

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN A MOTHER'S NEED AND HER DUTY: A FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF *THE FIFTH CHILD* BY DORIS LESSING

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ABSTRACT:

Doris Lessing is most widely regarded as one of English literature's most celebrated contemporary female writers. She is much interested in the position of women in society and their role in improving it. Unlike other feminist writers who advocate gender equality, Lessing's feminism is primarily concerned with defending women in the context of the various social pressures they face in a given society. It is the feminism of an unusual kind. It is a new form of feminism that is called implicit feminism. *The Fifth Child* is one of Lessing's novels in which she adopts the implicit feminist approach in portraying Harriet Lovatts' character. Harriet Lovatt wishes to live a free life, defying marriage conventions and maternal life in the 1960s by marrying David and having a large family. As a result, her society uses her as a scapegoat for deviating from the accepted norms. She emerges as a pleased, dedicated wife and a mother of four children in the beginning. However, she has to suffer as a result of the unplanned arrival of a fifth child. Being the mother of a fifth child who is abnormal, Harriet's struggle has become more significant. She finds herself in a dilemma split between her duties as a wife of a loving husband and her needs as a mother due to the unplanned arrival of this abnormal fifth child. Harriet's predicament has become significant because she is condemned not only by the people of the outer society but also by the family members, including the father and the siblings. Harriet must adapt to her situation on both levels, and in doing so, she must overcome many difficulties in constructing a new self. In a nutshell, Lessing wants to emphasize how any woman who wants to live on her own is exacerbated simply by deviating from the prevailing norms in her community.

KEYWORDS: Scapegoat, maternity, dilemma, implicit, explicit, feminism, motherhood, conventional, individual, abnormal.

People are wholesome of their experiences in life. Any person's identity is also the total of some of the different conscious and subconscious factors that constitute his being. Every individual has his dreams and hopes that he aspires to realize. Of course, such hopes and dreams should be considered in light of his abilities, the social surroundings he lives in, and the conventions and the social codes that govern his community. However, if such aspirations are otherwise, social and political clashes of some sort will occur, and such dreams will be a subject of criticism and contempt by the surrounding community. Such dream-holders have to suffer, and their suffering will be great when criticized by the very people who once were sharers of their dreams and aspirations. In other words, such dream-holders will be scapegoats for others at different levels.

Before embarking on discussing feminism as a theory that is concerned with women's conditions in society, it is noteworthy drawing a line of distinction between the three confusing words: feminine, female and feminist. First, the word feminist is associated with feminism, a literary and political movement concerned with making social changes in society and seeking

equality between men and women. Second, the word female is involved with the biological features that distinguish a female from a male being, such as specific organs of the body and their look and functions. Third, the word feminine is concerned with those cultural characteristics that distinguish between men and women. For example, in certain societies, the police's job is strictly for men, while in other societies, both men and women can occupy a career in the police. It is wrong to say a female job, but it is right to tell a feminine position. Simply, the word feminine is the opposite of masculine.

Generally speaking, feminism is a socio-political movement that aims at bringing about some substantial changes in society in favor of women. Such changes are fundamental. They can be seen in women's endeavor to compete with men to get equal rights and positions in society. Doris Lessing is interested in exposing the individual in contrast to the collective. Watkins states that "a feminist reading of Lessing's works exemplifies transitions that have been important in feminist criticism and theory" (Qtd. Hung. 2012 18)

Feminism has two different forms. The first form is concerned with calling for equality between men and women in society and political rights. The second form of feminism is concerned with defending women in the social pressures they are exposed to in society. It is not worried about discrimination of women in politics or jobs but with the influence of traditions and social conventions on their lives. The result of customs and rituals means those traditions associated with marriage and maternal life. In brief, the former is called explicit feminism, while the latter is known as implicit feminism. Implicit feminism is more concerned with depicting the impact of traditional marriage and traditional family life than with women's political rights in society.

