



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

Virginia Woolf And The Study Of Feminism

Divya Singh

Associate Professor, Department of English
CMP Degree College, Prayagraj 211002 UP India

Virginia Woolf was the daughter of Sir Leslie Stephen, eminent editor of the Cornhill Magazine and of the Dictionary of National Biography. She was married to the writer Leonard Woolf and was a member of the Bloomsbury group and shared its ideas and beliefs. She shared the experimentalism of her age. Her realism was psychological realism. She used the 'stream-of-consciousness technique in her novel to express the new consciousness. Another curious fact about Virginia Woolf was that she was wholly dedicated to writing. She had a singleness of purpose in mind. She was full of interest. One is surprised by the richness and complexity of her work. The English language was at her command. She had the imagination and sensitivity of a poet. She was a poet working in the medium of prose. She was highly sensitive, imaginative, dedicated, and witty as well. She was an intellectual lady but she was not confined to intellectualism. She was a social creature interested in society with a warm and shrewd outlook. Her outlook was the outlook of the woman and can be best seen through her feminism.

Feminism inspired one of the most brilliant of her book, *A Room of One's Own* and also *Three Guineas*, although her concern with the position of women informs all her novels. And if they are reread after these two books, they seem to be the continued revelations of the same concern. *A Room of One's Own* contains the Oxbridge lunch and Fernham dinner; the immortal encounter with the beadle when she tries to walk on the College grass and also the story of Shakespeare's sister- Shakespeare's equal in genius but she perishes because she had no position or money and that has been the fate of women through ages. In the book, Virginia Woolf tells us how the inability to receive proper education, to earn an adequate salary, and the grudging demands of motherhood and domesticity are harmful to the material and imaginative life. *Three Guineas* is about how women can create freedom and peace and prevent war. Women do not occupy important or high positions in the various institutions of the society such as education, Church, Politics, Army, etc. Women can create freedom and peace by investing their money in establishing a different education system that teaches the art of human intercourse and human understanding. Rich women should invest their money in supporting those women who are in the profession so that they have a mind of their own and a will of their own. Lastly, women should give money to a 'peace society'. Women are citizens of the world and are different from men. Therefore, they will have a different education and will cherish different values. *Three Guineas* splash everything that affects Virginia Woolf. It splashes the patriarchal home of the male society, education, and employment of women, cultural establishments such as the Church, media science, psychiatry, dress, etc. If read in the light of these two works *Jacob's Room* appears to be a satire on the masculine world of Bloomsbury in which Virginia Woolf felt oppressed and *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse*, a creative celebration of a highly developed creative faculty in woman. *Jacob's room* criticizes scholars and teachers of Cambridge. It makes fun of certain male tendencies, such as Jacob's attempt to think or to keep up appearances of thinking, or, when Jacob goes to Greece and Rome, he returns with his notebook full of Greek notes and a mouthful of adjectives and superlatives. Love of money and power, pretence, and hypocrisy of men are criticized in the novel. After leading a luxurious and privileged

life Jacob finally dies in the war. This shows us the fate of a purely masculine civilization, which sends its young men to war to die after giving them the best education and experience. *Mrs. Dalloway* is a celebration of creativity in women Virginia Woolf wanted men to acknowledge the thoughts, outlooks, values, and work of women, therefore she has celebrated their femininity in her novels. Clarissa is a creative artist, creating a word of her own, wherever she happened to be. She loves bringing people together, in giving parties. The novel criticizes war and also the medical profession, through the character of Septimus Warren Smith. Septimus is a war victim. He has gone mad due to his experience in war and the two doctors Holmes and Bradshaw hound him to death. He is a victim of their inadequacies. *To the Lighthouse* celebrates the virtue and qualities of Mrs. Ramsay. She is an endless source of energy through which all the characters in the novel draw their sustenance. She is "a fountain of life". She gives sympathy and reassurance to Mr. Ramsay and thus fertilizes the barrenness in him. There is another character in the novel named Lily Briscoe. She is an artist who is torn between the two forces-the dedication towards art and at the same time attraction towards Mrs. Ramsay's way of life. Through her character Virginia Woolf depicts the crisis in the mind of women artists. Her relationship with Mrs. Ramsay shows Virginia Woolf yearning for a relationship between women as opposed to love between a man and a woman.

The Waves is a poetic novel in which six separate voices Bernard, Jinny, Susan, Rhoda, Nevillie, and Louis express six different patterns of life. All the characters are suffering from some or other kind of isolation, which is a product of modern civilization. All are lacking something; feeling crippled and trying hard to achieve a coherent and complete self. Susan and Louis support patriarchal order and structure. Jinny is different. She lives a free life and her courage is admirable when her physical charm tends to decline. Rhoda suffers due to isolation and is weak in nature. The three women represent three different patterns of life and character.

