

THE FEMININE AND THE QUESTION OF TRUTH IN NIETZSCHE'S PHILOSOPHY

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The various comments Nietzsche's made about women gave him an ill reputation as a misogynist. Indeed he made lot of statements which are truly offensive to women. However in their haste to stamp him as a hater of woman the critics mostly fail to see the complexities in some of his expositions that relate the question of woman with the issues of truth, art and nihilism. A few of the recent feminist readings in Nietzsche to a certain extent moderates this bad image by articulating certain ideas which are usefull to the feminist cause. Still these readings could not bring out properly the feminine dimension of his philosophy.¹ Embarking much on Nietzsche's derogatory comments about woman these studies yet consider Nietzsche as a philosopher who shares the parameters of the patriarchal logic of western tradition. Adopting a different perspective Derrida's reading of Nietzsche enlarges the feminine question to the issue of multiplicity of styles in writing. Although the exposition of this paper largely goes in tune with Derrida's reading still it considers his discussion of Nietzsche's style as "the feminine operation"² not sufficient enough to highlight the transfigurative potential of the question of woman posed by Nietzsche. This paper on the other hand, attempts to reexamine the prevalent notion that Nietzsche's philosophy is anti-feminine. By reformulating the existing ideas of masculinity and femininity with the aid of the recent psychoanalytic theories on sexual difference an attempt is being made to reconfigure the image of woman that appears in Nietzsche's writings. It is argued that woman as a model for life radically transforms the perenial question of truth that appears in Western philosophical tradition. The study traverses through the dichotomy of truth and untruth that appears in philosophical systems with the aid of Nietzsche's woman image in order to highlight the power and value of untruth in life. Following

the path of Nietzsche's critique of truth the paper extends the feminine question into Nietzsche's interrogation of nihilism and ascetic ideal. Its effect is identified as a suggestion for a new way of perceiving the world and the purpose of life.

Woman's absence in the Western philosophical tradition is not only the absence of the woman-philosophers but it is the absence of a feminine space itself. In the major philosophical systems of the world the issue of the feminine does not appear even as a point of reference. This silence about woman never seems to have taken by the critics as an anti-feminine stand. Nietzsche was very much eloquent about woman, though most of them were deriding. But this very eloquence perhaps emphasizes a concern for the feminine in his philosophy. More than its absence its presence indicates a care for the issue. Nietzsche does not devote any specific book or part of books exclusively to write about woman. His opinions about the issue appears often as casual comments scattered here and there in the form of aphorisms in his works. In them we meet with multiple faces of Nietzsche's woman. In a few of them we see woman as shallow and the most dangerous play thing,³ as mere child bearer,⁴ the enigmatic love object,⁵ the reactive, castrating feminist⁶ and as dissimulator (masquerade) who is never interested in truth.⁷ In few other aphorisms, which are friendly to women, she is projected as the abode of man's happier self,⁸ and more life affirmative and natural than the contemporary degenerated man.⁹

Nowhere Nietzsche seems to give a standard definition of woman that should dictate as a regulatory code for women's behaviour in society. His opinions are plural in nature and he never intends to set a woman's essence. Instead of denying women outrightly his comments seem to be coming from a person who expects to see woman as the affirmer of life with all its tragic sense. He seems to be displeased to see modern woman often as a bad affirmer of life. For Nietzsche affirmation is the formula for greatness in existence. Affirmation endorses a stand in favour of multiplicity and chance in life and is posited against the will to negation of the worldly life through moral and ontological conceptualisations. Whether one is a male or female what is expected, in Nietzschean standards, is a glorious acceptance of the appearance and becoming of existence. Whereas religion, metaphysics, morality and human sciences fabricate another order of reality above life in order to tide over the insecurity emerging out of the fear of becoming and plurality. Nietzsche thinks, plurality

alone admits the beauty of the fleeting moments and accepts the world of appearance as the only true world. Its opposite, truth as essence is considered as a masculine - philosophical attempt to arrest chance and plurality merely to provide security and stability in life. This negative 'will' that "impose upon becoming the character of being"¹⁰ is seen as the guiding principle of the recent history of humanity. The values of our religion, morality, politics, and social institutions are interpretations of the world provided by such a nihilistic will. The nihilistic will requires homogenisation in place of multiplicity in order to exist. It requires truth and essence instead of plurality and appearance. The ideas of man and woman as such assumes relevance only with the dawn of a metaphysical age that instituted sexual difference by introducing the rational 'subject' into the sphere of thinking. Hence the essence of woman is non-existing as there is no place for a man's essence. So Nietzsche's highest question becomes who overcomes man (overman) rather than fixing man's essence or woman's essence. If nihilism is a result of essentialisation, its remedy, overcoming of nihilism requires celebration of multiplicity of life forms.

