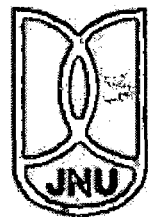


**SELF AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY:
A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE
TO SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the award of the degree of*

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

Richa Singh




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2009**

DECLARATION

Date: 28/09/09

This Dissertation titled **SELF AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR** submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full for any other degree or diploma of any university.


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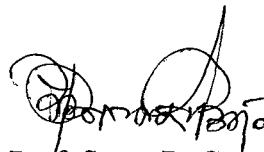
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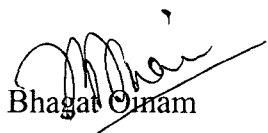
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled **SELF AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY: A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR** submitted by Richa Singh in partial fulfillment of the requirements for award of the degree of Master of Philosophy, is to the best of my knowledge an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or full for any other degree or diploma of any university and may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.


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CONTENT

Acknowledgements

Introduction 1-9

Chapter 1 Understanding the Nature of Self 10-38

- I. Critique of Cartesian Legacy of Self
- II. Phenomenology of Self
- III. Self and Moral Responsibility

Chapter 2 Engendering of Self 39-65

- I. First Wave Feminism
- II. Second Wave Feminism
- III. Third Wave Feminism

Chapter 3 Simone de Beauvoir on Self and Moral Responsibility 66-95

- I. Becoming a Women^a
- II. Idea of Freedom
- III. Rethinking Self and Moral Responsibility

Conclusion 96 -100

Bibliography 101-105

INTRODUCTION

We exist as a human being. As a human being we are different from animals. Since we are more rational, can ponder upon our past and manipulate our present and future. But is it sufficient to be human? To have a "self" is one of the most important elements of realizing human existence. This self has been called differently by different traditions according to the way they interpret it to be. For instance, in Indian philosophy it is taken as *atman*, and most of them make distinction between self (atman) and mind (chit). But this distinction does not exist in western philosophy. For most of them, mind or self or soul means one and the same, that is they do not make distinction between these.

When we focus on individuals as sources of decisions, the ultimate locus of responsibility, the unity of thought and action, we come to think of them as self. A consideration of the concept of "self" involves an analysis of other concepts related to it, such as, "body," "responsibility," "agent" and "freedom." The self can be defined as consisting of such qualities which make a person distinct from other persons. The self refers to the conscious, reflective, active personality of an individual. The self is both, physical and mental, public and private, directly perceived and indirectly imagined. Moreover, self as an agent is responsible for both its thoughts and actions. By assuming self as an agent enduring through time, we attribute thoughts and actions that occur at different moments to the same self rather than different selves. Self-awareness is the understanding that one exists as an individual, separate from other selves. This awareness is a personal understanding is important for one's own identity.

Personal understanding refers to the mental and conceptual awareness and persistent regard that sentient beings hold with regard their own being. Ulric Neisser, in his essay "The Five Kinds of Self Knowledge," has focused on the following aspects while characterizing the self:

The ecological self: is the self perceived with respect to the physical environment: I am the person here in this place, engaged in this particular activity.

The interpersonal self: appears from earliest infancy just as the ecological self does, is specified by species-specific of emotional rapport and communication.

The extended self: is based primarily on our personal memories and anticipations: I am the person who had certain specific experiences, who regularly engages in certain specific and familiar routines

The private self: appears when children first notice that some of their experiences are not directly shared with other people: I am, in principle, the only person who can feel this unique and particular pain

Conceptual self: or the self concept draws meaning from the network of assumption and theories in which it is embedded.¹

¹ Neisser Ulric, "Five Kinds of Self-Knowledge," in *Self and Identity*, p. 386.

Though Neisser talked about only five type of self but, this list is inexhaustible. Our role of selves keeps on changing with respect to the situations. It does not mean that the self does not have stability but that it accommodates itself with the change. That is when "A" is a father to his kid, brother, husband, friend, son, boss, employ etc. So the person is same but playing different roles and in doing so even his self changes. But if he is an honest person, will remain so but the way he will deal with them will change.

These selves are not experienced in isolation from each other but rather as coherent and unitary experience. Experience helps us knowing ourselves. We are different entities as we conceive ourselves enlightened by various views. Our actions, our relation, our properties, our characteristic, our success and our defeats, our conception of society etc. vary with conception of ourselves or vice versa. Whatever we think influences our actions, our action in turn, the society we live in. Since our actions affect the society so it makes us responsible towards the society. As this self is not something imposed wholly by someone else on us, we also participate in its formation. So we are responsible for it.

Having a sense of identity is an individual's self comprehension of one's self as a discrete, distinct entity separate from others. As we grow from infancy to adulthood, we change in our physical appearance as well as the way we perceive and think about the world. Still we remain the same person, in the sense that we are the same baby who becomes an adult. There is continuity in our development from infancy to youth and from youth to old age. For person, identity forms an important part of life, to the extent that they not only go to

save their identities, in life but also at time take their life when not been able to overcome the identity crises. This identity is important to the person because it is through this self identity that they are known in their society. Individual identity reflects certain perspective of human agency. Since we play a part in formation of self, we must be free beings, as we can make choices and be held responsible for our actions. So what one becomes is, one's own responsibility.

But the above view of self is not accepted by all the philosophers. We think of self as something within us, as essential to who we are. But what is the nature of this "Self?" What features characterize it? Is our body part of ourselves? Do we have any responsibility towards it? Different answers are given to these questions by different philosophers. Since, they perceive the problem from different perspectives, there are different answers as well.

I will be discussing in my dissertation the different views taken by different philosophers but with a main focus on what this self is. How is it morally responsible? What is the role of freedom in it? Why has the self of the women been perceived differently than men? There are several such questions that can be raised.

The dissertation is comprised of three main chapters in addition to the introduction and the conclusion. In the Chapter One, an endeavor is made to understand Descartes' view on self. Self is disembodied for him. An analysis has been made about how he reached to the conclusion that self is independent and body is dependent. The monadic view of the self has been criticized by many philosophers but I have taken phenomenologist point of view. How and why are they against disembodied view of the self? The second section of the chapter deals with the view of phenomenologist like Husserl, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty.

How have they understood self and its' relationship with consciousness? How through the method of bracketing phenomenologist tries to reach self? What role does perception play in it? Role of experience is always directed towards an object. The intentionality is also being directed toward an object or consciousness. Experience involves what Husserl called "intentionality," that is, the directedness of experience toward things in the world, the property of consciousness that is a consciousness about something.

In third section, I have tried to establish relationship between self and being responsible. Sartre talks about absolute freedom and how this freedom given to self comes along with responsibilities. How does concrete human existence influence the existence of the other individuals in society? The focus has also been given to how responsibility, freedom and anxiety are related.

In the Chapter Two, "Engendering of Self," an attempt has been made to understand the self from feministic perspective. A study has been done to analysis how the different waves of feminism deal with the women. What is feminism? Feministic movement helped woman to give voice to their grievances and problems. They not only raised issues related to them but also fought for their right. It takes in consideration all the three ways. The problems with which feminist mainly dealt. In First wave I have taken Marry Wollstonecraft, for whom the right to education was the most important right. This right will have women to even get right to vote, which was the focus of the wave. Education was important not only for getting woman right to vote but also to make them a more enlighten human being. To raise the position of women, educated women have the responsibility to change many of the stereotypes associated with woman. Education can be considered to a large extent like a pill which can cure almost all our pains. Education spreads more awareness, can access more things, can get

better jobs, can know what one's rights are. I am not saying that it is an end in itself, but surely it provides an edge over others. Of course, the full usage of it can be along with freedom and other rights. This was one of the reasons behind my taking Wollstonecraft among the other first wave feminists.

In the Second wave, I have taken Simone de Beauvoir, the one who changed the concept of women. Through her books *The Second Sex* and *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, she tried to change the frame of woman, which has been considered as fixed. This is due to the stereotyping thinking about woman. It is not that their position has been snatched but that she is not treated as having self only. According to her "one is not born but become women." How does female become woman? Why has she been given the status of the "other?" How did she incorporate the three different forms – biological, phenomenological and historical materialism? While defining self she also tries to deal with myths related to woman, which helped in further subjection of women by the society. For instance, men are considered as stronger than woman and this has been so much inculcate in our psyche that even when daughter goes outside, she is being asked to take her brother along with her. This may be in spite the fact that the brother is less strong than her. These myths have become so much the part of our life that it is no more perceived as entrenching their freedom and rights. Due to feminist movement there has been persistent urge to come out of this subjection.

In the Third wave feminism talks of their differences with their counterparts. Since they are different, they claim to enjoy different rights as well. This wave was even against the sexist image of woman. This wave of feminism is sometimes against the Second wave, and sometimes they to answer Second wave. It focused on all types of inequalities rather than just gender based. But there is nothing fixed as such, different feminists address different problems. The

binding line was that all feminists were continuing the movement started along back for the upliftment of woman.

The Chapter Three is on how Simone de Beauvoir discusses the way through which woman came into being. Simone de Beauvoir's trenchant observation in her book *The Second Sex* "He is the subject, he is the absolute – she is the other,"² sums up why the self as an important issue from the feminist perspective. To be other is to be the non-subject, the non-person, the non agent – in short, the mere body. In law and customary practice, women's selfhood has been systematically subordinated, diminished, and belittled, when it has not been outrightly denied, in cultural stereotypes. Women have been cast as lesser or inferior forms of the masculine individual. Therefore, the question of woman's self become an important question in feminism because in a male dominated world, women are treated as if they are without the self, i.e. as others.

A hidden masculinist conception of the self, though seemingly gender neutral, contributes to the valorization of the masculine and the stigmatization of the feminine. The masculine realm of rational selfhood is projected as a realm of moral decency – principled respect for others and conscientious fidelity to duty. Although cultural norms uphold the values of equality and tolerance, culture practices continue to transmit camouflaged messages of the inferiority of woman through stereotype thinking. One of the masculinized views about woman is that she is consigned to selflessness – that is, subservient, passive, and self-sacrificial altruism. Thus, man defines woman not in herself but in relation to him; she is not regarded as autonomous being.

² Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. H.M Parshely, Vintage Books, 1953, p. xvi.

Simone de Beauvoir is concerned with the problem of oppression and embodiment. Being oppressed is the status of an object (thereby regarding the oppressed as pure facticity), and it also excludes the oppressed from the community of those regarded as having the capacity and the authority to make meanings and establish values. Beauvoir saw the society as the necessary medium for revealing an individual's fundamental freedom. Freedom was not a license to act according to impulsive desires, but implied the ability to make conscious choices about how to act, or whether to act at all or not. Freedom occurred when an individual takes responsibility for himself or herself, thereby transcending the restrictions and oppressions imposed by the objective world.

Self deception is one of the reasons behind identity crises in women and also responsible for restriction on her freedom. Simone de Beauvoir used word "bad faith" for self deception. In her book, *The Second Sex*, she shows that women fail to take responsibility of their freedom because of being trapped in bad faith and patriarchal society. There is nothing natural or inherent about woman or femininity. She examines the myth about woman in society which is categorized on woman by man. She analyzed feminine being-in-the-world and that the females are not born but become women. One becomes a woman through interaction with the world, through lived experience. Lived experience may make one's experience of femininity as "real" in the sense that there are actual expectations. Beauvoir investigates how this radically unequal relationship emerged as well as what structures, attitudes and presuppositions continue to maintain its social power.

The world become bleak if one rejects or ignores one's responsibilities. Life has meaning but it is up to us to reveal it or not. Along with revealing, at times, we also create meaning. Individuals must and always do choose for

themselves, but choices are always made in social context. Women must take responsibility for themselves, their bodies and their lives.

The ends and goals of our actions must never be set up as absolutes, separate from who choose them. In this sense, Beauvoir sets limits to freedom. To be free is not to have free license to do whatever one wants. Rather, to be free entails the conscious assumption of this freedom through projects which are chosen at each moment. The meaning of actions is thus given not from some external source of values (the society), but in the existent's spontaneous act of choosing them. According to Beauvoir, "freedom is situated, subject not only to the whims of embodiment but also to those of historical, social location."³ Each individual must positively assume responsibility for his or her action and not to escape from it. Thus, we act ethically only insofar as we accept the weight of our choices and the consequences and responsibilities of our action.

Although we certainly cannot claim that woman's role as the other is her fault, we also cannot say that she is always entirely innocent in her subjection. Beauvoir believes that there are many possible attitudes of bad faith where the existent flees his or her responsibility into prefabricated values and beliefs. Many women living in a patriarchal culture are guilty of the same action and thus are in some ways complicitous in their own subjugation because of the seeming benefits it can bring as well as the respite from responsibility it promises. The feminist philosophical work on the self has taken three main tasks: (1) critique of established views of the self, (2) reclamation of women's selfhood, and (3) reconceptualization of the self to incorporate women's experience.

³Caludia Card, *The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir*, Cambridge University Press. 2002, p. 33.

Chapter1

UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF SELF

The problem of self has been one of the most debatable philosophical topics in almost all traditions of philosophy. When we focus on individual as a source of decisions, the ultimate locus of responsibility, the unity of thoughts and actions, we come to think of them as self. Having a self is what makes us different from other existing things in the world. As it is, this self thinks, acts, perceives, etc. in the world. Self is considered to be in one way the core of human existence. To save the identity of this self, humans at times take their life (i.e. commit suicide) and at times others life (i.e. murder). But the most important question is what this self is. What are the features that characterized it? Is our body part of this self? Do we have responsibility towards it? Different philosophers gave different answers to these questions. For some, self is disembodied, and for some others it is embodied and yet for some it is engendered self.

In this chapter we will see that in Cartesian tradition the concept of self was developed under the strategy of searching for the indubitable and certain knowledge, and which showed the "self" in its absolute separation from the external world, it can be called as "monad view of self."⁴ But there is a problem in Descartes' writing of the self, that we cannot avoid the presence of

⁴Schroeder William Ralph, *Sartre and His Predecessors The Self and The Other*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984, p. 2.

the external world and our physical bodies as well. On this score, many philosophers reject the Cartesian legacy of the self, and try to develop a new idea of the self along with the perceptual world in the concern of the specific discrimination of human being. In the critique of the Cartesian legacy, a new idea of "self" develops in existential way, that agrees there is a connection of the self with the body and external world. They try to show that there cannot be a self without body. There is an embodied self for them. But the matter is not solved here only, as there is third view to it as well. The Feminist were not satisfied as they see that this self is taken as different for both men and women, this can be drawn on the basis of the way they are treated in the society. Since, they are being treated as different so there has to be different self, i.e. engendered self, according to Simone de Beauvoir. This self is the one who is bearing the responsibility of its acts. Since there are different selves, that there are different responsibility to different selves. We will discuss in the end that it is important to know that how a human agent [self] is responsible for its act. In this sense, the self gets its meaning by getting responsibility for whatever it does. In this chapter, we will talk about the responsibility in the scheme of making the self understood in context of having an existence of a being.

I. Critique of Cartesian Legacy of Self

Descartes, draws the picture of the self in search for certain, indubitable propositions. For him, this indubitable truth was something absolutely certain, beyond the slightest doubt, foundation for knowledge. He was of the view that all our knowledge must begin with some self evident beliefs which can be constituted as genuine knowledge. In the process of searching for indubitable

knowledge, he began by doubting everything which can be doubted. Descartes conceived that there is nothing in the world which cannot be self-examined, that he can and cannot doubt.