Orlando is a biography, which runs for three and a half centuries. The central event in the novel is the transformation of Orlando from male to female at the age of thirty. For the first thirty years of life, Orlando lives as a thoughtless male, flirting with girls, expecting them to be obedient, chaste, and scented. He feels perfectly content with his emotional and sexual life. But sex becomes problematic as soon as he becomes a woman. She feels suffocated. She cannot do what pleases her. Society no longer permits her freedom of expression, movement, and thought. In this way, the novel and the She-Orlando are well-equipped to document the difficulties of women in a distinctly unliberated world. Also, Orlando is a statement about women and creativity. Orlando has the experience of a man as well as a woman and is therefore far better equipped to be an artist than if she were wholly female. Her mind is an example of that androgynous state of mind to which Virginia Woolf refers in her essay *A Room of One's Own*.

The Years is a fictional illustration of the arguments in *A Room of One's Own* and *Three Guineas*. The novel looks carefully at some of the illustrations and assumptions of the male-dominated world. It provides us with a criticism of the society, whose patriarchal values, institutions, and leaders as well, provide little possibility for full human development and satisfaction.

The novel is about the Pargiter family. Father is a typical Victorian patriarch in whose house girls are kept at home and boys go for higher studies and professions. There is a lack of communication and understanding everywhere in the novel. People feel crippled in such a society. Eleanor, Sara, North, and Peggy, all talk about some new and better world where people will live freely. Emotional poverty permeates the novel. Sara is a young talented girl who suffers due to loneliness and poverty. War is criticized in the novel. Frustration is the keynote in the novel. *The Years* gives us Virginia Woolf's bleakest view of the human condition.

In Between the Acts, there are two pairs - one is of the husband and wife namely Giles and Isa and the other of a brother and sister called Bart and Lucy. Bart and Giles represent typical masculine temperaments, which cannot go along with the typical feminine natures of Isa and Lucy. They are incompatible. Actually, in the novel there are two groups, one group consists of Giles, Bart, and Mrs. Manresa. They are aggressive, dominating and worship patriarchal values. They are hostile to other groups of Isa, Lucy, and Dodge who have a capacity for empathy, vision, and song. The group of Lucy, Isa, and Dodge represent those humans who are working secretly for a society different from and superior to Giles'. There are many feminist images

in the play within the novel and their writer Ms. La Trobe is also an example of the triumph of an artist over the despairs and problems which behest her. La Trobe continues to create despite difficulties and does not her pain a frustration with her art.

Thus, we see that Virginia Woolf's novels are about women (women artists) who are social and emotional leaders at least in their limited spheres. They are from their matriarch. They are dominating because of their nurturing and creative capacities. What was there in Virginia Woolf's mind was not the-ism of the family but a passionate concern with the nature of womanhood. In her novels, she gives us a subtle description of how women think. Feel and work. Women work for order and Romany they can love, care and share. Virginia Woolf has shown that women can have a deep and intimate relationship with women as against love between a man and a woman. She has criticized poverty and war in her novels, which according to her are a result of a purely masculine civilization. She has also shown in her novels the problems that behest women artists and how they can overcome them and create them successfully. Her novels celebrate the femininity of her female characters.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, T., B.H. Durston, N. Poole. *Thesis and Assignment Writing*. New Delhi: Wiley Eastern Ltd, 1989.
- Beja, Morris, ed. *Virginia Woolf: To the Lighthouse*. Casebook Series. gen.ed.A.E. Dyson. London: Macmillan, 1970.
- Bender, Todd K., Nancy Armstrong, Sue M. Briggum, Frank A. Knoblach, eds. *Modernism in Literature*. New York: Holt Rinehart & Winston, 1977.
- Bennett, Joan. *Virginia Woolf: Her Art as a Novelist*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964.
- Blackstone, Bernard. *Virginia Woolf*. London: Long man Green & comp., 1956.
- Bowlby, Rachael, ed. *Feminist Destinations and Further Essays on Virginia Woolf*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997.
- Bradbrook, Frank W.'Virginia Woolf Theory and Practice of Fiction'. *Pelican Guide to English Literature*. Vol. 7. Middlesex; Penguin Books, 1977.
- Caudwell, Christopher.'English Poet at the Time of Industrial Revolution,' *20th Century Literary Criticism*, ed. David Lodge London: Longman.1989.
- Cramer, Patricia.'Virginia Woolf's Matriarchal Family of Origins in *Between the Acts*.'www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0403/is_n2_v39/ai_1477337
- de Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. New York: Knopf. 1953.
- Detloff, Madelyn. 'Thanking Peace into Existence: The Spectacle of History in *Between the Acts: Women's Studies*, 28 (1999): 403-433.
- Deva, Some. *Virginia Woolf and her The Lighthouse*. Bareilly: Student Store, 1989.
- Freedman, Jane. *Feminism*. New Delhi: Viva Books Pvt Limited, 2002.
- Gibaldi, Joseph, W.S. Achtert. *MLA Handbook for writers of Research Papers*. New Delhi: Wiley Eastern Limited, 1989.
- Groden, Michael and Martin Kreiswirth. *The John Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory & Criticism*. www.litguide.press.jhu.edu
- Hallett, Nicky. 'Anne Clifford as Orlando: Virginia Woolf' Feminist hisoriology and women's biography.' *Women's History Review*. vol.4 No.4 (1995) 505-524.

