

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

Evolution of Modern Woman in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*

A thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts in English

By

Anjana Baral

T.U. Regd. No: 6-2-245-17-2002

Exam Roll No: 1006

Class Roll No: 19/063

Department of English

Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara

April, 2011

Tribhuvan University
Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences
English Department

Letter of Recommendation

This is to certify that Mrs. Anjana Baral has prepared this thesis entitled "Evolution of Modern Woman in Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse" under my supervision. I, therefore, forward it to the research Committee, Department of English Prithvi Narayan Campus for final evaluation.

.....
Supervisor
Dr. Sunita Gurung
Reader
Department of English
Prithvi Narayan Campus,
Pokhara

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF HUMANIVIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCE

This thesis entitled "Evolution of Modern Woman in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*"

submitted to the Department of English, Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara,
by Mrs. Anjana Baral

has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee

.....
Advisor

.....
External Examiner

.....
Head,
Department of English
Prithvi Narayan Campus,
Pokhara

Date:.....

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It's my pleasure to present my thesis entitled 'Evolution of Modern Woman in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse*' in final shape. I have made tremendous efforts for this but I believe there are many hands and brains that have encouraged me to accomplish this task.

First and foremost I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to my supervisor Dr. Sunita Gurung for her great help in completing this thesis. I am very much thankful for her encouragement, her proper guidance and support with critical feedbacks.

I am equally thankful to the management of Prithvi Narayan Campus's Research Centre where I could access relevant reference materials for the study. I would also like to thank the Central Library, Kirtipur as well. I should not forget to acknowledge each and every lecturer of the Department of English, Prithvi Narayan Campus whose lectures have given foundation and confidence in doing this task.

I am highly indebted to my parents Mr. Rabi Prasad Baral and Mrs. Kamala Baral who are the source of inspiration for me. I also would like to thank my parents in law Mr. and Mrs. Bastakoti for supporting me in each and every step. This thesis would not have been possible unless I had got co-operation, support and constant encouragement of my beloved husband Mr. Jagadish Bastakoti and my son Aadhyatma, so I owe my deepest gratitude to both of them. I am equally thankful to my brother and sister who constantly inspire me to pursue my aim.

Anjana Baral

CONTENTS

Page No:

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER ONE: Introduction.....	1-10
1.1 Virginia Woolf: Life and Her Age	1
1.2 Context of the novel	3
1.3 Review of literature	4
1.4 Focus of the study	10
CHAPTER TWO: Feminism: Concept and Origin	11-19
2.1 Feminism	11
2.2 British Feminism	15
2.3 Virginia Woolf: a Feminist Writer	16
CHAPTER THREE: Textual Analysis	20-39
3.1 Women's Self Exploration	20
3.2 Mrs. Ramsay: Model of the Family	35
CHAPTER FOUR: The final stroke: A Gesture against Male Domination..	40-54
4.1 Contrast between two opposite forces	40
4.2 Feminine Protest against Patriarchy	44
CHAPTER FIVE: Evolution of Modern Woman	55-57
WORKS CITED	

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Virginia Woolf: Life and Her Age

Virginia Woolf was born on January 25, 1882, in London. She was the daughter of a distinguished Victorian man of letters Sir Leslie Stephen. Her mother, Julia Duck Worth Stephen, was regarded by her contemporaries as an exceptionally beautiful woman. Both parents had married previously and had children. Together, they had three of their own and three from their previous marriages. In 1895 her mother died, and Woolf faced the first of many psychological breakdowns that would plague her throughout her life. Her half sister Stella, thirteen years Woolf's senior took her mothers place, but died two years later. They moved to the bohemian Bloomsbury section of London, where Woolf began her writing career and where the Thursday evening gatherings with Thoby's Cambridge friends constituted the beginning of the Bloomsbury Group. During this time the four Stephen siblings traveled, in 1904 to Paris and Italy, and two year later to Greece, where Woolf and Thoby both contracted typhoid fever; the illness proved fatal for Thoby.

Woolf conceived the literary sensibility from home itself. She had a lot of literary and intellectual influences from the family. She was able to take the advantages of father's magnificent and abundant library to educate herself. Learning Greek and being surrounded by the conversation of her father's intellectual friends, she educated herself. Her father died of stomach cancer in 1904. It was her second breakdown.

In 1912 Leonard Woolf – one of the original Bloomsbury members who had recently returned from a seven-year period of civil war in Ceylon proposed to Virginia Woolf in January, although she fell ill in February and March, she accepted

the proposal in May 29 and they got married on August 10 . Soon afterwards she suffered a serious mental breakdown involving suicide attempt; she remained in severe mental distress for the next three years. During this period Woolf completed her first novel, *The Voyage Out*, which was published in 1915. Two years later, the Woolf's established their own publishing company in the basement of their home; the Hogarth Press, publishing not only Woolf's work, but also those of T. S. Eliot, Katherine Mansfield, and Sigmund Freud, among others.

After publishing *The Voyage Out* Woolf published other novels like *Night and Day*(1919), *Jacob's Room*(1922), *Mrs. Dalloway*(1925), *To The Lighthouse*(1927), *Orlando*(1928), *A Room Of One's Own*(1929), *The Waves*(1931), *The Years*(1937) and *Between The Acts*(1941). Her novels have been approached in many ways; stylistically especially as an example of modernism, using the stream of consciousness technique; ideologically as a feminist claim for the needs and strength of women, and psychologically as well. Her novels such as *To the Lighthouse*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, *The Waves* etc. are the markers of high modernism in the entire history of English literature. Especially she was attracted by the impressionistic and symbolist writers. She was impressed by the aesthetic movement and other painters also.

The age was very suitable to flourish a new and high type of literature. Virginia Woolf could not keep herself aloof from it; rather she contributed to it all the more beautifully. In 1941 Woolf finished *Between the Acts*, became ill in March with anxiety and depression. She drowned herself in the River Ouse on 28 March. Her body was found three weeks later and cremated on 21 April.

Virginia Woolf is known as a versatile personality not only in the literary sky of England but is equally famous in the whole world. She is the first and foremost woman who is identified as the most influencing woman writer of the 20th century.

She had such a mind which was undoubtedly abnormal and extraordinary one. Her vision was sharp and strong and was Woolf who woke the sleeping society from their blind sleep and taught them to combat the problems for newness and purification of the soul.

1.2 The context of '*To the Lighthouse*'

To the Lighthouse is a landmark novel of high modernism. It is set in the Ramsay's summer house in the Hebrides, on the Isle of Skye. "The window", the first part presents the Victorian family life. It begins with Mrs. Ramsay promising young son James that if it is fine they will go to the lighthouse the next day, where upon Mr. Ramsay points out that it won't be fine the next day. It creates the tension between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay and also between Mr. Ramsay and his son James. Lily Briscoe and Charles Tansley are the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay who are the other important characters of the novel. The first part closes with a large dinner party. Mrs. Ramsay is alive in the first section.

"Time Passes", the second part of the text, is employed by the author to give a sense of time passing. It covers a period of ten year. Mrs. Ramsay's death is an important incident of the section. Although she dies, her personality dominates the book.

The final part "The Lighthouse" is a long account of mourning and reconciliation. Two of the children return with their father to the house, where they had spent the summers of their childhood, to complete the trip to the lighthouse that their mother had planned. Ten years have passed since her death and the children have been altered by grief. Both the brother and sister appear in the melancholic mood while they follow their father. Anyway, Mrs. Ramsay lives even in section three in the memory of others. As Lily Briscoe is about to finish her painting she thinks of Mrs.

Ramsay to be influential even after death. She reconsiders Mrs. Ramsay's memory, and is grateful for her help in pushing her to continue with her art, yet at the same time struggles to free herself from the tacit control Mrs. Ramsay had over other aspects of her life. Her character has become part of history including and determining the present.

1.3 Review of literature

Since literature has wide field, almost all the literary works are praised and criticized. Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* was the greatest novel of the twentieth century. It got many feedbacks: some reviewers admired the book while other criticized it. It is analyzed and interpreted as the masterpiece of Virginia Woolf. This idea of Morris Beja can be found in the introductory part of his critical writing casebooks series in which he states:

To the Lighthouse is the most widely admired of all Virginia Woolf's novels, according to the evidence of both critical praise and popular sales. Even among the vocal detractors of all the rest of her work, *To the Lighthouse* is seen as an exception and held in high regard. (11)

Since the novel became famous, it got severe attacks by many critical personalities. Some literary figures admired whereas others took it as a biased, baseless and untrustworthy. Many of them even got puzzled to make their critical opinions. In this respect, Su Reid writes the critical view of the time. This novel was described as:

'Poetic' rather than realistic; they found them sometimes difficult to read and their characters and events unclear. Many subsequent readers and critics have agreed. But the more recent critics featured in this book are beginning to see a different Virginia Woolf, a writer whose

novels are by no means remote from 'real life', and whose stories are carefully and coherently put together. (1)

A keen reviewer of the book, Robert Mathias has stated: "This simple and haunting story captures the transience of life and its surrounding emotions" (32). Many critics praise Woolf's way of writing, among them E. M. Forster is one. He writes of Virginia Woolf as:

She could seldom so portray a character that it was remembered afterwards on its own account, as Emma is remembered, for instance, or Dorothea Casaubon, or Sophia and Constance in '*The Old Wives tales*'. (qtd. in Bennett 19)

To the Lighthouse is the novel of autobiography. In the introduction of the novel Virginia Woolf illustrates what she wrote in November 1928: "I used to think of him (her father Leslie Stephen) and mother daily; but writing *To the Lighthouse* laid them in my mind"(iii). Leonard Woolf her husband, takes Woolf as successful in portraying her fathers character in Mr. Ramsay. He states:

The basis of Mr. Ramsay's character in *To the Lighthouse*, was, no doubt, taken from her father's character; it is, I think, successfully sublimated by the novelist and is not the photograph of a real person stuck into a work of fiction; it is integrated into a work of art. But there are points about it which are both artistically and psychologically of some interest. Having known Leslie Stephen in the flesh and having heard an enormous deal about him from his children...it is interesting to observe a faint streak of this in the drawing and handling of Mr. Ramsay. (qtd. in Beja 65)

Virginia Woolf in almost all her novels presents death and mystery. She is successful in presenting the past and bringing it in the form of present. Harvena Richter in the critical book feels the same:

The element of mystery, of enigma, lies at the heart of all her novels; as in a tale of ratiocination, the reader searches to understand the genesis of a certain characters. Mrs. Ramsay's in-explicable sadness, the bird-like sharpness of Mrs. Dalloway, Sally Pargiter's living Antigone – these and others pose the riddle of human personality which Virginia Woolf attempts to solve by uncovering each character's past and showing its relationship to the immediate present. (25)