But does this explanation provide a sufficient justification for Nietzsche's ridiculing comments on the 'eternally feminine'? And do we need to forget his eloquence against woman entering in the public sphere. It is true that Nietzsche spoke against giving freedom for women and their emancipation. Does this underline a position that essentialise woman and marginalise their lot? Emancipation as an ideal itself was objectionable for Nietzsche. In the conventional sense emancipation represents the logical and ontological values of a rationally dominated society of the modern bourgeois state which in the opinion of Nietzsche is the most decadent form of humanity. The integration of women into the socio-symbolic order of the male through 'higher education, slacks and political voting-cattle rights',¹¹ Nietzsche argued, would result in degeneration of feminine specificity. This is considered as defeminisation and effacing of the feminine specificity. Such a defeminisation by "imitating all the stupidities with which European manliness is sick"¹² was not an acceptable proposition for this analyst of the European nihilism. This suggests that the basic objection of Nietzsche was only against reducing woman to the sick animal man of which he was highly critical. In fact his entire *Genealogy of Morals* is devoted to analyse the root of sickness that began to envelop the man in the modern age.

Nietzsche criticized the attempts of women to achieve enlightenment and becoming scientific as it leads her to unlearn the art of grace and playfulness.¹³ He believed that she is rich in such arts which man already has lost and deviated from. In this regard woman is considered as more natural and playful than man. According to the Nietzschean position being more natural and animalistic is a sign of health and its opposite, becoming scientific and enlightened is a sign of degeneration.

Shedding the feminine dimension of one for seeking the advantages of the masculine social order, its logicity, its precision, its idea of justice and its truthfulness amounts to aborting oneself, putting a fullstop to the productive and creative aspects. 'Truth' is considered as the domain of the unproductive type, the masculine, the reactive, and the 'speculative philosopher' who, instead of creating, wants merely to explain and arrange things. It is towards this spiritual barrenness, of which humanity is already sick, modern woman is trying to reach. Contrary to such abortive adaptations Nietzsche saw being pregnant with child or being pregnant with ideas, both as a sign of maternity and something positive whether it is in male or female. According to Nietzsche pregnancy is a feature of the productive types. "Making music is another way of making children".¹⁴ Its immense potential for interrogating the nihilistic culture is overlooked while Nietzsche's comments were measured with the yardstick of received notions of gender equality and were judged to be male chauvinistic.

Nietzsche argues that 'truth' is a fabrication of the 'nihilistic will' to manage life and society. He does not count the feminine will as part of such a nihilistic denial of life and appearance. Disinterestedness in 'truth' (in the metaphysical sense) is reckoned as the feature of the 'eternal feminine'. While articulating the woman's specificity Nietzsche writes: "she does not want truth: What is truth to woman? From the beginning nothing has been more alien, repugnant and hostile to woman than truth - her great art is the lie, her highest concern is mere appearance and beauty".¹⁵ But instead of degrading woman on these counts Nietzsche considers this as a virtue that need to be honoured. Because man has already unlearned these instincts and in him separation from animality and innocence became more or less total. Instead of branding this as essentialisation of the feminine nature, acceptance of appearance and beauty must be considered as affirmation of plurality. An essentialised being clings to

homogenised truths. Whereas affirmation of multiplicity must be seen as going beyond of all essences by presenting oneself as indeterminable and plural.

Elaborating Nietzsche's ideas on femininity in the above manner does not intend to radically convert him in favour of a feminist cause by diluting all the offensive position he took on the woman question. As critics pointed out before, many of Nietzsche's derogatory statements may be symptomatic of his failure in love relationship with Lou Salome. Instead of bailing him out on these counts the objective of the paper is to highlight the feminine specificity and its effect on thought if woman is taken as the model for truth.

