

24.

THE VICTIM AND VICTIMIZER: A SELECT STUDY OF THE
POEMS OF SYLVIA PLATH IN *ARIEL* COLLECTION

Dr. Manpreet Kaur

Asst. Professor in English

Govt. SPMR College of Commerce, Jammu

Sylvia Plath belongs to the Twentieth century generation of the 1960's in which writers, especially the poets, hoped to create a total environment in which the Self could be realised. It is in the *Ariel* collection that Plath's dilemma which constantly afflicted her mind, the antithetical confrontation of Eros and Thanatos impulses becomes strongly apparent to any discerning and devoted reader. As a confessional poet, Plath with her absurdist vision of the world makes extensive use of surrealist imagery in the *Ariel* collection and most of the poems in this collection look neurotic, formless and even bizarre. A consuming search for the ethos of Self-fulfillment becomes central to the poems in the *Ariel*, making confessional poetry as something spilling over with an element of uniqueness in Plath's personality which had to be realized. The poems in the *Ariel* written mostly between 1962 and 1963 conform to, "a willed poetic process that has behind it a sustained effort to relate and explore." Ramakrishnan 216. In a poem titled "Ariel", Plath describes a ride on her favourite horse by the same name and the poem comes alive by getting loaded with a charged language that drives right into the very centre of experience:

"Stasis in darkness
Then the substanceless blue
Pour of tor and distances.

God's lioness,
How one we grow,
Pivot of heels and knees! The Furrow"

And again,

"Black Sweet blood mouthfuls,
Shadows.
Something else

Hauls me through air---
Thighs, hair;
Flakes from my heels.

White
Godiva, I unpeel-----
Dead hands, dead stringencies." TCP 239

What makes the collection *Ariel* quite disturbing from the reader's perspective is that these last poems written shortly before Plath's suicide withdraw deeper and deeper into an existential, psychological wordless state of stasis.

The poems in the *Ariel* command a bone-chilling authority and, "No artifice alone could have conjured up such effects, yet such is the paradox of art, these poems would never have come into being without the long, deliberate, technical training that had preceded them." Wagner 39. The world of the poems is full of despair, bleakness and grotesque suffering. In the world of *Ariel*, "Love is shadow". Here marriage is a final, desperate effort to gain peace and communication but even this marriage to Ted Hughes as the husband is hopelessly