

Chapter 1

Introduction

Coelho's Articulation for Women

Paulo Coelho is recognized for his powerful storytelling technique and the profound spiritual insights he blends flawlessly into his stories. The Brazilian author broke sacred ground as an author with *The Alchemist*. The book has achieved the status of a modern classic, universally admired. Considered a timeless story, it enchants and inspires new readers for generations to come. After that, He has dedicated his work to the ideal of helping people to follow their wildest dreams. He was born in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. His own dream, to be a writer, met with frustration throughout much of his early adult life, a time in which he worked at various professions, some of them materially rewarding but spiritually unfulfilling. He is not only one of the most widely read, but also one the most influential authors writing today. His books have had a life-enhancing impact on millions of people all over the world. The illusion readers have that he is talking directly to and about them is enhanced by the fact that he has often borrowed from their lives for his fiction.

Eleven Minutes by Coelho is the story of a prostitute named Maria. His depiction of Maria creates an image that sex is not a sin which he associates with the possibility of sacred sex and sex in the context of love. He sensitively explores the sacred nature of sex as a stereotypical biological characteristic vis-a-vis love and his treatment of her reflects his attack on the moral conservatism and prejudices associated with prostitutes. Though the author, Maria dreams, takes risks, learns to be her self, but *Eleven Minutes* is the harsh reality of life as a prostitute, a life that is no fairy tale. She is in a search for her soul, a search for her soul mate. This study will focus on the role of Maria as a prostitute and how the author strongly supports a

woman's right to sexuality and the need to be cared. The novel is a condemnation of males that systematically denies women their dignity and autonomy. The novel is a reminder that misogynist society is only an extreme manifestation of a basic reality, where women are ruthlessly and mercilessly exploited.

A woman's body is to be worshipped and not used, that is Coelho's assertion. *Eleven Minutes* is one woman's journey, Maria, from an innocent young girl who believes that she has wasted her only chance at love, to a young woman who becomes a prostitute. She is in search of fame and fortune, while becoming closer to her own moral definition of money, sex and love. While women share certain commonalities, women's issues differ according to class, ethnicity, race, religious and cultural norms. Many years ago, Simon De Beauvoir commented that woman is not regarded as an autonomous being. Humanity is male and they define women. Every institution from culture through ideology to literature is male oriented. Feminist writers attack the notion of patriarchy to awaken women about the discrimination imposed upon them. The males lust after a woman's body without giving it any love, care or attention. Therefore, *Eleven Minutes* is an exploration of the feminine side of a woman, giving them a voice in a man's world.

The world we live in revolves around sex, no matter how much people try to disprove or argue against the fact. Rather than dispute it or make sex ugly, Coelho presents sex as a beautiful lesson to be mastered as one gains experience. The title of the book makes us feel eager to know what the eleven minutes is all about. The eleven minutes that could make or break a person's feelings about love, life and more. His title refers to what his protagonist Maria discovers about the sexual act. It takes only eleven minutes on average to complete and yet people are obsessed with it. The title itself refers to the length of time it takes to commit the sexual act. The novel

celebrates physicality of love and serves to complement what Maria learns as she explores both the darkest and the most ordinary recesses of desire as the truth of the timing of eleven minutes is challenged. It seems to confirm what she has believed all along, those eleven minutes of pleasure is hardly worth the effort. Her sacrifices on the altar of sex is a fascinating exploration of not only those important eleven minutes but also everything that leads up to them. In her journey of self-discovery, she has to choose between pursuing a path of darkness and sexual pleasure. Quickly adapting to the vulgar but not interesting role of prostitute, she endures nearly a year of service, until she accumulates enough money to return to Brazil in style. At that point she meets a young artist, Ralf Hart, and begins to fall in love, raising the issue of whether the two halves of her nature can be satisfied by any one man.

Eleven Minutes gives importance and purity to a woman's body. Coelho tends to raise the question of dignity and the gracefulness that is being given to the world's oldest profession, prostitution. It makes the readers ponder with a poignant question. What is the difference between the profession of prostitution and any other profession in this world? Why prostitutes are not considered normal human beings as other professionals? Love never asks for permission, nor does it appear when we feel we most need it. Love is a universal entity that holds no shape and strikes down and stays tightened to the heart. The story compels us to think about sex and love. What it is, why it is and what is the meaning of it? Coelho suggests that sex is like a glass of overflowing wine. It means that sex is just an expression of overwhelming feelings of love and gratitude for the other person. We are so full that we want to share it with the other, and the most basic instrument for sharing these overwhelming feelings is our own body. Here sex has been given the highest spiritual stature, a stature that it truly deserves. To have sex is to surrender to the supreme consciousness and to be one with

that.

In *Eleven Minutes*, the reader is immediately transported into Maria's soul and the incidents that lead up to the opening of her long lost soul. The inner light spoken about in the story indicates the light that emerges from the soul. The character embarks into a twister of experiences that are intricately and beautifully woven. The story is an in depth story of a woman who wants to be able to succeed in the world. She tries to conquer everything by her own means and how she is able to survive the challenges of the masculine world. She chooses a path that makes the novel emerge into a classy seductive story. She goes from a restaurant dancer to a high class prostitute. In her quest, she endures pain and suffering in all degrees. She regains her spiritual virginity, falls in love and allows her heart to feel love again. It is her literal journey of a young woman and her search for her individual sexuality. The novel embeds itself firmly in her perceptions and experiences, her emotions, dreams and struggles to understand life as a professional prostitute.

A woman character like Maria becomes a pawn for the useless destructive adult games. Coelho's depiction of her creates an image that sex is not a sin which he associates with or risking everything to find her own inner light and the possibility of sacred sex, sex in the context of love. This thesis would focus on the role of her as a prostitute and how the author strongly supports a woman's right to have sex, to love and to be loved. The author sensitively explores the sacred nature of sex as a stereotypical biological characteristic vis-a-vis love and his treatment of her reflects the novelist's attack on the moral conservatism and prejudices associated with prostitutes. The author's sympathy is with women like her, who have very little options in life. Women like her suffer greatly at the hands of males, being subjected to humiliation and torture. As a prostitute, she is only welcome in bed of her clients but

not at home and their heart.

Coelho in *Eleven Minutes* speaks for women like Maria. He makes his readers aware that a prostitute may sell her body for money but it is her personal decision to love. She is a representative for all the prostitutes that the author is speaking for. It is her personal decision to love whom ever she wants. Though she has multiple relationships with men, it is Ralf she falls in love with. This is the decision the author respects and subtly requests his readers to do so. He seems to speak for her because otherwise nobody else would do so. She would only be abused and rated as a third class woman. By speaking about her, the author gives her the freedom of choice. She is forced into prostitution but when gets a choice to love Ralf, she does not hesitate. Ralf is able to transport her to another world where both of them seem to enjoy a lot.

Review of Literature

A number of critics have attended to different aspects of Coelho's novel. Matthew J. Brucoli says that the novelist with his unkempt hair and a wispy beard, claims to commune with spirits. On *Eleven Minutes*, Brucoli states,

In Maria, Coelho has created a strong, sensual young woman who grabs our sympathy from the first. The thematic thrust of the novel came to him well before the protagonist and her story. Readers who want a strong story and intimate characterization should look elsewhere, since Maria's adventures and discoveries are carefully folded into the novel's concept. Others, though, will find Coelho's newest novel an intriguing exploration of not only those important eleven minutes but also everything that leads up to them. (11)

At times the intellectual discussions of desire and love can get tedious, as Coelho is at his best in the midst of scenes and description, but overall this novel is about a

prostitute as its unlikely heroine.

