

Theme of Collective Errors of Humanity in *Shikasta* by Doris Lessing

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Abstract

At times when the world ready for transformation with deconstruction, Nobel Laureate Doris Lessing (1919 – 2013) is an author whose wholistic vision and prophetic voice is much needed for understanding collective errors of Human beings. The present paper analyses one of her Novels *Shikasta* where she uses medium of science fiction for showing us the path we have chosen and our impending doom due to that.

Furthermore, the analysis is also aimed to show how Lessing uses literature to highlight the issues of colonialism, pollution, population, and draws a subtle connection between them.

The paper aims to show Lessing's views on misguided, unmanaged scientific growth and evolution.

Keywords: Space Fiction, Evolution, Degenerative Diseases , SOWF.

A prolific contemporary British writer and the recipient of more than twenty literary prizes and awards, Doris May Tayler was born in Kermanshah, Persia (now Iran) and grew up in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) until 1949, when she came to England with the manuscript of her first novel, *The Grass is Singing*. The novel was published in 1950, and brought its author immediate success. Since then she has never ceased writing, producing a huge number of novels, short stories, narratives, exploring a variety of themes.

Re: Colonised Planet 5, Shikasta (often shortened to *Shikasta*) is a 1979 space fiction novel by British Nobel Prize in Literature-winner Doris Lessing, and is the first book in her five-book *Canopus in Argos* series. It was first published in the United States in October 1979 by Alfred A. Knopf. Subtitled "*Personal, psychological, historical documents relating to visit by Johor (George Sherban) Emissary (Grade 9) 87th of the Period of the Last Days*", *Shikasta* is the history of the planet Shikasta (Earth) under the influence of three galactic empires, Canopus, Sirius, and their mutual enemy, Puttiora. This Novel proves why Lessing has been described by Swedish Academy as "that epicist of the female experience, who with skepticism, fire and visionary power has subjected a divided civilization to scrutiny".

This novel makes one see the entire history of earth, various species and their relations with human beings, our past, present and future from an alien point of view. Lessing, in this novel, has exposed all faults of human civilizations. Although the ultimate blame for the suffering of humanity is on cosmic powers, yet the basic, common and horrible mistakes that we do as a species are presented to us from an aliens' point of view. The basic plot of the novel is

different from any other type of genre. Lessing calls it 'Space fiction'. She finds it to be more compelling and useful for portrayal of reality than the realistic fiction. She claims:

I had been saying that space fiction, with science fiction, makes up the most original branch of literature now; It is inventive and witty; It has already enlivened all kinds of writing; and that literary academics and pundits are much to blame for patronizing or ignoring it— while of course by their nature they can be expected to do no other..(*Shikasta*. 9)

Shikasta is the Story of evolution, degeneration, apocalypse and revival of a planet called Shikasta, told from the point of view of Canopeans, the benevolent civilization that had colonized the planet many centuries before. Canopus nurtures the promising species of this planet and considering its nature, names this planet to be Rohanda (the fruitful) and accelerates their evolutions through various experiments.

When the Natives are ready, Canopus imposes a "Lock" on Rohanda that links it via "astral currents" to the harmony and strength of the Canopeans Empire. In addition to Canopus, two other empires also establish a presence on the planet: their ally, Sirius from the [star of the same name](#), and their mutual enemy, Puttiora. The Sirians confine their activities largely to [genetic experiments](#) on the southern continents during Rohanda's [prehistory](#) (described in Lessing's third book in the *Canopus* series, [The Sirian Experiments](#)), while the Shammat of Puttiora remain dormant, waiting for opportunities to strike.

For many millennia the Natives of Rohanda prosper in a Canopean induced climate of peaceful coexistence and accelerated development. Then an unforeseen "cosmic re-alignment" puts Rohanda out of phase with Canopus which causes the Lock to break. Deprived of Canopus's resources and a steady stream of a substance called SOWF (substance-of-we-feeling), the

Natives develop a "Degenerative Disease" that puts the goals of the individual ahead of those of the community. The Shammat exploit this disturbance and begin undermining Canopus's influence by infecting the Natives with their evil ways. As Rohanda degenerates into greed and conflict, the Canopeans reluctantly change its name to Shikasta (the stricken). Later in the book, Shikasta is identified as [Earth](#), or an allegorical Earth.

