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## **Betrayal and Persecution in Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour***

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### **Abstract**

Persecution is the systematic abuse by one person or group of people against another. The most common forms of persecution are religious persecution, racism and political persecution, although of course there is some overlap between these terms. Many factors lead to persecution and can ruin the lives of the persecuted by causing suffering, harassment, imprisonment, arrest, fear or suffering. Moreover, the persecuted is considered oppressed socially, politically, and culturally, and this may lead to taking an incorrect action or judgment against the persecutor person and cause destruction of his being, life, reputation, and future.

So persecution is a campaign to harm people and destroy their life in various aspects depending on the mood of the oppressed subjugates people. Throughout history, people have been persecuted for their religion, race, ethnicity, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and many other factors. Also, it is the harassment or oppression of a person or group of people, especially because of who they are.

This paper attempts to analyze persecution, namely knows also as injustice or oppression, depicted in Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour* (1934), analysing them depending on Socrates' ethical theory. Socrates' theory of ethics is a preeminent moral theory that can be used as an analytical tool to analyze the social and cultural factors that some people may be offended by engaging in deviant behavior that causes harm to others. The oppression of the main characters is analyzed to show how this is done.

Hellman shows the teacher as a person who is oppressed by others, which is are represented by, the two headmistress who were accused of lesbianism by their students in Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*. Consequently, this paper aims to analyze the personality of the teacher as a person who was wronged by his students and by the community despite his honesty and work with sincerity and respect to serving the society and its students, but he was rewarded with accusations and lies that led to the destruction of his life as well as his reputation.

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## الملخص

الاضطهاد هو الإساءة المنهجية من قبل شخص أو مجموعة من الناس ضد شخص آخر. أكثر أشكال الاضطهاد شيوعاً هي الاضطهاد الديني والعنصرية والاضطهاد السياسي، على الرغم من وجود بعض التداخل بين هذه المصطلحات بالطبع. العديد من العوامل تؤدي إلى الاضطهاد ويمكن أن تدمر حياة المضطهد من خلال التسبب في المعاناة أو التحرش أو السجن أو الاعتقال أو الخوف أو المعاناة، كما أنه يعتبر مضطهداً اجتماعياً وسياسياً وثقافياً، وقد يؤدي ذلك إلى اتخاذ إجراء أو حكم خاطئ ضد المضطهد وتدمير كيانه وحياته وسمعته ومستقبله.

فالاضطهاد حملة لإلحاق الأذى بهم وتدمير حياتهم بمختلف جوانبها حسب مزاج المظلومين المظلومين. على مر التاريخ، تعرض الناس للاضطهاد بسبب دينهم وعرقهم وعرقهم ومعتقداتهم السياسية وميولهم الجنسية والعديد من العوامل الأخرى. أيضاً، هو مضايقة أو قمع شخص أو مجموعة من الناس، خاصة بسبب هويتهم.

تحاول هذه الورقة تحليل الاضطهاد، والذي يُعرف أيضاً بالظلم أو الاضطهاد، الذي تم تصويره في Lillian Hellman's *The Children Hour* (1934)، وتحليلها اعتماداً على نظرية سقراط الأخلاقية. نظرية الأخلاق عند سقراط هي نظرية أخلاقية بارزة يمكن استخدامها كأداة تحليلية لتحليل العوامل الاجتماعية والثقافية التي قد يسيء إليها بعض الناس من خلال الانخراط في سلوك منحرف يسبب ضرراً للآخرين. يتم تحليل اضطهاد الشخصيات الرئيسية لإظهار كيف يتم ذلك.

يُظهر هيلمان المعلم كشخص مضطهد من قبل الآخرين، والذي يمثله، المدير التي اتهمها طلابها بالمتولية الجنسية في Lillian Hellman's *The Children Hour* وبناءً على ذلك، تهدف هذه الورقة إلى تحليل شخصية المعلم كشخص ظلمه تلامذته ومن المجتمع رغم صدقه وعمله بإخلاص واحترام لخدمة المجتمع وطلابه، لكن تمت مكافأته بالاتهامات والأكاذيب التي أدت إلى تدمير حياته وكذلك سمعته.

