Chapter Two

The Mind and Art of Virginia Woolf

Woolf looks upon the novel as a representation of life. She naturally implies that it registers the growth and development of feeling, with the intention of following many lives and tracing their union with fortune over a long stretch of time and accordingly brings us close to the image of life. This chapter highlights Woolf’s age and the strenuous effort she has taken to bring women’s life in the perfect track. She becomes the voice of numerous depressed women. Before dealing with the works of the writer, it is quite necessary to give the details of Woolf’s period in which she lived as well as the people, education, common beliefs, traditions, laws, her aim and interpretation of her works fairly. More particularly, it throws light on how her society treated and viewed women and how Virginia Woolf has taken effort to portray them in her works through her “own voice”.

The Victorian era was a period of great advancement and flourishing. The age experienced swift changes and developments in nearly every way of life from progression in medical, scientific and technological knowledge to changes in population growth and location. It was a period of the Industrial revolution, which changed the economical and social conditions of people. The era was also a period of enlightenment where many scientists, theorists, artists, philosophers and writers emanated publicizing new theories and thoughts that changed people’s
insights towards many beliefs. There also blossomed confidence and optimism. The Victorians gave importance to politics. The age saw the birth and spread of political movements, most notably socialism, liberalism and organized feminism. The Victorian era was the great age of the English novel – realistic, thickly plotted, crowded with characters and long. It was the epitome genre to outline the contemporary life and to entertain the middle class. Historians correlated the Victorian era to the beginning of Queen Victoria’s reign that lasted about thirty-six years, which started from 1837 and continued till 1901. The Industrial Revolution plays a significant role in the development of human life. It refers to the switching of society from a rural and commercial state to an industrial and modern one. The Industrial Revolution constructed a new life and world to the Victorians.

Life pattern for women differed from that of men. Society was also divided into unequal social classes. People were considered unequally and they held different ideas and ways of reasoning. The Victorians could be particularized through their manners, speech, clothing and education. Each class had its own standards and people were expected to adapt to the rules of their class. The period was also an age of doubt and skepticism. Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was the most famous Victorian novelist. He was a prolific 19th century author of short stories, plays, novellas, novels and fictions during his lifetime. He achieved a place for him in the world for his remarkable characters, his mastery of prose, and his depictions of the social classes, mores and values of his time. He had his role of critics like Virginia Woolf and Henry James, but also had many admirers, even into the 21st century. He wrote his first novel The
Pickwick Papers (1836) at the age of twenty-five. It was an overnight success. Charles Dickens great rival was William Thackeray in the first half of Queen Victoria’s reign. Thackeray portrayed amore middle class society than Charles Dickens did. His best novel Vanity Fair (1848), subtitled A Novel without a Hero is a form well liked in Victorian literature within which recent history is depicted.

Victorian novels had a tendency to put on a pedestal portraits of complex lives in which there were much spotlight on hard work, perseverance and love, which wins in the end as the key to solve problems at all levels. The novels imparted the message that virtue would be rewarded and wrongdoers are suitably punished. Scientific thinking was a new dimension in researches of all fields. The nineteenth century had developed the theory Associationism. However, the psychologists rejected it in the twentieth century. James Ward highlighted the harmony of human experience and behaviour. The existentialists believed that every individual’s experience is an ‘existence’ or a fact deserving of description, analysis and classification. But the most essential development in psychology was Freud’s theory and technique of psycho-analysis.

D.H Lawrence discovered an originality and even violence of imagination and emotion which heralded a dynamic use of the novel as it had hardly been handled before. He made the novel a pulpit for something like a new religion. A new world of fiction had been unbolted to a considerably large audience. The time was ripe to an attempt to revolutionize the English novel. It was James Joyce who first dipped into the ocean of traditional novels and Woolf came up with another blow for the traditional novel, perhaps more effective because she was more restrained. Brian W. Shaffer highlights Bell’s opinion that “Woolf was
along with Hardy and Conrad, one of ‘our three best living novelists’ and one of
the most beautiful . . . [and] best bred women of her age’” (76).

