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<b>Gender Trouble: Judith Butler</b>	

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## **1.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- To evolve critical thinking, self-reflection, and diagnostic skills
- To articulate a composite and nuanced comprehension of gender, sexuality, and power
- To understand philosophy of Judith Butler on gender theory
- To understand Butler's assertion that gender, as an objective natural thing does not exist
- To throw light on the concept in Butler's work "gender performativity".
- To learn views of Butler on gender identity

## **1.1 INTRODUCTION**

Gender Trouble which was first published in 1990 by Routledge with the title, **Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity**, is a scholastic piece created by American philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler. It has been visualized as one of the many in her sequences on gender theory and is followed by **Subjects of Desire** and **Bodies That Matter**. Since its publication in 1990,



Gender Trouble has become one of the most influential texts in gender studies, and it has been widely praised by feminists and LGBTQ+ people, particularly in the U.S. Butler's arguments were considered highly unusual and unconventional, deviating from traditional gender theory ideas at the time, in addition to examining and critiquing the theories of other prominent philosophers, such as Jean-Luc Rousseau, Louis Lefebvre, Louis Lefroy and Jean-Claude Briand; Gender Trouble is widely evaluated as a major work of feminist, gender, and queer theory.

### **A BRIEF ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

The full name of Judith Pamela Butler is Judith Pamela Butler. She was born in 1956 in Cleveland, Ohio. Her parents were dentists and fair housing advocates. Butler was born in Cleveland (Cleveland, Ohio) and grew up in a Jewish household. As expressed in her own words, a rabbi from her local synagogue introduced her to philosophical thinking when she was fourteen years old only. She went on to study philosophy at Bennington College, and then at Yale University, where she received her doctorate in philosophy in 1979. She also received a Fulbright scholarship to the University of Heidelberg in 1979. She completed her Ph.D. in philosophy at Yale in 1984. Butler's philosophical education was centered on German Idealism and phenomenology, as well as the works of the Frankfurt school. After her doctorate, she began to develop a new approach to philosophy, one that would have a lasting impact on her life and work. She went to teach at a number of universities, including Wesleyan, George Washington, Johns Hopkins, and UC Berkeley, where in 1998 she was offered an appointment as Maxine Elliot Professor of Rhetoric and Comparative Literature. In addition to her teaching duties at UC Berkeley, she was also a member of the faculty of the European Graduate school of philosophy at the University Of Lausanne, Switzerland.

Butler's first book; Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France (1987) was based on a revised doctoral dissertation, dealt with the notion of desire as found in G.W. F. Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit and its later interpretations by various twentieth-century French philosophers. Butler's most famous work; Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (1990) and its follow-up, Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex' (1993), was based on the well-known cultural theory assumption that gender is socialized, rather than innate, and conventional conceptions of sex and gender serve to maintain the traditional power of men over women and the oppression of homophiles and transgender people.



Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity can be seen as Judith Butler's intervention into feminism. In a book that unmoored feminism at its core, she challenged the notion that there is a unification of women's experience. Women of color who failed to acknowledge the class of women as their advantaged one, argued against an amalgamated subject of feminism and a reductive system within white feminism. In line with this polyphonic language, Butler argued that the establishment of a category of women presumes the modulation of gender relationships which contradicts feminist objectives. She argued that a feminism based on a category of women contributes to compulsory heterosexuality because heterosexuality is an unreflective condition of the binary coded system of sex and desire.

Gender Trouble by Butler has been regarded as one of the founding texts of queer theory and her work continues to inform much discussion of cultural theory, particularly in the US in the early 2000s. However, her work has also been widely criticized for both its content and style. Even those who were sympathetic to her work worried that her approach to the subject was performatively constituted, leaving her without a clear account of personal agency. Others argued that her account of politics as a parody was weak and self-serving, akin to moral vacuity. The most common criticism was for her thick, jargon-filled prose and nonlinear argumentation, which some readers saw as rhetorical devices to hide a lack of original thought. Butler defended her work by pointing out that radical ideas usually are best depicted in writings that question conventional norms of clarity, grammar and common sense.

It's easy to argue that the success of Gender Trouble is that it laid the ground work for a more nuanced analysis of identity and its exclusionary mechanisms. But the radical critique of identity categories can also be read in a positive light, as it opens up new political prospects. In this way, Gender Trouble also heralds a new feminism. Butler's other works include *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (1996), *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (1997), *Antigone's Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death* (2000), *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (2009), *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (2012), and *The Force of Nonviolence: An Ethico-Political Bind* (2020).

In her recent lectures and papers, Judith Butler moves into new territory. She turns her attention to political collectives and the convention of people in a public assembly; the people, the citizenship, and the public space, reinvigorating her sense of performativity. Butler broadens beyond the act of speaking,



offering a new perspective on the performative: it is the emergence of physical life that creates performatively, a space of the political and promotes collective action. The emergence of bodies is not only precarious; it is also resilient and resolute. The first systematic articulation of these lines of thinking can be seen in Judith Butler's recent book, *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (2015).

## 1.2 MAIN BODY OF THE TEXT: GENDER TROUBLE

At the time of the book's publication in 1990, feminist thinkers were grappling with two issues that posed a threat to feminism's capacity to advocate for women's political rights. It was unclear what criteria were used to define the category of “women” that was at the centre of feminism’s struggle for access and representation and effort has been made by Butler to address these two issues in this book. Feminist thinkers also disagreed about what constituted a “subject,” a being with an identity for whom depiction and possibility could be sought. Butler asserted that “subjects” are not natural but are created by political forces that regulate them. She further argued that gender and sex identity categories are equivalent and artificial. She argued that identity incorporating gender is performative rather than fixed or natural. She declared that identity is ductile open to amendment and disarrangement. Butler’s arguments were revolutionary at the time they were made, and they remain revolutionary to this day. *Gender Trouble*’s impact went far beyond academia, and it is considered a cornerstone of queer theory, because of its pioneering approach to the nature of identity.

### **Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity**

#### **Preface (1990)**

Butler argues that feminist discourses to define gender have repeatedly led to "a certain sense of trouble." Butler argues that “troubles” do not necessarily have to be bad things. Butler explains the way “trouble” was introduced in her childhood discourse. Butler’s reading of existentialist philosophers (Simone de Beauvoir (1808–86), Jean-Paul Sartre (1805–80)) guided her to think about “trouble” and man-woman associations in terms of mighty relations. This further led her to rephrase the gender binary in terms of potentially unsteady “categories of ontology” generated by “the epistemic system of presumptive heterosexuality.”



Butler's analysis of popular culture, particularly the acts of men pretending to be women, leads her to ask questions about gender, sex and the body. Are these "natural facts" or are they "cultural performances"?

Butler defines Gender Trouble as a “critical genealogy of gender categories”, taking a multidisciplinary approach to study the political nature of identity, revealing them as the “effects of institutional structures, practices, and discourses.” The first part examines the status of ‘women’ as a subject of feminism and the sexual/gender distinction as the outcome of the establishments of compulsory heterosexuality and phallogocentrism. The second part examines the structuralist, feminist and psychoanalyst versions of the incest taboo as a mode of building and implying binary gender identity. The last part investigates versions of the construction of bodies and the sexual binary before closing with Butler's own theory of the body and her "performative theory of gender."

## **Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity**

### **Preface (1999)**

This second preface was written 10 years after the release of Gender Trouble. Butler's aim in writing it was to execute an “immanent critique” of vocabulary and presumptions of contemporary feminism. Specifically, she wanted to question hetero-sexualist ideas about gender. According to her, the origin of the book comes from French theory. She summarizes the theoretical accounts of a number of philosophers whose ideas inspired the ideas behind Gender Trouble, particularly the theory that gender could be sabotaged through sexual practice.

Since Gender Trouble's publication in 1990, but especially since this second preface, Butler has attempted to work in elucidating her theory of gender as performative along with other points in the book. These clarifications and developments have come partly from criticism and partly from her experiences through political activism. She writes that she does not want to argue that internal experience is something that doesn't exist. Rather, she argues that the external world is metamorphosed and is manifested into the internal self. She points out that her theories have been taken up by other theorists, who have applied them to issues such as race. In the decades since Gender Trouble was





published, Butler's involvement with the IHLC has led her to reconsider her position on the idea of universality, which she sees as a way to create a reality that doesn't exist yet.

According to Butler, *Gender Trouble* was written as a reaction to aspects of her life, including the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community and the various social movements, she had been involved in. Butler goes on to list some of the ways in which other people and organizations have taken ideas from *Gender Trouble* and applied them to their own work of art and politics. The American Psychoanalytical Association and American Psychological Association revised their positions on homosexuality, following the publication of *Gender Trouble*. *Gender Trouble* is widely regarded as one of the founding texts of queer theory. Some of the ideas in the book have been incorporated into legal research and practice.

It has been suggested by some readers that the aim of the text is to broaden the range of gender expression by subverting gender norms. However, Butler argues that gender assumptions are essential components of an intelligible life, one that is "human" and "livable." However, she does not wish to define the difference between subversive and unsubversive practices, as subversion is contingent upon the context. She clarifies that the example of "drag" from *Gender Trouble* is not intended to be a representation of a subversive practice, but rather a demonstration of the fact that reality is not as immutable as it appears. Butler argues that challenging these assumptions about reality is essential for political change, as it is necessary for increasing the opportunities for a "increasing the possibilities for a livable life for those who live on the sexual margins."

### 1.2.1 CHARACTERS

#### MICHEL FOUCAULT

Michel Foucault is a French philosopher, whose work has influenced many fields of study, including philosophy, history, cultural criticism and other disciplines. He was trained as a philosopher, and during his lifetime, he was a prominent figure in the structuralism and post structuralism movements. Structuralism is a method of examining human behaviour, perception and culture from the point of view of conceptual systems. According to Foucault, his life's work was the exploration of the inseparable nature of truth or knowledge, and the historic power structures that create and utilize truth for their own purposes. In *Gender Trouble*, Foucault's theories serve as both methodology and foundation for critiquing other philosophers' work, as well as a stepping stone for the development of her own theories.

**LUCE IRIGARAY**

Irigaray is a French author and activist whose work draws on a wide range of disciplines, from linguistics to philosophy to psychoanalysis. She studied with the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, whose theories are also widely discussed in *Gender Trouble*. Irigaray's research focused on the phenomenon of phallogocentrism i.e. masculine privilege (male privilege in constructing meaning) in language. This privilege in turn, reduces women to submissive matter or illogical nature. In the preface to the first chapter of Butler's book, he proposes that the language system of meaning casts women out of the subject position, rendering the woman a "point of linguistic absence."

**JULIA KRISTEVA**

The Bulgarian-born philosopher, Julia Kristeva, focuses on the study of the self and other, as well as the structure of the body, drawing both on and critiquing the psychoanalytical positions advanced by the French psychoanalyst, Jacques Lacan. Kristeva is most famous for her theories on abjection (a state of low, inferiority) and on the semiotic (or symbolic) dimension of multiple significance and the primary structure of the maternal body, both of which receive Butler's critique in *Gender Trouble*.

**JACQUES LACAN**

Jacques Lacan was a French psychoanalyst and post-structuralism philosopher. His theories had a profound impact on the field of psychoanalysis, as well as on the post-war philosophy of post structuralism. His theories have been applied to criticism and theory in literature, cinema, politics, aesthetics, and more. In his writings, Lacan often redefined the ideas of Sigmund Freud, the originator of psychoanalysis. His unique and controversial approach to psychoanalysis led him to be expelled from the IPSA in 1962 and the following year, he founded an institution dedicated to training psychoanalysts in accordance with his psychoanalytic theory. His description of the gendered/sexed subject and his idea of masquerade are discussed in Butler's critique of Lacan in Chapter 2, *Gender Trouble*.

**JOAN RIVIERE**

Along with her translations of her friend Sigmund Freud's work, the British psychoanalyst and novelist, Joan Riviere, made an enduring impression on psychoanalytic theory. Riviere's work focused ponderously on the notion of defense mechanism, as well as the development of a woman's sexuality and identity. Riviere based her theory on the French psychoanalyst, and philosopher, Jacques Lacan's



idea of the masquerade. Riviere sees the masquerade as a veil that women wear to protect themselves. Femininity, in her view, is the mask that women use to protect themselves from the power that comes with being a man. In Chapter 2, *Gender Trouble*, Butler criticizes Riviere for her inception of femininity as mimicry.

### **CLAUDE LÉVI-STRAUSS**

One of the most prominent figures in the mid-twentieth century structuralism movement within the philosophy of anthropology is French anthropologist Claude L. Strauss. While L.S.R.'s anthropological research focused on pre-industrial societies, his theories have been adopted as critical lenses in many disciplines. The fundamental principle of structuralism holds that human culture and behaviour can be understood in the light of the patterns that make them up. These patterns are found in all cultures and even in the human mind. For example, one of the theories that receive significant attention in *Gender Trouble* is L. S. Strauss' Universal Kinship Structure theory. This theory holds that all human society is organized according to the rule of exogamy: the practice of exchanging women through marriage between two or more social groups. As Butler points out, the interchange of women had both pragmatic and symbolic functions. L. S.R.H. pinned the origins of symbolic thought on the process of exogamy.

### **SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR**

Simone de Beauvoir, a French existentialist philosopher, is best known for her book: *The Second Sex*, whose critique of the oppression of women in society contributed to the emergence of the second wave of feminism after the Second World War. In the book, de Beauvoir examines the mythologies and social archetypes that make up the oppressive ideal of woman, which she calls "myth of woman". Her anti-existentialist assertion that one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman serves as a foundation for some of the critical questions posed by feminist theorists such as Judith Butler, whose work is analyzed in *Gender Trouble*.

## **1.3 FURTHER MAIN BODY OF THE TEXT: GENDER TROUBLE**

### **PART 1**

#### **Chapter 1: Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire ("Women" as the Subject of Feminism)**

The category of "women" is apparently the subject of feminism. Feminism attempts to strengthen representation of women in society and politics. According to Butler, nonetheless, both the ideas of a



steady, comprehensive category of “women,” as well as the very concept of a “subject” under the law, is presently open to examine.

Butler argues that the very concept of a subject represented and controlled by the law is problematic. She argues that this subject cannot exist independently of the law because the law defines or creates the subject that the law seeks to control. This is an issue of the “ontological integrity of the subject before the law.” Once the law has created a “subject,” the legal structures of power, which regulate social norms by prohibition, conceal that they have created a subject. It appears that the subject has a natural existence prior to the law, but according to Butler, this is a “foundationalist fiction.”

The content of feminism is the category of “women”. Feminism is mainly concerned with confirming women’s involvement in society as well as political life. If there is a feminist subject, it is also difficult to define. Femininity and the patriarchy, the social and legal systems that maintain male dominance over women, are not universal. Gender roles and the power structures of patriarchy differ greatly from culture to culture. These experiences are altered when they intersect with “racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities.” Feminism cannot be excluded by “universalizing” these notions.

Butler’s solution to these issues is not to try to find a “universal” yardstick for the category of “women” or to find a subject that is outside the scope of the law. Instead, Butler’s challenge is to carry out a “feminist genealogy” to explore the several ways in which these categories are established. This genealogy will reveal the true nature of these terms as historical constructs.

## **Chapter 2: Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire (The Compulsory Order of Sex/Gender/Desire)**

Feminism draws a distinction between gender and sex. Sex is thought to be fixed and governed by biology, whereas gender is thought to be derived from culture. Butler argues that this does not necessarily mean that male bodies are related to masculine gender, or that female bodies are related to feminine gender. She also argues that it is not necessary to assume that there is only one gender.

Butler challenges the nature of “sex” and argues that sex is, just like gender, a category constructed by scientific and historical discourse and according to some obvious “political and social concerns.” If sex is “constructed,” then there may be no real difference between gender and sex. She asserts that gender is the mode through which sex itself is established and depicted as “prediscursive” or “natural.” This will be the subject of her exploration in part 2.



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**Chapter 3: Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire (Gender: The Circular Ruins of Contemporary Debate)**

Butler then takes up the question of how gender is conceptualized, drawing on the arguments of French philosopher Simone De Beauvoir (1908-86), who argued, “you are not born as a woman but rather you become one” and that “the body is nothing but a situation.” She argues that investigation will reveal that sex is, in fact, gender, and the body “comes into being in and through the marks of gender.”

Some have categorized gender as a relationship, not as an attribute of an individual. In this system, “feminine” exists only in connection with the meaning of “masculine.” For Simone de Beauvoir, “the masculine gender” is the “unmarked” gender that is universal personhood, and the feminine gender is the “marked” sex that is the other. According to French philosopher Luce Irigaray, the masculine or “phallogocentric” classification of language portrays women not as “marked” or “Other” but as “unrepresentable,” a “linguistic absence.”

This direction of investigation allows Butler's exploration into the nature of being, which Butler calls “the metaphysics of substance.” This mentions the manner in which subjects, beings with individual existence, or substance are erected within numerous communications.

**Chapter 4: Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire (Theorizing the Binary, the Unitary, and Beyond)**

Butler returns to the issue of the steady identity classification of “women” and whether it is essential for feminism for feminist objectives. She asserts that the quest for this category has led to lapses into “totalizing,” when feminists believe that any set of experience or characteristics can include “women.” This is a mistake that feminism should investigate and guard against.

Butler warns against these “identity politics” because they are exclusionary. Instead, she explores the alternative of “coalition politics,” where the category is neither predetermined nor fixed. “Identity politics” has fragmented feminism, she argues. Instead, she proposes a new “coalition” conception of “feminism” that will enable the inclusion of “various, changing, and unstable feminine identities,” thereby avoiding the problem at its core: the “normative question” of what women should be.

**Chapter 5: Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire (Identity, Sex, and the Metaphysics of Substance)**

Butler argues that identity, the aspect that defines person-hood is inextricably linked to gender. The idea of a steady, compatible identity is compromised by the existence of creatures whose gender is culturally “unintelligible.” These ‘unintelligible’ beings do not conform to the culturally prescribed alignment of



sex, gender and sexual desire, which is the heterosexual norm. According to this female sex corresponds to feminine gender and sexual desire for men correspond to male sex and vice versa. The culture's compulsory heterosexuality necessitates this gender binary for either sex to be "intelligible" which gives rise to the notion of a "gender core" which belongs to subjects that appear to be natural but are actually constructed. Some have claimed that the apparent presence of substantive beings or subjects is an illusion that results from misunderstanding the language for reality. Radical feminist theorist, Monique Wittig assumed an evaluation of the French language to exhibit how person-hood cannot be assigned in language apart from gendered categories. Butler argues that gender is not a solid thing or a set of qualities but rather a performance or "doing". With the passage of time, accomplished pronouncement of gender gives rise to the emergence of solid identity.

### **Chapter 6: Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire (Language, Power, and the Strategies of Displacement)**

Butler declares that being a woman does not mean having a definite established substance, but rather a "process, a becoming, a constructing". In the views of Monique Wittig, language produces the fantasy of "sex" culturally furnished as a genital-based sexuality where women are described according to their reproductive function. But language is fluid, and Wittig uses this to argue for "dispersive sexuality" or "polymorphous perversions" as opposed to the traditional genital-based sexuality.

The social and political domain of strength provides rise to and seeks to manage this procedure of identity construction through discourse, in line with its "heterosexism and phallogocentrism." According to Foucault, "sexuality and power are coextensive." meaning that no sexuality or gender identity can exist outside of this domain of power. But, because gender is a state of being, it can be changed. The process of "doing gender" can use hyperbole, dissonance, and internal confusion to destabilize or supersede the domain of power in which it survives.

Butler's goal in constructing a "genealogy of gender ontology," is reveal the ways in which discourse creates the illusion of a "real" gender binary. Butler also explains these mechanisms, from the perspective of the field of power's interest in preserving this binary and in presenting it as a natural, material reality.

## **PART 2**



## **Chapter 1: Prohibition, Psychoanalysis, and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix (Structuralism's Critical Exchange)**

In the views of Levi-Strauss, all human society is based on a central Law, which she mentioned as the law of global kinship or the law of the patriarch. This Law asserts that kinship structures are created and are enclosed together by the exchange of women through marriage. When a woman belonging to one clan marries a man from a different clan, she in fact serves two motives. The “functional” motive is to virtually bind the two clans together as a family unit. The “symbolic or ritualistic purpose” is to serve clan identity. The two clans are bound together by an exchange of a woman, and a common identity is formed between them. The clans are also distinguished in their identity by this exchange. Butler calls this “phallogo centric economy” the source of symbolic thought, where women serve as symbols of masculine identity rather than as individuals in them.

Butler asks why women are chosen to be the object of exchange in this paradigm. In views of Levi-Strauss, this is connected to the prohibitions of homosexuality and the taboos of incest and their equivalents as well as the taboos of exogamy, the rule that marriage must take place to a woman outside one’s family line. Unjustifiable homoerotic cravings between men are inverted into admissible heterosexual swapping of women. The connections between men are strengthened without breaking these taboos. In Lévi’s view, these taboos are also connected to psychoanalysis’ relationship with structuralism. He argued that incest, in the form of an Oedipal complex in which the male kills his father and desires to satisfy his sexual desires for his mother, is a fantasy that men have in every culture. The prevalence of this incest fantasy, according to Lévi–Strauss, is why the taboo of incest is universal.

The psychoanalyst and philosopher, Jacques Lacan, took this idea further by associating the incest taboo with language. He saw the relationship between the two as the basis of human culture and individual subjectivity. According to Lacan, culture is the same as language, and he used the term “the Symbolic” to describe the linguistic structures that constitute culture.

For Lacan, the driving force behind speech is the dissatisfaction with the limitations imposed on him by the taboo of incest. He has lost his original, fundamental bond with his mother, and his longing for her is a longing for the lost “jouissance”, a concept that evokes feelings of pleasure or satisfaction. By using speech, the subject becomes the subject. He tries to use speech to replace his dissatisfaction, but, as he



sees it, language will never provide him with the jouissance that he desires, and thus will never completely satisfy his discontentment.

## **Chapter 2: Prohibition, Psychoanalysis, and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix (Lacan, Riviere and the Strategies of Masquerade)**

Butler examines identity and subjectivity in the way that Jacques Lacan conceptualized it. In Lacan's chronicle, identity and gender distinction begin in the domain of the Symbolic, according to the structuralism law of universal kinship, and through the means of language. The Phallus is a constellation of figurative expressions that begins this proceeding. It symbolizes heterosexual masculine desire. "Being" is the status of women; "having" the phallus is the status of men. They are the deficiency or dearth through which the male, "having" the Phallus invades and through which he comes into being.

This implies that the fundamental feminine position is one of emptiness or absence. Women do not possess "have" the Phallus, the heterosexual male yearning, but they are imposed with "being" the Phallus (the homosexual male desire). They must work to generate this appearance and while doing so, allow expanse for masculine subjectivity to emerge. According to Lacan, this situation forces women to practice masquerade, "the effect of a melancholy that is essential to the feminine position."

The term "masquerade" is used to describe the act of masking or concealing something in order to make it look like something that isn't really there. The meaning of the term is unclear. It could mean that the entirety of gender is nothing but "the play of appearances" or it could mean that the masking of female desire is necessary to create the masculine position. The term "masquerade" was also investigated by the British psychoanalyst, Joan Riviere. In essay, "Womanliness as a Masquerade," Riviere argued that, "genuine womanliness" is nothing more or less than the "mimicry and the mask" of masquerade. Riviere defined masquerade as a form of disguise that women use to conceal their nonsexual desire to inhabit the expanse detained by men, speaking subject that is, engaging in discourse. Women hide this desire because they are afraid of vengeance from men, who fear the symbolic "castration" this feminine aspiration implies.

## **Chapter 3: Prohibition, Psychoanalysis, and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix (Freud and the Melancholia of Gender)**





In this chapter, Butler examines the story of sex and character origination propounded by Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) an Austrian neurologist who established psychoanalysis. Freud's theory of character and sex, was based on a mechanism called melancholia'. Melancholia, according to Freud, is a reaction to the death of a loved one. Through magical acts of 'imitation,' the ego or conscious self protects it by identifying with the lost loved one, and the characteristics of the lost loved one become the structure of the subjective ego.

The mechanism of gender identity is mediated by melancholia, which is an outcome of an incest taboo. The Oedipal complex does not allow you to fulfill the desire of your desired parent. The incest taboo makes it inevitable that you will lose your desired parent, whether it is your mother or father. Your ego may identify with your lost parent and take on the gender of that parent, or your ego may counterbalance your lost parent by taking on the gender of your lost beloved parent.

This process of gender consolidation, as Freud calls it, can create masculinity or femininity and heterosexuality or homosexuality in both men and women. In part, Freud explains this by arguing that there is “primary bisexuality” that exists before the process of gender consolidation. To answer the question of whether the ego identifies or rejects its loss, Freud argues that there are “primary dispositions” in the psyche toward heterosexual masculinity and heterosexual femininity.

Butler argues that Freud's account implies that bisexuality is the result of the union of two heterosexual desires in a single psyche. Butler challenges the idea of “primary dispositions” and attempts to explain their existence, something that Freud's narrative does not do. Moving through the structure of the narrative, Butler argues that these “dispositions” are not natural or primary, but must be the result of the internalizing of repressive external rules. The first rule is against homosexuality. The second rule is against incest. After internalizing these rules, the ego moves into gender consolidation through melancholia. In Freud's view, normal gender consolidation happens when heterosexuality is the outcome of melancholia that completely solves the loss of the loved one. When the loss is incompletely solved because the taboos are not completely internalized, homosexuality happens.

#### **Chapter 4: Prohibition, Psychoanalysis, and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix (Gender Complexity and the Limits of Identification)**

Gender identification refers to a set of attributes that are integrated into a subject's psychological makeup. There are three different ways of conceptualizing gender identity: Lacan's, Riviere's, and



Freud's. Feminist theorists typically conceptualize gender identity as a mother-child relationship; however, this approach is still restricted, as it is heterosexual and binary. Butler's goal is to explain "the kinds of subversively and parodically convergent convergences" that are found within gay and lesbian culture. Now, she examines the identity stories of both Lacan and Riviere to see whether they can do the same.

Butler argues that psychoanalytical theory can explain the "multiple and co-existing identities" that can be identified. So, she asks whether the psychoanalyst's account can lead to "critical strategies and source of subversion". She rejects the law of the symbolic narrative that starts with Lacan's paternal law. According to Butler, Lacan's conception of the law of the symbolic is too strict, insisting that identification is predetermined as either male or female. For her, the action of the Law or even laws is not so decisive.

Melancholy, on the other hand and its procedure of incorporation is wordless. Rather, the mother's body; the site of the original bond that has been severed, becomes "established in the body and given permanent residence there". This is what creates the sexed body. The surface of the sexed body is covered with erogenous regions. Thus, the sexed body emerges within the boundaries of taboos such as homosexuality and incest.

The sexed body, according to Butler, is a "literalizing fantasy" that conceals its origin and becomes "naturalized." As a result, subjects become gender-coded through the body's division into erotic zones based on gender rules. Butler follows Freud's theory of gender identity using melancholia to claim that these identities are "embedded on the surface" rather than "embedded within the interior" of the body. She contrasts this process of integration (involving the body in attitudes or ideas subconsciously) with the alternative process (self-inclusion).

Similar to melancholia, mourning occurs when a loved one passes away. However, unlike melancholia, our ego recognizes the loss of our loved one as part of the grieving process. The mouth is a place of introjections. The mourning process is a stimulus for us to fill the mouth with words. It is our attempt to fill the emptiness with words.

## **Chapter 5: Prohibition, Psychoanalysis, and the Production of the Heterosexual Matrix (Reformulating Prohibition as Power)**



In this chapter, Butler examines how, in Foucault's words, the law of repression "the juridical law of psychoanalysis," of psychoanalysis works to establish and promote gender norms. Her aim is to do analysis of this law of repression in Foucault style and to expose whether the law of repression also has a generative or productive function. Specifically, she wants to know if the law of repression can explain gender configurations that do not fit within the binary constraints of sex/gender that the heterosexual matrix imposes.

Non-heterosexual associations are explicit as prohibition by the incest taboo that precludes certain heterosexual relations. The incest taboo is a rule that distinguishes between sexual partners that are permissible and those that are prohibited. It prohibits certain heterosexual relations, but it does not prohibit all non-heterosexual relations.

According to feminist analysis by Gayle Rubin (1949), the law of repression regulated by the rules of society, acts on pre-existing biological sex to produce binary sex and heterosexuality from the infinite possibilities of sexual expression. On the other hand, according to Foucaultian analysis, the law of repression acts discretely to produce homosexuality and heterosexuality; these sexual orientations come from the work of the law but appear to predate the law.

Butler rejects Rubin's claim that language is capable of recognizing and describing any disposition that exists before the law operates. Language is post-law, so it cannot realize anything outside this domain. Rubin, who maintains that limitless probabilities of sexuality survive formerly the action of the law and cultural norms, foretells that gender will vanish when mandatory heterosexual standards are shattered. Butler concurs with the philosopher Derrida and the French philosopher Foucault that social norms do not eliminate gendering because social norms do not create gendering.

Foucault interprets the structuralism law of universal relations, exogamy, or the father rule as a form of power historically unpredictable. Moreover, Foucault argues, its prohibition of particular desires may actually produce them. As a form of legal power, the Law enacts its prohibition of desire symbolically. But Foucault argues that its real purpose is to retain power, not to control desires.

Butler challenges the notion that the incest taboo is universal, arguing that it may have varying levels of prevalence and impact across cultures. Her goal is to identify the probability of a subversion of the taboo by its generative nature, namely the production of what the taboo seeks to forbid. However, this



analysis must be conducted without any pre-cultural assumptions, as the narrative itself originates within the culture, and cannot refer to anything external to the culture.

## **PART 3**

### **Chapter 1: Subversive Bodily Acts (The Body Politics of Julia Kristeva)**

According to Lacan, The Symbolic is a universe of linguistic constructions and is characterized by a state of univocal, that is, each term has a single meaning. In the Symbolic, a subject comes into being through the process of processing the loss of a primary relationship with the mother's body through language. According to Kristeva, there is an alternate dimension of the Symbolic where language has many meanings and the sound and meaning are connected. This semantic dimension permits us to recover the relationship with the mother's body because it obscures the difference between subject and object, it is poetic and instinctive, and it proceeds to destabilize the patriarchal law and its repressive prohibitions.

This homosexual as well as the incestuous aspiration to bond with the mother's body may be interpreted in a culturally acceptable manner through poetry as well as childbirth. Both of these experiences are culturally understandable because they recline on the borderline of the semiotic as well as the Symbolic. When a woman gives birth she becomes, as her mother did before her, "the same continuity differentiating itself." The incest taboo then creates a separation of the female infant and her mother after the birth, creating a sense of sadness for mother and daughter.

In some cases, this melancholia leads the daughter to accept the absence of the mother's body as her own. This rupture of the taboo of incest leads to female homosexuality. Thus, lesbianism is the absence of indivisibility between the mother and daughter. The lesbian self, which emerges from the rupture of the father's law that shapes culture, is not an integral self but "a site of fusion, self-loss, and psychosis." It is culturally incomprehensible and culturally unsustainable.

Kristeva's argument is based on an assumption of a primordial, pre-existing mother-child relationship that is characterized by a multiplicity of drives. However, this assumption is neither justified nor explicable, and must be viewed as a presumptuous assumption about a pre-existing state. Furthermore, the effects of the law are more complicated and less determinative than Kristeva permits, as the law may actually produce what it is intended to prevent. Butler argues that it is possible to subvert a paternal



law, but only within the sphere of that law, when the father law turns against itself and produces unexpected variants of it. Kristeva further undermines her argument by asserting that the Semiotic always follows the Paternal Law of the Significance.

Butler questions various characteristics of Kristeva's argument. Butler shares Foucault's view that the true body does not exist outside the law, and that sex is an artificial grouping of anatomy, biological function, conduct, sensation, and pleasure. Sex and the "maternal body" are presented as innate and pre destructive as a way to protect this power structure. This form of naturalization, in which the female body is presented as motherhood's primary function, confirms the power structure's drive to reproduce its subjects.

Butler also disputes Kristeva's assertion that poetry and female homosexuality are "places of psychosis" because they are a rejection of the patriarchal code that underpins society. Kristeva's claim about lesbianism does not represent a serious study of the subject; rather, it is a discursive argument made within and for the benefit of the heterosexual male power structure.

## **Chapter 2: Subversive Bodily Acts (Foucault, Herculean, and the Politics of Sexual Discontinuity)**

In this chapter, Butler looks at the case of Herculean, a hermaphroditic or intersex person from the 19th century. She was born with ambiguous genitalia, but was allocated the sex "female" at the time of birth. She lived a life of turmoil and confusion until she was in her early twenties. After an inspection was organized to ascertain her "true" sex, she was legally forced to take on the identity of a man. She then committed suicide. The story of Herculean story offers a glimpse into the perils of gender and sexuality. Butler undertakes her analysis by critiquing Foucault's analysis.

Foucault's description of Herculean's situation is inconsistent with his long-standing theory of sexuality, as outlined in his book, *The History of Sexualities*, Volume 1. Foucault argues that sex and sexuality go hand-in-hand with power. They come into being through and within the institutions of power and do not exist outside of them or before them.

Foucault, however, interprets Herculean as outside the univocal sex binary, where one is either a man or a woman. He argues that Herculean's bodily sensations are not connected to identity within the binary of masculine or feminine sex, but exist in a "happy dispersal" throughout her entire being. Foucault's theory of "emancipator sexual politics" suggests that the body's "primary sexual multiplicity" can be revealed when it is liberated from being categorized as one sex or another. By placing Herculean



outside the “framework of intelligibility” of the power matrix of compulsory heterosexuality, Foucault entirely neglects his official position on sex and sexuality, which is inseparable from the institutions of power.

Butler argues that Herculean’s description requires rejecting Foucault’s notion of a “multiplicitous sexuality” that results from the abolition of binary sex. Instead, Herculean writes about a “metaphysical homelessness,” a profound sense of disorientation that erupts into anger and ends in suicide. Herculean’s sexuality is neither uniform nor multiplicitous, but rather a “fatal ambivalence, produced by the prohibitive law.” Her body fails to abscond the sexual binary,” but merely mutates the elements that compose its categories. For Butler, the life of Herculean is a contrasting discourse with the legal laws that produce and manage sex and identity. Because Herculean cannot comply with or escape these laws, he/she is inevitably defeated by them.

In this chapter, there is also the section “Concluding Unscientific Postscript,” in which Butler uses Foucault’s critique of the construction of identity categories by discourse to illustrate a recent discovery in cellular biology. In 1987, researchers at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) identified a sequence of DNA what they declared was the “the binary switch upon which hinges all sexually dimorphic characteristics.” They proposed that maleness is the result of a DNA sequence that can move from its starting point on the “Y” chromosome to another point on the chromosome. This hypothesis could explain why some people with “XX” chromosomes were actually male.

The researchers identified the gene they called “testis-determining factor” or TDF by taking samples from individuals with chromosome abnormality: persons identified as women with XY chromosomes and men with XX chromosomes. The researchers argued that the existence of TDF, determining maleness was compromised when they discovered the same sequence on a female’s X chromosome. This discovery led them to develop a second unproven hypothesis: the TDF sequence was active in males and passive in females.

One critic noted that the specimen population was assigned either male or female based merely on external genitalia. Other critics noted that the “cultural prejudice” and “gendered assumptions” in the design of the experiment were evident in the way the researchers “conflated sex determination with male determination and testis determination.”



These presumptions are the consequences of discourse. They serve to reinforce the discourse that shapes scientific inquiry. These presumptions reflect and reinforce the cultural assumptions about the binary relationship between man and woman. They also support the idea that biological male and female sex exist independently from gender identity. Butler argues that people whose biological characteristics fall outside of the categories of male and female reveal that categories of sex that people take for granted are not natural; they are constructed and consequently may well be constructed in a different way.

### **Chapter 3: Subversive Bodily Acts (Monique Wittig: Bodily Disintegration and Fictive Sex)**

Butler provides an analysis of the feminist thinker Monique Wittig (1935-2003). Wittig's departure point is the idea of Simone de Beauvoir that "one is not born as a woman but rather becomes a woman."

Wittig argues in two main ways. The first is that sex is "a political category created by the institution of heterosexuality." The division of the body into sexes seems natural, but it is actually created by this institution to promote reproduction. The artificial category of sex reproduces the artificial category of sex.

The second is that "a lesbian transcends the binary opposition between women and man" and therefore "is neither a woman nor a man." A lesbian is "beyond the category of sex." In existing beyond those categories, the lesbian is an undermined power that discloses the fact that those categories are established and political rather than natural.

In Wittig's view, the sex binary is created by language. The category of "sex" pertains only to women and the feminine and actually defines them. Language creates the fantasy that a universal speaking subject is a man. The division of linguistics of actuality into "concepts, categories and abstractions" has a vicious and physical impact on bodies. It divides wholeness into artificial divisions that come to seem natural through linguistic repetition.

The heterosexual matrix has thus taken over the language, but the language is also a way to challenge it. The political work of Wittig is also to transform the language into something that is not categorized by sex or gender. This is a sort of "war" that demands that "women, lesbians and gay men" accept the "position of the speaking subject and its invocation of the universal point of view." "This will destroy the artificial "women" category and the "compulsory order of heterosexuality." In her fiction, Wittig tries to do this by manipulating the language. Traditionally, the masculine pronoun has been used to represent the universal, and the feminine has been used for the specific or definite.



Butler does not agree with Wittig's thesis that lesbianism is supposed to be non-conformist or non-hetero normative. Butler argues that to do so, would only reinforce the oppressive heterosexual construction. Instead, she argues that the very idea of identity itself should be challenged. To do this, she argues, we must reveal how discourse generates all the different categories of identity, not just the category of sex.

#### **Chapter 4: Subversive Bodily Acts (Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversion)**

Butler examines the relationship between "women" and the body, as well as its nature. She asks whether the sexed body is the basis for the system of forced heterosexuality, or if it is produced as a result of it.

Foucault sees the body as a surface inscribed by history; this "corporeal destruction ... necessary to produce the speaking subject and its significations" produces cultural values. Thus, the body's material existence precedes discourse. Following Foucault's British anthropologist, Mary Douglas, in her book; *Purity and Danger* observes that cultural prohibitions and the frontiers of the body are founded together. Bodily limits are, according to a post structuralism point of view, "the limits of the socially hegemonic" These boundaries are the pits at which a culture is susceptible to "pollution powers.

British writer Simon Watney (b.1949) in *Policing Desire: Pornography, AIDS and the Media* (1987) describes lesbians and gays as sexual transgressors, particularly in the wake of the HIV-AIDS epidemic, whose physical transgression also pollutes or endangers society.

In a similar way, Kristeva defines the concept of inner self or internal identity through the concept of "abjection." Abjection involves the expulsion or refusal of something from the inside. This process creates the subject by setting the limits of the body, but also renders what is expelled as the "Other." Racism and Homophobia can be seen as the result of this process. The bodily permeability which allows abjection is essential for the formation and preservation of the subject, but it also obscures the difference between the inside and the outside.

In his theory of inscription, Foucault interprets the soul as a representation of an interior space inscribed on the surface of the body. Foucault uses the prisoner as an example of this theory. Through the imprisonment of a criminal, Foucault argues, the body of the criminal is inscribed with a prohibitive law. The law permeates the bodily realm of the prisoner, embodying the essence of themselves, their sense of purpose, and their conscience. The surface of the body, which Foucault identifies as a vital,





sacred space, is transformed into the surface of the soul. The soul, Foucault explains, is the very thing that the body lacks. Thus, the body is presented as a symbol of lack. Therefore, the trope of the inner soul arises in this manner as a recommendation of inner space written on the body's surface.

In Butler's view, the same mechanism drives the "construction of the gendered body" on the surface of the body. So, "true" gender is an idea, an action. It's the performative creation of an internal identity through repetition of "act, gesture, and desire." These repetitions are controlled by prohibitions against incest and homosexuality, instruments of the heterosexual matrix and its reproductive purposes. This performance creates the subject.

The false form of inner identity hides the origin of gender in "political regulations and disciplinary practices." Since gender is only a form of fantasy, it is neither real nor false. The performance of drag itself is a subversive parody of gender identity. It plays with the components of bodily sex and gender identity, as well as gender roles; by configuring them in contradictory patterns. Drag performance implies a feminine outer appearance and a masculine inner essence, while simultaneously suggesting a masculine outer appearance and a feminine inner essence. Drag "postures as imitation" not only challenges the gender binary, but the very idea of originality and authenticity.

### 1.3.1 MAIN IDEAS IN THE NOVEL

#### GENDER IS PERFORMATIVE

Judith Butler's investigation into identity guides her to assume that gender is performative. Gender is an illusion of identity that is expressed on the body surface through performance. This performance that comprises gender incorporates desire, action, gesture, and word. It is repetitive and ritualistic.

Although gender is performed on the exterior of the body, it is identified by an advent of being an articulation of an internal "gendered core." This apparent internal ethos is a fabrication, and it is not the base that offers expression to gender, but rather the effect produced by repeated actions. Therefore, gender is more performative than expressive. The emergence of internal identification has no existence apart from the recurrence of the acts that constitute it. It is hence obtainable to insurgent forms of these repetitions.

The techniques in which gender is performed are managed and administered by culture. Culture shapes and dictates the ways in which sex is played out. The heterosexual matrix controls gender, sexual



desires, and sex so that it conforms to its objective of reproduction. Identifiable gender identities reflect the normal configuration of these components. Other configurations are rendered meaningless. The illusion of gender as an internal identity hides the power structure's role in the formation and policing of gender. This concealment helps consolidate and sustain the heterosexual matrix.

## **PARODY AS SUBVERSIVE POLITICAL ACT**

Parody reveals that gender is a constructed and historically contingent identity, rather than a natural one. Gender parody reveals that the original identity being satirized is itself an imitation without any source. The existence of an internal identity or "gender core" suggests the repetition of the performative components that constitute gender over time. Parody challenges cultural assumptions about the "proper" or "natural" configuration of gender by deconstructing the categories of masculine and feminine identity. By deconstructing these categories, parodies not only "deprive the hegemonic culture" i.e. the culture that dominates society by imposing a body of beliefs and norms while making those norms appear inevitable and natural), but it also "extends intelligibility" to configurations of gender, sex, and desire that don't conform to the heterosexual matrix, such as drag performance. By actualizing within these reconfigured gender categories, parodies allow for new varieties of identity that are "understandable and possible."

This disruptive gender parody, such as the specimen of drag performance, not only ridicules gender but also scorns the very idea of the actual, genuine, or authentic which may be classified as Pastiche, a type of parody in which there is no standard of normality or originality that is being satirized. For example, in the case of drag performance, it is not only a parody of gender but of the idea of the true, original, or original. Therefore, it can be classified as a kind of parody known as gender pastiche. In gender pastiche, the laughter "emerges in the realization that the original was derived." This pseudo-original is a copy of the necessarily failed one of gender norms, which is an idea that "an idea that no one can embody." Parodies are not always subversive. Sometimes, parody is domesticated and recirculated as instruments of cultural hegemony. Subversive parody is a kind of parody that confuses assumptions. For example, a parody of compulsory heterosexuality undermines the gender binary because it challenges the place and stability of gender categories. This is important because it "delimit the very field of description that we have for the human."