Before going into this issue, we need to agree with the critics of Nietzsche, at least on a few of his anti feminist remarks, that his position expresses a male bias on the issue of giving freedom to women in public sphere. His pronouncements may be coming out of various reasons. But those remarks seem to be operating on certain received ideas of femininity, which are partly his own and partly received from the nineteenth century male prejudices about women. Most probably he might have made use of the traditional conceptions of gender differentiation existing in the biological as well as philosophical notions to express his personal resentment in the failure of his love affair. Biological idea of gender places woman as physiologically weaker to man. In metaphysics Cartesian cogito was a central notion in the determination of human subjectivity and consciousness and is still prevalent in all rationally dominated discourses. The traditional notions of sexual difference which have founded through biological and metaphysical ideas place woman in opposition to man with separate social roles to play. Woman is defined as emotional, illogical, flux, chaos, passive and weak, whereas man is defined as active, rational, logical, stable, orderly and possessor of truth. According to this notion the difference of man and woman is eternally determined by their differences in physical and psychic status. While Nietzsche writes that "Man...must conceive of woman as a possession, as property that can be locked, as something predestined for service and achieving her perfection in that"¹⁶ (BGE, 238) we need to admit that he stands within the asymmetrical logic of the sexual division instituted by the patriarchal social order.

We need to analyse how the metaphysical notions of subjectivity and individuation work in the constitution of sexual difference in traditional manner. Recasting the issue in the light of psychoanalytical theories on sexual difference

may help us to reformulate the feminine question in Nietzsche and its relation to 'truth'. Psychoanalytic theories of Freud and Lacan now enable us to reconfigure the problems of individuation and subject formation which were previously remained obscure. Nobody comes to earth as a man or woman and that gender identity and sexual division is a product of the socio-symbolic order is central to their understanding. This provides a powerful critique of the explanations of biologism and the metaphysical concept of the rational subject. Subjectivity, according to this notion, is not a pre-given substance. How do human beings create a self identity? a sense of self? According to Freud, oedipalisation is the point at which the warring desires and anguished fragmentation of the small human infant becomes organised within the structure of social relations. It signals the transition from the free reign of polymorphous desire to the reality principle-to the constitution of the individual as a human subject. According to Freud biological sex difference remains irrelevant for the child until the onset of the phallic phase.

In psychoanalytic terms castration complex is understood to institute the humanisation of the small infant in its sexual difference. Prior to the castration complex, which is pre-oedipal phase, the little infant is not constituted as an individual subject. The infant's entry into cultural domain and sexual division occurs at the level of the symbolic order. In Lacan symbolic order is the overarching structure of language and received social meanings within human culture. In order to achieve psychical differentiation and to enter life in society, human beings must take up a position as a subject within this order. The shift from the child's imaginary unity with its mother into the socio-symbolic order is made possible by the intervention of linguistic order, which is the law of the father. In Lacan this separation is experienced as castration, the cutting of the individual from the world of desire and imagination. The power backing this law of the father is symbolised as phallus. The phallus serves to separate the child away from the world of desire and imaginary unity with the mother and also for entry into socio-symbolic order. An institution of the selfhood of male places the female, in opposition to man. This renders woman as something outside of the truth and social meaning and as the 'other' of man. Lacan's position that the institution of male and female identity is centered around the presence or absence of anatomical feature, however, does not agree with assigning any essential characteristics to these sexes. The selfhood of both man

and woman are a socio-symbolic product.

Julia Kristeva's psycho analytical expositions give a different interpretation to the meaning of castration. For her the entry of the individual into the symbolic order of the society through castration is a separation from the presumed state of nature, of pleasure fused with nature.¹⁷ The subjectivity of man and woman is not something pre-given but the effect of this separation from the pre-oedipal unity. Psychoanalytical theories now teach us that they are the product of socio-symbolic order of the patriarchy effected through the suppression of desires.

In the pre-oedipal level where the infant is not yet transformed as an individual "discrete quantities of energy move through the body of the subject who is not yet constituted as such and, in the course of his development, they are arranged according to the various constraints imposed on this body by family and social structures".¹⁸ The nonexpressive totality formed by these drives and energies is represented by Kristeva as the *chora* a term borrowed from Plato's *Timaeus*. The small infant experiences itself as an array of passions and bodily capacities which are multiple and discontinuous. This semiotic dimension of the early phase of the individual is prior to any sexual difference. This pre-self experience of the semiotic *chora* is non-gender specific and continues to exist in both man and woman even after their separation into opposite sexes in the socio-symbolic order. Kristeva's theoretical activity consists of exploring the semiotic dimension of language in order to evolve its subversive and disruptive potential which in turn help to reach the imaginary dimension of our earlier existence. Subjectivation and gender divisions are ruptured by the boundless play of semiotic drives. By the idea feminine Kristeva essentially means the heterogeneity of the pre-oedipal experience which has nothing to do with 'the woman' in the biological sense. She writes:

"The belief that 'one is a woman' is almost as absurd and obscurantist as the belief that one is a man....Therefore we must use 'we are women' as an advertisement or slogan for our demands. On a deeper level, however, a woman is not something one can 'be'By 'woman' I understand what cannot be represented, what is not said, what remains above nomenclatures and ideologies".¹⁹