Virginia Woolf named as Adeline Virginia Stephen was born on January
25, 1882, in London. She was an Englishwoman, and an ardent proponent of
feminism. She was one of the most skillful and influential writers of the early
twentieth century. She had a thorny and troubled life, perhaps more than is
specified directly in most of her writing. Woolf was the child of Victorian Era,
although she lived the major portion of her life in the twentieth century. Woolf
was a rational being. She was always able to repress her feelings and this was
characteristic of her being brought up in an atmosphere of the Victorian Age. She
possessed a likable attitude, sincerity in her looks and responsibility in her
behaviour. Quentin Bell, Virginia Woolf's nephew and biographer revealed that
Woolf had a desk standing about three feet six inches high with a sloping top; it
was so high that she used to stand in order to write her work. She continued this
work habit until about 1912. Later in her life, Woolf often wrote in a low
armchair with a plywood board across her knees.

Jane Goldman reveals that Woolf was born into a large family “. . . well-
to-do parents, born into a very communicative, literate, letter writing, visiting,
articulate, late nineteenth century . . . . I do not know how far I differ from other
people” (2-3). Virginia was the daughter of Sir Leslie Stephen and Julia Prinsep
Stephen. Her father was the most distinguished Victorian author, critic,
biographer and Alpinist. The eldest, Vanessa (1879-1961) became an important
avant-garde visual artist; the second, Thoby (1880-1906) died tragically young.
Virginia (1882-1941) was the third of four children. The youngest,
Adrian (1883-1948), became a psychoanalyst and prominent pacifist. Julia died in 1895, when Virginia was thirteen. It was the first of the losses that affected her gravely and her predictable world ended. Woolf suffered her first breakdown and the family endured a deeply unhappy period of mourning. Her youth was shadowed by series of emotional shocks. After this tragic loss Stella became a much-appreciated maternal figure to the Stephen children. Louise DeSalvo exposes the truth that “22 Hyde Parke Gate, the childhood home of the Stephen girls, seems to have been little less than a nightmare, a ‘patriarchal’ world of violence and terrified repression” (Poole, The Impact 301).

Stella Duckworth took charge of the household for several years till Vanessa Stephen was old enough to handle it. Stella’s life was cut short by sudden death, while pregnant, in July 1897 – an event Virginia noted in her diary as “impossible to write off”. This second blow in her life was horrendous. She narrates that this second blow of death smacked on her with wavering transparent gaze as if she was with her wings, still crumpled, sitting there on the border of her broken cocoon. Virginia began her first diary in January 1897. She was tutored by her father. She records a daily life packed with reading under her father’s guidance. His tuition often preceded by a morning walk together. She gives lively accounts of excursions in London on shopping errands, charitable visits and social calls. She also mentions about the various private lessons, of her father’s reading Walter Scott, William Wordsworth and many other writers. In The Absent Father: Virginia Woolf and Walter Pater, Perry Meisel highlights his view. It shows his attempt of placing Woolf’s life as a counterbalance to her true father, Leslie Stephen, who is seen as representing to her the oppressive world of
Victorian morality and other values, masculine authority, and a literary and critical stance antithetical to the cultivation of her own writing. Meisel opines that in Pater “she would have found opposing qualities: the tendency to almost militant aestheticism, with all the associated positions, socially, politically, morally and culturally” (Magalaner, Absent Father 685). Virginia R. Hyman takes efforts to show:

Most of Woolf’s writings were influenced by her competitive and contradictory and ambivalent feelings about her family . . . . Woolf and Leslie Stephen both wrote critical marginalia does not prove that she was trying to outdo her father as a reader. (Ferebee, Lighthouse and Beyond 803)

Virginia again encountered a severe blow after her father’s death in 1904. She had a nervous breakdown. Woolf resided in Garden Square, London. This Square was a literary district and came to be known as Bloomsbury Square. The Bloomsbury Group was a literary club founded by Virginia Woolf. Its principal members were Cambridge men who through Thoby became Virginia’s friends. Virginia became acquainted with several members of the Bloomsbury Group, a circle of intellectuals and artists. Notable members of their group were Lytton Strachey, famous for his *Eminent Victorians* and the well-known economist J.M. Keynes. The group of writers and artists in the group consisted of Roger Fry, Vanessa and Clive Bell, Duncan Grant, Lytton Strachey, Leonard Woolf, J.M. Keynes, Desmond Mac Carthy and rather on the fringe E.M. Forster.