As a form of subversive parody, drag also distorts “the distinction between inner and outer psychic space.” In its subversive features, drag and trans-sexuality lead to perplexity as to whether a person is a man or a woman, a masculine or a feminine person. It becomes “unclear how to distinguish the real from the unreal.” This bewilderment and confusion leads to the comprehension that gender and sex both are not natural factuality but are naturalized and delusional configuration. They are hence “changeable.” Subversive parody is a vital tool of feminism, enabling it to “insist upon the extension of ... legitimacy to bodies that have been regarded as ... unintelligible.”

## FROM PARODY TO POLITICS

Throughout the text, Butler summarizes her findings. She initiates by questioning whether feminist politics requires a fixed identity category women to be its subject. Butler confronts “the foundationalist reasoning of identity politics” by arguing that identity is an outcome generated by political structures and that its uncertainty makes it unsuitable as a basis for feminism.

In Butler’s view, the subject is the “doer,” the one, who acts with the power or will, only comes into being through the “doing.” The language composition of the subject and the object is conformity or a narration that takes on the emergence being an attribute of reality. Repeating language and action makes the subject come into being as a natural fact with substantive being. The same repetition to some extent naturalizes sex binary. It is only through substitute manners of repetition that a “subversion of identity becomes possible.”

Parody is the alternative mode of repetition that has the power to deconstruct these naturalized and repressive binaries of object/subject, man/woman, etc. Parody draws attention to the breach between ‘natural’ gender disposition and those that are “derived, phantasmal, and imitative.” Parody can reveal the constructed, “phantasmal” unreal or ‘illusory’ nature of “the original, the authentic, and the real.” By emphasizing the fictional nature of the central protagonists of compulsory heterosexuality, ‘man’ and ‘woman’, parodic implementations provide a space for the emergence of new gender configurations/norms. This approach to identity as a permanent signifier rather than a static inferiority opens up new prospects for feminist agency or deliberate action to appear. It has the capacity to generate “a new configuration of politics”. These new forms of repetition will not eliminate or strengthen the naturalistic stories and repressive binaries of heterosexual matrix. Instead, they will



rediscover possibilities that are existing within cultural domains that have been identified as culturally incomprehensible and impossible.

## **THE BODY AS CONSTITUTED SURFACE**

Butler argues that the body isn't an immobile means or a blank page that absorbs cultural meanings; rather, it is a product of cultural meanings. In Butler's view, there is no anatomically specified sex. Sex, like gender, is a culturally fabricated designation, made to seem natural by the discursive force that produces it. There are several examples in Part 3, which justify this. For example, consider the case of the intersex individual. The assertion that only 10 percent of entire people own a blend of chromosomes and anatomical characteristics that vary from domineering conceptions of "male" or "female" also assist Butler's argument. The fact that these individuals, whose bodies lie on the fringes of what is culturally understandable and legitimate, reveal the constructed nature of categories of the male sex.

Butler argues that the body is a surface whose permeability is politically regulated and a symbol of practice within a cultural domain of gender hierarchy and mandatory heterosexuality. The surface of the body is the place where the illusion of internal essence including gender identification is created and practiced.

## **PROHIBITION, PSYCHOANALYSIS, AND THE PRODUCTION OF THE HETEROSEXUAL MATRIX**

Butler cautions against looking for a pre-patriarchal past. At times, feminism has sought out such "origin" stories to counter the claim that patriarchy is an unavoidable and natural situation. It contains two issues with this approach: First, imagining pre-patriarchal times implies a universal, transcultural state of affairs, so that the experiences of women and patriarchal oppression are excluded from the story. Second, origin stories and post-apartheid narratives are always distorted because they are framed in terms of current self-interest.

These sorts of lines of inquiry are useful only to the extent to which they advance the political objectives of feminism. They have the potential to do so by demonstrating that patriarchy and the status of women as second-class citizens are not inherent, natural conditions; rather, they are the consequence of historical incidents or mishaps.



This line of thought has been developed by socialist feminists, who use a structuralism method of analysis, but Butler also refers to the famous difference between sex and gender identity made by the great structural anthropologist, Claude L.L.A.R.S. (1908-2009). L.L.S. distinguished nature from culture, believing that culture was a distinct force that interacted with nature. Some theorists have taken this relationship to mean that sex and gender is the same thing. In this model, sex is a natural category on which the body is constructed, and gender is a cultural condition that is inscribed on the body. But Butler rejects this argument.

### **1.3.2 THEMES IN THE NOVEL**

#### **HUMAN CONSTRUCT**

In Butler's view, gender is a human invention. She studies animal and plant life and notes the numerous ambiguities in which gender, sexuality, and reproduction become fluid across a species. She sees the asexual reproduction of plants and the various ways in which animals engage in parenting as proof that these gender roles are malleable. She also focuses on animal species that do not form hierarchies, even though all animals are part of the final food chain. By comparing the human construct of gender to the natural world, Butler argues that humans have made the concept of gender up and forgotten it along the way.

#### **ECONOMIC COMPETITION**

Butler argues that, in western culture, the economic system is competitive. This competition rewards dominance, which, she argues, is a male characteristic. This competitive economic system, she argues, penalizes women, which in turn discourages women from participating in it. She points out that men are usually physically better than women, which makes them more confident and therefore more successful in competition. These arguments are used to argue that women should be taught the language of competitiveness.

#### **A DISCUSSION OF THE "NATURAL"**

Throughout the book, Butler challenges what “natural” means. She recognizes that different species engage in sex and gender differently than each other. The diversity among species and the evolution within them suggests that sex and gender are maladaptive concepts. Humans see two genders as “natural,” but forget that many androgynous or poly-gendered species exist. Maybe the diversity within



the human race is as natural as homosexual activity or asexual reproducing. Butler's interpretation of these terms seems to be of paramount importance to her. She sees them as being interpreted in a cultural and sociological way, so she suggests that our human understanding of 'natural' calls for a re-examination in light of how historically men have used gender to justify the oppression of women.

## 1.4 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Why do men of all generations treat women differently in every aspect of life?
2. What is the long-standing relationship between social power and gender, as explored in Judith Butler's Gender Trouble?
3. Why do many people consider Judith Butler's feminist writings extreme? Explain

## 1.5 SUMMARY

Judith Butler is an American philosopher, born in 1956 in Cleveland, Ohio. She came out as lesbian at the age of sixteen. After graduating from Bennington College with a degree in philosophy, Butler went on to earn a PhD from Yale University, where she became active in the gay community and in political activism. Butler has taught at UC Berkeley since 1993 and is currently the Maxine Elliot professor of comparative literature and Critical theory program director.

Butler has revolutionized the study and understanding of gender in philosophy as well as the way certain groups advocate for political change. She has published over a dozen books, the most recent of which is Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, published in 1990. This book was inspired by Butler's desire to improve the lives of people and to redefine what is possible.

Gender Trouble is an academic book that explores the relationship between Sex, Gender and Sexuality. It is widely regarded as a seminal work in the fields of feminist theory, women's studies and lesbian and gay studies. Butler argues that society must rethink the most fundamental categories of human identities. To do this, she asks questions about sex, gender and sexuality, which define human identities. Butler's revolutionary ideas about gender identity have since become the foundation of queer theory. Butler begins by challenging some of the fundamental assumptions within Feminist Theory. She argues that there can be no single identity for women and that attempts to define one are problematic. According to Butler, feminist identity politics cannot be successful without a woman's identity. If there is no central point for the conceptualization of women, how can there be a foundation?



However, some claim that there is no such thing as ‘identities’ and ‘conceptual limits’. Butler touches on this in her essay ‘Gender Trouble’, where she examines the formation of feminine identity.

In the first part of “The subjects of sex/gender/desire”, Judith Butler argues that inter sectional feminism is essential, but she also challenges the way women are defined. She argues that the term feminism has been created by a phallogentric society, and that it assumes a universalization that denies its meaning. She proposes a new kind of feminism that challenges these notions of identity and gender. In this way, she argues, sex and gender are independent concepts. If sex is biological and gender is cultural, then sex and gender are two different things. If gender identity is complicated in connection with sex (which it is) then feminists must accept this complexity, rather than abandoning traditional western gender roles in society.

In the second chapter, Butler examines the psycho-structuralism approach to sexual difference and the structure of sexuality in relation to power. She argues that socialist feminism is problematic, and Levi-Strauss's structuralism anthropology makes fallacies that result in a self-destructive formulation of gender. Butler's critique of Freud and Lacan is particularly insightful, including her argument that the prohibitions against homosexuality generate heterosexual temperament allowing for the possibility of an oedipal complex.

The third chapter commences with a discussion of Yulia Kristeva. According to Butler, Kristeva's theory is rooted in the very system she seeks to dismantle. She argues that any theory which claims significance is based on the denial or suppression of a woman's principle should consider whether femininity is, in fact, external to the cultural standards by which it is repressed. In this chapter, we also hear Butler's critique of Foucault publishing the journal *Herculine Barbin*, her criticism of the novelist Monique Wittig, and her argument that gender identity can “subverted” itself through the use of pretence and drag.

## 1.6 KEY WORDS

- **Assemblage-** Gathering, Crowd, Congregation
- **Consequential-** Important, Significant, Momentous
- **Corporeality-** Element, Material, Constituent
- **Disavow-** Disclaim, Disconfirm, Disown



- **Disparaged-** Defamed, Traduced, Aspersed, Derogated
- **Dispensable-** Gratuitous, Inessential, Unwarranted
- **Divergence-** Separation, Partition, Division, Bifurcation
- **Entailment-** Consequence, Ramification, Implication
- **Genealogy-** Ancestry, Pedigree, Lineage
- **Hegemony-** Dominance, Authority, Supremacy
- **Implicitly-** Tacitly, Impliedly, Wordlessly
- **Inadvertently-** Unintentionally, Unwillingly, Accidentally
- **Injunction-** Order, Ruling, Instruction
- **Inexorable-** Relentless, Unstoppable, Unavoidable
- **Intelligibility-** Clarity, Lucidity, Readability
- **Ostensibly-** Seemingly, Apparently, Outwardly
- **Perpetuate-** Continue, Maintain, Eternalize, Immortalize
- **Postulation-** Assumption, Presupposition, Hypothesis
- **Proliferation-** Accretion, Augmentation, Expansion
- **Repudiated-** Discredited, Disgraced, Thrown out
- **Tortuous-** Twisted, Winding, Meandering

## 1.7 SELF ASSESSMENT TEST

1. What is the focus of Butler in Gender Trouble? What does she demand into question and how does she propose it be handled?
2. How does the desire of same-sex predate heterosexuality, according to Butler, and how does it put a threat to heterosexuality?
3. How does she deal with the probability of agency?
4. What does Butler intend to say about the complexity of her style of writing?





5. How does Butler elucidate gender norms as threatening?
6. What according to Butler constantly concerns her most?
7. According to Butler, drag is not a specimen of performativity, but of what?
8. While articulating about what she would do if she re scripted Gender Trouble, what according to her she would take into consideration, what does she aspire for and how does she conclude talking about identity categories?
9. How does Butler retrieve the notion of trouble?
10. What do the gender categories support?

## 1.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

In her book Gender Trouble, Judith Butler devotes a lot of time to explain the reasons why women are treated differently. In her book, she states that men have used physical strength to their advantage in politics, economy and all other areas of life. Because men feel physically superior to women, they use this strength to their disadvantage. But Judith is glad that in the present day, women are rejecting the mentality of men because women are now emerging as strong political leaders, successful business people and so on.

1. According to Judith Butler, the economy has traditionally been controlled by men, using strategies that deny women the opportunity to reach their full potential. Men have strategically manipulated women from a young age, telling them their place in society is to reproduce and provide for a man. Most women have grown up with the knowledge that economic and political control belongs to men.

2. Over the course of her life, Judith Butler decried the discrimination between men and women. She pointed out how men used unproven data to put women at a disadvantage in politics and economics. She closely monitored gender bias in life. But now she's speaking out because she believes, given the chance, women will do better. Her predictions and dreams have come true because, in today's world, women are outperforming men in almost all areas. Today, the world loves women as political leaders and business leaders who are driving the economy forward.



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<b>The Color Purple: Alice Walker</b>	

## STRUCTURE

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A Brief about the Author

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##### 2.2.2 Characters:

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Nettie

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Shug Avery

Harpo

Sofia

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Carrie and Kate

Aunt Odessa

Old MR. \_\_\_\_\_

Henry Broadnax (Buster)

Mary Agnes (Squeak)



**Major and Miss Millie**

**The Major**

**Eleanor Jane**

**Henrietta**

**Corrine**

**Samuel**

**Olivia**

**Adam**

**Catherine and Tashi**

**Doris Baines**

## **2.3 Further Main Body of the Text: The Color Purple**

### **2.3.1 Technique and Structure of the Novel**

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## **2.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- To detect Celie's moral, virtuous, ethical, and emotional development with the advancement of the story
- To scrutinize the use of dialect in the story



- To study whether the events of the novel are realistic and pragmatic
- To appraise whether the events as depicted in *The Color Purple* are still applicable in today's society
- To examine the history of Blacks in America
- To investigate racism and racial typecast in the past as well as in the present
- To understand the significance of the character development in the novel

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

In her preface to the Tenth Anniversary Edition of *Purple*, Walker explains: “This book is the book in which I was able to express a new spiritual awareness, a rebirth into strong feelings of Oneness I realized. I had experienced and taken for granted as a child; a chance for me as well as the main character, Celie, to encounter That Which Is beyond Understanding but Not beyond Loving and to say: I see and hear you clearly, Great Mystery, now that I expect to see and hear you everywhere I am, which is the right place.”

To be precise, this novel appears to be Walker's as well as Celie's spiritual journey, uniting the two women as companions on a sort of voyage. Actually, the entire novel revolves around voyage of its females. Although, Walker wrote the novel in 1982 and the story of Celie is set in the early 1900s (possibly between 1909 and 1947), these women essentially in a way share a common path.

*The Color Purple* is usually described as an example of "woman novel". According to Walker, feminist writing is actually a way of writing which focuses on African-American women in 20th-century America. This fictional tradition manages to address repression meted against African-American women, not just only through white domination but also by particular white and black men. In these kinds of novels, we usually happen to meet women who have the courage to fight against all odds for the sake of their own survival and also of their families. In their fragmented and displaced communities, these females are usually mothers who are seeking to shield and reunite families for future generations.

These characters frequently focus on safeguarding the present, ensuring a sound future, and on interacting with the past. For example, *The Color Purple* is often said to be a traditional parody of the slave story. The slave narrative genre emerged when slaves started to recount the stories of their



experiences. Approximately six thousand one time slaves recount their lives in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Walker's novel and stories of slavery actually expose the desolation of the speaker, exposing the appalling treatment that has never been challenged. Both are rooted in the oral tradition of African storytelling and song. Africans who were brought to the America as slaves were often prevented from communicating in their mother tongue similar to a sort of ban on speech of Celie. So they usually mingled alternative ways of communication, especially through acting and singing. Their stories involve experiences on the plantation as well as stories from their native Africa which were handed over from one generation to next generation and rapidly became central to African-American storytelling. Through her stories, Celie ensures that her experiences as black woman in early 20th century America will be heard and told for generations to come.

Although no particular date is mentioned, we can observe that the novel is set in the early 20th century, sometime between 1910 and 1940, after slavery was abolished in the United States. In the post-Civil War period of 1865, African-Americans were still faced with a massive economy, hard. At the beginning of the 20th century, the possibility of success was much greater. Many have been educated and many have moved from the rural South to the industrial North. Those who moved took their culture with them; songs and stories and in the 1920s, the Jazz Age began. In this atmosphere, African-American music, poetry, and intellectual activities gathered together to create what we now call the Harlem Renaissance.

In *The Color Purple* we come across such sort of changes taking place. Entrepreneur Harpo founded his own juke joint and ropes in the famous blues singer Shug. The success of Shug is a sign of the times that Célie writes, as she sings Bessie Smith and reflects an era that is concerned with enjoying one's time, forgetting worries about the past or the future. Towards the end of the novel, the opportunity becomes increasingly clear that Celie can start her own business. Célie now works from the house where her father used to live and worked. Thirty years ago, his father's life was shortened by white opponents who wanted to keep him down. Nevertheless, in this new generation, Walker makes us feel no longer worried about Celie's chances and we tend to believe Celie will hold up to flourish.

When the novel was published in 1982, one of the most beloved features of the book was its use of language. Mel Watkins of *The New York Book Review* commented that the novel “assumes a lyrical



cadence of its own...The cumulative effect is a novel that is convincing because of the authenticity of its folk voice.” Language is important to Walker. She then explains what happened after she submitted her finished novel to a major black women's magazine that she thought would probably realize its value faster than any other. However, the magazine rejected the novel on the grounds that “black people don’t talk like that” The novel's ensuing success suggests that these overall claims are false, as it is Celie's mighty idiomatic voice that is able to capture her particular situation and that of so many others.

## **A BRIEF ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Alice Walker was born in rural Georgia in 1944, and was the youngest child of a farmer. Whereas her mother, Minnie Lou Tallulah Grant worked as a maid in order to support the family income. At the age of eight, she got hit on one of her eyes with a copper pellet while playing with her two older brothers. The accident turned out to be traumatic, resulting in Alice changing from a cheeky, confident child interested in doing grown-up things to a shy, solemn and lonely girl. Walker plunged herself in her studies, consistently excelled in them, and upon graduation won a scholarship to Spelman College, a small, distinguished black women's school in Atlanta, Georgia. After two years, Walker went to study at Sarah Lawrence College in Bronxville, New York. Here she considerably studied literature and Latin poetry and history. Walker graduated from Sarah Lawrence in 1965 and published poems three years later.

In 1968, Walker got married to human rights lawyer Mel Leventhal and later they shifted to Jackson, Mississippi, becoming "the first legally married inter-racial couple in Mississippi.” They were frayed and bullied by whites, including the Ku Klux Klan. They were blessed with a daughter, Rebecca, before their divorce in the early 1970s. Her first novel published in 1970, was *The Third Life of Grange Copeland*. During that time, Walker also worked for *Ms. Magazine* as an editor; Gloria Steinem, Editor-in-Chief was very encouraging and supportive of efforts put in by Walker. In 1976, Walker's second novel, *Meridian*, was published, depicting the story of a woman fighting for civil rights in the American South.

In 1982, Walker received the Pulitzer Prize for Literature for his third novel, *The Color Purple*, which has become her best-known work. It speaks about a youthful distressed black woman grappling her way both through white racist culture and also patriarchal black culture and it turned out to be a huge commercial success. The book proved to be a bestseller and was



afterwards transformed into a critically applauded movie in 1985 as well as 2005, Broadway music. After this great achievement, she published in 1983 the essay *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens*, and in 1984 the collection of poems *Horses Make a Landscape Look More Beautiful*. She also published *Temple of My Familiar* (1989) and *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992), as well as children's books and non-fiction books.

She has to her credit a number of short stories, poems and other published works. She conveys the scuffle of black people, mainly women, and their existence in a racist, sexist and brutal society. Her writings also centre on the role of women of colour in culture and history. Walker is regarded as a respected person in the unprejudiced political community for her radically unusual and unpopular stances. Her short stories comprise "Everyday Use" from 1973, in which she peddled with feminism, racism, and the matters raised by young blacks who left home and lost the culture of their parents.

## 2.2 MAIN BODY OF THE TEXT: THE COLOR PURPLE

The *Color Purple* is not found to be an easily read book since it is written in a very different style. We are not intimated about everything about the characters as well as the setting and also why the characters tend to behave as they are depicted. This novel comprises a sequence of letters, without bearing any date, so in order to comprehend the time framework of the novel, there is a need to go through it precisely, watching for suggestions about social stations, clothes, and other significant details. After going through the whole novel, we are able to realize that the letters initiate the time when people used to move around in carts, and the letters conclude the time, when era of cars has begun, which make us realize that the time duration of the novel is about forty years. We also come across the fact that there are huge intervals, an information which we gather on close reading of the novel.

Another difficulty in reading this novel is language used in Celie's letters which are not written in Standard English. They are written in an unusual dialect that Walker refers to as the black vernacular. So Celie's language may seem awkward to some of us at first, but most readers will respond to this novel as soon as they read the letters, especially Celie's letters, who is uneducated and scribbles absolutely as she speaks and imagines. Nothing appears to be feigned and artificial about her style of writing. Actually, the most distinguished characteristic of Celie's letters is their spontaneity and





naturalness. The verbalized sound and sense of Celie's writing is consistently highlighted, rather than the "written" style of letters.

A vivid and sustained quality of honesty is reflected in Celie's letters. She writes letters to God, trusting Him as she would trust her best friend for guidance and vigour to carry on, despite the terrible unhappiness and pain she felt within herself and everyone around. It should also be noted that Célie has not signed her letters for a long time, which could be explained by the realization that Célie does not consider herself worthy to sign. When we get a chance to meet Célie, she seems to be devoid of confidence. She doesn't feel loved. No one has ever attempted to make her realize her worth. Therefore, she deviates towards God. But even the company of God proves useless as Celie feels worthless in His Company.

It will be a long drawn time before Célie gathers ample self-respect to sign her name with dignity but by then we will have perceived that while reading this long sequence of letters, we have beheld to the wonderful growth of a black woman born into difficult circumstances stacked against her, who initiated her life as an implicit slave, a sufferer in the hands of men, traditional gender roles, racism, and countless social injustice. Towards the conclusion of the novel, we will be able to find her grown into complete human being developed into fully matured woman of twentieth century. There are a number of remarkable women depicted in this novel, and each of them bears a particular perception of bravery and belligerence. They are not ready to be beaten into a sort of yielding. No doubt, it is easy to notice fiery women, but in the end, it's Celie's quiet and expanding courage and vigour that ultimately overwhelms us most. For more than half of the novel, Celie's method of resisting all forms of violence is to endure it bravely, pretending to be wood, a tree that bends but doesn't break. This sort of temperament works for Célie for a long time but subsequently, she is fortunate enough to have friends who are successful in persuading her to just suffer and "be alive." is not enough. One should always make an attempt to fight. Fundamentally, Célie is not born as a fighter. Actually, at first she is not willing to fight until she is able to realize the cruelty of her husband.

Over the years, Célie "absorbs" Albert's brutal violence, but when she sees evidence that he has hidden all of her sister's letters from her, tries to convince her that Nettie is dead or she never wrote a letter, Célie couldn't bear it anymore then she rebelled. She cursed her husband and left him to go to Memphis to find happiness with the woman who loved him. Celie has struggled for years to keep Nettie's memory



alive, trusting Nettie, despite the fact that there is no evidence that Nettie is alive. We admire Celie's brave spirit, her fierce and undying love for Nettie. And it was Celie's love for Nettie and Shug that finally allowed her to forgive her husband, Albert, for all of his intentional cruelty. Love heals sorrows and love leads Célie to forgiveness and reconciliation.

By the end of the novel, we observe that Célie is very "solid". Love helps to sustain Celie; she in a way learns to love herself and also to share her love despite constant ruthless pressures. Celie with her courage and endurance learns to battle, and emerges as a winner; besides she also learns to declare a feeling of joy she never realizes, is feasible and is also not aware that because of her courage, her strong, unyielding beliefs and her ability to cling, she is reunited with her children and sister which makes her possible to survive both physically and mentally.

### 2.2.1 PLOT IN THE NOVEL

The protagonist of the novel, 14-year-old Celie, has gone through a very difficult life. Her mother is very ill, and when she happens to go to the doctor, Celie is left alone accompanied only by her father; Fonso. During the time, her mother is away, Fonso rapes Celie. Celie's mother expires soon after, and now Fonso rapes Celie regularly, saying "You gonna do what your mammy wouldn't". Celie bears two children by her father, who are taken away immediately after their birth by her father. Celie presumes that they have been taken by him to the forest and killed, but in fact they were sold by him. Fonso later remarries and Celie keeps reminding him of his sexual assault on her. In order to get rid of her and his own guilt, he gets her married to a man described only as Mr. \_\_\_\_\_.

Life with Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ is also no greater for Celie than life with her father. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ believes that the only method to keep a woman is to thrash her, and as a result, he beats Celie frequently. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ does not possess any love for Celie. He only desired a wife as he required someone to take care of him along with his untamed children, and moreover the woman he truly is fond of, Shug Avery, does not wish to marry him. Shug is a vivacious blues singer who often moves the country singing in boring bars.

Nettie, sister of Celie, barely the only person whom Celie has ever actually loved, elopes from the home in order to live with Celie and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. Nettie is very beautiful and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ discovers her to be very attractive. He repeatedly tries to convey it to Nettie, but she just tries to ignore him. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ becomes distressed one day when Nettie does not pay attention to his advances and thereby kicks Nettie out of the house. Nettie and Celie both promise to write to each other. Nettie maintains her vow and



writes to Celie, but Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ happens to seize the letters before Celie actually spots them. Celie, who is not at all aware of the letters, assumes that Nettie is no more since she has not written any letter.

As Nettie was the only individual whom Celie ever candidly loved, and now when she imagines that she is dead, Celie has no desire to live. She takes all the abuse Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ bestows her every day silently and never utters a word or protests. In the meantime, Shug Avery, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s actual love, falls ill because of her ferocious lifestyle. She doesn't have any actual home, so she stays with Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. Celie nourishes Shug and takes care of her, bringing her back to good health, and simultaneously as she happens to perceive her better, Celie discovers herself plunging in love with Shug. As Celie restores Shug to her physical health, Shug also decides to help and nurse Celie to regain her emotional health. Towards the end, we find that Shug is fully recovered and she and Celie develop a very close relationship.

One day, Shug proceeds to collect the mail and discovers a letter from Nettie to Celie before Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ notices it. She displays it to Celie, who feels thrilled to learn that her sister is still alive. Shug and Celie then explore Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s bedroom and detect a pile of letters written by Nettie to Celie. Nettie informs in the letter that she has actually joined a Christian mission group that visits Africa to convert the natives to Christianity. The mission team is supervised by a minister and his wife, who are blessed with two adopted children. Nettie further mentions that after keenly observing the children they look like, children of Celie. Nettie writes further that the man they believed to be their father was not actually their father. Their real father actually died at a young age and afterwards they shifted with another family which denotes that two children of Celie were not born of incest. Celie feels overjoyed to hear that both her sister as well as her two children is still alive, but at the same time she gets furious with Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ for hiding this news from her.

This annoyance ultimately provides her with the courage to counter Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. When Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ attempts to hit Celie, she stabs him. She then decides to abandon Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and proceed to Memphis with Shug. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ apprises Celie that she will leave only over his dead body, to which Celie reacts with astonishing dominance "It's time to leave you and enter into the Creation. And your dead body is just the welcome mat I need". Following this statement, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ leaves Celie alone.

In Memphis, Celie initiates a new venture of stitching ants. With the help of Shug, she becomes quite successful and also comprehends love. Celie has been abused by men throughout her life and now it is



only women for whom she can feel love. Shug does not feel as passionately and strongly for Celie, as Celie feels for Shug, and ultimately she leaves her for a 19-year-old boy named Germaine. It seems as soon as Shug leaves Celie, her happiness also leaves her. Fonso, the man who professed to be their father, dies and leaves the house for Celie. She moves in and keeps on making pants there. Celie later befriends Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, who has transformed a lot since Celie abandoned him.

After Celie leaves, he has discovered and learned a lot about existence and love, and it is towards the end of the novel that he states what he has assimilated: "I start to wonder why we need love. Why us suffer. Why us black. Why us men and women. Where do children really come from? It didn't take long to realize I hardly knew anything. The more I wonder, he says, the more I love." No doubt, Celie develops friendship with Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, but it is not possible for her to love him. She can never love him again and maintains that love will never return to her life. But then her sister Nettie comes back from Africa along with her two children. The whole family is unified, and Celie perceives a kind of happiness and affection which she has never experienced before. Celie's ultimate letter to God announces that, in spite of her old age, "I think this the youngest us ever felt"

## 2.2.2 CHARACTERS

### CELIE

Throughout the first half of the book, Celie has gone through lots of suffering. She is a victim, who has been raped repeatedly by her father. She has lost her children. She has been sold into marriage by a man who does not want a wife but a servant. The only person that she loves is her sister, Nettie. Celie's story actually begins because of her victimization. Her father guides her not to tell anyone that she is being raped by him except to God. So, Celie starts confiding everything to God. For a long time, Celie has no one to talk to about her problems. She is either emotionally or physically isolated from most of the characters in the story.

Celie is passive for most of the time in the story. She is often encouraged by other women to fight for herself, but Celie believes that surviving is better than fighting and is not in favour of putting at risk to her survival. However there are so many junctures in her life that compel Celie to take a stand. Like a real fighter, Celie displays her willingness to fight for the people, she loves and cares about. Even as a victim of her father, Celie surrenders herself to her father to keep him away from Nettie which



definitely expresses her unconditional love for her. No doubt, Celie fights for Shug too, but in a small way. When the father of Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ arrives and criticizes him, Celie quietly rebels by spitting in his water. No doubt, it is improper but according to Celie he actually deserved it.

Ultimately towards the end of the novel, Celie is no longer a victim. Even though Mr. \_\_\_\_ had abused her physically for many years, she fails to recognize her strength until she comes to know that he has deliberately and spitefully kept her away from her beloved sister, Nettie, for decades. The emotional abuse was not only done to Celie, but to Nettie as well. And that was the final straw. Celie knew she could leave Mr. \_\_\_\_, and she did.

Throughout her years of abuse and isolation; much of the novel is written from Celie's point of view, she was emotionally stupefied. She is numb not because she desperately needs to be loved, but because she is in need of someone to love to be loved. She is entangled in a loveless marriage in which her step children were "rotten" and her husband treats her like a servant. Eventually, Shug Avery happens to come into her life who teaches her to take care of her.

No doubt, Shug is bad, even Celie admits it. But Shug is also someone to love. Celie nurses the ill woman back to health with gentleness and care. Because Celie has finally opened herself up to love, she becomes more loving. As Mr. \_\_\_\_ and Celie observe in a discussion, when you love others, they love you back. It's like a wave.

Shug reciprocates her love and it is through Shug's love that Celie comes to understand her own worth, which in turn strengthens her capacity to love others. By the end of the book, Celie has more people to love than ever before, and she is not even angry at Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. We can observe a kind of transformation of Celie. When Nettie ultimately returns home, she introduces Albert (Mr.) and Shug as "her people." which expresses a kind of love she is having for others. Celie's story depicts the power of the human heart and the power to forgive. We see Celie's journey from a broken, battered woman to a resilient, independent, and compassionate person.

## NETTIE

She appears to be the only character that loves Celie unconditionally and consistently throughout the whole novel. Since she loves her sister Celie abundantly, she also reciprocates her love. Their love for one other remains strong even after the separation of two sisters for 30 years, without seeing each other.



Nettie, in contrast to Celie, is an educated woman who is independent from all men. Many of the things that make Nettie what she is are actually the sacrifices that Celie made for her. For instance, Celie had to drop out of school after she got pregnant by her father, but she managed to keep him away from her so that she could get a better education and continue her studies. She also married Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ rather than Nettie in order to keep her from becoming a married woman, who is tied to her husband's children and continually giving birth to her own children.

Nettie's letters to Celie give her a better understanding of the world. She tells her the stories about Africa, sex, and religion. Nettie tells Celie things that make her feel proud of her African roots, as well as things about the world outside of the American ways. Nettie loves to learn and is always eager to share her new knowledge with her older sister. As a young girl, when her father takes Celie out of school, she tries to teach her as much as she can. This is a pattern that is constantly followed throughout the book. Nettie's letters to Celie help her understand the world better. She relates stories about Africa, gender roles, and religious beliefs to her sister.

For being an educated and intelligent woman, she is very self-reliant. She is unmarried for most of the time in the book and never judges her own worth in terms of men. The Olinka men around her don't think much of her because she is not married, but she feels content with her life and marriage. Instead of searching for personal meaning and value through marriage, she waits until she feels she is a complete human being before marrying. This is why she has a stable and happy marriage with Samuel.

## MR \_\_\_\_\_

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ is husband of Celie. Though the progress depicted in Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ for not being the protagonist of the novel is not the main subject of the story but his transformation towards the end is as significant as Celie's is. Initially, he treats Celie as though she is nothing more than an object, beating her like an animal, and displaying no sign of love and fondness, even during sexual encounters. He also conceals Nettie's letters from Celie for his own safety. Nettie is a passionate learner and eager to share her knowledge with her elder sister. Celie's newfound trait of self-assurance is brought on by Shug who encourages her to respond to Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s abuse with strength and determination. When she returns from Tennessee, she realizes a kind of positive change in his character. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ attempts to rectify his past transgressions, and the two enjoy talking and sewing together. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ finally conveys his wish to have an equal and mutually respectful marriage with Celie, which is humbly declined by her.



## SHUG AVERY

Our first reaction in the beginning of the novel towards Shug is one of revulsion. We come to know that she is a woman of questionable morality who dresses negligently, suffers from a mysterious illness, and is shunned by her parents. But Celie observes something different in Shug, when she looks at her photograph. Not only is she bewitched by her glamorous appearance, but Shug also reminds her of her “mama.” Throughout the novel, Celie tends to compare Shug to her mother. Unlike Celie’s own mother, who was held back by traditional gender norms, Shug does not allow herself to be controlled by anyone. Instead, she has shaped her identity through her many experiences, rather than submitting to the will of others and letting them dictate her identity.

Despite her sultry personality, brash attitude, and years of experience, Shug may appear cynical. But at her core, she is a warm and caring person. When she gets sick, she not only appreciates but also reciprocates Celie's care and concern. As the relationship between Shug and Celie progresses, Shug positions herself as a mother, a confidant, a lover, a sister, a teacher, and a friend. Her multiple roles make her a character which is constantly changing and unpredictable, moving from city to city, from lovers to lovers to blues clubs in the middle of the night. Despite her shifting roles and unpredictable nature, she remains Celie's dearest friend and companion through the novel.

## HARPO

Harpo is Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s son. When his mother, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s first wife, is killed by her lover and dies in Harpo's arms, Celie assumes the role of the "mother" for Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s children. Although, Harpo and Celie fail to realize and feel any family connection, both of them do develop a sort of a practical relationship, where Harpo comes to Celie for advice on love and women. Harpo marries Sofia Butler, who is an excellent companion and mother, but Harpo becomes obsessed with her refusal to submit to him. Harpo beats her in an effort to control her, but she fights back and often beats him and physically hurts him. At the core of Harpo's character, he is a kind, gentle, and sensitive man. However, the misogynistic world views that he inherits from his father starts to poison their marriage. Harpo has been raised to believe that women are subservient to men and that women should always submit to their men, but this is not the case with Sofia. Harpo becomes so obsessed with being the domineering party that he even makes efforts to become physically enormous than his wife so that he can beat Sofia by consuming abundant quantities of food.



Eventually, Harpo's obsession destroys the marriage. There is an awful aspect in the relationship between Harpo and Sofia; they truly love each other, but Harpo's traditional belief about gender roles and also that women should submit to their husbands, prevents him from being able to have a happy, supportive marriage. Harpo secretly enjoys feminine household chores, like cooking dishes, but his self identity prevents him to allow himself to be flexible with gender roles, as well as how his father and other men perceive him, is partly based on his masculinity and superiority to women. Had he been able to accept Sofia's independence and abandon the oppressive gendered beliefs that were limiting his own life and behavior, they likely would have enjoyed a harmonious marriage. As Harpo grows older, he feels comfortable in fulfilling the feminine roles of parenting and housekeeping.

Harpo and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ both learn to let go of their privilege and patriarchal values, which have prevented them from forming genuine relationships with women in the past. As a result, he and his wife, Sofia, are able to re-establish their relationship in later life. In reality, it is evident that, while Harpo sought to find a more obedient companion in the form of Squeak, Sophia was the true love of his life, despite their marital difficulties.

## **SOFIA**

Sofia Butler is a self-assured, well-mannered young woman. She gets pregnant by Harpo and as a result both of them get married against the wishes of Harpo's father. Unlike other marriages as depicted throughout *The Color Purple*, particularly Celia's, Harpo's and Sofia's marriage is one of love at first sight. But their relationship quickly turns sour when Harpo begins beating Sofia in an effort to teach her to submit to his will. Harpo's attempts are fruitless, for Sofia being a big and strong woman fights back. Her resilience becomes her central character, and she refuses to submit to any kind of abuse. Her stubbornness eventually lands her in prison and then in servitude to a white family throughout the novel. Sofia remains a symbol of strength and independence. Her situation is far from easy, in fact, it is far from ordinary, but she manages to preserve her own mind and identity. The character of Sofia reveals the various ways in which Black women, particularly those who seek to take charge of their lives, are often frustrated by society. Harpo and Sophia had been offered an opportunity to have a successful marriage; however, Harpo's constant pursuit of dominance over his wife leaves her emotionally exhausted. Sofia moves to a new life with her sister and takes on a less controlling partner, however, this pleasure of her life is further shattered by racist violence, similar to the case of Celia,





whose father, who had achieved success in the business world, was lynched. Sofia is mercilessly beaten and finally imprisoned by a white couple after refusing to submit to their demands. She spends more than ten years in servitude and loses contact with her young children. Through the character of Sofia, *The Color Purple* depicts the reality of the early 20th century, a world where racism and misogyny existed at their most extreme and as result, blacks suffered emotional trauma and physical danger from both misogyny and racism. Sofia is targeted in a particularly cruel way because of her struggles against this oppressive social structure. But her resilience and determination make her an inspiration to the other women in the novel, such as Celia, who tends to learn from the experiences of both Sophia and Shug how to maintain her independence against Mr. \_\_\_\_\_.

### **ALFONSO (FONSO/PA)**

He is the character depicted in the novel that Celia and Nettie refer to as “Pa”. He rapes Celie at the age of fourteen because her ill mother is not able to fulfill his physical needs. He is a very brutal man who forces Celie to remain quiet about the rape and further encourages her to confide to only God by writing letters. He is a domineering, selfish and weak man with no conscience. He forces Celia to marry Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ by preventing her from marrying him. He remarries after Celia’s mother passes away. He lives in the family home with his new wife. At the end, Nettie learns that Pa is not really their father. A white businessman killed their real father after their father’s success as an entrepreneur. Alfonso had married their mother and raised their children as his own. He lived on their property for years after their father died. Eventually towards the end of the novel, when he is finally confronted by Celie all he says to her is, "now you know." He dies while asleep, at the end of the novel.

### **CARRIE AND KATE**

They are sisters of Albert whom we happen to see for a short time, but they provide us an idea of the kind of values, Albert was raised with: they sneer at Celie, gossip about Albert's infidelity with Shug, and how they think Annie Julia is a terrible housekeeper. Kate visits the house one more time alone and demands to buy new clothes for Celie. This is the first time that somebody like Kate tries to comfort Celie by shopping for her own clothes. Introducing this brave woman into the household marks a kind of initiation of a shift away from male domination; it indicates very clearly that Albert is going to have to struggle to keep his place.

**AUNT ODESSA**

She has been presented as one of the sisters of Sofia. Just like Sofia, she's tough and practical. Harpo describes her as a militant mother. She provides full support to her sister and takes care of her kids while she is confined in prison. She is no longer a member of Celia's family, but she symbolizes the breadth of women's support in this community.

**OLD MR. \_\_\_\_\_**

He is the father of Albert who has been mentioned only once in the book. He is very critical of Albert and admonishes Albert for his behaviour towards Shug Avery. He tells Celie that she has his compassion. He unintentionally brings Celie, and Albert together in their independent love with Shug.

**HENRY BROADNAX (BUSTER)**

He is the second husband of Sofia and both of them bear a child out of their relationship. He lets her be free to go wherever she wants and loves her unconditionally.

**MARY AGNES (SQUEAK)**

She is a girlfriend of Harpo, after Sofia's departure. Harpo bears the upper hand in the relationship and in this case, she has to face Sofia on her own, without Harpo's backing leading Sofia hitting her teeth out. She appears meek and helpless at first, but all that changes after she gets raped by the warden. She learns how to be resilient and now persists with Harpo to call her Mary Agnes and starts singing.

**THE MAJOR**

The Major is a bully man. He presents a very dim picture of the white males in the community. He has been depicted as an abusive white male who uses his authority as a white man to physically restrain and abuse Sofia. He does this because he feels offended by her impertinence. In addition to the warden, the businessmen who murders Celie's father and Major also assist in the novel to paint a very negative image of the white men in the society.

**MS. MILLIE**

She is unemotional but at the same time depicted as harmless. She does not realize how snobbish she is to Sofia's family, she feels offended when Sofia rejects her offer to work as a servant in her house and



then happily accepts Sofia's punishment as maidservant in her home. Often isolated from the black world, Miss Millie doesn't even consider challenging the status quo, much less resisting it.

### **ELEANOR JANE**

Eleanor Jane is Miss Millie's daughter, who does everything she can, to help Sofia and make her life easier. She wants Sofia to take care of herself in the same way as she takes care of her. After all, she has been raised by Sofia. Unfortunately for Eleanor, her attempts to convince Sofia are unsuccessful. However, she maintains her good nature and continues to cook meals for Sofia's daughter Henrietta while she is ill. Eleanor Jane in a way represents a step forward for the future because she is smarter and more forward thinking than any of her parents.

### **HENRIETTA**

She is the youngest child of Sofia. Henrietta is rebellious and willful, and suffers from an incurable illness. Similar to her mother in her youth, Henrietta fights valiantly and continues to do so until the conclusion of the novel.

### **CORRINE**

She is happily married to Samuel but one thing she is missing in her life is children. After adopting Adam and Ollie, she is very content and happy for now having a perfect family. Corrine is a hardworking, devout Christian. She is apprehensive and jealous when she notices how well Samuel and Nettie are getting along and also observe an apparent resemblance of the children to Nettie. She dies peacefully realizing that Nettie isn't the mother of her children, but she has spent years of anxiety thinking she is.

### **SAMUEL**

The Reverend Samuel is completely devoted to activities related to missionary work, working tirelessly to aid the Olinka people. He is gentle and kind, and he welcomes Nettie to his home, believing she has come searching for Adam and Olivia. After a successful first marriage, he somehow feels hurt when Corrine accuses him of infidelity, and after the demise of his wife Corrine he remarries Nettie, after years of friendship.



## **OLIVIA**

Olivia is intelligent and independent. She does not immediately assimilate into Olinka's culture. She does not fall in love throughout the novel. This is presented as a positive thing because the man with whom she lives in Africa anticipates her to be submissive, something which she refuses to be one.

## **ADAM**

He has been depicted as an intense young boy who falls in love with Tashi, but finds it hard to accept the culture, she comes from. He fails to bear the thought of her undergoing the tradition of scarring and also going through the female initiation ritual. But when he comes to fathom her love for Tashi, he also resolves to join her and get the scarring done.

## **CATHERINE AND TASHI**

When we first meet Catherine, she has been presented as a typical Olinka mother and wife who does not want her daughter, Tashi, to attend school. Years later after spending time with Nettie, and Olivia, Catherine comes to understand the importance of education and after the death of her husband, she feels independent to change her mind. Tashi feels torn between the culture presented by Olinka and the modern world to which she is introduced by Nettie and Olivia. Although, she is not officially educated yet she seems to learn from Olivia and Nettie about the world around her. Tashi falls prey to the tribe's rituals of scarring, and the woman initiation ceremony.

## **DORIS BAINES**

Doris has been depicted as a white missionary, who happens to meet Nettie and Samuel on their way to England. Doris is an exceptionally forward thinking individual who has made a significant contribution to the communities in Africa, as well as providing individuals with the opportunity to study in England. Through the adoption of Harold as her grandson, Doris is able to see beyond the boundaries of color and convention, and is a significant force for change.

