Chapter Five

Summation

Women of the present generation seem to be riding on the pinnacle of glory. They exhibit their talents in all walks of life. The society has powerful women politicians, doctors, engineers, athletes, teachers, entrepreneurs, actors, social activists, pilots and so on. Unlike the olden days, women try to come out of the eternal servitude they had been undergoing for ages. Women and girls have many more opportunities and face different challenges. Not only the Victorian women but also the Indian women ever from the days of ancient times have remained pawns to be played with at the male member’s will. Even from the days of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, women were targeted. Sita was sentenced to an “Agni Pariksha” and then to an “Exile”. Draupadi was lost to the opponent as a pawn of the dice. These are examples of such women who are symbolic of the ideal womanhood. Not only this, education was also very different even in the urban society for women in those days.

The study here exposes the political, social and artistic implications of Woolf’s work along with her attitude to the Victorian stereotypes related to gender roles. In the Victorian era, home was treated as the rightful place for women. The four walls of their houses became the area of their functioning. Thus as days went on gradually the light began dawning on them and they began to come out and started facing challenges and proved their worth. Woolf belonged
to a society, which was known by its rigid laws and harsh treatment towards women. Women were expected to fulfill their mission as homemakers and submissive wives with sincerity and purity. They have nothing to do with education as it was destined only for men. The seed for such ideas can be said was due to the fear of women’s awareness of their oppression, which would lead them to respect and liberty. It would further make them to claim for equal rights and treatment. In many novels, Woolf has brought into focus the subjection of women and the issues related to them. Not only Woolf many great writers dealt with the suppression of women as they too found out that the treatment towards women were harsh. This study also focusses on a unique vision of the world where men and women should become equal counterparts in all walks of life.

Though everyone knows about the globalized progress of the entire world, no one can deny the unspoken psychological turmoils that women folk faces. However, there are staunch laws written in black and white in law books there are difficulties in the enactment of these laws in reality. The world in large, reels under patriarchal forms of familial setup right from the human history and it has been prevailing even in the 21st century in spite of all the stringent measures being enacted. Though equal rights women had been already received in education, job opportunities, and matrimonial issues and in getting properties, unreported physical and psychological tortures given to women continues. The objective of this study is to bring equality, unity, concern, secularism between men and women as equal counterparts. Thus, this study has a broader perspective with an intention to create international understanding.
The first chapter “Introduction” deals with the need for women’s voices and the position of Virginia Woolf in feminist history. In this chapter, Feminist Theories are appropriately placed in careful theoretical perspectives. Woolf’s Theory of “Androgynous Mind” and “Theory of Liberation” have been properly applied in the analysis of her works. This chapter takes a ride towards each Victorian woman who was looked upon as the “angel in the house”. Women are shown as having no identity of their own. There is always a focus of the Victorian society in her novels. Woolf brings every aspect of life in her works and this proves her as an innovator and experimenter. Woolf’s admiration for the other writers is also brought into the limelight. Virginia Woolf’s characterization has got every personal touch. She discovers her women characters and virtually lives in the mind of the character she portrays. Her method of analyzing women’s issues as well as bringing out their traumas is explained in this chapter.

Woolf’s position in the society is also portrayed and her works act as vehicles for motivating every woman to come out of her depression and get a new identity in the society. Her doorway into feminism and her status of blooming as a feminist have been detailed. The analysis on some of her selected novels gives a sketch about her views regarding the position of women both as a traditional and a “new Victorian” woman. There seem to be budding of a number of educated and liberated women, who were later called as modern women or new women. The new Victorian woman seems to be very different from the traditional ones in the sense; at least she has gathered courage to voice her subjugated problems. They began to raise their voice and started questioning the foundations of paternalistic society and the supposed bliss of the traditional
Victorian marriage. Writers used the new woman in order to show that she was different from the typical Victorian woman because she was intelligent, educated, emancipated, and independent and self-supporting. She departed from the stereotypical Victorian woman. These women were not only middle class female radicals but also factory and office workers. At the end of the nineteenth century, the new woman was playing a significant part in complex social changes that led to the redefining gender roles, consolidating women’s rights and overcoming masculine supremacy. The discussion based on gender relations brought a change in labour relations, divorce legislature, education for women, single motherhood, sanitation epidemiology as well as female consumer culture. New women included social reformers, popular novelists, suffragists, female students and professional women. Finally, the chapter concludes with a wider scopes for the future generation.

