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WOMAN AS WRITER: VIRGINIA WOOLF'S A ROOM OF ONE'S OWN

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ABSTRACT

The present paper is prepared to present feminist thought whereby women are depicted as writers. While observing women as writers, it explains Virginia Woolf's ideas of equality of sexes. Woolf has been considered the prominent writer of stream of consciousness technique along with James Joyce and Dorothy Richardson. she has employed this stream in her popular works 'To the Light House' and 'Mrs. Dalloway'. But her books 'Orlando' and 'A Room of One's Own' are renowned texts exploring feminism. Through the present paper, I will explore the idea why women lack behind in writing and reasons behind the differences of male writing and female after accepting the novel "A Room of One's Own" a renowned feminist text. But it is recognized in the criticism of Virginia Woolf that she specifically dislikes feminists rather she insists that men and women must make willing emotional acknowledgement of each other as individuals. Finally, it can be said that Woolf's text reveals three cultural notions- Liberation, Feminism and androgyny.

Keywords Feminism, patriarchy, liberation, androgyny, privilege, mentality, power.

Introduction

Feminism is a theory based on principles of equality of sexes in every field social, economic and educational. Many literary movements emerged throughout the history. All those movements had both good and bad points so does feminism. Feminism can be defined by Tong as cited by Tayna M. Purnell in "I think I am a feminist: A Study of feminist identity development of undergraduate college women" thesis of philosophy submitted to the undergraduate school, "Feminism is a social, political ideology with a broad purpose of advancing the status of women. Mainstream feminism as a social movement has its origin in the woman suffrage campaigns of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Feminism as a political stance has a goal of gender equality but there are multiple approaches within feminism expressing philosophical or theoretical explanations for the source of inequality and different paths toward abolishing it" (Purnell, La Tayna M: 2006)

Published in 1929, *A Room of One's Own* is one of the most significant feminist texts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and has similarity with the second wave feminists some forty years later. Having raised the economical issue, Woolf exposes the extent of patriarchal power. Males have the privilege over writing since they have the power, the money and the influence, they are the proprietors of the paper and its editors and sub-editors as Woolf claimed. Gender discrimination has been depicted with fictional characters as Beadle, Mary Seton,

Mary Beton, Judith Shakespeare, Mary Carmichael, Mr. A. Chapter four and five of present text deal with women as writers and the question why they lack behind in this field.

Woolf states that tradition affects women's writing. She agrees with the differences between the writings of male world and female. She states that their writing is different as they are women. A feminist perspective might be seen as growing out of fact that is liberationist or freedom of mind. Primarily, she considers a series of women writers of 17<sup>th</sup> century and also gave reasons behind their failure as writers. Impersonality is must to create any great work of art but they were unable to maintain it with the fear of getting ridiculed by society. They wrote in the constant fear of getting mocked by opposing faction who considered themselves superior to them in writing.

Women's domestic life have narrowed their range of experience, they limited themselves to fiction writing. Woolf quoted Charlotte Bronte here who longed for World experience, " I longed for a power of vision which might reach the busy world...full of life that I have heard but never seen...I desired more of practical experience than I possessed...more of intercourse with my kind, of acquaintance with variety of character than was within my reach".(Woolf,V : 1945)

Taking the instance of fictional character Judith Shakespeare, she claimed if women are unable to go out alone and are kept ignorant of certain matters, they become incapable to convey the whole human life experience like male writers can convey and hence they are considered inferior in writing. Not only the values differ but these are only the male values which exist in reality. Prominent Practitioner of Psycho-analysis theory, Sigmund Freud marked biology( Penis- lack) a reason behind their inferiority in writing but the reason given by Gilbert and Gubar in their renowned work ' Mad Woman in the Attic' is more agreeable where they related this issue to female identity. They depicted women writers tormented, troubled, disinherited, puzzled in their own world of madness and sickness as they feel themselves deprived of identity. Woolf here seems agree with Elaine Showalter who quoted Gilbert and Gubar in her essay ' Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness', " Thus the loneliness of the female artist, her feelings of alienation from male predecessors coupled with her need for sisterly precursors and successors, her urgent sense of her need for a female audience together with her fear of the antagonism of male readers, her culturally conditioned timidity about self-dramatization, her dread of the patriarchal authority of art, her anxiety about the impropriety of female invention- all this phenomena of ' inferiorization' mark the woman writer's struggle for artistic self- definition and differentiate her efforts at self-creation from those of her male counterpart"(Showalter, Elaine : 1981)

Further, in modern era the situation is changed to much extent as many of the restriction on women have been lifted. Women are giving contribution in writing and their role is significant and these contributions are possible just because they are women since full picture of their character can be depicted by them as picture is theirs not of Opposing Faction. Further, much can be portrayed and said by them about opposing faction since males are unable to see these things about themselves. Literature too faces injustice if merely male world is giving their contribution in it. Literature is a mirror of society so it contains whole human life experience and these experiences can be expressed by both the genders. Their experiences vary, hence both should write. R.S. Sharma is quoting here in 'Anita Desai', " It is probable however, that both in life and in art the values of women are not the values of a man. Thus, when a woman comes to write a novel, she will find that she is perpetually wishing to alter the established values- to make serious what appears insignificant to a man, and trivial what is to him important"(Sharma, R.S: 1988)

While comparing women writers, she considered Mary Carmichael with an inferior rank in her writing. She wrote better but not the best, she was not a genius as she was deprived of desirable things as money, time and leisure which were the privileges of males like Shakespeare. How could they be genius or as great as Shakespeare if they didn't have the same privileges. Woolf rightly said," Woman and literature. There is an eternal and overwhelming question, asked women by men insistently. Since you say so why could not you have a genius like Shakespeare?"( Woolf, V: 1945)

Towards the end, Woolf suggests the idea of androgynous mind which truly does justice with Literature. While observing Austen, Bronte, Eliot and other renowned writers, she accepted the difference of

writing between two genders. Having elaborated the specific reasons behind this difference of writing, she finally agrees with Coleridge's androgynous mind. Here she is seen agreeing with David Conway's view of mental structure difference, "It is true that number of working women is less; but the reason for that is not the men dominance. This is based on the physical and mental structures between sexes"( Conway, David : 2000) . If these mental structures vary, their merging can produce great pieces of art. So one should write with androgynous mind allowing both the softness of the feminine and the power of the masculine to come forth in words with the fusion of male and female mentality. Mind will employ its all faculties after getting fully fertilized. If a writer will write with androgynous mind, he/ she will write as a complete human being even if, one's own gender predominates.

In this study I emphasize specially the matter why is the world of writing is more difficult for women than it is for men. I might express I agree with Woolf on many subjects like lack of privacy, lack of money, lack of education and job opportunities. Along with this, I also suggest why they should write. They should come forward in order to present the whole scenario of humanity which is possible with the writings of both the genders. Man and woman are like two sides of a face. It is impossible for them to be successful in a world of writing by ostracizing each other. I concentrate on *A Room of One's Own* a notable work among masterpieces of Virginia Woolf as a reference in this study.

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