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Portrayal of Motherhood in Plath's Poetry

by

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CHAPTER ONE

1. Modern Mother's Desire for Emancipation

Motherhood in Modern Poetry

Motherhood is not a newly introduced subject matter through which female writers, especially female poets, expressed their inherent feelings along with their real-life experiences through their poetry. Though it is a common and universal theme, different poets have distinctive views over it. Among female poets Sylvia Plath is one who has poured her real feelings and sentiments of maternity through her poems. She has made room for herself in the theme of motherhood (Nehring 120).

Many poems show Plath's negative concept towards motherhood which are associated with her domestic sufferings. Actually her poems manifest and demystify the women's world. Plath leaves traditional loving and caring mother behind and introduces a modern mother who is indifferent towards children and tries to find place in humanity by not devoting whole life for the sake of children.

Plath has sketched typical mother, in different ways, in her different poems. In some poems she has introduced a rude and carefree mother whereas in other poems she has presented mother who escapes from her duties who never glorifies in the state of being mother. Some of her poems show a mother who is indifferent towards her kids. As a modern poet Plath has penetrated a modern mother who is different from traditional mother. In the bulk of her poems concerning motherhood, Plath avoids traditional emotions and images associated with mothering and employs rather images of harshness, barrenness and sterility (Dubois 3).

Plath is distinct and very different from other, it is because she transforms her personal into a private symbolic language (Ruland, Richard and Bradbury 471). Her poems daringly introduce female topics and subject matters which are seen from a female point of view. She has not only discovered her individuality but also celebrated in its most different and private manifestation (Spanckeren 83). She was a passionate woman who attempted to be a wife, a mother and poet on the eve of the women's movement and succeed to find her place in humanity.

Representation of motherhood is a widely used theme of many modern female poets. Some of them are Elizabeth Bishop, May Swenson, Gwendolyn Brooks, Anne Sexton, Adrienne Rich, Mary Oliver, Margaret Atwood, Rita Dove besides Sylvia Plath. Each of their poems sketches a typical mother and mother's fate: mothering, suffering and liberating. The real experiences of pregnancy, delivery, mothering, nurturing and caring are presented along with their feminist echoes. They have presented specific problems faced by women of modern time and try to name and find a culture of their own (Ruland, Richard and Bradbury 404).

Plath has been ascribed to only as a "confessional" or "suicidal" or at times simply a "hysterical" woman and never been studied as feminist in impulse or discussed distinctly in terms of feminine voice. Actually, Plath is shaped and conditioned by a current feminist awareness of the difficulties peculiar to being a woman and an artist (Bundtzen ix). She has violated conventional concept as well as form and structure to define motherhood distinctively. Her poetry might not have made the grade without the violence in its history. So, her poetry is gorgeous and audacious of all time and unsurpassed in modern literature (Nehring 121).

1.2 Recognition of Sylvia Plath as a Modern Poet

Considered an important poet of the post World War II era, Plath, born on 1932, is child of well-educated Boston parents. Her childhood and adolescence were a series of high academic achievements and published poetry, fiction and journalism in a number of places which awarded too. She was also very much a woman of the 1950s, plagued with thoughts that she had to marry and have children, or else she would be a “complete” female. Her literary career develops rapidly after the marriage with Ted Hughes and shared their literary ideas. Later she worked with confessional poet like Robert Lowell and Anne Sexton. The eventual disintegration of their marriage in the early 1960s intensified for Plath by Hughes’s relationship with another woman which resulted into the separation between them. The conflict between her career and family ties and the severe depression led her suicide in 1963 (Lauter 2594).

Her poetry reveals an intensely personal struggle with self consciousness and a pioneering examination of societal limitations experienced by women. She suffered a lot so that mind also created such brilliant poems which are examples of perfection (Bundtzen 3). Her verse is represented in several volumes. *The Colossus* (1960), the only book of her poems published in her life time, collects poems dating from the mid to late 1950s which included her true matter and voice. *The Bell Jar* (1963) is her a single and semi-autobiographical novel, *Ariel* (1965) contains poems selected by Ted Hughes from among the many works Plath composed during the final months before death. *Winter Trees* (1971) collects several more of the Ariel poems *Crossing the water* (1971) , transitional poems, reprints most of post Colossus and pre-Ariel verse, and *The Collected poems* (1981), which won a Pulitzer prize in 1982, *The Journals of Sylvia Plath* (1982),

features all of her verse including juvenilia and previously unpublished pieces in order of composition.

Plath's early verse reflects various mythic qualities of the works of W.B. Yeats and Ted Hughes, the diverse experiments with form and language of G.M. Hopkins and W.H. Auden, and the focus on personal concern that dominate the verse of Robert Lowell. Most of her early poems are formal, meticulously crafted and feature elaborate syntax and well developed metaphors which are more subdued in this subject matter, tone and language than her latter work. Early poems display an overriding preoccupation with estrangement, motherhood and fragmentation within contemporary society which demonstrates her mastery of traditional literary forms.

But her later poems evidence the increasing frustration of her desires. Her ambitions of finding happiness through work, marriage and family were thwarted by such events as hospital stays for a miscarriage and an appendectomy, the break up of her marriage, burden of two children and fluctuating mood in which she felt vulnerable to male domination. Such poems are mystic, solemn and resigned with darker images (Lauter 2595). Whereas those poems reflect her increasing anger, bitterness and despair, with rhythmic language that blends verse, sing-song lines, repetitive phrasing and full of sudden violent images and metaphors. Plath's later poems have already passed into legend as both representative of our present tone of emotional life and unique in their implacable, harsh brilliance (Steiner 324). Many of the poems which were written in the months and weeks prior to her death address similar subjects like motherhood in *The Colossus* but display a more distinctive voice with harsh images and less formal style.

Hughes too mentioned that she realized her true matter and voice in this period (Hughes 16).

As Plath has taken license of confessional poetry, and also being an heir of Lowell, she has transformed personal experience, especially her suffering, her principal subject, into an expression of general public-historic concern. Plath has shared especially the particular problems of women of her time and has confessed her personal anguish in the form of poetry (Ruland and Bradbury 410). Plath has a complicated literary personality whose biography is rarely impossible to disentangle from her writing. Her deeply personal lamentations often achieve universality through mythic allusion and archetypal symbolism. It can be seen widespread exploitation of the poet's psychological life a driven willingness to reveal innermost experience for the sake of art and for the sake too, no doubt of mental balance and survival (Ruland, Richard and Bradbury 407).

Viewed as a cathartic response to her divided personality as an artist, mother and wife, Plath's works have been discussed by feminist critics for illuminating the personal and professional obstacles faced by women in the mid-twentieth century. The struggle with self for her self-identity in opposition to conventional female roles and success to seek her own identity made Plath one of the icons in the feminist history. For few critics the use of horrific events as metaphor for personal anguish is inappropriate whereas as other feminist scholars have supported to Plath with her pioneering efforts to expose the absurdity of conventional feminine models and her attempts to establish equal footing for women writers in a male dominated publishing industry of modern time. Her poems can be viewed from the perspectives of psychoanalysis, feminism, structuralism and so on. As her poems are full of feminine images along with baby images, woman's traits and

fate and their experiences, they can be usefully studied in a feministic frame work. Actually her poems are manifestation of the women's world and mother's world. They speak about mother's experiences, feelings, emotions and reality of the modern society. As a female poet of patriarchy society, it is her great effort to stand in the side of women for upliftment of their situation by creating different vivid images through her poems.

Plath's poems show a steadily developing sense of her own voice, speaking of subjects that before the 1960s were seldom considered for poetry: anger, macabre humor, defiance, contrasted with a rarer joy and a poignant understanding of women's various roles. Her breaking out of the conventional patterns set an example that shaped a great deal of poetry for the next forty year- reliance on metaphor, quick shifts from image to image (Lauter 2595). The satirical attack on the domestic ideology canonized her in the art of literature.

1.3 Literature Review

Portrayal of motherhood in Plath's poetry is the great discussion among critics and writers. Her poems got immense popularity after their publication, mainly after her death. Talking about the portrayal of motherhood in her poetry, Plath herself explained that writing about experiences as a mother is a quite new and has psychological depth. Many critics and writers have put forward their judgment on different base. According to Bundzen poetry on motherhood is an ultimate concern for Plath - "Poetry is like the heart pumping her life's blood. She is an allegorical figure reminding the poet of the claims of motherhood" (6).

Motherhood is Plath's true subject among others. Supporting Bundtzen Dubois explores other recurring themes in her poetry along with motherhood on which he focuses and writes in the article "Assessing Sylvia Plath's Poetry":

Through her poetry she expressed her personal view on a variety of recurring themes, including the obstacles faced by a women poet, influences that shape the self, the allure of death and several others. Among her most original and personal perspectives is that on motherhood.

(3)

Another critic Dubois comments Plath as a uniquely troubled individual whose originality of vision is reflected by her often dark, brooding poetry. In the bulk of her poems concerning motherhood, Plath "circumvents the traditional emotions and images associated with mothering (i.e. warmth, compassion, softness) and employs rather, images of harshness, barrenness, and sterility"(3).

Traditional sustained emotions of motherhood as a sacrificial act is replaced by mother's exhaustion in her few poems. Her poems reflect the conventional suppression of female by the father figures. For the sake of her sexual identity, Plath also raised her voice against the patriarchy model. Irigaray writes:

The desire of mother is forbidden by the law of the father, of all fathers....
They always intervene to censor, to repress the desire of for the mother...
women are looking for their sexual identity and are beginning to emerge
from silence and anonymity. (415)

Though motherhood suppressed her creativity but it gave her a new and profound understanding of herself. She realized her position along with the position of female

world through the experience of mothering. Moses's "Interview with Rachel Iverson" shows Plath's unique capacity in her writing. As he writes:

Motherhood ushered in her artistic personal maturity; she wrote as much to her mother after the birth of second child, saying she felt her real life – personal and artistic- had finally arrived. Motherhood gave Plath a unique capacity for balancing objectivity and subjectivity at once. (116)

Woman is taken as mysterious being and never tried to understand her by men. According to Beauvoir, "Woman is the mystery and their seal sentiments and their actual behavior are carefully hidden in writings". As a mother Plath gives birth of baby as well as new language and art. Irigaray supports her and writes in "The Bodily Encountered with the Mother" that:

We bring other than children into the world, we engender something other than children: love, desire, language, art, the social, the political, the religious, for example. (420)

Plath confesses her inner feelings, emotions and experience artistically and metaphorically in the form of poetry. She focused on the real thing, real world and real emotion. In "*From Puritanism to Postmodernism*" Ruland, Richard and Bradbury differentiate Plath with her contemporary poets. As they write:

Both Anne Sexton and Sylvia Plath were Lowell's heirs and became friends and also shared each others interest in the particular problem of women (410). But they are distinct and very different because for Sexton getting out the 'story' was paramount, whereas Plath's aim was to transform the personal into a private symbolic language. As Plath put it –

My main thing now is to start with real thing... real emotions ... real world ... real situations. (471)

Plath is highly celebrated with her selected subject matter of domesticity in distinctive way which has color of liberation with private manifestation. Her poems daringly introduce female topics like experiences of pregnancy, child birth, child rearing, and the female body which are seen from a female point of view. In fact, Plath has not only discovered her individuality but also has celebrated in its most different and private manifestation (Spanckeren 83).

