

## 1. Unraveling the Transformed Personal Trauma of Mary Wollstonecraft in Her Literary Writings

*Mary, a Fiction* and *Maria or Wrongs of Woman* are remarkable writings of the 18th century British feminist Mary Wollstonecraft who pioneers for locating the sufferings, pains, pathetic condition, and the inhumane treatment upon women in social and cultural contexts. The corrupt social and cultural practices of contemporary society make women's life miserable, vulnerable, useless, and a curse. As being a female member of the ill society, Mary Wollstonecraft has to face a lot of unpleasant events which sometimes give even threat to her life. The unpleasant experiences of her life have been narrated in almost all her writings. Among the literary writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, I have selected her two creations, *Maria, or Fiction* and *Maria, Or the Wrongs of Woman*, to see how she has disclosed the horrifying and unpleasant life experiences. These two novels which capture the personal trauma of Mary Wollstonecraft highlight the social and cultural 'wrongs' upon female. The desperate attempt of Mary Wollstonecraft to verbalize her trauma through her novels *Mary, a Fiction* and *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman* becomes vivid because she has revisited her past horrible traumatic events through the memory of her novels' heroines Mary and Maria respectively.

The novel, *Maria or the Wrongs of woman*, revolves around the story of a woman imprisoned in an insane asylum by her husband. Likewise, *Mary, a Fiction* revolves around the story of the heroine, Mary, who is frequently victimized by her society and its components. Both novels focus on the societal rather than the individual "wrongs of woman" and criticize what Wollstonecraft viewed as the patriarchal institution of marriage in the eighteenth-century Britain and the legal system that protected it. However, the heroines' inability to relinquish their romantic fantasies also reveals women's collusion in their oppression through false and

damaging sentimentalism. These novels pioneer the celebration of female sexuality and cross-class identification between women. The twentieth-century feminist critics have embraced the works, integrating those into the history of the novel and feminist discourse. These are most often viewed as a fictionalized popularization of the *Rights of Woman*, as an extension of Wollstonecraft's feminist arguments in *Rights of Woman*, and as autobiographical.

*Mary, a Fiction* questions on the validity and usefulness of marriage by illustrating the conventional and loveless marriage between Mary's mother and father. Mary's mother, Eliza, who is infatuated with novels, rarely reflects on anyone but herself, and favors Mary's brother. Mary, who is divested from getting any kind of facilities in her family, educates herself relying on books and the natural world. She finds herself lonely though she is in her family. The emotional detachment of Mary to her family initiates her to conduct charity. But Mary's mother interest turns to Mary when her brother dies as her mother knows that Mary becomes beneficiary of the family's fortune. Mary is guided to be involved in different kinds of activities but the activities like dancing are concerned to draw the attention of the suitors. However, Mary is ready to get married with Charles when she is asked to be his wife by her sick and dying mother. Mary Wollstonecraft, the harsh critic of marriage, shows the irresponsible character of Charles who has left Mary immediately after the ceremony.

Mary, who has been mistreated in her father's home as well as in her husband's home, finds no one faithful to share her repressed feelings until she meets Ann, a local girl who educates her still further. Mary becomes quite attached to Ann who is in the grip of an unanswered love. Mary, who has a strong friendship relationship with Ann, wants to help Ann's family financially but could not as her access to her property has been limited after her marriage with Charles.

Ann, who becomes consumptive, has to go to Lisbon to get treatment. Her friend, Mary, assists her hoping to bring her health back in her life. There they are introduced to Henry, who is also fighting with his illness. Ann dies and Mary is desolate. But the frequent meeting between Henry and Mary, who are forced to return to England separately, brings them close and they subsequently fall in love. Mary, who has been subjected to traumatic events from her parents' home to her husband's home, becomes sick when she has lost her friend Ann and her boyfriend Henry from her life. The disease is so fatal that it compels Mary to sleep in the lap of death.

Eileen Hunt Botting considers the writings of Mary Wollstonecraft as the documents of personal experiences of Mary Wollstonecraft. Most of the writings of Wollstonecraft become the mirror of the contemporary society. For an example, she revisits the fiction '*Mary, a Fiction*' relocating it in the sociopolitical contexts. The new approach to the fiction helps her to discover the importance of sociopolitical factors in its creation as she writes in "Crossing Borders and Bridging Generations: Wollstonecraft's "Rights of Woman" as the "Traveling Feminist" Classic, " *Mary, a Fiction* (1788), a novel that exposes the injustices caused by patriarchal marriage and family life" (296).

Wendy Stevens, likewise, analyzes the creation of Mary Wollstonecraft *Mary, a Fiction*, as a document of the personal experience of the author who attempts to disclose the 'wrongs' of patriarchal society in relation to its mistreatment to women. She writes in "No lies, just omissions",

*Mary, a Fiction* is autobiographical in many respects, patterned clearly after the author's early life. Like many other women of her class, her life was filled with frustration, ruled by prevailing values, laws and traditions. The novel highlights

the particular frustration of its author; a gifted woman living in a society which had no use for creative women. (11)

The biased laws adopted by the society and its institutions to implement such biased laws have made the society a cage for women who do not see any hope to be free and liberated from the harsh clutch of men. The women's imprisoned status in male favored society becomes the primary concern for Mary Wollstonecraft as she envisions the justification of the superiority of male over female is socially constructed. The victim of male injustice, Mary Wollstonecraft, has attempted to surface her social position in *Mary, a Fiction* by assigning her fictional character the role of helpless and submissive to patriarchal rules in spite of having the capacity to differentiate the wrong to the right. Stevens points out the depiction of patriarchal society in *Mary, a Fiction* as a jail for women whose fate is same despite the differences in class and caste. She further writes; "Both the real and the fictional Mary were trapped by their gender. Neither Mary nor her fictional character Mary envisioned the possibility of escape during their lives [ . . .]" (11).

Mary Wollstonecraft continuously raises the voice against the social maltreatments to her sex throughout her literary writing career. Her dissatisfaction on the social injustice to her sex has been registered in her writings. Among these writings, *Maria or the Wrongs of Woman* attempts to present the miserable and pathetic condition of women in her society. The novel which is designed to illustrate to show the 'wrongs' of the patriarchal society narrates the personal trauma of the author making a connection to the trauma of women of her society.

Maria, the leading character of the novel *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*, has been imprisoned by her husband, George Venables. George Veneables not only has condemned Maria to live in an insane asylum, but he has also taken her child away from her. The continuous

floating images of her child in her memory hunt her. The alienated Maria from her husband, society and child could not easily restore the meaning of her life. This depressed woman Maria comforts herself when she meets Jemima, the attendant at the asylum, whose confidence and affection she slowly wins. The continuous communication with Maria alters the view of Jemima to Maria. Jemima who thinks Maria as a mad woman later realizes that the mad identity of Maria is an imposed one by her husband. Jemima, who has been victimized sexually and emotionally finds herself closer to Maria as Maria is also the victim of same ideology though the event is different. The bond that these two women have made between them makes them the helper of each other.

Acknowledging the interest of Maria on reading books to avoid and manage her loneliness, Jemima is ready to bring her a few books when Maria makes a request. Some of these have notes scribbled in them by Henry Darnford, whose enemies have, like Venables, found the asylum a useful place of imprisonment for someone whose fortune they wish to control. Maria finds the marginal written by Darnford impressive. The two begin to communicate and eventually meet. Darnford reveals that he has had a debauched life; discovered himself confined in the asylum after a night of heavy drinking, he has been unable to convince the doctors to release him.

Jemima, who has arranged the meeting between Maria and Darnford though it is not allowed, tells her life story to Maria and Darnford, explaining that she was born a bastard. Jemima's mother died while she was still an infant, making her already precarious social position worse. She was therefore forced to become a servant in her father's house and later bound out as an apprentice to a master who beat her, starved her, and raped her. When the man's wife discovers that Jemima is pregnant with his child, she is deserted out of the house. Unable to

support herself, she aborts her child and becomes a prostitute. After the death of the gentleman keeping her, she becomes an attendant at the asylum where Maria is imprisoned.

Maria relates her own life story in a narrative she has written for her daughter. She explains how her mother and father loved their eldest son, Robert, more than their other children and how he ruled despotically over his siblings. To escape her empathetic home, Maria visited that of a neighbor and fell in love with his son, George Venables. Venables presented himself to everyone as a respectable and honorable young man; in actuality, he was a libertine. Maria's family life became untenable when her mother died and her father took the housekeeper as his mistress.

Following the events, a rich uncle, who was fond of Maria, unaware of Venables' true character, arranged a marriage for her and gave her a dowry of five thousand pounds. Maria did not take much time to learn her husband's true character. She discovered her husband as a disloyal man who was ready to do anything to acquire money. Money was at the center of his life. He married Maria as he knew that Maria's uncle had left a handsome amount of money for Maria. The disgusting truth about her husband made her uneasy to live with him. She tried to ignore him by cultivating a greater appreciation for literature and the arts, but he became increasingly dissolute that he whored, gambled, and bankrupted the couple which led her to a depressive mood. Maria soon became pregnant after unwanted sexual encounters with her husband. As Maria's uncle is leaving for the continent, he tells her that women have the right to separate from their husbands. After Venables sells Maria to one of his friends, a Mr. S-, Maria tries to leave him, but she fails. She initially escapes and manages to live in several different locations, often with other women who have also been wronged by their husbands leading to a traumatic phase. When she tries to leave England with her newborn child and the fortune her

now deceased uncle has left them, her husband seizes the child and imprisons Maria in the asylum. At this point the completed manuscript breaks off.

At this point, Mary Wollstonecraft's personal history becomes significant in the analysis of her trauma. Mary was the second of six children. Her bitter training in the school of experience started from the very first years of her life. She has witnessed the practice of male impartial law in her own family since she started to understand her surroundings. Elizabeth Robins Pennel revisits the familial experience of Mary Wollstonecraft in *Life of Mary Wollstonecraft*: "Her father was a selfish, hot tempered despot, whose natural bad qualities were aggravated by his dissipated habits" (13). So, it is obvious for Mary Wollstonecraft to encounter with traumatic events in early childhood age. If the head of the family is selfish and corrupted, then it will not be hard to anyone to guess the condition of a female in that family. When Mary steps out from her home to the society, she witness that her society and females in that society are the victims of male's selfishness. Realizing and having the experience of suppressed woman in patriarchal society, Mary realizes the need to uplift the life of female.

Wollstonecraft has understood the dominant male constructed truth in her society which becomes handy for males to exploit women of the contemporary society. So, she envisions the necessity to challenge the existing deeply rooted male favored ideology to uplift the life of women. That is why she has been seen as a revolutionary figure in the history of literature.

Claudia L. Johnson writes in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*:

A revolutionary figure in a revolutionary time, she took up and lived out not only the liberal call for women's educational and moral equality, but also virtually all of the other related, violently contested questions of the 1790s – questions pertaining to the principles of political authority, tyranny, liberty, class, sex,

marriage, childrearing, property, prejudice, reason, sentimentality, promises, suicide, to mention only a few. (1)

As a revolutionary figure, she always attempts to disclose the faults in patriarchal society. The existing patriarchal society and its institutions to govern it are totally under the grips of males. As a result, an innovator woman faces so many difficulties to challenge the norms of the society as her voice will be silenced by the male dominated social institutions.

Mary Wollstonecraft is a woman who never feels defeated. Her continuous effort to standardize the life of woman in patriarchal society establishes herself as an advocate of female's rights in male societies. She foresees the problem in education system of the then society. She finds the fault in education system which has founded on biased educational system for male and female. Alan Richardson reads Mary's criticism on education system of England for girls as:

If education was preeminent in forming individual subjects, it was equally powerful, Wollstonecraft eventually argued, to deform the subjective lives of women. Building on Catharine Macaulay's *Letters on Education*, Wollstonecraft came to see the history of female education as a virtual conspiracy of male educators and writers seeking to render women weaker and less rational than they would otherwise have become. For the amelioration of women's abject social condition, then, and for the rise of a revolutionary generation of rational, freethinking, independent women, educational reform was crucial. (quoted in L. Johnson 25)

Understanding the necessity to provide the appropriate education to women, Mary Wollstonecraft starts to involve in discussion in public sphere. She starts to challenge the existing education system of her society for the women which provide education to women to



construct them as sentimental. So, her writing, criticisms, analytical study of the available texts which sought for the male superiority over becomes remarkable.

Mary Wollstonecraft continuously refutes the existing educational system for female in her society. The education provided to them only makes them familiar with the words so that they can learn fiction. The conspiracy of patriarchal society against women is clearly visible as it wants women to be sensible rather than reasonable. She establishes herself as a critique of contemporary educational system in England for woman. Her dissatisfaction against educational system for female can be traced in almost all her writing.

Janet Todd in his writing “Reason and Sensibility in Mary Wollstonecraft’s *The Wrongs of Woman*” notices the Wollstonecraft’s dissatisfaction to the educational system for women in her society. Janet writes:

Considering the account of Maria’s early education and marriage, we are well able to appreciate her struggle to control her mind in the opening section of the novel. With few intellectual resources to help her, Maria is quickly overcome in the asylum by the magnitude of the catastrophe that has overtaken her, and grief “seemed to have suspended her faculties.” By the time she meets the asylum keeper, indeed, she has so clearly lost the battle for composure that she “raved of injustice in accents that would have justified his treatment”. She raves rather than reasons because nothing in her experience and education has taught her the need for careful argument. (18)

Throughout her writings carrier, Mary Wollstonecraft points out the incapacity of a woman to acknowledge the importance of using reason for making their life valuable is a result of conspiracy of patriarchal society.

