

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

**Failure of Clarissa Dalloway's Self in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway***

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Ratna Rajya Laxmi Campus, in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in English

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**Letter of Approval**

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## Abstract

This thesis on Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* explores the causes of the failure of Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway's self from the perspective of socialist feminism. It studies in detail why she kills her feminine conscience, and quietly accepts the existing social code of conduct. Furthermore, it also analyzes the consequences of the suffocating tradition where women are being treated as commodity, which Clarissa also in the novel cannot rebel and is incapable of establishing her self identity breaking the norms and values of the contemporary society.

Due to the phenomenon of self-repression Clarissa strongly feels the lack of identity and belongingness. Like a fly trapped in a cobweb she is also trapped and pressed beneath the burden of superficial notion. Clarissa is aware that she cannot conquer the circumstances of the then society but still accepts the challenge for the creation of her own world beyond male domination.

The research has shown that Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway is characterized by the deadness of spirit. Due to self-repression, Clarissa strongly feels the lack of identity and belongingness. She has been compelled to repress her natural inclination, her wish to have a free space of her own. She cannot truly be Clarissa and cannot secure the space for her self as could cater to her fantasy.

Thus, with the acknowledgement of reality, Clarissa concludes her life spiritually dead though physically she is alive which shows the failure of Clarissa's self.

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## Chapter I: Introduction

### Quest for Self

The thesis tries to study how the novel *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) explores the failure of the protagonist, Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway's 'Self'. Clarissa, in the novel appears with every talent that a person is endowed by nature. On the contrary, she is compelled to get all her potentialities confined within the sphere of domesticity that vainly tries to fulfill by being a perfect hostess in her party. But she in the natural light of her feminine conscience is very different from what she appears in the light of social dogma at the party being a successful and highly praised perfect hostess. In the attic of her own house we get the glimpse of her true 'Self' that most of the time she locks up to be able to face the world. Her house's attic is the only place where she herself truly be Clarissa, that is, she eliminates momentarily the censor which keeps the real Clarissa repressed behind the mask of perfect hostess.

Due to this phenomenon of self-repression Clarissa strongly felt the lack of identity and belongingness. Like a fly trapped in cobweb she also trapped and pressed beneath the burden of social superficial notion. Clarissa is aware that she cannot conquer them but still accepts the challenge for the creation of her own world beyond male domination. It is not Clarissa who is culprit but still she hides her face behind the mask of 'Perfect Hostess'. She quietly shed tears and dies inside, an unseen crucifixion of her spirit.

At the party when Clarissa heard the news of Septimus' suicide, she identifies herself with him. Thus at the pinnacle of her success, Clarissa feels the hollowness of her existence. With the death of Septimus all the essence, vitality and spirit of Clarissa also vanishes leaving her empty from inside. Though a highly admired figure by all, she cannot feel any sparkle of triumph in her success.

As a result of the patriarchal social norms, Clarissa has been compelled to repress her natural inclination, her wish to have a free space of her own, just like the old lady opposite to her house whose presence throughout her life Clarissa avoids to acknowledge. But at the end Clarissa could not repress her lifelong desire to secure this space within her because it is her most beautiful fantasy, i.e. incomplete and natural 'Self', repressed but not completely obliterated by the superficial notion of the society. In contrast, all her social grace position in the society and previous values are superficial and traditional. Thus, with the acknowledgement of the reality Clarissa concludes her life spiritually dead though, physically she is alive.

Etymologically, the 'Self' can be defined as a person's essential being that distinguishes them from others, especially, considered as the object of introspection or reflexive action. In another word 'self' is a study of the spiritual journey in terms of consciousness. Self- concept is influenced by our sense of identity.

The English novelist, critic, and essayist Virginia Woolf (1882-194) ranks one of the England's most distinguished writers of the middle part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Woolf's early life was darkened by a series of immediate deaths in her family, especially by the unexpected and premature death of her mother, her half sister Stella and her brother Thoby, who were very close to her. That tragedy left an unrecoverable mark in her memory and made her mentally frail and disturbed throughout her whole life. And on the other hand they become the materials for most of her fiction. For her fiction and life were complementary. She transformed people whom she loved into figures in her writing. There were, of course, other influences from literature and history, but her life was her main source of her writings. She turned early tragedies, discoveries and moment of bliss into art. Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe in *To the Light House* (1927) resemble her mother and sister, Stella. Thus Virginia Woolf's

mind is essentially a poet's mind though she chose fiction for her medium to express her feelings.

Her father was her first and most enduring intellectual model in her career. He not only shaped her taste in classic literature and poetry but also the contemptuous towards novelists who merely reflected the material worldly life and he also taught her to admire poetic elements which we can feel in her writings. That is the reason why, W.H Miller calls her 'a poet in prose' in his essay, *Mrs. Woolf and Life* (1937). Virginia Woolf's passion for biography came from her and even in her early stage she surpassed him in originality. Throughout her life Woolf was to retain a fascination for the character of 'that old wretch my father', and she was, she believed more like him than her mother. The indissoluble rapport that she developed and entertained with her father made her pretty different than other children in Woolf family and it was absolutely due to her father's profession as a man of letters and partly of the education he gave to her. She launched her writing at an early age, but only after the publication of *The Voyage Out* in 1915, she emerged as a novelist having enormous prospect in the field of English fiction.

As Virginia Woolf broke free from tradition, she had also to discard the current form of the novel. But then she was driven to invent her own technique which would express her own vision of life. And Woolf had already expressed very strongly that if the novelist could base ones work upon ones feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love-interest or catastrophe in the accepted style.

In her time, the spirit of age was already in a state of flux. Not only was there a philosophical shifting but also change had disseminated on all levels from the historical to the personal. And slowly but surely she had become one of the most



influential modernist novelists heralding radically a new tradition in the domain of fiction. For she believed that the traditional novelists had only depicted the outer physical world not the inner complexities. Through her writing she tried to depict the individual psyche and inner complexities. And no doubt Woolf was largely interested in depicting the mental action of a character than physical. The material occurrences such as death or change of fortune were less important for her than the changes they brought in the consciousness of her character. For that reason she had broken away from conventional forms of fictions like Conrad, Joyce and other modernists. Woolf always tries to capture the inner 'self' of human nature, the conflicting forces within a single character which creates a kind of split in one's personality and she had got triumph over this new sphere by inventing a totally new technique known as 'stream of consciousness' in her fictions. Woolf contrasts the 'materialism' of the Edwardian with the 'spiritualism' and viewed that the conventional technique with their emphasis on the accurate representation on an external world has always been inadequate to capture the inner complexities of characters. Her novels *To The Light House*, *Mrs. Dalloway*, and *The Waves* (1931), marked 'high modernism' in the history of entire English literature and catapulted her to the zenith with inevitable public recognition that she rightly deserved. Indeed she is famous for her newness in the range of theme and experimentation in form. Woolf strongly argued that are not rooted in a preconceived plan or method but in hidden parts of their author's own life. And she rightly thinks that books are the flowers or fruits stuck here and there on trees which have their own roots deep down in the earth of our earliest life and of our first experiences. She strongly denies that the novels were born of a method. Thus, for Woolf it was a shift from male dominated environment to the space of her own. However, Woolf's idea of freedom was straight forward and practical- a small income

of one's own and a room of one's own that meant just enough money and privacy to free the mind. But after getting all these things that she needed for physical survival, Woolf had always nurtured a mystical feeling and preoccupation and desperately tried to solve it throughout her life. Regarding this feeling she wrote: "I enjoy almost everything. Yet I have some restless searcher in me, why is there not a discovery in life? Something one may lay hands on and say 'this is it? . . .What is it? And shall I die before find it?'"(*A Writer's Diary*, 86).

With the upheavals of feminist movement in 1960s, Woolf labored considerably to give it a solid shape and became one of the most remarkable figures in this domain. Her contribution to feminist criticism has been widely recognized since then. Throughout her life Woolf was deeply concerned to improve the quality of life for women, especially for intellectual woman like herself. She undertook many voluntary works for women and had participated various movements and was actively involved in the women's Co-operative Guide. Her *A Room of One's Own* (1929) and *The Three Guineas* (1938) are impassioned pleas for women's education and financial equality with men. And her persistent refusal of many academic honors offered to her by Universities also indicates her perennial resentment at the patronizing way in which the universities continued to treat women. She thinks women have failed to distinguish themselves because law controls their income sources and horrible domestic life has swallowed their privacy. In such condition to become what they really want means not only a break from family circle but also with accepted notions of woman loneliness and decency. She struggled against the restricted and shuttered life of the women where they were forced to relinquish language and trained to be silent. Woolf has not only showed her concern against the physical enclosure and

restrictions but also against the induced ignorance and the habitual silencing of feelings.

Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* has been influential in the sphere of literary feminism. The era in which Woolf belonged to was the era of unrest, growth and constant change in every walk of life. There were strikes and agitation for women's right. To become a writer, which was regarded as man's field, she had to make a dash for freedom and had to face many kinds of hindrances only because she was a woman. Regarding this situation she said, "I have endeavored not only attentively to observe all the duties a woman ought to fulfill but to feel deeply interested in them, but cannot help to wish to read and write in the place of sewing and cooking but try my best to deny myself". (A Writer's Diary, 15). She thinks it is difficult for a woman to define her feelings in language which is chiefly made by men to express their feelings. Most of her fictional themes are the delineation of inner self of women. And generally she depicts the confusion and contradiction between outer world (society) and inner self (emotional world) of women. On this aspect Woolf is close to many of her contemporary novelists like Dorothy Richardson, Joyce and Proust, whom she read in the original. They undoubtedly exerted a profound influence on Mrs Woolf. The theories of William James Bergen and Freud also influenced to shape her works. What woman wants is the inviolability of feminine solitude, or alternatively loneliness suggests that women are most themselves when they are alone. In her novel, *Mrs. Dalloway*, Woolf has presented the contrast of Clarissa's outer superficiality with the old woman's loneliness in the house opposite to her house that represents a woman's space, a room of one's own, independent of male domination and Clarissa's self desire to secure this female space in herself.

Thus, many female characters in Woolf's novels, besides their comfortable domestic life as a woman, yearn for an escape from it, for a space of their own and even for loneliness. This is the main conflict running throughout Woolf's writings. They want to establish their self – identity in the society but social norms and values come before them as obstacles – this is the main theme of her fourth novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, which I have selected for my research study.

*Mrs. Dalloway* is a novel by Woolf that details a day in the life of Clarissa Dalloway in post-world war in England. It is one of her best-known novels. It is a story of middle –aged woman Clarissa Dalloway. She is a wife of M.P Richard Dalloway from a high – class society with every kind of material wealth, a respected lady and ideal hostess of the society. In this novel Woolf shows far greater mastery of her new technique to explore the internal split in Clarissa. It is a story about the search for 'self' of the meaning of 'self' in monotonous and superficial life of middle class Londoners. This present study is an attempt to shed the light on the problem of Clarissa which as a woman she is bound to face. Her main problem is existential anguish versus social superficiality. She can neither completely gives up the social code nor can adopt it happily because of her feminine conscience. Clarissa's double Septimus vicariously represents the risk of the total rejection of patriarchal law, but Clarissa survives by submitting herself to the social code. Paradoxically she feels her survival as somehow her disaster and disgrace. In Woolf's original plan Clarissa was herself to die in the end of the novel. The invention of Septimus is thus a defensive 'splitting' whereby Clarissa's most dangerous impulses are projected in him who can die for her. He is a surrogate for Clarissa, committing suicide on behalf of her. Hence for Clarissa to behave 'like a lady', as society's 'perfect hostess' is a cautious

program for survival .Conflict within Clarissa is between remaining a perfect hostess on the one hand and questioning the notion of perfect hostess on the other.

The problem for Clarissa is to assert a female specificity as difference and to open up a space for this difference in the masculine structure of society. This is not achieved simply by the assertion of women's comradeship. It involves rather the question of the subject. Having remained close to the maternal body in spite of its enforced repression, the girl or woman inscribes herself naturally within the semiotic which Kristeva terms the 'spasmodic force' of the repressed. Clarissa as a woman constantly tries to affirm this force to find the practice appropriate to it. But this is not a matter of defining it as a separate, substantive and symbolic of its own. Here Clarissa is menaced equally by the 'paternal paranoia' and mother's 'schizophrenia' and to sustain her respectable position in the society she has to maintain herself in a difficult equilibrium between these two extremes.

Clarissa in *Mrs. Dalloway* is "always conscious of the lack of something central and important in her" (34). This lack is the maternal body, which she must repress to exist in the society. Because of this denial of the maternal and her own body "there is emptiness about the heart of her life, an attic room, to which she austere withdraws 'like a nun'" (33). The novel stresses this withdrawal from the body in several ways. Clarissa had grown very white since her illness. She is the "mere ghost of a woman" (4). Thus, at the end, Clarissa gets transformed into an object. The most positive representative of the body in the novel is Sally Seton, who confidently asserts herself as a woman as if she could say anything and appears bold enough to argue that her sex should have the vote. That is something which made Clarissa fall in love with her in girlhood but Clarissa's disappointment, the novel's

arch rebel also at the end becomes a sober conformist of the society by being 'Lady Rossister'.

Repressing the body, Clarissa is given a place in the symbolic order constructed around the Name- of-the- Father.

This body, with all its capacities, seemed nothing- nothing at all. She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen, unknown, there being no more marrying, no more having of children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond street, this being Mrs. Dalloway, not even Clarissa any more, this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway. (11)

Clarissa wants to revolt against this suffocating tradition where women are being treated as commodity. But she cannot dare to negate it totally because if she does so there raise the question of her existence. Another instance of women repression is the repression of Clarissa's mother throughout the novel though her father is always prominent in her memory. Only once at the party a guest exclaim that Clarissa looks that night 'like her mother'. And Clarissa's eyes are filled with tears but this brief 'return' of her mother is instantly cancelled by her duty as hostess of patriarchy. Indeed, Clarissa is a 'pure' revolutionary but has to end up being reactionary. Though she strongly feels the need for wholesale social transformation, she remains to be quiescence. In the process of maintaining equilibrium between her 'self' and 'body' by conforming social code, Clarissa becomes spiritually dead. These are the main points in the novel this study aims to move around. To analyze the novel and to understand Clarissa's emotional situation socialist feminism will be applied as

a tool. The study will be based on the activities actions of protagonist Clarissa. In addition to this other characters relevant to clarify the point will also be studied.

With the end of Edwardian era and the upheaval of the First World War, it seemed to many novelists that a settled point of view, chronological continuity and fixed identities were no longer valid and the traditional literary forms had ceased to be adequate for their needs. Virginia Woolf was one of the most remarkable figures in this 'modernist movement'. More than any other novelist of the period, she combined a theoretical analysis of the requirements for modern fiction with a continuing attempt in every new work to match her perception of reality with its appropriate form. And she became one of the most successful modernist's novelists to attract many critics to ponder over her works. Critics commonly emphasize on the newness of her art and novels written by her have become great enigma for them. Virginia Woolf was impelled by her own 'vision' to emphasize the fluidity of human personality rather than its fixity. She perceived the variety of impression made by one person on the people around him and his own ever – changing consciousness of the surrounding world.

## **Chapter II: Feminism**

Throughout history, women have always struggled to gain equality, respect, and the same rights as men. This has been difficult because of patriarchy, an ideology in which men are superior to women and have the right to rule women. This ideology has permeated the social structures of societies throughout the world and as a result, even in the new millennium, women are still struggling for rights that most men take for granted. The struggle was even more difficult for women of color because not only were they dealing with issues of sexism, but also racism. In order to fight patriarchy, feminism and feminist theory was born.

By general definition, feminism is a philosophy in which women and their contributions are valued. It is based on social, political and economical equality for women. Feminists can be anyone in the population, men, women, girl or boys. Feminism can also be described as a movement or a revolution that includes women and men who wish the world to be equal without boundaries. These boundaries or blockades are better known as discrimination and biases against gender, sexual orientation, age, marital status and economic status. Everyone views the world with his or her own sense of gender and equality. Feminists view the world as being unequal. They wish to see the gender gap and the idea that men are superior to women decreased or even abolished. There are many different types of feminist theory and each has had a profound impact on women and gender studies.

The first is cultural feminism, which is the theory that there are fundamental personality differences between men and women, and those women's differences are special. This theory supports the idea that there are biological differences between men and women and sexism can be overcome by embracing the women's way. The



second type is individualist or libertarian feminist. This feminism is based upon libertarian philosophies, with the focus on autonomy, rights, liberty, independence, and diversity. Next, there is the radical feminism; this theory began during the Sixties. This ideology focuses on social change, and attempts to draw lines between biologically - determined behavior and culturally- determined behavior in order to free both men and women as much as possible from their previous narrow gender roles. Finally, there is liberal feminism, a theory that focuses on the idea that all people are created equal and that education is the primary means to change discrimination.

