapha's third wife and tries to entice and manipulate him towards herself without any consideration for his first two wives. It is only when he marries a fourth wife that she faces the reality in her society. She feels used and undignified. Her only defence weapon is to become sarcastic and indifferent but she collapses under the strain. Ironically, it is Moustapha who feels that he has been wronged.
The women writers in this phase, mainly distinguish three types of women. Looking at Ba's women characters one notices that there is one group of women who follow the structure and its institutions blindly. These types simply pose for the group, that is, they identify themselves with it. Ramatoulaye's sisters-in-law are an example. They come to Ramatoulaye's house and to her they seem to be pathetic in their emptiness. Their time passes in celebrating group trifles. They seem to be like fattened goats waiting for slaughter on the altar of polygamy. Farmatta, Ramatoulaye's neighbour is another example of a woman who represents the society. Her outburst to Ramatoulaye reveals the society's nature:

'... who do you take yourself for? At fifty... you trample upon your luck. Daouda Deing, of your own age group with just one wife. He offers you security, love, and you refuse.'

Deing makes a marriage proposal to Ramatoulaye even when she is fifty and Ramatoulaye's refusal to Deing's proposal means 'trample upon your luck' to Farmatta who does not understand anything beyond money and security. Seynabou, another example represents women who have acquired false status and power. Such women manipulate younger women towards upholding the customs of the society. Seynabou goes to an extent of instilling group affiliations into Nabou, her brother's daughter to make her, her son's second wife. This is done without any consideration for his first wife, Aissatou, who, to her, is merely a goldsmith's daughter.

The second group of women are those who sacrifice their lives for the sake of sacrifice. They are conditioned to believe that suffering is a trail from which they emerge heroic. Ba sarcastically remarks:

'Your stoicism has made you not violent or submissive but true heroes, never upsetting established order, despite your miserable condition.'
In Flora Nwapa's *Efuru*, Ossai is portrayed as a typical example of a self-sacrificing woman. She advises Efuru:

'My daughter I can only solicit patience... I gained nothing from my long suffering, so the world would think but I am proud and still am true to the only man I love.'

In Buchi Emecheta's *The Slave Girl*, Ojebeta, the protagonist is subdued by the group. She is sold by her brother when she is only five to six years and made into a slave. She, from then onwards dances to the tune of the society. When she grows up as a woman and leaves the slave institution, she agrees to marry a man of her own choice and the society approves of it. But even in this position she finds herself thinking:

'Would she ever be free? Must she be a slave all her life, never being allowed do what she liked? Still it would have been better to be a slave to a master of your choice, than to one who did not care or even know who you were.'

Thus, in the end she changes her place. Instead of marrying Clifford, a son of her slave-mistress, she marries Jacob. But still remains and accepts herself as a slave. Efuru and Ajanupu, the female characters in *Efuru*, both move away from the idea of sacrifice for its own sake as shown in Ossai's image, and from the slave image characterised in Ojebeta. After listening to Ossai's story of sacrifice Efuru makes a choice for herself:

'... There is no point staying then. Adizuwa's waywardness is in his blood ... Perhaps self-imposed suffering appeals to her. It does not to me. I know I am capable of suffering for greater things, but to suffer for a tyrant husband like Adizuwa is to debase suffering.'

Nwapa seems to condemn undignified submissiveness in Ossai and supports the sense of the responsibility in Efuru who fulfills the demands
of the community without self-denial. Ajanupu is the medium through whose reactions both the qualities are revealed. She rebukes Ossai:

'How could you be suffering for a person who did not appreciate your suffering, the person who despised you, it was not virtue, it was plain stupidity. You merely wanted to suffer for the fun of it,...'  

These types of women, however, move within the sphere of the community. They react against the slave image and simply re-arrange the traditions to suit themselves. For example, Efuru elopes with Adizua in the beginning of the book but at the same time feels '... the dowry must be paid. I must see that it is done.'  

Another example is shown when she accepts her position without question. '...But why is he so secretive about it, He is the lord and master if he wants to marry her, I cannot stop him.'  

Although, Nwapa pictures her women in the framework of the society, she does, to some extent, expose the attitudes of men towards them and acknowledges a slight change in the consciousness of these tribal women. Efuru, at the end of the book, decides to remain alone when Gilbert, her second husband, accepts without question the medicine man's accusation of adultery on her. Unlike Ossai she at least realises her self-respect and reacts against her friend's Dr. Uzaru's advice when she emphatically retreats:

'Why do you want me to go back to the man who accused me of adultery. You don't know the seriousness of the offence.'  

What emerges here in fact is that Nwapa's protagonists are not really protesting for their identity, rather they are complaining about
the customs that make slaves of women in their society. This analytical perceptiveness has been noted as Niyi Oladeji, a critic, comments:

'She may not be a battering rain, she is surely an active termite burrowing into and undermining the pillars of those social customs that persecute people of her sex.' 32

Another idea that emerges from the group phase is that the purpose of life or future behaviour of an individual in the society is authorised by a voice that echoes from the remote past, a past full of symbolic constructs and images, the complex mechanisms, that are deeply rooted in diffuse but vital essences which ensure continuity of the society. Ramatoulaye, in Ba's book becomes aware of women's situations in Senegal and the importance of the self but cannot still challenge the bonds of African-Moslem culture and religion which has been instilled into her senses from childhood. She tells Aissatou:

'I hope to carry out my duties fully. My heart concurs with the demands of religion. Reared since childhood on their strict precepts, I expect not to fail.' 33

Similarly, in The Summer Before The Dark, in the modern context, Lessing describes Kate's situations as '... garments taken off a rack' 34 and through similar expressions (p. 7, 8, 13, 17) she seems to assert that women's situations are created mostly by the complex mechanisms of the past and are as a result of collective group affiliations. They are also as common as an act of garments being taken off a rack. The word 'garments' taken from the seductive consumerism built on the lingering influence of past traditions, serves as a symbol of social weapons which seduce
women towards strengthening their role-expectations. From Kate's musings and general contemplation emerge stale and stereotype cultural patterns revealed through private and public events:

'For towards the crucial experiences (private) custom allots certain attitudes and they are pretty stereotype. Ah yes, first love!... growing up is bound to be painful!... My first child you know... But I was in love!...'

'The crucial experiences (public)... were for more and more people: invasion, war, civil wars, epidemic, famine, flood, quake, poisoning of soil, food, air. For these allotted attitudes were even more stereotyped.'

Kate analyses the typicality of her own thoughts, words and phrases, and realises that they are not hers but '... taken down off a rack and put on' and are as '... worn out as nursery rhymes.' Even her children's behaviour seems to her '... the equivalent of one of the old phrases, a convention which people did not know how to lose in favour of the truth - whatever that was.'

Religion also plays a vital part in the lives of the individuals and determines their approach to life. Religious beliefs are encouraged to salvage the fears and responsibilities and leave the individuals with a sense of dependence on the more powerful force than themselves. The members of the particular group, thus, become passive, fatalistic, and usually unemphatic. If one of the members, is struck by a calamity, the group resorts to religion and tries to solve the problem collectively. The members rely mostly on deities and ancestors and have a strong belief in supernatural powers. Witch doctors and medicine men are usually consulted in
times of problems. For example, in Efuru, Nwabata is robbed of her property and complains to Efuru and Ajanupu:

'My world is bad. What have I done to deserve this? It is high time I went to dibia. Perhaps I have wronged our ancestors unknowingly. Perhaps I am being punished because of a guilt in the family.'

