

## CHAPTER: ONE

### **Banira Giri and Issue of Woman Existence in *The Prison***

Banira Giri is widely recognized poet and novelist. She was born in 1946 as a sixth child of her parents Indraraj Giri and Janakidevi Giri, in Kharsang, located in Darjeeling district of West Bengal, India. She became popular by her penname Banira Giri in the field of literature and academic arena, though her legal name is Satyadevi. Giri's primary education began from Scot Mission School at Kharsang in 1952. She was seven years old girl, studying primary level when her mother died in 1952. She passed her SLC from St. Joseph school Kharsang in 1956. Her father wanted her to make a doctor transferring his dream from his son upon his daughter. Giri began to study science and passed her I.Sc. in biology. After the death of her father in 1962, she studied humanities and in 1965 she passed BA from North Bengal University. In the same year she came to Kathmandu and joined Tribhuwan University and passed her M. A. in Nepali. In 1985 she did her Ph.D. in modern poet Gopal Prasad Rimal's narrative epic that made her the first Nepali woman to do Ph. D. in Nepali literature.

Banira Giri's *The Prison* is the story of a woman who has very few choices in a male dominated society and it exposes existential struggle of a woman. In traditional society, women are taught to be satisfied with whatever circumstances they find themselves in, not to demand anything for themselves. They traditionally become the part of their husband's family and never inherit from their parents. Sons light the funeral pyres of their parents to assure the entrance into the heaven. They inherit all the property legally without the need for a system of wills whereas daughters are supposed as other's property as if they do not have their own existence. The unnamed female protagonist of *The Prison* finds her place in society when she meets a married man as her true lover. When the married man dies in an accident, the society does not

give her right to be a widow. She does not have assets to pay for the word widow. The female protagonist realizes that, even with these markers, she would never be free from the bond of that patriarchal society because she has to live her remaining life as a widow wearing white clothes.

Giri's novels explore the theme of human suffering and solitude, dread and despair, anguish and alienation within society and its stereotypical norms and values. Among them *The Prison* is one. *The Prison* criticizes the society and its stereotypical rules and regulation for accepting patriarchal myth constructed for the human. The society influenced by the patriarchal myth divides entire humanity into two parts; male and female. Certain role are attached to the male and female. The myth define woman as passive, submissive, kind, affectionate and decile. Whereas the male is defined as active, brilliant, muscular and independent of the society. *The Prison* seeks to show the rejection of this tendency of society through the unnamed female protagonist. It deals with the theme of social morality which seems to undervalue woman and her individual freedom. The protagonist, an adult lady nostalgically remembers the days of her childhood. She is a daughter of middle class family and also the center of attraction her family. She is the single daughter of her parents and youngest sister of her brothers.

The Protagonist grows up in the social system and customs that have been constructed from the perspective of male. With the change of time the protagonist steps in her youth age. She sees the hints of change in her mother's eyes. Her mother looks at her with anxious eyes and asks her the questions, "Why are you late? Where have you been? Who was that young man with barely a mustache behind you when you came in?" (108). It shows the society's stereotypical opinion toward female. When a daughter is in her young age, her carefree life no longer remains with her.

Society as well as her own parents always notice her every behavior and activities. She is questioned time and again like a criminal if she becomes late for a while. It shows society's narrow conception toward female.

The protagonist finds the answers of those questions in her own physical changes. Around that time, she remembers her young widow sister-in-law coming from the hill country for shelter in her house. She hears her weeping to her mother:

They would not let me stay in the hills; there is no one call to my own, there is no worse curse for young woman than to be alone, without a father in law or mother in law, no brothers in law, no sisters in law and no children. When you are alone everyone is vulgar with you. Even if you have your dowry money, you can't live off it; they are all after your chastity. (109)

A woman has to face lots of difficulties when she loses her husband. Her life becomes like a curse having no relatives. Society does not sympathizes her rather wants to take advantage of her. Being a single woman, it is very hard to sustain her remaining life. Simone de Beauvoir, in her essay 'Myth and Reality' argues that it all happens because of the definition created by patriarchal myth. It defines woman as the flesh or the beast of burden. Woman is considered as man's play thing (996). The protagonist, being a female of the society, realizes her sister-in-law's difficulties.

One day the protagonist finds her own oldest brother involving sexual harassment with her widow sister in law. At the moment she becomes so sensitive, later she sympathizes her sister in law:

Poor sister-in-law, she protected herself from the thorns of the hill country to flee here for refuge, but- But she carried with her the source and origin of those thorns, it was stuck to her. Who could cut off his

own arms and legs and hang them up for sale like meat at the  
butcher's? It's impossible. (114)

It shows the sexual harassment and the domestic violence of the male towards female. Woman has to endure all the difficulties and sufferings silently. Society creates social parameter for the woman. Beauvoir argues that patriarchal myth takes woman as the weaker sense in the sentiment. She is sentimental but cannot expose her sentiment with other. If she tries to oppose this, the society wants to correct her but does not change its view. Therefore, woman, even if she is exploited, the social systems and customs repress her voice.

Likewise, patriarchal myth defines woman as passive, submissive, kind and the other. The protagonist finds lots of myths about woman that have existed in the society. Her mother suggests the protagonist to give up laziness and do household work. She is taught to follow the typical stereotype, rules and regulation social systems and customs. Her mother says to her:

You are always got to be active. You always have to smile. To us you still seem like a little doll-but you already look big in those sinner's eyes. Be careful now wherever you go. Don't lose your head because you get excited. You are like a lamp in our home, we have to keep adding oil and move you to cast your light in another home without letting it go out. (113)

It exposes the social convention of taking woman as other's property as if she does not have their own existence. Woman is always considered as thing not as a human being. She has to leave her own home become the part of her husband's family. Such conception are harmful to the individual growth of woman. These conventions are obstacles on the road to the cultivation of the freedom of woman. There are lots of

biases and prejudices against woman in these convention so that woman will not be aware of her individual existence and freedom.

The protagonist's parents die while they were on the pilgrimage. Shortly after the death of her parents, her elder brother opens an envelope of father's will, in which her father had divided the wealth for his survivor including his daughter. The protagonist was already in her marriageable age, but her brothers for the greed of her allocated property delay her marriage. They reject every suitor according to their own choices, without asking her. She narrates:

Among those who had come to ask for me, there were two or three I hadn't disliked, but how could I myself say, "I like this young man, I'll marry him?" My dear relatives packed away forever the bride that was inside me, underneath the thin shroud of my reserve and timidity. (123)

These statements show the lack of agency of women in patriarchal social system. They cannot even choose for themselves, having very few choices. Society takes woman as weak person.

Woman is considered of not being able to propose in love and marriage. Beauvoir in her essay 'Myth and Reality' argues that man inherits property as the birth right therefore strong. From the early ages he is in financially independent status. In proposing love and marriage, he proposes her survival and social status (998). The protagonist supports the view that woman are compelled to tolerate that happens to her. She puts forth, "I held the ticket of the will, but the platform was empty. Now the ticket was meaningless for me; my brothers had peacefully completed their selfish sacrifice" (125). She is compelled to compromise. Without her knowing a nickname began to attach her name "spinster". It shows the practice of labeling women. She opposes the tradition of labeling woman.

For woman to exist, they need freedom. But they are denied freedom in the society. If freedom and independence are given, woman also can explore herself and cultivate her identity. They are as dynamic and progressive as men. The protagonist gets well educated, passes Ph.D. and becomes section officer. She decides to leave home and moves to new place to avoid the hypocrisy and sycophancy of her so called relatives. She put forth: “you can choose your friend, but you can’t choose your relatives” (140). She explicitly argues that struggle of woman for freedom receives momentum if they are given economic independence.

The protagonist commits herself to struggle for libertarian, for an intellectual life and to live independent of her family members. She becomes more introverted. She asserts:

There was another compromise, between my intelligence and my introverted solitary character- everything in my life came together, my research, my reflection and anxiety. I left out no one: Freud, Jung, Schopenhauer, Sartre, Camus, de Beauvoir, Kierkegaard, Keats, etc.  
(125)

Independence and intellect make the protagonist to choose or decide for herself. She breaks the social parameter confirmed for women. She rejects to confirm the categories of women that society constructs how woman should be. She likes to study existential philosophy to live an intellectual and meaningful life.

As soon as there is the rumor of wealth about her, all kind of middle aged men begin flocking to her. They just want to rest their economic burden on her and move their life’s car ahead. They represent the opportunist male mentality. When she rejects all of them each individual attack just an expression of their meanest personal fury.

They use disgusting term like old spinster, bitch, slut, worn-out goods etc to her. She asserts:

When women disagree with someone, they won't say anything- They sit quietly, they brood, they scheme- they store up poison drop by drop as they scheme. And without telling anyone, when they get the opportunity they strike all at once, or if they can't then they thresh around in their poison. Men though are like snakes with no poison who spread out their heads but don't bite just bang their heads on the floor for a spectacle. (145)

The protagonist becomes close with a married man. When the male staffs of her office find this news, they, especially her boss tries to get close to her; indirectly he wants to take advantage of the news. These problems the protagonist faces exposes the gamut of contemporary issues like intimacy, sexual harassment and the practice of labeling women.