But at the same time, her attempts to transform the society where female can enjoy her freedom fails. Her consistent fight for the liberation of her sex and the way she is treated in her society by her male companions compel her to be the victim of the same male designed rules. The acceptance of the helpless condition of a female in patriarchal society and the regular marks of the indifferent behavior of her acquaintances and her society in her experience make her unveil her own pathetic condition through her writings. Mary Wollstonecraft discloses the agents, institutions, events and other social and cultural components which are responsible for her suffering because of her sex in her society fictionalizing in her last unfinished novel *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*.

Mary Wollstonecraft seems to represent the misconducts of contemporary patriarchal society whose doctrine becomes a means to exploit woman physically and mentally throughout her writing career. The continuous attempt of Maria Wollstonecraft to depict the poor status of a woman in patriarchal society through her writing justifies her as a witness of patriarchal society and its mistreatment to women. Her keen knowledge of patriarchal society helps her to portray the humiliated and dominated picture of a woman in patriarchal society.

Marriage, a social tradition and culture, helps to make a strong bond between man and woman. The marriage is regarded as a turning or another phase in human life. The legitimatization of sexual intercourse between man and woman, known as marriage, fosters a new way of life where both husband and wife assimilate and discard so many things for the sake of happy life. But the contemporary society of England when Mary writes *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman* views marriage as a weapon to curtail the individual freedom of woman. Marriage allows male to exploit and fulfill his desire on female body. Woman must show their submissive character to her husband. Even a woman is loyal or faithful to her husband; she might be the

victim of his brutality and selfishness. But Mary Wollstonecraft views the need to create the equality between husband and wife for the healthy family as well as healthy society. Diane W. Strommer perceives the social phenomenon marriage in his review of Wollstonecraft's novel *Maria Or Wrongs of Woman* as:

Marriage laws which deprived women of their autonomy are Wollstonecraft's primary target. 'Marriage,' her heroine says, 'has bastilled me for life.' The story of Maria's early marriage to George Venables, a man who proves to be contemptible; of her attempts to leave him; of his imprisoning her in a madhouse where she meets Darnford, the man who ultimately becomes her lover, provides the frame within which are contained stories of other women. This structure allows Wollstonecraft to show the similarity of women's positions despite economic and social differences, and allows for parallel examples of the relationship between tyranny and submission, the one as degrading as the other. The 'wrongs' of women wrong men as well, creating a relationship between power and powerlessness which deprives both men and women of their full human potential. (98)

The unmoved behavior of a husband to his wife in contemporary society stands for the assertion of male prejudiced belief about a woman body. Mary Wollstonecraft seems to state clearly that a woman suffers not because of her inability to cope herself with the situations but because she is a woman of a patriarchal society who is subjected to be exploited since her birth.

Ashley Tauchert reads Wollstonecraft's *Maria Or the Wrongs of a Woman* to see how she exploits her novel to show the position of a woman in Enlightenment patriarchal society in his analytical writing "Mary Wollstonecraft and Jane Austen: 'Rape' and 'Love' as (Feminist)

Social Realism and Romance”. He states, “Wollstonecraft’s novels- *Mary, A Fiction* of 1788 and *The Wrongs of Woman, or, Maria* of 1798- subsume narrative form to a theorizing of the female subject of Enlightenment ‘patriarchy’”. Trauchet’s concern in pointing out the Enlightenment period in regards to female subjugation is not only to expose Wollstonecraft personal experience as a subject but to highlight the patriarchal hegemony ingrained in the ideals of Enlightenment period itself. As such, she credits the female uprising (second wave feminism) to

Wollstonecraft’s novels:

The ‘revolutionary’ Wollstonecraft, following a messianic aim of breaking free from the humiliations of being a rational woman under Enlightenment patriarchy, sacrifices narrative (diachronic) to theoretical (synchronic) analysis. Her work has been central to second-wave feminist engagements with late twentieth-century debates concerning women, writing and knowledge. Its reading today calls up a history of feminist reasoning to account for its convoluted and pained condition.

(145)

The patriarchal society continuously takes advantage from women. The repressed picture of women depicted in the novel *Maria Or the Wrongs of a Woman* accounts for the plight and sufferings of a woman in patriarchal society. According to Thomas H. Ford, “the novel understands the repression of women to be a structure of feeling as well as a system of violence. In large part, the ‘wrongs of woman’ announced in the title are inflicted through the physical and legal force exercised by men” (192).

The turn of blind eyes and deaf ears to woman’s condition in contemporary society can be noticed in the failure of differentiating between abortion and miscarriage. Though the demarcation line between miscarriage and abortion is clear, the patriarchal society assumes the

miscarriage as abortion. So, Mary Wollstonecraft mocks at the inability of patriarchal society to differentiate between the abortion and miscarriage by revealing the failure of patriarchal society to encompass the knowledge about abortion and miscarriage. Christine M. Cooper surmises “[. . .] her unfinished novel *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman* tries to redefine the meaning of abortion and miscarriage” (1). The inability or unwillingness of patriarchal society to differentiate miscarriage to abortion stands for an example of making rules and laws which are based on biasness. In her view:

[. . .] abortion became [. . .] a means to argue for women’s political capacities. Whereas their lack of agency, over their bodies and over processes dependent on their successful delivery of future generations of citizens, allowed for a continuance of things-as-they-are, any moment in which women’s control within the reproductive process became evident signalled a more general political agency. (1)

Mitzi Myers in “Unfinished Business: Wollstonecraft’s ‘Maria’” reads *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman* as a combined expression of Mary Wollstonecraft’s own philosophies that she has propounded herself. Though the novel is incomplete one, it carries almost all the ideas of Mary Wollstonecraft that she holds throughout her life. At the same time, the novel also becomes a tool for Mary to show her bitter experience of her life. Mitzi reads:

Maria is many things: sociocultural stricture in the mode of the Rights of Woman, personal therapy after the debacle of the Imlay affair, conscious experimentation with the novel form. Mingling such seemingly disparate yet actually analogous concerns, Wollstonecraft’s last work is the culmination of her career in more than one sense, for it embodies and gropes toward reconciliation of the tension

between a rational, radical philosophy and a passionate personal need that characterizes her life and achievement. (107)

Mary Wollstonecraft does not only advocate for the freedom for the woman but also works finding out the surest weapon for it. She opines that the problem of the present pathetic condition of her sex of any classes is in education system. So she urges for the changes in education system. At the same time she also looks the way to resist the male dominance in her society. That is why she calls her sex to make anything as their weapon if that helps them to be free from the cruel clutches of male brutality. While searching for the tool to discard male's ideology which is made to exploit woman, she finds writing the one's own history as it may be handy for the next generation to understand the wrongs of society, females as well as wrongs of males. Diane W. Strommer writes in his review of Wollstonecraft's novel *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*:

One route is through the power of language to influence, to effect change. Maria writes her history so that her daughter may avoid the mistakes her mother made, so that she will understand the necessity of independence, of putting herself in any situation in which she "can be the mistress of [her] own actions." The defense of her lover, which Maria has read in the climactic courtroom scene during his trial, is another attempt by Maria and Wollstonecraft to use language to persuade, to change laws and society. The judge's mocking reception of Maria's paper shows its limitations as well, but one must use whatever weapon is at hand and words have served as bayonets for feminists from Wollstonecraft on. (98)

Mary acknowledges the importance of writing and preserving it as a history about the plight, suffering, pains, and wounds of woman. Her intention to preserve the true story of woman as a history seems to have two goals; one is to make her next generation aware about the devil side of

male and another is to appeal the suppressed sex, gender, and marginalized groups to continue their fight for the liberation.

Diane W. Strommer conceptualizes *Mary, a Fiction, and Maria, Or the Wrongs of Woman*, written by Mary Wollstonecraft as an effort of Mary Wollstonecraft to document personal story in her socialcultural contexts so that she can give life to her past memory. The society and culture, which have influenced the formation of the identity of male and female, delineate woman as a property of a man and also authorize a male to treat female as his wish. In such a society, a woman like Mary Wollstonecraft who has raised voice of equality and equity of female in her society has to face many challenges from the elements of society and culture. But those who fight for the rights of marginalized people find writing as a best means to document the personal story keeping it in the sociocultural contexts so that they can explore the responsible social and cultural mechanisms used to suppress the voice of these people. On the line of presenting sociocultural reality mixing personal story either in autobiographical writing or fictional autobiographical writing, Mary Wollstonecraft pioneers. Diane W. Strommer writes, “Both *Mary* and *The Wrongs of Woman* are Wollstonecraft’s attempts to transform her own history, personality, and intellectual gifts as they related to the position of women in her time and place into the story of every woman” (96).

The mission to eradicate or reformulate the biased laws for male and female makes her an ideal figure for those who fight for their own freedom. The advocate of freedom for the marginalized and suppressed sex towards the later phase of her life realizes the hardship in reformulating the social and cultural practices in contemporary society. Though she has initiated the fight for freedom and liberation for her sex in her society, she cannot protect herself being

victim of the male favored society. The continuous attack on her 'self' from her family, society and husbands makes her pass through the various forms of trauma.

The traumatic events that fall in her life one by one are the result of mishandling of woman in her society. The existing society regards the woman as a property of the man who can use the property as his wish without having any fear from either his society or from his nation's law. The constructed and valorized opinion of the society to woman as a property, Mary envisions, is the primary reason for any woman from any class, cast, and groups to be the victim of trauma. The societal and cultural prescribed and guaranteed practices for male and female become the primary concern for Mary Wollstonecraft as she concedes that unless there is change in these practices, a woman cannot find herself in secure and liberated social environment.

The woman who has started her fighting against the biased laws of patriarchal society becomes the subject of enquiry even after the centuries of her death. The continuous attempt of different scholars from different disciplines to unravel the truth of Mary Wollstonecraft life from available her writings and writings on her life justifies her as a historian, critics of contemporary society and culture, freedom fighter, voice of voiceless, and a revolutionary figure in the history of woman's writing.

The ongoing research in understanding the life and writings of Mary Wollstonecraft has disclosed the different faces of her life and her writing career. Having the idea from the different scholars' research on the life and writings of Mary Wollstonecraft, I attempt to revisit her novels *Mary, a Fiction* and *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman* as the means which Mary Wollstonecraft selects to release her personal trauma making her heroines Mary and Maria her mouthpieces in her two novels respectively.



In this fight of liberation of her sex, Mary encounters a lot of events which leaves irremediable wounds in her life. She frequently shouts for the betterment of her sex but nobody cares her voice. The society and its components become the agents of trauma which one by one add the unbearable pain in her life. Mary Wollstonecraft who knows the value of writing, in later phase of her writing writes about her personal trauma in particular and her sex in general.

So, this thesis tries to see how writers like Mary Wollstonecraft transfer their personal trauma in their literary writings. The thesis focuses on the role of a trauma to shape the identity of a woman in a patriarchal society. The centuries existing male ideologies become hindrances for any woman to have power over her own life. The guided and controlled life of a woman becomes painful and traumatic for some scholars like Mary Wollstonecraft who frequently point out the 'wrongs' of the society. But the attempt of such scholars to wake up the society becomes futile as the society is not in sleep rather it is pretending as if it is sleeping. The different mechanisms of society and culture are made active to silence the voice of the women.

The silenced voice of women gets disclosed in the writings as the writings become only one left means for the women to show their pain, suffering, and traumatic experience which are the result of indifference of patriarchal society to them. The woman, like Mary Wollstonecraft, who wants to share her personal experience of trauma, regards the writing as a best means to transmute her trauma. The society, particularly patriarchal society which frequently leaves the scars on the body of a woman, prohibits a woman to discuss her experiences of trauma of sexual abuse, abandonment and betrayal as they are the result of the malpractices of the patriarchal society to the women. The women, who are muted in patriarchal society, take writing as a best tool to cope their trauma.

For this purpose this thesis will be intensively text based. The hypothesis will be examined through the perspectives of Trauma Theory. Since trauma theory diagnoses the agent of trauma, its effects and its way out, the thesis will exploit how the trauma has been brought forth as stated by Susannah Radstone in “Trauma Theory: Contexts, Politics, Ethics”, “trauma analysis aims to demonstrate the ways in which texts may be engaged with the belated remembrance of trauma” (22).

Theoretical terminologies, tools, and perspectives will be obtained through library consultations and internet websites. This thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter introduces the novels, novelist, the background of the work and a general direction this thesis take in course of study. The second chapter introduces and elaborates the critical concepts of Trauma Studies in relation to understanding how the personal trauma is documented in Mary Wollstonecraft’s novel *Mary, a Fiction*. The same tool will be used in the third chapter to analyze the novel *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*. Mainly, it is shown that the writer writes her novel remembering her painful past experience and makes her character to be mouthpiece to narrate her traumatic experience. At the same time, she also sees the trauma as a component to shape the identity of her sex. The fourth chapter is the concluding section, rounding up the thesis by showing that the hypothesis set at the beginning was correct and the novel is about Mary Wollstonecraft’s trauma.

## **2. Understanding Traumatic Experience of an Author in (auto)biographical or Fictional (Auto)biographical Writings**

The study of trauma is relatively new, though the phenomenon has existed since humans began to be aware of their existence. Over the last twenty years or so, the appearance of revolutionary new work on trauma in literature and critical theory has made a weighty impact both within and beyond the field of literature. Academics generally agree that the explosion of trauma work now being done in literary studies is largely due to the path breaking work by Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman, two prominent members of the Department of Comparative Literature at Emory. Since the early 1990s, both Cathy Caruth and Shoshana Felman have been working ingeniously on the boundaries of trauma, literature, and psychoanalysis paving a way to analyze and understand the role of traumatic experience in the creation of a literary writing. This school of thought argues that the literature is the best means to capture the human experiences in comparison to the other available tools in preserving or representing human experiences. Elissa Marder in “Trauma and Literary Studies: Some ‘Enabling Questions’” asserts, “Literature is one of the ways we tell one another about aspects of human experience that cannot be contained by ordinary modes of expression and that may even exceed human understanding” (3).