Ted Hughes said in "*Collected Poems*" that, "Plath finds writing poems on the subject matter of children is colorful and amusing (14). Such poems success in revolting against myths where female appears as other.

Mostly, critics view and interpret Plath on her theme of suicide only. In fact she is not limited on it but she is the icon of feminism. Bundtzen's "*Plath's Incarnation*" shows her feministic views with the subject matter of children. According to him:

... I sensed that Plath's voice in addition to the subject matter in much of her work, was distinctly feminine. Her poems have full images and symbols which speak feminine voice. Reading her poems feels like to live in woman's body of the hurt and wonder of love, making in all its forms such as children, loaves of bread, paintings and buildings. Her poems seem born all of a piece put together by the rhythms of her own breathing. (110)

True modern mother's feelings and expressions are successfully presented through her selected images and diction. Hardly a poem of Plath goes by without a baby's

images. The idea, 'once, a mother is mother for ever' is traditional for Plath who views mothering in different perspective. We find many critics' view on her poems in feminist perspective. Among them is Showalter who finds the possibilities of both positive and negative sources of strength in female tradition. In "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness". She writes:

One of the great advantages of the women's culture model is that it shows how the female tradition can be a positive source of strength and solidarity as well as a negative source of powerlessness; it can generate its own experiences and symbols which are not simply the obverse of the male tradition. (326)

Thus Plath's poems which are specially written for her children project her negative concept towards motherhood which is totally different from stereotypical concept. They are representation of feelings and emotions along with the desire of emancipation of modern mother.

CHAPTER TWO

2. Feminism: A Weapon for Liberation

2.1 Feminism: A Struggle for Equality

Feminism, as defined in the Columbia Encyclopedia, is a movement for the political, social and educational equality of women with men; the movement has occurred mainly in Great Britain and the United States (934). Feminism is a struggle of women for their liberation. Feminists focus on the women's rights and their emancipation from the patriarchal society. Feminism affects the world politically, culturally, spiritually, and economically. They reject the tradition of masculinity, contemporary culture, and the wrong belief of cultural ignorance on women and fight for liberation. Feminists aim is to eliminate the oppression, subordination, inequality on the basis of sex, race, age, class, religions etc. and demand the political, social and educational equality of women with men. Thus the aims of feminism seem to identify and remedy the sources of all kinds of oppressions and subordinations.

Women were regarded inferior to men physically and intellectually from the very beginning of the civilization. It was said that male was always superior to female but the situation did not remain the same. With the Industrial Revolution women were aware of their subjection. Then gradually they began to raise their voice to possess property in their own names, engage in business, or control the disposal of their children or even of their own persons. As a result the industrial reduction brought a radical change in the life of the western society in the second half of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. The increasing development of industries resulted in the decline of domestic industries which had an impact in the income generation of women. This reinforced women of middle

class to raise their voices for equal opportunities and for higher education. (Cherhow and Vallari 934).

In the article "What's Happening in America" Reynolds shows the critical condition of women of nineteenth century. In early nineteenth century, women were paid less attention than male and they were deprived from even formal and higher education; and also they were not given the systematic training. In the French Revolution too, women's Republican Clubs demanded that liberty, equality, and fraternity be applied regardless of sex. North America, in 1848, issued declaration of independence for women demanding full legal equality, full educational and commercial opportunity, equal compensation, the right to collect wages and the right to vote. This movement spread rapidly and soon extended to Europe. As a result nineteenth century women did keep people scratching by working in factories, speaking in public, writing for newspaper and fighting for cause they believed in (Hakim 137).

So-called experts, male professors, of the very century used to say- "Women's brains are smaller than men's. Girls can't learn as much as boys"(Hakim 125). Some women, however, didn't believe their brains were small. They knew they were as smart as any men; they were determined to use their brains. Little by little, women demanded for higher education, entrance into trades and as their rights. At the same time women were fighting against slavery and poverty and also fighting for the self consciousness and emancipation of women. Then they centered into social enterprises and formalist works. Watson forecasts the women's confinement in his book *Liberty and Power: The Politics of Jacksonian American* where he writes:

There was not burst of complete social or political equality.... Women were routinely barred from higher education and most responsible professions. True woman's place was confined to her home.... (13)

The concept of Feminism changes with the span of time. In the first half of twentieth century women got right to vote after woman suffrage which brought division of women into two groups. Women were divided on the question of equal standing with men versus some protective legislation example limiting the number of hours women could work per week and excluding women from certain high-risk occupation. In 1946 the UN commission on the status of women was established to secure equal political rights, economic, rights, and educational opportunities for women throughout the world (Cherhow and Vallari 945).

In the 1960, feminism experienced a rebirth, especially, in the United States. The National Woman's Political Caucus and other groups pressed such changes as abortion rights, federally, supported child care centers, equal pay for women, the occupational upgrading of women, the removal of all legal and social barriers to education political influence, and economic power for women. But the post colonial twentieth century feminists vary in their opinions. But mostly deal from own viewpoints and for their own sake. According to Sonali Jolly Wadhwa, the post colonial twentieth century feminist looks after ones interest rather than other's in a male socio-economic order. She is actively performing the role of daughter, wife, mother and career woman. She says:

"This kind of feminism can also therefore be called" separate sphere feminism". This is because while these women might not so picket in

public place; they still however, try to better their lot even while staying within their traditional realm of the family and household." (83)

In this way, modern mothers are concerned with ones interest for their career. Their primary concern is not their children but their own career. So, the feminists opine their ideas distinctively according to their time, place, religion and socio-economic condition. Though females are still subordinated within their confined sphere and sphere created by male centered society, they are still revolting against it in different ways.

2.2 Reflection of Feminism in Literature

Feminists often differ in opinion over the sources of in equality, how to attain equality, and the extent to which gender and gender based identities should be questioned and critiqued. Even though, most of the feminists promote women's rights, interests and issues. Early feminist and primary feminists' movements are often called the first- wave feminist and feminist after about 1960 the second- wave feminists. More recently, some younger feminists are still active. Anyway all the feminists' common issue is dealing with womanhood (Feminism- Wikipedia 2). Liberal feminists believe the women's liberation movement revolves around the equality of sexes and that biological sex should not be the only factor in shaping a person's social identity or socio-economic rights. Radical feminists argue that feminism is about ending societal domination. Socialist feminism connects the oppression of women to Marxist ideas about exploitation, oppression and labor by a patriarchal system. Such feminists focus their energies on broad change that affects society as a whole, and not just on an individual basis. Eco-feminist sees the domination of women with that of the environment as they are exploited by men in power for their own profit, success and pleasure. Individualist feminists wish freedom to choose

anything in the society, even if it conflicts with political notions with other feminists. They don't attempt to change systems because they are already equal to legal, and welcome the input of men.

The feminist literary criticism is a political movement which expressed social, economic legal or cultural freedom and equality between women and men in patriarchal culture. Feminist literary criticism was inaugurated late in the 1960, after two centuries struggle for the recognition of women's culture role and achievements, and for social and political rights (Abrams 88). Although women raised their voice for womanhood, they rarely expressed their ideas individually through writing some dared to write but were neglected by editors and publishers time and again. According to Rosenthal, the main reason of the invisibility of many women authors in America is that the critic does not like the idea of women as writers, and hence does not see them even when they are right before his eyes. The other one is the social conditions which hinder them (Rosenthal 67).

Mary Astell and others had pleaded earlier for larger opportunities for women. Mary Wollstonecraft was regarded as the first feminist theorist who advocated for the political and social rights of women. Feminism gained new dimension and spirit after the publication of "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman" (1792). This is the first attempt of feminist writing where she says, "Mind does not know what sex is. But sex is the creation of man to overpower themselves". The women of nineteenth and twentieth century had to struggle much for the establishment of equality. Jane Austin, George Eliot and Bronte sisters were some nineteenth century novelists who developed feminist perspective in their writing. Similarly the American Margaret Fuller's "Woman in the

Nineteenth century" (1845) and John Stuart Mill's "The Subjection of Women" (1869) are regarded to be a milestone in the development of feminism (Abrams 88).

Feminism took shape as a movement only after 1960s liberation movement in the early part of twentieth century and helped in shaping the feminism. Feminists attempt to break down the barriers between male and female spheres completely through their writing. An important precursor in feminist criticism of twentieth century, Virginia Woolf occupies significant place. Her famous article, "A Room of One's Own" (1920) and numerous essays on women authors and on the cultural, economic and educational disabilities within patriarchal society has hindered or prevented women from realizing their productive and creative possibilities. This article particularly shows about how women are imprisoned within the domestic promises and are stopped from writing (88). A much more radical critical mode was launched in France by Simone de Beauvoir's "The Second Sex" in 1949. According to Abrams:

It is a wide ranging critique of the cultural identification of women as merely the negative object or 'other' to man as the dominating 'subject' who is assumed to represent humanity in general; the book dealt also with "the great collective myths" of women in the works of many male writers. (88)

In America modern feminist criticism begins with Mary Ellman's "Thinking about Women (1968)" where she talks about the derogatory stereotype of women in a literature written by men. Kate Millet's "Sexual Politics" (1969) attacks the male bias in Freud's psychoanalytic theory in which he degrades women as submissive sexual objects. In this way many writers who deal with women's problems and voice emerged, including both

male and female in twentieth century. The publication of "Of Their Own" (1977) by Elaine Showalter gained popularity because it examines British women novelists since Bronte from the point of view of women's experience. Similarly Sandra Gilbert's and Susan Gubar's "The Madwoman in the Attic" (1979) tends to see nineteenth century women writers in terms of late twentieth century feminism. On the other hand Betty Friedan's "The Feminine Mystique" (1963), Adrienne C. Rich's "Of Woman Born" (1986) K.K Ruthven's "Feminist Literary Studies: An introduction" (1984) and many other are highly discussed and read (Abrams 88).