In an attempt to salvage Canopus's plans for Shikasta and correct the Natives' decline, Canopean emissaries are sent to the planet. Johor is one such emissary, who takes the form of a Native and begins identifying those individuals who have not degenerated too far and are amenable to his corrective instructions. Johor then sends those he has successfully "converted" to spread the word among other Natives, and soon isolated communities begin to return to the pre-Shikastan days. But without the SOWF from Canopus and Shammat's influence over the Natives, Canopus is fighting a losing battle and the planet declines further. By the Shikastan's 20th century, the planet has degenerated into war and self-destruction. Johor returns, but this time through Zone 6 from which he is born on the planet ([incarnated](#)) as a Shikastan, George Sherban. As Sherban grows up he establishes contact with other Canopeans in disguise and then resumes his work trying to help the Shikastans. But famine and unemployment grow, and anarchy spreads.

On the eve of [World War III](#) Sherban and other emissaries relocate a small number of promising Shikastans to remote locations to escape the coming [nuclear holocaust](#). The war reduces Shikasta's population by 99% and sweeps the planet clean of the "barbarians". The Shammat, who set the Shikastans on a course of self-destruction, self-destructs themselves and withdraws from the planet. The Canopeans help the survivors rebuild their lives and re-align themselves with Canopus. With a strengthened Lock and the SOWF flowing freely again,

harmony and prosperity return to Shikasta. The Canopeans help the survivors rebuild their lives and re-align themselves with Canopus. With a strengthened Lock and the SOWF flowing freely again, harmony and prosperity return to Shikasta.

Although *Shikasta* features many relevant themes such as colonialism, postcolonialism, tools of colonialism (such as *Orientalism*), crisis of identity, the war between the good and evil, combinedly they can be seen as ‘errors of human species’. Lessing, through this novel, has tried to show us that we are not alone in this universe of infinite possibility, that we are governed, managed, supported and destroyed by some superior beings about whom we have only some traces in our sacred religions, yet the capacity and responsibility of our upgradation or degradation lies in us. We can help them to destroy us or evolve us.

One of the wrong tendencies of human beings, presented by Lessing, is tendency of individualism which divides human beings and makes them exploit each other on the name of this division. This mainly consists colonialism and tools of colonialism such as *Orientalism*, exploitation based upon religion, imperialism, racism etc. *Shikasta* presents three aspects of colonialism. One aspect is benevolent aspect in which the colonizer tries to evolve, support and preserve its colonized species or race without exploiting them. In another aspect the colonizer does everything to exploit the subject race. In the third aspect the colonizer indirectly exploits and destroys the subject race by showing that the subject race is backward / inferior and they are being developed by the colonizer. In this novel Canopeans are the benevolent race who wishes for nothing but harmony in universe by developing intelligent races. The *Shammatt* is the evil planet who destroys the evolving planet by degrading them to level of barbarism where nothing good can be expected. And various human civilizations colonize, control and exploit each other

either on the name of religion, gender or technological development. But in none of the form of colonization presented here, there is complete scope of free will.

Sirius and Canopus fight with each other for the control of the planet Rohanda (later Shikasta) and finally after much destruction, agree to divide the planet between each other. Canopus takes the northern hemisphere in their control and starts experiments for evolution of native species. Here again we see that there is no scope for choice for the native species. Canopus decides to evolve them and they, unknowingly, must do what Canopus wants. On the name of evolution the natives of Shikasta are made to be part of plan of Canopus. Canopus knowingly endangers their and other species life by mingling them. “It is never possible to forecast exactly what happen when two species are put into symbiosis: there are too many unforeseen.”(*Shikasta*. 29)

In spite of these shortcomings of being a subject race, the natives of Rohanda enjoy many advantages of their altruistic masters. Canopus does not directly involve in matters of the native species. They appoint another of their colonized but rather more evolved species to take care of natives. This species is called *Giants* according to their physical size. Lessing has presented the ideal relation between the two races with different levels of evolutions that leave no space and desire for exploitation.