He investigates indubitable knowledge by doubting three principles of belief, that are first, his own existence, second, doubting mathematical calculation (which he earlier thought cannot go wrong), and third, the existence of god. He doubted that all these believe as they can be the creation of evil genius. But for Descartes there is something he cannot doubt in the light of the evil genius: the fact that he can doubt implies that he must be a thinking thing, regardless of any attempt by the evil genius to deceive him into what he is thinking; he is still a thinking thing. One cannot doubt that one is doubting, while one is doubting. He couldn't doubt his act of thinking (i.e. realm of mental states). It follows that just by virtue of being a thinking thing one exists necessarily. Therefore, Descartes accepted, "Cogito Ergo Sum" (i.e. I think, therefore I am) as the only clear and distinct idea which is self-evident. In his search for this self evident truth, having a body was not essential for understanding of the self as a thinking being. According to Descartes,

Next I examined attentively what I was. I saw that while I could pretend that I had no body and that there was no world and no place for me to be in, I could not for all that pretend I did not exist. I saw on the contrary that from the mere fact that I thought of doubting the truth of the other things, it followed quite evidently and certainly that I existed; whereas if I had merely ceased thinking, even if everything else I had ever imagined had been true, I should have had no reason to believe that I existed...I knew I was substance whose essence or nature is simply to think, and

which does not require any place, or depend on any material thing, in order to exist. Accordingly this 'I' - that is, the soul by which I am what I am – is entirely distinct from the body, and indeed is easier to know than the body, and would not fail to be whatever it is, even if the body did not exist.⁵

In doubting whether one is existing or not leads one to believe that human essence is thinking. Descartes sees mind as a substance whose essence is consciousness or thinking. Therefore, he argues that he knows infallibly that he exists as a thinking being, but he doesn't know infallibly what this thinking thing is. Since he is sure that he is thinking then he must be existing. Where does this mind existing? So there must be a place where this self exists and through which it acts. Body is the place where mind reside in and body is dependent on self for its existence. Hence the body is separate from what is essential to thinking being, i.e. self. For him, self is essentially mind, and as mind only. Though mind resides in body still mind is not dependent on body but body is on mind. Descartes made a radical separation of the mind from the body. Mind knows itself directly and with absolute certainty, while knowledge of the external world is at least theoretically doubtful. The self exists as a distinct substance, as "thinking being," and it enjoys a supreme independence from the world of "extended matter," i.e. from the body. The self is a non-material entity that lacks extension and motion, and that operates through body. Body is a material entity and posses both extension and motion.

⁵ John Cottingham, *The Cambridge Companion to Descartes*, Cambridge University Press, 1992 , p. 143.

The certainties of one's own mental states entail the certain existence of a self that possess them and that remains identical through their changes. This self is taken to be within the body and "behind" each mental act. Since this self is a substance, it is self-sufficient and unaltered. The self is conceived to be prior to experience and to have a special relation to its own experience. This relation of self with its own experiences and that of another's ties each mental act to single person. The self is the essence of a person, the Cartesian picture will be framed, "the monad view of the self." This is a monad view because this self is something which is complete in it and does not need anything external to it for its existence. Other things in the world are in a way due to this self.

Descartes doubt convinced that the self as "thinking thing" is different from all extended things of the world. For Descartes experience

...in and of themselves, signs or phenomenological objects and as such as meaning or signification, quite independent of the experiencing self on the one hand and the existence of the external world on other.⁶

But how can a disembodied self be related to the physical environment or physical world? According to Descartes, this interaction between soul and body takes place through pineal gland. According to Descartes, the mind is joined to

⁶Sheldon P. Pterfreund and C. Theodore Denise, *Contemporary Philosophy and Its Origins*, D. Van Nostrand Company Ltd., 1967, p. 195.

the body in one specific place: the pineal gland, a single gland in the centre of the brain, between the two lobes. This is the spot in which interaction takes place. The mind has the ability to move the pineal gland, and by doing so, interacting with the body.

The above view on self doesn't seem satisfactory. Descartes was criticized for his mind body dualism argument as he could not provide a satisfactory account of the interaction between mind and body. Can mind or self exist without the body? The mere fact that I can think of the self as distinct from the body does not show that the self is separable from the body. It has been criticized by philosophers like Hegel, Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. All of them tried to show that there cannot be a self without body and that there is an embodied self. There is a relationship between them.

Husserl respected Descartes for challenging the epistemological assumption, that we can have knowledge about the external world directly through experience and agreed with him that experience alone can't prove the existence of external world. But he criticized Descartes, for ignoring an essential feature of experience, i.e. "intending" while making reference to the external world. For self is always related to the world. As whatever we think, is in relation to this world. Even when we talk or think about past, present and future, heaven or universe, we do so because we know about them through this world. And there is some reason, intention due to which we are thinking about a particular thing. Therefore, our thinking has to be intentional, and if it is intentional it must exist as there has to be some physical body through which we can have intentions.

According to Descartes, the mind interacts with the body at the pineal gland. This form of dualism or duality proposes that the mind controls the body; and the body just obeys the orders. But the body can also influence the otherwise rational mind, such as when we do a particular act and later on think about it. For example, if A is in a bad mood, and if A sees or meets B who is smiling that at times helps in changing the mood of A. In this case body first feels the sensations and then the mind interprets them. So mind cannot be said to be always ordering body. In fact, both act in relation to each other and there cannot be mind independent of body.

Descartes, according to Husserl speaks of the "excess of falsity." Descartes denied sensory perception as valid mean. He gives special prominence to the possibilities of deception that are always inherent in external experience. Husserl points out that the familiar observation through the senses along with the deception caused by senses deceive about the world or particular objects, there appearance, differently ought not to be taken as grounds for the negation of the world. They can taken as a clue to the essential and legitimate sense of sensuous experience as open-ended, always subject to further conformation and correction, as the relative and presumptive presentation of something showing itself. From the experience of deception the insight is won that sense experience is in principle inadequate. However, to leap from there to the conclusion that sense experience is false and its object does not exist, only on the basis of element of doubt. Husserl did not accept in this or any of the subsequent arguments is a proof for the illusory character of the senses and the non-being of the world. To argue the world out of existence and then back in again by appeal to the veracity of God is, for him, nonsense. What Husserl will at times emphasize is the insight that given the inadequacy of world experience, the possibility of the non-

existence of the world is never excluded. The proposition, "The world exists," must remain a contingent assertion.

Hegel opposes Cartesian's central "monad view of the self." Hegel's central assertion is that consciousness of the self makes being as a person, which requires the existence of others in order to become actualized. He takes self in two ways, i.e. a primitive sense⁷ of self which is possible without others and a rich developed self⁸ which requires the existence and recognition of the external world. For Hegel, the aim of inter-personal relation is recognition, and the kind of recognition one achieves is depended on one's orientation to others.

The central implication of Hegel's position is that Cartesian self-examination will be insufficient to fully clarify the structure of mental life because those structures keep changing and we have new changes in them. "Recognition" alters the nature of one's experience. Thus Cartesian approach that was performed prior to recognition would fail to elucidate. This challenge emerges from his contention that each form of conscious life breaks down and develops into another because when self seriously evaluates its experience with its own standard of adequacy. Although each form of consciousness begins with an immediate certainty that it satisfies its standard, it gradually discovers its mistake.

⁷ Primitive self is the one which we experience in isolation with others, as an independent and free from external world.

⁸ Rich developed self is the one which understand itself in relation to the external world and cannot exist without it.

Hegel's another criticism to Cartesian self is that through self-externalization a self-conscious being come to understand itself. One learns about one's nature only through actions and interactions with others. And the way in which self-consciousness comes to understand itself is not different from the way it understand others.

Heidegger's challenge to the Cartesian picture is quite different. He seeks to clarify the nature of being; in order highlight to this he examines human being. He does not show interest in proving the existence of the other. Instead he shows that others are one of the necessary conditions of the existence of human being have. He claims that even when one is alone, one experiences other's absence and thus relates to them. His claims are not merely that others (influence) effect one, they take over through the function of one's self. Thus others are present at the very core of the self. Descartes does not talk about others existence, as if it's not important. But the other is also as important for one's existence as the introspection about one's self.

Sartre also challenges the Cartesian picture of self like Hegel and Heidegger. Sartre disagrees with Cartesian picture in his contention that the mind is parasitic on the world to be conscious of. And it is quite essential if consciousness exist, something other consciousness must exist. Sartre's point is that in Cartesian picture and many of our common sense beliefs about us are false because when consciousness seek to know itself, it must reflect on and objectify itself. And in this process, the consciousness reflects on itself sometime as subject and some time as object. Sartre challenges Cartesian because he neglects the effect of this difference in reflection.

Sartre believes the experience of sense of self derives from an awareness of a particular mode of others created a definition, a nature or character for one. He thinks

... that the essential relation between the existence of the other and that of oneself is asymmetrical that is other's subjectivity emerges only across one's own objectivity and the others objectivity is experienced as long as one retains one's own subjectivity.⁹

Sartre notes that one can objectify others, hence one conceals their subjectivity. Even if one has experienced other's subjectivity, it will not influence one's conception because they are usually clarified in the frame of mind that excludes that subjectivity. Thus, Sartre concludes that the Cartesian picture is not doing justice to the experience of the other's subjectivity. His self, so involved with itself, that it considered others as merely objects.

For Sartre, we cannot take other as merely object. Since, other-as-subject is identical to the social self and all social selves are distinct. And in other words the other is the very being of the social life. It means the upsurge of the other and self-experience of social self are one unity, they cannot even be conceived of separately. The other, other-as-subject is absolutely present to self and Sartre claims that he wholly transcends one's world. And by "transcendent" here Sartre means only "capable of limiting the organization of one's world, one's freedom

⁹ Schroeder, Ralph William, *Sartre and his predecessors the self and the other*, op. cit., p. 181.

and one's existence."¹⁰ In so far as the other is a subject, he uses one's self for its purposes, and one's social self emerges necessarily as a result, it is "me-as-an-object-for-him." Sartre admits but one must exist and encounter other in order for him to use one's self. This social self requires the existence of both one's self and others.

For the existence of this self there is also need for the existence of the world. According to Merleau-Ponty, the natural world is present as existing itself irrespective of its existence for us; the act of transcendence¹¹ where the humans as subject are presented within it. So we are always in the nature, which exist independent of our existence of to be perceived. So it's not that this world exist because "I exist" as Descartes. The moment we are alive we are in the world and not in some vacuum, without this world. How can they we doubt the existence of this world? Even to doubt this we should have some idea of what it is. As we know that something is absent when we know that what that thing is? Therefore, in order to have an idea about whether the world exist or not first we should know what this world is? Thus

Picture of knowledge through which we arrived in ascribing the subject as situated in the world, we must, it seems, substitute second, according to which construct or constitute of this world exist.¹²

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 182.

¹¹ Transcendence means that it does not possess it nor does that circumambulate them. It is transcendent to the extent that one is ignorant of them but still assert their bare existence.

¹²M. Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of perception*, trans. C. Smith, Routledge, 1962, p. 370.

Merleau-Ponty also points out that how could one know that there are others who exist? The whole experience of self is through introspection within itself. Awareness of Other is possible without the junction of "for itself" and the "in itself." It is impossible to have knowledge about others without being in contact with them. The plurality of others is not possible if we have absolute consciousness of oneself. The monadic view of self given by Descartes does not allow one to interact without outside world, as it is complete in itself.

II. Phenomenological Understanding of Self

Phenomenology is the study of structure of consciousness as experienced from first person point of view. The central structure of an experience is its "intentionality." It is "directedness" of the consciousness towards something, as it is an experience of or about some object. An experience is directed towards an object by virtue of its content or meaning (which represents the object) together with appropriate enabling conditions. It studies "phenomena," that is, appearance of things to our consciousness through experience. Experience involves what Husserl called "intentionality," that is, the directedness of experience towards things in the world, the property of consciousness about something. It gives account of self-awareness. Self performs different roles, as thinking or acting self, self as embodied action that includes kinesthetic awareness of one's movement, self with purpose or intention of action, self having awareness of others in empathy, inter subjectivity and collectivity.

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Husserl is viewed as the founder of phenomenology, whose aim is to study how external things or, in other words, objects of consciousness, such as natural phenomena in the world, other people, our thoughts and feelings, appear to human consciousness. According to phenomenology, by the process of “bracketing off” our assumptions about the status of existence of these “appearances,” we are able to perceive the pure phenomena of the things “in themselves” or the objects of consciousness as we experience them. Phenomenology is concerned with analyzing the perceptual interaction between people and the world. It focuses on how we know and what we know about the world, through analyzing our respective lived experiences of the world? One of the truths revealed by the phenomenological method, according to Husserl, is that consciousness is intentional, and it means that consciousness is always towards something or is of something. In this way Husserl differentiates between acts of consciousness and objects of consciousness. According to Husserl, when someone is conscious of something such as a book on the table, a collection of sense data and experience are unified in an act of intentional consciousness related to the book or any object outside from him. But the act of consciousness is directed to or “intends.” Husserl’s aim was to expose the presupposition and structures of experience and to discover an absolute foundation of knowledge in the shape of the transcendental ego.

Husserl proposed that the world of objects and ways in which we direct ourselves toward them, and perceive those objects, is normally conceived of in what he called the “natural standpoint,” which is characterized by a belief that objects materially exist and exhibit properties that we see as emanating from them. Husserl proposed a radical new phenomenological way of looking at objects by examining how we, in our many ways of being intentionally directed

toward them, actually “constitute” them (to be distinguished from materially creating objects or objects merely being figments of the imagination); in the Phenomenological standpoint, the object ceases to be something simply “external” and ceases to be seen as providing indicators about what it is, and becomes a grouping of perceptual and functional aspects that imply one another under the idea of a particular object or “type.” The notion of objects as real is not expelled by phenomenology, but “bracketed” as a way in which we regard objects instead of a feature that inheres in an object's essence founded in the relation between the object and the perceiver. In order to better understand the world of appearances and objects, phenomenology attempts to identify the invariant features of how objects are perceived and pushes attributions of reality into their role as an attribution about the things we perceive

For Husserl the truth exists as a fact in the world even if there is no one to comprehend it or it is unknown to anyone. Which means, meaning is in the object itself and does not come into being when someone has asserted it; it possesses independent existence and validity. Knowledge in basic sense is a kind of “seeing,” which is given with evidence and insight. Evidence is “immediate becoming aware of truth itself.” It is something which is not verified further but something that can seek conformation of original truth. For Husserl evidence was:

... ongoing, everyday ‘production’ or achievement in all cognition where object is given in a satisfactory form, with ‘intuitive fullness’ or as Husserl prefers to say, where the object is given in itself.¹³

¹³ Moran Dermont, *Edmund Husserl: Founder of Phenomenology*, Polity Press, 2005, p. 98.

Evidence is, to experience and an experience is intentional. To experience this intentionality we have to go back to "things themselves," that is, the intuited essential of consciousness. The intuitive here means immediate or direct, and not indirect, inference or supposed inference. The object should be presented to the consciousness with all the external factors intact, required by the consciousness to perceive an object. It is gaining insight into the essence of the things as concepts.

To know an object is to know "the relationship between the subjectivity of the knowing and the objectivity of the content known." This unity of both subjectivity and objectivity is the essence of phenomenology. It focuses on meaning-intending act. "Meaning is identical, self-identical unities which do not come into being and pass away..."¹⁴ Meaning could be different from mental image that it has. That's why different expressions may reach to same object and same expression may reach to individual objects but can also lead to more complex intentional contents. According Husserl sensation themselves are not intentional rather they accompany intentional act. That is why there is

... difference in the contents of experience and the properties of mind transcend object. When I see an object, I only ever see it from one side, in certain kind of light, from certain angle and so on.¹⁵

When we perceive an object we can only look at the single side of the object that is present to us. The other sides remain comparatively away from our direct perception. Here we perceive the whole object with the help of direct

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 98.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 115.

perception and inference. The inference that we make about the other sides of the object of knowledge after perceiving presented side is called "adumbration."¹⁶ This presentation is not the thing itself, but its manner of presence, described in terms of how the presence of the thing unfolds in a lived experience.