Similarly, black women like Susan, Isabella, Lydia and other also fought for the emancipation of women in America and also produced literature written about racial discrimination including domination and subordination of male as well as white female society. Susan B. Anthony is one of the abolitionists who worked for women's right and her speech at Women's Right Meetings took female up in her strong arms and carried them safely turning the whole tide in their favor (Hakim 136).The art of literature gradually hold voices of female in great deal in this era and got popularity in every part of the world. Thus Feminism is discussed within poetry, essays, stories, novels, dramas and other forms of literature.

2.3 Position of Women in Modern Literature

Two centuries' struggle for emancipation doesn't bring full freedom for women in different areas. They have ignored, used and misunderstood since very beginning. In the field of philosophy, the ideas and opinions of female are paid very less attention.

"Philosophy", Kerber defines, "is itself a male noun" and the use of 'he' was in fact literal but described as generic. In spite of having rich ideas and thoughts, even Mary Wollstonecraft was absent in the discussions of the art of literature. Especially male counter- parts do not let female to secure place for them. Females are considered as males' subjects (Kerber 144). Kerber opines:

Husbands reigned over wives, wives suffered the pains of childbirth; but these were description of reality and reality might be changed by human intention. Labor might be medically eased, a woman who was queen in her own right did not become, when she married, her husband's subject. (145)

Women must be of others and not of their own. They must be lived for men and children, must perform their duties and responsibilities but don't have direct responsibility to their nation (Kerber 152). Women are still confined within boundary of family ties. Even though they get free time they are not able to go outside to contribute for the nation. Feminism is for the rights of half of human beings which are forgotten by all the legislators and limited within slogans and proves best weapon for the election. Women are ruled. Because of it they are invisible; for it male are responsible because they don't relate women not other than their daughters, sisters, wives or mothers, never as counter parts (Kerber 150). Kerber further says, "... women have moral and physical

relationships to men; but not political ones; not do they relate to any women other than their mothers (150)."

Even though the political function is acceptable of women, their participation is much less where as males are mostly outside the home for political discussions and females are busy in household chores with children. They have not much time for the development of the nation and not for their career. In this way modern women too are left within intellectual gap though framework has changed. Their concepts and thoughts are considered as private and described as observer or commentator in the art of literature. So that modern feminist demands for the direct participation in any work of literature and in the society. With the discoveries of scientific tools, a female writer also discovers their suppressed feelings, ideas, opinions and thoughts through their writings. Even less educated females are actively participating in writing magazines. Welter writes in the article "The Cult of True Womanhood" that:

Modern magazines are filled with female tragedies. Similarly, poetry, essays, criticisms, novels, drams are also providing place for female's agonies, cries, demands and wish for women's liberation; education is much more emphasized for girls who are ready to marry...for mothers to make their home, happy home. (63)

It does not mean that all the women are unhappy with the domestic roles, some women, even educated ones, are also glorifying their limitations and boundaries of home. According to Welter, Mrs. Sigourney glorifies to experience the state of being of mother. She writes in the magazine:

If in becoming a mother, you have reached the climax of your happiness, you have also taken a higher place in the scale of being.... you have gained an increase of power. (63)

It is no doubt that the love towards children, husbands, home and to other family members is true and pure. Mother's affection and love is incomparable with any other thing in the world. But when comes the question of identity and place of women, there comes the right of freedom, freedom from each and every ties, even the loveliest part of the life, children. Besides glorifying the state of being mother, modern mothers are re-thinking for their liberation from modern ties and boundaries. They have developed new concept on motherhood which is not totally dedicated towards homely life and responsibilities but more oriented towards their emancipation. Wadhwa explores the role of modern mother and writes in "Nepal New Women's Own Brand of Feminism" that:

... women are daily reprogramming their lives, although still predominantly centered around children and family, the change now is in the revised role scripts, where women continue to be mothers, but along with that they are more actively also performing their role as daughters, and career women. (83)

Although Women Suffrage gifted equality in politics, still women have problems in domestic roles as they have to give up their individuality. In Chafe's "Women and American Society," an anthropologist, Mead opines:

...a young woman contemplating a career had two choices. Either she proclaimed herself a woman and therefore less and achieving individual, or and achieving individual, and therefore less a woman. She could not do

both and if chose to follow the second option she took the risk of losing forever the chance to be 'a loved object' the kind of girl whom men will woo and boast of, toast and marry. (260)

Not surprisingly, few women are willing to take such a risk given the norms and realities of the society they live in. They begin to think for their own career along with tending the home and children. They dare to come out from the bondage and breathe air in freedom by involving in different activities of society competing with male counterparts. French feminist Simone de Beavouir says, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.... It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature... which is described as feminine (995). She further explains the condition of women under patriarchy model and their limitations within an object of male in her famous article "The Second Sex". She writes:

In sexuality and maternity woman as subject can claim autonomy but to be a 'true woman' she must accept herself as the other. The men of today... are willing on the whole to accept woman as a fellow being, an equal; but they still require her to remain the inessential ... with man there is no break between public and private life ... where as woman's independent successes are in contradiction with her femininity, since the 'true woman' is required to make her object, to be other. (1000)

Women are considered as other if they were created by male. They do not have their own identity in the society and must be interpreted by male and must be true woman. Similarly modern feminist critic and novelist Virginia Woolf depicts the

confined women of her era within household chores in her celebrated essay 'A Room of Ones Own'. She writes:

Millions are condemned to a stiller doom than mine and millions are in silent revolt against their lot. Nobody knows how many rebellions ferment in the masses of life which people earth. Women are supposed to be very clam generally, but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and field for their efforts as much as their bothers do; they suffer from too rigid restraints, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer; and it is narrow- minded in their more privileged fellow creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knitting stockings to playing on the piano, and embroidering bags.

(822)

Contemporary women begin to realize their position in the universe as a human being, and to recognize their relations as an individual to the world. Women in twentieth century break the bars of the age of illusory custom and convention and dare to overcome them it. The role of wife and mother is taken as gift and using their so- called weaknesses like motherhood and woman hood dependency are used as sources for the versatility in the writings of modern writers. They attempt to show that only female can write the feelings of motherhood, woman hood, including other subject matters used by male writers, which is impossible for male. Thus, they present themselves as strong and powerful as males.

2.4 Plath as a Feminist

Twentieth century woman had a great option whether to choose her career or to be a good mother. Both could not go side by side successfully. Even to choose the career was to take risk. Even though, few American female writers dared to take risk by choosing their career along with females' conventional duties. Among them Sylvia Plath is one who wanted to be successful poet as well as a mother at the same time but not succeed. Before to be a mother, she was managing with her career by nurturing home and husband but when she had the responsibilities of mother, she gradually faced the problems. Plath could not handle and finally, chose her career. It does not mean that she rejected her role of mother but she focused more for her career and less to the children so that her writings have echo's of feminism. It develops new concept on motherhood, indifferent motherhood, modern mother who is modified from the traditional concept. Plath is remembered as one of the renowned feminists in modern literature. As Haralson describes in " Encyclopedia of American poetry: The Twentieth Century":

Feminist criticism has also claimed Plath as a forerunner, someone who was acutely aware of the limitations placed on women just before the storm broke. She wrote at the time when the major feminist statements were beginning to be made, but she did not identify with the dawning movement. She began to write at the time when the great modernists were still alive, mostly looming male presence whose influence must have reinforced her belief that the literary world was all but closed to women.

(566)

Even though her life and her reputation have been marked by her mental illness and eventual suicide, when studying her poetry it is more important to consider her writing for its honest exploration of intimate insecurity in patriarchal, conservative world. After the separation with her husband, Ted Hughes, then after the burden of two children and financial problems lead Plath towards death and finally took her life. In fact she was murdered by male – domination and its suffocation. So, Nehring likes to remember Plath as a martyred feminist saint (Nehring 4).After being mother and with the women's liberation of 1960's, Plath's writings drastically changes in thematic level though she used same common subject matters like in her early writings. Her later works are filled with the voice of liberation. She did not like to be trapped within house. She began to give more important and priority to her writing than her children and family. It is because she was living in an age that emphasized personal happiness and immediate gratification.

Plath began to seek new opportunity in women's liberation which was unparalleled with any other. She has broken conventional domestic ideology and has presented a modern mother who is still in grip of domestic ties and roles but wish to be liberated and wish to create a new sphere where discrimination, domination and bondage ends. In the American society where women comprise a majority of the population; are often treated like a minority group. Plath raised her voice for women. Chafe clarifies the contemporary context of female in this way:

... assigned definitive "place" in the social order denied access to careers and power in the public arena, and viewed as dependent weak and submissive by "nature". (258)

As feminist, Plath has not emphasized on the equality of female with male. She wishes for full freedom from her domestic roles which was not completely exercised by females of her time. Her want of liberation is portrayed through her novel and her poetry. Plath has taken universal issues like suicide, motherhood and nature which are unavoidable in any time. So, she is liked and accepted as a modern feminist. According to Buntzen:

...many feminists regard feminism as a grass – roots movement that seek to cross boundaries based on social class, race, culture and religion. They also argue that an effective feminist movement should address universal theme. (ix)

Though she has taken universal themes, themes on suicide and motherhood, she has used very distinctly and differently from her contemporary female poets like Anne Sexton. Plath sees art in death which nobody has seen yet. The use of distinct images and symbols in simple form Plath demystifies the problems faced by twentieth century female writers in her poetry. Thus she has raised female voices of her era in her own distinctive form. To talk about Plath's themes, there are other than suicide, motherhood and nature. She has beautifully presented mythologies in her confessional poetry. 'Daddy', 'Lady Lazarus' and 'Ariel' are good examples of them. Besides it, Plath's poetry has also gothic effects which enrich feministic views of her poetry and generate complex shocks. Steiner exposes the use of Gothicism in her poetry in the article 'Dying in an Art' that:

She used Gothicism in a particular way making the formal terrors and equivalent to genuine and complex shocks of feeling but the modesh

element is undeniable. Her resource were moreover, however, more diverse. (326)

In this way we find diversity in Plath's writings. To bring diversity in Plath's writings, there is role of her mastery in her subject matter and also the influences which lie upon her. Family tragedies, the burning flame of feminism and the military crisis and economic crisis of contemporary time in her country have key roles to bring diversity in her themes. Cullen clarifies further with the reason of resigning domestic ideology by women in "Detached Houses: The Dream of Home Ownership". He writes:

The economic crisis ... and the military crisis had given women a new sense of participation in the public workplace and they began to resign the domestic ideology of the era. (154)