A mother is the very source of warmth and the fountain of kindness and care for her children. She is driven by her motherhood instinct to care for her children equally regardless of their looks, mental abilities, ages, or even their degree of gratitude towards her, especially when they are still young. In her care, a mother is guided by emotions and feelings rather than by logic and reason. Moreover, she does her best to bring up her children to be valuable members of society. Good socialization is the ultimate objective of a mother for her children. However, an abnormal child's existence will bring about some unexpected changes at the domestic level. Such changes can be seen in how each member of the family will look upon this abnormality. Even though a mother must be unhappy with any abnormality on the part of any of her children, she is the only member whose care and love should be the least badly affected by this abnormality. On the other hand, the father is supposed not to show any discrimination toward his abnormal child. As for the siblings, they should deal with their abnormal brother to not hurt him/her. However, when the parents of an abnormal child deal with him differently through showing discrimination of any sort, this is considered a green light for the rest of the family to establish their continuous contempt toward him.

Of course, an abnormal child is never to blame for his abnormality. Biologically, he is born as such, which is why his mother is also not to blame. Yet, when values undergo a reversal, other things will change accordingly. This reversal of values occurs when the family members of an abnormal child and the outer society show only contempt and disgust toward him. Such a turnaround reaches its peak when the parents adopt the same disdainful attitude toward their abnormal child. On the other hand, such reversal can also be seen when the other family members blame the mother for giving birth to this child.

Moreover, when the father himself blames the mother for the same reason, this implies the highest degree of the reversal of values. Thus, the mother is blamed, and, in this way, she is

considered a scapegoat by her own family for giving birth to this child. Furthermore, she will become a subject of blame for the outer society as well.

At another level, when the mother of an abnormal child finds that her child starts to be of a harmful effect on the well-being of the family, she starts to feel confused and distracted. Of course, the instinct of motherhood makes her spontaneously sympathize with this abnormal child. On the other hand, when the rest of the family members, including the father, do not sympathize with the same child, the domestic atmosphere becomes chaotic. Here, the mother finds herself in a dilemma either to continue empathizing with her abnormal child, forget about the rest of the family, or change her sympathy toward the abnormal child and go to the side with the rest. She is split between the two different attitudes, and this makes her dilemma great.

In England, the decade of 1960s was a decade of unprecedented sexual liberation. It was a period that witnessed an increase in liberal sexual activities among the young. Premarital sex was widespread. Society did not very much appreciate the idea of saving oneself for marriage during that time. A young man or woman in their 20s or 30s who was not coping with this trend was seen as conservative or old-fashioned. He or she was considered exceptionally odd because of not conforming to the norms in society. According to Fisher, "The 1960s was when the idea of liberation was herald as a break from the repression of the past. This period is popularly thought of as the period before the sexual revolution." (Qtd. PODE.2010 3)

Doris Lessing is known to be one of the most important post-war writers in English literature. She was born in 1919. She wrote many novels dealing with various themes that reflect her own experiences throughout the different stages of her life. She first published her novel *The Grass is Singing* in 1949. She also wrote *The Golden Notebook* in 1962, which made her an international celebrity. Lessing won the Nobel Prize for Literature (2007) at the age of eighty-two to be the oldest to win this prize. Lessing's novels focus on a relatively good number of the 20th-century issues ranging from the politics of race that she confronted in her early novels to the politics of gender, which has led to her adoption of the feminist tendency. They are also novels that deal with the role of the family and the individual in society. Lessing is extensively involved in the changing patterns of culture. She is also much interested in the position of women in society and their role in improving it. As a female writer, Lessing also shows a more significant concern about women's psychological health in marriage than about women's liberation in a political context.

Lessing's work and life show her as a feminist even though she is a feminist of an unusual kind; her novels show the difficulties a woman might encounter when trying to live a free life. Margret Drabble points out, "Lessing is one of the very few novelists who refused to believe that the world is too complicated to understand" (Qtd. Hazelton. 1982 110). Lessing does not advocate women's liberation from the point of view of the feminist ideology. Instead, she displays a faith in humanity by focusing on the individual female's problems in opposition to what society requires her to accept. In Lessing's world, female characters have to overcome the consequences of their disconformities to their society's conventions. As Raefipour remarks, "Lessing's characters always find themselves in the face of an alien world with unusual elements. They like journeys and go in quest of reality. They question the values of their society and live alone in it." (Raefipour. 2012 18-19)