Joseph L. Blotner raises significant issues about the role of myth in literature. Giving high priority to the role of Mrs. Ramsay and compares her with mythic character, he talks out a mythical prospective to the text stating that:

An important character of Mrs. Ramsay in her Demeter aspect is her complete femininity. As Demeter was worshipped more by men than by women, as the sacrifices to her were humble and restrained rather than fierce and bloody like those of men, so Mrs. Ramsay in all aspect is feminine and opposed to that which is undesirable in masculinity. (qtd. in Beja 177)

David Daiches praises the way Woolf arranges her characters. Every character is successful in it. According to him:

The characters in *To the Lighthouse* are carefully arranged in their relation to each other, so that a definite symbolic pattern emerges. Mr. Ramsay, the professor of philosophy, who made one original contribution to thought in his youth and has since been repeating and

elaborating it without being able to see through to the ultimate implications of his system; his wife, who knows more of life in an unsystematic and intuitive way, who has no illusions yet presides over her family with a calm and competent efficiency; Lily Briscoe, who refuses to get married and tries to express her sense of reality in terms of color and form; Charles Tansley, aggressive young philosopher with an inferiority complex; old Mr. Carmichael, who dozes unsociably in the sun and eventually turns out to be a lyric poet;... (qtd. in Beja 95)

The critic, Margaret Homans sees the pictures of Victorian mothers and daughters in Woolf's novel, *To the Lighthouse*. She feels how a woman had to kill 'the angel in the house' and sacrificed herself daily in order to charm the family. She writes:

The Angel in *To the Lighthouse* ... is Mrs. Ramsay, but Mrs. Ramsay also embodies the enormous positive value Woolf finds in 'think[ing] back through our mothers'. Mrs. Ramsay is Woolf's summary of nineteenth-century ideologies of motherhood, and the novel embodies Woolf's ambivalence about Victorian mothers. At the same time, as the daughter of a Victorian mother and of a Victorian tradition of literary women, Woolf uses the novel to speculate about what it means to write as the daughter of such mothers... (130)

Arnold Kettle in his book *An Introduction to the English Novel* talks about the role of Mrs. Ramsay in the novel. Mrs. Ramsay though dead is considered as the most appreciated character. Although she is dead she is the inspiration of the living characters. He writes:

The subject of *To the Lighthouse*, if one may properly attempt to isolate it at all, is Mrs. Ramsay and the effect of her presence, her very being, on the life around her. That effect cannot be fully understood or fully conveyed within her own lifetime, but in the final section, when she is already dead, she is still the main figure. It is she who leads Lily Briscoe to the sense of momentary completedness, the moment of vision which is the climax of the book; and Mrs. Ramsay's presence is indeed an essential part of that vision. (93)

Virginia Woolf seems very alert for the choice of the language to depict her intention since language is the powerful means to convey the real meaning of the writing. Language provides a visual image and portrays different aspects and facts of the novel that it intends to depict. For this matter Steve Davies in his *A Modernist Prose* expresses his concern with language of this novel as:

In *To the Lighthouse* language is a subject of the novel, its limitations, its miraculous tabulations, its detachability from the object and experiences, it is supposed to denote language is given a kind of visual being. So that it taken on an illusion of color, shapes, texture and substantiality. The whole text is a field of imagery, in which language is also realized in pictorial form. Virginia Woolf's mind has a peculiar and thrilling doubleness. It is at once the most abstracting and the most seemingly visual of imagination. (62)

Elizabeth Abel interprets *To the Lighthouse* as a psychoanalytical text. For her 'Cam' is between the godlike brother and suppliant father. She holds the place of Jocasta to both Mr. Ramsay and James. So she says:

Paralyzed between father and son, between two manifestations of patriarchal God and two incarnations of Oedipus, Cam is the ambiguous mother and maid whose body is fulcrum in sequences of history. (125)

Virginia Leishman writes:

To the Lighthouse plays back and forth between telescopic and microscopic views of nature and human nature. Mr. Ramsay is consumed with his legacy of long since published abstract philosophy. (1)

Woolf not only presents lighthouse as the real but also as a spiritual one.

Lighthouse is the experience of the past in the form of present. Josephine O'Brien

Schaefer says:

Beginning with an actual lighthouse which stands out in the sea, she quickly allies this real lighthouse with a spiritual one: an illuminated experience in the past which stands up out of the waste of time and sheds its glow on the present. (73)

Whatever interpretation critics have made the novel, *To the Lighthouse*, is a fictional autobiography of Virginia Woolf, which moves around her established identity and her powerful image and personality. Mrs. Ramsay (mother figure) has become Virginia Woolf's central character and one of her most successful creations. The lighthouse, at its most useful at night, is represented by the capable and inspiring Mrs. Ramsay, whose role is taken on and adapted by Lily Briscoe as she seeks to capture the changing nature of people and events in a single composition. Thus, the present study is devoted to show how *To the Lighthouse* is an exploration of feminine

identity. Therefore, Woolf dramatizes the impact of this story not on James, or on any other male character but on its more problematic female character.

1.4 Focus of the study

Although, the novel *To the Lighthouse* is examined using various critical perspectives, the issues of female identity is somehow overlooked by almost all the critics. So, her novel is to be examined closely and female identity as an emerging phenomenon will be discussed in the present work. What kind of identity she is presenting, rebellious or submissive? Is there any gender discrimination? How does Woolf apply her own feministic philosophical ideas in her novel? Whether she is successful to show the emergence of female identity or not? Can she be successful in analyzing her female character as a perfect one? Is she successful in creating female character as the heart of the novel?

The method of the research will be thematic analysis of female characters, their role in the family, their hard effort which turns out to be winning over masculine world. This research will make innumerable efforts to justify that Mrs. Ramsay's principles of life are emotional and flexible since they are compassionate and humane. Moreover this research will look at the text through the lenses of feminism in order to prove the two major female characters of the novel: Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe's position stronger and commendable in the reader's eyes.

CHAPTER TWO

Feminism: Concept and Origin

2.1 Feminism

The word "Feminism" is derived from the French word "feminisme" which means equal legal and political rights to men and women. In other words, feminism deals with woman's feelings, ideas, attitudes, experiences, problems and thoughts.

Since ancient time the man-made society has been obstructing female from coming out of the house and never granting the rights and privileges that they enjoy. The condition of women was at men's kindness that put restraint on their liberty. Women were also treated as inferior. First of all, they were supposed to be the property of their fathers and after marriage that of their husbands. But gradually all these factors made growing number of women aware that such traditional notions had failed to change the actual living conditions of women.

Early philosopher like Aristotle (384-322B.C), Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) devalued woman's intellectual efforts and minimized woman's moral concern. Aristotle asserted: "the female is female by virtue of a certain lack of qualities" (qtd. in Selden 134). Similarly Aquinas thought: "woman is an imperfect man" (qtd. in Selden 134). Not only these philosophers even the bible is biased in telling about the creation of man and woman. According to the bible, God first created man then woman out of man's rib. Thus, keeping in mind all these things feminism seeks to change society's prevailing stereotypes of women as relatively weak, passive and dependent individuals who are less rational and more emotional than man. Feminism seeks to achieve greater freedom for women to work and to remain economically and psychologically independent of men. Feminists criticize society's prevailing emphasis on women as objects of sexual desire and seek to broaden both women's self

awareness and their opportunities to the point of equality with men. Another aim of feminism is to enhance women's participation in political decision-making and all areas of public life.

Feminism seeks equal rights for women, giving them equal status with man and freedom to decide their own career and life patterns. Concern for women's right dates from the enlightenment, when the liberal, egalitarian and reformist ideals of that period began to be intended from the bourgeoisie, peasants and urban labourers to women as well. The period's nascent ideas concerning women's rights were fully set forth in Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Right of Woman* published in England in 1792. It challenged the idea that woman exist only to please men and proposed that women receive the same opportunities as men in education, work and politics. This work was unique in suggesting that the betterment of women's status be effected through such political changes as the radical reform of national educational systems. Such change should benefit all society. So she attacks the sentimental novels of her time for their pernicious influences on women's intellectual development. Everything women see or hear in sentimental novels serves to fix impressions that call forth emotions giving a sexual character to the mind: "the reading of novels makes women and particularly ladies of fashion, very fond of using strong expressions and superlatives in conversation" (Wollstonecraft 399).

In 19th century, however, the awareness of women's need for equality with men crystallized in the movement to obtain woman suffrage rather than in any fundamental or far reaching reevaluation of women's social status, roles and their place in the economy. In the later 19th century a few women began to work in the professions and women as a whole achieved the right to vote in the first half of the 20th century. But there were still distinct limits on women's participation in the

workplace, as well as a set of prevailing notions that tended to confine women to their traditional role as wives, mothers and homemakers.

Similarly, the economic conditions underlying women's inferior status were changing as women had fewer children and as household appliances freed them from many of the labor-intensive chores formerly associated with housekeeping. The growth of the service sector in the decades following World War II also helped to create new types of jobs that could be done as well by women as by men. In fact, women themselves are taught, in the process, of being socialized, to internalize the regaining patriarchal ideology which consists of conscious and unconscious presuppositions about male superiority, and so are conditioned to derogate their own sex and to co-operate in their own subordination.

Feminism in general, shares certain assumptions and concepts that explore the factor of sexual difference and privilege in the production, the form and content, the reception, and the critical analysis and evaluation of works of literature. Thus, feminism is a successful political movement which has become successful in giving due place to writings of non-canonical women writers. In short, the following characteristics can be seen in feminism; voices against canon's sexual exclusiveness, rejection of the marginalization of women from all areas and classes and study sexual, social and political issues once thought to be outside the study of literature.

Thus, feminism represents one of the most important social, economic and aesthetic revolutions of modern times. Feminists examine the experiences from all races, classes and cultures, including African-American, Asian-American Indian, lesbian handicapped and the third world subjects. The major feminist critics generally agree that their goals are to expose patriarchal premises and resulting prejudices, to

promote discovery and reevaluation of literature by women and social, cultural and psycho-sexual contents of literature and literary criticism.