Joan Bridgman claims that Coelho uses Maria to write a saga of sex and love making. He explores the difference between the two and in the process questions various boundaries of societal codes of morality and righteous living as:

Apparently, Coelho's book helps people for which they seem everlastingly grateful. He makes an astute choice in having the main character in his book, which honors sex, be a prostitute. Through Maria we are able to see some of the ugliest sides of sex. But it is through her development as a character that we are able to appreciate the beauty of the act of sex. (76)

The cultural dynamics of the human set up do not allow women to voice their sexual subjectivities.

As with other aspects of human behavior, Diana Fuss opines that the concrete institutional forms of sexuality at any given time and place are products of human activity,

Eleven Minutes is not just a book, it is an experience, experienced for eleven minutes revealed. The most amazing thing about the book is that it truly explains the difference between sex and making love. Coelho has brought out the meaning of love in the most pure form, that which we call sex when mixed with true love is called love making and that is what this book makes you realize. This book makes you realize that its all within us, just not discovered. (139)

The illusion readers have that Coelho is talking directly to and about them is enhanced by the fact that he has often borrowed from their lives for his fiction. Carol Singley states that Coelho had put the right words for people to easily understand and cope

what he/she is reading and he maintains an unusually warm relationship with his readers:

Although Coelho's books deal with the metaphysical subjects of finding yourself and gaining spiritual insight, Coelho tells his stories like a village bard. His personal experiences make their way into his books, which he writes in Portuguese. In *Eleven Minutes*, he seems unable to resist his tendency to preach and much of the book becomes his opinion, his take on how things are and should be. (33)

Eunice De Souza points out that nevertheless, the discussion of the sacred and secular elements of love, lust and the physical nature of relationships really resonate as profound.

Coelho probably spends a bit too much time on the anatomy, but it does not detract from the power of the message because,

It is the tale of Maria, a naive young woman from Brazil who becomes a high-class prostitute in Switzerland. And while Coelho comes down firmly in the end for the reality of a holy carnality, the path he takes to that affirmation acknowledges completely the snares and labyrinths awaiting any explorer of the fusion of body and soul. The narrative embeds itself firmly in Maria's perceptions and experiences, her emotions, dreams and struggles to understand life. Coelho's talent and restraint have elevated her from the status of mere mouthpiece and symbol to that of uniquely individuated life force. (44)

This book is about so many different themes including passion, forbidden love, sex, intimacy, friendship, making the right decisions, and nostalgia.

Maria's search for meaning and answers in life takes her to her limits. This is

not just about sex but about life and the human yearn for meaning and love. Gayle Rubin feels that the reader cannot but sympathize with the protagonist as:

Readers who want a strong story and intimate characterization should look elsewhere, since Maria's adventures and discoveries are carefully folded into the novel's concept. Coelho seems unable to resist his tendency to preach and much of the book becomes his opinion, his take on how things are and should be. He speaks of sex and its varieties, which includes 'sacred sex,' which is the primary subject of the book. (128)

Even though the story may be about love, sex and desire, it becomes a different novel.

Coelho confesses in an interview to Glauco Ortolano, how the idea of *Eleven Minutes* developed:

During my lifetime, I have experienced sex in many different and contradictory ways. I was born into a conservative age, when virginity was the defining characteristic of any decent young woman. I witnessed the emergence of the contraceptive pill and of antibiotics, both indispensable for the sexual revolution that would follow. I plunged enthusiastically into the hippy era, when we went to the other extreme, with free love being practiced at rock concerts. I now find myself in an age which is half-conservative, half-liberal, an age haunted by a new disease resistant to all antibiotics. (19)

Though different critics have seen the novel from different points of view, my research will focus on researching the issue of, "Maria's Journey of Self Discovery in Coelho's *Eleven Minutes*." The next chapter discusses Feminism as a theory to be applied in the analysis of this novel. Drawing on theoretical background from

feminism, this research proposes based on the hypothesis that a woman has the right to love and be loved. As mentioned earlier, women have always been dominated by males in a patriarchal society. The theory of Feminism is against the domination and marginalization of females by males in all spheres of life. Defined as the 'other,' women are always given secondary status and priority by males. They are given strict guidelines to follow and dictated not to go beyond the borders set by males. A prostitute like Maria is exploited ruthlessly. The term 'prostitute,' is a very derogatory term. In simple words, a woman who sells her body for monetary benefit is a prostitute. Prostitutes have been around from ancient times till the present day. But till today they are not considered a part of mainstream society. Men want their body but not their company.

Outline of the Study

This study is divided into three chapters. The first chapter deals with an introductory aspect of the study. It incorporates the thesis title clarification and an introduction about Paulo Coelho. It also deals with the review of literature regarding *Eleven Minutes*. The second chapter looks into the theoretical modality that is Feminism, to be effectively applied to the analysis of the novel. Therefore, feminist theorists like Beauvoir, Julia Kristeva and Judith Butler are studied. All of them voice their strong opinion for women against men, and speak against patriarchy. The chapter also presents an analysis of the novel at considerable length on the theoretical modality. With the analysis of the text done extensively in the third chapter, it tries to prove the hypothesis stated in the thesis proposal.

Chapter 2

Maria and the Discovery of Her Self

Coelho splits the dichotomy of male and female terrain to explore the unfamiliar territory of desire within humanity through his female central character Maria, in *Eleven Minutes*. She is a prostitute by profession. But apart from being a prostitute, she is also a woman who desires love and lust. She sells her physical body for sexual encounters with numerous unknown men, but deep within her, there is a desire to love deeply and passionately. This personal craving of her is the theme of discussion in this chapter. The novelist hopes to mold a new feminine identity, conjoining the female subjectivity, which encompasses love as well as lust. The question of feminine identity has always puzzled literary and cultural critics alike. In the sphere of cultural and literary representations, identity often becomes a way to denote one's subjectivity. Furthermore, a woman has always been constructed as man's 'Other,' denied the right to her own subjectivity and to responsibility for her own action.

Conventionally, feminine sexuality was upheld in great admiration. The female desire is and was respected as the root of sacred procreation responsible for the continuation of the human species on earth. It is only after the consolidation of the institution of patriarchy, that females are demoted to become subsidiary to husbands or brothers and political power in them is identified with greedy desire. Being subjected as the 'other,' women have been in a lower position in comparison to males. In addition to that, a prostitute is always ill-treated by males especially her clients. For males, a prostitute's body matters not her soul. Thus, this thesis is about self-discovery and how Maria has to choose between a dark life of prostitution, sex for the sake of money and a life with Ralf that would involve sacred sex. This research

follows the trajectory and the transformation of her from a naive woman in search of fame and money to an emotionally stable and level-headed individual. The fight against the extremities of life that she puts up is definitely a motivational factor. The novelist delves into the life of prostitutes and gives their profession an honor or else they are looked down upon by the society.

The patriarchal ideology exaggerates biological difference between men and women. It makes certain that men always had the dominant or masculine role and women has the subordinate. This ideology became the tool for the men to oppress women. Men with the superior concept of masculine gender oppress women through institution such as academy, the church and the family. Each justified and reinforced women's subordination to men with the result that most women internalized a sense of inferiority to men. Feminist epistemology inquires and explores the different ways of patriarchal domination. For instance with different criteria of justification and different emphasis on logic and imagination, characterize male and female attempts to understand the world. Such concerns include awareness of the masculine self-image. It is itself a socially variable and potentially distorting picture of what thought and action should be. Janet Todd tries to define feminism that, "It is typically associated with particular historical moments when a coalition of women succeeds in bringing issues of gender equality, sexual oppression, and sex discrimination into the public arena" (13).

Feminism is political in nature. It concerns itself with the marginalization of all women. Feminists disagree with the inferior role inflicted upon them by the patriarchal culture. They talk about how to unmask the culture and challenge it through literary texts. Feminist criticism includes a great variety of practices. English feminist criticism is oriented to textual interpretation. Nevertheless, nearly all feminist

start from one fundamental perception that is, recognition of the patriarchal structure of society. Feminism can be credited with effecting profound changes in the ideological construction of womanhood globally. The issue of women's autonomy in relation to reproduction and to work, and the issue of women's health more generally, have found themselves on the global political stage. Feminism continues in its struggle to establish itself as the ground for women's political, economic, and cultural ascendancy in the face of its own internal debates about the significance of differences among women.