To illustrate further, Efuru is accused by the witch doctor, of adultery which she has not committed but the society and even her husband try to force her to admit it so that she can live. This changes Efuru's life and she decides to leave her husband who she feels should have defended her. She tells her friend, Dr. Uzaru

'... I remained for seven Nkwas days and now I am absolved. Utuso did not kill me... That means I am not an adulterous woman...'

One observes that both religion and belief in supernatural powers play, in the communal phase, a significant determinant role in the lives of the people who somehow find their questions answered by them. Through our analysis of the communal phase, we observe that the traditional community generally sets a kind of unidirectional patterns. An individual who tries to move against the flow feels the resistance of the counter flow and is bound to be destroyed physically or metaphorically.
CHAPTER 2

The Protest Phase

In the protest phase, the writers feel that the traditional and institutional structures adversely affect and hinder women's full participation in the affairs of the community. The writers question the hierarchical system, domesticity, responsibilities of motherhood, male attitudes and polygamy as depicted in the communal phase. They expose women's emotional strains and dilemmas under the biased authority of the group. Thus, it is that the women characters make an attempt for self-expression, although, they find themselves struggling within the pre-determined social confines.

The protest phase is, therefore, characterised by a sense of psychological uneasiness, in which, one is torn between a sense of belonging to the group and one's awareness of her 'self'. For instance, in So Long A Letter, Ba projects the lives of Ramatoulaye, Jacqueline, and Aissatou revealing their conflicts: feelings for and against the group.

Ramatoulaye's consciousness is two-sided - there is one half of her which succumbs to the community's whims; the other half seeks to break away, thereby, beginning protests, as it were, against the group. Ramatoulaye starts doubting and questioning the norms and values of the society when Modou, her husband, decides to marry Binetou. Ramatoulaye's daughter, Daba, brings home a friend Binetou whom; Modou starts meeting without the knowledge of Ramatoulaye and Daba and finally decides to marry her. It is only after the marriage that Imam, Tamsir (Modou's brother), and Mawdo inform her. Tamsir's words to Ramatoulaye are revealingly sarcastic:
'You are the only one in your house, no matter how big it is, no matter how dear life is, you are the first wife, a mother for Modou, a friend for Modou'.

He goes on to say that it is god who wants Modou to have a second wife. One feels that a man makes even god an accomplice in his pursuit to fulfill his personal drives and vices. Ramatoulaye is cheated and her feeling of betrayal cannot be contained: '... I acquiesced under the drops of poison that were burning me, a quarter of a century of marriage, a wife unparalleled...'. She feels the pain of rejection and betrayal of their twenty-five years of life together. It is difficult for her to accept this kind of change in her life. Indeed, this long-time relationship with Modou makes Ramatoulaye question all else. She wonders in fact, that if Modou had taken co-wives time and again during her twenty-five years perhaps like most women in her society she would have accepted Modou's decision without question. As for her daughter, Daba, she feels so embarrassed because Binetou is her friend and in her age group that her remorse is to plead with Ramatoulaye to breakaway from Modou so that their self-respect can be maintained. But Ramatoulaye chooses to remain within the institution of marriage. It is only, after the death of Modou, five years after his marriage to Binetou that she feels she can direct the course of her life. It seems that she would have continued to play the role of Modou's first wife if he had not died. It is his death that actually leads her
towards assertion which is shown when Tamsir, Modou's elder brother, decides to marry her and she refuses:

'... You forget that I have a heart, a mind that I am not an object to be passed from hand to hand. You don't know what the marriage means to me, it is an act of faith and of love, the total surrender of oneself, to the person one has chosen. What of your wives Tamsir! Your income can meet neither their needs nor those of your financial obligations. One of your wife dyes, another sells fruits, the third untiringly turns the handle of her sewing machine. You the revered lord you take it easy obeyed at the crook of a finger. I shall never be one to complete your collection.'

Ramatoulaye's unexpected awareness of herself and her refusal to enter into a levirite marriage may be attributed to her education which in colonial times provided many women with an outlet to escape from their slave-like positions. The purpose of education which is seen as a tool in the mission of women's emancipation is characterised thus:

'To lift us out of the bog of tradition, superstition and custom, to make us appreciate a multitude of civilisations without renouncing our own, to raise our vision of the world, cultivate our personalities, strengthen our qualities, to make up for our inadequacies, to develop universal values in us...'

This outlook represents that of the urban middle class women of Senegalese society, and Ramatoulaye is one such example: a product of the time when ideas brought by colonialism tended to conflict with the indigenous ideas. Ramatoulaye feels that although she is embedded in the communal patterns, she can still search for a meaningful and acceptable life by extracting the best out of both the indigenous and the foreign cultures. However, to strike a
meaningful balance in such matters is no mean task as can be discussed from Ramatoulaye's remarks to Aissatou:

'... Now our society is shaken to its very foundation, torn between the attraction of imported vices and the fierce resistance of old virtues.'46

Most of the characters emerge demented from this shaken foundation in which chaos reigns in the interplay of eastern, western and indigenous cultural values. Thus, we note that the new generation represented by Ramatoulaye's children is indifferent to the old culture and more inclined towards the western ways. They have been brought up under western ideology and have no secure ethical base to search for a personal philosophy of life. The result is that her younger daughters - Dieynaba, Arame and Yacine start smoking, while Aissatou, her second eldest daughter, becomes pregnant. This is when Ramatoulaye finds herself questioning the western culture '... Does it mean that one cannot have modernism without a lowering of moral standards?'47 She brings up her children according to the westerly ways, herself being constrained by African-Moslem culture. But she realises that she gave them more freedom than they needed. Through exposing the conflicts in a transitional situation Ba seems to point out that freedom and life experiences should be tagged with personal morality. This can be seen through Ramatoulaye's advice to her daughters:

'I insist that my daughters be aware of the value of their bodies. I emphasise the sublime significance of the sexual act, an expression of love. The existence of means of contraception and instincts. It is through his self-control, his ability to reason, to choose, his power of attachment that the individual distinguishes himself from the animal.'48
On discovering Aissatou's pregnancy, Ramatoulaye is torn between the old and the new images of motherhood, and reflects:

'Mother of yore taught chastity. Their voice of authority condemned all extramarital wanderings. Modern mothers favour 'forbidden games' they help to limit the damage and better still prevent it! They remove any thorn or pebble that might hinder the progress of their children towards the conquest of all forms of liberty. I apply myself painfully to this necessity.'

Thus, Ramatoulaye admits to herself her belief in a modern image of a motherhood but she has to apply 'painfully' to it. We notice that Ba does make an attempt to search for ideal solutions and suggest alternatives for women through Ramatoulaye's experiences and observations.

Jacqueline, a minor character in the book, is depicted as a woman who does not seem to find any answer to her dilemma. She is aware of who she is but she does not enter into any philosophising as to who she is. Indeed on closer look, she strikes one as having an analytical faculty of Ramatoulaye and at the same time having the spirit of independence like Aissatou's who not only protests but actually moves out of the group. Jacqueline suffers mental breakdown after her marriage to Samba Diack. The cause of her increasing sickness is that Diack chases women although he is married and has children. Jacqueline fights her situation and turns towards a feeling of death; she remains in a mental hospital under care of a psychiatrist who advises her: 'You must react, go out, give yourself a reason for living, take courage...'

Jacqueline is a typical example of a frustrated and betrayed woman in a polygamous society. Her problem is that she lives in self-pity and does not take any action. One feels that she blindly
follows the predetermined patterns of her community and when she does not get what she expects or what the community promises her she fails to understand her situation and is unable to face the reality. To this end, Jacqueline is a clear contrast to Aissatou, a woman who successfully breaks away from the society.

