

02

## MYTH AND FALSEHOOD: 'TO CHOOSE AND WHAT TO CHOOSE' IN PLAYS OF JEAN PAUL SARTRE

*Dr. Alpna Rastogi, Associate Professor, Department of English, Meerut College, Meerut*  
*Ms. Kopal Vats, Assistant Professor, Department of English, MLSU, Udaipur*

### **Abstract:**

*When Sartre asserts the unfailing freedom of man to choose his own will and take full responsibility for it; he repudiates the presence of any factors that may curtail man's freedom. Yet, a man living in a collective society can never be free from the myths that people mutually share. The myths act as the binding factor for man's social environment but the same myths also often delimit man's potential to understand, that which lies beyond his mythical boundaries. For example- Religion often becomes the cause of feuds between people or one soldier kills another soldier even though none of them may have met each other ever; because they are part of two different nations whose territorial limits exist only in their minds and not on land. This paper is aimed at a study of the extent of man's belief in his myths against his own absolute freedom. The four plays of Sartre highlight man's incessant struggle against the rigid limitations of his own imagination. When a Sartrean man makes his choice, his cultural myths must have an impact too. Having been brought up with a psychological incorporation of myths, man's imagination is influenced by them.*

**Keywords:** Freedom, Choice, Myths, Hell, Communism, Racism, God.

***Any large-scale human cooperation- whether a modern state, a medieval church, an ancient city, or an archaic tribe-is rooted in common myths that exist only in people's imagination - Yuval Noah Harari***

Myths are a part of every culture and form a strong basis for the unity of its people. For thousands of years, myths have been carried from generation to generation. Most commonly, myths are a part of our religious beliefs and their relevance in our lives goes beyond their authenticity or physical evidence to support them. The myths overtime can become a hurdle in man's path to realising his freedom.

Communism as a political and economic tract enjoyed its peak in the years during which Sartre wrote his major plays. It is also true that that having grown disillusioned with the Vichy government, Sartre had developed left-leaning tendencies. When Sartre wrote 'Dirty Hands' in 1948, the world had already been torn apart in two major ideologies i.e. the communist bloc and the capitalist bloc. Sartre was deeply influenced by Marxism but he never joined the communist party. The play 'Dirty Hands' depicts the irony of a revolution's fate once it falls victim to a political propaganda. The protagonist is a young man Hugo who comes from a well to do bourgeois background. As a child, Hugo experienced suffocating protection from his family, which eventually developed a sense of disgust for them in his mind. Hugo mentions in the play that he was given superfluous care. He was fed even when he didn't want to eat because his family found his physique way too lean. He was given a tonic to fuel his hunger. Hugo noticed the large number of beggars on streets who marched with placards asking for bread. The sheer contrast between the bourgeois who were placed above (quite literally!) having surplus food and the poor class that starved with hunger down in the streets caused agony to Hugo.

HUGO: For once you're right, my friend. I don't know what appetite is. If you could have seen the tonics they gave me as a kid; I always left half-what waste! Then they opened my

mouth and told me: "One spoonful for Papa, one spoon-ful for Mamma, one spoonful for Aunt Anna." And they pushed the spoon down my throat. And I shot up too, believe me. But I never put on weight. Then they had me drink blood fresh from the slaughterhouse, because I was pale; after that I never touched meat. My father would say every night: "This child has no appetite." Every evening he would say: "Eat, Hugo, eat. You'll be sick." They had me take cod-liver oil; that's the height of luxury-medicine to make you hungry while others in the street would sell their souls for a beefsteak. I saw them pass under my window with their placards: "Give us bread." And then I would sit down at the table. "Eat, Hugo, eat." A spoonful for the night watchman who is on strike, a spoonful for the old woman who picks the parings out of the garbage can, a spoonful for the family of the carpenter who broke his leg. I left home. I joined the party, only to hear the same old song: "You've never been hungry, Hugo, what are you messing around here for? What can you know? You've never been hungry." Very well, then! I have never been hungry. Never! Never! Never! Now perhaps you can tell me what I can do to make you stop throwing it up to me. [*A pause.*] (Sartre 166)

