

Chapter Three

Journey of a Girl: Juvenility, Puberty, and Maturity

A girl is socialised to believe that ‘good girls’ are passive, quiet, and willing to sacrifice their needs for the sake of others. Education also builds gender-appropriate behaviour in a girl, encouraging her to be nice rather than smart. “Women’s work is undervalued Education for women takes place within the security of the domestic arena, and gets limited to training in domestic chores and teaching” (Tiwari 62). She is advised to go for career which requires caring, loving, and sympathetic attitude like that of nursing or teaching and to give up competitive career like that of engineer, lawyer, or doctor. Moi also feels that the kind of education that is given to a girl “alienates and divide” her “against herself” because she is embedded with idea of degrading her body and accepting her femininity which results in the development of a “damaged, split and mutilated” individual. (Moi 211)

For example, Stephen, in *Love, Again*, teaches his sons all ‘manly’ and ‘physical’ works like plumbing, shooting, and working with spade, crowbars, jump-drill as he thinks that ‘physical’ and ‘hard’ labour is men’s arena and he ignores the formal education in school. He also ignores a girl completely who has also come to learn shooting or when she shoots the bull’s eye. Benjamin is also surprised to see the girl learning to shoot just because he thinks that women do not need to learn all this because they are already protected by men. They deny the fact that many crimes against women are done by men.

Though, in various examinations in India, girls have always outshone boys, yet girls are forced to kill their critical sense and intelligence making them incapable of merging study with amusement. The attitude of 'giving up' easily or the 'defeatist' attitude makes them failures as they are discouraged to achieve their aims. Eagleton writes, "In patriarchal thinking feminine characteristics are viewed as natural to the female and inferior to masculine characteristics linked to the male." (Eagleton 155)

Beauvoir writes, "To be feminine is to show oneself as weak, futile, passive and docile" (Beauvoir 359). She feels that terror and fear is created in the mind of a girl about losing her femininity if she asserts her spontaneity and exuberance so, she is bound to dress up gracefully to charm men. This creates a distinction between a boy and a girl in the manner of clothing. As a young girl, Kate, in *The Summer Before the Dark*, with self-confidence, courage, vital energy, and individuality tries to stand by her style and manner, but she loses all these qualities when she grows up as she now spends time in front of mirror to attend to her face only to be chosen by men. Mary Ellmann, in *Thinking About Women*, points out few "feminine stereotypes" associated with women like "formlessness, passivity, instability, confinement, piety, materiality, spirituality, irrationality, compliancy" and Helen Cixous, in *The Newly Born Woman*, points out that "passivity, moon, nature, night, mother, emotion, sensitive, pathos" are associated with women. (qtd. in Eagleton 155)

In *The Sweetest Dream*, Celia, the daughter of Sophie and Colin, loves to give her "charming appearance", using flirtatious eyes at people, acting like a demure girl to attract their people (Lessing, *The Sweetest Dream* 466). It is surprising to see a young girl adapting herself to the conventions at her nascent age and imbibing it deep in her life.

This is how a girl is influenced and trained to behave like an adult woman as Celia also gets offended if people treat her like a small child and hold her in their arms.

Sarah, in *Love, Again*, observes how a little girl named Claudine is dressed in pink frock, socks, and pink hair band symbolising how femininity is associated with light colours, especially, pink. Alice, in *The Good Terrorist*, enjoys performing her role of a good girl and a good daughter at home as she is encouraged and praised by her mother for her cooking and shopping skills. She tries to make all the things available for Jasper at home and defends him whenever he confronts Dorothy. Alice is forced to read books on reactionary politics by her parents though she is least interested in it. When Zoe Devlin, Dorothy's friend, refuses to do the same, it is presumed that women, who are uninterested in politics, are weak and "soft-centred" (Lessing, *The Good Terrorist* 67). Mary William, the member of the Council is also introduced in terms of her heightened sexuality and is unable to leave the job despite hating it because she wants to maintain her independent status. She hates this job because she is forced to demolish the houses which can be better used for sheltering needy people.

In pre-puberty stage, a girl might take pride in becoming a woman, but once she reaches this age, she feels ashamed, repugnant, humiliated, worried, and guilty towards her own body. She perceives it as an illness or a 'malediction' because she feels dependent, at risk, alienated, and foreigner from her flesh and is made to live in a perpetual immanence. This transitional phase of her life is abrupt which makes her detached from her childhood and she is asked to wait for the prince charming to liberate her from this situation just like June Boothby, in *The Golden Notebook*, whose bursting sexual energy is seen as harmful and she is waiting for her prince charming to revive her

from her sleep-walking state. She does not get support from her mother which could have helped her to overcome this situation. Gradually, she transforms herself from a sulking adolescent into a young woman and finds a suitable man for herself.

Beauvoir quotes, “To lose confidence in one’s body is to lose confidence in one’s self” (Beauvoir 355). A girl is forced to renounce rough, daring, and violent games like billiards and bowling, or to go on adventurous trips, or to indulge in strenuous exercises and fights out of the fear of being disgraced if her menstruation or spotting is revealed to the world and she is under constant vision of her mother. The pride, which a man enjoys in the field while pinning down his comrade, does not find place in a girl. She approaches the stage of puberty with worry and displeasure because the body appears to her as ‘flesh’ and an object of gaze for others. She fears the comments and remarks of men on street and is forced to either hide her body or herself in isolation because she is now seen and observed through other’s eyes. Due to this, many girls watch their weight incessantly while others become pathologically shy and do not go out of their homes.

Beauvoir feels that a mother is to be blamed for not explaining the mysteries of menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and even sexual relations to her daughter in detail and rather builds an idea to see all this as ‘feminine servitude’. A girl feels ashamed, fearful, and repulsive and always rushes to the sink to wash or hide her dirtied underwear to avoid the stagnant odour coming out her body. The pride and dream to become a ‘big girl’ fades away as soon as she realises that instead of gaining any privilege she is, rather, bound to her normal course of life. These feelings exacerbate when she realises that men know about this. Alice finds her brother talking about menstruation in a condescending manner while her mother tells her about it in a manner as if it is a curse, an obstacle, and

an impediment which has to be faced by a girl every month. She realises it, later, that it does not harm her way of living.

Beauvoir feels that throughout her life, a girl lives in utter chaos and utter confusion leading to hormonal imbalances, like nervous and vasomotor instability, headaches, stiffness, and abdominal cramps, or neurosis which hampers her intellectual growth as she is forced to perform her feminine duties though she might be professionally well-settled. Lessing also talks about this and represents, in *The Golden Notebook*, Anna who changes her tampon of cotton, scents her thighs and forearms at regular intervals in the office to keep away the stale smell of her blood. Her anxiety curbs down only when she gets a compliment from one of the male colleagues that she smells good.

Lessing talks about body, blood, and flow openly though this might be revolting for the male readers as they cannot watch women either in this condition or in defecating position, yet she does not stop writing about these natural processes. She, even, writes about the coupling of insects when Anna and her communist friends go for shooting. The scene is described as obscene by Paul, or “a riot of debauchery” by Jimmy (Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* 371). But when it comes to their own turn these men do not hesitate to perform their sexual acts in open. This shows that there exists a difference between the sexual life of a young man and a young woman. On the one hand, a man has aggressive and prehensile sexual desire, whose subjectivity is affirmed through his transcendence, while on the other hand, a girl’s sexual life is hidden due to which she faces emotional turmoil.

The sexual initiation begins in infancy following from the oral, anal, and genital phases up to adulthood, but, in case of a girl, it is often unexpected and brutal which creates a rupture with her past and alienates her from her childhood dreams. Beauvoir finds this passage distressing because it is fixed, definite, and irreversible. Sometimes this crisis leads to tragic situations like suicide or madness. It is believed that if there are no clear cut divisions in a girl, she remains infantile throughout her life. June Boothby introduced as a plain, adolescent, ordinary “colonial girl”, remains unimpressed by boys of England, who are described as “sissy and wet and soft” (Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* 103). She is subjected to jokes of being a marriageable age and still unable to find a man for her. She is shown to have a “sulky bursting prowling sort of energy” and is in a state of “sexual obsession” which is normally experienced by the girls of her age (104). While Anna and Maryrose sympathise with June because they have also undergone the same experience, but Mrs. Lattimore feels repelled by such situation and says, “My God, to go through all that again, not for a million million.” (104)

Although Mary, in *The Grass is Singing*, is crossing her thirty, yet she still feels young at heart and does not even think of marrying because of her independent income. She feels the pressure of the society forcing her to seek a husband, but she feels repelling and disgusting at the thought of establishing relationship with a man. Beauvoir also feels that the search for a husband, for an older girl, becomes an important goal in her life because the society does not allow her to live independently, nags her continuously, and forces her into a rash marriage. She remarks, “The impatient wait for a man, often involving manoeuvres, ruses and humiliations, blocks the girl’s horizon; she becomes egotistical and hard” (Beauvoir 392). Rosalind Miles also writes, “Through Mary, Doris

Lessing attacks the burden that is placed upon women by the social expectation that they must marry, or be accounted failures. . . . Mary marries to fulfill a social obligation, not through an overwhelming desire to spend the rest of her life with Dick.” (Miles 105)

A girl even feels bitterness and disgusted when this process of finding a husband takes longer time. There is enormous social pressure which leads a girl to give up her independent life and to find a social position and justification in marriage just as is felt in the case of Mary. Even in the sexual act, a girl seems to be dependent on a man and submits to him while the man plays the role of an aggressor. Later, the girl punishes herself for delivering herself to him. Mary decides to marry a widower of fifty five years, who has half grown children, as she believes that this man will not make any contact with her. Once this man starts making love to her, Mary feels surprised, repelled, and frozen and she runs away from his house ending up her relationship with him. Beauvoir feels that a conflict arises between couple if a virgin is chased by an egotistical lover or by a husband asserting his rights over his wife’s body or if the lover or the husband seeks his own sexual pleasure. In this relationship she is dominated, subjugated, conquered, caressed, and penetrated while the man asserts himself aggressively.