Aissatou becomes her mother-in-law's victim. Seynabou, the mother-in-law pits Aissatou against Nabou, the daughter of her brother when she seeks to mould her into an ideal wife for her son. She detests Aissatou and works against her because she is only a goldsmith's daughter who cannot, she feels, measure up to her rank of a 'Gulewar' (princess of Sine). But Aissatou is a determined woman, she writes a letter to Mawdo, in which she states her resoluteness against polygamy, and thereby declares her individuality:

'Princes master their feelings to fulfil their duties. Others bend their heads and in silence, accept a destiny that oppresses them... that briefly put, is the internal ordering of our society with its various divisions. I will not yield to it... if you procreate without loving, merely to satisfy the pride of your declining mother, then I find you despicable... I am stripping myself of your love, your name. Clothed in my dignity, the only worthy garment, I go my way.'

Aissatou leaves her community altogether and proves that she can lead a dignified life with her children, away from her husband.

This action by Aissatou is what we are designating and is fundamental to the evaluation of this phase of the movement as it is a preparation for the final break so clearly revealed in the third phase, that of the 'individual' freeing herself from the society. Another woman who tries to break away from the group and cannot is Kate in *The Summer Before The Dark*. She gets an opportunity to move out of the group affiliations during the summer holidays. Her protest
against the institutions of marriage and motherhood is experienced only during that period of summer and its effect takes place in the private space of her inner life. Lessing depicts Kate as a middle-class woman, a pitiable creature in her thirties descending into a condition of terminal social decay, imprisoned in her community and her own psyche. Like Ramatoulaye she too feels a restraint when she begins to question the life she so submissively led as a wife and a mother. Kate is a picture of a self-effacing wife and mother at the heart of a home and specialises in love and service to its members. Lessing shows that this role is an extremely limiting one and frustrates the aspirations of women who are ready to move outside the family to seek independence through employment or personal experiences. In this novel an initiation journey can be deciphered—the departure, the initiation, and the return likened to the mythical journeys made by Bunyan, Gilgamesh, Prometheus and others. Through this journey Kate moves from the group to protest, however, unlike the mythical voyagers she disguises her transformation from the society on her return. Van Gennep formulates that Kate's journey has three phases:

'... when the activities associated with such ceremonies (accompanying life crisis) are examined in terms of their order and content it is possible to distinguish three major phases—Separation (separation), Transition (marge), and Incorporation (agregation).'

In these three phases, Kate gradually becomes aware of her life—through introspection (inner life), retrospection (past life), perception (outer life), and regression (unconscious life).
Kate's inner life is her real existence. It is here that she examines her regrets and aspirations and searches for truth. Retrospection makes Kate dwell on her present situation by comparing it with the past. Lessing uses flashback and free-association techniques to reveal Kate's past. Through her awakening perceptions, Kate sees the artificiality and familiarity of her culture and its antecedents. She questions her society's hierarchical role-expectations and purpose of life and sees herself as an endorsement of continuity in a mechanised structure. The initiation journey, side by side is also pursued by a dream journey (regression) mirroring Kate's unconscious transformation. Lessing like Jung perhaps believes that a process of individualisation should give freedom to the unconscious as much as it gives to the conscious dimensions of the personality. On analysing her dream sequence, Kate tells Maureen, her landlady that:

'... since that afternoon... everything changed...
I went out of my life... since then, what I think has been really going on is my dream.'

Kate's furtherance into self-knowledge is also deepened by the introduction of two other women characters in the book - Mary, Kate's neighbour and Maureen, her landlady. Kate weighs qualities of hedonism in Mary and admires Maureen's bohemian instincts.

Kate's separation is enforced by the family forces, she is suddenly not needed '... this was the first time in her life that she was not wanted, she was unnecessary.' The family - Michael, her husband, and her four grown up children disperse for summer pleasures leaving her dislodged and displaced. Her house is let without her consent and
she realises that it does not really belong to her. She feels let down and insecure:

'...the fact was that she, this kingpin was to be at a loose end from June to September with not much as a room of her own. A very curious feeling that was, as if a warm covering had been stripped off her, as if she were an animal being flayed.'\(^{55}\)

At this time of her life she recalls that she had actually become withdrawn from her family, three years before the summer holidays, but she had not accepted it. The household activities had become burdensome and she had felt alienated from her children who were behaving like self-centred entities. If she had revealed her inner conflicts at the time, the family would have been at odds with her so she had kept her withdrawal to herself. However, she had always felt that '... she had been continually dragged back into outgrown, she had hoped patterns of behaviour by people who still expected them of her.'\(^{56}\) Her situation had climaxed when Tim, her youngest son, had turned on her accusing her of suffocating him. Through this, she had been jolted out of her role as 'a gatted white goose.'\(^{57}\) into self-awareness. After this incident, she had observed herself and her position in life more closely.

On separation from her family, she starts doubting the norms and the values of her society. She thinks: '... All these years now seemed like a betrayal of what she really was...'.\(^{58}\) The dream sequence also begins at this point, where she finds a seal - 'stranded', 'helpless' and 'moaning'. It is a projection of her own tormented state, a symbol of her inner self. She picks up the seal and struggles with it towards the sea. While carrying the seal she hesitates on the
direction she is taking and in panic takes a wrong one, but the seal's restlessness brings her back to the previous direction towards the North. It is Kate's dilemma, she feels vulnerable to take a path of self-knowledge which may prove a betrayal to the life she led. Inspite of her uncertainty, she still persists. She now has an inner urgency, a striving to awaken to her personal priorities of life.

The transitional phase in the book is Kate's entrance into the Global Food International Organisation. Before embarking on a life of an urban career woman from that of 'a pretty, healthy, serviceable woman' she ritualises herself by cutting her hair into a modern style. According to Van Gennep 'the sacrifice of the hair' has two meanings: 'cutting' the hair and 'dedicating' the hair. To cut the hair is to separate from the sacred world; and to dedicate the hair is to bind oneself to the sacred world. At the end of the summer holidays, her only change is that she does not 'dedicate' her hair to her previous world. In other words, she does not dress them according to the society's approval:

'Her experiences of the last months her discoveries, her self-definition, what she hoped were now strengths were concentrated here: that she would walk into her home with her hair undressed, with her hair tied back for utility, rough and streaky, and the widening grey band showing like a statement of intent.'

As a career woman she compares her present situation with that of the past and realises that she has been a kind of maid at everyone's disposal. Her problem had been over-adaptability and over-efficiency which led her to total involvement and deep concern. Her fault was that she willingly allowed herself to be moulded to it. She became:
'A beautiful woman, a wonderful mother, a cook for the angels, a marvellous, marvellous being, all warmth and kindness with not a fault in her.'

She now becomes aware that she sacrificed for its own sake and simply filled roles, rather than lived her life. About the year spent with her grandfather she remembers that:

'She was sheltered and distrusted. She was flattered by deference to her very wish - but knew that, the female thing, occupied a carefully defined minor part of her grandfather's life as his wife had done and his daughter.'