## **2.3 FURTHER MAIN BODY OF THE TEXT: THE COLOR PURPLE**

### **DETAILED LETTERS IN THE COLOR PURPLE**



## Letter 1-10

"The Color Purple" commences with Celie remembering her father's order to keep quiet about her abuse by him. The entire book is filled with letters, and we start with many secret letters to God written by Celie. She seeks guidance in her first letter since she fails to comprehend something strange that is happening to her. Celie, is just fourteen, and already pregnant with her second child, as a result of rape and abuse by Celie's father, Alfonso. He seeks sexual pleasure from Celie, since Celie's mother is ailing and unable to satisfy Alfonso's sexual needs and later on she passes away. Celie writes that Alfonso has stolen her first child when she was asleep and murdered it in the forest believing he would kill her second child as well. Alfonso does not actually kill them but sell the child to a couple.

It is from Celie's fourth letter written to God, we come to know that Alfonso has brought in a novel wife, although this marriage never puts an end to sexual abuse of Celie. Celie and her sister Nettie come to know about a man called Mr. ----- desirous to get married to Nettie. He has become widower recently as his wife is killed by her lover. Further they are informed by Alfonso's new wife that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ has another beloved outside his marriage, a woman named Shug Avery. The girls come across a picture of Shug, whose bright, striking face mesmerizes Celie, who has not seen anyone beautiful like her.

Alfonso refused to hand over Nettie to Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, saying that she was too naïve and young to take care of a man having children. Alfonso is in favor of Nettie to pursue her education and instead urges him to marry Celie. Alfonso says that despite being unattractive, a liar and "spoiled twice," she is grown up and tough and also owns a cow, which she could bring in into his house after marriage. After introspecting for a few months, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ decides to marry Celie. Celie is actually interested in continuing to go to school, but according to Alfonso she is dumb enough to learn anything. Celie's whole wedding night is passed in putting bandage on a wound given by a rock thrown by son of her husband, easing the untangled hair of her step daughter and cooking meals and then having forced relation with her husband while worrying about safety of her sister Nettie.

One day Celie happens to see a little girl in the city who she thinks is her lost child. This girl looks exactly like Celie, specifically her eyes. She follows her mother to the fabric store and enjoys a pleasant conversation with her mother, Celie hears the woman call her daughter by the name Olivia, the similar name which Celie had given to her daughter and also embroidered it on the diaper of the baby



before she is taken away. At the store, a prejudiced salesman harassed Olivia's mother, by making her buy the yarn which she is not interested to purchase and also by tearing new fabric without measuring it.

## Letters 11-21

Nettie flees from Alfonso and seeks refuge with Celie and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. It seems very obvious that Mr. - ----- still bears a desire to have Nettie and whenever he bestows any compliment to her; she cleverly transfers them on to Celie. She does not accept his advances and is compelled to leave and when Celie fails to hear anything from her sister, she considers her to be dead. Two sisters of Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, Kate and Carrie visit the house of their brother and treat Celie kindly and thank her for taking good care of the house and also of the children. Kate tells her brother that Celie requires new clothes, and although he feels amazed to know that Celie also has some needs, he somehow permits the purchase. Celie feels so thankful for the new dress that she fails to comprehend how to express thanks to Kate. Kate also expresses her desire that the eldest son of Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ must help Celie with the housework which he bluntly refuses as he thinks housework is a job of woman. This demand of Kate enrages her brother leading to an argument between two of them. While leaving the house, she tells Celie to fight back with Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ but Celie is not able to understand what good will she get with fighting. Harpo tells Celie about his love for a strong-willed young woman, Sofia. At the same time, Celie's thoughts turn to the attractive young woman, Shug Avery. She learns that Shug is coming to the town to perform at the Lucky Star, and Celie finds herself longing to visit the bar, just to see Shug. Unfortunately, the only one who will see Shug is her husband Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. When Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ returns home, Celie refrains from inquiring about Shug's dress, body, and voice. Both Celie and Harpo struggle with the additional workload they are assigned, while Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ is overcome with love and despondency after departure of Shug. Harpo attempts to complain to father about the extra work, but Celie notes that he is equally inept at dealing with Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ as she is. Sofia's parents refuse to allow her to marry Harpo due to his mother's murder, and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ is also against this marriage. However, after she becomes pregnant, the marriage certainly becomes unavoidable. Celie is impressed by the vitality and unwavering courage of Sofia in her defiance of Harpo. As defiance has been alien to her own relationship with the two men, she is not used to dealing with these men in a defiant way. Sofia and Harpo get married and Celie helps them in building an old shack on Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s land that they use as their home. They seem to be happily married and loving parents, but Sofia still has her stubborn streak



insisting that Harpo assist with the household duties and refusing to submit to her father-in-law. Harpo gets really fed up and asks Celia and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ for advice on how to get his wife to do what he wants, and they both tell him to beat her. But Sofia is really strong and Harpo tends to end up hurting himself more than his wife. Celie fears that by telling Harpo to hit Sofia, she has sinned against Sofia's soul, and for over a month she can't sleep. Sofia finds out that Celie told Harpo to hit her, and she storms off to confront Celie. Celie admits to Sofia that she's jealous of Sofia for being defiant and she knows how to fight back. Sofia feels sorry for her timidity and submission. The two women make up and have a good time. They discuss their families, with Sofia mentioning that she has 6 brothers and 5 sisters, and that the 6 girls are all strong and "stick together." Now friends, Celie and Sofia decide to make a quilt out of curtains that were ripped during a fight between Sofia and Harpo. Celie no longer has a hard time sleeping.

### Letters 22-33

Shug is very ill, believed to be the result of an acquired sexually transmitted disease. No one in the vicinity of the town will accept her; even both her parents have accused her of promiscuity. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ arrives home unannounced, bearing the emaciated Shug in a wagon. Although she is weak, fevered, and underfed, she retains her sharp tongue. Upon meeting her, the first thing she says to Celie is, "You sure are ugly." Despite Shug's atrocious manner, Celie becomes increasingly captivated by the seductive singer, whose voluptuous dresses, glamorous makeup, and voluptuous figure are incomparable to anything she has ever experienced. At the first sight of Shug undressed, Celie confesses to feeling a sexual attraction for her.

Shug's health improves as a result of Celie's care, and they become friends. However, Shug's improved mood does not change, the way she looks down on Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, whose first name we hear from Shug as Albert. Shug laughs at Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and tells him he is weak for not standing against his father, but he is still in love with him. Harpo is eating excessively and has become so fat that the others are laughing and inquiring when his child will be born. Harpo later confides to Celie that he has been consuming a great deal of food in an effort to become as fat as Sofia in order to finally defeat her. However, this time, Celie counsels against beating Sofia and tells Harpo that his love for his wife is genuine and should not be equated with the callous and lack lustre in marriage between Celie and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_.



Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s father and Tobias, his toadying brother, come to stay with them. Both men don't approve of Shug living there. Celie hears his father criticizing her son for his promiscuous lifestyle, prompting her to spit in his drink. When her father says something about her son's lifestyle, Celie and her husband happen to share a look that she explains as "the closest we have ever felt".

We further come to know that Sofia confides to Celie that she is distressed due to the loss of sexual intimacy between her and her husband, Harpo, due to Harpo's tendency to overeat and brood. Initially, Sofia is resentful of Harpo's attempts to strip her of her autonomy and self-assurance. Ultimately, she moves into her sister's house along with her children. Harpo attempts to conceal his emotions when Sofia departs, however, Celie witnesses him wiping a tear away with his infant's cloth diaper. After Sofia disappears for half a year, Harpo and his friend open a juke joint on their property. They hire Shug to sing, which brings in a lot of people. Shug convinces Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ to let Celie go and see her sing. Celie sits with Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and watches Shug perform. She feels overwhelmed, sad, and lonely when she sees the special connection between Shug and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. Celie's heart brightens when Shug calls out her name and dedicates a song to her. It's the first time anyone's named something after her. She knows it's right for Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and Shug to be in love, but she's confused about the pain in her heart and her growing love for Shug.

### Letters 34-43

Celie is displeased that Shug is about to leave the house. She desperately wants Shug to stay. Celie informs Shug that when Shug is not around, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ hits her. When Shug inquires as to why he hits her, Celie responds, "For being me and not you." Shug then kisses Celie on the shoulder and states that she will not leave the house until she is certain that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ would never strike Celie.

As their relationship deepens, Shug encourages Celie to discuss sex for the very first time. It is no surprise that Celie's initial reaction is not encouraging. She expresses her distaste for sex. She tells Shug that sex is a chore for her and that she usually pretends not to be there during the act. Shug explains to Celie that in her mind Celie is still a virgin. For Shug, the true loss of virginity for a woman is not the first sex act but the first experience of orgasm. For Celie, the concept of pleasure is alien and shocking.

Shug forces Celie to take a mirror and take a long, hard look at her body for the first time. They're like little girls, laughing and worried about being caught. Celie takes her first long look at herself "down there" and isn't grossed out by what she sees. She's pretty sure it's her. She tells Shug she doesn't care if





Shug is sleeping with Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. Later, when she hears them, Celie cries. Shug goes on singing at Harpo's juke joint and the crowd is increasing day by day. One night, Sofia shows up unannounced, looking happy and healthy with a new man. She dances with Harpo and makes small talk with him. This upsets Harpo's new girlfriend, Squeak, a young, mixed-race girl who does whatever Harpo tells her to do. Squeak doesn't know what she's getting into. Squeak dares to call Sofia a bitch and slaps her, Sofia in return then chews out two of her teeth, and then calmly leaves with her new boyfriend.

Sofia's impertinence soon puts her in a lot of trouble when the mayor's wife, Millie, sees how clean her kids are and asks her to be their maid. Sofia bluntly refuses by saying "Hell no. "and the mayor in return slaps her for being rude. She knocks him down and ends up in jail. When Celie comes to visit, she finds out that Sofia has been badly beaten and has cracked ribs and a skull. She's really scared, but she sits down and takes care of Sofia. Back home, everyone thinks they need to help Sofia get out of jail; Squeak informs them she is related to the white warden for being his niece. Celie dresses her up like a white woman and sends her away, armed with forged words to persuade the warden to let her out. The warden doesn't let Sofia out of jail, and instead he brutally rapes Squeak. She returns home limping and in a torn dress, disgusted she narrates others about what had happened. She begs Harpo to call her by her actual name Mary Agnes. Sofia on the other hand, instead of being released is sentenced to work for the mayor's wife as a maid, and Squeak assists her with the mayor's children. She starts to sing, first songs of Shug and afterwards the songs created by her.

### Letters 44-60

Sofia accuses the mayor's family of being backward. To illustrate her point, she recounts a story in which Miss Millie asked her husband to buy her a car but he refused to teach her how to drive a car. Miss Millie ultimately asked her to teach her how to drive. This she did, and as a Christmas gift, she offered to drive her to her children's home, which she had not visited for five years and further added that she could spend a full day with her children, but after a few minutes of the visit, she attempted to return to town, only to find herself stranded in the driveway due to her lack of knowledge of how to drive in reverse. Exasperated for disabling the car's gears, she refused to let Sofia's brother-in-law drive her to town, claiming she could not ride in a vehicle with a "strange colored man". Ms. Millie then demanded that she be driven home by Sofia despite the fact that she had not been able to meet her



children only for fifteen minutes. She further tells at the mention of this incident till this day, Ms. Millie refers to Sofia as "ungrateful".

Shug writes about her surprise at the arrival of Grady, her new husband. Grady is a bad influence on Celie, and he shows off his lavish spending of Shug's money. Celie and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ feel excluded from their lives, as their love has returned home to another man. At Christmas time, Grady drinks with Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ while Shug spends time with Celie. Shug's singing career has exploded, and she has met many well-known musicians. When Shug asks Celie if sex between them has improved, Celie replies that it has not, and that she still believes she is a virgin. That night, Shug falls asleep in Celie's bed, and the two fall back into sisterly discussions about sex. At some point, Celie tells her whole life story to Shug. It's the first time, Celie discloses about her rape by her stepfather, her reticence, her pregnancies, and about disappearance of Nettie. After finishing her story, tears begin to flow, and then Shug confesses her love for Celie. The conversation, the kisses, and the closeness that follow become extremely sexual.

One night while in bed, Shug requests Celie that she should reveal more information about Nettie, as, apart from Shug, Nettie was the only individual, Celie had ever been truly in love with. Celie informs Shug that she is very much concerned about Nettie and suspects that she is no more since she has not received any letters from her. Shug informs her that she frequently sees Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ taking some secret letters out of the mailbox and concealing them in the pocket of his coat. The following week, Shug receives the most recent of the letters, which carry stamps from Africa. The letter is written by Nettie that tells that she is alive and that she's been writing and sending letters all this time. Since Shug knows Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, she presumes that Celie has failed to receive any of these letters.

Celie comes to the conclusion that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ must have concealed all of Nettie's letters in a locked trunk. Shug obtains the key of the trunk, and one night, two of them open the trunk when they are alone at home. Inside they found dozens of letters, some of them opened, some of them still sealed. Both of them steam open the sealed letters, and replace the blank envelopes with new ones. Shug assists Celie in organizing the letters in chronological order. Celie cries and tears up, grappling with strange and unknown words. She is hardly able to read the first seven only before Grady arrives and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ also comes back.



While reading the letters Celie comes to know that when Nettie left Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ years before, he chased her and attempted to rape her also. Nettie countered and also cursed him by saying she would never come back and see Celie again. She also realizes that the woman Celie had seen at the fabric store years before, whose daughter looked exactly like Celie's daughter was Corrine. Nettie developed a friendship with Corrine and her husband, Samuel. Samuel and Corrine were part of a Christian ministry that was planning to go to Africa for missionary purposes. Nettie had an insatiable appetite for knowledge, and after reading Samuel and Corrine's books on African history, she decided to go to Africa with them to help them establish their missionary school. She learned that Samuel's and Corrine's children, named Olivia and Adam, were in fact Celie's lost children. Nettie moved to New York City and wondered at the black society of Harlem, where liberated blacks possessed a lot of wealth. She crossed the Atlantic on a boat, first to Senegal, then to Liberia, and finally to the small village where she was doing missionary work. Nettie writes further that she feels astonished to observe the richness found in African culture as well as darkness of the native Africans' skin.

When Celie realizes that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ has been keeping Nettie's letters from her, she is so angry that she can barely think. She is so indisposed and insensible that she wants to kill him. Shug tries to maintain peace by narrating Celie long-winded stories about her past life with Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, who at one time had been a funny, seductive young man who had made Shug extremely happy. Celie, however, stays in her own little world, not afraid of Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and not even feeling anything from Shug.

### Letters 61-69

Celie's enthusiasm increases now that she has confirmation of Nettie's survival. She plans to leave Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ immediately upon Nettie's return to Georgia and contemplates the appearance of her children. She reads Nettie's letters in chronological order. Nettie narrates the following narrative: She, Corrine, Samuel, the children, and their guide, Joseph, travel for four days through the jungle until they reach an Olinka village, their final destination where they are met by a crowd of villagers who are not accustomed to the presence of African American missionaries. One of the villagers thought Olivia and Adam must be children of Nettie and inquires if Corrine and Nettie are both wives of Samuel. The group is led into a hut without walls, where the Olinka provide them with dinner and a glass of palm wine.



Nettie makes friends with a woman named Catherine, whose daughter, Tashi, forms a close bond with Olivia. Meanwhile, Corrine starts getting increasingly frustrated with Nettie's ambiguous place in the family and also with the assumption of natives that she is Samuel's second wife. Corrine demands that Nettie should cease to permit the children to address her as "Mom Nettie". Corrine further requests Nettie to stop inviting Samuel into her hut by herself and she and Corrine stop wearing each other's clothes.

Tashi and Olivia, who are not permitted to attend the local school for being girls, accompany Nettie to her private hut in order to converse, exchange stories, and exchange secrets. Tashi, in particular, is the only individual among the Olinka village who is interested to know about the slavery of African Americans, and Nettie is incensed by the Africans' refusal to accept any partial responsibility for this practice of slave trade. As a result, she starts believing that Africans also just like their white counterparts are equally self-absorbed like them.

The village soon experiences a turn for the worse when road builders working for an English rubber company plough through the middle of the village with orders to shoot anyone who opposes them. They demolish village homes and crops and force Olinka to start paying rent on their own land. The situation in the village starts deteriorating when road builders for the English rubber company start ploughing through the village centre bearing the orders to kill anyone who resists them, destroying village houses and crops and forcing Olinka to pay rent on their land as the company claims they no longer belong to the Olinka.

Corrine feels very much concerned about Nettie intruding on her family and endangering her position as a woman and mother. She falls sick with a fever, and starts pondering if Nettie is actually really the biological mother of Olivia and Adam. She further requests Samuel and Nettie to swear on a Bible that they did not know each other prior to Nettie's arrival at their home. Nettie starts believing that the two children, Olivia and Adam, are actually Celie's children, and eventually requests Samuel in private to explain the circumstances surrounding their adoption. She learns that her father, who was a farmer, had opened a successful dry goods store, which attracted a large number of customers. The white proprietors of the store were angry with Nettie's father for taking away their black business, and they burned down his shop and executed him. At this point, her mother had already given birth to Celie, and shortly after her husband's death, her mother gave birth to her. Although Nettie's mother did not fully recover from



the agony of her husband's death, she remarried to Alphonso and continued to have children until her death.

The relationship between Alphonso and Samuel dates back to Samuel's rebellious youth, prior to his conversion to a religious man. One day Alphonso knocked on Samuel's door to inform him that his wife had fallen ill and was unable to take care of their two youngest children, prompting Alphonso to offer custody of the two children to Samuel. Since Alphonso and Corrine had not been able to conceive children of their own, Samuel found it difficult to refuse Alphonso's offer. Samuel had never disclosed the identities of the children to his wife and thus when Nettie arrived; Samuel and Corrine both assumed from the resemblance that Olivia and Adam were actually children of Celie.

After learning Alphonso was not her biological father, Celie became disoriented and stopped writing to God, instead opting to write to Nettie. Shug decided to return to Tennessee and asked Celie to move back with her. However, Celie wanted to visit Alphonso, and she and Shug found a new home with a well-maintained garden on Alphonso's former property. Alphonso had a young wife, Daisy, aged fifteen. Alphonso confirms that Celie's real father had been lynched and that Alphonso was actually her stepfather. Shug and Celie stop by the local cemetery to have a look at the grave of their parents but they are not able to find Celie's mother and father's grave site as it is not marked. Shug tries to comfort Celie by saying, "Us each other's peoples now," and kisses her.

## Letters 70-82

Nettie acknowledges to Samuel and Corrine that she is in fact the aunt of their children. By this time, Corrine has become critically ill and is getting increasingly hostile towards the children. Corrine is still convinced that the children belong to Nettie and is determined to disbelieve Nettie's version of events, believing that Samuel and Nettie are deceiving Corrine. Nettie attempts to persuade Corrine to recall a time when Celie had seen her with her children at a fabric store in Georgia, which Corrine fails to recall. However, Nettie finds a quilt made from fabric that Corrine purchased that day, and Corrine finally recollects seeing Celie. Unfortunately, Corrine dies of her illness later that night. Samuel states that Corrine has forgiven Nettie and has overpowered her fear before she passes away.

Celie confides to both Shug and Nettie that she has ceased communicating with God through letters. Shug attempts to persuade Celie to conceive God not as the stereotypical old, bearded white male, but as an "it" who exists and enjoys all of creation. Meanwhile, after eleven and half years of



bondage, the Mayor and Miss Millie finally release Sofia from her enslavement and set her free. Despite her liberation, Sofia is left feeling lost, as her elder children are married and dispersed, and her younger children do not even recognize her. Harpo and Squeak both now have their own daughter, Suzie.

At Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s residence, while the members of the old gang are dining, Shug states that she and Celie, as well as Grady, are planning to relocate to Memphis. Celie, in front of the group, finally expresses her dissatisfaction and speaks up. She curses Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and later tells him that everything that he touches will fall apart, until he rectifies the mistreatment and abuse he has inflicted upon her. The other members of the group are astonished at Celie's confrontation. Perhaps, sensing some of her own narrative in Celie's defiance, Squeak states that she, too, is planning to relocate to Tennessee.

Shug's house in Memphis is large, opulent, and tastefully decorated. During this time, Celie designs and sews individually tailored pants. Shug encourages Celie to launch her own business, and so she does, Folks pants Unlimited. Celie returns to Georgia for the funeral of the mother of Sofia where many of her old acquaintances appreciate her beauty. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ is now a thoroughly changed man. He labours hard on his property and cleans his own home. Celie comes to know that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ had become quite weak and was scared, and it was his son Harpo who had taken care of him to restore his health. Harpo's loyalty drove Sofia back to her marriage with him. Alphonso dies, which means that her parents' property and house now belongs to her so she moves into her home.

Meanwhile, Nettie gets married to Samuel. With the passage of time both of them have started feeling enchanted with their missionary life in Africa and are planning to go back to America. But before they go, Adam falls for Tashi, who has lately endured female circumcision and scarring of her face. In order to keep up her family's traditions and in order to reflect his own solidarity, Adam also undertakes this procedure of getting facial scars too.

## Letters 83–90

Celie comes to know that Shug wishes to have freedom and flee with Germaine, who is a young man and is only third her age. Celie is little dependent upon Shug, than she used to be. But Shug's revelation is painful for her. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ is the only person who understands her pain, because he has also realized the same pain, though sometimes short-lived. Celie feels that even after all the wrongs committed by Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ now she no longer hates him as Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and Shug loved each other. Gradually, Celie and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ start liking to have conversation about their old times, friends, family, and also about



their new experiences of life. Nettie writes that her idea of God has changed while living for years in Africa with Samuel. For them God is not looking like someone or something. On the other side, both Olivia and Adam have grown independent and vocal like Africans, which makes Nettie a little worried as they will have to face difficulty when they return to America.

Eleanor Jane, the mayor's daughter, brings her baby son to Sofia's house. Eleanor Jane is expecting to listen from Sofia that she loves him. Eventually, Sofia tells Eleanor Jane that she has no feelings for the boy, and Eleanor Jane begins to cry. Sofia tells her that she feels somewhat sympathetic for Eleanor Jane as she had expressed her kindness, otherwise, the pain and racism that Sofia had suffered prevents her from loving anyone else in the mayor's family. Though Eleanor Jane commits to rear her son right, yet Sofia points out that in all circumstances white society will believably make him into a racist.

Celie gets over her grief over Shug, recalling the great and good times they had together in the past. Celie employs Sofia in her clothing store. Eleanor Jane finally comes to know why Sofia had come to work for her parents and also acknowledges Sofia's distance from her. In order to reverse the wrongs of her family, Eleanor Jane tries to help and take care of Henrietta, Sofia's daughter. Shug's love with Germaine turns out to be a failure, and she returns home. But she is jealous to know the cordial relationship between Celie and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. Celie ensures Shug that she and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ just talk about the love they both have for Shug.

Nettie finally returns to America, and she, Samuel, Olivia, Adam, and Tashi come at Celie's house without prior information. The homecoming is so emotional for both sisters that they are speechless with astonishment. The family assembles on the Fourth of July; people observe Tashi's beauty and praise her match with Adam. Though Celie feels old because her children are fully grown, at the same time she thinks, "[T] his youngest us ever felt."

### 2.3.1 TECHNIQUE AND STRUCTURE OF THE NOVEL

One of the most striking characteristics of *The Color Purple* is its writing technique. Alice Walker applies a genre of writing technique which is known as Epistolary Method. Epistolary is a form of writing technique in which the narration as well as way of story-telling takes the shape of a letter. Klarer, in *An Introduction to Literary Studies* affirms that epistolary is a technique which applies letters as a manner of narration which conveys that every chapter in *The Color Purple* grasps the shape of a letter. The letters themselves, while narrating the events that occur to her, are written by the leading



character Celie. Actually, this type of technique is very distinctive and *The Color Purple* is known to be one of the few books possessing this but sadly this method makes the comprehension of narration difficult as well as boring for the reader.

The novel seems to undertake more than thirty years between the two world wars. The letters shaping the formation of the novel fabricate the individual as well as the historical. For instance, Celie's real father was executed in the story for being a victorious business man and thereby posing a sort of threat to the White community. He was a farmer and was successfully running a store in the local Black community. After seeing the mutilated body of her husband, Celie's mother became mentally disturbed. During that period lynchings were usual sites in the south and this lynching of Celie's father is actually built on actual incident that took place in Memphis in 1892 which embeds the novel in a certain historical backdrop.

The novel is written in first person and the voice is mainly of Celie. The letters written by Celie are in dialect which reflects her lack of formal education whereas Nettie writes her letters in Standard English as she was formerly educated. The letters which are written by her sister are loaded with information which becomes a doorway for her to the external world, existing outside the world of small community of Celie. The letters of Celie are not actually signed by her and nor any date is mentioned on them but chronological sequence has been maintained. Further there is use of present tense which is part of the oral tradition but it also graphically tries to convey the existence of rural south with whole of its ideological motives as it influences the lives of the African-Americans even today.

The length of her letters, which varies from two paragraphs to two-three pages depict her evolution from a maltreated selfless and feeble victim to a woman with an awareness of her identity and who is in control of her life. Celie's letters to God are interrupted by her detection of Nettie's letters, written to her that has all along been concealed from her by Albert. Now Nettie takes the place of God in letters.

This is a conscious technique applied by Walker to convey us about the importance of women bonding and empowerment. Celie's resolution to cease writing to God after coming to know about Nettie's letters which have been hidden from her by her husband, Albert is the initiation of her autonomy, a feminist perception of self. After coming to know about the letters of Nettie, she writes only three more letters to God. The letters of Nettie are exhibited separately in the novel. They have not been integrated into Celie's letters. This is a way by which Walker makes her protagonist realize about the presence of





another world in Africa. This world also, just like America, displays types of racism, besides patriarchal repression in the lives of the Olinka.

### **2.3.2 STYLE OF THE NOVEL**

This novel contains ninety-four letters in total which are written by Celie to God: by Nettie to Celie; and by Celie to Nettie which in a way forms the structure of the novel. The reader comes to know about the character of the letter writer. In a way, the novel seems to be postmodern in its application of many genres such as autobiography, slave narrative, oral tradition and all of which are embodied into the form of letters. The number of letters written by Celie to God is fifty-one in total. Celie includes two letters into her account, one from her sister that she incorporates in a letter to God, and one is from Shug which she offers in a letter to her sister Nettie. In two of her letters written to God, she drives Squeak and Sofia to share their encounters.

Primarily the novel seems to be divided into four time frames. During the first phase, Celie suffers the agony of poverty and brutality at the hands of her stepfather. In the second closely-associated phase, Celie undergoes constant barbarism from her husband Albert. In the third phase, she becomes aware of the probability of self-realization through her association with Shug and her recommenced relationship with her sister Nettie. Ultimately, Celie is able to recognize herself and is successful in establishing a life over which she has her control; she also recognizes the pleasure and contentment that arises from self-realization. Another phase which is not directly related to Celie's life is the time which Nettie spends in Africa. The letters written by Nettie are totally in contrast to Celie's life which tend to broaden Celie's approach and also assist to universalize her life.

### **2.3.3 THEMES IN THE NOVEL**

#### **CELIE'S NARRATIVE**

This book is in fact the narrative of Celie, the main protagonist of the novel. The first line of the novel is the only direct line of dialogue and it is the only line that does not fit within the framework of the epistolary letters written by Celie and Nettie. Although it is Celie who allows Nettie's epistolary letters to reflect Nettie's own point of view as every presentation seems to be under the control of Celie. It is further not obvious whether or not the line spoken by Alfonso has also been written by Celie prior to the beginning of her letter to God, or if it portrays the hand of another writer. If it is the work of Celie, she



never repeats this method of recording dialogue. It is also something unusual that the line is also peculiarly written in italics, which reflect a formal, even scholarly way of emphasizing a spoken line. However, it appears more likely that someone else wrote the line. It is possible that this is the work of the author herself, Alice Walker, indicating that she has a presence in the novel.

It is fascinating to note that there's another line after Celie's final letter: "I thank everybody in this book for coming A.W. author and medium." A.W. is the author and medium, and this last line is an acknowledgment that she has been present all along, and along with the reader of the book. But in fact, the whole narrative belongs to Celie; the author is merely an instrument, through which Celie narrates her story, in one way as the author herself, and in another, as the novel itself. In fact, the novel is largely the product of Celie's own writing, which she began when she was forced to tell her story after being instructed to be quiet. The author also seems to thank each character for being part of the story. These two framing lines emphasize Walker's narrative structure but what they really do is to frame the world as Celie sees it.

## GOD

As the narrative changes and evolves, so does Celie's perception of God. At the beginning, we have only a very limited understanding of what Celie means by "God." At first, He is an abstraction, an authority, and someone Celie can confide in. White skin, white beard, and as long as Celie believes in him, he'll be there for her. When she tells Shug that she is going to stop writing to God because he does not appear to listen to her, Shug gives her a very important lesson. She doesn't tell her to think of a black God, and she doesn't just tell her to keep believing because God will come back in the same way she remembers. Shug tells her that God won't come to her in church, but through her. This is a challenge to their society's general view of God, as if God were a white, grey-bearded old man or someone who can be visited or anticipated to come. Shug demonstrates her love for God by loving what she has been provided. She loves the world around her, from her sexual experiences to the purple colour she finds in the wilderness.

For Celie, God is not a person but something inside Celie, a goodness which inspires. Celie learns that she is writing from her own point of view and that every point of view must be questioned and not accepted without challenge. No matter what people think of God, whether it is in the Bible or elsewhere, Celie learns to find a meaning for God within herself. Throughout the novel, we see Celie



writing or rewriting her own world and the divine message it conveys. But it is only at the end that she fully realizes what she has always been doing: constructing her own narrative. One has some power and responsibility to create a world or to judge a world that is created by one or another.

## **CREATIVE EXPRESSION**

When Africans were brought to the Americas (the countries of North and South America), they were often not educated by their slave masters and were not permitted to speak their native languages, instead being compelled to learn English. As a result, they had to come up with their own ways of communicating and expressing themselves. This was the beginning of the African American oral tradition. Style and content were often based on anecdotes and stories that they had heard while growing up in Africa. Through dance, song and gesture, they passed down their stories of hardship and freedom from generation to generation. In the same way, Celie is silenced by Alfonso but through writing her letters, she engages in creativity and communication, allowing her story to be heard by all.

She is writing to God because she is desirous to be heard, rather than orally. She doesn't know it at the moment, but every word she utters is a declaration that she is worthy of being heard. Sister Nettie never believes that her letters will be received by Celie, but she writes faithfully anyway, and eventually their communication is granted. This triumph is a sign of hope in human life, and it gives courage and strength to readers who don't yet have the ability to fully communicate with others. Several characters find their own voices and expression throughout the novel: Shug gets over her illness and resumes singing; Mary Agnes begins to sing and write songs; Celia and Sofia begin sewing quilts; and finally, Celie runs her own sewing business. Each of these ventures is a tale of courage and perseverance, and each one is a tale of self-discovery.

## **HOPE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION**

The novel foresees a better future for the black nation and especially for black women. Of all the families of the black community, Samuel's and Corrine's is the most stable and loving. Celia's children find their place in this family and are sheltered by it. Their education with the help of aunt Nettie allows them to decide at a young age what kind of life they want to lead. Realizing that she is not at all interested in becoming a submissive wife, Olivia, much like Nettie works hard to become independent



without any male influence in her life. Within the family of Celia, we already observe changes in her children. This opens up a world of possibilities for her granddaughters and grand-grandchildren.

Doris Baines, the white missionary, also provides us hope. By educating her so-called wives in England, she ensures that a new family will be raised and educated, empowered to challenge male supremacy and racial prejudice. There is also change within white communities at home as well. Eleanor Jane loves Sofia as her mother, despite her race, because of her care. When she gives birth to her son, she states that when he grows up, he will be a burden to her, but we don't believe her. Sofia may have thought that this innocent white male baby would be like all the white men she has encountered, but Eleanor Jane shows her hope, with her new perspective and fresh, forward-looking thinking that her son, and the next generation will progress in many ways beyond the struggles of previous generations.

## **FEMALE SOLIDARITY**

At the beginning of the novel, Celie, a young, black woman, is presented as one of the most vulnerable characters in society. She is abused and silenced by her (presumably) father and then her husband. In addition to the racial prejudice that young, black women face, they also struggle with their black, male peers. Sofia has always struggled with her brothers and we see her struggle with Harpo to achieve equality. The Olinka tribe does not believe in teaching their women but there are no allegations of violence against women in Nettie's letters, female inferiority is unquestioned, and the debasement initiation ritual goes unchallenged (except by Nettie herself and her family). In such circumstances, if these women want to challenge the status quo, they must unite against male oppression. Celia is so disturbed that she could not sleep, when she cheats Sofia by telling Harpo to beat her and this disloyalty of her to her fellow female is too much for her to endure.

Most of the time there is a bond of support between the two women, and this bond is born out of a need to counterbalance the idea that men have absolute power over women in society. Shug is the woman who best challenges this male supremacy. She lives by her own code, and it is no surprise that Celia and Shug fall in love. She is a goddess who will not be conquered by men, and she is always on the defensive side. Celia, on the other hand, is a woman who has been abused by men and has shut herself off from trusting men. When she comforts Harpo on the porch, crying, she doesn't feel anything more than a dog would.



Together, they help each other in liberating themselves: Shug helps Mary Agnes learn to sing; Albert's sister goes shopping with Celie when no one else will; Sofia's sisters take care of her children while she's in prison; Nettie writes Celie and takes care of her children for 30 years; Doris Baines has her "wives" go to England to be educated; Eleanor Jane cooks nutritious meals for Henrietta; Celie cures Shug and encourages her to write songs. Eventually, Shug and Celie fall in love for each other. Their love is born out of isolation, a longing for better things, and acceptance of each other. By the end, they are no longer helpless; they've joined forces and are making their own lives.

## COLOR

Shug is described in many colourful ways: she's roughed up in the first photograph Celie sees of her, she wears bright red dresses twice during the recording of Celie's music, and she gives Celie yellow fabric for a quilt. All of these bright, vibrant colors are filled with energy. On the other hand, when Celie goes shopping for clothes with Kate, the only colors she can choose from are browns, maroon's, or navy blues, because Kate thinks Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ won't pay for her favorite red or purple, because they look "too happy." At the beginning of Mary Agnes's musical career, the songs she writes are songs about colour: "They call me yellow/like yellow be my name." As she struggles to find her own identity outside the color of her skin, Mary Agnes tends to explore shades of color underneath her skin, within her personality, and finding these colors inside gives her the strength to sing.

When Celie and Shug talk about God, Shug describes that God is present everywhere and God is actually the beauty in nature. Shug particularly refers to "the color purple" which was traditionally referred to as a royal colour and feels amazed that how can a colour like purple grow in naturally, as Purple seems to be a rare colour in nature, if the colour itself is God's creation which is an indicator of god's influence on earth. It is also associated with the transformation of Celie from girl to a mature woman.

## TRANSCENDENCE AND RELATIONSHIPS

By the time the novel comes to an end, Celie has fallen in love, established her own successful business, and come to terms with her own identity. Now she has been reflected as very different from the fourteen year old Celie, at the beginning of the novel. She comes to know Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ better through their common love for Shug, and then through their listening and relating to each other. The lessons that



Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ learns as well Celie comprehends, educate them about themselves which consequently provide them with the courage to talk to each other without any assumptions about what kind of person he is supposed to be. Friendship is a way for people to grow out of who they are.

Throughout the novel, there are various relationships damaged but eventually reinstated: Sofia comes back home to her family and Harpo; Shug returns home from her adventures with Germaine; Nettie also returns home to Celie along with her children; In each of these cases, characters grow and change on their own, before returning to one another. Each character journeys on his/her own path and learns own lessons, but when the relationships are healed, they are connected by family and friends that go beyond the hurt of the past or the roles that once held them apart.

## 2.4 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Discuss the circumstances which motivated Celie to write letters.
2. After leaving Celie and Mr \_\_\_\_\_ where does Nettie happen to go? Discuss.
3. When is the color purple mentioned by Shug?
4. What does happen to Sofia eventually?
5. Do you think that Celie and Shug have been presented as lovers?

## 2.5 SUMMARY

"The Color Purple" chronicles the trauma and steady victory of Celie, an African-American teenager growing up in rural Georgia, who resists the self-abstraction which others have imposed on her. Celie speaks painfully and honestly about her life in Letters to God. The events are actually sparked when her abusive father, Alfonso, rapes her and she becomes pregnant for the second time at 14, warning her not to tell anyone, except God. After the baby is born, Alfonso carries the baby away as he did at the time of their firstborn, leading Celie to believe that both had been killed. When the widowed Mr. \_\_\_\_ (also called Albert) makes a proposal to Celie's sister Nettie, Alfonso urges him to marry Celie, thereby compelling her into a reproachful marriage.

Sofia can be mentioned here who is resistant and marries Albert's son Harpo when she gets pregnant. After failing to stop her, Harpo looks up for guidance from Celie and she asks him to beat Sophia. Nevertheless, when Harpo beats her, Sofia fights him. After comprehending that Celie inspired Harpo's



brutality, she encounters Celie who confesses that she was jealous of Sofia's refusal to back down, and the two women establish a good relationship and become friends. Most important however is Celie's friendship with Shug Avery, a beautiful and distinctive singer who happens to be Albert's mistress. Celie falls in love with an ailing Shug and the two women grow close and become lovers.

Harpo's obsession shatters their marriage. No doubt, there seems to be a tragic component in Harpo's on and off relation with his wife Sofia, but actually both of them have genuine love for each other. It is Harpo's obsession with the traditional gender role and his upbringing that women should obey their husbands that destroys their marriage. Although Harpo secretly enjoys traditional feminine household duties, such as washing the dishes, Harpo cannot afford to be flexible about gender roles because his identity, as well as his father's and other men's perception of him, is rooted in his masculinity and his superiority over women. If Harpo could accept Sofia's independence and let go off the patriarchal beliefs that were controlling his life and conduct, they probably would have had a happy marriage. As he grows older and no longer has a wife, he becomes more comfortable with the traditional feminine roles of being a parent and housekeeper.

Nettie soon runs away from Alfonso and starts living with Celie. However, Albert's continued desire for Nettie, forces her to leave. Nettie gradually starts establishing relationships with other black women, specifically those who are downtrodden and oppressed. Meanwhile, Celie comes to know that Albert has concealed the letters which were written by Nettie to her. Celie starts reading and finds out that Nettie has become friends with Pastor Samuel and his wife Corrine and that the children adopted by the couple Adam and Olivia, are in fact lost children of Celie. Nettie travels with the family to Liberia on an expedition where Corrine eventually dies. The letters also disclose that Alfonso is in reality stepfather of Celie's and that her biological father has been lynched. Celie questions her faithfulness and starts writing letters to Nettie. But then, Shug motivates Celie to alter her belief in God. The courageous Celie then resolves to leave Albert and go to Memphis with Shug. After arriving there Celie realizes her own self and ventures into the successful business of selling stitched pants. After Alfonso dies, Celie is able to inherit the house where he lived and ultimately settles over there. This time she befriends Albert who feels sorry for his previous cruel treatment towards her. Now after a gap of almost thirty years, Celie gets reunited with Nettie who has got married to Samuel and also reunites with her long-lost children.



## 2.6 KEY WORDS

- **Affliction**-a cause of great suffering and distress
- **Amazon**-a large, strong, and aggressive woman
- **Antimacassarr**- a piece of ornamented cloth that protects the back of a chair from hair oils
- **Appliqué**- a decorative design made of one material sewn over another
- **Barren**-providing no shelter or sustenance
- **Blasphemy**-profane language
- **Blight**-something that spoils, destroys, or impairs
- **Brazen**- unrestrained by convention or propriety
- **Browbeat**- discourage or frighten with threats or a domineering manner
- **Charity**- a kindly and lenient attitude toward people
- **Cistern**- an artificial reservoir for storing liquids
- **Clabber**- raw milk that has soured and thickened
- **Coddle** - treat with excessive indulgence
- **Complicity**-guilt as a confederate in a crime or offense
- **Corral**-collect or gather
- **Corrugated**- shaped into alternating parallel grooves and ridges
- **Covet**- wish, long, or crave for
- **Crib**- baby bed with high sides made of slats
- **Cumbersome**- difficult to handle or use because of size or weight
- **Dampen**- smother or suppress
- **Despot**-a cruel and oppressive dictator
- **Dialect**-the usage or vocabulary characteristic of a group of people
- **Dote**- hovers with love; show excessive affection for





- **Downtrodden**-abused or oppressed by people in power
- **Drudge**- a labourer who is obliged to do menial work
- **Dunce**- a stupid person
- **Despot**-a cruel and oppressive dictator
- **Eccentric**-conspicuously or grossly unconventional or unusual
- **Encroachment**- entry to another's property without right or permission
- **Fluster**- cause to be nervous or upset
- **Flustered**-thrown into a state of agitated confusion
- **Fornication**- sexual intercourse between persons not married to each other
- **Glum**-moody and sorrowful
- **Grievance**-a complaint about a wrong that causes resentment
- **Grub**-dig or search about busily
- **Haggard**- showing the wearing effects of overwork or care or suffering
- **Heathen**- a person who does not acknowledge your god
- **Hefty**- possessing physical strength and weight; rugged and powerful, of considerable weight and size
- **Immensity**- unusual largeness in size or extent or number
- **In earnest**- in a serious manner
- **Infidelity**- the quality of being unfaithful
- **Innate**- inborn or existing naturally
- **Jaunty**- having a cheerful, lively, and self-confident air
- **Lynch**- kills without legal sanction
- **Machete**- large knife used as a weapon or for cutting vegetation
- **Manifest**- reveals its presence or makes an appearance



- **Meager-** deficient in amount or quality or extent
- **Ostracism-** the act of excluding someone from society by general consent
- **Pallbearer-** one of the mourners carrying the coffin at a funeral
- **Paramount-** more important than anything else; supreme
- **Parole-** a conditional release from imprisonment
- **Pious-** having or showing or expressing reverence for a deity
- **Prevailing-** most frequent or common
- **Prim-** exaggeratedly proper
- **Procession-** the action of a group moving ahead in regular formation
- **Pomade-** hairdressing consisting of a perfumed oil or ointment
- **Prance-** move or step in a lively, spirited, or showy way
- **Primp-** dress or groom with elaborate care
- **Pulpit-** a platform raised to give prominence to the person on it
- **Racket-** a loud and disturbing noise
- **Ream-** a large quantity of written matter
- **Repent-** feels sorry for; be contrite about
- **Repugnance-** intense aversion
- **Rummage-** search haphazardly
- **Sanctify-** render holy by means of religious rites
- **Sass-** answer back in an impudent or insolent manner
- **Sassy-** improperly forward or bold
- **Sedate-** dignified and somber in manner or character
- **Seine-** fish with a seine; catch fish with a seine
- **Seminary-** a school for training ministers or priests or rabbis



- **Serene**-completely clear and calm
- **Sheepish**- showing a sense of shame
- **Shingle**- building material used as siding or roofing
- **Shun**-avoid and stay away from deliberately
- **Somber**- serious and gloomy in character
- **Staid**-characterized by dignity and propriety
- **Straddle**-sit or stand astride of
- **Strain**-an exert much effort or energy
- **Strumpet**- a woman adulterer
- **Stupendous**- as great in size, force, or extent as to elicit awe
- **Sullen**-showing a brooding ill humour
- **Tedious**- so lacking in interest as to cause mental weariness
- **Thimble**- a small metal cap to protect the finger while sewing
- **Treatise**-a formal text that treats a particular topic systematically
- **Ululation**- a long, loud, emotional howl or cry
- **Verbosity**- an expressive style that uses excessive or empty words

## 2.7 SELF ASSESSMENT TEST

1. Throw light on the transformation which Celie undergoes through the course of the novel.
2. Discuss in brief the events which motivate Celie to decide to take control of her life.
3. Elucidate in brief the problems faced by Black Americans in the early 1900's and compare them with the problems faced by modern Black Americans.
4. Discuss the significance of use of dialect in The Color Purple.
5. Whom do you consider the protagonist of the novel and why?



