

CHAPTER ONE

Virginia Woolf: A Debated but Successful Novelist

1.1 Introduction

Virginia Woolf was a prominent woman writer of early 20's when the women writers and their writings were in minority and were in crisis to define themselves. The males novelists and poets mostly dominated the literary field. Woolf had to face many kinds of hindrances only because she was a woman. In such time, she established herself as an artistic innovator, a champion of women's rights and an activist for social change. Woolf (1882-1941), was a British novelist, essayist, and critic, who has played important role in the field of English literature.

She belongs to the school of "Stream of Consciousness" writers who showed courage to be different from tradition and gave new form to spiritual awareness. Woolf's novels, however, emphasized pattern of consciousness rather than sequences of events in the external world. Influenced by the works of French writer Marcel Proust and Irish writer James Joyce, among others, Woolf strove to create a literary form that would convey inner life. To this end, she elaborated a technique known as 'stream of consciousness'. Her popularity can be praised not only as a novelist but also as a critic of great insight and sound literary judgment. Her novel *To the Lighthouse* received the Prix Femina award in 1928 and it has remained her most persistently praised book.

In Woolf's fictions, plot is generated by the inner lives of the characters. Psychological effect is achieved through the use of imagery, symbol, and metaphor. Characters are exposed by flow of personal feelings and thoughts. Being a woman she gives

us woman's perspective in her novels. Hence, the female characters in *To the Lighthouse* are more than male and the role of female characters are shown stronger than male.

Woolf's characters were drawn largely from her own experience, and her own affluent, intellectual, upper middle class. Woolf had several major concern other than her expressed desire to represent consciousness. She saw human sensibility close to nature and art. So the most memorable character, such as Lily Briscoe, and Mrs. Ramsay in *To the Lighthouse* (1927), are very close to nature.

However, Woolf has contributed English literature with her best novels like *The Voyage Out* (1915), *Night and Day* (1919), *Jacob's Room* (1922), *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927), *The Waves* (1931), *The Years* (1937), *Between the Acts* (1941), and *Orlando* (1948). Besides novels, Woolf also published many essays.

As a female writer, Woolf rejected the conventional conception of the novel. She adopted the method of psychological truth and aimed at expressing in her novels, the sensibility of the characters. About this matter William Troy states:

The subjective mode is the only, mode especially designed for temperaments immersed in their own sensibility, obsessed with its instability. It was the only mode possible for someone like Proust; it was alone capable of projecting the sensibility which, because it has remained so uniform throughout her work, we may be permitted to call Mrs Woolf's own. (qtd in Beja 86)

Thus, Woolf was a highly conscious examiner of consciousness, a bold and original experimenter with the technique of novel-writing.

1.2 Review of Literature

Virginia Woolf's novel *To the Lighthouse* was published in 1927. It was accepted by different people of the society. The novel became very popular. Some reviewers admired the novel. This work has been highly criticized, too. Regarding the critical view of the time, Morris Beja states:

To the Lighthouse is as elastic as a novel can be. It has no plot, though it has a scheme and a motive; it shows characters in outline rather than in the round; and while it depends almost entirely on the passing of time, it expands or contracts the time very freely. The first and longest part of the book is almost stationary, and describes a party of people gathered in the summer at a house on the Scottish coast. James, the youngest of the Ramsay children, is thwarted of a visit to the Lighthouse. (74)

At the time of publication, the novel faced bad comments. Reid quotes Leavis's attack on Woolf career, in the introduction of *Case Book Series* as "one misguidedly directed towards writing about vague experiences in the mind" (1). Even E. M. Forster wrote, in his memorial lecture, that she "dreams, designs, jokes, invokes, observes details but perhaps could not tell a story or weave a plot or create a character" (qtd in Reid 1). But after the year 1975, the critics in angulated new ways of reading the novel, after which Woolf started earning a universal fame and popularity. Now her work is considered a serious work of literature, which drew the attention of many critics and readers alike. The novel is often regarded as Woolf's greatest work. In this connection Morris Beja, in the introduction of *Case Book* states:

To the Lighthouse is in fact her best book, one finds it hard to pin down its appeal for anyone who cannot stomach the rest of her work. *To the Lighthouse* is, after all, though not the same old things, not a typical either; actually, none of her books is the same old thing, each is in some measure an experimental departure from her previous efforts. (17)

Many critics regarded this book as the best book of Woolf. For F. R. Leavis, “it is not merely her ‘best novel’, but her ‘only good one’”. (qtd in Beja 11). However, critics like David Lodge, as remarks Su Reid, discusses the modern writing of the novel:

David lodge, as remarks Su Ried, discusses the modern writing of the novel:

Lodge’s idea is that this use of metaphor contrast with ‘realist’ narratives, those that appear more obviously to describe real events and places existing outside the text. ‘Realist writing, he argues, displays fewer metaphors in its language and a greater preponderance of metonymy. (3)

To David Lodge, Virginia Woolf takes her work as an example of ‘modernism’. It is use of metaphor and symbolism. He also thinks that Woolf sees her novels, each constructed differently from the others, as becoming progressively more reliant on metaphor.

Critic John Mepham makes a reading of the text in the narrative dimension. He says,

Moreover the narration can bring fictional things and events into relations which they do not have in the fiction. For example it can figuratively relate them to one another. Of course figurative relations can also exist in the fiction, in the fictional subjective order, in which case the narration attributes this figurative connection together at things to a fictional subject. (qtd in Reid 35)

Whereas, Elizabeth Abel is concerned with the psychoanalytical theory of the text. She sees the novel not only tells the parallel but also contrasting oedipal story of Cam. Abel defines the novel as feminist novel too. She suggests that Woolf is an independent working-out of theories parallel to Freud's. Abel says:

Cam is Woolf's most literal narrative counterpart, her self portrait as her father's daughter, yet she is powerfully, though erratically, submerged. Minimally outlined in part I, Cam nevertheless joins finale in part III-and yet, as such a shadowy, attenuated presence that it is not clear why she is included. The arrival at the lighthouse caps James drama exclusively. Cam has never desired this journey and drifts suspended between the text's dual resolution: the arrival of the light house and the completion of Lily's paintings. (qtd in Reid 114)

A major aspect of the debate which Beer sees as central to *To the Lighthouse* is a series of question about the identity of the writer or thinker, her reputation and its survival and her independence on humbler men.

There are controversies among the critics about the book *To the Lighthouse*, for they agree that there is no single exclusive way of looking at this novel. There are essential ambiguities within the novel that have led to many different interpretation of the novel as a whole. David Daiches in his essay "The Semitransparent Envelope" (1942) says:

Two years after Mrs. Dalloway there appeared the book which marks the perfection of Virginia Woolf's art: *To the Lighthouse*. Here, instead of taking of a group of characters in upper middle class London society and wringing some rarefied meaning out of their states of mind, she keeps her characters

throughout the novel on an island in the Hebrides, an island unparticularized and remote, which, by its setting and associations, helps her to break down the apparent concreteness of character and events into that 'luminous halo' which for her was the most adequate symbol of life. (qtd in Beja 90)

To Daiches, the theme of the whole book is symbolic, in its implication "[...] group of people temporarily isolated from the rest of society on this remote island represents a microcosm of society" (qtd in Beja 93). Sharon Kaechele on the other hand, analyzes the book on the basis of one single symbol, that is, the lighthouse. He regards the symbol of lighthouse as a single unifying force of the book. He views that:

The diversity of interpretation among critics of *To the Lighthouse* suggests that, in this case, a discernible 'single vision' may be lacking. Yet we feel that a careful reading of the three parts of the novel with attention to details of character, action and imagery will reveal how successfully Mrs. Woolf has combined these diverse themes into a unified whole. The unity can best be shown by an analysis of the lighthouse symbol in part I and of Lily Briscoe's in part III. Mrs. Woolf's ability to concentrate so much of her meaning in a symbol and an episode is dependent upon a careful use of pattern of details. (qtd in Beja 189)

John Graham, in the book, *Critics on Virginia Woolf*, regards 'symbolism' in *To the Lighthouse* as the unifying and vitalizing principle of the whole book. He opines:

Sea images, colour images, the association of memory, recurrent verbal patterns, all serve to spin around the actual events a subtle web of interrelated meanings. The structure also is significant, the first section is called 'The

Window’, and image associated, as we have seen, with the individual’s vision of life; the second, ‘Time Passes’, portrays the assault of time on the integrity of that vision; and in third, ‘The Lighthouse’, the vision is triumphantly reaffirmed. Furthermore, he says, ‘the lighthouse is the central symbol of the book, and what it means depends on who is looking at it: it has no single limited meaning, hence its power as a symbol’. (qtd in Latham 33)

Another critic John Hawley Roberts in discusses about the design of the novel. He believes that the book is an attempt to make form and meaning one. He states that

The novel, with its loose structure, can have within a single work criticism of life, moral or religious or social teaching, and manners, any one of which may have been the immediate cause for the writing of the novel. Nevertheless, Fry insists, if there is any aesthetic effect, it does not arise from these ulterior purposes but from the 'creation of structures which have for us a feeling of reality, and ... these structures are self contained, self sufficing, and not to be valued by their reference to what lies outside'. (qtd in Latham 65)

The book has another very important dimension that is the expression of the relationship of the characters. Considering this aspect of the novel Andrew Sanders in the book *The Short Oxford History of English Literature* remarks:

The momentary reaction, the impermanent emotion, the ephemeral stimulus, the random the suggestion, and the dissociated thought are effectively ‘bent’ into a stylistic relationship to something coherent and structured. A ‘coherence in things’ is what Mrs. Ramsay recognizes in a visionary, and

quasi-religious, moment of peace in *To the Lighthouse* as ‘a stability . . . something . . . immune from change’. (516)

Critic Erich Auerbach not only places Mrs. Woolf within modern tradition but helps clarify her position within the entire sweep of western literature. He regards the book as a great work because it represents the reality.