Kristeva's idea underlines that the semiotic is a mode of being that exists

in all human subjects and, consequently, either gender can be feminised in a radical fashion. Kristeva's position does not allow us to posit feminine in essentialistic terms the way it appears in biological and metaphysical accounts. According to her : "...if the feminine exists, it only exists in the order of significance or signifying process, and it is only in relation to meaning and signification, positioned as their excessive or transgressive other that it exists, speaks, thinks (itself) and writes (itself) for both sexes."²⁰

Reading Kristeva's position against assigning an essence to woman together with Lacanian notion that "woman does not exist" enable us to recast the question of feminine. The feminine is to be understood as a mode of existence that affirms desires and imaginary multiplicity of life. In psychoanalytical terms it is non-gender specific. As it exists in both man and woman through an imaginary transfiguration any self can be radically feminised. It emphasises that the biological presence of separate genital organs does not give anyone the essential status of a man or a woman. The biological woman being situated within the symbolic order may not represent the feminine nature merely because she is a woman. She is part and parcel of the phallogentric discourse, which reduces multiplicity into homogeneity and desires into logic. Thus she may also hold the very same masculine perspective on the question of truth and values. Castration places her in a similar position of alienation and loss of imaginary dimensions of the self. The entry into the socio-symbolic order necessitates both man and woman to shed their early imaginary mode of existence. In this backdrop femininity can acquire meaning only by way of its difference from masculine phallic position. Lacan's claim that "woman" as some kind of essence does not exist, puts this issue into sharp focus. According to this position 'femininity becomes an endless series of masks and fabrication which women and men spend their lives seeking out, in the same fashion that the human subjects forever seek an imaginary'. Men and women fantasize femininity as a potential site of desire, fulfillment, joy, and wholeness.

Psychoanalytic articulation of femininity as the *chora* of pre-self experiences that goes beyond gender divisions can in no way be linked to Nietzsche's ridiculing comments on the 'eternal feminine' nature. Psychoanalytical understanding of subject formation also works in a different plane from that of Nietzsche's analysis of subject formation. However

Nietzsche's deconstruction of the moral subjectivity questions its permanency as a rational substance the way it appears in various metaphysical discourses. His analysis in *On the Genealogy of Morals* brings out the various techniques initiated by the reactive forces to form a morally responsible individual. Nietzsche argues that in pre-historic period it is through the inflicting of punishment and other means of correction by man upon man that humanity is able to mould a self identity. Although such a critique of the subjectivity does not take the institution of sexual difference into account it vehemently criticises the exiling of desires and imaginative dimension of life from the cultural domain. In this sense as a site of desire and imagination femininity can be seen as a powerful presence behind all of Nietzsche's later criticisms of religious, moral, and metaphysical interpretations of existence. Thus psychoanalytical notion of the feminine and individuation carries the key to the entry into Nietzsche's world of multiplicity of life forms, which in turn enable us to discern Nietzsche's affirmation of nature and desires as a counter position to patriarchal appropriation of reality through metaphysical postulations.

In the observation of Nietzsche resentment, bad conscience and ascetic ideal constitute the essence of modern man. This is not an essential definition of man but is attributed as a gradual development in history. A sort of degeneration which is said to be the outcome of the triumph of the reactive forces that seized truth and meaning of existence and created the age of nihilism. This is considered as a historical occurrence which the humanity has to surpass and overcome. In this sense man as such does not exist with a universal essence, but is merely a product, a subject, effected through various discourses of truth, morality and religion. Can man hope for any escape from this depreciation of the value of life? In the opinion of Nietzsche this most sick and degenerated among the animals needs to affirm plurality of life in order to reach a site that stands above man. Nietzsche suggests 'overman' as a figure representing a transfiguration in existence. For a transfiguration of existence one needs to unload the heavy weight of truths and morality deposited on humanity by nihilistic forces that until now stands victorious in history.

Thus if Nietzsche depicted woman as untruth, in strict sense it is applicable to man as well; if Nietzsche derided woman for trying to become part of the power structure, governance, social institutions man also comes under his

sharp criticism. For it is the reactive values and concepts of world denial man is trying to institute in his social activities.