It shows that women face the same problem of sexual harassment whether she is housewife depending on husband or the independent single woman. The male characters are shown corrupted with their body as well as by soul.

For Beauvoir as well as for the protagonist the society which is guided by patriarchal myth, defines woman as the flesh or the beast of burden. It defines woman as the mysterious other and treat accordingly. Beauvoir in her essay 'The Second Sex' argues that if woman is other for man, man is also the other for woman. Most importantly man should understand that other is other because of the presence of the self. If there is no self, there is no other. Woman is the self for herself therefore, man is other (995). The protagonist believes in self-respect and never weeps in front of such vulgarity provided by male dominated society. She strongly opines:

Any kind of blow just clangs and clangs for above, it can't pierce the core. It isn't that I don't have a core. I'm an educated woman known for her beauty, well-off financially and socially. I've never wept in the face of all this vulgarity. I know- I haven't done anything virtuous.

But I also haven't committed what they call sins. (147)

These statements show the protagonist's power and self respect that gives her strength to exist in the society even though the society is full of meaninglessness, frustration and hopelessness. She does not bow her head before the society however adverse circumstances she faces. The protagonist supports Beauvoir's opinion that it is easier to adjust rather than to be rebellion. But woman should not accept adjustable situation.

The protagonist is also the keen observer of the varied stories of the people around her. In her neighbourhood, she sees a suicide of a couple. Before suicide, the wife aborts her baby at her husband's strange request, she dies to follow her husband in his strange death. The female has to sacrifice the happiness of her life for the sake of male. The protagonist's landlord's only one son maintains double characters. He becomes so violent at night and his wife has to endure it every night. She cannot protest against it. She forgets all her pain in her daily routine work and with her loving child.

In this way, *The Prison* exposes the women's issues and their position in the society. It seeks to show the social system and customs, rules and regulation that have been constructed from the perspectives of male which have been the obstacles against the free existence of female. It shows the evils, follies and weakness of Nepalese society in which the protagonist has to struggle for her existence to find her place in society. Most of all, *The Prison* exposes the myth and reality constructed for woman.



It presents the protagonist as rebel who struggles to find her place in the society rejecting social myth.

The protagonist is an unnamed, educated unmarried woman living alone. She freely chooses how to live. She is brave enough to choose her own path, her own space in the society where she turns out to be a lonely character. She commits a social crime establishing relationship with a married man whom she calls 'Adam'. She does not feel ashamed in the least about it. Besides the passion and meaninglessness, there is something in her relationship with him. She is a woman having her own existence, tending self-respect, embarrassing softness. Her lover realizes the power and self respect in the protagonist so he makes her the foundation of his intellectualism. Unlike conventional woman, she does not force her lover to marry her. She wishes to have a baby from him without engaging in the institution that society calls 'marriage'.

The married man's death in an accident compels her to think who she is to him. She does not have assets to pay for the word 'widow' - red *sindur*, *potey* and bangles. The protagonist bravely embraces the word 'mistress' to justify her free existence. She asserts her own identity without male counterpart as well as social parameter confirmed for her. The society constructs the categories for her before she is born. She rejects to confirm the definition of the society how woman should be. As soon as she is born, she is fit into that category. The protagonist supports existential view of Beauvoir that one is not born woman but made woman. The protagonist, as an existential character believes that first one exists and then only identifies himself. In the social structure woman's essence precedes the existence. Before she exists, she is identified. The protagonist opposes this tendency of society to identifying woman before she is born. She asserts her own identity rejecting social myth constructed for male and female.

The protagonist finds her meaningless existence in the society and thus to create her own meaning of life, she chooses to transgress the social boundaries that she thinks dominates individual freedom. This study aims to analyze the circumstances the protagonist faces in the society. The protagonist's quest for meaning of life, her own self directed choices and responsibility for self are some of the issues that present study seeks to explore. It aims to analyze the protagonist as existential character and interpreting her life from existential point of view.

### Review of Literature

The work of art brings several criticisms along with it as soon as it takes its birth. Giri's *The Prison* was both praised and criticized for establishing a powerful, liberated woman protagonist. The book succeeded to attract many critics and reviewer's attention toward it. The richness of the novel is reflected in its criticism from various perspectives. Giri believes in the dissolution of the traditional values and the elimination of plot in the fictional work.

Giri's stories are supposed to be mirror of life. Since life is plot-less, her fictional work is also plot-less. Dr. Govinda Raj Bhattarai in his essay 'Nepali Upanyasma Uttar Aadhuniktako Chetana' appreciates her writing style. He claims:

उपन्यासलाई पाठकले अकवितात्मक, गद्य र आख्यानको सरल भाषामा पढ्ने अपेक्षा राखेको हुन्छ । तर बानीरा गिरीको यस कृतिको लेखन आकारको दृष्टिले शैलीको दृष्टिले र विद्याको दृष्टिले गद्य कविता भएको छ । उत्तर आधुनिक प्रकृतिहरूमध्ये विद्यालाई मेद्ने र विलय गराउने वा मिश्रित विद्यामा अर्थात् कुनै पनि विद्यामा रच्च सकिने कुरा यस उपन्यासले देखाएको छ । (६७,६८)

'A reader aspires to read a novel in *non-poetic*, prosaic and fictional language. But Banira Giri's writing in this work has become a poetic prose in the perspective of size, style and discipline. This novel

exhibits the post modernist nature of dismantling or eliminating the genres, integrating a new style.’ (67-68)

Bhattarai praises the novel for its postmodernist style of writing. According to him, the novel exemplifies the idea that, a work of art can be created in whatever style one likes. He takes the novel as a poetic prose.

Giri often raises the feminist issues like male domination and female suppression in her works. Rhetorically, she makes use of cultural images, metaphors and symbols to satirize the contemporary social situation and follies. Through the use of pen, she wants to explore the emotion of women in the patriarchal society. For the same purpose she has created fiction related to the subject of female suppression. The females of the then society were traditional and were dominated by male. Even the exploited and suppressed females were unable to go against the male because of the prevalent system of society. The characters, most often the female ones struggle for their existence to find their place in society. Giri herself about her protagonist of the fiction states:

On 29 April 2003, I encountered a woman I had abandoned 24 years ago. Shocked, I asked myself “how did I dare be so cruel and heartless as to leave such a pretty, darling intelligent Young woman without a name?” She herself was enabled, to break all the emotional tides surrounding her destiny. Her whole life, She committed herself to struggle for liberation, for An intellectual life, and to be existentially alive In this way she had been brave enough to choose her Own path, Her own space And the latitude of her own destiny. Bravo Darling.  
(n.p.)

Giri directly observes the sense of alienation and meaninglessness of the novel and the protagonist's responsibilities for her own deed; it is because she wants to give meaning to her life.

Similarly, Ann Hunkins, the translator of the book views the main character as an independent woman negotiating for her own space in society. Hunkins in the introduction to the book remarks:

This is a story about a woman's choice in the small prison of society in which she finds herself. In the Hindu culture of the characters in the book, women are taught to be satisfied with whatever circumstances they find in. Thus *Karagar's* nameless narrator, an intelligent, educated, unmarried woman living alone and having an affair with a married man, was scandalous in the conservative era of 1970s. Social pressure can be so intense, so this female protagonist was seen as breaking new ground in choosing the kind of life she did. (n.p.)

According to Hunkins, the female protagonist of the novel makes her own choices in the society. Despite the intense social pressure and conservative social structure, the protagonist is brave enough to choose the kind of life she likes. She breaks a new ground in the society where she has to live.

Giri's novel seeks to show the social systems and customs, rules and regulations that have been constructed from the perspectives of male, which have been the obstacles against the free existence of women. The protagonist of the novel is a conscious woman for her rights and liberties. From her early childhood, she lives a different life from common. She involves herself in existential struggle in the society through the act of living an extraordinary life. Giri's *The Prison* is noted for

innovation in narrative style such as simplification and fragmentation of plot, and the use of unconventional syntax and punctuation.

The novel communicates her profound dissatisfaction with contemporary society through her unconventional style of writing. Dr. Ramdayal Rakesh in the blurb of the book praises the novel for its unique style. Banira Giri, according to Rakesh, has introduced an extraordinary style of narration in *The Prison*. Giri in *The Prison* employs illogical situations, unconventional poetic language and minimal plots to express the apparent absurdity of human existence. She has reacted against the traditional Nepali novel writing conventions, rejecting assumption about logic, characterization, language and plot. She has reduced characters, plot and dialogue to minimum in an effect to highlight fundamental question of human existence. She is tradition bearer. She does not take the subject of her writing from the glorious legends of the gods and religious heroes. Her writing deals with the issues of the life of common people like middle class and lower middle class people. She questions the main values, norms and restraints with which everybody has to get along.