A girl is filled with the idea of ‘valuing’ her beauty in order to charm and to attract the gaze of men. “She closes herself up in fierce solitude” and refuses to reveal her hidden ‘real’ self to anyone which makes her claustrophobic (Beauvoir 363). This is clearly observed in *The Grass is Singing* where Mary is at her prettiest being a thin blonde girl with “light-brow hair, serious blue eyes, and pretty clothes”, but she does not feel any difference when she turns thirty (Lessing, *The Grass is Singing* 36). She likes to attend parties, but does not want to get married because she likes to remain single.

Similarly, in *The Summer Before the Dark*, young girls are used as baits and pawns by Charlie to lure and entertain delegates to promote his organisation. Most of these girls do not have any future prospects with delegates, but they enjoy playing the roles of “covetable escorts” and “amiable companions” and indulge in affairs with them (Lessing, *The Summer Before the Dark* 42, 44). They are taught the art of attracting men by adjusting their lips, facial muscle, eye movements, and movements of back and shoulder and are made to feel proud when they capture men’s interest and admiration. This creates conflict in their minds as on the one hand, they display their bodies, but immediately blush, and on the other hand, they become vexed if someone else looks at them. Whenever any conference is organised, these girls are trained to search partners for sex or friendship and do not protest about being used as baits.

Few other girls are used by some large airlines as “the drum majorettes that are used at conventions and carnivals” and are asked to dress up fancifully in arrested colours to offer their services to the customers, playing the role of “public benefactor” and “love supplier” (Lessing, *The Summer Before the Dark* 53-54). They have to be available to men to be easily laid down by them, or they have to be attractive and friendly which intoxicate them into boasting about their beauty. It is the demand of the public situation that befools them into thinking that they should feel proud if they are able to capture male attention. These girls have been on the show and focus of many pairs of eyes the whole day receiving admiration from men and enjoy being envied by other women or ascribing to their feminine roles. Rita Freedman remarks, “The socialization of gender begins in infancy, continues through adolescence, and involves almost every aspect of experience,

including toys, clothes, media images, and, of course, parental expectations and behaviour.” (Freedman 138)

Lessing offers a criticism of airlines and their use of fresh, radiant, and attractive girls to promote their business. These girls are stimulated with these pre-defined roles and they are compared to machines, which get stuck or which keep on spinning because someone has forgotten to turn them off. For these girls, marriage is like “walking off a stage where a thousand people are applauding” and directly entering into a small dark room (Lessing, *The Summer Before the Dark* 55). Their inability to create a balance between their personal and professional life leads to their divorces. Lessing calls them naïve as they neither want to introspect themselves nor they want to face the reality. They want to remain in the world of shortlived fame. They do not realise that if they decide to join back the job again, they will be considered ‘too old’ to fit into the role after losing their “easy puppy vitality” and will be replaced by other attractive girls. (56)

Sophie takes pride in her beauty only to realise later that beauty is transient as Julia remarks that Sophie might take pride in being a beautiful woman, but she is ignorant of the fact that she might turn out to be an old hag later. Few girls marry at young age out of competition with other women without realising that they are like those children, who are first admired by the grown-ups only to be ignored later when children bore them with their repetitive activities. The hotel attendants, especially the girls, are told to welcome guests with smile and to be warm, concerned, delightful, and solicitous towards guests.

Philip is also in search of this kind of passive woman and does not feel disheartened by the rejection from Maureen. He, rather, finds “a neatly pretty English

girl” for him whose “femininity [is] well battened down by responsibility, duty, service” (Lessing, *The Summer Before the Dark* 233). Instead of going for an unconventional woman, he finds a woman who is ready to bear and adhere to all his unpleasant choices, demands, and burdens. He brings this girl to Maureen’s party to show her off and to prove Maureen that he can possess any woman. In *The Sweetest Dream*, black girls and women are shown taking pride in imitating the manners of white women just as a black girl shows her attitude at Senga airport. But as soon as she is asked for her introduction she does it in her relation to her father and introduces herself as ‘a minister’s daughter’ just to use the influence of her father to get her work done easily. She does not even have time to think about her as an individual being, having an independent identity.

In the early childhood, a girl is taught the concept of passivity by parents and educators, books and myths, women and men. Mary, in the novel *The Grass is Singing*, becomes timid because she lives a miserable life in her childhood. “Mary is a child of violence: but the violence that has made her into a bitter, pretty, frustrated and ultimately defeated and self defeating racist” (Jouve 133). Since her father is a drunkard and a useless man, Mary has to buy things from the store, but has to curb her wishes for sweets because of her poverty.

In *The Summer Before the Dark*, Kate, as a child, has been an intelligent girl who finishes her school early and decides to take admission in the university, but then she decides to marry Alan keeping her career aside. The readers do not get to know about her mother who is introduced always in terms of men like her father, her husband, or her sons. As a girl, Kate is unaware of her abilities and it is only with the efforts of her grandfather that she is able to learn Portuguese completely. She has been flattered and

treated respectfully, but in a mocking manner, by her mother and her grandfather and is made to believe that she is being respected in real.

Kate always feels the pressure of her grandfather, an old-fashioned man, a patriarch, who is strict towards women and wants them to follow conventions, or to control their desire instead of getting swayed by any man's charm. He teaches her that her thoughts, feelings, and impulses should belong to men and she should learn to live at their mercy. Kate wants to fight back, but is unable to do so because of her upbringing as she has been shielded and sheltered from unpleasant experiences of life by him so that she should not have affairs. She is made to believe that she is a fragile woman who needs to be protected and sheltered by men.

Kate wears a "shockingly seductive white dress" sending "waves of sexual attraction" to men, in an attempt to defy her grandfather's codes (Lessing, *The Summer Before the Dark* 40). Her upbringing in a conventional family makes her learn the art of fanning herself which looks like a "willful or whimsical play-acting" (17). Even Maria, the housekeeper of Kate's grandfather, instructs and imposes a sense of morality in her by telling her how to sit properly not with a skirt too high, or not to wear shorts while playing tennis as this exposes her to men's stares. She is bound to wear 'decent' dresses according to their status. Although her rebellious nature instigates her to go against the norms set by her grandfather, yet she has to surrender herself to the traditional standards because of excessive discipline of her grandfather. Shashi Deshpande writes, "To know means to question, to think for yourself, it means turning your back on the unquestioning acceptance of any custom/practice that clashes with the knowledge, however hallowed

the custom or practice is” (Deshpande 13). She feels that instead of mute acceptance of tradition, women should try to challenge it.

Sonia joins the Green Bird theatre and is a clever and competent woman, but she attracts criticism for her outfits which are ‘unlike woman’ because she wears a black Dutch-boy trousers and T-shirt from a surplus shop with a Victorian choker necklace, rings, and earrings, but she seems to be least bothered about it. She fights for her rights and teaches a lesson to a theatre critic, who falsely accuses her of producing a worthless play, proving him that “bullies only understand the boot.” (Lessing, *Love, Again* 89)

The education and customs have made it difficult for a girl to walk on the street independently, without any fear of being watched. She is constantly stared at, insulted, followed, faces lewd remarks and comments and is even assaulted, raped, and murdered. Similarly, in *The Golden Notebook*, Anna feels that Janet wants to live an ordinary and normal life in a boarding school away from all the complications which Anna has faced herself. These boarding schools conform to the notions of patriarchy and confine the individuality of girls by preparing school dresses to give them an ordinary and ugly look in order to avoid male attention. Ironically, women like headmistress become the tool to implement such rules and regulations over girls. Girls, their schools, and their feminine world are mocked at by people like Ivor, a homosexual and instead of encouraging Janet to oppose this view, Anna asks her to get used to all this mockery to survive in this world.