Feminism is an institutionalized system of oppression based on the domination of men over women: sexism. Its contradictions are based on the hostile social relations set into force by this domination. This antagonism can be mediated by the culture and the flexibility of the social institutions so that in certain times and places it seems to be a stable relationship. But the antagonisms cannot be eliminated and will break out to the surface until there is no longer a system of domination. Most feminists believe that their culture is a patriarchal culture; that is one organized in favor and the interest of men. Feminism – in its diversity is concerned with the marginalization of all women and their being regulated to a secondary position in the society. In short feminism represents one of the most important social, economic and aesthetic revolutions of modern times. Despite their diversity, feminist generally agree that their goals are to expose patriarchal premises and resulting prejudices, to promote discovery and re-evaluation of traditional female role in the society. Elaine Showalter, one of the leading feminists attacks traditional literary history that reduces female only to the position of hostess, whose main duty is to serve men. Showalter's most important contribution has been to describe social context in which women were

valued for the work they could produce, they could bring, or the services they could render. Kathy and Myrna have rightly said in their essay "Bread and Roses" that:

A woman of any class is expected to sell herself not just her body but her entire life and her talent, interest and dreams- to a man. She is expected to give up friendship, ambitions, pleasure, and moment of time to herself in order to serve his career or his family. In return, she receive not only her livelihood but also her identity, her vary right existence, for unless she is a wife of someone or the mother of someone, a woman is nothing. (130)

But feminists are not ready to accept this definition of womanhood. They value and prize the fact of women as highly as any man. They are against the cultural image of women as incompetent, petty, irresponsible, or weak only suitable for being hostess. Feminist rejects the traditional attitudes that regard the masculine characteristics of aggression, power and competition as good and desirable and the traditionally feminine characteristics of compassion, tenderness and compromises as weak and ridiculous. They argue that this belief and attitude regarding women are false or wrong concept based on myth, ignorance and fear.

A particular conception of feminism that is, socialist is one that focuses on how power has denied women because of their class position. We see capitalism as an institutionalized form of oppression based on profit for private owners of publicly-worked-for wealth. It sets into motion hostile social relations in classes. Those classes too have their relations mediated through the culture and institutions. Thus, alliances and divisions appear within and between classes at times clouding the intensity or clarity of their contradiction. But the basic hostile nature of class relations will be

present until there is no longer a minority owning the productive resources and getting wealthy from the paid and unpaid labor of the rest. The socialist vision of a humanist world made possible through a redistribution of wealth and an end to the distinction between the ruling class and those who are ruled.

Woman's history was a neglected subject until quite recently. One of the difficulties in uncovering women's history is that until the seventeenth century very little was written about them from their point of view, ideas and experiences. Before these times those who could read and write were mostly men. From the early 1600s; however, women of the upper classes began to receive some education. But it was not until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that education became available to everyone rich or poor. Thus, until less than hundred years ago any information we do have about ordinary woman's lives is rarely written by themselves, from their own point of view. So to find out about the lives of women at that period we have to take help of the few surviving letters and diaries written by upper class women because most of the women of that time were illiterate. Medieval painting tells us quite a lot about the kind of works women did then. Others sources are official reports, household accounts and popular songs and stories. All these helped to build up a picture of women's position and daily lives at that time.

During the Middle Ages the large landowners were the most popular people in the country. Marriage of the wealthy were often arranged in order to increase ownership. Details were usually decided by the fathers of the couple. The daughter of landlord had little choice over whom she married but after marriage she had a lot of responsibilities. Husbands were often away fighting or attending the king's court. Wives remained at home in charge of all domestic work as well as large estates and

the members of the family. Despite their responsibilities and services women had no legal rights over their property and children. The only women to win land on their own right were usually widows. However the vast majorities of women- rich or poor had no legal rights, owned nothing and were rarely educated. Whatever their class might be they remained just domestic servants in the house i.e. a devoted hostess of the family and in the textile industry they became 'unskilled' button holder and seamstresses. Regarding women's position inside and outside the house Kathy and Myrna write in an essay "Bread and Roses" collected in the book titled *The Vintage Book of Feminism*, edited by Mirian Schneir: "In general, because women are defined as docile, helpless and inferior they are treated as children's slave. Their very position reinforces the idea, even among the women themselves that they are fit for and should be satisfied with this kind of work" (34).

One of the most important things which affected society's view of women was the church because the church unjustifiably presented women as an evil temptress. At that time the church had a powerful influence in the society. Many priests thought that women were deceitful and likely to tempt men to sin as Eve had tempted Adam in the Bible. People's concepts were negative towards women and they argued that women were less intelligent than men incapable of any cerebral work and once they got married any land or money they had become the property of their husband. So rich women were valued of their wealth and poor women for the work they did within the family. But they were regarded inferior and subordinate to men. This how Olivia Bennet has presented a dictum of sixteenth century lawyer in her book *Changing Status of Women* (1992): "Every woman is a sort of infant ... it is seldom, almost never, that a married woman can have any action to use her wit only in her own name,

her husband is ... her prime mover, without whom she cannot do much at home and less abroad” (13).

At that time women were denied knowledge and classical education as their brothers were. They learnt enough mathematics to do the household accounts, and skills such as needle work, singing and little French conversation. This is how one describes the way she gets educated “As if we were nothing else designed, but made like puppet to divert mankind” (*Changing Status of Women*, 22). The professions allowed to women were only nurse or midwife could hope to become a doctor because Latin was the language of medicine. Latin was key to higher education and training, without it women who wished to study were at a great disadvantage. Elizabeth I had encouraged learning among the ladies at her court, but James I who succeed her had a poor opinion of women’s intelligence. He refused to allow his own daughter to learn Latin, saying “To make women learned and foxes tame had the same effect, to make them more cunning” (*Changing Status of Women*, 34). This kind of thinking represents the treatment of society towards women.

Throughout these early centuries the difficulties for most women were that circumstances rarely provided them with opportunities to prove their worth. The structure of society discouraged them to expose their creativity and intellectual skill for the development of the mankind. Women spent most of their life within four walls bearing and rearing children. This not only consumed their creative time but also weakened their health. Women were described as “weaker sex” but however increasingly became a quality to be prized. Women were praised for being more ‘delicate’ and ‘pure’ than men- but that of course meant they needed a man to look after them and ‘protect’ them from the burden of such responsibilities as owing

property and other intellectual works. This concept about women compelled them to play the role of hostess within the domestic sphere.

Women's works in the home was unpaid and so began not to count as 'real' work in the eyes of the people but their duties towards their family and society. Middle class women were not meant to work at all, their husband went out into the world of business and politics while they stayed at home increasingly cut off from everything outside the family and the household. Naturally interest narrowed, people generally regarded women as being incapable of serious discussion or thought. And in the name of 'protection' they were prevented from such responsibilities such as voting or owning property.

Because of social structure from the very beginning of the social history the concept of the society about woman was a born hostess. Women were expected to stay at home and confine themselves to domestic duties and social graces- playing music and decorating themselves to domestic duties and social satisfied with their given status in the society. They had no idea about their secondary object like position in the family. They were totally unaware about and duties and followed them without any complain. Not only ordinary people even scholars of that time thought in the same way and helped to strengthen this concept. One of the philosophers of the age Rousseau said in *Changing Status of Women* as quoted by Olivia Bennet, that:

Women were naturally inferior to men and ought to be weak and passive. According to him her main duties are 'to please men, to be useful to them, to win their love and respect.... These are women's duties in all ages and that are what they should be taught from childhood on' (26).

These lines evoke the contemporary concept of society about women, which they followed without any question and never tried to challenge.

From centuries our culture has been patriarchal where male has dominant position over every aspect of the world and female has to accept the secondary positions assigned by patriarchy. In a society where men have determined social values and the structure of institutions, it is not surprising that women have no power of explanation and definition for their own selves and realities of experiences. In a patriarchal culture, male defines female as they define nearly everything else. The issue is not only that men perceive women from a masculine perspective, but that even the nature of socialization of all members of society, including women, perceives the female from the prevailing masculine perspective and directly or often indirectly this has had considerable impact on the structure and quality of society. As a social being, subject to those social institutions, women have most frequently adopted or gained the image which is not their own. Women are forced to enter into a world of docility, of behaving like a lady, of loving strokes for submission, quiet and gentility, of cutting out dolls in wedding gowns. From the very early age women have to inhale an environment that teaches them a vision of femininity so pervasive and complete that it appears real and their own by the time they grow old, wise and angry enough to discard it. Annett Kolodny in her essay collected in the book *The New Feminist Criticism* strongly explains:

It is significant, I think, that the stories do not suggest any difficulty for the women in apprehending the men's meanings. On the one hand this simply is not relevant to either plot, and on the other hand, since in each narrative the men clearly control the public realms of discourse, it would of course have been incumbent upon the women to learn to

understand them, though masters need not learn the language of their slave, the reverse is never the case: for survival's sake oppressed of subdominant group always study the nuances of meaning and gesture in those who control them. (62)

The seed planted in their infancy and constantly tended became so much a part of them that reject it has almost the force of rejecting themselves. The constant process of the naming of women by patriarchal societies may find different expressions and may vary in intensity and effect but they almost universally recur. Although various hypothesis have been formulated ranging from the scientific to the religious and from the accepting to the vehemently opposed, the origins and causes of women's subordination have never been opposed, the origins and causes of women's subordinations have never been definitively explained. The masculinity of women and the roles that these images support are constructed so as to create a situation, which in many ways are very convenient for men. The patriarchal definitions of femininity provide the masculine with excellent rationales for the uses to which women have been put as well as potent socio-psychological advantages. The female role of helpmate for example, following 'naturally' from the patriarchal definition of women's nature and it provides men with tremendous privilege, power and pleasure.