Giri's novel is developed with the philosophy concerning the reality of woman's life. Women are nothing to men's eye. Giri has boldly criticized the society for the unfriendly standards made for humans. Her courage is transferred into the rebellion of the protagonist. Kishan Thapa, in his essay, "Girish Ballav Joshika Bir Charitra ra Nepali Upanyasko Saya Barsa" asserts, "जीवन जिउने शैली चुन्ने स्वतन्त्रता सबैलाई हुनुपर्ने अवधारणा प्रस्तुत गर्ने क्रममा बानीरा गिरीका कारागार र निर्बन्ध देखापरेका छन् । उनले आफ्ना उपन्यासमा सामाजिक नातासम्बन्धका बिच नारीमा विवशता र उसको स्वतन्त्रताको आकांक्षाका बिच चल्ने द्वन्द्वलाई रोचक पारामा चित्रण गरेको पाइन्छ ।" (३४)

*The Prison* conceptualizes the theme that everyone must have freedom of choosing the lifestyle that he/she likes. In this novel, the conflict

between the compulsion and the quest for freedom of woman within a sociological relationship has been presented in very interesting way.'

(34)

Thapa seems to support the existential viewpoint of the novel while he points out the human freedom, boredom, and compulsion along with responsibility that every individual has to face in this world. It explores the theme of particularly human existence. It seeks to show how the protagonist overcomes the conflict between compulsion and freedom of her life. The novel strongly advocates for individual freedom according to Thapa.

To deliver the theme of absurdism and existentialism, this novel has made use of poetic structure as critic D. B. Gurung writes that *The Prison* “is a prose in tight pod, dispensing a poetic structure without rhymes and rhythms. [. . .] I am in a jumble whether to call it a novel in a technical term, or still poetry! I end up conforming it as a poetic prose in strongest assertive sense” (4). Gurung’s commentary shows the technical part of the novel when he finds himself in dilemma whether to call it a novel or a prose. Giri employs poetic language with unconventional style of writing in the novel. It shows the life’s absurdity and apparent meaninglessness of human existence using a unique style of narration.

Likewise, the novel can be compared with Parijat’s *Sirish ko Phool* for its poetic expression, ideology and story-plot. *The Prison* of Banira Giri, claims Madan Mani Dixit on the blurb of the book, has left behind Parijat’s *Sirish Ko Phool* at every step like in story, poetic expression, establishing powerful human characters and ideology, as well as equally powerful liberated woman character, a character which did not need even a name, but strongly made an impact in the heart of the readers. According to Dixit, the novel establishes the unnamed female protagonist as a

libertarian. The protagonist, although she is not given even a name; she has very strongly impressed the readers. That is to say, she makes strong impact in the mind of readers.

Dr. Taranath Sharma on the blurb of the book, comments on Giri and her work this way; “Besides writing excellent poetry, she is an innovative writer of profoundly philosophical fiction and thought-provoking essays. Banira’s lyrical Nepali is indeed inspired by the Bengali language she learnt while in Bengal.” Sharma praises Giri for her excellent writing style of poetry as well as philosophical fiction. He takes Giri as a innovative and thought provoking writer. According to Sharma, Giri is inspired by the Bengali language and it can be seen when she employs lyrical feature in her fiction.

The protagonist of the fiction seems to be submissive character toward her family. She has not forgotten her brother’s role as parents in the family when she loses her parents in an accident. So she becomes ready to sacrifice her personal happiness for the sake of her other family members. The fiction is typically about a woman’s experience in male dominated society. Lila Luitel, in her essay “Nepali Upanyasma Mahila Lekhan” writes:

बानीरा गिरीको कारागारमा आफ्नै भनाउँदा स्वार्थीहरूका कुचक्रको जालोमा  
फसाइएर अविवाहित रहन बाध्य तुल्याइएकी नारीको मनोदशालाई अत्यन्त शिष्ट,  
शालीन र यथार्थपरक ढंगले प्रस्तुत गर्दै मानवीय संवेदनाको खोजी गरिएको छ ।  
यिनको कारागार र निर्बन्ध वैयक्तिक भावनाको प्रस्तुति हो । (९५)

“In Giri’s *The Prison*, the inner feeling and the psychology of female is exposed in a very polite and realistic way. She is compelled to remain unmarried caused by greed and plot of her so called own relatives. Her *Karagar* and *Nirbandha* are the exploration of the human emotion” (95). Here we can say that Giri expresses the dilemma, worries, emotions, and intense psychology of woman through the

protagonist. The protagonist of the fiction, an adult lady finds herself imprisoned being helpless to fulfill her desire and for her life in itself becomes a prison.

Giri realizes the truth of unmanageable world. She is one of the Nepalese writers to step in the new horizon of existentialism through *The Prison*. Her characters belong to the uprooted world where existing values are decaying and new values are yet to be realized. The protagonist of the novel takes her life as an imprisoned and wants to be free from that imprisonment. Giri in this novel has employed the theme of social realism. The novel exposes the social reality. Sharma, Mohan Raj and Khagendra Prasad Luitel, in their essay, “Banira Girika Upanyasma Samajik Yatharthabadi Dhara”, mark, “समाज जीवन जस्तो छ त्यस्तो चित्रण गर्नु सामाजिक यथार्थवादी उपन्यासको प्रमुख प्रकृति हो । बानीरा गिरीको कारागार यही धारको उपन्यास हो ।” (६५)

“The nature of social realistic novel is to picture the society and life as it is. Giri's *The Prison* is the fiction of the same stream” (65). According to Sharma and Luitel, her fiction explores the social realism. That is to say, social realism is also the significant subject in her novel.

Critics have explained this book according to their own perspectives. They have examined the novel as the serious work of Banira Giri and one of the notable creations of Nepali literature. Whatever they react about the book are good in their own places but here in this research the existential tone of life will be searched in an intensive way and the protagonist will be presented as existential heroine.



## **CHAPTER: TWO**

### **Existential Issues and Application to the Heroine**

The meaning of life is philosophical question concerning the significance of life or existence in general. It has been the subject of much philosophical scientific and theological speculation. There is large number of proposed answers to the question from many backgrounds. The ancient Greek thought was revolutionized by Socrates. He shifted the attention of the study of philosophy from nature to man, man as the centre of existence. The problem of what man himself is can be perceived in the Socratic imperative 'Know Thyself'. Augustine asked man not to go outside himself in the quest of truth; for it is within him that truth abides. Pascal was interested in the people's quiet struggle with the apparent meaninglessness of life and the use of diversion to escape boredom. Rene Descartes strongly advocated for individual existence which can be found in his principle "I think, therefore I am". In this principle, I symbolize the individual existence.

Hegel analyzed being or existence in an abstract and impersonal way. He maintained the philosophy of reconciliation and synthesis and gave importance to the rationality and collective spirit. Soren Kierkegaard emphasizes upon personal choices and responsibilities rather than overall rationality. Friedrich Nietzsche focused on subjective human experience. He precisely focused on the non existence of god, proclaiming the death of god. Fyodor Dostoyevsky and Franz Kafka introduced existential theme in literature. Dostoyevsky presented the defeat of man in the face of choices, and the result of their consequences. This trend preceded by the work of German phenomenologist Frenz Brento and Edmund Husserl. Husserl laid emphasis on immediacy of experience. Similarly, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jasper, Jose Ortego Gasset contributed to this philosophical quest for existence. Heidegger proposed

metaphysics as the study of being in terms of totality. For him, we are hurled into existence/ being.

Jean Pal Sartre claims that existence is prior to essence because of the absence of god. Since there is no god, there is no purpose, no value in the life as well as world. Simone de Beauvoir denies the existence of basic female nature or male nature. She opposes the tendency of identifying woman before they exist. The absurdity of the human existence is a central principle in Albert Camus. According to him, the living of absurd man depends upon the maximum struggle against the absurdity. In his *Myth of Sisyphus* the world is full of absurdity but Sisyphus teaches to revolt through action that offers freedom and justification for continuing life. Despite the meaninglessness of our existence, he asserts, the point is to keeping on living.

Existentialist thinker therefore divided into respectively “Theist” and “Atheist. The theistic group includes Kierkegaard, Augustine, Karl Jasper, Martin Buber and Gabriel Marcel who are supposed to believe in Christian faith. On the other hand, Sartre, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Camus, Beauvoir are the atheist thinker who do not believe in the existence of God. The atheist existentialists discard the concept of god as an authentic shelter. They regard human being as optimistically forlorn, free and support less creature. Whatever existence is supposed to be, it is not something that a person will come to understand through intellectual posturing; existence is something that we must encounter and engage through actually living. After all we human define ourselves who we are through living our lives. Our natures are not defined and fixed at the moment of conception or birth.