The words "feminists" and "feminism" are political. These two terms indicate to support the women's movement which emerged in the late 1960s. Defining feminist criticism Toril Moi states, "it is a specific kind of political discourse; a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for gender in literature" (204). Patriarchal attitudes and male interpretation in literary feminism is concerned both with representation of women in literature and with changing women's position in society by freeing them from oppressive restraints. Unjustified is the condition under which most women live. Women strive to be able to do anything and everything men do, because, after all, they are just the same as men.

The feminist movement very much disagreed, and argued that women's writing expressed a distinctive female consciousness, which was more discursive and conjunctive than its male counterpart. Such consciousness was radically different, and had been adversely treated. Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* documented the ways, "Legislators, priests, philosophers, writers and scientists have striven to show that the subordinate position of women is willed in heaven and advantageous on earth" (32). Women had been made to feel that they were inferior by nature and,

though men paid lip-service to equality, they would resist its implementation.

Beauvoir adds that, some men might be sympathetic to women's issues, but only women themselves knew what they felt and wanted because

Woman has always been man's dependent, if not his slave. The two sexes have never shared the world in equality. And even today woman is heavily handicapped, though her situation is beginning to change. Almost nowhere is her legal status the same as man's, and frequently it is much to her disadvantage. Even when her rights are legally recognized in the abstract, long-standing custom prevents their full expression in the mores. (58)

Women traditionally had been regarded as inferior to men physically and intellectually. Both law and theology had ordered their subjection. Women could not possess property in their own names, engage in business, or control the disposal of their children or even of their own persons. Although learned women had pleaded earlier for larger opportunities for women, the early feminist document was Mary Wollstonecraft's book entitled *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792).

Later, Simone de Beauvoir argued in favor of women in her book *The Second Sex*. Beauvoir said that woman was not regarded as an autonomous being. Humanity was male and male defined women. Every institution from culture through ideology to literature is all male. So, feminist writers attacked this notion of patriarchy to awaken women about the discrimination imposed upon them. So, feminists are ultimately in pursuit of a more radical change for enlightening women of a patriarchal society that exploited women from a long history in the name of sex differences. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar tend to define feminist literary criticism as the process of

Revising the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction. It is an act of survival to actively seek a female precursor. Far from representing a threatening force to be denied or killed, proves by example that a revolt against patriarchal literary authority is possible. (124)

Consciousness rising is a collective activity of mutual support and critique that encouraged individual women to see the ways in which their habits of thought conformed to a particular set of ideological presuppositions about women's nature and their roles. Though this characterization of consciousness raising might appear a parody of the concerns of middle-class married women, the fact that such women were drawn into the movement in large numbers was crucial to the widespread recognition that women were no longer content to sit on the sidelines of political and public life.

Despite serious differences among feminists as to whether the goal was equality with men or freedom from them, a broad agenda for change could be articulated. More generally, women demanded ready access to the political arena, to economic self-sufficiency, to childcare, to freedom from male violence, to divorce, and to workplaces free from sexual harassment. While feminism must be seen as an activist demand for political and economic reform, it has always been informed by serious reflection on the nature of sexual difference and the mechanisms by means of which sexual difference is enmeshed in relations of power and oppression. Julia Kristeva points out,

The specificity of feminism derives from the intellectual as well as the political climate in which it has developed. Most particularly, in the late 20th century, the dominance of Marxism, psychoanalysis, and

Post-Structuralism in intellectual discourse has shaped contemporary feminist theory as it is generally understood. The aspects of feminism are its political struggles, its work in sociology, political science, and history. (82)

So therein lies a fundamental problem with the modern feminist goal, the total equality between the genders. There is no way to completely eliminate gender in society because that is something embedded into us. Nonetheless, feminists had advanced to a much more confrontational attack on male hegemony, advocating a complete overthrow of the biased male canon of literature. Feminists argued that women should write with a greater consciousness of their bodies, which would create a more honest and appropriate style of openness, fragmentation and non-linearity. Critics, being generally male, have not generally concerned themselves with gender issues.

The patriarchal society thought that women were naturally inferior to men. Women internalized their subordinate position and accepted their role to be meek and passive. They had to be useful to men and they had to win their love. These were women's duties in ages and that were taught to women from childhood. Women followed their duties set by patriarchal society without any question and they never tried to challenge it. The feminist critic Virginia Woolf questions, "Whether part of the housework was her task" (34). The male structured society compelled women to think that was their destiny and women did not think necessary to revolt against this thinking.

It became easy for men to convince women that their role in life was to be wives and mothers and to serve the family. Generally women were taught 'drawing room' piano playing and dancing in the place of real education like boys got. Juliet

Mitchell opines, “patriarchal society thinks women are ideally suited only for certain occupations – teaching, nursing, and clerking - are largely incapable of other tasks” (28). Feminist content was the basis for the censorship of publications. Women needs and interests were ignored and neglected. In a patriarchal society, the law, constitution and the executive body were bias against women. These institutions were male oriented and from these institutions females were oppressed and suppressed. Beauvoir further adds that male defined women as other because

When man makes of woman the Other, he may, then, expect her to manifest deep-seated tendencies towards complicity. Thus, woman may fail to lay claim to the status of subject because she lacks definite resources, because she feels the necessary bond that ties her to man regardless of reciprocity, and because she is often very well pleased with her role as the Other. (74)

Feminism awakened women with the new idea to struggle against the male dominated society. This is done by enlightening the female, feminist advocated for emancipation and equality. Because of the patriarchal structure of society women have been involved in an age long pathos of identity crisis. Women’s identity crisis has been the issue of several women writers all over the world. The bias society oppressed and suppressed women bitterly and obliged women to internalize their inferiority. But feminism as a political movement awakened them to dismantle all the disciplines of patriarchal society to address the absence of women in various academic areas by uncovering women’s achievement. Female awareness tried to dismantle the conventional patterns to establish nonsexist ones.

Feminism is a relatively recent term for the politics of equal rights for women. It came into use in English only in the 1890s, and many languages do not have this

noun at all. It is also a system of critique and has as its central focus the concept of patriarchy, which can be described as a system of male authority, which oppresses women through its social, political, and economic institutions. Feminism is therefore a critique of patriarchy, on the one hand, and an ideology committed to women's emancipation on the other. At the heart of feminist social and political analysis is the challenging of the public and private divide in politics, which has historically denied women access to the public political space and therefore representation of their interests. In the nineteenth century, the ideological ascendancy of science and medicine joined the spread of industrialization to promote the sexual division of labor. Women's fixed role as caregivers was ideologically determined by their biological capacity to bear children. Associated with that biological capacity was a host of psychological attributes passivity, dependence and moodiness which further reinforced a growing emphasis on the gendered separation of the domestic and the public spheres.

While the resistance to this view of sexual difference varies historically and culturally, it is against this backdrop that modern and contemporary feminism must be understood. Gradually, women's demands for higher education, entrance into trades and professions, married women's rights to property, and the right to vote was conceded. In the United States after woman suffrage was won in 1920, women were divided on the question of equal standing with men versus some protective legislation. Various forms of protective legislation had been enacted in the 19th century. Not surprisingly, feminism often consolidates into a political movement as a result of women's participation in other radical, reformist, or revolutionary activities.

The Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, the backdrop to contemporary feminism, is characterized by two intersecting trajectories. On the one

hand, in spite of the liberalization of non-marital sex, women remained men's sexual subordinates. Feminists challenged 'sexist' images of women in popular culture and in the pornography industry in relation to a growing understanding of women's political subordination under patriarchy. Women's bodies, then, became the ground on which the struggle for liberation was waged. On the other hand, a connection was made between women's consciousness and their sexual subordination. Judith Butler sheds some light saying,

For the most part, feminist theory has taken the category of women to be foundational to any further political claims without realizing that the category effects a political closure on the kinds of experiences articulable as part of a feminist discourse. When the category is understood as representing a set of values or dispositions, it becomes normative in character and, hence, exclusionary in principle. (218)

Feminism as a movement is committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism. The growing feminist movement sought not only to change society's prevailing stereotypes of women as relatively weak passive, docile and dependent individual but also to eliminate the subordination, oppression, inequalities and injustices women suffer because of their sex.

The concept of male hegemony is not new in a patriarchal society. Women in the society consciously or unconsciously consent to their subordination before male. They are encouraged "Freely" to choose their inferior status and accept male exploitation as natural. History is only male centered and women are completely absent. The concept of history for women is inappropriate. They hit hard the male centered biased attitude. The feminist's movement made aware to the women that they themselves were not the reason to be unfit, but it was male's desire, not to give

the women any respect.

Making women enlightened the feminist movement, challenged the male hegemony to create a favorable situation for women to develop their personality.

Simone De Beauvoir seems to vent her anger against males for their double speaks,

All agree in recognizing the fact that females exist in the female species; today as always they make up about one half of humanity.

And yet we are told that femininity is in danger; we are exhorted to be women, remain women, become women. It would appear, then, that every female human being is not necessarily a woman; to be considered she must share in that mysterious and threatened reality known as femininity. (62)

Feminists are proud of their femaleness and have made a vital tool to femininity to perceive their existence. In patriarchal society men defined women as other and men as universal because of sex difference. The radical feminist insisted that the root of women's oppression were buried deep in patriarchy was sex gender system. Kate Millet in her *Sexual Politics* (1970) argued that sex is political primarily because the male- female relationship is determined by it. Because of gender difference men controlled the public and private world.

The Profession of a Prostitute

Maria herself does not know why she chose to become a prostitute. Maybe because she felt she had nothing to lose. Sex is part of her relationships, but holds none of the great pleasure she has heard about from friends. If the reason is to earn money, then it is not a good excuse because she has other ways of doing it. She did not have the feeling of self-pity within her. She knew she could quit anytime.

Everyone in her life had shown her what pain is and that made her emerge as a

stronger woman, who knew how to separate her personal and professional life. She becomes a high profile prostitute and her unique perspective forms the soul of *Eleven Minutes*. Her ambition and curiosity distinguish her from not only her colleagues but from everyone else in Geneva.

Through all such roles, Maria seems caught in the medium of continuously changing and dissatisfied subjectivities and yet, at times finds agency and the ability to resist received roles and definitions. But, deep within, her essential subjectivity remains unchanged as well as unfulfilled. At the outset of her professional journey, she begins by accidentally being laid by an Arab man, who pays her one thousand Francs for one night as:

She went to the Arab's hotel, drank champagne, got herself almost completely drunk, opened her legs, waited for him to have an orgasm (it didn't even occur to her to pretend to have one too), washed herself in the marble bathroom, picked up the money, and allowed herself the luxury of a taxi home. She fell into bed and slept dreamlessly all night.

(57)

As the Arab man offers her a thousand francs to have sex with her, she makes an instant decision and does not look back. A world of darkness opens up that sucks Maria in. Sex is a powerful drug, the more we have the more we need and Maria finds the same with sex with clients. From her first experience of sex, she decides it does not do anything for her. She thinks that sex does nothing for her, there is no pleasure, then why not do it for money. After all it only involves opening her legs, and working out of the Copacabana in Geneva where she makes 300 Swiss francs per client, three clients a night. From then onwards, Maria becomes a regular prostitute at the club and starts saving the money she earns as a prostitute. In less than a year, she has 60,000

francs in the bank.

At the opening of the novel, Maria is a young girl living in Brazil's interior. Her girlhood experiments with romance convince her that love is an illusion. In Brazil, she suffers her first unreturned love and determines that she will never bare her heart again. As she grows older, she becomes a shop girl with limited prospects. What she learns as she explores both the darker and the most ordinary recesses of desire seems to confirm what she has believed all along, that eleven minutes of pleasure is hardly worth the effort. After becoming a prostitute, she discovers that it takes only eleven minutes on average to complete the sexual act and yet people are obsessed with it. Maria says that, "I can choose either to be a victim of the world or an adventurer in search of treasure" (86). Therefore, she sets out on the path of prostitution in search of adventure and money. Through her, Coelho writes an account of sex and love-making that explores the difference between the two. Maria scribbles in her diary:

Last night, when Ralf Hart looked at me, he opened a door, as if he were a thief; but when he left, he took nothing from me, on the contrary, he left behind him the scent of roses - he wasn't a thief, he was a bridegroom visiting me. Every human being experiences his or her own desire; it is part of our personal treasure and, although, as an emotion, it can drive people away, generally speaking, it brings those who are important to us closer. It is an emotion chosen by my soul, and it is so intense that it can infect everything and everyone around me.

(167)

Maria learns about men and sexuality through her numerous clients. She articulates at various points in the book, "I have discovered why a man pays for a

woman: he wants to be happy” (207) or that, “sex has come to be used as some kind of a drug: in order to escape reality, to forget about problems, to relax” (119). She explores sadomasochism with one of her clients and writes, “when I experienced humiliation and total submission, I was free” (71). Her disillusionment with sexuality grows and she writes, “I need to write about love otherwise my soul won’t survive” (173). Later she does find her love in an equally disillusioned painter. She is left to choose between her existing life of mindless lust, the life of dull ordinariness that awaits her back home or an odyssey of sacred sex along with her lover.

Before meeting Ralf, the men she has met since she arrived in Geneva always did everything they could to appear confident. These men, her clients acted as if they were in perfect control of the world and of their own lives. But Maria could see in their eyes that they were afraid of their wives or the feeling of panic that they might not be able to get an erection. Some men thought that they might not seem manly enough even to the ordinary prostitute whom they were paying for her services. And yet, even though they were paying for female company, if they did not manage to get an erection, they would be too ashamed ever to go back to the same club again because they would assume that all the other women there would know. As she feels,

I’m the one who should feel ashamed for being unable to arouse them, but, no, they always blame themselves. They all dream of someone who will come along and see in them a real woman – companion, lover, friend. But they all know, from the very first moment of each new encounter, that this simply isn’t going to happen. (76)

To avoid such embarrassments, Maria always tries to put men at their ease, and if someone seems drunk or more fragile than usual, she usually avoids full sex. Rather she concentrates on caresses and masturbation, which always seems to please them

immensely. This seems absurd since they could perfectly masturbate on their own. She has to make sure that they did not feel ashamed. These men, so powerful and arrogant at work, constantly having to deal with employees, customers, suppliers, prejudices, secrets, hypocrisy, fear and oppression, end their day in a nightclub and do not mind spending three hundred and fifty Swiss francs to stop being themselves for a night.

Men have competed with one another in proclaiming that love is a woman's supreme accomplishment. For a woman, love is her life. A woman is man's equal only when she makes her life a perpetual offering, as that of man is perpetual action. This had been taught to Maria when she was young. Then she had dreamt of her boyfriend, demanding something physical of her and her regret on having denied the same. The episode has taught her the importance of the art of cultivating desire and holding it back. She adds, "And then, our bodies learn to speak the language of the soul, known as sex, and that is what I can give to the man who gave me back my soul" (141).

After she initiates herself into prostitution, she came to understand that, "sex has come to be used as some kind of drug: in order to escape reality, to forget about problems, to relax and like all drugs, this is a harmful and destructive practice" (175). In dealing with all her executive clients, Maria, is sometimes the innocent girl, who gazes admiringly at the man, pretending to be impressed by his tales of power and glory. Her role as a prostitute forces her to act as the understanding mother, who looks after those in need of advice and who listens with an all comprehending air to stories that go in one ear and out the other. The voicing of one's desire, automatically means entering a prostitute's dominion.