Most of he poems and only one novel "The Bell Jar' represent personal failure, mental illness, breakdown and alienation which were contemporary problems of the era of great depression developed by World War II. Clarifying it Haralson says:

...the work of Sexton and Plath – may in fact be a part of a larger shift in American culture and poetry in the decades after World War II, a shift that encompasses the Beats as well as the explosion of new writing gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation (138)

Plath, a woman, a wife and a mother of twentieth century is a feminist writer. Though she wanted to write more novels and essays she was limited by single novel and very few essays. But she could create lots of poems which would take very few times, lesser than to write essays or novels, are proved canon in the art of literature because of its feminist perspective. Her essays, novel and poetry are medias of her ideas and

concepts on feminism. Feminism is rarely noticed and discussed in her works. But when we see them from the feminist point of view, we find rich with it. Pointing out feminist echoes which are dominant in Plath's writings Showalter writes in "Toward a Feminist Poetics" that:

Many women literature in the past has dealt with "matrophobia" or the fear of becoming one's mother. In Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar*, for example, the heroine's mother is the target for the novel's most punishing contempt. When Esther announces to her therapist that she hated her mother, she is on the road to recovery. Hating one's mother was the feminist enlighten of the fifties and sixties; but it is only a metaphor or hating oneself. (1230)

In 'The Bell Jar', Plath reveals the feminists view through the voice of the major character Esther. This novel deserves its iconic status because it tries to prove 1950's domestic ideology as a "false consciousness". Through it Plath satirizes on the domestic ideology and emphasizes on Esther's creativity rather than female creativity (Reynolds 173). Reynolds casts his view on feminist evolution as:

The Bell Jar is a jeremiad, a cry of complaint and warning against the current state of women's lives. The Jeremiad is recurrent modes for American women ...attack a particular social structure ... (176).

Moreover, Plath is remembered as a modern feminist from her poetry. The most popular among other is 'Ariel' which shows her vision of what she attempted in her poetry and her life: the transcendence of the old confining order and the creation of a new self and a new world. Similarly 'Daddy' is another famous one that methodizes her struggles to separate from her dead father, who continued to dominate her life. Critics interpreted it

as feminist poem that represents the attempt of the female to articulate her self in a male dominated language and social context. Likewise "Lady Lazarus" is Plath's dramatic, intense and darkly comic poem with full of feminist echoes (567).

In this way Plath proves herself as a successful and also a martyred feminist of the era because of her feminist views and concepts which are clearly presented in her writings, mostly find in her poetry.

2.5 Modern Mother: An Indifferent Mother

The last few decades of the twentieth century exhibited the birth of a new kind of motherhood poet. Some poets talked with too much pride and boasted in their reproductive achievements and some other began putting the body back into motherhood poetry. Poets like Plath, Sexton and Loy bring revolution on traditional concept on motherhood making their poems bridge the body and the page. The perspective of expectant motherhood was prevalent in poets like Anne Bradstreet but modern poets broke down the barrier of precursor's train that kept the female body out of their art. Laura discusses more on the birth of a new kind of motherhood poet in "The Fruits of Their Labors: The Childbirth Poetry of Plath, Sexton and Loy". And Laura writes:

Early in America history, Anne Bradstreet had written from the perspective of expectant motherhood, but without any description of the body involved in pregnancy and her publication was framed by a preface assuring her readers that she limited her dalliances in poetry to her children's naptimes. Description of pregnancy in women's poetry remained tenuous and abstract until the twentieth century. Plath, Sexton and Loy were mother/poets who all insisted on displaying the maternal body within

the page effectively breaking down the barrier that kept the female body out of their art. (150)

It has been difficult to discuss the work of female poets with children without considering the problem that woman writers face: to be either a mother or a poet. Neglecting one or other was nearly impossible for modern writers. Feminist literary critics have postulated that woman's exclusion from art was related to her reproductive body. Given the natural ability to reproduce, women had no need to reproduce art. In such a way an interest in artistic creation was neglected but poets like Plath creates art by mingling beautifully 'procreation' and artistic creation (Laura 149).

Sylvia Plath is remembered as a confessional or a suicidal or a hysterical woman but according to her subject matter is much of her work, she appears distinctly feminine which share women's experiences without erasing differences in time, class and race (Bundtzen ix). Plath has expressed her personal view on a variety of recurring themes including the obstacles faced by a woman poet. Among her most original and personal perspective is that on motherhood. From early poems to novel and mostly in late poems, motherhood is represented in many ways but distinctively. Almost all her poems have images of children in different forms. As Dobbs justifies "domesticity is an ultimate concern" for Plath. She had complex and ambivalent attitudes towards motherhood which revels suffering with powerful, original images and diction. Focusing ambivalent concept Dobbs writes in the article "Viciousness in the Kitchen: Sylvia Plath's Domestic Poetry " that:

Plath's life and her writings are filled with anxiety and despair over her refusal to choose and instead to try to have- what most males consider

their birthright- both...her commitment to domesticity, especially
motherhood, was ambivalent. (3)

In Plath's view her poems are "by the rhythms of her own breathing"(Bundtzen x).
In fact her poems are her children, as she reproduces them and children are her poems as
she creates them. Both are interrelated but not separable. In '*Plath's Incarnations*'
Bundtzen writes, in Plath's brief essay entitled 'context', she says:

My poems ... about a child forming it self finger by finger in the dark.
For me, the real issues of our time are the issue of every time- the hurt and
wonder of loving; making in all its forms, children, loaves of bread,
paintings, buildings..... That unicorn thing – a real poem (158)

As a modern poet, Plath tries to leave the stereotypical mother behind and
introduces a modern mother, who is far different from traditional ones who is indifferent
to her kids. Her poems lack interest in pregnancy, childbirth and mothering: mother
persona totally does not enjoy with such experiences rather she remains indifferent
towards them and wishes and cries for liberation. Watson clarifies the frustration of
mother in nineteenth century in such a way:

...women were more and more limited to the joys and frustrations of
motherhood. It was a transition that brought tension to everyone, men,
women, and children alike. (32)

Modern mothers are tired and exhausted by the time consuming job of tending
children. Until twentieth century they are also confined within home, so they see new
opportunity in liberation and try to seek. Plath, through her poetry tries to seek freedom
from home especially children and their disturbances which disturbs her time and again.

The change in different levels of society, politics and of her personal life influences her to create such poetry which resembles contemporary problems. She is angry with the problems: domination of male culture, domination of male lyric tradition, the burden of children and the time consuming daily task of mother. Such problems dragged her back not to create her own place in writing. Bundtzen writes, according to a feminist, Suzanne Juhasz, who explores the position of Plath in feminism as:

She is a woman of our century who sees the problem, the situation or trying to be a woman poet with the coldest and most unredeemed clarity. The problem is a predominantly male lyric tradition which puts the woman poet in a double mind (13).

In the beginning of her writing career she was inspired by male ideology. But she used such ideology as a tool to revolt against male domination by breaking conventional patriarchal model who wants to see a woman 'a true woman' and who must accept herself as the 'other' (Beauvoir 1000). Woman is capable of total love for her lover, she is deep richness, a warm spring but she should give up all the personal transcendence and continue herself to fathering that of her male. In a sense woman is 'mysterious' from the point of view of other because they have very complex physiological nature and unable to penetrate clearly her special experiences on pregnancy, menstruation and in childbirth. So, they hide their real feelings (Beauvoir 997). So that women are mostly ignored and misinterpreted by men. But as a scholar and a feminist Plath clearly shows her experiences on motherhood. Either consciously or unconsciously, Plath chose domestic subject matter and periphery, which was necessary to select such subjects and those

experiences and the emotion they stimulated in order to revolt against traditional concept on motherhood.

Maternal care is crucial to provide 'total environmental provision' for the children. Children too, wish to remain one with their mother and expect that she will never have different interests from them. Men too including family members wish women mothers to remain near to them for moral and physical support. But what is the wish of women/mother nobody thinks and asks (Chodorow 3). Chodorow, in "*The Reproduction of Mothering*", clarifies the responsibilities of women and role of the mother. Chodorow writes:

...women not only bear children. They also take primary responsibility for in fact care, spending more time with infants and children than do men and sustain primary emotional ties with infants ...women mothering is one of the few universal and enduring elements. Women's mothering is of profound importance for family structure, for ideology about women... it is rarely analyzed. (3)

But Sylvia Plath is exhausted by such traditional concept and tries to come out of it. For Plath, stereotypical motherhood, glorifying in mothering is like sacrificing her individuality not lesser than death. Dobbs writes, "Childbirth in a kind of martyrdom. A woman dies when she bears a child and she continues to die as the child feeds literally and metaphorically on her" (4). Plath too dies many times in the course of mothering. Similarly Dubois agrees with Dobbs and argues with mother's glorification in mothering. In an article, "Assessing Sylvia Plath's Poetry", Dubois writes:

In the course of mothering she has to sacrifice her career, where her feelings- "Living with her was like living with my own coffin" suggest that she tries to get rid of the children's nurturing and caring (30).

Though she does acknowledge positive aspects of mothering in few of her poems like in "Child", "Manor Garden", "Balloon" "Point Shirley", and "Metaphors", even that sentiment is overwhelmed by a sense of loss. Thus her poetry presents the concept of motherhood as one defined by the loss: the loss of physical beauty, of free time and of one's identity. Mostly in later poems she has dark and brooding images which are full of anger and manifest her hidden and suppressed feelings. In Plath's view, she has found a voice in her work. A voice is a new voice that is voice of female. She has defamiliarized all-top-familiar images to create mood of an angry mother to replace soothing mother. Plath has exposed the feelings of love, detachment, bewilderment and selection in few of her poems like 'Morning Song', 'Edge', 'In Night Dances', where her feeling – "I'm no more your mother/than the cloud that distils a mirror to reflect its own slow" suggests a clouded alienation, loss of individually and indifference.

Plath tries to overcome from the fears created by the loss of individuality, upstaged, eclipsed through maternity. Noticing the strength to overcome from such threats Nehring writes in the article "Domesticated Goddess":

It is Plath's greatest strength that she tells us in her poetry not only what is nice but also what is true-or what can be true. She shows us not only woman's selfless delight in her infant but also her fear of being upstaged, eclipsed, desexualized, by maternity-turned into an absurd instrument of biology, a means, a stage, a cow in calf" as she puts it in "Metaphors" (7).