Patriarchal society has exhorted women to be woman, remain woman and become women- which mean an ideal hostess 'the female is a female of certain lack of qualities' said Aristotle, 'who should regarded female nature as afflicted with a natural defectiveness' (*Changing Status of Women*,31). And St. Thomas has pronounced women to be an 'imperfect man' an 'incidental' being. This is symbolized in *Genesis*, in which all the thinking of human society has based where Eve is depicted as made from what Rousseau called 'a supernumerary bone' of Adam.



Thus, humanity is male and male defines woman not in herself but as relative to him, she is not regarded as an autonomous being. Women have been always defined and differentiated with references to man and not him with reference to her. She is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the subject he is the Absolute- she is the Other. In every sphere, the male have displayed their satisfaction in feeling that they are the lords of creation and try to prove women are secondary creatures created to serve men as hostess.

Legislators, priests, philosophers, writers and scientists have striven to show that the subordinate position of woman is willed in heaven and advantageous on earth. The religions invented by men reflect this wish for domination. For example in the legends of Eve and Pandora men have taken up arms against women. In doing so they have made use of philosophy and theology, as the above quotation from Aristotle and St. Thomas has shown. Since ancient time satirist and moralist have delighted in showing up the weakness of women that made them easy to confine the woman's role as hostess in the society. In any circumstances patriarchal society is not ready to acknowledge any other possibilities of woman in the society than hostess.

Until the end of the nineteenth century education for most girls had one end in view- that is domesticity. The only difference was that wealthy girls were being educated to be domestic angels and poor girls to be domestic drudges. And as long as women rich or poor were brought up to believe that their role in life was to be wives and mothers and to serve the family, it was going to be hard for majority to do anything else different. Generally women were taught 'drawing room' skills such as embroidery, piano playing and dancing, in the place of real education like boys got. The main purpose of these skills was to attract a good husband. Girls were not encouraged to use their mind for their own status as boys. They had to look after their

younger brothers as sister almost as soon as they could hold a baby. They had to help their mother with time-consuming household chores. If they did attend school girls were taught handicraft as well as the 'three RS' – Reading, writing and rhythmic. The girls were taught domestic skills such as sewing and laundry work aimed at making them food housewives and mothers i.e. a perfect hostess. In an essay "Bread and Roses" Kathy MacAfee and Myrna Wood write the status of women as "all women, even including those of ruling class are oppressed as women in the sense that their real fulfillment is linked to their role as girl friend, wife or mother"(37).

After the long struggle and debate towards the end of the nineteenth century women did gain some political power with voting right and become members of local councils, schools and boarding which looks after the poor. Thus, women were in strange position of being able to administer the country's law but not having any responsibility for making them. Education, housing and the protection of children were some of the issues on which these early courageous women worked. And they proved themselves capable of dealing with these matters skillfully like any man. Gradually, in several regions, there were more women holding 'elective office' till later nineteen and early twenties. New grounds were being breaking for women. Politicians as well as other women were working hard to improve the opportunities for better education for women. Campaigns were held against the unfair law; woman like Florence Nightingale was opening up women's opportunity for paid employment by establishing nursing as a respectable profession. And great needs were felt for the middle class women that they must have the choice of a future other than marriage. The struggle to win the vote had shown that women not interested only in domestic or so-called frivolous matters. They were being conscious about their condition and inner urges which was different from traditional thinking. One woman expressed her

inner urges by saying – “we can no longer ignore that voice within woman that says I want something more than my husband and my children and my home” (*Women in Culture*, 67).

Many attempts were made towards equal educational opportunities for girls, which prepared them for university and for work in the civil services of professional such as medicine and teaching. Because of these opportunities of further chance to enter in the medical profession as respective job women also realized their potentialities and tried hard to apply it to make a career in different fields that was completely new for them. On the other side, social thinking about woman was same as before. Rich women who had enough time and money for the initiation of new ground for their sisters were told, they were too fragile to think. Thus, in the name of tradition and protection they were told, they were prevented from breaking limited boundary. They were meant to be ‘pure and innocent’. And if they wanted to be respectable women in the society they had to follow the rules and regulation and of the society without any question. That was the main reason they could not cross this threshold laid by the society despite their internal dissatisfactions and wishes to live freely as a rational being. Whatever educated and conscious they were but compelled to remain as an ideal woman and perfect hostess. Betty Friedan in her essay “The Feminine Mystique” correctly explains the woman’s condition in both cases women would be the victims. “Most adjusted to their role and suffered or ignored the problem that has no name. It can be less painful for women not to tolerate the strange dissatisfied voice stirring within her” (61).

## **Feminism and Literature**

Feminism has gradually become more far-ranging and subtle in its attacks on male-dominated society. Many injustices still need to be corrected, but equally necessary is a more down-to-earth, tolerant and compassionate view of fellow human beings.

Critics, being generally male, had not generally concerned themselves with gender issues. Most of the world's great literature has been written by men. Sappho, Austen, the Brontë's and Emily Dickinson apart from them, it was difficult to think women really had it in them to write at the highest level. Literature was literature, and critics saw no need to distinguish a specifically feminine way of writing or responding to a text.

Virginia Woolf was herself a refutation of that thesis, though her mental breakdown was perhaps brought on by the strain of balancing male self-realization with female abnegation. But in her essay "*Professions for Women*" (1931), Woolf complained only that women's social obligations hindered a writing career. Their lives gave them a different perspective, but women were not fundamentally different from men in their psychological needs and outlooks.

The feminist movement was very much disagreed, and argued that women's writing expressed a distinctive female consciousness, which was more discursive and conjunctive than its male counterpart. Such consciousness was radically different, and had been adversely treated. Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex* (1997) documented the ways "Legislators, priests, philosophers, writers and scientists have striven to show that the subordinate position of women is willed in heaven and

advantageous on earth." Women had been made to feel that they were inferior by nature and, though men paid lip-service to equality, they would resist its implementation. Some men might be sympathetic to women's issues, but only women themselves knew what they felt and wanted.

Nonetheless, by the early eighties, feminists had advanced to a much more confrontational attack on male hegemony, advocating a complete overthrow of the biased male canon of literature. French feminists argued that women should write with a greater consciousness of their bodies, which would create a more honest and appropriate style of openness, fragmentation and non-linearity. Parallel studies in the visual arts stressed a feminine sensibility of soft watery colors, an emphasis on the personal and decorative, and on forms that evoked the female genitalia.

Five years later the debate had moved on, from exclusively feminine concerns to the wider issues of gender in social and cultural contexts. Patriarchy and capitalism should be examined more closely, perhaps as Althusser had attempted, and sophisticated models built to integrate the larger web of economics, education, division of labor, biological constraints and cultural assumptions.

Literature will often reflect the cultural assumptions and attitudes of its period, and that of course includes attitudes towards women: their status, their roles, their expectations. But a literature doctored of male-orientated views would be failing in its first requirement, to present a realistic or convincing picture of the world. Moralizing, which includes political correctness, has its dangers.

Feminists have argued for positive discrimination as the only way to correct centuries of bias. Nonetheless, the agreement emerging among black Americans is

that positive discrimination is counter-productive. Disadvantaged minorities desperately need the odds leveled, but not patronizingly tilted in their favor.

Naturally, some literary works will lend themselves more readily than others to feminist analysis or at least to certain kinds of feminist analyses. For students new to the field, I think it is useful to examine the ways in which literary texts reinforce patriarchy because the ability to see when and how patriarchal ideology operates is crucial to our ability to resist it in our own lives. This approach, applied to literary works in the male canon, was the dominant mode of feminist literary analysis in America during the 1970s and it usually requires reading “against the grain” of the text’s apparent intention, for patriarchal literature is usually unconscious of the sexist ideology it promotes, or perhaps more precisely, patriarchal literature sees nothing wrong with its own sexism. It is also important to be able to recognize when a literary work depicts patriarchal ideology in order to criticize it or invite us to criticize. For example, a feminist reading of Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* (1970) might examine the ways in which the novel invites us to criticize the sexist behaviors and attitudes it portrays. A striking illustration of the novel’s insight into patriarchal psychology is its depiction of women as the site upon which men’s pain and anger are displaced, a memorable example of which we see in the young Cholly’s hatred of Darlene, upon whom he displaces his hatred of the white hunters who humiliate them.