Maria's beauty is a magnet that draws men to her straight away. Being a high

profile prostitute, Maria knows that, “having sex is about eleven minutes” (88), but her own innate subjectivity never “revolved around something that only took eleven minutes” (88). In her heart of hearts, she still is innocence preserved and personified and like every other good woman feels that, “really important meetings are planned by the souls long before the bodies see each other” (140). She always feels that what she needed is not a cultural passage, but an emotional one to enable her to become the woman, she desires,

Profound desire, true desire is the desire to be close to someone. From that point onwards, things change, the man and the woman come into play, but what happens before - the attraction that brought them together - is impossible to explain. It is untouched desire in its purest state. When desire is still in this pure state, the man and the woman fall in love with life, they live each moment reverently, consciously, always ready to celebrate the next blessing. (164)

In hindsight, Maria has always been used by every boy or man she loved. They use her to get physical and then drop her down like trash. She seems betrayed by her fake male companions cheating on her and thus decides to become a prostitute. Her is a case of crossing the threshold of varying subjectivities, in order to attain the ultimate one. Being a prostitute involves innumerable number of physical involvements but what she lacks is a passionate encounter. In serving her clients, she exercises a mechanical regularity and coherence, something that could neither ignite, nor consummate the passion to her sex desire. Despite such encounters, she very well knows that, “Desire is not what you see, but what you imagine” (162). An excerpt from her daily diary read:

Each day I choose, the truth by which I try to live. I try to be practical,

efficient, professional. But I would like to be able always to choose desire as my companion. Not out of obligation, not to lessen my loneliness but because, it is good, yes, very good. It is an emotion chosen by my soul, and it is so intense that it can infect everything and everyone around me. (167)

While Maria's entrance into prostitution is probably pretty typical, she is not the common sex worker, we associate with. She had followed her dreams to Europe but soon finds that she is not the only girl with big ideas. Loneliness and frustration inevitably become her main modes of existence. To avoid them she visits the library religiously and during downtimes at her workplace, she reads and takes notes on matters on psychiatry, farm management, love and sex. She learns to provide for her clients physical and mental needs. She saves her money and she has adventures while she bides her time until her return home to Brazil. She honors sex, and the profession of a prostitute. Through her we are able to see some of the negative sides of sex. But it is through her development as a character that we are able to appreciate the beauty of the act of sex.

Maria had grown up in a small town in the interior of Brazil where folklore, superstitions and traditional roles for women are woven into their culture. Although she is good at school and always tries to better her situation by reading books, her only goal is to fall in love, marry and raise a family. Through her, the author creates a strong, sensual young woman who grabs the reader's sympathy from the very beginning. She is made to suffer unreturned love as a child and learns a bit about sex as a teenager.

At the age of nineteen, she makes the ill-advised decision to leave Rio on a Swedish stranger's promise of fame and fortune. Her simple mother's advice to her

young, professionally inclined daughter, unknown to the dangers which the lure of professional success and money has for such unskilled girls. She had once told Maria in this way,

My dear, it's better to be unhappy with a rich man more than happy with a poor man, and over there you'll have far more chances of becoming an unhappy rich woman. Besides, if it doesn't work out, you can just get on the bus and come home. If you can go there, you can always come back. I didn't love your father at first, but money buys everything, even true love. (32)

Thus, *Eleven Minutes* is a novel about sex and the title refers to the length of time it takes to commit the act. Rather than dispute it or make sex ugly, Maria as a prostitute presents sex as a beautiful lesson to be mastered as one gains experience. She is a prostitute from a small town in Brazil who gets convinced to move to become a stage sensation. Doing Brazilian dances at a sleazy bar does not bring the fame she wishes, so she gets out of her contract and tries to fend for herself in Geneva and ends up working as a prostitute.

Feminism as a political movement, awakened women to bring a change in a society for women's right of liberty, equality, property, education and so on. Feminists are alert of their existence. They desire that women should also be part of history, and emphasize upon equality of legal reform for women's rights. This female awareness movement helped to change the condition of women. That awareness has not remained limited to voicing out of the women's rights and sexual equality in the public and to create a political propaganda that explores how a woman tries to redefine the traditionally accepted patriarchal norms advocating freedom.

Literature reflects the cultural assumptions and attitudes of its period, and that

includes attitudes towards women. It deals with their roles and their expectations. But a literature comprising of male-orientated views would be failing in its first requirement, to present a realistic or convincing picture of the world. Feminists have argued for positive discrimination as the only way to correct centuries of bias. Presently, the debate had moved on, from exclusively feminine concerns to the wider issues of gender in social and cultural contexts. Patriarchy and capitalism should be examined more closely and sophisticated models built to integrate the larger web of economics, education, division of labor, biological constraints and cultural assumptions.

Literature is literature, and many people do not see the need to distinguish a specifically feminine way of writing or responding to a text. Parallel studies in the visual arts stressed a feminine sensibility of soft fluid colors, an emphasis on the personal and decorative, and on forms that evoked the female genitalia. Feminism has gradually become more far ranging and subtle in its attacks on male dominated society. Many injustices still need to be corrected, but equally necessary is a more down-to-earth, tolerant and compassionate view of fellow human beings. Lois Tyson in his book *Critical Theory Today* points out,

Because feminist issues range so widely across cultural, social, political, and psychological categories, feminist literary criticism is wide ranging, too. Whatever kind of analysis is undertaken, however, the ultimate goal of feminist criticism is to increase our understanding of women's experience, both in the past and present, and promote our appreciation of women's value in the world. (101)

Feminism studies women as people who are either oppressed or suppressed or deprived or the freedom of personal expression. All women writers who struggle

against patriarchy in favor of womanhood are generally considered feminists. Today feminists have stepped forward against male dominance in order to enhance women's rights and to secure women's emancipation.

Elaine Showalter was another feminist who divided women's literary development into three distinct phases. The 'feminine' phase (1840-1880), where they imitated the masculine role, the 'feminist' (1880-1920) where they advocated the rights of women and protested male norms and values and the 'female' (1920-present) was the phase of self discovery where women's experiences were their main purpose. Showalter entitled *Women's Writing and Women's Culture* in which she said that women have their own types of culture, women have their own types of body, the speaking style, the language, the capacity of thinking and behaving, all are their own sorts and male have their own. So they are naturally different.

Feminist critics like Mary Wollstonecraft, Kate Millet, Elaine Showalter, Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf and Susan Gilbert were the renowned critics to enlighten the women about the precarious existence of women in a male governed society. In a patriarchal society, sexual differences caused sexual discrimination and repression. Because of the biological differences women had been compelled to lead a poor life. The sexual difference caused women to remain within the four walls of a house.

The patriarchal society had its own norms, values and culture. By imposing these norms, values and culture upon women they dominated the women. But with the development of time the movement named feminism came into existence to deny the male culture, male norms and values that undervalued women as complements parts of men the feminism as a movement aimed awakening women in all sides. Its overall goal was to develop all round personalities of women. Simone De Beauvoir looks at

the sorry state of women because

The reason for this is that women lack concrete means for organizing themselves into a unit which can stand face to face with the correlative unit. They have no past, no history, no religion of their own; and they have no such solidarity of work and interest as that of the proletariat.

They have gained only what men have been willing to grant; they have taken nothing, they have only received. (147)

Contemporary feminism has achieved more systematic interventions into the arenas that authorize representations of sexual difference, in large part because feminists have secured a greater presence in academia and in elite domains of business, politics, medicine, science, and the mass media. Feminist historians have unmasked the assumption that history is determined by great wars and great men, and have succeeded in drawing attention to the ways in which women's work has significantly affected historical developments. Feminist scholars have demonstrated the extent to which male bias has determined the normative assumptions of the social, natural, and behavioral sciences. In the arts, literary and artistic canons are no longer restricted to the work of men.