Lessing's female protagonists are engaged in ambivalent relationships with other female characters. They show this ambivalence in their attitudes toward the prevailing norms, especially those associated with motherhood. "They examine their female experience within the terms of collective life." (Hung.2012 229). She is interested in seeing the female individuals in contrast to

the surrounding society. Natasha Walter remarks, "Lessing's work raised women's consciousness that they were not alone in their struggle to reach some independence and honesty in their dealing with men." (Walter. 2001 1)

The Fifth Child is one of the most famous books written by Doris Lessing. It deals with the history of a middle-class family. In this novel, Lessing is depicting women in the traditional English society during the sixties. Here, the protagonist is defining herself according to the different roles she is performing in life. Lessing is very much concerned with pinpointing the destructive process that the protagonist has to undergo both at the social and psychological levels. This protagonist has to face many difficulties regarding marriage and maternal life in her role as a wife and a mother.

Harriet and David are two young unmarried persons during the sixties. Both of them do not believe in the prevailing conventions regarding sexual liberation and maternal life. To Harriet, David is an exception as he can understand her choice and accepts it. Of course, this creates some bond between them immediately the moment they have met. They go to stand in opposition to the prevailing norms in their society. This bond enables them to dream together and seek to fulfill their dream. They maintain their traditional values in their society. They get married not long after they have first met due to their shared belief and their faith in the possibility of achieving their dream of having a traditional large family.

Harriet Lovatt is regarded as an old-fashioned woman who is adhering to the view of having a traditional big family. Here, Harriet's view is against the modern idea of the time she lives in. She appears strong enough to resist the criticism wreaked upon her by all those around her. She makes choices that imply a rejection of the sixties and the accompanying social changes regarding maternity and family construction. Harriet's dream is based on her belief that having a big traditional family is the most significant goal that she wants to achieve in her life. However, both her dream and belief are threatened by the social changes in outer society. She states, "This is what everyone wants, really, but we've been brainwashed out of it. People want to live like this really." (Lessing.1988 27) Harriet emerges as a strong female even before marriage. She asserts herself in opposition to the mainstream ideas regarding sexuality and femininity by rejecting the surrounding modern society's values and conventions. In this due light, Cervantes points out, "Harriet lives in an era of great feminist debates, the bulk of society had changed its mind about women and the family." (Cervantes.2010 4)

Harriet wants to construct a family according to her perception of how she wants it to be. She has her vision of an ideal traditional family, which David also shares. Both dream of having a perfect big conventional family. In doing so, they blind themselves to the reality of their conditions and develop a desire beyond their actual economic abilities. As Mikaela Kyle remarks, "David and Harriet perceive the world in a way to see a reality that suits their way of life. They live in a fabricated world of their blocking out the realities and imperfection of life to create happiness. (Kyle. 2011 13). In the beginning, both Harriet and David emerge as a very caring and loving couple living in a world of their own, disregarding the outer world with its conventions. As Hung puts it, "The Lovatts' try to create their micro-universe in their domestic world. Like good liberals, they believe in the possibility of separating the private from the public." (Hung.2012 226)

Harriet and David lead a happy life for a considerable number of years. They are blessed with four children who become the center of their concern in life. The whole family is overwhelmed by happiness. Harriet is a very caring mother and a loving wife. David is a loving and devoted husband as well. As the story tells, "When he bent to kiss her goodbye and stroked

like head, it was with a fierce possessiveness that Harriet liked and understood; for it was not herself being possessed or the baby, but happiness, his and hers." (Lessing. 1988 24) Both parents show a lot of love, affection, understanding, and responsibility toward one another as well as toward their first four kids. Even though the family's income does not meet their needs, they are leading a happy life. David never shows any regret regarding having a big family.

As a mother, Harriet emerges as a very caring one. She considers her children as the only source of happiness in her life. She has already given birth to four children. Her care for her four children is an equally balanced one. She loves all of them as a good mother that loves her children. Everything is going smoothly at the domestic level. She has the pleasure to be defined through her love and care for her children or family. She goes to fulfill her desire of maternal instinct with the first four pregnancies despite the increasingly stressful economic pressure. She still insists on making her desire and aspiration as realistic as she can.