[...] the exterior events have actually lost their hegemony, they serve to release and interpret inner events, whereas before her time (and still today in many instances) inner movement preponderantly function to prepare and motivate significant exterior happening. This too is apparent in the randomness and contingency of the exterior occasion (looking up because James does not keep his foot still), which releases the much more significant inner process. (qtd in Beja 120)

James Hefley is primarily interested in her ideas as they are given definition by her technique (qtd in Beja 25). He writes:

Most critics consider *To the Lighthouse* Virginia Woolf’s masterpiece, meaning because of the technical ability it displays, the unity of effects, masterful structure. Often it is described in the words with which Lily Briscoe thinks of her painting: ‘Beautiful and bright it should be on the surface, feathery and evanescent, one colour melting into another like the colours on a butterfly’s wing; but beneath the fabric must be clamped together with bolts of iron. It was to be a thing you could ruffle with your breath; and a thing you could not dislodge with a team of horses’. This novel also fulfils, in the use to which it puts its materials, Lily’s postimpressionistic intention that ‘one

wanted . . . to be on level with ordinary experience, to feel simply that's a chair, that's a table, and yet the same time, It's a miracle, It's an ecstasy'. As she was finishing this novel, Virginia Woolf considered it by far her best-more subtle and human than *Jacob's Room* or *Mrs. Dalloway*, more interesting , more successful in method. (qtd in Beja 147)

Joseph Blotner tries to make associations between *To the Lighthouse* and ancient literature. He raises significant issues about the role of myth in literature and criticism giving her priority to the role of Mrs. Ramsay and compares her with mythic characters, he chalks out a mythical prospective to the text stating that:

Woolf's concept of woman's role in life is crystallized in the character of Mrs. Ramsay, whose attributes are those of major female figures in pagan myth. The most useful myth for interpreting the novel is that of the Primordial Goddess, who 'is three fold in relation to Zeus: mother (Rhea), wife (Demeter), and daughter (Persephone). (qtd in Beja 169)

From the review of literature it can be concluded that in the past scholars have approached the text symbolically, technically and thematically. And they have held a view of Woolf being one of the important 20th century novelists. Though these critics took *To the Lighthouse* as one of the notable creations of modern time, they developed their views basing merely upon the external features of the novel. The fact is that, the intricacy of the novel can only be unveiled if it is reviewed about human consciousness and relation. The book is to be analyzed seriously for she shows the relation of human consciousness and social activities.

Therefore, this study intends to make an analysis of Woolf's novel, *To the Lighthouse* on the basis of Woolf as a feminist writer of early 20's when the dominant writers were male.

Except few female faces like Dorothy Richardson, Miss Humphrey Ward, Elizabeth Bowen, Katherine Mansfield, all literature and literary modes were led by the males. But the modern and the post-modern writings have introduced female writers with their own identities. The special emphasis will be given to Virginia Woolf's novel, *To the Lighthouse* on the contrast between illusion and reality.

Though Woolf's novel *To the Lighthouse* is examined using different critical perspectives, the issue of "contrast" as a dominant metaphor of the text has been overlooked by the critics. That is why, her novel is to be examined closely and the problematic of contrast as an emerging phenomenon has to be discussed. What kind of contrast she is representing the whole gender, is there a gender problem, how does she deal with complexities of human relation and what are the main problems she casts light on, which are the grounds on which she builds the contrast of reality and illusion, how does she apply her own philosophical relation in her own novel. Whether she is successful to show the human relation or not, are the questions that are to be answered to the best possible extend.

The method of the research will be a close thematic analysis with especial and extensive attention to Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay who are representing contrast of reality and illusion and their relationship. Therefore, the thesis will be an analysis of the relation of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay which Virginia Woolf wanted to raise in her fiction *To the Lighthouse*.

CHAPTER TWO

Virginia Woolf and Modernism

2.1 Background

Virginia Woolf was a leading modernist. The modernists wrote in a radically different way than the writers of the preceding generations. They left behind the more traditional form of representing reality as they saw it. The rise of modernism was due to the changing spirit of the time. Dorothy Richardson in her "review of *Revolving Lights*" states, "[...] the spirit of the age was one of the change. Not only was there a philosophical shift in man's concept of himself and reality, but change moved on all levels from the historical to the personal" (qtd in Richter 125).

Woolf was very sensitive to these spirits of her age. She shows its effects on fiction and in a series of her essays. In her works she illuminates the problems faced by the writers of her time and offers a remarkable prophesy of literary forms to come. In her essay *Mr. Bonnet and Mrs. Brown*, she states, "All human relations have shifted—those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change, there is at same time a change in religion, conduct, politics and literature" (Bowlby 71).

Due to these changes the form and style of writing also have changed. Hervana Richter in her book *The Inward Voyage* states:

The Edwardian novelist, especially Arnold Bonnet, Mrs. Woolf changed had not recognized what had taken place inside the very people with whom their novels were concerned. Seeing the world as a globe which constantly moved

and tilted with each successive age, she sought the emotional perspective by which the reality of this new era could be viewed. (3-4)

Thus, there was novelty in the way the writer saw reality. The very perspective of seeing the world has been changed. The age was showing many changes which affected the literature of the time directly. Many events that happened at that time affected the writings and the writers. Richter in the book *The Inward Voyage* maintains:

The date of December, 1910 was not a random choice. It was sufficiently long after Victoria's death for the changing values in England to show themselves. It was in general, a period of unrest of experiment, of growth. Abroad England was encountering serious challenge. At home, another shifts in power were taking place wealth was moving from the aristocracy to the middle class. The socialist movement and labour party were growing. There were strikes, agitation for women's rights. But was also a feeling of expansion, of freedom from restraint, of new things stirring that found its way into artistic and intellectual circles. Not only had human character changed, as Mrs. Woolf said, but also the artist's and philosopher's way of looking at world. (4)

It becomes clear from the quotation that due to the changes, in literature human figures were reduced to essence or outline or given multiple personality. Man was seen to be a complex of consciousness existing on many levels. He was also seen to be a complex of personalities, with separate states of awareness. Man was never the same from one moment to the next; his identity changed with each new set of perceptions.

Thus, the modern current seemed that of flux and the flow of the shifting the discontinuous. It was to offer novelists the areas of experimentations which the nineteenth

century could not provide. It was to give them a new range of theme. And it was to force a concentration on the phenomena of life itself, on the moment and its values.

Woolf expressed that the novelty in writing needed change in its traditional form of writing. The change in theme needs in style she rejects past literary forms which she felt as inadequate. The past genres of the novel were discarded. The conventions of writing literature which were established by Edwardian novelists were not more useful. So breaking the convention of writing in a fixed way, Woolf continually experimented with the form of the novel. She was of opinion that, the transition from the old to the new, from a stable world dealing in absolute to one committed to the present moment of feeling, the writers must renounce the old methods. In modern writings of Woolf, the presentation of characters changed a lot. Joan Bennet in her book *Virginia Woolf: Her Art as a Novelist* states:

Characters are described and then gradually made better known to us by their sayings and doings, they are related to one another by a series of events leading to a climax...it is not the width and variety of the human comedy, nor the idiosyncrasies of human character that most interest her. Rather it is the deep in and simple human experiences, love, happiness, beauty, loneliness, death. (3)

Woolf rejected the conventional conception of the novel as a realistic portraiture of life from the objective point of view. She adopted the method which James Joyce and Dorothy Richardson had practiced in their novels. She laid emphasis not on accident, external description but on the presentation of characters through the 'stream of consciousness' method.

This style of narration is based on the free association of thoughts. A character might be looking at a boat out at sea and a memory will be triggered which takes her back ten years to a particular vivid memory of a person that memory in turn, might trigger another thought, which might take the character to another memory and so on. Stream of consciousness narration is unlike traditional linear narration in that it records thoughts in the order that they arise rather than recording them in a rational, linear order. This style of narration was popular with literary modernist, a period of literary production that reaches its pick in the 1920s.