No matter how decently a girl might be dressed, she is subjected to male gaze just as happens in the case of Eileen, the daughter of Kate. A man stares at her ankles, the only exposed portion of her body, while Eileen returns him a resentful look, but she is

taught not to take any serious action against men as they are strong and she is forced to accept the fact that no woman can avoid being examined and inspected by men.

In *Love, Again*, Julie, inspite of being well versed with several books, music, drawing, and regional literature, is unable to use her education for some constructive work due to her illegitimacy. She is seen as a savage and a woman good at entrapping and ensnaring sons of respectable families. She does not even have a proper house and lives with her mother in a sultry forest. She plays music for many young officers for their entertainment where one of the officers, Paul Imbert falls in love with Julie, but does not have the courage to go against his family to marry her. He plays with her emotions and once Julie becomes pregnant with his child, he abandons her on the pretext of pursuing his duty without even providing her any monetary help.

Julie's beauty fascinates Paul's father also and he envies his son, but cannot accept her as his daughter-in-law. He just offers her money as she is pregnant with Paul's child, but she refuses to take it out of her own self-respect and dignity, and also because she has a miscarriage. Instead, she asks for an employment due to which Paul's father is charmed by this "accomplished, witty and delightful woman" and yields to her request (Lessing, *Love, Again* 17). He promises her to get the job only at the condition of not meeting his family ever so that they should not face any disreputation.

Julie has two miscarriages each of Paul's and Remy's child, but the society blames her for forcefully inducing the abortions instead of blaming men who leave her unattended during her pregnancy. It is never thought that she might have been forced to kill one of her girl child as a girl is rarely accepted by the society when she is illegitimate.

The worst sex ratio is a proof that still girl children, in many countries, face life threat and are either killed in the wombs of mothers or are left abandoned to die.

A girl is also expected to be serious and to shun light-heartedness just like Julie has suppressed and crushed her wishes and fulfills these desires only through her paintings and sketches where she portrays herself as a respectable young lady. She also paints herself in various guises like an Arab girl wearing a transparent veil, or a woman wearing colourful skirts, frilled blouses and bandannas. At the same time, she also paints herself in “a biddable femininity” with a passive folded hands and “bare shoulders and bosom *tamed* by lace” (Lessing, *Love, Again* 155 emphasis added). This shows that no matter how fiery life she wants to live, she is, at the end, subdued, tamed, and pacified by the society.

Maryrose, in *The Golden Notebook*, gets very little space in the novel. She is a woman with unattainable beauty, her softness is taken as a sign of her passivity, her dress makes her look like a doll, and she is an obedient and patient child without asserting her will in any matter. She offers herself as a consoler to everyone in her group and is the one of the girls who has the “gift of allowing themselves to be touched, kissed, held” because she feels that she needs to pay the price for being beautiful (Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* 109). She faces humiliation at the hands of men just as Willi who targets her beauty and makes her feel as if she does not have intellectual mind.

Beauvoir feels that a girl has always been convinced of male superiority where man uses his fists to exert force and violence on weak to retain his subjectivity and strength while the weaker section is coerced into believing its secondary position. The

girls are bullied by boys not only in their family but also in school and playground as they take pride in resorting to violence. A boy revolts against the given norms whereas a girl is doomed to docility and resignation in accepting her passive role without any protest. The image of a girl as sex object or as an object to flaunt is a common idea which is reflected through James's notion in *The Sweetest Dream*. He, as a leader, wants to have a girl besides him to flaunt his own youth following the convention that men, at higher posts, should definitely have girls with them to boast about it.

A girl is not seen as a self-sufficient being and does not dare to venture out in fields preserved for men, which might hinder her development. She readily, silently, and passively accepts her defeat and is made to believe that her future lies in the hands of males. According to Beauvoir, a girl is forbidden to climb trees, ladders, and roofs creating an inferiority complex in her because she accepts her resignation mutely. Just as is observed in the novel *Love, Again* Briony and Nell, the daughters of Anne and Hal, do not wish to take promotion in their job due to the amount of hard work required at the higher level. These girls are ignorant about their surroundings because their education system teaches them things fit only for certain feminine roles and does not impart them knowledge about political events of the country. Sarah calls them "amiable barbarians" as they blindly follow conventional roles. (Lessing, *Love, Again* 231)

A girl is seen as a piece to be displayed and is never respected by anyone which is also observed in Julie. She is described as a beautiful girl, who has fascinated many men while girls envy her, but in her personal life she faces rejection from her father and people only because she is an illegitimate child. She is disowned by her father and is not allowed to go to school because of maligning his reputable status and she, too, disowns

him as her father. She is given a doll by her father as a toy as it is expected from a girl to learn all 'feminine' qualities right from the beginning. But the rejection of the doll by Julie when she breaks it and buries it which is a clear indication that duties of caring, loving, and nurturing should not be imposed on a girl. She proves that it is wrong to presume girls in passive roles, but, later, succumbs herself to it.

In the same manner, many restrictions are also imposed on Mary when she is a young girl as she is forbidden, restrained, and restricted by her mother to talk to the natives, to walk out alone out of the fear of being disgraced by these natives, or to mingle with "the little Greek girl" whose parents are "dagos" out of the fear of defiling her status (Lessing, *The Grass is Singing* 32). The sense of discrimination against natives is inculcated in her mind right from her childhood which, later, develops into hatred for them after her marriage, the reason of her problems with her servants. Cheri Register writes that it is wrong to reserve certain sections for boys like "creativity, ingenuity, adventurousness, curiosity, perseverance, bravery, autonomy" while girls are supposed to be "passive, docile, dependent, incompetent, and self-effacing" (Register 238). She also believes that literature can be used as a means to depict women in strong roles, performing 'masculine' work, and how this can change their lives and attitude towards men which can dilute the rigid and fixed categories of roles defined for men and women.

Sylvia, in *The Sweetest Dream*, faces many problems like she is posted to Zimilia which is in a deplorable condition as it is without proper hospital, instruments, medicine, or food; she confronts many people who do not support her or give her the required funds instead accuse her of stealing money; she is accused of being a South African spy and being a Nazi by Rose who is keen to malign Sylvia's image making her a scapegoat in

her article; she is seen with suspicion because of her weak structure and is considered unfit to be a doctor. Later, when she treats old cases of diseases and cures them, the people start believing her to be a miracle worker. A white woman is always perceived to be rich by the people of third world country even if she is not, just as Sylvia who is expected to pay for the medical training of Joshua and his wage; for the education of his four sons and three children of Rebecca; for the construction of buildings and hospitals and for buying medicines, and other necessary things.

Sylvia is told by the Father to work tirelessly and to forget about her leisurely life of London as he assumes that women, in developed countries, live comfortable lives. He throws a challenge at Sylvia to convince nurses (nuns) and Joshua to work with her. Sylvia feels humiliated when the Father asks Aron to stay with him to avoid being sullied by people for allowing Sylvia to stay in his house. The Father also does not allow women to enter his room, but when he is really sick, Sylvia has to forcefully give him the blanket bath while Rebecca is embarrassed and feels sorry and guilty at this scene and averts her eyes from “the evidence of the Father’s manhood” (Lessing, *The Sweetest Dream* 288). Right from childhood, a girl has been taught not to look at the ‘manhood’ of a man, but Sylvia treats the Father as a doctor and does not feel shy in doing her duty to save him from fever. The Father, worried about Sylvia’s mechanical life, instructs her to take proper meal, proper sleep, and proper walk to relax her mind.

Sylvia also encounters the angry-man, a drunkard, and an insolent man, Joshua who does not want to cooperate with a white doctor. He is hostile to her and incites people into believing that she has looted the blacks and is now returning their money in form of mercy by building the hospital and she becomes an easy target for him. She also

faces humiliation at the hands of Mr. Mandizi who believes that he is not answerable to a woman regarding the issue of AIDS or about not distributing condoms. He chides Rebecca, a black woman, for being open to him regarding diseases like AIDS, believing that a girl has no right to talk to a man openly about certain health issues.

Sylvia is curbed down by the government officials claiming that she has been working in the country illegally and is replaced by a young doctor, a native of Zimilia, just because Sylvia seems to be a threat to their government. The male doctor thinks that he is better experienced than her because he has seen bloodshed and violence as compared to her experience with the natives of Zimilia having minor diseases. He forgets that she has to tackle with many deaths in this place. After the death of Joshua, Sylvia decides to give proper education to Clever and Zebedee, but she panics at the thought of teaching these children English manners, a difficult task for her. She has exhausted herself so badly that when she goes back to London she dies the very same day without any will due to which her fortune goes to Phyllida, her mother, which could have been utilised for the education of Clever and Zebedee. But Phyllida refuses to part with it saying that Sylvia owes a debt to her for the years of care she has taken of Sylvia.