The formal study of trauma starts with the changes in social structures, medical advances and philosophical outlooks which are the result of industrial revolution in West. With advancement in technology in transportation, England and France face the problem of providing compensation for those who psychologically but not physically injured in rail accident. The word trauma, deriving from the Greek word for wound, is first coined to denote external injuries. But the new socio-political environment in West after industrial revolution and the claim for compensation from the people of rail accident open the new area in the study of trauma. The

research conducted by Charcot and his team broadens the boundary in understanding the trend of trauma from external injury to the injury that remains unseen: wounds of the internal kind, wounds sustained by the psyche. As such, psychological wounding gets its definition as both caused by a trauma and as being trauma itself.

The beginning of study of trauma, the word which is coined for severe physical pain, tries to redefine in terms of psychologically disturbed behavior of the person who is trapped in railway accident. Colin Wastell writes in *Understanding Trauma and Emotion*:

In the case of trauma unaccompanied by physical injury, the suspicion emerged that the claimant may not actually be affected, but rather attempting to gain compensation by fraud. Erichsen (1883) contemptuously labeled the condition 'railway spine'. The rise of interest in this condition was the beginning of the funded study of trauma. (3)

The funded study of trauma conducted by French psychologist Charcot understands the symptoms of 'railway spine' as 'hysteria- which was believed only to occur in women. He further adds,

The association of trauma with monetary compensation and with a 'disorder' associated with women resulted in a large degree of suspicion being directed towards those who claimed to be afflicted with trauma. Indeed, it is consistent with later literature that, from the point of view of the legal profession, if a person displayed the symptoms associated with trauma, they were either malingering or constitutionally weak (remember that women at this time were considered the weaker sex). (3)

The study of trauma to understand 'hysteria' helps Colin Wastell to read Charcot's work significant in the study of woman's trauma as he writes, "hysterics were the result of the women's traumatic experiences" (3). So, from its beginning, the trauma study pays its attention on the psychological trauma of women and its impact on women's life.

Sigmund Freud, a leading psychologist, diagnoses the cause of hysteria and discovers the disease regarded as peculiar to woman in the contemporary society as a response to the childhood sexual abuse trauma. He coins the word trauma to understand the psychic response of a woman who once was sexually abused. He sees the hysteria, taken as a female disease, is a result of trauma. Ryan LaMothe in 'Freud's Unfortunates: Reflection on Haunted Beings Who Know the Disaster of Sever Trauma' reads the traumatic theory of hysteria propounded by Freud is applicable to understand the hysteria as a belated response to the trauma that is set by the childhood sexual abuse. Hysteria must be understood as a response to the early sexual abuse of the child. It is regarded as a response of our unconscious mind when the victim of trauma voluntarily or involuntary is triggered to the unbearable pain of the past. LaMoth writes:

Freud initially proposed, in his traumatic theory of hysteria, that "one or more occurrences of premature sexual experience" proved "suitability as a determinant" and "necessary traumatic force" in the formation of hysterical symptoms. The hysteric's symptoms are derivatives of memories which are operating unconsciously" and which were for the most part, rooted in the patient's childhood traumatic experiences. (546)

The study of trauma in its preliminary phase has been confined in the study of the psychological and physiological responses of the trauma victims. The aim of studying trauma is to analyze the abnormal behaviors performed by the trauma sufferer.

Judith Herman, a well known scholar in the field of trauma study, finds the study of psychological trauma has “a curious history- one of episodic amnesia” (9) in *Trauma and Recovery*. This class interval absentmindedness is not due to the lack of interest on it, but rather the issue arouses debate that sometimes it is easier to avoid the subject and deny its existence. Herman reads the history of development of psychological trauma is the result of political movement in the world each time. He asserts, “Psychological trauma has surfaced into public consciousness, and each time flourishing in affiliation with a political movement (9).” He sees the history of psychological trauma with history of major political movements like World Wars, women’s right movements etc. He acknowledges that the study of trauma starts with the study of hysteria, shifts to the study of traumatic impacts on soldiers in World Wars and especially in Vietnam Wars, and in later phase on the study of sexual and domestic violence. Herman sees that the latest concerned area of the trauma study on sexual and domestic violence is because of, “feminist movement in western Europe and North America” (9).

Marinella Rodi-Risberg likewise sees the latest history of psychological trauma in understanding the traumatic experience of women is the result of feminist movement in *Writing Trauma, Writing Time and Space*. She views, “after the feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s, when it became known that more women than men suffered from the long-term effects of psychological trauma and that these women were traumatized in private life rather than in war” (8). As is clear from this brief overview, trauma’s coming into being as a theory, or the very history of research into psychic trauma itself, has a history of necessity to cope the trauma which may be the result of violence, sexual abuse, wars, betray, incest etc.

Anne Kaplan, a pioneer leading scholar in trauma studies, revisits the idea of trauma and hysteria set forth by Freud. She finds the failure of Freud to see the cultural, political and social

phenomena responsible for different psychosis in the case of sexual abuse though he is able to differentiate male hysteria and female hysteria. She says in “Why Trauma Now’: Freud and Trauma Studies”:

Freud suggests why women resort to hysteria while men manifest obsessional neurosis by distinguishes the kinds of infantile sexual abuse boys and girls receive (women receive it “passively”, males “actively”). Yet he does not realize the implicit acceptance of prevailing concepts of gender in this statement. That is, Freud does not go on to ask how cultural, political, and social roles laid down for men and women to produce different neurosis in the case of sexual trauma. (27)

With the introduction of new sociopolitical contexts of the world and the long term effect of World Wars, Civil Wars, Holocaust, and Inter-National wars, the narrowed definition of trauma gets challenged and researches in wars and its aftermath on people are conducted. In later phase of the study of trauma, the scholars attempt to see trauma not only from the perspectives of psychology and physiology but also they try to relocate the study of trauma in sociocultural and political contexts.

The historical context which set the parameters for a reworking of the discursive grounds for women collective identity was propounded by the outbreak of different social movements like Women Right movement of 1960s. These events were significant in that they helped to structure the formation of a generational awareness amongst women intellectuals, writers, and artists, and thus condition their attempts to reconfigure the process of identity-formation and collective memory. The groundbreaking afford of new critics and researchers in unraveling the plights of the women documented either in films, pictures or in literary writings facilitates new approaches. The new approaches in analyzing the displaced characters of a woman in a text put

forth the notion that any form of representation must be analyzed in its social and cultural contexts.

Mary Wollstonecraft attempts to disclose the real face of her culture and society which structure the traumatic events for women through their components. The existing biased rules and laws of her society construct a ditch of pain, sufferings, suppression, and humiliation for women. The exercised domination over women compels the women to pass through horrible and unexpected terrifying events which leave a mark in the body as well as in the mind of women forever. The mark created by these unforgettable events frequently hunts them. As a result, these women neither keep themselves away from the hunting experience of the events nor find the social and cultural environment inclusive. So, the researchers and the scholars of traumatic studies shift their attention on defining trauma from psychological or physiological paradigm to social and cultural regime after 1960s. Gadi Benezer in “Trauma Signals in Life Stories” writes:

It is apparent, too, that traumatic events never happen in a social vacuum. They are connected to the social context in which they take place. In many if not most cases, they are related to the norms of society and to what is spoken about and what is kept silent in public. Life stories include an exposition of the relation between the private and the collective context. They can thus give a better understanding of both the personal trauma, as it is viewed within a social context, and of the social milieu, as reflected in the individual’s life. (20)

Realizing the necessity to put trauma in sociocultural and political contexts, Anne Kaplan asserts that the contextualized form of study of trauma helps us to understand it well. Kaplan does not support the idea of universalizing trauma as psychological study of trauma does. The trauma, as she opines, has its origin in human society, culture and politics which discard the equal rights



and freedom for the people who are the members of the society, culture and politics though they claim the ground of their foundation is on the motif of providing equal opportunity and equal social and cultural position to its people without carrying any sign of prejudices. To support her idea, she reads David Becker theory on trauma. She writes:

Becker also argues that instead of speaking about trauma per se, we should talk of the “traumatic situation,” since that phrasing implies that one is not just looking at an individual who has suffered but at what surround’s that person’s sufferings- his or her environment, specific institution involved, the state of her community, its politics. (39)

John G. Allen argues that the trauma should not be only confined in psychological regime. Instead of locating traumatic experience in psychological understanding, one must shift his or her attention to the social and cultural causes of trauma to understand the trauma in its full fledge. The any event which is not expected to happen in life terrifies a person and leaves the lasting inerasable hunting effect in the person’s life. Allen writes, “Traumatic experiences can result in cynicism, bitterness, distrust, alienation, hatred, vengefulness, demoralization, loss of faith, and loss of hope. All these are ways we can be traumatized by terrifying events that ought not to happen” (5).

The appeal to see the plights, suffering, pain, wounds either existed in society or reflected in writing, painting etc has formulated a new paradigm in the study and analyzing the literary writing either authored by male or female. The literary scholars have felt the importance of interpreting or reinterpreting the literary texts from the light of trauma to understand how the traumatic experience of the writers get reflected in their writings. The initiation of using Trauma in understanding a literary text has strained a lot of ways for the researcher to complete their

research. Susan Rubin Suleiman argues in “Judith Herman and Contemporary Trauma Theory”, “Trauma studies constitutes a huge field today, keeping whole armies of theorists- philosophers, literary scholars, and historians as well as clinicians- very busy” (276). The paid attention of so many scholars from different fields in trauma has called for the consideration of interpreting literary writing as a way to release personal as well collective trauma.

Karyn Ball, in “Introduction: Trauma and Its Institutional Destinies”, reads the psychiatrist Judith Lewis Herman who has argued that the history of trauma studies is determined by the history of political and social movements for the reconstruction of the society and its policies. He opines that the reappearance of trauma studies in the literary field after the social movements 1960s attempts to redefine the trauma as not only the individual inability to bear the horrifying events rather trauma is the result of social injustice done by a social group upon another group. He asserts the new model of trauma studies helps to create social cognizance by vocalizing the marginalized and suppressed group. The intensity to be the words of voiceless person or group is to help to identify the sources of trauma for these groups so that it will help to eradicate the social injustice or to pave a way for social integration of these marginalized and suppressed groups. Ball says:

The systematic study of psychological trauma ‘depends on the support of a political movement.’ This is the case insofar as social movements raise public awareness by ‘giving voice to the disempowered’ and thereby creating the conditions that enable individuals and groups to admit the reality of trauma and victimization. (4)

The study of trauma focuses on how the voice of a race, sex, group etc has been suppressed in contemporary society. More than this, the scholars and the texts on trauma studies focus on the

outcome of traumatic experience, its sources, the behavioral and physiological changes in the victim of trauma as well as how the person's trauma is being 'acted out' and 'worked through'. The work of trauma enquiry seems to disclose the hidden truth of suppression and its means applied by the contemporary society in a text.

The practices of a society illustrate the ideologies set in the society get guided by the concept of 'othering'. Hence, the constructed ideologies on the onset of 'other' help the main stream people to exercise their power recklessly on the marginalized people. The inhuman behavior of privileged people has made the life of underprivileged people miserable and painful. The disadvantaged people find literature as the best tool to represent their miseries and pains which are the consequences of inauspicious treatment of their society. So, the cultural scholars like Karyn Ball shout to diagnose the erroneous of a society which marks scars on the body or identity of the deprived group, sex, race, etc. Karyn Ball writes:

The "representation of difference," or "otherness," depending on one's perspective, became the topical catch phrase for a cultural agenda to make visible the wrongs of a society that reproduced the privilege of white heterosexual men above all, at the same time that it sustained the ideological and material conditions for the social and economic marginalization of women, people of color, and gays and lesbians. (3)

Janice Haaken elucidates the development of Trauma Studies as a result of social movements in "The Recovery of Memory, Fantasy, and Desire". The world has witnessed so many social movements and every time the motif of social movements is to bring forth the plight, suffering, pain, dominance of a marginalized race, sex, gender, or groups. She writes;

The social movements of the 1960s and 1970s confronted the hegemonic ideal of a unified collective memory. Black studies, women's studies, and gay and lesbian studies redefined identity and reclaimed stories and mythic truths 'hidden from history.' It was and is a struggle against the repression of cultural memory. In this context, repression refers to the subjective experience of struggle against a 'received truth' in creating a new identity and narrative account of the past. (118)

Along with the social movements, the existing culture in the world gets challenged. The new or revised form of culture opens a new sight to look into the life of people who are suppressed for a long time. The society and its institutions bring changes in its value. The change in value of society tries to encompass all the people in the society under one umbrella though it faces many problems and threats from its own people who could not accept the norms of equality and freedom for all. Anyway, the social movements in the world establish a platform for the social integration. The revised structure of society diverts its attention from the mainstream people to the marginalized sex, groups and gender. Then after, the scholars from different fields attempt to foreground the suppressed voice of the people who are the victim of social law and rules for a long time. The academics from different disciplines develop different theories to unfold the plight, pain and suffering of the people in the society as they believe that the suppression of the people is in fact the result of adopted or practiced culture of the society.