Jean Pal Sartre is the most important existential philosopher who revised reinterpreted and reworked with the existential ideas from different philosophers into a bold new integration. Satre believes that man is nothing in the beginning but

something latter. There is no life guiding book like Bible, philosophy and other religious books. If we had books, life would be easier. In *A History of Western Thought: From Ancient Greece to the Twentieth Century*, Gunna Skirbekk and Nils Gize cite from Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*:

We are like actors who suddenly find themselves on the stage in the middle of performance, but without having a script, without knowing the name of the play or what role they are playing, without knowing what to do or say-yes without knowing whether the play has an author at all. We must personally make a decision, to be something or rather-a villain or a hero, ridiculous or tragic. Or we can simply exist immediately. But that is also choosing a role. And that choice too is made without our ever knowing what the performance was about. (56)

That is the human reality in this world. The world is a big stage and life itself is drama. We are the actors thrown in the stage without knowing anything about the drama, our role and without even having script of the play. Even in such situation, we have to choose ourselves simply to exist. This is our ground reality in this world.

In *Shophies World* Justein Gaarder says, "By essence we mean that which something consist of –the nature, or being of something" (456). But according to Sartre, "man has no such innate nature, man must therefore create himself. He must create his own nature or essence because it is not fixed in advance" (456-57). He further opines:

Since man has no such eternal nature to fall back on, it is therefore useless to search for the meaning of life in general. We are like actors dragged into the stage without having learned our lines, with no script

and no prompter to whisper stage direction to us, we must decide for ourselves how to live. (456)

This is how we are thrown into existence. We have no fixed and eternal nature that can define us. Rather we have to define ourselves through the act of living. We have to create our own nature or essence by choosing the kind of life we like. There is no one to guide us like divine or god. We are the architect of ourselves.

Existence precedes essence is the main tenet of Sartre's philosophy. It means that the identity of any person, his essence cannot be found by examining what other people are like; but it is found only in what particular person has done. No one can claim that his or her actions are caused by anyone else. By essence we mean that which consist of – the nature or being, of something. But according to Sartre, man has no such innate 'nature'; man must therefore create himself. He must create his own nature of 'essence' because it is not fixed in advance. Humans define their own reality of life during the course of time after appearing in this world. In the beginning man is nothing but latter on something.

Man is like a character dragged into the stage without knowing the dialogue and the role of the play. One is compelled to act after entering the stage. Whatever things he or she does on the stage is the essence of the characters in the play. So man is nothing in beginning and there is no one to guide, and no one to take responsibilities of anyone. Because of this fate of human being, one will always raise question about his existence since he is ignorant about it. Each man is blank sheet of paper on which he will by his action of writing come to define his own being. The human being is free because he can add essence in the course of his life, and he is in constant state of flux and able to comprehend his situation.

## **Freedom, Choice and Responsibility**

Human being is the only known social animal which defines itself through the act of living. He carries the weight of the world by himself alone without anything or any person being able to lighten it. One difficulty is he has not created himself-and nevertheless free. Because having once hurled into the world, he is responsible for everything he does. Human being makes himself, so he is responsible for everything he does in his life. Furthermore, this absolute responsibility is not resignation, it is simply the requirement of the consequences of our freedom. What happens to one happens through him, and he can neither affect himself with it nor revolt against it nor resign himself to it.

Moreover, everything which happens to one is ones. In this case, Sartre remarks, "Human reality is free, because it is not enough. It is free because it is perpetually wrenched away from itself and because it has been pirated by nothingness from what it is and from what it will be" (568). It exposes the reality of human freedom. Freedom is necessarily accompanied by responsibility. Once we freely choose for ourselves, we are responsible for the result derived by our freedom of choice. We cannot be free from our responsibilities. Freedom therefore is precisely the nothingness.

The human being's existence is the final and basic fact; the human being has no essence that comes before his existence. The human being as a being is nothing. This nothingness and the non existence is the central source of freedom the human being faces each and every moment. The human being has liberty in view of his situation, in decision, which makes him serve this problem and live in the world. Ryan summarizes this concept thus:

Man is free and responsible, but he is responsible only to himself. As with Nietzsche, man creates moral values. Besides being free, man is finite and contingent being, existing in a world that is devoid of purposes. The pessimism resulting from this position is likewise expressed by Camus doctrine of *The Absurd*. Absurdity or contradiction arises from the chaos between hopes, desire and meaningless universe into which man has been thrown. (639)

Man creates himself along with his own moral values. He can add essence each and every moment of his life. That is to say, he is in the stage of becoming, not in the state of being. He is contingent being. He has to exist in the world which is devoid of purpose.

Human beings do not have fixed natures that limit or determine their choices, but rather it is the choices that bring whatever nature they have into being. All actions imply choices. Even when, we do not choose explicitly, as we may not do in the majority of case, our actions bear to implicit choices. Even if we do not choose, we have chosen not to choose. In *Being and Nothingness* Sartre asserts, "I am responsible for everything, in fact except my very responsibility, for I am not the foundation of my being. Therefore everything takes place as if I were compelled to be responsible" (574). He concludes that human choice is subjective because individual finally must make their own choices without help from such external standards as laws, ethical rules or tradition. Because individual make their own choices, they are free, but as they freely choose, they are completely responsible for their choices. Existentialists emphasize that freedom is necessarily accompanied by responsibility. Furthermore, since individuals are forced to choose for themselves, they have their freedom and therefore their responsibility- thrusts upon them. As Sartre says they are "condemned

to be free". They are thrown into the world not knowing anything. They must choose for themselves because there is no god to rescue them in their adverse situation.

### **Heroine's Focus on Individual Morality**

In existential literature, characters are forced to answer the existential question by being forced into utterly meaningless situation. Even in the meaningless situation, the existential hero or heroine is he or she who creates his or her own meaning in the absurd, doomed situations. They still act in accordance to their internal morality. The existential failure or anti-antihero in contrast, is he or she who is paralyzed by the situation or his or her own intellect and unable to rise above the meaninglessness. For Camus, the existential hero or the heroine is one, who like Sisyphus grasped the absurd, pointlessness of his/her task (existing) and chooses to embrace it anyway. Sisyphus overcomes his fate or doom by choosing a heroic attitude toward life's apparent meaninglessness. He proves man can win meaning into any situation by simply reforming his attitude toward his fate something that eventually nearly all of us must do.

In *The Prison*, Giri presents her unnamed protagonist as existential heroine. The protagonist struggles in the alarmingly insecure and coherent world just like Sisyphus. The world she lives is full of alienation, fragmentation, loneliness, absurdity, anxiety and disillusionment. The protagonist struggles in the family and society where pain, domination, frustration, failure and humiliation prevail. She wants to identify herself where she lives in. Her will to search her own identity has made her struggle in the society to exist. In this futile world the possible way of living is to be prepared to struggle for survival.

Sartre sees the existential hero or heroine as a person principally of action rather than of just ideas or emotion. So the hero or heroine would be measured in

what he or she has done with his lot in life. The unnamed protagonist, sometime addressed as eve makes her choices to live by herself. Her choice is subjective because individual finally make their own choice. According to Sartre individual finally make his own choices without help from external standards like laws, ethical rules or tradition. What is right and what is wrong depends on his decision and thought. The traditional values do not work. She takes her own decision and is not governed by any social norms and values. So the protagonist struggles against the prevailing society to affirm her existence.

The protagonist is a lonely figure. She suffers from a feeling of angst. With her freedom of choice she struggles, to overcome her feeling of angst. Her parents die in an accident, while they are on the pilgrimage her happy world breaks into three fragments “W”, “O” and ‘RLD’ symbolically the protagonist and her two brother. Her brother delays her marriage for the greed of her allocated property. In her life, love and affection cross the line, like hooligans out of control. Intimacy abandons its meaning and takes the shape of sycophancy. Her relative always seem to be in a race to show intimacy.

Despite adverse circumstances, the protagonist makes her decision to move to a new place. She marks:

Everyone tongues were slicked with quarto and quarto of oil, even real relationship seemed like a play acted on a stage. In this play, everyone was in a race to beat the others; as if it were a fight gnashing their teeth behind each other’s back. Love and affection began to fly like ash until all that could be seen means red hot coals. I couldn’t stand the heat, so I decided on the coolness of moving to a new place. This was the first decision of my life, like a first child. (136-137)



The protagonist comes to know the artificial love and affection of her brothers toward herself. She finds her relatives crossing the limits to show sycophancy and to takeover her allocated property. She comes to see the unbelievable plague and conflict; her brothers, sister-in-law and even her nephew seemed to be in race to show intimacy. To avoid this she decides that she cannot live there anymore. She uses her own morality to make the decision and proud of her decision. She advocates for individual freedom in a society where she herself has to survive.

Actions are the major theme with existential hero or heroine. To take action he or she has to choose or decide for himself without support of laws ethical rules, tradition etc. The protagonist makes her own choice without help from the external laws, ethical rules, tradition and other family members' guidance. She takes action by choosing for herself. That is to say she decides for herself whether to live with her relatives or to live alone. Her family members are the personification of the society whom she takes action against.