Bloomsbury life was marked off by the freedom to talk without self-consciousness about anything at all, a reaction in part to the ‘darkness and
silence’ of Hyde Park Gate where communication was often strained. The founding principle of the group was “absolute frankness”. The members used to read memoirs to each other as well as dined together. They believed in contentment and tried to get the greatest of happiness out of their personal relations. This group had its own dignity and pathos. Alison Light says, “The Woolfs and their Bloomsbury pals were, in many ways, enlightened employers. Uniforms were discarded; the demands of formal entertaining increasing abandoned for jolly evenings with whisky and buns” (qtd. in Jays 38). Leonard Woolf, a writer and a member of the group, had a great affection towards Virginia.

Virginia wrote extensively on the problem of women’s access to the learned professions, and on women’s equality with men in marriage and in other fields. Though, many suitors proposed Virginia for marriage she selected and married Leonard Woolf in August 1912 and she herself told it was not because of any physical attraction but for the care that he had shown her. Virginia and Leonard lived happily but did not have children. Virginia’s unstable mental conditions or her intermittent neurotic problem might be one of the reasons for it. Unfortunately, Woolf had some fits of madness but Leonard looked after her like a loving husband. Madeline Moore records that she possessed the habit of presenting herself as Woolf’s mind reader, predominantly in support of her depiction of Woolf as a lesbian for example, “No amount of political empathy [with Leonard Woolf], however, could mollify Woolf’s disgust with heterosexual eroticism” (Rowe, Short Season 351). After two years of her marriage the First World broke out. The era of security and stability was sealed. Woolf was
Furthermore influenced and affected by war nostalgia and depression. Hence the war for Woolf was a horrible and nerve-shattering experience. Her tantalized life began and shook her completely. Spater and Parsons in Alma Halbert Bond’s say:

A compulsion neurotic, Leonard wrote down and catalogued everything he could . . . . we have a married couple in which one partner was inordinately gifted in the ability to enjoy the sensate world . . . while the other was burdened with a severe superego that enabled him to function but unquestionably impaired his ability to enjoy life. (Poole, Who Killed 303)

In January 1916, Woolf and her husband decided to buy a house that was closer to London. They settled in London suburb called Richmond and named their new home “Hogarth House”. Their publishing house “The Hogarth Press” became an important and influential publishing house in the decades that followed. Virginia wrote, printed and published a couple of experimental short stories *The Mark on the Wall* and *Kew Gardens*. Leonard Woolf and Virginia Woolf continued hand printing until 1932, but in the meantime, they increasingly became publishers rather than printers. Woolf got support from her husband, which indicates that she was lucky enough to have a supportive husband. Leonard Woolf in the preface of *A Writer’s Diary* highlights that Woolf was “a serious artist and all her books are serious works of art” (vii). Her diaries illustrated her “extraordinary energy, persistence, and concentration with which she devoted herself to the art of writing and the undeviating conscientiousness with which she wrote and rewrote and again rewrote her books” (vii-viii). Woolf used the book *The Voyage Out* to experiment with several literary tools, including compelling
and unusual narrative perspectives, dream states and free association prose. In 1925, her fourth novel, *Mrs Dalloway* was released to rare reviews. The mesmerizing story interweaves interior monologues and raises issues of feminism, mental illness and homosexuality. Since it first went to press, *Mrs Dalloway* has been turned into movies (1997) and been the subject of a Michael Cunningham novel and film, *The Hours* (2002).

The Bloomsbury group gradually dispersed, beginning with the death of Lytton Strachey in 1932 and then the suicide committed by Dora Carrington shortly thereafter. When she lost some of her literary friends Virginia got depressed. In 1941, she was writing her last novel *Between the Acts* and at that time out of depression she felt that she lost her art and she could not write any more or live longer. She got worried and she wrote suicidal notes for three times. In her last letter, she wrote to her husband, “I feel certain that I am going mad again: I feel we can’t go through another of those terrible times. I shan’t recover this time. I begin to hear voices, and can’t concentrate” (qtd. in Svendson). On March 18, she might have attempted to drown herself but it was a failure.