On analysis of her marriage to Michael, we become aware of her society's nature towards marriage and motherhood. In spite of her successful marriage in the eyes of the society she finds herself doubting. She finds herself thinking that her marriage to Michael 'was offered up as a charming, almost whimsical sacrifice to convention.' Her culture practices more of one-sided Victorian sexual tolerance. She now recalls Michael's affairs and feels a deep dissatisfaction. At the time, she felt maternal to him but now she finds herself resenting it. Her resentment involves her into an affair with Jefferey, a callous American. They travel together towards the interior of Spain from Istanbul. It is a tedious journey which involves crossing a frontier to reach the interior. It is a symbol of Kate's moral challenge, she unconsciously feels that she has to go deeper into her inner-self by accepting the experience. She finds herself in conflict between a sense of security and a sense of freedom. Meanwhile, in the next part of the dream she searches for the seal which is temporarily missing. This is perhaps because she feels she has taken a wrong step. She feels morally disoriented.
Jefferey, however, falls sick and instead of leaving him she nurses him with an indifference (against her maternal instincts) until she herself becomes sick and has to leave him. She thus realises the purposelessness of the affair and decides: 'The future was not going to be a continuation of the immediate past, with the summer seeming in retrospect, like an unimportant hiatus. No future would continue from where she left off as a child...'.

In her dream she tries to retrieve her neglected self by tending to the seal which is weaker and reproaching. She enters a house where she revives it by splashing water on it. She finishes various household activities which she feels she must do for her family. Her children seem to her '... transformed and transfigured into myth creatures, larger than themselves, representing more than they were in ordinary life.' Lessing suggests that the seed of Kate's alienation lies in the rejection she feels from her children. When the time comes for appreciation of her service and sacrifice they mock and criticize her by using self-defence mechanisms. For instance, when she takes in a stray cat, they treat her as a patient and the cat as her medicine - '... just the thing for the menopause, she heard Tim say to Eileen...'. She realises that they pretended to be the well-tempered and well-adjusted family for the sake of the social norms but the reality was the undercurrents running deep within that mask. In her dream, in the upper room of the house she finds 'a noble-man, a blue-eyed lover'. They make love but instead of staying with him, she tells him '... I want to stay with you, but I must take the seal to the sea first'. She has unconsciously started realising that knowledge of the self is a priority.
In her next dream sequence, she enters a village where the king claims her for a village dance sealing her with a kiss. He is the same blue-eyed lover she left for her seal. After a while, the king chooses another girl with a red ribbon. Kate feels humiliated and tries to run away but the people get hold of her and imprison her in a pit framed with wooden planks. The king chides her '... for her lack of generosity, her niggling and critical spirit, her failure in communal feeling but, above all, for her lack of understanding for the laws that governed life...'. This dream projection of Kate's mind is her true feelings towards her husband's infidelity. Kate begins to doubt the ethos and etiquette she built throughout her life and feels shaken. Kate's state can be given Robert-Merton's description:

'... a condition of breakdown in the cultural structure, occurring particularly when there is an acute disjunction between cultural norms and goals and the capacities of members of the group to act in accordance with them.'

Meanwhile, in her dream, Kate sees the seal and herself in flashes making a painful journey towards the north. It is a struggle towards her goal of self-realisation. The dream movement and her surface one, interact and interplay pushing Kate deeper into self-knowledge. She feels that she is awakening through her dreams.

The incorporation phase begins from the time she returns to London from Spain after her affair with Jefferey. She comes back to the realisation that '... having left even for a moment the pattern her life was set in seemed a mistake chosen by a mad woman...'. On her return, she suffers mental disorders - loss of self, rootlessness, isolation and pessimism. We see her confusion when she gives the
taxi driver the address of her house and upon arriving remembers that it was let. This is probably an unconscious urge towards a sense of security which her house symbolises. She then finds a room in an expensive hotel where she tries to hide herself in a cocoon of warmth given in excess by the hotel maids - Anya and Sylvia. One notices that she becomes dependent on anyone she meets and on being left alone feels rootless and disoriented. This sickness permeates into her dream, the seal is in coma, or dying. Her dependent nature can be seen in the seal's dependence on her. If it is left alone it will die, likewise, if she is left alone she will feel disordered. Throughout her movement, we notice that she finds someone to depend on - Charlie Cooper, Ahmed, Jefferey, Senez Martinez, Anya and Sylvia, and later Maureen.

In her dream she tries to cure the seal by frantically splashing water which is beginning to freeze in a hollow of a rock. The seal recovers somewhat and they continue northwards. She, herself also recovers and finds a room in Maureen's flat where she feels isolated and lonely until she communicates with Maureen. She goes to a familiar restaurant with her shabby appearance not in her usual social image. She is unrecognised and treated badly. She leaves the place in a kind of tantrum. On reaching her room she breaks down and cries which she had never done before in her life. '... She wept long and deliberately. A safety value... She was being assailed on all sides, and from within too, by loneliness'.

Throughout the incorporation phase, Kate searches for her dream but cannot find it. She has other small dreams '... like so many parcels
she had to balance and secure...' Although she feels that the
dream is continuing somewhere in her but does not focus. Perhaps
Kate has to go through various social tests to reach an answer to
her situation. Later, the dream starts playing hide and seek with
her. It emerges and submerges beyond her reach.

This makes her realise that the dream was fading. '...because her
waking life at this time, in this flat, with Maureen, was wrong, was
not feeding the dream into a strength which would enable her to re-
member it? The more she becomes aware of her decision to return
home, the more the dream fades. She tells Maureen about the dilemma:

'Perhaps I'll never find the open water the seal
needs. Perhaps it's all ice and snow and dark
always, forever there is no end to it - perhaps
1 and the seal will fall into the snow and never
get up again. But why, then should I be dreaming
at all? What would be the point of a dream that
had to end in me and the seal dying, after all
the effort?'

We ourselves are disappointed to see Kate turning into a mere digni-
fied actress. Lorelie Cederstrom says '... the depth of her aware-
ness has increased so slightly that Lessing forces the reader to
ask whether it was worth all the effort.' But then, through Kate's
analysis (quote above) we see that Lessing is herself aware of this
feeling of hopelessness. Perhaps she implies in Markow's words:

'To achieve being, woman will have to surmount her
nostalgia for the dependent life, to achieve
transcendence she has to exirpate her need for
romantic love; to achieve essence, she will have
to assume, in anxiety and hope, responsibility for
self.'

We however, know from Kate's nature that her only solution to her
situation is to go back home for otherwise she would be destroyed
by her own psychic demands. But at least she had an opportunity to see through the cloud of illusion shrouding her life. In the next part of her dream she breaks a 'flowering twig from a silvery-pink cherry tree in a full bloom,' while carrying the seal which has shown it to her. This development in the dream is Kate's coming to terms with her life. She dreams again, in which she is not anxious about the seal anymore. At the same time Kate also analyses Maureen who lives against the role-expectation of her society. Kate by understanding Maureen's reactions against the group sees her own weaknesses. She reflects on Eileen, her daughter's behaviour and realises why she did not openly rebel and instead broke plates, banged doors and once even pretended to become pregnant. Maureen makes her realise how suffocating a family institution can be on children. As the time for Kate to return home draws near, she phones home and learns that the tenants are leaving in three days'time. In her excitement she forgets herself and, as before, fixes appointments on phone with grocers, cleaners, etc. This reaction makes one feel that Kate has hardly changed. Maureen watches her reaction in disgust and condemns her. She decides not to get married to Philip, her fiancé, as a protest against Kate's reaction. Kate decides to remain with Maureen a little longer and has a time to note that her desire to please others and her serviceable consolation, to some extent, has died in her. She tells Maureen:

'I have made a discovery going home the way I am going to make statements though I am not sure what about. But my area of choice - do you know what I mean? Well, it's narrowed down to how I do my hair? Isn't that extraordinary.'