6. Write a comparative analysis of male characters as depicted in *The Color Purple* and also throw light on generalizations made by Walker about males on the basis of their presentation in the novel.
7. Discuss in brief the technique of epistolary and its significance in the novel.
8. Briefly discuss the relationship between Celie and Nettie as revealed in letters from 1 to 25.
9. Discuss the aptness of the title of the novel in relation to its theme.
10. What do you think is the importance of family of Mayor in the novel?

## 2.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Celie has been a loner since she was a little girl. Her mother died young and married off to an abusive man. She had no one to talk to about her fears, her traumas, her loves, her hopes. So she is turned to God, believing that God, whom she initially considers as the all-powerful figure in the Abrahamic religions will always be there for her, even if there is no one else to talk to. Without having a companion to share her woes, she finds only God as the one person she can truly trust and talk to. But as the story goes on, Celie starts to form a family with people such as Shug and Sophia. When she finally finds out that her sister Nettie is still alive and has been trying to get in touch with her for years, Celie begins to write to Nettie instead of God. The fact that she switches to Nettie so quickly, shows how desperate Celie is for real, honest communication with another human being. But when Nettie and the children are assumed to be lost in a ship accident, Celie goes back to writing to God because she has been left alone again with no one to talk to. Throughout the novel, Celie's relationship with God becomes more complex as she changes her definition of God. As she starts to see God as the source of everything, including her own self, it becomes apparent that Celie's letters to God are really letters to herself. It's a way for her to cope and process her feelings and situation.

2. After leaving Celie and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s house, Nettie follows Celie's recommendation to seek refuge with Corrine and her husband Samuel, whom Celie believes to be the adopted parents of her daughter, Olivia. Corrine and Samuel accept Nettie as their maid and take good care of her, educating her and inviting her to go on a Christian mission with them to Africa. Nettie and her family travel first to England, then down to Africa where they visit Senegalese and Liberian villages before settling in a small, rural village where they will work and live as missionaries. Throughout the novel, Nettie spends



many years in the village and even builds her own hut, which is sparsely furnished but contains a writing table where Nettie writes letters to Celia. Adam and Olivia mature into young adults while living in the village and eventually Corrine dies from an illness. The family eventually returns to England with Samuel and the children before returning to the United States.

3. During an interview with Celie, Shug refers to the color purple as a sign of God's presence. Celie sees God as a traditional patriarchal figure of Abrahamic religions, and even imagines a bearded white man as God. However, Shug's God is much less specific and much more spiritual. He is also free from maleness and whiteness, making him much more accessible to both Celie and Shug. Shug believes God is the source of all things in the universe, including trees, animals, and human beings. He desires to give himself as well as human beings something to admire, to appreciate, and to love, and the best way to do this is to simply enjoy the world around us. "I think it upsets God if you walk by a purple field and don't see it," says Shug. Shug believes in the power of creation and the beauty of the world. This is a deep and life-affirming message for Celie and all the other central characters in *The Color Purple*. They all desperately want to find something to love and appreciate in a world so full of suffering and loss.

4. She has been depicted as a strong-willed woman who refuses to bow down to any kind of abuse. One day while visiting the town along with her kids and a friend, she happens to run into the white Town Mayor and his wife. The mayor's wife is very much overwhelmed by the cleanliness of Sofia's children and asks her if she would like to be a maid for their family. After being micro-aggressively offended by the mayor's remark about her children's cleanliness, she responds back to the mayor's wife, "Hell no." During those days, it was unheard of for a Black man or woman to speak so openly to a white woman, because Black people were supposed to be subservient to whites. The mayor and his wife are literally shocked at the tone of Sofia and consequently the mayor gives her a slap in order to remind her of her position in the race hierarchy. When she takes offence and hits him back,, the local white police reach and beat her almost to death. She is convicted for twelve years in jail. Celia and her accomplices manipulate the system to somehow get Sofia out of the jail but she is compelled to serve out the rest of her sentence in the mayor's household as their maid. During the span of ten years, she only gets a chance to see her children once for fifteen minutes. Most of her time is consumed in raising the mayor's white daughter with whom she has a sort of complex relationship for the remainder of her life. After leaving the mayor's household, Sofia returns to join Celia, Harpo and the other members of the family.



Unfortunately, her connection with her children who never had the opportunity to bond with her is never restored.

5. Yes, Celie and Shug both have been depicted as lovers. However, their relationship dynamic is complicated. While Celie has experienced sexual intercourse with both her stepfather and her husband, she is uninterested in sex until Shug began to introduce her to new experiences. After experiencing it, Celie comes to know that she is attracted towards women, not men. She falls in love with Shug, and remains devoted to her throughout her life. On the other hand, Shug enjoys with both men and women, and enjoys multiple marriages and affairs throughout her life, counting Albert, Celie, Grady and Germaine. Shug's free-spirited, approach is a witness to her loving and passionate nature, but that is hurtful to Celie, who has no interest in anyone else rather would prefer to have a monogamous relationship with Shug.

Celia and Shug are portrayed as lovers, but their relationship dynamics are complicated. Celie has experienced forced sex with her stepfather and her husband, but she is not at all interested in sex until Shug opens for her a new chapter of new experiences. While exploring sex with her, she realizes that she feels more attracted towards women than men. She falls in love with Shug and is loyal to her for the remaining life. However, unlike Celia, Shug enjoys sex and romances with both men and women and engages in many marriages and relationships during her lifetime. Shug's free and spontaneous attitude towards romance is a sign of her love and passion, but it is also something that in a way tortures Celia, who is not interested in anyone else and would rather be monogamous with Shug. No doubt, Shug and Celie's relationship is strained but nothing can break the bond between them. It hardly matters whether they have a sexual relationship or not but their love for one another is unbreakable. In the end, Shug sticks to her promise to get back together with Celie after her last affair with Germaine, hinting that they may live out their golden years together as partners.

## 2.9 SUGGESTED READING

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<b>Subject: Literature and Gender (Part-II)</b>	
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<b>Lesson No.: 03</b>	<b>Editor: Dr. Punam Miglani</b>
<b>The Golden Notebook: Doris Lessing</b>	

## STRUCTURE

### 3.0 Learning Objectives

#### 3.1 Introduction

A Brief about the Author

### 3.2 Main Body of the Text: The Golden Notebook

#### 3.2.1 Historical Context of the Novel

#### 3.2.2 Plot in the Novel

#### 3.2.3 Characters:

Anna Wulf

Janet Wulf

Molly Jacobs

Tommy

Richard Portmain

Marion

Mrs Marks / Mother Sugar

Willi Rodde

Paul Blackenhurst

Jimmy McGrath

Ted Brown





**Maryrose**

**George Hounslow**

**Michael**

**Saul Green**

**Nelson**

**Ella**

**Julia**

**Max Wulf**

**George**

**Dr West**

**Patricia Brent**

**Paul Tanner**

**Ella's Father**

**Robert Brun**

**Cy Maitland**

**Jack**

**Ivor**

**Ronnie**

**James Schafter**

**De Silva**

**Tom Mathlong**

**Charlie Themba**

**Mrs Boothby**

**Jackson / The Cook**

**Marie**



**Comrade John Butte**

**Stanley Lett**

### **3.3 Further Main Body of the Text: The Golden Notebook**

#### **3.3.1 Technique and Structure of the Novel**

#### **3.3.2 Style of the Novel**

#### **3.3.3 Themes in the Novel**

#### **3.3.4 The Golden Notebook As Psychoanalysis**

### **3.4 Check Your Progress**

### **3.5 Summary**

### **3.6 Key Words**

### **3.7 Self-Assessment**

### **3.8 Answers to Check Your Progress**

### **3.9 Suggested Reading**

## **3.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- Students will be able to learn to analyze and practice descriptive writing; sensory and emotive
- Students will think about the history of a piece of literature and its current relevance, errors, and consequences
- They will see how the various notebooks in the story contribute to a fuller understanding of Anna's (and maybe Lessing's) concepts of writing
- To investigate the reasons for the writer's block that the main character Anna Wulf suffers in Doris Lessing's novel The Golden Notebook
- To understand Anna's need to make sense of the world, her sense of failure, and her fears of the darkness within herself and the world



- To understand a lot of factors that go into the process of causing and lifting a writer's block, and difficulties Anna has to go through to be able to write again
- To study the structure and style adopted in the novel by the writer
- To study the issue of political identity, self identity, social identity, gender and sexuality

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook* was written in a time when women were not considered to be writers and women's roles in literature were seen as superfluous. Writing ability was seen as an attribute only given to men. The novel was released in 1962, at a time when the second wave of feminism was beginning to emerge, and it was called a "feminist bible". However, it also attracted both positive and negative criticism, with some arguing that it encouraged a "man hater" and "ball breaker" attitude among women. Despite this, Lessing disputes the claim that the novel is a feminist one, stating that her main goal was to create a book that would make a "wordless statement" "to speak through the "way it was shaped."

*The Golden Notebook* is definitely a book that influences the reader regardless of gender. In its own way, it is a reflection of different thoughts, beliefs, emotions and feelings that are present and which follow the protagonist throughout her life. As readers, we are given an insight into the complexity of human nature and in this case, into the different layers of the protagonist's life. Doris Lessing gives us the character of Anna Wolf, who, in a way, cannot be seen as an adventurer, a person who doesn't have much going on, so to speak. This makes it easy for other women to identify with this woman, who can easily be seen as a vulnerable creature, but at the same time, powerful within. The reason why it's somewhat easy to identify with Anna is that she comes with a complex set of different identities. We recognize Anna through her social identity, political identity, and sexual identity, but the most important one is her self-identity.

Ling's magnum opus, *The Golden Notebook*, was published in 1962 and has been translated into many languages around the world. It is widely regarded as one of the greatest works of twentieth-century literature. The novel follows Anna Wulf, a free woman, a Communist, and a single mother in her 30s, who struggles with political disillusionment and writer's block, and struggles to find a way to achieve



wholeness, order and a unified vision in a chaotic, fragmented, and individualized social order. The novel examines the socio-political, cultural, economic and historical conditions of the mid 20th century. The main focus of the novel is on the rise of the anti-Stalinist movement, the rise of nihilism, the rise of gender issues, psychoanalysis, the rise of madness, the rise of colonialism, and the rise of racism. To capture the immediacy of mental breakdown and the fragmentation of consciousness in British society and to express it in a new narrative framework, Lessing uses a form-breaking and experimental narrative organization. Each section of the novel, entitled "Free Woman," is written in the third person and chronologically narrates the lives of Anne Wulf and her companion Molly Jacobs in London. This is followed by extracts from the notebooks (black, red, yellow, and blue) which were written in the first person and cover the years 1950-1957, but are now presented with a truncated chronological order. The black notebook records Anna's interior monologues about her first novel, *Frontiers of War*, which has been parodied as *Forbidden Love*, and her memories of Southern Africa. The red book records Anna's involvement with political issues, particularly with the British. The yellow notebook tells the story of Anna's novel, *The Shadow of the Third*, centered on Ella and her friend Julie. The blue notebook serves as a record of Anna's personal life and her relationships with her daughter, Janet, and friends.

This pattern is repeated four times in the novel, culminating in the penultimate section "The Golden Notebook" where Anna finally achieves integrity and wholeness and begins writing a new novel by getting rid of the "writer's block". According to Lessing, Anna keeps four notebooks, but not one because she has to separate them from each other out of fear of chaos, of formlessness, of breakdown. In the interior of the Golden Notebook, everything has come together, the division has broken down, and formlessness is replaced by the end of fragmentation, the victory of the second theme which is unity. (Preface to *The Golden Notebook*)

This confusing arrangement of the novel's parts, through which Lessing distributes different and conflicting moods, ideas, orientations and motivations, reveals the division of Anna's personality. The dialectical synthesis of dissolution and unity in the golden-coloured notebook at the end symbolizes the desire to impose order on chaos, creating a form-content division. The complex and linguistically disjointed structure of the novel stands in stark contrast to Anna's sense of formlessness and the need for a unified and cohesive whole: "she felt herself, under this shape of order, as a chaos of discomfort and anxiety." Though Lessing left the communist party in 1956, she was a member of the editorial



committee of the New Reasoner and an active member of The New Left, which was founded by writers such as Raymond Williams, E.P. Thomson, Perry Anderson and Stuart Hall, who were concerned with Marxist interpretations.

## **A BRIEF ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Doris May Tayler was born in Persia (now in Iran) on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 1919. Her parents were both British. Her father, crippled during World War I, worked as a clerk in the British Imperial Bank of Persia. Her mother was a nurse. In 1925, the Taylers moved to Southern Rhodesia, a British colony, what is now Zimbabwe, with the promise of becoming wealthy through maize farming. Doris's mother adjusted to the harsh life in the settlement and worked hard to recreate what she saw as a civilized, Edwardian life amid savages, however, her father did not succeed and thousands of acres of bushes, he purchased did not produce the wealth he had hoped for.

Lessing describes her childhood as a mixture of joy and sorrow. Exploring nature with her brother Harry was one of the few moments of joy in her troubled life. Her mother, a strict disciplinarian, imposed strict rules and hygiene on her at home. She then sent her daughter to a convent school where nuns petrified their pupils with tales of hell and doom. Lessing was sent to a boarding school for girls in the capital, Salisbury, where she dropped out at the age of thirteen which was like the end of her formal education

But, like other South African women writers (Olive Schreiner, Nadine Gordimer, etc.) who did not complete high school, Lessing went on to become a self-taught intellectual. She once said that unhappy childhood tends to generate fiction writers. The bundles of books she ordered from London nurtured her imagination, opening up new worlds to her imagination. Her early reading was mainly Dickens, Scott, and Stevenson also Kipling. Later, she discovered D. H. Lawrence and Stendhal, as well as Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky. Bedtime stories nurtured her youth, too: her mother would tell them to the children, and Doris herself would keep her younger brother awake with tales. Doris's early years were spent absorbing her father's bitter World War I memories, absorbing them like "poison". "We are all of us made by war," Lessing has said, "twisted and warped by war, but we seem to forget it."

As a young woman, Lessing ran away from home at the age of fifteen to become a nursemaid, where her employer provided her with books on political science and sociology. During this time, Lessing



wrote, “In a fever of erotic desire”, frustrated by her unsuitable suitor. She also wrote stories, selling two of them to South African magazines.

Lessing’s life has challenged her conviction that people can’t resist the tides of their times, as she struggled against the natural and cultural forces that doomed her to a life of marriage and parenthood. “There is a generation of women,” she says, referring to her mother’s era, “And it was as if their lives came to a stop when they had children. Most of them got pretty neurotic, because, I think, of the contrast between what they were taught at school they were capable of being and what actually happened to them” Ling believes that her success as a writer made her more liberated than most people. According to her, writing is about setting at a distance, bringing the raw, the personal, the uncategorized, and the unprocessed, into the world of the general.

She moved to Salisbury in 1937, where she worked for a year as a telephone operator. She married Frank Wisdom at the age of nineteen, and they had two children. After a few years, she felt trapped by a personality she feared would ruin her, so she left her family and remained in Salisbury. She was soon drawn to the members of the 'Left Book Club', a group of Communists who "read everything and did not think it was remarkable to read." One of the group's central members was Gottfried Lessing, with whom she soon married and bore a son.

She moved to London in 1949, where she published her first novel 'The Grass Is Singing' and started her competent career as a writer. During 50s, Lessing grew increasingly disenchanted with the 'Communist movement,' which she left in 1954.

Lessing’s fiction is largely self-referential, with much of it coming from her African experiences. Drawing on her childhood experiences and her deep-rooted interest in politics and social affairs, Lessing has explored themes of clash of cultures, racial inequality, the clash of conflicting forces within an individual’s personality, and the clash between the individual’s conscience and the common good. In her stories and novels set in Africa during the 1950s and early 1960s, Lessing decried the dispossession of blacks by white colonizers, and challenged the sterility of white culture in South Africa. In response to her outspokenness, Lessing was prohibited from entering South Africa and Rhodesia in 1956.

Throughout her life, Lessing had tried to adapt what she admired about nineteenth-century novels, their “climate of moral judgment” to twentieth-century concepts of consciousness and timing. After penning *The Children of Violence* (1951–1959), a formally traditional novel of education about the development



of Martha Quest's consciousness, Lessing went on to write her most daring novel, "The Golden Notebook" (1962), a narrative experiment in which the multiplicity of selves of a modern woman is revealed in breathtaking detail. Like Lessing, Anna Wulf seeks ruthless truth as she struggles to liberate herself from the confusion, emotional paralysis and self-righteousness of her generation.

Anna Wulf was accused of being "unfeminine" in her portrayal of women's rage and aggression to which Lessing replied, "What many women were feeling, thinking, and experiencing came as something of a surprise." As one early critic noted, Wulf was "trying to live with a man's freedom", a point Lessing appears to confirm: "These attitudes in male writers were taken for granted, accepted as sound philosophical bases, as quite normal, certainly not as woman-hating, aggressive, or neurotic."

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, however, Lessing had begun to traverse more enormously the quasi-mystic insight that Anna Wulf appears to have achieved at the end of her work, *The Golden Notebook*. Her "inner-space fiction" deals with space-faring dreamscapes (*Briefing for a Descent into Hell*, 1971), dream-worlds (*Memoirs of a Survivor*, 1974) and other dimensions of existence (*Canopus in Argos: Archives*, 1979-1983), as well as science fiction explorations of higher levels of existence. This reflects Lessing's interest in the writings of Idries Shah since the 1960's a Sufi mystic, whose work emphasizes the development of consciousness and his conviction that personal liberation can only be achieved if people recognize the connection between their own destiny and the destiny of society.

Lessing's other novels comprise "The Good Terrorist" (1985) and "The Fifth Child" (1988); she also published two novels under the pen name Jane Somers (*The Diary of a Good Neighbour*, 1983 and *If the Old Could*, 1984). Apart from this, she has written various non-fictions also including books about cats, a love since childhood. *Under My Skin: Volume One of My Autobiography to 1949* appeared in 1995 and received the James Tait Black Prize for best biography.

In June 1995, Lessing received an Honorary Doctorate from Harvard University. She also went to South Africa in 1995 to meet her daughter and grandchildren and to further recommend her autobiography. This was her first visit to South Africa since being forced out of the country in 1956 for political reasons. In 1995, Lessing returned to South Africa as a writer for the very issues for which she had been expelled 40 years earlier.



She got associated with illustrator Charlie Adlard to produce the distinctive and uncommon graphic novel, *Playing the Game*. Harper Collins republished *Going* and *In Pursuit of the English* in 1996, after for more than 30 years being out of print in US. These two captivating and significant books give rare vision into Mrs. Lessing's character, life and opinions.

*Love Again* was her first novel published after seven years in 1996 by Harper Collins but she did not make a personal appearance to promote it. She recalled in an interview the vexation she experienced during a 14-week worldwide tour to promote her autobiography. She told her publishers that it would be better for everyone if she stayed at home and wrote another book but they wouldn't listen. She decided to mark her foot and would only do one interview. She was nominated for a Nobel Prize for literature in 1996 and for Britain's Writers Guild Award for fiction in the same year. At the end of the year, Harper Collins released a collection of three of her plays, entitled "Play with a Tiger", "The Singing Door" and "Each His Own Wilderness". For some reason, this volume was only available in the United Kingdom and not in the United States, much to the chagrin of her readers in North America.

In 1997, she associated with Philip Glass for the second time, furnishing the libretto for the opera "The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five" which premiered in Heidelberg, Germany in May. *Walking in the Shade*, the apprehensively anticipated second volume of her autobiography got published in October and was recommended for the 1997 National Book Critics Circle Award in the Biography/Autobiography category. This volume registers her arrival in England in 1949 and moves us up to the publication of *The Golden Notebook*.

Her new novel, named "Mara and Dann", was published in U.S. in January 1999 and in the U.K. in April 1999. In her interview, published in the *London Daily Telegraph*, she said, "I adore writing it. I will be so sad when it's finished. It's freed my mind." In May 1999, she was awarded with the XI Annual International Catalunya Award, an award by the government of Catalunya. In the U.K.'s last Honours List before the new Renaissance, Doris Lessing was appointed a Companion of Honour, an exclusive order for those who have done "conspicuous public service." She revealed that she had turned down the offer of getting a Dame of the British Empire because there's no British Conglomerate. The list was named by the Labor Party government to recognize people in all walks of life for their benefactions to their professions and to charity. It was officially bestowed by Queen Elizabeth II. In January, 2000 the public portrayal Gallery in London unveiled Leonard Mc Comb's portrayal of Doris





Lessing. Ben, in the World, the effect to The Fifth Child was published in Spring 2000 (U.K.) and Summer 2000(U.S.). In 2001, she was awarded the Prince of Asturias Prize in Literature, one of Spain's most important distinctions, for her brilliant erudite workshop in defense of freedom and Third World causes. She also entered the David Cohen British Literature Prize. She was shortlisted for the first Man Booker International Prize in 2005. In 2007 she was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. Her final novel was Alfred and Emily. She expired on November 17, 2013.

### 3.2 MAIN BODY OF THE TEXT: THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK

Doris Lessing's award-winning novel, The Golden Notebook first appeared in 1962. It is set in the late 1950s, a time of political uncertainty and fear of nuclear war, and tells the story of a woman, Anna Wulf, who is divorced, a single mother, a struggling writer, and a former communist. Although her marriage was short-lived and lacked both physical and emotional intimacy, Anna is grateful for the daughter she gained from it. Over the years, Anna has had several other relationships, all with married men, but none of them last.

It was the income from her best seller novel "Frontiers of War," which supported her financially. The novel tells the story of Anna, growing up in colonial Africa during World War II. It follows a group of young white idealists and their conversations about politics, particularly communism, racism and war. The novel's earnings have enabled Anna to purchase a house in London for her and her daughter, with space for a tenant. Anna has only one friend, Molly, who, like Anna, is a divorced single mom and a disillusioned Communist. Molly, a minor actress, is supporting herself and her son on the irregular income of an artist. Molly has frequent quarrels with her former husband, Richard, as well as growing anxiety over their adult son, Tommy, who appears to be indifferent and broody.

She became a communist at a young age because she felt that there was no other group that expressed such moral outrage against the injustices of the existing system. In recent years, however, as the true nature of Stalin came to light, as the lives of those living under the Iron Current came to the surface, as the prospect of nuclear war became a reality, and as the British Communist party's refusal to acknowledge these facts became grotesque, Anna and her friend Molly were left with no choice but to break ties with the Party. This experience has left Anna ideologically bankrupt and lost her way. She now uses the word 'comrade' only with a touch of nostalgia.



In the meantime, the income from her novel, which is her primary source of income, is disappearing. She has failed to finish another novel. Sometimes she feels ashamed of her bestseller, as if it is a poor novel written by an inexperienced writer. Sometimes she wants to start writing again but can't seem to get past her paralyzing writer's block. Other times she denies that she ever wants to begin writing again. Although Anna loves her friend Molly, it is not easy for her. Molly's life is full of ups and downs, as she struggles with her former husband and her mischievous son, and Anna often finds herself caught in the middle, having to referee or defend her. This is a stress that Anna doesn't need right now.

The stress is compounded by the fact that Anna's present tenant, Ivor and his lover Ronnie, are slowly moving into the house and neglecting to pay their rent. This makes Anna feel uncomfortable and out of place in her home. Janet, Anna's daughter, is also growing up and searching for normality. She doesn't appreciate or admire her unemployed, ex-communist, unmarried mother for any kind of 'pioneer' or 'revolutionary' qualities, or 'new woman' as Anna calls her. She doesn't believe she would have made the same decisions as her mother, and wants her home life to be more conventional. Anna's love life is also complicated by the break-up of Michael, a married man with whom she has spent five years. Three years have passed since they broke ties but she has recently met him and is still not over the pain of their breakup.

### 3.2.1 HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK

The Golden Notebook is set primarily in the 1950's (although with a few flashbacks to the 1940's), but it also reflects shifts in the world as World War II came to an end and the Cold War began, with the colonized world moving towards independence from Europe. Throughout the 1940s, Anna's relationship with Willi Rodde, a German exile, and the young British aviator Paul Blackenhurst (as well as Jimmy McGrath and Ted Brown) is steeped in the social and geographical fear and displacement that a generation of Europeans were forced to endure, not only because they were fighting in World War II, but also because of the similarities between how their nations treated colonized people and how the Nazis conducted their campaign of extermination and territorial expansion.

The novel is also set against the backdrop of African national liberation movements against European colonial powers: Anna both sides in these movements (for example, as an ally of the anti-apartheid campaigner Tom Mathlong), and enjoys the privileges of colonial racism (which gives her a prominent place in the British-occupied, Central African society). In the novel, Anna and her companions often



refer to the NFD's war of independence (which lasted from the late 1950s to the late 1960s and coincided with the publication of the novel in 1962) as a vanguard movement for national liberation movements throughout the continent. These national liberation movements won the independence of African nations from European colonialists in the 1960's and 1970's.

The Soviet Union's history also plays an important role in the novel, as the protagonist spends much of the novel grappling with her ambivalence towards communism, both in theory and in practice. After the death of Joseph Stalin in 1953, the Soviet Union found itself in a state of turmoil, as the world came to terms with his violent suppression of opposition. The year, 1956, in which much of the book is set, was a pivotal turning point in the history of the Soviet Union, as the new Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev openly repudiated Khrushchev's predecessor, prompting Soviet citizens and Communist organizations around the world to reevaluate their faith in Khrushchev. Western parties, such as the British communist party, lost large numbers of their supporters (Doris Lessing included).

The Golden Notebook was also a forerunner and major contributor to the second wave of feminism of the 1960's and 1970's (referred to as the "women's liberation" movement) which were largely a reaction to the rigid gender roles that existed in the 1950's. Women had been forced back to the home after World War II and were often limited to supporting and administrative roles, such as nurses and secretaries. As a result, Anna and Molly lived as unmarried working (but not working class) mothers, which was as unusual as it was daring. Lessing's focus on writing about "free women" (i.e. sex from women's perspective) was groundbreaking.

Although she faced considerable criticism for her supposedly 'man-hatred' character, one of Lessing's greatest accomplishments in The Golden Notebook is that she successfully refuted the idea that single, independent, and working women are cynical or emotionally unavailable: Anna and Molly transcend gender roles without abandoning the idea of healthy, equal love.

### **3.2.2 PLOT IN THE NOVEL**

Doris Lessing's The Golden Notebook is a novel, bearing multi-layers that mainly focus on the life, memories and writings of Anna Wulf in the 1950s during her late twenties and early thirties in London and colonial Africa. The novel alternates between a direct narrative entitled; Free Women follows the lives of Anna and her friend Molly. Anna's four private scrapbooks; in the black, she remembers the time she spent in Africa, the novel she constructed out of her experience and her troubles coping with



the novel's acceptance; in the red notebook she recalls her equivocal membership in and disowning of the British Communist Party; the yellow notebook, very closely reflects her own design of unfulfilling relations in London; and the blue notebook assists as her inconsistent individual diary, brimming with self-doubt and contradiction.

At the start of *Free Women*, the two women are alone in their London apartment. Anna, a gifted but shy writer, informs Molly, a brash and worldly-wise actress that the world is coming to an end. Molly's ex-husband, Richard, a rich merchant who despises the left-wing politics that drove them together, arrives to discuss a job with their son, Tommy, a troubled young man who has been locked up in his room and brooding for the past few months. He also asks for advice about Marion, his wife, who has fallen into alcoholism as a result of Richard's many extramarital affairs. Tommy hears the conversation and comes downstairs to reject his father's offer. Anna confides in Molly that she is losing interest in writing her next novel, that Richard is trying to seduce her, that their communist friends are in a state of disarray, and that she is still unable to move on from her ex lover Michael, already a married man.

The story then cuts to Anna's four notebooks, which she has divided herself; The black notebook starts with a summary of her first novel, "Frontiers of War" which she still finds deficient and naive, before moving on to the experiences that gave the novel its foundation. Anna decides to remain in colonial Central Africa during the war, where she falls in love with a bunch of white socialists who drink with her on weekends at the Mashopi Hotel and has a long, no-strings-attached affair with a German exile, Willi Rodde. Her novel was based on an affair between a white roadie (George Hounslow) and an African hotel cook's wife, Maria, but she changed the name to Paul Blackenhurst, a version of the cocky, arrogant Oxford-educated pilot, whom she elopes with, on the last day of their stay at the hotel, the day before he tragically dies in an airstrip crash.

The red notebook opens with Anna receiving an invitation to join the British Communist Party (BCP), of which Molly had already been a member, albeit a critical one. Anna recalls her unease with the party's ideology and the growing evidence of the horrendous crimes committed by the Soviet Union against political dissidents, as well as the conflicts she faced while visiting East Berlin with her husband, Michael, and encountering unhappy housewives during canvassing in North London.

The *Shadow of the Third* begins in the yellow notebook, where the manuscript for the novel based on Anna's life begins. Ella is working at a women's magazine, responding to reader letters, which her boss,



Dr. West, finds unsuitable for his advice column, and she is secretly writing a book about a man who takes all the necessary steps to commit suicide as he realizes “that’s what I’ve been meaning to do“. Ella begins an affair with the psychiatrist, Paul Tanner, who begins spending every night at Ella's house, but also engages in an affair with other women, neglecting his wife, gradually losing interest in Ella's work and making it very clear that it is just a brief affair. When Paul suddenly moves to Nigeria at the end of the novel, Ella is heartbroken.

The blue notebook chronicles Anna's psychoanalyst, Mrs. Marks, and her sessions with her. When Ms Marks inquires if Anna writes about her sessions in her journal, Anna's entries about them cease for four years, and instead she collects newspaper articles. When she does write about her analysis again, she feels overwhelmed by the violence of the world and worries that Michael is going to leave her, and when Ms Marks mentions Anna's diary again, she chooses to stop going to her appointments.

In the next installment of the series, "Free Women," Tommy, a cruel and grumpy man, visits Anna, inquires about the difference between her talent and his father's, and then begins to read her notes, leading her to “an extraordinary tumult of sensations”. He asks her why she keeps her thoughts in a little box, and he accuses her of being selfish and concealing herself from the outside world. When he returns to Molly's home, he kills himself and is “expected to die before the morning”.

The black notebook unfolds Anna’s meeting with film and TV producers who are interested in buying the rights to "Frontiers of War" but want to remove racism from it and move it from Africa to England. The red notebook is filled with Anna's thoughts on the myths that keep the Communist Party in power. The yellow notebook tells the story of Ella, who is hopelessly in love with Paul over a year after the end of their marriage. Ella has an affair with an American leucotomy doctor, and their mechanical, short-lived sex makes him realize how unhappy he is in his marriage. Ella does not feel any better about Paul. The blue notebook shows the breaking of Michael's affair with Anna and she decides to “write down, as truthfully as I can every stage of a day, Tomorrow.” She has to take care of Michael and their daughter Janet all day long and work for no pay at Party headquarters, reports on bad novels that her boss, John, will publish anyway, and responds to letters from average writers.

She realizes that she is useless and that her job is pointless, so she leaves. She sends Janet to bed and enjoys cooking dinner for Michael, who never shows up, showing that their relationship is over. She deletes the entire entry and rewrites it as if it were a normal day.



In the third installment of the series, "Free Women," Tommy survives a suicide attempt but goes blind. He returns to Molly's home, where his presence becomes increasingly dominant as he spends his time reading and writing, and visits Marion. Anna goes to Richard's house, where he indulges in one of his typical misogynist rants. On the train home, she senses that Richard is beginning to "crack up" and has to cope with the new relationship of her boarder, Ivor, with her daughter Janet and Ivor's lover, Ronnie, who does not pay rent and Anna is soon evicted from the house.

In the black notebook, Anna recounts a pigeon-hunting excursion in Africa and narrates her relation with James Schafter, an American who egregiously parodied his way to the top of the literary world. In Anna's red notebook, she describes a year of intense political activity after the death of Stalin, during which she and her comrades came to the conclusion that the party was corrupt beyond repair. In Yellow notebook, the third book in the series, *The Shadow of the Three*, Ella begins to receive unwanted attention from men who expect her to be their lover. Ella decides not to give in to her desires, and begins to write short stories to cope with her frustration. In the blue notebook, she returns to a long reflection on psychoanalysis, feeling that the blue book's "record of facts" is a misrepresentation of her experience and that she is losing the capacity to express meaning through words, recalling a nightmare in which a character takes "joy in spite".

In the fourth part of the book, Anna talks to Marion, who has just been arrested in a protest, about some of the old revolutionaries she had known in Africa. In the black notebook, Anna has a dream of a movie being shot at a hotel called the Mashopi, and realizes that all of her memories of Africa are probably not true. In the red notebook, a teacher who is devoted to communism visits the Soviet Union, and perceives that his proposals won't be taken somberly. In the yellow notebook, Ella breaks away from Ella's story to list nineteen different ideas for stories or novels, most of which are about women who are exploited by men.

The story of the blue notebook begins with Janet's departure to boarding school, and Anna's lack of options. She takes on an American writer, Saul Green, who is sensitive and intelligent, but can also be brusque and abusive. Anna suffers from intense anxiety, which is linked to her relationship with Saul. Their relationship alternates between calm and intense, with political discussions over coffee and heated arguments in the bedroom. This is further complicated by Anna's jealousy over the other women that



Saul visits and her decision to read his journals. They both blame each other, as well as themselves for their own madness. Anna realizes that there are many Sauls and many Annas in her life, and begins to see versions of herself in him. She begins to see the moving floor and walls in her dreams, as well as different personas in her life. Finally, one day, Saul encourages her to start writing again, and she acknowledges having writer's block. She purchases a beautiful golden notebook, but he tries his best to profess it for himself.

Anna goes to the golden notebook all alone, She dreams of Saul as a tiger, and begins to move through her past, only to realize that an invisible projectionist is playing it all over for her of course, it is also Saul, and they both realize that they have "become a sort of inner conscience or critic" The next morning, Anna plans to write a new story about "free women," and Saul urges her to begin writing. In their final days together, they both offer each other opening lines: Anna provides Saul with an image of an Algerian soldier on a hill which turns out to be the first sentence of his great novel, and he offers her the boring sentence "The two women were themselves in the London flat," which turns out not to be an objective record of Anna's subjective life in her notebooks, but rather her fictionalized version of the notebooks' reality: all the multiple, contradictory voices that Lessing offers in her second novel, *The Golden Notebook*, all end up being Anna's.

The final part of *Free Women* is very different from the first two parts. Janet goes away to boarding school and Anna goes crazy pasting newspaper articles all over her room. Milt, an American, moves in with her and makes her feel safe and secure but he insists that he's a "feeder on women" and leaves after five days. After sometime Janet returns back from school. She starts working at a marriage counselling center, Molly gets married to a "progressive businessman" and Tommy follows the footsteps of Richard.

### 3.2. 3 CHARACTERS

#### ANNA WULF

The *Golden Notebook*, the main character, Anna, is a young woman in her early 30s who has been depicted as a novelist and a casual activist who lives in London after spending part of her childhood in colonial Africa. Her novel *Frontiers of War* was based on her experiences in Africa, in which she became involved with a circle of socialists, one of whom was Willi Rodde, who turned out to be her first husband and father of her daughter, Janet. Several years after her return to London, Anna starts



a long-term relationship with the first man she has ever loved, Michael, a married psychiatrist. After five years of long relationship, he abandons her, leaving her heartbroken and unable to continue writing. Throughout the novel, Anna keeps track of her life in four coloured notebooks that form the bulk of the book, rigidly categorizing different components of her life into their correspondent notebooks. The Golden Notebook is set in the spare room of Anna's house, where an American writer, Saul Green, moves in and begins an affair that brings them both to the brink of madness. As their relationship becomes more and more intense, oscillating between painful tension and tenderness, Anna tries to unify the disparate aspects of her life into one golden notebook. Just before Saul leaves her, he ends by taking this notebook and he also gives her the first line of what would become her second novel: *Free Women*, which also serves as the frame story for *The Golden Notebook*. Anna's notebooks contradict each other and the reader learns at the end of *Free Women* that the seemingly objective portrayal of Anna's life in the Golden Notebook is actually the protagonist's own fiction. It becomes difficult to decide which parts of the book, if any, reflect the real Anna's experience and personality and which sections simply reflect her self-image or fantasy.

## **JANET WULF**

Janet is a young daughter of Anna and William Rodde, born in 1947. She is brought up during the period of Anna's journals and *Free Women*, and, unlike her mother, she is quite content and conventional. She is not affected by her mother's emotional travails and abusive relationships. In the absence of his father she gets close to Tommy, and, Ivor but Anna always worries about what would happen if she gets married again. When she was with Michael, he and Janet both were always competing for her affections. Janet becomes Anna's identity and her daily motivation; Anna often has to pretend to be a more cheerful version of herself in order not to disappoint Janet. Even when Janet persists on going to boarding school, and even adorns the discretionary uniform, Anna is left in a state of despair, with no direction and no sense of time and purpose. Anna worries about what will happen to her daughter in the future, hoping that men will be kinder to her than the way they have been to her and that she will not be emotionally damaged like Anna.

## **MOLLY JACOBS**





Molly is the closest friend of Anna and probably her only friend, whom she views as a sister or emotionally and psychologically suggesting as a lesbian partner. Unlike Anna, who is shy, diminutive, and artistically gifted, Molly is brash, voluptuous, emotional, and worldly-wise, comfortable in any room, and well-versed in dressing to make a good impression. Despite this, many people view the two women as "interchangeable" because both of them are unmarried. Molly is an unsuccessful actress, and in the 1930s she had been married to Richard Portmain, whom she now publicly scorns as an elitist and obsessed with money and status, though he still seeks her advice on his current wife Marion, as well as on his and Molly's son Tommy. Molly and Anna still speak frequently, even after Anna leaves Molly's apartment, and she frequently punctuates their gossip by saying, "it's all very odd, isn't it Anna?" During the 1950s, Molly exhausted most part of the time as a communist organizer; organizing meetings at her house, and repeatedly being deficient of the energy to have serious discussions with Anna during her more hectic periods.

Despite this, she often alternates between repeating communist slogans and expressing her dissatisfaction with the party. She introduces Anna to a number of her acquaintances, such as De Silva, Saul Green, and others. At the time of initiation of Free Women, Anna has just come back from a year of travelling in Europe and by the end of the story; she has married a "progressive businessman." However, she is much less prominent in Anna's notebooks and in both stories. Anna gradually distances herself from Molly while she develops a relationship with either Saul or Milt although they eventually return to their former intimacy at the conclusion of Free Women.

## **TOMMY**

Tommy is the son of Molly and Richard. He is one of the main characters in Free Women, but he is presented only as a casual or minor character in Anna's notebooks. He is depicted as a judgmental and spiteful character that spends most of his time pondering in his room. He admires Anna's vulnerability, her sense of moral reasons and her refusal to define herself by an occupation. He believes that Anna is deceiving and hypocritical because she compartmentalizes her life out of apprehension of chaos rather than presenting a genuine and amalgamated if messy account of herself. Anna feels partly responsible for Tommy's suicide attempt which she believes is related to what he reads in her notebooks earlier in the day. He survives, but is blind and becomes an unwelcome presence in Molly's home, where his



mother grows increasingly anxious and confined. The physical blindness of Tommy is presented here as a situational irony because it contrasts with his ability to see people and situations clearly.

He soon makes friends with Marion, who spends hours talking to him about politics. Tommy joins his father's company, but only because he believes that capitalism can improve the world. In contrast, in the notebooks, Tommy is presented as a diligent objector, working in the coal mines instead of going to war during World War II. He is a few years older than he is in *Free Women*, and he has a relationship with a sociology student who persuades him to embrace a political ideology that Molly finds too moderate. By the time the blue notebooks are finished, Tommy is married and lecturing on coal miner's affairs and thinking about joining the independence fighters in Cuba and Algeria. Both versions of Tommy point to the dubious veracity of *Free Women*, which is eventually disclosed to be a second novel but what they have in common is that in both cases, Tommy surmounts a state of existential despair and doubt by learning to do things that balance his moral beliefs with practical opportunities.

## **RICHARD PORTMAIN**

Richard, Molly's ex-husband and Marion's current husband and Tommy's father has been depicted as a main character in the novel. Richard is an overbearing, impatient, domineering and well-to-do businessman who despises Anna and Molly's left-wing politics, although he happened to meet Molly during his brief socialist phase in the 1930's, and their lack of commitment to marriage and careers. Richard tries to dominate the lives of his family, particularly Tommy, who he tries to discourage from writing and encourages going into business. Richard betrays Marion repeatedly and openly with a succession of younger mistresses, who are often his secretaries. Richard even attempts to sleep with Anna and when she rejects him, becomes even angrier and more aggressive towards her whenever she resists his attempts to dominate his family. In the final novel, *Free Women*, Richard gets divorced from Marion and moves his new lover into his home. Richard barely appears in the notebook, and when he does it is as if he has three daughters instead of three sons. He portrays not only an incompetent, cheating husband, but he is also an example of a classic conservative businessman. He perpetuates the cycle of increasing social injustice, under capitalism by placing profits above people, contentment, and integrity.

## **MARION**



At the beginning of *Free Women*, Richard's second wife Marion is an alcoholic, probably driven by Richard's adulterous affairs and her confinement at home with their three children. For much of the book, Richard ponders what to do with Marion, of course, he never thought of being faithful or devoted to her and, in her distress, Marion seeks advice from Molly and Anna, who she admires for their "freedom." Marion's greatest change comes after Tommy's suicide attempt when she becomes friends with him, quits drinking and decides to become an activist instead. She eventually gets a divorce from Richard and runs her own dress shop at the end. It's hard to tell if she's a fictional construct or a real person Anna knows, but she exemplifies not only the suffering of married women who are confined to the home by their unfaithful husbands but also the possibilities of reclaiming their independence and happiness.

### **MRS MARKS / MOTHER SUGAR**

Mrs. Marks is a psychoanalyst that Anna and Molly both visit and refer to as "Mother Sugar," a play on Marks' "traditional, rooted, conservative" attitude. Anna initially seeks psychoanalysis to deal with her lack of feeling and inability to write but spends most of her sessions talking about her strange dreams. These sessions make up a large part of the blue notebook that Anna began keeping at Marks' request. Marks leads the psychoanalysis sessions with short questions and "conducting smiles," giving Anna space to explore and face her doubts and anxieties. Marks becomes a source of psychological fortitude for Anna and encourages her to write. Anna also criticizes Marks, particularly for her tendency to "name" feelings and experiences in terms of easy-to-recognize archetypes or mythologies. Marks' name is an ironic pun on Karl Marx, as she is the opposite theoretical tendency (Freud, not Marx) and is decidedly anti-evolutionary as she urges Anna to settle for her own unsatisfying life rather than change it.

