1. Life and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

1. Life Sketch

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762), prolific letter-writer and diarist, born into the highest nobility, brilliant in mind and beautiful in body, had become an accomplished socialite in London by the time she was an adolescent. Her family background involved her in Whig politics. Later, she represented her country as an Ambassadress and the first ever English woman traveler to Turkey. It was chiefly on account of this travel that she could pen down her popular letters for which she is remembered today and has earned various critics’ accolades. For instance, Billie Melman brands her work as “the very first example of a secular work by a woman about the Muslim Orient”. (Melman 1992) She also championed the feminist cause of her day and introduced smallpox inoculation in England. Of late, it is opined that she also nurtured a scientific bent of mind. Truly, she left her imprint in almost every phase inspiring contemporary English women, especially those cherishing the might of the pen and the child inside her who once nursed ‘the childish desire of catching the setting Sun’\(^1\), and instead, ended up seizing a shining galaxy.

But there is also the other side of Lady Mary’s account that relates to mishaps that befell her. Grundy writes: ---when she herself related the story of her life and talents, she said, ‘the bad fairies found means to nullify every gift the good one gave’---\(^2\) catapulting her cart every now and then in unpredictable ways under the impulse of notoriously unusual circumstances. Her father catered to every material wish of his children except their education. Her grand-mother enforced strict discipline on her and deprived her of any share in her inheritance. She acquired superb skills through
self-study and became an author in her adolescence itself, but was rebuffed by the Court for criticizing the ‘High Society’. In later years, she was the target of Pope’s satire and Walpole’s criticism. She served as a companion to the ‘Ambassador Extraordinary’ to Turkey, and championed the cause of Smallpox Inoculation, only to find herself embroiled in a mesh of suspicion and scandals. A pseudo-scholar cheated her and a pseudo-aristocrat extorted her wealth brutally. While the outside world acclaimed her literary genius, her family members preferred to destroy it. The tale is endless but fortunately, in every phase of her life, it was the brighter side that prevailed and this makes the study of both her life and works doubly interesting and revealing.

1.1 From Infancy to Married Life

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, née Pierrepont (1689 –762) was born in an influential land owning family on May 15 but like many other details of her early life, the date of her birth is also uncertain. Anita Desai mentions Lady Mary’s date of birth as ‘in 1689’ and Halsband simply makes a note: ‘Lady Mary Pierrepont (1689-1762) the eldest daughter of Evelyn Pierrepont’ Her biographer, Isobel Grundy reports that it fell in April or May 1689. She also does not mention the date.

However, it is confirmed that she was born in London and was baptized at St. Paul’s Church, Covent Garden, London, on May 26, 1689.

The Pierreponts, who claim their descent from William the Conqueror, comprised a well-connected, ‘intricate web of earldoms, baronies and dukedoms both English and Irish’, and had been prominent land owners in Nottinghamshire since thirteenth century. Most of this property was acquired through the institution of marriage. Henry
Pierrepont, who had got hold of a lavish mansion by 1589, had married the daughter of the well-known Bess of Hardwick. Lady Mary’s father Evelyn Pierrepont, who became fifth Earl of Kingston-upon-Hull soon after her birth, held significant aristocratic offices as a member of parliament, an earl, a marquess and duke. He was Ll. D. from his alma mater Cambridge University, Knight of Garter, a Privy Councillor, Lord Lieutenant of Wiltshire, Lord Privy Seal and one of the Regents of the Kingdom in the absence of the monarch. Like other Pierreponts, money came first in his marital priorities and reasonably so. In 1717, he was elevated to Duke of Kingston, an office for which Lady Mary’s great-great-uncle Gervase Pierrepont (d 1679) had earmarked £10,000 with which his brothers were supposed to get the dukedom for the family. Evelyn Pierrepont was destined to receive a dowry of £6,000 from his bride’s brother, instead his step mother, Dowager Lady Denbigh who had brought her up, paid to him a ‘voluntary gift’ of £1,000 after the marriage settlement dated 23 June 1687.

The lineage of Lady Montagu’s mother, Mary Fielding, the daughter of the third Earl of Denbigh was full of cavalry commanders, Lords and County Lieutenants. The Fieldings also had a treasure in the form of books and manuscripts. The family produced several outstanding scholars among whom Henry and Sarah Fielding are celebrated as excellent novelists. Evelyn Pierrepont married Mary Fielding when she was 19 but their marriage certificate shows her 22 years. He chose Mary Fielding as his life partner mainly for her wealth and the social network of Fieldings’ alliance. Mary Pierrepont was the first born child of the couple, though they were expecting a male child in order to become eligible for the will of the first Duke of Kingston.
Reportedly, Lady Mary’s father ‘begot illegitimate progeny’, yet in her words, he was ‘a very fine gentleman, of good sense, well bred and a Lover of Ladies’.\textsuperscript{10}

Shortly after the death of Lady Mary’s last surviving maternal uncle on 17 September 1690, her parents became the Earl and Countess of Kingston, an event that conferred on her and her sister, Frances Pierrepont, the aristocratic title of ‘Lady’. On 6 September 1691, a third girl, Lady Evelyn was born in the family and her brother William, Viscount Newark, on 21 October 1692. When their mother passed away, these children had to be handed over to the care of their grandmother Elizabeth Pierrepont, nee Evelyn, who lived in West Dean. The Dean Hill stands in its south where Lady Mary ‘took air upon the Downs at 4 years old. A few miles away is Salisbury Steeple where she once longed to catch the Sun. At Dean, the Pierrepont children’s clothes were tight and formal and easy to spoil. Discipline would have been strict.\textsuperscript{11} In all probability, Mrs. Dupont, their mother’s nurse, was also their Governess. She was assisted by two ‘foolish and benighted’ under-nurses, as Lady Mary described later in her satirical tale ‘Princes Docile’, and the whole system was supervised by their grandmother. She also accused her Governess of inculcating superstition, ‘so much pains from my Infancy to fill my head with superstitious Tales and false notions---’.\textsuperscript{12}