Similarly, many literary works have conflicted response to patriarchal ideology, as we see, for example, in Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818). On the one hand, the text undermines patriarchy’s belief in female weakness through its portrayal of women’s strength: Caroline is the sole financial and moral support of her ruined father; Justine bears up bravely and nobly under the community’s unjust

condemnation of her, which includes the penalty of death; and Safie defies her patriarchal father and successfully undertakes a dangerous journey in pursuit of her own goals. The monster, too, can be read as an indirect advocate for women's rights. In many ways, the monster occupies the woman's position in eighteenth century European society: it is considered inferior to men and therefore denied the rights and comforts men enjoy. On the other hand, the novel reinforces patriarchal ideology through its admiration of the way in which Caroline, Justine, Elizabeth, and Agatha conform to traditional gender roles. They sacrifice and devote for nurturing others. Caroline dies as a dutiful mother, tending Elizabeth; Justine dies as a dutiful servant and surrogate mother, when it should be Victor who dies; and Elizabeth dies as a dutiful wife and surrogate mother, trusting her husband's judgment and catering to his needs, when, again, it should be Victor who dies. This reading of *Frankenstein* might also examine the ways in which the novel's conflicted response to patriarchal ideology is reflected in Mary Shelly's own conflicts concerning her personal experience of patriarchy. She violated the patriarchal values when she eloped with a married man, Percy Shelly.

Because feminist issues range so widely across cultural, social, political, and psychological categories, feminist literary criticism is wide ranging, too. Whatever kind of analysis is undertaken, however, the ultimate goal of feminist criticism is to increase our understanding of women's experience, both in the past and present, and promote our appreciation of women's value in the world.

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, originally published in 1925, is a novel riddled with themes, one that could be and has been criticized for many years. Woolf has much to say about society and the post-war changes, but a steady underlying theme in the book is feminism, the roles of women of the time period and their

seeming insignificance. The story is a day in the life of Clarissa Dalloway, who while planning a party, reflects on her life and feels as though much of it has been trivial. Woolf is saying this about the women of this era, that within the constraints of their social roles, their lives are trivial. Often subtle, a feminist tone is established from the very beginning. Clarissa has decided to go out to buy the flowers for the party herself as her maid has much work to do. She nearly immediately begins to think of Peter Walsh, her love from years ago that she had considered marrying. Considering Clarissa's memories of dialogue between herself and Peter, one might come to the conclusion that although he loved her, he did not conceal his feelings that Clarissa, as a female, was petty; but he would humor her. It is indicated within this text that he, as a man especially, had the capacity of mind to be concerned with far more important matter.

But Peter-however beautiful the day might be, and the trees and the grass, and the little girl in pink-Peter never saw a thing of all that. He would put on his spectacles, if she told him to; he would look. It was the state of the world that interested him; Wagner, Pope's poetry, people's characters eternally, and the defects of her own soul. How he scolded her! How they argued! She would marry a Prime Minister and stand at the top of a staircase; the perfect hostess he called her (she had cried over it in her bedroom), she had the makings of the perfect hostess, he said. (7)

In remembering this, Clarissa reassures herself that she had been right not to marry him.



It is as if Clarissa realizes that she is to be the property of some man, best she find the most tolerable of situations; "...this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa anymore; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway.(11)

Although the character of Clarissa is portrayed as a suppressed woman, there are indications in the novel that some women were beginning to take on roles of power. For instance, Lady Burton was a lady in a position of power.

Clarissa always said that Lady Burton did not like her. Indeed, Lady Burton had the reputation of being more interested in politics than people; of talking like a man; of having had a finger in some notorious intrigue of the eighties, which was now beginning to be mentioned in memoirs. Certainly there was an alcove in her drawing-room, and a table in that alcove, and photograph upon that table of General Sir Talbot Moore, now deceased, who had written there (one evening in the eighties) in Lady Burton's presence, with her cognizance, perhaps advice, a telegram ordering the British troops to advance upon an historical occasion. (She kept the pen and told the story.) (105-106)

On this day, Lady Burton was hosting a luncheon. The attendants were primarily men, outside of Miss Brush, her assistant. The occasion for this luncheon was business. The topic of discussion was Lady Burton's proposal for "a project for emigrating young people of both sexes born of respectable parents and setting them up with a fair prospect of doing well in Canada (108)

In an essay in regard to this small feminist reference within the novel, a student wrote that "Lady Burton's strong independence as a leader shows the movement towards tolerance of women being in power" (Anonymous Student allfreeessays.com) Not only did Lady Burton host this business luncheon with the gentlemen in attendance, but when Richard Dalloway asked if she would be at Clarissa's party, she wondered how Clarissa could throw parties. She thought about parties and how they frightened her. So, the idea set forth here is that not only could a woman take on acts and responsibilities that were traditionally masculine, but she could also reject those that were traditionally feminine.

Clarissa continues to reflect upon her past relationship with Peter Walsh throughout the day. Apparently she has some feelings that perhaps her life would have been something very different with Peter than with Richard, perhaps something more exciting. Elizabeth Abel writes, in *Narrative Structures and Female Development: The Case of Mrs. Dalloway*, "marriage in Mrs. Dalloway provides impetus rather than closure to the courtship plot, dissolved into a retrospective oscillation between two alluring possibilities as Clarissa continues to replay the choice she make thirty years before" (Abel, Elizabeth, 28).

Although Clarissa thinks deeply about the possibility of having married Peter, the most intensely emotional and romantic memories belong to Sally Seton. Having to admit her love for Sally to herself caused her some feelings of shame, undoubtedly imposed upon her by the societal standards of her time, at least in part. The description of Clarissa Dalloway and Sally Seton's relationship with each other as young women clearly allude to a lesbian attraction.

...the cold contract of man and woman or of women together. . . She resented it, had a scruple picked up heaven knows where, or, as she felt, sent by Nature; yet she could not resist sometimes yielding to the charm of a woman, not a girl, of a woman confessing, as to her they often did, some scrape, some folly. . . .their beauty, or that she was older, or some accident-like a faint scent, or a violin next door, she did undoubtedly then feel what men felt. Only for a moment; but it was enough....But this question of love, this falling in love with women her relation in the old days with Sally Seton. Had not that, after all, been love? (31-32)

But instead, as was socially expected of her, (a woman of her class especially) she had married Richard Dalloway and outwardly embraced a life of duty. She was a woman who had maintained her appearance, was mother to a daughter, and fulfilled her social obligations such as her role of hostess to parties. She perhaps could not admit to herself that this was not the life she desired as was the cause of her musings throughout this day.

The sense of a wife's duty is also demonstrated in the character of Lucrezia "Rezia" Warren Smith, wife of Septimus Smith (Said to be Clarissa's parallel character), the mentally disturbed soldier returned from the war. Rezia, although she loves her husband very much, and cannot imagine living without him, feels the burden of having to care for her ill husband. Doctors have either diagnosed him as having nothing wrong with him, or have not been able to care for him at all. Rezia finds herself in the role of constant caregiver, and begins to see her husband as less of a man.

For she could stand it no longer, Dr. Holmes might say there was nothing the matter. Far rather would say that they were dead! She could not sit beside him when she stared so and did not see her and made everything terrible; sky and tree. . . And he would not kill himself; and she could tell no one. Septimus has been working too hard"-that was all she could say to her own mother. To love makes one solitary, she thought. She could tell nobody, not even Septimus now, and looking back, she saw him sitting in his shabby overcoat alone, on the seat. . . And it was cowardly for a man to say himself, but Septimus had fought; he was brave; he was not Septimus now. (23)

The story, as it is being concluded, takes a turn when during the party when Lady Bradshaw arrived with the announcement that a young man, Septimus had killed himself. Clarissa became overcome with emotion about this, at first expressing it inwardly as anger "What business had the Bradshaw's to talk of death at her party? A young man had killed himself. And they talked of it at her party-the Bradshaw's, talked of death." (*Mrs. Dalloway*, 184). She then began to have more feelings, more scattered thoughts, as she wondered about the way he had done it, why he had done it. That if she died at this moment she would die happy. She went to the window and watched the woman across from her getting ready for bed (their eyes had met) and felt relief when she finally turned out her lights. Then she began to think again of the young man;

The young man had killed himself; but she did not pity him; with the clock striking the hour, one, two, three, she did not pity him, with all this going on...She felt somehow very like

him-the young man who killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it; thrown it away. The clock was striking. The leaden circles dissolved in the air. He made her feel the beauty; made her feel the fun. But she must go back. She must assemble. (186).

The death of Septimus had served a purpose for Clarissa. At first she wanted to keep the thought away from her party. She did not want to think of something such as death, as her life felt so small in comparison to that thought, a mere wife and party planner.

Many women of Clarissa Dalloway's days may have felt this way. Woolf commented even, in the writing of fiction how a man differs from that of a woman. No one will admit that he can possibly mistake a novel written by a man for a novel written by a woman. There is the obvious and enormous difference of experience in the first place...And finally...there rises for consideration the very difficult question of the difference between the man's and the woman's view of what constitutes the importance of any subject. From this story not only marked differences of plot and incident, but infinite differences in selection, method and style.