### **WILLI RODDE**

Willi Rodde appears as Anna's friend in Africa in the black book. He is a German exile, who happens to be the same person as Max Wulf in both the black notebook and the red notebook. He is an uncomplicated, dedicated socialist, and the senior most of the group which comprises of Paul Blackenhurst, and also includes Jimmy, Ted, Maryrose, Anna as well as himself and, less frequently, Stanley and Johnnie, Mrs. Lattimer. He has a very conventional viewpoint on social mores, which often clashes comically with his left-wing political views. His association with Anna is transactional and



"almost asexual"; the only time they have sex "with any conviction" is after she spends the evening with Paul. Some, especially like George, view Willi as a brilliant, erudite theorist, while others especially like Paul view him as overly serious and out of touch with colonial Africa's social reality. Although Willi is passionate about social change, he is only interested in revolution at a national level and has little interest in interpersonal dynamics and inequality which is why he celebrates Jackson's firing and encourages George to forget about the fate of his son who is of mixed race. After the war, Willi breaks up with Anna, and Willi ultimately becomes a bureaucrat in East Germany.

### **PAUL BLACKENHURST**

Paul Blackenhurst in the black notebook with Jimmy and Ted is one of three former homosexual Oxford-trained airmen to get associated with the socialist party with Anna Rodde and Willi. Anna is in love with Willi but at the same time she falls covertly in love with Paul and elopes with him on their last night at the Mashopi hotel. Paul happens to become a model for the main character of Anna's first novel *Frontiers of War*. Paul is from a wealthy, powerful English family and is charming but ruthless. He is fond of scorning and insulting the people around him, specifically those who have spent almost their whole life living in the colonies. Paul wastes much of his time arguing with Willi about politics; Paul's socialism just like his homosexuality is fake and he likes to sneer at Willi's earnestness about the revolution. Paul develops friendship with Boothby's cook Jackson, partly out of spite and partly to point out British racism, and this leads to a long-running argument between the socialist party and Mrs. Boothby. On the day Paul is due to go to India, he arrives at the airfield in a drunken stupor and as the sun illuminates him, he trips over a propeller which dismembers him and kills him.

### **JIMMY MCGRATH**

In the black book, the Oxford airman, Jimmy is born into a Scottish middle-class family but adopts a well-tuned Oxford drawl and adopts a homosexual accent. Unlike Paul Blackhulst and Ted Brown who were homosexual only as a fashion statement, Jimmy's homosexuality is real and causes him constant anxiety and insecurity, which is further heightened by his fear that he will die during the war. Jimmy drinks heavily and frequently gets lost, gets hurt, and in a way embarrasses all of the socialist guests at the Mashopi hotel. Jimmy is genuinely in love with Paul, but Paul hates and insults him back. Jimmy finally makes it through the war and is eventually married in England resulting in sexless marriage.



## **TED BROWN**

In the black book, the Oxford airman, Ted Brown, is described as "the most original of the three" and "the only true socialist among them." He is also "the only working-class Englishman." Ted is energetic, enthusiastic, and devoted to those around him. He puts his money and time into helping those around him, especially the young men he helps, such as Stanley. Stanley's defiance of Ted's advice causes Ted to put more and more of his own money and time into him. While Ted is hurt by the group's quarrels, he does not get along with any of its members. He deliberately fudges his military exams so that he can be with Stanley. This does not go well and he eventually gets married and teaches English in Germany after the war.

## **MARYROSE**

A young white woman, Maryrose is the only female member of the socialists' group, with the exception of Anna. She is a former model who was born and bred in what is now South Africa's British Cape Colony. Most of the men, Maryrose meets, such as Paul Blackhead and William Rodde, are fixated on her beauty while neglecting her impressive intellect. Maryrose is gentle, uncomplicated, and more open-minded than the other members of the group when it comes to the plight of white settlers. During her stay at the Mashopi Hotel, Maryrose is overcome with grief over the passing of her brother, with whom she may have had an inappropriate relationship. She is also torn as to whether or not she should pursue a relationship with George Hounslow, the man she regards as the only man who can make her happy

## **GEORGE HOUNSLOW**

George Hounslow in the black notebook has been depicted as a passionate, modest, and lovable road repairman. He has an affair among others with the cook Jackson's wife, Marie during the time he is away from his wife and children due to work. This relationship is central to Anna's plot for "Frontiers of War." George worries about Marie's fate and the fate of his son, who he cannot tell the world about due to the strict racial segregation in colonial Africa. He lives in squalor with his wife and children, his parents, and his wife's parents, but he loves and works hard. He is very passionate about socialist organizing and idolizes and spends a lot of time talking to the only other socialist at the Mashopi hotel, who believes in socialism, Willi Rodde. Unlike the other socialists, George believes in living up to his principles so much that Paul and Willi Blackenhurst laugh and sneer at him. George's



emotional profoundness and intense pursuit of women makes Anna as well as Mayrose who is much younger than George feel like that he is the only acceptable possibility for romance and regrets rejecting him.

When Mrs. Boothby throws Jackson out and sends him, Maria, and their kids (including George's son) back to the capital, George is heartbroken; however, he does manage to get in touch with them and send them some money. George is one of the few working-class men who are honest, self-aware, and emotionally honest throughout *The Golden Notebook*. He is, perhaps, the exception to the rule of the true man that Anna is looking for.

## MICHAEL

The character of Michael, as depicted, is a married psychiatrist with whom Anna has a long and heartbreaking relationship in the early 1950s. Michael has been presented as Jew ex-communist, most of his family perished in the Holocaust and most of his communist dissident friends were killed by the Soviets, and their relationship is mostly mentioned in passing and through Ella's relationship with the novel's main character, Dr. Paul Tanner, in the yellow notebook. However, it is the main reason for Anna's emotional distress throughout the novel. In the third section of Anna's blue notebook, which she writes in great detail, she describes the end of her relationship with Michael: On September 16th, 1954, Anna spends most of the day at home indulging in Michael's every desire; sex, food, emotional comfort, but she gets nothing in return; he doesn't even show up for her veal dinner, and she throws it in the trash.

Although Michael was the only one Anna was truly in love with, he always saw her as a distraction and would never marry her; this disassociation between men seems fondness for women and their lack of emotional backing in them is the chief hurdle to Anna from being content with her romantic life.

## SAUL GREEN

Saul Green is an American communist writer, who is blacklisted. He moves into Anna's apartment and begins a passionate relationship with her. Initially, he is brutal and cruel, but when he also appears to be an "extraordinarily acute observer" of her personality and experiences, Anna begins to fall in love with him, even though he is unable to commit to her sexually or emotionally until the end. Anna finds Saul's long-winded rants about "I, I, I" and his constant infidelity painful, partly because it makes her wonder



if he really cares. He also has no sense of time, and he writes about women in his notebook in a scattered and restrained way, including Anna. She feels her body tense when Saul approaches, but she prefers to chat and listen to jazz with his best version of himself, she knows there are many versions of him and that she will never know which one she will encounter at any given moment. Eventually, they start to meld mentally and emotionally, losing each other's sense of self. Saul begins to feel controlled by Anna, and he is guilty of sleeping with other women. In her dreams, she sees Saul playing her memories back like films.

She nurtures him and brings the relationship at the verge of maturity; in the end he finally asks her to write but takes the golden notebook in exchange for the opening line of what would become *Free Women*. He abandons her and she dramatizes their whole relationship in the final pages of *Free Women*. She replaces him with a similar figure named Milt, who saves her from madness as well. Anna and Milt are together for five days, but Milt realizes he has to leave because he is unable to combine sex with love.

## NELSON

Nelson is an American communist entertainer who, during McCarthyism, is blacklisted from Hollywood and moves to England. He has a short-lived affair with Anna, which is described in the final section of the *Blue Notebook*. Anna meets him when he speaks out against the British Communist Party and attempts to conceal stories of Soviet oppression from the Party's members and the public at large. She finds him attractive and passionate, but soon learns that he suffers from a "mortal fear of sex"; he gets into hysterics before bed, has misogynistic rants after sex with her, and disappears for weeks before she visits him at his home for a party. At the party, he and his paranoia-ridden, beautiful wife drink excessively and laugh openly about their hatred for each other. He then calls Anna to ask her to marry him, but hangs up and calls later to spitefully denigrate women on the phone and demands that she tell him that he did not hurt her. Nelson, like De Silva, is a recurring character in Anna's nightmare about "joyful spite". Like De Silva, he represents the dichotomy of male objectification and female emotional support; he forces Anna to lie in order to confirm his distorted version of their relationship. This illustrates how men who are unable to confront their own internal conflicts push those conflicts and their emotional repercussions onto the female partners in their life.

## ELLA





Ella has been depicted as an alter ego of Anna, the protagonist of her yellow notebook, *The Shadow of the Third*. Ella, like Anna, is single and unhappy. She has a child from a past, brief, and ill-considered marriage. Ella is also a writer, her first novel is about the suicide of a man and passes her in answering letters at *Women at Home* magazine much like Anna at the Communist party. Ella's relationship with psychiatrist Paul Tanner mirrors Anna's long and intimate relationship with Michael; they both have a series of relationships with immature, distant married men. Through Ella, Anna allows herself to process her abuse by men and her frustration with her own failures in creative and romantic life. After Ella encounters her father in the yellow notebook's third section and Anna's relationship with Saul Green begins in the blue notebook's third section, Anna leaves the story and begins writing the novel's frame story, *Free Women*, in which she replaces Ella with another version of herself. Using her real name and completing *Free Women* suggest that Anna's short-lived relationship with Saul gives her a sense of identity and helps her overcome her writer's block.

## **JULIA**

Julia is Molly's identical in Anna's novel document *The Shadow of the Third*, which appears in the yellow notebook. Like Molly, Julia is a failed, single Jewish actress with Communist leanings although unlike Molly, Julia does not belong to the Communist Party. In Anna's yellow notebook, Julia is much less important than Molly is in *Free Women*, though Ella discloses her fondness for Julia when she moves into her apartment. Julia bears more scorn for men than Molly; she is an acute, if pessimistic, observer of sex and relationships and possibly reflects the answers that Anna wishes Molly would give her in their discussions about men.

## **MAX WULF**

In the black notebook, it's Willi Rodde. In the yellow notebook, it's George and in the blue one appears as Max Wulf. Max is an ex-husband of Anna and also father of Janet. As mentioned in the blue one, Max and Anna happened to meet in Africa and had never been in love with each other. The disparity in his name suggests that the black one may not be as accurate as it initially appears.

## **GEORGE**

George is Ella's ex-husband in the yellow notebook as well as Anna's, Max Wulf in the blue notebook and Willi Rodde for Anna in the black notebook. Ella never felt attracted to George and married him





almost out of exhaustion. She is relieved when he leaves her for another woman. When Ella meets Paul Tanner, she feels uncomfortable walking past him.

## **DR. WEST**

Dr. West writes medical advice columns in the yellow notebook, *Women at Home* magazine, and Ella takes care of his overflow by responding to letters that aren't quite as "medical" as he'd like. At the start of Anna's manuscript of *The Shadow of the Third*, Ella arrives at Dr. West's house, which is an improved version of the drab, identical working-class homes that surround it. Dr. West later tells Ella that Paul Tanner had gone to Nigeria to escape his mistress, who he described as a "flighty piece" and of course, it was Ella. Dr. West later attempts to have an affair with Ella, she rejects him and rather ends up with Patricia Brent. Dr. West is a typical career-obsessed, emotionally stunted man, who is entirely concerned with his own pleasure and not concerned with how he affects the lives of the women around him.

## **PATRICIA BRENT**

Patricia Brent has been depicted as the conservative "editress" at *Women at Home* magazine, where Ella also works, in the yellow notebook. No doubt, she worked at a "big smart woman's magazines" but had to quit because she had no idea about fashion or culture. Brent feels pride in being fair to people she doesn't agree with, and because her husband walked out on her 11 years ago, she talks about men with a gallant, sarcastic, cynical attitude. Eventually, she becomes Dr. West's lover, and Ella is afraid of becoming like her: immediately resigned to never having love and extremely contemptuous of men who mistreat her. Patricia Brent shows the self-punitive resignation of women who feel abandoned by men but can't conceive of themselves as valuable outside of their romantic relationships.

## **PAUL TANNER**

Paul Tanner is a fictionalized version of Michael in the yellow notebook. He has been presented as a married psychiatrist and turns out to be Ella's main centre of attraction of love. They happen to meet at the party at Dr. West's house and spend most of the next couple of days together. They end up having sex on a carpet in a field in a rural area. Paul spends every night in Ella's apartment. He talks about them like an old married couple but also insists that he doesn't love Ella. He criticizes her novel and tries to change her clothes and personality. He continues to have affairs with women. When he finds out that



Ella loves him, he moves to Nigeria with his family and never visits her again. He is a perfect example of a married man who takes advantage of his unmarried mistresses. He sees them as a source of pleasure and distraction but never takes responsibility for his actions.

### **ELLA'S FATHER**

In the yellow notebook, Ella's father has been presented as an ageing, very quiet, ex-soldier who lives in seclusion in Cornwall. He spends his days reading philosophy, writing poetry, and when Ella inquires about their family, he tells her that he never cared for others or had an active sexual relationship with his mother. He likes Ella in an abstract way but has no intention of learning about her life. He believes that people are not going to change and that it is better to be alone than to try to make relationships with people who are not like them. His pessimistic attitude towards relationships is an extreme version of the way; Ella and Anna feel about their own inability to make meaningful connections with men.

### **ROBERT BRUN**

In the yellow notebook, Robert Brun is the over-the-top conspicuous, well-groomed and unfaithful French editor of "Femme et Foyer" which translates to "Women and Home", a close translation of Ella's magazine "Women at Home". Ella meets him in Paris to buy a story for "editress" Patricia Brent, but quickly realizes that the story isn't suitable for a British reader. For the remainder of the meeting, Ella watches Brun stare at women passing by until his "captive" fiancée, Elise, arrives. Ella perceives Brun's relationship with Elise to be a failed marriage, as he is clearly unable to respect or match her loyalty.

### **CY MAITLAND**

The protagonist of the book is CY Maitland, an American leucotomy surgeon who falls in love with Ella, the yellow notebook girl. CY is an energetic, boyish, handsome, and proudly nonconformist. He meets Ella on a bumpy flight from Paris and the two of them sleep together a few times while he is in London. Although CY is impotent and unsatisfactory sexually, Ella impresses him with her experience and depth of character, which causes him to ponder what it would feel like to be married to someone like you, rather than his wife. CY does not approve of Ella's communism, her extracurricular activities and her independence, but he believes he has learned something from his time with Ella. The relationship between CY's professional success and his immature personality reflects a pattern of men's emotional and interpersonal malleability in this book.



## JACK

Jack is a Soviet communist movement historian in the red notebook. He is Anna's closest friend in the British Communist party. He often mediates meetings between Anna and Comrade John Butte. They both agree that their party has lost its purpose and is becoming a Stalinist propagandist machine. They also have interesting conversations about their difficulties with the party and with the Soviet Union as a whole. However, unlike Anna, Jack feels that he cannot leave the Party because he has spent his whole life in it. After Anna quits, it seems that they drift apart. Jack is torn between his religious convictions and his organizational commitments. He is a symbol of the tragedy of political activism, which is also a tragedy of individual values against the collective interest. There is also a version of Jack in Anna's novel *The Shadow of the Third* in a yellow notebook as an editor at the magazine of Ella. He collaborates on several articles with Ella's magazine and later has sex with her before discussing his conflicting feelings about his wife.

## IVOR

Ivor has been depicted as a gay Welsh student who rents out the spare room in Anna's flat. He is sort of isolated until after Tommy's suicide attempt when he becomes a bit of a father figure to Janet and his girlfriend, Ronnie, moves into the flat. Anna loves him for helping her with Janet, but worries that his presence is bad for her because he's not "a real man". After Ronnie leaves, he goes back to his isolation, and Anna also kicks him out of the flat, knocking him hardly in his face with the flowers brought by him. Anna's relationship with Ivor reveals her conflicting feelings about "real" heterosexual love, which involves tension and conflict. She loves Michael and Saul for their insensitivity and strength.

## RONNIE

In the third part of *Free Women*, Ronnie the theatrical lover, Ronnie of Ivor, moves into Anna's apartment without warning. Anna despises him for his vanity and femininity which she perceives as a satire on women and "normal" love. Despite her fear that no one would accept him and his attempts to please her, Anna throws him out of the flat at the end of this section, but he returns briefly in the next part of *Free Women*.

## JAMES SCHAFER



The protagonist, James Schafter, is an American young writer and Anna's friend who adopts and satirizes the overindulgence of the literary establishment. He makes friends with a critic who gives him a bad review, and he publishes satirical journals and short-form stories that satirize the self gratification of Western writers and their racism. He persuades Anna to publish her own fake journal, but she can't bear the thought of it coming out in her name.

### **DE SILVA**

De Silva has been depicted as an old friend of Molly who has migrated from Ceylon to London and marries a British woman before returning home after his journalistic career fails and later on moves back to London on a whim. He borrows money for his travels and leaves his wife and kids in Ceylon with no money. At the end of the novel, in a blue notebook, he sleeps with Anna "because it didn't matter to me." Anna hates him for his arrogance and his misanthropy. He tells her about persuading a girl to fall in love with him, only to have her fall out of love with him when he actually did it. He also tells her how he tried to ruin his friend's marriage by exposing an affair just to see what would happen. After Anna rejects him, he tries sleeping with a prostitute above her to arouse her jealousy. When she finds out about the affair, he cries in the blue notebook and pleads for forgiveness. Much like Nelson, De Silva represents men's divided consciousness and the principle of joy in giving pain. He harms women and neglects them, but he expects Anna to look after him and condone his mistreatment.

### **TOM MATHLONG**

Tom Mathlong, the charismatic and influential leader of the African revolutionary movement, appears to be an old acquaintance of Anna and is mentioned by characters at several points in the novel. When Marion makes friends with Tommy and decides to become an activist, she asks Anna for help in getting in touch with him, who is in prison and unlikely to be able to reach out to them. Mathlong represents the kind of unyielding, powerful, and action-focused political advocacy that Anna seeks out to find for herself in the novel.

### **CHARLIE THEMBA**

Mr. Mathlong's friend and fellow activist, Charlie Themba appears to have lost his mind years into his political activity and started accusing his friends of conspiring against him. When Anne starts having



her own mental break-down, she briefly believes that Mr. Mathlong and Mr. Themba are one and the same; but their true relationship and even existence is left in doubt.

### **MRS. BOOTHBY**

Mrs. Boothby has been depicted as a caring and trusting wife, but at the same time closed-minded also. She is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Mashopi hotel and at first has a close relationship with the socialists until she reciprocates against them for their kindness shown towards her black cook Jackson. The socialists, particularly Willi Rodde and Paul Blackenhurst, have a great deal of fun with her, berating, laughing at her, embarrassing her, before trying to win back her affections by pretending to be nice. She frequently throws Paul and Anna out of her kitchen when they are seen talking to Jackson and she is annoyed by Jimmy's infatuation with Paul; when Jimmy drunkenly kisses Jackson, she dismisses her cook after 15 years of service. She is a typical British settler living in Africa, not being wealthy or educated according to European standards, but ends up imposing a system of racial terrorism and exploitation in order to improve her own economic situation.

### **JACKSON/THE COOK**

Jackson is the friendly, hard-working African chef at the Mashopi hotel, whose relationship with Paul Blackhead during the period of the black notebook incites Mrs. Boothby's anger. When she sees Jackson helping the drunken, gay Jimmy McGrath to his feet in the kitchen, Mrs. Boothby sends Mr. Jackson, his wife, Marie, and their family home, even though he has been employed by the hotel for fifteen years. The relationship between Mr. Jackson's character and his destiny serves as a tragic metaphor for colonial racism.

### **MARIE**

The character, Marie is the wife of Jackson. Marie lives with Jackson and his family in a cottage on Mr. and Mrs. Boothby's land. Marie is having an affair and having a baby with George Hounslow which is the background to Anna's story in the first novel, "Frontiers of War". At the conclusion of the first part of the black book, Mrs. Boothby has Marie and Jackson return to Nyasaland.

### **COMRADE JOHN BUTTE**

He was a leader of the British communist party and a staunch supporter of the Soviet empire. He was an energetic and sympathetic organizer, but his attitude has hardened over time and he has become an



authoritarian. He has always ignored Anna's advice that the Party should not publish mediocre books. This authoritarianism shows the dangers of long term political commitments that place dogma above independent critical thinking.

## **STANLEY LETT**

Stanley is one of Ted Brown's "Protégés." He is a seductive young man who breaks the law and spends most of his time sleeping with Mrs. Lattimer. He also spends a lot of time with his friend Johnnie, who is his passport to a party. Stanley hangs out with Anna's bunch of socialists, but he has no interest in politics. In the end, Ted decides to take a sabbatical from his military exams so he can be with Stanley, but Stanley thinks it a stupid idea and continues ignoring Ted's advice.

## **3.3 FURTHER MAIN BODY OF THE TEXT: THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK**

### **THE NOTEBOOKS, PART- 1**

Anna keeps four notebooks: a black one, a red one, a yellow one, and a blue one. The black notebook has a black line running down the middle of the page, with the words "source" on the left and "money" on the right. On the left, the words *Frontiers of War*, about Anna's novel, and on the right, transactions, about the money she got from it. At the beginning of the novel, Anna talks about meeting with various people who want to make a movie version of her novel. She doesn't like their plans and feels that her novel has been misinterpreted. *Frontiers of War* was published in 1951 and became a bestseller. The story follows Peter, an English pilot, who is sent to Africa during World War II and falls in love with a black woman.

Anna begins to recollect the events and the individuals that inspired the novel. She was part of a communist subgroup in the African colony of Rhodesia now Zimbabwe. In 1939, she along with a man named Steven, moved to Rhodesia, where their relationship ended quickly. Anna finds that she does not want to go back to England, and so lingers in Rhodesia, where she works as a secretary, where she falls in love with a German, Willi Rodrigue. This relationship forces her to remain in Africa, where she becomes involved in the politics of the Left. It also forces her to meet three young men, pilots in the



Royal Air Force Paul, Jimmy and Ted: Paul was an unfriendly, calculating and affluent man; he died in an accident just before he was due to leave Africa, Jimmy was a melancholic somewhat because of his repressed homosexuality. Ted was always interested in intellectual pursuits and was the most political of the bunch. A young woman, Maryrose, who had grown up in Rhodesia, became part of this group, as did a local, , working class man, George Hounslow

On an impulse, they go to the Mashopi hotel run by Mr. and Mrs. Boothby, who have a teenage daughter named June, and Anna and her friends spend most of their time at the hotel over the next few months, talking politics and organizing the local community in support of their political cause. Their community steadily grows to include Stanley Lett, the young man, whom Ted is trying to educate, and Mrs. Lattimer a lady who is staying at the hotel. As the group gets to know each other, George confesses about having an affair with an African woman, who is Mrs. Boothby's cook's wife, and that his paramour has delivered his baby. In the meantime Stanley starts an affair with Mrs. Lattimer.

Several sensual and emotional apprehensions come to the forefront one weekend when Mashopi hosts a big dance. At this point, Mrs. Boothby is fed up with her cook Jackson, who has become friendly with Paul, and berates him several times. Eventually, she fires Jackson. When Anna expresses her anger, Willi suggests that George should be separated from the cook's family. Furious, Anna sneaks off with Paul and they make love. When they get back to the hotel, Lattimer is yelling at his wife, probably because he knows about the affair. Anna doesn't conceal her deeds from Willi, and ultimately their relationship is over. The next morning Jackson and his family leave and the rest of the group breaks up. Paul is killed a couple of days later, and Jimmy goes away on deployment. Anna mentions that these events inspired her novel.

## **FREE WOMEN, PART-1**

The novel begins in 1957 in London, where two friends Anna and Molly are visiting Molly's apartment. Molly has recently returned from a holiday abroad. While she was away, Molly's ex -husband Richard paid a visit to Molly's apartment. Richard and Molly were married for a brief time and had a son, Tommy. Richard had since married Marion and had three sons. Molly did not get remarried and had



pursued a variety of careers. Richard was expected to call at Molly's apartment and the women waited for him. When Richard reaches, he is surprised to find that Anna has spoken to Molly about his arrival. He tells her that he is concerned about his son Tommy because he thinks he is too melancholic and spends too much time brooding. Molly and Richard quarrel, with Richard accusing Molly of raising their son in a bad manner. She complains in return that Richard is too busy running his business and making money that his treatment towards Marion is also not good. She further accuses Richard of cheating on his wife and neglecting Marion's drinking problem.

In the end, Richard invites Tommy to move in with him and Marion, but before Molly can say anything, Tommy shows up. He tries to explain why he doesn't want to devote to a career, while his father endeavours to explain that he needs to earn a living. Tommy mentions that he might like to write, citing a series of talks he has with Anna about writing. Molly is astonished to know that her son had these conversations with her friend. At the end, Richard storms out, leaving Tommy in tow.

Molly is left alone and conveys her hopes to Anna that Anna will write again, as she has written one novel before. Anna changes the subject and tells Molly that while she was away, she almost had a sort of romantic relationship with Richard. Molly is sad to be in England again and wishes to travel abroad again. Anna tells Molly about some of her acquaintances and points out that the two women are connected to the Communist party. Anna also tells Molly that she has recently seen Michael, her ex-boyfriend. At last, Anna goes home and bids her friend a fond farewell. Anna returns to her own flat, where she lives with her daughter, Janet. She takes out the four notebooks, she regularly writes in.

## THE NOTEBOOKS, PART- 2

The red notebook is filled with Anna's thoughts about her involvement in the British Communist Party. The entries start in 1950, which suggests that these notes were made after Anna's return from Africa, and before the publication of her novel. Anna and Molly both have their doubts and suspicions about the party, but continue to work hard to further the Party's political objectives. Anna mentions several times that she wants to leave the party, but never does. Michael is mentioned many times during this period which suggests that this is when they were involved romantically.

We then proceed to the yellow notebook, where we find what appears to be the manuscript of a novel called "The Shadow of the Third". The novel centers on the protagonist, Ella, who is a divorced woman with a young son, Michael. Ella lives with her best friend, Julie, who works at a woman's magazine but





also has aspirations of writing a novel. One night, Ella grudgingly agrees to attend a party where she meets psychiatrist Paul Tanner. The next day, Ella and Paul begin an affair, although Ella is aware of Paul's marriage and children. The relationship between Ella and Paul continues for five years, with Ella's jealousy over Paul's wife and Paul's lack of support for her novel. Paul eventually leaves for Africa and the relationship comes to an end, leaving Ella in ruins.

The blue notebook appears to function as a diary. Anna watches Molly and Richard argue over their son and notes how it brings to mind her relationship with her late husband, Max. Anna mentions that the black notebook character, Willi, refers to Max, whom she dated for three years before deciding to have a baby. The couple got married in 1946 and had a daughter Janet, but soon after the birth of their child, they split up. Anna narrates the occurrence in 1946, when she and Max, who are already grappling with despair in their relationship, resolve to have a child and consequently they conceive Janet in a hotel room in Africa.

The notebook then introduces a sequence of entries from 1950-1954, where Anna discusses about her encounter undertaking psychoanalysis with Ms. Marks. During this time, Janet is a baby and Anna is in a relationship with Michael. Anna's psychoanalysis experiences lead her to confront her anxieties about affinity, vulnerability and insecurity. The notebook also contains a series of entries describing geopolitical events, with a focus on death and destruction.

## **FREE WOMEN, PART- 2**

Anna had just tucked Janet into bed when she got a phone call from Molly asking if she knew where Tommy was. Molly was worried because Tommy had gone out with Richard the day before and hadn't come home. A few minutes later, Molly called again to let Anna know that Tommy had gone to Marion's house. When she hung up, Anna was surprised to see that Tommy had come to her apartment.

Anna tries to get Tommy to talk; he tells her that Richard offered him several jobs working for Richard's company but Tommy refuses, angering his father. Tommy and Anna discuss Anna's communist past and his mother. He tells Anna that he stopped by Marion's house. He further asks her why she maintains four notebooks; and she describes that she wants to prevent any sort of chaos. Anna gets more and more upset when Tommy asks her how she feels about Janet's father and tries to explain how mothers feel towards their children. Tommy communicates his annoyance and resentment



with her decision to keep four notebooks, affirming that Anna is not being genuine or unified in the manner she writes and anticipates about herself.

Tommy leaves and Anna calls Julie, who is feeling better. Meanwhile, Marion has told Anna that she's coming to stay with her and Marion arrives at the flat in a drunken stupor. Marion conveys her envy of Anna for being unbound and single and Anna tells Marion that she can stay the night. Marion complains that Richard is cold and distant, and that he doesn't seem to like her. As the two women are talking, the telephone rings again, and Anna answers it. It's Molly, telling her that Tommy shot himself and she is convinced that her son is not going to survive. Anna hung up the phone and realized Marion had fainted. She left the flat and went to the hospital with Molly. When Anna arrived at the hospital, she was told that Tommy was not expected to survive.

### **THE NOTEBOOKS, PART- 3**

The black notebook begins with two columns: "Source" and "Money." In the "Money" column, Anna receives several letters from Reginald, a man who is interested in adapting her novel "Frontiers of War" for television. Initially, Anna is reluctant to meet him, but eventually she does. At lunch, Reginald finally explains what he wants to do with the novel: he wants it to be set in England for the romantic relationship to be class based rather than race-based. In exasperation, Anna makes a sarcastic suggestion that the novel should be adapted into a comedy, which shocks Reginald. After the lunch, Anna decides not to engage in any further conversations about adapting the novel. However, soon after, she meets an American woman called Edwina Wright who is interested to talk about adapting the novel and Anna meets her. Anna is fond of Edwina, although she is not open minded to the proposal of revamping her novel as a melodic. However, the relationship between Anna and Edwina quickly deteriorates when Edwina comes to know that Anna is a Communist.

The story begins in 1954 with the red notebook, and Molly and Anna discuss the possibility of separating from the communist party. When Anna tells Michael about her ideas, he questions her moral presumptions that she is making. That evening, she has a dream, where she sees a world map with the colours of different countries spreading out, symbolizing different political affiliations. When she wakes up, she is moved by the power of her love for Michael, and is surprised to find that she is content in her life. The story then jumps back to 1952, depicting a Communist meeting, where Anna tells a story that she has recently heard from a party member. It is about a man called Comrade Ted, who has been



selected to travel to Russia as a member of a delegation, and tells the story of how he met with Stalin with pride and emotion. When Anna reads the story to the members, they laugh at her idealism and innocence.

The third volume of the yellow notebook picks up with *The Shadow of The Third*. Ella's editor tells her to fly to Paris, but Ella doesn't want to go as she's been depressed since the end of the relationship with Paul over a year ago. She can't stand the idea of being alone in Paris, so she decides to cut short her trip and fly back to London. As she waits for her flight to take off, she observes an American man in wait for the same flight, but they are delayed due to a mechanical issue. It's unclear whether the issue has been resolved or not when they board the plane, so Ella starts thinking about plane crashing and realizes she doesn't care if she meets her death. At the end of the flight, the American CY Maitland asks Ella to go out to dinner with him the following night. When they meet, Ella finds out that he's a rich brain surgeon who's married and has kids. Despite this, CY falls in love with Ella and feels influenced by her independence and bold sexuality, and they sleep together. Both of them continue to meet each other during the course of CY's visit; when he quits, Ella tells Julia that she is still not over Paul.

The blue notebook continued in 1954. Michael tells Anna that he believes his relationship with her is coming to an end, and that she does not have a clear view of the world existing around her. Anna responds by resolving in writing down every detail of whatever happens in that single day. On September 16, 1954, Anna records the following: She spends the morning dividing her time between Michael and Janet. She plans for dinner with Michael that evening. She spends the day at the Communist Party's office, where she works without pay. She rushes home to take care of Janet. She prepares dinner for Michael. He doesn't show up. After writing this long, detailed entry, Anna deletes it and replaces it with another, much shorter entry. In it, she explains that she had decided to leave the party and realized that Michael had decided to end the relationship.

### **FREE WOMEN, PART- 3**

Tommy survives his suicide attempt and goes on to live a normal life although consequently he has become blind. Anna spends her days looking after Molly and Janet and concealing the truth from her young daughter. Tommy is amiable and easy going, and he seems to be making good progress in adjusting to his new circumstances. He never talks about what happened, and Anna is frustrated that she is unable to reconnect with him. Molly reports with astonishment that Marion visits Tommy often and



has almost completely quit drinking. Ultimately Richard invites Anna to his office to meet him. He tells her that he is annoyed that Marion spends so much time with Tommy and that she appears to have developed a novel interest in politics

Anna recommends Richard that he could hire a babysitter to take care of the kids while Marion is busy, and further adds that it is actually better that Marion has discontinued drinking. Meanwhile, Richard is fed up with his wife's behaviour and informs Anna that he is contemplating of divorce, and further adds that he is anticipating to get married to his secretary. He wants Marion and Tommy to go on a holiday together but Anna tells him that Tommy won't leave without Molly. Anna and Richard quarrel, with Richard claiming he has the right to marry again and be happy while she explains how selfish he has become. She storms out in exasperation.

As she drives home, Anna ponders her relationship with the man who lodges in her flat, Ivor. Initially, their relationship was unprejudiced and neutral during the time he started taking care of Janet, while Anna was busy attending to Tommy's health and Molly's support. Recently, however, Ivor's lover, Robbie, has moved in with him and this arrangement disturbs Anna. She arrives home to find Marion waiting for her, and explains that since spending more time with Tommy she has come to realize how much she had not known about him. Marion inquires if Richard has spoken to her about his plans to divorce his wife, and adds that she is aware of his relationship with his secretary. She further adds that she was going to go along with the divorce but Tommy urged her not to. She also hopes to work with Tommy on behalf of an African political leader who is imprisoned

Anna is perplexed and angry because she knows that Marion is not intelligent enough to have come up with such thoughts on her own. After Marion goes, she calls Tommy and berates him, shocked at how uncomfortable he makes her feel. She has a dispute with Ronnie and tells him that he and the two men must go. She also tells her daughter, Janet, that Ivor is leaving. She is relieved because her daughter doesn't seem to care. That evening, Ivor talks to Anna and convinces her that if Ronnie goes, she will let him stay in the flat. However, the relationship goes cold again.

## **THE NOTEBOOKS, PART- 4**

The black notebook continues with entries in both the "Source" and "Money" columns. The first entry in the Source column is from 1955, in which a man in London kicks and kills a pigeon, and then is resisted by the woman who watched the whole incident. It is possible that this is a dream, as the next



entry is from Anna, in which she dreams of a pigeon, and remembers a day on a safari in Africa, when Mrs. Boothby asked the group to go out and shoot pigeons, so that she was able to make pigeon pie for her husband. Paul, Jimmy and Willi, and Anna and Maryrose all go out, and are distracted by watching a large flock of butterflies and locusts. Paul shoots pigeons, but everyone finds the process of observing this process of shooting pigeons a little bit distressing in various ways.

Under the heading “Money”, Anna receives a request for either a story or a piece of a journal, which she declines. However, she records a series of fictitious journal entries from the point of view of an American writer, depicting his experiences of a pompous debauchery in Europe, and shows this journal to the American writer, James Schafter. James finds it humorous and together, Anna and James create another series of journal entries from the point of view written by a woman writer who lives in Africa. These journal entries tell the story of a woman who has created a novel called “The Frontiers of War” and is thinking of making a play out of it. She talks to her friend Harry about making the novel into a play, and he suggests changing the love story to an account of a young African woman falsely accusing a white man of rape. The story then moves to a short story by James called “Blood on the Banana Leaves” which tells the story of a white man who falls in love with an African woman, and after she has been raped, kills another white man in vengeance. The notebook then moves to a series of critical reviews of Anna’s novel, all of which appear in Soviet journals.

The story then proceeds to the red notebook depicting the sequence of events from 1955-56, with the entries describing Anna’s increasing disillusionment with Britain’s Communist Party. The entries conclude with how Anna is informed by Molly that Tommy has actively joined a socialist party, and Molly is surprised that Tommy is following the same ideas which she and Anna were inspired by. She wonders, why the new generation doesn’t know any better, Anna comforts her friend by explaining that it would be better for Tommy if he focused on socialism instead of his own success and money. The story then moves into the yellow notebook, after Ella’s relationship with Paul is over, she moves to a new apartment, which upsets Julia. Doctor West, who writes a medical column for the magazine where Ella works, tries to seduce Ella, but she rejects him. He ends up sleeping with her editor, and the conversation between Ella and Julia about his advances brings them back together as they both complain about men. Ella somewhat feels disturbed that her friendship with Julia is dependent on both women detesting and distrusting men.



Sometime later, Ella starts having an affair with Jack, the married man she works with at the magazine. She begins to wonder if her attitude towards sex is making her happy or unhappy, but she doesn't know what to do. She has another unsatisfactory sexual encounter with another married Canadian screenwriter, this time at a party. She decides to give up on men and concentrate on her writing. The story is cut short by Anna's voice, thinking about writing about a character called Ella. Then, the story continues from Ella's point of view, where she is thinking about different ideas for her next novel. She visits her father and asks him about his relationship with his late wife. Father tells Ella that his wife didn't like sex, so he had other sexual partners, even though he knew his wife was jealous and unhappy. At the end of the visit, Ella asks him if he ever wrote poetry, and he tells her he did.

#### **FREE WOMEN, PART- 4**

The blue notebook continues with a set of entries made daily for eighteen months, listing the facts of the events of the day in condensed way. These entries are crossed out and are then followed by an entry where Anna regrets that her attempts to be true in the blue notebook have failed. She anticipated that she could attain truth by just writing down factuality but that has failed to help her to catch the actuality of her experience. She goes on writing about a conversation she had with Mother Sugar, in which they had argued, whether psychoanalysis was helping her or not, and what the purpose of the treatments might be. Anna goes on describing how, once she moved into her own apartment, the notebooks became a more important part of her life. She had written in them while living with Molly, but hadn't thought critically or consciously about them. After reading them, she became concerned about what she was reading, and decided to use them to simply record the facts of her life. However, she found that these entries did not help her attain clearance or compatibility.

Anna explains a recurring dream, in which she struggles to explain what she believes is the source of the dream. Then further she explains Communist Party meeting organized at Molly's house, where a man narrates a cycle of violence and atrocities committed by Communist regimes in foreign countries. An American named Nelson confronts the man at the meeting and demands that these events be kept secret in order to protect the public image of Communism. Anna is attracted to Nelson and they sleep together, but Anna soon realizes that Nelson is not fond of sex. Both of them look at each other in a



very uncomfortable and enigmatic way. Then, Nelson invites Anna to a party at his house. The party is filled with Americans having Hollywood connections, and Anna feels uncomfortable, especially because Nelson's wife is there. There is a lot of drinking and bickering among various married couples, and Anna realizes that Nelson will decide to stay married to his wife forever. The following morning, Nelson asks for Anna's hand in marriage, and he gets angry when she refuses.

Anna then moves on to another recent confrontation with a man and notes that she is beginning to associate men with the fear of pain. De Silva is a journalist who is unhappily married and has kids and a wife who stay in Ceylon. He is a friend of Molly on whom he occasionally depends for money. When she rejects him, Anna feels guilty and calls him to dinner. De Silva tells Anna about his recent experiment in which he had sexual intercourse with a stranger and told her that he would act as if he loved her but didn't want her to react with love. He was annoyed that she found her unable to stop herself from showing him affection. De Silva then tells Anna some other story about his friend who ruined his marriage by having an affair with his cleaning lady. Anna sleeps with De Silva, but the next day she tells him that she won't sleep with him anymore, which upsets him. He proposes to bring another woman to Anna's apartment and sleep with her, making her listen to him.

Later, Molly tells Anna that De Silva has deserted his wife and kids and that she feels deceived by him. Anna then discovers that the friend that De Silva confided in is the one who gives his wife an allowance and that it was De Silva who had an affair with his cleaning lady. Coming back to the frame narrative; Anna is waiting for Richard and Molly to meet. They need to talk about Marion's move into Molly's and Tommy's apartment, but Marion insists she will ultimately go home. Richard doesn't want Marion to come back because he wants to stay with his secretary Jean. During a protest, Tommy and Marion get arrested, and Richard worries about the negative publicity he'll get because he is a reputed personality. Richard is mad at Molly and Anna because he thinks that both of them have encouraged Marion to accept Leftist policies as a means of tormenting him. Molly is feeling devastated and dejected, but fails to understand how to support Marion and Tommy, so she asks Anna for help.

Upon arrival, Anna meets Tommy for the first time, but he tells her that he does not want her to talk to Marion, and Anna ignores him. She goes to see Marion, but surprises herself when she talks about an African leader, Tom Mathlong, and expresses admiration for his vision of the society he wishes to build. She also talks about another leader, Charlie Themba, who became obsessed with the idea that others





were plotting against him. Anna shows Marion a letter that Charlie wrote to her and Marion tells her that she cannot go back to Richard, even for their children's sake. As Anna starts to argue that Marion cannot live in Molly's house, Tommy cuts her off. He accuses her of trying to keep Marion away from him and Anna proposes that Tommy and Marion go abroad together.

Anna leaves feeling very optimistic and when she sees Molly and Richard she informs them that she is very much hopeful. She recommends that Richard proposes again to send them abroad and predicts that this time they will go through with it. Anna goes on to explain that because she got emotional in her reciprocation with them, she was able to get a better understanding of them. Molly and Richard go to talk to Tommy and Marion. Anna, feeling more confident than ever, tells Ivor that he has to go as she knows he has started seeing Ronnie again.

### **THE NOTEBOOKS, PART- 5**

The story returns to the black notebook, now full of newspaper clippings depicting violence and chaos in Africa. Anna writes one entry, September 1956, in which she narrates a dream where she notices a film being created about individuals she knew at a hotel called the Mashopi. She becomes exasperated and agitated by the discrepancies between her memories and the film being made. She decides to quit writing in her notebook. The story then proceeds to a red notebook, also full of newspaper clippings, in which Anna has labelled each time the word "freedom."

The entry in Anna's red notebook in the handwriting of Anna herself tells the story of how she met Jimmy, who she had first encountered in Africa. Jimmy apprises her how he had a friend named Harry. Harry and Jimmy would argue about political ideology but Jimmy would keep up with Harry's life: Harry ran a school for disabled children and children with developmental delays in London. Harry also did a lot of research on the Russian Communist party in his spare time. He studied Russian and dreamed of one day being invited to be part of Russian leadership. Jimmy meets Harry by accident and invites him to be part of the delegation to Russia, unaware that Harry sees it as a calculated and intentional invitation. After a few days in Russia, Jimmy realizes what Harry is up to and crushes Harry's hopes by telling him that the invitation is unprepared and doesn't mean anything. Harry bores the interpreter for hours with his version of history. Finally, Harry goes back to England with no change in his life. Anna closes the red notebook.





The yellow notebook continues with nineteen notions and synopsis of plots for possible novels or short stories, most of which are about men and women in love. The blue notebook resumes with no dates. Anna has not been able to find a new tenant for her apartment and she contemplates moving into a smaller one, especially as her daughter, Janet, is leaving for boarding school. Molly tells Anna about an American she knows, who has become involved in Left-wing politics and is in need of lodgings, so Anna unwillingly agrees to rent out the rooms to him.