Coming to the central issue of the paper, if 'women' who is the figure of untruth is taken as the model for truth its repercussions for philosophy would be far reaching. Since its beginning philosophy has been devoted to first principles and approached truth as changeless essence. It has been an enquiry for 'being' which is the changeless. The changing and the fleeting has placed in opposition to truth and often depicted as becoming, chaos, emotion and as non-representable phenomena. Thus philosophy became the privilege and has always been the vocation of man, the possessor of phallus, who alone possesses truth and who is the truth. But what would be the effect if truth is identified as woman, or equated with woman? Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil* starts with raising this question :

"Supposing truth is a woman - what then? Are there not grounds for the suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they are dogmatists, have been very inexpert about women? that the gruesome seriousness, the clumsy obtrusiveness with which they have usually approached truth so far have been awkward and very improper for winning a woman's heart? what is certain is that she has not allowed herself to be won-and today every kind of dogmatism is left standing dispirited and discouraged"²¹

Nietzsche's assigning of woman as the model of truth has to be read in comparison with his various comments about women. This woman metaphor enable us to recast the way in which the perennial questions of world, truth, life and art so far presented in philosophy.

Nietzsche constantly ridicules the feminist woman who wants to resemble man, the dogmatic philosopher, demanding truth, science, objectivity, and the illusions of male verity. Nietzsche's most of the attacks are directed, in fact, towards this castrating type of woman. Nietzsche loved the affirmative woman who does not discard her feminine modesty, who is more natural, 'the dionisiac', who resists the masculine attempts to essentialise and reduce her plurality. Woman stands in Nietzsche's writings as the very image of untruth, multiplicity, and the other pole of the male's ideal of truth as identity.

This untruth may not be seen as a negativity and something to be looked

down upon. Instead Nietzsche himself positioned with multiplicity, becoming, untruth, and appearance and accepted them as the highest conditions of existence. I shall quote three passages from his texts to show that he favoured untruth and appearance to correctness and precision. The first one on untruth comes during a discussion on art:

- 1) "If we had not welcomed the arts and invented this cult of the untrue....the realisation that delusion and error are conditions of human knowledge and sensations would be utterly unendurable...art as the good will to appearance..."²².
- 2) "what in us really wants "truth"?why not rather untruth? and uncertainty? even ignorance?"²³
- 3) "the antithesis of a real and apparent world is lacking here : there is only one world, and this is false, cruel, contradictory, seductive, without meaning -- A world thus constituted is the real world. We have need of lies in order to conquer this reality, this "truth", that is in order to live"²⁴

Instead of saying that woman is untruth and man alone has access to truth Nietzsche's position underlines that nobody has truth and that "truth itself is a kind of error"²⁵ instituted by a sort of will to power that wants to master the universe. However as far as sexual division exists and socio-political domain continues to be based on metaphysical/phallogocentric ideals man will be considered as the truth and logic and woman will remain as his shadow, an image formed in his imagination. But Nietzsche's image of woman as multiplicity discomforts this situation. In this backdrop the potential of the 'woman metaphor' in undoing the existing image of truth and overcoming metaphysical discourses is immense.

Going back to the proposition of *Beyond Good and Evil*, if woman is the model of truth how will a philosopher approach this reality, the woman? Woman being the model of multiplicity may not be possessed in any of the familiar discourses of metaphysics. But the dogmatic philosopher thinks that she was won over by him and that her essence has been discovered. In fact she has no essence and the "truth" about woman is a fabrication, a fetish of the philosopher. We can conceive of the dogmatic philosopher an inexperienced lover who does not know the proper way to approach a woman and win her love. Nietzsche

writes that so far she has not allowed herself to be won, implying that the actual nature of the world and life, and of woman has till today eluded the grasp of metaphysical philosophy. The dogmatic philosopher in his haste to possess the woman adopts immodest means. He goes too close to see her, even to the extent of stripping without knowing that she has not any truth within her. He fails to keep a little distance from her reality. Nietzsche perhaps places woman in comparison with the veil of the *māyā* of the world : "The magic and the most powerful effect of woman is, in philosophical language, action at a distance".²⁶ Woman's beauty is seductive only from a distance. We need only to listen it from a "distance" in order to be enchanted by her melodious song. On the other hand if one goes closer to discover her 'truth in itself' or 'beauty in itself' it may not be available.

Nietzsche here links 'woman's action at a distance' to a specific way of perceiving the world. The dogmatic attempt to find the truth of the world by measuring it with logical categories give only a distorted picture of the world. Its theoretical grasp instead of leaving the world as it is, imposes 'the character of being upon its becoming'. In order to perceive the appearance of the world as mere appearance one requires distance from the world as we require distance from woman. Distance is the very condition for the aesthetic perception of the world. However, if we go too close to the reality and attempt to disclose the essence behind the apparent things as the way a dogmatic philosopher does we will be cast out of the magical spell of things with all their dreamy enchantment. One needs to let oneself to be carried away by the plurality and chance of the world in order to be succumbed by her magical spell. The joy of plurality comes to us as an aesthetic moment which is radically distinct from the logical/metaphysical grasp of the world. The aesthetic moment is to be seen essentially a moment of the transfiguration of the ontologically fixed image of the world.