Lady Mary likened her grandmother and the Governess to those who led Docile to make the pledge, ‘to remain for seven years sitting cross-legged in honour of Goddess Vishnu’ is reminiscent of Ms. Dupont, the governess\textsuperscript{13}. However, strict disciplining rather made her rebellious. Lady Mary presented an alternative to this disciplining as suggested by her religious allusion mentioned above. Meditation as a source of purification is supposed to be a means of pleasing Vishnu whose pleasure is taken as a
token of bestowal of ‘freedom from death, release from all bonds of sin, all territorial
enjoyments, a placing in heaven and final liberation’. But there seems a lacunae in
this allusion: Lady Mary has referred to Vishnu as a ‘Goddess’, which looks like a
lapse on her part but, perhaps, this is not true. In modern India, Vishnu is popularly
known as a male deity and Lakshmi is taken as his perennial wife. Wilkins\textsuperscript{14} and
Dowson\textsuperscript{15} also ascribe the same gender to him. But there are indications that he was
identified with a primitive aboriginal deity, Bhu, who is defined as:

The Earth, a goddess who, before Creation, rested at the bottom of the
primeval ocean. Here Brahma found her and raised her to the surface
in the shape of a many petalled lotus flower (Nymphaea Stellata)
which opened magnificently as soon as she reached the light. Brahma
Prajapati the Creator is often depicted sitting on the rising lotus
absorbed in meditation.\textsuperscript{16}

That Vishnu was the other team-member is supported by Knappert:

“Creation of new worlds follows the twilight of the gods when Vishnu and Brahma
enter in a state of meditative suspension.”\textsuperscript{17}

Then ‘Goddess Vishnu’ shall simply imply ‘Goddess Bhu’ i.e. Vishnu in pre-creation
phase, when he meditates conjointly with Brahma, and this has deeper implications
for Lady Mary’s allusion of meditation.

Efforts have also been made to reconcile the ascription of contrary genders to Vishnu:
“The question whether Vishnu has been identified with the earth god of a more primitive aboriginal people is resolved by the Indian philosophers in the sense that all the gods are emanations of manifestations of the one Divine Principle.”

But Sri Aurobindo seems nearer the point and straightforward in defining Vishnu as: “The Eternal’s Personality of Consciousness”

Lady Mary resented the strict discipline imposed upon her by her grandmother and her Governess and the strict disciplining had the opposite effect and made her rather rebellious.

On 1 January 1699, Elizabeth Pierrepont expired and a ten-year old Lady Mary was returned to her father’s care at Thoresby where her cultural grounding was sharpened. The walls of the rooms in the mansion were decorated with paintings that furnished a course in the history of Art. Evelyn Pierrepont’s Kit-Kat associates, especially Congreve, Dr. Samuel Garth, Addison and Steele regularly visited the mansion but any formal education was missing. So, private teachers were employed to instruct her in drawing, in Italian language and in carving joints of meat---so that she could master the arts of a perfect political hostess. She was also instructed in embroidery and cooking along with the physical arts of riding and dancing.

However, Lady Mary asserts that the main impetus to her education came from her own habit of self-study. She confined herself to her father's library which was not only decked with ornaments and busts of classical philosophers but also housed 1,200 manuscripts and thousands of books covering both the classics and modern science, according to Bibliothecae Kingstonianae, the catalog commissioned by Evelyn
Pierrepont. Her passion for reading helped her in learning Latin by her own efforts at the age of 14 and she published a book of verses before she was 8. She studied so voraciously that she developed a distaste for novels by the time she was 20. At 21, she presented her translation of Epictetus to the Bishop of Salisbury. She received intellectual inspiration and support from her maternal uncle, William Fielding.

Lady Mary’s translocation to Thoresby brought her closer to the hub of Whig politics, the Kit-Kat Club. Her portrait done in 1709 for the Club is a testimony to her attachment with the Whigs and with the Club. She had been there when she was only 8, as the toast of the year, an honour given to reigning beauties, proposed by her father. On record, she is listed by the name of Mary Pierrepont as the toast for 1712 and 1719, which occasion she has enthusiastically narrated. This thrilling experience that made her a life-long ‘flattery addict’ and emphasized the joy ‘to be dressed in her best, admired and made much, to go from the lap of one poet, or patriot, or statesman to the arms of another--- her health drank by everyone present and her name engraved in due form upon the glasses’\(^1\) But she was not well-pleased with the rites of the toast or the associates of the Club. All this set a particular image of her father in her perceptive mind; ‘he thought of her sometimes rather like a social asset, a luxury plaything---abandon’d to his pleasures, and did not think himselfe oblig’d to be very attentive to his children’s Education’,\(^2\) although Evelyn Pierrepont’s family background had raised him to a position of power in Whig politics and the Club. Lady Mary’s forebears had also been adherents of Whiggism and she was also was proud of her schooling in ‘Old Whiggism’, a creed and a principle ‘to defend to the death the point of principle’ but the creed had decayed by her father’s days. Her great-
granddaughter Lady Louisa Stuart describes her as ‘Whig to the teeth’ but Lady Mary was annoyed that contemporary adherents of Whiggism fight each other for selfish power.

Lady Mary first saw her menstrual days in 1704-5 when she was 15, and came to believe that this is a normal age for girls to experience this watershed. The same year she nursed a strange desire, ‘to rule as abbess over a Protestant nunnery of a community of retired women’ and philosophized that ‘childish dreams of fame ought to be extinct’ by the age of 15’ a theme she developed in poems related with Hermensilda. Lady Mary’s longing for flight from the mundane life seems to be a by-product of her devotion to Scudery. But when Martha Fooke read ‘Empire of Women’ to her, she also kindled in her, the quest for finding her dream mate, a King or Prince, to marry. This led Lady Mary to project herself as Scudery’s Sapho, an orphan of noble descent by-passed in matters of inheritance, educated by a female cousin and well-grounded in both verse and prose.