Plath has uttered private grievance which are involved in mothering. Her difficulties in bearing, nursing the children manifest the tired, some, indifferent nature of a mother. As Dobbs comments:

The poem "The Manner Garden" begins by creating an apprehensive, foreboding tone that dominates the poem. "The fountains are dry and the rose's over/incense of death. Your day approaches". Here is death in the midst of birth ... The poem's prophesy is for a "difficult birthing". (6)

Her poems lack the significant important value of children. She has not shown any kind of happiness and merriment for the arrival of a newly born baby. Children are unconcerned and uninterested parts of her life. She could not enjoy with it and compares birth with the death, the death of her time. Similarly "I want, I want" describes the terrible demand of the 'baby-god' who 'cried out' for the mother's due. "Moonrise" uses imagery and allusion to indicate Christ's death in relation to pregnancy. The speaker's pregnancy is the subject matter of the poems like "Who", "Dark House", "Metaphors", "Manor Garden"- suggests motherhood may be something monstrous, as the child for Plath. Likewise "Tulip's" also describes a mother's feelings towards child but in a negative tone. She compares baby with tulips- "like an awful baby" – something wild and dangerous about them. She wants to reject them because she says they "eat my oxygen". She wants to reject the tulips as she wants to reject the trappings of her domesticity.

In this way, Sylvia Plath wants to come out from the trappings of family roles and mother's role for her own sake. As children are obstacles of her poetic career, she dares to leave them behind to be free from suppression. Thus, in any cost, a feminist Plath attempts for liberation which makes her an indifferent mother in the modern society.

CHAPTER THREE

3. Portrayal of Motherhood in Plath's Poetry

3.1 "Metaphors": Pregnancy as a Disgusting Experience

One of the most characterized early poems of Plath "Metaphors" written around the time of her first pregnancy reveals the sense of self-disgust. Over the nine lines, Plath employs nine metaphors to represent herself and her pregnancy. The dissatisfaction with one's physical self caused by pregnancy is vividly expressed through the lines,

I'm a riddle in nine syllables... (1)

A melon strolling on two tendrils... (3)

I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf... (7)

Boarded the train there's no getting off. (9)

The speaker has self-disgusting experience of pregnancy. She has neither any sweet imagination of new comer nor feels proud rather compares herself with unattractive images- "an elephant", "a ponderous house", "a melon", and "a cow in calf".

Such comparison does not show any positive feelings towards pregnancy. In the article "Assessing Sylvia Plath's poetry", Dubois discusses the dissatisfaction of a pregnant speaker to state pregnancy experience. As he writes:

By referring to herself as "Cow-heavy", Plath reveals her disgust with her physical self, brought about by the weight gain typically associated with pregnancy. The speaker describes herself as "an elephant", "a ponderous house"/ A melon strolling on two tendrils, and "a cow in calf". None of these images used to describe the pregnant speaker are positive in implication. (2)

The sense of self-disgust is created by the physical alterations and changes in lifestyle which are brought by pregnancy. The speaker, a pregnant woman, loses her physical beauty because of pregnancy and that are unavoidable and irrevocable. Plath addresses the state of irrevocability by stating,

I'm a riddle in nine syllables, (1)
I've eaten a bag of green apples,
Boarded the train there's no getting off.(8-9)

By supporting the concept of irrevocability Dubois compares the state of being mother is similar to the boarding of a train which guides woman into a predestined role of motherhood. He writes:

... by comparing her pregnancy to the boarding of a train, the speaker furthers the notion of motherhood as inescapable; a train travels down linear rails, and bears its rider to a predetermined destination, just as motherhood guides a woman into a predestined role. (2)

Pregnancy is totally new, strange and odd experience for the speaker. In *Plath's Incarnation*, Bundtzen shows the negative concept of Plath towards children. Plath has coined lots of metaphors for both experiences of a pregnancy and of foetus. Her images capture this new strangeness- how odd it must seem for the mother who carried the baby in her body for nine months (Bundtzen 228).

In "Metaphors" Plath has played metaphysical game with the referent, a pregnant woman, with series of images. For Plath new coming baby is "red fruit", "ivory", "fine timbers" "loaf" and "calf" whereas pregnant woman is "an elephant", "a ponderous house", "a melon", "a cow" and "a stage". The profusion of metaphorical images in

"Metaphors" seems ironically disconnected but they suggest genuine metaphorical connection. Vivid use of metaphors both for bodily heavy condition of a pregnant and developing foetus inside the womb enhance one another and thus create poetic quality.

Such metaphors reveal degree of mental stress over the maternal conditions which indicate motherhood may be something indifferent. The strong dislike of the speaker for the heaviness of her body is discussed by Dobbs in such a way:

Several of Plath's poems about pregnancy and motherhood ... play a metaphorical game : the referent (the foetus or the child or the pregnant woman) is described through a series of images. In "Metaphors" the pregnant woman is "a riddle in nine syllables/ An elephant, a ponderous house". (6)

It seems significant that she could not deal with maternity or babies in a positive or hopeful manner. Similarly the relationship in the poem in between 'I' and 'O' – refers totally detachment with the child. "I" is suffering from "red fruit", "ivory", "fine timbers", "loaf" and "a calf". The poem, thus, reminds the frustration at the experience of pregnancy. So that speaker has self disgusting feelings.

In spite of disliking, poetic persona is compelled to face predestined role of mother. As she "boarded the train there's no getting off". So that Plath's mother persona is different from stereotypical adoring, loving, caring mom. As she states, "O red fruit, irony, fine timbers! / This loaf's big with its yeasty rising"(4-5) she introduces an indifferent mother who does not want to take the responsibility of mother and wants to be detached from it. So, Plath's selection of images is suitable for the revelation of the concept of pregnancy which is not glorifying experience but self-disgusting one.

To bring new concept on motherhood Plath has violated traditional soft, fine, soothing imagery by replacing with surreal images. Comparing her verse with the strongest brew Nehring writes:

... her poetry might not have made the grade without the violence in its history. Her poetry, as far as I'm concerned, is some of the most starkly gorgeous and audacious of all time, the gift for metaphor is unsurpassed in modern literature; and her honesty is rearing, hard-won, and precise. If we could bottle her verse, it would be the strongest brew in the bar. (2)

"Metaphors" is composed of a number of metaphors which is also rich in alliterations and assonance. Although alliterations and assonances generate pleasure in sound which are purely aesthetic but in "Metaphors" Plath has used to create just opposite effect for sad mood of a pregnant woman. More than that, each line is end-stopped lines that is making each line a tight unit of thought. So, every line conveys a complete thought. Here, Plath's use of end-stopped lines achieve negative effect to support the brooding mood of a mother who is about to bear a child.

We do not get glorification and joy in the state of being mother. The poet is dissatisfied with the loss of her physical beauty with heaviness. It indicates the loss of creativity as Dobbs says-"Plath's fear of procreativity was, in large part, a fear of a resultant loss of creativity (6). Plath's such portrayal of images of motherhood in "Metaphors" give new insight to the modern women to think within what they are entrapped and unable to be free for their creativity- "there's no getting off". Procreativity is dominating female's creativity so that Plath has created a disgusting situation of a pregnant woman.

3.2 "Morning Song": Alienation in Mothering

Plath reveals her negative concept towards mothering as a futile and self-depleting task in her famous poem "Morning Song" which is written after giving birth to her daughter Frieda. Her aversion to the new-born instead of motherly passion is vividly depicted in this poem. Plath has created a poetic persona who is not only unable to love her newly born baby but also dislikes and feels different from traditional mother.

The poem begins from the development of the foetus. The speaker hints at how the foetus grew bigger in the womb. But when mother actually gets, the child, she does not feel any love at all. The beginning lines depict the absence of mother's love.

Love set you going like a fat gold watch.

The midwife slapped your foot soles, and your bald cry

Took its place among the elements. (1-3)

The very beginning feelings towards child contains surrealistic image – "gold watch" that directly shows the oddity and alienation that the mother felt when faced with the infant out of her own body.

Plath is honest to confess her feelings of alienation and separation through "Morning Song." The surreal images "gold watch", thingness of "it", and "bald cry" underline the feeling of strangeness. Such surreal images and comparisons are functional to emphasize the sense of oddity and alienation. Child's cry is "bald cry" which is totally opposite to stereotypical mother's notion as mother does not rush to feed. Plath has avoided traditional images and emotion to depict the sense of alienation. Even "love" is used to link the surreal image "gold watch" of baby has negative tone and the newly born

infant is a thing – "it", not a living being. Generally mother regards her child a golden thing – a valuable thing, but her joining the word, gold with "watch" shows as opposite, valueless and the role of mother seems alienated.

"Morning Song" not only depicts alienation in mothering but also shows alienation in parenting. Parents can only "stand round blankly as walls" in response to this new being. There is no hurry in grasping and loving the child. Their voices "echo", they feel odd in "nakedness", the child is like a statue, "new statue" of the "museum" which may be looked at through glass from distance, but not to touch. The feelings of detachment and alienations are spoken by the lines,

Our voices echo, magnifying your arrival. New statue
In a drafty museum, your nakedness
Shadows our safety. We stand round blankly as walls.(4-6)

The detachment towards child of Plath is interpreted by Bundtzen:

They adults, can only "stand round blankly as walls" ... or else ooh and aah, " magnifying your arrival". At first, the baby is one more "new statue" a new work of the mother's art, in the "drafty museum" of the sterile hospital nursery. (228)

Plath shows her negative notion towards motherhood as she loses her identity in the course of mothering by the sense of alienation through the lines,

I'm no more your mother
Than the cloud that distills a mirror to reflect it own slow
Effacement at the wind's hand.(7-9)

The lines above clearly suggest that the speaker cannot take responsibility of mothering; she is no more a mother to the infant than the cloud is that effaces with the mind. As a modern mother the speaker shows courage to confess that she does not feel like being a mother to this new thing – "I'm no more your mother/ Than the cloud"(7-8). Ford agrees with Bundtzen and shows the detachment and alienation of mother as:

As a confessional poet, Plath's "Morning Song" provides us with a complex outburst following childbirth. Plath exposes us to feelings of love, detachment, bewilderment and rejection, where her feelings - "I 'm no more your mother / Than the cloud that distills a mirror to reflect its own slow / Effacement at the wind's hand" – suggest a clouded alienation and loss of individuality. The traditional image of a new mother is shattered with Plath's evocative image of her stumbling from bed, "cow – heavy" and floral /In my Victorian nightgown". In every way, Plath feels ridiculous and in both the subject and object of the ridicule. (2)

Supporting the idea of Ford Dubois manifests the attitude of Plath towards mothering which is like a sacrificial act that is responsible for the loss of self. He writes:

Plath's concept of motherhood as a sacrificial act, resulting in a mother's eventual exhaustion, is reinforced by her poem, "Morning song". The poem possibly precipitated by the birth of her child, is a piece of conflicted tone, at once heralding the birth of a child into

the world, and acknowledging the speaker's (mother's) perceived obliteration as an individual....This statement betrays a negativity in the speaker's attitude towards motherhood; it implies both denial of the duties inherent in motherhood, and a consciousness of the loss of self perceived in the assumption of those duties. (1)

She refers herself "cloud" It signifies her temporary significance in the life of her child. Thus, the speaker's identity suffers its "slow effacement at the wind's hand. The individuality is disappeared by the obligations of motherhood, which is a force beyond her control.