According to Wollstonecraft, due to the traditional education system, women are compelled to study such novels, which cannot exercise their intellectuality but are trapped in the sentimentality which leads them to a concept that a knowledgeable man is nothing in comparison to a brave rake. These novels have direct baneful effect on their lives. So, they want to marry with a rake. A woman chooses a rake that easily rouses her emotion which she learns from the sentimental novels:

Women subjected by ignorance to their sensations, and only taught to look for happiness in love, refine on sensual feelings and adopt metaphysical notions respecting that passion, which lead them shamefully to neglect the duties of life, and frequently in the midst of these sublime refinements they plump into actual vice. (398)

The principles of modern feminism were set up and strengthened by the publication of *'The Second Sex'*(1949) by Simon de Beauvoir. This book became a classic of feminist literature. She reveals herself as a woman of formidable courage and integrity, whose life supported her thesis: the basic options of an individual must be made on the promises of an equal vocation for man and woman founded on a common structure of their being, independent of their sexuality. In *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir has established the fundamental questions of modern feminism while defining herself. She starts by saying 'I am a woman' (15), she goes ahead saying:

You think thus and so because you are a woman' but I think that my only defense is to reply; I think thus and so because it is true; thereby removing my subjective self from the argument. It would be out of the question to reply; 'And you think the contrary because you are a man;

for it is understood that the fact of being a man is no peculiarity. A man is in the right in being a man; it is the woman who is in the wrong.
(15-16)

Beauvoir established the fundamental issue that the women are not born as women they are made one. She opines that is just a gender concept in a social construct. According to her, the male is defined according to particular manner in which the one chooses to set himself up. But women have been made inferior in comparison to men, and their oppression has been multifaceted by men's belief that women are inferior by nature.

2.2 British Feminism

British feminist criticism is more traditional and based on textual interpretation in connection with the society. Essentially, it is Marxist feminist criticism, which stresses on the oppression of women. They believe that feminism acts on ideas. Karl Marx argued that forms of economic production determine all historical and social developments.

According to British feminist critics, women are the victims of the socio-cultural construction. Women have been suppressed in the capitalist society by means of economic exploration. The critics see patriarchy as an ideology, which controls the values of society. So the critics suggest that gender equity will be attained only with the complete alteration of the economic system of the society.

Marxist feminist combine the ideas of radical feminist thinking because Marxist feminists agree with the ideas of radical feminist's that men's domination over women is the result of the social system of patriarchy. Some Marxist feminist has tried to go beyond the purely economic explanation of women's oppression and to look at the way in which ideology creates gender divisions. Michel Barret, for

example, stresses the way in which ideology has a pivotal role in the construction of the gender, particularly through the institution of the family and the ideology of 'familialism' (qtd. in Selden 204-20). This move away from a purely economic explanation of women's oppression in terms of capital and class. Marxist feminists moved beyond the limits of conventional Marxist- feminism in the direction of another type of feminist analysis. It analyses women's oppression in terms of both capitalism and patriarchy.

Hence, British feminism is a theory, which concerns the relationship between sexes on the grounds of inequality, subordination, exploitation and oppression. It aims to identify and remedy the sources and ways of those oppressions. They stress the fact that the male domination is not because of nature but because they are breadwinners, they can earn money whereas women do not. Accordingly it is argued that, change is required not only in the culture, but also in the position of economic production. The different materialist conditions under which men and women write, influence the form and content of what they write. Furthermore, the ideology of gender also affects how man or woman's writing is read and interpreted. And, feminist critics should admit the 'fictional' nature of literary text and review the erroneous practice of condemning all male authors for sexism and approve women authors for raising the issue of gender.

2.3 Virginia Woolf: a Feminist Writer

Virginia Woolf was one of the most innovative and influential literary figures of the 20th century. A prolific writer of essays, journals, letters and long and short fiction, she is probably best remembered for her provocative experimental novels. Through her revolutionary writings, she questioned both the nature of reality and the significance of the individual human being in an alienating and dehumanizing world.

Her works offer a unique perspective on such topics as sensuality, feminism, life and death, madness and sanity, and disintegration of the society.

Separately, Woolf has always been renowned for her feminist consciousness. Historically, modernists speak of her aesthetic virtuosity, and feminist scholars praise her social agenda. But detaching her beautiful writing from feminism ignores the most radical aspect of Woolf's effort: the creation of a technically remarkable prose that would help effect social change.

Virginia Woolf has also fully devoted herself and labored considerably to give a concrete shape to the feminist movement after the upheavals in 1920s. She was very keen to observe the duties of woman inside narrow domestic walls and to feel them deep inside the core of her heart. She brought her feminist side before public periphery with the struggle for women's rights. Since then, her unforgettable contribution as the foundation stone for feminist criticism has been widely highlighted. Woolf continued by taking up the challenge of a woman's portrait in the course of writing career. Her best aimed book *A Room of One's Own* (1929) has been proved to be influential in the domain of literary feminism. By the help of writing, she unveils the essential and indispensable qualitative nature of female experience that is completely different from that of male.

Woolf wrote a good deal about a feminist stance, she continually examined the problems faced by women writers. She believed that women had always faced social and economic obstacles to their literary ambitions. Rejecting a feminist consciousness, she hoped to achieve a balance between a male 'self- realization' and female 'self-annihilation'. Her ultimate belief was that women could freely develop their artistic talents if they achieved social and economic equality with men. .

Woolf was concerned with the relation of women writers to the spirit of the age. In this regard Herverna Richter in her books *Virginia Woolf, The Inward Voyage* states:

If the subjective novel would explore every atom of sensation, it must enter dark areas which the Victorians had never dared. For the feminine novelist, this offered obstacles; for, as Mrs. Woolf confessed, a woman still has a secret desire to be veiled. It was difficult to tell the truth about her body, to write about certain passions which she images as the largest fish to slumber in the depths, the dark places of the pool'. If everything was the proper stuff of fiction, that 'Angel in the House'- the feminine instinct to be pure, to hide the fact that you have mind and body of your own- must be killed. (12)

Woolf advocates for the radical change in the concept of family and social life, she refutes the traditional view about women that they are submissive, and cries for a separate space for women in literature and society because they are also independent human beings like men. Hazard Adams presents Woolf's view about women:

Women are supposed to be very calm generally, but women feel just as feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation [...]; it is narrow- mindedness in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making pudding and knitting, stocking to playing and the piano and embroidering bags. (822)

Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* is the perfect example of feminism. Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe are Woolf's model women. Both these ladies represent different

views on life and follow different paths on their search of meaning of life. The female characters want to establish their identity in the family. Somehow they are successful in marking their self identity. Their role is more superior than that of men. Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe are pictured as perfect ladies by Woolf who challenge the Victorian society. Mrs. Ramsay is the typical Victorian lady who always thinks of her family. Although she is typical she is always the one who is always wanted by her husband to be on his side. He always wants his wife to listen to him and love him. Her death makes her more alive in the family and in the life of Mr. Ramsay. Lily Briscoe challenges Mr. Charles Tansley who thinks female only as a house keeper. Mrs. Ramsay's support and her self confidence make her fulfill her dream. Lily transcends the traditional female gender role embodied by Mrs. Ramsay by presenting herself as an independent and modern woman; she symbolizes the advent of modernism and rejection of traditional Victorian values. They are the modern women figure of the Victorian society. So, I endeavor to present Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe as the symbol of evolution of modern woman in my present study.

CHAPTER THREE

Textual Analysis

3.1 Women's Self Exploration

Although the novel, *To the Lighthouse* by Woolf is told through the thought processes of different characters, it is Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe that stand out the most. Mrs. Ramsay, a matriarchal figure, has eight children and a scholar for a husband, to all of whom she is deeply attached. She is a beautiful woman, and with it, has a certain sense of superiority that puts some people off, particularly Lily Briscoe and William Bankers. Her aspirations of life are to see her children and friends happily married off and to keep her husband happy. Even though her thoughts centre on a very old-fashioned family life of nearly 100 years ago, there is much in common with modern day women; for example, wanting to see her children lead happy and successful lives while wanting them to stay the same age. She is certainly an interesting character, with much to recommend her, but somehow, although wanting to see everyone happy, she expresses herself in a rather patronizing way, which is perhaps because of her obvious view that men lead the world; without them nothing would happen, whereas a woman's role is to care for and protect the men.

The narrator details the family structure of Mrs. Ramsay and further it becomes clear that the role of Mrs. Ramsay is much vital in association with all family members who are with her. It is said in the introductory part of the text, *To the Lighthouse*: "The family consists of the scholarly and somehow aloof Mrs. Ramsay, who is a warm, maternal and capable figure at the centre of the household, their eight children, an assorted friends and guests among whom is the artist Lily Briscoe"(vi). Hence the focus is on the central figure, Mrs. Ramsay who deals with all sorts of problems of her family. She proves a good mother who seems to have been doing

every thing for the sake of her children in particular and for the betterment and progress of the entire community in general. She never thinks negative of others since she is maternal at heart and loves humanity. She is capable enough of tackling every sort of up and down. In contrary to her characterization, her husband Mr. Ramsay is much tyrannical and despotic. This is the reason he is somewhat alienated everywhere. Woolf throws a glimpse on his character:

Mr. Ramsay is seen as a typical male, rational, insensitive, aloof, lonely, and perhaps ridiculous: the lighthouse by day. The lighthouse at its most useful at night is represented by the capable and inspiring Mrs. Ramsay, whose role is taken on and adapted by Lily Briscoe as she seeks to capture the changing nature of people and events in a single composition.(xi).

Hence Mrs. Ramsay is carved in a very much positive way and is presented as a meek and commendable person who contradicts Mr. Ramsay's character. She is emotional and sacrificing whereas Mr. Ramsay is mechanical in relationship. He thinks more than he feels. This is why his relationship with other family members is not so sound and lively.

The book, *To the Lighthouse* touches on many vital topics, from the battle and personal cost of artistic creativity for women as opposed to their expected roles of wife and mother, remembrance and struggles to escape the tyrannies of the past. Woolf highlights Mr. Ramsay's interpersonal relationship with other family members in a transparent manner:

Mr. Ramsay excited in his children's breasts by his mere presence; standing, as now, lean as a knife, narrow as the blade of one, grinning sarcastically, not only with the pleasure of disillusioning his son and

casting ridicule upon his wife, who was ten thousand times better in every way than he was, but also with some secret conceit at his own accuracy. (3)

Although Mrs. Ramsay and her children are the integral part of Mr. Ramsay's life, he does not feel comfortable to remain in their touch normally. Rather he is sarcastic and tries to ridicule his wife and tease his child which is indeed much disgusting. He behaves as if he is a great opponent to his wife and children. Consequently, children, like James, remain much closer to mother than to father. Despite the fact he is rational, he does not try to understand other people's innermost feelings and attitudes. Hence, the father is shown to play the role of authority that controls the family. Mr. Ramsay is a male image which implies the authority and power. Woolf further avers in the same light:

Indeed, she (Mrs. Ramsay) had the whole of the other sex under her protection; for reasons she could not explain, for their chivalry and valor, for the fact that they negotiated treaties, ruled India, controlled finance; finally for an attitude towards herself which no woman could fail to feel or to find agreeable, something trustful, childlike, reverential which an old woman could take from a young man without loss of dignity, and woe betide the girl- play Heaven it was none of her daughters!- who did not feel the worth of it, and all that it implied, to the marrow of her bones.(5)

Hereby, Woolf opines that Mrs. Ramsay sometimes feel unable to explain every thing that at the same degree and further more she shows Mr. Ramsay as a person who is respected and dignified in the society he lives in. However, he does not sense other's sentiment and feelings. The negative presentation of his characterization

is indeed true and reliable since males in the contemporary time behave and deserve similar criticism and treatment.