Though feminism's relation to other struggles for political liberation has always been an element of its self-understanding, this has become particularly salient in recent years as feminism is increasingly exposed as beholden to a pernicious set of assumptions about class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, and nationality. Feminism has been challenged to re-think the centrality of a unified and singular woman's identity to its political aspirations. Adding class as a factor further complicates the feminist agenda, for upper-class white women have considerable economic and social power over lower-class men and women, irrespective of race or ethnicity.

Some have argued that the belated admission of Beauvoir into the ranks of philosophers is a matter of sexism on two counts. The first concerns the fact that Beauvoir is a woman. Her philosophical writings are read as echoes of Sartre rather than explored for their own contributions because it is only natural to think of a woman as a disciple of her male companion. The second concerns the fact that she wrote about women. *The Second Sex*, recognized as one of the seminal works of the twentieth century, would not be counted as philosophy because it dealt with sex, hardly a burning philosophical issue at that time as:

This has always been a man's world, and none of the reasons that have been offered in explanation have seemed adequate. To emancipate woman is to refuse to confine her to the relations she bears to man, not to deny them to her; let her have her independent existence and she will continue none the less to exist to him also; mutually recognizing each other as subject, each will yet remain for the other an other. (163)

Beauvoir's analysis of sexism is her account for how women occupy the position of the other. She argues that, in order to define their identity as superior, men declare themselves master of Nature, which includes women. By doing this, men put women in a Hegelian slave position. No wonder that the feminist view of the world is based upon a refusal to obey the will of the Supreme Being. The Women's Liberation Movement is the social struggle which aims to eliminate forms of oppression based on gender and to gain for women equal economic and social status and rights to determine their own lives as are enjoyed by men.

Beauvoir's challenge to the philosophical status quo is part of an evolving movement. Her challenge to the patriarchal status quo is more dramatic. The publication of *The Second Sex* is regarded more as an affront to sexual decency than a

political indictment of patriarchy or a phenomenological account of the meaning of “woman.” The women who came to be known as second wave feminists understood what Beauvoir's first readers missed. It was not sexual decency that was being attacked but patriarchal indecency that was on trial. *The Second Sex* expresses their sense of injustice, focuses their demands for social, political, and personal change and alerts them to the connections between private practices and public policies. *The Second Sex* remains a contentious book. No longer considered sexually scandalous, its analysis of patriarchy and its proposed antidotes to women's domination is still debated.

Beauvoir's self criticism suggests that her later works mark a break with her earlier writings. Rather than thinking in terms of breaks it is more fruitful to see *The Second Sex* in terms of a more radical commitment to the phenomenological insight that it is as embodied beings that we engage the world. As *The Second Sex* became a catalyst for challenging women's situation, Beauvoir's political and intellectual place is also reset. With regard to the feminism, she herself is responsible for the change. Several concepts are crucial to the argument of *The Second Sex*. The concept of the other is introduced early in the text and drives the entire analysis. It has also become a critical concept in many theories that analyze the situation of marginalized people. Beauvoir adds that:

If her functioning as a female is not enough to define woman, if we decline also to explain her through the eternal feminine, and if nevertheless we admit, provisionally, that women do exist, then we must face the question: what is a woman? Society, being codified by man, decrees that woman is inferior; she can do away with this inferiority only by destroying the male's superiority. (82)

Before *The Second Sex*, the sexed/gendered body was not an object of phenomenological investigation. Beauvoir changed that. Her argument for sexual equality takes two directions. First, it exposes the ways in which masculine ideology exploits the sexual difference to create systems of inequality. Second, it exposes the ways that arguments for equality erase the sexual difference in order to establish the masculine subject as the absolute human type. Her argument for equality insists that women and men treat each other as equals and that such treatment requires that their sexual differences be validated.

The Second Sex argues for women's equality, while insisting on the reality of the sexual difference. Beauvoir finds it unjust and immoral to use sexual difference to exploit women. She finds it un-phenomenological to ignore it. As a phenomenologist she is obliged to examine the ways in which women experience their bodies and to determine how these experiences are co-determined. As a feminist phenomenologist assessing the meanings of the lived female body and exploring the ways these meanings affect our place in the world, she brackets these assumptions to investigate the ways in which they corrupt our experiences. Beauvoir further says that:

Representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with the absolute truth. Man is defined as a human being and a woman as a female - whenever she behaves as a human being she is said to imitate the male. The most sympathetic of men never fully comprehend woman's constricted situation.

From a feminist perspective what is perhaps the most famous line of *The Second Sex*, “One is not born but becomes a woman” (267), introduces what has come to be called the sex-gender distinction. Whether or not Beauvoir understood

herself to be inaugurating this distinction, whether or not she followed this distinction to its logical/radical conclusions, or whether or not radical conclusions are justified are currently matters of feminist debate. What is not a matter of dispute is that Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* give us the vocabulary for analyzing the social constructions of femininity and the structure for critiquing these constructions.

Beauvoir exerts an enduring influence upon modern day feminism. Some may not deem her a major philosopher, but to humanists, socialists and Marxists, she is an original thinker. She put forward a series of empirical claims about women as the Other, that is, about what the role gender played in her society. Our nature is universal, the difference between the genders is frequently denied. She also puts forward a philosophical argument for why sexism is wrong. She forces the reader to face the absurdity of the human condition and then proceeds to develop dialectic of ambiguity which will enable him not to master the chaos, but to create with it.

The above chapter has elaborately discussed feminism theory. Here we have seen that what feminism stands for. The issue of patriarchy is also discussed and how women are made to feel inferior is talked about. Above all, there is a good deal of discussion about Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*. Her point is those males categorize themselves as primary and females as secondary. A hierarchy is created and the difference between them is massive. It is extremely difficult to bridge that gap. Therefore, based on the above assumptions, the next chapter will be analyzed based on feminism theory.

Moral Principle and Male Chauvinism

Human beings are biologically male or female. Sexuality is a complex aspect of our personality and self. Sexuality depends on personal choice and has nothing to do with being male or female. It is also defined by sexual thoughts, desires and

longings, erotic fantasies, and experiences. In many ways sexuality is the force that empowers us to express and display strong, emotional feelings for another person and is a natural stimulus for the procreation of human beings. But in a patriarchal structure, females are made to toe the line framed by males. And this is what Coehlo through his protagonist Maria highlights in *Eleven Minutes*. The point that is debatable here is whether Maria is right in falling in love after becoming a prostitute.

Eleven Minutes is specifically about women, love and passion. During the course of the story, Maria falls in love that provides her an outlet from her chaotic professional life as a prostitute. The men, her clients are only interested in their sexual act and not willing to enter into even a casual relationship with her. Though she is sexually active, it is men who enjoy her body without her giving anything in return. For Maria, she only has to open her legs for a short interval of time and her work is done. She is only interested in the money that her clients pay her. This makes her feel unpleasant, ashamed of her sexual frustration and her awakening. Having regular and continuous sex makes Maria lose confidence over her body. Moreover, she is far more interested in the money over her clients.

Men generally assume that a prostitute's job is to provide pleasure and happiness to their clients. She must never have emotional attachment with her customers and love is beyond the question. Maria shows that there is no age or profession to love, as it is not discovered, it happens instantly. When she falls in love with Ralf Hart, the readers are confused. But we must give the benefit of doubt to Maria, because she has led a lonely life as a prostitute far away from home. So when she is fascinated with Ralf, she instantly falls for him. Being a professional prostitute, there is no regulation obstructing her from falling in love. This is the issue that I deal with in this thesis. Maria is free to pursue her love and her sexuality should not be a

hindrance to it.