Chapter Two titled “The Mind and Art of Virginia Woolf” reveals the period in which she lived laying bare the picture of her life, her themes of her works and her voice in getting liberation. This chapter also dwells on society’s treatment with women and Virginia Woolf’s effort to portray them in her works. Her family background is portrayed to be acquainted more with her personal life which is filled with mental afflictions and trauma. There is a crystal clear picture of her access in the literary field through the Bloomsbury group. Her life journey with Leonard Woolf is also highlighted. Her role in the feminist history along with her personal problems influenced her literary works. Woolf was also influenced and affected by war nostalgia and depression. The researcher finds correlation between Woolf’s personal life and her professional life. Her personal
experiences directly and indirectly create impact on her writings. Virginia Woolf tried to balance her life and art with care and attention. The reading of her novels always gives the readers a fresh and original experience, and one comes out of it with an altered perspective. The stream-of-consciousness technique used by Woolf is brought into focus. She presents the stream-of-consciousness of her characters not as a photographer but as an artist. Her voice is distinctive, her style is her own and her work is an active influence on other writers. Woolf was a very brave and strong woman and therefore she deserves respect and independence. She lends her literary skills to open the doors for all the voiceless women. Literature requires someone to listen and understand. Her work was more of an outcry to the unfairness, not just her own, but for all women. Women should have something of their own.

Woolf is of the view that one must write in order to flee away from the real world or come in terms with oneself. Woolf writing became a therapy, a means of exploring the inner state of oneself and a hope of finding solution to one’s problem. Her works are meant for women and she wants to wake them up from their degraded level. Her work becomes a way of re-thinking about life, experimenting and exploring time, space, memory and consciousness, the very concept of self over and above with an impact on the creation of identity. Woolf’s witty and beautifully crafted works has a practical message for aspiring women writers as pioneers in the virtually unexplored frontier of women’s literature, and to create timeless, powerful works of art. Women must forsake the established mores of masculine creativity and forge their own traditions and styles.
The third chapter titled “Vision of the World in the Works of Virginia Woolf” deals with the great vision of the world as envisaged in the works of Woolf. There is a vision of truth, reality and the role of women in society. The novels and her other works are noted for their subjective explorations and they capture ordinary experience depicting the workings and perceptions of the human mind. She observes the human life deeply. Almost many years have lapsed since Woolf spoke at Newnham and Girton Colleges on the subject of women and fiction. Her remarked words in *A Room of One’s Own* still echoes in every one’s ears and are still preserved for the future generations of women. This essay is the first manifests of the modern feminist movement and has been called a “notable preamble” to a kind of feminine Declaration of Independence. This essay has nurtured women and has made them to realize their status in the patriarchal world. Woolf writes that her modest goal for this ground-breaking essay is to encourage the young women especially those who seem to get fearfully depressed. This treatise on the history of women’s writings, reasons for the scarcity of great women artists, adds suggestions for future literary creators and creations as well as inspires and motivates young writers.

This single work of Woolf is enough to make women realize their position and take steps to improve it. Woolf claims that talent is important although economic is the most important thing for the creative process there should be talent as well as boldness. Hence, she focusses on the importance of “money” and “a room of one’s own” if one craves to pen down one’s creative works. She wants to reveal money not as a class issue but as a gender issue in which women even after a hard labour do not get even a single pie. Her husband
is the owner of the property and the money. She feels that one has to identify one’s position and it lies in one’s own hand. Woolf brings about the changes in women’s life through her works. She presents female heroines fighting against the traditional Victorian male perception of woman as “angel in the house” and challenging the old codes of conduct and mortality. Woolf is very particular in providing confidence in women.

Woolf’s main theme deals with women’s rights. In almost every direction, she realized women were not allowed to be independent. She sharply and desperately wanted the rights for women to write of her own and if a woman wants to write she need a room and before all this, she needs education. The anguish realized by her for not having that right tormented her. Woolf feels that a woman must have enough independence to provide for herself as well as realize her dreams. Woolf was a very bold and energetic woman and therefore, she deserves respect and independence. She lends her literary skills to open the doors for all voiceless women. Literature requires someone to listen and understand. Her work was more of an outcry to the unfairness, not just her own, but for all women. Women should have something of their own.