Then she embraced the thought and savored it, as it made her feel more alive, and allowed her to cherish and feel glad for the feelings of being alive, and the things that she had, although in her current state of mind, her life could be summed up as trivial, merely a wife and party planner.

### Chapter III: Failure of Clarissa Dalloway's Self

Virginia Woolf sees people having a dual existence, as an outer public life of conventional activity and an inner private life of secret zone. Each person has an inner world of images, memories, meanings, private feelings, and secret thought and unconscious desire. These hidden depths and this underlying reality receive many contradictory interpretations in Woolf's work. In her novel *Mrs. Dalloway*, this is what she has succeeded in doing. Woolf has discovered new technique for rendering the inner world of her characters. The narration of this novel jumps backward and forward between the story of Clarissa's party and the story of Septimus' death. Though they do not know each other till the end, the socialized lady and the obscure manic young man are in a sense the same person that is Septimus Smith as Clarissa's double, her inner self, and her essence.

Two opposing forces we have in the novel are on the one hand the force of life as it manifest itself in the nature of the individual, and on the other the force of the 'sense of proportion' based on dogma and arbitrariness and the far reaching implications, this may have. Both Clarissa and Septimus are imprisoned souls prevented from free development and full expression by the society of which they are members. Peter Walsh can notice this tendency within Clarissa, but that was not her fault, not her inborn instinct it was the society which made her woman that Peter hates but he knows that behind it.

He hadn't blame her for minding the fact, since in those days a girl brought up as she knew nothing, but it was her manner that annoyed him, timid, hard, arrogant, prudish. The death of a

soul? He had said that instinctively, ticketing the moment used to do-the death of her soul? (*Mrs. Dalloway*, 44)

Clarissa's real gifts are her vitality, her instinct, and her intuition. If she had been able to exercise this freely and naturally, all her other abilities and interests would have developed too. As this is not given to her, she devotes her talents and creative energies to an excessive preoccupation with her parties and social formalities and that is why they mean so much to her. In fact her social activities, the lunches, dinner, parties, tattle and all the finer faculties. Septimus shares Clarissa's fluctuation between her own world withdrawals i.e. towards social world. His 'Plunge' through the window like hers, represents a triumph over the fear that would keep both of them on the safe side of the window. When Clarissa heard about the suicide of Septimus by throwing himself from the window, in her party, she identified herself with Septimus. She feels, Septimus has in a sense died in her place. For she had felt the same terror of life, but she has sufficiently been protected, especially by her husband Richard Dalloway, symbol of social code. Clarissa had escaped by accepting the social notion of Richard, Dr. Holmes and Lady Burton. But the young man had killed himself. Paradoxically, Clarissa feels her survival as somehow her disaster and her disgrace, she thinks, "she had schemed, she had pilfered" (58). She was never wholly admirable. Thus, Clarissa accepts her own failure at the end.

On the other side, she felt somehow very like Septimus-the young man who had killed himself. She felt glad that he had done it, thrown it away while she went on living- this moment of perceived similarity and spiritual substitution between Clarissa and Septimus. Peter's memory of Clarissa coming downstairs in a white dress and had a vision of Clarissa's falling dead where she stood in her drawing room. But it is Septimus who in a sense dies at that time. But Peter's vision is true, with Septimus'

death all Clarissa's essence also died leaving her like a mere ghost of a respectable woman. In this connection Clarissa and Septimus are not separate and individualized characters, but opposite phases of an idea of life itself. They are 'one and the same person'.

According to Kristeva it is not the biological sex of a person but the subject position she or he takes up that determines their revolutionary potential as a masculinist and feminist. Here, Kristeva's feminism echoes the position taken up by Virginia Woolf some sixty years than her. Woolf has understood that the goal of the feminist struggle must precisely be to deconstruct the death dealing binary oppositions of masculinity and femininity. Reading from this perspective, Septimus is a radical feminist, though he is a male by biological point of view. He rejects the society altogether that rules under the law of the father totally.

Septimus is a victim of patriarchy. He had left the homes as boy and educated himself in public libraries. Actually his growth is a process of breaking away from the mother and assimilation to the locus of the father. He works within capitalism, for firm of auctioneer, values and estate, agent, and finally goes to war in which he developed manliness. Bu in this final stage of his cultivation of 'masculinity', he senses the worthlessness of social values and broken down completely from his previous notion of life i.e. in the war itself he lost all his faith on human rationality. He could not resist his natural instinct anymore and his obsession that 'one must be scientific' represents his imperative thinking towards the rationality of the patriarchal civilization. From this perspective all the wordily activities are meaningless for him, "It might be possible, Septimus thought, looking at England from the train window, as they left Newhaven, it might be possible that the world itself without meaning" (115).



Septimus cannot see any beauty on the earth only cruel crowd and heartless existence of so called human being around him, and he knows very well that all these are due to the social superficiality, which suppressed his natural instincts and restricted his feelings:

He looked at people outside, happy they seemed, collecting in the middle of the street, shouting, laughing, and squabbling over nothing. But he could not taste, he could not feel. In the tea shop among tables and the chattering waiters the appalling fear come over him- he could not feel. He could add up his bill, his brain was perfect, it must be the fault of thee world then that he could not feel. (114)

He totally refuses to acknowledge the society and invokes a Shakespearean loathing of the sordid of the mouth and the belly. He rejects his wife's wish to have a son, "She must have a son like Septimus, she said" (116). Thus, the refusal to procreate is also a refusal of his symbolic order. Septimus refuse to take the final step into patriarchy by becoming a father himself. He does not want to continue this social system by becoming himself a father of a son: "One cannot bring children into a world like this. One cannot perpetrate suffering, or increase the breed of these lustful animals, who have no lasting emotions but only whims and vanities, eddying them now this way not that" (116).

Septimus wishes to retrieve the maternal, which the name- of the father forbids. With the breakdown of the symbolic and the return of the repressed- 'semiotic'. That is unorganized, pre-linguistic, flux of movement and jester, Septimus loses the capacity for communication though, he know very well that communication is everything in the world and life without communications is impossible,

“communication is health, communication is happiness, communication, he muttered” (24). His talking to himself, hearing voices which do not exist, hearing birds sing in Greek all are regarded abnormal behavior into the eye of the society. But for Septimus, communication as the exchange of the sign is made possible only within the symbolic order through the split in the subject, which is established by the intervention of phallus in the unity with the mother is the means of social restriction for the free expression of soul. The society, the name-of-the- father, upholds does not leave one alone. It drives a wedge between subject and the maternal body, signifier and signified. And any person who tries to bring this unconscious into surface runs the great risk to put her or himself in a position of revolt against the regime and cannot survive in the society. This Septimus has done by the total rejection of the patriarchal law and perishes from the world.

As described by Kristeva, between the original love for mother and the patriarchal repression of this love in the social order- rational order, one can express the real feeling and emotions freely. And madness is the partial escape from the world and to be free from this confused situation and barriers one has to embrace the death. Thus, for Septimus death is an attempt to communicate, which is not possible in this world of sane people like Bradshaw, Mr. Dalloway and Dr. Holmes. “Your brute ! Cried Septimus, seeing human nature, that is Dr. Holmes enter the room” (*Mrs. Dalloway*, 122).

Septimus could not tolerate the intervention and unwanted social burden imposed upon him and dies by jumping from the window. The window is used repeatedly as a symbol of looking outside. And leap from the windows is regarded steps towards center. In order to penetrate to the center, like Septimus, one must either

die or go mad, or in some other way lose one's humanity or has to liberate oneself from the physical world in order to exist independently without being split.

Actually, Clarissa does not want to kill her essence and by different means she tries to save it but society does not allow her to live with her essence as a woman. For the sake of 'society' i.e. 'human nature', she has to kill her essence, sacrifice herself for the community where she lives. Sally, being her most intimate friend, inspiration of life to save her from the havoc of society tries and thinks:

...to carry off Clarissa, to save her from the Hugh's and Dalloway's and all the other 'perfect gentlemen' who would 'stifle her soul' (she wrote reams of poetry in those days), make a mere hostess of her, encourage her worldliness. But one must do Clarissa justices (98).

Thus, at the end of her struggle Clarissa has to lose her soul, though physically she is leading a prosperous life.

Clarissa as a woman tries her best to create her own female world without breaking away from traditional notion of woman's decency. In real sense, she is a practical woman not just a radical thinker as Septimus. Clarissa is very much aware of her marginalized position as a woman in the patriarchal society. But cannot dare to go beyond these social norms for the creation of her own world. Instead, she wants to erase all social boundaries by remaining within the same boundaries created by male.