As per the demand of the changed picture in the socioculture paradigm, trauma studies broaden its field from psychological understanding of trauma to understanding trauma from sociocultural aspects. The scholars of trauma studies like Karyn Ball reads the emergence of trauma studies as a demanded means to see the suppressed traumatic experience of marginalized

people in the contemporary society as the trauma is somehow cultural phenomenon than anything else. Ball reads Judith Herman's clinical research which;

has focused on the traumatic effects of incest and other forms of domestic abuse-trauma that are relatively common among women and girls, but only began to receive attention as public issues through the efforts of feminists to raise consciousness and mobilize society against specific forms of gender and sexual persecution. This structure of articulation reflects a similar conjunction of trauma and oppression in the discourses of the social movements from the 1960s and 1970s. Their relative successes and failures paved the way for the institutionalization of the multiculturalist agenda in the 1980s and the emergence of trauma studies shortly thereafter. (5)

The emergence of Trauma Studies at first handled and promoted by the feminist writers as they want to attract the attention of the societies of the World which are partly or fully constructed to implement male ideologies to make scares on the body of woman. The feminists explores the trauma of female or marginalized groups either being suppressed in the societies or try to dig out the rooted causes of traumatic experience of a women disclosed in writing, painting, films etc. by (re) reading the available texts authored either by male or female. But in the later phase of trauma study, it pays equal attention in finding the causes of traumatic experience and its ways of managing without considering gender, sex, race etc.

The tremendous researches on trauma and its agents have identified the various events which postulate trauma in a person may be both natural and human made. A traumatic event is one that necessitates the shaping of the very distinctions upon which everyday existence depends; upon which people rely to continue their lives. In fact, the events or people that cause

trauma are regarded as 'agents of trauma'. American Psychiatric Association, regarding agents of trauma states:

with the military combat, violent personal assault (sexual assault, physical attack, robbery, mugging), being kidnapped, being taken hostage, terrorist attack, torture, incarceration as a prisoner of war or in a concentration camp, natural or manmade disasters, severe automobile accidents, or being diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. For children, sexually traumatic events may include developmentally inappropriate sexual experiences without threatened or actual violence or injury.  
(quoted in Degloma 113)

Anything which creates a break in human psyche and leaves scars in the psyche of the person is taken as an agent of trauma. The agent of trauma forces the victim to alter his existing views on society, people and the world. Duncan Bell reads trauma as the atrocious events which strike people and leaves an effect in the lives of the people forever. The sudden impact of horrifying events may alter our conviction about our society. So Bell writes:

Trauma implies a breakdown of both meaning and trust- in a world that has been shattered, overturned. It encompasses 'rapid, sudden, and radical' impacts on the 'body social'. Trauma occurs, then, when there is a break, a displacement, or disorganizing in orderly, taken for granted universe. (8)

So, trauma may create distrust, hate, dissociation, and disorder in the life of a traumatized person. Such kind of person may not come out from the grips of trauma and cannot live a normal life. The continuous reflection of traumatic events may paralyze the victim. So, it needs to be transferred, transmuted and represented.

## **Writing Autobiography or Autobiographical Fiction: A Means to Manage the Traumatic Experience**

The personal as well as collective trauma has been evidenced through writing, speaking, making films etc. The academics of trauma studies who initiate understanding trauma from psychological discipline to war neurosis divert their attention to dig out how trauma is represented in literary writing; autobiographical, fictional, or poetic. The continuous effort paid by these scholars have made trauma studies as a major tool to identify the personal writings of the writers intertwined with their personal as well as collective trauma.

Trauma should not be concealed. Rather it must be made visible through the various available means. The only one way to manage either personal or collective trauma is to bring the traumatic experience through writing or speaking. The suppression of the trauma may create psychological as well as physiological impairments in the life of trauma victim. So the academics of trauma studies suggest surfacing the trauma in any form. The inerrable effects of trauma can be managed bringing it from past to present through speaking and writing. So, the scholars of trauma studies advise to write the traumatic experience if you cannot speak it to other. Giving the value of writing in trauma management, Jon G. Allen writes:

Converting the memory fragments into an organized narrative not only fosters self-understanding but also enables you to talk to others about the traumatic experience. Talking to others will help with the construction of autobiographical memory. As discussed in relation to attachment, the core of trauma is feeling afraid and alone. The lack of opportunity to obtain comforting and make sense of the events is a paramount contribution to traumatic experience. Talking about trauma entails shedding the shackles of secrecy and allowing someone to bear

witness. Then you're no longer alone with the experience, and, albeit belatedly, you can experience some understanding, comforting, and reassurance. Thinking and talking about trauma in the context of a secure attachment relationship is the framework for mentalizing, making sense of experience, making the emotion more bearable, and opening up the possibility of healing and a more fulfilling life.

(95)

The importance of managing trauma through writing has drawn the attention of the many academics who have been continuously working in the field of trauma management. Leigh Gillmore in his analytical writing 'Limit-Cases: Trauma, Self-Representation, and the Jurisdictions of Identity' writes to read the autobiographical writing as an outlet to the truth about the writers life than a document documented to create false truth about the author.

Telling the story of one's life suggests a conversion of trauma's morbid contents into speech, and thereby, the prospect of working through trauma's hold on the subject. Yet, autobiography's impediments to such working through consist of its almost legalistic definition of truth-telling, its anxiety about invention, and its preference for the literal and verifiable, even in the presence of some ambivalence about those criteria. Conventions about truth telling, salutary as they are, can be inimical to the ways in which some writers bring trauma stories into language. The portals are too narrow, and the demands too restrictive. Moreover, the judgments such accounts invite may be too similar to forms in which trauma was experienced. When the contest is waged over who can tell the truth, the risk of being accused of lying (or malingering, or inflating, or whining) threatens the writer into continued silence. In this scenario, the autobiographical project may



swerve from the form of autobiography even as it embraces the project of self-representation. (129)

The assertion on the credibility in autobiographical writing foreshows the significance of locating traumatic experience of the author as an attempt to diminish his or her trauma. Though trauma can't be totally erased from the unconscious mind of the victim, its pain and long term effect can be minimized.

Nerea Arruti in her writing, 'Trauma, Therapy and Representation: Theory and Critical Reflection', quotes Primo Levi to highlight the role of trauma in creative writing. She envisions the trauma as a driving force for writing as only the narrativization of the painful experience can assuage its aftermath. She quotes Primo Levi as:

Certainly practice (in this case frequent re-evocation) keeps memories fresh and alive in the same manner in which a muscle often used remain efficient, but it is also true that a memory evoked too often, and expressed in the form of a story, tends to become fixed in a stereotype, in a form tested by experience, crystallized, perfected, adorned, installing itself in the place of the raw memory and growing at its expense. (1)

Her assertion on the need to understand the writing in the light of trauma helps to read any literary text as a wishful attempt to release personal trauma of the author. The locked and disapproving sociocultural contexts may compel the trauma victims to suppress their traumatic experience to conceal its own flaws and weakness. Even the victims speak about their trauma; their voice may be unheard or suppressed. As a result, the victims may shelter in writing as a best means to disclose their traumatic experience.

So, the trauma, known as a psychic injury which reflects only after revisiting the same kind of horrible life threatening events, has its history from the early existence of human being. The intertwined wound in human life from his early civilization gets attention around the end of nineteenth century. The study of trauma does not get any remarkable attention before Charcot and Freud. But Charcot and Freud start their study of trauma to understand trauma with 'hysteria'. The political upheavals in the world widen its concept and compel it to focus the psychic behavior of armies who become victim in great wars of the world. But social and cultural movements immediately surged up after the great wars of the world make the trauma studies interdisciplinary. The paid attention from cultural critics and scholars give a new insight to underpin the writing is imputed with trauma.

The extended field of trauma helps to relocate trauma in social, political and cultural contexts as trauma is the product of misbehavior of one group of people to another group of people in exercising the power. So, every text, especially auto (biographical) either as auto (biography) or fiction form, represents the painful experience of trauma. The writing helps the writer to locate his or her personal trauma in social, political, and cultural contexts. More than this, by locating personal trauma in social, political and cultural contexts, it helps writers to mix his or her trauma with others' or these texts help the writer as well as readers to understand the personal trauma is not merely personal rather it is collective.

The writing, which is written to give some account on traumatic experience, becomes a means to speak 'unspeakable' event. The writer is not only allowed to reveal his or her trauma, but also takes advantage of writing trauma as writing and speaking of trauma will lessen the pain of trauma. In another sense, disclosing personal trauma through writing helps writer to manage their trauma as well as writing becomes their voice which has been suppressed for many years by

society either using law forcefully or using violence. Another advantage of writing about personal trauma may pave a new way and hope where both perpetrators and victim can make their space in the society.

### 3. Reading *Mary, a Fiction* as a Document of Personal Trauma of Mary Wollstonecraft

Mary Wollstonecraft, a leading feminist, views the existing family and its applied and practiced rules are responsible for constructing traumatic identity of a woman. The trustless father and the biased mother in her family create a rupture in their family attachment. Instead of having love from mother and protection and promotion from her father, Mary Wollstonecraft often becomes the victim of mother's prejudice and the father's malice. The victimization of attachment trauma in Mary Wollstonecraft's life is surfaced and resurfaced in her writings like *Mary, a Fiction* and *Maria, Or the Wrongs of Woman*.

Mary Wollstonecraft gives a shape to her personal trauma in her master creation, *Mary, a Fiction*. The victim of male dominated society, Mary Wollstonecraft recalls her traumatic memory; memory of domestic violence and the death of her friend Fanny. Mary Wollstonecraft, who is overwhelmed by the domestic violence and the death of her dearest friend Fanny, uses writing as a tool to preserve as well as manage her personal trauma resulting from the above mentioned two unforgettable events.

*Mary, a Fiction*, which carries the fractional biographical elements of Mary Wollstonecraft, basically accounts the traumatic experiences of domestic violence and death of her friend, Fanny Blood. These traumatic events disturb the mind of Wollstonecraft but she does not find any means and even a person to share them. But knowing the impact of these horrifying events in her 'self', Mary Wollstonecraft determines to disclose these traumatic experiences through her writing placing her heroine in the existing social and cultural situation in her writing. The positing of her heroine in *Mary, a Fiction* in her sociocultural contexts helps her to verbalize her trauma.

Mary Wollstonecraft revisits her childhood experiences of her home which is governed and run by her tyrannical father in *Mary, a Fiction*. Family, a word which carries the meaning of care, love, cooperation, and support among the members, becomes an agent of trauma for both Mary Wollstonecraft and her fictional heroine Mary. Though, Mary Wollstonecraft has fictionalized her childhood experience in *Mary, a Fiction*, she recollects the tyrannical and cruel face of her father. The deliberate fictionalization of her family environment in *Mary, a Fiction* helps her to reveal her own as well as her mother's traumatic experiences which is the result of her father's indifference behavior to the female members of her family. Mary recollects her father's tyrannical face in *Mary, a Fiction* as:

Her husband was very tyrannical and passionate; indeed so very easily irritated when inebriated, that Mary was continually in dread lest he should frighten her mother to death; her sickness called forth all Mary's tenderness, and exercised her compassion so continually, that it became more than a match for self-love, and was the governing propensity of her heart through life. She was violent in her temper; but she saw her father's faults, and would weep when obliged to compare his temper with her own. (3)

Mary Wollstonecraft, who does not have healthy relationship with her father, has taken the help of her writing to show the cruel and tyrannical face of her father. When the memory of the tyranny of her father is revisited through her writings, she does not hesitate to assert that her father's rude and harsh rules in his family is the result of social and cultural gifts to male in patriarchal society.

Trauma has been interpreted and reinterpreted making its space in psychology, physiology, neurology, or in other fields. The field and the demand may be different but the goal

remains same. The different researchers' enthusiastic researches on trauma studies have revealed that the unacceptable performed behavior in social attachment or family attachment ideology seeds the trauma in the life of the person who is betrayed in the notion of attachment theory. Among the scholars of trauma studies, Jon G. Allen pays his attention in *Coping with Trauma* to find out the location of trauma in personal attachments. His research on trauma discovers the trauma takes place when there is disruption in attachment relationship. He sees the place of personal attachment in family and society. We, from our early life, find ourselves connected with others. But if the connection is grounded on cruelty, betrayal, and treachery, the attachment trauma makes its position among the people. Allen writes, "First, much trauma occurs in the context of attachment relationships. Second, trauma can disrupt your capacity to make use of attachment relationships. Third, attachment trauma earlier in life renders you more vulnerable to later trauma" (26).

The relocation of trauma studies in the context of attachment relationship fosters a new idea to the trauma scholars, like Psychologist Jennifer Freyd who highlights trauma as a result of break in assumption. Allen reads the idea of trauma put forth by Freyd as, "the aptly construed trauma resulting from sexual abuse in an attachment relationship as betrayal trauma, highlighting the abuse of trust" (12).

The traumatic memory of domestic violence gets partial reflection in *Mary, a Fiction* as the domestic violence might be regarded as 'unspeakable' in her contemporary society. Jane Kibly reads Herman's idea of unspeakable as: "the desire to deny the reality of violence is such that the victim is quite capable of forgetting what has happened, and if not forgetting it, the victim is as likely to find the experience unspeakable" (10). So the victim of trauma can't speak

about personal traumatic experience as the person wants to forget it or the victim does not like to talk about it having the fear of social or cultural marginalization.

These scholars believe that in a society some events which trigger the traumatic experience cannot be spoken because of social suppression. Especially the domestic violence, incest, sexual abuse etc. are not supposed to disclose to others. Jane Kilby writes;

Originally, victim silence was figured in terms of social censorship: women remained silent because there was a taboo on speaking about sexual violence, not because they had lost the capacity to talk per se. It was an externally imposed silence. This conceptualisation still holds for many, with victim silence still figuring as a consequence of social censorship manifest in any number forms, explicit and implicit. (3)

The suppression of traumatic memory always is in a way of being surfaced. The memory of past can be repressed for some time but the reoccurrence of similar event in victim's life, witnessing the similar traumatic event happened in other's life or hearing other's story of traumatic event similar to that of victim takes the victim back to the past and compels him or her to suffer from his or her past traumatic experience. In this sense, understanding the memory of the victim of trauma plays important role to diagnose his or her affected present situation.