Harvena, Richter. *Virginia Woolf-The Inward Voyage* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970.

Karl, Frederik R., and Marvin Magalaner. *A Reader's Guide to Great Twentieth Century English Novels*. London: Thames & Hudson, 1968.

Kapoor, Vijay. *Virginia Woolf's Vision of life and her Search for Significant form*. Merrut: Anu Prakashan , 1979.

Kettle, Arnold. *Virginia Woolf: Mrs. Dalloway*. Open University Books A 302. Unit 30. Walton Hall: Open University Press, 1977.

Lathams, J.E.M. ed. *Critics on Virginia Woolf*. New Delhi: Universal Book Stall, 1994.

Lewis, Wyadham. 'Mind' and 'Matter' on the Plane of a Literary Controversy. www.english.upenn.edu/~jenglish/english104/lewis.html

Lucenti, Lisa Marie. Virginia Woolf' The Wave': to defer that "appalling moment". www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2220/is_ni_v40/ai_20650633.

Lehman, John. *Virginia Woolf and Her World*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1976.

Majumdar, Robin and allen Mclaurin.ed. Virginia Woolf: The Critical Heritage (London:Routledge,1997[1975].www.orlando.jp.orgVWWARC/B/vwch.html

Marcus, Jane. ed. *New Feminist Essays on Virginia Woolf*. London: Macmillan, 1981.

Marriot, J.A.R. 'On the Brink of Armageddon'. *Modern England (1885-1945): A History of My Own Times*. London: Methuen & Co. 1952. Vol. 8. of *A History of England*. ed. Sir Charles Oman.

Maze, John, R. *Virginia Woolf: Feminism, Creativity and the Unconscious*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997.

McNees, Eleanor. ed. Virginia Woolf: Critical Assessments (East Susses: Helm Information,1994). www.orlando.jp.org/VWWARC/B/vwca.html

Miles, Rosalind. *The Women's History of the World*. London: Paladin & Grafton Books, 1988.

Millett, Kate. *Sexual Politics*. New York: Double Day & Company, 1970.

Moody, A.D. *Virginia Woolf*. London: Oliver & Boyd, 1963.

Moi, Toril. *Sexual-Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory*. London: Methuen, 1985.

Richter, Harvena. *Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978.

Rose, Phyllis. *Women of Letters*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul; 1978.

Rosenthal, Michael. *Virginia Woolf*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979.

Roe, Sue, and Susan Sellers. *The Cambridge Companion of Virginia Woolf*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

Spendor, Dale. *Mother of the Novel*. London: Pandora, 1983.

Sprague, Claire, ed. *Virginia Woolf: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Twentieth Century Views Series. New Delhi: Prentice Hall of India, 1979.

Verma, C.D. *Mrs. Dalloway*. New Delhi: Aarti Book Centre, 1982.

Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel*. Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1981.

Woolf, Virginia. *Jacob's Room*. 1922. London: Grafton Books, 1986.

Woolf, Virginia. *Mrs. Dalloway* .1925. London: Grafton Books, 1990.

Woolf, Virginia. *To the Lighthouse*. 1927. London: Panther Books, 1984.

Woolf, Virginia. *Orlando*. 1928. London: Grafton Books, 1977.

Woolf, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. 1929. London: Grafton Books, 1990.

Woolf, Virginia. *The Waves*. 1931. London: Grafton Books. 1977.

Woolf, Virginia. *The Years*. 1937. London: Pan Books, 1948.

Woolf, Virginia. *Three Guineas*. 1938. London: Hogarth Press, 1986.

Woolf, Virginia. *Between the Acts*. 1941. London: Grafton Books, 1990.

Woolf, Virginia. 'Modern Fiction'. *20th Century Literary Criticism*. ed. David Lodge. London: Long man, 1989.

Woolf, Virginia. *Collected Essays*. 2nded. Vol. 1. London: Hogarth Press, 1968.

Woolf, Virginia. *The Common Reader*. London: Penguin Books, 1938.

