



DR. Indu Singh Rajput

Impact of Solitary Environment on the Life of Human Beings in Light of Mathilda By Mary Shelley

Associate Professor- English Department, Gokul Das Hindu Girls College Moradabad (U.P.), India

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E-mail: aaryavart2013@gmail

Abstract: "There was a critical moment in British Literary history when Elizabeth Nitchie transcribed and published it in 1959, which unyield this peace of revolutionary taboo fiction suppressed for over a century by the author's male relatives chiefly Shelley's father Willian Godwin. It is an artfully crafted episatraly work depicting the traumatic confessions and suicidal tendencies of the protagonist, Mathilda a woman who isolated herself with nature due to her father's confession for his incestuous passion towards her regarded as an underrated work, Mathilda has often been interpreted from biographical and incest-related perspectives by literary critics which relegates literary merits although it is in accordance with feminist and ecological theories and feminine writing." (<https://www.researchgate.net>2367.....>)

Ranking woman author of early 19th century Mary Shelley's work has reached all corners of the globe. The contribution of remarkable writer to literature and science continue to inspire and fascinate people. Her life was full of personal and professional challenges. In spite of negative circumstances she managed to create some of the most enduring works of literature of the romantic era.

Key Words: Revolutionary, suppressed, relatives, episatraly work, traumatic confessions, suicidal tendencies.

Her name is decorated with the awards. She get Nebula award for best script (1975), Hugo award for best dramatic presentation (1975) "Mary Shelley had perfection to write about to Gothic tradition. Mostly her novels deal with extreme emotions, exalted speech, the hideous plight of virgins, the awful abuses of charismatic villains and picturesque ruins." (<https://homework.study.com>how>)

Since the beginning of the universe, society exists in different forms and has been playing an important role in the life of the human beings. It provides the good and evil shape of human beings. It is truly said that literature is the mirror of the society. It has its deep effect. Here I would like to quote the well-known lines of Hindi Poet Kabir- "As we belong the society, as we find the furit." Mary Shelley, wife of P.B. Shelley and daughter of English journalist, political philosopher and novelist William Godwin, rose the curtain of the contemporary society. In 19th century, when the great artist as Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, Jane Austen were pouring their talent, and experience in their writing on so many occasions, Mary made use of epistolary form of writing that has been made popular by Samuel Recharadson (Pamela) and Henry Fielding (Shamela) (21year). Following Aristotle concept of probability and Hamartia. She consentrted upon the probable events and made Mathilda's father responsible for his agonies and anguish.

The year 1818 with the publication of Frankenstein brought the name and fame for her. With this masterpiece several other novels have been written by her. Here some selected novels are mentioned as- Valperga (1823), The Last Man (1826), The Fortunes of Perkin Warback (1830), Lodora (1835) and Falkner (1837) and A Travel book, History of a six week's Tour (1817).

"The act of writing this novella distructed Mary Shelley from her grief after the deaths of her one-year old daughter Clara at Venice in September 1818, her three-year-old son Willim in June 1819 in Rome. These loses plunged Mary Shelley into a depression that dislanced her emotionally and sexually from Percy Shelley and left her, as her put it, on the hearth of pale despair." (<en.m.wikipedia.org>)

The novella 'Mathilda' points out the state of women in the contemporary society. Both women- novelist Mary Shelley & protagonist of the novel Mathilda- were exploited and dominated by the male. Even the father of Mary Shelley- William Godwin could not secure the place in his paper to publish this novella. As following lines proves-

"Through Mary Shelley was better known in her life time than her husband, her writings otherthan Frenkenstein have been largely forgotten until recently. It is more ever a curious fact that the reassessment of her place in the canon (and of the canon in the relation to that place) is being mobilizing by the reissuing of two of her most depressing texts: "The Last Man' and "Mathilda", Godwin also focused on father-daughter incest disgusting and did not secure the place for publication texts: 'The Last Man' and 'Mathilda'. Mathilda was not published until 1959. 140 years after Shelley write it in part because her father William Godwin suppressed it. (<jstor.org>stable>)



Novella 'Mathilda' has many aspects of the human life. As- Struggle for female narrative, subjectivity, melancholy and political economy of romanticism, romantic tragedy, love with death, isolation with the typical components of Gothic literature. Present research paper has the goal to reveal the knot of the importance and influence of the society in the life of the human beings. The questions about the protagonist Mathilda are- What were the circumstances at the time of the birth of Mathilda? How her upbringing took place? What was the role of her aunt towards her in childhood? What was the role of her father in her life? What was the role of Woodville in her life? What was the decision of Mathilda about her life? What was the place of Nature in her life? What is the role of societal environment?