When she decides to move a new place her relatives become shock to see that new era in her life. They start conflict and another race for her supposed comfort. But the protagonist chooses herself rejecting her relative's suggestion and their artificial love. She asserts:

I choose the apartment myself. One good room, a small kitchen, a nice, separate bathroom. Outside there was a separate lawn and small garden where I could grow flower and vegetables in my free time. Once I had moved to the apartment I felt a great satisfaction. Now I don't have to live in an artificial environment. Its far more pleasant to live alone than to live in hypocrisy and artificiality. (138)

The protagonist takes her own decision and act accordingly. She decides to leave her home to live alone on rent. What is wrong to do or what is right to do depends on her own decision. So the concept of existence proceeds essence is truly applicable in the protagonist of the fiction. Making a bend decision to live independent of her family, she exhibits her existential endeavours.

As soon as there is a rumor of wealth about her, all kind of middle aged men begin flocking to her and move their life car ahead. She does not choose anyone of them. That is to say she chooses to not to marry. She becomes close with a married man and finds her existence upon him. She thinks that her lover is the ultimate source of love and affection that she is searching the whole life. The relationship that she makes with the married man is the moral degradation from the standard of the society she lives in.

The protagonist is alienated from the family as well as society. But she does not feel ashamed in the least about it. Beside the passion and meaninglessness, there is something in their relationship. She accepts her crime proudly and unhesitatingly. She asserts:

I am a woman with my own existence tending myself respect, embracing softness. I'm protecting my youth like a pink peach blossom deep inside my heart. I'm not the road where people walk, not just a well to draw water from, not just a bed where people sleep when they get tired. I'm something beyond the street, well and bed, and he become my intimate because he recognized that something. Though by establishing a relationship with a married man, I may surely have committed a social crime, but the relationship is not exactly meaningless. We're not just dragging out a relationship we were forced

into by passion. There is something in it behind besides passion; when that something comes to an end, our relationship will break up, we both know it. (60-61)

These statements show her bold and courageous attitude toward herself, and her decision. She has the power and intellect that gives her courage to take any decision. She thinks that her lover is the ultimate source of love and affection and the source of existence in the society.

In their relationship, they receive each other as nourishment, but beyond it, they accept each other's existence as it is. That truth works like fertilizer in the growth of their relationship. For her, the day that truth dies, their relationship will be broken. They both know that very well. It shows her strong belief on self morality rather than other accepted morality of society that takes their relationship as sin. Giving focus on her individual morality, she engages herself in relationship with the married man.

Anyone who is existentialist must adopt the view that men are free and that their freedom extends further than they have thought, before their eyes were opened by the study of philosophy. Essentially they are free of choose their morality, their attitude towards, God, the world, destiny and anything else.

The protagonist has her own view toward the destiny and the world. She marks:

I refuse to look at the world 'fate' even out of the corner of one eye. Astrologers disgust me. I get furious if someone tries to look at my palm lines. He hates them equally. Once we both made a plan to put an end to our horoscope charts by burning them in my kerosene stove. That was a truly exceptional day, a day of great celebration. We rejoiced and felt light as if we'd been climbing a desolate hill logging

two unnecessary burdens. Without effort, we understood the uselessness of our burdens and suddenly let them roll back down the hill. Releasing them, we both felt lighter took each other's hands, and began to go up the hill. (55-56)

The protagonist does not believe in fate, God and any false morality. She hates the astrologers who provide lies and illusion, take advantage from the innocent people like her parents. She truly believes in self so she does not need any horoscope chart for she rejects the false morality.

The protagonist believes in existence and makes her essence accordingly, rather than any philosophy, fate teller and false morality. She strongly supports Sartre's claim that man makes himself through the act of living. She hates the astrologers who create false morality and illusion. She rejects the tendency of claiming everything according to fate. That is to say, she rejects the fatalistic mentality asserting her own morality. So the term existence precedes essence is truly applicable in the protagonist.

The possibility of choice is the central fact of human nature. Even the theory, that existence precedes essence often means, no more than that people do not have fixed nature that limits or determines their choices, but rather choices that bring whether nature they have into being. Even when we do not choose explicitly as we may not do in the majority of cases, our actions bear to an implicit choice. Even if we do not choose; we have chosen not to choose.

The protagonist has chatty friends who suggest her to break the relationship with the married man the protagonist chooses:

Hey dim-wit, does he only give helps of books for gifts or do you get some spending money too? Its more romantic when it is somebody

else's isn't it? What funs your own husband, your own wife? Men say it too, you can't get bliss if it's legal, do you know? Look, how can you depend on men? While you still have some looks and youth, you ought to snare one in marriage, What are you going to get out of hanging around with someone else husband? (65)

The protagonist's friend represents the traditional female of the society. Her greed for money and interest on immoral relationship can be seen here. She has the mentality of using the look and youth to take advantages from the male. For the woman like her, there is no means of existence, self-respect and inner morality. She suggests the protagonist to attract the male and get married using her beauty. She cannot realize free existence and self-respect of the protagonist. She represents the common women who do not realize their existence without male counterpart/husband. They only go after marriage. Such kind of thinking is harmful for the free existence of woman. Her mentality rejects that woman can live freely without engaging herself in marriage.

Unlike her friend, the protagonist does not make her beauty and education as tool to attract any male. She has her own view toward the relationship she chosen. She creates her own morality and she truly believes on that. She does not give up her morality whether or not society likes it. For her individual freedom is supreme and unique beyond the social morality. What matters to her is her confidence and self respect to prove her act as not immoral but unique one. She does not care how the society looks at the relationship. She asserts:

No matter how society looks at it, no matter how the taunts injure our relationship. I call it unique. I haven't prostituted it by milking him for money and gift. I have not made it stink by putting too much emphasis on sexual desire. I don't flit here and there wherever I like. I'm not

blowing in the wind, clinging to whichever branch I happen across. Even if I've broken the social code, I'm bound by it no matter how they try to brand me indigent, I remain unmarked. If Sita sworn to Ram with her heart and soul, proved herself by trial of fire, then I, bound to him body and mind, can pass any test. (149-150)

These statements show the power and self respect of the protagonist. It also shows her challenge to the society, its rules and regulation that is conformed for the female. She believes in self and judged by her own morality. She is courageous to truly live to what she believes to be morally right rather than to accept her friend's suggestion.

Existential hero/heroine acts autonomously and would be judged by his/her own morality, rather than by simply following the social conventions. This implies that the hero/heroine is cognizant of his/her own moral framework. He/she is consistent within that framework. Sartre uses the term bad faith to describe those who frame their morality around their activities or action instead of vice versa. Sartre explicitly argues that we must find the courage to truly live to what we believe to be morally right. We do not have to give up our morality even if it makes us unhappy or requires us to sacrifice. The protagonist as existential heroine is guided by her own morality. She does not follow the social parameter created by the society. Rather she protests against social system to affirm her existence. What is wrong and what is right depends on her own decision and thought.

The protagonist is fully aware of the ground reality that the society does not digest her individual morality rather individual is punished or made alone for keeping his own morality. She exposes:

What one person considers excellent can be poison to another; what to one is sacred duty can be sin to another. Otherwise why did Socrates

have to drink poison? Why did Jesus have to be crucified? Why did Gandhi have to be shot? That is how the world is; we have to build our homes, live and celebrate in this kind of world, and one day we all have to leave it and die. (54)

Here the protagonist realizes society's tendency toward individual morality. The society always dominates individual and does not easily digest his morality. She is of the view that every person is unique and that people's minds are all different. After all people are the people not the product of machines. She is an existential heroine who gives emphasis upon individual morality. She holds strong belief upon individual morality. She wishes to fight honourably than to run away from the society or to accept traditional view of society.

### **Heroine's Protest against the Society**

Protest or revolt is the major theme of existentialism. Anyone who is an existentialist must adopt the view that he has to protest against the prevailing system to affirm his existence. Existential character has to assert his own value whether or not society likes it. The society expects human being to act within social norms. The protagonist is not governed by the laws that the society has created for the people. She hates the social parameter constructed for the human being. She does not like to confirm those norms which do not satisfy her.

For the protagonist, protest or opposition is a natural quality. In that sense her protest or challenge to the society is natural. She is well educated, intelligent, wise, and an independent woman. She has her own existence. What is right to do or what is wrong to do depends on her decision and thought. She knows well the society does not accept her relationship with the married man. Society considers it as the act of immorality or

sin. But the protagonist does not believe that. She seeks the naturality in their relationship. She asserts:

It's as if we are altering the sweater that was almost finished, one being knitted by nature, the expert by reversing one or two knots; Rivers normally flow within their banks, but it is not uncharacteristic or unnatural to them to flood; if that were the case, none of this events would be natural; Tornadoes, typhoons, earthquakes, landslides, floods. They're elements of nature, so when a river revolts against its banks, that is natural. (36)

The protagonist's protest against the society is natural because the banks are the social boundaries and the river is the protagonist herself. She seems bold enough to revolt against the social boundaries.

The protagonist attempts a kind of opposition toward society. The society always makes boundaries. It expects her not to cross them. Human is stereotyped and does not do anything new if he follows or continuous the tradition of the society. So the protagonist transgresses the social boundaries created by society.