At the same time, Kate also compares her life with that of Mary, (her neighbour). By introducing Mary, Lessing exposes two extremes -
Kate is pressured by her serious and sensitive approach to life while Mary abandons all customs of the society and seems to thrive on immoral and meaningless pleasures. Kate examines Mary's life-style and discusses with Maureen which pushes her deeper into self-analysis.

In the end of her dream Kate lets the seal slide into the water, where it mingle with other seals. In other words Kate will join the group from which she made an attempt to get out. She distinguishes her seal from the others from the scar on its back. She abandons the seal and decides to return home. Showalter says for this that it '... is not a solution, it is the equality that comes out at the end of the gun.' Maureen asks her:

"Your seal is safe, isn't he?" "He is being rescued and he is safe." "I don't see it as my seal". "Yes, wouldn't it?" One notes that Kate does, however, try to move away, from the family and the community and in retrospect tries to analyse her situation but it is almost the impossibility of the situation she is in, that she finally decides to return back. Markow expresses Kate's problem as '... the domesticated female is stripped off her will to prevail as a person on her own right, and failure becomes inevitable and irreversible.'

Through the women characters projected in the protest phase, one tends to ask the question that if followed consistently, what principle of conduct will bring the greatest happiness and moral value in a woman's life in general in the modern world? At the end of So Long A Letter, Ba shows a ray of hope:

'I warn you already, I have not given up wanting to refashion my life. Despite everything disappointments and limitation hope still lives in me. It is from the dirty and nauseating humus that the green plant sprouts into life, and I can feel new buds spring up in me. The word 'happiness' does indeed have meaning, doesn't it? I shall go out in search of it...
Ba's letter referred to as 'dairy-novel' is more a dictum for women who are on the verge of liberation, and inspires courage and determination. Ba stimulates women to search for a meaningful life in spite of all the disillusionments and disappointments. In the protest phase, the women writers mostly mirror their communities as reactionary towards women and expose conditions which bind them to the expectations of the community. From Ramatoulaye's observations and Kate's experiences one learns that an individual cannot really break away easily from the folds of the society. However, it is encouraging to recognise that the 'self' of each individual within the society can emerge and recognise itself.

From Ramatoulaye's and Kate's self-expressions which are constrained one realises that the African woman faces dilemma. She has obviously discovered herself as a force to reckon with the development of her society, and yet, she has to identify herself with her traditions. It seems, that there is a fear in the African woman to break away from the traditional values which have existed from time immemorial and which reduce her to her state of submission to man. At the same time, she has to assert herself. She has to actualise her potentialities and establish herself as equal to man. She finds in this specific goal that she faces opposition from the old values which alienates her from herself and betrays her actions towards self-determination. The African women writers in the protest phase, while accepting their roles of women in the African society try hard to search for appropriate means to express their freedom in the African situation. If not making a complete break, they have started
believing in emancipation from their mental slavery towards equal rights and opportunities. For the African woman we notice that self-assertion is beginning to be a starting point and the ultimate goal. Some African values constitute a strong hindrance to the movement but then, women cannot give up their struggle. They have to keep pace with the transitional African situation, thereby making an attempt to negotiate with their male counterparts.
CHAPTER 3

The Individual Phase

The individual phase is distinguished by disjunction, a disruption in the affiliative relations between an individual and the group. Here an individual openly moves away from the norms and values of the group towards self-fulfilment. Physical separation between the individual and the group is often revealed, marking the final break. The individual, in such circumstances, takes the responsibility over her actions and resents group interference. The novels of Doris Lessing best illustrate this kind of movement of the self and seek uniqueness of the individual personality.

The conflict between the two - 'self' and 'society' is the very action in her works. Lessing in her own life too had moved away from her family and community. Stafford writes that in an interview, Lessing's brother, Harry Taylor '
... sketched Doris Lessing's life style as a rejection of her heritage. He said that she was '... a prodigal young woman, who had wandered away from the family and would never return to it.'
Similarly, in *A Proper Marriage*, which is chosen for this study, Lessing projects Martha, the protagonist, colliding with the collectives. This brings out the movement towards self-actualisation effectively. *A Proper Marriage*, in general, reveals the established conventions of the society and resentment against the subjugation of women by men and the society. Martha struggles against the limitations and restrictions of the community towards her own aspirations. Her search for meaning is irreversible, like the Flying Dutchman she never gains harbour. Being a poor white, although categorised with the rich white minority for the sake of upholding the racist concepts, Martha is brought up in a psychologically chaotic environment. Through her reactions Lessing expresses anger at the white colonial rule in Rhodesia. She attacks race and class division that emerge from racism, segregation and exploitative capitalism. Through minor and major characters, she portrays colonial white community in Rhodesia as repressive by nature. These characters see themselves first and foremost as family men and women, and members of the community. Much of their vigour and activity is devoted to keeping the community and its vested interest intact. In such circumstances, the family, as a socio-economic unit becomes oppressive to women, the central agent of repression, inculcating both the subservience of women and sexual taboos.
Through various situations where the group exert manipulative and misleading influence on the lives of the women characters, Lessing explores both the ideal and the actual possibilities open for them. These possibilities expose the women to some sort of choice as well as freedom of access and also provides them, within the framework of the situation, with something which throughout history, women have badly needed - an inner place of their own to exist in.

To bring out Martha's movement from the institutions of marriage and motherhood in A Proper Marriage, the childhood of Martha will be briefly mentioned exposing at the same time the situations which gave Martha a choice of freedom. Her childhood is projected in Martha Quest (the first novel in the series of Children of Violence).

Martha spends her early years in a solitary confinement with nature and literature as her only companions and means of education. She closely observes the hypocrisy and triviality of the colonial society and becomes withdrawn from it. She takes refuge in literature provided to her by the two Jewish boys, Joss and Solly Cohen. The intellectual growth provides an inner existence, a world of her own through which she becomes opinionated and imaginative, indulging in dreams and fantasies of her hopes and aspirations. Her parents' sense of belonging to the group and their belief in the continuity of the system, makes her rebel openly. She rejects their ideas on sex and natives and applies her own ideas created by an inbuilt faculty. These ideas are revealed through Joss's 'Catechism' and her fantasy of 'four-gated city'. Through them, her nature is revealed, she repudiates colourbar and racial prejudice, is an atheist and believes in socialism. In her fantasy all races, colours and classes are an
integrated whole. She is thus, definitely moving away from the exploitative colonial system towards personal beliefs. At the same time, she is unconsciously being injected by the society's ideology. This is the result of passivity and vulnerability in her throughout the book, she has to disentangle herself by undergoing strenuous inner conflicts '... she could not help feeling afraid that the gap between her and the (nigger) was seven pounds ten shillings, in hard cash.'

On the suggestion made by Joss, who plays an important part in Martha's adolescent life, she moves from the farm to town. In town, she finds herself in a practical world away from the ephemeral world of the farm and feels incompetent, inexperienced and naive. She meets various suitors, and deliberately has an involvement with a Jew (lower class), as a protest against colonial prejudice and white social structure. Later, on impulse, she marries Douglas Knowell, a typical social figure and a well-settled civil servant.

Thus, Martha's marriage and motherhood are projected in *A Proper Marriage* in the background of colonial capitalist situations. Martha now becomes Martha Knowell from Martha Quest. In other words, she moves towards knowledge from a period of searching.

