

## **Revisiting the Story of *Sleeping Beauty*: A study of Personality Development of Maleficent in Elizabeth Rudnick's *Maleficent***

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### **Abstract**

The present paper analyzes the character-transformation and personality growth of the chief character, Maleficent, in Elizabeth Rudnick's novel *Maleficent* (2014), which is inspired by Walt Disney's animated movie *Sleeping Beauty*. The study further utilizes Elizabeth B. Hurlock's structure of personality development, as presented in his book *Personality Development* (1974), which discusses the conditions or factors that manipulate Maleficent's personality. This approach analyzes the character's behaviours, thoughts, actions and motifs.

Fairy tales show dilemmas and offer a range of solutions, labelling socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, separate good and evil and binds the teller and the audience into a common understanding of community. Elizabeth, in the novel, tries to describe how a villainous fairy can be transformed into a compassionate one via love. *Maleficent* novel is a remake of *Sleeping Beauty* (text), which rotates upside-down one's fairy world as it dispense utterly with every major sexist element of the original. *Maleficent* changes her personality from being evil to being unselfish, which sets an example that all the evil in the world can be changed with the power of love.

**Keywords:** maleficent, transformation, personality development, erroneous

### **Introduction**

The paper focuses on how fairy tales indicate the spirit of time and how far these tales help in the shaping the society. Fairy tales deal with magical creatures and events, including crossed cultures across country, and have specific social, political and economic educational ends in mind. The study focuses on the character alteration in Elizabeth Rudnick's *Maleficent* from *Sleeping Beauty* movie. The study analyzes the past and traces the personality development and transformation of Maleficent who gradually evolves into a godly being from an evil one.

Fairy tales is a genre in literature dealing with fantasy characters such as fairies, giants, goblins, unicorns etc. The oral ritual of the fairy tales came long before the printed page, and so they were passed along from generation to generation via oral narration. Throughout history, fairy tales have been women's stories, passed down verbally by mothers and grandmothers. When fairy tales began to appear as a literary form, many of the stories were edited and transformed, removing the darker and more horrible basics of the stories. Since time immemorial, women's social position has been restricted to domestic chores only. So, fairy tales are evolved and morphed to reflect the current society and values. In other words, it can be detained that in fairy tales, the female roles are polarized. The heroine is always ideal. She is beautiful, kind, cooperative and compassionate and also powerless, native, lacks any sort of intelligence, whereas, on the other side, the one that illustrates signs of cleverness or aspire to achieve something is generally presented as impious, ugly or deformed.

Personality development is a comparatively lasting pattern of feelings, opinions and behaviours that distinguish persons from one another. Elizabeth B. Hurlock (1974) [4] asserts that personality is what a person is, how a person thinks and feels and what is included in someone's total psychological make

(p.6). Allport (1961) defines that "personality is the vibrant organization within the individual of these psychophysical systems that resolve his characteristic behaviour and thought" (p.7.). Feist (2009) also shows that personality is a pattern of relatively permanent traits and exceptional characteristics that gives both uniformity and individuality to a person's behaviour (p.4).

*Maleficent* tells about the story of Maleficent, who is a brood and powerful fairy. She lives in the Moors, a wood with a harmed kingdom. She meets up and falls in affection with Stefan who is a human. The king does not like Maleficent as Maleficent tries to attack him. So, the king develops a competition and declares that the one who succeeds to murder Maleficent will be considered his successor and will also be allowed to marry his daughter, Princess Leila. Stefan tries to slaughter Maleficent by cutting her wings as the proof of Maleficent's death. In turn, Maleficent curses Stefan's daughter named Princess Aurora. As time passes by, Maleficent begins to feel affection for Princess Aurora like her own daughter. She attempts to break her abnormal curse but she fails. The situation makes her realize that she has drawn a self-same erroneous strength of will by cursing Princess Aurora.

After studying Maleficent's character, the research analyzes her personality development, which can be read in two sections- her transformation from a humble fairy into an evil one, and then her gradual evolution from a damaged fairy into an angelic one. It has been discussed that human's personality is always having the potential to trade. The personality itself is able to alter through the experiences. Hurlock (1974) [4] states that there are some situations or factors that manipulate the personality change- such as physical changes, environmental changes, changes in significant people, changes in social stress, changes in roles, strong motivation, and self-concept. These situations work a great deal to alter a

person's personality.

Maleficent's personality grows and develops through number of actions that she experiences in the Moors according to the story. After facing disloyalty, she makes a decision to give a curse to Stefan's daughter. But, Maleficent's character starts to build up, she becomes searching about the Princess, Aurora. She starts transform into a kind-hearted fairy, and all her evilness begins to shed off, which is clearly visible in the given line: "While Maleficent hated to admit it, Diaval wasn't the only one who was curious about the baby. As the days turned into weeks and then into months, the interest ate at Maleficent" (117).