## Introduction

Lillian Florence Hellman was born on June 20, 1905 in New Orleans, Louisiana, to a loving father, Max Hellman, and a neurotic mother, Julia Newhouse. Hellman, spent much time with her two doting aunts, who owned a boarding school in town, which made her first play, *The Children's Hour*, about the two women, who own a girls' boarding school might have influenced. Due to her father's bankruptcy in failing shoe business, Lillian split her teenage life between New Orleans and New York, living in both the North and South during the Jim Crow era, meaning she lived in a conservative and a relatively progressive society.

Hellman is considered the foremost woman playwright of the American theatre, and "America's number one woman writer". It is believed that no other woman in the history of the American theatre has reached her stature and few have attained

her position as one of the pioneer figures in the American literary scene. Jacob H. Adler stresses her being a southerner, but he still gives her a unique position saying that "among the dramatists who gave American drama a special eminence, three southerners are of major importance: Paul Green, Lillian Hellman, and Tennessee Williams" (Adler. 1999).

### Discussions

Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour* was based on real events at an exclusive boarding school in Edinburgh, Scotland, in 1810. Jane Cumming was a biracial schoolgirl whose father had met her mother while on a business trip to India with the East India Company. Her father died when she was young, and Cumming was eventually adopted by her grandmother, Lady Cumming Gordon. Cumming's grandmother enrolled her in a school for girls run by Marianne Woods and Jane Pirie.

*The Children's Hour* was Hellman's first and most successful play, with a long premiere run of 691 performances. The play received mixed reviews, was banned in several cities, and was shortlisted for a Pulitzer Prize, although later critics agreed it was the best American play of 1934.

For most of Hellman's life, *The Children's Hour* remained important primarily as a woman's visual art, helping to uphold her reputation as a writer, activist, and social critic. During the years that the House Un-American Activities Committee cast its shadow over the arts of the United States, revival art merged with similar works such as Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (1953), which commented on the power of ideologically motivated lies. Distort social order and destroy discord. Subsequently, art gained increasing prominence due to the depiction of sexual

themes, such as societal control of female sexuality and the oppression and repression of lesbianism.

Hellman used sexual themes as key elements of the social order from which the play emerges, but there is little direct engagement with these themes in the play, suggesting that Hellman's feelings about lesbianism were quite complicated. However, her portrayal of the limitations and silences, the terrors and constraints surrounding the subject of lesbians ring true, helping to initiate the fruitful and more complex exploration of the subject that followed. (Atkinson. 1934).

The play begins In the school room in April at noon, and in the living room at other times. Mrs. Mortar a forty years old sits on a chair in the middle of the room with her head thrown back, her eyes close, her body plump and her clothes luxurious. She loves literature and poetry very much, and this makes her travel a lot to attend literary conferences. She is surrounded by her female students who are between the ages of 12 and 14 years. Six of them work as knitters on white mother's pieces, and one of them, Evelyn, uses her scissors to cut the hair of her friend Rosalie, and the eighth girl. Peggy who sits on a high chair from the others and reading aloud the book of literature of Shakespeare's book and she is very bored and this is what make her read tiredly and singing voice to express her fatigue.

Mrs. Mortar asks each student about her homework, and she enjoys hearing William Shakespeare's The Merchant of Venice which is read by her student, a late student enters the lesson known as Mary, about fourteen years old, whom is forced by her grandmother to enter the boarding school for girls. Therefore, Mary hates the whole school and even its teachers are trying all the time to find an opportunity to leave school and go home.

Mrs. Mortar rebukes Mary for being late to morning sewing lessons saying: "Even if you are not interested in your work, you may at least remember that you owe me some courtesy. Courtesy is education. Education is an excellent thing." (Act, 1. p.563). It also encapsulates Mrs. Mortar's toxic attitude as a teacher, placing all her egos and needs before those of girls. Mary always does what she likes rather than what she supposes to do, and then lies about it a lot, so feigning courtesy. She gives flowers to Mrs. Mortar, thinking that this beautiful gift will distract her from Mrs. Mortar's punishment.