She gradually becomes alienated from the institutions of marriage and motherhood and turns towards the underground groups, formed against the colonial government, which provides a stimulus to her self-knowledge. Throughout the novel Lessing uses lengthy analysis of state of mind and feelings from which one grasps the essential nature of all her characters. The documentation of the speech in the book occurs mostly from the conflict between the two existences - inner and outer
selves. Martha develops her inner existence by trying to take the meaning, or the essence out of everything '... it was as if she, Martha, were a variety of soft shell-less creature whose survival lay in the strength of those walls. Reaching out in all directions from behind it, she clutched at the bricks of arguments, the stones of words, discarding any that might not fit into the building.'

After her marriage to Douglas, Martha Knowell feels a deep-rooted dissatisfaction. She finds herself already '... married, signed and sealed away from what she was convinced she was.' The last few weeks confused, hectic and hilarious had one thread running through it - the delight of other people in this marriage... The whole thing was a gigantic social deception. Martha observes that women in her society are treated solely as traits and qualities for men. For instance, Douglas Knowell treats Martha as a bartered exchange. He only feels proud because he had been lucky, according to his friends, in his acquisition of her. Furthermore, he '... was surprised and grateful that his wife set no bounds to his freedom. It was an additional reason to be proud of his acquisi-
tion.' And when Martha actually questions Douglas about his where-
abouts he feels resentment against it. At this point Lessing voices her disgust: '... Tyranny, it seems, is not easily legislated against.' Men in A Proper Marriage are projected more like caricatures. They are shadowy characters who exist only for the sake of analysing women's situations. In other words, women do not any more protest to or against them, but for themselves. Women seem more aware of the
meaning of life than men. Even Stella, lacking in depth and sensitivity, remarks, 'Men are nothing but babies'. It seems men are reduced to almost nothing if they are projected worse than Stella. During the war, when Douglas, Andrew and William, husbands of Martha, Stella and Alice plan to go for fighting, Martha finds herself thinking, 'these young men, so eagerly discussing the prospects of being in the kill, seemed like lumpish schoolboys.' To Stella she remarks, '... if they knew they were going to fight for something, if they cared at all...'. Douglas can converse to Martha only about social life. He is insensitive to the feelings of Martha and indulges in club entertainments and sundowner parties. Lessing appears to point out that the marriage institution encourages the habits of dissipation in men. It perpetuates the notorious double standards of sexual morality, hypocritically condemning the sexual irregularities. The women are encouraged to fulfill their side while men are condoned for any kind of behaviour. One observes that in colonial white society the system of matrimonial exchange corrupts sex and marriage because it subordinates them to the advancement of private ends which are the family's economic and dynastic ambitions and in most cases false social prestige. Douglas, like any responsible man posing for the society, constantly pushes Martha towards Dr. Stern, a professional, without simultaneously dealing with the problems of sexual relationship. Martha visits Dr. Stern but being suspicious of imposition and dependency, she analyses and probes into these types of institutions of the society. She realises that by aligning themselves with the providers of expert services women improve their position in the family only to fall into a new
kind of dependency not only for the satisfaction of their needs but for the very definition of their needs. Dr. Stern seems to represent the achievement of 'individualization' and autonomy for middle-class women who are just becoming conscious of freedom. He also represents part of a larger social and political process that ends in the ascendency of professional experts. It seems that these doctors, psychiatrists, child guidance counsellors or other specialists deride maternal instincts claiming to substitute for the traditional lore of women new techniques based on science. Lessing implies through Dr. Stern's introduction that professional intervention in family life, to some extent, erodes patriarchal authority. Also that women actually welcome the substitution of doctors for midwives in childbirth. This re-definition of pregnancy as a disease requires medical treatment which helps women in their campaign for voluntary motherhood by raising the cost of pregnancy to their husbands.

'Stella urged laughingly, "Did you learn anything new?" And it occurred to Martha for the first time that she had not. Her sense of being supported, being understood, was so strong that she stopped in the passage, motionless, with the shock of the discovery that in fact, Dr. Stern had said nothing at all, and in due course Douglas would be sent a bill for half a guinea - for what?" 96

Moreover, the alliance between the doctors and the women results in ironical situations. Dr. Stern leads Martha to pregnancy without her knowledge. Through this, she not only feels social and institutional deception, but also self-deception '... She understood that this long process had been one of determined self-deception almost
as if she wanted the damned baby all the time. Martha also resents the lack of differentiation of women's situations which the doctor encourages: '... She could not bear to think of the everyone, the we, the all. So everyone had moods in which they ran off to the doctor, that archpriest who... assured them that they were like everyone else.' She goes even to an extent of expressing her anger against the state and the law, '... who presumed to tell women what they should do with their bodies, it was the final insult to their personal liberty.

On the social side too, Martha is constantly being manipulated for instance, by Mrs. Quest (Martha's mother), Stella, Mrs. Calbot and others who are all representatives of the society. They try to instill into her, the joys and sacrifice of marriage and motherhood. She is attacked by remarks like '... its your duty to your husband to look nice!' (Stella). And Martha wishes tiredly '... that Stella would leave her alone and return to her own life if she had one at all.' Mrs. Quest tells her '... you won't have time for all your ideas when the baby is born, believe me.' To which Martha reacts coldly '... that she must keep brightly burning the lamp above the dark blind sea which was motherhood. She could not allow herself to be submerged.' The middle-aged women are constant reminders to Martha about obligations and duty to the family and community. On hearing of Martha's pregnancy Mrs. Quest insists on coming to look after Martha who resents her.
Martha tries to find out about Mrs. Quest's feelings when she had been pregnant but Mrs. Quest avoids the truth and speaks in a social dialect. She tells Martha to visit Dr. Stern and get a tonic '... she looked dreadful - it wasn't fair to Douglas.' Mrs. Quest is a typical conventional woman who follows the ways of the society blindly. Her concern becomes an interference to Martha because she is insensitive to Martha's feelings. When Mrs. Quest plans an upbringing for her coming grandchild, Martha reacts and tells her that it is her baby and that she would know best how to bring her up. Lessing's depiction of Mrs. Quest's reaction is pathetic. Her '... eyes filled with tears; she was the small child who has been slapped for something she had not done.' By showing middle-aged women's conditions Lessing seems to suggest that women are ultimately made dependent and taken for granted by the society. They depend upon them (their children) for emotional satisfaction, pathetic middle-aged women left high dry by society with nothing to do. Other middle-aged housewives from the rich class - Mrs. Brodeshaw, Mrs. Calbot, Mrs. Maynard and others indulge in various marginal and meaningless occupations. To find something to do, they hold committees and parties. They help in club organisations, war preparations, and charity not particularly for the betterment of the society but because they can project images of themselves as goddesses and godmothers. For example, Mrs. Brodeshaw extends her charity towards coloureds not Africans, who do not exist for her. Most of these types of women indulge in a game of cards and gossip which makes them shallow in their approach.
towards life. It seems that the whole system finally reduces women to some sort of outcasts who ultimately become dependent.

The only person Martha feels at home with is Alice who feels like Martha but, unlike her, does not have a spirit of rebellion. Both Martha and Alice share mutual sessions.

'... they would discuss in humorous, helpless voices for an hour or so, their boredom, the tediums of living alone, the unsatisfactory nature of marriage, the humours with the unscrupulous and baccamering chuckle that came of being so ruthlessly disloyal to everything they were.'