Another prominent female character in *To the Lighthouse* is Lily Briscoe who undercuts the boundary of the male-dominated society and challenges the mega-male-structured society by doing her best in the domain of painting and thus, Woolf in the novel discloses the fact about Briscoe in this way:

Lily's picture! Mrs. Ramsay smiled. With her little Chinese eyes and her puckered-up face she would never marry; one could not take her painting very seriously, but she was an independent little creature, Mrs. Ramsay liked her for it, and so remembering her promise, she bent her head. (12)

Mrs. Ramsay is much delighted to see the picture by Lily and further she assimilates her potential in the very field. Due to Lily's physical appearance similar to Chinese people, she is committed not marrying forever. However, Mrs. Ramsay is much soft and meek towards her. Thus, their relation shows the fact that they coordinate with each other in a very friendly manner which further strengthens both of them for battles in the male-dominated society. Mrs. Ramsay is so clean-hearted that she is always loving and kind as well as positive to Lily.

As the society is much biased and discouraging for women, Lily gets targeted to make herself a victim in the sense that males cannot feel good at her progress and prosperity. This is why there are challenges from outside every time. It is focused in the text:

Such she often felt herself-struggling against terrific odds to maintain her courage; to say: but this is what I see,' and so to clasp some

miserable remnant of her vision to her breast, which a thousand forces did their best to pluck from her. (13)

She goes against many challenges and struggle so valiantly in order to get success by hook or crook. She does not get afraid of any sort of the consequences of her deed. Rather she continuously keeps on doing her job with the faith that her every effort will bring about fruition in her life. She is so keen at comparing one person with other and derives satisfaction through such judgment. In fact she is fair and unbiased in the matter of putting two people into two distinct boxes on the basis of their qualities and human behavior. Thus, Lily compares Mr. Ramsay and Mr. Bankes saying:

I respect you (Mr. Bankes) she addressed him silently in every atom; you are not vain; you are entirely impersonal; you are finer than Mr. Ramsay; you are the finest human being that I know; you have neither wife nor child (without any sexual feeling, she longed to cherish that loneliness), you live for praise would be an insult to you; generous, pure-hearted, heroic man!(17)

Lily compares Mr. Bankes with Mr. Ramsay and says Mr. Bankes is far better than him. He is not a vain person. Rather he is the finest model of humanity and further tells us about his sexual life which is idiosyncratic and this idiosyncrasy really differs him from other males who dominate opposite sexes and seek for their selfishness. Though Mr. Bankes is not married and does not have any children, he knows the feelings of others. He feels more than he thinks. Hence, he is upgraded in a very charismatic way that he is at par excellence and there is nothing as a mischief on his part. She balances her remarks by stating that he is pure-hearted and heroic in nature which is not false praise in any way. Thus, Mr. Bankes position is heightened

in much decorated manner. It further implies that his distinct quality makes him prominent in the eyes of others. Perhaps he is a bit away from the world of tyranny and despotism cultivated by male figures. So, Lily aspires and decorates Mr. Bankes personality saying:

You have greatness, she continued, but Mr. Ramsay has none of it. He is petty, selfish, vain, egotistical; he is spoilt; he is a tyrant; he wears Mrs. Ramsay to death; but he has what you (she addressed Mr. Bankes) have not; a fiery unworldliness; he knows nothing about trifles; he loves dogs and his children. He has eight. You have none.

(18)

Woolf, through Lily, speaks out the character of Mr. Ramsay, a typical male who embodies all dominating features of males of the time. Hence, it becomes pretty clear that Mr. Ramsay is totally a spoilt character in the sense that he is despotic in nature and imposes his views on his wife, Mrs. Ramsay, despite the fact she is much scared and loving. The woman without any flaw is exploited at his hands. He tortures her mentally and makes her do something beyond her wants and desire which is indeed inhumane and cruel. He boasts unnecessarily and thinks of him that he is superior to others. As a matter of fact flaws stand for the features of males of the time. Further it indicates the interrelations between males and females and how women are victimized in the male-dominated culture. It also becomes clear that Mr. Ramsay loves only his possessions for his temporal benefits and has some sort of inclination towards them for his selfishness.

Woolf simplifies Mrs. Ramsay's character in much delicate way and says:

If it was her (Mrs. Ramsay) beauty merely that one thought of, one must remember the quivering thing, the living thing (they were

carrying bricks up a little plank as he watched them), and work it into the picture; of if one thought of her simply as a woman, one must endow her with some freak of idiosyncrasy; or suppose some latent desire to differ her royalty of form as if her beauty bored her and all that men say of beauty, and she wanted only to be like other people, insignificant.(21)

In fact Mrs. Ramsay is the persona of the writer that is why she conveys her views about her and others through Mrs. Ramsay. Mrs. Ramsay is so simple and embodies no any distinct character and extraordinary feature is aimed at saying that Woolf was as insignificant as common people are. She does not create any kind of rift between commoners and herself simply because she tends to show humanity on her part to a greater extent. In the eyes of readers Mrs. Ramsay can be an idiosyncratic person that she is not, is apparently clear in the novel, *To the Lighthouse*. The full-fledged notion of Mrs. Ramsay's human character reveals the fact that she is nowhere found to be boasting about her beauty. Rather she is much maternal and fully emotional. This is pretty clear by the given excerpt:

They came to her, naturally, since she was a woman, all day long with this and that; one wanting this, another that; the children were growing up; she often felt she was nothing but a sponge sopped full of human emotions.(23)

People love to go in her touch since whoever goes near her, feels much comfortable and good. After all, she is the source of inspiration and comfort. She takes care of eight children with equal degree of love and thinks that she is nothing. Rather she is simply a woman and mother of children who is full of emotions. Hence, her emotional part is much crucial as it heightens the position of women in general.

But in the eyes of males she seems somehow redundant and useless since she has grown up and now she is not as well-maintained as before. Due to being mother of eight children, she is morally bound to remain busy in domesticity for better care and rear of those children. The writer discloses this fact with evidence from the text: "Shabby and worn out and not presumably (her cheeks were hollow, her hair was grey) any longer a sight that filled the eyes with joy". Woolf allows enough freedom through outlining her characters for the readers to fill in some of their own experiences, while being able to understand the thoughts presented in the book. Hence, the focus is on the deteriorating condition of Mrs. Ramsay's physical appearance and thus her portrayal is much significant here to show the fact that males are tempted to the glowing beauty of women and they become less interested in women when they turn old. The concern of male is only with their pleasure and once the source gets empty and it stops providing pleasure to people, then they throw away the very things. Thus, the relationship between males and females is shown mechanical and commercial.

Lily has an extensive pluck and she feels everything is possible though complicated and challenging. Therefore, she suspects the grand design of males that teaching and preaching is beyond human power. Lily feels: "Teaching and preaching is beyond human power, Lily suspected. (She was putting away her things.) If you are exalted you must somehow come a cropper. Mrs. Ramsay gave him what he asked too easily. Then the change must be so upsetting."(33). Lily doubts the very statement since males might attempt to keep women in ignorance about the matter. Their plan might be to separate intellectual domain for only males. They perhaps fear that once women get aware and knowledgeable about the practical life, they may revolt against. After all, to suspect such unfair statement is appreciative.

Lily is portrayed as a painter in the text, *To the Lighthouse* which is the bitter truth to men. Thus, the text exposes the fact about them:

Lily Briscoe went on putting away her brushes, looking up, looking down. Looking up, there he was – Mr. Ramsay – advancing toward them, swinging, careless, oblivious, and remote. A bit of a hypocrite? She repeated. Oh no- the most sincere of men, the truest (here he was), the best; but, looking down, she thought, he is absorbed in himself, he is tyrannical, he is unjust; and kept looking down, purposely, for only so could she keep steady, staying with the Ramsay. (34)

Lily Briscoe is a young woman in her early thirties at the beginning of the book. She is unattractive: too thin and with slanted eyes that remind her friends of Chinese eyes. She is deeply sensitive to the feelings of those around her and their reaction to her; as an artist, she is upset by Charles Tansley's suggestion that women cannot paint (or in fact do not much at all). As a single woman, if she cannot paint, then she is left with no purpose in life- her art is to her what Mr. Ramsay's scholarly work is to him. She admires Mrs. Ramsay for her powers at keeping every one together, but at the same time finds her somewhat overbearing. As for the somewhat short-tempered Mr. Ramsay, she finds it hard to tell what he is thinking. As a matter of fact Lily Briscoe is the character in *To the Lighthouse* to whom everything and everyone is related. Her reactions to the others seem very natural. To her Mr. Ramsay is a hypocrite and pretends to be what he is not. In one sense she is against Mr. Ramsay's character which further implicate that she opposes the entire male-dominated society which often undermines women's potential and capability.