The ears of a girl are “filled with the treasures of feminine wisdom, feminine virtues are presented to her” and she is also expected to be an expert in all household works like cooking and sewing apart from taking care of her appearance (Beauvoir 306). The girls in the singing band, in *Love, Again*, are also shown to give their best in terms of their appearances and not in their skills in music. The point is that only girls are hired for singing since it is considered to be their arena because women are emotional so real sentiments of songs can be conveyed only by them. They feel like “stroked cats” when

they are praised by a taxi driver without realising that they are being devalued and degraded to the position of being an animal. (Lessing, *Love, Again* 179)

Pat, twenty-six years, is described in terms of her physical appearance which is in contrast to the norm as she wears a military dress. Still, she is considered fit only for modeling and not for serious activities like wars or revolutions. Pat is not allowed to take independent decision like that of leaving the Party and is rather controlled by Bert and yields to his pressure. Alice observes that politics has taken a toll on their personal relationship, while Pat feels disillusioned by the working of Bert as he does not have a fixed goal. Pat is outspoken in the matters of politics contrary to what is thought about women. She wants to work according to her own ideas without any influence from anyone while Alice is usually shown adhering to Jasper's ideas. But, at the same time, Pat also acts like a woman and submits herself to Bert as soon as he embraces her. She beautifies herself to charm and attract Bert, acting like a damsel in distress waiting for her knight in armour, Bert, to rescue her from her miserable condition. She pretends to be attractive, lively, and affectionate with Bert, but, in reality, she is unable to bear him and his politics. At last, Pat makes a difficult decision and leaves the party and Bert. She moves out of the house and from his life to start a new life of her own where she might not have to be dependent on someone.

A girl is condemned to joyless existence as an adult, playing the role of 'little mother to the doll' or to her younger siblings, giving orders to them, and to be on equal footing as of her mother, which she might enjoy, but it lasts only for a brief period. Ruth writes, "From infancy onward, women's lives are suffused with the affective (feeling, experiential, non-cognitive) aspects of living" (Ruth 17). Beauvoir also observes that a

girl, first, builds the 'feminine' qualities like compassion, tenderness, loving, and caring to become a matron, but soon she realises her folly and finds that men have the authority to rule the world and the family. The father holds a "mysterious prestige" where mother punishes children in his name. (Beauvoir 312)

As an adolescent, Mary is happy being away from her confused father and a bitter mother to be in a boarding school. She dreads the idea of an irresponsible man, like her father, but ends up marrying Dick who is an irresponsible man. Mary inherits "an arid feminism" from her mother which is completely baseless as it makes her to despise men though she enjoys being in their company (Lessing, *The Grass is Singing* 35). One of the reasons why Mary does not feel the need of a company of a woman is because of her mother's influence which has created a split in her personality. She is, rather, happy, living as a single woman in South Africa without even thinking of getting married as she has seen her mother suffering in her marriage.

A girl is also affected by her mother who acts as an executioner and tries to claim her femininity through her daughter, promoting gender differences. Beauvoir writes that the child imitates her mother through her doll where the doll functions as her double as well as her child. A mother exercises her power and supreme authority over her child which is carried forward in a girl through her doll. A mother tries to assert her sovereignty and satisfies her dominating and sadistic attitude towards her girl child where the girl becomes an object in her hand which is repeated by the girl through her doll. Stories and books teach a girl that taking care of the child is mother's duty and she is also taught to exalt and glorify men.

Maryrose is subjugated by her mother and she likes to go into her shell whenever her mother tries to claim her femininity. At times, she feels the pangs of protest, but does not have courage to do so. Maryrose's mother, Mrs. Fowler, dominates and mentally harasses her daughter, snatching away all the vitality from her due to which Maryrose lives in the state of "listless irritation, a nervous exhaustion" (Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* 106). Mrs. Fowler is like Mary's mother of *The Grass is Singing*, who also affects Mary in such a manner that she dreads from marrying and does not remain happy after she marries Dick.

Tilly, in *The Sweetest Dream*, is a passive, frightened, weak, and pale child because of her hysterical mother, but she tries to put a smile on her face following the conventions that have been taught to her. Her real name is Sylvia and she is the step daughter of Johnny from his second marriage. Her life has become a mess because she absorbs the negative energy from her mother who tries to claim her in her loneliness while Sylvia fails to escape from the clutches of this grieving and hysterical lady. She is afraid of her mother's rage and its effect on her so, she tries to avoid her company, but circumstances force her to come face to face with her mother where she is unable to face Phyllida confidently. She is seen as a problematic child and Johnny feels that only Frances can take care of her well. Frances is forced to give up her 'safe place' to adjust Sylvia in a room. Gradually, Sylvia learns to socialise herself with the help of Andrew and Julia who nurse her and help her to come out of her shell.

Sophie, in the same novel, is introduced in terms of her physical attraction which makes boys fall in love with her immediately. She is a delicate girl who has lost her father due to cancer and suffers at the hands of her mother. Her mother wants to lay claim

over Sophie as an emotional outlet once she loses her husband while Sophie also wants to get rid of her grieving mother. Her mother pressurises Sophie to end her life along with her so as to escape this cruel world and Sophie has to face this trauma daily which forces her to leave her mother alone. She never tries to find out the solution or to help her mother recover from this pessimistic attitude.

A girl is seen as an own extension by her mother and she becomes an easy target of her anger and sufferings which a mother has undergone during her life. Beauvoir talks about few mothers who are keen to take revenge of their suppression from their daughters by exploiting them and turning them into passive objects the way they have faced. Mary's mother finds in Mary her 'double', a confidante with whom she can share all her miseries and sorrows. She prepares a shield in terms of her daughter against her husband. She treats her husband "with a cold indifference" and does not want him to realise that she cares for him and behaves as if he does not exist for her (Lessing, *The Grass is Singing* 33). She takes her revenge by scornfully ridiculing her husband in front of his friends. Her grief and sorrows make Mary hate her father as her mother's sadistic attitude has been transferred to her. Mary does not realise that she is being instilled with hatred against her father because her father always comes home completely drunk.

Her mother has influenced Mary negatively due to which Mary is unable to develop into a whole and independent person, and, rather, becomes the older and sardonic double of her mother. Mary is, now, a raving and ranting woman, on the one hand, when she is with Dick, her husband, and her servants, while on the other hand, she behaves as if she has given up everything in her life and has learnt to accept her defeat easily. Mary, the youngest child, is the product of disturbed marriage of her parents and severe fights

between them have influenced her a lot and she is unable to settle down well in her marriage.

Phyllida has been sent to Canada by her parents to live with a family when she is just ten years old. This moment of separation turns out to be a disaster for her as she faces humiliation by that family. This snaps off the bond between her and her parents as she starts remaining aloof from them. This makes her hysterical out of the fear of being separated from her loved ones, but no one seems to bother about this problem. Meriel also suffers from a broken childhood as her father is shot by his own side while her mother commits suicide leading to a permanent depression in her, making her incapable to establish a sound relationship with her husband, Rupert, later.

Molly, in *The Golden Notebook*, is also the product of broken marriage and has lived a disturbed childhood. Due to this, she is also unable to settle in her own marriage. This is also the case of Janet whose parents have separated and she tries to find security in her friends. Anna and Max marry only to give Janet a legitimate name and then they separated after a year. Anna acts according to her lover, Michael's will, but still is unable to love him and becomes frigid towards him, the reason behind their separation. Ella's mother dies when she is very young and she is brought up by her father who is "a silent, hard-bitter man, an ex-army officer from India" (Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* 175). She does not get proper love and care as a child which she tries to seek in her marriage or in her relationship with Paul, but gets disappointed. Her father doesn't seem to bother about her and they do not talk often as he feels embarrassed to talk to his daughter.