For Husserl, body is involved in all conscious functions. Through immediate intuition, sensuous feelings – sensations of pleasure and pain, bodily well-being, or being ill or at ease in body – are localized, and their relatedness to the body grounded in that localization. Among these sensations are included groups of sensations which play for the valuing acts (for the intentional mental processes of the sphere of feeling) or, more precisely, for the constitution of values (as the intentional correlates of those feelings) a role as stuff which is analogous to the role played in the constitution of spatially real objects by primary sensations for the intentional mental processes of the sphere of experience.

Thus, phenomenology develops a complex account of temporal awareness, spatial awareness, awareness of one's own experience (self-conscious, in one sense, self-awareness), the self in different roles (as thinking, acting), awareness of other persons (in empathy, inter-subjectivity, collectivity), social interaction (including collective action), and everyday activity in our surrounding life-world (in a particular culture). Consciousness experienced by us have unique feature: we experience them, we live through them or perform them. Other things in the world we may observe and engage. But we do not experience them, in the sense of living through or performing them. The

¹⁶ David R.Cerbone, *Understanding Phenomenology*, Acumen Publishing Limited, 2006, pp.28-29.

intentional process (i.e. subjectivity) of consciousness is called the noesis, while its ideal content (i.e. objectivity) is called noema. As an ideal meaning and as “the object as intended.” Nomena does not exist apart from act.

Sartre started a new tradition in phenomenology as existential phenomenology. Existential phenomenology have included description of the meaning, of Heidegger; the role of the lived-body in perception, of Merleau-Ponty; Sartre’s account of bad faith and our concrete relations with others; Simone de Beauvoir’s description of sex and aging. Existential phenomenologist shows phenomena to the one who is involved with the world.

In existential phenomenology the things in the world are structured by the ways that they are related to other things, bodies and activities. Existential phenomenology is concerned with the human existence as embodied existence and not with disembodied pure consciousness. They are constituted by such relations that, to be an object of perception or to be used, is to belong to the world. Existing entities are thus independent of any particular thoughts or conscious experience. What we have of them, only to the extent, that the world is not itself an identical entity, something that only exists for thought. The phenomenal world shows that the constituted world entails more than vision conceived as a mental act; it requires an embodied subject.

For Sartre, being is of two kinds; one is being-for-itself or consciousness and other is being-in-itself. The latter includes everything other than consciousness; i.e. includes the material world, the past, and the body as organism and so on. Consciousness is consciousness of itself, hence it is essential “for-itself” – free, mobile and spontaneous. Everything else lacking this self-consciousness is just what it is “in-itself”; it is solid and lacks the freedom.

Consciousness is always engaged in the world of which it is conscious and is in relationships with other consciousness.

Being is not known to us as it is, we can only know about being as it appears to us. It is through consciousness that the world is endowed with temporality, spatiality and other qualities, such as usefulness. Being-for-itself is the nihilation of being-in-itself. Nihilation does not mean annihilation but rather the special type of negation, it is the nihilation of being-for-itself of what it is and seeking for what it is not. For Sartre being-for-itself is the being that is involved in the world and humanizes the things in the world by using them as an instrument. Being-for-itself is the being who is a projecting being, who keeps on projecting a new project for its being. Through this process of projecting his being in the future he evolves in the society. Being-in-itself is complete in itself, so it does not strive for achieving anything. It is the being-for-itself who feels the "lack" and strives for the completeness. Being-for-itself is always engaged in the ever failing pursuit of achieving being-in-itself-being-for-itself.

The in-itself has nothing secret; it is "solid" and there is not the slightest emptiness in being, not the tiniest crack through which nothingness might slip in. In contrast to the for-itself, or consciousness, has no such fullness of existence, because it is nothing.¹⁷

For-itself generates desire to exist with fullness of being of an existing thing, but without contingency and without any loss of consciousness.

¹⁷ Diane Collinson, *Fifty Major Philosophers a Referential Guide*, Routledge, 1995, p. 57.

Merleau-Ponty was also a phenomenological existentialist, who also advocates the idea of embodied self rather than disembodied self. Being an embodied self, we try to bring into existence, for ourselves, or take a hold upon, space, the object or the instrument, and to describe the body as the place where all these annexation take place. He assumes the body as subjective, the one which is experiencing and the objects of our experience like the perception of space and time, language, art, politics, sexuality are experienced in relation to our body as the experiencing subject. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology addressed the role of attention in the phenomenal field, the experience of the body, the spatiality of the body, and the motility of the body. Merleau-Ponty succinctly captures embodied self, through existential form of phenomenology. He emphasized on the role of the body in human experience. Address the role of attention on the phenomenal field, the experience of the body, the spatiality of the body. According to Merleau-Ponty,

Insofar as, when I reflect on the essence of subjectivity, I find it bound up with that of the body and that of the world, this is because my experience as subjectivity (consciousness) is merely one with my existence as a body and with the existence of the world, and become the subject that I am, when taken concretely, is inseparable from this body and this world.¹⁸

Merleau-Ponty argues that knowledge is always derivative in relation to the more practical exigencies of the body's exposure to the world. There is no aspect of his phenomenology which does not implicate the body, or what he terms the body-subject (which is later considered in terms of his more general

¹⁸ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. C. Smith, op. cit. p. 82.

notion of the flesh), and significantly, his descriptions allow us to reconceived the problem of embodiment in terms of the body's practical capacity to act, rather than in terms of any essential trait. He argues that the starting point for understanding ourselves is the lived body, which, as the "vehicle of being in the world"¹⁹ is an existing being in its own right. Our ability to understand a world that can't be fully grasped in through requires that we ourselves are not simply representing minds. Because the existing world is never presented to us as a whole, as completely determined and available for thought, Merleau-Ponty argues, the world "does not require, and even rules out, a constituting subjects"²⁰ we encounter the world, in other words, not as subject thinking thoughts of the world, but as ourselves a kind of "open and indefinite unity of subjectivity." For Merleau-Ponty, unity of an experience being is like the unity of the world, it is not something one experiences directly, but rather it is the background against which a particular experience stands out. He conceives the unity of the self as something that is not itself fully given in experience. It is a possibility of situation, a field which encounters the world in a unified way, but which is not itself fully explicit and understandable to it. We understand ourselves as we understand the world, progressively manifesting ourselves as we unfold our existence in the temporal world. The subject itself is existential phenomena. It is so because it has its existence in being in a world, which means, in acting and experiencing and responding to the meaningful things and people and situation it encounters in the world. He emphasized on the role of the body in human experience, our experience our own body and its significance in our activities.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 406.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 83.

According to him, the main structure of an experience is in its intentionality, its being directed towards an object by virtue of its content or meaning (which represents the object) together with appropriate enabling conditions. Intentionality refers to the notion that consciousness is always directed towards something. Whether that something towards which consciousness is directed is indirect perception or is in fantasy, is in consequential to the concept of intentionality itself. Consciousness is not only directed to physical object apprehended in perception; but it can be a fantasy or a memory as well.

For Merleau-Ponty, people are both bodies and subjects of thoughts. The acts of self-contemplation are not the same as the traditional dualism of mind-body. The body-self relationship cannot be severed, yet two are not the one thing. Ponty's view is that one must exist physically before one can think about what it means to exist. Self recognizes first physical body and brain before creating an "essence" that is "oneself." According to Ponty phenomenology is concerned primary with the physical existence. The human body and its perceptions is the way we relate to and understand existence.

But this understanding of the nature of subject (i.e. self) is incomplete. According to the above view self is embodied self, i.e. gender neutral. There is no difference between man and woman. But that's not the case. As when we look around we also perceive that man and woman are considered as different and not identical with each other. If they are different they owe different responsibilities and also have different self then their counterpart, i.e. man. Since they are different from each other so must be having different self as well. That is why Simone de Beauvoir correctly says that the concept of

self is not gender neutral, but it is engendered. Since there is difference between man and woman self, so is in their responsibilities.

III. Self and Responsibility

The notion of responsibility is bound up with the conception of self. Only a thing having a self can be held responsible for action performed by it. Therefore it is significant to know how a human agent [self] is responsible for its decisions or actions. Sartre takes up the notion of human subject that he is not just de facto, a kind of being, with certain given desires, but it is somehow "up to" him what kind of being he is going to be. This freedom to choose puts responsibility on human subject for the way he is. This responsibility is essential to our notion of self. That is so because this sense of responsibility makes us different from other living things. This also helps us in having a better concept about oneself. The person having fulfilled one's responsibility have more confidence in him/her than one who doesn't.

In a sense, the self gets its meaning by getting responsibility for whatever he does. Naturally, we think of the agent as responsible, for what he does. And we can say that the state of being responsible is accountable and answerable as for a trust, debt or obligations as a person himself is taking his responsibility for his all doings, choosing and making decisions. A person is fully free to be a responsible because he is set to be free to make choices. I like having responsibility because it means that I don't want to depend on someone else, and I have an intuition that my independence will come through my taking of responsibility of my doing. By being responsible, not only I want to show to other people that one can be independent, but also to show oneself. The one who

is not being responsible, others will never take him serious, and if one follows his commitments as responsible being, people will off course take him seriously. Therefore, it is important to enquire how we are to understand responsibility. "What is it to be responsible?"

We regard ourselves and others as sources of their actions. Since they are aware of what they have done or doing. And it is this awareness which gives us a sense of responsibility for our actions. The awareness of freedom to make choice, having capability in the sense that we could do otherwise and we are capable of doing that, but this was our choice. It makes us responsible towards our decisions. The notion of "self" or "agent" is central to the concept of "responsibility" in the sense that ascriptions of beliefs, values and ethics presuppose self-conscious beings that are capable of knowing implications of such ascriptions and that they can deny or affirm them as well. To regard oneself as a "self" is to hold one to be autonomous in making one's choices, and to regard oneself as capable of changing and developing oneself. Being capable of change and development is actually meant to be an autonomous.

However, in asking "What is it to be responsible?" we might have a concern in mind, we often praise some people as responsible, and criticize others as irresponsible. Here responsibility names a virtue – a morally valuable character trait, holding responsibility is best understood as resting on an independent decision about being responsible. As just indicated, we can weight degrees of responsibility, both with regard to the sort of prospective responsibilities a person should bear and a person's liability to blame or penalties. Responsibility represents a virtue that people (and organizations) may exhibit in one area of their conduct, or perhaps exemplify in their entire lives.

The irresponsible person is not one who lacks prospective responsibilities, nor is she one who may not be held responsible retrospectively. It is only when one does not take or fulfill the responsibilities seriously. The more responsible someone is, the more we will be inclined to entrust her with demanding roles and responsibilities.

Looking at the matter positively, we can also say that a person who exhibits the virtue of responsibility lives up to the three other aspects of responsibility in an exemplary way. First, she exercises the capacities of responsible moral agency to a model degree. Second, she approaches her previous actions and omissions with all due concern, being prepared to take responsibility for any failings she may have shown. And third, she takes her prospective responsibilities seriously, being both a capable judge of what she should do, and willing to act accordingly.²¹

Existentialist philosophers like Sartre would deny that self has any essence. Yet most of the philosophers tend to characterize persons as the sort of beings who can think, remember, believe, perceive, feel, wish, want, choose, intend and decide. Existentialist thinkers focus on the question of concrete human existence and the conditions of this existence rather than hypothesizing a human essence. In fact, through this concrete human existence is how self gets its meaning in proper way.

²¹www.stanfordencyclopedia/moral_responsibility/=feminism. [on line:web]

Accessed on 26th April, 2009.

A central proposition of existentialism is that existence precedes essence, which means that the actual life of the individual is what constitutes, what could be called their "essence." Instead of there being a predetermined essence that is defined only as what it is to be a human. Although it was Sartre who explicitly coined the phrase, similar notions can be found in the thought of many existentialist philosophers.

It is often claimed in this context that a person defines himself, which is often perceived as stating that we can "wish" to be something – anything, a bird, for instance – and then be it. According to most existentialist philosophers, however, this would be an inauthentic existence. What is meant by the statement is that a person is (i) insofar as they act and (ii) that they are responsible for their actions. For example, someone who acts cruelly towards other people is, by that act, defined as a cruel person. Furthermore, by this action of cruelty they themselves are responsible for their identity (as a cruel person). So the self does not mean the basic nature of a human being, it has the potentiality to make changes in it with the changes in his surroundings. Thus we can talk about the being and becoming of a human being. Becoming of a human is closely related to the self he has, as we are talking about.

Sartre puts it in *Existentialism is Humanism*: "man first of all exists, encounters himself, surges up in the world – and defines himself afterwards."²² Of course, the more positive aspect of this is also implied: You

²²Jean Paul Sartre, *Existentialism and Humanism*, trans. Philip Mairet, Butler and Tanner Ltd., 1946, p. 124.

can choose to act in a different way, and to be a good person instead of a cruel person. Here it is clear that since man can choose to be either cruel or good, he is, in fact, neither of these essentially.

When a person is not able to carry out his responsibilities in the desired manner, he might experience anxiety within himself. The term anxiety or even anguish is common to many existentialist thinkers. It is generally held to be the experience of our freedom and responsibility. The archetypal example is the experience one has when standing on a cliff where one not only fears falling off it, but also dreads the possibility of throwing oneself off. In this experience that "nothing is holding me back," one senses the lack of anything that predetermines you to either throw yourself off or to stand still, the one experience one's own freedom. This is significant to say what an existentialist says that anxiety comes with the feel of freedom. When a being feel free for his doings he is also aware to his responsibilities, this awareness of responsibility produces anxiety in a being.

This feeling of anxiety is different from the feeling of fear, because anxiety is before nothing, but the fear has an object. In the case of fear, one can take definitive measures to remove the object of fear, in the case of angst; no such "constructive" measures are possible. The use of the word "nothing" in this context relates both to the inherent insecurity about the consequences of one's actions, and to the fact that, in experiencing one's freedom as angst, one also realizes that one will be fully responsible for these consequences; there is no thing in one (one's genes, for instance) that acts in one's stead, and that one can "blame" if something goes wrong.

Not every choice is perceived as having dreadful possible consequences (and, it can be claimed), but that doesn't change the fact that freedom remains a

condition of every action. As such, existentialist freedom is not situated in some kind of abstract space where anything and everything is possible. Since people are free, and since they already exist in the world, it is implied that their freedom is to be understood in this world, and that it, too, is restricted by it. What is not implied in this account of existential freedom, however, is that one's values are immutable; a consideration of one's values may cause one to reconsider and change them. A consequence of this fact is that one is not only responsible for one's actions, but also for the values one holds. This entails that a reference to common values doesn't excuse the individual's actions: Even though these are the values of the society the individual is part of it, they are also his own in the sense that she/he could choose them to be different at any time. Thus, the focus on freedom in existentialism is related to the limits of the responsibility one bears as a result of one's freedom: the relationship between freedom and responsibility is one of interdependency, and a clarification of freedom also clarifies what one is responsible for.

The theme of authentic existence is common to many existentialist thinkers. It is often taken to mean that one has to "find oneself" and then live in accordance with this self. But in one sense, if one considers the self to be substantial or "fixed," that the self truly is something you can find if you look hard enough, this is a misunderstanding. What is meant by authenticity is that in acting, one should act as oneself, not as one, one's genes or any other essence. The authentic act is one that is in one's freedom. Of course, as a condition of freedom is facticity, this includes one's facticity, but not to the degree that this facticity can in any way determine one's choices (in the sense that one could then blame one's background for making the choice one made). The role of facticity in relation to authenticity involves letting one's actual values come into play when

one makes a choice. In “choosing” randomly, so that one also takes responsibility for the act instead of choosing either-or without allowing the options to have different values. In contrast to this, the inauthentic is the denial to live in accordance with one's freedom. This can take many forms, from pretending choices, to a sort of “mimicry” where one acts as “one should.”

