

Conflicts in Human Values in Doris Lessing's *Martha Quest*

T. Amisha Priya,
Ph.D. Research Scholar (Full Time),
PG & Research Dept. of English,
V.O. Chidambaram College,
Thoothukudi

Dr. B. Manivannan,
Head & Associate Professor,
PG & Research Dept. of English,
V.O. Chidambaram College,
Thoothukudi

Human values continue to be affected by the space and time, which are culturally conditioned. Family is considered social group that has been emotionally connected with certain values; these values are about to change when the relationship among the members in a family is morally brought into some conflicts. This paper explains how Doris Lessing's *Martha Quest* as a family narrative attempts to map the conflict behavior plotted in the relationship of Mr. Quest, Mrs. Quest and Martha.

Doris Lessing began to sell her stories to magazines at the age of fifteen. In golden notebook she gained international attention from audience. Lessing declined a damehood (DBE) in 1992 as an honour linked to a non-existent Empire; she had declined an OBE in 1977. Later she accepted appointment as a Companion of Honour at the end of 1999 for "conspicuous national service. She was also made a Companion of Literature by the Royal Society of Literature. In 2007, Lessing was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature She received the prize at the age of 88 years. She was the eleventh woman to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature by the Swedish Academy in its 106-year history.

The family narrative, *Martha Quest* is reviewed using postmodern point of view to study how the family members get into a kind of conflict, demoralizing themselves. Family has been long recognized as a social schema concerned for human values. But the postmodern perspective takes a digression to show how the age old value based system like family shattered or disintegrated. The story line is primarily set on certain human values but the resistance of younger generation against these values proves to be liberating one from all the family clutches. The novel *Martha Quest* revolves around the conflicts in human values that are interlinked with the characters Mr. Quest, Mrs. Quest and Martha. The concept of tradition, to Mrs. Quest, plays a vital role in promoting human values but in the modern times the younger generation finds satisfaction to antagonize it because it is old, considering dogmatic. "Two woman explain Martha how they had behaved when young, the phrases of their respective tradition." (MQ8)

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Martha turns deaf ear towards her mother. Mrs. Quest feels about her daughter to her colloquies. Mrs. Quest crony advises Martha about the traditions and rituals to be followed by girls. But Martha turns deaf ear and minds her own business. Even reading has been treated by women folk as the practice of men for which they are entitled. In this regard her mother finds fault with Martha's choice of books: "Mrs. Quest did not say, 'you are supposed to have strained your eyes, why are you reading? She made such remarks as 'you do it on purpose to upset me! 'or' why do you have to read that kind of books?'" (MQ30)

Martha is a tremendous reader. The shelves in her room were filled with poetry books and fairy stories collected since her childhood. In the living room, her parent's bookcases were filled with the classic. But Martha's mother dislikes her habit of reading books; she asks her to work and act like a girl child. Martha received book parcel from joss, entitled the social Aspect of the Jewish Question and inside was a note there was address to dear Matty Quest that this would be good for your soul. To some extent, responded positively to her mother's word's. After some time, when Martha complained against Mr. McFarline who misbehaved with her, her mother was not ready to accept her words, saying 'Nonsense, you're imagining it, he couldn't have done'" (MQ 69&70).

What Martha comes to say is duly denied by her family. Mrs. Quest begins to say about girl's rituals the very first rituals a girl wants to be submissive and she wants to be quiet and silent. She has no right to speak and decide her own life. She must undergo a caged life. "Very well,' she said angrily, ' I will leave'. She and her father looked at each other across the breadth of the table her mother sat in her usual place at the heads; and those two pains of dark and angry eyes stared each other out" MQ (pg 70).

For pity things, Martha's mother sees rituals. Martha cannot withstand this kind conservative practices imposed on girls by their own mothers, talking. She is not able to manage the notions of her parents, surroundings, relatives which are from the postmodern stand, considered to be dogmatic. So she planned to move out of the city and she finds a new job. To criticize and reject social institutions like family in which there are no objective criteria of moral judgment, no universal bases for moral values.

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