Both the women, inspite of their resolutions become pregnant. In the beginning Martha feels that '... it was in her power to cut the cycle.' But later becomes 'irrationally elated'. Both Martha and Alice go to the hospital where they feel even more disillusioned. Alice's breakdown shows their conditions: '... She cries out that she wished she had never married... she couldn't understand how she had been so crazy as to tie herself down to being nothing but a piece of livestock to be stuffed three times a week, and then swollen like dropsy, and then a cow streaming with milk...'

Martha feels disgusted with the whole process of procreation. Her only defence against it is her loneliness in it. She refuses to utter a sound when she is in labour pain. Lessing exposes the hospitalization of women during pregnancy where they feel almost helpless and dependent. Martha has a daughter, Caroline and feels estranged from her. The routine and efficiency of bringing up a child makes her feel tied down. Her withdrawal from motherhood can be felt from her monologues to Catherine. She tells her, '... you bore me to
extinction. '... No doubt I bore you. But as far as I can make out
... most important function of parents is that they should be suit-
able objects of hate... you and I are victims... I can't help it,
my mother couldn't help it, and her mother...'. One observes
that although Martha is persistent, she is at the same time passive
in her movement which makes her situation paradoxical:

'For if she married in the colony when she wanted
to be free and adventurous, always did contrary to
what she wanted most, it followed that there was no
reason why at fifty she should not be just such
women as Mrs. Quest, maron, conventional, into-
lerant, insensitive... She had no words to express
this sense of appalling futility which menanced
every one, her mother as well as herself.'

Martha finds herself playing roles and feels a sense of meaning-
lessness, for instance, in social gatherings (sundowner parties)
she has a feeling of suffocation:

'She could feel the nets tightening around
her, she thought that she might spend the
rest of her life on this veranda (Colonel
Brodeshaw) or other like it, populated by
faces she knew only too well ...'

Lessing, through these gatherings, mirrors a picture of the role-
players of the society from all accepted institutions of the white
colonial society - Capitalist and bourgeois classes consisting
of advocates, Members of Parliament, landowners, magistrates,
business, service, press and others. The exchange of familiar and
stereotype conversation based on racialism, exploitative capitalism
(material, power and position) alienates Martha from her society.
Lessing ridicules the artificiality of these social gatherings.
She parades the intermingling of the object selves (the people's outer selves) resulting in playing roles and posturing for effects. These collective role-players seduce the individual away from self-realization. A number of minor characters in *A Proper Marriage*, for instance, Douglas, Mrs. Guest, Stella, Mrs. Colbert, back the support of other role-players to suppress the emerging individuality in Martha. In the civil service as Douglas's wife and Caroline's mother Martha reflects on the group, she belongs to (p. 278) and realizes that the lives of the civil servants are predetermined and planned into organised system. They all have similar household equipment, cars, two to five servants, a holiday once in a while, and pensions and policies for their old age. They enjoy sundowner parties, go to the clubs or to the cinema halls two or three times a week. The sexual and social behaviour is stereotyped and conforms to the continuous process. Every couple has almost similar traits and interest for they all desperately try to fit themselves into the prevalent patterns. The portrayal of civil servants trying to imitate the stereotype social images take us into a sensational world of George Orwell's *Animal Farm*, where the pigs representing the politicians make desperate attempt to imitate human ways; a procession of pigs walking on their hindlegs and their forelegs clawing in the air for balance are watched by other animals (the commoners) almost with a sense of deadness. It seems that Lessing's characters give Martha the same feeling of deadness. '... she did not feel like Douglas's wife or Caroline's mother. She was not even bored. It was as if three parts of herself, stood on one side,
idle, waiting to be called into action.¹¹³ Like Kate in The Summer Before The Dark, who while watching a Russian play in her disordered mental state cannot make out the difference between the actors on the stage and the audience... this room full of people, animals lifted on the stage...¹¹⁴ She wonders about the caricaturist who saw human beings as animals, who was always '... looking into mirrors hoping that one day a human face would at last appear there, dissolving the animal mask that always confronted him...¹¹⁵ Through Kate's exploration of the social role-playing, Lessing reveals a middle-aged woman's state of mind. Kate dresses herself in two appearances (p. 138), one made up (fitting the pattern) and the other, shabby (not conforming to the prints made by fashion) and observes the reactions of the workers on the street. In her former pose, she is noticed and in the later, she does not exist. Kate on seeing this has an urge... to pull up her skirt and show them her backside, as the Czech women had done to insult the Russian troops, ...¹¹⁶ She knows that it is sign of defeat and feels defeated. Lessing perhaps implies that women usually fall prey to social traps set by men, for whom women are just decorative objects of entertain- ment. Women not realizing this kind of social seduction spend most of their time, money and energy fitting themselves into it. They are jolted out of their complaisance only when their usefulness as the objects of lust and utility is gone and men tend to look away from them bluntly for new stimulants. Kate realizes: 'What
a lot of rubbish, what a con it was all, what a bloody waste of

time. Lessing is suggesting that people do not try to find their
real or subject selves, they do not really know who they are and what
they want to be. So they sometimes play one role and sometimes
another depending on the group they are in or hidden ends they are
seeking, not uncommonly hidden even from their own consciousness.
Lorelei Cederstrom writes for Lessing that she is

'... asserting that one must have the time and
opportunity to explore the sense of self behind
the social facades even if that sense of self
is not socially acceptable and requires an
excursion into madness or involves hostile and
anti-social attitudes.'

In this case, an individual who makes an attempt to discover the
self, fears the criticism of the group. Inevitably she has to first break
the fear and develop strength in herself. In short, strength comes in as a requisite to self-identity. Therefore, a
woman has to be immune to what people say and withstand the feeling
of loneliness. Otherwise she is often dragged back into the group.

In this context, in Lessing's work the sense of freedom is un-
defined. Martha manages to create a space for herself, an inner
existence and even tries to exist in it by following her needs
and desires. But this space is undefined and unimproved. In short,
Lessing suggests alternatives for group affiliations to women but
does not define freedom to them. They end up feeling rather incomplete
and unwhole. In the words of Markow they

'... all prove incapable of accepting responsibility
for significant alternative behaviour which would
allow them meaningfully to redirect their lives. The
psychological essence of the problem would seem to reside in the fact that society is in a state of transition and while demythologising is everywhere apparent and remythologizing is everywhere, has not yet solidified—hence neuro-psychotic symptoms of Lessing's new woman'.

In other words, the women seem to continue to cling to the old patterns. Markow goes on to say that 'they should not try to escape, they should instead take on the disease, combat it and come through on the other side, not really stable (stability is an inappropriate response in an age of transition) but willing to be loose, undefined and fully awake...' Linda in Lessing's The Golden Notebook, aptly epitomises this state when she declares:

"I keep quiet about what I know ... I have to, you see ... That's freedom, isn't it? Everyone has a bit of freedom, a little space... that is freedom ... That's mine. It's all they let me have..."