The fourth chapter entitled “Theoretical Application in the Works of Virginia Woolf” dwells on feminism, post modernism and the application of the theories in the works of Virginia Woolf. The term wields an enormous grip upon our intellectual climate and upon contemporary debates within feminism. The depiction of post modernism is used by critics to describe their perception in the world of literary experiment arising out of but moving beyond those of cultural modernism. It thus entails a pervasive crisis in the modern understanding of
Feminism to some extent has always been post modern. The realization of bringing tremendous changes between the relations of power and knowledge is noted between feminism and post modernism. Through the character of James and Cam in the novel *To the Lighthouse* Woolf depicts the vow and chains bound on women by which they are unable to make a move in their life. Woolf in order to make women understand their slavery makes Cam to break the vow and kill the angel, which kept on suppressing her. The patriarchal society imposed the differences between women and men by proving the stereotypes of femininity and masculinity.

There is a portrayal of some women characters who embraced their role as a typical woman in society. Woolf creates a new radical modern approach to literature. She reaches beyond personal relationships to explore one’s wider relation to the universe. Woolf presents conventional male characters who indicate the cultural values and preserve the authority of patriarchy in the society. Her effort to make women fight for freedom is seen throughout the chapter. Thus women have always fought to break the boundaries between them and men in order to free themselves. Woolf shows the maturity of thoughts in women. In her novel *The Voyage Out* she focusses on the place of women within the power structures of modern society. Woolf feels that a “new woman” has to work hard if she aspires to be equal with man and achieve the same status like him. The first thing she can embark on is through education. Education is the greatest weapon to achieve status in the society. Only when women succeed to bring changes on the social and cultural levels they can win the match, which their former generation had begun with men. There would emerge a new society, a unique
world for women. The degraded conditions of women led them to raise their voice and rise against the social institutions to denounce all those who contributed to the state they belonged. There bloomed ‘feminist movement’ which was begun by a group of women demanding their rights and later on it started cropping up including women from all over the world to organize themselves into movements and associations in order to react against men whom they accused of being their oppressor and the cause of their misery.

Woolf’s feminism emphasizes not only on women and on their relationship within the patriarchal society but also about the women who did not have an opportunity to use their talents because of their sex. She feels that women have not been allowed to develop their own style throughout history. Woolf did not have any grudge against men in fact in all her works she seems to focus much on the pitiable conditions of women relating to what and how the tradition has dealt with them. Women should have the freedom of mind. Woolf feels that they should behave in such a way that they should be respected of being what they are. Gradual changes have helped women to be independent financially more than men have. In every work of Woolf, the readers are able to have a vision of women’s revolt against male tyrannical suppression in one way or another. Woolf feels that the society must treat men and women equally and must not smash their creativity at the blooming stage. As long as human beings live together there should be equal rights given to women. She chooses to be feminism because she was well aware of the ongoing suppression of women. She knew that men and women were not equal. Confidence should be aroused in women. Their voice should be a source of inspiration to other women.
Woolf felt the need of writing for women because she realized that women were denied equality with men. Women are still scapegoats in the society and still worst incidents like brides burning, dowry deaths, rape cases and other outrageous incidents have become everyday news. Such is the position of women in the society and she without any complaints remain a suffering mortal. Thus, Woolf designed the “new women” who welded new attitudes in them. She was either a radical, socialist or revolutionary or she was reactionary and conservative. She was seemed to be an agent of social and racial renewal. The new woman expected various discourses of a new womanhood in the twentieth century. New women who were focussed in the fiction anticipated feminist writing of the twentieth century. Twentieth-century feminist criticism has identified tinge of innovative views on gender and society in many ‘new woman’ novels.

Woolf points out that a woman is not looked upon as an individual rather as an image created by men and always in contrast with men. She is strong enough to point out that one should not judge works of literature based on the writer’s sex. Woolf herself established her own authority. The conflict between community and independence appeared in all areas of Woolf’s life and work. Woolf struggled for the independence and privacy because she felt it as necessary for her work and her life. Woolf was able to bargain these conflicting needs well enough to produce strikingly fine literature as well as lead a rich life of relationship. Issues of relationship and independence became a topic for discussion in many areas of her work. Her voice still echoes in every women writer because she is the one who gave her own voice for her betterment in life.
Woolf has taught women to live as an individual. For Woolf, a person must be independent, not trapped into a restricted, reactive set of emotions, thoughts, or other by relationships and communities. She is of the view that problems may crop in their life but they must learn to tackle it wisely. Woolf succeeded in developing and motivating women to fight for independence and thus she achieved it. She has provided women with many attempts to solve the conflicts in male dominated society and has taught women to balance the needs for independence as well as community. She demonstrates that in life, there will be many tribulations and desires, which one must know how to bargain and tackle it for just in bargaining it, will do no good at any cost. They must wear the armour of bravery carrying their voice as a strong weapon in the patriarchal society.