Correlating woman with the reality of the world signify that the world has plurality of principles. Perhaps they are not principles and could be mere innumerable possibilities. The multiplicity and flux in nature gives a seductive charm to life on earth. How one would represent in logical discourses the fleeting beauties of nature that could only be appreciated? Those rare individual moments such as "love, spring, a beautiful melody, the mountains, the moon, the sea"²⁷

which only speak to our heart. The attempt to locate their 'truth in itself' in all probability will be defeated. So what we can suggest the truth seeker is not to go too closer to such wonders of earth. In order to enjoy one requires to keep a little distance to such phenomena. The attempt to find their truth is a shabby proposition and most likely to end in mere babbling. The categories and concepts of metaphysics employed for measuring highest reality becomes ineffective at this point. Woman evades the attempt to grasp her in the language of dogmatic philosophy. But the philosopher never desist from his attempt to get hold of the truth. Perhaps an artist may be able to depict the woman- truth in a different mode of expression. Here the representative reason is subordinated to 'perspectivism'. Instinct of possessiveness here gives way for affirmation and acceptance of the world as it appears to the senses. This way of interconnecting the woman question with 'truth' gives a different image to Nietzsche's idea of the feminine. In the renewed sense woman in Nietzsche's texts no longer appears as an object to be hated and exiled. Woman as the image of life affirmation and as a figure of plurality becomes the most acceptable being against the degenerated man of the nihilistic age. This is very well articulated when Nietzsche presents the world as covered with a veil of beautiful appearance :

"the world is overfull of beautiful things but nevertheless poor, very poor when it comes to beautiful moments and unveiling of these things. But perhaps this is the most powerful magic of life: it is covered by a veil intervoven with gold, a veil of beautiful possibilities, sparkling with promise, resistance, bashfulness, mockery, pity and seduction. Yes, life is a woman."²⁸

This parallel between woman and truth and between woman and life suggests a new image of thought different from the metaphysical way of percieving the world. In identifying the question of truth with woman the question of art is posed and the end of metaphysics is heralded. 'Truth' no longer is the obejct of the philosophical enquiry.

Affirmation of life and world requires a different approach distinct from representation and appropriation. A love and care for the world would be a more appropriate appraoach. Woman who is the model of life and desire would be situated in the centre of such a transfigured perspective of the world. A philosopher's relationship to life can be compared to that of an unskilled seducers

relationship to a woman. Both these men are not knowing that a woman has to be loved and affirmed in order to win her love. Possessing and mastering are not the proper means to win her. This gives a clue to the contemporary scientific man's approach to the world itself. Instead of affirming the beautiful possibilities of life with all its multiplicity he wants to master and possess it. The anthropocentric greed to dominate nature is indeed the culmination of the metaphysical way of approaching reality and world. In Nietzschean terms the result of the victory of the reactive forces has been at work for some time in history to seize truth and values in its favour.

Nietzsche's supreme concern was how to overcome nihilism that has enveloped the history of man in the modern age. This is essentially linked to the issue of changing the element of values. The reactive values have to be defeated and active values have to be played out. If negative forces in history interpreted their values into things and made life reactive this has to be reversed and made active. This reversal would be possible only through affirmation of multiplicity as the supreme task of life.

In this regard the 'woman' question acquires a new significance in Nietzsche's writings. She is posited as a counter figure to 'man' the philosopher. Woman in Nietzsche's texts appears as the very image of the power of life affirmation. If 'man' could be taken as a figure of truth and homogenisation (in Lacanian sense) woman as a figure of multiplicity disrupts the image of truth as identity and essence. In both senses, woman as a metaphor for truth as well as the concrete woman with flesh and blood, is the figure of life affirmation capable of confronting the nihilistic negation of life instituted by the reactive forces.

If Nietzsche is offensive to woman it is those reactive women who want to adopt the position of phallogocentric men and their values he offends. The large corpus of Nietzsche's anti-feminism is in fact directed against the castrating woman who adorns objectivity and truth as the true form of life. However Nietzsche accepts the affirmative woman 'who is more natural than man'. Because woman as a life affirmative force carries the potential for confronting the reactive forces who reduced the meaning of existence to the value of nil.