On the other hand, Harriet is viewed as a criminal by her society because of advocating the greatness of a big family in a society whose conventions do not welcome the same. In this due light, Zhao remarks:

This troubled world is penetrating the Lovatts' fortress. Harriet has been referred to as a criminal who is somehow breaking the laws of society. Her crime is attempting to have a perfect life in an imperfect world. The high expectation in this imperfect world is the background put forward by the implied author's attitude. (Zhao. 2012 1500)

Thus, Harriet's desire to have a big family is not welcomed by her society. Therefore, she criticizes society for making people suppress their appetite to raise a large family.

Although Harriet's dream of a large family has come true, it is not to continue unchanged. It turns to be a nightmare. She has willingly and happily given birth to four children, but she does not plan to have any more children. Unwillingly, she carries a fifth baby that she has not desired. Therefore, the unplanned arrival of the fifth child has turned everything upside down. The dream turns to be a gloomy nightmare. Primarily, she rejects this fifth child (Ben) even during pregnancy. She refuses Ben even before he comes to life. She has neither that sense of attachment nor that feeling of warmth toward the coming baby. Hence, an attitude of rejection toward the future baby is immediately established. As Cervantes puts it, "Harriet's dream of an idealized family and motherhood turns to be a nightmare with the birth of the fifth child. Her wish suddenly escapes her control through going beyond her expectation and leading her to a life of misery, disintegration, and chaos" (Cervantes. 2010 3)

The fifth pregnancy marks a turning point in Harriet's life as a mother and a wife. Initially, Harriet starts to feel as if something strange exists inside her. She feels physically restless. Moreover, she feels uncomfortable both mentally as well as psychologically. She realizes that what she is suffering from now is contrasted with the pleasure and comfort during her four previous pregnancies. While being examined, the initial reaction of the doctor to her condition frightens Harriet that she realizes that there is something wrong with the fetus she is carrying "On the doctor's face, she saw what she expected: a dark fixed stare that reflected what the woman was feeling, which was horror at the alien, rejection by the normal for what was outside the human limit. The horror of Harriet, who had given birth to Ben." (Lessing. 1988 106)

Harriet develops some sense of disgust and hatred toward the fetus inside her womb. She feels that she is carrying something that is tormenting her. This unplanned pregnancy makes her irritable and temperamental. She thinks that she has an unusual baby because of its pain due to its movement. In this due light, Emily Clarke states, "Significantly, it is only with the fifth

child that Harriet's pregnant body seems to violently turn against her and, indeed, it is not her body which imprisons her so much as the body within her and a particular body at that." (Clarke. 2013 83) Harriet's attitude toward the fifth baby is an antagonistic one. "From the first, the dramatic physical suffering of Ben's mother and her antagonistic relation to the developing fetus during her pregnancy challenge stereotypes of the caring mother which is central to the traditional concepts of care." (Hung.2012 25)

Harriet realizes that the baby she is carrying is different. She states, "This new being is unlike anything." (Lessing., 1988 36). She also describes it as "a being of a different substance." (Lessing. 1988 50) When only a five-month-old fetus, Ben is already so active that it causes much unbearable pain inside his mother. As the story tells, "She was bruised- she knew it, inside she must be one enormous black bruise. And no one would ever know" (Lessing. 1988 59). Thus, a negative attitude toward the fifth child is established right from the beginning of pregnancy. Here, the reader develops some feeling of sympathy toward Harriet as a result of her continual sufferings. Harriet is haunted by what she is carrying. She is also obsessed with how she is going to mother this baby.

Generally, in *The Fifth Child*, the division in the family starts with the pregnancy with Ben. Both the physical as well as mental pains that Harriet is experiencing are so great. Of course, this affects the well-being of the family. David, who used to be a loving and caring husband toward Harriet throughout her previous pregnancies, is no longer one. He considers the baby that Harriet is carrying a monster. He feels helpless toward helping her. He even fears touching her body anymore. As the story tells, "He had stopped putting his hand on her stomach in the old companionable way for what he felt there was beyond what he could imagine." (Lessing. 1988 49). Moreover, with Ben's unplanned pregnancy, David feels Harriet is "possessed and gone right away from him in the battle with the fetus." (Lessing. 1988 50) Of course, it is a battle that he cannot share. David realizes the greatness of Harriet's pain "At night, David heard her moan or a whimper, but now he did not offer, for it seemed that these days she did not find around her any help, but nothing he said seemed to reach Harriet who, he felt, was possessed." (Lessing.1988 49)