It is much difficult to say what Mrs. Ramsay thinks of Mr. Ramsay in reality. She is found puzzled and her stance is also vague. Her attitude towards males and

females is much transparent. To have a glance at her mood is essential to say more about her:

Mrs. Ramsay thought that no woman could worship another woman in the way he worshipped; they could only seek shelter under the shade which Mr. Bankes extended over them both. (35)

In *To the Lighthouse* female voice and writing style are to stand against the male dominated literary canon. This book is written entirely in a stream-of-consciousness style, the long winded sentences striving to evoke each character's thought process as their minds flip from one topic to another, and back and forth through their lives. The text is highly creative and revealing insight into a woman's mind that is, of course, written by a woman. *To the Lighthouse* is similarly a celebration of feminine against male oppression as well as a very effective and chilling observation of the generation gap carved by the First World War, particularly in the changing attitudes of women. There are two options before Mrs. Ramsay whether she accepts Mr. Ramsay or rejects, as the writer says:

She must accept him, or she must refuse him. This going off after luncheon for a walk, even though Andrew was with them – what could it mean? except that she had decided, rightly, Mrs. Ramsay thought (and she was very, very fond of Minta), to accept that good fellow, who might not be brilliant, but then, thought Mrs. Ramsay, realizing that James was tugging at her to make her go on reading aloud the Fisherman and his wife, she did in her own heart infinitely prefer boobies to clever men who wrote dissertations. (40)

Mrs. Ramsay implicitly does something beyond the expectation of her husband Mr. Ramsay and supports her son, James who has not been affected by his

father. Rather he does disagree with Mr. Ramsay in many ways. He is much inclined towards Mrs. Ramsay simply because her opinions and ideas to him are a source of inspiration. This is why Mrs. Ramsay does everything for the sake of her children rather than her husband, as she plays her role of a good human being; she is blamed in many ways since people in the male dominated society cannot tolerate the active role and position of women. Hence, the writer makes it clear about Mrs. Ramsay that:

Wishing to dominate, wishing to interfere, making people do what she wished- that was the charge against her, and she thought it most unjust. How could she help being like that' to look at? No one could accuse her of taking pains to impress. She was often ashamed of her own shabbiness. Nor was she domineering, nor was she tyrannical. (41)

There are many charges against Mrs. Ramsay since she does everything with passion and full energy. As a matter of fact the male- dominated society perceives such women with biased eyes. Mrs. Ramsay as a conscious human being can minutely and closely perceive and read the people's mindsets. This is why she takes such unwanted charges unjust and shameful. She further makes it clear that she never sells her service and compassion for the sake of cheap popularity. Rather she does everything for the shake of human betterment and comfort. The jobs most often women do in the society are also highlighted for the further evidence how women are ill- treated and deprived of intellectual battering in the male- dominated society:

She looked up over her knitting and met the third stroke and it seemed to her like her own eyes meeting her own eyes, searching as she alone could search into her mind and her heart, purifying out existence that lie, any lie. She praised herself in praising the light, without vanity, for she was stern, she was searching; she was beautiful like that light. (46)

Mrs. Ramsay is so powerful at heart and mind that no one can easily degrade her. She is purifying her in such a way that she becomes an idol for successors and they will approach her way of life. She is so strong and harsh that nothing can badly affect her. She is beautiful like light. Hence, light refers to knowledge as well as brightness, knowledge reflects her mental beauty and brightness symbolizes her physical charm. After all, she is inspiring and resourceful.

In the same vein, another woman character, Minta who is closely observed by Andrew and commented on especially regarding her gestures and fashion:

Minta, Andrew observed, was rather a good walker. She wore more sensible clothes than most women. She wore very short skirts and black knickerbockers. She would jump straight into a stream and flounder across. He liked her rashness, but he was that it would not do—she would kill herself in some idiotic way one of these days. She seemed to be afraid of nothing – except bulls. (54)

To Andrew's observation, Minta is a good walker and puts on more sensible clothes than most of the women. However, her clothes are short and black. In such short clothes she looks beautiful and attractive. He feels pleased at her gesture since he can derive a sort of pleasure out of her pace and delicacy. But much remarkable thing is that he is happy even at her foolishness. Hence, it is mentioned that she is afraid only of bulls. Bulls perhaps stand for dangerous men and that she is not afraid of common people especially women. As she lives in patriarchal society, she suspects the men will probably attack her. Again the writer focuses on Mrs. Ramsay's physical and mental stance in much critical way. It is mentioned:

But indeed she was not jealous, only, now and then, when she made herself look in her glass a little resentful that she had grown old,

perhaps, by her own fault. (The bill for the greenhouse and all the rest of it.) She was grateful to them for laughing at him ('How many pipes have you smoked today, Mrs. Ramsay?' and so on), till he seemed a young man; a man very attractive to women, not burdened, not weighed down with the greatness of his labors and the sorrows of the world and his failure, but again as she had first known him, gaunt but gallant; helping her out of a boat, she remembered; with delightful ways, like that. (72)

There are many ups and downs in her life. Her relationship with Mr. Ramsay is old and they have ever been intact with each other. But now time has transfigured Mrs. Ramsay and she is a juiceless woman due to the fact she has borne eight children. Consequently, her health has gone down and she looks old. However she is jealous to no one. She copes up with time and its hazards. She does not complain. She feels sorry when her conjugal life seems fragile due to indifferent nature of her husband, Mr. Ramsay. She praises him and reveals the fact that he was very much brave and courageous and they had beautiful days in the company of each other. There was a complete harmony and peace in their conjugal life. But with the passage of time he has totally changed and has started drinking and smoking which perhaps leads to the unbearable situation. This is why she is worried and recalls her past days. In this way Lily, the popular and competent painter remarks that to stay idle is absurd and meaningless. She reacts in much grave way and like Mrs. Ramsay recalls her past:

How childlike, how absurd she was, sitting up there with all her beauty opened again in her, talking about the skins of vegetables. There was something frightening about her. She was irresistible. Always she got

her own way in the end, Lily thought. Now she had brought this off – Paul and Minta, one might suppose engaged. (73)

When Minta behaves childishly, Lily does not like simply because she thinks every woman should be active and energetic. They should have some purpose of life in order to promote themselves economically and socially. She comments on the cheap purpose of Minta that is to say marriage. To Lily marriage is the end of women's life since this institution is miserable, oppressive and exploitative. She does not confide in this institution that is overtly the source of misery and pain. Minta's engagement with Paul is the mark of the very institution.

Woolf talks about the dual character of men. In this sense masculine intelligence is fabricated and laminated in such a way that commoners cannot feel different. Rather women fall victims in the hands of such men whose real and genuine characters does not appear. The writer says:

On Lord Rosebery; on Creevey's Memoirs; she let it uphold her and sustain her, this admirable fabric of the masculine intelligence, which ran up and down, crossed this way and that, like iron girders spanning the swaying fabric, upholding the world, so that she could trust herself to it utterly, even shut her eyes, or flicker them for a moment, as a child staring up from its pillow winks at the myriad layers of the leaves or a tree. (76)

Men uphold the entire world and their rule is as they prefer. They undermine the potentials of women and simply expose their magnificence and omnipotence through abuse of the authority. Furthermore, she is much critical about the masculine notion and lens that men use to perceive the world around. In fact men control the entire world and even the mind of women through their economy as comparatively

they have ever been powerful throughout the history. The gold watch symbolizes the economy of men and their attempt to tempt women with. It is clearly said in the text:

'I've done it, Mrs. Ramsay. I owe it all to you.' And seeing the gold watch lying in his hand, Mrs. Ramsay felt, how extraordinarily lucky Minta is! She is marrying a man who has a gold watch in a wash leather bag! (84)

The life of women is judged according to their husband's economy. They are called lucky and fortunate in case their husbands possess a lot of property. After all their fate is evaluated in terms of their material facilities not in the term of the fact how freely and independently they live their life in the company of a male in the male-dominated society.

The most significant thing in the novel, *To the Lighthouse* is the female characters emergence. They do not stay static and idle every time like a lighthouse. Rather they gradually develop mentally and become capable of observing the world in much critical and minute manner. At one point the writer says:

But she was becoming conscious of her husband looking at her. He was smiling at her, quizzically, as if he was ridiculing her gently for being asleep in broad daylight, but at the same time he was thinking, goes on reading. You don't look sad now, he thought (87).

Through this excerpt one thing is apparently clear here that men crack jokes and burst into laughter when they find women doing something different from their by-gone sisters. In this sense women are stereotyped in such a way that they do not have potential to do something on their own that is different from their customary duties forcibly provided by the male-dominated society.

But Woolf discards such stereotypes and brings women to the stage where they can show their potential par excellence and can stay and live life with equal dignity and prestige as men have ever enjoyed. The hasty remark that women cannot paint and read made by Charles Tansley get shattered in very precarious manner. Charles Tansley used to say, she remembered, "women can't paint, can't write"(119). The main theme that stands out is the exploration of the relationship between the different sexes and the struggle of women like Lily to make their mark in a world that still does not accept women as people in their own right. Lily Briscoe's picture of Mrs. Ramsay seems to be another important symbol, perhaps pointing to the fact that life can be encapsulated in a work of art, but then again, life goes on, and the chances are the picture will be relegated to an attic-or that the memories of certain people will eventually be put to the back of one's mind.

3.2 Mrs. Ramsay: Model of the family

To the Lighthouse is the most successful novel by Woolf which makes her one of the most important writers of the English literature. The context of the novel is so brilliant that it makes the novel her master piece. Woolf beautifully presents the feeling of the women in the novel. She presents how strong a woman is to handle and tackle with men. Her heroine Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe are perfect in their role. Mrs. Ramsay is the wall of the family. She does the job of the male. She holds all the characters of the novel and makes them like the family. Woolf presents her as the character that lives not only for her but for others. She cares and loves all the people in the novel. She becomes the inspiration for different characters. She is the one who inspires Lily Briscoe which makes Briscoe to achieve her goal.

Mrs. Ramsay is the helper, the giver, the organizer and arranger. She feels she is competed by her family and her friends and by society. She knows that men are

sterile and incapable and that if she did not hold the house by herself nobody would do it. She truly loves her husband most of the time and loves her children all the time. She is treated as a doll in the house so she is called as 'the angel of the house'. She believes in taking care for others, marrying people off and harmonizing every one's life. She becomes the perfect example of feminist thought. She successfully proves that females are there to protect men, and to nurture their ego.

Mrs. Ramsay, the busy mother of eight children, a woman of grace and ease who delights in social intercourse and visits the poor as well. She often feels the need to be silent, the relief of abstraction from all of being and doing grows upon her, and it is in this mood that she muses upon the alternating flashes of light. It is a mood of detachment, peace, rest and of triumph over life; she identifies herself with the third strike which becomes for her an image of purity and truth of strength and courage, searching and beautiful:

She could be herself, by herself. And that was what now she often felt the need to think; well not even to think. To be silent; to be alone. All the being and the doing, expansive, glittering, vocal, evaporated; and one shrunk, with a sense of solemnity, to being oneself, a wedge-shaped core of darkness, something invisible. Although she continued to knit, and sat upright, it was thus that she felt herself; and this self having shed its attachments was free for the strangest adventures. (45)

Although Mrs. Ramsay is maternal, intuitive, involved in life's common cares and capable of an unreasoning fear when she allows herself to dwell upon the tragic fragility of human life, she nevertheless is capable also of a triumphantly mystical detachment wherein life's inscrutable mystery appears ordered and revealed. And the significance of her portrayal, as it emerges from the attributes of others towards her as

well as from her own broodings is Mrs. Ramsay encompasses both these aspects of her personality. She can easily make her husband feel satisfied with her powerful words, a husband who was a difficult and demanding man, a large network of extended family and friends and also the poor to whom Mrs. Ramsay gave her care.