Human freedom operates against a background of facticity and situation. Facticity is about the facts that cannot be changed like ones place of birth, age, and family one is born, etc. but situation can be changed by exercising freedom through making decision. This freedom is not absolute

It is always within a given set of circumstances, after a particular past and against the expectation of both myself and others that I make my free choices.²³

Therefore, all our choices are made in a context, though we are free to make choices that we make.

There are situations when one is free to make choices but there are also situations when one is not free to make choice or cannot make choice. Like being a female is a biological condition but to become man or woman can be a matter of choice. These choices of ours decided our criteria of responsibilities. And different choices carry different responsibilities. The responsibility helps in playing different roles in the world. But how to decide who will play which role? A woman has been a subject of exploitation without their consent. So there

²³ Edward Craig, *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 8, Routledge, p. 474.

responsibilities differ from men. According to Simone de Beauvoir, women have been treated as 'other' by men. So it has to be men who are responsible for their (woman) present situation. But we cannot say that they alone are responsible for what women's condition is. Woman is also a being with a self, who has to exercise her freedom in order to realize her true self.

Chapter 2

ENGENDERING OF THE SELF

The notion of embodied self as the subject develops with the notion of the lived and represented body in the context of gender. Self as we have seen in the last chapter has been first taken as disembodied self and then later on as embodied self. But this self is not just embodied gender neutral self. In fact it is an engendered self, as it has been taken by most of the feminist. This is so because we treat self of the two sexes as differently. This engendered self is mainly, can be said due to the watertight compartment roles imposed on sexes by society in which one lives. These roles are on the bases of one's being male or female. Different biological features, is being provided as the ground for the prescription of different roles.

The body, or the embodiment of the subject, is a key term in the feminist struggle for the redefinition of subjectivity. As self is taken as subject, while about whom we talk is taken as the object. The subject is defined by many different variables like – class, race, sex, age, nationality and culture, which overlap each other in the defining and coding our experiences. The embodied engendered subject thus defined as situated in a web of complex power in relations to the society they live in. Mostly woman is treated as object in the patriarchal society, i.e. like an object. This view of woman as an “object” is the one of the key term for the feministic struggle. By taking woman as “other,” the self of woman is ignored. One of the reasons for this otherness to woman is due to the stereotyping roles, called as social norms. As Simone de Beauvoir say in

her book *The Second Sex* that a person is born as male or female but become man and woman on the basis of the roles taught to them in a given a society. So this body is to be understood as situated at the intersection of the averred facticity of anatomy, that is, "sex" and that of "gender."

The embodied subject is always functional, socializes gendered entity. As there can be no subjectivity, outside gendered self. The "I" cannot exist without the body of her or him. Therefore, whenever we talk about, even for one's own self, it is always "I." This "I" is then always "she-I" or "he-I," subject is always engendered. The "she-I" secures the embodied self of woman, and helps in redefining female subjectivity.²⁴

Many feminists believe that gender is not innate; rather it is something which is the result of what one does and performs. Biological sex constrains one's genders performance. Gender performances are available to everyone, but with them come constrain on who can perform which personae with impunity. And this is where gender and sex come together, as society tries to match up ways of behaving with biological sex assignments. Like man and female perform their gender roles as per the traditions. Male is mostly considered as tough, in control, aggressive, etc. whereas females as nurturing, physically attractive, passive, etc.

Feminism emerges as the concept that embraces both as an ideology and as a movement for socio-political change based on a critical analysis of male privilege and women's subordination within any given society. The differential social construction of the behavior of the gender is based on their physiological

²⁴Gisela Bock and Susan James, *Beyond Equality and Differences, Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity*, Routledge, 1992, pp. 184-7.

difference in appearance. Like men are considered as strong because they appear to be so and female are as delicate. That's why feminism raises issues concerning personal autonomy or freedom, but this cannot be without constant reference to basic issues of social organization. Feminism is pro-woman movement. That does not mean that feminists are against men but they want to rebalance between women and men in social, economic and political power within a given society. They wanted to establish equilibrium between both genders. As these divisions on the basis of gender, raise basic question concerning individual freedom and responsibility as well as the collective responsibilities in society, and modes of dealing with others.²⁵

The disequilibrium of rights between the genders is one of the reasons behind women's subordination by the men in the society. The men's claim to define what is best for women, without consulting them. As they think they have the right to do so, since women is not capable of taking decision. This thinking is largely to the patriarchal system in society. Thereby feminist offers frontal challenges to patriarchal thought, social originations and control mechanism, it seeks to destroy masculinity based hierarchy.

Who is a feminist? Feminist can be any persons, i.e. female or male whose ideas and actions recognize and exhibit consciousness and discomfort over institutionalized injustice towards women in society. The feminism advocates the elimination of injustice done by these institutions, by challenging prevailing ideas and practices through coercive power, force or authority that upholds male prerogative over female. Thus feminists are at odds with male dominated culture

²⁵ Ibid. p. 82.

and society. Feminism is concerned with advancing the position of women through achievement of political, legal or economics rights equal to those which are granted to men.

The history of feminism is the history of feminist movements and their efforts to overturn gender inequality. Feminist have divided feminist history into three “waves.” Each wave is described as dealing with different aspects of almost the same feminist issues but with the different perspective.²⁶ The first wave refers to the feminism movement of the nineteenth century through early twenty century which dealt mainly with the Suffrage movement. The second wave (1960s-80s) dealt with the inequality of laws, as well as cultural inequalities. The Third wave of Feminism (1990s–current) is seen as both a continuation and a response to the perceived failures of the Second-wave.²⁷

Feminist thinking sprang from two quite different assumptions about the nature of women: one that men and women are essentially same and the differences are due to environmental factors and the other is that women were innately different from men. They wanted to have structural changes in the society.

²⁶ The main purpose behind the feministic movement is to fight for woman’s right. Though the issues for which the movement was lead for was different in different waves.

²⁷*Encyclopaedia Britannica* [online:web] Accessed 14th March, 2009, URL: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/724633/feminism/280083>

I. First Wave Feminism

The first wave of feminism began in the United Kingdom and the United States around the nineteenth century and lasted until the early twentieth century. The main focus of this movement at this time was on de jure inequalities, or officially mandated inequalities. There were many people during this time who were considered to be feminists, like Mary Wollstonecraft, Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, Olympia Brown, and Helen Pitts; there are countless more.

The term “personal is political” was coined during this wave. Women’s discovered that the problem of male dominance, humiliation and ill treatment, and continuing growing inequality of the sexes are common to all women and is not of a particular woman. These problems made them realized that the problem was not only social but also political. They thought that the key to these problems is in the political participation in public sphere of women. Therefore, this wave primarily focused on gaining the right of women’s suffrage.

The demand of right to vote was the tool for attainment of legal control over the property and person. This right will give them entry into male-dominated professions and will also change the intuitional hierarchies. Right to vote was important to harmonize two strands in forgoing rights advocacy:

... that was to enable women to make special contribution; it sought to give women the same capacity as the men so they could

express their differences; it was a just end in itself but it was also as expedient means to other ends.²⁸

Right to vote was to give them opportunity to explore their freedom. Suffragists were of the view that women deserve the right to vote because of their sex – because women as a group also contribute in the society and so should have right to express themselves. The demand for equal suffrage for women differed from men, because the right to vote was recognized as a tool of group interests as well as a symbol of equal access of citizens to self government.²⁹

According to Mill, the right to vote should be valued according to the education one has. That is that the value of the vote should be according to whether the voter is educated or not. He talked about quality of the vote. If a person is educated, his/her vote should have more value. So the education played an important role in deciding the criteria for right to vote.

Education was also considered as important because it helped woman to rise in economic, political and culture status. It was necessary for them to make them class conscious and to improve job opportunities. Education was seen as a significant for women's emancipation. Many feminist believe that patriarchal men-women relations can also be changed through education. Since, education can also help in changing the way they have been socialize, as discrimination

²⁸Ann Oakley and Juliet Mitchell, *What is Feminism*, Basil Blackwell, 1986, p. 57.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 58.

against woman in the field of politics, employment, etc can be abolished. As there, participation will help in eradicating the misconception about them.

Marry Wollstonecraft belongs to this wave. She wrote *A Vindication of Rights of Woman*, which was first full scale book favouring women. According to her, the excessive concern of women for romantic love and physical desirability are not the natural behavior of woman but rather a socially-imposed behavior by male. According to her, education can help women to overcome the image that has been developed by males. Education will provide them new horizons to explore the limits of their potentiality. Being subjected to subjection the self of women has not been explored fully. Even they themselves do not of much expectation from them. As they have always been or forced to accept the views or image, dictated by male. Wollstonecraft intendeds to illustrating that these limitations on women are due to the deficiency of educations. She writes that they are

... taught from their infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and, roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison.³⁰

Woman has been made to learn that for women the most important thing for them is beauty. Such types of thought inculcation are one of the reasons behind what she thinks. In the case of male it is just opposite. They are always being taught about bravery, strength etc. As a result they even associate themselves with such things.

³⁰Mary, Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Davis Cambell, 1919, p. 155.

The woman, have been inculcated since their childhood to focus their attention on beauty and outward accomplishments, rather than on being educated with the understanding the practical things about the world. They have most of the time pictured the world as a good place and that they need not do anything but just to wait to get married. They were considered just as the machine to produce children. This picturesque Woman could achieve much more if they were given education because what they are, is not because they don't have mind but due to the roles assigns to them by society. Wollstonecraft writes:

women ought to have an education commensurate with their position in society and then proceeds to redefine that position, claiming that women are essential to the nation because they educate its children and because they could be 'companions' to their husbands rather than mere wives.³¹

Education for woman was also important as she was the one who takes care of the children's. In order, for children to be well educated and for their being a good citizen. Education will accord her in changing the perception of men towards woman. Being educated she can show that she has the capability to work, like her counterpart. This will also help in changing the perception that is of viewing women as ornaments to society or property to be traded in marriage and also in getting the rights for which they are fighting. Wollstonecraft argued that they are human beings and deserves the same fundamental rights as men.

³¹Ibid. p.192.

In her book she challenged the view that women exist only to please men. Men took women as an object to satisfy their sexual need only and nothing more than that. According to her the position of women can be uplifted when, women and men are given equal opportunity in education, work and politics. Women are naturally as rational as men. She gave preference for an education to women, and she insists that girls and young women be made to acquire "inner resources" so as to make them psychologically independent. "Inner resources" means to build one's confidence and faith in oneself, the inner strength. But along with freedom there also comes responsibilities, which is to be taken care. Like with the right to education for women, increases their responsibility towards its family. They are the one who take care and brought up the children. So in order to make them good citizens, it's important that women's are educated so that it can benefit their children's. Wollstonecraft therefore, did not simply clamor for rights, but emphasized that these rights entail duties as well. She also insisted that no one could be expected to perform duties whose natural rights were not respected.

Her reflections on the status of the female, as a gender were part of an attempt for a comprehensive understanding of human relations within a civilization. She demanded for equality of women so that they perform their functions dutifully as mothers, wives, sisters and daughters. In her opinion, it is only by giving them their rights that they would be held responsible towards their own being and their men folk. It is in vain to expect virtue from women till they are in some degree independent from men; nay, it is vain to expect that strength of natural affection which would make them good wives and mothers. In the same vein she asks that in order for woman to be really rendered virtuous and useful,

She must not, if she discharges her civil duties, want individually the protection of civil laws; she must not be dependent on her husband's bounty for her subsistence during his life, or support after his death.³²

She also questions the assumptions of woman's generosity and virtuosity that without being free why she should be held responsible for any of her actions? If the natural rights are taken away then duties will also become null.

Though Wollstonecraft was first to write book on female education but it was J.S. Mill who built the first real case for equality for women. In his book *The Subjection of Women* he also questions the relationships between the genders. There are inequalities, which are being imposed in the social relations between the two genders i.e. opposition to the social and legal inequalities that are commonly imposed upon women by the patriarchal culture. He was of the view that only through the moral and intellectual advancement of human beings as whole, that there can be happiness for everybody. The Higher pleasures that which is due to intellect yielded far greater happiness than the lower pleasure of the senses (which mostly tries to seek immediate gratification, without pondering on them. Mostly such type of happiness is instinct based). He conceived of human beings as moral and intellectually capable of being educated and civilized. Mill believed everyone should have the right to vote, with the only exceptions being barbarians and uneducated people. The reason people should be able to vote is to defend their own rights and to learn to stand on their own feet, morally and intellectually.

³² Ibid. p. 158.

Woman was generally subject to the whims of her husband and/or father due to social norms which said that women were both physically and mentally less able than men, and therefore needed to be “taken care of.” this view was supported by social theories, i.e. survival of the fittest and biological determinism, religious views supporting a hierarchical view of men and women within the family. The archetype of the ideal woman as mother, wife and homemaker was a powerful idea in 19th century society.³³ The right to education along with right to vote was thought to be the tool to change the view about woman.

First wave feminism focused its energy on concrete and pragmatic change at institutional and governmental level. Its aim was to integrate women thoroughly into the power structure of the men and to give women equal position with men, which they had traditionally denied. Originally it focused on the promotion of equal contract and property rights for women and the opposition to chattel marriage and ownership of married women (and their children) by their husbands. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, activism focused primarily on gaining political power, particularly the right of women’s suffrage. The end of this wave is often linked with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution (1920), granting women the right to vote.³⁴ This was a major victory of the movement, which

³³ *The Subjection of Women by John Stuart Mill*, The Pennsylvania State University, Electronic Classics Series, Jim Manis, Faculty Editor, Hazleton[online: web] Accessed on 18th April 2009, URL: http://www2.hn.psu.edu/faculty/jmanis/jsmill/sub_wom.pdf

³⁴ Leslie L, Heywood, (eds). *The Women’s Movement Today: An Encyclopedia of Third Wave Feminism*, vol-1, A-Z, Rawat publication, pxiii.

also included reforms in higher education, in the workplace and professions, and in healthcare. The first-wave of feminism was monumental to the movement, however, without the continuing second-wave, there would be no hope for feminism in current times, for each wave is connected and dependent on the other's history.

II. Second Wave Feminism

Second wave feminism refers to a period of feminist activity beginning in the early 1960s and lasting through the late 1980s. The second wave feminism saw cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked. The movement encouraged women to understand aspects of their own personal lives as deeply politicized, and reflective of a sexist structure of power. Unlike the first wave, the second wave focus was on the de facto inequalities, or unofficial inequalities i.e. for both civil rights and sexual liberation. They also felt that de jure and de facto inequalities were inextricably linked issues that needed to be addressed together if there was ever going to be any hope of change in the position of woman. Feminist groups campaigned on issues such as childcare, health, welfare, education, abortion. This wave encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives and politicized, and reflective of a sexist structure of power.

Equality among both sexes and issues related to them were the important issue for this wave feminist. Therefore, second wave feminism inspired the fight for equal rights and finally received the amendment between 1960 and 1970 for the Equal Rights Amendment into the United States Constitution. The Amendment said:

The category of the other is as primordial as consciousness itself. This otherness is a fundamental category of human thought. Thus it is that no group even sets itself up as the one without at once setting up the other over against itself.³⁵

It also documented a national pattern of employment discrimination, unequal pay, legal inequality, and meagre support services for working women that needed to be corrected through legislative discriminating on the basis of sex.