Besides a number of daughters of nobility and gentry, Lady Mary’s friends at this stage included her Pierrepont cousins who were in the town, a distant cousin, Lady Henrietta Cavendish Holles, an heiress, Sarah Chiswell, an orphan yet a ‘humble companion’, Clarinda, Jane Smith, the Maid of Honour and daughter of the Speaker of the House of Commons, Dolly Walpole who lost her love because she could not arrange dowry to the satisfaction of her would-be in-laws. A clearer idea of her perception of and inclination towards love emerges in ‘The Adventurer’, and of course she had read Mary Astell, a High Church Tory, who shortly published her attack on the demeanors of the Kit-Kat Club associates of Lady Mary’s father. Mary
Astell was unconventional, too bold and free but she was also a leading promoter of women's rights in her age and perhaps this was the strongest link between the two.

Lady Mary’s friends, a generation older than her include Ann Levinz, daughter of a London-based attorney and wife of a Member of Parliament, Frances Hewet whose husband was a land owner and an agent to large landowners, Phillippa Mundy, a confidant of Lady Mary, Mary Banks whose father was a lawyer owning a country house at Scofton and an influential local politician, and Anne Wortley, sister of Edward Wortley Montagu.24

Though living at Thoresby, the Pierrepont sisters were not restricted to the confines of that place but travelled outside, for instance to London, twice a year along with their coach, servants and baggage for their ‘acclimatization’ with weather between Nottinghamshire and London, and usually stayed in a walled abode in Arlington Street. The erstwhile London society of fashionable souls taught Lady Mary ‘how to attract others’ notice in the Mall.25

Evelyn Pierrepont respected his children’s choices; even the choice of their soul mates but the reason behind delaying his daughter’s marriage was the custom of the day that required late marriage of upper class children. In the meantime, the spinster trio, Lady Mary, her sister Frances and Phillippa Mundy, used to give vent to their emotions, aspirations and anxieties in their personal correspondence using a secret code which reveals that they aspired for ‘Paradise’ (marriage with their love) and dreaded ‘Hell’ and ‘Limbo’, marriage with reluctance and loathing and ‘marriage with indifference’ respectively. Yet as realistic persons, none of them expected to get ‘Paradise’, which was eventually proved true. When Lady Mary’s father chose a Hell for her, she, for
the first time, talked about her unidentified Paradise. It happened some time before her elopement with her Limbo, Edward Wortley Montagu.

On one occasion, the Pierrepont sisters visited Mary Astell’s close friend, Anne Wortley in Wharncliffe, about thirty miles away from Thoresby. Presently, a grave gentleman came in, sipped tea and enquired about her proficiency in Latin language. He was Anne’s real brother, Edward Wortley Montagu. Impressed by Lady Mary’s wit, Anne increased the frequency of her correspondence with Lady Mary, with the difference that her letters comprised a replica of her brother’s words. Topics of Anne’s letters changed soon, and kept changing swiftly, from gossip and scandal to ceremonies and compliments to Lady Mary’s ‘transcendent’ attractiveness and her herd of lovers. When Edward Wortley dictated the last such letter to his sister, Anne, he was 32 and she 21.

Edward Wortley Montagu was the son of Sidney Montagu, the Earl of Sandwich and second son of a leading naval commander, Edward Montagu, who did not have an heir. After he left home in search of an heir, he adopted the royalist name, Sir Francis Wortley. As his marriage could not yield any children, he declared his illegitimate daughter Anne Newcomen his heiress, on the condition that her husband should ‘take his name’. Anne Newcomen married Lord Sandwich’s son Sidney who thus became Sidney Montagu. It was this Sidney who fathered Edward Montagu and his brother. Anne Newcomen’s sons, Francis and Edward were sent to Westminster School under the headship of the ‘strict disciplinarian’ Dr. Busby. Since Sidney was keenly interested in his second son’s education, Edward was sent to Trinity College, Cambridge, and then to Middle Temple, after passing out from Westminster. He was
called to bar in 1699, after which he headed for the Grand Tour and Addison accompanied him in certain parts of this tour.

When ‘Sebastian’ (Edward Wortley Montagu) met his Laetitia (Lady Mary) for the first time at a get-together in a young Lady’s house, Edward was already set to win a rich woman in Nottinghamshire but Laetitia’s charismatic beauty and soothing eye-catching charm instantly bewitched him. Laetitia’s conversation on diverse subjects like English poetry, contemporary plays, classics and routine politics also enticed him as it mirrored her wit. Edward’s sincere admiration of her intellect exhilarated her intensely as it came from Addison’s and Steele’s friend who was a well-travelled man and a Member of Parliament. Mutual understanding registered the same wavelength on both sides at astonishingly fast speed. Their romance began in 1715. A marriage proposal was shortly handed over to their attorneys but any progress remained stagnant. After some time, Edward Wortley suspected that Lady Mary’s cold responses indicated her eagerness for a direct proposal. He first went to Acton to discuss the issue with Lady Mary but his business preoccupation dragged him to Durham. This was rather an annoyance for Lady Mary. Finally, he approached her father, now Marquess of Dorchester, but representations failed on the juncture of a suitable dowry, and minor familial trivia. Soon after, Lady Mary found that she was being spied on by her sister. In early June she found herself in ‘frightful solitude’ at West Dean.

