

# **REFLECTION OF SELF: A STUDY OF SYLIVA PLATHS**

## **POETRY**

**Hasina Jabeen**

*Research Scholar Jiwaji University Gwalior (M.P)*

### **Abstract**

*Critics have described Sylvia Plath as an extremist poet, a confessional poet, a pre-feministic poet, a romantic poet and so on. Some think that she was carrier of death wish and some think she was a victim of male brutality. Whatever it was said about Sylvia Plath but it was certain that she was facing enormous amount of pressure and strain which were the main cause of her depression. She went through several steps of despair, grief, anger, quietness and longing. She used the mean of poetry to end her pains and pressures which were common for a woman living in the twentieth century.*

**Keywords:** - *confessional poetry, pre-feministic poet, Victim, male brutality.*

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

*Plath was the woman who faced the problems boldly and raise voice against discrimination when other women were silent. It is not matter of surprise that the poems of a complex and multifaceted writer like her are confessional and bring out those details of life which come from the deepest core of her isolated self. Her poetry is filled with the socio-psychological situations like her personal sufferings and the tortures that she faced outside her family relations. She showed a resentment against male domination, hostilities toward the female condition are freely expressed in her poetry. Some feminist writers see her a writer who was abused and betrayed by men. In a male dominated society she tried hard to find her identity as a woman and as a writer. Sylvia Plath found herself caught in a conflict between her artistic and domestic desires. She tied her best to become a best wife and a mother and on the other hand she made every effort to become a good writer. She successfully combined her social life with her professional life. She experienced a conflict between her family and her carrier. The real significance of Sylvia Plath does not lie in her exposure of autobiographical material but in her dramatic approach to the representation of a violent and threatened self. As a major American poet she wrote in a period of literary transition, a period of post war prosperity and political passivity accompanied by resurgence of American individualism and success. She has expressed the personal and political experiences, the brutalities of war and the alienation of bureaucracy as metaphors between the world and self.*

## **II.OBJECTIVES**

1. To analyze how Sylvia Plath's poetry is a reflection of her physiological state.
2. To know how poetical craft has been used as a defense mechanism.

## **III. REFLECTION OF SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL SITUATIONS**

Plath's poetry is confessional as she reveals her personal world through her poetry to the audience. She suffered a lot this could be seen through her writings. Her mental depression and failure of relation could be noticed in her poems. Her autobiographical projection in her writings is the main characteristic that is found in her poetry. Plath's art of writing is different she chooses her basic idea of writing poems from different sources such as man's estrangement from nature, a threat and horror expressed through hostility, the father daughter relationship or an Electra complex, the theme of love, the theme of death, the sense of isolation, loneliness and deprivation accompanied by mental torture, suffering and loss of identity. The core of her poetry is based on autobiographical and personal elements, thus locating a meaningful relationship between self and the world.

In Plath's poems like 'Parliament Hill Fields', 'Poem for a Birthday', Plath's feelings are those of rejection by people, family, friends, herself and landscape. Same elements could be seen in 'Three Women'. She feels loss of identity. An isolated self could be seen in her poetry. A loss of identity exists within her:

I am so vulnerable suddenly  
I am a wound walking out of hospital.  
I am a wound that are letting go  
I leave my health behind I leave someone  
Who would adhere to me: I undo her fingers like  
Bandages: I go  
(Three Woman)

Plath reveals the psychological experiences like hospital experience, failure of relations, hurt from the male dominant society, in her poetry. She projects her dark world through her poetry. Consequently she feels breaking apart from all:

I am breaking apart like the world  
There is this blackness  
This ram of blackness  
I fold my hands on a mountain-  
...I am used, I am dammed into use.  
My eyes are squeezed by this blackness  
I see nothing.  
(Three Women)

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The poems of Sylvia Plath reveal her personal experience, self-expression, identity crises and threat from nature violence and also reveal her longing to escape from the world to attain better life.

In Plath's works there is expression of anger of rage for male society. The woman is presented as man's prey, tortured beyond endurance, reduced like a lifeless puppet by his destructive expectations. Commenting on the disturbed condition Plath tells in 'Applicant' woman is a living doll, a dehumanized wife and an innocent female:

It can sew, it can cook,

It can talk, talk, and talk

(Applicant. L.33-34).

Plath conveyed her feelings about her tormented self and about her relation with male dominant society in a no. of poems. In "Pursuit" there is intense portrayal of passion, a woman's frantic terror, dark guilt and appalled self-awareness:

Entering the tower of my fears

I shut my doors on the dark guilt,

I bolt the door, each door I bolt...

Panther's tread is on the stairs

Comoing up and up the stairs

I hurl my heart to halt this place

To quench his thirst I squander blood.

(Pursuit. L.46-52)

The personae in these lines acts as a prey of Black Panther's pursuit. In a terrified state she characterizes him as greedy and violent, majestic and graceful.

Sylvia Plath uses her personal situations as a weapon in her poetry. She uses American Cold War, history and social landscape to view herself in relation to them and finds difficulty in locating brutality. There she shows a brutal and dehumanizing relationship between an individual and society:

The peanut crunching crowed

Shoves In to see

Then unwrap my hands and foot

A big striptease

Gentleman ladies,

There are my hands

My knees

I may be skin or bone.

Nevertheless,

I am the same, identical woman.

(Lady Lazarus. L.16-25)

Through personal conceptions she creates beautiful images of her fate.

#### **IV. CONCLUSION**

Plath's poetry is a work of personal process, in which she transforms her inner world into the world of reality through various images. She expresses antithetical attitude towards existence alternately speaking for life and against it. Plath's poems on one hand are expressions of vitality and power and on the other hand they are self-negating and suicidal, thus employing a negative vitalism. Plath's poetry is confessional in nature and is based on her experience as a woman, working in the male dominant world who woman is treated merely a doll. The lack of community among woman writers in the 1950's and 1960's resulted in isolation for Plath within her own psyche. Due to such depression she pushes her poetry into the world of death, and the fear of death and destruction produces a shrillness in her life. At the end she finishes herself and her artistic world. Her career as a poet remained full of pain and suffering accompanied by violent ecstasy and the inability to control traumatic war like experiences.

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