Woolf states that the Victorian rules of writing was never suitable for the women because would could not speak out their inner voices and could not express their inner mind through conventional pattern of writing. Therefore, women need some different kind of writing which would express their feeling. She uses stream of consciousness technique which would help to express the inner voices. In her essays, Woolf developed a thought that women's lives are under-represented in fiction, and that a woman writer is cramped and constrained by the historical fact that literary convention have been established male minds. According to her, the lives of women present the challenge of a new subject. Woolf was keenly conscious her place in the tradition of women writers and she was determined to maintain the dignity of her sex in her novels.

Woolf's book, *A Room of One's Own* deals directly with the problems of the women writers. In her works, she also expresses the view that woman's life would encourage to look beyond the personal and political relationships to the wider questions of meaning of life.

To sum up, Virginia Woolf is, in one of the great innovative novelists of the 20th century, many of whose experiment techniques such as the use of the stream of consciousness or interior monologue have now been accepted into the main stream of fiction. Her novels have been highly regarded, from the 1970s onward by the new school of feminist criticism

2.2 Bloomsbury and Its Influence

A significant factor which influenced Woolf as a writer was her concerns with the 'Bloomsbury group'. She had contact with a particular section of London's privileged and literary society. Woolf's father Stephen had family friends such as Thomas Hardy, Henry James and George Meredith. After her father's death in 1904, Woolf, then twenty two moved to Bloomsbury. The move to Bloomsbury initiated what may be regarded as the adult phase of Virginia's life. Freed from the protective control of her father, she began a new kind of independent existence. Even before she arrived here, she had begun writing literary reviews for a periodical. Establishing herself at her new residence, she became a fully qualified book-reviewer.

Another important feature of her life here was the rich social life which she was able to lead. It was this life which became famous in London literary circle. Here she got excellent opportunity of intellectual conversation and discussion with some intellectuals. This group of intellectuals became known as the Bloomsbury.

The group included Woolf's husband, the writer Leonard Woolf, the novelist E. M. Forster, the painter Vanessa Bell and Duncan Grant; the economist J. M. Keynes, the art critic Clive Bell, Roger Fry and philosopher G. E. Moores. They placed great importance on aesthetic enjoyment, on personalities and affection, and on intellectual honesty and clarity. They saw themselves at the front of new social cultural trends, experimenting in their different field, with new forms of analysis and expression, more suited to post-first world war Britain than those established values, which were firmly rooted in the 19th century. They consciously revolted against the social, political, religious, moral, intellectual and artistic institutions, beliefs and standards of the past. They wanted to construct something new, a new society which should be free from rational and civilized concern.

But whatever Bloomsbury meant to others, for Woolf, it was a revolt against Hyde Park Gate's patriarchal domination, which made home intolerable for her. For her, Bloomsbury friends were important not only for their thought of art and literature but also for an atmosphere of mental freedom. Thus for Woolf it was a shift from male dominated environment to space of her own.

Many pre-occupations of the Bloomsbury Group are touched upon in her writings. Their hostility to imperialism and to militarism related to her feminism. What She regarded was as man made arguing that the sympathy of women is too broad to be contained within national boundaries. Governed by G. E. Moore's "Scientific Method" the Bloomsbury attitude was outwardly rational and questioning but also inward-turning, examining philosophical and aesthetic questions from an intuitive stand point. Questions of inward and outward reality, subject and object, conscious and unconscious, or problems of the relationship between the self, art and the world where strong Bloomsbury concerns, and they find their echo in the works of Virginia Woolf.

2.3 Virginia Woolf and Stream of Consciousness Technique

'Stream of consciousness' was coined in 1890 by the American philosopher and psychologist William James (1842-1910) as description of the flow of thought within the waking human mind. It was a phrase much used in the criticism of the new fiction of the 1920s and 1930s, and particularly with reference to the work of Virginia Woolf, in an effort to come to terms with a literature which boldly attempted to replicate or represent the flux of thought and feeling within a character without resorting to objective description or to conventional dialogue. Virginia Woolf is widely known for her technique 'Stream of Consciousness'. In this technique, she has used her brilliancy as far as possible and earned

many-folded personality as innovative, inventive, creative and psychoanalytic female writer of twentieth century.

Almost all her novels are quite different from traditional kinds of novel in the sense that she has adopted a very unique technique in her novel. The interest of a story or a plot being almost completely absent from this novel, the portrayal of characters becomes the foremost concern in portraying the characters; Virginia Woolf has adopted the technique which has come to be known as the "Stream of Consciousness" technique. This kind of technique includes another widely known technique interior monologue. The phrase, "Stream of Consciousness" implies the flow of thoughts through the mind of a person. She employs the procedure as the chief narrative mode in several novels including *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925) and *To the Lighthouse* (1927). The Stream of Consciousness, as it was refined after World War I, is a mode of narration that undertakes to capture the full spectrum and flow of a characters' mental process. Although this technique was started by James Joyce, it is widely used by Virginia Woolf in her novels and she made the technique lively.

In expressing her views about the novel as a form of literature, Virginia Woolf puts great emphasis on the consciousness. The need of consciousness to establish its identity and integrity is at the center of her artistic sensibility. The focus on consciousness is so great that it has become the center of the self. The self is primarily defined by the character of consciousness, by the manner in which her world is perceived, and by the memories and moods which activate or inhibit the flow of consciousness. In her first two novels, the *Voyage Out* and *Night and Day*, Virginia Woolf's attention is on the need for isolation, which preserves the individual consciousness, in conflict with the need to extend consciousness beyond the limits set by society. Her emphasis on individual consciousness and her attention

to the world as something whose character is determined by individual perception, do not lead her to the conclusion that only one's own consciousness is real.

CHAPTER THREE

Symbolic Vision

3.1 Art and Life

The word 'Art' refers to the principle of beauty and its enjoyment. In other words, it advocates the enjoyment of human and natural things. It means that the art should be full of beauty and enjoyable. People view art as good only with pleasure and which they have been enjoying since a long time. Clarifying about Art Leo Tolstoy says, "Art is a human activity consisting in this, that one man consciously, by means of certain external signs, hands on to others feelings he has lived through, and that others are infected by these feelings and also experience them" (Adam 679).

Art is a part of nature and it is very close to life and nature. Though there is not difference between these two in the process of their natural creation and relation, art has always taken itself superior to life and treats life as own and affectionately. Art is mainly concerned with the natural distinction between life and nature. In other words, Art refers to any theory, which sees the relation between the nature and life as one of the inequality, subordination.

Art is a creation or way through which nature relates in every creation. Thus, art represents one of the most important, natural and very close to everyone in the society. Art is defined by various critics in different senses. As it is originated from nature and preserved in literature. Ernst Cassirer, the great writer has concluded that art trends toward the particular and sensuous and art is an expression of the infinite. He clarifies the art in different sense and says, "Art is not an imitation but a discovery of reality. Indeed, it is more than that; it

constructs and organizes our sense of human experience according to its own formal principles" (Adam 925).

Generally, the relation of art to life is in favour of nature. In this sense, not only an artist but also all kinds of people can be near to art if they understand the life. But the artists occupy more authority to be artist because they, being themselves the artist who know more about the nature and life and the problems of the inner section. So, the function of an artist is to find out the relation between art and life that comes out of the nature and other circumstances and bring them out before eyes of the people. Ultimately, the novelist intends to find out the solution of these problems by winning her reader's sympathy towards them.

3.2 Symbol and Vision

Symbolic vision is more traditional and based on textual interpretation in connection to literature. Essentially it is very critical and criticized too, which stresses on the writing skill. These writers believe that symbol acts on ideas. There are different kinds of symbol and vision and it is the production that determines all historical and social developments.

According to the people who are opposite this pattern, symbol is only for the capitalist society by means of economic exploitation. The critics see the vision as an ideology, which controls the values of writing. So the critics suggest that the pattern will be attained only with the complete alternation of the writing system of the society. Symbol, thus, combines study of literature with the natural vision and shows the relationship between more colours, characters and units.

Symbol occupies the first position to give birth to the vision which defends literature as a rational thing capable of benefiting from reader and of performing like duties of citizen. About the colour, symbol David opines, "There is a colour symbolism running right through

the book. When Lily Briscoe is wrestling unsuccessfully with her painting (qtd in Latham 71). He emphasizes on the symbolic pattern. Every writer attempts to create right thing for others and it is impossible without vision. Symbolic vision denies the existence of natural difference between various types of writings. The critics are interested to depict the economically exploited and socially oppressed literature with the texts. According to Thomas Carlyle symbol is a blend of silence and speech. He praises the virtues of silence and secrecy and finds them combined in the symbol. In his essay 'symbols', he states:

Highest of all symbols are those wherein the artist or poet has risen into prophet, and all men can recognize a present God, and worship the same: I mean religious symbols, various enough have been such religious symbols, what we call religious; as men stood in this stage of culture or the other, and could worse or better body-forth the Goodlike: some symbols with a transient intrinsic worth: many with only an extrinsic. If you ask to what height man has carried it is this manner. Look on our divinest symbol. (Adam 548)

In this way Carlyle gives emphasis on the study of symbol including artist, poet and prophet within the text in connection with the contemporary society.

