



## **THE REALITY OF HUMAN LIFE THROUGH THE IMAGES AND ATTITUDES OF WOMAN AND MIRROR IN SYLVIA PLATH'S *MIRROR***

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Sylvia Plath, an American poet, novelist and short story writer, attempts to portray the reality of human life through the images and attitudes of woman and mirror in her famous poem 'Mirror'. At the same juncture, she reflects the exactness of mirror for which she has pride. On the other hand, this exactness is not acceptable to woman who always wishes to be live young. In present research paper, the researcher wants to explore the reality and universal truth of human life through the images of mirror and woman.*

**Key Words:** *Human life, reality, exactness, images and attitudes of mirror and woman, role of the mirror etc.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Sylvia Plath, a recipient of 'Pulitzer Prize for Poetry' for her collection 'The Collected Poems' in 1982, is a well known confessional writer. She graduated from Smith College and shifted to Cambridge University in England for a fellowship. Later on, she married to fellow poet Ted Hughes in 1956. She was clinically depressed for the most of her adult life. As a result of this, she committed suicide, out of frustration, in 1963.

'Mirror' is a short, two stanza poem, written in 1961. This poem is an exploration of uncertain self. Sylvia Plath's poem has her hallmark stamp of powerful language, sharp imagery and dark undertones. 'Mirror' contains unusual syntax, irregular rhyme and an astute use of enjambment. 'Mirror' is a personification poem. The poetess has given the mirror a first person voice. The mirror is direct, objective and open. It has a personality. The poem is all about the appearances and the search for the self. Sylvia Plath wanted to show how

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powerful an object the mirror is in People's lives. In particular, the poetess wanted to highlight the issue that some females have with their image and the inner turmoil that can be caused as the aging process gathers pace. The poet's own struggle for a stable identity only adds to the idea that the face in the mirror must stay young, pretty and perfect.

The poetess projects the realistic feature of mirror in a personified manner. She attributes the human qualities to the mirror, a non human object. In real life situation, a mirror takes in and reflects the life in front of it without distortions, without adding or taking away. It does not show fear or favour, love or hatred, joy or sorrow. The poetess asks the question,

*“Does the mirror have feelings of its own? And what about the people standing in front of the mirror? Do we expect more than an exact image from the mirror?”*

The mirror explains itself faithful and truthful and exact. It forms no judgments. It has no prejudices. The mirror accepts the things as it is as it comes before it. Therefore it has been compared with the 'eye of a little God' because only God possess the quality of seeing and accepting the thing as it is. Most of the time, it meditates with the pink coloured opposite wall with small marks. The mirror has been looking the wall for a long time. It gets only disturbed when somebody comes in between the wall and the mirror and even by the darkness.

Now the mirror converts into a lake, a woman bends over and look into the mirror to know about herself, what she is, how she looks. Then she turns to the candles or the moon who are liars because it tells her the truth but the mirror tells her faithfully and in return, the woman rewards with tears. The mirror is significant to her as everyday she sees her image in the mirror. She has seen her face in the mirror as a young girl and in the same mirror, she finds herself growing old day by day like a terrible fish.

In the opening line, the mirror is described as 'silver and exact' because it is faithful and truthful. The mirror is not at all aware of the person who will come before it. It has no preconceived impressions. It reflects as it is whatever comes before it. It reveals the truth. It doesn't want to hurt anybody and it has no personal like and dislike or any preconceived notion. The mirror is itself the speaker of the poem, says,

*“I have no preconceptions,  
Whatever I see I swallow immediately just as it is  
Unmistaken by love or dislike  
I am not cruel, only truthful”*



The poetess compares mirror with the eye of a little God because it is omniscient, it possess the quality of seeing and knowing everything which only almighty God possess. That's why poetess claims,

*"The eye of a little God, four cornered"*

The poetess describes the romantic relationship between the mirror and the opposite wall. She depicts that there is a pink coloured wall with small marks opposite of the mirror. Mirror has been continuously staring at the wall for a long time that it has become the part of its heart, its life. It is only disturbed or flickered when faces or darkness come in between them. This fact reveals in the lines,

*"Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.*

*It is pink, with speckles.*

*I have looked at it so long.*

*I think it is a part of my heart. But it flickers.*

*Faces and darkness separate us over and over."*

Sylvia Plath has used various metaphors in the poem. She compares the mirror with a lake. A woman bends over and looks into the mirror to know about herself, what she is, how she looks. In her youth, the woman looks very beautiful, charming and gorgeous. Everything was attractive and pleasant but it the universal fact that nothing is permanent, even youth and beauty do not last forever, it vanishes at its time.

*"Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me*

*Searching my riches for what she really is."*

After she turns to the candles or the moon who are liars because it tells her the truth but the lake tells her truthfully and return the woman rewards with tears. The mirror is important to the woman because daily she comes to the mirror and sees her image in the mirror. Now the mirror reveals the truth to a woman about her figure, about her youth, about her beauty and about her old age. With a passage of time, the woman realizes with a shock that she is no more young and her beauty is lost. Hence she searches the truth about her acceptance and look in the mirror. The old age seems to be a terrible fish for her. She is grieved for this terrible change. She does not want to accept this transformation. The woman is consumed by her own anxieties. Therefore poetess proclaims,

*"Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon*

*I see her back, and reflect it faithfully,*



*She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.  
I am important to her. She comes and goes.  
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.  
In me she has drowned a young girl and in me an old woman  
Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish."*

## CONCLUSION:

Thus the poem 'Mirror' expresses the realistic picture of human life which is not eternal. The changes are unavoidable. Human beings need to accept the changes with the passage of time. Poetess has chosen the images of woman and mirror through personification, simile and metaphor for describing the human attributes.

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