Eleven Minutes is the story of Maria, whose tender and innocent notions of love leave her tired and heartbroken. She begins to believe in the idea that “Love is a terrible thing that will make you suffer” (15). A chance meeting in Rio takes her to Geneva, where she thinks, she would be wealthy and famous. But destiny and her personal choices for survival have other plans and the young Brazilian girl ends up working as a prostitute. Meanwhile, in Geneva, Maria develops a personal fascination with sex, and her meeting with Ralf Hart puts her on a journey of self-discovery. In the beginning of the novel, Maria is an innocent girl who:

Dreamed of meeting the man of her life (rich, handsome and intelligent), of getting married (in a wedding dress), having two children (who would grow up to be famous) and living in a lovely house (with a sea-view). She was always hoping that one day, without warning, her Prince Charming would arrive, sweep her off her feet and take her away with him so that they could conquer the world together.

(1)

Things change for her when she meets a young painter, Ralf, who saw in her a woman, none of the previous men had seen in her. He gave her the respect she deserves. This respect is denied to her by her male clients who pay her in kind. And now she is to choose between following the dark path, or to leave it all behind, and start a new life. With the emergence of him, she believes she is in love because she claims to be suffering immensely from her feelings. As she falls in love with the seductive Ralf, she finds herself in a state of longing and desire she thought the province of other women. He opens a new world of loving and caring to her. For her the changes are profound as she falls in love with him causing her to think about the

nature of love. She explores the meaning of love and falls into a state of love, which is another country altogether, but struggles to maintain her sanity while there.

Maria falling in love with Ralf becomes problematic. As discussed above, a prostitute falling in love is not acceptable in a patriarchal society. A prostitute like she does not have the right to cross the threshold constructed by males. By falling in love she is treading an unknown dangerous ground. She or any other prostitute has to service her clients and never have any emotional attachments with their clients. But Coelho defamiliarizes this made up theory and provides us with her side of the story. He is firmly behind her and encourages his main character to follow her dreams with Ralf.

With other men, Maria is only concerned about the money. But with Ralf, she becomes the student and the former her teacher. He takes her to an unprecedented journey of love and sex never before experienced by her. While making love to Maria, Ralf is able to provide her sexual, emotional and spiritual satisfaction. The experience is a totally different world for her. What she has read in the books on sex in the library, she is able to understand while making love to Ralf.

Without any awareness of what is coming next, Maria at home reflects on her experience of total surrender, an experience she had never had before or even approached before, in her diary. She likes it and decides she wants more:

When I had nothing to lose, I had everything. When I stopped being who I am, I found myself. When I experienced humiliation and total submission, I was free. I don't know if I'm ill, if it was all a dream, or if it only happens once. I know that I can perfectly well live without it, but I would like to do it again, to repeat the experience, to go still further. (192)

Maria did not regret her choices, but her choices did not give her the time to celebrate her subjectivity. Her story is the transformation and the metamorphosis of an innocent young girl into a professional prostitute. This transition involves the harsh reality of life and her choices. In this journey, she has a choice to either pursue a path of pure physical pleasure or discover the possibility of a physical relationship which articulates the unspeakable in her soul that is love.

It is Ralf, who teaches Maria the real meaning of being a woman and who sets her culturally free by acknowledging the desire of a woman. It is he who makes her attain an orgasm, both emotional and sexual. Indulgence in sex for her becomes a radical way of reclaiming her lost identity. In experiencing the “mystery and delight” (150) of sadomasochism with Ralf, She attempts to cross the frontiers. Unlike her emotionally hurt past, where she has offered unwanted gifts to men, here, she is offering herself up for sacrifice. This feeling within her soul, introduces her to the latent woman within her who, “wants to have all the joy, passion and adventure” (153) that life has to offer. Her relationship with him is doubly political, in that the latter also looked for a momentary self elevation as he says:

Do you know why I am doing this? Because there is no greater pleasure than that of initiating someone into an unknown world. Taking someone’s virginity, the virginity not of their body, but of their soul, you understand. You will be punished because you are useless, because you don’t know the rules and because you know nothing about sex, life or love. (149)

Though emotional in nature, this relationship has the element of violent behavior, of a victory and a defeat. This relationship creates new barriers between Maria and enjoyment and at the same time she takes vengeance upon herself by means of this

inability to know enjoyment. This force has been depicted in her strong wishes to forge romantic relationships since her teenage years. Her disappointment on the failures of such efforts and her adoption of prostitution in the absence of true love forces her visits to the Geneva library to look for books on sex, signaling her deep interest in meaningless physical relationships.

Maria is a prostitute and a prostitute in general is not regarded as the other. She believes that even if the sexual act is pleasurable, due to the acknowledged differences, the female may sometimes be, “offended by a too obvious effort to give her pleasure” (192). It is a feeling which presupposes the presence of longing or desire due to the acknowledgement of the other person’s difference. In this regard, when Maria sits with Ralf in front of the fireplace, sipping wine and having the following conversation and the former opines,

As for sex, I don’t think I can teach you anything. I am nearly twenty three, you’re about six years older, but I know you’ve lived life very intensely. I know men who pay me to do what they want, not what I want. I’ve done everything a man could dream of doing with one, two, even three women at the same time. And I don’t think I learned very much. I want you, however, you want to be wanted. (128)

Ralf tells Maria about the ritual of sacred prostitution, the importance of pain in the garb of self-denial in human lives and cultural stigma attached to the open acknowledgement of feminine desire. Ralf “made her understand that the search for happiness is more important than the need for pain” (211). She felt as wet as she has with Terence’s whip between her legs. Then Ralf touches her naked breasts, only to ignite a greedy desire that never intended to finish her off. It was then, that she found out, that, “she wasn’t dead to sex. That man had managed to rescue her. It was good

to be alive” (222).

This was where the difference between physicality and emotionality delineates itself and Maria falls in love with Ralf. She makes similar observation of the way that physical love-attraction can flow one into spiritual states of love-being when she writes in her diary, “The aim of every human being is to understand the meaning of total love. Love is not to be found in someone else, but in ourselves; we simply awaken it. But in order to do that, we need the other person. The universe only makes sense when we have someone to share our feelings with” (118).

Sexuality is a healthy and natural occurrence throughout a person’s life cycle. Maria is able to make the distinction between physical attraction and emotional love. For a vast majority of human beings, sexual activities are strongly associated with satisfaction. She tries to illuminate a woman’s inner self, one that is spiritual in nature, and the celebration of her sexuality. She makes us feel the grief and sense of loss experienced by her character. She now observes both her body and her psychological reactions with a mixture of clear-sightedness and happiness. Her journey of love leads to the integration of the mind, body and sexuality.

Personally, she never wanted a commitment from Ralf, because, she is not looking for a victory, but a, “kind of utter surrender by which a person offers his or her heart and asks for nothing in return” (155). Later this is exactly why, she gets everything, the completion of her dream, her subjectivity and her identity. This desire in reciprocity is exactly what Maria feels for the first time with Ralf, when she scribbles in her diary:

Anyone who is observant, who discovers the person they have always dreamed of, knows that sexual energy comes into play before sex even takes place. The greatest pleasure isn’t sex, but the passion with which

it is practiced. When the passion is intense, then sex joins in to complete the dance, but it is never the principal aim. (166)

Ralf's search is not for Maria's body, it is for her soul. That, towards the end of the novel they make love, the details written in her diary, appear to have been penned by a lost soul, "when we initiated that joint search for the two lost souls, the two missing fragments needed to complete the Universe" (262). The sexual act, her multiple orgasms, "none of this absolutely none of this was a LIE" (263), as has been pleasure. She has always faked her pleasure, her orgasmic ecstasy, to ensure a faithful clientele and to ensure that money never stopped coming in. She is unmindful of her own subjectivity which for the first time feels satisfied when he penetrates her body, her soul and her life.