Beauvoir has tried to examine the relationship between mother and daughter minutely and finds that a daughter is forced to involve herself in housework like sweeping, dusting, peeling vegetables at a very young age whereas a son is exempted from it. If a daughter is the eldest then she is “prematurely integrated into the universe of the serious” and enters the adolescence stage as an adult (Beauvoir 310). A girl is brought up in a kind of atmosphere where she gets attached to her mother and is unable to bear her pain and suffering. In the absence of mother, it is always expected from a daughter to perform her womanly role while other family members enjoy their life with no contribution from their side. After returning from the work, Kate is happy to see that her daughter, Eileen has already prepared the meal for everyone and maintained the house very well. Feminist historian, Carroll Smith Rosenberg writes that in a mother-daughter relationship, mother has always tried to train her daughter in the “arts of housewifery and motherhood.” (qtd. in De Shazer 611)

A girl is conditioned in such a manner that she loves to play with her kitchen set, but when she grows up she finds displeasure in this “monotonous and mechanical” work, and repetition of work as “it is laden with waiting: waiting for the water to boil, for the roast to be cooked just right, for the laundry to dry” and then dreads “long moments of passivity and emptiness” as it leads to boredom (Beauvoir 493). Kate is also turning her daughter into a woman which she has dreaded herself. Kate thinks of her sons’ future in terms of their political careers, but she wants her daughter to marry and settle down in her life with her husband just like she has done. Shiela Ruth remarks, “The role of a middle-class white female in our society includes playing with dolls, helping mother, getting married, having children, cooking and cleaning, being sexy, and so on” (Ruth 29). In *The*

Good Terrorist, Jocelin takes pride in showing off her skills and expertise with electronic devices and explosives quite contrary to the notion that women and science cannot go together while her friend Caroline enjoys cooking food.

A child comprehends the world through her/his eyes, hands, and body and not through her/his sexual parts. Beauvoir, in Volume Two of her book *The Second Sex*, traces how the birth and the weaning period is the same for the child of both the sexes and mother and her flesh are objects for them. Both of them try to seek their mother's attention in the initial three to four years. A girl is also sturdy, just like her brother, till the age of twelve, but after that, she is "imperiously breathed" with the notions of passivity and coquetry while a boy is taught to take pride in his virility. (Beauvoir 293)

A girl is doomed to secrets, lies, modesty, makeup, and other 'feminine' actions and is expected to resort to being a passive woman. Sarah, when young, acts according to the convention and enjoys becoming an object of gaze of men wherever she goes. She is described as a robust attractive woman, having "an animal and glistening physicality", arrogant about her beauty, and takes pride in rejecting men (Lessing, *Love, Again* 145). Gradually, she realises that the power in which she takes pride, as a girl, is not eternal because she will not be able to attract men when she ages because she is never told that the attractiveness is fleeting and transient. She is encouraged to find love with her charms, but, later, is forced to shut her doors for love when she ages. She is forced to accept that 'falling in love' is only for a young girl and love is a dreadful suffering when she becomes old. Sarah offers a critique of how love is related to physical attractiveness bringing arrogance and pride in the owner and how this becomes the parameter to judge all other women.

The parents' attitude towards their children creates a difference in their upbringing as they shower more love on their sons, talk to them seriously, take pride in them, and grant them more rights. Michael Kimmel remarks, "In adolescence, both boys and girls get their first real dose of gender inequality, and that is what explains the different paths" (Kimmel 77). Claudine, in *Love, Again*, is snubbed and smacked by her mother when she tries to grab her mother's attention while the mother is busy looking after her son, Ned. The mother uses sexual tone with her son as she sees in him an extension of his lover while daughter seems to be a rival to her. The daughter always feels neglected, but this vicious cycle goes on as one day the same girl will be a mother and will repeat the same thing with her daughter. The problem does not lie in a girl, but how she is conditioned to accept the importance of man over woman. She is taught and prepared for her future by telling, "You will always be disliked, and you will have to watch her love that little creature you love so much because you think that if you love what she loves, she will love you." (Lessing, *Love, Again* 347)

Sarah also faces discrimination from her mother as Hal, her brother, has been her mother's favourite. She is made to accept her secondary position as soon as he is born. Lessing remarks, "Well, unfair preferences are hardly unusual in families" referring to the preference of a male child over a female child (Lessing, *Love, Again* 87). Sarah has been a neglected child, missing the warmth and sweetness from her mother due to which she does not like attending her brother when he comes for her help later. Her mother, Kate Millgreen, adores her son more than Sarah due to which Sarah feels detached from her childhood memories.

Though Janet's perspective has not been offered to the readers in *The Golden Notebook*, yet one can assume that she is also neglected by her mother who is busy with her lover, Michael. She is described by Anna as "a charming, conventionally intelligent little girl, destined by nature an unproblematic life" (Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* 476). Molly, her mother's friend, spends time with her and Janet finds only companion in Tommy, Molly's son. He also leaves her when he has a girlfriend while she tries to delude herself into believing that Tommy will continue liking her. Janet spends her time playing with her friends instead of being at home all alone. She has created her own 'child's world' at school and does not want to leave it as she feels more protected in it. Neglected by her mother she seeks companion and comfort in other people because the bond between the mother and the daughter is weak.

Alice, as a child, mostly sees parties in her house organised by her parents and she always helps her mother in laying out dishes for her guests. She feels neglected by her mother and does not get proper care as it is remarked, "Where there were parties, where there were people in the house, it seemed Alice became invisible to her mother, and had no place in her own home" (Lessing, *The Good Terrorist* 229). Alice is asked to sleep in her friend's house or is offered to sleep in her parent's room when guests stay in their house and this continues even when she becomes an adolescent. This is the reason why she grows up hating her mother's middle-class living standard and for making her feel that she has no right to lay claim over her room.

A girl is always raised by parents for the purpose of marriage rather than focusing on her personal development. She becomes a disturbed individual in two cases, either when her upbringing is different from that of her brother or when her parents separate.

The difference in the upbringing is also observed by Beauvoir who writes that “the young boy leaps towards an open future” and several fields are open to him where he can experience the whole world while the girl is destined to fulfill her domestic roles and is confined to her family. (Beauvoir 323)

Sophie, in *The Sweetest Dream*, tries to seek comfort only in men as she is made to believe that men will liberate her from her problems so she turns to Colin and Roland Shattock, an actor, whom she meets during her rehearsals. She faces humiliation and rejection at the hands of Roland stating that she is not mature enough for him still, she wants to cling to him. He rejects her saying that he is gay, but takes Sophie out alone and declares his love for Sophie. The fear of sending Sophie alone with a man is still thought to be dangerous in a country where it is assumed that women are freer than women of other third world countries. She has been groomed with the purpose of marrying and settling down in a family so she ends up marrying Colin.

Frances, an obedient and a punctual girl, attends her school regularly because she is taught that she will be able to earn her living only if she has good education. She discontinues her studies because she meets Johnny who becomes a priority for her as she wants to settle down well in her life. Similarly, her mother-in-law, Julia von Arne, born in Germany in a gentle family with a diplomat father and musician mother, has a strict upbringing and has been brought up by English and French governesses. She likes to be dressed up in prim and proper manner and expects Frances and others to do the same thing. Julia acts with Philip Lennox in a conventional and formal manner through her gestures, smile, and acting in a mechanical way when he proposes for marriage. She has been taught to be conscious of her body and to remain modest throughout her life which

is deeply embedded in her till her death. Philip does not want to marry a tomboyish girl so he goes for Julia, a perfect woman for him who would “melt like a snowflake” if a sunbeam strikes her (Lessing, *Love, Again* 24). This clearly indicates that men always want weaker women, who would easily fit into stereotypical roles.

Beauvoir compares the growth and conditioning of a male child with that of a female child. The weaning period for a boy is early than a girl because he is asked not to cry, not to look at himself in the mirror, and not to ask for kisses from the mother though this might hurt him, yet the male child is able to achieve his adulthood and frees himself from his mother and draws an air of superiority around him. Tommy, in *The Golden Notebook*, is a problematic child like his father with no trace of his mother’s vivacity. Tommy is also the product of broken marriage which has created a split in his mind for which he blames his mother as he is suffering from “a paralysis of will” (237). He also blames Molly for seeing his life in phases or stages; or as “temporary shapes of something” rather than seeing him as a complete person (243). After shooting himself he follows his father’s footsteps and has several affairs, which disturbs Molly as she disapproves of his actions. He refuses to take any help from his mother and wants her to leave him alone.

Molly faces humiliation from her son as he feels that he has the right to blame both Anna and Molly. He blames them for creating in him a divided mind regarding communism by bringing him up on certain principles and then asking him to abandon those principles to settle in a job with his father. He regrets his decision of not following his father who is at least clear with his goals and his ideas. He accuses Molly for being a communist and a bohemian just as his father criticises her. He blames Anna for failing

him by giving up her ideas and hobbies. He is harsh towards Marion, in the beginning, for being a drunkard woman and neglecting her children by being obsessed with affairs of Richards. Later, he acts as a saviour of Marion and motivates her to leave drinking heavily and to indulge in some constructive and welfare work.