Mathilda was a young woman, whose mother Diana died in her child birth. She passed her childhood in the isolation because after of her mother, the responsibility of her bringing up had been given to her aunt by her father. She did not pay attention to her as a mother. Her aunt was not like Yashoda or Panna Dhay who sacrificed everything of her whole life for Krishna & Udaya Singh. As Mary Shelley has written in the words of Mathilda about her loneliness herself-

"I was placed in a remote part of the house, and only saw my aunt at stated hours. These occurred twice a day; once about noon she came to my nursery, and once after her dinner I was taken to her. She never caressed me, and seemed all the time I staid in the room to fear that I should annoy her by some childish freak." (Mathilda, Page -10) Her aunt was an unsocial lady. She did not care of Mathilda as a responsible and affectionate guardian. Mathilda herself explored her own experience- "So I was entirely thrown upon my own resources. (Mathilda - 11) She was alone, had no any companion. She did not learn any kind of moral and societal culture because of lack of societal environment. A child notices about the bad and good by behaviour & activities by the family members, parents, relatives and neighbours. But Mathilda did not get this opportunity. So she was not cautious about her chastity and morality. She was neither bold nor mature. She explores her grief about her isolation-

"I was a solitary, being, and from my infant years, ever since my dear nurse left me, I had been a dreamer. (Mathilda-12) In the lack of lures and affection in her childhood in the real world she tried to get company and happiness by her imagination as Mary Shelley depicted about her - "Than I wandered from the fancies of others and formed affections and intimacies with the aerial creations of my own brain-but still clinging to reality I gave a name to these conceptions and nursed them in the hope of realization. I clung to the memory of my parents; my mother I should never see, she was dead: but the idea of [my] unhappy, wandering father was the idol of my imagination." (Mathilda-12) Her dejection towards the life and isolation can be seen through the following lines-

**For what should I do here,
Like a decaying flower, still withering
Under his bitter words, whose kindly heat (Mathilda- 17)**

The effect of societal environment reflects of the Mathilda's life. Her parents were fond of reading and writing and both were writers. So Mathilda was also just like them as in the words of Mathilda's father Mary Shelley depicted-

"We walked together in the gardens and in the evening when I would have retired he asked me to stay and read to him; and first said, "When I was last here you mother read Dante to me; you shall go on where she left off." And then in a moment he said, "No, that must not be; you must not read Dante. Do you choose a book." I took up Spencer and read the descent of Sir Guyon to the halls of Avaice; while he listened his eyes fixed on me in sad profound silence." (Mathilda-20) She was not well-known about the societal and moral values because her life had passed in solitary atmosphere. So she neither could check her father nor herself." She did not know the purity of father- daughter's lovingly relationship that a father is a shield of safety for her daughter as Mary Shelley penned about her act-

"Yes it was despair I felt; for the first time that phantom seized me; the first and only time for it has never since left me-After the first moments of speechless agony I felt her pangs on my heart: I tore my hair; I raved aloud; at one moment in pity for his sufferings I would have clasped my father in my arms; and then starting back with horror I spurned him with my foot; I felt as if stung by a serpent, as if scourged by a whip of scorpions which drove me-Ah! Whither-Whither?" (Mathilda-25) When her father told her-

"come, come, the worst is past: no more grief, tears or despair; were not those the words you uttered?-We have leapt the chasm I told you of, and now, mark me, Mathilda, we are to find flowers, and verdure and delight, or is it hell, and fire, and tortures? Oh! Beloved One, I am borne away; I can no longer sustain myself; surely this is death that is coming. Let my lay my head near your heart; let me die in your arms!"- He sunk to the earth fainting, while I, nearly as lifeless, gazed on him in despair." (Mathilda-25)

But exploring the feelings of her father made her cruel towards him.