Different critics give different ideas and they agree with the symbol with vision. Some critics have tried to go beyond the purely economic explanation of symbol and to look at the way in which it has gender divisions. Thomas Carlyle, for example, stresses the way in which everything has a pivotal role in the construction of the symbol, particularly through the present God and the person who has faith on them. This moves away from a purely economic explanation of symbolic vision in the terms of religious and vision meant that some critics move beyond the limits of conventional symbol in the direction of another type of symbolic

visionary analysis. It analyses the ways of uses of symbol and its technique in terms of both religious and unreligious.

Hence, symbol is a technique, which concerns the relationship between the physical and literary beauty. It aims to identify and remedy the sources and ways of those visions. They stress the fact that the symbolic vision is the technique which is essential for writing.

Symbol and vision have been much discussed by Virginia Woolf in her writings. She, being an important novelist of the twentieth century, believes that this technique has always faced criticism. She demystifies the symbolic image of the happy English people and their lives. She creates ideas of new vision, which suggest much more than it is conveyed by their literal meaning.

Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* is a study of personality, of the relationship between the sexes, of time, death, nature and art. The diversity of interpretation among critics of *To the Lighthouse* suggests that, in this case, a discernible 'single vision' may be lacking. *To the Lighthouse* is a sense of the whole, of the complex but cohesive vision of reality created by the book. In her novel *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf has presented more symbol with creative vision. Among them the sea, the Lighthouse, the Window, Colours and Mrs. Ramsay are some symbols and they present their own symbol with help of vision.

Thus, symbol and vision in Woolf's novel *To the Lighthouse*, yearn for the literary meaning. This is the main technique run throughout Woolf's novel. Her ability to concentrate so much of her meaning in a symbol and an episode is dependent upon a careful use of patterns of details. The symbolic visions are presented in this novel and the vision also are two types. One is reality and other is illusion. This is the main theme of her fifth novel *To the Lighthouse*, which I have selected for my study.

3.3 The Relation Between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay

Virginia has not only revolutionized literary technique she also has presented her characters with new identity of their own. With her innovative literary technique, she has expressed her own experience. One of Woolf's lifelong concerns is the role of Mrs. Ramsay in the society. In Woolf's time learned men wrote scholarly and well-respected books on the intellectual inferiority of women which she presents through Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. In this novel the relation of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay shows the family relation, emotional and contrast. Mr. Ramsay is a teacher of philosophy possessed of a superb intellect. He is a ruthless realist, a hard intellectualist, an egotist, and a tyrant. He demands sympathy but does not give any sympathy to another. Whereas, Mrs. Ramsay is much younger than her husband, mother of eight children. She is a human being of great appeal, very far-sighted. Not only this much she is a practical nurse, and much concerned with the improvement of social conditions. The relation between these husband and wife is not so harmonious and their characters are totally opposite. Even in the most fully explored relationship in the novel, that of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, there is a note of pretence, and falsehood. Mr. Ramsay is forced to praise her to her face and to bolster up his confidence in a way she feels, should not be necessary. In this regard critic John Graham states:

The relation of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay repeats this ideas on another level, for as husband and wife they are the lighthouse. Crudely put, Mrs. Ramsay equals eternity, Mr. Ramsay equals time; they are married. For Mrs. Ramsay, though she triumphs in time, triumphs because she intuits eternity; and Mr. Ramsay, though he loftily seeks a philosophical absolute which will solve the problem of 'subject and object and the nature of reality', cannot break his bondage to

time without the aid of his wife. Together they fulfill each other, and are the creators of life. (qtd in Latham 34)

Woolf looks for and tries to describe accounts of husband wife relation. She turns to Mrs. Ramsay as the source of an autonomous art. She refines and describes the experience of such relation. To many literary abstractions, which claim to be universal, have in fact described only more perceptions, experiences. In her fiction, the complacently precise and systematic male has often been the target of satire especially when protagonist is a woman. She writes about family and husband-wife relation but gives emphasis to female characters, here Mrs. Ramsay. James Hafley in his essay "The Creative Modulation of Perspective" opines:

It is actually the testing of Mrs. Ramsay's vision by Mr. Ramsay's Ramsay's fact, and the apparent triumph of those facts. Simply, it describes the effects of ten years' time upon the little horse. The books become moldy; Mrs. Ramsay's beloved garden is choked with weeds; toads, swallows and mice invade the rooms; the wood rots; above all, Mrs. Ramsay's truth-symbolized by the shawl she had wrapped around a frightening skull in the children's bedroom-falls victim to 'the fact'. (qtd in Beja 141)

Virginia Woolf is also concerned with the relation of female characters like Mrs. Ramsay and Lily. She also explores the possibility of an androgynous and states that when this fusion takes place the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. But, the main relation is between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. She expresses the view that the greater impersonality of a character's life would encourage the poetic spirit, and that character would, in future, tend to look beyond the personal and political relationships to the wider questions, which the poet tries to solve, namely, the questions of some characters' destiny

and the meaning of life. This poetic spirit, together with the concern with the meaning of destiny and life, was a characteristic of Virginia Woolf's own fiction from the very beginning. Norman Friedman in his essay "Double Vision in '*To the Lighthouse*'" states:

Finally, as the perfection of this moment becomes in turn a thing of the past, the party disperses and Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay are in the study reading.

Thinking of her husband's anxiety over the fragility of his fame, and of her concern over encouraging him, she feels once more a sense of detachment as she knits and watches him read Scott: 'It didn't matter, any of it, she thought. (qtd in Beja 159)

In this way, her novel emphasizes the relationship of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. It shows Mrs. Ramsay to imagine something different for her family, while at the same time it honors the strength and dignity of Mrs. Ramsay who has made beauty out of a confined role. Thus Woolf has been an inspiration for the women writers of her age because she broke the conventions of Victorian novels and started new feministic novels where women's passions and desires are expressed. She was the pioneer feminist who influenced the feminists of the future generation to the great extend. In this regard Suzanne Raitt maintains:

In recent and contemporary criticism, Virginia Woolf has most often been associated with the articulation of the female voice in fiction. Virginia Blain in 1983, for example, remarked that Woolf's early novels are 'as experimental as any of the later fiction, in the sense that each is trying out means of breaking through the barriers of inherited male conventions towards the expression of an authentic woman's voice'. 'Voice', for feminist criticism such as this, signifies the immediacy of a woman's experience and her authority. (qtd in Roe 30)

CHAPTER FOUR

Contrast Between Illusion and Reality

4.1 Mrs. Ramsay: a significant Protagonist of the Novel

Woolf, as a woman novelist, glorifies women in her novel *To the Lighthouse*. She has given high priority to women. Her whole attention is centered on the women protagonist. One of such characters, whom she has given high priority, is Mrs. Ramsay. Through this character, Woolf has presented female consciousness, which is one of the characteristics of feminism. Mrs. Ramsay's character reflects consciousness of the femaleness and the effects of this femaleness on the other characters of the novels. In fact, Woolf seems to be the first woman writer who has created a world of women in her novels and sincerely written about the ordinary women of the kitchen. Julia Briggs states:

While the novel sets up emotional and aesthetic frames for its central figure, it also reveals the extent to which she is trapped within a set of social expectation, as well as the extent that she has internalized there. She conforms to the image of womanhood that Woolf elsewhere designed 'The Angel in the House' (from the title of poem by Coventry Patmore). (16)

The 'Angel in the House' in this novel, obviously, is Mrs. Ramsay. In the novel, Woolf complicates that revered image and makes of it a fully rounded character with thoughts and desires of her own. She, thus, breaks the conventional norms to present women only as 'angels'. Mrs. Ramsay is a wife, a mother of eight children, a house wife, a woman in her sixties, and an artful hostess. Mrs. Ramsay is one of the Virginia Woolf's characters whom she gives an unprecedented place at the center of a novel. She has created Mrs. Ramsay as a most autonomous 'woman hero', which places Woolf on the line of the most

genius feminist novelist. Her whole attention is centered to this woman. She occupies such a significant position in her family that the male figures look insignificant. Again this 'hero' is herself a feminist because she is strong enough to resist against her rival males at her surrounding.

The first line of the first chapter indicates how her views differ with her husband's:

“Yes, of course, if it's fine tomorrow”, said Mrs. Ramsay. “But you'll have to be up with the lark” she added.

To her son these words conveyed an extraordinary joy, as if it were settled the expedition were bound to take place, and the wonder to which he had looked forward, for years and years it seemed, was, after a night's darkness and a day's sail, within touch (1).

[. . .] “But,” said his father, stooping in front of the drawing-room window, “it won't be fine’.