They had established with the Natives a tutelary relation which gave the liveliest of self interest and satisfaction to both sides. It was the Giants who taught the Natives the beginning of plant culture. They taught them, too, how to use animals without harming the species. They were developing language in them. It was still only the basis of many talents—arts, sciences – that the Giants were laying.(*Shikasta*. 30)

Suddenly this utopian situation changes when the stars of the galaxy change their alignment and the flow of harmonious current of SOWF (the substance of we feeling) from Canopus decreases and the effect of another Colonial power, *Shammat* increases. This power is against Canopus. They try to undo all good deeds of Canopus and degrade the subject race to animal level.

The first impact of this happens on the race of giants who were present on Shikasta for many generations. They were responsible for the development of natives. But when they are informed by Canopus about end of their function at Shikasta, they could not accept it. But they have already been influenced by the negative vibrations and showed signs of growing individualism. Instead of thinking as a community for the benefit of community, they started having debates and even violent quarrels over the Canopean plan. Lessing considers this to be the first sign of degradation. The protagonist and emissary of Canopean Empire names it to be 'Degenerative disease'. He further explains: "To identify with ourselves as individuals – this is the very essence of the Degenerative Disease, and every one of us in the Canopean Empire is taught to value ourselves only insofar as we are in harmony with the plan, the phases of our evolution." (*Shikasta*. 55)

With the degradation from the group feeling to individualism all other types of ills associated also come one of them is racism. Giants, who rejected the help and guidance of Canopus, are affected by this phenomenon. When Canopus visits them for the second time along with natives, they abhor them. Considering the other race to be inferior is the worst thing that Racism preaches. Johor, who has experienced this phenomenon earlier, finds it shocking for the innocent natives: "They had no means of knowing, or imagining, the contempt a degenerated and effete race may use for another, different from themselves." (*Shikasta*. 80)

Lessing finds that the people living in rural areas and surrounded by the natural objects are less affected by division and hatred that dogmas of racism inflict upon the highly developed or technologically advanced civilizations. Johor finds that the natives of Shikasta are less affected and hence he concentrates upon them for the further development: “These Natives were better off than the giants, simply because they stood so much nearer to stones and earth and plants and beasts: in them was bedrock of strength the Giants did not have.”(81)

To stop them from falling from their natural state of harmony with the nature and with each other Johor tries to instruct them some rules. These rules were to be considered holy and to be followed by them. Later, these were to be considered as religion. But, Religion which was developed by the higher beings to save the innocents from degrading to the animal level itself became the tool of dividing and exploiting human beings. It is used for the purpose of colonization. Johor, in his report about the *History of Shikasta* in the ‘Century of Destruction’ finds religion responsible behind the two world wars and tendency of colonization and exploitation of ‘the north west fringes’.

The local religion was materialistic. This was again due to an unfortunate combinations of circumstances: one was geographical , another the fact that it had been the tool of the wealthy classes for most of its history, another that it retained even less than most religions of what its founder had been teaching.(*Shikasta*. 109)

Clearly this history is indicating the period of colonization when the European nations ruled over Asia and Africa and justified their illogical violence on the name of spreading of religion. Johor writes: “They were better able to persuade themselves that what they did was ‘for

the good' of the conquered: and it is here that the above mentioned religion is mostly answerable.”(*Shikasta*. 110)

In this Novel, Lessing shows the beginning of religions as a divine intervention for balancing the harmony in the world. Canopean Empire always sends its emissaries for guiding the blind human civilizations. These emissaries were considered by the natives to be the representative or messengers of God. Johor writes about it in detail in a separate section: *History of Shikasta, VOL. 997, Period of the Public Cautioners. EXCERPTS FROM SUMMARY CHAPTER*. He explains the effects of such public advisors and their effects on Shikastans.