Later pieces of evidence hint that Wortley visited West Dean and found Lady Mary’s present controllers irreconcilable and inhospitable. He also came to know here that some other suitor was being explored for her. Being discouraged and frustrated on all fronts, he suggested to her that they by-pass the unmoving Dorchester. Lady Mary
pretended indifference. At the same time, Wortley insulted her by calling Lady Wharton, (a known immoral) her friend. At last, Lady Mary wrote to him, ‘---I propose to myselfe a Happynesse in pleasing you and do not think it impossible’.26 Yet letters kept flying to-and-fro London and the year was gone. In February 1711, Lady Mary’s brother, William, was married to the illegitimate heiress, Rachel Baynton. The next month she wrote to Wortley, ‘While I thought you lov’d me I could have liv’d with you in any place or Circumstances’, but in vain. Finally she wrote to him, ‘Adieu. ---I desire you not to answer’.27 In February 1712, the Pierrepont sisters found themselves pitted against a potential Limbo or their father’s choice, a Hell itself.

Lady Mary kept rejecting the suitors selected by her family and finally told her father, only to his dismay, that she wants to live single. Months later, she suggested to Wortley that Naples would be an ideal Utopia for their predicament. On 1 August, he floated a different agreement: an elopement without any marriage contract in order not to cause any trouble to her family. She wrote back the same day, ‘I know not what to say. I am sure I cannot say enough to thank you for the Generosity of your proposal’. The last letter she wrote to Wortley before her elopement read, ‘---I now declare to you that I am already, if you please, marri’d to you’. His response echoed her words.

Lady Mary acted on her conscience and eloped but prior to that Wortley bought two marriage licenses on 16 August, first to marry locally and, then, the second one to marry anywhere. Both licenses were issued with the permission of Thomas Tenison, Archbishop of Canterbury. They slept for the first night at the house of an unmarried friend of Lady Mary. On Monday, she was in the elopement vehicle carrying her
westward from London. The next day, they were at an inn where she suggested a secret marriage. According to her sister Frances, their marriage was actually solemnized at Salisbury on 23 August 1713.28

A few days after their marriage, the couple moved to Wharncliffe Lodge, near Sheffield and four miles ahead of Thoresby, to live in the company of Sidney Wortley. When Edward’s colliery business carried him to Durham, she headed for Wallingwalls to stay temporarily with Thomas White, a land owner and an agent to her father. There she penned her first post-marriage letter to Wortley, ‘I lament your absence as if you was still my Lover---’. Later she visited Lord Sandwich, head of the Montagu family, at Hinchinbrooke. She also tried to entice her husband’s constituency, discharged other wifely duties and indulged in penmanship ‘at the Desire of Mr. Wortley’... By 1713, the couple was back at their London lodgings where they passed the longest uninterrupted period of living together, six months. On New Year 1713, she bore a son.

In the mid-year, she was very worried as her brother William, not yet 21, was suffering from smallpox. He, then Lord Kingston, expired on 1 July 1713 at Acton. For now, Wortley was again absent and wanted her to move to Yorkshire in some rented house. Instead, she moved to Wharncliffe Lodge on 12 July along with her baby but Lord Sandwich’s visit forced her to leave the place and shift to Wallingwalls and then back in search of some alternative. She inspected a number of houses but could find none till a day before her wedding anniversary. On that day, she wrote to Wortley from Middlethrope Hall, assuring him that she had chosen the best ‘from all Mankind’ as her husband. Social gossip was her favourite pastime here. January 1714 saw her once again packing her baggage,
once again, this time to move to London, but she could not do so till the end of February. She expected to stay there for a month and, therefore, left her baby with some Ms. Cromwell, she actually ended up staying for four months, as if unconsciously undergoing the training as a journeyman and a sojourner.

On 2 August, her father married Lady Isabella Bentick. A few days later, she returned to Middlethorpe to brighten Wortley’s prospects for winning a parliamentary seat from York, but her husband was planning to hold some government post. Lady Mary persuaded him to get elected arguing that ‘Any offer below that of Secretary of State not worth his acceptance’. On 13 October, Wortley accepted the post of junior Commissioner of the Treasury along with three others, ignoring Lady Mary’s advice. Nevertheless, her letter dated 5 January 1714 shows that she was happy in marriage and devoted to pleasing her husband besides pursuing a temporary career as a courtier, an emerging writer and attending to her son. Trying her luck in London was still a distant dream.

Lady Mary next becomes visible at the Court of George I where she tried her best to explore Wortley’s prospects but George I took no interest in the Treasury. However, she succeeded in gaining fast acquaintance with a number of female courtiers, the king’s mistress, Baroness von der Schulenburg, his illegitimate half-sister, Madame von Kielmansegg and daughter-in-law the Princess of Wales, who became her correspondent. She was the only English woman invited to their formal and more cultural meeting in the evening. These meetings also brought her in close intimacy with James Cragg the younger, who once ‘snatched’ her in his arms as ‘a nurse carries a child’. Another close
acquaintance was Carolina of Anspach, who helped her in her inoculation drive six years later.

The Whigs registered a landslide victory by February 1517, in which Wortley was elected unopposed from Westminster, his father and his cousin Hinchinbrook from Huntingdon. By the end of March, Lady Mary was satirizing the rush to court patronage in her latest creation, ‘Roxana’, mingling her literary and social life with the intellectual and political. Her own ambition added a number of influential personages; ‘the influential Mrs. Charlotte Clayton, a Bedchamber Woman to the Princess, the brilliant and self-made young Craggs, the poets Alexander Pope and John Gay’ etc., to the list of her acquaintances. Her intellectual circle included Congreve, John Gray, painter Charles Jervas, Sir Godfrey Kneller and lawyer William Fortescue. Through William Whistor, Samuel Clarke, radical and heterodox churchman who succeeded Tenison and Brunet, and John Told, she came in contact with Abbe Antonio Conti, the Italian scholar, who became her lifelong friend. Nonetheless, her letters show her busy in daily household management, her husband’s personal assistance, upbringing of their son, besides entertaining old friends and relatives.