The roundabout of the personal traumatic experience of her childhood in her family in *Mary, a Fiction* can be taken as the compulsive nature of trauma to be surfaced. The social institutions and the existing culture of her society have legalized the domestic violence against the women. More than this, these social and cultural practices promote the use of violence against women. So, Mary Wollstonecraft knows that she will not get any justice against the domestic violence. However, the pain that she gets either being witness or being victim of

domestic violence in her family leaves a scar in her mind forever. The incurable traumatic pain resulted from domestic violence has been narrated in *Mary, a Fiction* making her heroin Mary to be an witness of her father's tyranny over her mother or the tyrannical behavior of her father directed towards herself as both Mary and her mother are female.

The political and social movements of 1960s for the liberation of marginalized race, sex, and groups of people give a new light in interpretation of self of an individual as well as self of suppressed race, sex and group of people. After the establishment of equality and freedom in their society, feminists blur the individual self of woman with political self so that they can relocate the development of a woman self as the reality of existing sociocultural politics of patriarchal society. The feminist's insight into the study of self opens a new paradigm in understanding the self of marginalized and suppressed people as the constructed one to regulate the culture and hegemony of main stream people. This group of scholars turns the existing trend of interpreting a literary text and appeals to locate the manifested self of the suppressed people especially of women in existing sociocultural politics. Reading the feminist's attribution in reevaluation of self in relation to the politics of a patriarchal society, Ron Eyerman writes:

In the 1970s feminists developed techniques of "consciousness-raising" which attempted to make the personal political, to theorize the development of the self within a political as well as a symbolically structured social context. Armed with theories of socialization that combined Marx and Freud (and sometimes G. H. Mead), feminists developed techniques for liberating individuals from the distorted identity-formation of male dominated society. Like the collective behavior school mentioned above, with whom they shared many theoretical assumptions, some feminists viewed individual memory as a barrier to collective



political action. “Memory work” was one technique developed by feminists after the women’s movement moved into the academy, as a way of recalling faded or repressed images of domination. (6-7)

Writers, who try to locate the trauma in sociocultural context, view trauma as a result of injustice regulated in the society. He further gives the focus on the externally imposed silence as it compels the victim to become the victim of self suppression. He quotes Roberta Culbertson;

That silence is ‘an internal one in which the victim attempts to suppress what is recalled [. . .] or finds it repressed by some part of himself which functions as a stranger, hiding self from the self ‘s experience according to unfathomable criteria and requirements’. More basically, she argues, internal silence represents the fact that the victim ‘simply cannot make the leap to words’. (3)

Mary, who is a victim of meanness of her father, does not find any consoling words from her mother either. Mary’s mother, a hunted person of patriarchal rules and its institutions like marriage, does not show her interest to create a platform for her daughter for her liberation. Instead, she becomes the passive supporter of male ideology giving priority to her son and depriving her daughter from her love, affection, care, and assist. Mary Wollstonecraft writes:

Her sensibility prompted her to search for an object to love; on earth it was not to be found: her mother had often disappointed her, and the apparent partiality she shewed to her brother gave her exquisite pain — produced a kind of habitual melancholy, led her into a fondness for reading tales of woe, and made her almost realize the fictitious distress. (3)

The parental response that Mary gets in *Mary, a Fiction* becomes the partial reflection of the family of Mary Wollstonecraft. Mary Wollstonecraft has been subjected to the domestic violence

in her early childhood age and she is stripped from education, love, affection, and care in her family. The suppressed memory of inerasable effect of domestic violence and the neglected self in her family are unfastened when she writes *Mary, a Fiction*. Pennel sketches the character of father of Mary Wollstonecraft as, “he used personal violence not only to his dogs and children, but even to his wife. Drink and unrestrained selfishness had utterly degraded him. Such was Mary’s father” (14).

Mary Wollstonecraft’s childhood age becomes more traumatic when she is disregarded by her mother. The effect of father’s violence, when gets added with the mother’s inattention, makes Wollstonecraft’s life miserable. The victim of mistrust in family attachment relationship, Mary Wollstonecraft has been forced to have the unbearable experience of severe pain at the beginning ages of her life. Pennel points out the intense suffering of Mary Wollstonecraft and writes, “Only too often the victim of her father’s cruel fury, and at all times a sufferer because of her mother’s theories, she had little chance for happiness during her childhood” (16). The impact of domestic violence and the partiality of her mother frequently hunt her. Though she tries to conceal it to others, she could not because the traumatic memory can be suppressed for sometimes but cannot be erased from the memory.

The suppression of traumatic memory always is in a way of being surfaced. The memory of past can be repressed for some time but the reoccurrence of similar event in victim’s life, witnessing the similar traumatic event happened in other’s life or hearing other’s story of traumatic event similar to that of victim takes the victim back to the past and compels him or her to suffer from his or her past traumatic experience. In this sense, understanding the memory of the victim of trauma plays important role to diagnose his or her affected present situation.

Cathy Caruth explores the principles of trauma and its narrative history. In relation to de Manian theory of language, Caruth argues and proceeds to a quite difficult discussion of how events befall authors, how language falls short of perpetual reality while producing reference through this fall and how reference ultimately “registers, in language, the impact of an events” (74). It is not currently possible to distinguish a true repressed memory from a false one without corroborating evidence:

Memory, as most contemporary theorists agree, involves a recurrent process of reconfiguring the past in the light of present needs and desires. Subjects to those condensations and displacements, repressions and denials, which shape perception itself, memory are ineluctably contaminated with subjectivity, a changing representation rather than an objective record of experience. (Kahane 187)

Evidences of the spontaneous recovery of traumatic memories have been shown and recovered memories of traumatic childhood abuse have been corroborated which is illusionistic and false.

The traumatic memory, memory of violence, the untimely death of dearest one, rape, sexual violence, etc., becomes a creative force for the writers who find writing as a best means to explore the traumatic self and to preserve the history of violence upon particular sex, group, race, etc. Kim Lacy Rogers analyzes why writers unfold their life stories; stories of violence in “Lynching Stories”. He writes:

Memories [. . .] of racial violence have, however, left their mark on many narrators’ life-stories. If the cumulative story of most of their lives has been that of survival, achievement, and community leadership, it is a story that has been constructed and reconstructed from often painful experiences. Thus, many narrators acknowledge the sometimes corrosive effects of remembering the

segregated past, even as they assert that their experiences of fear and dread must be transmitted to younger generations. (125-26)

Although studies have suggested that memories of trauma that are forgotten and later recalled have a similar accuracy rate as trauma memories that had not been forgotten. Hartman, “On Traumatic Knowledge and Literary Studies” had effectively translated his long critical career into variations on the study of trauma. After reading Romantic Poetry, Hartman argued that trauma marks the disjunction between the event and the forever belated, incomplete understanding of the event. Figurative language is a form of ‘perpetual trooping’ around a primary experience that can never be captured. Whether it is Coleridge’s “Ancient Mariner” “compulsively repeating his tale, or William Blake’s private and cryptic mythology, or Wordsworth’s account, in “The Prelude” and “Tintern Abbey”, of how poetic subjectivity is created through wounding events. Hartman regards trauma theory as a key expository device. Hartman had always emphasized that poetic discourse induced a proliferation of meanings; trauma was now the motivating “nature of the negative that provokes symbolic language” (540).

Claire Kahane sees the importance of memory which “involves a recurrent process of reconfiguring the past in the light of present desires and needs” (187). Though there is a debate among the scholars on the validity of the recovered memory, he regards the term as ‘a traumatic break in the ordinary memory system’ (187). The recovered memory has its own value in representation of women’s traumatic experience in their writings. Memory, which is suppressed for some time, always struggles to be surfaced. The foreground of memory of trauma is either volitional or involuntary. Writing assumes the memory of past which is recovered is a voluntary act. So, some researchers doubt in its truth. But most of the writers and philosophers working on trauma and exploring the value of recovered memory in trauma believe that the recovered

memory though the deliberate act brings the past experience of the writer or his witnessed traumatic events forth to the world and the readers. Kahane interprets Janice Hakeen's 'Pillar of Salt' and discovers the explorations of her in her writing the need to regard the recovered memory as something which has its own worth in understanding the traumatic experience of an abused woman in patriarchal society. He points out the conclusion of Hakeen and writes:

Haaken explores the kinds of stories that are being told and concludes that, whether factual or not, the recovered-memory syndrome that has come to the fore in the past 20 years provides women with dramatic representations of their experience within an abusive patriarchal culture. (188)

In analyzing the traces of the disturbing knowledge of a person in his story, the act of remembering the horrifying event that has injured the person psychologically is also important. "The word remember itself suggests that memory creates the form, as well as evokes the fragments, of past events" (187) Claire kahane writes. Supporting the idea of trauma memory, Kaplan argues:

In arguing that trauma is a special form of memory, they stated that in trauma the event has affect only, not meaning. It produces emotions [- - -] terror, fear, shock [- - -] but perhaps above all disruption of the normal feeling of comfort. The meaning-making one (in the sense of rational thought, cognitive processing), namely, the cerebral cortex, remains shut down because the affect is too much to be registered cognitively in the brain. Caruth, taking these theories for granted, argued that just because the traumatic experience has not been given meaning, the subject is continually haunted by it in dreams, flashbacks, and hallucination. (34)

Mary Wollstonecraft distastes marriage as marriage demands the submissive character of a wife as well as it guarantees a husband to treat his wife like an animal or like his property. The miscalculation of emotion of a woman in marriage, a social or cultural institution, and the heartless treatment of a husband to his wife become the first agent of trauma for the wife as well as for the girl(s) of that family. The sufferer of her father's misconduct and a witness of his cruelty to her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft opines the marriage and its constructed characters are responsible for the 'wounds' of a woman. So, she tries to generalize the fate of women as to be exploited physically, emotionally, and financially by showing the sufferings of woman. The mastery on presenting the traumatic life of women in male favored society becomes vivid in her writings as those are the outcomes of her personal experiences either facing them personally or being a witness. Mary Wollstonecraft recollects the traumatic self of women of her society when she narrates miserable condition of a woman in *Mary, a Fiction*. She writes:

Near her father's house lived a poor widow, who had been brought up in affluence, but reduced to great distress by the extravagance of her husband; he had destroyed his constitution while he spent his fortune; and dying, left his wife, and five small children, to live on a very scanty pittance. (4)

Mary Wollstonecraft's act of remembering her past traumatic memory is in fact guided by her motif to resurface the ill face of society and its male drivers in her writings. The parallel and the side by side narration of the story of her mother and the stories of other women with her personal traumatic memory justify the fate of women of her society who have to pass through almost same kinds of traumatic events.

The restricted definition of trauma in psychological or physical field gets widened when the researchers from cultural studies pay much attention to relocate trauma as a result of the ever

going tension between oppressors and oppressed. The scholars of cultural studies divert the trend of locating trauma reflected in psychic disorder, depression, hysteria etc to dig out the root cause of trauma that becomes the hindrance in social inclusion. So these scholars look into traumatic events for a person or group of people as a barrier that has been the result of exercise of power from the main stream culture to deprive and prohibit the victim in accessing to social equality and freedom. Ron Eyerman sees the necessity to liberate the confined meaning of trauma as psychological or physical to cultural trauma. Eyerman asserts:

As opposed to psychological or physical trauma, which involves a wound and the experience of great emotional anguish by an individual, cultural trauma refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, a tear in the social fabric, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion. In this sense, the trauma need not necessarily be felt by everyone in a community or experienced directly by any or all. While it may be necessary to establish some event as the significant “cause,” its traumatic meaning must be established and accepted, a process which requires time, as well as mediation and representation. (2)

The desperate attempt of relocating the personal as well as her sex’s trauma in sociocultural context helps Mary Wollstonecraft to bring a shift in understanding trauma from either psychological or physiological perspective to social or cultural paradigm.

Memory or memorizing the past is crucial to understand the formation of self of an individual in his or her culture and society. The study on the identity formation at first keeps an individual and his or her present behavior as shaped by the past as its prime concern. The focus from understanding the individual’s self shifts to understanding individuals’ ‘selves’ because an individual’s memory is somehow interlinked with the memory of other. Focusing on the specific

value of interpreting memory in formation of self and its connection to understanding the collective memory, Ron Eyerman writes in *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the formation of African American identity*:

Theories of identity-formation or socialization tend to conceptualize memory as part of the development of the self or personality and to locate that process within an individual, with the aim of understanding human actions and their emotional basis. In such accounts, the past becomes present through the embodied reactions of individuals as they carry out their daily lives. In this way, memory helps to account for human behavior. Notions of collective identity built on this model, such as those within the collective behavior school, theorize a “loss of self” and the formation of new, collectively based, identities as the outcome of participation in forms of collective behavior like social movements. (5)

The role of traumatic memory in creation of the ‘self’ helps a reader to identify the social and cultural institutions of a society longing to create the different but fixed identity of its male and female members. The malpractices of contemporary society to objectify a woman, hence making a woman property of a man, are captured in writings of women. Among them, Mary Wollstonecraft pioneers.

Mary Wollstonecraft, whose childhood is marked by domestic violence, finds Fanny Blood in her life as a true friend with whom she can share her feelings, ideas, and so on. But the predestined fate of Mary Wollstonecraft to be traumatized gets fueled when she is blown by the untimely death of her friend, Fanny. The effect of death of her friend is so terrible for her that she almost becomes the patient of depression. As Mary Wollstonecraft does not find anyone to



share the grief that has left an effaceable scar in her life, she takes the help of writing to release her trauma as well as to preserve her deep affection, compassion, and love for Fanny Blood.