He detested his family especially his father because they refrained from sharing that extra food with the needy. Apart from this, Hugo was smothered by his pretentious society that also constituted his parents because he felt that he wasn't allowed enough subjectivity. He suspected that his parents aimed towards moulding Hugo into the similar frame that was their identity. He started believing that his family wants to crush his individuality so that he can never think for himself and turn out to be their facsimile. Fearing this, Hugo decides to rend away all ties with his family and demolishes his old identity. Hugo, in haste, guesses that the only way to break away with his past is join the communist party because it represents everything in opposition to his filial identity. He is under the impression that the tag of communism will wash away his bourgeois filth. Hugo opts for the communist party because it stands for a class-less society where all men are equal and all state owned resources belong equally to each and every person irrespective of any prejudices. He wants to show his support to people who clamour for food on streets while the affluent turn deaf ears behind closed balcony doors. On joining the party, however, Hugo discovers certain discrepancies that were invisible on the outside. The communist party is also a political party with fiery political aims of securing a strong hold in the government. The atmosphere is of chaos because the Red Army is approaching towards Illyria (a fictional country resembling post world war II Hungary). The Regent represented by the fascist Prince, the Pentagon of the middle class and the communist party are all vying for majority in the upcoming elections. Amidst all of this chaos, a senior party member, Hoederer, wants to make a radical deal with the opposition because he believes that this is the call of the hour. He is of the view that when the Red Army will enter the country the general population will not accept its role even as a saviour army. As a result, people will raise their voice of dissent against the government. The incumbent government will face the wrath of the people and will be voted out in the next elections for sure.

Hoederer's prospect is that the communist party be rational enough to join hands with the opposition so that the government of coalition will take over as the new government. He believes that the current scenario calls for the communist party to take a back seat and be a minority in the new government. As minority, the communist party will be saved from the anger of the general population as it will be directed towards the majority constituting the Regent or the Pentagon. The communist party would then be in a secure position to even support people in their protest against the government of majority. By winning the faith of the people, the communist party will make a clean sweep in the next elections. The future then would be placid and none of the present chaos would hinder their governance.

The other party officials like Louise are totally against policy of Hoederer because they think that

he is acting like a traitor. This is why Hugo is assigned the job of Hoederer's assassination. Hugo, as well, believes in the same line that Hoederer is acting like a black sheep. In the course of the play, the reader observes that Hoederer is not a traitor; instead, he is a practical political leader who can judge the future like a visionary. Hoederer cares about his party and wants to save it from a silly death that will most likely come if the policies remain too rigid. Hoederer does compromise because a compromise is what politics is all about. The moment, the party becomes political its real agenda of a communist society is blown up in the air. Communism is reduced to a mere myth that can mobilize the associates towards a common goal but the goal no longer is the one that the revolution strove for. The label remains while the policies are near about the same as the other political parties that maybe placed under the rubrics 'opposition'. When Hoederer makes the deal, he is saving the party not 'communism'. Yet, Hoederer, is last to be blamed because there is no other option. If the idea of Louise were to be adopted, the party would be out of the picture after the elections. In fact, the play ends with the revelation that the party first gets Hoederer assassinated as a traitor and later on, adopts the same policy that he had furnished. It means that sooner or later, the party members realise that the ideals of communism would have to be abandoned in favour of a stable and powerful government.

When Hugo learns about the U-turn of the party, he is thoroughly disappointed and finds his life meaningless because his only milestone was the assassination of Hoederer. Discovering that it served no purpose other than silence a strong voice, Hugo is shattered. He commits suicide. He killed himself because he failed at grasping the mythical nature of human interests. The party he had joined was established on a myth-communism, an abstract policy that has no substance out of the human mind. He also failed to comprehend that a political party can never function unless it pretends to incorporate all sides of humanity. There are no extremes in politics, no black or white. Only a middle grey ground based on a compromise. The world has seen strong communist nations in its history but can we still confidently assert that today our world is classless? Thus, the play reflects the similar hopelessness associated with being on either side of the line of division because ultimately, no myth can be an absolute. Hugo abhorred his family because of their ideals but he later learns that the ideals that stand opposite to his family's are equally vulnerable to corruption. Unfortunately, it is too late before he comes to his senses.