When Saul Green comes to live with her, she is immediately charmed by his keen sense of observation and perceiving her life. Although she is not sure if she likes him or not, she feels a strange tension and excitement whenever he is near her. A few days later, she discovers that she loves him. They start an affair but he is not consistent in his treatment towards her and she doubts that he is having relations with other women. They quarrel about politics. At times, he changes from cold unfriendly to needy. Still, Anna becomes very fond of him but feels devastated when she discovers a diary in which he talks about his relationships with women and confesses that he doesn't enjoy sex with Anna, she is horrified.

Anna and Saul resume living together in a strained and unhealthy relationship. Anna is frequently envious and angry with him, but they are also content with their lives. Anna is still hoping that Janet will return, but she is increasingly confused and unable to think rationally. One day while shopping, Anna finds a golden notebook with a gold cover. She buys it and brings it home. When she gets home, Saul offers to give it to her, but she wants to keep it for her own use. She decides to put aside her other notebooks and use this one to write everything down.

## **THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK & FREE WOMEN, PART- 5**

The Golden Notebook starts with Anna and Saul in a new phase of their relationship. She is feeling hopeful and happy about the future. But then she goes into a spiral of craziness and bad dreams that include all of the characters and stories spread across all four notebooks. She wakes up and tells Saul that they are not good for each other. Both of them argue with each other and go back into a crazy cycle of arguing and having sex.

Ultimately, Saul suggests that if Anna were able to communicate and tackle her encounters, perhaps she would no longer be a victim of her own madness. Saul tells Anna that he will make her write a novel and offers her the opening sentence "The two women were alone in the flat." He tells her that if she can



complete the novel, he can too as well. He asks her for the first sentence of his novel. He says that he will use it on one condition if she gives him the notebook. He then requests her to cook for him

Throughout the night, Saul acts in a childlike, vulnerable manner, and when he awakens in the morning, he and Anna declare the end of the affair. In the Golden Notebook, Anna writes the first line of the novel she has given him. Saul continues to write, finishing a short novel about the intellectual life of an Algerian and French soldier. The novel is published and does well. The story then returns to Free Women, recalling the hesitation of Anna about permitting Janet to go to boarding school and her ultimate consent consequently leaving Anna alone. Marion and Tommy are away in Sicily and Molly is busy looking after Richard's young sons while he is away with his secretary. She thinks about having an affair, sleeping with an American named Nelson, but is disappointed and decides to have no more relationships. She starts to pin newspaper and magazine clippings on the walls of her apartment. She knows she is losing her mind, but she is sure that when Janet comes home she will regain control and be able to look after her child. Anna also suffers from guilt that her writing may have caused Tommy to commit suicide, as well as frustration at having to use language to express her feelings.

A friend invites Anna to stay with an American friend, a writer called Milt. Milt spends a couple of nights at Anna's apartment. They sleep together once and break up on amicable terms. After Milt's departure, Anna starts looking for a smaller place to live and a job. Molly calls Anna and informs that she is planning to get married to a rich Jewish businessman. Tommy and Marion are moving into Molly's house. Marion runs a small women's dress shop. Anna talks about her plans to go into business, offering marriage counselling and teaching to disadvantaged young people. The two women part on friendly terms and go back to their separate lives.

### 3.3.1 TECHNIQUE AND STRUCTURE OF THE NOVEL

The Golden Notebook is divided into two main parts. The first part is a third person short novel, called Free Women, which is split into 5 parts. The second part is a first person narration by Anna, which takes the form of four diaries, or notebooks, which she keeps. The black notebook is for her writing life; the red notebook is for her political life; the yellow notebook is for her emotional life; and the blue notebook is for everyday events. Basically, Anna keeps her notes as a way of compartmentalizing her life, hoping that by doing so; she will be able to stay more on top of things. Reading the Golden Notebook we start with the first part, Free Women, and then go through each of the other four



notebooks in turn, from black to red to yellow to blue. After reading the fourth of the blue notebooks, we are presented with a new notebook, the Golden Notebook, and then the fifth part of the novel, *Free Women*. In addition to being third person, *Free Women* takes place in the present for the reader while the notebooks take place in the past, but as we go through the cycles the distance between them increases until they become one and the same.

The Golden Notebook has a unique structure, but it's not perfect. Ms. Lessing wants to show the relationship between Anna's past and present, and between her past and her fantasies. But she doesn't want to do this by the usual combination of narrative strands, which might lose her the sense of tension and timing. Instead, she throws in long passages from several notebooks, each in a different colour, each representing a different part of Anna's life. The beauty of this is that Ms. Lessing has been able to isolate the key elements of Anna's experience with a clarity she might not have been able to achieve in a traditional novel; the downside is that she's had to cram large chunks into a disarranged framework.

In the black notebook, Anna goes back to her childhood, drawing a sketch of a gang of English radicals in a temporary African city, bickering with each other. This is the least interesting part of the book and does not justify its length. In her black notebook, Anna talks about the meetings she has had with different people who want to turn her novel into a TV series, a movie, or a stage show. Even though her income is decreasing, Anna has no problem rejecting these offers because the people making them don't seem to understand her novel at all. They want to move the story away from Africa, emphasize the love story elements, and ignore the fact that the novel was mainly about racism.

In the red notebook, Anna looks back at her political life and sketches a series of funny vignettes about left-wing intellectuals in London in the 1950s. The red notebook chronicles Anna's political life, both inside and outside the Communist Party. It documents the people Anna was close to, including Michael, the important events that took place, including the Rosenbergs and the death of Joseph Stalin and his denunciation at the party's 20<sup>th</sup> congress. It also documents the consequences of the Hungarian revolution, including the executions and the extermination of Russia's Jewish population.

In the yellow notebook, she writes a story of her own life, centered on a love affair that, in the story of the present, has come to an end. The Yellow Notebook was said to be about Anna's "emotional life" but in reality it was an attempt to create stories out of Anna's experiences, most of which were in the form of the short novel. *The Shadow of the Third* tells the story of Ella, a magazine writer who, like Anne, is



a divorced, single mother with a close friend, Julie. Like Anne, Ella has a long-term relationship with Paul, a married man who is a psychologist. Ella's relationship with Paul initially satisfies her, but its end threatens to destroy her.

In the blue notebook, she writes an objective account of her day-to-day life, which culminates in a detailed description of one day. Little by little, Anna builds a mosaic of her anxieties: how she faces the conflicting demands of a lively child and a sleepy lover in the early hours of the morning; how she deals with the irritation of working in a travelling publishing company; how she succumbs to the urge to wash her body repeatedly, fearing that her periods will make her smell unclean, how she comes back home at night to the unrelenting of her thoughts. The blue notebook was intended to be a more traditional journal. It includes entries about Molly and other people in her life, appointments with her psychiatrist, newspaper clippings, etc.

Finally, there is the golden notebook, which is meant to document the re-integration of the different Annas that appear in the notebooks. However, the love affair she is betting her hopes on, begin to fall apart, the golden notebook becomes a record of her breakdown, and in the pages of nightmare power. Anna is shown to enter a state of madness, where she locks herself in her bedroom, pastes disturbing newspapers on the walls and slowly tastes the journey from hopelessness, where she gives up on herself to vividness, where she remembers what she has already lost, to despair, where the image of loss fades but the pain lives on, feeding on itself.

### 3.3.2 STYLE OF THE NOVEL

The majority of Lessing's novels are set as Anna Wulf's journals. This helps to draw the reader in because Anna's character is so much more open to the reader than if the novel had been written in the 3rd person. It also gives the reader the feeling that they have stumbled upon something very personal and confidential and that they have been given the privilege of reading Anna's innermost musings. By presenting the novel in the form of a series of journal entries, Lessing avoids the traditional plot and chronology of the novel and concentrates on the internal transformation of the character of Anna Wulf. The fictitious journals provide a deeper level of character, but they also cause problems or difficulties. Some of the writings are repetitive or inconsistent with previous entries but Lessing uses these journals as a way of categorizing Anna's thoughts, as each of the four colour-coded notebooks focus on a particular topic or area of Anna's life. Each of the notebooks remains neatly separated and the reader



becomes familiar with the recurring pattern in which each notebook appears. Lessing also uses various notebooks to emphasize the different divisions in Anna's life. After that, as Anna's personality begins to unravel, the lines between the notebooks start to blur. The journals are then used to further represent and reinforce Anna's drive into madness.

An unreliable narrator usually cannot be trusted. In Lessing's novel, it's unclear whether the narrator is speaking the truth or not. First, Anna tells us that she's looking for the truth in her writing, and then she explains the difficulties of finding it. When she tries to record her memories, she acknowledges that her memory may have faded, and she's creating details that aren't necessarily true or accurate. She also admits that her memory is colored by her feelings, both the feelings she experienced during the actual experiences she had undergone as well as the feelings which have evolved with the passage of time as she remembered it.

In addition, Anna creates fictional characters in her journals. It's a little perplexing because journals usually record actual events or ideas. Anna's characters are supposed to represent her and her relationships with others, so why doesn't she just record these events as they happen? Basically, Anna has more freedom to make up the truth by presenting it up as a fiction, which adds to the sense that Anna isn't a reliable storyteller.

Once Anna starts losing her sanity, her credibility becomes even more tenuous. If she's not experiencing reality the way most people do, how is she recording events that we can accept as true? What's confusing about Anna's writing is the vague outlines of the people she's describing. Anna uses a variety of names for her ex-husband, Willi. It's unclear how much the real Paul Tanner looks like Michael, Anna's paramour. Other details in the story seem out of place. Was it true that Tommy ran away with Marion? Or did he marry another woman he was seeing, a woman that Tommy's mother mentions briefly in an interview with Anna? Milt and Saul Anna's lovers are interchangeable. Sometimes, Anna records events in the journal before they happen.

The journals may be intended to evoke a sense of honesty or trustworthiness, but the lack of specificity in the novel scratch out this impact. Perhaps, this too is deliberate: Lessing shows that, while an author may try to get to the truth, it is not possible to do so.

### 3.3.3 THEMES IN THE NOVEL



## **FEMINISM**

The feminist protagonists, Anna and Molly, are women who do not want to be defined by their marriage or by their relationship with men. They believe that they have the right to live a life of complete intellectual and political involvement. They challenge traditional chauvinistic behaviour of Richard's many liaisons with his secretaries. In the novel, Lessing points out that even a movement like Communism, which sought to destroy an existing political system, did not necessarily break down gendered norms. The novel offers a nuanced and complex view of feminism because it portrays female characters who want freedom and romantic love. Anna and Molly both struggle with the duality of wanting to be "free women" while also having a man in their lives.

## **AUTHORSHIP**

Anna has written the bestselling novel and uses it as a tool to navigate and understand her world. The content contained in these four notebooks reveals her struggle to comprehend herself, her history, and her surroundings. She experiments with various forms of writing, such as diary, journal, list, and memoir. Although writing allows Anna to express her thoughts and feelings but it does not always provide her with the tools to lead a significant life. As Tommy points out Anna's ability to write means that she can always self publish, edit, or rewrite in a way that she would not be able to do if she was committed to actions or words. Because Anna doesn't always share her work, it also doesn't always enable her to truly connect with others. Writing may be complicated but it is also important to her. The reasons why she can't and won't write a new novel are so complex and deep rooted that it takes all of the 640 pages of her novel to articulate them. Even then, it doesn't heal her problem.

## **POLITICAL IDEOLOGY**

For much of her life, Anna is urged by her dedication to Leftist ideology and her belief that if she worked vigorously for the Party, she can bring about real change and a fairer world. But Anna is brilliant and insightful enough to understand that individual personalities, selfishness and sentimentality are inherent to any political movement. She often finds herself wondering if she can keep working for the Party in the good interests. The novel also draws attention to the exhaustion that comes with working for a political cause, for example, by knocking on doors during a campaign.

## **DESIRE**



Although Anna is ambivalent about how romantic relationships can affect a woman's freedom, she often feels sexual desire towards different men. Anna is also interested in exploring the experience of desire in a critical way; for instance, she ponders why she feels desire and sexual pleasure for some men and not others and she notices when her partners feel desire in a different way than she does. As a liberated woman, Anna must confront the fact that love and desire remain deeply connected to her. She is deeply in love with Michael and finds it difficult to enjoy sex with men after their relationship ends. She is also deeply hurt and deceived when she finds out that Saul has slept with other women.

## **COLONIALISM**

In the parts of the book that take place in Africa, the theme of colonialism is raised: different white European characters exist in a society where native Africans have been the main victims of exploitation and oppression. Anna's overall quest for self-discovery is complicated by her status as a white woman in a colonized society. Her novel poses significant questions about racial discrimination, demonstrating that Anna has considered the realities of colonialism. However, with the passage of time, it also becomes clear that many people overlook these issues and choose to read the novel as a straightforward love story.

## **FRAGMENTATION**

At first, Anna's use of four separate notebooks is intended to assist her to maintain different aspects of her life in a separate and organized way. As Anna's mental health deteriorates, it becomes more and more difficult for her to view herself as a single entity. As she tends to observe the conflict between her identities as a mother, a lover, a writer, and a political organizer leading her to perceive herself fragmented and discordant, Anna's feelings of individual fragmentation in a way reflect a wider sense of global fragmentation during the Cold War. At the time, there was no longer any sense of security or a stable world order. Social norms e.g. expecting children to be raised within marriage were becoming less and less secure. Anna's sense of personal fragmentation threatens to push her over the edge.

## **TABOOS**

In both her life as well as in her novels, Anna is not afraid to break taboos. In her novel, she spends years in a long-term relationship with a man without marriage and then she bears the courage to get divorced and survive as a single mom. As a woman without a husband, Anna has numerous



relationships with married men. Although she is occasionally disappointed or even jeopardized by these liaisons, Anna is never ashamed to violate the taboo of infidelity. Her novel is full of interracial love stories and Anna refuses to leave them out of her novels for the sake of making money from adaptations. Although Anna seems to enjoy living an unconventional lifestyle and doing what she wants, she also suffers from feelings of isolation from making decisions that most people would not accept.

### 3.3.4 THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK AS PSYCHOANALYSIS

At the beginning of the novel, we find out that Anna and Molly both have encountered psychoanalysis. This aspect of the novel becomes more significant as we see several scenes in which Anna talks to her psychoanalyst, Mrs. Marks; nicknamed “Mother Sugar”. Psychoanalysis is a form of psychotherapy that dates back to the early 19th century. It was developed as a form of treatment for depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues. It was first introduced as a practice in the late 19th century by the German psychoanalyst F.S. Freud. Over the years, other psychoanalysts have developed different theories and approaches to psychotherapy.

Psychoanalysis is based on the idea that a person’s thoughts and actions are based on instinctual drives that they are not consciously conscious of. When these drives come to the surface, most people will react with defense mechanisms that prevent them from becoming aware of them. According to this theory, the conflict between the “conscious mind” and the “repressed unconscious” can lead to conditions such as anxiety and depression, neurosis and hysteria. Some of the conditions that psychoanalysis was originally used to treat, have been studied through modern scientific models of mental disease, while others have largely been refuted or rediscovered by scientists.

Psychoanalysts used to believe that the unconscious is revealed by dreams and by things we do unconsciously, like saying something we don't mean to say or saying something we mean to say (Freudian-slip). If we can bring this material to the surface and bring it into our conscious mind, then the tension between our consciousness and the unconscious can be resolved. Most psychotherapy sessions were short and focused on the patient talking about their thoughts, dreams and fantasies. This allowed the analyst to get a better understanding of what they were thinking and feeling in their subconscious.





In Lessing's novel, psychoanalysis plays a key role in explaining Anna's fascination with her dreams: both Anna and Mother Sugar believe they reveal something about her unconscious mind. The idea of a 'repressed unconscious', which is both hard to access and necessary for self-realization is also present in Anna's struggle to articulate her true feelings and to write authentically. Anna's writer's block seems to be linked to her repression. Psychoanalytic theory also informs Anna's account of her sexuality, as she is interested in having different types of 'orgasms' and what this reveals about her. Freud theorized respective phases of sexual development and associated them with different levels of sexual pleasure.

## 2.4 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. What happens when potential collaborators misinterpret Anna's novel when they suggest adapting it? How does this affect Anna?
2. How does the encounter with psychoanalysis affect Anna?
3. How does homosexuality play a role in Anna's novel?
4. Describe in what ways does Anna appear honest with herself in how she presents the world and in what ways is she not?
5. How does Anna's sexual and romantic life interfere with the notion of her being a "Free Woman"?

## 3.5 SUMMARY

The Golden Notebook is structured as follows: First, there is a formulated portrayal called "Free Women" depicted in third person in which the protagonist, Anna Wulf, is featured. Anna writes four notebooks: a black notebook, a red notebook, a yellow notebook, and a blue notebook. The novel then switches between describing Anna's life and revealing the contents of each of these notebooks. Finally, there is a passage from the fifth notebook, the Golden Notebook.

An Englishwoman, Anna Freeman Wulf, moves to Rhodesia in 1939 at the outbreak of World War II. During her stay in Rhodesia, she becomes involved with Leftist politics and forms a circle of friends who share her commitment to the cause. She is romantically involved with a man called Max Wulf, but her feelings towards him are inconclusive. At the end of the war, Max and Anna plan to have a child together and marry in 1945. Their daughter, Janet, was born in 1946. After some time, Anna and Max



divorce each other and she returns to London to be a single mother and initiate her work as a writer. In 1951, she published her novel, *Frontiers of War*. The novel is set in Africa and is based on her own experiences. It sells very well and gives her enough money to live. Anna also becomes involved with the British Communist Party and works for them.

When Anna returns to England, she starts living with a single mother named Molly. Molly is raising her son, Tommy after divorcing her husband Richard. Anna also develops a long-term relationship with Michael, a married man she has been in love with for five years. In 1954, Anna ends her relationship with Michael and leaves the Communist party after becoming increasingly disillusioned with the party. The frame narrative begins in 1957 and all of the past events are gradually revealed through the notebooks. The black notebook is about Anna's experiences in Africa. The red notebook is about Anna's experiences with Communism. The yellow notebook is about the reception of an adaptation of Anna's novel. "The Shadow of a Third" is a story that appears to be loosely based on the relationship between Anna and Michael. The blue notebook is like a journal where Anna writes down memories and reflections.

In 1957, Anna tried to be supportive of Molly and Richard's teenage son, Tommy. Tommy tries to kill himself and is left blind. This suicide attempt and Tommy's strange behavior make Anna think about her life and her mission in writing. She feels anxious about writing her second novel but doesn't know how to go about it. By the time Tommy gets better, Anna's mental health is deteriorating. After her daughter goes off to boarding school, Anna is left to fend for herself. She falls in love with an abusive American screenwriter. This affair pushes Anna to the edge of a nervous breakdown, but in the end, she is able to start her second novel. The scene in which she wrote the first line of this novel reveals that frame narrative is also a larger work of fiction written by Anna herself. At the end of the novel, Anna realizes that she needs to get a job, and she tells Molly that she wants to become a marriage counsellor and a teacher. At this time, Molly is getting ready to get married again. The novel closes with the couple going about their daily lives.

### 3.6 KEY WORDS

- **Amalgam-** A combination
- **Bolster-** To strengthen



- **Connivance-** Scheming or assistance
- **Deduce-** To arrive at a conclusion based on premises, assumptions, and logical inferences
- **Foetid-** Rotten
- **Foliaged-** With leaves or trees
- **Impermanent-** Temporary
- **Indoctrinated-** Brainwashed
- **Intuition-** Instinct
- **Ironical-** Sarcastic
- **Judicious-** Showing caution or good judgment
- **Mellifluous-** Sweet and flowing in sound
- **Naivety-** Lack of experience
- **Perpetuating-** Encouraging something to continue
- **Pert-** Sprightly and jaunty
- **Plaintive-** Wistful or longing
- **Prejudice-** Bias, stereotype, or preconception
- **Spasmodic-** Sudden, brief, and sporadic
- **Spontaneous-** Unconstrained, without planning or premeditated intent
- **Turpitude-** Vile, shameful, or base

### 3.7 SELF ASSESSMENT TEST

1. What is the importance of four notebooks in Doris Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*? Discuss.
2. Throw light on the significance of the title *The Golden Notebook*?
3. Do you consider *The Golden Notebook* a feminist? Justify.
4. Describe the character of Mother Sugar in the *Golden Notebook*?
5. What does *The Golden Book* symbolize?



6. What according to you is the main theme portrayed in *The Golden Notebook*?
7. Who do you consider the protagonist of *The Golden Notebook*? Explain.
8. Discuss the time period and background when did Doris Lessing write *The Golden Notebook*?
9. Throw light on the structure of the novel.
10. Justify whether the narrator is reliable or not.

### 3.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. When Anna talks to potential collaborators about adapting her novel into TV or film, they often make suggestions that they don't understand what she's trying to say. They seem to miss the basic point depicted in her novel. For instance, they sometimes propose moving and setting away from Africa or removing the central biracial relationship element. A lot of people who read her novel think it's a love story that they can make money off of, and they ignore the political critique that Anna was trying to make. These conversations leave Anna feeling cynical and frustrated, and they add to her writer's block because she feels that because people misunderstood her first novel, she's hesitant to write another.
2. Anna has psychoanalytic sessions with a woman called Mrs. Marks, whom she calls "Mother Sugar." Mother Sugar encourages Anna to open up about her feelings and vulnerabilities. Mother Sugar pays close attention to when Anna appears to be in a state of distress. For instance, Mother Sugar provides Anna with dream interpretations that indicate that Anna is in a state of conflict and unhappiness. Anna admits that going through psychoanalysis allows her to be more in touch with her emotions. For instance, she talks about how she has learned "how to cry." However, Anna is not completely satisfied with this new vulnerability and she prefers to compartmentalize and repress her feelings.
3. Anna is very open-minded and tolerant when it comes to certain kinds of sexuality. She has a lot of sex with a lot of different men and many of them are married. She rents out the spare room of her apartment to a gay man. At first, Anna stays away from him. But when he helps to look after Anna's daughter, she becomes more uncertain of him. When he moves his lover into the apartment, Anna reacts with disgust. Eventually, Anna moves Ivor out of her apartment. She is



ashamed of herself and worries that people will think that she is having a lesbian relationship with Molly.

4. Anna prides herself on being able to see the world as being an honest and unsentimental person. She's good at reading people's moods and observing how they deceive themselves. She's also keen to write openly about sex and bodily functions, which have traditionally been considered taboo, particularly for women. But Anna can also deny what she really wants and what would bring her joy. She denies the fact that she is pursuing relationships with emotionally unavailable men. She denies the frustration she feels when she can't write another novel.
5. Anna is proud of her decision to not to marry again out of social pressure and to provide a father to her child. Although Anna is proud of her independence, it also becomes clear that she is lonely at times. Anna finds it difficult to stay away from men. She ends up being unhappy and disappointed in her relationships. Also, Anna comes to the realization that she doesn't find relationships sexually satisfying unless there is some kind of emotional connection. Anna's romantic life and bad judgment about men reveal that she isn't as independent and detached as she claims to be.

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<b>Difficult Daughters: Manju Kapur</b>	

## STRUCTURE

### 4.0 Learning Objectives

### 4.1 Introduction

A Brief about the Author

### 4.2 Main Body of the Text: Difficult Daughters

#### 4.2.1 Plot in the Novel

#### 4.2.2 Characters:

Virmati

Ida

Kasturi

Shakuntala

Swarn Lata

Ganga

Kishori

Lajwanti

Suraj Parkash

Harish

### 4.3 Further Main Body of the Text: Difficult Daughters

#### 4.3.1 Narrative Technique

#### 4.3.2 Themes in the Novel

**Quest for Identity****Marriage****Relationship between mother and daughter****Tradition versus Modernism****4.4 Check Your Progress****4.5 Summary****4.6 Key Words****4.7 Self-Assessment****4.8 Answers to Check Your Progress****4.9 Suggested Reading****4.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- To comprehend the patriarch system prevalent in India
- To understand the theme of quest for identity
- To understand the theme of traditional versus modernity among women
- To study the epistolary technique of narration as presented in the novel
- To understand complicating and conflicting relationship between mother and daughter
- To study struggle for independence and freedom among women during time of partition

**4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Difficult Daughters tells the story of three women: the narrator Ida, who is divorced, her mother Virmati who marries a professor for love and her grandmother Kasturi who comes to terms with her difficult daughter Virmati. This is not a story of a fictional family but of a real middle class family with father, mother, brothers, and sisters that you have known and lived with, in your life. Bringing them together is the backdrop of the partition, which seems to have been the turning point of modern India 50 years later. Their popularity lies in the fact that they accurately document the life and time of this nation in its





early years, giving us a picture that is like going through the family photo album where half forgotten people and events come flooding back into our minds.

Virmati falls in love with Harish, an English professor, who equally passionately falls in love with her for being married to an illiterate woman, who is unable to reciprocate his love. After many attempts, Virmati succumbs to his love as she too is a soul in search of love. This love affair leads to a lot of problems and Virmati is left to bear the burden alone. She has to have Harish's child aborted because the professor is afraid to marry her but at the insistence of a friend, he is forced to marry her. However, Virmati's troubles do not end there, they only change colour. Most of Virmati's suffering is due to her mother's apathy. She has no one to cry for her and this makes her suffering even worse. She suffers from the prejudice of the society, the family and most of all from her own selfishness.

### **A BRIEF ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Manju Kapur, a novelist from Amritsar (India), was born in 1948. Manju Kapur completed her M.A. degree from the University of Dalhousie (Halifax, Canada) in 1972, and her M. Phil degree from Delhi University. Currently, she resides in New Delhi with her husband, Gunndhi Dalmia, with whom she has three children and three grandchildren.

She is a prominent figure in the post-colonial literature of India, having previously served as a professor of English literature at her alma mater Miranda House College in Delhi. However, she is now retired. She has joined the rank of a growing number of Indian female writers, who have had a significant impact on the development of Indian fiction, including authors such as Shashi Deshpande, Anuradha Roy, Komal Das, Geeta Hariharan, Anita Nairand, Shobha De, as well as Meena Alexander.

Kapur's novels depict the plight of women in a patriarchal society and the difficulties they face in achieving their autonomy. Her works are not only a reflection of the society's desire to uplift its female population, but also a reflection of the self-consciousness of every woman, in order to contribute to the development of the society. Five of her novels have been published, including *Difficult Daughters* in 1998, *A Married Woman* in 2002, *Home* in 2006, *The Immigrant* in 2008, and *Custody* in 2011. Her most renowned female characters include Virmati and Astha, as well as Nina and Shagun.

Nisha in *Home* offers a rare glimpse into the lives of modern Indian women, who are all striving to achieve their own personal success. These characters may engage in a scandalous liaison with their



married neighbour or professor, or explore lesbian relations as seen in *Virmati* (Difficult Daughters) and *Astha* (A Married Woman). However, Nisha is distinct from her predecessors in this regard.

Manju Kapur's debut novel, *Difficult Daughters*, was released in 1998 and met with immense international recognition, winning her the Commonwealth Writer's prize as the best first novel.

## 4.2 MAIN BODY OF THE TEXT: DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS

The novel follows the protagonist, *Virmati* as she is raised by an affluent and educated family. She has matured into a responsible young woman, taking care of her siblings as a substitute mother due to her mother's multiple pregnancies and subsequent illness. *Virmati* is presented as a woman who is in complete control of her own body and mind, despite her physical and emotional traumas. However, she gradually realizes that her responses to these traumas and the remedies she offers have caused further emotional harm to herself and those around her.

It is interesting to note that *Ida's* journey to uncover her mother's past reveals her own internal struggle to achieve self-worth and the realization of the most fundamental truth of her life: that all things in this world are relative, and no one or entity can be distinguished from one another, regardless of their strength or weaknesses. The story of *Virmati* is told by *Virmati's* daughter, *Ida*, who is in a state of emotional turmoil due to her mother's death. *Ida* searches for answers to her questions about her mother's past but is unable to find the information she desires. The author employs a skillful narrative technique to create a narrative that accurately reflects the feminist perspective.

It is evident that the narrative that *Ida* desired has been lost due to the hesitant, informative opinions expressed by her family. Unsatisfied with the relatives' interpretations of her mother's story, *Ida* continues to attempt to reconstruct it. The author has been able to maintain a distance from the story, as the narrative of *Virmati* is also related to the narrator's own life in certain aspects. Consequently, *Ida's* role as an interpreter of her mother's narrative creates a difficult relationship between the writer and the reader which is problematic as it allows for an understanding of a woman's perspective on another woman's life.

As the novel progresses, *Virmati*, the protagonist, is confronted with the conflicting aspects of two opposing forces: femininity and masculinity, individualism and society and more generally, feminism and patriarchy. She is born and raised in a family that is traditionally tied to patriarchy, and as she



matures, she is confronted with the opposites of domination and defiance, freedom and slavery. She finds her own space, where she struggles to negotiate, forced to accept but ultimately rejects, and transgresses and rebels against the patriarchal norms of her family and the oppressive standards of the family and society. Although Virmati's story is one of transgression at various levels, it has many similarities to the stories of other female characters, such as Kasturi, Lajwanti, and Swarn Lata as well as Ganga. All of these women can be characterized as "Difficult Daughters" in both general and individual terms. Their subjugation and resistance to the patriarchal standards they are forced to adhere to, particularly in the face of male chauvinism, is common. Despite the social repercussions of their relationship, their suffering is common due to the oppressive patriarchal restraints placed on them by men. Almost all these women have experienced their suffering in a silent manner, with their silence rather than their voice being the expression of male chauvinist values. The relationship between mother and daughter is seen as more captivating when the subservience of women to men is present. This type of relationship has been subject to scorching views and has been damaged at various levels. It challenges the fallacies of feminism, yet remains in harmony with it due to its cross-referencing between the patriarchal realm and the specificity of women's experiences.

Manju Kapur's novel *Difficult Daughters* is a touching story about a daughter and her mother. The main characters are Kasturi, Virmati, and Ida, three women who belong to three generations of Punjabi families. The story revolves around the idea that all girls are expected to marry and obey their husbands. However, Kapur does not overlook the tradition of marriage or the encouragement of breaking away from the family structure.

The very words of the story serve as the basis for the title of *Difficult Daughters*: "One thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother" This is a statement made by a young, childless and divorced woman, Ida. Ida, Virmati's daughter, was a strong-willed woman who was not afraid to take a stand against society. The story is set in a pre-freedom era. When Ida was travelling alone in Amritsar, she faced criticism from the other women on the train. This is a simple story, but it is powerful enough to illustrate the disregard of women's autonomy in a free India.

In *Difficult Daughters*, the protagonist Virmati is caught between the emotions of her family and her desire for education, love, and freedom. The female characters have different perspectives on their thriving culture and norms. When Virmati's mother Kasturi urges her daughter to accept the marriage



as the 'norm,' Virmati refuses to accept it and instead searches for knowledge. Ida, who narrates the novel, is the daughter of Virmati. The novelist distinguishes the women from three generations through her voice. She uses Virmati as the weapon of her writing and highlights the marginalization of women who are primarily interested in their uniqueness and dignity.

Virmati's mother, Kasturi, is constantly reminding her that she is meant to work and please her relatives. She has always known that marriage is her destiny since her school days. After she graduated, she continued her education at home. Her mother wanted to ensure her daughter's future happiness by making sure that she had the right qualifications. She wanted to please her relatives. In the novel, Kasturi is described as the mother whose duty is to bear children as many as possible. When Kasturi married, she became the victim of this unlimited birth. She was married in a traditional family. She gave birth to a total of 11 children, including 6 daughters and 5 sons, all against her wishes. The girls were Virmati, Indumati, Gunvati, Hemavati, Vidyavathi and Parvati, and the boys were Kailashnathi, Gopinathi, Krishanathi, Prakashnathi, and Hiranathi. When she was about to give birth to her eleventh child, she began to experience pregnancy symptoms similar to those of an anemic or malnourished woman. She began to feel heavy in the belly, nauseous in the morning and evening, vomiting while eating, and her hair was falling out in bunches. She also experienced a sudden feeling of joy when she woke up. How can a woman be so trapped by nature?

Kasturi's prayers start and end with this request that she should get rid of the child she is carrying and never get pregnant again. During her pregnancy period, she is not able to be away from her other children and due to the hectic schedule, she feels exhausted all the time. Kasturi can't remember a time when she was not exhausted and her feet and legs did not hurt. When she gave birth to her 11th child, she was not permitted to take proper rest.

Virmati's life is not much better than her mother Kasturi's, and Virmati's parents are as eager for her marriage as her mother is. She says, "They want nothing from me except an agreement to get married." Women in those days were forced to think only of marriage, and that's why marriage is a major issue in her life. Her mother is always concerned about her marriage, and she doesn't understand Virmati's mental issues. Her mother doesn't understand that she has been a very honest girl since childhood, who has her own self-esteem.



Virmati is the true mother to her siblings, who she looks after when her mother gets away from her responsibilities after giving birth. Since Virmati is the eldest of all Kasturi's children, her role is less like a child, a sister and more like a mother. Virmati's mother was always pressuring her to do something for her siblings, and this behaviour made her angry. She would give her mother a blank look when she asked her to do something. She was a girl with a lot of ambition. When she was 13 years old and her mom was ill in Delhi, she met her cousin Shakuntla and realized how independent she was, which motivated her to want to live a life similar to Shakuntla's. She then plans for a bright future, "first FA and then BT on top of that." After her marriage, she went on to pursue an M.A. from Government College in Lahore, "a very good college, not like today. It's like the Oxford of the Earth, as they say."

Virmati proves to be a challenging daughter in this novel because she does not listen to her parents and tries to find another path for her. In this novel, it is only Virmati, who proves to be the challenging daughter in the prosperous merchant family of Lal Diwan Chand, whereas in the Kasturi generation, women's role was limited to child bearing and kitchen work. However, in the Virmati generation, Indian women break away from the traditional limits of Indian tradition. When Virmati expresses her interest in going to Lahore to pursue higher studies, Shakuntla tells her that "times are changing and women are leaving the house, so why not you?" Shakuntla then says, "Arre" and pats Virmati on the back. Later, Virmati's mother reproaches her for saying that "when I was your age, girls did not leave their house until they got married" and after a certain age ...".

A Professor of English in Amritsar comes to live with his wife as a tenant at his aunt's house. He had been married to an uneducated woman since he was a child. When his daughter went to college, he fell in love with her and gradually gained complete control over her heart and thoughts. Virmati rejects the marriage proposal of Inderjit who is a Canal Engineer, but she does not tell her mother about it. The English professor Harish Chandra comes into her life and she listens to his lectures with great attention. She goes against her family's wishes to get her love. She is in love with the professor and refuses to get married to Inderjit and tries to commit suicide by drowning. At the end, she moves to Lahore, but this professor is a master manipulator. He's not happy with his ex-wife because she's not as educated as him, and their ideas don't match. He doesn't accept Virmati in society and continues his inappropriate liaisons with her. Virmati is a well-educated woman and gets a job as the headmistress of a girls' school run by an educated maharajah.



Virmati is very unhappy with the life she is leading and refuses to marry the professor. However, the professor understands the need of time and marries her in a hurry. Virmati then sees herself as a part of the society by wearing the red bangles that other girls wear when they get married. However, this marriage leaves her feeling disoriented, disenchanted, and confused. Even though she is married, she is still dispossessed and will continue on the path that has been chosen for her. Because of the chaos in her marriage, her life is totally chaotic.

Virmati believes that she would have been better off not marrying Harish, "I should never have married you", and now she is not accepted in her own home or her husband's. His step-wife and co-wife does not let her into the kitchen or do household tasks, and her mother is abusive when she tries to visit her siblings. She is considered a woman of nowhere, and is not welcomed in her husband's or her father's home, even after her father's death. She is not forgiven by either of her parents or her own family, and is suffering greatly due to her own mistakes.

In the case of Ida, her father wants his daughter to have a good education but she married a man and got divorced from him. Because of this, Ida became a difficult daughter to Virmati. The women who were trying to get their own identity were called "difficult daughters". The main idea behind this story is that girls were only meant for marriage.

In each of the last three generations, girls have been sheltered from society by their families. Since Kasturi was sheltered from independence, she was able to follow the footsteps of her parents and get married and become well-known socially. She needs Virmati to do the same. But when Virmati was made to understand this, she was weak and made the wrong choice and lost her social circle.

Lajwanti did the same for Sakuntala and she was clear-sighted and courageous enough to accept her life as an unmarried woman. Similarly, Ida was also clear-minded and courageous enough to reject the tradition. Thus, the story takes us back to a time before freedom where women were forced into a complicated cycle of cooking, cleaning, chopping, mixing, having a baby and being obedient to their husbands. Manju Kapur's sensitive depiction of relationships, highlight the struggles women face to gain their place in the family, equal rights and the freedom to choose.

#### **4.2.1 PLOT IN THE NOVEL**



*Difficult Daughters* is a debut novel by Manju Kapur. The protagonist, Ida, is a middle-aged divorcee whose mother has recently passed away. The novel follows Ida's journey from Amritsar and then to Lahore to get to know her mother, Virmati, and her relationship with her. The novel explores the complexities of mother-daughter relationships across generations. Ida interviews her mother's relatives, people who have a relationship with her mother and visits all the places where her mother spent time to find a cohesive narrative of her mother's life.

Virmati was born in Arya Samaji's family and is the eldest daughter. She has 10 siblings and acts as a second mother to them. Virmati has a special relationship with Parvati, the youngest sibling. While pursuing her studies at AS College, Virmati has an illicit affair with Ida's father, Professor Harish and consequently bears the brunt. Virmati's family members, especially her mother, Kasturi, are very bitter towards her but ultimately she marries Harish and goes through various struggles and challenges afterwards.

*Difficult Daughters* explores the complexities of women's roles in society and Virmati's struggle to break out of the mould through education. It also explores the concept of maternal apathy. The novel is set against the backdrop of World War II and India's partition.

## 4.2.2 CHARACTERS

### VIRMATI

She is the main character of this novel. Virmati is a young girl from the 'Arya Smaji' family of Amritsar, which is a very bourgeois, austere, and respectable family. Virmati has 10 siblings and lives in a joint family. Viramati has been depicted as a young girl who is torn between her family responsibilities, her desire to learn, and her love for the married man. Virmati is the heroine of this novel. She is the eldest daughter of Kasturi and Suraj. Kasturi is pregnant every year and is always ill so the burden of household work and younger siblings has fallen on Virmati's vulnerable childhood. She lives her life under the pressure of domestic responsibilities and her mother's strictures from a very young age. As she is consumed with domestic matters and taking care of her siblings, she matures at a very early age.

Virmati is like a second mom to her 10 siblings. Her relationship with her brothers and sisters is very strict, intense and fast. Maybe it's because she has a lot of responsibility and never gets to indulge in her



childhood fantasies like her siblings. Her daughter, Ida, learns about this side of her mother after her death. She is always looking for love, affection, and wants love from her mother but Kasturi is always busy with her pregnancy and never has time to express her love and gratitude to her daughter. A mother doesn't realize her daughter's hunger for love.

Eventually Virmati falls in love with a married man and gets both love and education from him. She is drawn to Professor Harish, who is more caring and interested in her with his attractive appearance and words. The constant words from the professor make her submit to him and his physical and sensual desires. She loses her morals, traditions, and wisdom, and eventually her whole self to her and the professor's desire, though she knows it was an illegal, immoral, and unsocial love affair. All of this is because of the lack of communication between her mother and her father, who always reminds her of her duties and makes her take care of her younger siblings. Virmati's marriage to the professor drove her away from her family and the professor's family. Virmati had the right to choose her own life but she ruined it by choosing to be the second wife of the professor. Her lack of knowledge and experience drove her on the wrong path

Virmati is a new woman who is conscious and introspective, educated and wants to create her own life. Her quest for self-identity is a value-changed, almost charismatic term, and her achievement of it is seen as equivalent to personal salvation. Her search for identity is a spiritual journey of a modern man who is lost in the social and spiritual world and wants to find his roots. Having been born and raised in a well-educated and cultured family, Virmati should never have committed the sin of falling in love with a married person, which is a betrayal of her family, especially her parents, who fully trust her. In addition, she has already been engaged to someone else, whom her grandfather and her parents have chosen for her. She refuses to marry that 'Canal Engineer' as she has sensually given in to the professor's attempts to seduce her. It is not her beauty, but her desire to extinguish her physical lust, at the expense of her family's reputation and her life, in defiance of tradition and ethics. Even Virmati finds it difficult to move forward in her life, both politically and academically, as her husband Harish keeps interfering with her at every step on the way. It is interesting to note that Manju Kapur chooses Shakuntala, who was a part of the non-violent struggle against British rule and who will have a definite impact on her growth as a person.





Virmati is scorned by her relatives and deeply resented by her husband's first wife, Ganga, who holds a grudge against Virmati. Her future as a wife is further complicated by Harish's interference, which prevents her from pursuing her studies without any hindrance. Virmati's financial aspirations have also been dashed due to Harish's practicality. She can't find her freedom in Lahore with Harish and she can't get proper education either. Her mind clashes with the wild ideas of emancipation. Being isolated in Ganga's family, she lapses into a state of psychological paralysis which leads to a loss of enthusiasm in life and a psycho sexual and xenophobic disease. She also loses her self-esteem when Harish's first wife, Ganga, does everything for him. She does not establish herself as a woman in a way that the Indian society will accept. Over the course of her life, she becomes involved and adapts and complies, but she is separated from her family and unable to establish a space for herself.

Virmati is a person who has different ideas and aspirations in life. She does not have a compromising personality. Her mind is disturbed because of small things. This kind of personality of Virmati puts her in an ambivalent situation. In reality, living in Amritsar, opens the door for her to get the freedom that she has been longing for a very long time. For Virmati, education is about freedom and new ideas and mindset. In Amritsar her mindset has completely changed. She wants to continue her education but her family refuses her. Her mother blames Virmati for her ambition and behaviour. Virmati's mother does not care about her education, but she does care about the Indian woman's traditional role after marriage. Virmati, being a hard-headed daughter, decides to go to Lahore for her education. In Lahore, she finds Shakuntala's company. She visits the Oxford University returned professor, Harish. She falls in love and has a love affair. Both of them enjoy sexual and emotional fulfilment. Later on, this illicit relationship caused confusion and conflict in Virmati's life.

On one hand she has to follow the traditional system where girls are not free to select their husbands, on the other she is brave to go beyond the boundaries of the traditional society to marry the married man. The professor acts like a real Indian man and all the while he treats her like a sex doll to satisfy his lust. Virmati's abortion, on the other hand, makes her mature enough to resist the professor's sexual compulsion. As a result, she is constantly at odds with her spouse and parents. Virmati's love for the professor, if that is what it is, is her biggest tragedy. Throughout the novel, Virmati talks about her flaw, this is that she is not able to make a decision about something that is very important to her life, which is,



of course, the reason for her own tragedy. This flaw in Virmati is even more pronounced when compared to the decision-making skills of Shakuntala or Swarn lata.

Swarn Lata tells Virmati in her own modern way that she should participate in active politics and go to jail as an alternate life instead of marriage. This concept is completely foreign to Virmati's mindset. Even though Virmati immediately believes Swarn Lata's words, she still wonders if she can lead a life without marriage. She seems to be more comfortable with her status quo than trying to find a new life as Swarn Lata suggests.

Virmati's character is characterized by her ambivalence between the past and the present. Let's take a look at the scene where she and the professor engage in sexual intercourse for the first time. Virmati flouts the tradition of being chaste before marriage and justifies it by saying that it is an outdated morality. She speaks as a modern woman but thinks as a traditional woman who believes that a woman who has been touched by a man completely belongs to him. Virmati is sent to Nahan by her family to become the headmistress of a girls' school. She accepts the offer, but without enthusiasm, it allows her to expand her horizons and serve the needs of the nation's literacy.