In December 1715, smallpox attacked Lady Mary and ravaged the ‘transcendent’ beauty of her face leaving her without eye-lashes that made it more repulsive. Fortunately, not only her resolve that beauty was not the end of the world but also the devastation of the disease favoured her in more ways than one. It opened the way to her enduring fame, ensuring a poet’s career if not that of a courtier. Another break-through came to the couple on 16 February 1716 when Pope arranged Wortley’s meeting with Sir William Trumbull, former British
ambassador to Turkey, ‘to advise about the value and profits of [the] Embassy.\textsuperscript{31} to Turkey. Lady Mary came in close contact with Pope when she secretly published \textit{Court Poems} in 1716. On 7 April 1716, newspapers announced Wortley’s appointment as a substitute of Sir Robert Sutton who had served the post for the previous 15 years and the Levant Company confirmed it on 10 May. Lady Mary continued playing ‘the obedient and invaluable’ wife and planning administrative arrangements for the travel. The Ambassador’s credentials were signed in July and friends and well-wishers of the couple flagged off the Montagu family along with 22 servants dressed in special uniform on 1 August. Lady Mary accompanied Wortley along the whole journey, from London to Vienna, and from there to Adrianople and Constantinople. This travel and the letters she wrote in its duration are discussed in chapters III and IV.

\subsection{1.2 Resettling and Later Years}

As Wortley’s diplomatic mission turned out to be a dismal failure and political intrigues back home became intense, he was recalled in 1717 but they remained in Constantinople till 1718, the year Lady Mary bore a daughter. The \textit{Preston}, the ship sent to carry them back, anchored at Constantinople on 18 June 1718 and left the shore on 5 July after a seven-gun salute to the retiring ambassador. Passing through Seven Towers, the state jail, the ship sailed ahead towards Tunis via the Sea of Mammar and Bay of Troy. The poetic landscape on the shore kept conjuring up memories of antiquity, and enthraling Lady Mary who was spontaneously quoting from classics regarding its history. On the eve of 29 July, their ship anchored off the shores of Porte Fatima in Tunis, the land she eagerly explored for a few days and reported back dexterously. On 2 August, they departed for Toulon and moving past
Sardinia (4 August), Monte Carlo (8 August) and Elba (9 August), they were at the opening of the Genoa Gulf harbour on the dawn of 15 August. From here onward, the children pursued the sea route and the elder Montagus opted for land travel to Paris via Genoa, Turin, Venice, and Lyon. Rough weather put both parties, the children and the couple, on trial repeatedly. After a short stay at Dover, they returned to London.

Lady Mary expected vivified social intercourse in London but things had changed, almost every friend or relative was all too busy or engrossed in his own problems. Housing was equally problematic. Wortley somehow arranged for a house for her in Covent Garden, the Pizza. When he bought Seville House from Sir Godfrey around 1722, Lady Mary became an amateur gardener in its back garden which had a door in its walls that opened towards Pope’s house beside the Thames. Her friendship with Pope burgeoned in three phases, opening in 1715, 1728 and 1729 respectively, each of which ended in indifference or acrimony, perhaps on account of literary contemporariness or class antagonism but incommensurable love seems a more likely reason.

Rémond whom she had met in Paris, arrived in London in 1720. Soon she became a romantic correspondent of the Frenchman. Lady Mary invested money in South Sea stock at Rémond’s risk but when its value crashed he tried to extort the deficit as a debt by blackmailing her with her correspondence, unknown to her husband. This left her in an acute financial crisis that was further compounded by her sister’s monetary problems. Two years later she got busy in her Inoculation drive. Francesco Algarotti, an Italian scholar of arts and sciences belonging to a middle class Paduan-Venetian family, came to London in March 1736 to promote his career. Voltaire had recommended him to Hervey and Hervey to Lady Mary. Two weeks later, when
Lady Mary met the gentleman, she instantly fell in love with him and proposed living together in Italy. Their affair protracted for the next two years. In July 1739, she wrote to Algarotti, ‘I am off to find you…Such a proof of undying Attachment need no embroidery of words. I appoint you a meeting in Venice’.³³ Algarotti was then moving to Russia from Paris.

Within a few days, she was on her way to Venice. On 14 September 1739, she wrote to Wortely that she wanted to stay there. This was the beginning of her twenty-two years’ sojourn in her middle age. She never saw Wortley again, though she continued writing letters to him. During August 1740 and March 1741, she roamed Florence, Rome, Naples and Turin where Algarotti was present since the end of January but the life of a displaced intellectual, a disenchanted courtier and an unsettled figure of nobility had become her fate. In Florence, she visited Horace Walpole but their meeting yielded nothing except scandalous gossip.

In 1742, when she settled in the papal state of Avignon, France, where she lived till 1746, she met a diplomat from Poland and Saxony, Count Ugolino Palazzi, 30, who offered to escort her but his intentions were malicious and he wanted to extort money from her though she was ignorant of this fact for some time. Both of them lived in the Venetian province of Brescia for the next 10 years. She was in Gottolengo on 11 November 1746 in a ‘castle’, a country house rented by Palazzi. After her illness, she moved to Lovere in July 1746 on her doctor’s advice. When her health improved in early 1750, she moved to Sale and then back to Gottolengo. Now she was a ‘lone philosopher’ yet she could get rid of Palazzi only in 1760 when he was sentenced along with his three brothers. She passed the last years of her sojourn in the academic
Padua and cosmopolitan Venice. Wortley had long been inconsequential, though he remained busy in hoarding money during his last years.