Marry Wollstonecraft was fighting for women's right but she considered man as an ideal towards which woman should aspire. But Simone de Beauvoir was of the view that this attitude will limits women's success by maintaining the perception that that they were a deviation from the normal, and were always outsiders attempting to emulate "normality." She believed that for feminism to move forward, this assumption must be set aside.

Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* sets out a feminist existentialist feminist view. In her book she talks about why the females have been ruled by man and also that how they are equal. As she, sees that there is no difference as such between man and woman they should have equal pay for equal work, equal job opportunities, and expanded child-care services. As the result of her effort along with other feminist equal pay act was passed. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 offered the first guarantee, and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was amended to bar employers from of woman's consciousness. Since every one has consciousness, we should face the world alone and must create itself through its

³⁵ Susan j. Hekman, *The Future of Differences, Truth and Method in feminist theory*, polity press, 1999, P. 1.

own choices by responding to the things around them. As a conscious being with body we should make choices and not simply put things for others to do. If we do that, then other tends to take us for granted. She was concerned with the relationship between modes of consciousness and the phenomenological body.

For, the body being the instrument of our grasp upon the world, the world is bound to seem a very different thing when apprehended in one manner or another. This accounts for our lengthy study of the biological facts; they are one of the keys to our understanding of woman. But I deny that they establish for her a fixed and inevitable destiny. They are insufficient for the setting up of hierarchy of the sexes; they fail to explain why woman is other; they do not condemn her to remain in his subordinate role for ever³⁶

She accepts that there are biological differences between male and female. But those anatomical differences though cannot be ignored but they even do not even provide reasonable justification given by our society for the subjection of woman on these basis. And even control them considering as incapable of taking care of themselves on their own but also put them into category of woman.

Beauvoir considered consciousness and thought as inseparable from the embodied self. As an existentialist, Beauvoir accepted Sartre's precept that existence precedes essence;³⁷ hence one is not born a woman, but becomes one. One is not born as man or woman but become so in relation to the society and

³⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* trans. H.M Parshely, Vintage books, 1953, p. 65.

³⁷ Allen Douglas and Ashok Kumar Malhotra, *Culture And Self, Philosophical and Religious Perspective East And West*, Westview Press, 1997, p14

social norms. It is the (social) construction of woman as the quintessential other that Beauvoir identifies as fundamental to women's oppression. This identity is imposed on women and not chosen by them. Therefore "one is not born a woman; one becomes one."³⁸ A woman as "the other," is defined by patriarchy as other than man, therefore they are considered as less than fully human.

Woman has been treated as "other" by men. She is just like any other object for them, which they use for themselves. That's why Beauvoir says that woman "other' for them devoid of self, consciousness – possessing on body of flesh. They never try to understand her and then by say by putting false aura of "mystery" around them. She argued that men used this as an excuse not to understand women or their problems and not to help them, and that this stereotyping was one of the reasons behind exploitation of woman. But she said that it was nowhere more truly than with sex in which men stereotyped women and used it as an excuse to organize society into a patriarchy.

Beauvoir asserted that women are as capable of choice as men, and thus can choose to elevate themselves, moving beyond the "immanence" to which they were previously resigned and reaching transcendence, a position in which one takes responsibility for oneself and the world, where one chooses one's freedom. It is not the case that she cannot take the decisions but she has never been allowed to do so.

The main thesis of *The Second Sex* revolves around the idea that woman has been held in a relationship of long-standing oppression to man through her

³⁸ Claudia Card, *The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir*, Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 38.

relegation to being man's "Other." In agreement with Hegelian and Sartrean philosophy, Beauvoir finds that the self needs otherness in order to define itself as a subject; the category of the otherness, therefore, is necessary in the constitution of the self as a self. However, the movement of self-understanding through alterity is supposed to be reciprocal in that the self is often just as much objectified by its other as the self objectifies it. What Beauvoir discovers in her multifaceted investigation into woman's situation is that woman is consistently defined as the other by man who takes on the role of the Self. As Beauvoir explains in her Introduction, woman is the incidental, the inessential, as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute – she is the other. In addition, Beauvoir maintains that human existence is an ambiguous interplay between transcendence and immanence, yet men have been privileged with expressing transcendence through them, whereas women have been forced into the repetitive and uncreative life of immanence. Beauvoir thus proposes to investigate how this radically unequal relationship emerged as well as what structures, attitudes and presuppositions continue to maintain its social power.

She took women from multiple perspectives, which includes the biological, scientific, psychoanalytic, materialistic, historical, literary and anthropological standpoint. In each of these treatments, Beauvoir is careful to claim that none of them is sufficient to explain woman's definition as man's other or her consequent oppression. However, each of them contributes to woman's overall situation as the other sex. For example, in biology and history, the women experience certain phenomena such as pregnancy, lactation, and menstruation that are foreign to men's experience and thus contribute to a marked difference in women's situation. However, these physiological occurrences is in no way directly cause woman to be man's subordinate because biology and history are

not mere "facts" of an unbiased observer, but are always incorporated into and interpreted from a situation. In addition, she acknowledges that psychoanalysis and historical materialism contribute tremendous insights into the sexual, familial and material life of woman, but fail to account for the whole picture. In the case of psychoanalysis, it denies the reality of choice and in the case of historical materialism; it neglects to take into account the existential importance of the phenomena it reduces to material conditions.

Beauvoir analyses the myths which surrounds the woman. These myths about woman, regarding the women themselves, deny the individuality to her, as she is always perceived along with those myths. For instance a woman is considered to be soft spoken and something that has to be taken care of. It is not that she is not strong enough to take care of herself. But these preconceived notions about her not only stop her knowing herself, but also keep her in the patriarchal arms. Such myths appear in all societies, thus forcing women to unfairly take the burden and blame for existence.

Beauvoir's most famous assertion, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman,"³⁹ highlighted the idea that is there is nothing natural or inherent about woman and feminity. By this, Beauvoir means to destroy the essentialism which claims that women are born "feminine" but are rather constructed to be such through social indoctrination. For example, women are considered to be delicate and dependent on males for their protection. They will be told that they need not worry as either their husband or father or brother will take care of it. Beauvoir illustrates how women are forced to relinquish their claims to transcendence and

³⁹ Ibid., p. 38

authentic subjectivity by a progressively more stringent acceptance of the "passive" and "alienated" role to man's "active" and "subjective" demands. Woman's passivity and alienation are then explored in what Beauvoir entitles her "Situation" and her "Justifications." Beauvoir studies the roles of wife, mother, and prostitute to show how women, instead of transcending through work and creativity, are forced into monotonous existences of having children, attending house hold jobs and catering to the sexual needs of the male's to satisfy their libido.

Although we cannot claim that woman's role as the Other is her fault, we also cannot say that she is always entirely innocent in her subjection. There are many possible attitudes of bad faith where the existent flees his or her responsibility into prefabricated values and beliefs. Many women living in a patriarchal culture are guilty of the same action and thus are in some ways responsible for their own subjugation because of the seeming benefits it can bring as well as the respite from responsibility it promises. Women also gradually starts' enjoying the comforts provided by society, and as a result does not want to exercise their freedom. Beauvoir discusses three particular inauthentic attitudes in which women hide their freedom in: "The Narcissist," "The Woman in Love," and "The Mystic." In these three of these attitudes, women deny the original thrust of their freedom by submerging it into the object; in the case of the first, the object is herself, the second, her beloved, and the third, the absolute or God.

Beauvoir asserts various concrete demands necessary for woman's emancipation and the reclamation of her selfhood. First and foremost, she demands that woman be allowed to transcend through her own free projects with all the danger, risk, and uncertainty that entails. As such, modern woman

prides herself on thinking, taking action, working, creating, on the same terms as men; instead of seeking to disparage them, she thinks herself to be equal to them.

In order to ensure woman's equality, Beauvoir advocates such changes in social structures such as universal childcare, equal education, contraception, and legal abortion for women, and perhaps most importantly, woman's economic freedom and independence from man. In other words, Beauvoir believes that women will benefit tremendously from freedom to work. As far as marriage is concerned, the nuclear family is damaging both the partners, especially the woman. Marriage, like any other authentic choice, must be chosen actively, and at all times or else, it is a flight from freedom into a static institution.

Beauvoir emphasis on the fact that women need access to the same kinds of activities and projects as men places her to some extent in the tradition of liberal or second-wave feminism. She demands that women be treated as equal to men and laws, customs and education must be altered to encourage this. However, *The Second Sex* always maintains its fundamental existentialist belief that each individual, regardless of sex, class or age, should be encouraged to define himself or herself and to take on the individual responsibility that comes with freedom. This requires not just focusing on universal institutions, but on the situated individual existent struggling within the ambiguity of existence. Simone de Beauvoir tried to answer to the question of how social circumstance might limit the freedom of the individual in oppressed group, including women. Her writing had great impact on feminist movement, particularly the second wave of feminism

III. Third Wave Feminism

The Third wave of feminism began in the early 1990s. The movement arose as responses to perceived failures of the second wave. The First Wave was essential: get the vote. The Second Wave was instrumental: get the choice. Third wave feminism started with the question, Is Feminism dead?

No, feminism is not dead as long as there are women who face misogynistic attacks from the media; who face rape but the rapists don't face trial; who are told they are not beautiful unless they are thin; who are paid less than their male counterparts; who are beaten by husbands, boyfriends and fathers; who are unable to receive health care; who cannot escape the confines of heteronormativity⁴⁰; who are educated to be nurses instead of doctors, teachers instead of engineers, secretaries instead of elected officials; until these and more realities facing women around the world disappear, feminism will remain.

The Third Wave is innately ambiguous due to the fact that there is yet to be a legal achievement or formalized goal associated with it. Women such as Rebecca Walker, who founded the Third Wave Foundation, have helped to formulate the Third Wave movement. Additionally, Third Wave focused organizations like National Organization for Women, Women's Action Alliance, Voters for Choice, Students Organizing Students, Take Back the Night, Feminist Majority Leadership Alliance, also add to the movement. For many Third Wavers the champion issue of third wave is not defined by gender, but instead the focus is on inequalities of all kinds.

⁴⁰Heteronormativity is a term describing the marginalization of non-heterosexual lifestyles and the view that heterosexuality is the normal sexual orientation.

With such a broad set of issues and identities at hand, and the fact that many modern women do not self-identify as feminists, it has been difficult for women's organizations and feminists to call upon a collective action agenda for the women's rights movement.

In order to understand the Third Wave of feminism, we have to see both forwards and backward time, i.e. we have to realize that there is precedent within the feminist movement: the 19th Amendment, Right to vote and in second wave right to equality, they were achieved in the name of women's rights. The Third Wave, however, seeks to not only maintain those rights but break through even deeper societal norms. The Third Wave can serve as a movement of equality for women, gay rights, immigrants, transgender etc.

It was also a response to the backlash against initiatives and movements created by the second wave. Third wave feminism seeks to challenge or avoid what it deems the second wave's "essentialist" definitions of femininity, which over emphasized the experiences of upper middle class white women. A post-structuralist interpretation of gender and sexuality is central to the third wave's ideology. Third wave feminists often focus on "micropolitics," and challenged the second wave's paradigm as to what is, or is not, good for females.⁴¹ Rebecca Walker published an article in a 1992 "Becoming the Third Wave" in which she stated, "I am not a post-feminism feminist. I am the third wave."⁴² Hill and Thomas' case brought attention to the ongoing presence of sexual harassment in the workplace and reinstated a sense of concern and awareness in many people

⁴¹[online:web]. Accessed on 20th march,09
http://stayviolation.typepad.com/chucknewton/2006/02/the_third_wave.html

⁴²,Lesilie L Heywood, (eds). *The Women's Movement Today: An Encyclopedia of Third Wave Feminism*, vol.1, A-Z, New Delhi, Rawat publication,2007, pxiii.

who assumed that sexual harassment and other second wave issues had been resolved.

The rising response is to the perceived failures of the second wave and also as a response to the backlash against initiatives and movements created by the second wave. Third-wave feminism seeks to challenge or avoid what it deems the second wave's essentialist definitions of femininity, which (according to them) over-emphasize the experiences of upper middle-class white women.

Rebecca Walker's awareness of feminism reflects a sense of entitlement and heritage, in spite of being aware of the fear that comes with challenging social hierarchies. In the introduction of *"To Be Real,"* Walker opens with a glimpse into her life, which she identifies as a "feminist ghetto." She felt that she had to measure up somehow to everyone around her and to an image of what was right according to a pre-existing model of female empowerment. Her existence, as she puts it, was "an ongoing state of saying no to many elements of the universe, and picking and choosing to allow only what I thought should belong." ⁴³ Her greatest fear came not from recognizing and embracing her own enigmatic personality and feelings but from sharing these revelations with the people she admired and loved:

I feared that this betrayal, which was grounded in staying true to myself, could mean banishment from the community for

questioning the status quo. Because feminism had been so close to home, I worried that I might also be banished from there.⁴⁴

The questions and problems associated with multiple and contradictory identities emerge as the most significant theme in Findlen's and Walker's collections. Walker extends her own feelings of fear to her generational cohort – young women and men struggling with the reality of who they are:

Constantly measuring up to some cohesive fully down-for-the-feminist-cause identity without contradictions and messiness and lusts for power and luxury items is not a fun and easy task.⁴⁵

Should she and others like her ignore the fact that they might enjoy pornography, want to shave their legs, wear makeup and dresses, join the army, be a man, get married, or do anything else that might compromise the perceived idea and ideal of what a feminist is? Historian Angela Y. Davis touches upon a critical distinction between third wave feminists and their foremothers in her afterword to "To Be Real".

Many third wave feminist

... lay claim to feminist consciousness even as they engage in rituals, careers, sexual practices, and cultural politics that they take

⁴⁴Aronson, Pamela. "Feminists or "Postfeminists"? Young Women's Attitudes toward Feminism and Gender Relations" in *gender & society*, 17; 903, 2003. <http://gas.sagepub.com>

⁴⁵Aronson, Pamela. "Feminists or "Postfeminists"? Young Women's Attitudes toward Feminism and Gender Relations" in *gender & society*, 17; 903, 2003. <http://gas.sagepub.com>

to be decidedly 'unfeminist' according to standards of second-wave feminism.⁴⁶

As Anna Julia Cooper stated over one hundred years ago in the context of African American liberation, when and where she enter, in the quiet, undisputed dignity of her womanhood, then and there the Negro race enters with her. Her of cited words resonate with the importance of being both black and female, not one or the other, and of living a life that suggested more ambiguity than certainty vis-à-vis political affiliations and organizations.

Third wave feminists are also aware of their own contradictions and multiplicity. Much of this perspective is borne out of the fact that the conventional, dichotomous way of ordering the world is, as Walker notes,

Especially difficult for a generation that has grown up transgender, bisexual, interracial, and knowing and loving people who are racist, sexist, and otherwise afflicted. . . For us the lines between us and them are often blurred, and as a result we find ourselves seeking to create identities that accommodate our multiple personalities: including more than excluding, exploring more than defining, searching more than arriving⁴⁷

Third wave feminists, then, are building upon a century-long feminist legacy that challenges the status quo, finds common ground while honouring difference, and develops the confidence it takes to live and theorize about one's

⁴⁶ Oakley Ann and Mitchell Juliet (eds.) *What is Feminism?*, Basil Blackwell, 1989, p. 288.