Mary Wollstonecraft realizes that the death of Fanny has taken away so many things from her life. The long lasting traumatic effect of the loss of Fanny is documented in one of her letters collected in Pennel's book in which she writes:

The loss of Fanny was sufficient of itself to have thrown a cloud over my brightest days; what effect, then, must it have when I am bereft of every other comfort? I have, too, many debts. I cannot think of remaining any longer in this house, the rent is so enormous; and where to go, without money or friends, who can point out? My eyes are very bad and my memory gone. (62-63)

Mary Wollstonecraft's traumatic memory on loss of her friend, Fanny, is recollected in *Mary, a Fiction*. Mary, the heroine of the fiction, finds Ann as an idle woman with whom Mary develops a strong obsession of friendship. The pleasure that Mary has in Ann's friendship turns out to be matter of worries as Ann health is deteriorating. The poor health of Ann becomes the primary concern of Mary as she loves her friend more than anyone else. Mary Wollstonecraft writes:

Night after night Mary watched, and this excessive fatigue impaired her own health, but had a worse effect on Ann; though she constantly went to bed, she could not rest; a number of uneasy thoughts obtruded themselves; and apprehensions about Mary, whom she loved as well as her exhausted heart could love, harassed her mind. After a sleepless, feverish night she had a violent fit of coughing, and burst a blood-vessel. The physician, who was in the house, was sent for, and when he left the patient, Mary, with an authoritative voice, insisted on knowing his real opinion. Reluctantly he gave it, that her friend was in a

critical state; and if she passed the approaching winter in England, he imagined she would die in the spring; a season fatal to consumptive disorders. (11)

The calculation of the time of approaching death of Ann makes Mary restless as Mary Wollstonecraft becomes restless when she gets informed of approaching death of her dearest friend Fanny. The disturbed health of Fanny leaves an ineffaceable mark in the memory of Wollstonecraft. Mary Wollstonecraft has so deep compassion to Fanny that even the worse health of Fanny makes Mary Wollstonecraft a patient of depression. Pennel writes:

She loved Fanny Blood with a passion whose depth is beyond the comprehension of ordinary mortals. Her affection for her was the one romance of her youth, and she lavished upon it all the sweetness and tenderness, the enthusiasm and devotion of her nature, which make her seem to us lovable above all women. And now this friend, the best gift life had so far given her, was to be taken from her. She saw Fanny grow weaker and weaker day by day, and knew that she was powerless to avert the coming calamity. (55)

The powerless situation of Mary Wollstonecraft and her heroine makes them the passive viewers of their friends' death. Though the death has taken all the pains of Fanny and Ann with itself, Mary Wollstonecraft and Mary are posted to live under the continuous traumatic memory of the death of their friends. The confession of Mary Wollstonecraft about the lasting effect of Fanny's death delineates the traumatized 'self'. Pennel brings the words of Mary Wollstonecraft as:

“When a warm heart has strong impressions,” she wrote in a letter long years afterwards, “they are not to be effaced. Emotions become sentiments; and the imagination renders even transient sensations permanent, by fondly retracing them. I cannot without a thrill of delight recollect views I have seen, which are

not to be forgotten, nor looks I have felt in every nerve, which I shall never more meet. The grave has closed over a dear friend, the friend of my youth; still she is present with me, and I hear her soft voice warbling as I stray over the heath.” (24)

The traumatic memory of Fanny’s death has been remembered in *Mary, a fiction*. The affected mind of Mary Wollstonecraft by the death of Fanny bursts out when she remembers her friend Fanny in *Maria, a Fiction* through the character Mary, who is also in grief of her friend’s death. Wollstonecraft vomits out her disappointment on Fanny’s death in *Mary, a fiction* as, “she exclaimed, - I cannot live without her! - I have no other friend; if I lose her, what a desert will the world be to me?” (16).

The deserted figure of Mary in *Mary, a Fiction* resembles the deserted identity of Mary Wollstonecraft. Mary Wollstonecraft who has been deserted on love, care, protection, trust, attention, etc. in her family finds Fanny in her life as a source of love and care. But the source of love dries when Fanny dies. The death of Fanny is so shocking for Mary Wollstonecraft that she assumes her world is deserted. The haunting memory of her home’s domestic violence upon her and her mother, and the untimely and unexpected death of Fanny shake her world. It becomes too difficult for her to overcome from the past traumatic experiences of domestic violence and Fanny’s death. She finds the writing as a best weapon while she is looking for an appropriate means to transform and manage her personal trauma which is directly or indirectly attached in her ‘self’ by her society.

Mary Wollstonecraft who has understood the value of writing trauma to less the pain of trauma, which I will see in her another novel *Maria, Or the Wrongs of Woman*, materializes her personal trauma; trauma of domestic violence and death of her friend. The writing, which is written to give some account of traumatic experience, becomes a means for her to speak

‘unspeakable’ event. When she documents her personal trauma in her writings, she attempts to show the link of her trauma with the trauma of other women asserting women’s fate in her society is designed by men of her society, not by women themselves. The helpless social position of women as she views is the primary reason to be traumatized.

#### **4. *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman: A Account of Personal Traumatic Experience of Mary Wollstonecraft in Fictional Form***

Mary Wollstonecraft criticizes the existing male dominated society which disrespects woman and become an agent to traumatize the women of contemporary society. Instead of correcting its own 'wrongs', the society frequently compels a woman to pass through the series of traumatic events. The border line created for women by society does not see the plights, sufferings, pains and wounds of a woman but justifies it as a must to maintain the law and regulation of the society. The law and practices of contemporary society which are guided by male hegemony disregard woman as a subject. Besides, it creates the identity of a woman and asks the woman to live under the constructed identity. If any woman tries to violate and revolts against the constructed identity, she will come under the legal action. Because of impartial law of the society, Mary Wollstonecraft and her sex from any race, class and age become the victim and get the traumatic identity. Seeing and having the traumatic experience resulted from the impartial law and indifference behavior of man to woman, Wollstonecraft struggles for her sex liberation throughout her life.

Her struggle against the impartiality of the society does not bring any change in her society but sets a ground for women to fight for their rights and freedom. During her revolt, she has applied many means to unravel the truth of man's cruelty upon woman. Though she is able to locate the wrongs of men, she could not bring any change in the society and in the thought of men. Instead, she finds herself in the reign of despair, sorrows, wounds, pain and more than these she finds herself surrounded by trauma. Difficulty to come out from the traumatic experiences and realizing the poor and helpless condition of herself, she takes the assistance of writing especially fictional writing to help herself to release the extreme pain of her trauma.

Mary Wollstonecraft, an advocate of freedom and equality for women in societies, in the course of revealing her trauma highly depends on her fictional writing. Though she does not write her autobiography, she reveals her traumatic experience resulted from social injustice, impartial law, betrayal, violence, emotional breakdown, and sexual abuse in her writings reflecting the social reality of her society and making her heroine to pass through the horrible events that occur in her life. Her heroine, in her fictional writing, becomes the mouthpiece to narrate or remember the traumatic experience of Mary Wollstonecraft. Caroline Franklin reads her two novels; *Mary* and *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*, and writes, “this is evident in Wollstonecraft’s fiction too, for she had used her own name or variations of it for the heroines in both her novels, her children’s stories, and even her translated books for children” (3).

She does not only cast her heroine giving her name or variations of her name, but also creates the most of the unfavorable situation of her life for heroine in which she has been compelled to go through. The compulsion for travelling through such unaccepted and adverse state of affairs is in fact modeled for her sex by her society, culture and law. The social injustice, cultural domination and partiality in law for male and female are responsible for the physical and psychological imbalance in woman’s life.

In an attempt to transform her traumatic experience of her childhood and of her married life with Gilbert Imlay, Mary Wollstonecraft writes *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*. Mary, who was overwhelmed by the unbearable pain in her life, gives an account to her traumatic experience crafting the similar sociocultural situation to her mouth piece Maria in her novel. She has tried to recover her personal traumatic memory placing it in the sociocultural contexts of the contemporary society so that she can show the women’s identity of her society is not acquired rather it is constructed. The novel opens in a private mad house where Maria has been

imprisoned by her husband. In the novel, Mary Wollstonecraft dispenses her anger to the society and its partial law for woman by postulating the miserable situation of her sex in her society.

Mary Wollstonecraft's hidden motif of surfacing and resurfacing of her personal trauma making a connection to her societal and cultural practices is heavily reflected in *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman*. She has given a shape to the trauma resulted from the domestic violence and the conventional betrayal of a husband to his wife in marriage institution.

Mary Wollstonecraft has made her characters to recollect their memory of past one by one. The characters of the novel like Maria, Jemima etc remember the 'overwhelming' experience of the past events that took place in their lives. The horrifying past of their life has shaped their present psychology and opinion about themselves and other. Jon G. Allen writes, "the intrusion of the past into the present is one of the main problems confronting persons who have developed psychological symptoms and psychiatric disorders as a consequence of traumatic experience" (4).

In an attempt to give shape to her traumatic experience, Mary Wollstonecraft revisits her society and its biased law for male and female in her novel *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*. The female characters in the novel have got the experience of trauma because of the social imbalance view to their sex. Maria, the protagonist of the novel, finds herself close to Jemima when Jemima narrates her trauma. The bond that she has felt between Jemima and herself after hearing the traumatic past of Jemima illustrates that the females from any class and race of her society become the victim of the social injustice. Maria, replica of Mary Wollstonecraft, finds the fate of Jemima similar to the fate of herself as both of them are the victim of same social institution. Mary Wollstonecraft has witnessed and gone through the various traumatic events. When someone, who belongs to her sex as she is victimized in her society because of her sex, recounts

the horrible past traumatic experience of domestic violence and sexual abuse, Mary recalls her own traumatic experience like Maria in her partial autobiographical novel *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*. Maria shares the traumatic experience of Jemima after hearing how she has been brutalized in her master's house.

LaMothe asserts, "testimonies of trauma evoke experiences in the listener, which are connected to the speaker's experience to the trauma" (560). Maria finds her position in her society similar to Jemima though Jemima is from lower class. Acknowledging the similar fate provided to women for any age, group, and race, Maria laments for giving birth to a girl. She predicts her daughter will be casted in her society as others women are being casted. Mary sees the oppressed state of woman in her society from the memory of Maria as:

Active as love was in the heart of Maria, the story she had just heard made her thoughts take a wider range. The opening buds of hope closed, as if they had put forth too early, and the happiest day of her life was overcast by the most melancholy reflections. Thinking of Jemima's peculiar fate and her own, she was led to consider the oppressed state of women, and to lament that she had given birth to a daughter. Sleep fled from her eyelids, while she dwelt on the wretchedness of unprotected infancy, till sympathy with Jemima changed to agony, when it seemed probable that her own babe might even now be in the very state she so forcibly described. (29)

The family is our first and most important social agent as it shapes our belief, thought as well as it makes us familiar to the outer world. Family is also regarded as a place where we find ourselves safe and protected. We have made a strong attachment with our family members. But if the family, instead of being protecting and safe place, becomes cruel and constructs partial law



for a boy and girl then the family becomes the first agent to traumatize its members especially children. Jon G. Allen writes:

Attachment trauma occurs in relationships in which there is a close emotional bond and a significant degree of dependency. Trauma resulting from child abuse is a glaring example. The impact of such trauma can be especially far-reaching, because it can affect the capacity for trusting relationships. (4)

The early introduction to attachment trauma to the children may alter their view to the world, society and people and may break the capacity of children to integrate themselves with the society and its people.

Mary Wollstonecraft who has introduced to the attachment trauma in her early childhood opines the miseries of women of her society are deeply rooted in patriarchal ideologies. She locates the traumatic experience of her sex in her social and cultural context. To illustrate her personal experience of attachment trauma, Mary Wollstonecraft has created almost the same family environment for her heroine Maria in her novel *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*.

Maria, the mouthpiece of Mary, finds herself in the prison of male's brutality in her early childhood. The house does not become a house in its true sense for both Mary and Maria as the house exercises partial law, deprivation and individualistic treatment for its males and females. Mary and Maria both have developed intense hatred towards marriage, family and male dominance because of their early sorrowful experience in their family.

Mary discloses how the woman of her society becomes the victim of attachment trauma in *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman* by portraying the painful condition of her heroine who shares the most of her characters and horrifying events of her life. Mary Wollstonecraft writes:

An insulated being, from the misfortune of her birth, she despised and preyed on the society by which she had been oppressed, and loved not her fellow-creatures, because she had never been beloved. No mother had ever fondled her, no father or brother had protected her from outrage; and the man who had plunged her into infamy, and deserted her when she stood in greatest need of support, deigned not to smooth with kindness the road to ruin. (5)

Maria has been affronted in her family, society and by her husband not because she has some kinds of weakness but it is a destined fate of her sex in her society. Like Maria, Mary Wollstonecraft is also neglected in her family. She does not get any considerable attention from neither her family, nor from her husband nor from her society. She feels she is in the crowd of people but alone like Maria.

Mary Wollstonecraft, who is victim of attachment trauma, searches the means to manage the stress of it. In course of her search, she realizes that only another form of attachment, attachment between or among the suppressed and social victims, will be handy to manage attachment trauma when she gets Fanny Blood as her friends. The friendship that she has with Fanny gives a new way and a new light in her life. She finds a true friend which helps to lessen her attachment trauma. Pennel writes, "Mary then and there vowed in her heart eternal friendship for her new acquaintance, and the vow was never broken" (23).

