



MRS. DALLOWAY : A GYNOCRITICAL STUDY

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Virginia Woolf is a modern novelist, par excellence. She expresses profound and mature vision of Life in her novels and other writings. Her novels - *Mrs. Dalloway*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Jacob's Room*. *The Waves*, *The Voyage Out* are in-depth expression of the complexity of life. The complexity of her vision owes to her probing and exploration of the psyche, the inner world of characters. In fact, Virginia Woolf is, primarily, concerned with the realism of spirit and unbroken flow of consciousness which is timeless and immortal.

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Going through Woolf's emphatic argument and discussion of Women's situation, characters and independence, she emerges as a powerful feminist. Like Helen Cixous, Elaine Showalter, and other feminists, Woolf powerfully pleads for the restoration of basic/ god-given freedom and independence to woman in both literary and cultural aspects. She went to the extent of stressing that woman wants a room of her own. Economic independence and a separate space are crucial to the woman. It reminds us of Showalter's advocacy of exclusive independence of women in her famous essay "Feminist Criticism in Wilderness." She regrets, like Simone de Beauvoir, that the male-dominated society has been cruel and callous to women life Fascists. To prevent all this, Woolf suggested a set of revision and reform of social and academic system based on humanistic ethic. Furthermore, she pleaded for the establishment of an "Outsiders' society to ensure separate and undisturbed self-reliant lives to women. This will encourage, Woolf holds, the development of a woman's ethic which is holistic, anti-war, anti-fascist and life-affirming. This ethic can finally pave the way for the dawn of a new society based on new public morality. The present paper is a humble attempt to approach Virginia Woolf's masterpiece from gynocritical perspective.

In the present paper, an attempt has been made to establish with suitable/ relevant textual instances/ illustration a sui generis gynocritical realism in the two major novels of Virginia Woolf. In both the novels *Mrs. Dalloway* and *To The Lighthouse* the themes which Woolf deals with are psychological realism. It is a realism which defies any kind of temporal and spatial justification. That is why Mrs. Woolf outrightly condemns the novelists like – Wells, Bennett and Gals worthy by calling them "Materialists" as their novels are preoccupied with material temporal and spatial realism.

Hence like William James, Henry James, Dostoevsky, Bergson and Dorothy Richardson Virginia Woolf envisages an unconventional, complex realism which flows out of character's mind on the pages like a stream of consciousness. Her novels are conceived in epiphany to use James Joyce's term to experience and present eternity and mystery of moment all its variety and complexity. Peter Walsh's likening of Mrs. Dalloway to river of life in the end of



Mrs. Dalloway and Lily Briscoe's vision of Lighthouse to Mr. Ramsay and his companions are revelatory, all-inclusive, undivided mystic and awful. Like a mystic/ transcendentalist poet and philosopher Woolf's characters have visionary moments of lofty, sublime and profoundly psychological and metaphysical realism.

Showalter through her term 'Gynocriticism' hints at constructing 'a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adapt male models and theories.' (Showalter, 149). It is a kind of the study of exclusive self of woman without any masculine intrusion. Virginia Woolf seems to follow Showalter in Mrs. Dalloway from her hosting a party to her undisturbed and undivided inner life towards the end of the novel. Mrs. Dalloway fed herself on hosting party. Whosoever came into her contact, she reminded them of her party and requested them to attend it:

With a sudden impulse, with a violent anguish, for this woman was talking her daughter from her, Clarissa leant over the banisters and cried out, "Remember the party! Remember our party to-night!

(MD, 135)

The same self absorption we notice when she identifies herself with the sudden news of Septimus have committed suicide. It was a kind of self-discovery. The novelist describes it poignantly:

Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the center which mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded one was alone. There was an embrace in death.

(MD, 198)

We see that Mrs. Dalloway was living a life of her own self and her lover or her associates were simply mirrors of her unique composite personality. Even her lover Peter Walsh was an aspect of her own self, 'a room of one's own' (Woolf, 13) as the novelist describes it in the end of the novel:

"I will come", said Peter, but he sat on for a moment. What is this terror? What is this ecstasy? He thought to himself. What is it that fills me with extra ordinary excitement? It is Clarissa, he said. For there she was. (MD, 209)

Hence realism in the novels of Virginia Woolf is all-inclusive, profound and, therefore complex. This kind of realism is based on humanistic and deeply psychological impulses. Woolf's treatment of the realism through interior monologue, stream of consciousness and intense symbolism is novel and innovative. Due to unconventional and modern treatment of inner reality of human life Virginia Woolf's novels are profoundly suggestive and universally appealing.

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