Had there been an axe handy, a poker, any weapon that would have gashed a hole in his father's breast and killed him, there and then, James would have seized it. Such were the extremes of emotion that Mr. Ramsay excited in his children's breasts by his mere presence; standing, as now, lean as a knife, narrow as the blade of one, grinning sarcastically, not only with the pleasure of disillusioning his son and casting ridicule upon his wife, who was ten thousand times better in every way than he was (James thought), but also with some secret conceit at his own accuracy of judgment. What he said was true. It was always true. He was incapable of untruth; never altered a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure or convenience of any mortal being,

least of all of his own children, who, sprung from his loins, should be aware from childhood that life is difficult' facts uncompromising; and the passage to that fabled land where our brightest hopes are extinguished, our frail barks founder in darkness, truth, and the power to endure. (Woolf 3-4)

From these lines, the two antagonistic views come forward. The novel is built on this contrast between the warm humanity and maternal love of Mrs. Ramsay and the cold matter of factness of Mr. Ramsay. Her husband's passion is for abstract truth; her is for reality, particularly the reality of love, married life and family. Here, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay's difference in attitudes illustrates the difference between the male and female consciousness. This argument about whether or not the weather will be fine the next day, expresses the motherhood, which turns out to be winning over fatherhood because she wins the love of her children whereas the father becomes an object of hatred and ridicule. Mrs. Ramsay is triumphant over Mr. Ramsay by her awareness and intuitive feeling of the more important things in life; the value of human relationship. Though there is no mention of her extensive educational background, she innately possesses the skill to maintain the cohesion of the family as a whole, the respect and love of her children and the continued survival of her marriage. Unlike her rational abstracting husband Mrs. Ramsay reaches beyond the limitations of individual isolation in her efforts to care for others.

As a female writer, Woolf emphasizes on female character through Mrs. Ramsay. She relies on intuition than on reason. The children do not like their father because he takes strange pleasure in disillusioning them. He has a high opinion of his own accuracy of judgment, and never alters a disagreeable word to suit the pleasure of others. He wants his children to know that life is difficult and to fact it needs courage, truth and power to endure.

On the other hand, Mrs. Ramsay has a common sense approach to life and its problems. She therefore consoles James saying, “But it may be fine –I expect it will be fine” (Woolf 4).

Mrs. Ramsay is at the center of her family. She holds everyone together. In fact, bringing people together is her special talent. She is sensitive to everyone’s feelings and makes it her life’s work to bring people into the center of community and family. She helps her husband to maintain his ego with the same deftness with which she protects her son James’s feelings against the insensitive remarks of his father. She manages to put human emotions at the service of those around her.

Mrs. Ramsay, so far as human relations are concern, attempts in the first section of the novel to bring about something beautiful and permanent in the contacts among the people gathered for the summer in the Hebrides. She hopes for the happy marriage of her daughter Prue, once to bring about the wedding of Paul and Minta, seeks to protect her youngest son James from his father’s peevishness. She is admired for her divine power to maintain human relation. Charles Tansley feels happy and proud to be walking with a beautiful woman for the first time in his life, or a young ‘booby’ like Paul Rayley feels he can do anything. She tries to hold the affections of almost all the characters in the novel. Mrs. Ramsay provides structurally and psychologically a cohesive force which gives a sense of unity and meaning to the lives of the people around her.

Mrs. Ramsay knows how to answer her husband’s lead for love and sympathy. Mr. Ramsay feels that he is a ‘failure’ Mrs. Ramsay consoles him and provides him strength to withstand life.

He was a failure, he repeated. Well, look then, feel then. Flashing her needles, glancing around about her, out of the window, into the room, at James himself,

she assured him, beyond a shadow of a doubt, by her laugh, her poise, her competence, that is was real; the house was full; the garden blowing. If he put implicit faith in her, nothing should hurt him; however deep he buried himself or climbed high, not for a second should he find himself without her filled with her words, like a child who drops off satisfied, he said, at last, looking at her with humble gratitude, restored, renew, that he would take a turn; (Woolf 28)

Thus, Mrs. Ramsay asks him to be at ease, and enjoy himself, she thinks that if he put implicit faith in her nothing would harm him. Satisfied with her words, looking at her with gratitude he says that he would go out and watch the children play cricket. He needs sympathy because his truth is factual truth which is so short-lived. He himself realizes: its fragility. In a generation, he thinks he will be forgotten; even Shakespeare will someday be forgotten. It is for this reason that his wife is so essential for him.

[. . .] to be assured of his genius, first of all, and then to be taken within the circle of life warmed soothed to have his sense restored to him, his barrenness made fertile, and all the rooms of the house made full of life. The drawing room; behind the drawing room, the kitchen above the kitchen, the bedrooms; and beyond them the nurseries, they must be furnished, they must be filled with life. (Woolf 27)

Therefore, he must, from time to time leave his metaphysical speculations and return to his wife to 'life itself' for sympathy. Mr. Ramsay regards her intuition as a false truth but he knows that without it he would perish. Thus Mrs. Ramsay is generous and dominant. Her power is gentle but irresistible. All of them her eccentric and demanding husband, her children, the lovers, the young academic are all drawn into her sphere of influence. She sees

Mr. Carmichael and imagines all the “[. . .] inadequacy of human relationship . . .” (29). She looks at William Banks and feels sorry for him for not having a wife or children. She is worried about Charles Tansely and inspires him whatever abilities he has. With all these people she builds friends and protects her own identity. One of the most striking examples of Mrs. Ramsay’s influence is to be found at the dinner party. Before she sits down at the dinner table the guests seem to be sitting separately; each having his or her own separate identity. She helps to make a harmony among guests and all start to interact together. She realizes the wholesome influence which she can exercise upon them all. Mrs. Ramsay feels strongly that she is in the center of her husband, her children, her friends, the food on table and the general conversation which is going on and she feels that she is holding the whole together.

Virginia Woolf even makes of Mrs. Ramsay’s talent of bringing people together on art. It is an art because it brings desperate elements together to form a whole and it crystallizes a moment in such a way that it will be remembered by all the participants. She wants Lily and Mr. Banks to get married but at times she is critical about marriage. She does not want her children to grow up because she thinks that childhood is the best time and marriage is the step out of childhood. Mrs. Ramsay’s character creates a doubt in the reader’s mind that the marriage is a glorious thing. She, in a way, wants her children to “escape the horrors of family life” (Woolf 64). She thinks she never wants James or Cam to grow up. “They were happier now than they would ever be again” (Woolf 51). She wishes she could always have a baby. She also worries that she has put under pressure on Minta to marry. She thinks life as a terrible thing and thinks of her children who will have to go through it. She is driven on, as if in an attempt to escape the horrors of life, to tell people they must marry and have children. She always realizes the fact that marriage brings problems and sorrows in a woman’s life.

Life; she thought but she did not finish her thought. She took a look at life, for she had a clear sense of it there, something real, something private which she shared neither with her children nor with her husband. A sort of transaction went on between them, in which she was on one side, and life was on another, she was always trying to get the better of it, as it was of her; and sometime they parleyed (when she sat alone); there were, she remembered, great reconciliation scenes; but for the most part, oddly enough, she must admit that she felt this things that she called life terrible, hostile, and quick to pounce on you if you gave it a chance. There were the eternal problems: suffering; death; the poor. There was always a woman dying of cancer even here. (43)

Mrs. Ramsay thinks of her fifty years and thinks of life. Her sense of it is that it is something real, something private which she shares with neither her children nor her husband. She is a critical thinker of a different sort than is usually expected. She questions herself and her motifs and looks open-eyed at her faults. She feels upset by the fact that she can not tell her husband the truth about certain things. She is not able to tell him, for instance,

[. . .] about the greenhouse roof and the expense it would be, fifty pounds perhaps, to mend it; and then about his books, to be afraid that he might guess, what she a little suspected, that his last book was not quite his best book (she gathered from William Banks); and then to hide small daily things

(Woolf 29)

Mrs. Ramsay also remembers Mrs. Doyle, who said something to her about her wish '[. . .] to dominate, wishing to interfere, making people do what she wished-that was the charge against her, and she thought it most unjust' (Woolf 42). She cannot see how anyone could say she took pains to impress people, she rejects these charge and says:

Nor was she domineering, nor was she tyrannical. It was more true about hospitals and the dairy. About things like that she did feel passionately, and would, if she had had the chance, have liked to take people by the scruff of their necks and make them to see. No hospital on the whole island. It was a disgrace. Milk delivered at your door in London positively brown with dirt. It should be made illegal. A model dairy and a hospital of here-those two things she would have liked to do, herself. But how? With all these children? When they were older, then perhaps she would have time; when they were all at school. (Woolf 42)

Mrs. Ramsay comes out here as a strong woman who likes to change the society. She would like to improve society but she is bound in family matters and her eight children are also the hurdles on her way to do something of her own. Again strong concern in Mrs. Ramsay's character comes out in dinner party where she speculates about her own life. She feels that she is not able to do something significant out of her life. She thinks "but what have I done with my life" (Woolf 60). Again she thinks, "she could not understand how she had ever felt any emotion or any affection for him. She had a sense of being past everything, through everything, out of everything". . . (60).