1.3 Last Words

After her husband’s death in 1761, Lady Mary planned to return to England. On 1 January 1762, she embarked a trading vessel and reached her house in Great George Street, London on 27 January.\textsuperscript{34} Discontented, as London could not fetch her contentment this time, she was inclined to return to Italy but the intense cold of May 1762 made her fatally ill. When her tumor burst by the end of the month, Walpole wrote to Mann, ‘there are no hopes of her…says she has lived long enough’.\textsuperscript{35} On 21 August 1762, Lady Mary eloped once again. This time in the company of the Angel of Death. Several sources confirm that her last words in this transitory world were: \textit{It has all been most interesting}.

2. Projects and Works

Lady Mary was not simply an ivory tower intellectual, she not only actively engaged herself in the social discourse of the day but also motivated others, especially the court and the nobility, towards the causes taken up by her. She is remembered today for both her penmanship and her devotion to her anti-smallpox drive besides feminist advocacy. The epic of her life covers both her mastery of a range of literary genres as a writer and her efforts to introduce modern thought and practices in society. What follows is a brief survey of these endeavors.
2.1 Social Missions

2.1.1 Inoculation Drive

Lady Mary had her first encounter with smallpox in 1715 when her brother died of the disease. In the coming December, her own beauty was ravaged by smallpox. Two years later, when she traveled to Turkey with her husband, she came to know about the Turkish practice of inoculation called Variolation or engrafting against smallpox, as she was anxious to safeguard her children, she let her son be inoculated in Turkey. It is curious that when there was an outbreak of smallpox in London in 1719 she remained dormant but when the disease struck the city again in 1721, she not only got her 3-year-old daughter inoculated by the Turkey-returned physician Charles Maitland but also promoted the method enthusiastically, although she was facing financial distress.

This time Lady Mary persuaded Caroline, the Princess of Wales, to test the Turkish treatment. At first, seven prisoners awaiting execution were put on trial and all of them survived and won their release. Six orphan children who were inoculated next also survived. Finally, the ‘Oriental’ process was officially declared successful on 25 August and St. James’ Evening Post ascribed it to the efforts of persons ‘of known Credit and Reputation who have seen this practice in Turkey’ King George I got his grandchildren inoculated by Maitland in 1722.

The success of this inoculation drive benefitted both the populace and Lady Mary; it opened doors of fame for her. But scandals and offensives were not far behind her as about 3% of the inoculated lot ultimately died and others took weeks to recover from it. Opposition, because of royal support to the drive, had a section of the local press,
because of impending scandals against Lady Mary, berate her as a cheat and swindler. However, with a mortality rate of 20–40% from this new method, Lady Mary’s fame was assured. When Voltaire came to know about this contribution of hers, he celebrated her in *Letters Concerning the English* (1733).

Jennifer Lee Carrell’s book that recounts Lady Mary’s encounter with smallpox in detail,

36 informs that Edward Jenner, who was 13 years old at the time of Lady Mary’s death, developed the process of vaccination, using cowpox in the 1790s which is considerably safer than variolation.

### 2.1.2 Feminist Activism

It is no exaggeration to claim that feminism had been in Lady Mary’s blood since several of her female ancestors had championed feminist issues, that were then in their embryonic form. Her great-great aunt, Elizabeth Pierrepont, had voiced her concerns over the unequal retirement ages of men and women for observing fasts prescribed by the Church. Men were exempt from observing these fasts at 60 and women at 55. The clergyman, who she had approached, reasoned that once past childbearing age, women become old. The other reason was ‘Infirmities proper to the sex’. Those were days of rigidity. But Lady Mary had matured Scudery’s ‘Empire of Women’ and ‘Epictetus’ stoicism that pointed towards the vast potential of women of her era.

Lady Mary founded her 'feminism' on women's ability to reason at par with men, down-playing any ‘infirmity’, and concluded that if some debility is seen in them they should be given adequate access to education. As early as when she presented her translation work to Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, she forcefully advocated
for women’s right to education. By giving some concession to gender equality in her letter to the Bishop, she made a crass remark against gender bias fabricated by social norms. Her comments on the position of women made in her TEL clearly plead against gender divide. She had herself experienced biases during her inoculation drive on account of her sex. Later, when Adison proposed launching ‘a Club of Widows’ in the Spectator (30 June, 1714), he promptly forwarded a riposte on 28 July detailing women’s plight in marital life. In 1737, she approvingly extended a proposal to the Female Tatler to establish a ‘Table of Fame’ for women. She has written disparagingly against paternity and unbridled paternal authority. Her frequent mention of lesbianism is not merely for fun but a plea to conjugal freedom and individualist social contract. A hint of her belief in gender equality may be found in her advice to her husband in 1751, to distribute his inheritance equally between sons and daughters.

2.1.3 Mending Oriental Lore

The outcome of Lady Mary’s travel to the Orient, in this case Turkey, has been largely taken as an addition to travel literature. In fact, this is also an exercise in exploring Oriental veracities. Her depiction of the Orient, which contrasts with earlier Orientalist repertoires on a number of issues, must be given credit for rectifying some misconceptions inherent in them. Isobel Grundy has described the expanse of Lady Mary’s Oriental project:

She firmly sets the record straight from the perversions of ‘voyage’ writers who traduce the Mohammedans: who ‘never fail giving you an Account of the Women, which, ‘tis certain they never saw, and talking
very wisely of the Genius of the Men, into whose Company they are never admitted…

She delights in exploding received ideas. Lady Mary’s account of the Orient was not meant to promote or propagate Islam or project a Muslim image but ‘an Enlightenment travel treatise’ meant to present factual data before well-meaning and rational audience. Another purpose of her Oriental writing was to slacken the East/West divide and foster religious understanding in order to create an atmosphere congenial to ‘speaking for the other’ and ‘listening to the other’. Lady Mary’s Orientalist project challenges the trend to consider Islam as irrational, derelict or to spread hostility against Islam and Muslims. She censors the hegemony of the West and refutes Europe’s claim to be the birthplace of reason. No doubt her efforts correct the popular concept of the Orient and generously support universal amity and goodwill.