Tommy enjoys frightening women by reading books on psychology and affects them with his own hysteria. Anna is forced to move into her shell in order to avoid being affected by Tommy's hysteria as he shows Anna her real face that she is afraid of being exposed or being alone due to which she is unable to write about life. She assumes a pleading and appealing attitude towards Tommy who takes the privilege of being a man and humours her; tells her that her bed looks like a coffin; chides her for disguising her real self, and intrudes her privacy by reading her notebooks leaving her feel tensed and "terribly exposed, forcing herself into immobility." (Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* 245)

Tommy makes these women realise that they have sacrificed their interests for the sake of their family as Anna has stopped writing and Molly has stopped acting and these women have moulded themselves according to changing situations. He suggests Anna to remarry to ward off her loneliness; suggests her to write everything in one notebook rather than four notebooks, and not to treat her life as a chaos or a mess. He orders her to stop spreading the ideas of disgust and futility through her writings as she writes in her Black notebook, "Every time I sit down to write, and let my mind go easy, the words, It is so dark, or something to do with the darkness. Terror. The terror of this city. Fear of being alone." (Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* 71)

Beauvoir feels that for a young man, there is no contradiction between his existence and his vocation whereas there is a divorce between a girl's human condition and her feminine vocation. This contradiction can also be seen between a girl's claim to be the subject, activity, and freedom and her assumption of being an erotic and passive object. Freedman quotes an old saying which tells that "A boy expands into a man; a girl contracts into a woman" (Freedman 144). Julie earns her own living by teaching people drawing, painting, and piano. The girls want Julie to settle in town and to abide by the conventions so that she could also be the prisoner just like them. The society does not allow any woman to live life on her own terms which Julie seems to defy as she enjoys living in the forest rather than in the cultured world. Still, she is hopeful of being rescued by Paul and forgoes trying her luck in big cities. She yearns to be free, but she is also ready to sacrifice these for the sake of her love for Paul who does not care about it.

Julie wants to go to Paris to join theatre or to live a life of an outcast, but she is forced to confine herself in a small place. Stephen feels that this life of Julie is what he has never been allowed to live and feels more attached to dead Julie, but he also critiques her for using her "very cold intelligence" to charm men or for being romantically engaged with Paul and Remy (Lessing, *Love, Again* 218). Behind this intelligent and attractive woman, there is a disturbed woman who falls in love with men only to be betrayed by them. She draws criticism from women living in town still, she is asked to teach the daughter of a wealthy family where the youngest son, Remy Rostand, falls fatally in love with her. He is described as a man with "marvellous masculinity" who falls in love with Julie only to prove to his family that he is an adult now. (94)

Despite being betrayed once, Julie falls in love again not heeding to the caution given to her by her mother and she enters into relationship with Remy for three years where she stops giving lessons to the girls. The problem, in this relationship, is that he is five years younger to her and his parents are sure that their son will come out of this infatuation. They ignore the rumour about their son only because they are getting a cheaper teacher for their daughters. Remy, due to his French origin, is asked to leave Julie because society cannot accept a respectable man stooping lower than his status just to marry a girl. The blame is clearly put on the origin or the birth of a man without even thinking that no woman can survive only on love.

Beauvoir feels that the conflict between an autonomous existence and being an 'other' does not arise in a boy which is present in a girl who is taught to make herself object, to please men, to renounce her autonomy, and to put her freedom at stake. She is not encouraged to show her vibrant exuberance. Freedman remarks, ". . . children believe that male body is to be strengthened and developed, while the female body is to be protected and beautified" (Freedman 142). Beauvoir believes that a girl brought up by a father escapes the defects of femininity which is not accepted by the society and if she is brought up by a mother, she is integrated into the feminine world.

When a girl turns out to be a tomboy she is forced to enter a 'feminine' world by accepting her passivity which is observed in the case of Cathie, Sarah's daughter in the novel *Love, Again*. She has a poster of *Mardi Gras* on her wall and likes to disguise herself as the youth in a Pierrot costume. Cathie, being a rebel, is not accepted by the society and so she is introduced into her conventional roles as "a successful matron, with children, a job, a satisfactory husband" (Lessing, *Love, Again* 5). The success of a girl is

mostly calculated in terms of her married life and her potentiality to raise a family where her own identity is pushed under the carpet. The thought that men do not like tomboys and thinking girls, because these girls might claim their subjectivity, makes these girls reject and repress their spontaneity.

A girl is ready to sacrifice her modesty and pride and submit herself only to those who do not want to subjugate her. The pride of a girl is hurt in two cases and she becomes frigid when the partner is too violent and brutal or when he is too self-controlled and asks her to make herself an object or a prey to him. Beauvoir remarks, "Frigidity itself can be seen as a punishment that woman imposes as much on herself as on her partner: wounded in her vanity, she resents him and herself, and she does not permit herself pleasure" (Beauvoir 425). Mary becomes a butt of jokes and subject of gossips and yields to the pressure of the society. She marries Dick Turner as she feels that Dick will surely restore her feeling of superiority over men and will support her.

Beauvoir also remarks that idolatrous love is dangerous because when a woman discovers her idol's weaknesses and mediocrity and his inability to reciprocate her love, she feels disillusioned by the image which she has, herself, created and as a result she feels repelled by him. If the man is unable to devote himself to her she becomes frustrated. She is made to believe that her independent status cannot alone guarantee her happiness for which she has to turn to a man. Mary and Dick are quite opposite to each other as Mary likes the town and cinema whereas Dick is claustrophobic, hates going to cinema, and hates the changing conditions of the town as it is full of ugly little houses. Dick wishes to get married and have children, but he is unable to establish himself well due to lack of money, increasing debts, and huge loss at the farms.

Beauvoir also feels that masochism exists when “the individual chooses to constitute himself as a pure thing through the consciousness of the other, to represent oneself to oneself as a thing, to play at being a thing” and in Mary’s case, she starts feeling alienated from herself (Beauvoir 424). In *The Sweetest Dream*, the nuns, black women in Zimilia, are forced to embrace religion to escape from poverty and to save their family from their expenses. They are told to devote themselves to God and to find pleasure in serving him. This is the major issue which has been dealt by the author in a subtle manner so as not to offend any religious sect. The problem is that this practice continues till today also where people are lured by few missionaries to embrace a particular religion and then they are discarded as converts and are never accepted by ‘pure’ race of that religion. These women do not look after the hospitals well for which they are hired and rather they are more interested in keeping the Churches clean and tidy. It is also remarked that if this pressure will become intolerable then these nuns might protest and give up all this just like Sister Molly does in the novel.

Another example from the same novel is Joyce who is a problematic child and is described as “a screaming baby, a grizzling toddler, a disagreeable child”, and falls sick whenever she goes to school (Lessing, *Love, Again* 12). She is reserved in nature and does not like making friends. Ironically, both her parents are doctors, but they cannot treat their daughter. They do not realise that what she wants is not the money, but the comfort from them and feels aloof despite having two “viable” sisters and an “ideal” father (93). She is terrorised by her father’s punishments while her mother has no time for her as she is exhausted by her work. All this makes Joyce find comfort in her aunt, Sarah.

Joyce stays with Sarah where she spends her time only in eating, drinking, watching television, and making random calls to people just to seek attention from her relatives. Her life seems to be in a crisis due to which she makes several suicide attempts. She lives with drug addicts, pushers, and prostitutes and has become one of them. Despite facing problems, Joyce puts up a “characteristic smile” on her face just as a girl should do which shows that her rebellion against the norms and customs, which bind her, is not strong (Lessing, *Love, Again* 56). Even Sarah looks at Joyce in feminine terms as she believes that Joyce can grow up to be a beautiful woman if she applies some make-up quite contrary to Joyce’s present appearance. This clearly reflects that the conditioning of a girl is done in such a manner that she tries to feminise all women who come into her contact. Instead of accompanying drug peddlers, Joyce could have involved herself in some constructive work like accompanying her aunt, Sarah, to theatre and learning the art of theatrics.

Some girls love to play the victim as they see it as a protest against their harsh destiny and also find repose in it as they feel that they are alive if they are surrounded by tragedy. They suffer from masochism and find great thrill and pleasure in annihilating themselves in front of the superiority of man where the self is constituted in terms of others. Jill, in *The Sweetest Dream*, is shown to be a silent girl and is ready to accept all kinds of sufferings. She has been abandoned by her lover after she gets pregnant while no one knows the identity of the lover and she is not keen to reveal the identity of the culprit. Beauvoir finds it “morose and haughty initiation in sexual adventure” when a girl indulges in sadomasochistic practices and in self-mutilation like gashing her thigh with a razor or burning with cigarettes just as is observed in several marks appearing on Jill’s

hands who tried to cut her wrists several times (Beauvoir 378). Colin comes to her rescue by getting her aborted silently, but she goes on suffering silently. This woman is again a typical model who wants to bear the burden herself, but does not want to punish the person who has spoiled her life.

“Destined to be passive prey, she claims her freedom right up to submitting to pain and disgust” which is critiqued by Beauvoir severely because she feels that this makes a girl accept it as her fate and destiny. She is made to believe that she is flesh as defined by the society where “affirming herself [like boys], imposing herself, are forbidden to an adolescent girl, and that is what fills her heart with revolt: she hopes neither to change the world nor to emerge from it” (Beauvoir 378). Similarly, Jane, a thirteen years old plump girl, is being tormented, ignored, bullied, and insulted by a tall and attractive boy who does not seem to pay attention to her in zoo while she follows him wherever he goes.