On March 28, after she had written her third suicidal note she walked half mile to the river Ouse. She filled her pockets with stones, walked deep into the water, and finally drowned herself creating an unenduring void in the English literary world as a writer with social commitments. Her dead body was found almost a month later on April 18, her body was cremated on April 21 with only Leonard present, and her ashes were buried under a great elm tree just outside the garden at Monk’s House. The lines of the epitaph were taken from *The Waves* and the lines are heart rending. The epitaph reads thus: “Against you I will fling
myself unvanquished and unyielding, O Death” (qtd. in Svendson). Her husband published her last novel and also compiled Virginia’s papers into significant diary and thereby preserving Woolf’s unique voice and personality forever and forever.

Woolf’s reputation as an avant-garde writer and important literary critic was consolidating. Her reputation as a writer started blooming day by day. Her life was a life of overwork and hard work. Woolf had a pleasing personality and her soothing appearance gave an impression of sobriety and simplicity. Her literary background will set Woolf’s work within a tradition. The differences and similarities pave a way for the readers to know her commitment towards women. Woolf was designed to be a writer and though Woolf was denied the formal education, which was allowed to males, she was able to take advantage of her father’s abundant library. She used to adjoin great writers such as Thomas Hardy and William Thackeray. Woolf’s work, and her intellectual development under the support of women, together with her involvement with feminist thinkers and activists, is also now acknowledged. Bhaskar A. Shukla highlights Woolf’s living. He says that Woolf, who was educated at home by her father describes in her middle age narrating that period in a letter to Vita Sackville-West:

Think how I was brought up! No school; mooning about alone among my father’s books; never any chance to pick up all that goes on in schools – throwing balls; ragging; slang; vulgarities; scenes; jealousies! (55)

Alison Light portrays Woolf’s life saying that she as “the young Virginia Stephen grew up in a society in which service, either giving or receiving it, was the defining relationship of domestic life, particularly for women” (qtd. in Hill
She further adds that by 1850, 80 percent of female servants were mostly liable to the mistress of the house. Therefore, she argues to a great extent “the history of service is the history of British women, if a largely unwritten and unregarded one” (10). Woolf was well known for her intelligence and was a sophisticated and a beautiful person. She was not much outspoken, spoke little, and uttered out only the needed word. Although she lived the major portion of her life in the twentieth century, she was the child of the Victorian era. Her novels through their nonlinear approaches to narrative exerted a major influence on the genre. She also penned pioneering essays on artistic theory, literary history, women’s writing, and the politics of power. Woolf probed with several forms of biographical writing, composed painterly short fictions, and sent a lifetime of brilliant letters to her friends and family.

Woolf is one of the greatest female authors of all time. She is respected worldwide. Her life was cut short as she was driven by uncontrollable circumstances and internal conflicts. Her role in feminism, along with the personal relationships in her life, influenced her literary works. Woolf learnt a lot from her life and was greatly influenced by her mother Julia Stephen. She was the most arresting figure, which she tried to resurrect and preserve. She depended on her mother’s approval in order to measure her own stature. Her mother used to help her to get rid of self-criticism and doubt. But this was however short-lived. Her mother’s rejection affected her badly. She could not bear to re-read anything she had written. Mrs. Stephen’s rejection of Woolf may have been the paradigm of her failure to meet her own standards. Woolf reveals her deepest feelings for Vanessa through letters. She writes:
You are beautiful, beloved, chaste: and I am none of these things. She envies Vanessa for her ostensible freedom from neurosis . . . . Repeatedly she asks, ‘Do you love me?’ and demands proof in the form of kisses, as a small child might. Vanessa can do no wrong. She becomes the touchstone by which Virginia measures her own physical being . . . . (Magalaner, The Letters 277- 278)