Commenting on the concern in Ramsay's character, Julia Briggs states:

The novel builds up a complex rhythm of tensions and anxieties, suddenly resolved into moments of plenitude, of utter happiness when Mrs. Ramsay commands 'Life stand still here'. Through memory such moments will acts as narrative land-marks in other lives: 'they would, she thought . . . however long they lived, come back to this night; this moon, this wind; this house; and to her too.' Mrs. Ramsay is conscious not only of the importance of such moments

but of her role as their creator, in her capacity as mother, a hostess and wife. She works towards their creation by providing appropriate conditions for them. She packs of the young people to the beach, the lovers on walks together, reads to James, lets Rose choose her jewelers and arrange the fruit bowl and continually monitors the states of mind of her house guests, careful that their wishes be met and their egos satisfied. As the archetypal mother, she fulfils the deepest needs of those around her. Not only for her husband and children but for William Bankes and even for Lily, she is the ultimate feminine ideas, the Madonna of intercession and consolation for suffering and loss, a figure of 'delicious fecundity, the goddess Demeter. (Briggs 12)

Woolf accords Mrs. Ramsay a great amount of dignity. Rather than viewing her as less than intelligent because she is not formally educated, Woolf finds a special kind of reasoning in Mrs. Ramsay. She is Woolf's one of the most successful creations. In addition of being an individual in her own right, she has been presented more as a symbol than as an individual. She symbolizes the female principle as distinguished from the male. She signifies the intuitive intelligence as distinguished from the rational or scientific intelligence. In this regard Joseph Blotner maintains:

She is a symbol of the female principle in life. Clothed in beauty, an intuitive and fructifying force, she opposes the logical but arid and sterile male principle. Her influence works toward the mating of men women, toward their becoming fruitful like herself. Her function is the same on the intellectual level, for she gives her protection and inspiration to both art and science. To Lily Briscoe the painter she gives stimulus and understanding; to Carmichael the poet she gives haven from squalor and a shrewish wife; to Ramsay the

philosopher she supplies love, comfort, and reassurance, To Tansley the graduate student she offers protection for a personality rubbed raw by insecurity; to Bankses the botanist she renders affection and respite from a windowed life and priest like devotion to science. 'Indeed, she had the whole of the other sex under her protection; for reason she could not explain . . . finally, for on attitude towards herself which no woman could fail to feel or to find agreeable, something trustful, childlike, reverential (qtd in Beja 172)

In fact, Mrs. Woolf, through her creation of Mrs. Ramsay, shows a reaction to the male-dominated world to bring back the women's world. She manages her domestic affairs without the domination of her husband. Woolf strongly criticizes male characters in the novel, who try to dominate women through their patriarchal, rational ideas. This autonomous female protagonist is contrast with the antagonist male character.

4.2 Lily Briscoe: the Painter

Virginia Woolf's center of focus in *To the Lighthouse* is a woman artist, Lily Briscoe. Like many of Woolf's main characters, Lily Briscoe is not a traditional protagonist for a novel. She is quiet, reserved, unassuming. She is not famous or highly regarded by a community. She is unattached to family, merely a friend of the family. She is not a great artist in the sense that she has not achieved success or been recognized by other artists. Most significant perhaps, unlike the fast majority of protagonists of novels, she is a woman. All of these attributes make Lily Briscoe a perfect protagonist of a modernist novel. Using the point of view of someone who is slightly outside the norm, Virginia Woolf can look at the middle class, patriarchal Victorian family and the role it allots to boys and girls, men and women.

Lily is on the cusp of change for society, moving out of the old position which female occupied as many roles into a new mode of being a center. Woolf has highly admired Lily for her creative power, which is very helpful to establish her as a painter. Lily is a creative artist who struggles against the difficulties to achieve the goals of her life as a painter. Woolf, as advocated is for art and artist's life taking female as a source of creativity. From her judgment, she has found artistic power only in the female and in male. She has expressed this view through her persona Lily, the artist protagonist of *To the Lighthouse*. But she talks of some factors very essential for the woman artist: i) Her desire, enthusiasm and devotion to art. ii) The freedom of her heart and her independent life with her own income and iii) identity with having no domination over her.

Lily is fully devoted to her art. But from the very beginning of her own inadequacy as an artist, she is trying to paint a picture in which Mrs. Ramsay and her son James figure. But she is facing many problems while painting which signifies the struggle character should do to create something new. Lily thinks of the colours of the scene she is painting. Lily sees that beneath the colours there is a shape. She can see it clearly as she looks at it, but when she tries to represent it with a brush she loses it; the "demons set on her who often brought her to the verge of tears and made this passage from conception to work as dreadful as any down a dark passage for a child" (Woolf 14). She often feels that it takes tremendous courage against great odds to insist on what she sees and hold the original vision. Also, as she paints often thoughts force them into her. "It was then too, in that chill and windy way, as she began to paint that things, her own inadequacy, her insignificance, keeping house for her father off the Brampton Road . . ." (Woolf 14). She tries hard to make her picture perfect but she is not able to reach to that perfection. When she does not find her picture up to her expectation, she feels very disappointed.

She would have wept. It was bad; it was bad it was infinitely bad! She could have done it differently of course; the colour could have been thinned and faded; the shape etherealized. Of all that only a few random marks scrawled upon the canvas remained. And it would never be seen; never be hung even and there was Mr. Tansley whispering in her ear, ‘women can’t paint, women can’t write’ (Woolf 35)

After this, she thinks of Mrs. Ramsay’s ideas that all women must marry, “. . . an unmarried woman has missed the best of life” (Woolf 36). But Lily opposes this view of Mrs. Ramsay:

“Oh but, Lily would say there was her father, her homes; even had she dare to say it, her painting. But all this seemed so little, so virginal, against the other. Yet, as the night wore on, and white lights parted the curtains, and even now and then some bird chirped in the garden, gathering a desperate courage she would urge her own exemption from the universal law; plead for it; she liked to be alone; she liked to be herself . . .” (Woolf 36).

Thus, on the contrary to the demand of a faithful artist, Woolf makes her character Lily in the works of art, without any involvement in the other works. She offers two options to Lily, either marriage or not. In her view, marriage entraps people to the domesticity. So the artist should remain a bachelor for its good achievements. Such profound revolutionary ideas of Woolf on art and marriage have ranked her in the category of the novelist. Lily is devoted to art, postponing her desire for marriage.

Lily feels the force of the social norms: She knows she is expected to get married and give up her painting. She thinks about Mrs. Ramsay who would say, “. . . her dear Lily . . .

was a fool” (Woolf 36). But Lily in a crucial moment, which occurs in silence, decides that she will not marry but that she will paint. At Mrs. Ramsay’s dinner party, Lily makes the choice not to marry; instead she decides to pursue her art. She does not make this choice easily and she is never able fully to move outside of relations with other people because she continues to exist in a social world organized with men’s need at the center. She struggles to transform a clear vision she has for her painting onto the canvas. About Lily Norman Friedman says:

Lily likewise is a complex figure; a spinster disinterested in ordinary sexual attachments, she is nevertheless capable of a fierce outburst of love; an artist perpetually terrified by a blank canvas, she still manages to approach a solution to the complex problem of the art-life relationship. (qtd in Beja 152)

When Lily decides she will paint rather than marry, she is making a world-changing decision. She is deciding to step outside of the role assigned her in the society and to embrace an alternative existence. Woolf provides her as an artist for imaging vision in what seems to be a society. In this way, (in the novel) Lily is a free artist to imagine something different for herself.

After the death of Mrs. Ramsay asks for sympathy with Lily. But Lily is opposite to Mrs. Ramsay. She would prefer to be alone than to be with some man in her life.

Suddenly Mr. Ramsay raised his head as he passed and looked straight at her, with his distraught wild gaze which was yet so penetrating, as if he saw you, for one second, for the first time forever, and she pretended to drink out of her empty coffee cup so as to escape him-to escape his demand on her, to put aside a moment longer that imperious need. And he shook his head at her, and

strode on ('Alone' she heard him say, 'Perished' she heard him say) and like everything else these strange morning the words became symbols, wrote themselves all over the gray-green walls. (110)

Thus, Lily is unable to integrate Mr. Ramsay with her own life. Mrs. Ramsay is an aggressive intellectual who makes demands for sympathy. Lily finds it difficult to reconcile herself to this man either emotionally or imaginatively.