The boy takes the privilege and casts angry and disapproving looks at Jane when she watches masturbating monkey because a girl is not supposed to look at the male enjoying sexual pleasure be it an animal while a boy has the right to enjoy this sight. She is burning with the longing for the boy to notice her while the boy turns to her only when he is in pain and needs someone for comfort. The boy goes with Maureen and does not hesitate to kiss her while Jane bears the torment. Maureen initiates the kiss as against the traditional model and offers a challenge to everything which is like “a slap in the world’s face” (Lessing, *The Summer Before the Dark* 226). As the role demands that a girl should be a passive beloved instead of an active lover, the boy feels cheated and returns to Jane.

This clearly shows that boys and men do not like unconventional women rather they like weak and subjugated women.

In *Love, Again*, as a six years old girl, Sarah, faces humiliation at the hands of a five years old boy who is in love with a nine years old girl, Mary Templeton, because Mary is the most glamorous girl of the town. Despite all this, he embraces Sarah and admits his love for her, too, leaving her confused and outraged because she dreams of establishing a house with him without any distraction of any other girl. The boy wants to lay claim over the beautiful girl and once he realises that she is inaccessible, he turns to another weaker girl just to claim his authority.

The games and dreams build passivity in girls while toughness, independence, climbing trees, and fighting with companions in violent and daring games are all attributed to boys and they are guided to dominate nature. If ever a girl tries to act like boys she is termed as a virago and is punished severely. A boy is prepared “to take blows, to deride pain, to hold back tears from the earliest age” (Beauvoir 305). But a girl also has a desire to assert her power over the world and to protest against the inferior situation by escaping the authority of her mother.

A rebellious girl likes to belong to the ‘privileged’ section of the society where she tries to compete with boys, take active part in sports, studies, and in climbing trees, gets flattered when boys treat her as their equal. Sylvia is attracted towards rebellious activities initially due to her disturbed childhood. She finds the company of Jake Miller amusing and ventures into astrology despite being warned by Julia to do some other constructive work. Sylvia does not realise that for Jake and his group of fortunetellers,

she is just a pet and she enjoys playing this role happily. She leaves the group only when Jake forces himself on her by kissing her forcefully and inciting her to have physical relationship with him as her morality does not allow her to do so. The problem lies in her upbringing where she is taught to enjoy being an object to men, but once they start asserting their rights over a girl, she feels insecure. A girl is always annoyed with her oppression in forcing her to obey the rules of decency, of clothings and manners, and of being enslaved to cleaning tasks.

Julie also tries to defy certain conventional roles while people make fun of her as they claim that they have seen her walking all alone in the forest and even dancing naked. Quite contrary to her life in the forest, she feels afraid of the corrupted town and finds herself a misfit in it. Her seductive and 'ruthless' femininity is questioned and she is termed as immoral by the society because she defies all codes of conduct established for a woman. The paintings of similar scenes shock the society as well as her fans because this act is considered to be immoral. She hates confinement and writes that she is an open book and people will find only "uncurtained and unshuttered window" in her house (Lessing, *Love, Again* 20). It is remarked, "Julie's life had been cursed by the suspicious surveillance of the citizens" as it is shown that society disapproves of her being a vagabond. (122)

Rose Trimble, in *The Sweetest Dream*, does not get along with her parents and seeks shelter with Frances. She introduces herself as Andrew's girlfriend and claims of having been sexually exploited by him and now forces herself onto him to provide shelter to her. She watches her weight as she wants to remain in the rat race of being a perfect girl. She is not at all interested in completing her studies and rather likes to indulge in

delinquent activities like travelling without buying any ticket, taking pride in breaking rules and being summoned by police for this as she looks it as one of her contribution against the fascist government. Her unpleasant attitude makes people dislike her while she blames Frances for forcing her to leave Julia's house. Later, she becomes a freelance journalist, keen to write articles, criticising and falsely accusing Lennox family having a relationship with Nazism. This profession makes her ruthless and contemptuous of others as she eyes to achieve success by manipulating truths.

Maureen, in *The Summer Before the Dark*, does not like to conform to conventional roles as she is described by Kate as a reckless and an unconventional girl. She likes to experiment with her dresses and her looks, loves to smoke, to dance in a self-observed manner without caring for anyone, to keep her clothes in piles, and to buy new clothes in search of a new identity. She feels uncomfortable living "among the rigid categories of the old" and once tries to be in a uniform just as Philip wants her to do, but discards it as she feels caged in it (Lessing, *The Summer Before the Dark* 158). She freely chooses to be a gipsy, or a young boy, or a belly dancer, but Kate, as an aged woman, does not have this choice. This makes Kate envious because she has to suppress her fantasies out of the fear of upsetting her family and its reputation.

Maureen, in a relationship with Philip, feels entrapped and repelled by him when he tries to assert his superiority over her by talking in an authoritative manner and forcing her to marry him because he finds himself capable enough to give her home, car, and children which every woman wants. He does not think beyond buying material happiness for her. When he comes to her home, she attends to him and makes all the arrangements like a typical girl, but she does not conform in the matter of her dress as she wears dress

of patterns and prints which is deep in the front showing her breasts. This attracts Philip's attention everytime he talks to her and wants to convert her into a conventional, sympathetic, and submissive woman by making her conform to old values. He wants her to lead a "typical, ordered, middle-class, 'responsible' life." (Lessing, *The Summer Before the Dark* 186)

Maureen has always been in a strong conflict with Philip's ideas, and does not hesitate in expressing her disgust and anger at him. He wants her to cut down her expenses to help the needy people. Due to which, Maureen does not show any table manners in front of him as a sign of protest, but immediately melts and responds to him warmly when Philip consoles her by putting his hands on her shoulder as she feels a cocoon of warmth around her while Philip takes pleasure in seeing her crying and performing her 'feminine' role. Her craving for his love makes him boast about himself that she will not be able to get a man like him. He also feels that he is capable of 'creating' a new obedient and sophisticated Maureen, but she refuses to marry him. She thinks that marrying him will confine her to slavery. Maureen is confused about Williams, too, as she loves to be in his arms, but also protests his action of taming her.

Beauvoir feels that when the "solitary cult" is not enough, a girl turns to her female friends which she sees as lesbian relationship where both are on equal pedestal without any distinction between subject or object and no alienation with the self because the 'other' is also an 'object of desire' (Beauvoir 366). It is believed that a girl is charmed by softness of things often compared to breasts which attracts her to be in a relationship with a woman rather than a man. Beauvoir remarks, "She has no taste for rough fabrics, gravel, rocks, bitter flavors, acrid odours; like her brothers, it was her mother's flesh that

she first caressed and cherished; in her narcissism, in her diffuse or precise homosexual experiences, she posited herself as a subject and she sought the possession of a female body” (399). On the one hand, she wants a strong embrace but is also afraid of brutality and force that might wound her.

For a drained out and tired Alice, Caroline strikes a friendship with her and acts like a natural vitality to her. Beauvoir feels that the feminine body does not frighten a girl as no violence or harshness is involved in this relationship and may be driven to homosexuality or may be seen as lesbians by men. Faye is also described in feminine terms, having a soft-face with her hair tied in a ponytail while her lesbian partner Roberta is a bulky woman with a strong face and short hair. Their room reflects the “bower of femininity” or the way they have managed their things (Lessing, *The Good Terrorist* 94). Faye’s disturbed childhood leads her to embrace lesbianism. The description is given just to contrast their outlook and establish their lesbian relationship right at the beginning where Roberta is shown to play the role of a pacifier and a mother.

In a lesbian relationship, an adolescent girl turns to a woman as she finds her less fearsome than the male, but she also expects that her partner should possess male prestige, a social status, and a profession to earn her own living. This is why it is always preferred that the beloved of the woman, who plays the masculine role, should not be married which would lead to a conflict as the object of her adoration could be under the control of a spouse or a lover. This relationship ends when the younger woman realises the possessiveness of the older woman and then she turns to a man trying to seek a normal relationship. Roberta suffers at the hand of Faye as she desires and longs for Faye’s love while Faye wants to get rid of her.

As against Beauvoir's idea, the relationship between Kate and Maureen cannot be termed as lesbian relationship. Maureen and Kate share a cordial relation where Kate provides and gets comfort from Maureen which she lacked from her children. But Maureen gets upset when she observes her thumb in her mouth and feels like returning to the stage of an innocent child. Maureen feels that Kate's presence has hampered her growth and wants her to leave. Maureen also wants Kate to think what she has achieved so far in fulfilling her womanly duties. They have an argument regarding this where Kate tries to explain that Maureen is wrong if she decides to remain unmarried.