Lessing also criticizes religion for many ills such as division of society, exploitation, colonialism. In this Novel, Lessing explains beginning of religion. The religion started as a way of saving humanity from falling from its already degraded status to animalistic levels. “These religions had two main aspects. The positive one, at their best: a stabilization of the culture, preventing the worst excesses of brutality, exploitation, and greed. The negative: a priesthood manipulating rules, regulations, with punitive inflexibility; sometimes allowing, or exacerbating, excesses of brutality, exploitation and greed.”(144)

Thus, religions which were developed by the Canopus for maintaining the levels of Shikasta became the most difficult impediment in maintaining it in the system. Religion and politics became the instruments of persecution. Together, they were used for destroying the cultures which were more developed according to the Canopean standards.

The novelist shows that the highly evolved alien beings from Canopus have taken birth on the earth as prophets and developed many rules for the natives of Shikasta. After work or task of an emissary from Canopus finishes, he returns and after him his set of rules are developed as

religions. The set of rules formed by them got distorted and sometimes even worked for the purpose of evil empire Shammat .These religions became so inflexible and rigid that any new development, innovation became a very difficult task. Johor writes: “Shikasta was an *olla podrida* of cults, beliefs, religions, creeds, convictions; there was no end to them, and each of our envoys had to take into account the fact that even before he, she, was dead, his instruction would have already taken flight into fantasy, or been hardened into dogma: each knew that this newly minted, fresh, flexible method, adapted for that particular phase, would, before he had finished his work, have been captured by the Shikasta Law, and become mechanical, useless.”(145)

Lessing finds politics and political parties to be responsible for division of humanity. Political ideologies have always been criticized by Lessing for their similarity of approaches in exploiting humanity. They only have different names. Johor’s friend incarnates on Shikasta to save many individuals from these mirage of ideologies but unknowingly succumbs to it and be part of it. Johor in his efforts of rescuing his friend finds striking feature of politics that he mentions in his report.:

The attitude outlined in this paragraph defines ‘politics’, ‘political parties’, ‘political programmes’. Nearly all political people were incapable of thinking in terms of interaction, of cross-influences, of the various sects and ‘parties’ forming *together* a whole, wholes –let alone groups of nations making up a whole. No, in entering the state of mind where ‘politics’ was ruler, it was always to enter a crippling partiality, a condition of being blinded by the ‘correctness’ of a certain viewpoint.(*Shikasta*. 101)

Writing about the present as past history from the point of view of an alien, Lessing sees the basic tendency of compartmentalization to be the only thing a political party can give. They claim to be benevolent but ultimately they lead to dictatorship and hate for every human being not agree with a certain point of view.

Such divisions ultimately lead humanity to illogical wars. Wars occur due to reasons which within a few years seem to be utterly illogical. The capacity to kill and destroy increases with every war. This is developed by the help of science and technology. Shikasta, after its falling from the harmonious position among stars, becomes a fertile place for war. Writing after the final apocalypse (third world war), Johor names the century before it to be the 'The Century of destruction'. He analyses the illogical reasons behind both of the world wars and the unbelievable amount of destruction caused by them to the civilizations. Lessing, who has witnessed both wars, knows the absurdity behind them. She reveals them in this novel through the report of Johor. :

World War I – to use Shikasta nomenclature (otherwise the First Intensive Phase of the Twentieth Century War) – began as a quarrel between the Northwest fringes over colonial spoils. It was distinguished by a savagery that could not be matched by the most of the barbarians. Also by stupidity: the waste of human life and of the earth's products was, to us onlookers, simply unbelievable, even judged by Shikasta standards. Also by the total inability of the population masses to understand what was going on: propaganda on this scale was tried for the first time, using methods of indoctrination based on the new technologies, and was successful. (*Shikasta*. 89)

Johor also analyses the Second World War and from an alien point of view shows us to be the main culprit and victim of this era of global violence. Johor finds that the Second World War was result of exploitation during the First World War. He shows it to be more barbaric than the earlier one. This war did not only kill armies, it exterminated entire towns with unimaginable weapons.