In fact, Mary enters the lesson late because of her deep sleep, yet she denies this and tells the teacher that she went to the field to pick flowers for her because she heard that Mrs. Mortar loves flowers. But the truth is that she finds the flowers thrown in the garbage and gives them to Mrs. Mortar claiming that she was late for the lesson because she was collecting flowers for Mrs. Mortar. Accordingly, this situation shows how much Mary is a cunning student, who depends on using lies professionally to achieve her goals.

Meanwhile Miss Wright enters the classroom when Mary is talking to Mrs. Mortar about the flowers she picked in the field. Thus, Miss Wright is completely surprised and tells Mary That "It wasn't necessary to go so far. There was a bunch exactly like this in the garbage can this morning." (Act, 1. p.565). Consequently, the truth becomes clear and Mary's lie, which she insists on, is revealed that leads to Mrs. Mortar's anger and makes her punish Mary. In fact, Miss Wright has been trying to help Mary all the time and is trying to help her stop lying and tell the truth instead. She also wants to know why Mary hates the school to help her be happy in it.

But Mary thinks that Miss Wright hates her and does not believe anything she says or does, and that she trusts all the students and loves them. Moreover, Miss Wright does not like Mary in particular and does not trust her, and this increases her hatred towards Miss Wright and the school as well. Thus, she is always trying to find a way to leave school and return home.

In fact, Miss Wright and Miss Dobie are the headmistress of the boarding school, whose friendship extends back for ten years. They are close friends since their college days. They worked hard for two years after they had graduated from college collecting money. They open boarding school with the financial help of Mrs. Tilford, who is Mary's grandmother.

Miss Wright punishes Mary by making her move to another room and stay in Rosalie's room (the student whom Mary hates a lot). In fact, Miss Wright tries to help Mary by moving her in with her classmate Rosalie hoping that Mary can change and learn from Rosalie to improve her morals by depending on honesty rather than relying on lies and deception to achieve her goals.

When the girls start moving their things according to the order of their teachers, Mary pretends to have pain at her heart and fell to the ground. Miss Wright tries to find out what happens with her (Mary) and phones Dr. Cardin, Miss Wright's fiancé a good doctor who works in the hospital and he loves Miss Wright very much, standing by her and helps her. In everything that happens with her. Mary uses to lie tricking others by fabricating dramatized situations just to evade the mistakes she makes and avoid bearing the consequences of her mistakes and bad behaviours. She seeks in every way to avoid staying in the boarding school trying to return to the life of luxury in her wealthy grandmother's house.

Meanwhile Miss Dobie who hates her aunt Mrs. Mortar so much, and wants to get rid of her by sending her away to London and giving her enough money for that. But Mrs. Mortar get very angry with her niece Miss Dobie who refuses to keep her in the boarding school preferring to send her away to London. Moreover, she implicitly expels Mrs. Mortar from the boarding school, thus she confronts Miss Dobie harshly trying to take revenge on her for treating her with superiority and hurting her by directing, harsh words only to annoy her. Thus, when Miss Dobie leaves the room, she finds the two students at the door listening to the conversation and the quarrel between her and Miss Mortar, and when she asks them about the reason for their coming, they say that they only come to ask about Mary's health.

When Dr. Cardin arrives to examine Mary, he is accompanied by his fiancée Miss Wright, so he tells her that Mary is in good health and there is "Nothing. Absolutely nothing." (Act, 1. p.570). Wrong with her.