Her active social performance and her personality is a great mystery for her friends who are always stunned because of her humanistic feelings and thoughts towards society and the people. It shows her triumph over the conceptualization of patriarchal speculation related to women and her performance. "For her own self-satisfaction was it that she wished so instinctively to help, to give, that people might say of her: "O Mrs. Ramsay! Dear Mrs. Ramsay ... Mrs. Ramsay, of course!"(29). She is quite aware about how to deal the people who are even unknown to her. Thus, Mrs. Ramsay seems very dynamic and powerful as well as dominant and very interactive in the society. She is life for her friends and the family without whom they feel great lack within them. Her death brings tear in the eyes of her family. In her absence the house was empty, the doors locked and only the shadows of the trees remain there:

The house was left; the house was deserted. It was felt like a shell on a sandhill to fill with dry salt grains now that life had left it. The long night seemed to have set in; the trifling airs, nibbling, the clammy breaths, fumbling, seemed to have triumphed. The saucepan had rusted and the mat decayed. Toads had nosed their way in. idly, aimlessly, the swaying shawl swung to and fro. (102)

She is a perfect woman with all kinds of powerful characteristics and people suppose her to be the loveliest as well as the best among all. She strongly influences

the people because of her optimism and fruitful encouragement, "you will be as happy as she is one of these days, you will be much happier" (79).

She has secured a powerful position in the family. She possesses such virtues and characteristics that other eagerly seek to acquire. All the members of the family respect for her good deeds and for her way and style to tackle the things. Mr. Ramsay is nothing and finds himself all alone in the absence of Mrs. Ramsay. His dignity is preserved by her existence. He finds himself confident and powerful before others after he gets sympathy from her. He is not sure about his intelligence and talent without her assurance. He is quite sure that without her loving care and well management, the house will lose its existence and livelihood:

He was a failure, he said. Mrs. Ramsay flashed her needles, Mr. Ramsay repeated, never taking his eyes from her face, that he was a failure. She blew the words back at him. 'Charles Tansley...' she said. But he must have more than that. It was sympathy he wanted, to be assured of his genius, first of all, and then to be taken within the circle of life, warmed and soothed, to have his senses restored to him, his barrenness made fertile and all the rooms of the house made full of life- the drawing room; behind the drawing- room the kitchen; above the kitchen the bedrooms; and beyond them the nurseries; they must be furnished, they must be filled with life. (27)

Mrs. Ramsay is the wall of the family. She is the builder the constructor of the family. Her children like their mother than their father. Especially, James the youngest son of the Ramsay family loves his mother. He thinks his mother ten thousand times better in every way than his father. This statement clarifies her inner qualities of a real mother that is to understand the needs and necessities of the

members of the family. She encourages her daughters to help the poor and the needy one. She treats her guests as if they are her own family members. She is the perfect mother, perfect wife, and the perfect arranger of the family.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Final Stroke: A Gesture against Male Domination

4.1 Contrast between two opposite forces

The novel *To the Lighthouse* has the conventional usage of feminism in it. Woolf gives high priority to women. Her whole attention is centered on the women protagonist. Woolf beautifully presents modern concept of woman in the traditional Victorian society. Female who were supposed to be limited in the kitchen and the household have been shown as modern by their thought and their deeds. They turn out to be the successor of the modern society. Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe are the perfect example of Woolf's modern females. They are successful in winning the masculine world.

Mrs. Ramsay is the leading female character who is the ideal for all other characters. Although in her fifties she is the woman of exceptional beauty. She is optimistic by nature. She is a perfect picture of a woman. She is the heart of the family; she is the wife, the mother, and the every woman. She emerges from the novel's opening page not only as a woman of great kindness and tolerance but also as a protector. Her character reflects the consciousness of femaleness and the effect of this femaleness on other characters. Lily Briscoe, inspired by Mrs. Ramsay, wins the masculine world. She challenges the male's concept about women: "women can't paint, women can't write"(35). She completes her picture and shows her feminist power. She is the perfect example of modern woman in the male's world. She doesn't believe in romantic affairs and wants to remain independent.

Mr. Ramsay is presented in the novel as broad minded and sharp sighted. He is the influential philosopher and versatile figure. He is the symbol of masculinity in the

novel. Since, Woolf gives much priority to the female characters he is taken as the inferior character. His logic is not understood by the family even by his own wife.

The very opening word of Mrs. Ramsay in the novel is "yes" which reflects her affirmative and positive nature. She shows her positive aspect about the weather. She says: "Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow"(1). But Mr. Ramsay opposes it he says: "but it won't be fine" (1). It shows mother's love and care for the family and the father's masculinity. It is the reason that makes their children love their mother much more than their father. Especially, James their youngest son thinks his mother to be ten thousand times better in every way than his father.

Woolf shows an essential difference between the thinking of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. Both have different thinking on truth. In this regard James Hafley states:

To the Lighthouse is really the story of a contest between two kinds of truth – Mr. Ramsay's and Mrs. Ramsay's. For him, truth is factual truth; for her, truth is the movement towards truth: since truth is always 'being' made, and never 'is' made, the struggle for truth is the truth itself. The form of this novel at once expresses and verifies Mrs. Ramsay's truth. (qtd. in Beja 138).

Mrs. Ramsay accepts all the masculine arrogance of her husband. She is very much aware of the bad events which the family has to face in the near future.

Josephine a critic illustrates the event in which Mrs. Ramsay is aware of the obstacles:

Mrs. Ramsay is almost abjectly grateful to her husband who with masculinity arrogance gives order and limit on her necessarily fluid and unbounded world. For the feminine sense of infinitive possibilities carries with it an imaginative burden. Mrs. Ramsay is constantly aware

of danger of accidents and death, a fear which is only the other side of the coin of hope. (Latham 74)

Harvena Richter presents her concept of feminine and masculine power. She thinks: Mr. Ramsay, the philosopher, implies a universal masculine principle; Mrs. Ramsay, the creative mother, the feminine. As she is the wedge of darkness between the lighthouse beams, so he is associated with light (wisdom); and the qualities of yang and yin, the light and the dark, the masculine and feminine, are seen as a unity. In a parallel way, the children came to terms with their father on the journey; Lily who is described as having a father but no mother, glimpses her mother – surrogate.

Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay's attitude towards time further illustrates the difference between the masculine and feminine consciousness. Mr. Ramsay has accurate, theoretical knowledge where as Mrs. Ramsay has vague, immediate knowledge. Again Josephine illustrates that the vision of the male and female is different:

When Mrs. Ramsay wants to know if it is getting late, she looks into the garden where the light tells her how close it is to evening. When Mr. Ramsay wants to know if it is getting late, he flicks open his watch and sees it is 'only just past seven'. He has accurate, theoretical knowledge; she has vague, immediate knowledge. The thing exists for her, the mental construct for him. (Latham 75)

From Virginia Woolf's middle class view of masculine occupation, men's activities are peculiarly unrestrictive. Women's delicious fecundity is a common gift which has been preserved by their constant contact with a world that requires a total rather than a partial response. So, the man must come to the woman. Though Mr. Ramsay wants to show his superiority in the family he returns back to Mrs. Ramsay for sympathy. It is set out most powerfully in section seven of part one, in which Mr.

Ramsay launches his demand for sympathy on his wife. A pattern of symbolic denotations emerges as the dynamic of their relationship, which is easy to evaluate if we set out paradigms of significant phrases against one another:

It was sympathy he wanted, to be assured of his genius, first of all, and then to be taken within the circle of life, warmed and soothed, to have his senses restored to him, his barrenness made fertile, and all the rooms of the house made full of life - the drawing-room: behind the drawing-room the kitchen; above the kitchen the bedrooms; and beyond them the nurseries; they must be furnished, they must be filled with life. (27)

In *To the Lighthouse*, Lily Briscoe lacks the feminine creative aspect which Mrs. Ramsay so abundantly possesses, and it is this which Lily seeks from her. At the novel's end, when Lily achieves her vision of Mrs. Ramsay her nature is symbolically complete and she is able to finish her painting.

Mrs. Ramsay's different roles in the domestic periphery are vivid and significant that forecast the powerful image fully capable to bisect the male authority and chauvinism. She is an angel who provides her blessings to everyone in the house. Everyone in the house gets her security, care, her warm love and sweet as well as encouraging words. Her words are very powerful that can replace every negative thought and fill every heart with new enthusiasm and hope.

In the first part of the novel Mr. Ramsay thinks himself as the boss to all the family members. He dominates the family by his thought. He shows his masculine power in the family. He does not care on the desires of his family. He doesn't even bother to kill the happiness of his six years old son. The death of his wife changed him a lot. Mr. Ramsay never thought the value of his wife while she was alive but

realizes her importance after her death. He faces lots of crucial phases in his life. He tries to be true guide of his family. He sometimes feels as if he is guided by the spirit of his wife. Though Mr. Ramsay seems to be tyrannical father and dominating male at last goes to Lily for sympathy. But, Lily rejects. She hates him for she loves Mrs. Ramsay a lot and takes Mr. Ramsay responsible for the death of Mrs. Ramsay. He looks like a desolate sea bird, all alone and one sided. Sharon summed up Mr. Ramsay's thoughts where she thinks he is all alone:

It was his fate, his peculiarity, whether he wished it or not, to come out thus on a spit of land which the sea is slowly eating away and there to stand, like a desolate sea-bird, alone. It was his power, his gift, suddenly to shed all superfluities, to shrink and diminished so that he looked barer and felt sparer, even physically, ledge facing the dark of human ignorance, how we know nothing and the sea eats away the ground we stand on – that was his fate, his gift. But having thrown away...all gestures and fripperies, all trophies of nuts and roses, shrunk so that not only fame but even his own name was forgotten by him, he dept even in that desolation a vigilance which spared no phantom and luxuriated in no vision, and it was in this guise that he inspired... in his wife... (qtd. in Beja 192)

Regarding the above expression we come to acknowledge that the novel *To the Lighthouse* is the perfect picture of feminine, masculine is nothing without feminism. Masculine exist only in the presence of feminism.

4.2 Feminine Protest against Patriarchy

Woolf's novels have some kind of gathering of the varieties of people from different aspects of life. Their conversations, connections and relation are very typical

one which constructs the vision of the author. Her work is especially very personal as she presents same kind of society almost in her every novel. Her novels are based on wide experiences. She depicts in black and white what she had observed throughout her life. She didn't hesitate to pour what impressed her. In this sense, her works are the real depiction of truth. *To the Lighthouse* is one of her natural novel where she has tried to highlight the depression, doubt and dissatisfaction that reside in the heart of the character.

Virginia Woolf is at her most strong writing with the whole of her intense range of feeling throughout the novels. Her consciousness of what it is to be a woman both as a member of society and as an individual and artist, emerges as one of her few instinctive and passionate concerns: and is a subject which brings the fullest conviction and engagement in her writing whenever it appears.