Previously, Harriet's endeavor to build a big family has been received by many rejections by the people around her, including her close relatives. The whole community has condemned her. She is scapegoated as a result. Furthermore, with the fifth child's unexpected arrival, Harriet is also blamed by her husband, who ceases to be a loving one. She is no longer attached to her husband. As the story tells, "David tries to avoid looking into Harriet's eyes. He no longer speaks to her. She was longing for him to reassure her, but he only nodded and did not look at her." (Lessing.1988 116) Here, David's attempt to avoid looking at or speaking to Harriet signifies his attempt to exclude her from his life. In a word, Harriet has become a scapegoat for her husband.

From an implicit feminist point of view, Harriet suffers from both social as well as psychological pressures. She is suffering from social stress because of her concept of a large traditional family on the one hand and her psychological pressure due to being condemned by the same people about her baby's abnormality on the other. Thus, Ben's existence in the family is accompanied by many changes at the domestic level. Therefore, the unplanned arrival of Ben marks a shift in the process of self-construction. It marks a new phase in both Harriet and David's inner development, destroying everything they have previously constructed.

Before embarking on discussing the attitudes of the different members of the Lovatts' toward Ben, it is noteworthy shedding light on Ben's character as a child and his abnormality and the Lovatts' reaction to it.

Initially, Ben is not welcomed by his family, including the mother and the father, while he is in Harriet's womb. After birth, Ben proves to be strange. While he is still a baby, he shows a lot of violence toward his siblings and the pets bred by the family at home. He attacks his other siblings and smothers a cat to death. Moreover, he attacks the kids of the guests who come to visit the Lovatts' at their house. Ben grows up and is seen as a freak by his family. He finds no other means but violence to express himself. He cannot develop a sense of being because of his inability to communicate with the people around him in a usual way. He can also not establish a sense of belonging to his family because he sees how he is rejected by them, including his parents. As Shu-Ming Hung remarks:

Ben is presented as an outsider because of his distinctive appearance and odd behavior; he is treated like the "Other" because of his difference from those around him. He cannot establish a sense of belonging to the family because he sees himself in terms of "otherness" through the gaze of those around him." (Hung. 2012 233)

Ben is abnormal, and his abnormality makes him an outcast from his family and an outcast from the world. He is considered a source of danger. For him, the house has become a prison or, as the story tells, a "cage" that confines him behind its bars. He does not receive enough love or care from his family. He is unable to connect with his family correctly. Emily Clarke remarks, "Ben's corporal difference is marked primarily by his physical in conformity to the aesthetics of a real baby child, but even more by his inability or unwillingness to exhibit appropriate, effective behavior toward his family members." (Clarke.2013 181)

Ben is referred to as "goblin, grotesque, unusual, odd or abnormal" in many places in *The Fifth Child*. He is indeed abnormal because of his odd behavior. However, the degree of his abnormality depends on how he is looked upon by those around him. In other words, Ben's aberration depends mainly on the parameters of the people around him. As the story unfolds, Dorothy (Harriet's mother) says, "He may be normal for what he is, but he is not normal for what we are." (Lessing. 1988 65) Ben is outside of normal, and this is why he is seen as different. As Shu-Ming Hung points out, "Because Ben disturbs the normal boundaries through being neither human nor non-human, his effect is that of being uncanny, encouraging the intersubjective responses to him as if to the object. (Hung. 2012 225)

Ben is seen as a monster by his family. He awakens Harriet and David from their dream. He disturbs this dream by embodying fear, madness, and violence. As a mother, Harriet has to bear the burden of disruption while the rest of the family distance themselves from Ben. That is to say, Ben comes to embody what his parents have tried to avoid in their dream of a large family. They see Ben as a punishment because of their distinctive dream. As Kyle remarks, "The reality that Ben presents is far from the perfection that the Lovatts' have created. It is a reality full of violence, fear, and failure". (Kyle. 2011 16)

Again, Ben's unplanned arrival represents a threat to the well-being of the family as a whole. He becomes the source of the family's misery and distress. David and Harriet are no longer attached as they used to be. Harriet has to face a lot of difficulties to keep a balance between her duty toward her new child and the rest of the family members; on the one hand, she has also to face a significant problem in her attempt to satisfy her need as a mother and a wife toward the other members of the Lovatts' on the other. She cannot ignore the threat that Ben

represents. She is aware of losing the mutual understanding and love between her and David. She finds it better not to share her thoughts and feelings with her husband. She realizes that David is not a loving husband to her or a caring father for the new baby. David ends up abandoning his dream.