When Dr. Cardin leaves for his work Miss Dobie and Miss Wright tell the students to complete the transfer of the items, and then Mary tells Miss Wright that she does not like Rosalie and does not want to stay with her, but the two females teachers force Mary to do so, and this increases her hatred to them. Moreover, Peggy and Evelyn told Mary that they have heard something unbelievable, which a rises Mary's curiosity who tries to lure Peggy to tell her everything she has heard. Thus, Peggy says that:

Mortar said that Dobie was jealous of them [Miss Karen and her fiancée Dr. Cardin] and that she was like that when she was a little girl, and that she'd Better get herself a beau of her own because it was unnatural, and that she never wanted anybody to like Miss Wright, and that was unnatural. Boy! Did Miss Dobie get sore at that! (Act, 1. P.573)

In fact, such obscene and dangerous words should not be serculatied among young children specially the females, because such words can destroy the lives of

the two females teachers and destroy their reputation not only harm them. But Mary is different from her fellow innocent children being experienced in lying and deceiving others to achieve what she wants. Therefore, Mary does her best to take advantage of this golden chance for her own benefit achieving what she wants by leaving the boarding school which she hates. Moreover, she is ready to do anything to achieve her goals without having any moral restrain, and she does not care about the reputation of her females' teachers and her conscience does not reprimed her while she falsely accuses her females' teachers with such disgraceful accusations.

Mary thinks a lot and finds it better for her to leave the school immediately and go home to tell her grandmother what has happened. She does not have enough money to go, thus she tries to take her friend Peggy's money. Accordingly Mary decides not to come back to school ever again.

Mrs. Tilford calls Agatha ask her to call Miss Dobie telling her that Mary is in her grandmother's house and that she will come immediately after supper. Mary prevents her grandmother from contacting the school telling her that the two females teachers always punish her for everything she does and beat her and that she never wants to go back to school.

Furthermore, Mary explains to her grandmother that there is something hidden that she (grandmother) does not know about concerning the two females teachers and the school. Mary tells her grandmother what her friends Evelyn and Peggy have heard about the existence of an unusual love relationship between Miss Dobie and Miss Wright and that Miss Dobie loves Miss Wright very much and is jealous of Dr. Cardin precence near her, and that they are punished for eavesdropping on their teachers saying that:

It was-it was all about Miss Dobie and Mrs. Mortar. They were talking awful

things, and Peggy and Evelyn heard them and Miss Dobie found out, and then they You don't

care made us move our rooms. (Act, 2. Scene, 1. p.577).

But her grandmother does not believe what Mary says about Miss Wright and Miss Dobie and tells Mary not to say such a thing again. And tells Mary that she should not say such silly words about her teachers again.

But Mary insists that there is something wrong and unnatural between Miss Dobie and Miss Wright and that she should believe her, even her friend Peggy and Evelyn heard this and everyone are afraid and know this truth. Moreover, Wright forces Mary to move into another room far from their room because Mary's room is next to Miss Wright and Miss Dobie's room, which enable Mary to hear everything, and that is the reason which make Miss Wright punishes her. These words cannot be believed because Miss Dobie and Miss Wright have been friends since university days and they do not have any other kind of relationship like the one Mary accuses them of.

Obviously, Mary's insistence that she has heard and seen a lot of bad things within her eyes and that even her friends are ready to testify with her, this made Mrs. Tilford believe Mary's words even though she is stunned by Mary's words. Accordingly, Mary becomes very happy because she will not go to school again.

Thus, Mrs. Tilford calls Dr. Cardin and ask him to come to her house. At the same time, Mrs. Tilford calls all the students' parents telling them to withdraw their daughters from school immediately. Yet Miss Wright and Miss Dobie do not know why all the students left the school at the same time. Meanwhile, the mother of one

of the students are on her way from New York, so she told Mrs. Tilford that her daughter Rosalie should stay with her at home until she arrives from journey.

Dr. Cardin arrives to Mrs. Tilford's house thinking that she only wants to check Mary's health, but Mrs. Tilford tells him that she does not call him because of Mary's illness only but to tell him that: "You must not marry Karen[Miss Wright]...Because there's something wrong with Karen." (Act, 2. Scene, 2. p.582). Meanwhile Miss Wright and Miss Dobie come to meet Mrs. Tilford, as they hear the news from one of the students' parents.