Before marriage, Clarissa had an interest in nature, in literature, in politics, even read Shelly, Morris, Huxley and Tyndall, but after marriage and becoming Mrs. Dalloway in London at the center of the social swirl, has put an end to all this interests. Marriage for Clarissa is a process of socialization and assimilation with the

norms of patriarchal society. And she knowingly does all this because she wants to enjoy life. Clarissa is a skeptic, she is not surprised or afraid of her lady like position, and has come to consider life the whole as 'a bad joke'. In this bitter situation also what sustains her charm is the fact that in spite of her thought about life being a bad joke and her suppressed self, 'there is no bitterness in her'. Clarissa thinks it is the price paid of respectable life and accepts the whole system as it is.

Clarissa's rejection of Peter Walsh's proposal of marriage is a rejection of male authority over female. In giving up Peter, Clarissa renounced the passionate intimacy he would have demanded. Though she loves Peter truly, she leaves him for the sake of her position in the society which, she gains after her marriage with Richard Dalloway. In this sense, Clarissa is very practical woman, who sacrifices her emotion, pleasure and even love for her own identity. But emotionally she always had a sense of guilt and sometime, somewhere in her life feels regression on the choice of marriage with Richard Dalloway. She still cares for Peter's views, wants him to think well of her and was grieved when she heard about his marriage. And that news wound her feminine pride badly.

Clarissa will tolerate a relationship with a man like Richard, who is less demanding and plays a purely protective role for her. Marriage with Richard is a kind of compromise with world on the one hand and at the same time on the other, the only means to fulfill her inner urge to be the subject in the society. In short it is marriage to palliate insufficiency within her. Peter Walsh can understand this situation easily when he saw Richard Dalloway.

Clarissa is not ready to give up her self- respect and freedom to others in any cost even to her husband. She knew instinctively that the mild Richard would be safer

than the passionate and demanding Peter Walsh. She did not mind Richard's 'second class' brain because she knew he would not make demand on her. Peter wanted the whole of her and that is what for Clarissa was 'intolerable' and could not marry him.

When Richard comes in holding flowers, Clarissa thinks:

And there is a dignity in people, as solitude, even between husband and wife a gulf and that one must respect, thought, Clarissa watching him open the door, for one would not part with it oneself, or take it, against his will, from one's husband, without losing one's independence, one's self- respect- something after all, priceless. (156)

Clarissa manages to convert even Peter into a protective spirit while he is away but when he appears near to her, he changes from defender to invader and Clarissa reacts to his entrance with the excessive indignation and his interruption always provokes her. Peter's pocketknife is a phallic symbol incorporating at the threat Clarissa attaches to sex, as well as an emblem of his habitual behavior towards her breaking into her privacy, lacerating her with criticism, and rippling open the civilized surface of life that protects her from emotion:

For Heaven's sake, leave your knife alone! She cried to herself in irrepressible irritation, it was his silly unconventionality, his weakness, his lack of the ghost of a notion what anyone else was feeling that annoyed, had always annoyed her, and now at his age, how silly! (59)

The first page of the novel poses the two polar images of Clarissa's existence. Her 'plunge' into the open air signifies her immersion in the whole life, represented by the ocean, when her submerged life appears benevolent 'kissing' her as it envelops her. But the opposite emotion, fear of "something awful about to happen" holds her

back. A dread of life's dangers leads her to take refuge within the house, separated from the wholeness of life by the window. Throughout the book the window stands for separation and the ocean for the totality of existence. "What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Burton into the open air" (3).

These two polar of Clarissa's life are represented by Lady Burton and Sally Seton. These two women reflected both class conflict in the society and conflict within Clarissa's life, which is her emotional world and social world.

Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway is a woman of great charm, feminine delicacy, genuine, kindness and has a true concern for her friends. But because of her excessive stress on social formalities, she would sometimes make people feel ill at ease even frighten them. Miss Kilman always criticizes Clarissa's this mannerism.

Lady Burton is 'fixed', 'trenched' and 'frozen' in the posture of symbolic order. In contrast, refusing traditional feminine passivity, Sally Seton always performs some daring feat. 'She ...ran along the passage naked bicycled round the parapet on the terrace, smoked cigars' (50). And for that is all the frankness, boldness and courage of challenge, from the bottom of her heart Clarissa loved Sally so much as precious gift of her whole life.

Sally Seton, Clarissa's best friend and her ideal repudiates the aristocratic code of Lady Burton. Worst of all, she has 'married beneath her' in the eye of the society, married a miner's son who has becomes a wealthy industrialist. To secure the respectable place in the society Clarissa adopts Lady Burton's rigidity by being timid,

hard, arrogant, prudish and inscrutable in the society. She eventually rejects Sally for marrying beneath her class and Clarissa rejects the country gentleman's misalliance.

In the process of being socialized, Clarissa gives the signal for her life's direction, away from Sally, a source of vitality and passion of her inner-self, towards the deadening aristocratic society of Lady Burton, just for the sake of her social status in the symbolic order. But with Sally Seton, there is some affinities which Clarissa can sense instinctively and care a lot of Sally's opinion about her. Clarissa cannot ignore Sally throughout her life.

Only in her attic can Clarissa let herself truly be Clarissa that is or in other words eliminates momentarily the censor that keeps the real Clarissa repressed. Instinctively she evokes in the attic, her love for Sally Seton, the only time it was almost expressed which is her emotional world.

The strange, of her feeling, on looking back, was the purity, the integrity, of her feeling for Sally. It was not like one's feeling for a man. It was completely disinterested, and besides, it had a quality which could remember standing in her bedroom at the top of the house holding, the hot water can in her hands and saying aloud, she is beneath this roof. . . That was her feeling- all because she was coming down to dinner in a white frock to meet Sally Seton! (44).

Clarissa's feeling for Sally seemed to her 'pure'. Nor does she see anything wrong in her feeling for woman when she thinks them in her attic. These feelings spring from her innermost nature and therefore for her these feelings are right, so right in fact that for the fleeting moment she let herself yield to them. And they obliterate all the principles she maintains in her life, outside, the attic. She never consciously

examines these feeling in the light of her principles. The genteel background of her upbringing it, purity, the conceptions of propriety, modesty and all the possessions of social codes are so deeply ingrained in her consciousness that she unlocks her natural instinct as soon as again she has to face the world, which most of the time she has to do by being superficial, wearing the mask of perfect hostess.

Clarissa instinctively feels that she will be safe as long as she lives by the tenets of her society and this is why she adheres to them so persistently, holds herself upright, loves success, care for rank and society and hates frumps, fogies and failure. Thus for survival Clarissa cannot save her soul from being splintered into two worlds. Throughout the novel Clarissa is an inscrutable personality. Her most intimate friend Peter Walsh also has never had an idea of what stirs in Clarissa's soul. He only can dimly perceive that there is something the matter with it but does not know what it is. When Peter thinks of Clarissa he finds her 'cold' 'prude' and 'inscrutable'. Actually no one knows the repressed self of Clarissa in the mask of a 'Perfect Hostess'. Clarissa is very possessive regarding the privacy of her soul and even Peter Walsh was not allowed to move in this private zone of Clarissa. Only Sally Seton being a close female friend of Clarissa detects that lack within Clarissa, which Clarissa desperately try to fulfill by marrying a man with a completely different taste.

But- did Peter understand? She lacked something. Lacked what was it? She had charm, she had extraordinary charm. But to be frank (and she felt that Peter was an old friend, a real friend- did distance matter? Did distance matter? She had often wanted to write to him, but torn it up, yet felt he understood, for people understand without things being said... to be quite frank, then how could Clarissa have done it. Married Richard Dalloway? A sportsman, a man who cared only for dogs.



Literally, when he came into the room he smelt of the stables. And then all this? She waved her hand (247-8).

Clarissa thinks of marriage always a catastrophe, but she knew that the social code demanded that she should marry. Without marriage she can have no place in the society. In this sense Clarissa takes marriage as the means of self-protection:

It was protective, on her side, sprang from a sense of being in league together, a presentiment of something that was bound to part them (they spoke of marriage always catastrophe), which led to this chivalry, this protective feeling which was much more on her side than Sally's. (44)

Clarissa wants to be the central of her social circle, wants to be known by her own name. She does not feel shame to acknowledge her identity as a woman Like Miss Kilman, Clarissa never tries to be a man, she never negates her femaleness. For this reason Clarissa hates Miss Kilman. In Miss Kilman, Clarissa sees the image of man, as strong maleness. Though Miss Kilman also wants to challenge the patriarchy by being herself a male, negating her female weakness Clarissa thinks this is not the way to challenge patriarchy. Instead Clarissa wants to adopt that old lady's privacy opposite to her house, free and lonely from social pressures to whom she use to watch through her window. They have been neighbor for so many years but do not acknowledge each other or in Clarissa's case, she has been forced to stay far from that old lady by means of time, love and religion all manmade notion of the society. The old Lady represents the soul of Clarissa which, Clarissa wishes to follow and always feel danger from humanity i.e. Miss Killman's religion and Peter's Love that claims they have solved that mystery but Clarissa is not ready to believe it.