⁴⁷Lesilie L Heywood (eds), *The Women's Movement Today: An Encyclopedia of Third Wave Feminism*, vol-1, A-Z, Rawat Publication, 2007, p. xiii.

own life. By using more than either/or, according to Walker, they “continue to shape a political force more concerned with mandating and cultivating freedom than with policing morality.”⁴⁸ Perhaps the greatest evidence of this feminist heritage is that third wave feminists continue consciousness – raising efforts and the notion that “the personal is political” by encouraging people’s unmediated voices and perspectives. They also recognize that individuals – not just organizations – make up feminist viewpoints and movements. Walker made an explicit point of selecting pieces for *To Be Real* written from personal perspectives. She inks:

because they build empathy and compassion, are infinitely more accessible than more academic tracts, and because I believe our lives are the best basis for feminist theory.⁴⁹

She further writes:

this continuing legacy of feminism, which demands that we know and accept ourselves, jettisoning societal norms that don’t allow for our experiences, is a politically powerful decision. For, in these days of conservative and exclusionary politics it is more important than ever to fight to be all of who we are.⁵⁰

Rather than allowing ourselves and others to be put into boxes meant to categorize and dismiss, we can use the complexity of our lives to challenge the belief that any person or group is more righteous, more coect, more deserving of

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. xxiv.

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. xxxvii.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p .4.

life than any other. Like Walker, Findlen compiled stories of women's experiences because they form the basis for political action. She noted that women's experiences of sexism are far from universal; they are shaped also by race, class, location, ability, sexuality, religion, and "just plain luck." So what may appear to be a splintering in this generation often comes from an honest assessment of our differences as each of us defines her place and role in feminism. Recognizing the inherent value in this style of writing and publishing, the editors engaged in a type of consciousness – raising with their audience about the next generation by forcing readers to deal with all their contradictions.

Heywood and Drake defined third wave feminism as

A movement that contains elements of second wave critique of beauty culture, sexual abuse, and power structures while it also acknowledges and makes use of the pleasure, danger, and defining power of those structures.⁵¹

Third wave feminists embrace individual experience and politicize personal stories. A feminist consciousness is more likely to be individually defined and activism to be about personal interest.

Predictably, third wavers faced critics. Even as the third wave found its voice, some writers were declaring themselves post-feminist and arguing that the movement had lived beyond its usefulness. Meanwhile, established feminists of the earlier generation argued that the issues had not really changed and that the younger women were not adding anything of substance. By about 2000, some

⁵¹ Heywood and Darke, *Feminism's Identity Crisis*, University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p. 3.

writers from inside and outside the movement rushed to declare that the wave had broken. In addition, questions of sexualized behavior raised debate on whether such things as revealing clothing, designer-label stiletto heels, and amateur pole dancing represented true sexual liberation and gender equality, or old oppressions in disguise.

As with any other social or political movement, fissures and disagreements were present in each wave of feminism. The third wave, to an extent almost unimaginable to the members of the first and second waves before it, was plural and multifaceted, comprising people of many gender, ethnic, and class identities, experiences, and interests. As such, its greatest strength, multivocality, was attacked by some as its greatest weakness. Third-wavers countered this criticism by stating that the creation of a unified agenda or philosophy – or at least, one that was unified beyond the very general statements offered by groups such as the Third Wave Foundation noted above (groups and individuals working towards gender, racial, economic, and social justice) – was a goal that was not only unrealistic but undesirable

Chapter 3

SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR ON SELF AND MORAL RESPONSIBILITY

The notion of the “engendered self” is developed in *The Second Sex* and *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, the books authored by Simone de Beauvoir. In her writings she is concerned with women and women’s interests; specifically she talks about women’s independence. Beauvoir says that “one is not born woman but becomes woman.” Beauvoir takes this in existentialistic way – which has a basic notion that “existence precedes essence.” It means that woman has no pre-established female nature or essence. It is the social construction of woman as the quintessential other that Beauvoir identifies as fundamental to women’s oppression. She argued that men had made women the “other” in society by putting a false aura of mystery around her. Beauvoir argued that women have historically been considered deviant, abnormal. This attitude of men limited women’s success by maintaining the perception that they were a deviation from the normal.

Beauvoir asserted that women are as capable of making choice as men. Therefore can choose to elevate themselves, moving beyond the “immanence” to which they were previously resigned and reaching “transcendence,” – a position in which one takes responsibility for oneself and the world around them. Thus one chooses one’s freedom. Choice, responsibility and freedom also happen, on the basis of other categories of identity, such as race, class, and religion. But it

happens more truly with regard to sex, in which men stereotyped women and used it as an excuse to organize society into a patriarchy. One of the strongest standpoints of

Simone de Beauvoir is through her existential ethics makes an analysis of the engendered self; through which it is asserted that the projects of the individual are the realization of transcendence and therefore human freedom. In genuine accounts, woman as a human being is a subject; she is being-for-itself. "Being-for-itself" is used to characterize the self. Sartre uses this word for self, which is defined in its core as freedom. For Beauvoir "for-itself" has an important and significant place, which is reflected as the central theme of her ethics. Woman in this sense is sovereign, individual, carrying the essential quality that all subjectivities carry. According to Beauvoir, oppression of woman knows no historical period that precedes it. As Rosalind Delmar points out that the search for women in history has called in question the very stability of the concept of "woman". It is seen that women in general do not exist as individuals: their personhood is merged with or under the directions of father or husband, boy friend or brother or any other form of a patriarchal society.

I. Becoming of Woman

As we put the question about a woman, "what is a woman?" We generally define a woman in different ways according to her roles in society. We all agree that females make up one half of the humanity. It is not that the female lacks individual abilities – rather it is quite the contrary and it cannot be understood that a female has only complementary qualities than of male.

Though biologically male and female are separated, there are not great differences between them. In fact along with differences they also have similarities between them. Therefore both bodies have equally right to live their own separate lives. They are complementary to each other only when they are sexually reported. That means that both have equal rights to share with each other and not to dominate the other, as has been done by most of the men's in our society. The persistent subjection of woman by the society, make's an image of her in which she does not want to grow up. But it is not that she actually wills it to be so. She inculcates this feeling of not growing up due to subjection. In order to realize that one can enjoy something he/she should know that she can have access to it. Female does not seek to affirm her individuality; she accepts very calmly the space given to her by man-made system. She does not feel necessity to affirm her identity and she does not make claims over males because she assimilates herself with her body. Since, being a woman has been conjoined so well with being a female that she takes it to be her identity. She also takes it to be so as she cannot perceive the other side. Instead, of having a self and body without any identity, they perceive this identity as better one. Beauvoir says that she becomes a woman; within a process she has got a definition of her being and that definition does not justify her "self," it justified her being as a "woman." Women contend themselves with marriage and pregnancy by which a patriarchal society traps them.

Beauvoir provides an ethical analysis of human existence and situation. She argues that woman has been positioned as the "absolute Other" to man's role as a universal of subject. But there is no "natural" femininity or masculinity. Simone gives a point in *The Second Sex* that there cannot be any

kind of difference between male and female from their birth only. Otherness is a fundamental category of human thought that comes in society naturally. A very notable point is: Beauvoir sees that woman "becomes" her gender by learning to conform to patriarchal society's requirements that she exists inauthentically as passive body for consumption by the male gaze, and by abandoning her freedom and devoting herself to the roles of wife and mother. As Kristana Arp pointed out in her writing on Beauvoir's ethics, that becoming of a woman is because of her tendency of keeping eyes away from her responsibilities that must be carried by herself necessarily. But a woman does not seem interested in carrying her authenticity. She wishes to be a mother of a man and a wife of a man nothing else she wants. There is no need to say that women are always taken up as a certain lack of qualities. Women are also called as "imperfect men" many times. They are never treated as human beings in true sense, as she is considered as inferior to men. The perfect is only men, so she is imperfect. She is not actually hostile to males or to other females; she is actually her "self" in itself. Man-made society decides essence for females from their birth only and also decides work for her that is related to her reproductive power.

Simone de Beauvoir points that throughout the history, women have always been subordinated to men, and hence their subordination is not the result of a historical event or a social change. The reason why women are treated like objects is that it lacks the contingent or incidental nature of historical fact. Beauvoir makes difference between "being a woman" and "becoming a woman." She clarifies that she (female) is not being a woman but she becomes a woman. She analyses what "becoming a woman" means in her account of the construction of female subjectivity and explores similarly the

notion of woman as “the absolute other”. So in explaining the notion of woman she takes these two significant points, first is “becoming of a woman” and second is woman as “the absolute other.”

I will explain first the “becoming of a woman”, that how a female being, becomes a woman? In what conditions she is compelled to be a woman? Beauvoir agrees with Hegelian idea of becoming. As he entails the significance of the verb “to be,” and she forces that the verb “to be” must be rightly understood. Actually it is (i.e. “to be”) mistakenly understood as its static value when it really has the dynamic sense of “to have become.” Hegel assures that nothing can be posed as it is being forever from its past being, but everything is in a process of becoming, differently from the moment before it exist. Beauvoir points that “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.” It means that there is no pre-established woman nature or essence to female. Beauvoir adapts existentialistic notion of “existence precedes essence” to the ways in which gender identity is experienced. This only appears to be determining male or female identities because society has traditionally organized itself according to a sexual segregation, rooted in men and women biological make up and reproductive roles.

Male and female are considered as two different identities, separated in a way of natural to right of equality. Nature has given right of equality primordially and basically to both genders, as they are equal in almost every field – only thing is that they are carrying separate bodies. Their bodies are supposed to play different roles according to their physical potentialities. In pre-capitalist society, the family was the unit of economic production, which allowed to be a firm division of labor by sex within the family, but prevented their being a division between the worlds of the family, and women’s

productive role was respected because it was the necessary part of domestic production. As Zaretsky Eli says, who is a well known historian says in his book *Capitalism, Family and Personal Life*, which is historical analysis of the emergence of the family relations and gender relations.

When capitalism socialized production, two divisions took place: work was separated from the family, and also became an activity distinct from personal life. An ethic of personal fulfillment, which had hitherto characterized only leisured classes, became possible for the masses, and the family became the major location of personal meaning for the individual. Because women were more obviously tied by reproduction to the home, it was on their shoulders that this new responsibility for personal relations was laid.⁵²

Here he points that pre-capitalistic societies were hardly concerned with man and woman division placed which was strictly gendered based. The division was according to labor of individuals and they were getting equal importance. And in the capitalistic society women were carrying a specific and important responsibility of giving births that is to have offspring. That's why she has been taken in different way. And for this purpose, she is necessarily tied within a specific bondage with the caring for her body. So for sure women were taken as reproductive equipment from start. It's the fact that patriarchal societies value women's reproductive capacity more than her intellectual capacity or her autonomy. There are certain minor physiological

⁵² Eli zaretsky, *Capitalism, The Family and Personal Life*, Pluto Press, 1986, p. 55.

and biological differences between men and women. But Beauvoir does not accept the valuing of these differences and maintains that these differences do not justify the oppression of women and their traditional status. Society is organized in such a way as to favor male projects and aspirations. And the obvious question is how such a question came into existence that why female are counted as second and male as first? It is accountable to say that since the beginning of social organization man must be physically stronger so they must do heavy manual works, and women must be involved in domestic works and raising children. Men had more freedom to invent systems of thought and social and political organizations. But these systems got developed to favor male interests rather than society interests as a whole. Women have been obliged to adapt to this patriarchal system which maintains them in a subordinate position.

Here Beauvoir adopts Marxist analysis of history in her analysis of the situation of women. Seeking an explanation for the origin of woman's oppression, she argues that historical "evidence" is not reliable or conclusive because it is produced by men to justify their oppression of women. Instead she proposes Hegel's account of the master – slave dialectic. That we might interpret women position as slave, as absolute other as the result of a process of "becoming." She argues that "to be" a woman should be interpreted in the dynamic Hegelian sense that is "to have become." She focuses the significance of the verb "to be," as Hegel took in the sense that the verb "to be" must be rightly understood. Actually it is (i.e. "to be") mistakenly understood as its static value when it really has the dynamic sense of "to have become". In this sense women must have some possibilities to come out of their present situations as every

living being has potentiality to become some other than it is now. This is the actual meaning of being a woman as understood by Beauvoir:

This vicious circle is met with all analogous circumstances; when an individual (or a group of individuals) is kept in a situation of inferiority, the fact is that he is inferior. But the significance of the verb "to be" must be rightly understood here; it is in bad faith to give it a static value when it really has the dynamic Hegelian sense of "to have become."⁵³

Beauvoir shows her concern towards Marxism; she got her notion of "becoming a woman" close to "historical materialism." Beauvoir argues that economic and social contexts are crucial in determining the importance of attributed to the "biological facts" of gender. She adopts Marxist notion of productive activity as being crucial for human beings to transcend their animal nature. She points how women become alienated because they are marginalized from the work force and society and reduce to their reproductive roles. The word "marginalized" means that she is taken as secondary than the male and it is because of her reproductive role very firmly and essentially. Woman reduces herself in man as absolute subject who can assume responsibility for her life. Women become objectified through their marginalization from conscious productive activity and through their relationship to their embodiment, experienced in patriarchal society. Beauvoir argues that women have been assimilated to their body and sexed identity and traditionally confined to the roles of wife and the mother. Marriage and motherhood have been artificially promoted as the most important roles for

⁵³ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans & ed. H.M Parshely, op.cit. p. 24.

women in the society and this has been inscribed in customs, beliefs and culture of society. As a result, women have been traditionally prevented from working outside the home and hence have been obliged to attach themselves to men, to a man, to ensure their survival. Women have adapted to this state of affairs in a variety of ways which encourage "in authenticity" to some extent. Therefore we can say that woman is herself responsible for her present condition that is being counted as second sex, whereas males count themselves as first.

The duality of the sexes, like any duality gives rise to conflict and it is considerable that the winner assumes the status of the absolute. The two sexes represent two diverse aspects of the life of the species. The difference is not that between activity and passivity, both sexes are active, for they act independent roles, which can be played exclusively by them only, male cannot play female's role and female cannot play male's role. Beauvoir assures that women's oppression is related to the ownership of private property. As she argues that because human consciousness includes the original category of the other and an original aspiration to dominate the other. Since different kinds of systems came in existence notion of the "Otherness" was there inherently, like master – slave relationship – One has to be superior and one has to be inferior apparently. In Beauvoir's view in a social system the relationship of man and woman is also like this, where man is considered as superior and therefore as master and where as woman is inferior, like slave. Beauvoir argues that no groups ever set itself up as the one without setting up the other over against itself. We find in consciousness itself a fundamental hostility towards every other consciousness, the subject can be posed only in being opposed. He sets himself up as the essential, as opposed to the other, the inessential, the object. So the division of people into selves and

other is fairly inevitable. Beauvoir adopts the thought that “otherness” is a fundamental category of human thought. As she puts the historical truth in her saying;

We find in consciousness itself a fundamental hostility towards every other towards every other consciousness, the subject can be posed only in being opposed, and he sets himself up as the essential – as opposed to the other, the inessential, and the object.⁵⁴

But actually this is only a concept which has to be understood here so that we can view more option to understand the affair. Beauvoir admits that woman is not simply a worker but a human being who has productive and reproductive capacities. Yet she’s for man a sexual partner, a reproducer, an erotic subject, an Other thing, through whom he seeks her. Now the question rises that how femininity has been conceptualized and how women “become” relative beings in a patriarchal society. Throughout history, “woman” has been constructed as man’s Other and defined access to an autonomous existence. Man has positioned themselves as uniquely responsible for all aspects public life and women have been confined to a marginalized positioned in society, in which they are made to support male interests. Women are maintained in an inferior position. Men have a right to make women as a subordinate and women have internalized and adapted to oppressed state.

⁵⁴ Ursula Tidd, *Simone De Beauvoir: Critical Thinkers*, Routledge, 2004, p. 58.