Woolf’s theory of fiction is different from that of Fielding, Scott, Jane Austen, Dickens and Harry. Fielding defines fiction as a comic epic in prose; Scott made it a means for the reproduction of history and romance. Jane Austen’s view is that it was just a medium of expressing life’s little experiences, a storm in a tea-cup. Dickens looked upon it as a chronicle of social history and a picture-gallery of caricatures and characters. Hardy sought through it an expression of the tragic, the fatal and the pessimistic. Virginia is a fearless feminist but she had some mental stress. She was often charming as well as a delicate creature, prone to fits of depression and sexually frigid. In a letter to Vita Sackville-West, Woolf comments:

I am sometimes pleased to think that I read English literature when I was young; I like to think of myself as tapping at my father’s study door, saying very loud and clear ‘Can I have another volume, father? I’ve finished this one’. Then he would be very pleased and say ‘gracious child, how you gobble’ . . . and get up and take it down it may have been the 6th or 7th volume of Gibbon’s complete works, or Spedding’s Bacon, or Cowper’s
Letters . . . In this way I shall become surfeited with history . . . .

(qtd. in Lund 78)

Whether Virginia actually interrupted and reflected the age to which she belonged is still unclear and has been a matter of controversy. A few critics argue that ‘she stood apart from her age’. She kept herself in writing aloof from the contemporary scene of business, industry and politics. Like her predecessor Jane Austen, she wrote of the small scenes of which she had knowledge, which she was fascinated, and of the relationships between people in that world. Woolf however steeped into the world of her generation. She grasped what was important in the thought of her age, grappled with it and then transmitted them into rhythmical forms of literary art. Her critical precepts and gifts of essayist were the rich endowments, which she had received from her age. Woolf fixed some of her time in making her mind and exploring the deep, spiritual chords of humanity. Thus, it can be said that in 1920s she wrote her best work. Woolf can be considered a champion of women’s rights. She wrote in such a way that it promoted women to fight for more freedom and more changes to earn their own income. Woolf’s age was however, one of the fertile periods of English literature. G.S. Frazer credits this period as “The Gay 1920s”. He comments:

One can think of the 1920s’ as a decade in which the English people as a whole were recovering from the shock of the First World War and hoping desperately that things would get back to ‘normal’: to the material comfort and moral security of the Edwardian age, to the old Victorian confidence in the steady march of human progress. (Varshney, Common Reader 29)
The twenties saw a craze of immaturity of ‘youth’. There was a good deal of cant about ‘liberty’, especially liberation in sexual behaviour. It can be called as an era of hollow men and wasteland relatively because of war and partly because of the common trends all over the world. This period was a period of termination of ethics such as social, and ethical, philosophical, aesthetic and religious. R.L. Chambers’s highlights his views regarding the age. He says:

It was as if a child had gone to bed overnight with the fond greetings or remonstrances of mother and father in his ears, and had awakened in the morning to find that mother and father no longer existed, that they were at best a couple of elderly strangers in the house, speaking strange words, offering unpalatable and insipid food, imposing irksome restrictions, completely unsympathetic beings in whom he had no interest, for whom he felt no affection. (30)

Gertrude Stein’s frame of reference was that of “a lost generation”. In literature it was the age of T.S.Eliot, D.H.Lawrence, Aldoux Huxley and Virginia Woolf. In spite of the sexual freedom, it was the age of spiritualists and mystics, of novelist and poets, of dramatists and critics. Woolf, Eliot and Huxley stepped forward and accepted the challenge of the new age, and contrary to the age, they emphasized upon spirit and encouraged people to reject materialism. Woolf as a novelist rejects the traditional novel because she feels that the novel of ideas, social problems, history or domesticity is inferior to one of spiritual discovery. She as a novelist makes her statement clear that the novelist should discover life, the whole life, that is, the reality – the external reality. Patricia Ondek Lawrence
tries to bring out Woolf’s notions regarding “mind”. She says that in Woolf’s novel based on “mind” and “thought” what we are actually observing is language and semiotics. She mentions,

What are her narrative preoccupations as a novelist? Who is speaking? Who is thinking? Do they speak aloud? Do they speak to themselves? And when the self speaks to the self, who is speaking? Is writing always silent? And if thought is sounded in life or on the page, is the presence of a listener or reader – audibility – necessary or peripheral? . . . (22)