The artist Lily Briscoe understands the stresses of trying to paint when her society calls her to be a wife and a mother and trivializes her art as worthless. She also understands the stress of hearing men tell her women can not write and can not paint. She is always disturbed in her work and can never complete her work. She always feels the pressure of society, which is levied on her because she is a woman. She tries to capture a moment and tries to make the moment last in her painting. In 'The Window' Lily feels excitement as a certain unified pattern demonstrated itself in front of her eyes, 'as she saw Mr. Ramsay bearing down and retreating, and Mrs. Ramsay sitting with James in the window and the cloud moving and the tree bending', and she felt:

[. . .] how life from being made up of little separate incidents which one lived one by one, became curled and whole like a wave which bear one up with it and throw one down with it, there, with a dash on the beach. (34)

She knows that the problem of translating such a vision onto canvas is, to reconcile opposites. But Lily is aware of the difficulties involved in solving her problem. When she took her brush in hand [. . .] the whole thing changed' (15). In fact, the final achievement of her vision seems only possible when she openly acknowledges that although in one sense her picture will be permanent-she will have completed something aesthetically satisfying in itself

in another it will not last. Her act of painting has taken a long time and when she finishes it, She feels satisfied. She knows that the future of her work of art, and its future reception will be uncertain. Probably it will pass into obscurity, be hung in attics, destroyed. The implication is that the creation can only, indeed be fully satisfying for the creator and as life changes and moves on, even this satisfaction is likely to be temporary. With this vision in mind, she is able to complete her work of art. In this regard James Hafley quotes:

The novel is comparable to Lily's painting, for its purpose too is to capture and render stable and permanent the essence of Mrs. Ramsay. For a long time Lily 'could not achieve that razor edge of balance between two opposite forces; Mr. Ramsay and the picture; which was necessary. There was something perhaps wrong with the design? Was it . . . that the line of the wall wanted breaking? (qtd in Beja 144)

Woolf through the character of Lily makes a comment about the extreme difficulties of creating a new work of art especially for women. At the end Lily becomes successful to complete it. Woolf admires Lily and her creative power, which is very positive.

4.3 Human Consciousness and Social Activities

Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay are the most important characters which are very different living beings in the same society. All characters have their own consciousness and they do what they want to do. So the social activities of them are not same. *To the Lighthouse* is a novel which presents how Mr. Ramsay's family and his guests spend holiday in an island of skye. Their life is very harmonious and emotional but they sometimes suffer and face several problems. In Lily's mind the image of Mr. Ramsay appears as "a scrubbed kitchen table, lodge at the moment in the fork of a pear tree" whereas Mrs. Ramsay believes in making people

happy, in protecting children from losing the contented innocence of childhood, finds her husband's attitude equally repugnant. Lily, an unmarried artist, has devoted her life on painting and does not want to get married. But Mrs. Ramsay, a married woman wishes that Lily should get married with Mr. Bankes. Lily has no inclination for marriage and she never repents over her decision not to get married. In the last part of the book, she remembers Mrs. Ramsay when she comes to know about the breaking of the marriage of Paul and Minta, which was a dream of Mrs. Ramsay.

She would feel a little triumphant, telling Mrs. Ramsay that the marriage had not been a success . . . Mrs. Ramsay has faded and gone, she thought. We can over-ride her wishes; improve away her limited old-fashioned ideas. She recedes further and further from us. Mockingly she seemed to see here there at the end of the corridor of years saying, of all in incongruous things, 'Marry, Marry! [. . .] And one would have to say to her, it has all gone against your wishes. They're happy like that; I'm happy like this. (130)

Woolf, through her characters, presents the social activities of Victorian age and the human consciousness of the people. The Ramsay family, their guests and Lily are the main characters. Mrs. Ramsay is a housewife who totally supports his family, takes care of the guests, whereas Mr. Ramsay and Lily do not agree with her. Sometimes, Mr. Ramsay arranges to make party and Lily helps her to go things smoothly, silently implores the relation between Lily and Charles Tansley become harmonious through the party Kept by Mrs. Ramsay. Mrs. Ramsay encourages people to marry or she creates communication between people. Because her own view of life tends to pessimist, she is moved to make every endeavour to create what order she can achieve from the chaos of life. She can establish

satisfactory human relationships and this fact makes her a good hostess. About the human consciousness and relation in the novel, Norman Friedman states:

[. . .] and it is exactly this problem which works its way through the novel on three perceptible levels: human relation, metaphysics, and aesthetics. Thus, although Mr. Ramsay's problem is technically an epistemological one, the novel itself can also be seen to have been built around the problem of how the known looks to the knower: of one person to another, of nature to man, and of life to the artist. Further, the over-all quality of this relationship may be subsumed under the headings of order, (qtd in Beja 150)

Lily, being a modern artist, totally attaches with art which is different in the society and she does not like the person who always tries to get sympathy from others.

At the same time Woolf also gives a dignity to Mrs. Ramsay as a mother. She is the one who guides all and leaves a strong influence on them because of which even after her death everybody remembers her for her power to love all human beings. “. . . she was unquestionably the loveliest of people . . . , the best perhaps; . . . But why different and how different? . . .” (Woolf 35). Lily realizes that Mrs. Ramsay had created order and permanence out of chaos, and now Lily herself is trying to create stability in art as represented by her painting. The privileged moment Lily recalls in part III in connection with Mrs. Ramsay, “which survived, after all these year, complete, so that she dipped into it to refashion her memory of her and it stayed in the mind almost like a work of art”(Woolf 120), occurs on the beach with Charles Tansley.

Thus Mrs. Ramsay is the most important character to connect the network relation of the all characters. Virginia Woolf is successful to present the human consciousness and social activities in his novel.

4.4 Contrast Between Illusion and Reality

Virginia Woolf explores the different kinds of truth and reality. In this novel, Woolf highlights the main and contrast between two things, one is illusion and the other is reality. In fact the writer shows an essential difference between the reality represented mainly by Mrs. Ramsay and illusion represented by Mr. Ramsay. In this regard James Hafley states:

To the Lighthouse is really the story of a contest between two kinds of truth Mr. Ramsay's and Mrs. Ramsay's. For him, truth is factual truth; for her, truth is the movement toward truth: since truth is always being made, and never is made, the struggle for truth is truth itself. The form of this novel at once expresses and verifies Mrs. Ramsay's truth. According to Bergson, certainly can follow only from factual extension of knowledge resulting in scientific order; such is the order which Mr. Ramsay seeks. (qtd in Beja 137-138)

Here Hafley talks about two kinds of truth. Mr. Ramsay wants to highlight factual extension of knowledge resulting in scientific order. Mrs. Ramsay, on the other hand is known by intuition rather than by analysis and is therefore able to know reality. About this too, Hafley states, "Together they constitute the hybrid nothing of creative duration whose 'parts' interpenetrate which, according Bergson, comes nearest to give satisfactory description of the actual fact directly known which is, for him, the whole reality" (qtd in Beja 138).

In this regard Morris Beja quotes,

Mr. Ramsay's books are on 'subject and object and the nature of reality', but the irony of the novel is that he has attained less true understanding of his own field than his wife, for he has not yet realized that the brain does not matter compared with the heart. (220)

Mr. Ramsay thinks in starkly abstract terms. His pursuit in his philosophy is to explore the relation between the subject and the object and the effect that relation has on what is known as reality. He explores that vital question with the methods of rationality which he has learned in his education and which he has sharpened with further scholarship and teaching. The primary method is a linear one represented in the metaphor of the alphabet. Mr. Ramsay compares his progress in understanding this philosophical problem to the progress one makes through the letters of the alphabet. Regarding this Woolf writes:

[. . .] if thought is like the keyboard of a piano, divided into so many notes, or like the alphabet is ranged in twenty-six letters all in order, then his splendid mind had no sort of difficulty in running over those letters one by one, firmly and accurately, until it had reached, say, the letter Q. He reached Q. Very few people in the whole of England ever, reached Q . . . But after Q? What comes next? After Q there are a number of letters the last of which is scarcely visible to mortal eyes, but glimmers red in the distance. (24-25)

That is a sequential progress, the letters are in a fixed order in the alphabet, and Mr. Ramsay imagines only two ways of getting through the alphabet-plodding through the letters one by one or knowing the whole in a moment of Genius. In Mr. Ramsay's time, only male are educated formally in logic or reasoning. Mrs. Ramsay has not attended the university, yet Woolf endows her with a strong sense of reasoning and intuition. Ultimately Mrs. Ramsay's intuitive knowledge wins over Mr. Ramsay's factual knowledge. When Mrs. Ramsay tells

Mr. Ramsay she is working on stockings for Sorely's boy of the lighthouse, Mr. Ramsay insists there is no chance of going to the lighthouse tomorrow. She argues with him, telling him the wind could change. He is frustrated by the "extraordinary irrationality" of her thinking. "The folly of women's minds enraged him" (Woolf 23). He stamps his feet and says, "Damn you" (Woolf 23). But he immediately realizes that she has not said anything so bad. In fact, the weather might be fine tomorrow. Thus he accepts his failure of judgment and Mrs. Ramsay comes out to be a winner. Mrs. Ramsay is out-raged by his strict conformity to truth:

To pursue truth with such astonishing lack of consideration for other people's feelings, to rend the thin veils of civilization so wantonly, so brutally, was to her so horrible an outrage of human decency that, without replying, dazed and blinded, she bent her head as if to let the pelt of jagged hail, the drench of dirty water, bespatter her unrebuked. There was nothing to be said. (Woolf 23)

Mrs. Ramsay can not imagine what motivates him to discard other people's feelings so easily. She does not reply to him but just bends her head, feeling as if she has been 'people bitten by hail or drenched by dirty water'.

Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay's attitude toward time further illustrate this difference between the reality and illusion. When Mrs. Ramsay wants to know if it is getting late, she looks into the garden where the light tells her how close it is to evening.