For Kate, Maureen seems like a bird, who is trying to dash around the cage. The conversation continues as Maureen asks Kate, "All day long, busy busy busy-at what?" and Kate replies, "At bringing you up" (Lessing, *The Summer Before the Dark* 194). Maureen cannot take the idea that mothers spend time in raising children only and keep themselves busy which she does not want to do. She accuses Kate for accepting her secondary position while she also conforms to the same role when Philip embraces her out of love. Despite having an argument, these women help each other as Kate tries to give good piece of advice to Maureen and Maureen tells her not to be guided by anyone else. Maureen encourages Kate to share her happy moments of her life which she finds only when she has spent time with her family on holidays whereas Maureen wants to know the moments which Kate has shared alone with her husband, Michael, and whether there are such happy moments between them or not. Maureen wants to feed herself on Kate's experiences to decide whether she should marry or not.

Beauvoir feels that the conflict arises in an adolescent girl when she flirts with her 'Ideal one' which is impossible to find, but if she finds one she recoils as soon as the

lover becomes aggressive and starts manifesting vivid emotions in return. The girl gets confused when she faces this kind of situation which again leads her to fall in love for the impossible where the man might be her friend's lover or a married man. Maureen wants to know from Kate whether she is sorry for marrying because Maureen is confused about her relationship with her men and wants to know how a woman feels when she is married. She is afraid of marriage because her mother has been a failure in marriage and is indecisive about it. She wants to formulate her decision regarding marriage only after listening to Kate's experiences. She even asks Kate whether her daughter wants to marry or not. These young people are confused regarding marriage as they believe that they are told and taught to find happiness in it, but when they see others being unhappy in marriage they decide to opt out of it.

This incident leaves Kate thinking whether she is happy with her marriage or not and tries to justify it that she has four children out of her marriage, symbols of their love. Moreover, she is unable to justify why she talks about Mary Finchley, a rebel, and not about her happy married life which makes Maureen more determined not to marry. Maureen believes that Kate is unhappy in her marriage, but wants to cling to it and that she is a "megalomaniac" because Kate believes in an exaggerated importance or power against her real situation where she holds a secondary position to her husband. (Lessing, *The Summer Before the Dark* 218)

Beauvoir remarks that at a certain age, a girl is in "a state of constant denial" if "the girl no longer wants to be a child, but she does not accept becoming an adult and she blames herself for her childishness and then for her female resignation" (Beauvoir 376). She is divided internally and is unable to escape the reality and tries to find refuge in

laughter and mockery of someone else or she might recourse to using abusive language in defiance of adults and society. Faye uses “cockney voice, all pert and pretty” and always tries to bear a smile on her face, but also warns Alice saying, “Ask no question and get told no lies” (Lessing, *The Good Terrorist* 28). Contrary to this, Roberta is shown to have a comfortable and accommodating voice, but both these women have adopted artificiality in their tone and have deeply imbibed it. Even Alice feels like using her father’s Northern tone, but does not do so as she feels that she is being dishonest to herself. On analysing, gradually, Alice realises that Roberta is not the “butch-motherly” woman in this relationship, but it is Faye who controls the situation. (112)

The stepping into an adolescent age is quite confusing where a girl has already left her past and yet she has not committed to a new life, she hesitates to become woman, yet frets at still being a child. The poem by Margaret Lawrence “Am I A Child?” clearly highlights the conflict of a child stepping into her adolescence and is confused about it. She writes:

Well, am I a child or an adult ?

No ! Not one or the other now;

One pace in front of childhood,

And one behind an adult.

Soon I shall stride into a new world,

The world of adult life. (Lawrence 21-26)

Beauvoir writes that love can be accepted by a girl only if it is “unthreatening to her integrity”, if “her heart beats, she feels the pain of absence, the pangs of presence, vexation, hope, bitterness, enthusiasm, but not authentically; no part of her is engaged”, but if the abstract lover is admired and idolised, the girl lives in an “intense imaginary life” (Beauvoir 371). Ted, Paul, and Willi want to sleep with Maryrose, but she is unable to respond as it is told that she had an incestuous relationship with her brother who also acted as a shell from their bullying mother. She seems to feel that she has lost her life after the death of her brother and has idolised a lover in him while other men see her as a sex object wasting her youth mourning over her dead brother. She is always surrounded by “swains”, but she wants to marry the person who looks like her brother or who really loves her and feels dejected to find that most men want to sleep with her (Lessing, *The Golden Notebook* 127). She does not escape from the charm of George and feels that he is the man who can make her forget her brother, but knows it is impossible. So, she is warned by Willi that her attitude will ward off all boys and she will end up marrying late under the compulsion of the society just as happens with Mary in *The Grass is Singing*. Maryrose ends up marrying a middle aged man, father of three children, whom she does not love.

The problem arises for a girl when she is unable to hold her new found autonomy, when she escapes from her parents, raising her need for a guide and a master. She is ready to sacrifice this freedom easily because she has started assuming herself as an object and is unable to find a confident autonomy. In *The Golden Notebook*, young women, who are betrayed by their lovers, turn to politics and join communist party, but the hypocrisies of people in the party snap these women emotionally. Anna suggests the

members of the communist party not to conceal any truth from the public, but the tone is always that of an apology and defense showing that women are considered to be weak in political matters. She fears in being vocal to the leaders regarding politics and does not seem to bother about the events around and rather is concerned only with the idea of being with Michael. She wants to rebel against her “future enslavement through her present powerlessness”, but due to her negative attitude she does not try to get out of her cage (Beauvoir 378). All these symptoms are due to the ambivalence between desire and anxiety. She does not attempt to push back the limits of the possible or to revolt against the established world where boundaries and laws are preserved.

The image of a young woman with a girl child is recurrent in Lessing’s novels just as is the case with Kate where she looks at a young girl, being trained to become a woman by looking after her doll, symbolic of her future baby. The problem with her is that she does not take help from Kate or Maureen and rather flashes them defiant looks as if saying to mind their own business. This girl feels burdened by becoming mother of two children at very a young age while her lover leaves her alone. Maureen panics seeing this situation and decides to marry Williams instead of Philip as she will have nannies and nurses for her children if she marries Williams.

The image of a young girl with a small child in a pushchair probably symbolises how girls are taught to handle responsibilities right from the beginning of their lives. The girl named Monica Winters, in *The Good Terrorist*, is badly in need of a shelter and approaches Alice to solve her problem, but Alice could not allow her to live with her without taking permission from others. This girl has been shoved into one room flat with her husband and child by the Council and has to bear the brunt of cooking in the same

room. A girl with puffy and pale face has no time for her as she has to look after her child and her drunkard husband. This girl faces insults from Faye and is forced and kicked by her out of the house.

Beauvoir remarks:

It is a painful condition to know one is passive and dependent at the age of hope and ambition, at the age where the will to live and to take a place in the world intensifies; woman learns at this conquering age that no conquest is allowed her, that she must disavow herself, that her future depends on men's good offices. (Beauvoir 383)

Beauvoir writes, "Her erratic mood, her tears and her nervous crises are less the result of a physiological fragility than the sign of her deep maladjustment" (383). She also offers a solution and writes that a girl should learn "to overcome her modesty, to get to know her partner, and enjoy his caresses without violence or surprise, without fixed rules or a precise time frame" (415). Beauvoir talks about various issues regarding the subjugation of a girl and the force applied on her to 'become' a woman which has been traced through the novels of Doris Lessing. The Fourth Chapter of the thesis talks about the issues and problems regarding woman in love, married woman, and divorced woman.

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NOTES

1. Lessing, Doris. *The Grass is Singing* (1950). NY: Harper Perennial, 2007. Print.
(All the subsequent references from this text are taken from the same edition and it is referred as *GS*)
2. Lessing, Doris. *The Golden Notebook* (1962). NY: Harper Perennial, 2007. Print.
(All the subsequent references from this text are taken from the same edition and it is referred as *GN*)
3. Lessing, Doris. *The Summer Before the Dark* (1973). London: Penguin Books, 1988. Print. (All the subsequent references from this text are taken from the same edition and it is referred as *SBD*)
4. Lessing, Doris. *The Good Terrorist* (1985). London: Fourth Estate. 2013. Print.
(All the subsequent references from this text are taken from the same edition and it is referred as *GT*)
5. Lessing, Doris. *Love, Again* (1996). NY: Harper Perennial, 1997. Print. (All the subsequent references from this text are taken from the same edition and it is referred as *LA*)
6. Lessing, Doris. *The Sweetest Dream* (2001). London: Harper Perennial, 2004. Print. (All the subsequent references from this text are taken from the same edition and it is referred as *SD*)