Maria feels this new self-respect because her lover knows about her desire and takes care to fulfill it, without ever her telling him so. If, in experiencing masochism with Terence, she has felt the perpetuation of, "the presence of the ego in a bruised and degraded condition," (142) thus giving her some sense of her own discovery. The satiation of desire in a woman's body has a lot to do with psychic factors. Ralf feels intensely about sex, because for him sex is beyond the body. Maria makes a statement in her diary about a few lessons learned from her encounters with men in her work saying:

Everything is important. If you live your life intensely, you experience pleasure all the time and don't feel the need for sex. When you have sex, it's out of a sense of abundance, because the glass of wine is so full that it overflows naturally, because it is inevitable, because you are responding to the call of life, because at that moment, and only at that moment, you have allowed yourself to lose control. (176)

Even though, as a prostitute, she has not been in control, with hundreds of men, with Ralf, she has for the first time ever let go of her emotions and hence experiences a pleasure, up till now unknown. Maria's ability to give herself orgasms and to show her lovers how to please them has been one of the cornerstones of a new self-respect and autonomy and has therefore been politically as well as personally important for her. This results in their uniting for life, in marriage.

Women in different culture do not know what womanhood means or whether they have arrived there for sure. For Maria, this point came in her life, when she feels or rather knows, that she could trust Ralf. For him the point has come when he has made up his mind to win her trust, her "inner light," as he calls it. If he is ready to learn about Maria's sexuality and the timing of her body, he wants her to learn about his body as well. She is, "pleased that the conversation had shifted into being a discussion" (258). Sex, then, for both of them means a celebration of the divinity of selflessness and in such a situation pleasure is guaranteed as she says:

And I came at the same moment he came. It wasn't eleven minutes, it was an eternity, it was as if we had both left our bodies and were walking joyfully through the gardens of paradise in understanding and friendship. I don't know how long it lasted, but everything seemed to be silent, at prayer, as if the universe and life had ceased to exist and become transformed into something sacred, nameless and timeless.

(264)

Towards the end of the novel, Maria emerges as a newly born woman. She lives in the selfless expression of this very pure desire that transforms her from a prostitute into a wife. It is through the libidinous female desire that Ralf's and her personal societies are integrated and the bonds of community affirmed. Her personality and its erotic

fulfillment is, “not a trashy and titillating cliché of material aimed at objectifying for the consumption of thoughtless man” (184). Unlike, the other encounters, it is through her legitimate and emotional contact with Ralf, that she feels her sexual self-discovery to be a scared and legitimate development. She becomes the representative of thousands of women waiting to be brought to life. During this process she also questions various areas of societal codes of morality and righteous living.

Women in patriarchal society have always been dominated. A prostitute on the other hand, is exploited doubly. As a woman she is ill-treated by the males and as a prostitute, she becomes an object of desire. Men lust after her body but refuse to accept them in society. They are usually treated as outcasts and men are more interested in their physical bodies than their soul. In other words, women especially prostitutes do not get the respect they deserve from male.

Inside the room men hanker after their bodies, but prostitutes are not supposed to cross the threshold of their rooms. It is a man’s world. In *Eleven Minutes* Coelho tends to reverse this notion or rather defamiliarize Maria’s world to the readers. She is tempted into prostitution once she lands in Geneva. She has no other choice than to sell her body. Within a year she realizes that her bank balance is swelling.

Maria feels that prostitution does not require much hard work. She feels she has to only part her legs and men do the rest. But she just lies down and men play with her body. They get the pleasure and satisfaction while she is not interested in the sexual act. Coelho sheds light on the issue about exploitation of a woman’s body by males through her. She is paid well for her services but emotionally she does not receive anything. It is later when Ralf enters her life that he is literally and figuratively able to penetrate her body and soul. Then sex for her becomes a ritual where she feels that her inner soul has been touched. She is now able to

wholeheartedly enjoy sex and life properly.

Before that, all the men who had had sex with Maria had either betrayed her or given pain to her. It is Ralf who brings sunlight into her life and she begins to celebrate life. Thus, *Eleven Minutes* is a brilliant examination of love, of longing, grief, a prostitute's story, of all the experiences of love available to Maria in her lifetime. The book revolves around her and how she copes with her own sexuality and attractiveness in light of the inevitability of falling in love.

Chapter 3

Eleven Minutes as a Mouthpiece for Women

This research deals with Coelho's powerful support from a prostitute's perspective to fulfill her basic instinctual needs. The author sympathetically explores the sacred nature of sex as a stereotypical biological characteristic vis-a-vis love and his treatment of Maria, it reflects the novelist's attack on the moral conservatism and prejudices associated with prostitutes. In other words, the novelist through Maria centers a prostitute's story in a patriarchal society. In literature, prostitutes have mostly been relegated to the margins. They are present only to entertain and amuse their male clients. Coelho's portrayal of Maria creates an image that sex is not a sin and a prostitute has a fundamental right to love and enjoy her life. *Eleven Minutes* talks about Maria's assessment and achievement as she becomes a high class prostitute from a restaurant dancer. The narrative embeds itself firmly in her perceptions and experiences, her emotions, dreams and struggles to understand life. Through the course of the novel, readers are given a glimpse into Maria's philosophical diary that illuminates on the nature of sexual desire, passion and love.

Eleven Minutes talks about the defenselessness of a woman's life. Maria comes from a poor background and that is one of the reasons she is not able to complete her education. Being deprived of a proper schooling, she has no choice but to work as an attendant in a shop. Apart from that, she is abused by males from a very tender age. In Rio, her boyfriend sexually molests her and abandons her. She is also slightly ambitious and feels that money is a must to make life successful and happy. Her mother tutors that it is better to have money and be unhappy rather than have no money and be happy. Maria understands that money means happiness. After she lands in Geneva, she has no choice but to become a prostitute. Hesitatingly, she joins the

flesh trade business where money is exceptionally good. The points discussed above shows how women are easily tempted into selling their bodies. Globally, women with moderate or no education are in danger to join the profession. Maria takes a unilateral but strong decision where she knows that she will have a fat bank balance but a lonely life to lead.

Coelho minutely describes his title of his story, *Eleven Minutes*. After becoming a professional prostitute, Maria realizes that on an average it takes about eleven minutes to satisfy her clients. She handles multiple men brilliantly without letting them take advantage. The sexual encounter with her customers lasts that long. Eleven minutes is not a very long time. Men become exhausted while having sex. All these things are noted in detail in her diary. The novelist has been written about womanly desire, but what needs to be understood is that desire in a woman is equivalent to manly passion. Her clients become completely satisfied when she is able to give them orgasm. The novelist subtly describes the process of having sex as a form of art, a ritual. Within those eleven minutes, she is able to transport her men to another world, never experienced before.

The novel is about love and how people confuse sex and love and how they no longer seem to be able to find love in sex. The book is on the surface about sex and all the good and bad associated with it. With Ralf's entry in Maria's life, a new world is experienced by the latter. He helps her explore the deepest desires of a being, whose body is in constant supply of the physical bondage but suffers from the shortage of pleasurable fulfillment of the soul. Like a good pupil, She learns the art of making love and able to enjoy another experience. He is able to arouse or touch the inner soul of her that gives her immense gratification. The meaning of eleven minutes is elaborated more by his description of love and sex. He respects and loves her for

what she is and does not treat her like a prostitute.

The findings presented above have led to the conclusion that *Eleven Minutes* is a novel that should be read about with an open mind. It is wrong to categorize it as a novel about sex and pleasure. Coelho thoughtfully explores the sacred nature of sex as a stereotypical biological characteristic vis-a-vis love and his treatment of Maria reflects his attack on the moral conservatism and prejudices associated with prostitutes. She manifests in her love for Ralf who sees in her the innocent girl and not a prostitute. He is able to give her a voice, helps her move out from the margins. In this regard, Coelho's novel becomes a mouthpiece for women.

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