The play 'The Flies' is very explicitly based on the Greek myth of Orestes. The Greeks were particularly too sincere about their Gods as is clear from Greek art in ancient times. Zeus, Hera, Dionysus etc feature in Greek literature quite frequently. The popularity of Greek Gods was so huge that they feature very often in English literature as well. Especially, the romantics had a soft spot for the Greek Gods. From Urania, the muse in paradise lost to James Joyce's Ulysses, Greek Gods and deities form an integral part of literature. This is because the Greeks revered their gods as the ultimate word. The question of God, however, is very personal because there remains no concrete physical proof of God's existence. The entire humanity has long supported itself by an invisible, abstract rope of faith. Sartre had no faith in God especially because his philosophy emerged in the post world war II world that was characterised by heinous crimes like the holocaust. It was difficult for that generation to have faith in God as it questioned its existence in the face of such horrifying crimes. Sartre asserts human freedom as the ultimate truth. He is of the opinion that man is fully responsible for himself. Man must choose his own essence knowing that no external force like God can come to his rescue. Sartre's choice of the myth as the basis for his play is indicative of his intention to depict the uselessness of God. He could not have presented his idea with a better foundation because in the play, he clearly displays that the very God who enjoys the limitless control over the people, is the most powerless of everyone. By reducing Zeus to almost a caricature, Sartre wants to establish Orestes as a sovereign individual in himself. This is exactly how Sartre weaves the plot of the play, to show that relying on Zeus is not at all necessary.

The play borrows the basic story line from the myth that Orestes is the long lost son of

Clytemnestra, who returns to Argos, his birthplace after decades as a stranger. Orestes was kidnapped as a child and exiled from Argos in the aftermath of Agamemnon's murder. Orestes comes to Argos in search of his identity and a desire to belong to his birthplace. On arriving in Argos, however, Orestes is appalled at the dreary state of the people. The Argives live in constant mourning. They wear black all the time, celebrate no festivities, never do they laugh. They feel guilty if ever encountered with a reason to be happy. Orestes is startled at the view. All the Argives do is that they offer regular libations to the statue of Zeus and look forward in terror to the 'Day of the Dead'. The Day of the Dead is a mythical observance created by king Aegistheus. The king has convinced the Argives that the dead people come out of a cave on this day and haunt the city of Argos. They visit so that they may punish those who did them wrong. Obviously, the concept of the dead arriving is pure hokum but the Argives are convinced of its truthfulness and they observe it without fail with deep sincerity. The reason why Aegistheus spun this story is that he wants to keep his subjects under utter control. Aegistheus has a personal sin to defend i.e. the murder of Agamemnon. To check the Argives from revolting against himself, he has engaged them with the myth of the dead. He also makes them believe that they share his crime of killing Agamemnon equally because they did nothing to save their beloved king. This way Aegistheus transfers his own remorse to his people who are naive enough to trust him and his myth. When Orestes is incited by Electra to stay back and pay his dues for his motherland, Orestes decides to murder both Aegistheus and Clytemnestra. He thinks this is the only way to relieve the Argives of their mythical burden. In a conversation between Zeus and Aegistheus, the reader learns Aegistheus is too tired of the whole facade.

Aegistheus. But I-what am I but an empty shell? Some creature has devoured me unawares, gnawed out my inner self. And now, looking within, I see I am more dead than Agamemnon. Did I say I was sad? I lied. Neither sad nor gay is the desert- a boundless waste of sand under a burning waste of sky. Not sad, nor gay, but- sinister. Ah, I'd give my kingdom to be able to shed a tear. (96)