Life affirmation comes as a desire for enhanced life. This entails accepting

multiplicity including pleasurable and painful in existence as a necessary precondition for healthy life. This is a counter position to the moral interpretation of life that suggests to avoid painful and error from existence. In the moral interpretation of existence what are considered painful and error are always those fleeting things which stand outside the realm of truth. The christian interpretation of life often posits sensuous things of life in the realm of sin. Major religious discourses and metaphysical systems of the world always make us cautious about the dangers of sensuous life in deviation from the paths of reason and truth. It is precisely in this regard woman, the image of sense and life, is associated with sin. In their idea this seductress who plays at the worldly and material desires has to be approached cautiously and be given a different social sphere from that of the masculine truthfulness. In a single stroke dogmatic thinking dissociates itself from everything associated with desire such as sense, woman, and beautiful possibilities of the apparent world. Nietzsche's critique of nihilism as "the positing of higher values above life and the consequent depreciation of earthly life" in effect is an attack on such masculine appropriation of the meaning of existence. His embracing of multiplicity and its parallel with the feminine question need to be highlighted in order to discern the specificity of Nietzsche's philosophy in the history of Western metaphysical thought.

If we can discern a sexual difference within philosophical tradition among various philosophies then Nietzsche's writing represents 'the feminine' in the history of thought. This representation of the feminine is not entirely of the woman as such or of woman's sexuality. Going back to the psychoanalytic idea of the feminine as a site of desire and multiplicity enables us to recast sexual difference in a new way. From a mere man-woman relationship its manifestation can be discerned even in our ways of looking at the world and life. Taking up multiplicity and facing desire and love of world as a challenge in life alters the traditional notion of reaching truth as the objective of thinking. Exalting the beauty of earth by representing the world of change and plurality as the proper task of Nietzsche's philosophizing comes from the need for a feminine site of existence. In order to eternally affirm the world and say 'yes and amen' at life 'woman' who is the figure of life and desire needs to be affirmed:

"Oh how should I not lust for eternity and for the wedding ring of rings
- the Ring of Recurrence! Never yet I find the woman by whom I wanted
children unless it be this woman whom I love : for I love you eternity"²⁹

It is this lust for life and world that is missing in the logically dominated traditional philosophy. Parodying Heidegger we could rightly say that the history of metaphysical thought has been the history of concealing the feminine dimension of life. In traditional philosophy truth as the law of life has been pursued in a language of precision that represented only the male perspective of life. Woman being the site of desire and multiplicity could remain only in the margins of the grand philosophical systems. Nietzsche's unsystematic thought inaugurates a new form of writing through the practice of plurality in styles; heterogeneity and desire for life are its hallmarks. This disrupts the epistemological standard of truth as single and univocal. This stylistic plurality through a language of desire subverts the 'phallogocentric' language of the metaphysical philosophy. Nietzsche would represent the activity of life as the power of falsehood. Like a woman it dupes, dissimulates, and seduces. Philosophical activity, in his opinion, should redouble and elevate this power of the falsehood. According to Nietzsche only an artistic will could compete with the ascetic ideal of the dogmatic philosophy that debased the value of worldly life to nothingness.³⁰ The language of plurality turns the will to untruth and desire to a highest affirmative power. In connection with this, Deleuze in his interpretation of Nietzsche comments that: "Then truth perhaps take a new sense. Truth is appearance".³¹ This desire for appearance and love of nature does not exclude the woman, who is the figure of life affirmation, from the domain of thought.

In many ways Nietzsche's philosophy endorses a stand in favour of a feminine dimension of existence. The plurality of styles practiced in the aphoristic forms deviates from the phallogocentric notion of 'truth' as the supreme law of life. The grand philosophic systems can be viewed as mere male attempts to symbolise a chaotic world of the imaginary in order to tide over the fear of castration. Contrary to it Nietzsche's celebration of multiplicity and chaos brings a stand in favour of the feminine which is the model of life affirmation. If we can agree with Kristeva that 'feminine exists only in signifying processes' Nietzsche's practice of plurality of styles can be viewed as a search for the

feminine. His writings unleash a semiotic experience of the pre-Oedipal mode of life that is closer to poetry and music. According to Kristeva semiotic is the space of flux and heterogeneity. Poetic language contains a semiotic pressure that dislodges reader's ideological assumptions. Which in turn disrupts the symbolic through releasing the semiotic forces.