2.2 Penmanship

Lady Mary’s literary activities started at Twickenham. She had earned the fame of a woman of letters among London’s literary circles during her lifetime itself. Fear of personal attacks kept her and her family members from publishing her works for a long time. Her diary was destroyed on the same account and the letters she wanted to publish could see the light of the day only after her death.

Lady Mary’s published works have been compiled by I. Dallaway in five volumes: ‘The Works of the Right Honourable Lady Mary Wortley Montague’ Complete Letters (195-6), Essays and Poems (1977, 1993), Romance Writings (1996) Besides, a number of good biographies of Lady Mary contain selections of her work. A recent
publications of this type is ‘Mary Wortley: Prose and Poetry of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’ published by Electronic Text Center at University of Virginia Library. Some other important works are Richard Bear (ed.); Selected Prose and Poetry of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (June 1996); University of Oregon and Montague, Mary Wortley; Romance Writings; Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1996;

2.2.1 Annotations and Juvenilia

The set of poems, Poems on Affairs of State is the first known annotated work of Lady Mary. Her main thrust in this work was to expose tyranny, whether by the Church or the State. During early adolescence, she was accused of writing satire on high society which was then taken as an attack on the Court. Lady Astell once showed her a copy of Pierre Bayles’ Pensees diverse on whose flap Lady Mary had scribbled two paragraphs of her analytical remarks with due pardon of Mary Astell. Lady Mary never minded sabotaging books in this way. She excelled in cryptic memoranda and persuasive pamphleteering.

She compiled two volumes of her juvenile writings, dated ‘1704’ and ‘1705’, when she was 14. The first volume’s title page was dedicated to ‘Hermensilda by her most obedient Strephon’ but the second volume deserted Strephon replacing him with Clarinda, the character she created as the lover of Hermensilda. In her introduction to these volumes, Lady Mary presented a most profound apology for the poems included:

I question not but here is very many faults, but if any reasonable person considers three things they will forgive them:
1. I am a woman

2. without any advantage of Education

3. all these was wrote by me at the age of 14.\textsuperscript{38}

Critics have noted that the apology is not simply the confession of a woman writer but a plea to justify her dignity as well as a comment on the social institution.

Although Lady Mary attempted imitating Ovid and Virgil at an early age, the text does not show her perfection in Latin, although it reflects her maturity of style. It is interesting to note that in her imitation of Virgil, she interchanged gender roles, making man a capricious person and the woman the indignant. The influence of Dryden, Congreve, Cowley, Behn, Katherine Phillips and Garth has been traced in her juvenilia. Her earlier works, for instance The Adventures of Lindamora seems rooted in Thomas Brown’s The Adventures of Lindamora, though some reflection of Behn’s Voyage to the Isle of Love is also visible. It deals with romantic love and social morass. Famous love stories such as those of Julius Caesar and Cleopatra, Ovid and the emperor’s daughter and Alexander the Great and her Queens form the subject matter of her shorter poems of this period, which she has handled in fascinating form and style.

Lady Mary’s lost works, which perhaps outweigh those remaining in print, include her lifelong diary. It was destroyed by her relatives time and again. When she eloped with Wortley, she had left behind volumes of diaries spanning several years. But her sister put them to flames lest their father come to know of them. Later, Lady Mary resumed writing the diary when she was at Wharncliffe. After the marriage of her
friend, Phillippa, she jotted down her concerns about her sister’s fate in her diary. Similarly, after her father’s second marriage, she exposed in her diary how very ambitious her young step mother was, who had jilted a young, romantic lover and married a much older person, (this eminent middle-aged rake). Sometimes she neglected diary writing, for instance, in the hectic days of 1715-16 or during her pregnancy in Constantinople, Turkey, although she maintained a journal during this journey. She expected that her diary will be published some day along with her poems but her daughter destroyed it for fear of infamy.

In the second week of December 1737, there appeared, ‘The Nonsense of Commonsense’. Its editor remained unknown till last century. It was found that on her copy of its first issue (10 December), Lady Mary had noted: ‘all these wrote by me M.W.M. to serve an unhappy, unworthy man’. While the hapless man still remains unknown, the note conclusively shows that she was the first woman after Delairivier Manley (who issued ‘Examiner’ in 1711) to author a periodical. In ‘The Nonsense of Commonsense’ (1737-8), she defended men like Walpole in Parliament and advocated feminism and feminine rationality in one of its editions.

2.2.2 Prose

Lady Mary is acknowledged as one of the most important of women writers. Some critics rank her in the category of Aphra Behn and Jane Austen. Her prose, is general, provocative and entertaining. Her narratives in Romance Writings appeal to both sexes equally. She is fond of experimentation in fiction and autobiography writing. She seems more influenced by the French than by the English. Like her poetry, her
prose also reflects her engagement with literary issues, cross-cultural relations, gender ideologies, and other social, political and literary debates.

The ‘Account of the Court of George I’ is Lady Mary’s first famous piece in prose but its exact date is not known. Isobel Grundy opines that it must have been written before Lady Mary discovered a commonality between herself and the princess Carolina- their role as medical pioneers; because she painted the princess in a bad light in it: frightful face, green cat-like eyes, worse shape and so on. After 1715, she started writing her autobiographical romance, Carabosse is a fairy tale in which a bad fairy’s curse deprives the heroine of all her gifts, beauty, health, wisdom, wealth etc. She thus depicts her own life and romantic leanings. In ‘Expedient to put a stop to spreading the Vice of Corruption’, written around 1734-elections, Lay Mary presented the parliament as a ‘gang of bullies’ who poison personal uprightness, scholarship and household virtues by fostering corruption.