"Morning Song" is entirely negative and downtrodden in its implication towards motherhood though the speaker feels attachment with the child in the end lines,

You mouth opens clean as a cat's. the window square
Whitens and swallows its dull stars. And now you try
Your handful of notes;
The clear vowels rise like balloons.(15-18)

"Moth - breath", suggest something-new life and new possibilities; child's mouth is, "clean as a cat's ,child's sound is "clear vowels" which rise "like balloons" possess confident and strength voice of poet to portray new concept on motherhood. In fact it is the miracle of childbirth for a modern mother; it is frightening, uncomfortable and confusing rather than rewarding.

The experience of motherhood helps Plath to realize her position and the suppressed condition. The birth of the baby is the birth of new phase of her life

and also the death of the valuable time which is killed by the arrival of the child. Plath does not want to sacrifice her life for her child. As Plath herself writes in her journal – "My mother had sacrificed her life for me. A sacrifice I did not want" (26). Plath tries to get her individuality through mothering which depicts from the lines,

All night your moth – breath

..... I wake to listen (10-11)

One cry, and I stumble from bed... (13)

The dark vision of domestic life is portrayed by her simple images and metaphors. But they offer alternative meanings. Images and symbols like "gold watch", "bald cry", "new statue", "drafty museum" are doubled natured and they shift from one implication to other. Even the silence of the room is as great as "a far sea" in the mother's ear. Baym sees the alternative meanings in Plath's images and symbols who says, "It seems likely Plath felt that childbirth was a double kind of widening, an expanding of the self and the soul in addition to that of the body" (2743).

The title "Morning Song" reveals the idea of liberation. Morning song is the song of new phase of life intended to sing in the morning which welcomes the new day in the life of modern mother that is born along with her baby.

Parenthood affects her self-image which Plath directly speaks – "One cry and I stumble from bed, cow heavy and floral/In my Victorian nightgown.(13-14). Thus Plath satirizes the Victorian era by coining "Victorian nightgown" as a

stereotypical image of traditional mother to manifest newly assumed role of a mother. Clarifying it Dubois writes:

Plath's choice to describe the nightgown of the speaker as "Victorian is not accidently but instead, further reveals her attitude towards mothering. The Victorian era was one of staunch patriarchal values, and left virtually no room for women to foster individuality or creativity ...the nightgown serves as an exterior manifestation of the speakers newly assumed role as a mother, and its accompanying restraints and limitations. (2)

By utilizing her unique and compelling writing, Sylvia Plath is able to make a statement of alienation on motherhood that is unique to her own artistic vision, and as contrary to convention. Enjambed lines of the poem too adds to portray special poetic quality which matches with thematic quality. To create dark mood of the alienated mother "Morning Song" lacks rhyming patterns. But assonance and alliteration enhance the quality of the poem. Thus, by creating lack of sympathy with the detached point of view towards the newly born baby Plath has presented alienation of a modern mother in "Morning Song".

3.3 "Tulips": Mother as an Escapist

Plath's portrayal of motherhood in "Tulips" is quite different. Here, Plath has created a person who tries to escape from her domestic roles and likes to remain in her own world. "Tulips" are taken as fragile objects but here Plath empowers them by comparing with the baby that is destructive and awful to her. The poem,"Tulips",

represents mother as an escapist and concentrates on a single object tulips which "eat my oxygen".

The poem begins with peaceful and calm images and as poem develops the tone also changes into harshness. The speaker who is lying in hospital feels immense peacefulness, having given up all her responsibilities, identity and connection to the world. Lying quietly in the bed shows the speaker's denial of her duties.

Look how white everything is, how quiet...

...peacefulness, lying by myself quietly (2-3)

I am nobody; I have nothing to do...(5)

In spite of coldness of winter the speaker is in quiet and in pleasant mood. "Tulips" are presented as snow white, quiet and exciting one which has created peaceful environment in the beginning of the lines. But such pleasant images are twisted and introduced something like awful like monstrous. This peacefulness is disrupted by the red tulips, which is given by her husband, invading her privacy and feeling of detachment from the world.

The tulips are too red in the first place, they hurt me.

... I could hear them breathe

... Like an awful baby. (36-38)

The speaker does not like the disturbance created by the presence of tulips. She wants to remain in her world, world of individuality from which she will be able to fulfill her desires. This is why she is so angry at the invasion of the tulips which stops her not to enter into her new world, the world that is different from her domestic world and world which she has created temporarily. The red tulips disrupts the whiteness and purity of the

hospital room drags her back to her family chores. So, she does not want to be limited with such activities tries to get rid of them – "My body is a pebble to them". By attacking even the picture of her husband and child Plath makes this idea clear.

My husband and child smiling out of the family photo;

Their smiles catch onto my skin, little smiling hooks. (20-21)

Even the speaker desires to go away from the smiles of husband and child which is similar to hook as if it caught her inside the boundary. She is tired of family burden, their smiles hurt her and she sees herself "flat, ridiculous, a cut – paper shadow" and compares with "a thirty-year-old cargo boat". Old cargo boat symbolizes the burden which she is holding. So, she wants to "efface myself" from which she can load off her burden. In this way, a mother speaker tries to escape by keeping "them" "behind bars".

In the later part of the poem Plath compares her baby with tulips. For Plath red tulips are like an awful baby. So she rejects them because "they eat my oxygen". As she rejects them she wishes to be out of them. Actually to be free she has rejected the gift-tulips-given by her husband. Plath shows her rejection for the gift from the lines,

I didn't want any flowers, I only wanted

To lie with my hands turned up and be utterly empty.

How free it is, you have no idea how free___

The peacefulness is so big it dazes you, (29-32)

Her desire for peacefulness is shown by Dobbs. He says, "Actually she wants gift-gift of death, not tulips. So she rejects the gifts of tulips because she finds freedom, a kind of perfection in rejection of the gift. (4).

Her freedom is both wonderful and terrible because the price is so high. For it, the mother must give up her children who hook on to her. But as a cruel mother she is ready to give up all for the sake of freedom- "The tulips should be behind bars like dangerous animals"(58). The image of "awful baby" is ridiculous which is compared with red tulips that "hurt" her. This signifies total rejection of the child in her life. Plath's such annoyance towards children is discussed by Nehring as:

Ted's bringing her tulips when she was in the hospital... the flowers "hurt" her. They are "dangerous animals"; the smiles of the speaker's husband and child "Catch onto my skin" like little smiling hooks". (5)

With the comparison of the baby with tulips, Plath personifies the tulips as,

... I could hear them breathe... (37)

Their redness talks to my wound (39)

... now I am watched.(43)

And she blames them for consuming her oxygen and choking her. "Too red" tulips hurt her and she could hear breath which is compared with baby's breath that is "awful" to her. It shows the excessive hatred toward her child. Similarly "Redness" of tulips is compared with babies' skin-different from natural skin of baby which hurts her- "Talks to my wound". Such dislike towards red color symbolizes the rejection of the body and movement of foetus which upsets her and finds very complex to describe.

Their redness talks to my wound ...

They are subtle: them seem to float...

Upsetting me with their sudden tongues and their color.(39-41)

From the comparison of the baby with tulips Plath has revealed her regret for having baby. The presence of child there is fuss everywhere and from it the calmness is disrupted with loud noise which reveals through the lines,

Before they came the air was calm enough

Coming and going, breath by breath, without fuss.

Then the tulips filled it up like a loud noise.(50-52)

In fact, Plath is tired of time consuming task of nurturing child – "they concentrate my attention" (55), she gets no time for her creation and to live in her world so she wants to keep "them" aside- "the tulips should be behind bars like dangerous animals" (58) because they "eat my oxygen" like an "African cat". So that she wants to escape from her child and also her family ties. As she realizes and recognizes her hook to keep her back she wishes to escape by setting herself free. In "Dying is an Art" Steiner explores Plath's principal realization by saying, " This brokenness so sharply feminine and contemporary, is, I think, her principal realization (330).

My patent leather overnight case like a black pill box,

My husband and child smiling out of the family photo;

Their smiles catch onto my skin, little smiling hooks.(19-21

The rejection of tulips, disliking of child smiling signifies her mentality to get relief from mothering. She is fade up with "child's smiling", "awful baby", "thirty-year-old cargo boat", rust-red engine and "African cat" and desires to be emptied. It suggests her escapist nature through which she gets her freedom.

On the other hand, Plath's choice of white and red color in "Tulips" creates contradiction to symbolize the peaceful and disturbing notion of her life. Here in "Tulips"

her spirit is oppressed by red color (Haralson 567). As red tulips appear in her life, she totally rejects them and cries for freedom which leads her to search her identity in isolation. The search for individuality and self assertion is clarified by Bundtzen who says, "... use of different colors – are unruly(difficult to control or manage), emotionally disturbing and associated with individuality and self assertion(166)".

The spatial setting, in the hospital where Plath had miscarriage, plays vital role to create detachment with the child. Similarly, the use of punctuations in the middle of the lines almost all hold back the overflowing of bitterness created by child. The use of simile, dark metaphors, unique and original symbols along with assonance and alliteration are cohesive and also enhance to create brooding mood of the speaker who finally escapes by trapping "them" inside the "cage".

3.4 "Kindness": An Indifferent Mother

One of the poems written in later part of Plath's life, "Kindness", deals with the subject matter of mother–child relationship. Here, Plath has introduced an indifferent mother who is unconcerned with her children. Though the poem exposes positive feelings towards children, negativity is dominant and where soothing mother is absent.