Femininity as a search for a potential site for fulfillment of desire and imaginary experience is said to be at work behind every artistic form of expression. The woman who was cast away from the philosophical discourse returns to play at an artist's philosophy. As Nietzsche considers himself to be an artist and his philosophy to be dance and play one can visualise his stylistic plurality as the operation of the feminine. Such a writing enables one to surpass the constraints of a subjectivity that ties one to the masculine socio-symbolic order. The aspiration of one to become woman as a motivating force of literary expression is a Deleuzian idea as well, which comes from the need for becoming and transformation :

"Writing is inseparable from becoming: in writing one becomes-woman, becomes-animal or vegetable, becomes- molecule...."³².

In Deleuzian sense this transformation to womanhood or animalhood is required because "man" inhabits only the dark side of the world. Man, who is the 'transcendental ego' (Cartesian Cogito) deployed by the metaphysical tradition has become a disease of the earth. Deleuze writes that the reason to write comes from the need to overcome the shame of being man. If the morally responsible rational subject of the metaphysical tradition represents the absence of desire and love of earth, the woman who as the figure of life affirmation carries the potential for the retrieval of all elements of desire which have been exiled from the domain of life.

This desire to become woman may be seen as the root of Nietzsche's stand against all sorts of asceticism such as christianity, modern science and metaphysical thinking. Christianity that advocates extirpation of the senses represents the strongest case for world denial. The modern scientific spirit and democratic institutions as long as founded on abstract generalised truths are, for him, nothing but christianity in disguise.

Nietzsche's attack on the great philosophers of the world for having

remained unmarried and for depreciating the value of the senses in favour of their love for the beyond in effect, is a stand against the hatred of the senses they preached in their systems.³³ This negation of the sense should be identified, as the negation of the feminine principle. Nietzsche's affirmative philosophy, on the other hand, would consider will to truth as a symptom of nihilism and a sign of impotency for willing the beauties of this world. Such a negative will which is the hallmark of the dogmatic philosophy represents the casting away of the woman from the domain of life. Contrary to it the unperceivable presence of woman would be a specificity of every affirmative philosophy that stands against asceticism of all kinds.

NOTES

1. For instance Debra B. Bergoffen. "On the Uses and Disadvantages of Nietzsche for Women", in Arleen B. Dallery and Charles Scott (ed), *The Question of the Other*, The State University of New York Press, 1989. Bergoffen considers Nietzschean notion of time 'eternal return' as feminine time and explores its potential for confronting the linear temporality of the patriarchal historical consciousness.
2. Jacques Derrida, *Spurs/Eperons, Nietzsche's Styles/Les Styles de Nietzsche*, trans. Barbara Harlow, University of Chicago Press, 1979, p.57.
3. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1984, pp.91-92.
4. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, Why I write Such Good Books 5, in *On The Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, New York, Vintage Books, 1969, p. 267.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York, Vintage Books, 1989, sec. 239, pp. 167-69
7. *Ibid*, 232, p. 163

8. Nietzsche, *Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, New York, Vintage, 1974, P. 123-24, sec. 60
9. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, sec. 239, p. 169.
10. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale, New York, Vintage, 1968, sec. 617, p. 330.
11. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, *Ibid*
12. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, *Ibid*
13. *Ibid*, sec. 232, p. 163.
14. *Will to Power*, sec. 800, p. 421.
15. *Beyond Good and Evil*, sec. 232, p. 163.
16. *Ibid*, sec. 238, p. 167.
17. Julia Kristeva, 'Women's Time' trans. Alice Jardine and Harry Blake, in Toril Moi (ed.) *Kristeva Reader*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1986, p. 198.
18. Kristeva, Revolution in Poetic Language, in *Kristeva Reader*, p. 93.
19. Interview with Julia Kristeva, "Women Cannot be defined", in Marks and de Courtivon (eds), *New French Feminism*, pp. 137-38.
20. Cited in Toril Moi (ed.), *The Kristeva Reader*, p. 11.
21. *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 1
22. *Gay Science*, sec. 107, p. 163.
23. *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 9.
24. *Will to power*, sec. 853, p. 451
25. *Ibid*, sec. 493, p. 272.
26. *Gay Science*, sec. 60, p. 124.
27. Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human*, trans R. J. Hollingdale, Cambridge University press, 1988, p. 419
28. *Gay Science*, Sec. 339. pp. 271-72
29. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pp. 244-45.

30. On the Genealogy of Morals, III, sec. 25, in *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, pp. 153-54.
31. Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson, London, The Athlone Press, 1983. p. 103.
32. Deleuze, 'Literature and Life', in *Critical Inquiry* 23, Winter 1997, p. 225.
33. On the Genealogy of Morals III, sec. 7.