Jon G. Allen strongly asserts that the person who is the victim of attachment trauma attempts to make another attachment with other person as the alienation of the victim adds only pain in his or her trauma. The way out from the stress of attachment trauma lies in making or searching another attachment. He argues:

Isolation from other potential sources of support further cements the traumatic attachment, as the battered woman becomes increasingly dependent on periods of loving-kindness that provide a brief safe haven and respite from assault. Thus finding other sources of support is a crucial pathway out. (16)

The victim of attachment finds solace in another form of attachment where the members make a strong bond.

Mary Wollstonecraft has understood the importance of making a fetter among the females who have been traumatized for a long time in her society so that the bond will help them to manage their trauma and become an instrument to correct the man's behaviors to them. The friendship that she has made with Fanny makes her acknowledge the importance of bond among the suppressed and brutalized women to manage their trauma. Besides the bond will provide them strength to fight against male's ill treatment.

Mary Wollstonecraft recollects her memory of her friendship with Fanny who has given a new direction in her life in her novel *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*. Maria, the ambassador of Mary in her novel, finds a true friend Jemima who is ready to help her in her escaping plan from the asylum. Maria, who has been isolated from human's companionship, is unable to come out from the haunting memory of her past life. Isolation has added stress in her past memory. But the stress of isolation and the past memory get managed when she gets Jemima as her friend. The bond between Jemima and Maria helps them to fight together and liberates them from the confinement of the asylum.

Mary supports the idea of making a bond among the women to break the chain of their society which frequently asserts its cruelty upon the women. Diane W. Strommer's analytical review of the novel on the necessity to make a tie among the women makes an assertion to form

an association among women who have been suppressed for a long time by men's violence. The social institutions concede male to create false truth about the identity and duty of woman. Besides, male draws an imaginary line in the society so that he can prohibit female from uniting their voice. Comprehending the male's trick applied against female to realize herself as a property and slave of male, Mary Wollstonecraft appeals her sex to make a concord to fight against male's brutality. Strommer writes:

Wollstonecraft in *The Wrongs* may well have been the first woman to examine the ways in which the harshness of the law and social custom can effectively divide women from women in their equal powerlessness and their fear of risking masculine anger. She also recognizes the strength in mutual support.

Significantly, it is the bond formed between Maria and the lower-class Jemima which furnishes both with a means to escape from their prison, combining their different strengths to make the break which neither could have made alone. (98)

Ryan LaMothe reads Janoff- Bulman notion of trauma in relation to the relationship of self to others. LaMothe discovers the argument of Janoff- Bulman as, "trauma is overwhelming because it shatters the assumptions that are linked to the very structure of the self-in-relation-to-others" (551). Mary Wollstonecraft tries to know her 'self' through the eyes of other. In point of fact, Mary Wollstonecraft attempts to search the self of her sex in relation to male. She is overwhelmed when her presupposition about her sex as equal to male is frequently crushed in the merciless hands of male dominated society.

Mary Wollstonecraft's journey to the trauma begins from her own home. Home- a place where its members feel secured, make strong bond, ready to face any kind of unfavorable events together, and cheer the happy moments together- becomes an traumatic agent that makes the

wounds in mind and body of Mary Wollstonecraft using the means of violence and deprivation. She is not only the victim of the brutality of her father but her mother also shares the same suffering of domestic violence.

Jenny Edkins reads Derridean concept on 'the mystical foundation of authority' to see how the regulation of power in society is founded creating the relationship between law to violence or force. Edkins writes,

He points out that the law has an intimate relation to force or violence in two distinct ways. First, law has to be enforced: the very notion of the law implies the ability by what we call the state to use force to make sure that the law is obeyed, and, importantly, makes that force or violence appear to be legitimate. Generally, perhaps because its legitimacy is not challenged, the violence that is an inherent part of the state as a form of authority or type of power- sovereign power as well we shall see it called later- goes unrecognized and unquestioned. Second the violence of the law becomes visible in the moment in which the state and the legal system that accompanies it are founded. (105)

The sociocultural definition of woman as a man's property and the deaf ears of the social institutions to the domestic violence upon women have silenced and suppressed the voice of victims of domestic violence in the contemporary society of England.

The bearer and witness of the domestic violence in her society, Mary Wollstonecraft finds the deteriorating health condition of her own, mother, sister, friend Fanny, and of her sex in her society as a result of the enforcement of the social law through violence. Elizabeth Robins Pennell reads the life of Mary Wollstonecraft in her home which is under the control of her tyranny father as,

Home became unbearable, the wife's burden heavier. Mary, emancipated from the restraints of childhood, no longer remained a silent spectator of her father's fits of passion. When her mother was the victim of his violence, she interposed boldly between them, determined that if his blows fell upon any one, it should be upon herself. (20)

The bold but the victimized girl could not speak about the domestic violence to the other as she has understood the position of her father in her society not because of his success but because of his sex. The male privileged society treats a woman as a property of a man. The suppressed traumatic experience of domestic violence is recollected in her novel *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*.

Maria, the heroine of the novel, finds her home as a jail where her father is a jailor. Her father's despotism is grounded on the silence of the members of her family especially female members. His ideas and orders should not be challenged. Maria remembers the tyrannical figure of her father as:

His orders were not to be disputed; and the whole house was expected to fly, at the word of command, as if to man the shrouds, or mount aloft in an elemental strife, big with life or death. He was to be instantaneously obeyed, especially by my mother, whom he very benevolently married for love; but took care to remind her of the obligation, when she dared, in the slightest instance, to question his absolute authority. (32)

At the same time, the society makes the victims of violence silenced by using false ideology or by regulating cultural or political instruments. Jane Kilby reads the suppression of domestic violence, especially sexual violence, and concludes as:

originally, victim silence was figured in terms of social censorship: women remained silent because there was a taboo on speaking about sexual violence, not because they had lost the capacity to talk per se. It was an externally imposed silence. This conceptualisation still holds for many, with victim silence still figuring as a consequence of social censorship manifest in any number forms, explicit and implicit. (3)

The silenced victim of domestic violence cannot find the right person and place to console themselves. As a result they are frequently hunted by the traumatic experience when they encounter or witness the similar type of horrible events in their life.

The hunting memory of domestic violence has left an irremediable wound in the life of Mary Wollstonecraft and her fictional character Maria. Whenever these two real and fictional women witness or hear the story of domestic violence upon females, they make a strong bond with the victim and remember their own inerrable traumatic experience.

Mary Wollstonecraft, a victim of domestic violence, finds herself close to her mother as both of them are passing through the same unpleasant family environment. Though her mother is partial to her, Mary never complains her mother as she knows her mother's behavior and opinion are constructed by male conquered society. A passive victim of male's brutality; her mother's health deteriorates day by day.

Mary Wollstonecraft has to nurse her mother. The victims of domestic violence find themselves tied in a same knot that brings some kind of happiness on the side of her mother. Jon G. Allen states, "attachment relationships play a paramount role in healing from trauma" (7).

Elizabeth Robins Pennell revisits how Mary Wollstonecraft presence and her care to her mother help to reduce the pain of isolated mother. Pennell writes, "Mrs. Wollstonecraft's illness

was long and lingering, though it declared itself at an early stage to be hopeless. In her pleasure at her daughter's return she received her services with grateful thanks" (33).

Mary Wollstonecraft knows the long and lingering disease of her mother is the aftermath of her frequent encounter with her father's brutality. The untimely death of her mother and her presence at the unease condition of her mother at the limited time of her life adds another trauma in her life. The death of her mother and the unusual response from her father and brother to her mother when her mother is counting her days of her life has scratched her mind. She is really moved by the unmoved rejoinder of her father and brother at the time of her mother's death so deeply that she even could not forget the last words of her mother to her at the last stage of her life. She, while writing her partial fictional autobiography *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*, does not only remember her mother's death but also comments on the apathy from her father and brother which add pain on the pained body. Maria recollects the death-bed scene of her mother as:

The neglect of her darling, my brother Robert, had a violent effect on her weakened mind; for, though boys may be reckoned the pillars of the house without doors, girls are often the only comfort within. They but too frequently waste their health and spirits attending a dying parent, who leaves them in comparative poverty. After closing, with filial piety, a father's eyes, they are chased from the paternal roof, to make room for the first-born, the son, who is to carry the empty family-name down to posterity; though, occupied with his own pleasures, he scarcely thought of discharging, in the decline of his parent's life, the debt contracted in his childhood. (38)

Maria highlights how her mother was desperately looking for the presence of her elder son towards the end of her life. She waited for the remarkable presence of her elder son to whom she



has shown her compassion more than to her other children. The jaundiced eyes of Maria's parents had privileged him thinking he would be pillar of their life at the moment of life's difficulties. At the same time, Mary Wollstonecraft brings her past memory through Maria how girls are left to suffer from destitution depriving their shares to their parents' property.

Mary, who has been brutalized in her family, has discovered her world as a prison where her sex is asked to be submissive, loyal, passive, dutiful, and obedient to her father before her marriage and to her husband after her marriage. It means the women in her society are the objects of men. The social picture of *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman* is a facsimile of the society of England where Mary is living. The continuous blows from the males' acquaintance to Mary or Maria or women in her society have compelled them to reflect themselves on their sex and their identity. Reflecting the self in relation to male, Mary generalizes her sex identity through her characters verbalization as, "Was not the world a vast prison, and women born slaves" (4)?

The conclusion made by Mary Wollstonecraft in her novel *Maria Or Wrongs of Woman* about her sex in her society is based on her personal experience and her witness in her society and family. Pennel writes, "Mrs. Wollstonecraft was her husband's most abject slave" (14).

Colin Wastell reads the culture of Western society which associates emotion with the weakness of human being. To conceal the weakness of the self and present himself or herself as bold and not overwhelmed by the heartbreaking events of the past, people either fight with their emotion or search alternate to ease themselves. Watsell writes:

In many cultures, and especially in the West, displays of emotion are not encouraged as they are associated with weakness. A number of researchers have taken a different view, and regard emotion as both adaptive and central to normal

human functioning. Its role in trauma is life-preserving, through the activation of responses such as flight and fight. (23)

Rather viewing the emotional response in traumatic experience as an irrational, Watsell gives a new insight in trauma taking it as a useful to preserve the life of victim that either make them fight against or pave them to take shelter in another retreat.

Mary Wollstonecraft, her sister and her fictional character Maria have understood the value of fight or flight at the time of life threatening moment. To overcome from the emotional breakdown in her family, Maria frequently visits the house of Mr. Venables. "I longed to see new characters, to break the tedious monotony of my life; and to find a friend, such as fancy had portrayed" (34). Like Maria, Mary Wollstonecraft also flights here and there in search of a company with whom she can share her repressed emotion.

In search of the right and ideal company, Maria and Mary meet their husbands. The ideal figure of their husbands dismantles when they find their husbands as the transformers and protectors of male hegemony over female.

Mary Wollstonecraft opens her heart, full of love and passion, to Gilbert Imlay who is able to create the picture of lover of mankind in Mary's mind though she fears to make any kind of psychical or psychological bond with a man. Her desire to make a happy and idle family full of freedom and love for and to its members without having any prejudices helps her to enter into the social institution which she qualms of much. Though marriage is regarded as a cultural practice to establish strong emotional and physical bond between a man and a woman based on the sense of equality, it becomes a weapon in England to make a woman slave and object to be played. Mary Wollstonecraft, who has witnessed the bitter and miserable condition of her mother

and her sister in their marriage life, is in fact against of existing form of marriage system. She does not openly challenge marriage but demands for some kind of changes in it.

Her desire to create an ideal family is visible when she meets Gilbert Imlay in France. The heated environment of France against the English people and Gilbert Imlay's impression of a human lover excite Mary to take shelter in the arms of Imlay. She takes the decision to be the wife of Gilbert Imlay realizing her life may be trapped in death because of the French policies against English people, though she could not forget the traumatic experience in her life resulted from being the witness of brutality of male upon female in marital life. Her acceptance of idea of marriage which she negates for a long time can be seen as a form of compromise that becomes a must for the self protection. Colin Wastell writes, "Trauma is about life and death, and it is in these instances that our primitive instincts take over. When there is no time to 'think', people react. It is the residuals of these life-preserving processes that cry out for integration" (xvii).

But the response that Mary has made leads her to another unbearable event in her life. The idealized lover, Gilbert Imlay, in search of prosperity and material success moves here and there without considering the emotion of Mary Wollstonecraft. Mary Wollstonecraft looks for the ways to be united with him. Her attempts do not bring any change in the mind of Imlay. Gilbert Imlay is a man who never rests in any places for a long time. Likewise the revelation of his passion and desire to have many women in his life gives a hard blow in the mind of Mary Wollstonecraft.

Again her granted world and universe is shattered. Another trauma is added in her life. Duncan Bell writes,

Trauma implies a breakdown of both meaning and trust- in a world that has been shattered, overturned. It encompasses rapid, sudden, and radical impacts on the

body social. Trauma occurs, then, when there is a break, a displacement, or disorganization in the orderly, taken for granted universe. (8)

Her effort to create the idle family has been crushed. Her husband has altered her conviction. She does not see any hope in her life. The ideal lover is no idler rather he becomes another agent of trauma who has betrayed her. He plays with her emotion. He does not only crash her life but also leaves a mark of his cruelty upon her body by making her pregnant. Such a mind disturbing act of her lover cements her belief strongly on the tyranny figure of a man. She writes:

“I have gotten into a melancholy mood, you perceive. You know my opinion of men in general; you know that I think them systematic tyrants, and that it is the rarest thing in the world to meet with a man with sufficient delicacy of feeling to govern desire. When I am thus sad, I lament that my little darling, fondly as I dote on her, is a girl. I am sorry to have a tie to a world that for me is ever sown with, thorns. (quoted in Pennel 223)

The overwhelming emotion resulted from the betrayal of her husband frequently hunts her. The hunted memory of her marriage life she narrates in her novel *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*. Mary Wollstonecraft condemns marriage in her novel.