On the other hand, the elder children of the Lovatts' decide to leave the house and go to boarding schools as they cannot adapt themselves to the new conditions at home. The extended family members are no longer interested in paying visits to the Lovatts' house during Christmas or Easter. Therefore, Harriet realizes how she has brought destruction to the family due to giving birth to Ben.

Like any mother, Harriet's self-construction and identity are defined through her life with her children or family. She finds some difficulties in adapting to the kind of life brought with Ben's coming, and she starts to suffer a crisis with her identity. As Giles remarks, "Harriet struggles in embracing her role as a mother after the birth of Ben. It is Ben who forces her to question her capability and her identity." (Giles. 1988 5) However, even though her society condemns her for having a large family, she decides to be a full-time dedicated mother. Also, despite being aware of the danger that Ben represents, she persists in her heroic endeavor trying her best to keep the stability of the family under exceptional circumstances. Thus, Harriet emerges as strong in exercising her motherhood abilities under social and domestic pressures.

As a dedicated mother, Harriet finds herself in a dilemma split between the physical and intuitive demands of motherhood, on the one hand, and the needs of her family: physically, socially, and emotionally on the other. In other words, Harriet has to choose either to go on defending her identity as an ideal mother by caring for Ben regardless of whatever abnormality he has or to abuse this identity by neglecting him by caring for the rest of the family; including the father and defending the kind of life she has been dreaming of. According to the story, Harriet's dilemma grows more significant in the novel as she cannot reconcile both feelings. Of course, this affects her identity as a mother and a wife. She is distracted in many ways. As Emily Clarke puts it:

She does not want her children the way a mother should; she does not refuse her child for the sake of her other children and marriage the way a mother should; and finally, she is ultimately held responsible for Ben's existence and indeed is categorized as "other" and "less" than human by literal associations. (Clarke. 2012 105)

. Ben represents a continuous source of danger to the settlement and well-being of the family. Because of the so much disruption to the family at home due to Ben's abnormal behavior, all the Lovatts' members decide to get rid of Ben by sending him to an institution. Driven by the instinct of motherhood, Harriet is the only member who does not welcome the decision. She says, "He is a little boy He is just a child." (Lessing. 1988 90) Despite her awareness of the danger that Ben represents, Harriet shows contempt toward the decision simply because she is his mother and he is her son. However, her objection to this collective decision is welcomed neither by David nor by the rest of the family. Though she is against the idea, Harriet finds herself obliged to accept it as her marriage is at stake. She unwillingly gets it because of her feeling of guilt caused by a sense of social injustice. "It was guilt and horror that kept her awake through the nights for not being able to find one little spark of feeling." (Lessing. 1988 94) As Ben is away from the house, Harriet never feels comfortable. It is true that the rest of the family, including David, is back to the stream of life during Ben's absence. Yet, Harriet grows gradually more and more restless.

As Harriet's dilemma is growing more significant in Ben's absence, she decides to move one step forward toward rescuing him from the institution. Of course, this makes her predicament greater and greater. She takes an individual decision to fetch Ben from the institution. It is a decision that results from her intuitive feeling as a mother toward her son. In the institution, Harriet finds Ben treated like an animal, and he is almost paralyzed because of the hefty doses of drugs they have been giving him. As the story tells, "His pale-yellow tongue protruded from his mouth. His flesh was dead while greenish. Everything –walls, the floor, and Ben were smeared with excrement. A pool of dark yellow urine oozed from the pullet which was soaked." (Lessing.1988 99)

Here, it is noteworthy that Harriet's decision to fetch Ben originates from her instinct as a mother more than from her love for him. She wants to save him from death. "A guilt-ridden goes to retrieve him after his parents have arranged for Ben's institutionalization and institutionalization, which consists of solitary confinement, physical restraint, and extreme medication that will most certainly result in Ben's death. (Clarke.2012 97)