Lessing criticizes the sects based upon various ideologies to be responsible behind the violence. She herself denies adherence to any ideology. Johor in his report calls the time during the three world wars to be 'The Age of Ideologies'. The recent and most potent ideology is of 'Science'. It lost its rational approach and became a tool for the war and mechanism for exploitation. "Its ways of thought, in its beginning flexible and open, had hardened."(115)

The growing individualism not only creates sects, religion, dogmas and ideologies, it also affects people's mentality. The higher norms and rules of living personal life have also compared with the ideals set by or taught by Canopus. The lost values of family and social life are revealed. Lessing through her omniscient narrator Johor points the degradation in giving birth and raising children and slavery of women. Johor finds that the children now were not the result of an ideal harmonious relation between male and female. "Now these delightful infants are born haphazardly of any mating, any parents, treated well or ill as chance dictates."(137)

The half population of humanity is of women. But they too are subjected to total exploitation. They themselves are responsible behind it. Johor finds women to be "slaves to their beauty."(138) The dominant gender is male gender. But men do not have any true meaningful relation with the women or their children. They treat them according their personal desires. "Men

treat women according to their degree of beauty, and the children only according to how they will advance themselves, their names, their properties.”(138)

Taufiq is also sent by Canopus to fulfill task of redemption of selected natives from Shikasta. But due to negative influences in Shikasta he does not realize his true purpose. In his absence, many individuals supposed to be aided by him are guided by Johor. With the description of cases of different individuals we are introduced to different ways through which human psyche is divided and distorted. In the first case, Johor, mentions “Standardization of intellectual and emotional patterns”(151). Sources of entertainment are the first way which transforms the free human identity into stereotypes. Their effect starts during childhood through various programmes. “These programmes were standardized, particularly for children. At best they reinforced a low level of ethic – kindness to animals, for instance – but the worst was inherent in the sheer fact of the infinite repetition.”(151) In this first case Johor reports about the children who unknowingly become victim of such entertaining and addictive programmes and commit crime. They start identifying themselves and people around them according to the characters shown in the programmes. Their behavior is also copy of the behavior of their favorite characters. Taufiq, as a lawyer had to defend them “as victims of indoctrination.”(153). Through this case, Taufiq was supposed to make people recognize the methods of indoctrination to imprison their intellect.

In the second case, degradation of human beings, is shown. Lessing presents a character who, like all of us, is full of sympathy, love for downtrodden and a sense of justice in the youth but gradually succumbs to the prevailing condition of exploitation and becomes a part of it. The individual, presented in the second case, is born in extreme poverty but never accepts it. In his youth he is full of exalted thoughts about the greatness of all individuals irrespective of their

condition. But in his adulthood he becomes a soldier and has to torture people without any reason. “He accepted things as ‘human nature’ which as a child he would have rejected.”(155)

After war, he returns and becomes a workers’ leader. He spreads propaganda about equality but never works for it. He gets indulged in same corrupt politics that he once criticized so passionately. But at his old age he again realizes his wrong positions and finds his life to be wasted without any real and meaningful achievement. He did not uplift anybody else except himself. He finds himself guilty of forsaking his duties towards society. He decides to file a case against himself for giving up his lofty ideals. Taufiq was to undertake this case and through this case he was to expose the corrupt systems which divert many idealistic youths from doing something for the society.

The second case is of a person who could clearly see the grotesque reality behind the propaganda spread by governments. He was born in a family who barely survived the holocaust. Due to his capacity of direct, cold, detached and unbiased observation of historical events, ideologies and political stands, he finds himself at odds everywhere including his own family. Lessing presents him as an exemplification of the modern youths who can clearly see the lies behind the propaganda used to misguide the earlier generations. Due to this feeling of enveloping falsehood everywhere, such ignited young people get involved in criminal activity. Same happens with the youth presented here. He tries to prove the incompetency of the social structure, law and other institution through various types of crimes. Ultimately he is captured and as there was nobody to see the hidden reasons behind his crimes, he is jailed where he commits suicide.

The fourth case is just opposite to the third case. Here the individual is unable to see the reality behind various ideologies. She becomes a victim of groups who follow ideologies for their own benefit or for finding a meaning of their life. She is used by these groups for spreading unsocial activities on the name of socialism. She is caught by the police and finally commits suicide for saving the group.