Rosalie comes to spend the night with Mary who tries to win her over to her side by telling her that she has done something important against her teachers, trying to make Rosalie her partner in the dirty lie by telling Rosalie that she knew everything and that she has seen everything herself. But Rosalie completely refuses to participate in such a dirty plot against her teachers accusing Mary of being used to lying and deceiving others to achieve her goals and therefore she invents this dirty lie in order to return to her grandmother's house instead of staying in the boarding school saying: "(tearfully). You [Mary] made it up. You're always making things up." (Act, 2. Scene, 2. p.581).

In fact, Mary is shocked by Rosalie's refusal to take part in her scheme against their teachers feeling the danger of her dirty lie being exposed and the consequences that she can not bear. So as usual, she relied on her dirty method of manipulation bluffing and deception, thus she desperately threatens Rosalie that she will tell her grandmother that Rosalie has stolen her friend Helen's bracelet to force Rosalie to agree to participate in Mary's scheme and her false accusation against their teachers, saying:

You can't call me a fibber, Rosalie Wells. That's a kind of a dare and I won't take a dare. I guess I'll go tell Grandma, anyway. Then she can call the police and they'll come for you and you'll spend the rest of your life in one of those solitary prisons and you'll get older and older, and when you're very old and can't see any more, they'll let you out maybe with a big sign on your back saying you're a thief. And your mother and father will be dead and you won't have any place to go and you'll beg on the streets. (Act, 2. Scene, 2. p.581)

Conceqently Rosalie is terrified by Mary's threat and subjectes to her and swears to her saying: "From now on, I, Rosalie Wells, am the vassal of Mary Tilford and will do and say whatever she tells me under the solemn oath of a knight." (Act, 2. Scene, 2. p.581).

Thus, Mary's continuous relying on the use of lies and deceit enables her to obtain solid ground for making such an outrageous and shameful accusation against her teachers, especially after obtaining the support of her friend Rosalie whom Mary threatens to force her to support her statements. Accordingly, Mary's allegation have become beyond doubt, and no one will be able to question the validity of her statements and claims any more. Thus, Mary has become devoid of morals and humanity by undertaking such a false accusation against her respected teachers destroying their reputation and future with cold blood only to achieve her goal of staying at her grandmother's house and not going to the boarding school.

Dr. Cardin and his fiancé Miss Wright ask to see Mary and talk to her, but Miss Wright cannot control herself when she sees Mary and scolded her saying:

I don't want to have anything to do with your mess, do you hear me? It makes me feel dirty and sick to be forced to say this, but here it is: there isn't a single word of truth in anything you're said. We're standing here defending our- selves and against what? Against a lie. A great, awful lie.

(Act, 2. Scene, 2. p.584)

Then Dr. Cardin asks Mary why she said that to her grandmother. Mary says that she is punished daily by her teachers and that they do not love her and hit her for the simplest things she does. So, she tells her grandmother everything she has seen and heard with her own ears. Then he asks her how she can see and hear this. Mary replies that she hears everything and that her friends Evelyn and Peggy also overhear the conversation that takes place between Miss Dobie and Mrs. Mortar who rebukes Miss Dobie (her niece) accusing her of being jealous of Dr. Cardin especially when he is close to his fiancée Miss Wright, and that she has tried to thwart their marriage because she (Miss Dobie) loves Miss Wright unnatural love. But Miss Dobie shouts saying: "My aunt is a stupid woman. What she said was unpleasant; it was said to annoy me. It meant nothing more than that." (Act, 2. Scene, 2. p.586).

Dr. Cardin asks Mary about how she could have seen everything with her own eyes. Mary replies that her room is next to her teacher's room, and that one night she heard voices and went out to find out what is happening, therefore she looks inside a room through the keyhole of the room's door and sees everything that is happening between Miss Wright and Miss Dobie. But Miss Wright quickly replies that their room does not have a key hole, so how can Mary see a thing. Mary quickly changes her words saying that she sees them in another room and that when her teachers find that Mary has exposed them and saw them, they punished her. Thus, Dr. Cardin starts laughing believing that Mary is lying. Even Mrs. Tilford is shocked and confused asking Mary to tell the truth about what she has seen and heard. Mary starts crying at her failure, then replies that Rosalie can testify to her words because she also sees and hears everything saying that: "It was Rosalie,

Grandma, she told us all about it. She said she had read about it in a book and she knew." (Act, 2. Scene, 2. p.587).