Of course, Harriet's individual decision in the face of the family's collective decision increases the greatness of her dilemma. It is a decision that is welcomed by neither David nor any other member of the family. They have made their decision for the sake of their comfort regardless of its result on the poor child or the afflicted mother. However, Harriet, like any mother, will never feel comfortable with what they want. They are unable to understand her instinctive desire as a mother to save her child. As Emily Clarke points out, "Harriet's decision to save Ben from the institution where he was destined to die functions as a parallel to a woman's choice not to abort a fetus that has been diagnosed as disabled, a choice that is deemed irresponsible." (Clarke. 2013 104) They do not realize that a mother should care for her child regardless of whatever danger he represents.

Moreover, they blame her and look at her as a criminal for carrying and delivering such a child. This is the reality of motherhood that she cannot escape. Yet, at times, she has to accept what the world imposes on her.

Having brought Ben back from the institution, Harriet is seen as a culprit and the real criminal behind the family's suffering. Getting him back drives all the family members to react to keep them away from the house. As the story tells, "Because she had him home, this house had emptied itself, and everything had gone away, leaving her alone." (Lessing.1988 157) The three elder children leave the house and go to live with their grandparents. They develop some fear of Ben and become quite upset about his presence. They consider him a source of danger that threatens the family's well-being and brings about its ruin and destruction. They are also not happy with their mother and think of her as responsible for helping Ben destroy the family. Hence, all the siblings are not loving ones toward their brother Ben. They develop some detachment from him since he has been a baby, and, gradually, they develop the same toward their mother. They welcome the decision of sending Ben to the institution. They say, "They are sending Ben away because he is not one of us. It will be all right now that Ben is not here." (Lessing. 1988-93)

David, the father, goes to react to bringing Ben back by withdrawing from family life and detaching himself from Harriet. Initially, David has never been a loving father for Ben. An emotional distance is already created between the son and the father from the very beginning. There is no communication between them at all. David is so indifferent to the existence of Ben even before he is sent to the institution. He thinks of him not as his child. He sees him as a source of danger that threatens the stability of the family. He considers him as the reason for

missing one promotion in his job. Of course, David does not welcome Harriet's decision of getting him back. He is shocked to see him back at home again. He considers Harriet's decision as an act that defies his authority as a husband. In this regard, Holmquist points out, "By deciding on her own without consulting David, Harriet increases her authority by undermining him (David) as a man and a father. This would in its turn lead to David feeling like less of a man, hence making him feel emasculated." (Holmquist. 1990 66)

The house becomes an uncomfortable place for David. He spends most of his time away from his family at work. Moreover, he finds an extra job to stay as much as he can away from the house. He has become, as the story tells, "The sort of man he had once decided never to be." (Lessing. 1988 135) In this due light, Ponde remarks, "By failing as a father, when his children move away and failing as a husband in losing his loving bond with Harriet, his work becomes the only thing that can give him ratification." (Ponde.2010 14) David sees Ben as the biggest problem of his life. He detaches himself from Ben, referring to him as "not mine" and in another situation as "someone just dropped from mars." (Lessing. 1988 90) David never regrets this feeling toward his son. He never cares for him, and he goes to care for his other children. Yet, he gradually starts to lose control over his family as a whole. As Sundberg puts it, "When David is about to lose control, anger, sarcasm, and psychological violence become means for him to regain that control." (Sundberg. 2011 13)

After returning from the institution, Ben develops a lot of hatred and despises his father, siblings, and mother. Still, he has the feeling that they are opposing him and that he is like a prisoner in the Lovatts' house "Ben was always in his room, like a prisoner." (Lessing.1988 75) In other situations, as the story tells, "Heavy bars were put in, and there Ben would sit gripping the bars and shaking them, and surveying the outside world letting out raucous cries." (Lessing. 1988 73)

Even though Harriet defies the family by bringing Ben back from the institution, and even though she decides to save him regardless of the danger he represents against the family's stability, Ben does not see Harriet as a loving mother. He does not find comfort in looking at her face. As the story tells, "Harriet's face does not evoke anything in him as if she does not exist..... When she put her arms around him, there was no response, no warmth; it was as if he did not feel her touch." (Lessing. 1988 11) Ben never appears a grateful son to his mother. Despite giving him most of her time, Ben does not feel that emotional and psychological bond between a mother and her child. He is not even able to communicate with her properly. When Ben is already an adolescent, he finds some difficulty in communicating with his mother:

Did he feel her eyes on him, as a human would? She would put into her gaze these speculations, these queries, her need, her passion for knowing more about him whom, after all, she had given birth to, had carried for eight months, though it had nearly killed her, he did not feel the question she was asking. Indifferently, he looked away again, and his eyes went to the faces of his mates, his followers. (Lessing. 1988 157)

Thus, on the whole, Harriet represents a scapegoat's epitome as she is exposed as a victim of what others want to inflict on her despite having no hand in it. Her society victimizes her, her extended family, her own family, her husband, and even Ben, for whom she has been suffering. She is considered an outcast by her society. She is regarded as a criminal by the family members and is not viewed as a caring mother by Ben, who has been the only misery source to her and her family. Harriet is seen as responsible for bringing unhappiness to the whole family, making her feel guilty most of the time. Everyone around her has a look of condemnation

towards her. She thinks that giving birth to Ben is a matter of misfortune for her. She states, "I have suffered a misfortune. I haven't committed a crime." (Lessing,1988 94) In another situation, Harriet remarks, "I feel I have been blamed for Ben ever since he was born. I feel like a criminal. I've always been made to feel like a criminal." (Lessing, 1988 125). She is seen as responsible for the breakdown of the family. "Harriet was paying the price of mankind of cynicism and boldness. As a woman, she was the target of an unjust male-dominated world that is oppressing women." (Zhao. 2012 1505) Harriet is seen as the destroyer of the family who bears the burden of the family's flaws. She is not judged on what she has done but on what nature has made of her. The family condemns her because of her inappropriate upbringing Ben. In a word, she is scapegoated by her own family because she is forced to exercise her mothering abilities under domestic and social pressures. These pressures have come to contradict what she has previously planned.

Thus, both Harriet's social and psychological sufferings have been traced. She has emerged as the real scapegoat of whatever both the family and the outer society want to inflict on her before and after Ben's birth. From an implicit feminist point of view, Harriet endures both the social and psychological pressures because of the lifestyle she has adopted. As Sundberg points out, "One of Lessing's messages is that it is not necessarily men in a biological sense, who are dominating and strong in society, but women who have acquired traditional qualities can be that as well." (Sundberg,2011 57) Here, Lessing is so much concerned about understanding the undermining process that Harriet has gone through because of the different attitudes of her husband, children, and other people around her toward her in the process of self-construction. Lessing has also pinpointed Harriet's mental suffering due to the insensitivity and lack of understanding of the people around her regarding her grief as a wife and a mother and how this has culminated in undermining her psyche.

Harriet is indeed condemned for deviating from the standard norms of her society. However, she persists in doing so out of her conviction that what she has been doing was consistent with her own set of values as a married woman aspiring to lead a free life. At another level, what happens to her as a mother could happen to any mother. Giving birth to an abnormal baby can happen to any mother. Harriet has nothing to do with carrying an abnormal child. It is just a matter of misfortune but not a crime. On her part, Harriet is aware of this reality, but she has to suffer. Her sufferings become more significant because of the cruelty of the society in which she is living. What intensifies Harriet's nightmare is that she is condemned by the very people directly connected to the same child, including his father and siblings. All those around her victimize her, yet she can stand up for her benefit and conviction.

CONCLUSION:

On the whole, Harriet's sufferings from various social and psychological pressures as a result of, first, deviating from dominant social conventions regarding family construction and maternal life, and, second, of giving birth to an abnormal child expose her to be a scapegoat from an implicit feminist point of view. She is blamed for making choices that are not in line with what society believes in. At another level, Harriet finds herself in a situation where she has to choose either to be a dedicated mother through caring for her abnormal child in the same way she has been caring for her four children or to act as a perfect wife through neglecting the strange child and caring for the husband and the family's well-being. She is split between her duties as an ideal wife and her requirements as a dedicated mother. In a word, Harriet's different experiences

as a devoted mother and a perfect wife in light of the other circumstances that have characterized her life have exposed her as an implicit feminist figure.

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