The novel portrays Virmati as a character who is less confident and more hesitant in her decisions, and more prone to romantic impulses, which ultimately prove to be her downfall. It is clear that Virmathi is trying to break free from the strictures of tradition to pursue her passion for learning, which is seen as a sign of modernization. When one critically analyzes Virmati's life, the main cause of her tragedy is her marriage to the Professor, who is a sophisticated villain in the novel, and through his clever manipulations, he manages to win over the young, innocent, and uncomplicated Virmati, whose idealism has brilliant wings, but they are not powerful enough to fly her far enough to achieve her goals. This is the story of her struggle to find her identity and purpose in life, ultimately leading to her death and the burning of her desires in the pyre.

## IDA

She is a simple girl who never displayed intellectual brilliance during her childhood. Her philosophy is to live for herself without worrying about pleasing others. She believes only in pleasing herself. She is forced to be a model daughter as her father's expectations are high for her appearance, academic performance and aesthetics of music and dancing. He expects these talents to make her more kind to his guests at parties. His expectations turn out to be sheer disappointment because of Ida's disastrous



marriage and later her divorce. Ida is left without a husband, child and completely consumed by melancholia, depression and despair. She can't help but blame her mother for having strict rules, which forces Ida to look for a way out. After her mother passes away, Ida gets nostalgic and tries to recall her mother's memories. In her words, "I can sink into her past and make it mine. In searching for a woman I could know, I have pierced together material from memories that were muddled, partial and contradictory." Despite her mother's wishes, Virmati is cremated. Her last request is to be remembered after her death, "I want my body donated: My eyes, my heart, my kidneys, and any organ that can be of use. That way someone will value me after I have gone "

As Virmati's daughter, Ida struggles to find her identity, dignity, and self-esteem, something that Virmati also lacks. She rejects the traditional family structure and male-dominated culture. Ida becomes the typical daughter of a difficult daughter, Virmati. The role of Ida as a researcher and the dominant narrative voice of her mother's past is crucial. Her narrative of her mother is based on her personal experiences and information collected from Kailanath, Gopinath, her parents, friends and colleagues, maternal uncles, and so on. After the death of her parents. Ida's "I "serve as Kapur's alter ego.

Ida has been depicted as a modern, radical woman. Kasturi's difficult daughter is Virmati, and Ida is born as a difficult daughter to a difficult mother. Ida is a childless divorcee and lives as a single, a system which was unheard of in the time of Kasturi's grandmother. After her mother's death, Ida goes to Amritsar to learn more about her mother's past in order to understand their relationship. She comes to learn how her mother had defied her own family, where marriage was accepted but not independence. Virmati never apprised Ida to maintain her identity and inheritance from her mother; she got "Adjust, compromise, adapt".

## KASTURI

Kasturi, a traditional woman, wants her children to be interested in Pooja - Path and traditions. Kasturi, Virmati's mother, gives birth to 11 children, which makes her health deteriorate day by day. Her husband doesn't care about her, and she doesn't get equal rights, so she is forced to give birth to 11 children. She doesn't know how to talk about equal rights with her husband. Kasturi is an example of the typical feminine attitude to procreate in order to bring life and pleasure. Running her home, first a joint family and then her own, is happiness for her.



Kasturi is a woman of the past in the novel. She listens to others all her life. In the patriarchal society, like Lala Diwan Chand, she puts up with everything quietly. She does most of the work by resisting herself. She works in the house day and night. She becomes exhausted every night because of the excess of housework. Kasturi can't recall a time when she wasn't exhausted, when her legs and feet didn't hurt. She needs to shift the burden of raising children to her eldest child, Virmati.

Kasturi comes from a family where child marriage is considered an abomination. During her childhood, she attended the Mission school, but the day she started praying in front of the photo of Christ, was her last day in the school. After a while, a college was built for Hindu girls, and Kasturi became the first girl in the family to delay the arrival of her wedding guests with a tentative assault on learning. While she was in the Hindu girl's school, Kasturi learned to write, read, sew and do household work. During her formal schooling, it was never forgotten that marriage was her destiny. After graduating; she continued her education at home. Kasturi's mother wanted to ensure her daughter's future happiness by providing her with the best qualifications. She wanted to satisfy her in-laws. Kasturi also studied Arya Samaj ceremonies in school and continued to follow Arya Samaj rituals day after day.

Kasturi lives in a patriarchal society where marriage is the only option for the woman and she has to work hard to please the in-laws. Kasturi sees her daughter as a rival and sees her as a threat to her world in the future. When Virmati starts showing signs of asserting herself, there is a conflict between mother and daughter. Virmati always yearns for the love of her mother but Kasturi under the pressure of responsibilities and duties, fails to reciprocate. Virmati's love for the professor only worsens the situation. When she does not go along with her mother's wishes, Kasturi says that God has sent her on this earth to punish her. She refers to Virmati as “randi” when she marries Harish and believes that she has tarnished the family's reputation by becoming the second wife of the professor. After this, Kasturi destroys all relations with her daughter as she herself is the face of traditional values and culture.

## SHAKUNTALA

For Virmati, Shakuntala is the ideal. She is the first one who encourages her to focus on her studies. Shakuntala is Virmati's charming cousin. She is intelligent and full of energy. She talks to Virmati as she walks. She tells her that they don't understand her. She also talks to her about living her life in her own way. She talks to her about how her friends are unhappy with their family and are looking for fulfilment by working with her group. She goes on saying, ‘We travel, we have fun in the evening, we



watch each other's work, we read papers, we go to seminars. Some of us are even going abroad to study'. She believes that if a woman wants to study higher, she shouldn't get married. Usually women believe that marriage takes away a woman's freedom.

She believes that her freedom of self is more important than everything. Kasturi sees her as a terrible influence on Virmati, but Virmati doesn't see it that way. When Shakuntala goes to Lahore, Virmati falls in love with her. She tells her that she too needs to look like her, but she is not as smart as her. But Shakuntala calms Virmati down and tells her that the times are changing and women are leaving the house. So why not you? This is the story of a contemporary woman who is rejected in her family because of her boldness. Her lifestyle is extraordinary and Virmati can see the transformation that Lahore has undergone. She is smart and beautiful.

Although Shakuntala's role in the novel is limited, it is clear that she is an anti traditionalist figure. She is driven by a new idea that stands against the traditional way of thinking. The first thing Shakuntala believes is that women should have a higher education to be able to live an independent life and marriage is the next step for her. She has the characteristics of a young woman who is coming into her own as a modern woman. Kapur highlights Shakuntala's main characteristics to show that she has a lifestyle that is totally modern. She has absorbed the essence of modernity and has left behind an unbroken line between the traditional world and the new modern world that she belongs to.

She appears to be self-reliant and a woman who makes her own decisions. She seems more determined and emotionally strong to accept the oppressive structures of the traditional system. During Virmati's stay at the University of Delhi, she observes Shakuntala's way of living. Shakuntala, who is M.Sc. in Chemistry, has embarked on a journey of freedom, preaching about marriage, education, and a woman's independent life. Therefore, her main role in the novel is to bring about a complete transformation of Virmati and this makes Shakuntala stand out from the other transition characters as a dynamic character.

## SWARN LATA

Virmati describes Swarn Lata as a person looking at whom anyone would have been mesmerized by Swarna's eyes behind her spectacles, eyes that didn't smile just because someone was looking at them, with the intelligence in that round face, the friendliness on that frank and open face, whereas Shakuntala finds her to be plain and derecognizes her identity. She's not just Virmati's roommate, she's her best



friend, when Virmati gets into trouble, it's Swarna who comes to her rescue, and when she's in a complete quandary about her marriage with Harish, she advises her that most families view a daughter's marriage as a holy duty or a holy burden but they are lucky to live in a time when women were able to do something else. And for her, even women in Europe obtain more respect during wartime.

Virmati comes back from Nahan and finds out that she is pregnant. Swarna helps her in getting an abortion and proves to be her real and true friend. Swarna is the only woman who gets what she wants. While in Lahore as a room-mate of Virmati, she does her M.A. and postpones her marriage for an indefinite period of time. Swarna is depicted as a young and dynamic woman with a strong social conscience. She is always inclined to do some kind of service. Like many young educated women of that time, she comes under Mahatma Gandhi's influence. It is in this context that Swarna's mother urges her to get married as she has completed her education.

By then, however, she had changed her mind. She feels that she has other things to do besides marriage. Of course, she's not opposed to marriage; it's a question of priority. Like many young, well-educated people, she wants to study in Lahore and pleads to her parents that they should leave her alone for at least two years so that she can think about her marriage. She would be very grateful if they agree to her request, otherwise she will offer them Satyagrahas. She narrates to Virmati what had happened between her and her parents before she came to Lahore. This section of the novel, which deals with her, reconstructs her entire personality. She seems to have a strong sense of patriotism.

Swarn Lata is strongly against the separation of the Hindu and Muslim communities. She has a vision of a united India. Millions of Indians, both Hindus and Muslims, are against the artificial separation of communities, especially on religious grounds. In some way, Swarn Lata has come to know herself better in terms of her relationship with society and vice-versa. Virmati on the other hand seems to be a bit of a pariah when it comes to her social understanding. This is because she has been through a roller-coaster ride of change from enslaved India achieving Swaraj to the partition of India into two countries: Hindustan and Pakistan, which has resulted in sour blood paths for both the religious communities.

Swarn Lata shared all the hardships of the time, directly or indirectly; nothing can give a man more insight into life than his personal experience. She is a young woman who is passionate about her ideology, which involves political and other activities to improve society. It shows that she is the strong champion for the promotion of social values and above all, Women's empowerment. It also gives rise to



ideas of radicalism or militancy, but what is remarkable is that she is able to incorporate these ideas of freedom into her marriage without ruining the family structure. Her marriage is conditional on her work, and she will not sacrifice it for her ideology. She wouldn't sacrifice her ideology for anything, and in the letter she writes to Virmati unambiguously about her marriage, this is what makes Swarn Lata so special.

Swarn Lata is a character that has not been given much space in the novel. However, the author has portrayed her very well. Swarna is a clear-sighted social activist, unlike her friend Virmati. She has a sense of belonging to a group and is an extremely committed activist. In the novel, Swarna's second meeting with her friend and classmate Virmati who has come to Lahore for M. A. Philosophy; she is asked to join the protest against the Draft Hindu Code Bill.

She is the voice of modern women who are fighting for their rights. Swarna is bold, open, determined and action-oriented. Both her words and deeds show her to be a strong feminist who is fighting for all women's rights.

## GANGA

Ganga is another character of *Difficult Daughters*. She is a traditional woman married to Professor Harish, as she is uneducated he tries to educate her. In this regard, Manju Kapur wrote, "She thought of all the times her husband tried to teach her, but she found it hard to learn." Ganga does all the household chores like washing clothes, tidying the table, polishing the shoes, dusting the books, fixing the clothes, filling the fountain pens and stitching the shirt. Whenever Harish's poet friends come to her house, she prepares kachori, samosa, mathris, pakora for them.

When Harish marries Virmati, she is in shock. Ganga is hurt by his actions. She believes that her husband's marriage to Virmati is her fault but she can't find any proof. She is an educated and submissive woman who is a victim of patriarchal society. Kishori Devi encounters Ganga after Harish's marriage and tells her that it is fate, which is in the hands of God. We have to accept it and nothing can be changed. Hearing this, Ganga's tears began to flow. She was determined not to show her face, but she began to cry. "What have I done, that God should punish me like this?" she asked, "Tell me what I did wrong?" Ganga, the first wife of Harish is completely devoted to him and his family. There are many differences between Ganga and Harish, and their marriage is totally unhealthy. Ganga's carefree attitude about study and lack of knowledge bring Virmati into her husband's home as his second wife. For



Ganga, marriage is a religious and social institution where love does not play role. She has a great sense of domesticity and her husband, who is educated and English-speaking, loves her cooking. But at a certain point feels very aloof. All she wants is, to live with him and bear his children.

### **KISHORI**

Kishori Devi is Harish's mother. She is a woman with a lot of experience. She understands life and its irony. As a woman, she feels sorry for Ganga's situation when Virmati arrives as Harish's second wife. But as a woman of tradition, she accepts Virmati as the second wife of Harish. She is a good example of how traditional ideas force people to act in strange ways. She believes in the horoscope of her son that he will have two wives. So, when Harish brings Virmati to her as his second wife, she has no choice but to accept the situation while she is overcome with grief for her daughter-in-law Ganga. She is completely sympathetic to Ganga, whom she admires and respects as a competent, traditional housewife. However, even in the well-planned families, something unexpected happens and such a thing has taken place in the life of innocent Ganga. It is a great irony that Ganga's husband has married another woman in her life. She is the epitome of domesticity. In her attempt to comfort Ganga in her hour of greatest need, Kishori, like all traditional women, succumbs to a state of resignation.

### **LAJWANTI**

Lajwanti is a traditional woman who believes in traditional values and puts a lot of emphasis on marriage. She is unhappy with Shakuntala's unmarried status and keeps asking her when she will settle down and further adds that she spends a lot of time in the laboratory, doing experiments, helping girls, studying or attending conferences. Lajwanti believes that Shakuntala should have been a man. It is natural for a mother to feel a bit apprehensive about her children's unmarried state when they reach marriage age. However, in this case, it appears that the mother's apprehension is heightened when she states that Shakuntala's unmarried state has caused her 'enough heartache' and continues to insist on her son's marriage. She expresses her anguish over her children's unmarried status. However, if we take a critical look at her words, it is clear that the mother's traditionalism is masked by her attempts to sound progressive.

### **SURAJ PARKASH**





Virmati's father, who is also the father of ten other children, is presented as a typical homely type of a patriarch who has been overwhelmed by the household responsibilities. He is conservative, patronizing, anxious and apprehensive about his daughter getting married. He is almost a 'flat' and 'typed' character, who understands the importance of having a joint family and wants to keep it that way. However, these characteristics are very common among family patriarchs, so Suraj Prakash does not get much attention in the novel 'Difficult Daughters'.

## HARISH

Harish is an important character and Virmati's male counterpart. He is an English professor from Oxford who has a British degree and has British values and characteristics. He is the only son, and his unique personality has affected the way he drinks and breathes since he was born. He is fond of tea and loves to entertain tea-lovers. He is married and has grown up children, but his marriage as well as his wife Ganga has not been able to satisfy his need for romance. He falls in love with Virmati, the first time he sees her in his class, even though it is outside of his marriage.

It appears that Harish has compromised with his marriage to Ganga to whom he is just a husband and completely an unhappy person. However, all his romantic and loving instincts come to the surface when he encounters Virmati and when he gets Virmati's approval, he expresses his love in a very assertive manner which is somehow reflected when he stops Virmati from her unwanted proposed marriage. Harish is a typical professor-lover, who is aware of his inability to justify his role as teacher in Virmati's presence. However, it is in the love letters that we see the hidden lover emerging.

His character is full of duality. On one hand, he is professing his love for Virmati and constantly trying to convince her not to marry anyone else, but on the other, he's still in love with his wife. On one hand, he says that he's the truest lover of Virmati, but on the other hand, he's having kids with Ganga. Even after Harish married Virmati, the situation is still the same. Ganga still appears to be assertive and protesting as a wife. He's still in the same situation, not satisfied with his life. He is oscillating between wife and his beloved. He's not true to Ganga or to Virmati. He's caught in an awkward middle between wife and Virmati. He has a latent desire to break the marriage and live his life free, but he can't do it easily because of unknown reasons. He's always looking for an educated woman, who can fulfill his intellectual needs, but his wife Ganga can't do that. As an educated man, he has no reservations about the idea of polygamy. He justifies it by saying that if something happens to our education; it does not



mean that we are breaking tradition. Tradition that refuses to think, or remains resistant to new ideas, is a prison, rather than a reservoir of life. Even the tiniest of us have a social function. But it does not mean, blindly following beliefs that may be wrong. Harish appears a bit like Keats, a lover of beauty. Even the illiterate woman, Ganga, notices this and says that she has never known anyone as passionate about beauty as her husband. Of all the men in Manju Kapoor, only Harish has the feminist temperament that the novelist has and seems to serve as her mouthpiece. He also does not shy away from the concept of having a co-wife. In fact, he tries to convince Virmati that she should marry him and expresses his frustration with his current marriage. He says that Co-wives are a part of the society

## **4.3 FURTHER MAIN BODY OF THE TEXT: DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS**

### **4.3.1 NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE**

As a chronicler of Indian middle-class life and culture, Manju Kapur is compared to Jane Austen, as she too delves into the domestic sphere, a domain that is dominated by women. In *Difficult Daughters*; Kapur uses realism as a tool to tell the story of women in a middle-class family. *Difficult Daughters* simultaneously tells the story of the independence, India has gained and the independence Virmati wishes for. The majority of the novel is told by an omniscient narrator, who appears to know everything but does not participate in the story. Genette defines such a narrator as “heterodiegetic” (someone who is not a person of the novel, but knows everything). The novel starts with Ida’s narration, but she narrates intermittently and becomes the link that brings together the information “pieced together” with “material from memories that were muddled, partial and contradictory.”

Ida searches for ways to reconnect with her dead mom and builds her mom's life. Ida's role in telling her mom's story is very small, and according to Genette's point of view, such a narrator is called homodiegetic. From the very first line of the novel, Ida says, "The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother." Such a strong statement of turning her back on her mother is what triggers the novel. Even the ending is similar, with Ida saying, "This book weaves a connection between my mother and me, each word a brick in a mansion, I made with my head and my heart. Now live in it, Mama, and leave me be. Do not haunt me anymore.”



The novel seems to be in a complete circle, and this complete circle provides the direction, continuity and speed that propel the narrative forward. At various points, Ida narrates the story but her presence is brief and breaks up the monotony. The novel starts with Virmati's funeral, and Ida's recollection of how "contrary to her wishes, she was being burnt with her organs intact." We also get to witness the strained relationship between Virmati and her mother. After her death, Ida visits Amritsar, where she learns about her mother's past life, which turned her into 'a silent, brisk and bad-tempered' mother. In Chapter 9, Ida reappears, visiting AS College with uncle Kailash Nath, and narrates a detailed description of the college. In between the omniscient narrator tells the story of Virmati, beginning with her illicit love affair and her rebellion against her family.

Subsequently, Ida pursues her narration in the seventeenth chapter where she first meets Virmati's college friend Swarn Lata Sondhi. Later, she gets a visa to go to Lahore, which has become part of Pakistan after partition. There, she takes pictures of Government College Lahore, and records all her mother's details. When she finds out that Virmati had an unwanted pregnancy and had an abortion with Swarn Lata's help, Ida empathizes with her mother's pain. She also remembers Prabhakar, forcing her to terminate her pregnancy, leading to their divorce, as she could not forgive her husband. In chapter twenty-three; Ida has a brief chat with Paro, mother's sister. Paro refers to her as a 'simple girl', which disgusts Ida. She says "I hate the word simple. Nobody has any business to live in the world and know nothing about its ways." In chapter twenty-five, Ida is trying to unravel the mystery of her mother's marriage, and at the end, she says goodbye to her mother.

The epistolary technique has been introduced since 1740, when Samuel Richardson introduced it in his novel 'Pamela or Virtue Rewarded'. Nowadays, many novelists use this technique to tell their stories, but Manju Kapur uses it to bring the story to life. The author introduces epistolary technique when the reader is forced to witness how Virmati reacts after comparing the letters of her suitors; Inderjit, her fiancé, chosen by her family, and Harish, her next door neighbour. The novel chronicles the events that took place over a period of six months from September, 1939, to February, 1940, depicted through the letters exchanged between Virmati and Harish. The epistolary technique allows the reader to get an intimate insight into the thoughts and feelings of the characters without any interference from the author. The narration of events from several perspectives adds dimension and authenticity to the story.



The epistolary technique has become so common that many critics agree that it is mostly concerned with subjectivity of mind. According to Bakhtin, the letter in *Difficult Daughters* leads the novel to the deepest of everyday life, the smallest details, intimate relations between people and into the inner life of the individual personality and is characterized by “psychology and pathos.” In *Difficult Daughters*, the reader learns about Virmati’s life and her confinement in the godown while Indu marries Inderjit to protect the family’s reputation. Virmati doesn’t even get to attend the wedding ceremony. Finally, she is released from the godown to spin on Mahatma Ji’s birthday.

On the other hand, we see the life of the professor, who has moved to a different place with his family in order to avoid any encounter with Virmati’s family. We get information about Ganga’s second pregnancy, which confirms Harish’s involvement in his marital life while professing his undying affection for Virmati. Paro, the youngest sister of Virmati and the professor’s student, Kanhiya, who act as a messenger for them are also revealed from the letters. At the end of the chapter, Virmati receives a letter informing her that she has decided to go away to Lahore and leave the professor and his ideas behind.

By unfolding a story in letters, the psychological aspect of vision is emphasized in a way that no other form of narrative can convey. Since the letter-writers’ imagination plays a role in translating experience into language, a story told in letters becomes a story of events in consciousness, regardless of the subject matter.

The protagonist of *Difficult Daughters*, Virmati, begins writing letters to Harish to express her loneliness and get relief from her isolated life. After committing an unforgivable crime, Virmati is forced to live in the godown alone. Her family members shun her and refuse to communicate with her. She is filled with anger and shame at her family’s rejection. Her humiliation reaches its highest point when she learns that Ganga is pregnant and insists on meeting Virmati. Virmati comes to terms with her reality and decides to study in Lahore. In the godown, Virmati’s thoughts flow in random order and she becomes more aware of her environment. She compares the godown to her grandfather’s home in Sultanpur and sees even the smallest details, such as the way the angan light gets dimmer and more peaceful in the evening. Alone, away from daily household activities, Virmati feels strange and her life becomes like “one pea alone in a whole long pod”, useless to anyone.



Ultimately, Manju Kapur resorts to the dramatic style by adding an “Epilogue” at the end to wrap up the story. However, before that, she dedicates an entire chapter to all the characters who have something to say about the events that happened in the novel. The epilogue informs the reader about how Ganga leaves Amritsar along with her kids and mom-in-law to their village house in United Province and never makes it back to Amritsar. Virmati along with Harish moves from Amritsar to Delhi, where Harish is offered a principal ship in a new college of Delhi University. Ida was born but as she grew older, she never showed any sign of intellectual brilliance. Harish's two other children, Giridhar, and Chhotti, moved to Delhi to finish their studies. The epilogue ends with multiple voices narrating the events and situations that happened in India after Independence. Excerpts from India's Independence speech are included in the epilogue. Giridhar went ahead and got married to one of his customers, despite the disapproval of both families. Chhotti went on to join the IAS to support her mom and grandma and never got married. At the end of the story, Ida says to her mother, "Do not haunt me anymore"

### 4.3.2 THEMES IN THE NOVEL

#### QUEST FOR IDENTITY

Virmati is one of the main characters of *Difficult Daughters* and is also considered as difficult because she is rebellious and stands up against the old rules of patriarchal society. Virmati is the oldest daughter in the family and the one who takes care of all the household chores. As the perfect eldest daughter, she accepts her role with no questions asked. As a girl, Virmati is unable to get love and care from her mother, which makes her feel tired and upset all the time. At times, Virmati wants affection from her mother, or some sign that she is special. But when she put her head near the youngest baby, who was in her mother's arms, Kasturi would get angry and push her away, saying, 'Have you seen their food - milk - clothes - studies?' Even though she felt suffocated from inside, she never even raised her voice. She was already engaged with canal engineer Inderjit at that time.

Every time Virmati sees her cousin Shakuntala tasting "wine of freedom", she knows that if she wants to be free, she must look beyond the family. However, her mother was the epitome of a traditional woman in a patriarchal society. Education was seen as an evil force and when Virmati expressed her desire for education, her mother said, 'Leave your studies if it is going to make you bad tempered with your family. You are forgetting what comes first'. She used education as her identity. Not only did she



pass FA exams, but she also entered 'A.S College', the 'Bastion of Male Learning'. She also asserted herself through education and choice of groom during her college years. In her college years, she developed a crush on Harish. However, this turned out to be a very bad choice as Harish was already married and she fell in an illicit love affair with him before she was confined.

This relationship drove her to suicide because she was unable to define her place in the family and the professor's life. The professor was not faithful to her. On one hand, he loved her, and on the other hand he was apparently unreliable. She gave birth to a baby girl, which is another phase of the problem. She named her daughter Bharati as a symbol of independence, but the husband refused, saying, "I don't wish our daughter to be trained with the birth of our country. What birth is this? With so much hatred reminded of it." The country gained freedom but the man who talked about freedom couldn't give it to his wife. While India was struggling for freedom from British rule, she was fighting for her own identity. In a patriarchal society, women were forced to stay at home, but Virmati was courageous and educated. She lived her life as a free bird. The most productive period of her life was in Nahan, where she did not worry about anything.

She worked as the headmistress, which gave her financial autonomy, respect, and all the duties that were supposed to be assigned to her. This gave her new purpose to her life. However, these actions led to her having no family and no friends. The social construct made her feel incomplete because there was no one in her life, so she went back to be a professor. She ended up in a patriarchal society that was ruled by patriarchy. Her life was filled with suffering and her search for her identity. She lost all hope; even her daughter does not want to be like her mother. In the novel, it is clear from the very first and last lines that Virmati is a failed mother. Virmati's struggle to break free from the patriarchal mould of tradition and caste on her ends up being unpredictable as she gets caught up in the web of assigned female roles that she tried to avoid.

## MARRIAGE

At the beginning of every novel, the protagonists of Kapur enter into marriage with the notion that the marriage will provide them respect and status in the society. Unfortunately, they become disappointed and eventually frustrated. However, at the end of each novel, Kapur prepares her characters to face the truth. Her characters do not seek to break up or end it all, even though they are hurt and unhappy in their married life. In this novel, Virmati and Ida develop at the end as strong



women who guarantee and achieve independence. They find a way to live harmoniously in the world without the family ties or the modern aspirations for self-rule. The theme of marital discord in her novels reveals her true craftsmanship. She truly ponders the fate of modern women, especially in a male dominated society and her demolition of the taboo of marriage. However, she does not argue that marriage is useless but rather reveals the inner thoughts of the protagonists through their relationships.

Kasturi is mother of Virmati. Throughout the novel, she is constantly reminded that she was born to work for her family and please her relatives. She never forgot that marriage is her destiny. Kasturi is described as the mother, whose duty it is to bear children as many as possible. When she got married, she became the victim of those unlimited births. She married into a traditional family and bore 6 daughters and 5 sons against her will. When she was about to bear her eleventh child, her pregnancy symptoms included anemia, malnutrition and restlessness.

Virmati's life is also not much better than her mother Kasturi's. Her parents are also as eager for her marriage as her mother. Women in those days were forced to think only of marriage and that's why marriage became an issue in her life as well. Her mother worries about her marriage all the time and doesn't understand her mental issues. Her mother doesn't understand that she is a very honest girl from childhood who has a high self-esteem. In fact, Virmati is a real mother to her siblings and looks after them when her mother is away after giving birth.

Virmati rejects Inderjit's marriage proposal who was working as a Canal Engineer. Virmati's encounter with the English professor Harish Chandra marks a turning point in her life. She listens to his lectures with intense interest. She goes against her family's wishes to win her love. Virmati falls deeply in love with the professor. However, she will not marry Inderjit. Virmati attempts to commit suicide by drowning. Finally, she immigrated to Lahore. This professor is a great controller. He is unhappy with his ex-wife because she is not educated as he is and is attracted towards Virmati because of her beauty and education but her life with Harish after marriage is not happy one. She has to face the society as well as Ganga, first and legal wife of Professor. Ganga also despite so many years of marriage and children is not leading a happy married life for being uneducated and reluctant to learn. Harish despite having two marriages is not at peace and contented. Ida, daughter of Virmati is also leading a life as a divorcee whereas Swaran Lata gets married on certain conditions and terms and according to Shakuntala marriage takes away freedom of women



## RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

The novel's title refers to the complicated relationship between mother and daughter, which is also reflected in the characters of Ida, Virmati, and Kasturi. The beginning sentence of the novel, “The one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother” which describes the narrator's relationship between Virmati and Ida. Ida is a middle-aged woman who has recently gone through a divorce. Throughout the novel, her marital status has been frowned upon. Her mother's relatives attribute her divorce to the character of her mother Virmati. Ida returns to her mother's home town, Amritsar, which she can only imagine in terms of Virmati's painful past to find out more about her mother's history.

The main theme of the novel is the relationship between the mother and her daughter. The mother is very traditional while the daughter decides to live a different life, searching for love, fulfillment, and freedom. Virmati has always done what is expected of her, but she was always searching for some sign of love from her mother, which she never got because her mother was emotionally exhausted. Virmati loves her parents, her family, her education, and professor. She wants to have her own room and her own identity.

Virmati doesn't want to live like her mother so she doesn't give up her fight for higher education just because she has to help her mother all the time. She wanted to fulfill her dream of higher education, so she went to Lahore even though she had to fight against her mother who was always trying to deprive her of higher education. Despite all the difficulties she faced, she went ahead with her education and got a degree in Bachelor's.

Ida is Virmati's and the professor's daughter. We find out that the relationship between mother Virmati and daughter Ida is not amicable. Ida never gets to spend quality time with her mother and when she looks at the photo of her mother's youth, she thinks, “I could not remember a time it had been right between us”.

Kasturi follows the old rules and patriarchal society, forcing her daughter Virmati to agree to the family tradition. However, Virmati breaks the old rules and traditions of the family, and when she becomes a mother of daughter Ida; she does the same with her daughter as Kasturi does. Ida struggles for her identity, dignity and self-esteem and rejects the family rules and patriarchal society.

## TRADITION VERSUS MODERNISM





Kasturi loves tradition. Anything that deviates from the tradition is not good for her. Her whole life is dedicated to preserving the tradition of her family. She tries to instil the same feelings in her daughter. Open expression of emotions was not considered right and never expressed by Kasturi in her daughters. The language of emotions did not flow between them. Kasturi wants to control her daughter and prepare her for marriage by teaching her to learn sewing and knitting. But Virmati did not listen to her. She's a simple woman whose greatest joy is to see her family happy. She never thinks about how she could ever hurt or alienate them. Even the thought of anything happening to the family disturbs her.

Ganga is viewed as another victim of traditional society. She enters the house of her in-laws when she is 12 years old and tries to prove herself as a good housewife. However, she is unable to become an intellectual companion to her husband, which leads to her predicament. Kapur portrays Ganga as an extremely hardworking traditional wife in every aspect of her life. Ganga does everything for her husband, not to gain his love or affection, but as part of her duties as a traditional woman. She cleans his clothes, polishes his shoes, keeps his desk clean, dusts his books, fills his fountain pen with ink, puts his records back into his jacket, mends his clothes, stitches his shirts, kurtas and dhotis and makes sure they are properly starched. Because she is a traditional woman, she grudgingly accepts her husband's second wife, Virmati, when he brings her home. Kishori mother of Harish is also symbolic of traditional society who fails to find any fault with her son for second marriage and similarly Lajwanti has been endowed with all the traits representing traditionalism.

Virmati the main protagonist, Shakuntala, Swarn Lata and Ida have been portrayed as symbols of modernism. In Shakuntala, Swarna Lata, and Ida, we see images of modern women; conscious, thoughtful, educated, liberated, cultured, driven by the desire to assert their autonomy, separate identity and find their place in society. In Manju Kapur's novel, we see glimpses of the women of the 40s in India, struggling to find their identity. Kapur portrays feminist autonomy through Swarn Lata, Shakuntala, and Ida, showing it in a positive & acceptable way. They use their modern ideas to liberate themselves from the constraints of the feminine sex; they never abuse their freedom as modern girls.

## 4.4 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. How does marriage with a Professor bring troubles in Virmati's life?



2. Depict the conflict between two generations as presented in the novel.
3. How does Manju Kapur present developing patterns of patriarchy in private and public spheres in the novel?
4. Do you think that the novel in a way presents a struggle for freedom? Explain.
5. Analyze the relationship between Virmati and Professor.

## 4.5 SUMMARY

Manju Kapur's novel *Difficult Daughter* is about a woman who is torn between her duty to her family, the need to be academically well-equipped and the illicit love affair she has with a married man. The main part of the novel deals with the love affair between Virmati and her professor, while the rest deals with the struggle for freedom that Virmati faces. Throughout the novel, we get to see how Virmati fights against her family's wishes and continues her studies against their will.

The novel begins with Ida recounting the death of her mother Virmati. She remembers her mother saying before she passed away that there should be no 'Shor Shaar' and that her eyes, her heart, her kidneys and all other useful organs should be donated to the needy. The novel is written using the flash-back technique. All of the events are seen through Ida's eyes. She was a childless divorced woman who did not understand her mother all of her life. It was only after her mother passed away that she realized what had happened to her, plunging her into a world of shame and guilt. She picks up the pieces of memory and begins to see her mother's life in a new light. Virmati is Kasturi's and Suraj's elder daughter. Ida comes to know about her mom Virmati from her uncles, aunts and her mom's friends but they don't want her to know about her unconventional way of life.

Ida's eagerness to 'dig' into her mother's past shows Ida's desperation to connect with her mother and get to know her. She learns how her mother used to run the house as her grandmother, Kasturi, was always ill. She describes Virmati as short, domineering, and quick-thinking. She was an educated woman who completed her masters after marriage. By the time Virmati turned ten, she was used to her mother's frequent pregnancy and even made sure her siblings didn't throw up on her aunt Lajwanti's side. Her aunt's daughter, Shakuntala, is an inspiration to Virmati as an independent, educated, and empowered woman. Virmati was educated in Arya Samaj schools and later in a college, where the values taught were not necessarily the same as those taught at home. There was no conflict between individual needs



and family as there were no two worlds with opposing values and Arya Samaj brought about significant ideological changes and transformed the traditional society into a more modern one. For example, it discouraged child marriage and promoted female education. The educational system was designed to emphasize reading, writing, household accounts, sewing and the rituals associated with Arya Samaj, which enabled women to be trained as responsible wives and mothers.

Virmati longed for love but never got it from her mom. She fell in love with her aunt's neighbour and college professor, Harish Chandra, even though he was married. Harish sees Virmati as unique and valuable to be his companion as she is educated unlike his wife. When her family wants her to marry a Canal Engineer, Inderjit, Virmati tries to commit suicide. Since she cannot tell her parents about Harish, she uses her education as a ground to reject marriage. Her parents feel shame and disappointment. They lock her up for a long time. Finally, they sent her to study at Bahadur Sohan Lal training College for Women, Lahore though Kasturi was against Virmati staying in a hostel.

Virmati is a woman who has grown from a child to a woman and who has experienced hardships throughout her life. Despite her success in breaking all human-made boundaries, she is still held to certain values that are so ingrained in her that she finds it difficult to break free of them. Throughout her life, she has gone through a range of experiences, from higher education to an illicit love affair. She is constantly on the search for true love, freedom, and self-realization and her journey does not end there. She has been deprived of the necessary love and care, and has even lost contact with her childhood. "At times Virmati yearned for affection for some sign that she was special".

## 4.6 KEY WORDS

- **Agonized-** expressing pain
- **Attuned-** able to understand or recognize something
- **Bountiful-** abundant
- **Commemoration-** celebration
- **Congregation-** an assembly of persons
- **Constricted-** compress, shrink
- **Convalescence-** to recover health or strength
- **Frantic-** emotionally out of control



- **Frequently-** many times
- **Glistened-** sparkled
- **Inadequate-** not enough
- **Inauspicious-** unfavourable
- **Indulged-** involved
- **Inevitable-** necessary
- **Inscription-** engraved, carving
- **Manoeuvre-** set of movements needing skills
- **Mortified-** to be extremely embarrassed
- **Nightmare-** a frightening dream
- **Retorted-** to answer back
- **Spontaneous-** automatic, impulsive
- **Straggles-** drift
- **Strand-** single hair
- **Sojourn-** short stay or live temporarily
- **Substantial-** considerable

## 4.7 SELF ASSESSMENT TEST

1. Throw light on the main protagonist of the novel.
2. What do you understand by quest of identity in the novel?
3. Differentiate different female characters as depicted in the novel.
4. Do you think that Manju Kapur has not given much importance to male characters in the story? Explain.
5. How cleverly Manju Kapur has been successful in presenting difficult relationships between mothers and daughters?
6. How does the theme of difficult daughters justify the title of the novel?
7. Explain in brief the depiction of three generations of women in the novel.
8. Describe in detail the narrative technique adopted by the author.



9. What does the character of Harish signify in the novel? Which traits of male diplomacy have been presented through him?
10. Female characters in the story have been depicted as strong characters in the novel. Explain.

## 4.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

1. Virmati's relationship with the professor caused all kind of problems for her. She had to go through an abortion before getting married. She got expelled from Nahan School and after getting married, her life became even more difficult. As the wife of the professor, she gets to share the bed but not the house while his first wife remains the dominant one with everything that belongs to her; this includes the house, the family members, children, husband's belongings, and even as professor's wife continues to serve him and never lets Virmati do anything. All this makes Virmati feel restless and incomplete as a woman. Most of all, this relationship deprived her of the parental love and respect that a daughter normally gets after marriage. The marriage only provided her with abuse and the destruction of so-called strong family ties. The humiliation and lack of affection from both families made her suffer even more when she found out that her father and her grandfather had passed away without forgiving her and all this made her angry. It was as if she had lost her mind, forgetting who she was and who she had married to and all of her responsibilities.

2. This conflict existing between the two generations has been presented through Kasturi's daughter Virmati and Lajwanti's daughter Shakuntala throughout the novel. The former lays stress on marriage and the latter gives importance to education and economic freedom. We also come to know how Shakuntala lived a lonely life. Similarly, Virmati's claim for education leads to her estrangement. Her obsession for education makes her life full of difficulties. Her simple surrender before the professor's love is nothing but an expression of those hidden and fermented emotions that were expected from her mother and her family. In the beginning, she was attracted to the professor but gradually, this attraction took on a form of love that she herself was unable to recognize. For her, getting married to a canal engineer seems to be a burden to her and her refusal leads to a lot of chaos within her life and her family. Virmati's relationship with the professor made her a difficult daughter to her mother and a burden to her siblings, particularly her sister Indumati who married Inderjit instead of Virmati due to her relationship with the professor. At times, it seemed that Virmati only took the help of education to gain time and to fulfill her love. This set a bad example for girls' education and proved to



be a setback for Arya Samaj's mission to educate girls. Virmati violated all taboos and moral norms of the society by getting married to a man who had a wife and children. Similarly, Swaran Lata got married on certain conditions and whereas Shakuntala against her mother's wishes gave priority to education and considered marriage as the next step. She believes in self-reliance and independence of women.

3. In *Difficult Daughters*, Kapur writes about the humiliation and frustration that modern women face from the patriarchal social system. As a real feminist revolutionist, Kapur reveals the ways in which patriarchy hinders the growth of women's freedom. The male centric rules that define the role of the woman in the family and society are imposed by the men for their convenience and these norms are imprinted in the habits and practices of the traditional family. The female protagonist, Virmati, is seen as a mere worker in the family whereas women are expected to anchor their life in the family and are seen as the builders of the home. Virmati realized that she would not get any response to her question inside the house as it is the foundation of patriarchy. Thus, she realized that education was the only path to freedom in her thought, speech and action. The calming experience that she had outside the house shows her freedom and self-realization. Home indicates a traumatic space where patriarchy is at its strongest. Women are trapped between their aspirations for education and employment and their responsibilities in the home. No one is prepared to comprehend the challenges and struggles that women face inside the home. The patriarchal society has treated the woman as a slave to the man and without him she has no identity and individuality. They are the shadow of the man at home and should be content with the family relationships and duties. The education, the customs and practices, the literature are all for the purpose of male supremacy and hence women cannot come out of the family into the public space of society. The representative of the current generation, Ida, is against the tradition of the family and is searching for her mother's life in the darkness of the male dominated society. The traditional families are against the education and employment of women. Women are supposed to be the builders of the home and hence their education should be for the advancement of the family and not for their liberty and self-empowerment. Shakuntala urges Virmati to break the traditional bonds and come out and take up political activities and public duties. Manju Kapur's heroine fights against the patriarchal ideas that push women to stay at home and want to be free. Kapur's female characters try to break the cultural and social norms and rules and claim their space. Manju Kapur has a deep understanding of the various forms of suffering that a woman, especially a middle-class Indian woman



faces in her lifetime. In every one of her novels, the daughters are complicated, and the happiness they get at the end after a lot of struggle and suffering does not bring them any kind of joy. In her novels, Manju Kapur tries to reveal the traditional myth of woman as a second-rate person, a sexual commodity, a housewife and an obedient wife to her husband and his family.

4. Difficult Daughters also depicts the story of a freedom struggle. While on one hand India fights for freedom from the British Raj, on the other hand main protagonist Virmati struggles for the freedom to live life on her own terms. Just like other Indian girls, she also wishes to choose what to study, where to study, who to marry, and when to marry. But in the end, she realizes that she may have achieved all these things but that she has lost something of herself in the process. She finds herself torn in two, one half of herself fighting against the other half of herself. Just as the British did during the partition: India achieves freedom, but at the price of partition and the loss of half of her soul. Hundreds of thousands of lives are lost in the flames of communal hatred and India's hollow victory mirrors Virmati's life. In all of this, the professor (who loves everything English) has a great deal of power but not in the way that the British did.

5. It is difficult to understand and evaluate Virmati's relationship with the professor, which has been passionate but confusing and inconsistent. Whenever she experiences an emotional crisis, the psychotherapy given to her by the professor is not exciting. In the love letters, the professor doesn't think it necessary to talk about Ganga's pregnancy. In fact, Virmati's visit to Lahore & Nahan has been sensitized by the professor's trip. Virmati's academic background is forgotten in the face of professor's intellectual brilliance. The professor doesn't see the sociological reality or the emotional depth of Virmati. He doesn't understand the connection between the game of love and everyday life. It is very much important to note that Virmati, who gets good education despite social pressure and prejudices, wants to be a housewife so that she can take care of her husband's daily needs but she isn't allowed to do so. She isn't even appreciated for her intellect whereas Harish is respected for his academic ideas and ideology. Sometimes it seems as if Harish as well as Virmati doesn't have a good life together. In one of the wife-husband tussles, Virmati tries to suggest their baby's name and the professor dismisses it coldly. The professor isn't calm or considerate and he also gives Virmati a long lecture to shut her up. Kapur never allows Virmati to feel the power of freedom as she escapes from the old jails; she is trapped in the new ones. For example, the professor is an escape from an arranged marriage without



love; however, it is secretive and suffocating with only a fleeting sense of togetherness behind closed doors. Years of study and work alone do not empower her to take root and develop. She hangs uncertainty on the edge of every new world, not daring to enter it for fear that the professor will call and find her. In the end, marriage to a man of her choice is not a victory either. As a second wife, Virmati has to deal with social exclusion outside the house and contempt for the kitchen and the marital bed with the first wife, Ganga inside it.