Mary Wollstonecraft revisits her traumatic experience of marriage in her novel by setting her protagonist in the similar situation of her life though she has fictionalized her character. Maria, who finds herself in the mental asylum, narrates her past life with her husband George Venables. George Venable has shown his deep compassion and love to Maria as Gilbert Imlay has shown to Mary before their marriage. Like Mary, Maria could not see the covered face of George Venables before marriage. After marriage, Maria discovers the real face of her husband as he has married Maria for five thousand pounds that her uncle has promised to give him. His

cruelty, negligence, and conspiracy against Maria to get the fortune of Maria that she gets from her uncle become agonizing for Maria. She can't expect her life with her husband. As a result she runs away from her husband house. But the male favored society keeps chains in her feet and confines her in a mad house.

The bitter experience of her past life frequently hunts her. Maria who becomes the victim of her husband's betrayal condemns the marriage and says:

Humanity, compassion, and the interest produced by a habit of living together, made me try to relieve, and sympathize with him; but, when I recollected that I was bound to live with such a being forever--my heart died within me; my desire of improvement became languid, and baleful, corroding melancholy took possession of my soul. Marriage had bastilled me for life. I discovered in myself a capacity for the enjoyment of the various pleasures existence affords; yet, fettered by the partial laws of society, this fair globe was to me a universal blank. (48)

Her trust upon the marriage system has vanished as Mary's. Like Mary, Maria also has witnessed the cruelty of male upon female's body in her family. Both Mary and her fictional character Maria have expected they would be more secured and protected in the arms of their husbands. They have accepted the social and cultural value of marriage. But at the same time, they undermine the hidden cruelty being foregrounded in marriage life in their society. The idealization of their lovers and understanding their lovers keeping them outside the patriarchal society mislead them. As a result, they have to face the same consequence which their mother, sisters in particular and her sex in general have to face. They do not see any wrong in woman's side making her husband pleasing. Rather the forking over of male ideologies from generations to generations and the repetition of violence in the family to keep women silence become the

main difficulty to women to have any integration with men and society without being victim of trauma.

Marriage, instead of being an institution to provide love and affection to the woman, becomes handy for male to brutalize woman. Mary, being victims and witness of the wrongs in marriage system, finds herself near to other females like Elizabeth in her real life and like Jemima in her fictional life in *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*. Throughout her writing career, she appeals for the reformation in the notion of marriage as the existing marriage system becomes disgusting for females as it normalizes the violence and betrayal of husband to his wife. Jenny Edkins relates the act of betrayal with trauma in 'Remembering Relationality: Trauma Time and Politics'. He writes:

Trauma is the betrayal of a promise or an expectation. Trauma can be seen as an encounter that betrays our faith in previously established personal and social worlds and calls into question the resolutions of impossible questions that people have arrived at in order to continue with day- to- day life: What we call trauma takes place when the very powers that we are convinced will protect us security become our tormentors: when the community of which we considered ourselves turns against us or when our family is no longer a source of refuge but a site of danger. (109)

Mary and Maria are shocked when they are tormented by their own husbands. The desertification of Mary and Maria at the time of pregnancy dismantles the ideal figure of their husbands as protector and all loving. These women are left to live alone when they need the company of others especially of their husbands. The desolation from their husbands at the time of pregnancy makes them crazy.

Like Maria, Mary Wollstonecraft searches the possible means for reconciliation with her husband. So she frequently writes letter expressing her deep love for him. But Imlay is so selfish that he does not enquire anything about Mary and her health condition. Rather he only writes about his business and business plan. His concerned and attention centered on him add another wound in her life. The indifference behavior of husband that she has experienced in her life has been portrayed vividly in her novel's character Maria's life.

Mary Wollstonecraft becomes the power house of trauma. The traumatic events in her life come one by one. So, she is frequently hunted by the series of traumatic experience. Unable to hold herself from the severe pain of trauma, Mary decides to do suicide. Elizabeth Robins Pennell reads the life of Mary Wollstonecraft life after being deserted by Imlay and writes:

Imlay in London became more absorbed in his immediate affairs, a fact which he could not conceal in his letters; and Mary realized that compared to business she was of little or no importance to him. She expostulated earnestly with him on the folly of allowing money cares and ambitions to preoccupy him. She sincerely sympathized with him in his disappointments, but she could not understand his willingness to sacrifice sentiment and affection to sordid cares. "It appears to me absurd," she told him, "to waste life in preparing to live." (221)

The continuous avoidance from her husband makes Mary's life bitter. She cannot think anything properly. Realizing her life is a curse, Mary couldn't hold her emotion and attempts suicide. The fall of trauma in her life one by one has shattered the view that she has made about her life and the universe. Mary Wollstonecraft, who has been regularly scratched by the social and cultural components, once feels defeated and wishes to plunge her life into death. Pennel writes:

If hell is but the shadow of a soul on fire, she was now plunged into its deepest depths. Its tortures were more than she could endure. For her there were, indeed, worse things waiting at the gate of life than death, and she resolved by suicide to escape from them. (229)

Even the suicidal attempt does not free her from the panicked world. The woman who wants to make her 'self' distinct from others women in her society from her early childhood to the end of her life finds shattered by the continuous attack of different trauma.

Mary who faces many traumatic events in her life finds patriarchal society and its components as the agents of trauma to traumatize women. She realizes her fight against the cruelty of males upon her sex will be disappeared in air. Her constructed opinion about male as a symbol of malice is based on her own personal relationship with different males who are different in appearance but bear same ideology.

Mary Wollstonecraft has shown the importance of writing in her life as writing helps her to lessen her pain and pacify her disturbed mind. She mention the importance of writing to manage the extreme pain in her life to George as, " I scarce know what I write, yet my writing at all when my mind is so disturbed is a proof to you that I can never be lost so entirely in misery as to forget those I love" (quoted in Pennel 63).

Asserting the significance of writing in Mary's life, Pennel says, "In writing it she sought relief for the bitter sorrow with which her loss had filled her heart" (82). The remarks make on the writing of Mary postulates the idea that she has tried to ease herself through her writing; writing about her overwhelming experience.

Mary Wollstonecraft, who has understood the value of writing in her life, asserts to preserve the history of male's brutality in writing in her novel *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*.



Writing personal trauma helps Mary to search her distorted identity as well gives her a space to remember her repressed memory which hunts frequently. Like Mary, the fictionalized character of Mary in her novel *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*, Maria also finds writing about her horrible past experience helps her to lessen her pain as well as helps her to keep her story alive to her daughter so that her daughter will search for the right means to avoid the miseries which her mother could not. Mary writes in *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*:

Writing was then the only alternative, and she wrote some rhapsodies descriptive of the state of her mind; but the events of her past life pressing on her, she resolved circumstantially to relate them, with the sentiments that experience, and more matured reason, would naturally suggest. They might perhaps instruct her daughter, and shield her from the misery, the tyranny; her mother knew not how to avoid. (5)

Mary knows that her voice would be silenced and her story would be distorted. It would be futile deeds if she shouts for justice in her society because women are silenced using violence and men regard women as a private property. But she doesn't feel better concealing her bitter experience that she gets in her society. So, she selects writing as a best tool to store her wounds. Her intention is not only to make her writing as a store house of her wounds, rather she wants to manage her trauma through writing. Writing for women like Mary Wollstonecraft who do not have any means to cope with their trauma turns out to be useful to locate her trauma in sociocultural contexts in order to trace the wrongs of society to its victims.

In an attempt to give voice to her suppressed severe pain of trauma, she directs herself to writing. In her writing, she does not only cry to look her wounds in sociopolitical contexts but also makes a remarkable appeal to locate the trauma of woman in the contexts of the society,

culture, and politics where woman is frequently tortured. Her intention to write the trauma of women of her society encompasses the notion of reformulation of the society where both man and woman find themselves on the same line of equality, freedom and opportunity. By foregrounding the trauma of women in her novel, Mary Wollstonecraft demands for the correction of the wrongs of the society which have wronged both male and female in creating better and healthy family. So, her novel *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman* becomes a historical document which captures the personal trauma of Mary Wollstonecraft as well as collective trauma of women of contemporary society. The documentation of personal life in relation to other male and female acquaintances of her life, Mary justifies the wrong of her life and her sex lives is the result of imposition of male favored philosophies in woman's life.

## 5. Conclusion

This research makes a study of how Mary Wollstonecraft has transmuted her personal trauma in her fictional autobiographical writing *Mary, a Fiction* and *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*. Apart from identifying the personal trauma of Mary Wollstonecraft, My primary focus has been to understand the worth of narrating personal trauma through writing. In particular, my attempt has been to examine *Mary, a Fiction* and *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman* as a real life stories which disclose the trauma of Mary in particular and trauma of a woman in general. In the first part I have analyzed Mary Wollstonecraft's work from the eyes of other critics and Wollstonecraft's life. Whereas the succeeding chapters chronicles the critical voices on literary trauma studies and the diagnosis of Mary Wollstonecraft's personal trauma in *Mary, a Fiction*, the third chapter focuses on the surfacing of Mary's personal and her sex's collective trauma in her novel *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*.

I have tried to revisit the trauma of Mary Wollstonecraft in *Mary, a fiction* and *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman* in terms of the trauma theorists' critical voices. In general my research exposes the traumatic experience of Mary and her female encounters and her fictional female characters is not the acquired one rather imposed one. The imposition of trauma in women's life begins from their early conscience of the world in Mary Wollstonecraft's society. The artful exposition of her personal trauma making them as collective in her fictional autobiographical writings *Mary, a Fiction* and *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*, she tries to pacify her own disturbed mind making complains about the dogmas of patriarchal society responsible for inculcating trauma in woman's life.

The successful attempt made by Mary Wollstonecraft to fictionalize her traumatized identity in her novel *Mary, a Fiction* and *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman* has altered the preset

mind of the follower and promoter of patriarchal ideologies. The voice that she has raised through her writing and her effort to unravel the bitter truth of patriarchal society make scholars to relocate her writing in the then sociocultural contexts to grasp the intended message that Mary wants to deliver through her writing.

Mary Wollstonecraft, who is ardent critic of male dominated society, valorizes the need of writing personal trauma as well as collective trauma in any genre of writing. Her strong assertion on woman's trauma as an imposed and created turns out to be true for any researcher who diagnose her personal traumatic memory in her writing placing her writing in contemporary sociocultural milieus.

Mary Wollstonecraft writes *Mary, a Fiction* and *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman* to provide an account of her life's dreadful events. *Mary, a Fiction* accounts the detail of trauma resulted from the death of a person whom she loves much more than anyone else. The illustration of the trauma of domestic violence and the traumatic self of a woman in a family before and after marriage in *Mary, a Fiction* has been resurfaced in *Maria, or the Wrongs of Woman* making it more personal. While attempting to surface her past unforgettable memory, she makes an appeal to relocate the woman's trauma in sociocultural contexts. Her demand to look woman's trauma in contemporary sociocultural contexts challenges the readymade response of the society to view woman's depression, melancholia, madness, amnesia etc as an inherent disease of woman. Instead, she argues these so called inherent diseases are the aftermath of trauma which is located in male's brutality, social injustice and cultural suppression. The demanded, constructed and valorized picture of woman as sensible prohibits any woman to use reason against the male's violence upon her body. Rather making her voice loud, the practiced sociocultural norms make a woman believe herself that she was born to serve her male acquaintances.

In an effort to show the misdeeds of patriarchal society upon her body, Mary Wollstonecraft writes *Mary, a Fiction* and *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*. Mary, who has been the victim of attachment trauma, betrayal trauma, and emotional breakdown, narrates her traumatic past in her novels making her heroines Mary and Maria her mouthpiece in *Mary, a Fiction* and *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman* respectively. Like Mary, her fictional characters Mary and Maria become the victims of domestic violence. Their early childhood life is full with miseries not because they are weak physically or psychologically but because of being the victims or witnessing other victims of patriarchal society. The impact of domestic violence is so disturbing that Mary has to be silent for many hours without being able to speak even a single word. The domestic violence has shattered her 'self' and has altered the meaning of family in her life. The altered and shattered identity of Mary has been refigured in her novel's heroines Mary and Maria *Mary, a Fiction* and *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman* respectively.

The tormented and shattered self of Mary searches various available shelters in her life but every time the granted shelter for protection and promotion of her life discloses itself as a perpetuator of trauma. Having the series of traumatic events and its effects on her body and mind, she makes an effort to exile herself from the world. Like being failure to protect herself from awaiting traumatic events, she fails to end the suffering of her life making herself as a family member of death.

Realizing the injustice that she is doing to her life and her wounds, Mary Wollstonecraft comes with a determination to reveal the wrongs of men and her society. Instead of writing her personal trauma in autobiographical form of writing, she chooses fictional form of writing to transmute her trauma. Mary Wollstonecraft knows that her primary goal to write her personal trauma is to make her sex aware about the origin of trauma which is deeply rooted in prejudiced

sociocultural constructed role for men and women. To achieve her goal, she selects fiction or novel as women in contemporary society promoted and restricted to read only novels or fictions.

So, with a fixed determination, Mary Wollstonecraft narrates her traumatic experience in her novels *Mary, a Fiction* and *Maria Or the Wrongs of Woman*. While she is remembering her personal trauma in her novels through her heroine Mary and Maria, she blurs the demarcation line between personal trauma and collective trauma when she remembers the trauma of her female acquaintances in her life. Like Mary, Mary's heroines Mary and Maria find slight difference in trauma and traumatic events in their female associates but discover social mores, cultural values and political laws are major elements in perpetuating trauma in women's life.

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