‘Princess Docile’ is Lady Mary’s old-age creation in which she has mirrored her childhood experiences. Lady Mary depicted her nurse as ‘foolish and benighted’ in this satirical tale. Her grandmother bequeathed £ 20 on Mrs. Dupont, her Governess who never matched Lady Mary’s tastes. Her satire presents the Governess as ‘Prudish, sanctimonious and stupid beyond belief’, and ‘though perfectly good and pious’ but lacking in ‘a capacity for so great a trust’. The royal mother of ‘Princess Docile’ is very much similar to her grandmother and its Governess who led Docile to make the pledge, ‘to remain for seven years sitting cross-legged in honour of Goddess Vishnu’ is reminiscent of Ms. Dupont. This view, which outrages the codes of her upbringing, springs from Docile’s emotional isolation: ‘she would rather belong to Vishnu than to nobody.’
2.2.3 Poetry

Lady Mary is considered a famous poet. She has quipped: ‘My verses not children but miscarriages’. The mangling of her works literally proved these words right. Although her poetry was widely circulated in her lifetime, she once lamented, ‘I have seen Poems I never read publish’d with my Name at length, and others that were truly and singly wrote by me, printed under the names of others’. Moreover, much of her work remained dumped in manuscripts or among members of her social circle.

Lady Mary secretly published Court Poems, 1716. A ballad written in 1723, is credited either to Pope or to Lady Mary but it could also belong to none of them. Her anonymous works include ‘Epistle from the Late Lord Bo…ke to D. of W.’ (1730) Other poems by her did circulate…, for instance, Astell’s eulogy. In later years, Abbe Conti played an instrumental role in enhancing the European circulation of her poems. In her copy of Pope’s, ‘A Hymn’, God is adored by both the ‘heathen sage’ and the ‘Christian Saint’. Her collection of Six Eclogues, their titles starting from ‘Monday’, is suspected as being a result of a collaboration between her, Pope and Gray. Her rejoinders to Pope, especially, ‘Verses Addressed to the Imitator of Horace’, may also be mentioned here. On a scrap of paper pinned to Lady Mary’s copy of Mary Madeleine’s novel La Princess de Cleves, is written a 14-line poem of Italian verse in Algarotti’s handwriting, which is a proof of their love. This poem sketches the pair’s role in a medieval love court and dwells on the definition of love.

In 1747, Walpole published Lady Mary’s ‘Six Town Eclogues’ by the Rt. Hon. Lady MWM. The eclogues, whose titles start from ‘Monday’ onward were actually witty adaptations of Virgil. A few months later, came Dodsley’s collection of poems
demonstrating varieties of Augustan poetry. It carried Lady Mary’s poems published by Walpole in addition to three more poems. This was the first time that her poetry was put on a common platform with that of Pope’s associates. The same year, an unauthorized publication of her poems revived her reputation in England. She was then residing in Italy. In 1749, ‘London Magazine’ featured her in its literary column. In 1753, she was requested to donate a volume of her works to Cardinal Querini’s College Library in Brescia. She modestly replied, (claiming falsely) that she had never published a word in her life. It is also claimed that she wrote a series of elegy on ‘fatally seduced women’.

2.2.4 The Letters

Lady Mary was a prolific letter-writer ever since her adolescence. She regularly corresponded with her grandmother Denbigh and uncle William right from her teenage years. All these letters are compiled in Halsband’s, The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in 3 volumes. The Turkish Embassy Letters (TEL) is a distinct collection of her letters written during her travel to Constantinople and back in the company of her husband Edward Wortley, an Ambassador Extraordinary. As the Letters were clearly intended for print, she revised them extensively and entrusted the manuscript of these letters to the Reverend Benjamin Sowden in Holland in 1761 while returning from the journey but her daughter and son-in-law, Lady and Lord Bute, tried to prevent their publication. Finally, the letters somehow found their way to the press almost an year after Lady Mary's death and the ‘London Chronicle’ reviewed them in 1763. Dr. Johnson and Gibbon also reviewed them. In fact, the Letters were an immediate success and were reprinted several times, which added to her literary reputation.
The early history of the printing of TEL is checkered. On 7 May 1763, Becket and de Hondt printed these letters under the title of Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M..y W...y, highlighting the book as an ‘account of the policy and the manners of the Turks based on sources inaccessible to other travelers.’ Even Walpole admitted their originality. In the local press, these were reviewed by Voltaire for Gazette Litteraire. A. Homer and P. Milton pirated the book the very next year for a publisher in St. Paul’s Church in London. In 1767, Becket and de Hondt brought out an ‘Additional Volume’ in which spurious letters were added. This was further expanded in 1768 with the inclusion of ‘Poetic Works’ Lady Mary’s ‘Works’ and was published in 1803 with due endorsement by her family members. More inclusions were finalized by Lady Louisa Stuart in 1826. W. Moy Thomas gave a professional touch to the book in 1837. However, their first decent edition was prepared by Robert Halsband, published on December 28,1965 by Oxford University Press, USA. Other well-known editions of the Letters include: Original letters from the Right Honourable Lady Mary Wortley Montague to Sir James and Lady Frances Stewart edited by John Dunlop and published by Greenock, Robert Donaldson in 1818, The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu edited by Lord Wharncliffe, her grandson, in 3 volumes for R. Bently in 1837 and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: Turkish Embassy Letters with introduction by Anita Desai and edited and annotated by Malcolm Jack printed in 1993 by William Pickering, London, on which this work draws heavily.

Such were the personal and professional characteristics of Lady Mary. She was born in aristocracy, but found herself in the bondage of class customs and fought against it in both her personal and social life. She promoted a literary circle in London and magnanimously faced its ire. She ventured to abridge the East-West cultural divide
and augment the spirit of Enlightenment and Reason. She suffered agonies of her time as a lone philosopher and passed away from this world with the solace of an enduring author.
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