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SUICIDAL ENDINGS OF CERTAIN MODERNIST WRITERS - A CASE STUDY OF SYLVIA PLATH & VIRGINIA WOOLF- A REVIEW

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Abstract:
*The purpose of this research article is to explain the factors leading to the suicidal death of emerging feminist, modernist writers. The research lenses its approach through ''**Sufferings in the early life (Childhood), Hardships of Marital life, Textual references from their work & Societal Impact on the Mental Health.''** Modernist writers of their age broke the patriarchal norms of writing and leads the focus on Equi-lance of gender by their work and also portrays the image of how society treats a woman in modern era starting from late 19 century to the mid of 20th century.*
Keywords: Problems of Marital life, bipolar disorder, longing for love, suicidal attempts Poem Lady Lazarus.

Introduction:

Sylvia Plath

Sylvia Plath (born October 27, 1932, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.—died February 11, 1963, London, England) was an American poet whose best-known works, such as the poems "Daddy" and "Lady Lazarus" and the novel *The Bell Jar*.

Childhood Traumas:

Plath was only eight years old when her father died. She was so close to her father that she never felt safe in the world after the death of her father. She tried her first suicidal attempt after the death of her father at the age nineteen. She tried to slash both of her legs, which ultimately could not prove to be successful. She and her mother suffered a lot regarding financial issues of their house for which both ladies had to work hard. Her mother always pushes her to earn something by learning different skills along with her studies, just like short hand courses so, that it could help them financially. Although, Sylvia was brilliant in her academic progression and studied most of her education on scholarships. But, the death of her father when she was only eight years old was a big trauma of her life. This shows her pure affection for her father.

Virginia Woolf:

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Virginia Woolf (born January 25, 1882, London, England—died March 28, 1941, near Rodmell, Sussex) was an English writer whose novels, through their nonlinear approaches to narrative, exerted a major influence on the genre.

While she is best known for her novels, especially Mrs. Dalloway (1925) and To the

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Lighthouse (1927).

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Sufferings of Early life:

Virginia Woolf faced a number of problems in her childhood since after the death of her mother from rheumatic fever, when she was only 13 years old. Her childhood traumas include the sexual abuse of her half-brothers (Step-Brothers), which leads to further psychological and nervous breakdowns and resulted in a bipolar disorder. She felt uncomfortable in the company of men. Society further leads to put the allegation of being a homo-sexual on her. These hardships lead to suicidal death of Virginia. Virginia Woolf drowned herself in Sussex, England, on March 28, 1941, when she was 59 years old.

Hardships of Marital life:

Virginia and Plath both faced failure of marital life. In case of Sylvia, she always wandered in Loging for true love, but she never found neither from her husband nor from the society. She was cheated by her husband and that went to further legal separation of Plath with her husband Ted Hughes. After, separation with her husband Sylvia went into severe depression and insomnia attacks. She could not get over from suicidal thoughts. Her work ‘‘LADY LAZARUS’’ depicts the idea of suicide and her affection towards death, because she thinks that only suicide can brought her back, to her loving father. As, this world is full of deceivers.

Her second suicidal attempt was in 1953, when she overdosed on sleeping pills and was hospitalized for six months after that. Finally, in her third attempt of suicide she died in 1963 by inhaling gas from kitchen oven.

Virgina was a bit lucky in comparison to Sylvia Plath as her marital life was not that much problematic as compared to Plath. But, because of her bipolar disorder she never felt at ease with men. Sexual abuse by step brothers, brought up a fear in her mind regarding men. So, it developed an attraction towards similar gender in Virginia and she was accused for homo-sexuality then. Virginia Woolf had a passionate, ten-year-long affair with Vita Sackville-West. This affair, while not physically consummated, deeply impacted her emotional and creative life and undoubtedly affected her relationship with Leonard, her husband.

Societal Impact on Mental Health:

Financial crisis in the young age of modernist writers caused them to work with every class of people and to accept criticism and judgements from all over the society that leads to mental health issues, social anxiety, fear of men, bipolar disorder, attraction towards homo-sexuality and suicidal attempts. All these factors proved the failure of modernist era for a middle-class woman to survive.