Beauvoir examines in *The Second Sex*, how femininity to be understood and represented. She focuses initially on biology, psychology and Marxism to understand what is it to be a woman. Opponents of feminism usually base arguments on biological difference to justify sexual oppression. Beauvoir's main argument is concerning with women's biology, that is women have been obliged to experience their bodies as facticity rather than contingency. It means that women do not choose how they "exist" their bodies because their embodiment has been pre-defined by patriarchal society like the self is embodied.

Beauvoir accepted Merleau-Ponty's view, for whom, subjectivity is always incarnated. His concept of the body was close to Beauvoir's notion of the female body as expressive of "situation" and distinct from Sartre's account of embodied consciousness as effectively striving towards its own perpetual self disembodiment. According to Sartre, the body is not an object of consciousness. Actually Sartre's view of the body seems abstract. It neglects the lived experience of how we experience and are sometimes encouraged to experience our bodies. Beauvoir was precisely interested in how relations govern the "lived experience" of embodied subjectivity and how our body might be expressions of that experience in the world. On the other hand, Sartre tends to view that the body is a passive instrument subject to the mind's willful control. But Merleau-Ponty finds a problem with this view of Sartre; he gives an example of brain-damaged people who experience their bodies differently. And with this context Ponty tells difference in two types of bodies – the habitual body and the present body. The habitual body is the mode of existing, our bodies based on past experience, gestures learned within a spatial and temporal context and within an intersubjective context.

The present body is the way in which we experience our bodies according to the demands of present and future contexts, which may require a relearning of our embodied subjectivity. In Ponty's view the body is an expression of our relationship with the world, it is anchored in space and time in relation to others, and constitutes the point at which we assume our subjectivity in the world. Beauvoir adapts Ponty's argument within the context of gender; woman like man is her body, but something other than herself. Here Beauvoir wants to say that woman's experience of embodiment is separated from transcendence and in patriarchal society, which has traditionally promoted woman's objectification; she is rewarded for alienating or reducing her transcendent subjectivity to her physicality. Woman finds space in society as she is expected from patriarchal society. And she feels herself in a heaven, if she does whatever she is expected from man-made society.

Beauvoir introduces the concept of freedom for woman, as feminism shows its concern about the independence of the woman in social and political as well as economic systems. But here she agrees that freedom is difficult for women because they are not used to assuming full responsibility in society, and they, therefore, lack the patronage and experience from which men benefit. To exist autonomously, Beauvoir argues women should not context themselves with marriage and pregnancy by which patriarchal society can entrap them. She gives a solution as well that women must strive to become economically independent so they can challenge the situations.

II. Idea of Freedom

Beauvoir's most important contribution to philosophy is of her constructing an existentialist ethics, that is, an ethics based on the tenets of existentialism.

Existentialism sees human as beings that create and define themselves in interaction with others and the circumstances they find themselves in. In *The Ethics of Ambiguity* she sketches out theory of freedom. She introduces a new conception of freedom – moral freedom into existentialism. By introducing a new conception of freedom into existentialism, Beauvoir formulates existentialist ethics. She constructs an ethics consistent with existentialism, one that sees freedom to be both the defining feature of human existence and its ethical ideas. She takes moral freedom differently from ontological freedom, which is taken by Sartre as all human possess. It is also different from what Beauvoir calls “power.” The concept of ‘Power’ is manifested in Foucault’s theory of power. He insists on power as a productive and positive force, rather than as a purely negative, repressive entity. And he connects the category of resistance with the concept of power, as the later effects of power, which limitizes human to be absolutely free. He points that where power relations are at their most rigid and intense, the category of resistance is closely linked, therefore to the idea of power as productive.⁵⁵ By which she means the freedom from material and social constraints, which can be limited by outside forces.

Moral freedom is different from both of these, but it is somehow related to these. As existing alone is impossible as far as pursuing our projects are concerned what we can expect from other people who are indisputably in the world with us. As she doesn’t adopt the voluntaristic notion of freedom which has given by Sartre, which depends on a will to be free, effectively arguing that our actions are the product of free choices. Instead Beauvoir distinguishes

⁵⁵ Lois McNay, *Foucault And Feminism: Power, Gender and The Self*, Polity Press, 1992, p. 39.

between one's freedom and one's capacity to act in a given context. For Beauvoir man is both free and unfree she means by this that man is free in a situation. The freedom and the possibilities of action for one-self and for others would be developed in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Beauvoir writes in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*

But ambiguity is at the heart of his very attitude for the independent man is still a man with his particular situation in the world, and what he defines as object of his own choices.⁵⁶

Ambiguity is a major concept in Beauvoir's thought, it constitutes a fundamental characteristic of human existence. She points that human existence is ambiguous because human beings are both free and unfree, separate and connected to each other. A human being is a subject for himself and an object of others. She takes this argument for making her concept of freedom clear. She argues that human beings are both separate from and dependent on other people. To will oneself free and to will that there be being are same, this is one choice that man makes of himself as a present in the world. Development of moral freedom requires assuming a certain sort of relation with other people. As Beauvoir says, in order to be genuinely free, one needs others to be free as well. In other words, ethics maintains some basic norms in itself where the notion of freedom must be explained in a specific way, and it seems necessary to understand it. As we are moral, in the sense that we relate ourselves to others, and ethics should look on a basic principle of respecting others' freedom while one exercise ones freedom. She contends that we have an obligation to enable others to achieve this higher level of freedom: "to will oneself free is also to will

⁵⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics Of Ambiguity*, trans. Bernard Frechtman, citadel press, 1976, p. 39

others free.”⁵⁷ Beauvoir’s ethics is concerned with others to the ideal of personal honesty. According to Kant, we have duties towards ourselves, as well as others. Sometimes we feel that it is wrong to do certain things to other people, as well as wrong to do certain things for them.

Sartre proclaims that human has an absolute freedom to act; it is present in every situation and cannot be diminished. All humans are equally free because freedom is absolute for all. But all humans do not act morally. We see a person who is free to choose whatever he wants to do; he has options to do good and bad equally. When he chooses something bad, he may still find what we consider as “bad” to be good for himself. But instead, he could have chosen to do something good for community as a whole. He has the freedom to do what he wishes. Here a problem comes in Sartre’s notion of freedom. That for Sartre even if we inner option of choice for the exercise of our freedom, those needs not all the time be good choices. Evil can creep in ones choice itself. So every choice need not be morally good. So we find this notion of freedom away from ethical approach.

Beauvoir tries to solve the problem by positing moral freedom, which is not achieved by every person. Indeed they must struggle to attain it. She shows how an individual can develop moral freedom by interacting with other morally free subjects. It is important to say that one should promote the moral freedom of others in order to enjoy it oneself. Beauvoir ethics is very sensitive to the context of human actions. She assumes that the only thing that can give meaning to human life is a goal that a person has taken on and given meaning to himself or

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 56

herself. The only meaning that life has is the meaning that we ourselves give it. It is only our choosing to find a way of life that decides what is valuable. She analyses the individual's relation with others in her book *Pyrrhus et Cineas* and comes closer to the usual terrain of ethics. She points there is a right and a wrong stance to take vis-à-vis others. Her position on the relation between subjects diverges from Sartre's position in his book *Being and Nothingness*. Instead of another's freedom threatening to engulf one's own, Beauvoir argues that one individual's freedom supports and founds another's.

She points here that this discussion can be taken in another way in which people try to give meaning to their lives – they devote themselves to other people. This choice is an ethical stance, she judges. It's clear that Beauvoir accepts outer world for maintaining one's moral freedom which can be held through others. If one is absolutely separate from the outer world and other subjects then there is no need to talk about freedom. If everyone is indifferent toward the other and no one interferes with no one else then everyone is suppose to possess in his interests, absolute freedom and independence. That would be like infinite separate worlds in a common world – all must have their own norms and values, and different sets of worlds. As Ursula Tidd writes that in Beauvoir's view it is significant to understand that why people adopt this ethical stance looks ahead to her depiction of the woman, and in this context Tidd shows Beauvoir's fruitful statement which is concerned with the idea of women's ethical behavior, taken from *Pyrrhus et Cineaus*:

Let's suppose that the other needed me; let's suppose that his existence had an absolute value. Then I am justified in existing since I exist for a being whose existence is justified. I am released

from risk, from anguish. In placing an absolute end before me I have given up my freedom.⁵⁸

Here by these words Beauvoir is asserting that devoting oneself to others cannot fulfill a person, because one can never do anything for another person. As one can never create anything for others except points of departure. She says that as a free being the one is radically separated from the other.

This freedom also leads to act violently at times. But this violence is something other than inner will to do free. Here she introduces her distinction between power and freedom. In her view if one can do nothing for a man, he can do nothing against him either, from this account she makes a point that violence restricts a person's power but it does not touch his or her basic freedom. And here comes the concept of resistance which is significantly used by Foucault for the counter-effect of power which bounds one from being absolutely free. This potential implication has a focus point in ethics. Although Beauvoir characterizes the other's freedom as "dangerous" in the sense that other's freedom limitizes one's being free, but she also means other's freedom as it provides a foundation for one's existence as transcendence; she says that through others, one's transcendence is always being extended further than the project, he has formed. In sketching out this argument she adverts to the disclosure of being through subjectivity. She stresses the role which others play in creating the future towards which one constantly transcends oneself. Beauvoir concerns properly with ethical question: What is my relation to the other? Here the analysis is dominated by

⁵⁸ Ursula Tidd, Simone de Beauvoir: Critical Thinkers, op.cit., p. 23.

the problem created by her insistence on the radical nature of our freedom. According to Beauvoir, the other, as free, is immune to my power. Whatever I do, as master, I can exploit the slave, I cannot violate the other in the inner depths of their free subjectivity. Beauvoir argues that we can never directly touch the other in the heart of their freedom. Our relationships are either superficial, engaging only the outer surface of each other's being, or mediated through our common commitment to a shared goal or value.

Developing the concept of freedom as transcendence Beauvoir points that to be free is to be radically contingent. As free, one brings value and meaning to the world, without giving value and meaning of its own, one cannot support these values alone. As radically free one needs the other. One needs to be able to appeal to others to join himself in his projects. The knot of the ethical problem lies here: How can one, a radically free being who is existentially severed from all other human freedoms, transcend the isolations of freedom to create a community of allies? In answering the question Beauvoir turns the inner-outer distinction to her advantage as she develops the concept of situated freedom. She argues that though one can neither act for another nor directly influence their freedom, one must accept responsibility for the fact that his actions produce the conditions within which the other acts. However irrelevant his conduct may be for the other's inner freedom, it concerns himself. Having described the different ways in which freedom is evaded or misused,

Beauvoir establishes the difference between ontological and ethical freedom. She shows us that acknowledging our freedom is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for ethical action. To meet the conditions of the ethical, freedom must be used properly. It must, according to Beauvoir, embrace the ties that bind

oneself to others and take up the appeal – an act whereby one call on others, in their freedom, to join me in bringing certain values, projects conditions into being. Her writing expresses the subjective passion that grounds the ethical life. It establishes the freedom of the other as the condition of mine, like the ethical life requires the participation of others. It provides a view of the world in its material complexities – complexities which may alienate me from my freedom or open me to my freedom. It provides visions of the future which as open and contingent avoid the mystifications that validate sacrificing the present for the future. Beauvoir says in the *Ethics of Ambiguity*,

A choice will become possible in the light of the future, which is the meaning of tomorrow because the present appears as the facticity which must be transcended toward freedom.⁵⁹

It seems permissible to dream of a future; Beauvoir argues that ‘constructive activities’ would be possible for all that each one would be able to aim positively through his projects at his own future. As we see our freedom in order to fulfill itself, we see it in the way that it emerges into an open future. We have potentiality to make future by projecting goals, and we are bound to scheme a goal in present. Beauvoir's argument for ethical freedom proceeds concretely by analyzing the ways in which the adult's existence as a moral agent is conditioned by the fact that we all begin as children who find themselves embedded in a world already endowed with meaning. We are born into the condition which Beauvoir calls the “serious world.” This is a world of readymade values and established authorities. This

⁵⁹ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, , op.cit., p.68

is a world where obedience is demanded. Beauvoir describes children as mystified. By this she means that they believe that the foundations of the world are secure and that their place in the world is naturally given and unchangeable. It is the time of moral decision. Emerging into the world of adults, we are now called upon to renounce the serious world, to reject the mystifications of childhood, and to take responsibility for our choices.

III. Rethinking Self and Moral Responsibility

Before Beauvoir, most of the ethics defined women as being not quite fully human or lacking the definitive human status, that of the male. For it was in her lifetime, toward the middle of the twentieth century. In her view the freedom involves the freedom of others, women are taken into account specifically. If freedom is the principle for ethical action, then it follows that women deserve freedom equally. In her ethics, when choices and values are open to women, the future is open to her. Without a future there is no ethical possibility, no real humanness, and no womanness. It is because a human being always sees towards future through his projections. Human being lives life by projecting his goals towards others. Fundamentally each human being is transcendence, that is, oriented towards things beyond itself. And this assumption is concerned with things that are affected by those projects. Beauvoir introduces several key concepts, such as situation, reciprocity. Reciprocity is an important feature of self-other relations for Beauvoir. It refers to a mode of relating to oneself to others as both subject and object and as equal freedoms in the world. Ambiguity and facticity which inform analysis of women's condition in her writings. She distances herself from Sartre's conflictual account of self-other relationships, emphasizing the reciprocal possibilities of our self-other independence, the

importance of situation and the action, freedom willed not only to one's engulf but to others. As Ursula Tidd explains in her way what Beauvoir says about the 'situation,'

"situation" as a that is nothing more than a condition which bounds a person in a space limit and a time limit and his surroundings.⁶⁰

In her thought, "situation" refers to how a human being as an individual consciousness engaged in the world with regard to other people, to time, to space and to other products of his or her facticity. One's "situation" is not something outside or around him, but the glue which binds his freedom and his facticity together. Though "facticity" makes the concept "situation" more clear. By the word "facticity" that a necessary connection between consciousness and the world of inert matter and the past. One's aspects of facticity are one's aspects of situation which are not chosen by him. Facticity is other than the right to choose, something which is given to us. Like one's birth in a particular family. Here an individual does not have choice. In fact he is already present in the situation. Situation connects a human being with the outer world and this is what actually needed for being in a world and having an existence of himself, because everyone should be equally bounded by surroundings, although everyone has his own surroundings and his own relativity with the world and others. It seems well planned scheme by some power of nature or whatever that we never find such an absolute

⁶⁰Ursula Tidd, *Simone de Beauvoir: Critical Thinkers*, op.cit, p. 30.

perfection in the world and in ourselves. We find connectivity with all those things through which we find our goals and projections. For example, the facts of my birth, my body type, the existence of other people and their presence on specific moments, and my definite death that I cannot choose and cannot deny them. It is not that makes human beings different from each other that someone is being provided with all freedom for choosing his birth or his surrounds or his situation, and other is not being provided his own freedom to choose option from very less countable. So if we want in a wide sense to be moral then we must find ourselves in sameness and here the sameness is this that we born in a given situation and we have to conduct our lives in that givenness. When we start to project goals in a given situation which makes everyone different from each other, we are compelled to be responsible for what we choose to do in a given situation. A non-situated consciousness is impossible. This concept of "situation" enables Beauvoir to avoid having to divide lived experience up into the traditional subject/object binary. For she argues the other is always a part of a situation for oneself and the other is not his desirable condition. Human beings are transcendent beings, oriented towards things beyond themselves and compelled to transcend the given, and what is important is to create a meaningful existence in a meaningful world. As transcendent beings, we can never exist in a moment. Here Beauvoir agrees with Heidegger's notion that man is a creature of distances, he is always somewhere else, this means we are never be fixed in a moment, but always engaged somehow in transcending the given state of affairs. The fact that one has no pre-assigned place in the world opens up many possibilities that would not otherwise be given if our place was already fixed.