How extraordinary it was, strange, yes touching to see to old lady moving away from the window, as if she were attached to that sound, that string. . . Clarissa tried to follow her as she turned and disappeared, and could still just see her white cap moving at the back of the bedroom. Why creeds and prayers and mackintoshes? And the supreme mystery which Kilman might say she had solved, or Peter might say he had solved, but Clarissa didn't believe either of them had the ghost of an idea of solving, was simply this, her was one room, Did the religion solve that or love. (166-7)

On the other, Clarissa cannot totally reject patriarchy. She knew if she does so it would be a grievous mistake on her side and can create the existential problem. Thus, she has to choose one catastrophe 'marriage' to avoid another catastrophe i.e. 'death'.

Bearing his flowers like a weapon, Richard Dalloway approached her, intent he passed her, still there was time for a spark between them- she laughed at the sight of him, she smiled good humorously, considering the problem of the female vagrant, not that they would ever speak. But he would tell Clarissa that he loved her, in so many words, he had, once upon a time been jealously true, and she wanted support. Not that she was weak, but wanted support (152).

But as a husband she did not choose Peter Walsh because he is more demanding than Richard and that is not acceptable for Clarissa. She thinks, "For in marriage a little license, a little independence there must be which again, in Clarissa's case is much more necessary than in others which is achieved after marriage" (112).

Clarissa has a great self-respect and she is ready to live by repressing her emotions, by giving up all pleasure, love and sentiment but cannot live losing her self-respect, even in front of her husband.

Yet Mrs. Dalloway feels herself misnamed within her culture. Because of this situation there is emptiness about the heart of her life, an attic room, which can be seen in her attitude but in front of others she appears inscrutable.

Like a nun withdrawing, or a child exploring a tower, she went, upstairs, paused at the window, and came to the bathroom. There was the green linoleum and a tap dripping. There was about the heart of life, an attic room. Women must put off their rich apparel. At midday they must disrobe. She pierced the pincushion and laid her feathered bellow white bound from side (39).

With the pass of time Clarissa compelled to change her notion that sharply contrast with her early thinking. But adopting this social notion, Clarissa cannot satisfy her soul because this matured notion is superficial, imposed by the society not natural and spontaneous. She always takes her present situation as compromise for survival.

Inscrutability is something that is taken as women's virtue, charm and ornaments. Women cannot express themselves freely and openly, they are not free to express their emotions in-front of others frankly. If they do so they are taken as mad out casted from the respectable circle of the society. Being a social woman Clarissa also accepts this notion:

That was devilish part of her – this coldness, this woodenness, something very profound in her, which he had felt again this morning

talking to her, an impenetrability. Yet Heaven knows he loved her. She had some queer power of fiddling on ones' nerves, turning one's nerves to fiddle-string, yes. (79)

In this way Peter also praises her social grace though, he hates her 'perfect hostess' like manner.

## Chapter IV: Conclusion

### Spiritual Death of Clarissa

Clarissa Dalloway, in the novel *Mrs. Dalloway* is characterized by the deadness of spirit. She is something more than an image of 'the British ruling class'. Moreover, she comes to embody Virginia Woolf's criticism of the life of women of that class. Though outwardly Clarissa is very attractive, brilliant and satisfied, her deep inadequacy, a grave insistence upon the dissipation and death of her spirit in glittering triviality is the reality of her existence. Clarissa Dalloway is shown to be of not much interest in herself, she has to offer only a sharp awareness of the surface of her world and its people. She is a living image of the surface of the society. Mrs. Dalloway by the very naming is the marginalized character who is prevented from natural growth in the superficial world of man.

Mrs. Dalloway's society in the novel represents the patriarchal society. The world of Mrs. Dalloway, Dr. Holmes, Lady Burton and Dr. Whitbread where other than male has no right to express their feelings. 'Patriarchy' in the novel does not mean something abstract or simply inherent in a family structure, it means the rule of an oppressive state power that has its spokesman Bradshaw, telling people whether they are well or not in the name of 'proportion', or Richard Dalloway pronouncing on poetry and on its dangerous emotional or sexual charge.

For Woolf as for Freud, unconscious drives and desires constantly exert a pressure on our conscious thought and action. Indeed Septimus can be seen as the negative parallel to Clarissa Dalloway, who herself steers clear of the threatening gulf of madness only at the price of repressing her passions and desire, becoming a cold but brilliant woman highly admired in patriarchal society. Madness, suicide and

coldness imply the price paid for non-recognizing the presence of otherness with the unitary self. In this way Woolf disclose the dangers of the invasion of unconscious pulsion in a person. And as well as the price paid by that person maintaining a precarious balance between an overestimation of so-called 'feminine' madness and too precipitate reflection of the values of the symbolic order. This is the inevitable destiny of women like Clarissa in male made society.

Clarissa Dalloway, protagonist of this novel has every talent that a person is endowed by nature. But she is compelled to get her all potentialities confined within the sphere of domesticity that she vainly tries to fulfill by being a perfect hostess in the party. However the most telling aspect is that she cannot get the answer that for whom and for what the party has been organized so far. As Kristeva's theory of feminism insists that woman should persist in challenging the notion of perfect hostess of the society by remaining with the same notion, not breaking away from the prevailing notion of the society, Clarissa can be considered epitome of this very line. Kristeva thinks any subject who tries to go beyond the boundaries that society has fixed for them cannot exist in the society. It means no one can survive by breaking away completely from the notion of the patriarchal society. And if they cannot exist in the society, how can they change the notion of the society towards women? This is the reason that Clarissa cannot dare to go against the role of women as a 'perfect hostess'. Instead, she tries to change the status of women by remaining with the same boundary created by male.

Clarissa is ambitious and wants to rule over the society as a woman. She wants people to praise her and to respect her, she wants to stand on the top of the social order as female to whom society despises a weaker sex and her role as a 'Perfect Hostess' of the society just as a lower servant like work, that has no value in the

society. Clarissa's goal in life is to subvert this thinking. She challenges the social notion regarding woman as an object. And at the end of the story she succeeds to meet her lifelong ambition. The Prime Minister, who is the symbol of the center of social hierarchy, comes as a guest at her party. Thus, Clarissa brings the whole social structure at her feet without breaking away from the very same patriarchal notion. Therefore, the parties become the resource to occasion the aura which grants a perennial offering to herself, to the maintenance of her personal, delicate equilibrium, which is extremely necessary for her survival. This all is the external reality of Clarissa Dalloway's existence that can be seen very easily by each and every from the society.

But Clarissa in the natural light of her feminine conscience is very different from what she appears in the light of social dogma at the party being a successful and highly praised 'Perfect Hostess'. In the attic of her house we get the glimpse of her true 'self' that most of the time she locks up to be able to face the world. Her house's attic is the only place where she lets herself truly be Clarissa, that is, she can eliminate momentarily the censor which keeps the real Clarissa repressed behind the mask of 'Perfect Hostess', who cares a lot for social values and appears in front of people timid, hard arrogant, prudish and cold in manner. Clarissa is not cold at all by nature. Rather it is the genteel background of her upbringings. Indeed, the prudery, the conceptions of propriety, decorum and all the paraphernalia of social codes are so deeply ingrained in her conscious mind that she instinctively represses her true and real natural inclination for nearly all the time and shuts them up in a compartment of her consciousness.

Due to this phenomenon of self-repression Clarissa strongly felt the lack of identity and belongingness. Like a fly trapped in cobweb she also trapped and pressed

beneath the burden of social superficial notion. Clarissa is aware that she cannot conquer them but still accepts the challenge for the creation of her own world beyond male domination. It is not Clarissa who is culprit but still she hides her face behind the mask of 'Perfect Hostess'. She quietly shed tears and dies inside, and unseen crucifixion of her spirit.

At the party when Clarissa heard the news of Septimus' suicide, she identifies herself with him. Thus, at the pinnacle of her success, Clarissa feels the hollowness of her existence. With the death of Septimus all the essence, vitality and spirit of Clarissa also vanishes leaving her empty from inside. Though a highly admired figure by all, she cannot feel any flare of triumph in her success.

Due to the patriarchal social norms, Clarissa has been compelled to repress her natural inclination, her wish to have a free space of her own, just like the old lady opposite to her house whose presence throughout her life Clarissa avoids to acknowledge. But at the end Clarissa could not repress her lifelong desire to secure this space within her because it is her most beautiful fantasy, i.e. crude and untamed 'self' repressed but not completely obliterated by the superficial notion of the society. In contrast, all her social grace, position in the society and previous values are superficial and traditional. Thus with the acknowledgement of the reality Clarissa concludes her life spiritually dead though, physically she is alive.



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