The hardship of human effort in incoherent world can be perceived from the very beginning of the novel. The protagonist, the existential heroine from the beginning is shown to be struggling to find her identity whether it is for her survival as a human or as a liberated woman. The monotony of completely futile events in her family creates a condition, which in fact becomes a means to understand her life better. She explores the possibility of existence even in the world devoid of meaning. The protagonist makes herself free from the bondage of that male dominated society. She is brave enough to choose her own path, her own space in the society.



The protagonist enables herself to break the circle of patriarchal norms and values that she thinks serves man's interest at the expense of the women's suffering. She commits herself -herself to struggle for liberation. She expresses:

We women are liberated now - we can run as much as we like, go wherever we want. We've embarked on a journey without a goal carrying this beautiful word liberated clutched under one arm. If we do not have any goal, we can at least make longest, most vexing expedition easier by bringing this tasty world along as bread for the journey. (177)

The protagonist is a conscious character for her right and liberties. She seeks her profound interest to use her liberty and right. She strongly supports the feminist existentialist view that woman can make their own existence without help from the society. If freedom and independence are provided, woman can achieve every success in their life. She can win the race of life along with her right and liberty. If they have liberty to choose themselves, they can do anything for themselves. So the feminist existentialist tone can also be seen in the protagonist.

The protagonist knows well, it is easier to adjust rather than to be a rebellion of the society. But the protagonist does not accept that adjustable situation. Instead, she revolts as well as struggles like that of Sisyphus in the alarmingly insecure and incoherent world. Existence precedes essence is truly applicable in the protagonist's case she first believes in existence, and makes the essence thereafter. She exist, therefore, she chooses to struggle.

Human is the only known social animal which defines itself through the act of living. He makes his life meaningful choosing different way in life. The protagonist makes her own choices without the help from external standards as laws, ethical roles

or tradition. Rather she opposes the external standards like laws ethical rule or tradition. She seems to breaking a new ground in choosing the kind of life she likes, because traditional laws, values rules do not support her. When she makes her own choices she is free. As she freely choose she is completely responsible for her choices. Because freedom is necessarily accompanied by responsibility; she makes herself, chooses freely, so she is responsible for everything she does in her life.

The protagonist is fully aware of her responsibility that comes with her freedom of choice or the decision she makes in her life. She represents the modern woman who compares herself with the mythical figure Sita. She underscores:

Sita never made a single decision. She surrendered herself to the situation and to Ram's wishes. I have not bowed my head before thousands and thousands of washermans; I've steered clear of the unfulfilled desires of demons called relatives to live alone - how ever good or bad things are, I've made my own decision. In that content I'm not Sita. I'm a decision maker. I will get no peace until I love this decision just as I would love a child I had borne. My strength is in my decision. (178)

The protagonist is a decision maker. She does not simply follow tradition of society that woman cannot live independently and they do not have their own existence. Her comparison with the mythical figure Sita shows the contrast between traditional and modern woman and her profound dissatisfaction toward society that not realize free existence of woman. Sita did not protest against the society and its attitude. She rather surrendered herself to the patriarchal society and her husband's wishes. To prove her purity and pious she walked on the fire, whereas the protagonist does not bow her

head before the society. She does not give up her liberty to decide for herself. She is a decision maker and she is proud of that. It shows a kind of revolt to the society.

Existential character gives importance to their individual interest than acceptable relation of society. He or she seeks his identity without engaging in the group and institution. As a result dread, hopelessness, becomes characteristics of existential characters. The protagonist seeks her identity or own being so she suffers with a sense of insecurity in the society. Her own relatives as well as the society always try to take advantage of hers. So the protagonist does not like to uphold the prevailing tradition of the society which assumes her to accept all the difficulties silently and to face the problems without any complains. Her brothers are the personification of the family and the social values their protagonist struggle against.

The protagonist tries to reconcile her own personal freedom and inner nature with her brother narrow and controlling idea about what is right and what is wrong for her. But she faces the cruel reality of her brothers and the society. She finds the society and its role as the person which she tries to overcome. She chooses to live alone far from her home and relatives. She chooses to remain unmarried. She chooses a married man as her true lover. Unlike the conventional woman, she does not force her lover to marry her. Rather she wants to have a baby from him without engaging in the institute that society calls marriage.

The protagonist requests her lover for it. She marks; "I'm serious. I'm not crazy. I will have your baby; I'll break this lonely prison of silence" (98). But her partner denies her saying that her lonely prison is more wide and peaceful than that of his. He replies:

Don't get sentimental. It's a world of disgust and curses- a world of people everywhere. Your prison is incredibly open compared to that

world out there. Your emptiness is rich contrasted with that public chaos. The cruelty you struggle with in life- the reality you are looking for is nastier than that. I would rather let my Adamness commit suicide than see you knocked down by that huge unblinking cruelty. (98)

The protagonist cannot fulfill her desire of being free from the narrow prison of society. She has to realize the cruel reality of the society.

The protagonist is highly influenced by the existential viewpoint. She makes her action without fear of being punished. It can be seen throughout the novel in her actions, philosophy of life and her lifestyle. Her disgust for the society and social convention can be seen as she asserts:

I can't get free. I force this dream of freedom to vanish with my own hands- may be dreams are made to be vanish. The one patch of land that fell to my share will remain barren. There's drought. Such irony, his sex crazed wife walk around sowing her sexual desire like rice seeds wherever she pleases and harvest the crops freely. I hate society and its social convention. (100)

The protagonist is a rebel of the society. She dislikes the kind of society and its norm which makes her to bear the injustice.

Marriage is one of the society's most important and basic institutions. It is a socially recognized and approved union between individuals who commit to one another with the expectation of a stable and lasting intimate relationship. It begins with a ceremony known as a wedding, which formally unites the marriage partners. It is commonly defined as a partnership between two members of opposite sex known as husband and wife. The usual and certain roles and responsibilities of the husband and wife include living together, having sexual relations only with one another, sharing

economic resources, and being recognized as the parents of their children. It involves an emotional and sexual relationship between particular human being. The society considers extramarital relationship as crime or sin. Society does not care whether or not the marriage is only for namesake or it is binding two people together. So her disgust toward the tendency of society is seems natural.

### **Heroine's Responsibility for Self**

Existential hero/heroine has to locate his/her morality in universe with no god or absolutes. He/she believes that there is no existence of supernatural force since god cannot support people during their sufferings. Human is the only known social animal who defines itself through the act of living. He makes himself so he is responsible for everything he does in his life. This is the human subjectivity. Thus the first effect of existentialism is that it puts every man in possession of himself as he is, and places the entire responsibility for his existence squarely upon his own shoulders. When the protagonist decides for herself, she carries entire responsibility for it. In addition, the situation is her because it is the image of her free choice of herself. She is responsible for everything in fact except for her very responsibility, for she is not the foundation of her being. Therefore everything takes places as if she was compelled to be responsible.

The protagonist realizes the ground reality of the world. As Sartre says we are hurled into existence, the protagonist strongly supports it. She is of the view that human being is not born complete right. She asserts:

Once we're lucky enough to be born, may we receive our full domestic, social, political and human rights, but is for the way we created, our creators (mother-father) did not form us with the words: "we are entrusting our rights." In fact at that moment their only goal

was sexual pleasure. We are the result of that aim, not the fruit itself.

As long as we are not the fruit itself, we have no right to grab all the delightful fruits of life. (34-35)

It shows the existential viewpoint of the protagonist toward human life. That is to say we exist before we intend. As long as we exist before any particular plan, we cannot get what we wish in our life. Whatever we receive, we must make it our own; whatever we lack, and we have to be satisfied with it. We cannot grasp all the fruit of life because we did not intend to be in this world. This is the fact of human life that every individual has to face.

Being thrown into this world, the protagonist is compelled to choose for herself in the absence of divine or biological rules. As Sartre argues that human is doomed to choose. It is the very choice that every human being has to encounter each and every moment of his life. The protagonist is condemned to be free having been thrown into this world. She moves to a new place confirming her choice. She listens to her inner voice and acts accordingly. She lives alone in the apartment with no relatives and friends. It shows that every individual, alone has to decide for himself without any help from religion, philosophy and external laws.

Human life is full of harsh depression and hopelessness. Even in such a condition the protagonist wishes to control her fate by changing her thinking, reversing the perspective of her circumstances. She wants to live independent of her family and the society. She creates her own world of experience through the choice of alternatives that makes her free from all other people. But at the same time she is enslaved by her own doubts, uncertainties and the consequences of her own choices. She has the agony of despair, disgust and the feeling of despair. As the philosophy of existence postulates everyone has to get imprisoned at this or that place, time or turn

of life because of the choices along with responsibilities, same things happens with her. Because of the dilemma, worries and helplessness within herself, the protagonist finds herself imprisoned in the society.