Women are considered as a toy even today and it is unfortunate that 21st century India still carts with the same Victorian mindset with regard to sex and gender. Everyone is aware of the recently deplorable gang rape of a paramedic student in a Delhi bus. The situation, however, is not that much better in the rest of the nation. According to the National Crime Records Bureau, the maximum rape cases were reported in states like Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan as well as Maharashtra and Assam. Therefore, it is apparent that rape is alive and well all over India. Since the Delhi rape was reported, a lot has been said of tackling with the problem. Female police has been recommended to protect women from being raped. Though tougher punishment for rape is forwarded, such things keep on existing. Therefore, a key change has to happen in attitudes and the “Victorian mindset” in people of today’s generation has
shown remarkable resilience and is flourishing. Sometimes education too fails as a vehicle to modernize the mindset of men and the patriarchal society. It is only through realization of values for a female the world can amend the situation. Knowing without understanding is similar to the warning on a cigarette packet that tells everyone that smoking is injurious to health. But its knowledge does not stop anyone from smoking. One must make up one’s mind to change one’s attitude and way of thinking.

Though professions are now open for men and women alike, women are still discriminated against in most fields of works. Feminism is theory, and, theoretically, women now had the same rights as men. Though they are also equal before the law, they still have to fight patriarchy. Woolf feels that in order to put an end to these discrimination women must find ways to solve it in a smooth way. They need not imitate men’s attitude or take revenge against them but they can try to create something unique in their self. A lot of changes is witnessed in women of today’s world. Woolf feels that women must keep themselves updating with the happenings around her. They must be alert and courageous. They must put their trust by sticking on to the fact that they are independent and owe nothing to anybody. This is essential for women to achieve success in every field of life.

Woolf’s concern is to explore human personality with a target to attain a vision of life’s meaning. She chooses different scenes, events and sometimes unexpected places. She lays emphasis on them and finally manages to complete her story. Woolf is hopeful that women would find a new liberated life in which shackles of slavery to men would be shattered and they would strive better in the harsh patriarchal society. Woolf’s novels brings to light the evil effect of burden
laid on women forcing them to stick on to the Victorian laws laid for them and how her voice drives them to the path of liberation. An analysis of Woolf novels shows that she is feminine in her perspectives and a feminist in her ideology. Her real world is the world of women. She longs to change their lives. The strength and success of her work lies in her genuine presentation of how women are demoralized by the society.

This chapter sums up the causes and consequences of women’s subjection in the lives of the Victorian women as well as women of the present age. It gives a solution to women to get away from such issues. Woolf’s voice is a fortress, which guides and protects women community. Once men realize women as a part of their life and accept them then the life of women will not be drudgery. Women trapped between patriarchal society, the Victorian laws are the cause of their subjection, and this makes them to step back from the progress. Men’s strong rule towards women affects the whole women sex. Hence in order to protect women, feminist’s voices help them to take a bold step towards a unique world. Feminist voice or feminism strengthens and arouses hope in women. They raise a question regarding their life and this leads them to an eternal quest for their identity. Laws by the patriarchal society and the submissive characters in their roots begins to haunt them and feminists like Virginia Woolf, Jane Austen, Thomas Hardy and others become a guiding force for them. Stepping aside from the traditional values gave life to them. Their new life started blooming. A change in their life is brought out when they recognize their position in the society and begin to practice their life full of sharing, loving and caring.
Battered and shattered by the Victorian laws women try to establish their liberty. Though they succeeded in stabilizing their lives, the scars of submissiveness still exist and their life is in turmoil. Women’s life will be a peaceful one only when all men realize the traumas undergone by women and start respecting them. Still there are rape cases, poverty stricken women, women without an identity, etc. The main reason, which bars their path towards establishing liberty and identity, is that they are still dominated by men who think themselves as superior. They are not attempting to realize their true feelings and that they too have rights in the society as they have. The dominated patriarchal society makes them insecure, uncomfortable and unhappy.