Obviously, Dr. Cardin proves that Mary's accusations are baseless therefore he proves that his fiancée Miss Wright is completely innocent of the dirty accusations that Mary makes against her. But Mary insists on committing her lie, asking her grandmother to summon her friend Rosalie to testify before her, who would support Mary's words. Rosalie is stunned at the talk about her and her teachers whom she loves so much. Miss Wright asks her to say everything because it is a very serious matter. Rosalie replies to everyone that she has never seen or heard anything saying: "I never saw any such thing. Mary always makes things up about me and every- body else. (*Starts to weep in excitement.*) never said any such thing ever. Why, never even could have thought of." (Act, 2. Scene, 2. p.588).

But, Mary intervenes threatening Rosalie to expose her theft of Helen's bracelet, reminding Rosalie of Mary's threat to her that her grandmother will tell the police to imprison Rosalie for life, saying: "Yes, you did Rosalie You're just trying to get out of it. I remember just when you said it. I remember it, because it was the day Helen Burton's bracelet was." (Act, 2. Scene, 2. p.588). Accordingly, Mary succeeds in intimidating her friend Rosalie forcing her to support her (Mary's) words confirming Mary's false accusations against Miss Wright saying: "With a shrill cry. Yes. Yes. I did see it. I told Mary. What Mary said was right. I said it, I said it." (Act, 2. Scene, 2. p.588).

The two females teachers sit in the living room at their boarding school remembering their hard work and diligence for two years after graduating from college and establishing their own boarding school and how it was a despicable lie that completely destroyed their lives and everything they sought for. Consequently,

everyone abandoned them and no one wants to deal with them because they have become disgraceful and notorious, even Mrs. Morter (Miss Dobie's aunt) refused to come to the court because she would have saved them if she testified, and even the shop owners refused to sell to them. Except for Dr. Cardin he is the only person who stood with them in their crisis. Thus, Miss Dobie consoles Miss Wright, who can not believe what happened to them of the devastation they do not deserve, that Dr. Cardin is a true gentleman who did not abandon her, and that she will forget everything that happened to her after her marriage to him, and that thing will be fine.

In fact, things have completely changed, Miss Wright is no longer the same person who proposes Dr. Cardin to, but she has become a woman accused of a disgraceful act that defames her reputation and morals as a woman and as a teacher, and this is what makes her fiancé Dr. Cardin suspicious of her, even if he does not say so. Moreover Miss Wright herself feels the charge in Dr. Cardin's feelings towards her. She knows very well that he supports and help her because he is a gentleman who would not abandon her in time of distress when she desperately needed help and support. As for his feelings as a man it is something else. She fully feels the change of his feelings towards her every time she asks him if he has a question, he would like to ask her and he stays silent for a long time to say sadly "I have no question."

But she is sure that there are many questions inside him that need real answers from her in order to calm him down and end his doubts towards her, but he will not ask her anything so as not to add to her miseries and add to her repeated losses a new burden with a new loss that she can not bear by losing her fiancé Dr. Cardin by separating from him and not consummating their marriage. Accordingly, she is

quite certain that what Dr. Cardin has for her now is the feeling of pity for her only and not the deep feeling of love that he has for her before her reputation is discredited by the outrageous accusation by a cunning child who mercilessly ruins the lives of her teachers and their reputations in the society with her mean lie. Consequently, her long years of servicing her community and her young students, to whom she devotes herself to offering them respect, love, affection and care is never appreciated in comparison to the dirty lie of her cunning student, Mary.