The protagonist has desire of having a baby from her lover without getting married. That is to say she is an outcast and rebel of the society who is constantly hunted by the sense of loneliness and failure of communication. She remarks:

Imprisonment and impatience must complement to each other just like child widowhood and frustration. Today, gripping the bars, I'm suffering the imprisonment too, and the witness to my life as a prisoner are the sky stretching on forever, the mute, hanging moon and this silence that keeps needling me. (81-83)

The protagonist while maintaining her freedom to live an authentic life, experiences the sense of imprisonment. Imprisonment is the punishment sentenced to a person or a group by an authorized agency or state for any criminal activities. However, the protagonist being helpless to overcome her dilemma and worries, her unfulfilled desires, craving, pride or emotion within, finds herself imprisoned within.

The protagonist compares her situation with the image of prison. She has no friend, no parents and she is totally isolated from the human society. She says life in itself is a prison. She is lonely and failure of communication compels her to endure the needling silence of that prison. Gripping the bars, she realizes that she is separated from the society. For her the bars of the prison are social conventions and false values whereas she herself represents different categories of human race who is compelled to suffer imprisonment.

Human being finds himself irrupting into the network of time, space and relation as soon as he born. According to Heidegger, these things determine who we

are. If so, we are in the process of becoming but not into the state of being. If our involvement into this totality determines our existence, God has no role to play. We ourselves are the architect of our existence. The protagonist realizes it and aware of her existence. Existence is realized in the state of boredom and anxiety. The protagonist realizes it in the presence of her lover as well as in her anxiety and boredom. In her life nothing changes and this nothing becomes her entire existence. She has nothing to pin point but everything to realize. One becomes anxious only when he is conscious. The protagonist is conscious of existence that is why she realizes anxiety and boredom. She finds herself imprisoned and helpless to overcome that imprisonment. The unmarried protagonist desires to break the prison having a baby from her lover without marrying. But her lover denies her saying that the evil society would not accept it.

The protagonist claims herself responsible for the imprisonment that she is suffering. This is the price of her freedom that cannot excuse her to take responsibility for her each action. She exhibits:

I'm always being chased off by life - before each menstruation, I have murdered every embryo of my desire, every time I've enjoyed sex, I endure a thunderbolt on my fertile womb. The irony is that, I'm the one who does the chasing. I'm the narrator of that murdered desire and I'm the, director of the thunderbolt, too. If I am both agent and reason, then I have to bear this prison; I'm bound to receive this punishment. There must be prison and the punishment in the lot of someone like me. (84)

The protagonist has to suffer much while maintaining her freedom. She is dominated by the different social forces even though she chooses her way of life herself. In doing so, is obliged to encounter despair, dread and anguish. She cannot use her



freedom to have a baby while being in the dogmatic society. The society compels her to vanish her dream in front of her own eyes.

The protagonist realizes that she is nothing but which she made of herself. This is her subjectivity. Subjectivism means according to Sartre, on the one hand the freedom of the individual subject and on the other hand, that man cannot pass beyond human subjectivity. It is the latter which is the deeper meaning of existentialism. The protagonist is responsible for herself for what she has done in her life.

Sartre clearly believes that human freedom is the basis of morality. In order to act, one must be free to choose and act. So a person could not be moral while infringing on the freedom of others. Thus, freedom is itself a moral means and a moral ends in itself. The protagonist does not ask her lover to leave his wife and stay with her. Though she commits a social crime having affair with a married man, she does not feel guilty for that. She argues:

I know I haven't done anything virtuous. But I also have not committed what they call sins. I haven't ignored my own husband and babies to take a lover. I haven't shown the weevils in the life of a happy couple. If she examined all her actions and returned in his arms I know he would forgive her. On that day, I would raise no argument. I would move off without hesitation. (147)

The protagonist is ready to bear any situation. That is to say she takes full responsibility of self. We are social animals and our actions affect other people and vice versa.

The protagonist while choosing for herself does not affect other's freedom. What she chooses for her seems to be right for other people too. Even when there comes adverse situation, she does not escape from her responsibility as well. She is

ready to tolerate anything that happens to in their relationship. She does not undervalue or dominate other's freedom and choice as well. The protagonist's self respect and confidence on her decision along with responsibility can be seen here.

As Sartre claims; to choose between this or is at the same time to affirm that value of that which is chosen; for we are unable ever to choose the worse. What we choose is always the better. Nothing can be better for us unless it is better for all. For the betterment of all, the protagonist sacrifices her desire. She is compelled to bear the prison and punishment created by her society. The news of her lover's death in an accident shatters all her dreams, desires and hopes. She finds her existence upon her lover and the meaningless life of the protagonist starts again with the death of lover, the married man. With the death of her lover she knows that her dream to have a baby will never be fulfilled.

The protagonist realizes that the word 'destiny' is circling over her like a giant hawk that will tear the pieces of flesh from her body. For the first time she is compelled to think who is she to him. She puts forth:

I didn't get this news for myself. It came as public knowledge. No one thought it important to send me this news. No one thought anything of our relationship of so many years. What I am to him? I didn't get this news. His wife certainly got the news, perhaps she fainted in front of everyone, and maybe she beat her breast and wept. But why should anyone tell me? How can an Eve be without news when an Adam dies?

(199)

The protagonist realizes, though she is Eve to herself and for her Adam, the society does not accept this relationship. The reality of her Eveness dies away with the sudden death of her Adam. She realizes the death of her relationship with her lover

when he dies. She feels as if the word life has been separated from her heart and soul although her body is alive. She finds the presence of nobody to acknowledge her Evenness toward her Adam.

The existential view of the protagonist toward her life in the society gives her strength to struggle and revolt in the society. As most of the existentialist philosophers support the idea of human helplessness, absurdity and estrangement of life, the protagonist realizes it as well. She inserts:

Life is no movie plot; the singing and dancing' the break-up and reconciliation- life is not limited to these simple things. You go somewhere not knowing what you will have to see, not knowing what you will have to hear. We have no idea where the question mark, the exclamation point, the semicolon or the full stop in the sentence of life is going to appear. (34)

These statements show the apparent meaninglessness of life. Life has no inherent meaning so man makes himself. Life has no linear, chronological events which happen suddenly without any plan or prediction. Even in such absurd condition of life, man is responsible and he alone, for whatever thing he does in his life.

If we analyze the fiction, we can find the protagonist sharing the same reality of the world. The protagonist is unable to do anything about her life, when her lover dies. She constantly complains about the boredom of life in which nothing changes. Society does not give her right to become widow of her lover. It names her “mistress”. She compels to think about her relationship. She asserts:

I'd seen so many characters in love in movies, plays or novels, who go to temple and fill the empty part of their hair with red *sindur*. I didn't do any of that- I thought it was all just hypocrisy- I steered clear of it,

thinking it was just cheap movie plot.... How did I become a mistress?

I was the foundation of his intellectualism- if there I no change to who

I am because of his death, then does this word have meaning for me?

(200-201)

The protagonist realizes her courage to not giving any name for their relationship.

For her the relationship they having is so meaningful than that of society's legal married relationship. She thinks herself as the foundation of his intellectualism. She does not care what society looks at her. The only thing which matters is there is meaning in their relationship. They have accepted each other along with their own existence. There is no hypocrisy in their relationship. She never felt the necessity to give the name of marriage to their relationship.

The protagonist has much courage to living on self decision. She is free; guided by her own morality and rationale, keeps an ability to choose the kind of life likes. She compares herself with others and finds herself most bold and courageous. That is why she is adamant for not getting married with her lover. She realizes how she can survive without being married. She rejects the misconception that marriage is the one and only the way of her introduction. She does not run after marriage and even if she had the right to be his widow, she realizes, she had to live her remaining life as a widow wearing white clothes.

The protagonist as an existential heroine, is observed to find the meaning of life. Believing in self morality, she makes self directed choices. Though the death of her lover makes her life very difficult, she seeks to overcome of that. She realizes that the physical end of her lover cannot destroy her identity. She does not like to wear the mask of intellect and create another deception and become the victim of another delusion. The protagonist bravely embraces the word "mistress" to affirm her own

existence. Her narrow life becomes wide enough when she searches the greatness of life in terms of her own value. She realizes although she has difficulties to sustain her life embracing that word, she never surrenders in front of the evil society neither commits suicide. When she becomes conscious of her existence, she shows radical dissatisfaction with the prevailing systems and norms of the society. Due to this dissatisfaction, she feels boredom. One becomes tragic only when he is conscious. She feels boredom because of her consciousness.

For Sartre as well for the protagonist, man is nothing but what he makes himself. She is sure in her subjectivity and individuality. In the quest of living as an authentic being, the protagonist tries to create her true self by the will and effort of her own. Even in the painful situation, the protagonist seeks her identity and thus challenges the society by accepting the word “mistress” bravely. Her actions lead to reasonably increased freedom- not only for her but for all human. Her moral actions have outcomes that increase the frequency of other free choices or freedom of others. Her responsibility of her actions gives her courage to live essentially. The protagonist overcomes her imprisonment by choosing a heroic attitude toward life’s apparent meaninglessness. She liberates herself from the prison full of loneliness, discontent, incompleteness, lack of meaning, barrenness and philosophies. Although her life is like rolling stone which can never be pushed to the top of the hill just like that of Sisyphus, she chooses her task of existing and chooses to embrace it anyway. She exists to create her essence.