The case of the next individual represents the exploitation of women in the colonial areas. This individual is a poor woman in a colonial area. She works as a maid servant since her childhood. She devotes her entire life to the family. For her loyalty towards the family is the only meaning of her life. In her old age, her masters leave the place and leave her too. She has now no means and no reasons of surviving. She takes shelter at the home of her widowed sister. Soon her misery and the inhumane attitude of her colonial masters become well known everywhere through media. Her masters found it ruining their public image and filed a court-case against her. Here again the lawyer ought to have been Taufiq. “he would have pointed out, for instance, that this situation, the woman working for any number of years in the most intimate service of a family, only to be dismissed with as little consideration as would be given to an animal, and less, in some cases, was at that time prevalent — and he would have been able to cite a dozen countries, bringing witnesses of several races and cultures.”(195)

Lessing has presented the colonialism in the novel. She has shown the ironies of colonialism in various descriptions in reports and illustrations of Johar. In one of such reports she mentions the mechanism of colonialism where a scientifically evolved but morally degenerated race colonize and destroy a better race. In one illustration, Johor describes the procedure of colonialism used by the white races to exploit other races. He compares the culture and religion of colonial race with the colonized race and finds that the colonized races are morally superior.

The illustrations are of ‘Southern Continent 1’(Africa) which was colonized by white races of ‘Northwest fringes’(Europe). He finds that the advanced technology of one race is the basic cause for the colonialism. The colonized race is superior to the colonial power in all terms.

They lived in balance with their surroundings, taking no more than they were able to back. Their ‘religion’ was an expression of this oneness with the land they lived in, medicine was an extension and an expression of their religion, and their wise men and women knew how to cure the sickness of the mind.(199)

They were so kind and innocent that they could not realize the true intention of the invaders and allowed them to settle in their land. But soon they realized that they were enslaved. The free people of ‘Southern Continent 1’now become labors in their own land. The colonial powers started hating the natives without any reason. They considered themselves to be superior to the colonized races and thus justified exploitation of natives by them. Johor reports:

And thus with the conquerors of a country, who will persuade themselves that these people whose land they are in the process of stealing from them are dirty, primitive, cruel, communists, fascists, capitalists, nigger lovers, white trash, anything that comes to mind.(202)

The religion also aided in the process of colonialism. Religion of the colonial powers was “the most self-examination, this most inflexible, the least capable of self examination.”(202) They imposed their religion upon the colonized races and tried to convince them about the inferiority of their religion.

Lessing has also exposed the realities behind various myths in this novel. She has criticized monolithic religions for the exploitation they commit through the myths. She finds that people have been misled and exploited by the use of false presentation and misinterpretation of religious myths. Johor presents the contrast between the real incidences that took place and the presentation of them in one popular religion. In reality the superior beings from Canopus try to teach the immense possibility in every human being through inculcating a tradition of admiring any child daily. Through this tradition people started believing that they have equal rights and capacity as their rulers. Soon the monks and rulers find this and try to stop this tradition through prosecution. When they fail to stop this tradition through torture, they try to divert people through misinterpretation of the actual events that caused this tradition. They institutionalized it and created a 'Ceremony of the Child' (215). They built churches for celebrating this and termed the child to be the heavenly 'Christ-child'. Later they formed an entire religion on its name. Johor finds that through such misinterpretations all religions are formed.

The common and collective errors of human civilizations not only crush and destroy bright and benevolent civilization and traditions, but it also incapacitates individuals who see the world from a different perspective by calling them insane. Johor analyses that this is due to our incapacity of applying what we know and our faulty psychological knowledge. To exemplify this miserable phenomenon Johor illustrates a case of 'Lynda Coleridge'. He includes parts of the daily-diary in his reports. This diary shows that the some of the people, whom we consider insane, actually possess highly evolved spiritual powers. They see world from a different perspective. Due to their different and almost contradictory to common outlook, they are considered insane and governing authorities and their family members force them to live in mental asylums, where they are subjected to various types of medical experiments.