Virginia Woolf devoted her major novels to evaluate the patriarchal English society. She portrayed different types of women in various contexts. She unlocked women’s eyes on their inferior status and provided them with a female tradition to rely on. She strived to provide women with the proper evidence and hints for having a meaning in life. In order to overcome their suppression, women must follow the inkling given by the feminist writers through their works. They must try to pay attention to their voice and emulate it. They must get a definite identity and for that, they must root themselves with a strong feminist voice and have a strong view regarding their life. Women must also preach feminism to the whole of their sex. They should stop adjusting their submissive life, believe in their strong will power and change their modes of living. Immersing themselves in writing and exploring the problems women can face all sorts of vanity and make themselves free, whole, secure and functional.
Woolf feels that courage, vigour, positive outlook would give women the endurance to withstand the oppression and suppression of the patriarchal society. They must face the reality and avoid escapism. A single woman can never reckon change in the society. The whole society of men should realize their cruel treatment towards women, rectify their mistakes, and show affection for all women. A man should respect a ‘woman’ whether she is a daughter, sister, wife or his neighbor’s wife. Woolf says that a change in the whole system is necessary. All of them must join hands and detect the laws, which revealed women as inferior. Women with vitality must own and possess a position in the world. The sufferings of women portrayed in the novels of Woolf are not only that of the Victorian women but also the sufferings of women in the present scenario. Through pictographic narration of the suppressed position of the women, Woolf universalizes not only the problems undergone by women but also offers a ray or message of hope to all the depressed women to uplift themselves and obtain an identity of their own.

The scholar asserts and reasserts the necessity of a re-reading of Woolf in the present day context. Atrocities on women are a continuous process even in the 21st century. The laws, which are favouring the rights of women and the liberties of women including the equality of women, are only in paper form. The ground reality is on the reverse. Women are being brutalized, abused, and tortured in inhuman methods. The occurrences, which have been shocking the society in the name of sexual abuse, harassment on women, are proving the deplorable condition of women in the present century. Hence, the scholar reasserts the necessity of a re-reading of Woolf and her works in order to uplift
the condition of the women folk. This thesis ensures the necessity of the equality of men and women to make the world function in a more democratic and civilized manner.

Many colleges and Universities pursue degrees in women’s studies. The future researchers and students of “women’s studies” learn how social and cultural influences have shaped the lives and roles of women throughout history. In future “Women’s Studies” must be a disciplinary and an interdisciplinary subject. Women’s studies adheres to its theoretical proclamations. Women’s studies include the theory and practice of feminist research and teaching in the academies. Women studies explore complex social structures, the prevalence of injustice and oppression and thus hones the skills of citizens to face future confidently.

The scholar’s estimation on Virginia Woolf has been raised to a greater level because the writer surprised everyone because her views withstand the test of time. Her expressions are true even in the present 21st century where women are being treated as slaves. Women should come forward; they have to break all barriers and should evolve as women of individual freedom. If everyone follows Virginia’s bold assertions success comes near to everyone. For sowing the seeds of equality of women even in the 19th century in effective terms, each one must be thankful to Virginia Woolf. Woolf therefore succeeds in developing and proceeding women’s fight for independence and thus they achieved it. She has provided women the mental strength to solve the conflicts in male dominated society and has taught women to balance the needs for independence and equality.
Woolf teaches them that in life there will be many tribulations and desires, which one must overcome with mental confidence and tackle it. One must sit back and think of the victory and losses one has undergone and thus move forward with a strong willpower and wear the armour of bravery carrying voice as a strong weapon in the patriarchal society. For those who proclaim that since women have been given equality, what is the necessity of writing dissertations like this, here is an answer: On November 20, 2014 there was a write up on “Sexual Harassment” and “how to report such harassments to authorities” were published in The Hindu (The write up has been attached as an Annexure in this dissertation). Hence, it is evident that when such problems are meted out to women even now dissertations on topics like this are also essential and important.

Women with vitality must own and possess a position in the world. The sufferings of women portrayed in the novels of Virginia Woolf are not only that of the Victorian women but also the sufferings of women in the societies all over the world. Virginia Woolf universalizes not only the problems undergone by women but also offers a ray or message of hope to all the depressed women to uplift themselves and obtain an identity of their own. Women will not be hereafter termed as “finger-puppets” as the postmodern thought has altered their minds. They have learnt to recognize the root cause of their problems with the help of the feminist writers like Virginia Woolf. The power-game will be changed.

This dissertation leaves many newer areas of research to the future research scholars. They can do research on the new curriculum system where Women’s Studies must be a compulsory discipline which should enunciate its
importance in the sustenance of cultural, economic and political spheres with an international approach and thus Women’s Studies can be viewed as an Interdisciplinary subject. Secondly, the future research scholars can explore other female and male writers who raise women’s issues. Thirdly, more researchers can be done on feminism with an international perspective.