## **CHAPTER: THREE**

### **Identity Crisis**

This study tries to exhibit the struggle of human for his existence in the society as well as in the world. This vast world is engulfed by alienation fragmentation, loneliness, absurdity, anxiety, and disillusionment. Meaninglessness is the meaning of life. Suffering is only reward that people get in life. In this futile world the possible way of authentic living is to be prepared to struggle for survival.

The unnamed protagonist, sometimes addressed as Eve, makes her own choices to live by herself. Her choice is subjective because individuals finally make their own choices without help from standard like laws, ethical rules or tradition. What is right and what is wrong depends on his decision and thought. The traditional values do not work. The protagonist takes her own decision and is not governed by any social norms and values. So the protagonist struggles against the prevailing society and its system to affirm her existence. With her freedom of choice she struggles to overcome her feeling of angst.

The hardship of human effort in incoherent world can be perceived from the very beginning of the novel. The protagonist, the existential heroine, from the beginning is shown to be struggling to find her identity whether it is for her survival as a human or as self-conscious liberated woman. The monotony of completely futile events in her family creates a condition which in fact becomes a means to understand her life better. She explores the possibility of existence even in the world devoid of meaning. Like Sisyphus, the protagonist struggles in the alarmingly insecure and incoherent world. Existence precedes essence is truly applicable in the protagonist's case. She first believes in existence, and makes the essence thereafter. She exists, therefore, she chooses to struggle.

For Sartre, as well as Giri, existentialism leads man to possibility to hope. The protagonist has the view that man is nothing else but what he makes of himself. She is sure in her individuality and subjectivity. As the existentialist show a fundamental existence of man unlike other being, the protagonist has nothing to consider about, but she all the time worries about herself and the whole humanity. The protagonist is in the quest of living an authentic life i.e. human being. She tries to create her true self by the will and efforts of her own.

*The Prison* is about confrontation with existential questions during the period of despair and anxiety. She seeks the answer to her questions, by submitting herself to a painful trail of loneliness and voidness. She deals with disillusionment and despair. Though she is full of anxiety with no meaning in life, she creates her own self by making self directed choices. Giri supports the idea that self realization of the individual comes when he takes full responsibilities for his life like other existential philosophers. Most of the existentialists have insisted that personal experience and acting on one's own conviction are essential to the truth.

The protagonist is aware of her own existence. With her exercise of choices and freedom she leaves home. She lives in the apartment on rent where she finds peace and solace. She seeks an intellectual life so that she can live meaningfully. In the course of this she meets a married man and finds her existence upon him. They join the way two streets join with no awkwardness and she does not feel least shame about it. She wants to have a baby from him to break her lonely and narrow prison of silence. But her lover denies her saying since society will not accept it. The news of her lover's death in an accident shatters her dreams, desires and hopes to have a baby. The question "who is she to him?" comes on her mind. The society does not allow her to be his widow because she does not have assets to pay for the word widow, red

*sindur, potey* and bangles. But toward the end of the novel, the protagonist finds herself being able to realize her free existence. She asserts, the physical end of his body does not change her existence. She does not suicide, neither surrender herself to the society. Rather she bravely embraces the word “mistress” to challenge the society and its convention.

Actions are the major themes with the existential hero. The hero has the concept of free choice. He has no concern with moral and immoral things. With the dream to get rid of loneliness, she wishes to have a baby without getting married with her lover.

The protagonist as an existential figure is observed to find the meaning of life. Though the life she feels is very difficult, narrow and lonely like prison and punishment, she attempts to find happiness and meaning in the modern world characterized by alienation, isolation, voidness, loneliness, frustration and absurdity. She focuses on struggle for existence and tries to overcome her angst, confusion and anxiety with her struggle to exist in the world full of absurdity. In *The Prison*, Giri has tried to focus that individual existence is prior to everything. She emphasized the concepts of individual, of choice, of dread, of freedom and of paradox. Presenting the protagonist as existential heroine, Giri shows that human mind is free and it can make choices and decision of its own.

What Giri attempts in *The Prison* is an analysis of human living and growing in the society of 1970 era of Kathmandu. Through the unnamed protagonist, Giri evokes the anxiety of human that provides a lucid experience of freedom which characterizes human existence. The concept of identity crisis gives a meaning that there is the angst of identity crisis in every individual’s existence and every individual must struggle to exist within that anxiety. The protagonist cannot have peace being



herself so she seeks to obliterate that self. As Camus in *Myth of Sisyphus* shows that life is absurd. It is like rolling stone which can never be pushed to the top of the hill. The protagonist starts affair with the married man but she can never lead it to the marriage that she thinks as hypocrisy. So the life for her is unchangeable. Although she has difficulties to sustain her life embracing the word mistress, she never surrenders in front of the evil society. Her whole life she commits herself to be a libertarian, to live intellectual and conscious life. Being brave enough, she struggles for living meaningfully, though the world is full of anxiety and disillusionment.

## Works Cited

- Beauvoir, Simone de. "Myth and Reality." *Critical Theory Since 1965*. Eds. Adams Hazard and Searle, Florida: Florida UP, 1971. 995-98. Print.
- . "The Second Sex." *Critical Theory Since 1965*. Eds. Adams Hazard and Searle, Florida: Florida UP, 1971. 992-995. Print.
- Bhattarai, Govinda Raj. "Nepali Upanyasma Uttar Aadhuniktaiko Chetana." *Nepali Upanyasko Satabarsiki*. Ed. Sanat Regmi. Kathmandu: Nepal Rajakiya Pragya Pratisthan, 2004. 67-68. Print.
- Camus, Albert. "The Myth of Sisyphus." *Essay on: The Creation of Knowledge*. Ed. Shreedhar P. Lohani, Rameshwar P. Adhikari and Abhi N. Subedi. Kathmandu: Ratna Pustak, 1996. 66-70. Print.
- Cuddon, J. ed. *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. New York: Penguin Books Ltd., 1982. Print.
- Dahal Durgaprasad and Bhojraj Dhungel. *Nepali Kabita ra Kabya*. Kathmandu: M. K. Publishers, 2005. Print.
- Dixit, Madanmani. blurb. *The Prison*. By Banira Giri. Kathmandu: Jiba Lamichhane, 2005. Print.
- Gaarder, Justein. *Sophies World*. New York: Phoenix, 1998. Print.
- Giri, Banira. *The Prison*. Trans. and Ed. Ann Hunkins. Kathmandu: Jiba Lamichhane, 2005. Print.
- Gurung, D. B. "The Liberterian." *The Kathmandu Post*. 13Nov. 2005: 4.
- Hunkins, Ann. Introduction. *The Prison*. By Banira Giri. Kathmandu: Jiba Lamichhane, 2005. Print.
- Luitel, Lila. "Nepali Upanyasma Mahila Lekhan." *Nepali Upanyasko Satabarsiki*. Ed. Sanat Regmi. Kathmandu: Nepal Rajakiya Pragya Pratisthan, 2004. 95. Print.

- Nietzsche, Friedrich. "The Death of God and Antichrist." *The Modern Tradition: Background of Modern literature*. Ed. Ellman and Feideson. New York: Oxford Up, 1965, 816-22. Print.
- Rakesh, Ramdayal. blurb. *The Prison*. By Banira Giri. Kathmandu: Jiba Lamichhane, 2005. Print.
- Ryan, John K, "Existentialism." *Encyclopedia Americana*. New York: Macmillan, 1966. Print.
- Sartre, Jean-Pal. *Being and Nothingness*. Trans. Hazel E. Bernes. London: Routledge, 2003. Print.
- . *Existentialism is a Humanism*. 2005: 2012-04-1. <<http://www.marxist.org/reference/archive/Sartre/works/exist/Sartre.htm>:Retrived>
- Sharma, Mohanraj and Luitel Khagendra Prasad. "Banira Girika Upanyasma Samajik Yatharthabadi Dhara." *Aadhunik Nepali Samalochana*. Ed. Regmi, Sanat. Kathmandu: Nepal Rajakiya Pragya Pratisthan, 2002. Print.
- Sharma, Taranath. blurb. *The Prison*. By Banira Giri. Kathmandu: Jiba Lamichhane, 2005. 65. Print.
- Skirbekk, Gunna and Nils Gije. *A history of Western Thought: From Ancient Greece to the Twentieth Century*. London: Routledge, 2001. Print.
- Thapa, Kishan. "Girish Ballav Joshika Bir Charitra ra Nepali Upanyasko Saya Barsa." *Aadhunik Nepali Samalochana*. Ed. Sanat Regmi. Kathmandu: Nepal Rajakiya Pragya Pratisthan, 2002. 34. Print.