This illustration seems to prove that humanity seeks rationalization of everything and all things, persons and opinions which cannot go fulfill the demands of rationalization are considered insane and absurd. But in another illustration Johor reports about the absurdity and irrationality spread on the name of religion. Humanity has been forced to live in dark ages due to irrationality spread by faulty interpretation of religions. Everybody has to accept the religious orders and “to believe anything else was to court reprisals that included social ostracism, the loss of opportunities to earn a living, the reputation for ungodliness and general wickedness. (239)

Johor illustrates the case of one such individual who stood up against religious dictatorship. He glorifies him by calling him “a small soldier in the cause of free enquiry.”(240) This individual devotes his life to the spreading of rational thought. He tries to spread the new scientific discoveries which are refuted by religious faith. Due to this, he is insulted everywhere and made to flee from one city to another. He does not react to any ridicule. He feels pity on them for their erroneous beliefs which do not allow them to see the real truth.

Gradually all this false convictions, ideologies of self-deception, tortures on the name of religious, racial superiority loss their hold and impact on common Shikasta. Johor before his last visit and incarnation on Shikasta finds that all means of dividing, exploiting and deceiving are gradually becoming irrelevant due to growing awareness in the coming generations. “Everywhere ideas, sets of mind beliefs that have supported people for centuries are fraying away, dissolving, going.”(249)

Through this novel Lessing has tried to portray the very near future. She has mentioned the apparent faults of our systems of society and the way and reasons which shall make them fall. She terms religion as “the most powerful reality bunters”(23). All monolithic religions claimed

that only the followers of their religion would be saved. But as the history of Shikasta progresses, Johor reports that the growing global troubles and growing awareness of common people, shatters all religion's claims. Scientific discoveries also contribute in this gradual disillusionment and many religious objects such as heavenly bodies lose their holiness.

The second and very recent way of dividing people is the ideology of 'nationalism'. Lessing, who has experienced the maddening effects of nationalism in first and Second World War, knows the futility of this emotional trap. The nationalism was based on the conviction that one should love only ones' nation and try to make it better than others at even the cost of exploitation of other nation. But soon the exploitation, rise and fall of colonial powers and two great world wars on the name of nationalism revealed the reality behind this notion. Johor reports:

So recently, a hundred years ago, or fifty, it was possible for the members of a nation to believe that this small patch of Shikasta was better than others, more noble, free, and good. But recently even the most self-regarding and self-worshipping nation has had to see that it is the same as the rest, and that each lies, tortures , deludes its people, and bleeds them in the interests of a dominant class... and falls apart, as must happen in these terrible end days. (248)

When the governing system based upon monarchy was abolished by the democratic system, various political parties emerged. They too divided people on the name of common good. But their ultimate aim was the benefit of their leaders. Johor finds that the political parties have same capacity of "attracting same emotions as religions did and do, as nations did and do."

(248) But the betrayals and disappointments and senseless violence associated with it caused disbelief for the political parties in the public.

Lessing knows the misuse of science and technology for spreading wars and colonialism. She saw the great amount of massacre and genocide aided by the advancement of science. In this novel the superior species -such as Canopus, Sirians and Shammat-are highly evolved scientifically. But they are in control of their scientific development. On the other hand Shikastans are unable to foresee the disastrous results of their unplanned and haphazard scientific development. At Shikasta, Science became inflexible and started destroying anything for which it has no tools and patience of understanding. Scientists became servants of profit making organizations and government authorities and their invention are no more for the common people of Shikasta.

Thus Lessing has exposed the collective errors of humanity in this novel. She presents the final outcome of each of our faults. She warns us that if we do not stop, we will lead to the worst situation for earth. The narrator Johor reports about the condition of Shikastans in the last stage:

Creatures infinitely damaged, reduced and dwindled from their origins, degenerate, almost lost- animals far removed from what was first envisaged for them by their designers, they are being driven back from everything they had and held and now can take a stand nowhere but in the most outrageous extremities of – patience.(*Shikasta*. 257)

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