"It was getting late. The light in the garden told her that; and the whitening of the flowers and something gray in the leaves conspired together to rouse in her a feeling of anxiety". (Woolf 44)

When Mr. Ramsay wants to know if it is getting late, 'he flicked his watch carelessly open' and sees it is 'only just past seven' (Woolf 49). He has accurate, theoretical knowledge; she has vague, immediate knowledge.

Virginia Woolf looks at that kind of truth from the outside, from the perspective of someone who is unable to understand truth and the perspective of someone who knows the reality. She gives emphasis to the reality and makes it winning over the illusion. Woolf knows the alternative methods of exploring the relation between the subject and the object in their effect on reality. Lily Briscoe works on just their problem in her attempt to paint Mrs. Ramsay's portrait. In that pursuit, Mrs. Ramsay is the object of her painting and Lily Briscoe is the subject, the one who perceives that object. What is the reality of Mrs. Ramsay? Lily understands the many different perspectives it would require to represent complex reality of Mrs. Ramsay adequately. Virginia Woolf does too. She gives us the perspective of Mrs. Ramsay's children, her husband, her husband's colleagues, her servant and Lily Briscoe's. All these perspectives come together in the novel to give us a view of reality of Mrs. Ramsay. Mr. Ramsay and Mrs. Ramsay living in same place and share same feeling and emotion. Mr. Ramsay is a scholar, a philosopher, honored by several universities and he is opposite to Mrs. Ramsay, who is a woman of a great appeal. She is an extremely beautiful woman, a mother with very sympathetic mind. Though they live together their ideas are different and both are right in their perspectives.

Mrs. Ramsay supports her son's desire to go to the lighthouse next day but Mr. Ramsay declares about bad weather so it makes James very sad and angry. Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay are interrelated, yet contrasting characters, one for reality and other for illusion. At first Mr. Ramsay has no value of his wife but after she expires he realizes her importance. They have separate streams though they came from the same river and are living together

4.5 Virginia Woolf's Imaginary Vision

Woolf's works always display their own kind of vision and depends on imaginary vision. Her vision go in its own direction. It holds for important differences between various types of vision. She appeals for radical changes that should occur as imaginary freedom. Woolf sometimes imagines a world in which all people would come together in a single purpose and desire. Thus the theme of imaginary vision recurs in her work.

Imaginary vision is one of the themes of the novel and this quality is dominant in Woolf's novels. She regards natural vision as the most essential of a novelist for writing her novels. An imaginary vision has a sweet and natural theme. Woolf admires her imaginary characters with natural vision and compares with the art and its beauty to keep in balance. She regards full imaginary art and full natural art are equally dangerous.

Sometimes her theme of vision is regarded as an-imaginary and because it discards the fixed unnatural identities , that is, to regard imaginary art as art and natural art as also art. In this regard Sharok Kaethele and Howard German say:

The imaginary of this description is fainting sensual and connects this moment of impersonality with her love for her husband. The best illustration of the way in which their love contributes to a triumph over time is found in the last scene in part I when Mrs. Ramsay finds herself in explicably drawn to the room where her husband sits reading. Feeling a need for his voice, she is comforted by his asperity in rebuking her for trying to finish the stocking that night. Reassured, she in turn answers his need by artfully but indirectly assuring him of her love. Sensing the completeness of their rapport, Mrs. Ramsay turns

toward the Lighthouse which is shining outside the window and thinks to herself that 'nothing on earth can equal this happiness'. (qtd in Beja 195-6)

Woolf's theme of 'imaginary' is the concept of the human mind and the creative act. Concept of imaginary means the co-existence of both natural and artful visions in an individual. According to this concept, the individual mind contains a fusion of the natural and artful traits. In the novel *To the lighthouse*, the character of Lily, the aspiring artist is shown having both these traits. The natural and artful vision have been fused in the creative moment and enabled Lily as an individual to have her vision of Mrs. Ramsay and to complete her painting. Woolf uses imaginary vision of the sea in this novel. As Irene Simon states:

The exhilaration of the waves has its counterpart in the lines running up and across in Lily's pictures, with its greens and blues, and its attempt at something. In the sudden intensity of her vision, Lily draws her line and the form emerges. One would be very much surprised indeed if the relation of masses, lights and shadows in the picture did not portray the rising and falling of the waves, which echoes throughout the novel. (qtd in Latham 80-1)

It should be emphasized that Lily as an artist and as an aspiring creative mind has described with details suggestive of both Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay. This means that Lily takes the nature of both persons. This could be interpreted as Virginia Woolf's way of saying that it is the imaginary mind which produces the creative movement for the artist.

Thus Woolf is received as an imaginary writer and is adequately welcomed and acclaimed by the creative person. Though, she has been criticized severely by some critics as insufficient writer, yet it becomes impossible to deny Woolf as the progressive, creative writer of genius. Woolf always believes that imaginary natural visions have begun to affect

concepts of power, family and social life. Therefore she wants both natural and artful imaginary vision to mix together for the complete work. Both are equal and should be used equally in everywork.

CHAPTER FIVE

Realization of Truth

Virginia Woolf has highly contributed to the women's issues taking the favor of women and waging a war against British patriarchal culture. Throughout her life, Woolf was deeply concerned to improve the quality of life for women, especially for intellectual women like herself. With the upheavals of feminist movement in 1960, Woolf's contribution to feminist criticism has been widely recognized. Her emphasis on women's independence and freedom resembles with the modern feminists' outlook on women. Her concerns were deeper as any novelist's would be: men's anger at women, misunderstandings between the sexes. Woolf's feminism went in its own direction. It did not go beyond her own upper middle class and it held for important differences between men and women when the feminist trend of her time was toward absolute equality with men and the complete erasure of differences.

Her novels attempt both to 'dissipate' character and to reintegrate human experience within an aesthetic shape or 'form'. She seeks to represent the nature of transient sensation, or of conscious and unconscious mental activity, and then to relate it outwards to a more universal awareness of pattern and rhythm. Although her characters may often seem to be dissolved into little more than ciphers, what they come to signify is part of a complex iconographic discourse. Woolf's particular preoccupation with time is closely related to her manifest interest in flux, a dissolution or dissipation of distinctions within a fluid pattern of change and decay, which she recognizes in nature and science as much as in the human psyche.

Virginia Woolf presents her female characters in search of a new identity. Lily faces problems to present her personality as different in the society. Her task in the novel is then to

affirm the force to find the self-identity. Mrs. Ramsay's enthusiasm for marriage annoys the artist Lily Briscoe who likes to be alone and likes to be herself. Lily is successful to make her identity through her art. It is Lily's painting that confers permanence and a wider significance on Mrs. Ramsay transforming her into an icon of motherhood. Lily's vision of Mrs. Ramsay finally fuses with her painting because both are intimately linked with that act of creation. So, Lily's painting confers permanence on the passing moment.

Woolf's novel usually supports female character, as Mrs. Ramsay. Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay are from the same family and society but they differ with each other. Mrs. Ramsay presents as a strong woman who is conscious of her capacity as mother, hostess and wife who is very close to reality. She fulfills the deepest needs of those around her. She finds her identity in her self sacrifice and a constant self-surrender for others. She always desires to play a determining role in the lives of those around her. She desires to give, to help, providing a kind of self-satisfaction for her. She is intensely sympathetic and unselfish and she excels in the difficult arts of family life. Whereas, Mr. Ramsay is an excellent philosopher and knows about all right and wrong but he is against his wife and reality. He is totally blind with illusion of belt.

Thus, Virginia Woolf, an important writer who writes infavour of female as powerful human beings. She focuses on the difficult life of the new English woman. In fact, from the overall study of her novel *To the Lighthouse*, it can be concluded that her utmost concern is centered to the women characters, their relation to men the society they live in and here Mrs. Ramsay is the woman character. However, Woolf does not want to create the contrast between male and female; instead, she wants to see the harmonious relation of the characters but the society is the main cause to create such thing.

Woolf wants to adorn all characters to keep them in balance as she thinks that excessive power in a single hand is very dangerous. Woolf has taken the side of Mrs. Ramsay's attitudes for her consciousness, creativity and nonviolent attitude to life. It also expresses Mrs. Ramsay's selfless services to others. Woolf's novels are to express the consciousness of human, specially women and the social values. Her novels are written in her different circumstances and different moods but the main theme of this novel is to pour out her female character to portray the reality of the society.

Thus Woolf has played a great role to promote the general status of novel. Though she is not an outspoken writer, she has strongly struggled against the difficulties challenging the existing social norm. She has mocked over the unreal society. In short, her voice for the creating of reality of natural art in the society is the matter of great concern, which has placed Woolf to the circle of the modern feminist.

Though no specific theory on the contrast between Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay has been formulated by her in the novel *To the Lighthouse*, the contrast of two types of persons has formulated through her novel that has helped greatly to bring changes in the society. What startling conclusion do we reach at the end of the novel is that what seems to be a reality proves illusive and what is regarded to be illusion proves to be a reality, just the same as the truth of real life.

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