He concedes that he has kept his subjects in mythical illusion just so that they do not rebel against him. The conversation also throws light on the role of Zeus as God. Zeus keeps his population in dark about their freedom because if they realise that they are eternally free to make their choices, Zeus would be rendered useless to them. Zeus maintains his authority by fear. Sartre asserts here that reliance on God is an unnecessary practice because man is essentially free and any form of service to God is a negation of that freedom. Man must endure the burden of his existence using his freedom. Orestes, as a character, is an ideal Sartrean hero because he waves off all temptations of submission to Zeus. Zeus gets intimidated by Orestes because he refuses to obey. Zeus is alarmed at his defiance, comprehending it as a straw in the wind. If Orestes is successful in dispelling the cloud of ignorance over Argos, Zeus would be an obsolete little magician. The play draws a stark comparison between Orestes and everyone else because Orestes is the only one who refuses to bow down to the myth of Zeus as a God. His own sister, Electra, who is partly responsible for pushing Orestes into the pool of vengeance, backs out when the call for action is at its peak. She caves in to the service of Zeus. She does so because she fears the unknown fate that lies outside of the reign of Zeus. Freedom entails responsibility and Electra fears responsibility, as she has been a spoilt princess all her life. An encounter with reality is like a flash of lightning; blinding and painful. She resorts to the option of submission. So what if she has to regret all her life! To her, the comfort of being under the aegis of Zeus is more appealing. Electra denies her freedom blatantly because she lacks courage to face her individuality. Orestes repudiates all the luxuries promised by Zeus in favour of his freedom. It is quite amazing that Zeus is able to organise the Argives under a common myth of a punisher god without ever facing any rebellion before Orestes. This is because Zeus appoints Aegistheus to control the Argives and Aegistheus in turn, further unloads himself by slapping his burden on their backs. Sartre condemns this. He

denounces the use of any common myth that drives man as if by a magnetic force into a crowd, destined for destruction.

In a way, Sartre is drawing an analogy between the unwitting Argives and reluctant French officials who acted as collaborators with the Nazi Germany. He is emphasising that a myth, most commonly does the task of uniting people in the easiest manner but it also spawns herd-mentality. It robs off people of their sacred individuality. In the end, when Orestes lures away all the flies at the tune of his flute, along with himself, he is providing a psychological unburdening to the Argives. Definitely, Orestes does not look at the flies as pestering creatures who feed on remorse. Argives look at the flies that way. Therefore, when Orestes takes them away, he is assuring the Argives that their remorse is gone with the flies so that they can live happily. In truth, Orestes has not taken away their remorse, he has only taken away the symbol of their remorse so that they may revert to their freedom which had existed all along, only the Argives had failed to discover it because they were overtaken by the myth of guilt perpetrated by Zeus and Aegistheus.

The respectable prostitute delves into the dark corners of a racist America. The play is about a prostitute, Lizzie, who has to make a dreaded choice. Lizzie is under pressure to falsely testify against an innocent Negro so that a spoilt, white young man can go scot-free. The white man Thomas tries to molest Lizzie in the train and shoots one Negro of the two, who come to help her. The Negro who escaped is being charged with the false crime of raping Lizzie and Thomas is being reflected as Lizzie's saviour. Lizzie is a conscientious woman who prefers to speak the truth instead of being bribed into falsehood. Thomas is the nephew of Senator Clarke whose son Fred meets Lizzie as a customer so as to settle things with her about the Negro's conviction. When Lizzie seems not to budge from her stand, Senator Clarke enters the scene. Clarke comes from a much respected, influential American family whose ancestry is glorious in America's history. According to Clarke, his fore fathers were heroic pioneers who helped lay the foundation of modern day America. He thinks that he and his family is above the general people and his son, nephews and all forthcoming generations are entitled to glory because of their illustrious roots. He convinces Lizzie against the Negro not by offering her any bribe but by invoking the ideals of America in her mind.

THE SENATOR. Then Uncle Sam would have many things to tell you. He would say: "Lizzie, you have reached a point where you must choose between two of my boys. One of them must go. What can you do in a case like this? Well, you keep the better man. Well, then, let us try to see which is the better one. Will you?"

LIZZIE [carried away]: Yes, I want to. Oh, I am sorry, I thought it was you saying all that.

THE SENATOR: I was speaking in his name. [He goes on, as before.] "Lizzie, this Negro whom you are protecting, what good is he? Somehow or other he was born, God knows where. I nourished and raised him, and how does he pay me back? What does he do for me? Nothing at all; he dawdles, he chisels, he sings, he buys pink and green suits. He is my son, and I love him as much as I do my other boys. But I ask you: does he live like a man? I would not even notice if he died."

LIZZIE: My, how fine you talk.