Another characteristic trait of Woolf is that she is also a prose writer of genius. She is a poet without the equipment of a poet. She would have been a great poet had she been in the age of poets such as the Elizabethan Age. Woolf sets the quest for truth against the dreary catalogue of outward facts, and seeks a spiritual certainty behind the manifold experiences of life. Mr. Chambers’s analysis of Woolf is that she is par excellence the novelist of the nineteen-twenties. Mr. Cazamian declares, “One cannot help believing that the novels of Mrs. Woolf, even if they were to be an isolated portent, will experience a fuller survival . . .” (Varshney, Common Reader 50). David Cecil asseverates that Woolf is by far the most satisfying of aesthetes. Woolf has the power to lead our eyes to look first and everywhere that stimulates the sense of beauty. Woolf remarks that the aesthetic life is vigorous and satisfying as any other kind of life. Moreover when one reads her books as long as their spell is on them they will not bother about the limitations of her vision. In fact these limitations are a part which plays a major role for her success.
Woolf’s observation on literature is contrastive from that of her father. She looks upon literature as not only a mode of enlightenment about the past or about human emotions and dilemmas, but also something that gives incentive to the creative urge in us. Woolf inherited her primary aim of reading from the age when she was allowed to browse freely in her father’s library. Woolf feels that the main motive of reading should be the joy of reading for its own sake. Trev Broughton exposes the fact that when Leslie Stephen was at the age of fifty his daughter was ruminating over a comparable act of consolidation — a project that would last “my 20 years, if I have them”. He says Woolf wanted to “go through English Literature, like a string through cheese, or rather like some industrious insect, eating its way from book to book” (3). Like other critics of her generation, Woolf started on her career of criticism as a reviewer. Her first review, as if to mark the closing of a new era in criticism. It was published the year her father died. Her initial acknowledgment came with the publication of *The Common Reader* in April 1925. Kumar Chandradeep opines that by the middle of the 1920s, Mrs. Woolf had evolved “a distinctively new style and had broken philosophically and stylistically with her Edwardian predecessors, Wells, Galsworthy, and Bennet, to take her place with the innovators: T.S. Eliot, and even Gertrude Stein” (34). Rob Johnson inscribes Fogel’s study of Henry James’s power on Virginia Woolf. He says:

A friend of Woolf’s father and an imposing artistic presence of his time, James came to represent for Woolf the reigning patriarchal literary society of late Victorian England. His influence on her is described by Woolf herself as an ‘influenza,’ . . . .
Ridding herself of the voice of Henry James becomes central to Woolf’s project of finding her own voice as a woman writer. (754)

Woolf was never pushed into criticism. She learnt it naturally without effort and enjoyed doing it like a fish takes to water. She wrote *Mrs Dalloway* and *The Common Reader* simultaneously. She reveals it as “my fiction before lunch and then essays after tea” (qtd. in Sharma 111). Whenever Woolf got worn-out of the novel or at any time if she comes to a difficulty that she could not immediately make up her mind, she turned to her critical essays. In order to express her views clearly she chooses novel as a vehicle for presenting her feminist vision. Some of her published novels are as follows: *The Voyage Out* (1915); *Night and Day* (1919); *Jacob’s Room* (1922); *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925); *To the Light House* (1927); *Orlando* (1928); *The Waves* (1931); *Flush* (1933); *The Years* (1937); *Essays in Criticism of Literature or Manner: The Common Reader, 1st Series* (1925); *2nd Series* (1932); *A Room of One’s Own* (1929); *Three Guineas* (1928); *Between the Acts* (1941); *The Death of the Moth* (1942). Daniel Mark Fogel focusses the feminist theory by inflowing into the very double-crossing territory by positing an Oedipus complex for Woolf, particularly where he takes “Leonard Woolf’s word as gospel”. Fogel says that as Woolf goes ahead of Jamesian style in *The Waves*; her experimental triumph is reduced to “a formula for literary self-destruction that presages her own death” (qtd. in Scott 362). The career of Virginia Woolf is marked with her supreme achievement. She has also left behind her a number of short stories, some of which have considerable literary merit. She is best known as a novelist, and her reputation rests on a few
novels, which are equally her great works of art. Given below are brief outline sketches of her major novels which have been taken for study.