Woolf strongly establishes Mrs. Ramsay as a powerful character. She is present even after her death in the minds of other characters. The completion of the painting determines the secured position of her personality with the impact of the tree; lively, dead and becomes a part of history in different section of the novel. She is very influential even after her death for she imparts the artistic aspiration in the heart of Lily Briscoe. As a novelist Virginia Woolf has overtly discussed how much a woman is powerful for the artistic creation which is dominant even after her demise in a family. As she is about to finish her paintings, Lily Briscoe thinks of Mrs. Ramsay as still influential after her death; " For days after she had heard of her death she had seen her thus, putting her wreath to her forehead and going unquestioningly with her companion, a shadow, across the fields"(135).

Lily feels that the tragedy of Mrs. Ramsay's death was not that it made one, now and then and very intensely, unhappy. It was that it made her unreal and solemn

and self-conscious. Of course, Lily was unaware of the fact that we were made to act parts that we did not feel to fumble for words that we did not know. However in painting about Mrs. Ramsay – Lily was straining after facts, aware that much of what she painted was necessarily conjectural. Any bit of history, any family anecdote was turned over and over in her hand, a scrap of evidence from which to draw inferences. Lily gives permanency to Mrs. Ramsay in her work of art. Everything vanishes and passes but the work of art and the things it portrays is eternal.

Lily is aware of the fact that Mrs. Ramsay was always poorly standing in the need of private time and rooms, "It was a windy morning. They had all gone to the beach. Mrs. Ramsay sat and wrote letters by a rock. She wrote and wrote" (119). Actually, it was difficult for her to manage the time, anyhow she managed it. But still, though she wrote, she never wrote her own life and scarcely kept a diary, there were only handful of letters in existence. She left no plays or poems by which Lily can judge her. So, it's very difficult for Lily. However, she is preeminent in the mind and life of others. So, she tried to picture what the life of Mrs. Ramsay was and perhaps, she thought, Mrs. Ramsay is held up by the scarcity of facts. One knows no details, nothing perfectly true and substantial about her. Thus, the contrast between woman's place in the world and her place in the imaginative lives of others was distinction with deep personal resonance for Woolf. Those whom we have lost are all the more present for being readily available to fantasy.

Mrs. Ramsay inspires Lily Briscoe to paint and prove the words said by Mr. Tansley "women can't paint, women can't write..."(35) wrong. Lily Briscoe paints her picture without letting anyone interfere and know about it except Mr. Bankes. Although nobody takes her painting seriously, Mrs. Ramsay always guides her and praises her painting. Lily's independent nature is liked by Mrs. Ramsay, "There was in

Lily a thread of something; a flare of something, something of her own which Mrs. Ramsay liked very much indeed, but no man would, she feared" (75). Mrs. Ramsay gives enough time for her artistic creation. Lily gives continuity to her painting before Mrs. Ramsay's death but after her death, the painting is not completed and she is also not seen painting anything. But remembrance which becomes very powerful ushered her again towards painting. She tries to accomplish the left task of painting which haunts her all the time after Mrs. Ramsay's death: "she had never finished her picture. It had been knocking about in her mind all these years. She would paint that picture now. Where were her paints, she wondered. Her paints, yes. She had left them in the hall last night she would start at once. She got up quickly before Mr. Ramsay turned" (110).

Mrs. Ramsay actually was not the extraordinary woman or the gifted woman. But, Lily remembers how Mrs. Ramsay used to encourage her to paint so that she could take revenge upon Mr. Ramsay and Charles Tansley. She imagines a scene for Mrs. Ramsay and herself- an elderly woman in the arm of a middle aged daughter, crossing the street. Then she remembered; she had laid her head on Mrs. Ramsay's lap and laughed, and laughed, laughed almost hysterically at the thought of Mrs. Ramsay presiding with immutable calm over destinies which she completely failed to understand (36). Lily was terribly haunted by the memory of Mrs. Ramsay. In each stroke of her painting she painted mournfully about the difficulty she had remembering Mrs. Ramsay. Sometimes Lily is too much annoyed with Mrs. Ramsay because she died without leaving a book, or a picture of any piece of work- apart from the three children who now survived and the memory of her that remains in their minds; " it was not knowledge but unity that she desired, not inscription on tablets,

nothing that could be written in any language known to men, but intimacy itself, which is knowledge, she had thought, leaning her head on Mrs. Ramsay's knee" (37).

In fact, whenever, Lily feels the necessity to revolt against male chauvinism, she becomes alone and she expects encouragement from Mrs. Ramsay to go ahead in her mission and it was only possible from Mrs. Ramsay because she knows all the males, their feelings and interpretations in her surroundings and also Lily's ambition in her painting.

At last, the picture is accomplished by Lily, as the work of art, is very powerful. Lily's determination gets a concrete structure making Mrs. Ramsay lively forever. Lily gives permanency to Mrs. Ramsay in her work of art. Everything vanishes and passes out but the work of art and the things to portray is eternal. Whereever it is hung, it remains the powerful and significant image of Mrs. Ramsay the picture is the complete vision of Miss Lily. The picture is a non- living thing but tells about a person whom people cannot forget and omit from their reminiscence. It illuminates and visualizes Mrs. Ramsay with its brightness: "She looked at the picture. That would have been Mr. Carmichael's answer, presumably – how 'you' and 'I' and 'she' pass and vanish; nothing stays; all changes but not words, not paint... that 'remained for ever', she was going to say, or, for the words spoken sounded even to herself too boastful, to hint, wordlessly; when looking at the picture, she was surprised to find that she could not see it..." (133).

This novel *To the Lighthouse* is the rebellion against the Victorian patriarchy which dominated Woolf's early life. But the personal and autobiographical element is caught up in a larger cultural shift from one era and code of values to a new range of possibilities, especially for women; and this potential requires new forms, rhythms and modes of expression. Like Lily Briscoe, the whole text launches itself at her old

antagonist, life. The gender roles are sustained by material entrenchment within well rehearsed differences and the only alternatives seem to lie in exclusion or new forms of autonomy, as shown with some hesitation through the spinster's independence and professional commitment of Lily Briscoe. Lily Briscoe, wrestling with problems of artistic form, completes her canvas actively with a stroke that is definitive not representative; "with a sudden intensity, as if she saw it clear for a second; she drew a line there, in the centre" (154). The novel draws energy from the tension between aesthetic and emotional imperatives: shape and flux, light and darkness.

Lily, likewise, is a complex figure: a spinster disinterested in ordinary sexual achievements, she is nevertheless capable of a fierce outburst of love, an artist perpetually terrified by a solution to the complex problem of the art life relationship. To Lily, the great mystery is love:

Love had a thousand shapes. There might be lovers whose gift it was to choose out the elements of things and place them together and so, giving them a wholeness not theirs in life, make of some scene, or meeting of people (all now gone and separate), one of those globed compacted things over which thought lingers, and love plays. (143)

But the lover in art cannot help being fascinated by the artists of life who do achieve a wholeness in their lives, so Lily, vicariously seeing the world through the eyes of human love – the love of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay – feels "how life, from being made up of little separate incidents which one lived one by one, became curled and whole like a wave which bore one up with it and throw one down with it, there, with a dash on the beach" (73).

Lily represented Mrs. Ramsay's judgment that an unmarried woman has missed the best of life, and "she would urge her own emotions from the universal law;

plead for it" (77). Lily liked alone. She liked to be with herself because she was not made for marriage. For Lily Mrs. Ramsay was weak with her husband as she let him to make those scenes. She says, "Nobody knew exactly what had happened to her" (145). So, Lily thought she has triumphed over Mrs. Ramsay; "for at any rate, she said to herself, catching sight of the salt cellar on the pattern, she need not marry, thank heaven: she need not undergo that degradation, she was saved for that dilution. She would move the tree rather more to the middle" (74).

One morning she stubbornly sets up her canvas and starts to paint. Like Mr. Ramsay, the philosopher confronting the mystery of nature, she too, the artist confronting life is imaged as a figure isolated and facing the sea of mystery and chaos alone. She is habituated to sleep lulled by the sound of the sea. As she gives herself upon her art, as Mrs. Ramsay did to her husband, she loses consciousness of outer things, her name and her personality and appearance, and her minds throws up from its depths images, memories, ideas like a fountain sprouting over the glaring, hideously difficult while she modeled with greens and blues. The creative waters of life, welling up within her, help to shape her picture.

In the eyes of Lily, Mr. Ramsay is a self- dramatizing domestic tyrant, a lonely and detached philosopher, who nevertheless craves the creative contact of wife and children. She wondered: "why he needed always praise; why so brave a man in thought should be so timid in life; how strangely he was venerable and laughable at one and the same time" (33). What she dislikes was his narrowness, his blindness and his hypocrisy. Lily's aloofness from life's routine involvements prevents her from yielding to Mr. Ramsay's demand for feminine sympathy.

Having seen that the Lighthouse beam had come to her when she was in a state of detachment, and had spoken to her of triumph and fulfillment, and then of

failure and frustration, thereby annihilating her abstracted bliss and bringing her back down to the sphere of life's fretful involvements, so too the sea – reserving the process – comes to her when she is in a state of involvement and speaks of consolation and sympathy and then of terror remorseless power, thereby annihilating her contended involvement and carrying her up to the blank and meaningless abstraction. "It was his fate, his peculiarity, whether he wished it or not, to come out thus in a spit of land which the sea is slowly eating away, and there to stand, like a desolate sea-bird alone" (11). Mr. Ramsay's masculine detachment from the common place he does not notice little things, the shape of a flower, the texture of sunset, - is here a positive act, a gesture of defense against the tides of time and ignorance. Yet, as we have seen, this standpoint becomes ultimately sterile without a periodic immersion in the feminine waters of life. To take it the other way round, his withdrawn from the life around him into his abstracted solitude finds its image also in immersion: "and then, as if he had her leave for it, with a movement which oddly reminded his wife of the great sea lion at the zoo tumbling backwards after swallowing his fish and wallowing off so that the water in the tank washes from side to side, he divided into the evening air" (52).

When Lily Briscoe finished her painting, with the stroke and pause in alliteration, she excitedly shouted; "it was done, it was finished" (154). She succeeds in drawing a line at the center then immediately felt the fall down of masculinity from its height:

He stood there spreading his hands over all the weakness and suffering of mankind; she thought he was surveying, tolerantly, compassionately, their final destiny. Now he has crowned the occasion, she thought, when his hand slowly fell, as if she had seen him let fall

from his great height a wreath of violets and asphodels which,
fluttering slowly, lay at length upon the earth. (154)

While painting Lily rejected one brush so that, she would give no position to Mr. Ramsay. Even if she gives he would be fifty feet away and down to her; "she could not see the color; she could not see the lines; even with his back turned to her, she could only think. But he will be down on me in a moment "(112). Putting the tree in the centre of her painting, she marginalized the males who were supposed to be the power holder in the society.