THE SENATOR [in the same vein]: "The other one, this Thomas, has killed a Negro, and that's very bad. But I need him. He is a hundred-per-cent American, comes from one of our old-est families, has studied at Harvard, is an officer-I need officers-he employs two thousand workers in his factory-two thousand unemployed if he happened to die. He's a leader, a firm bulwark against the Communists, labor unions, and the Jews. His duty is to live, and yours is to preserve his life. That's all. Now, choose."

LIZZIE: My, how well you talk! (263)

The Senator is of the opinion that Thomas has a magnificent future ahead of him that will be ruined if Lizzie does not do what is 'righteous'. Thomas' life is more precious and valuable than that of a Negro

(who Sartre does not even give a name) because Thomas will make America proud like his ancestors but the Negro is an inconsequential creature whose death would affect nobody around him. The senator declares the Negro as a useless citizen whereas Thomas would bring laurels to Uncle Sam. The senator's judgement is heavily prejudiced and he propagates his prejudice in the name of America, the nation; when truly any nation-state is only a myth. A nation-state is characterised by its majority sharing similar cultural patterns, language and being conscious of its identity as linked with idea of their nation. In purely physical terms though, any nation exists merely as an idea in the minds of its people. The idea of a nation is what causes strangers living miles apart to unite towards a common cause. When the Senator appeals to the America in her mind, she begins to lose her hold on her rationality because the idea of her country's welfare occupies the top shelf. Lizzie, like any citizen, takes pride in her association with her country. The Senator capitalises on her feeling of nationalism. He wants to remind her that by choosing Thomas over the Negro she is doing a great service to the nation. The senator topples the game by touching upon the national identity of Lizzie. The national identity sometimes takes precedence over the idea of humanity. No wonder, he is successful enough to confound Lizzie that she agrees to his whim and signs the testimony. Until, the senator had spoken of American welfare, Lizzie was in agreement with her conscience and knew that the right thing to do is save the Negro from false charges. The Senator, however, convinces her otherwise. Lizzie is carried away by the myth.

In reality, the fact remains that Lizzie belongs to the trash of American society. She is a neglected prostitute who has no concrete identity. She is irrelevant and insignificant just like the Negro, only slightly better than him because she is a white woman and in the hierarchy of disdain, she has a better position than a black man. If Lizzie were to think rationally then she would know that helping Thomas would turn out to be much worse than helping the Negro for many reasons. Firstly, she would be desecrating the truth to save Thomas, if truth holds any importance in a post-truth world anyway. Secondly, it is of least importance whether Thomas would contribute to the country over whether he is guilty or not. Thirdly, the so-called contribution of Thomas cannot be weighed against the life of an innocent man, however insignificant he maybe. Fourthly, sparing Thomas at such crucial moment would only raise his insolence towards other people. It is like infusing him with confidence to go ahead and murder more Negroes because his life is more sacred than theirs.

By asking Lizzie to twist the truth in favour of Thomas, the Senator is asking her to place her nation above humanity. Every single life is of value and framing someone owing to his or her caste or race is against the human welfare in total. In addition, what nation can ever thrive on the unfairness meted out against its one section of population? It is also noteworthy that Lizzie falls for the glory of her country especially when she has received no benefits of being its part. She is a poor prostitute and lives hand to mouth. The society, obviously, does not respect her or treat her with kindness. When Fred is pressing upon her the need to save Thomas, he repeats his insults to her several times. His treatment of her is disrespectful and uncouth. When neither the senator nor his son think Lizzie worthy of any respect then why should she compromise her ideals for the sake of these selfish people? The senator also uses the mother card to trick Lizzie. He mentions his sister Mary to soften Lizzie's stand. When Lizzie comes to know that Mary is eagerly waiting for his son's acquittal and that all her hopes are tied to Lizzie, she feels blessed. A woman of elite class is pegging her happiness on Lizzie. This gives her a thrill of excitement. For the first time, Lizzie can prove to be relevant to somebody. She knows that by speaking the truth and saving the Negro, her relevance for the negro would be far greater but yet again, Lizzie is trapped in the myth that is social hierarchy.