The beginning line- "Kindness glides about my house"(1) refers to the problem which plath has discussed in the whole lines. The problem is the "Kindness" which glides her "house" – her world. Though it seems simple but it has different meaning. Plath further clarifies her concept from second line coining the symbol- "Dame Kindness". It suggests "Dame Kindness" is responsible to glide every wishes of modern mother. Dame kindness is a traditional mother who soothes over the domestic problems sweetly. Bundtzen explores a stereotypical mother in "Dame Kindness" as:

Dame Kindness is ... the female stereotype for the good little house-wife- sugar and spice and everything nice. She smoothes over domestic problems with her sweet disposition. (6)

In "Kindness" the speaker is an indifferent mother who surprises in the notion of stereotypical mother who sees children's smiles every where "In the windows the mirrors/Are filling with smiles"(4-5). In the contrary Plath sees the slippage of the house because of "Kindness".By supporting the concept of Budtzen, Haralson writes:

Dame kindness has tenderness, warmth nourishment, mutuality. Comes from mother... represents an inner self-reproach. She is an allegorical figure reminding the poet of the claims of motherhood: "What is so real as the cry of a child?" (567)

For stereotypical mother the cry of a child is so real who finds nothing so real as child's cry. It is so mild that the speaker finds rabbit's cry wilder in comparison. This kind of nurturing mother is not appreciated by the speaker who says – "But it has no soul." it refers to a stereotypical mother, in Plath's view, the stereotypical mother has no soul of her own who only exists for her children not for herself. She has no identity of her own. But being modern mother she wishes to have soul, her own identity and does not like to be limited within family and children.

"Kindness" says "Sugar can cure everything"/ "Sugar is a necessary fluid" /and "Its crystals a little poultice"(9-13) which Plath doesn't believe. These are only notions of traditional mothers who have no soul. The speaker scares in "Sweetly picking up pieces!"(13). Here the speaker accepts the positive aspects in the presence of children. But there is not any merry making and glorification in children's smiles and the soothing

of stereotypical mother. The speaker has no interest in such acts and even neglects child's cry.

Sugar can cure everything, so kindness says,

Sugar is a necessary fluid,

Its crystals a little poultice.

O kindness, kindness

Sweetly picking up pieces! (9-13)

Plath has described the stereotypical mother vividly by coining different images.

The traditional mother wears "a ring of blue and red jewels", "Japanese silks" decorated with "butterflies" which anesthetized her as Plath believes. But it does not affect her who lacks interest in them which are spoken through the lines,

The blue and red jewels of her rings smoke (3)

My Japanese silks, desperate butterflies

May be pinned any minute, anesthetized (14-15)

Biographical information – Ted's arrival with a hot cup of tea- in the final stanza signifies the interruption in the process of writing by her husband and also by children. Even though she accepts two children are two roses for her but the blood of her body is poetry without it she cannot exist. So, she rejects the disturbance in her process of creativity.

And here you come, with a cup of tea

Wreathed in steam.

The blood jet is poetry,

There is no stopping it.

You hand me two children, two roses. (16-20)

According to Bundtzen, in "Kindness", Plath poses the situation -Ted's act of treachery to her and the children. Really it is the result of treachery but it forces Plath to act as Ted. In other words, "Kindness" is also Plath's treachery to her children. She is indifferent towards her children as if she had not any responsibility of a mother. She gives more priority to her poetry- "The blood jet is poetry"- and "Sugar" in only "a little poultice" which soothes a little but not equally important like blood. This concept reveals Plath's wish to live in the present not in the past as a stereotypical mother who anesthetizes in the pain too – "May be pinned any minute, anesthetized"(15).

By introducing a mother persona who is detached, not interested and not fully devoted towards children mark lack of preference of the mother who devotes her life for poetry career. Career is greater than caring children which is claimed by modern intellect mother. In this way, Plath's self-transformation is triumphantly achieved which reflects overall intention of motherhood.

With the use of simple language along with images of softness Plath explores her concept of unloading burden of children for the sake of her career. It also shows Plath's compulsion who does not have enough time to be the perfect mother because she has to create her self, in the world of poetry. The comparison of her two children with "two roses" and "rabbit" shows the fragility of such creatures mark lack of feelings towards them. Indifferently, Plath has not shown any sense of attachment towards children.

Placing different punctuation marks creates no confusion to understand the idea of the speaker as they are in right place and in right time as situation demands. Each longest line of all stanzas holds weighty idea of the poem from which the concept is clearly

known. Similarly end stopped lines too hold tight idea within it. Symbols like "Dame Kindness". "rabbit", "sugar", "Japanese silks", "butterflies" and "roses" are justified by its use; though they seem positive but here in "Kindness", Plath has twisted some of them and used in her own original way to create the detached mood of indifferent mother.

3.5 "Edge": An Attempt to Transcend the Singularity of Existence

"Edge", a final poem written just before her death, is about an attempt to transcend the singularity of existence. Here, Plath has created a strong mother who sacrifices her children because she doesn't like to live in illusion. It is a cry for freedom in which a mother wants to take back the gift of freedom and wishes to go away from the hook. In "Edge" transcendence is achieved at one's expense.

Plath has created a situation where her poetic persona is in the edge- edge is an edge of life and death. The speaker wants to cross the edge so she sees "smile of accomplishment" in dead body. Though it is highly interpreted as a suicide note, it centers around domestic situation. The speaker, here, asks permission to cross the edge, for her death, with her children after reclaiming them with her flesh. According to Lauro "Edge" is a poem:

... about a woman who, by virtue of the act of reclaiming her children with her flesh, gains permission to die. It beings" the woman is perfected "and she is made complete by the action of incorporating her children back into her body.(153)

She has folded

Them back into her body as petals

Of a rose close when the garden (12-14)

The speaker is tired of waiting "a Greek necessity" which results "illusion" and "Flows in the scrolls of her toga". Her dreams, wishes and wants slip away before to achieve. So tired some mother says "it is over". She wants to transcend herself. But to transcend herself there is no way except sacrifice of her children. And finally she decided to finish herself along with children for transcendence. Only strong mother dares to do it.

The illusion of a Greek necessity

Flows in the scrolls of her toga,

Her bare

Feet seem to be saying:

We have come so far, it is over.(4-8)

Thus Plath tries to escape from the maternal responsibility as she was a single parent to tend her children. Being brave, she wants to take back the gift of freedom and eager to come out from the trappings of the children. Here, mother figure has neither love nor affection towards her children rather she is concerned for her own sake. It shows mother has no relationship with her children as if she was not their mother. "A white serpent" symbolizes the cruelty over her children. As a traditional mother, she is not ready to sacrifice herself rather she wants sacrifice of her children.

The speaker as a strong mother reverses her maternal responsibilities. She is not ready to hold the burden any more. So that she forgets the duties of a mother which must be pure and true. Plath's reversals of maternal functions is discussed by Dobbs who says, "In "Edge", the mother proudly takes Back the gift of herself: "the woman is Perfected" because she has reversed her maternal functions" (7).

Each dead child coiled, a white serpent

One at each little

Pitcher of milk, now empty.

She has folded

Them back into her body... (9-13)

By incorporating two children back into her womb she pretends to take back the gift of freedom. After this attempt she is get rid of mothering responsibilities. In this way Plath attempts to transcend the singularity of existence, now she only exists which explores through the lines,

Pitcher of milk, now empty.

She has folded

Them back into her body as petals

Of a rose... (11-14)

"Milk" symbolizes mother's true and pure love towards her children which here is empty- "Pitcher of milk, now empty"(11) – refers the love, affection and devotion of mother towards children is emptied. The speaker reveals that she takes them back into her body "When the garden /Stiffens and odors bleed"(14-15). Here, Plath compares the mother's body as "a petals of rose" and the "garden" is the society where she is living. In fact, it " stiffens and odors bleed" of garden is the cause of incorporation.

Them back into her body as petals

Of a rose close when the garden

Stiffens and odors bleed (13-15)

In this way Plath blames the male dominated society which is the cause in the scarification of her children. Comparing the female body with "rose" of the garden she tries to show the fragility of motherhood is dominated by male society. But, here mother persona is not weak and fragile but strong and able to bear any hardships in her life. She dares to incorporate her children back into her body though there is threat of society. She doesn't care whatever society responses her and acts against her.

The moon has nothing to be sad about

Staring from her hood of bone.

She is used to this sort of thing.

Her blacks crackle and drag. (17-20)

By personifying the moon, Plath has created vivid explanation of murdering. As the poem proceeds, the tone of "Edge" is peculiarly detached as the poem is written in detached point of view. The only one eyewitness of murdering is "the moon", detached goddess neither complains nor becomes sad about the cruel activity of mother because "she is used to" with "this sort of thing". In this way the speaker does not care whoever notices her activity and continues her activity to achieve her goal. Her goal is to be free and to get freedom from the burden of children. So, artistically she incorporates her children without hurting into "rose petals" and liberates herself.

Thus she proves herself a strong mother who dares to get freedom from her children and transcend her singular existence. It is achieved by providing them rest inside her own body within "Petals of a rose". Here is not any sense of lamentation for death and murder of her children but a brave mother "wears the smile of accomplishment". She thinks her act is not new in the society so moon is not sad for it, then she thinks it must be

acceptable. From the ending lines Plath shows the possibility of transcendence which is gained by one's expense. "The woman is perfected" is the beginning and also should be ending line in which the whole poem concentrates. Actually Plath wants to show the smile of accomplishment and perfect woman after the achievement and transcendence. So, Plath freezes the woman's body into statue dead body – that instead of heavy and lifeless stone we view this figure is one of defiant transcendence. Bundtzen sees Plath's strength and newly achieved emotional freedom in "Edge", as he writes:

For Plath, art is a physical elation, A new sense of the freedom of her body: these poems are filled with metaphors of flight, ascension, and transubstantiation into new states of being. (35)

Plath has destructed stereotypical notions of mothering but also recreated the new concept. Here she unpeels the child's cry to destroy, reject or rebel against old selves and old loves. These new abilities are 'brilliant negative' but Plath fuses the brilliant negative with an even more 'brilliant affirmation' of her creative powers (Bundtzen 34).

With the detached point of view Plath gains her wish to cross the edge. From the comparison of her body with the rose of the garden, Plath explores her attachment towards her body and the images of "coiled dead child", "a white serpent", "moon" show detachment towards children as well as to society. As a result she easily can step over the edge. Although the setting is in domestic situation, with the subject matter of children, the mood is despair and tragic. The selection of images, symbols and metaphors create sad mood in the poem. Images like "dead body" of woman and children; the coilage of dead child, crackling and dragging act of moon; "black moon", "a white serpent", "empty pitcher" "stiffens and odors bleed" create coldness and lifeless atmosphere in the poem.