Furthermore, Lily also answered Mr. Tansley through her painting. Whenever he was badly standing in need of help and encouragement, she refused to give anything because she remembered how he had sneered at women, 'can't paint, can't write' why should she help him to relieve himself, certainly not. Rather she remembered that the next morning she should move the tree further towards the middle, and her spirits rose so high at the thought of painting tomorrow that she laughed out loud at what Mr. Tansley was saying. Let him talk all night if he liked it. Charles Tansley used to say that, she remembered," women can't paint, can't write. Coming up behind her he had stood close beside her, a thing she hated, as she painted here on this very spot" (119). Certainly she could not bear the voice saying she could not paint, saying she could not create, as if she were caught up in one of those habitual currents which after a certain time forms experience in mind, so that one repeat words without being aware any longer who originally spoke them. Then she begins dipping her pen among the blues and umbers, moving her brush hither and thither thinking Mr. Tansley as really the most disgusting human being she had ever met. Finally, she finishes her painting and says, "Phrases came. Visions came. Beautiful pictures. Beautiful phrases"(144).

Mrs. Ramsay, with her feminine creative vision, creates a world in which all the characters such as her husband, children and even her guests move. Her creative role is pronounced with her own creation as well as her addition of fuel in Lily's creation. Mrs. Ramsay is fountain of life and rain of energy with constructive enthusiasm. She is wholeness of being and creative for the long lasting establishment of harmony. Every character is very much pulled and attracted by Mrs. Ramsay. She could not bear incivility to her guests, to young men in particular. Indeed, she had whole of the other sex under her protection; "They came to her, naturally, since she was a woman, all day long with this and that; one wanting this, another that; the children were growing up; she often felt she was nothing but a sponge sopped full of human emotions" (24). Mrs. Ramsay always remains smiling as if it was the duty of a woman. But for her own part, she would never regret on her decision even for a single second. She provides security to her children from masculine dominance that is always ready to pounce upon their raising voice. In the novel, the son is made frustrated by Mr. Ramsay's adverse and opposite remark about the weather. But, the immediate interruption and encouragement are bestowed on him by Mrs. Ramsay. She proudly thinks that she has managed things better; "There might be some simpler way, some less laborious way, she sighed. When she looked in the glass and saw her hair grey, her cheek sunk, at fifty, she thought, possibly she might have managed things better – her husband; money; his books"(5).

But on the other hand, Lily who gets inspiration from Mrs. Ramsay for artistic creation opposes the misjudgments done by the brutal bloods of male chauvinisms. Instead of sympathizing Mr. Ramsay and helping Mr. Tansley, Lily remembers her own work, as if she had found a treasure. In a flash she saw her picture and she thought she should put the tree further in the middle so that she could avoid that

awkward space. That's what she should do. That is what has been puzzling her. She took up the salt cellar and put it down again on a flower in the pattern in the bible – cloth, so as to remind herself to move the tree. Mr. Ramsay does not get proper position in her painting because in her eyes he is: "petty, selfish, vain, and egotistical; he is spoilt; he is a tyrant; he wears Mrs. Ramsay to death; he knows nothing about trifles, he loves dogs and children" (18).

Similarly, Lily wanted to protest violently and outrageously her desire to help Mr. Tansley; "she thought, screwing up her Chinese eyes, and remembering how he sneered at women, 'can't paint, can't write', why should I help him to relieve himself" (66). Lily has known him very well. One day when she had gone to a hall and heard him speaking in the half of empty hall, pumping love his kind who did not know one picture from another. She knew he was so timid in life, so venerable and laughable at one and the same time.

Mr. Ramsay who used to neglect his wife's sympathy realized her importance in his life. He wanted some one to help him, support him. He goes to Lily to take sympathy but she rejects. She remembers: "Mr. Ramsay march past her, with his hand raised, aloof, at the head of a procession, in his beautiful boots, asking her for sympathy which she had refused" (135).

Finally, Lily completed her picture and proved Mr. Tansley's words wrong and gave him a terrible blow of answer on his head and managed to change him into nothingness, a lively corpse who kept on demanding help and help from the women.

Chapter Five

Evolution of Modern Woman

Woolf in the novel *To the Lighthouse* is seen as a true feminist writer. She presents the female character in such a way that changes the traditional Victorian society to modern society. Her two leading characters Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe are able to change the traditional values. They are the modern female characters of Woolf's age. Woolf uses them as the tool to destruct the male dominated society which has prevented woman from realizing their creative possibilities.

Mrs. Ramsay is presented as a gorgeous and straight forward character which is one of the main characteristic of modern woman. Her performance is really praise worthy. Though she is not highly educated, she is intelligent and has strong reasoning power. Mrs. Ramsay's beliefs are there to care for others, marry people off and harmonize everyone. It is her artistic feelings which influence her to marry people and establish happy family life for them. She is always there to help her educated but selfish husband who always tries to be supported by his wife. Mrs. Ramsay is a warm maternal and capable figure at the centre of the household, she proves to be a good mother who seems to have been doing everything for the sake of her children. She never thinks negative and her aspirations are different from that of males; she keeps nice balance among all the male members. She is the centre of the family. She holds everyone together. She does the job of the male. In fact bringing people together is her special talent. She even goes beyond her husband and supports her children. She manages to put human emotions at the service of those around her. The real lighthouse of the novel, therefore is the one which Mrs. Ramsay carefully sets glowing and which illuminates space of life even after her death.

Lily Briscoe is the other modern lady with modern views. She is far different from other Victorian women. She has different views on life. She doesn't believe on romantic affairs and marriages. She doesn't like to be interfered by anyone in her life. She thinks marriage as the bondage throughout the life. She wants to remain independent. In spite of Mrs. Ramsay's effort she wants to live her independent life. Though social norms and values come before her yet, she wants to establish her self identity in the society. Virginia Woolf presents Lily Briscoe as a thirsty person who wants to search her own new identity. Lily confidently shows herself as a woman with feminist boldness. She doesn't want to be interfered by males. Her character breaks many conventional gender roles. She is an independent, educated woman who has a talent to paint and is not confined to the home domestically. She challenges Mr. Charles Tansley who thinks females are born just to handle the kitchen. She challenges him and by the end of the novel she completes the picture and proves herself as an extra ordinary lady. She proves herself as a new woman of the new world. She is a creative woman who struggles against the male domination to achieve the goal of her life as a painter. Her painting is not only a painting but is the painting of her inner thoughts. Her painting has challenged the convention because it is abstract and is painted by a woman.

Despite being the members of the Victorian society Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe show their strength as that of the modern woman. They are not limited within the households. Though Mrs. Ramsay is a housewife her thoughts, her works are as brave as that of a modern lady. They are the revolutionary women who revolt against the patriarchal society. Lily is the real picture. She proves herself as a capable, independent lady. She shows boldness in each and every part of the novel. She is influenced by Mrs. Ramsay and it is Mrs. Ramsay whose portrait Lily made and it is

the portrait that makes her create a new world of her own. Lily is the inspiration for all the women for her hard work, creativity and boldness.

In this way, *To the Lighthouse* is the novel which is rich with feminism. It is one of the remarkable feminist novels. The novelist, Virginia Woolf is proved to be the perfect female writer who shows all the ups and downs of the female life. She shows Mrs. Ramsay's household and Lily Briscoe's courage. It was Lily, whose characterization helped Woolf to express what was impossible to say aloud for a woman in those times. Lily eventually frees herself from the Victorian ideology concerning marriage, motherhood and other prescribed feminine roles. Her fictional world provided a new perspective to the female characters. By externalizing her repressed feeling Woolf thus, gives birth to the modern women- Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe.

WORKS CITED

- Abel, Elizabeth. "Woolf's Potrait of the Artist". Virginia Woolf: *To the Lighthouse*. New Casebooks. Ed. Su Reid. London: Macmillan. 1993.
- Adams, Hazard, ed. Critical Theory Since Plato. London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers, 1992.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage, 1974.
- Beja, Morris. Ed. Virginia Woolf: *To the Lighthouse*. London: Macmillan, 1993.
- Blotner, Joseph. "Mythic Patterns in *To the Lighthouse* (1956)". Virginia Woolf: *To the Lighthouse*. Case Book Series. Ed. Morris Beja. London: Macmillan, 1993.
- Diaches, David. "The Semi- Transparent Envelope"(1942). Virginia Woolf: *To the Lighthouse*. Case Book Series. Ed. Morris Beja. London Macmillan, 1993.
- Forster, E.M. "The Novels of Virginia Woolf". *The Criterion*. 1926.
- Hafley, James." The Creative Modulation of Perspective". *Virginia Woolf: To the Lighthouse*. Ed.Morris Beja. London: Macmillan, 1993.
- Homans, Margaret. "Mothers and Daughters in Virginia Woolf's Victorian novel". *Virginia Woolf: To the Lighthouse*. New Casebooks. Ed. Su Reid. London. Macmillan, 1993.
- Kettle, Arnold. Virginia Woolf: *To the Lighthouse*. *An Introduction to the English Novel*. Vol II. New Delhi: Universal, 1991.
- Krichman, Mathew. *Western Writers and their Works*. Chicago: publishing Workshop, 2001.
- Latham, E.M. Jacqueline, ed. *Critics on Virginia Woolf*. New Delhi: Universal Book Stall, 1991.
- Leishman, Virginia. "*To the Lighthouse* – Fiction". *Publishers weekly* 2006.
- Mathias, Robert. *Feminism*. Albama: Fast Publishing House, 1999.

- Richter, Harvena. *Virginia Woolf: The Inward Voyage*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970.
- Reid, Su. Ed. *Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse*. London: Macmillan, 1993.
- Schaefer, Josephine O'Brien. "Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay". *Critics on Virginia Woolf*. Ed. Jacqueline E. M. Latham. New Delhi: Universal Book Stall, 1991.
- Selden, Ramon. *A reader's Guide to Contemporary Literary Theory*. 2nd ed. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1988
- Steve, Davies. "Elegy". *A Modernist Prose: Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse*. London: Penguin, 1989.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary. "Vindication of the Rights of Woman." *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Ed. Hazard Adams. Washington Hardcourt, 1871
- Woolf, Virginia. "A Rooms of One's Own." *Critical Theory Since Plato*. Ed. Hazard Adams. Washington Hardcourt, 1971.
- Woolf, Virginia. *To the Lighthouse*. Hertfordshire: Wordsworth classics, 2002.