

**International Webinar on
Multicultural Doris Lessing: Lessing through the South Asian Lens**

March 25 & 27, 2022 (Friday & Sunday)

Time: 5pm – 9 pm (IST, both days)

Organized by Centre for Studies in Gender, Culture & Media (CSGCM), West Bengal State University, Kolkata in Collaboration with Doris Lessing Society

Concept Note:

This webinar takes up the idea of the multilingual and the multicultural as tools of inclusion, from the presidential theme of MLA 2022, and wishes to explore the British Nobel-laureate, Doris Lessing's writings vis-a-vis women's writing in South Asia. Within Lessing's own scholarship this marks a continuation of the seminal work by Claire Sprague, *In Pursuit of Doris Lessing: Nine Nations Reading* (1990), as it tests the efficacy of Lessing's writings within the complex multiculturalism and multilinguality of the subcontinent's literature.

Women in South Asia wrote from the colonial times in both the regional languages and English. In them we find the nuances of forms and modes that mark them out from the male literary canon. In this respect they engage directly with Lessing's concerns about the represented and the unrepresented, the canonised and the undervalued, the quotidian and the spiritual. Again, like Lessing, most of these women foreground the problems of existing within the folds of patriarchy and performing the roles defined by its institutions, like marriage, war, religion and educational systems. A comparative exploration of the study of Lessing's massive oeuvre and the vast, multilingual, women's literature of South Asia promises to be a fascinating journey, and will certainly bring out the points of coincidences and departures of the women's questions in the global North and South.

This webinar proposes to open the door to some of the possibilities of cultural and linguistic exchanges between Lessing and South Asia through interleaved readings of Lessing and the women's literature of the subcontinent, in both vernacular and English. Since Lessing was limited neither by subject, nor forms or modes, we hope to acquire a rich collection of readings.

Suggested areas for exploration of Lessing's works and Women's Writing in the subcontinent:

- Exploring Lessing's trope of 'free women' and women's writing in South Asia .
- Short stories, big concerns: Lessing and South Asia.
- Women Writers and their need to write their lives : Lessing and South Asia
- Portrait of a Lady - in Lessing and in the visual media (including films and advertisements) in South Asia
- Translating Lessing
- Teaching Lessing/Learning Lessing (including students' papers)

Program:

Day I-25 March 2022

5.pm-5.10 pm: Welcome Address by Chandrava Chakravarty (Director, CSGCM)

Chair: Prof. Chandrava Chakravarty

5.10pm-6.10pm: Keynote- 'World Tales': The Expansive Vision of Doris Lessing'

*Dr. Josna Rege (President, Doris Lessing Society, Professor of English at
Worcester State University)*

Business Session-I

Chair: Prof. Mamunur Rahman (Dept. of English, Islamic University, Bangladesh)

*6.10pm--6.40pm: Prof. Ratna Raman, 'Doris Lessing at New Delhi: The Beginnings of a
Journey in the 1980s'*

(Dept. of English, Sri Venkateswara College, Delhi University, India)

6.45pm -7.15 pm: Dr. Swaty Mitra , 'Portrait of Ladies: In Lessing and Bengali Cinema'

(Dept of English, Barasat Govt. College, Kolkata)

7.15pm-7.30pm--Interactions

Business Session –II

Chair: Prof. Ratna Raman (Dept. of English, Sri Venkateswara College, Delhi University)

7.30pm-8pm: Dr. Subhajeet Sengupta, 'Teaching The Grass is Singing in Indian Classroom'

(Department of English, Burdwan University)

*8.05pm-8.35pm— Dr. Ujjal Jeet – 'The 'Free Women' of Doris Lessing with a Special
Focus on the Experiential World of The Golden Notebook.'*

(Dept. of English, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, India)

8.35pm-8.55pm-Interactions

8.55pm-9pm—Announcement by the Organizing Committee

Day II—27 March

5pm-5.05pm—Welcome Address by Dr. Sneha Kar Chaudhuri (Deputy Director, CSGCM)

Business Session-III

Chair: Professor Ahmed Ahsanuzzaman (Independent University of Bangladesh)

5.05pm- 5.35 pm— Prof. Mamunur Rahman-‘Translating Doris Lessing: South Asian Experience’ ,

(Dept. of English, Islamic University, Bangladesh)

5.35pm-6.05pm—Dr. Sajeesh Vappala, ‘ Multiplicity of Truths and their Implications in Doris Lessing’

(Dept. of English, St. Gregorios College, Kerala, India)

6.05pm-6.20 pm: Interactions

Business session IV

Chair: Dr. Swaty Mitra (Department of English, Barasat Govt College, Kolkata)

6.25pm- 7 pm: A Special Talk by Dr. Devaki Jain —“The Generous Doris Lessing”

(Feminist-Economist & Author of The Brass Notebook)

Business Session V

Chair: Dr. Sneha Kar Chaudhuri (Deputy Director, CSGCM)

7pm-7.15pm: Deeksha Samra, ‘Exploring L’écriture Feminine through Short Stories of Doris

Lessing, Ismat Chughtai and Maheswata Devi’ (Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar)

7.15pm-7.30pm: Oindrila Dey, ‘War and Illusive Peace: Explorations of Collective Trauma in

Lessing's Martha Quest and Waheed's The Collaborator'' (Bethune College, Kolkata)

7.30pm-7.45pm: Sudipta Dutta, ‘Womanhood Reinscribed: Relating the Preface to The Golden Notebook to Ashapura Devi's The First Promise’ (West Bengal State

University, Kolkata)

7.45pm-8pm: Anutosh Sinha, 'Treatment of Indigenous Subjects in Lessing's Short Stories'

(Jadavpur University, Kolkata)

[No Q & A Session]

Valedictory Address

Moderator: Prof. Ratna Raman (Sri Venkateshwar College, Delhi University)

8.10pm-8.50pm- Roundtable on 'Doris Lessing and South Asia'

Vote of thanks

8.50 pm-9pm