The idea of a person's assumed superiority is also a figment of imagination that is cultivated by a society in a collective way. This idea is so pervasive in our thoughts that sometimes it out-does the reality. Lizzie is a pre-conditioned individual who does not need to be reminded of her low status. She believes in it

herself. She has grown up believing it like the Negro who is already convinced that his days are numbered because he is black. The supreme-most truth is that of sanctity of humanity. Yet, collective ideas and stories weave up into each other to form common myths. These myths help organise a society within its imagined national boundaries. The myths determine a place for every individual that may or may not be a violation to his prerogative as a human. Lizzie is convinced of her part as a prostitute in her society and this part for her does not go beyond the interests of the ruling class. She agrees to the senator's demand although her scepticism about her action keeps her engaged. In the end, when Lizzie receives the money bill from Mary in return for her gesture of help, Lizzie is exposed to the myth of her country where all men do not stand equal.

The concept of hell is associated with redressing the injustice of the world. It is a collective mode of respite from the unfair world that we live in. Nearly all cultures believe in hell strongly. Although, like God, hell too, has never been a physical reality that one may prove with evidence. It is ultimately, a part of our belief, our thought process and most of all our collective imagination. Notwithstanding that, nobody has seen hell to report about it, our perception of hell is quite similar as a society. We all believe it to be a terrible place of torture with horned-devils, blazing flames, clawed beasts nibbling on human flesh etc. We believe it to be so since this is how we project our sense of punishment in divine retribution. Sartre's hell however, is nothing like it. Sartre's hell is merely a drawing room, modestly decorated. Sartre's choice of hell as place of setting is quite contrary to his philosophy of choice and freedom. If Sartre says that man makes each of his choice and takes full responsibility for it then why should a man's choice become a matter of hell and heaven? To choose hell as a metaphor signifies that man's choices clearly fall into two categories of good and bad. This negates the freedom that any person is entitled to innately. Although, if man's morality is to be judged along with his actions then hell can denote the fact that no one can get away with hurting others. The three characters in the play 'No Exit' are sinners. Garcin is a war traitor and treated his wife cruelly. Estelle killed her own child because it was an illegitimate baby. Her lover committed suicide after this incident but Estelle doesn't seem ruffled at all. Inez seduced his cousin's wife and made his cousin's life miserable. The cousin died in a road accident while Inez and Florence were killed in a deliberate accident set up by Florence. All three of them made other people's lives miserable. Garcin proved to be a bad husband and a bad journalist. Estelle was an unfaithful wife, a selfish lover and a cruel mother. Inez admits to being pure evil who cannot live until she has made someone suffer. On their deaths, all three of them arrive in hell.

Surprisingly, this hell is nothing like the hell in their imagination. The hell they come to is a drawing room without any devils or instruments of torture like the mythical boiling cauldron. It is a plain drawing room and two other roommates. How hard it can be! There is nothing hellish about this hell. At first glance, each one of them can make merry that there are two not-so-bad seeming roommates to give company. Yet, this drawing room is not an ordinary room but truly hell. This is Sartre's hell. Sartre has thought of his hell not as a place where people are punished for having caused suffering to other people, rather Sartre's hell is a mirror to reflect back upon these residents the inauthentic lives they had led in their life-times. Sartre is not primarily worried about how the three characters gave pain and suffering to those around them but his chief concerns are about the attitude of these three people with regard to their subjective choices. Sartre does not drop them in hell because they were a lot of a bad husband, a cruel mother and a back-stabbing cousin. He throws them in hell so that they can figure out why they were cowards and irresponsible bullies in their lives. The answer lies in Sartre's statement that 'hell is other people!' Sartre's hell is such a plain drawing room-type setting because he did not want it to be any different from the setting they had lived in, in their lives. The idea behind Sartre's hell is to show these characters a microcosm of their own lives. It means that their arrival in hell is not a shocking turn of events; rather it is a mere extension of their earthly lives with the exception of the added fixity in hell. They have come to hell

because they were in hell when they were alive but in the new hell, they are confined. This confinement will cause them misery and each one of them would act like other's torturer.