The *Voyage Out* published in 1915, marks the beginning of her career as a novelist. According to James M. Haule Virginia Stephen initiated writing *The Voyage Out* when she was 25, and was still working on it when she married Leonard Woolf in 1912. Woolf reread the proofs of her first novel in 1913, but her half brother’s firm did not publish *The Voyage Out* until 26 March 1915. Haule exposes Leonard Woolf’s explanation that the publication was “held up for two years because of Virginia’s breakdown” (309). On 25th March 1915 Woolf got sick again and was taken to a nursing home just as *The Voyage Out* was due to be published. The title of the novel is very fitting to the story of the novel. Julia Briggs regarding Woolf’s *The Voyage Out* points out that for Woolf it was “a desperate struggle to write, draft succeeding draft, racking her confidence, yet when completed, it proved, as its first reader had promised, ‘a work that counts’” (Virginia Woolf I).

The novel suggests rather than depicts profound disturbance in the inner lives of women. A young and inexperienced girl named Rachel Vinrace hands over her doubts regarding life to be cleared to her newly guide Helen Ambrose. She is brought into a variety of experiences with a large number of people. She meets Terence Hewet and sells her heart to him. She has just begun to emerge into life of a normal young woman but she becomes ill and dies of terrible fever. She dies before reaching her maturity. It describes of her troubled life by the mysterious immensity and loneliness of existence. It often brings into mind the work of Jane Austen. A woman’s life from a young stage is mentioned where she
struggles to find a place for her in the society. The discovery and analysis of love is of such great importance that it has been regarded as the central theme of the novel something that provides the unity of inspiration. Rachel teaches what life is like when one has a shadowy idea of it and how it changes gradually when one starts living it.

In February, shortly before *The Voyage Out* was to be published, Woolf became manic. Her doctor had diagnosed her with neurasthenia, but her husband who loved her deeply cannot bare this and he called it, simply, mania-depression. Both Woolf and Leonard found some physical warning signs like severe headaches, insomnia, quickened pulse, unbearably rapid heartbeat which assured them that an attack was about to happen. In the novel *The Voyage Out* Rachel who is none other than Woolf faces the same signs of fitness. Woolf’s mania manifested itself in gabble, a personality shift to uncharacteristic garrulity and extreme excitement. Woolf sometimes became violent and enraged which was unambiguously unlike the normal Woolf. Leonard kept on moving their things into Hogarth House when Woolf was put in nursing home for few days. Woolf slowly returned to normal state and her novel *The Voyage Out* was finally published in fact it was well received. E.M. Forster praised it and a number of book reviews called it the work of a genius. Lousie DeSalvo’s exposes that in *Melymbrosia*, the first complete version of the novel, the sexual awakening of Rachel, the heroine, tracks the pattern of Woolf’s own flirtation with her brother-in-law, Clive Bell. DeSalvo states:

> With each shift in her own life, Woolf tried to adjust the novel accordingly. Terrence recognizes his love for Rachel just months
before Leonard proposes to Woolf. Rachel’s uncertain feelings about Terrence follow Woolf’s ambivalent emotions about Leonard. Rachel and Terrence become engaged, as do Woolf and Leonard. When Woolf turned away from earlier problems in her personal life, she expurgated them from her text, including certain sexual themes. (McLaughlin, First Voyage 321)

*Night and Day* (1919) is the longest novel of Virginia Woolf. It depicts the family life of Katherine Hilbery. It is smooth going story between the two generations. It is a life, which the younger generation craves for. Woolf is interested in discovering the everlasting and the perpetual process of life because for her it is life that matters. She is able to form her own friends and attachments. She is free to roam London at any hour of the day or night largely unchaperoned, and is generally given a great deal of liberty by her parents (particularly her laissez-faire father). She has got the liberty to go against the tradition of the society. She even goes to the extent of finding another young lady for Rodney, with whom she was engaged, to marry. She breaks her own engagement with him and marries a young man from the lower middle-class, Ralph Denham. Ann-Marie Priest reveals:

There are two worlds in *Night and Day*: the everyday world of social life and interaction, and a shadowy other realm in which the everyday world simply ceases to exist. For Katherine Hilbery, who straddles these worlds, the first is a place of constraint, the second of liberation. (66)