It can be seen that only after cursing the child, she becomes curious of what happens to her, and this agitation eventually breaks off her iniquity, thus developing an affectionate bond with the Princess. A part of her desires to forget about the child, but she fails all the time. Her loving nature is in addition exposed when she calls Aurora with another name, "Curious little beast," Maleficent mumbled as she watched Aurora (138-139). Leaning over the princess, Maleficent felt small tug at the corner of her lips.

"Good night, beastie," she said gently before turning to go (153).....And as she had done every nights, she pulled the covers up gently and supposed, "Good night, beastie." (163). although she calls her a "beast", she says it without having any regrets.

According to Hurlock (1974)<sup>[4]</sup>, changes in major population can provide large impact to personal personality development. In this narrative, the one who gives vast changes to maleficent personalities is Aurora. Chapter sixteen shows that even Aurora finally begins to show her compassion towards Maleficent, which is evident in the line, "I know who you are," she said, causing Maleficent to raise an eyebrow. "You're my faerie godmother." "Faerie godmother," she reply slowly. "You've been watching over me my whole life. I've always knows you were close by."(150). The below given passage further indicate that even Aurora shows her care and love by allowing Maleficent to be her godmother who has always protected her since her childhood.

"...true love: that of a mother and daughter. That was what Aurora had become to her- a daughter. She loved her firmly, without question. She would love her on the bad days and on the great days. When Aurora was near and when she was love her for the women she would become and the girl she was now. That, Maleficent realize as she looked at Aurora's huge smile, was the truest of love" (226-227).

The passage also illustrates that change of Maleficent's heart becomes clearer as she understands the factual love of a mother and daughter. She also understands that loyal adore is not about pair love. As Maleficent's iniquity begins to vanish, she becomes extra caring towards others, including Aurora. Her transformation takes place as a result of Aurora's treatment of her as her fairy godmother. She desires to be conscious of her environment and environment.

The story starts with the writer describes Maleficent as a fairy who never thought of what harm she did to others perfect temper and badness towards herself and the environment

made a lot of people suffer. But after her alteration, she became aware of and felt regretful for her mistakes. The feeling of regret is clearly visible in the given lines: "She filled with regret, Maleficent spent the next day sitting indolently by the wall. The thought of seeing Aurora's innocent face that evening was heart-wrenching. She felt this new, intense need to protect the girl from the ugliness of the world, but ironically, she was part of it" (167).

The main story indicates that Maleficent feels regretful for all that she has done. Aurora reminds her how valuable family ties and contacts are. Hurlock (1974) states there are several situations which influence individual's notion of 'self'. The situations around Maleficent lead her towards self-introspection. In the story, after Aurora pricks her finger on the spindle of a rotating sweep and falls into a deep sleep, Maleficent says,

"...I will not ask you for forgiveness. What I have done is unforgivable. I was so lost in hatred and revenge. I never dreamed that I could love you so much. You stole what was left of my heart. And now I've lost you forever...But I swear, no harm will come to you as I live... and not a day shall pass that I won't miss your smile..." (225)

The aforementioned passages clearly demarcate Maleficent's character transformation and her change of heart. Maleficent's consciousness leads her to feel apologetic for what she has done to herself and to Aurora. According to the Hurlock's theory (1974)<sup>[4]</sup>, positive character transformation leads to personality development and individual growth. Maleficent's modification leads her to such an extent that she decides to face Stefan one more time and make him realize what blunder he made her do because of his disloyalty, which is visible in the lines, "Swooping down, she slammed Stefan with one of her powerful wings. The king was thrown back, tentative as he tried to keep his footing. Flying forward, Maleficent held him up against the tower wall. She leaned forward, her face mere inches from Stefan's (247)." The lines indicates that Maleficent determines to fight against Stefan and his army, even though she had the risk of losing her life, because she feels it was her liability to defend Aurora and the Moors from him.

## Conclusion

The novel concluded that though Maleficent, the central character, is portrayed as a sad, bad humoured, evil and a cruel fairy in the beginning, her evilness sheds off when she eventually forms a mother- daughter relationship with Aurora. She even finds a prince, Philip, whom Aurora met in the jungle, and brings him to offer a true-love kiss to Aurora. Magically, the princess wakes up and the curse breaks off, which makes Maleficent realize the actual power of love, thus transforming her completely into a godly fairy. Thus, Elizabeth succeeds in proving how in famous fairy can be transformed into a generous one via care and affection, setting an example that all the evil in the world can be changed with the power of love.

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