There is no privileged position from which we can have absolute knowledge of ourselves or other people because we are not fixed beings. For example one might be sitting in a class and taking notes, but he might be thinking about something else, he might think about a person he met sometime before, or he might be planning a future, what he will do. In other words, despite his best effort of concentration, he can never be fully there in that moment because the capacity to transcend the given is tough, wired in our consciousness. Transcendence is simply a part of human condition. Beauvoir refers to subjectivity as an intentional consciousness that is always directed towards or of something.

Beauvoir argues that there is an ultimate situation given to every human being is "Death" which places limits on one's projects. She argues that it is only with death that freedom is impossible. But she argues that to be a human is to be mortal. We cannot choose death as a part of facticity. She refuses the idea that we exist for death like Heidegger who says that we live authentically only when we recognize that we are "being-towards-death," instead "being" as such has no end; only our projects can direct our existence towards a particular aim. Actually it is true that when we think about our goals and projects, we never think about the ultimate end, the death. And this is the main point Beauvoir is concerning with.

According to Beauvoir, the Ethics formulates an ethics of ambiguity, the ambiguity of existence and essence, of being in the world and of the world, of choosing to live only to be conquered by death. As Kristana Arp rightly considers Beauvoir's talking about the issues of ambiguity having human beings in their moral lives;

"The Ethics of Ambiguity opens an account of intentionality which designates the meaning-disclosing, meaning-making and meaning-desiring activities of consciousness as insistent and ambiguous – insistent in that they are spontaneous and unstoppable; ambiguous in that they preclude any possibility of self unification or closure.⁶¹

Beauvoir describes the intentionality of consciousness as operating in two ways. First there is the activity of wanting to disclose the meaning of being, of discovering the meanings of the world. Second there is the activity of bringing meaning to the world, of wanting to be the author of the world's meaning. In the first mode of activity consciousness expresses its freedom to discover meaning. In the second, it exists as the freedom of bringing meaning into the world. Beauvoir identifies each of these intentionalities of freedom with a mood: the first with the mood of joy, the second with the dual moods of hope and domination. Whether the second intentionality becomes the ground of projects of liberation or exploitation depends on which mood prevails.

But by this account one of the problems here comes how can a person choose or act, denied freedom? What does denial of freedom mean, when does it occur, and what does it have to do with responsibility? When freedom is denied, in the case of women, who at this time cannot enter the public sphere in any meaningful way, or in the private sphere are forced to operate under the authoritarian sign of their father or husband, then, Simone de Beauvoir claims, that it prevents women from acting in their full humanity or

⁶¹ Kristana Arp, *The Bonds of Freedom: Simone de Beauvoir's Existential Ethics*, Open Court Press, p. 18.

full freedom and responsibility. She compares this situation to that of a child, a prisoner of war, a slave. It is indeed unjust for an essenceful being; if a being has its own essence then she must have a freedom to take responsibility of her own. This taking of responsibility develops an identification of herself. For an ethical subject, choices are possible but limited, and the future depends on the severity of the oppressions. This is so because human beings are compelled with facticity and situation. Beauvoir addresses in her writings such fundamental ethical and issues as: What are the criteria of ethical action? What are the principles of ethical relationships? It examines these questions from an existential-phenomenological perspective. Beginning from the situation of the concrete existing individual, it provides an analysis of our human condition that takes account of our unique and particular subjectivity, our embeddedness in the world, and our essential relatedness to each other. As Kristana Arp points in her writing;

One cannot morally will freedom only to one's self. Evil results from refusing to choose to be, in choosing a replacement for being, or in choosing freedom only for one's self, for that is not really choosing freedom. Finally, in its definition of ethics as relational activity, it is, indeed, a Field-Being ethics.⁶²

Pursuing this difference between power to affect the other's freedom and the responsibility for their situations, and exploring the conditions under which his appeal to the other can be heard. Beauvoir determines that there are two conditions of the appeal. First, one can be allowed to call to the other and

⁶² Ibid., p. 2.

can struggle against those who would silence himself. Second, there would be others who can respond to his call. Beauvoir argues that he can hear or respond to my call. Beauvoir has argued that we can never reach the other in the depths of their freedom, and we cannot call it evil. She does not, however, endorse it. Neither does she envision a future without conflict. The fact that we are differently situated and engage in the work of transcendence from different historical, economic, sexed, and race positions, ensures that some of us will always be an obstacle to another's freedom. Thus the argument of Pyrrhus and Cinéas ends on an uneasy note. As ethical, we are obliged to work for the conditions of material equality.

In calling on others to take up our projects and give them (our projects) a future, we are precluded from forcing them (others) to become our allies. We are enjoined to appeal to their freedom. Where persuasion fails, however, we are permitted the recourse to violence. The ambiguity of our being as subjects of and objects in the world is lived in this dilemma of violence and justice. Becoming lucid about the meaning of freedom, we learn to live our freedom by accepting its finitude and contingency, its risks and its failures.⁶³

Describing consciousness as ambiguous, Beauvoir identifies our ambiguity with the idea of failure. We can never fulfill our passion for meaning in either of its intentional expressions; that is, we will never succeed in fully revealing the meaning of the world, and never fulfill our desire to impress our meaning on the world. These truths of intentionality set the criteria of Beauvoir's ethics. Finding that ethical systems and absolutes,

⁶³ Ursula Tidd, *Simone de Beauvoir: Critical Thinkers*, op.cit. , p. 30.

insofar as they claim to give final answers to our ethical dilemmas and authoritarian justifications for our actions, offer dangerous consolations for our failure to be the source of the world's meaning or being, Beauvoir rejects them in favor of ethical projects that acknowledge our limits and recognize the future as open. From this perspective her ethics of ambiguity might be characterized as an ethic of existential hope.

Beauvoir's *Ethics of Ambiguity* is a secular humanism which rejects both the ideas of God and Humanity. However different they may be in content, both ideas provide an already given ground of and justification for our actions. They allow us to abdicate our responsibility for creating the conditions of our existence and to evade our ambiguity. They invite us to sacrifice the present for the future. They pervert our relationship to time. Insisting that the ethical concerns our existence as temporal intersubjective beings, Beauvoir argues that as ethical we are obliged work for a just future in ways that affirm the value of those who exist today. Beauvoir in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* rejects the familiar charge against humanism made famous by Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor that If God is dead everything is permitted. As she sees it, without God to pardon us for our "sins" we are totally and inexcusably responsible for our actions.

But, it is the problem of the unity. Can separate existing individuals be bound to each other? *The Ethics of Ambiguity* insists that we can. It does this by arguing that evil resides in the denial of freedom (mine and others); that we are responsible for ensuring the existence of the conditions of freedom (the material conditions of a minimal standard of living and the political conditions of freedom); and that I can neither affirm nor live my freedom without also affirming the freedom of others.

This child's world, however, is neither alienating nor stifling, for as children we are not yet ready for the responsibilities of freedom and are being prepared for these responsibilities by the benign indifference of adults to our imaginary worlds of play. Free to play, the child develops its creative capacities, its meaning – making abilities without being held responsible for the worlds it brings into being. Considering these two dimensions of the child's life, its imaginative freedom and freedom from responsibility, Beauvoir determines that the child lives a metaphysically privileged existence; for children, she says, experience the joys but not the anxieties of freedom. All of us pass through the age of adolescence, not all of us take up its ethical demands. The fact of our initial dependency has moral implications; for it predisposes us to the temptations of bad faith, strategies by which we deny our existential freedom and our moral responsibility, and sets our desire in the direction of nostalgia for those lost Halcyon days. Looking to return to the security of that metaphysically privileged time, some of us evade the responsibilities of freedom by choosing to remain children, that is, to live under the authority of others.

Beauvoir does not object to the mystifications of childhood. She acknowledges that they may be necessary for the child's survival. To treat adults as children, however, is immoral, and evil. To choose to remain a child is an act of bad faith. Whether or not we live a moral life depends on the material conditions of our situation and on our response to the ambiguities and failures of intentionality. If we are exploited, we cannot be accused of bad faith. If we are not, we are accountable for our response to the experience of freedom. Attending to the joys of freedom, we take up projects of justice. Vulnerable to the anxieties of failure and fearful of the responsibilities of freedom, we succumb to

unjustifiable mystifications which justify my passivity and the exploitation of others.

Having described the different ways in which freedom is evaded or misused, Beauvoir establishes the difference between ontological and ethical freedom. She shows us that acknowledging our freedom is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for ethical action. To meet the conditions of the ethical, freedom must be used properly. It must, according to Beauvoir, embrace the ties that bind me to others and take up the appeal - an act whereby I call on others, in their freedom, to join me in bringing certain values, projects conditions into being. The artist-writer embodies the ethical ideal in several respects. Her writing expresses the subjective passion that grounds the ethical life. It provides a view of the world in its material complexities-- complexities which may alienate me from my freedom or open me to my freedom. It provides visions of the future which as open and contingent avoid the mystifications that validate sacrificing the present for the future. It establishes the freedom of the other as the condition of mine, for the life of the artist-writer, like the ethical life requires the participation of others. Whereas all humans are free for existentialism, according to Beauvoir the moral person takes a certain stance towards his or her freedom. If one wills oneself free by affirming one's freedom instead of running from it or denying it, one can achieve what Beauvoir calls genuine or moral freedom: To will oneself free is to effect the transition from nature to morality by establishing a genuine freedom on the original upsurge of our existence.

Beauvoir's assumption is that woman, like man, is morally free being who is responsible for her life. To achieve their freedom women must become economically independent and politically aware of their situation. It is to be said

that authentic relations between woman and man depend on their recognition of each other as morally free subjects for the ultimate benefit of all humanity.

CONCLUSION

Self always exists in relation to others; it is always in context and never in vacuum. It is always surrounded by the world in which it stays. Though, it is not necessary that this “other” is always present physically for self. At times things are present in the form of symbols, memory, imaginations, etc. For instance, when I think of doing certain act but stops myself from doing so, because I remember my family asked me not to do so. The family is not present physically but they are present in my memory. This memory affects my present actions and decisions.

If we take the above view of the self then Descartes’ view of self has a problem. He takes self as disembodied self. But how can we have a disembodied self? Self has to exist in body in order to act and it cannot disassociate itself from the environment in which this self exist. If we accept Descartes’ view, then the mind dominates or rules the body. Like a king who has all the powers to control to his citizens. Similar is Descartes’ self. Mind resides in and operates through body. It can also be explained like; mind is the person who controls the bullock cart, while the body is bullock cart. Bullock cart has no say over the person who controls her. In this case, body gets conquered by mind.

Can an entity that does not have any control on itself be held responsible? Who is to be punished for wrong a deed – who initiates the action, or one who physically perform the action. Where lays the moral responsibility? Who is enjoying the freedom – the self or the body? As per Descartes, the self of a physically handicapped has the capability to do all tasks but cannot perform so

because of body deformities. So the blame can be put on the body. Can that be the case? How can self exist without body? In fact self cannot be independent substance as its existence also in one way can be said to dependent on body. Where will this self exist without body? If it is not known to us through body then how are we suppose to know that it exist? Therefore, the existence of body is an essential component of self. Body is also required, as the acts done by self are communicated through body only.

Where will the responsibility of an act lay if self is independent? Responsibility is for the acts one does. One can be truly held responsible for those acts where the person has freedom to make choices. When body follows the order of mind, it does not have freedom. Hence body cannot be held responsible for the acts done by him. As body had no say in making decision for it but was under compulsion to act. Therefore it is self who should bear the consequences and not the body.

For a person to be held responsible for his/her act must have self as an embodied entity. Phenomenologist's take the embodied view of the self. That is, self exist in the embodied being then he is responsible for the actions done through it.

Embodiment of self at least makes it clear that we are talking about a self which exists in this very world. This self consist of consciousness through which we perceive and tries to comprehend to world around us. The concept of embodiment of the self answered many question related to it, to some extent. For instance, if our body is embodied then it is us who are acting through it. Hence, we are responsible for the action done by us.

Though we have a body to act through, this also has consciousness. But are we still free to act the way we want to. If we take Sartre earlier view then we are absolute free beings and can act as we want to. This also put the responsibility over all our action on us. He talks about the absolute freedom for the being in the world. He said that we always have choices to make between actions. Sartre talks about freedom ontological freedom. As per this freedom women is alone responsible for her situation. But if we take that all individuals have absolute freedom, then there will be anxiety in the persons having it. Since, all the responsibility of one's acts will come on him/her. The level of anxiety will increase on the person performing the action. This can lead to psychological disorder to the person. It is not that one should escape taking responsibilities but it is also equally true that sometimes we are victims of situations we are in. Being a part of this world we cannot act as an isolated individual. Often one's actions are determined by social conditions.

Simone de Beauvoir's view that freedom exists in relation to other seems more reasonable. It seems true that since we are part of a society, we cannot exercise our freedom in isolation. In order to exercise one's freedom to the full extent, we should respect the freedom of others as well. Beauvoir rightly said that when we respect the freedom of others then only we can enjoy our own freedom. One's freedom is up to the point, from where others nose starts. These restrictions to freedom also save society from chaos. In absolute freedom every individual will do what one wishes to do without thinking about the other.

Beauvoir sees that this concept of freedom is directly related to the position of woman in society. Whatever is the woman's position it is also the responsibility of man living in the society. Though woman themselves have to work for their liberation from the chains of patriarchy, but man as the other has

to contribute a lot to it. To the large extent whatever is the condition of woman, it is largely because man took them for granted. It is also fault of woman because she let man take advantage of her. Therefore, in order to realize the freedom or to get out of the chain both woman and man has to work together.

But this work for the better status or we can say, making the man realize that even woman has "self," has to be done more by woman. As we have seen in the past that it is not only man who controls or try to rule woman, but women also do not let other woman to enjoy freedom. The common example is where mother-in-law creates hurdle for daughter-in-law and vice versa. Female infanticide can be seen as another case that highlights lack of respect for women. In order for others to respect you first you have to respect your self. Therefore in order to change the perception of man towards woman, first women themselves have to change their perception toward themselves.

Beauvoir's concept of freedom can help both male and female to realize and respect each other and to make the world a better place to live. She has contributed a lot in feminist movement through her radical thoughts, especially by raising the issue of women as "other."

Woman has been made dependent on man, if not his slave. The two sexes have never shared the world in equality. And even today woman is not fully independent, though her situation has begun to change. Interestingly, in most countries, her legal status is the same as that of men. But even when her rights are legally recognized, the customary practices most often prevents these ideas to be realized in the reality. Though women have started taking part in the state of affairs of the world, but it is still a world that belongs to men. To decline to be a the other, to refuse to be a party to the deal – this would be for women to

renounce all the advantages conferred upon a few of them by men. Man provides woman in league with material protection and undertakes the moral justification of her existence; so that she can be treated as the other.

Even today though woman has been given rights in law but these laws are far from being actually practiced. Even though by natural rights everyone is equal, but if we look in real situation, it is only bookish equality. There are miles to walk still before reaching the ends. As human being is free being, it is his/her who gives meaning to his/her own life. Beauvoir proposes that a consideration of one individual's freedom implies an ethical consideration of other free subjects in the world.

It is the individual who gives meaning to his/her existence by choosing what is right to the best of his/her knowledge. It is woman who has to take a more firm decision to improve her condition. First step has to be taken by oneself only in order to walk. The first step was taken by first wave of feminism against the exploitation that existed during that time. But still it is the women's responsibility to keep walking in order to make their counterpart realize their importance.

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