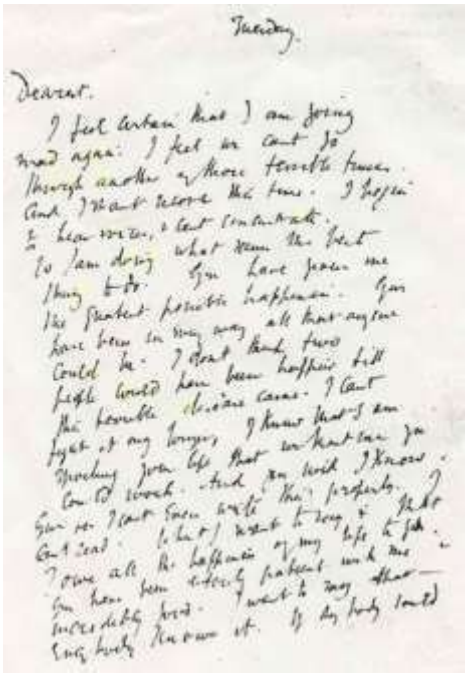
Virginia Woolf Suicidal Note:

Dearest,

I feel certain I am going mad again. I feel we can't go through another of those terrible times. And I shan't recover this time. I begin to hear voices, and I can't concentrate. So I am doing what seems the best thing to do. You have given me the greatest possible happiness. You have been in every way all that anyone could be. I don't think two people could have been happier till this terrible disease came. I can't fight any longer. I know that I am spoiling your life, that without me you could work. And you will I know. You see I can't even write this properly. I can't read. What I want to say is I owe all the happiness of my life to you. You have been entirely patient with me and incredibly good. I want to say that - everybody knows it. If anybody could have saved me it would

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have been you. Everything has gone from me but the certainty of your goodness. I can't go on spoiling your life any longer.
I don't think two people could have been happier than we have been.



Virginia Woolf Suicidal Note in Her Own Writing

Analysis of Modernist Text ''LADY LAZARUS'' A poem by Sylvia Plath:
Modernist era was the time when emerging feminist writers broke the patriarchal norms of writing and emerged to equalize the Equi-lance of gender in society. They not only target male dominance in society, but also wrote about the sufferings of a common lady, which neither had any respect in society nor in her family.

In this poem Sylvia Plath highlighted themes of courage, as an emerging feminist writer and her affection towards death and suicide in the stanzas as follow:

And I a smiling woman.

I am only thirty.

And like the cat I have nine times to die.

In this part of the stanza, smiling woman indicates her strength against all the male dominance in the society, that she is not afraid of men. Indicating the factual figure of her age, that she was only thirty meant that, she was at the initial stage of her emergence towards a feminist modernist writer and she had to work a lot for balancing the gender scale of the society of modern era. Her affection

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for struggle is so much that she can even bare the pain, the hurdling's in her way nine times. This shows the image of her fairness towards every struggle and hardship of her life, she faced.

In another part of the stanza,

Dying

Is an art, like everything else.

I do it exceptionally well.

Plath never left the expression of gloominess on the mind of her readers. She always justified her act of suicide as, if it was an unexceptional thing to do. But she done it, she made her name in modernist era, where females where not considered that they cannot do something extra ordinary that men cannot do. According, to her poem ''Dying is an art'', not everyone can perform this art equally well in modernist era, as Plath did. This proved that she made her unforgettable impression in the history, which cannot be neglected.

Out of the ash

I rise with my red hair

And I eat men like air.

Poem ends with the stanza, in which Plath clearly mentioned her comeback, her rebirth, which means that either her writings would survive which then late after, fought for the Equi-lance of gender or new feminist writers may emerged after her death, which will work for the rights of female, to balance the scale of gender in society.

Conclusion:

Virginia Woolf and Sylvia Plath both proved through their life and their work that writers are the product of their age. Both, modernist writer tried their best to adjust with their surrounding but, at the end both had to attempt suicide to get a relief from the mental and psychological breakdown issues. Plath successfully carried away the act of suicide in order to end the sufferings of her life as she wrote 'Dying is an art' and she being the artist played this act equally well. Similarly, Virginia also left behind her suicide note which was later received by her husband.

Thousands of the people in the world suicide because of societal rejections, failure of love, financial depression & health issues every year. There, should be strong awareness regarding mental health issues among general public, so that people may consider the values and norms of relations with each other and to build a safe environment for everyone to live peacefully.

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