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<b>Study of Whole Content with Ease</b>	

## STRUCTURE

### 5.0 Learning Objectives

### 5.1 Introduction

### 5.2 Main Body of the Text:

Gender Trouble

The Color Purple

The Golden Notebook

Difficult Daughters

### 5.3 Further Main Body of the Text:

Gender Trouble

The Color Purple

The Golden Notebook

Difficult Daughters

### 5.4 Check Your Progress

### 5.5 Summary

### 5.6 Key Words

### 5.7 Self-Assessment Test

### 5.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

### 5.9 Suggested Reading



## 5.0 LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To provide students with summaries of the books those are prescribed as per their syllabus
- To help them remember and review the study material of the concerned books as given in the previous units
- To help them learn how to write the answers of various questions on their own by reviewing the study material provided
- To help them practice how to answer questions accurately

## 5.1 INTRODUCTION

After providing the necessary study material in the preceding four units for a thorough study of all the prescribed books to make it easy for the students to comprehend all the characteristics, features and elements of the novels, this chapter has been created. This would be helpful for recapitulation and thorough revision of what is already explained in previous chapters to prepare the students for their written examinations and also to hold good command over the subject.

This unit is packed with the summaries of all the required books along with sample answers and practice questions which students will need to answer. After reading the prescribed books thoroughly and understanding the study material as outlined in the preceding chapters, students can find the answers to the questions related to the novels in this unit. This unit will help students to focus better on their subject.

## 5.2 MAIN BODY OF THE TEXT:

### GENDER TROUBLE

Gender Trouble, which was first published in 1990 by Routledge with the title, **Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity**, is a scholastic piece created by American philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler. It has been visualized as one of the many in her sequence on gender theory and is followed by **Subjects of Desire** and **Bodies That Matter**.

Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity can be seen as Judith Butler's intervention into feminism. In a book that unmoored feminism at its core, she challenged the notion that there is a



unification of women's experience. Women of color who failed to acknowledge the class of women as their advantaged one, argued against an amalgamated subject of feminism and a reductive system within white feminism. In line with this polyphonic language, Butler argued that the establishment of a category of women presumes the modulation of gender relationships, which contradicts feminist objectives. She argued that a feminism based on a category of women contributes to compulsory heterosexuality because heterosexuality is an unreflective condition of the binary coded system of sex and desire. According to Butler, *Gender Trouble* was written as a reaction to aspects of her life, including the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community and the various social movements she had been involved in.

### **THE COLOR PURPLE**

*The Color Purple* published in 1982 is usually described as an example of "woman novel". According to Alice Walker, an author, feminist writing is actually a way of writing which focuses on African-American women in 20th-century America. This fictional tradition manages to address repression meted against African-American women, not just only through white domination but also by particular white and black men.

Walker's novel and stories of slavery actually expose the desolation of the speaker, exposing the appalling treatment that has never been challenged. Both are rooted in the oral tradition of African storytelling and song. Africans who were brought to the America as slaves were often prevented from communicating in their mother tongue similar to a sort of ban on speech of Celie. In *The Color Purple*, we come across such sorts of changes taking place. Entrepreneur Harpo founded his own juke joint and ropes in the famous blues singer Shug. The success of Shug is a sign of the times that Célie writes, as she sings Bessie Smith and reflects an era that is concerned with enjoying one's time, forgetting worries about the past or the future. Towards the end of the novel, the opportunity becomes increasingly clear that Celie can start her own business. Célie now works from the house where her real father used to live and worked.

### **THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK**

*The Golden Notebook* by Doris Lessing released in 1962, is definitely a book that influences the reader regardless of gender. In its own way, it is a reflection of different thoughts, beliefs, emotions and



feelings that are present and which follow the protagonist throughout her life. As readers, we are given an insight into the complexity of human nature, and in this case, into the different layers of the protagonist's life. The main focus of the novel is on the rise of the anti-Stalinist movement, the rise of nihilism, the rise of gender issues, psychoanalysis, the rise of madness, the rise of colonialism and the rise of racism.

The novel is also set against the backdrop of African national liberation movements against European colonial powers: Anna on both sides in these movements (for example, as an ally of the anti-apartheid campaigner Tom Mathlong) and enjoys the privileges of colonial racism (which gives her a prominent place in the British occupied, Central African society). The Soviet Union's history also plays an important role in the novel, as the protagonist spends much of the novel grappling with her ambivalence towards communism, both in theory and in practice.

## **DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS**

The author Manju Kapur's debut novel, "Difficult Daughters", has been widely acclaimed since its publication in 1998 and has been shortlisted for several awards. It was also the recipient of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize in the Best First Book category in 1999. This novel is set during the tumultuous period following the partition of British India in 1947, when India was struggling to achieve its independence and the world experienced a period of political unrest and violence. It has been described as a novel of female desire and entrapment, with themes of compromise and compliance.

Manju Kapur's novel "Difficult Daughters" explores the complexities of the struggle for freedom for one's country and self. The protagonist, Virmati, is confronted with the dilemma of whether to adhere to traditional family values and remain subservient to her family or to pursue her own desires. This novel is a testament to the power of a woman's passionate desire for freedom, which is both legitimate and commendable.

The novel is set at a time when the British Indian nation was being divided into India and Pakistan, leading to a divide between the two nations. The protagonist's desire for freedom to pursue her filial desires with a married professor of English is seen as an illegitimate, unethical, and reprehensible act in the patriarchal society. This conflict serves as a metaphor for the division of one's heart and soul, between tradition and desire, filial relationship and fair relationship and the struggle for freedom for physical, passionate and sensitive relationships. The author's skill and ability are evident in her ability to



depict the individual's sensitive situation at the forefront of the country's freedom struggle, highlighting the transformation of Indian women's search for self-identity and their resistance to the power of men. The author also emphasizes the theme of gender based discrimination in the context of socio-political resistance. The novel *Difficult Daughters* explores the complexities of gender inequality and the plight of Indian women in the face of the oppressive structures of a patriarchal society. It is a reflection of the crisis of the contemporary value system and an issue that cannot be ignored.

### **5.3 FURTHER MAIN BODY OF THE TEXTS:**

#### **GENDER TROUBLE**

The book has been provided with two prefaces. In both the preface and the introduction, Butler outlines her goal and methodology. She explains that she will use the process of critical genealogy, tracing the history of thought around a subject to explore how the identity categories gender and sex, and the subject itself, form through discourse. She explains how her own experiences led to the exploration of *Gender Trouble* and how the concepts in the text have been evolved, critiqued and applied since its publication.

#### **Part 1: Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire**

Butler begins her exploration by arguing that the challenge of defining the category “women” threatens to demolish feminism from the inside. In addition to the question of defining “women,” the subject for whom she seeks political expression, feminism is also challenged by the question of defining the subject itself. Butler introduces the idea of “heterosexual matrix,” an alternative term for what is commonly known as patriarchy. Butler examines how gender and sexuality are shaped and regulated by the rules of compulsory heterosexuality which defines the discourse about sex and gender. The discourse creates, enforces and limits the possibilities of gender configurations while presenting them as natural or true states. Butler also argues that social discourse is “phallogocentric” in that it creates meaning through a language “signifying economy” which privileges the masculine. Language is the process of creating and using words to represent or signify concepts, ideas and things because the feminine experience can only be expressed through language. It is subject to misrepresentation, concealment, devaluation or exclusion from discourse when there are no words to express it.



## Part 2: Prohibition, Psychoanalysis and the Production of Heterosexual Matrix

At the start of Part 2, Butler cautions against the use of implementing “origin” narratives which are sometimes used to suggest that the sex hierarchy is unpredictable rather than innate. These narratives, she argues, are weakened by the bias of the present. She also rejects structuralist anthropology’s nature/culture distinction which holds sex to be natural and gender to be cultural.

Butler then turns her attention to the theory of the universal relationship structure and its associated rules by structural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009), the rule of exogamy getting married outside one’s group and the prohibition of incest and homosexuality. Next, she turns to psychoanalysis and the theory of the speaking subject by psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901–1981). In this theory, the prohibition against incest with the mother forms the first barrier between mother and child, and the frustrated child is moved to express his dissatisfaction through speech, which initiates the child’s being as a distinct subject. Finally, she considers Lacan’s account of masquerade the masking that is at the core of femininity and Sigmund Freud’s theory of masquerade (1856–1939). He argued that the taboo of incest creates an identity, but his theory is based on the implementation of melancholic identification. All three theories of identity are based on a pre-existing natural state. Butler rejects them because it is impossible to argue about what is beyond the natural state from within it. Instead, she examines them to see if an alternative explanation can explain the subversive and inconsistent gender identities of gay and lesbian identity.

Butler goes on to discuss how the body is a “naturalized” outcome of discourse, concluding with Foucault’s critique of the tyrannical incest taboo: By prohibiting desire, the taboo creates what it prohibits. The nature of legal power, in relation to a judge or to the law, is to create what it prohibits. Thus, a prohibitive law which discursively generates heterosexual configurations of sex, gender and desire is competent in creating alternative “forbidden” alignment of those identity components.

## Part 3: Subversive Bodily Acts

Butler challenges the claims of Julia Kristeva (b.1941) about the formation of identity and the undermining of the paternal law through the study of language as a sign. The undermining of the paternal law, which governs all discourse, is achieved by access to the semiotic, which exists before and outside discourse, where language links sound to sense and multiplies meanings. Kristeva’s analysis is



based on the concept of the mother body and the plurality of drives existing before discourse. Next, Butler examines the existence of people whose physical and genetic characteristics do not fit the sex binary. In such cases, sex and gender are rendered unintelligible and reveal themselves as discursive constructed categories. Finally, Butler examines feminist author and theorist, Monique Wittig, who sees language as the instrument through which the body is broken down into the artificial categories of sex. However, Butler does not agree with Wittig's claim that the deconstructing of language will eliminate sex.

### **Conclusion: From Parody to Politics**

In the final analysis, identity politics is rejected. Identity is not a solid base for political action because the subject does not have a solid basis other than the repeated actions of the subject. Parody practices of repetition demonstrate this. Parody practices also reveal the fictional nature of the gender categories. Butler's research throughout the text has radical consequences. Her findings reveal the possibility of a new gender configuration as well as a new configuration for the politics itself.

### **THE COLOUR PURPLE**

The Color Purple's protagonist and narrator is Celie, a poor and illiterate fourteen year old black girl from rural Georgia. She begins to write letters to God after being repeatedly raped and beaten by her abusive stepfather, Alphonso. Alphonso had already fathered Celia once. She bore him a daughter, whom he stole and probably killed in a wood. Celia also bore him a son, again stolen by Alphonso. Her mother became ill and died. Alphonso married a new wife, but continued to abuse Celia.

Celie's bright, beautiful younger sister Nettie learns that a man named Mr. ----- wants to marry Nettie and he has a lover called Shug Avery, who is a seductive lounge singer whose picture fascinates Celia. Alphonso is not interested in letting Nettie marry him so he offers Celia as a bride to Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. He accepts the offer and takes Celia into a miserable and unhappy married life. Nettie flees Alphonso and hides at Celie's house. Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ still wants Nettie and when he tries to seduce her, she runs away for her life. Celia never hears from her again. She thinks she is dead.

Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s sister Kate is sympathetic to Celie and encourages her to resist Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s abuse. Harpo, Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s son falls in love with the big, strong girl, Sofia. Shug Avery arrives in town to sing at the local bar. Celia is not allowed to visit her. Sofia became pregnant and married Harpo. Celia is





astonished by Sofia's defiance in the face of her husband and father in law. Harpo's efforts to constantly beat her into submission keep failing because she is by far the stronger of the two.

Shug gets sick and Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ brings her to his home. Shug is rude to Celie at first but the two women start to get to know each other as Celie takes over Shug's nursing duties. Celie falls in love with Shug and finds herself sexually attracted to her. Frustrated by Harpo's constant attempts to control her, Sofia leaves and takes her children with her. A few months later Harpo opens up a juke joint, where Shug performs every night. Celie is perplexed by her feelings for Shug.

Shug makes the decision to stay after she finds out that Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ had beaten Celie while Shug was away. Shug and Celie get closer and Shug starts asking Celie about sex. Sofia comes back for a visit. She gets into a fight with Harpo's girlfriend, Squeak. The mayor's wife, Miss Millie asks Sofia if she will work as her maid. She bluntly says 'No'. When the mayor hits her for being disobedient, she hits him back and knocks him to the ground. Squeak tries to free Sofia but fails and Sofia is sentenced to 12 years in jail.

Shug comes back with her new husband Grady. Even though she is married, Shug starts instigating sexual relationships with Celie and the two of them sleep in the same bed together. One night, Shug asks her about her sister, and Celie thinks Nettie died because she promised to write to Celie but didn't. Shug tells her that she saw Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ hiding some mysterious letters that came in the mail and she manages to get hold of one of the letters. She and Shug discover that it is Nettie's letters. Looking through Mr. \_\_\_\_\_'s suitcase, Celie and Shug discover dozens of letters, Nettie sent to Celie throughout the years. Heartbroken Celie reads the letters one by one, wondering to figure out how not to kill Mr. \_\_\_\_\_.

According to the letters, Nettie made friends with a missionary couple Samuel and Corrine and went on missions to Africa with them. They had two adopted children Olivia and Adam. Nettie became close friends with Corrine. Corrine began to wonder if her adopted children looked anything like Nettie. She also began to wonder if she and Samuel had a secret history. Corrine became increasingly suspicious of Nettie's presence in her family.

Nettie is disappointed with her experience as a missionary, finding the Africans to be selfish and stubborn. Corrine gets sick with a fever, prompting Nettie to ask Samuel to explain how he adopted his two children, Olivia and Adam, based on Samuel's story. Nettie learns that Celie's biological children



are actually alive after all, and Alphonso is in fact Nettie's and Celie's step-father. The real father of Alphonso and Celia was a store owner who was lynched by white men because they hated him for being successful. Alphonso claims to be their true father because he wants to inherit the home and land that belonged to their mother.

Nettie explains that she is the biological aunt of Samuel's and Corrine's children. Corrine is terminally ill and refuses to accept Nettie's story. Corrine passes away but accepts her story and feels at peace just before she dies. Celia visits Alphonso and he confirms Nettie's version of events. Alphonso tells Celia that he is just the woman's stepfather and Celia begins to lose faith in God. Shug tries to persuade Celia to see God as she sees him, rather than as the old bearded white man.

Sofia is freed by the mayor six months later. One evening at dinner, Celie lashes out at Mr. \_\_\_\_\_, accusing him of having abused her for years. Shug tells Celie that she is moving to Tennessee with Squeak and the two of them leave. Celie spends the next few years in Tennessee, where she designs and sews individually tailored pairs of pants and eventually turns this hobby into a career. She returns to Georgia to visit Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and learns that he has changed his ways and Alphonso has passed away. Alphonso's house and land belong to Celia now, so she moves there. In the meantime, Samuel and Nettie get married and get ready to go back to America. But before they go, Samuel's son Adam gets married to Tashi, an African native girl. Tashi gets circumcised and facial scarring in African culture. In a show of solidarity, Adam gets facial scarring as well. Celie reconciles with Mr. \_\_\_\_\_ and the two start to enjoy each other's company. Now financially, spiritually and emotionally independent Celie no longer feels troubled by Shug's frequent infidelities with young men. Sofia remarries Harpo. She works in Celia's shop. Nettie finally makes her way back to America with her son Samuel and the kids. Feeling exhausted but excited to see her sister again, Celie remarks that although she and her sister are old, she feels younger than ever before.

## THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK

The story of the Golden Notebook begins with a framing narrative called "Free Women", which is a third-person narrative in which the protagonist is a young woman named Anna Wulf. Anna has four notebooks: a black one, a red one, a yellow one, and a blue one. The prologue alternates between telling the story of Anna's life and revealing the contents of the notebooks. Eventually, a passage from the fifth notebook, the golden one, appears.



In the novel, Anna Freeman Wulf moves to Rhodesia in 1939 at the outbreak of World War II. During her stay in Rhodesia, she becomes involved with Leftist politics and forms a circle of friends who share her commitment to the cause. She is romantically involved with a man called Max Wulf, but her feelings towards him are ambivalent. At the end of the war, Max and Anna have a child together and they marry in 1945. Their daughter, Janet, was born in 1946. They divorce when Janet is a year old, and Anna moves back to London to be a single mother and to write. In 1951, she published her novel, *Frontiers of War*. It is set in Africa and is based on her own experiences. The novel sells very well and gives Anna enough money to support herself. Anna also becomes involved with the British Communist Party.

When Anna returns England, she finds herself living with a single mother named Molly. Molly is raising her son Tommy, after divorcing her husband Richard. Anna also falls in love with a married man, Michael, who she loves and spends five years in a relationship. In 1954, her relationship with Michael came to an end and she also resigned from the Communist Party after becoming increasingly disillusioned with it. The frame narrative begins in 1957 and all of these events are gradually revealed through the pages of the notebooks. The black notebook is about Anna's experiences in Africa, and her experience with the reception and publication of her novel. The red notebook is about her experiences with Communism. The yellow notebook contains a story called "The Shadow of a Third," which appears to be a thinly veiled account of Anna's relationship with Michael. The blue notebook is like a journal, where Anna writes down her memories and reflections.

In 1957, Anna tried to be supportive of Molly and Richard in dealing with their teenage son, Tommy. Unluckily Tommy tries to kill himself and is left blind. Consequently, this suicide attempt and Tommy's strange behavior make Anna question her life and her mission in writing. She feels anxious about writing her second novel but doesn't know how to go about it. By the time Tommy recovers, Anna's mental health begins to deteriorate. When her daughter goes off to boarding school, Anna is left to fend for herself. She falls in a destructive love relationship with an American screenwriter. This relationship drives Anna to the edge of a nervous breakdown but eventually, she is able to start her second novel.

The scene in which Anna writes the initiating line of that novel reflects that the frame narrative itself is also a substantial piece of fiction, written by Anna herself.



## DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS

The protagonist of the novel is a woman who is torn between her body and her desire to be part of the social and political movements of the times and also defies tradition. The novel's title is a reference to the fact that a woman who is struggling to find her own identity is labelled as a difficult daughter by both her family and society. *Difficult Daughters* tells the story of women who are trying to find their identity. The story of *Virmati* is narrated from the viewpoint of her daughter *Ida*. In the beginning of the novel, *Ida* narrates the story of the dead mother. In order to understand the story, one has to know about *Virmati*'s character. The writer describes *Virmati*'s personality and her attitude after death. *Virmati* says, "When I die, she said to me, I want my body donated: My eyes, my hearts, my kidneys, and any organ that can be of use. That way someone will value me after I have gone." *Ida*, an aloof girl, goes to Amritsar in search of her mother's memory. The writer manages to bring the past and the present together seamlessly. *Ida*, a divorced woman, is trying to remember her mother.

The novel tells the story of *Virmati*, mother of *Ida* who is a brave and courageous woman who fights against the oppressive ways of society and struggles to find her own identity in traditional Indian culture. *Virmati* is raised in a traditional Indian family where she is constantly occupied with household duties. She has lost her identity in this family responsibility. The novel reveals the reality of the Indian woman in the family, who is just a pawn in the hands of a man. Her mother had always told her that marriage is the last destiny of a woman. Because *Virmati* was *Kasturi*'s eldest daughter, she had to take care of all her siblings and assist her mother in feeding them. During her mother's pregnancy, *Virmati* has always been occupied with taking care of the housekeeping and managing the things for her.

*Virmati* seems to have been forced to take on the responsibilities from a very young age. So *Virmati* is depicted as a typical Indian woman. Most of her time has been spent in the household. Even though she wants to live her life without any responsibilities, she is bound by the household responsibilities. She is a modern woman. She is fighting against the traditional Indian male dominated society.

Living in Amritsar gives *Virmati* the chance to step into a new world of freedom that she had been deprived of for a long time. In Amritsar, she changes her clothes, her attitude, her look and her style, everything changes in a flash. In *Shakuntala*, she feels the true signs of happiness that can only be found in freedom. She watches *Shakuntala* with interest. She wishes to be with *Shakuntala* someday. *Shakuntala*'s visit has planted the seed of aspiration in *Virmati*. It is possible to be more than just a wife.



The images of Shakuntala kept coming back to her mind. Shakuntala who has completed her M.Sc.(Chemistry) has tasted the wine of freedom.

Virmati's problem is different. On the outside, she looks like Shakuntala but from inside, she has a lot of issues. She has to deal with her five sisters who are waiting for her to get married. She is the eldest in the family and her mother feels the same way. Her mother wants to perform her daughter's marriage as early as possible. Kasturi is aware of the change that Virmati is going through. She knows that her daughter is going to change. But she doesn't know whether to let her daughter go free or stop her from growing up. She appears to be in a quandary. She doesn't want to let Virmati enter the world of education with so much freedom but also doesn't want to burden her daughter with all the traditions and conventions. But Virmati wanted to study instead of getting married and having children.

Virmati wants to practice her English but her mother doesn't see it as important. For Kasturi, the most important thing is taking care of her family, husband and kids. She doesn't get a chance to convince her mother and gets engaged with Inderjit, an irrigation engineer. Her marriage with Inderjit is final but postponed due to his father's death. She doesn't think about marriage and child bearing after completing her high school. She joins A.S. College to pursue her B.A. where she fell in love with Harish Chandra, an already married professor who lives next door and has an intellectual companion. Like many Indian girls, Virmati is expected to accept an arranged marriage but she rejects it and continues her studies.

Virmati refused to get married to Inderjit, which caused a lot of tension in the family. Everyone felt that she had brought shame to the family and destroyed her sister's chances of getting married. When the marriage proposal was rejected, her condition deteriorated. The writer deeply conveys the concept of women's inferiority. She states that the position is degrading because of the dependability of the man. She does not have the right to choose her own life. The male dominance creates obstacles in their life. They never decide to choose their love or to continue their education. However, they are disappointed with their love and Virmati tries to commit suicide. In the end, they put her in a godown and forced Indu, their younger sister, to get married to Inderjit.

Virmati was determined to continue her studies in Lahore. All her family members were against her decision, but they would not stand in her way. The elders of the family decided that Kasturi should accompany her to Lahore to help her get admitted to RBSL College and the principal assured her that there would be no difficulty. She was the centre of attention due to her revolutionary spirit. She did not



give in to the traditional ways of the Arya Samaj family. She found a friend in Lahore, Shakuntala, who encouraged her to be open and free in her ideas and attitude. She told Virmati that the people in Lahore were not closed-minded.

She and her companion Swarna Lata begin a fulfilling life in Lahore. Swarna is an active supporter of the current political and social movements. She is a progressive woman with her own ideas and opinions. She is independent and wants to do more than just get married. She is not content to wait for any man, but wants to involve herself in others. Under the watchful eye of a friend like Swarna Lata, Virmati tries to study the communal tensions during the freedom struggle in India. But the thoughts of the professor keep coming back to her thoughts. Harish visits her in Lahore and they live happily ever after. The professor shows sexual interest in Virmati. Virmati couldn't refuse the professor's advances. She is aware of the nature of the relationship between the two, but her resistance is short-lived. After the act of sexual intercourse, Virmati finds herself in a state of guilt. She realizes the moral flaw in her heart and feels guilty.

Manju Kapur beautifully intertwined Virmati's character with the activities of the freedom movement which was then at its peak. Virmati participated in many conferences organized by different parties, where the topic of woman empowerment was discussed. She attended these conferences and listened to many speeches given by Leela Mehhta. Virmati did not understand the freedom she wanted. In her mind, she wanted to be like her friend Swarn Lata. When she goes to a meeting of women for freedom, she sees all the women who are actively participating in the freedom struggle. Even though she keeps begging him to marry her, Harish won't budge. He's nothing but a chauvinist who is steeped in patriarchal culture. He's a hypocrite who has created his own ideas about social norms and abuses Virmati sexually. Virmati becomes pregnant. Then she leaves for Amritsar. In Amritsar, she gets gold bangles from her father. However, she sells the gold bangles for the abortion. After this unfortunate incident, Virmati no longer wants to associate with the professor. She blames the professor for the unfortunate incident in her life.

In the 1940s, few women would have dared to venture out of the seclusion and sameness of their home and cry their hearts out. Virmati was iron-willed, but she showed incredible fortitude when she resisted Harish's advances and overcame her depression and decided to take an independent path, taking on the role of a girl's school headmistress at Nahan. This is the happiest and most attractive time of Virmati's



life and no one can deny that she spends the happiest time of her life at Nahan. Nahan is the capital of a small Himalayan state, ruled by a maharajah, which provides her with a place to live and work as the headmaster of a school for girls. Sirmaur was a real place, and it is now part of a federal state, and here she has the most control over her life. She has to follow certain rules and her failure to do so prove her downfall, but she manages to teach in an orderly way, and her success earns her respect.

She thinks she needs a man but makes the mistake of going back to a relationship that has already caused her nothing but pain. The constant secret visits of the fatal professor rob Virmati of the trust of her employers and she is forced to leave her school, her house and her job. From Nahan, she goes on her way to Shantiniketan to get more freedom but again she is cut off from her loved ones until she is tied in marriage with Harish.

The professor's obsession with Virmati, even after she has been sent to Lahore to study in a women's college as part of her punishment, his eagerness to have sex with her again, and his refusal to marry her despite her constant requests, are all examples of the male's desire. Men's ego-centricity makes them blind to the plight of women who are often put in difficult situations as a result of their relationships with men. From an intellectual point of view, it can be said that the professor, Harish Chandra enjoys the bliss of both worlds. He has the luxury of having Ganga as his maidservant who does his laundry for him, while Virmati fulfills his academic need which the professor can't satisfy in his humble and gentle Ganga.

Even though Virmati gets married to the professor, she doesn't get a place in the family because Ganga's mother makes Virmati live a miserable life in the small house. It's important to note that even Virmati, who gets a good education despite social pressure and obscurities, wants to be a housewife to take care of her husband's daily needs, but she isn't allowed to do so. She isn't even appreciated for her intellect, whereas Harish is respected for his intellectual ideas. Sometimes it seems like Harish doesn't have a good relationship with Virmati. In a conversation between husband and wife, Virmati tries to suggest a name for the baby but the professor dismisses it.

Therefore, Virmati, who is raised in a well-educated and westernized family, defies her family and listens to her heart. She fights a lot for her identity. In her struggle for identity, she loses it at all stages. She struggles to make room for herself. Her rebellious attitude takes her back at every stage whenever she has to fight against Harish's sexual oppression. According to N.P. Sharma, Virmati has to fight



against the power of the mother as well as the oppressive forces of patriarchy symbolized by the mother figure. The rebels in Virmati might have actually exchanged one kind of slavery for another. At the end, she is free, even from the repressive love of her husband. Once she succeeds in doing that, she gets her husband all by herself, her child and reconciliation with her family.

## 5.4 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

### GENDER TROUBLE

1. According to Judith Butler, how is gender constituted?
2. Explain in brief the criticism of Gender Trouble depicting queer theory.

### THE COLOR PURPLE

1. Explain in brief the relationship between Celia and Shug?
2. What do you think is the significance of the title The Color Purple?

### THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK

1. Discuss the ending of the novel.
2. Explain in brief the role of psychoanalysis in the novel.

### DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS

1. Do you consider Manju Kapur as a feminist writer? Explain with reference to the novel Difficult Daughters.
2. Do you think Virmati blossoms into a 'New Woman' in the real sense? Explain.

## 5.5 SUMMARY

To conclude this unit, it can be observed that all the efforts have been put in, in order to generate this unit as a useful one for the students from the point of view of recapitulating and recollecting the different aspects of all the four books prescribed in the syllabus. The unit has been provided with various questions to help the students in preparing well for their exams. Students are further advised to take it important to go through the whole text thoroughly to comprehend the whole material properly which has been provided in this unit.





## 5.6 KEY WORDS

### GENDER TROUBLE

- **Assemblage-** Gathering, Crowd, Congregation
- **Corporeality-** Element, Material, Constituent
- **Disavow-** Disclaim, Disconfirm, Disown
- **Disparaged-** Defamed, Traduced, Aspersed, Derogated
- **Divergence-** Separation, Partition, Division, Bifurcation
- **Genealogy-** Ancestry, Pedigree, Lineage
- **Hegemony-** Dominance, Authority, Supremacy
- **Inexorable-** Relentless, Unstoppable, Unavoidable
- **Ostensibly-** Seemingly, Apparently, Outwardly
- **Perpetuate-** Continue, Maintain, Eternalize, Immortalize
- **Repudiated-** Discredited, Disgraced, Thrown out
- **Tortuous-** Twisted, Winding, Meandering

### THE COLOR PURPLE

- **Antimacassar-** a piece of ornamented cloth that protects the back of a chair from hair oils
- **Browbeat-** discourage or frighten with threats or a domineering manner
- **Cistern-** an artificial reservoir for storing liquids
- **Coddle -** treat with excessive indulgence
- **Corral-** collect or gather
- **Corrugated-** shaped into alternating parallel grooves and ridges
- **Despot-** a cruel and oppressive dictator
- **Dote-** showers with love; show excessive affection for



- **Flustered**- thrown into a state of agitated confusion  
**Fornication**- sexual intercourse between persons not married to each other
- **Haggard**- showing the wearing effects of overwork or care or suffering
- **Jaunty**- having a cheerful, lively, and self-confident air
- **Ostracism**- the act of excluding someone from society by general consent
- **Pallbearer**- one of the mourners carrying the coffin at a funeral
- **Pomade**- hairdressing consisting of a perfumed oil or ointment
- **Prance**- move or step in a lively, spirited, or showy way  
**Pulpit**- a platform raised to give prominence to the person on it
- **Repugnance**- intense aversion
- **Rummage**- search haphazardly
- **Sassy**- improperly forward or bold
- **Seine**- fish with a seine; catch fish with a seine
- **Seminary**- a school for training ministers or priests or rabbis  
**Shingle**- building material used as siding or roofing
- **Staid**- characterized by dignity and propriety  
**Strumpet**- a woman adulterer
- **Stupendous**- as great in size, force, or extent as to elicit awe
- **Thimble**- a small metal cap to protect the finger while sewing
- **Ululation**- a long, loud, emotional howl or cry
- **Verbosity**- an expressive style that uses excessive or empty words

## THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK

- **Amalgam**- A combination
- **Connivance**- Scheming or assistance
- **Foetid**- Rotten



- **Foliage**- With leaves or trees
- **Impermanent**- Temporary Indoctrinated- Brainwashed
- **Judicious**- Showing caution or good judgment
- **Mellifluous**- Sweet and flowing in sound
- **Naivety**- Lack of experience
- **Perpetuating**- Encouraging something to continue
- **Plaintive**- Wistful or longing
- **Spasmodic**- Sudden, brief, and sporadic
- **Spontaneous**- Unconstrained, without planning or premeditated intent
- **Turpitude**- Vile, shameful, or base

### DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS

- **Attuned**- able to understand or recognize something
- **Commemoration**- celebration
- **Constricted**- compress, shrink
- **Convalescence**- to recover health or strength
- **Frantic**- emotionally out of control
- **Glistened**- sparkled
- **Inauspicious**- unfavourable
- **Indulged**- involved
- **Inscription**- engraved, carving
- **Manoeuvre**- set of movements needing skills
- **Mortified**- to be extremely embarrassed
- **Retorted**- to answer back
- **Spontaneous**- automatic, impulsive
- **Straggles**- drift
- **Sojourn**- short stay or live temporarily



- **Substantial-** considerable

## • **5.7 SELF ASSESSMENT TEST**

### **GENDER TROUBLE**

1. Throw some light on the early life of Judith Butler.
2. How Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity can be read as an intervention into feminism?
3. How is the problem of exclusion dealt with in Gender Trouble?
4. How Gender Trouble is a book that questions the relationship between sex, gender and sexuality?
5. How does Butler in the second chapter examine the psycho-structuralist approach to sexual difference and the structure of sexuality in relation to power?

### **THE COLOR PURPLE**

1. Discuss some of the patriarchal rituals of the Olinka people that you observe in the novel.
2. Trace the development in Celie from her belief in a white male Christian God to a pantheistic gender less God.
3. Write in brief the growth of Celie observed by you in letters 1-25.
4. In what ways do you find Nettie and Celie different and similar? Does Shug replace Nettie in Celie's life?
5. Sofia has been unjustly imprisoned. How do you find it related to the major theme of injustice, which in a way touches all the main characters in the novel?

### **THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK**

1. What does Anna intend to do by using four separate notebooks?
2. What do you understand about fragmentation as depicted in the novel?
3. What is the influence of Molly on the life of Anna? Explain.
4. Elucidate how do male characters affect the life of Anna?



5. Do you think that the overall tone of the novel is pessimistic? Justify.

### **DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS**

1. Discuss in brief the influence of the character of Shakuntala and Swarnlata on Virmati.
2. Discuss in brief the traditional thought reflected through some women characters.
3. Throw some light on the childhood of Virmati as depicted in the novel.
4. Describe the reaction of the family of Virmati on her refusal to get married to Inderjit.
5. Describe the relationship of Virmati with the family of Harish after marriage.

## **5.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS**

### **GENDER TROUBLE**

1. Butler's upheaval was to argue that gender is a set of actions and words, acts in which a set of gendered characteristics or temperaments are expressed or performed. In other words, gender is not a basic ethos or a product of gendered behaviour; it's a sequence of actions whose continuous reiteration gives the illusion that there is a fundamental nature. However, she emphasized that individuals don't exist before or independently of their genders, and that gender is always a done thing, though not necessarily a done thing by a person who may be said to exist prior to the deed. In fact, the "doer" is "variably constructed" by the deed. So, it follows that people don't choose their genders, and they can't change them at will just by acting (or not acting) in a certain way. But small deviations from the established patterns of gender are possible and even inevitable, and that's where the socially constructed nature of gender comes into play.
2. Gender Trouble by Butler is widely regarded as one of the founding books of queer theory, and her work has continued to inform much contemporary cultural theory, especially in the United States in the early 1990s. However, her work has also been criticized for the content and style of her work. Some critics, despite being sympathetic towards her work, have also argued that her approach is performatively constructed, leaving her with no clear account of individual agency. Others have argued that her description of politics as 'paradoxical' is weak and self-serving, similar to the moral vacuity of politics. The most common criticism of her work has been for her dense, jargon-laden prose and non-linear argumentation. Some critics have accused her of using language as a substitute for original



thought, while others have argued that radical ideas are best represented in writings that challenge accepted standards of common sense, clarity and grammar.

## THE COLOR PURPLE

1. Celia is in a relationship with Mister's lover, a singer named Shug Avery. Shug gets sick and is taken to Mister's home, where Celia nursed her back to health. Shug was rude to Celia, but she warmed up to her and they became friends. Celia likes Shug sexually. When Shug's health returns, she starts singing at a juke joint that was opened by Harpo after his first wife, Sofia left him. Shug finds out that Mr. \_\_\_\_ is beating Celie while she's away, so she decides to stay longer. Eventually, Shug goes away and returns with his new husband, Grady. Shug initiates an intimate sexual relationship with Celia. Celia finds out that Mr. \_\_\_\_ has hidden many letters, but she doesn't know who they're from. She gets one of them and it's from Nettie whom she had thought was dead because she hadn't received any letters from her. Shug and Celia both help each other discover their true selves and bring the best out of each other, because they both felt limited by how others perceived them. Shug becomes Celia's idol and helps her to discover a new way of looking at life. Celie starts to become stronger and discover who she really is, how she loves, and what love is. She sees Shug as a metaphor for the missionaries in her life, similar to the missionaries in Olinka. She is the one who makes Mr. \_\_\_\_ stop torturing Celie, and she also finds the letters that Mr. \_\_\_\_ hid from Celie, which gave her the strength to break away from Mr. \_\_\_\_\_. She also, encourages Celie to start her own business. She helps her find a new stage in her life where she can pursue her passions and creativity, which gives her more personal as well as financial freedom.

2 There is a significant psychological and spiritual development throughout the novel. However, the meaning of the title "The Color Purple" remains the same throughout the novel. At the beginning of the novel, Celie is a religious person who believes that as long as she can spell the word "G-O-D," she has someone to go with her. However, after reading Nettie's letters, Celie's faith in God, the angels, and the prophets of the Bible changes drastically. She comes to understand that Jesus had hair like the lamb and that God is more like her than she believes. Her faith in God changes completely after she listens to Shug, who believes in the beauty of nature and life, and rejects the narrow ideas of the church. She believes that God is angry if you walk by a purple field and don't notice it. "The Color Purple" is named after this philosophy. A simple color like purple should be celebrated as a gift from the divine. By



recognizing the beauty of the natural world and cherishing it, Celia finds a more liberated faith. Shug encourages Celia to rejoice in all that God gives because He is a sexless, raceless being who loves to be loved. This realization changes Celia's life. The colour is no longer just a color, but helps her recognize that God is not a white man, but an entity that is full of wonders and miracles. This novel is a fusion of people, culture and worlds, and the title plays an important role. At the start of the novel, Celia is under the control of Albert and his children, and even his sister, Kate, feels bad for Celia and requests her to buy her a new dress. It is the first time that Celia mentions her love of purple, and she imagines Shug wearing this colour, which she sees as beautiful, royal, and liberated. Purple has a lot of historical significance because it has always been associated with royalty and status. For example, the Romans wore purple togas, which symbolized respect. In the West, purple was associated with power and authority. So, Celia and Kate look for a purple cloth for her, but they can't find any. This is a sign that Celia is not liberated yet. She wears colours that are dull instead of vibrant and happy colours like red and purple, in the beginning. Later on, with the help of Shug, Celia finds her identity and independence and this is again shown when she makes red and purple pants for Sophia. This not only symbolizes Celia's independence but also the progress of women who wear pants, which was once considered an abomination to society, but is now acceptable. Celia owns a house now, and decorates her room in red and purple. Now she finally gets what she wants and deserves. Albert presents Celia with a purple frog, which he carves for her, symbolizing the change in the relationship between men and women. The color purple is no longer just a color, but a symbol of Celia's dignity and her change as a person, as well as the change in the ideas of people in society.

### THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK

1 At the end of the novel, Anna realizes she needs to get a job and tells Molly that she wants to become a marriage counsellor and a teacher. By this time, Molly is getting ready to get married again. The novel closes with the two women going about their daily lives. As Anna in the Golden Notebook resumes her writing career, while Anna in Free Women joins the Labour Party, teaches evening classes for delinquent children twice a week and never writes again, it is hard to determine what the true end of The Golden Notebook is. Whittaker argues that the Blue Notebook is the most detailed record of Anna's life and that it is, in fact, the only record that we as readers can rely on. As a result, Anna in Free



Women and Anna in *The Golden Notebook* are both fictionalized versions of Anna's life. The Blue Notebook's status as a diary gives it a credibility that the other versions lack.

At the end of the Golden Notebook, the golden colored notebook shows Anna who resumes her writing career and this resumption of her writing career is definitely productive, as we see in the final novel, *Free Women*, because *Free Women* is fiction, and in that novel, Anna is just a character. Also, the fact that Anna decides not to write again, but works as a marriage counsellor, does nothing to convince the reader about the character of the Anna who keeps records in the notebooks, who has a great desire to write, it is simply inconceivable that the Anna who keeps notes in the notebooks, and writes the best-selling novel, will forever and truly turn her back on her writing career.

2 At the beginning of the novel, we find out that Anna and Molly both have encountered psychoanalysis. This aspect of the novel becomes more significant as we see several scenes where Anna talks to her psychoanalyst; Mrs. Marks, nicknamed “Mother Sugar.” Psychoanalysis is a form of psychotherapy that dates back to the early 19th century. It was developed as a form of treatment for depression, anxiety and other mental health issues. It was first introduced as a practice in the late 19th century by the German psychoanalyst, F.S. Freud. Over the years, other psychoanalysts have developed different theories and approaches to psychotherapy.

In Lessing's novel, psychoanalysis plays a key role in explaining Anna's fascination with her dreams: both Anna and Mother Sugar believe they reveal something about her unconscious mind. The idea of a ‘repressed unconscious’ which is both hard to access and necessary for self-realization is also present in Anna's struggle to articulate her true feelings and to write authentically. Anna's writer's block seems to be linked to her repression. Psychoanalytic theory also informs Anna's account of her sexuality as she is interested in having different types of ‘orgasms’ and what this reveals about her. Freud theorized respective phases of sexual development and associated them with different levels of sexual pleasure.

## DIFFICULT DAUGHTERS

1 Manju Kapur is a feminist writer. Her novels are a strong protest against the patriarchal society of India. Manju Kapur writes about the New Indian woman. The New Indian woman is a self-identifying woman who seeks liberation in all aspects of life. She challenges the traditional image of the Indian woman. In *Difficult Daughters*, it is very clear that a typical woman character is changed into a “New Woman” by replacing the traditional image of an Indian woman.





Manju Kapur's novel *Difficult Daughters* offers a fresh perspective on Indian women. In this novel, Manju Kapur challenges the traditional idea that marriage is a requirement for women. She deliberately portrays the character of Virmati (the protagonist) and Shakuntala (Virmati's cousin) as two girls with different perspectives. In *Difficult Daughters*, Manju Kapur portrays her characters as traditional and new modern women. Virmati is the first category of woman while Shakuntala is the second category of woman. In this novel, women are seen as the oppressed people. The protagonist, Kasturi, gives birth to 11 children, making her feeble and weak. Her husband neglects her health and denies her equal rights. Thus, she is put in a position where she cannot refuse to give birth to more children. She is not given the opportunity to talk about equal rights with her husband. The protagonist, Virmati, gets pregnant with Harish's child. She is Harish's second wife. He forced her to have the child aborted. In her struggle for identity, she refers to having the child aborted.

At every stage of her life, she loses respect and status but struggles to carve out space for herself. Her rebellious attitude fades away whenever she has to put up a strong fight against the professor's sexual oppression. Virmati, just like her mother, treats her daughter Ida according to the strict patriarchal rules. She is not an understanding mother to her daughter. This results in making Ida suffer from being independent. Ida, as Virmati's daughter, fights for the identity, dignity and self-esteem that Virmati never had. She rejects family rules and male dominated society. Thus, Ida becomes Virmati's 'difficult daughter'.

Virmati's life is dominated by her domestic responsibilities and the restrictions of her mother. Manju Kapur's novel shows that social institutions such as family and economy are dominated by men. This is reflected in some of the incidents in the novel. Kasturi, for example, was seen to suffer from the economic and social disadvantages in a society ruled by men. The society was dominated by patriarchy. People such as Virmati were denied their fundamental rights and aspirations to find their own identity and independence.

2 After going through the novel we don't think that Virmati evolves as a new woman in the real sense. Despite her rebellion against her family and her firm stance against the professor, she gives in to his demands and compulsions in Lahore, where she had come to expand her horizons. Instead, she finds herself entangled in a futile love affair, a dubious marriage and an unwanted pregnancy. Virmati wants



to expand her wings like her college friend Swarnlata, who is committed to 'meaningful activities' related to freedom movement and women's emancipation. However, Virmati finds herself used by the professor.

Despite marrying her, he tends to make her a pariah. Kapur reveals how Virmati reacts when her lover betrays her. Her anguish is evident in her words in the following lines: "Here I am in the position of being your secret wife, full of shame, wondering what people will say if they find me out, not being able to live in peace, study in peace and.... Why?" Virmati refers to the selfishness of men and their power over women and believes that men abuse women. She holds the traditional view that a woman's body should be pure and immaculate, therefore, could never make an effort to look for another husband. So, Virmati crosses one patriarchal barrier and gets trapped in another where her freedom is restricted and all she can do is adapt compromise and adjust. She is a failure whose actions completely alienate her from the family and she cannot create the space for herself that she has been trying so hard to create all these years. Maybe it is this failure to find independent roots and grow that makes Ida say, 'the one thing I had wanted was not to be like my mother.'

## 5.9 SUGGESTED READING

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## NOTES

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