All three of them prefer to see themselves through the eyes of other, through the judgments passed by others. Garcin showed his back in the war and ran away but he seeks approval for his action from his colleagues and it hurts him to see that others call him a coward. If Garcin chose cowardice, he must take responsibility for it. Even when he is in hell, he seeks judgement from the ladies. Estelle is too easy to tell him what he wants to hear but Inez gives him a hard time never conceding to his desire of being called a hero. Estelle's whole life is based on her physical appearance and her ability to seduce men. She is bothered to know that there are no mirrors in hell because she cannot live without seeing her image. A neat reflection assures her of her charms and gives her confidence. If her looks are lost, everything is lost for her. She immediately seduces Garcin out of habit. Estelle's hell deliberately is devoid of any mirror so that she cannot get a glimpse of herself. This is her torture. Inez is a lesbian and had a hard time when she was alive. She had to face social ostracism because of her sexual orientation. This made her grow bitterer than ever and she took pleasure in hunting other people. Her evil actions were a direct result of her perception of herself through the eyes of society. On arriving in hell, Inez can have a relationship only with Estelle but Estelle is straight and would not accept her advances. Estelle has her mind set on Garcin. Therefore, Inez views Garcin as her rival. If Garcin would not let her have Estelle then she would not give him his much-needed 'not-a-coward' tag. This mutual tug of war results in a pattern where Garcin cannot be at ease since Inez reiterates his cowardice, Estelle cannot have Garcin fully to herself because he is restless about his image, Inez will continue to stalk Estelle and tease Garcin and finally, Estelle will be forever in jitters about her fading beauty. This cycle of mutual attraction and repulsion would never let them be at peace.

ESTELLE My darling! Please- GARCIN [thrusting her away]: No, let me be. She is between us. I cannot love you when she's watching.

ESTELLE Right! In that case, I'll stop her watching. [She picks up the paper-knife from the table, rushes at INEZ and stabs her several times.]

INEZ [struggling and laughing]: But, you crazy creature, what do you think you're doing? You know quite well I'm dead.

ESTELLE: Dead? [She drops the knife. A pause. INEZ picks up the knife and jabs herself with it regretfully.]

INEZ: Dead! Dead! Dead! Knives, poison, ropes-all useless. It has happened already, do you understand? Once and for all. So here we are, forever. [Laughs.]

ESTELLE [with a peal of laughter]: Forever. My God, how funny! Forever. (46)

This vicious cyclic pattern can be broken only when they stop caring about the presence of others. This, however, will never happen, and this is why Sartre's hell is so unconventional. None of them can reject 'the other' because it is through the presence of other that they find their lives meaningful. Garcin cannot convince himself that his choice was good for him; he wants someone else to tell him that. Estelle cannot survive until she can attract the gaze of the *other*. It is only through the *other* that she can convince herself of her beauty. Inez is bitter because the world called her abnormal. Her means of survival is inflicting pain back onto the world to feel good about herself. She will not let Garcin and Estelle unite for she must see them suffer. Their hell is the presence of other people. The other may not say anything or do anything but its presence is enough to unsettle them. Hell is struggling with the others and the fact that there is no escape, no respite from it.

### Conclusion

Man is a social animal; a product of his society. At the same time though, man is also burdened with his own inherent freedom to make his choices irrespective of his background. Human society thrives on myths like God, nations, heaven and hell, religion, political ideologies etc. that facilitate men towards a



collective form of world. On the contrary, the same myths also drive men towards dissent. Amidst this, individual freedom is man's guiding light towards realising himself. Through characters like Orestes and Hoederer, Sartre exhibits the power of an individual against social forces.

### Works Cited

1. Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. Vintage, 2011.
2. Contat, Michel, and Michel Rybalka, editors. *Jean-Paul Sartre: Sartre on Theatre*. Translated by Frank Jellinek. Pantheon Books, 1976.
3. Cumming, Robert Denoon. *The Philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre*. Vintage Books. 2003.
4. Harari, Yuval Noah. *Sapiens*. Vintage Books. 2014.
5. Kaufmann, Walter. *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*. Plume Penguin Group. 2004.
6. McCall, Dorothy. *The theatre of Jean-Paul Sartre*. Columbia University Press. 1971.
7. McMahon, Joseph H. *Humans Being: The World of Jean Paul Sartre*. The University of Chicago Press, 1971.
8. Murphy, Julien S, editor. *Feminist Interpretations of Jean-Paul Sartre*. The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999.
9. Palmer, Donald. *Sartre for Beginners*. Orient Blackswan, 2003.
10. Sartre, Jean Paul. *No-exit and Three Other Plays*. Vintage International, 1989.