The incident of incestuous relationship was not common for her and her father. Both were dreadfully upset. After the death of her father and aunt she fell into a cycle of loneliness, unhappiness and societal tendencies. In her loneliness Mathilda felt the importance of society. She said- "my convalescence rapidly advanced, yet this was the thought that haunted me, and I was forever forming plans how I might hereafter contrive to escape the tortures that were prepared for me when I should mix in society, and to find that solitude which alone could suit one whom an untold grief separated from her fellow creatures. Who can be more solitary even in a crowd than one whose history and the never ending feelings and remembrances arising from it is [sic] known to no living soul." (Mathilda-35) After had gone her father, her state was very miserable. She was alone. She did not know what is happiness? What is true love? What is the affection of parents? Against it she know only her father's cruelty, solitude and her tears. Her thoughts reached till about suicide. She was so depressed that people thought about her - "A poor girl broken in spirit, who spoke in low and gentle voice and from underneath whose down case lids tears would sometimes steal which she strove to hide. One who loved to be alone, and shrunk from observation; who never smiled; Oh, no! I never smiled- and that was all." (Mathilda-38)

She has a need of friends and society. It is said that time fills the deep sore. With the passing of the time, Mathilda also had adjusted herself with the nature. She had only one female as a servant and passed her time with birds and animals. Mary Shelley proved with her pen about Mathilda-

"Yet this was very unlike my early life although as then I was confined to Nature and books." (Mathilda-39) It is a famous phrase in Hindi- The peacock danced in forest, who did see?

There is no meaning to live a life without the society. It plays an important role. It provides happiness, one can enjoy his feelings among the people. It consoles in grief and imparted the opportunity of enjoyment in life. Mathilda also felt the presence of society and friend. Through the Mathilda Mary Shelley depicted-

"Solitude also lost to me some of its charms: I began again to wish for sympathy; not that I was ever tempted to seek the crowd, but I wished for one friend to love me. You will say perhaps that I gradually became fitted to return to society. I do not think so. For the sympathy that I desired must be so pure, so divested of influence from outward circumstances that in the world I could not fail of being balked by the gross materials that perpetually mingle even with its best feelings. Believe me, I was then less fitted for any communion with my fellow creatures than before." (Mathilda-40)

It was the destiny of Mathilda that she got a friend- Woodville, who was also passing through the sorrow because of the death of his beloved- Elinor, Woodville had known about the grief of Mathilda & the cause of grief. He consoled her saying that- "We are both unhappy"- He would say to me; "I have told you my melancholy tale and we have wept together the loss of that lovely spirit that has so cruelly deserted me; but you hide your grief's: I do not ask you to disclose them, but tell me if I may not console you. It seems to me a wild adventure to find in this desert one life you quite solitary: you are young and lovely; your manners are refined and attractive; yet there is in your settled melancholy, and something, I know not what, in you expressive eyes that seems to separate you from your kind: you shudder; pardon me, I entreat you but I cannot help expressing this once at least the lively interest I feel in your destiny. (Mathilda-46)

Mathilda had been sinking deep sorrow. Even she could not judge the woodville. First she did not like the presence of the Woodville. Following lines are depicted by Mathilda to Woodville- "I was at peace before you come; why have you disturbed me? (Mathilda-47)

She was so frusted that she wanted to attempt the way of the end of her life. She imagines of the peaceful death. Now she realized that Woodville was her true friend who distracted her from the thinking of death. At last she had accepted the friendship with Woodville and demanded the forgiveness to Woodville for her misbehaviour towards him. She said; "I wept and said, "Oh, pardon me! You are good and kind but I am not fit for life. Why am I obliged to live? To drag hour after, to see the trees wave their branches restlessly, to feel the air, & to suffer in all I feel keenest agony. My frame is strong, but my soul sinks beneath this endurance of living anguish. Death is the goal that I would attain, but, alas! I do not even see the end of the course. Do you, my compassionate friend, tell me how to die peacefully and innocently and I will bless you: all that I, poor wretch, can desire is a painless death." (Mathilda-48)

When she found the company of Woodville, she got some relief as she depicted, "It is true that his presence is a consolation to me, and that his words are sweet, and, when he will he can pour forth thoughts that win me from despair." (Mathilda-49) She became glad when Woodville promised her to come back. She imagined that his presences would provide her company. So there is no need to fear. Mathilda thought about Woodville- "He promised that he would come and see me again; and bade me take cheer, and to encourage what happy thoughts I could, until time and fortitude should overcome my misery, and I could again mingle in society." (Mathilda-54)



The paper proved that isolation is twisted the life of the human beings. Mathilda passed her life in solitary environment and did not find any company of her parents and societal environment. She could not share her emotions and grief with others, and fell in incestuous love of her father and faced the sorrow, depression and loneliness. As a result she decide to do suicide. In this way present research paper points out the short coming of solitary environment which leads the human beings towards the wrong way of the life. As Mathilda is a significant example with the melodramatic language and theatrical metaphors.

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