Thus when Dr. Cardin tries to surprise her by saying "we are getting married this week. Then we are going away...all three of us." (Act, 3. p.591) Miss Wright rejects Dr. Cardin's pity on her by insisting on refusing to marry him because she knows that he already carries a heavy burden of supporting her and providing assistance to her at the time of her crisis and her friend Miss Dobie, and she does not want to add an additional burden to him by marrying him, which will cost him to return to Venna to work in the hospital that he hates where he used to work in before moving to her town in Britain. Thus, she believes that her marriage to Dr. Cardin is doomed to failure because Dr. Cardin, sooner or later, will explode with the doubts inside him, and then they will also separate. Accordingly, Miss Dobie feels guilty because she is the cause of the destruction of her friend Miss Wright's marriage and the cause of the destruction of her life.

So, Miss Dobie cannot bear such a heavy burden and goes to her room where she shoots herself in the head committing suicide. The shocking surprise occurs after several months when Mrs. Tilford's maids, Agatha, enters to tell Miss Wright that Mrs. Tilford is asking to meet her, which she first refuses, but she accepts when Agatha tells her that it is about something related to Miss Wright, as well as Miss

Dobie. Mrs. Tilford takes the initiative saying that she has come to reveal the truth and to ask for forgiveness saying that:

Last Tuesday Mrs. Wells found a bracelet in Rosalie's room. The bracelet had been hidden for several months. We found out that Rosalie had taken the bracelet from another girl, and that Mary- (*Closes her eyes.*) that Mary knew that and used it to force Rosalie into saying that she had seen you and Miss Dobie together. I- I've talked to Mary. I've found out. (*KAREN suddenly begins to laugh, high and sharp.*) Don't do that, Karen. I have only a little more to say. I've talked to Judge Potter. He will make all arrangements. There will be a public apology and an explanation. The damage suit will be paid to you in full and-and any more that you will be kind enough to take from me. I-I must see that you won't suffer any more. (Act, 3. p.597)

Thus, finally the truth comes out to the public, but after the total destruction of the lives of two females virtuous teachers who served the community and served their young students providing them with education, love, tenderness and care. They do not show any harm to the society or the young students but this does not benefit them despite the great abuse they are subjected to by the shameful accusation that the cunning student Mary claimed. Which not only ruined their lives but made Miss Dobie lose her life by suicide.

### Conclusion

Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour* is a tragic play that brilliantly demonstrates how a dirty lie is told by a cunning student who accuses her two respected females teachers of having a homosexual affair, only because she does not want to stay at boarding school. The spoiled Mary, who is known to everyone for her lies and insincerity, resorts to accusing the female principals of her school of having an infamous affair of homosexuality, of which they are innocent of the charge, only to be able to leave the boarding school and return to living comfortably

in the house of her grandmother, Mrs. Tilford. Miss Wright and Miss Dobie studied hard to graduate from college and worked hard for two years after their graduation to raise enough money to start a business that supports them in their lives. But the unscrupulous student, Mary, did not care about all what her teachers had suffered from and their effort for many years to achieve their ambition, and the help they offered to the females students of their community by teaching them and improving their skills, and she accused her respected females teachers of a shameful accusation of the existence of lesbian relationship between the two females teachers.

Mary, the cunning student who is known for lying, with a dirty and mean lie from her not only rewarded her two females teachers with ingratitude and betrayal, but also destroyed all their lives and everything they had worked for for many years and destroyed their reputation and even their future. Miss Wright's marriage is threatened to be concealed because of Mary's false allegation, which led to Miss Wright's defamation. Thus, the life of the two female teachers became a real hell, as they were met with contempt and were outcasted by the entire community. They were treated with contempt and ostracism from their closest people, their students, the parents of their students, and even the shop owners refused to deal with them or sell them anything.

But what burdened Miss Dobie's conscience and was the straw that broke the camel's back was Miss Wright's statement that her marriage to Dr. Cardin would be concealed. Accordingly, she could not bear her overwhelming sense of guilt, in addition to her frustration and complete abandonment she was experiencing. Her only way out of the hell of her life was suicide. Accordingly, a dirty lie can not only harm others but also destroy them completely. It can even lead, as in the case of Miss Dobie, to suicide and death.

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