"Rose" is a traditional symbol which symbolizes beauty, love, fragility, delicacy but here in "Edge" Plath has turned it to her own original use to signify women's body. The choice of rose as a symbol for mother's womb symbolizes the strength of motherhood which can both bear the children and also take back them into it without hurting and damaging them. To release from burden of children Plath has linked images of softness with dark images. "Pitcher of milk", "scrolls", "toga", "a rose of the garden", "a moon" are linked with images of hardness and emptiness where pitcher of milk is empty, Greek necessity flows in the scrolls of her toga, the garden of rose stiffens and odors bleed and moon has its darker side "blacks" remains silent in the murder of the children. The indifference nature of moon- "the moon has nothing to be sad about" – creates coldness and lifeless atmosphere in the poem. The states of being—softness and hardness, steadiness and process- play an important role in shift of mood from paralysis to release (Bundtzen 63). Similarly, besides the state of being softness and hardness, Plath has shown the state of steadiness and process in the poem to release—the flow of illusion, folding back of babies, moon's staring signify process in the poem.

For singular existence, Plath created a bold mother persona in "Edge" with the violation in traditional theme on motherhood as well as in traditional forms. Here, the traditional stanza pattern "split couplet" is broken by inserting off rhyming patterns. Similarly the broken syntax, run-on lines, the use of assonance and alliterations with dark images and metaphors are dominant in the poem where unusual pauses and arrangements of words have violated traditional rules, notions and concepts to create dark mood and for proper cohesion. The poem is overall the struggle of Plath to create beautiful self in a new world.

CHAPTER FOUR

4. Liberation: Modern Mother's Wish

Sylvia Plath's poems are exposition of her concept on motherhood which has bestowed a great influence in the field of feminism. Her poems are portrayal of the frustrations felt by a talented and ambitious young mother. The confession of her tragic life that she explores in the rebellious poems resemble her self-reflection. She attempts to establish an equal footing in a male-dominated society. Furthermore, her poems are full of images which function at both literal and symbolic level. The images of female body, children and their presence in her life are captured for the discussion of motherhood. The influence of children and the family role upon modern mother is shown vividly to protest against the conventional conditions of mother.

Till her time, mother's image was taken only as need of children and family. Her desires and wishes are never concerned. Along with the women's movement, this concept gradually changes and mothers too begin to think about their personal life. As a modern mother, Plath is also conscious for her personal life and thinks for her individual existence. As a result she realized the main cause of women's backwardness is because of children's and husband's interruptions and mother's role. Then she attempts to revolt against patriarchy model which divided the work labor to tend care of children for women and tries to find her place in humanity.

Plath's negative concept on motherhood is projected in almost all in her poems. None of her Poems shows mother persona who is busy in feeding and comforting her child in its cry rather we find echoes of escaping. Her use of images and choice of diction along with symbols depict the suffering in relationship to mother's role and experiences.

Some of her poems portray the images of mother as creator or producer, liberator and escapist. Likely, she has also provided an image of indifferent mother with sense of alienation who only cares for herself. In fact her poems have a world of mother's own personal world- "wild zone" as Showalter mentioned, which make up a message that women are equally talented to men but they are dragged back by children and household chores.

Moreover she taught the women to revolt against the cultural oppression and traditional division of work, a role of mother. Getting rid from the child's burden is the main desire of modern mother which she wants to convey through her poems. Her poems are, in fact, not for the reformation of the society but for the self-reformation. As a reformalist she begins first from her side. So, her poems support directly to feminist movement.

Satirizing stereotypical motherhood, Plath identifies the recurrent image of modern mother who is strong, brave, rigid, confident and determined. " I am no more your mother" is the most important verse which reveals her detachment towards her children and wants to go away from the role of mothering. Similarly "they eat my oxygen" shows her rage and hatred toward them from which she is dragged back. "We have come so far, it is over" refers her tiredness in the role of mothering. She is fade up with walking with them. She wants to stop and wishes to choose the way where she can walk alone.

So, her lyrics are not to be sung for a moment of pleasure but for lamentation for her loss of personal life. The tragedies include divorce, abortion, miscarriage; experiences like pregnancy, childbirth, depression are taken as sources of energy to fight against

conventional society. Her poems not only reflect perfection of outer reality but also project her inner reality as well. Her deeply personal lamentations achieve universality through archetypal symbolism. Viewed as a cathartic response to her divided personal as an artist, mother and wife, Plath's works have been heralded for feminist critics illuminating the personal and professional obstacles faced by women in the mid twentieth century. Female creativity and female literary career is intermingled in the theme of motherhood.

The poetic persona, a mother of her poems like in "Metaphors" and in "Morning Song" seem little bit passive but it is because of the burden of her children. Where as, "Edge", "Tulips" introduce a strong rebellious mother with active role. In "Kindness", mother directly opposed the interruption. Experiences and wishes of a modern mother are vividly described in her verses. They focus the newly visible world of modern female culture. The presence of children is quite irritating and disturbing. Though Plath accepts innocence rose like children's existence in her life, but rejects them as the obstacles of her poetic career, "a cargo load" which she wants to unload. For Plath childbirth is a kind of martyrdom as Dobbs, explains. She dies first in her pregnancy in "Metaphors", then in childbirth in "Morning Song", and continuously dies in the role of mothering in "Tulips", "Kindness" and in "Edge". She projects thus the rebellious view by projecting the concept of childlessness as a kind of perfection. In "Edge", the woman is perfected because she has reversed her maternal functions by taking them back into her womb.

Plath reveals her detachment towards children and her attachment for her career as she projects in "*The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath*" - "The life of the creative mind first, then the creative body. For the latter is nothing to me without the first" (286).

Her priority for her career continues till her last creation of her life-in "Edge". The line, "the blood jet is poetry" portrays her preference for her poetry. Similarly "Their smiles catch onto my skin" projects her detachment towards children.

Thus, Plath seems escaping from the role of mother in her poems. It is because she does not want to divide her life into two-"Private Life" and "Public life" unlike man has single. She wants to combine "human and vital values" (Beauvoir 1000). From this it can be viewed that she wants to be equal to man by unloading her responsibility towards children. It might be unconscious wish fulfillment of the desire to be male. In this way she wants to hold "man's position"- perhaps it will give rise to new myth.

Plath has highly satirized stereotypical mother in "Kindness" and in "Morning Song ". In her view, 'Dame Kindness' is similar with the notion of "true woman" who accepts herself as the "Other" along with the female functions of a mother. She introduced a mother who is not only a woman, a female parent, a child nurturing figure and caretaker as defined by male. She tries to eradicate the vice of the society. The patriarchal domination and work division is a social vice which is an incurable disease. So, she attempts to illuminate the vice by the creation of poetry where mother speakers embodied her feminist ideology. Her desire of emancipation is shown indirectly in "Metaphors" and in "Morning Song" where as "Edge", "Kindness" and "Tulips" directly revolt and opposed the oppression. Plath has violated traditional concept on motherhood by rejecting "Dame Kindness", "true woman", stereotypical images and by coining original symbols for penetrating her new concept. And she celebrates herself in rejection of stereotypical notion of mothering and in her alienation.

As mystery is not more than a mirage that vanishes as we draw near to look at it, Plath demystifies mother's world that include mother's wish and her discomforts of pregnancy, vacancy of miscarriage, pains of childbirth and their interruption. Though having complex physiological nature Plath does not remain silent she further reveals her overall view of women's world. Viewing her poems, the concept of separative model of selfhood is penetrated with the sense of alienation, lamentation and frustration which is much larger issue-an exhibition of self-reflection.

By folding her children back into her body- womb, she has transformed her womb into a power instrument which produces and also keeps back children safely without hurting them. Thus she challenges patriarchal power which transforms his penis into an instrument of power to dominate maternal power (Irigaray 420). Similarly she also penetrates female incomparable creativity which is productive and also reproductive which is impossible to men. As Irigaray suggests not to forget female genealogy to women, Plath situates within it to conquer and keep sexual identity. Suggestion of Showalter to express mind and body to fight open and extend the linguistic limitations, Plath seems fighting by creating new feminine language by coining stereotypical images, new metaphors and symbols and by using them artistically in her own original way.

On the other hand, Plath has played artistically with the simple images but an analysis they are found complicated. Every symbol offers alternative meanings with doubled nature which shift from one implication to the other like "Rose" and "Tulips" are most effective too through their repetition. Her use of symbols thickens the meaning which has created powerful effect and has made structural tightness for the expansion of thought.

Like Woolf, Plath blames children who are responsible for not to let produce brilliant works. Another cause is because of interruption in the lack of their own room and their own time. "Kindness" reveals this incident of her life which is directly opposed by the lines, "The blood jet is poetry/There is no stopping it".

Reading her poems, they symbolize the hope for the possibility of new world. In "Morning Song" title itself; in "Edge", "the smile of accomplishment"; in "Tulips", the setting hospital having white walls, and in "Kindness" "there is no stopping it" represent the new possibility of her new world-wild zone. Plath is tired of mother's duties: "child's cry", "Japanese silks", "Victorian nightgown", "their smiles", "moth-breath" and "open mouth" from which she wants to escape to reach "wild zone" in which she is able to fulfill her desires. This is why her anger is dominant in her poems. Unlike her contemporary female poets like Anne Sexton, May Sewson, Mina Loy, Addrenne Rich she neither sacrifices herself for sake of children nor glorifies rather she wants scarification of her children as shown in "Edge".

Showalter's discussion of the notion that women have a completely different experience and perception from men is visualized in Plath's poems which echo the differences in style, structure, language and theme by the use of simple, common and unique language, variations in structure with the taboo subject matter of female world. Her simplicity in language can be explored from the use of simple diction from the use of simile and simple metaphors in almost all her poems except in her few darker poems.

Plath has broken conventional pattern which set example that shaped great deal of poetry later on. Reliance on metaphor, which shifts from image to image that mirrored the tensions, confusions of her single parenting. The arrangement of shorter lines and

larger lines in each stanza are weighty in idea. The half rhyme, off-rhyme and alliteration give tautness to the lines. End-stopped lines and enjambed lines add variations in her poetry along with the following different five traditional stanza patterns for different five poems avoiding rhyming patterns.

Thus she is a controlled writer who has balanced with her lucid stanzas, clear diction, dazzling alternation with darker images to create brooding mood of the speaker as Steiner said. (Steiner 330). Thus her creations project the difficult circumstances of her life.

In this way Plath has violated stereotypical concept of motherhood and attempts to enter into wild zone. As motherhood is Plath's true subject, through it she raised one of the biggest problems facing American women of her time-the balancing of career and family and further suggests to choose her career. Women are struggling with the same issues that Plath struggled with at mid-century: how to have a rich, satisfying inner life, how to balance that with ambition, children, marriage and the expectation of culture along with the liberation from patriarchal model.

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