Her understanding of freedom is limited because of her anger against the male world and feeling of defeat in it. She lives in a freedom which is more a mental trap. Infact, most of the women characters develop psychic disturbances and to some extent become mad. Mary in The Grass is Singing is one such case. She becomes mad because she exists in the inner space of her life and refuses to relate it to the outer space. Like Linda she cannot cope with reality, let alone alter it. She thus, retreats into the refuge of insanity. Kate in The Summer Before The Dark, keeps her inner freedom locked in her with a 'humourous grimace' for mental release. Martha and Linda in Children of Violence (Four-gated City) are on the verge of becoming mad and believe that madness is a true insight into self-knowledge. Through the reactions
of the women characters on freedom one observes that creating of an inner existence or space leads an individual to a somewhat higher plane of thinking. This could either lead to stability through moral conscience or mental disequilibrium depending sometimes on an individual's environmental growth, genetic formation and her own in-built mechanism. In Martha's case, however, after creating the inner space for herself, she does try to find solutions. Like Linda, Mary and Kate she does not remain inside that space, she gradually disentangles herself from the group but finds it difficult to take a right approach towards freedom. Lessing directs her characters but seems to abandon them towards the end. She seems to have shown 'freedom for freedom's sake' a type of aimless, lonely freedom. This does not really leave her women with the feeling of wholeness and satisfaction, for example, shown when Martha hates the idea of mothering her daughter, Caroline. She feels herself imposing on her and murmurs over her as she leaves: "You are perfectly free Caroline. I am setting you free..."123 In short, if she were satisfied with her actions she would have been confident enough to bring up her child. In The Four Gated City, she tells Jack:

'... The family was a dreadful tyranny, a doomed institution, a kind of mechanism for destroying everyone... And so we abolished the family... Because the family was the source of neurosis... We were all corrupted and ruined... but the children will be saved.124

Jack, too, feels he cannot father a child. 'But I won't be a father. I wouldn't do that to any human being.'125
The definition of freedom seems to have become vague in the modern society. The individuals seeking it do not understand its true meaning. Little is realised that freedom makes its own demands and has its sacrifices too. One has to give a lot to take from it. It seems that instead of finding solutions or aiming for a better society, women have become bogged down in their disillusionments. Through our analysis of Doris Lessing's characters we feel that freedom is also closely related to one's interior satisfaction of accomplishment and self-expression. One should be concerned mainly about the meaning of life and quality of self and society. That is, an individual should be serious about her personal thoughts, values, and actions and should find achievement through self-fulfilment. Thus, we note that through careful exposure of women to various situations there is a sharpening of vision, a revelation: the new experience, a search for a full, rich and mature life.

If one is not careful, freedom can degenerate into the moral chaos on the extreme end such as is shown through Mary's actions in The Summer Before The Dark. Kate describes to Maureen:

'... about plays, books, T.V. programmes she (Mary) says: It is all about people torturing themselves about nothing. She needs detective stories, boys adventure stories and animal stories ... Love, all of it - you know, centuries of our civilisation - it's left right out of her. She thinks we are crazy. To her it's you fancy a man, he fancies you, you screw until one or the other is tired and then goodbye, no hard feelings.' 126
Martha, too, to some extent, indulges herself, however, unlike Mary she moves through inner conscience. As says P.M. Spacks:

"Her creator (Lessing) appears to claim that such a solipsism, multiplied may save the world, but the novel suggest rather that it may become a trap." 127

Spacks further says about the freedom shown in *The Golden Notebook*, that it is "... only a word, its implications always contradicted by reality, and the idea of the free woman is as illusory as that of the free society." 128 In short, "... wholeness is finally the necessary condition for freedom." 129 Lawrence suggests:

"What we suffer from today is the lack of essence of our own wholeness or completeness, which is peace... And by peace I don't mean inertia, but the full flowing of life like a river." 130

Martha analyses her marriage and motherhood and prepares to move out. She wakes up finally to her situation on p. 315 of the book:

"She had two clear and distinct pictures of that other part of the world - one noble, creative and generous, the other, ugly, savage and solid. There was connection between the two pictures. As she looked at one, she wanted to fling herself into the struggle, to become one of the millions of people who were creating a new world, as she looked at the other, she felt staleness, futility... it was like a rebirth. For the first time in her life, she had been offered an ideal to live for." 131

On becoming aware of this ideal she feels angry that she has been cheated and made a fool of all her life. Lessing voices Martha's instinct of an asserting individualization: "... if the first political emotion of people like Martha is anger, the second is blind anarchy." 132 Martha prepares a complete break from her previous life. At her joining the underhand party, Douglas feels
uneasy. She tells him bluntly all her future plans. Martha is also bitter about his affair with Molly, if not jealous, and asserts her right against married women being taken for granted.

Douglas from then on, indulges in sentimental rhetoric. He uses emotional blackmail as a weapon to keep Martha within the limits of the social mores as and when she tries to uphold her individuality. Jasmine tells her: 'All that's wrong with him... is that his property instinct is outraged.' Douglas goes to an extent of enlisting the support of the other members of his family and society to stop Martha from moving away:

'... My mother's coming to stay 'he remarked, as she left she (H) did not reply. This did frighten her. She drove down to the meeting in a pure state of terror. It was not of Douglas, but of society. She could see her mother-in-law, her own mother, Mrs. Calbot, Maynards massed behind him. They were all much stronger than she was.'

When Martha finally makes a decision to leave, most of the members of the society unite in a frantic melodrama of manipulation and rejection. Douglas goes to an extent of

'... confiscating the contraceptives threatening to make her forcibly pregnant, accusing her of multifarious infidelities and ending in self-abasing weeping appeals that she should change her mind and stay...'

Lessing generalizes this kind of sequential threats usually used by man whenever facing this type of crisis. Mrs. Quest breaks down from the bottom of her heart: "And what will people say?"

For this was the kernel of the matter. Mrs. Calbot representing the conventional sexual ethics: 'But Matty, dear, you are
such a well-suited couple, we could all see it. And he's so proud of you - and you are such a good cook, and everything like that." 137

Even the press gnaws at her conscience:

"Yet precisely that same note was struck in every issue of the local newspaper - goodness betrayed, self-righteousness on exhibition, heartless enemies discovered everywhere. But she was being heartless; she was as cold as a stone and had to be." 138

We observe through our analysis of the individual phase that estrangement from social affiliations results from the realisation that life can mean more to a woman, than the grim household activities and subjugation to the will of parents and later to the whim of the husband. Lessing seems to hold a conviction that the meaning of women's life should not be wholly exhausted by raising a family, doing one's chores, acting out the roles society assigns, and being used by others. These activities may have their place in society but dwelling upon them only blinds women to the truth that life can mean more. In other words, a woman can impose demands for creativity, autonomy, participation, vitality and stimulation.
IN CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis of a number of African women writers' works strongly suggests that there exists a discernible movement away from an unquestionable subservience, group pressure and control, a struggle to loosen the traditional bonds of group affiliations and, achieve individual freedom. This struggle, as is manifest throughout the works considered here, is waged by both Doris Lessing and Mariama Ba themselves through the protagonists and other minor characters. It is a struggle against all kinds of odds and obstacles aimed at achieving individual freedom. This struggle provides the organising principle of the development from group affiliation to individual assertion and therefore, the basis of the thesis of this study.

Furthermore, it is noted that women writers do at one and the same time dramatise significant issues of contemporary society - issues which appear all - pervasive - in the works of such writers. These concerns include the incessant questioning of the view that the world is seen through sexist eyes, a world granted and interpreted largely from and by a male dominated cosmo vision. Along with this question is the issue of why it is that men continue to oppress women and, infact, deny the latter equal status and equal rights. Finally, the writers suggest the need to break away from such a world as one in which their characters lived.
NOTES

Introduction


3. Davies Wendy, Africa Centre (In an interview with Flora Nwapa).


6. Ibid., p. 68.


8. Showalter Elaine, A Literature of Their Own, p. 31.


The Communal Phase


15. Ba Mariama, So Long A Letter, p. 58,

17. Ibid., p. 48.


19. Ibid., p. 7.

20. Ibid., p. 58.


22. Ibid., p. 63.


24. Ibid., p. 11.


28. Ibid., p. 79-80.

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