Mary Datchet is an adorable character with whom the readers have some sympathy because she dreams of her future with Ralph and later she finds out that
her wish will never be fulfilled and thus she chooses her career. For Mary, the vision of reality demands a transformation from the universal to the particular. Mary enjoys a moment of being from an intense perception of herself as an individual. She passed to a conception of the method of things in which, as a human being, she must have her share. “She half held a vision; the vision shaped and dwindled” (Night and Day 218). She recognized that her affliction as an individual was “left behind her”. Woolf is fascinated by the variety of human motives and the oddness of human actions. In every novel her characters enlarged with the best kind of development. The incidents shown are allowed to evolve according to their own life. It is a novel about which conflicting opinions have been expressed. One will come across the theme of love, marriage and a small family. Katherine’s character is far more convincing than Rachel Vinrace. Here Katherine knows what life will be like if she marries William Rodney thus she steps out and chooses Ralph but Rachel is in search of an explanation of all these. However, this novel has a clearly defined theme, in which a clever and cultural young woman rejects one lover and accepts another in order to make her life worth living. Helen Wussow asserts that in his biography of Virginia Woolf, Quentin Bell expresses Night and Day as “a deliberate evocation of the past . . . a very orthodox performance” (61). In September 1987, Andrew McNeillie phrased the novel as “very traditional”.

Jacob’s Room (1922) her third novel appeared three years later after Night and Day, marking Woolf’s advance into full maturity. From the title the readers get a crystal clear view that the life of Jacob Flanders is the theme of the novel. It describes a few incidents connected with the life of Jacob who visits places like
Paris, Italy and Greece besides England. Time plays a major role as being mentioned in the other novels. The novel has fourteen chapters and it has an interval that indicates a change of time or place. There is also an omniscient narrator, which moves from one character to another or interrupts to say something from her own point of view. It portrays the effort taken by a mother, Betty Flanders, a widow, who looks after three children. When the novel opens, the readers come to know that her husband died two years before. The pathetic conditions of women are expressed by Woolf as the novel go on. The readers enter into Jacob’s consciousness as a child, as a student at Cambridge, as a traveler and as a young man in love, until he is in the war. A picture of a man is formed through a series of incidents and events linked with women are described in the novel. There is no climax in the novel in the traditional sense. Through other characters, Jacob’s personality is highlighted. Woolf began using the stream-of-consciousness technique from this novel and this technique is carried on to her next two novels *Mrs Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*.

*Mrs Dalloway* published in the year 1925 is the most important novel of Woolf and her greatest claim to immortality. This novel was followed by *To The Lighthouse*. Each and every novel of Woolf is tuned like a piece of music, proceeding note by note, phrase by phrase, with crescendo and diminuend, that best of time being actually marked by the voice of Big Ben. Caring little for the world of fact, she diverts her attention by focusing the reality. The action is presented through the mind of these characters, and the mind ranges without any limitations of time or space. In this novel, Woolf connects the present with the past and also ties it up with the future. The readers get a glimpse of
Mrs. Dalloway’s life through her recollection of memories from London to her
girlhood in her family home at Bourton, and back again to London.

The world of London is full of life and an intimate knowledge of the
characters and their relationships are focussed. Mrs. Dalloway emerges as a
rounded figure, one of the immortals of literature, and her character has been
closely integrated with her world and people around her. Woolf gives a vital
picture of Mrs. Dalloway and the upper middle class London, the world in which
she lives and moves. Woolf at times shifts her position like a poet because she
conveys how it feels to be in love, how the love-experience can shape the course
of one’s life. Jacob Littleton transcribes:

Clarissa’s isolation, the fact of death in her life, is caused by a
social order which requires the subjugation of the private self, for
Clarissa the real self, to the individual’s social position . . . . Woolf
writes, She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible, unseen
. . . ‘Mrs Dalloway’ is that part of her fixed in a social position:
her feminity, in a patrilineal culture, subsumed by her identity as
Richard’s wife. The novel begins with the words ‘Mrs Dalloway’.

(48)

Woolf presents her character Clarissa as loving life and enjoying it
immensely. “It was her nature to enjoy . . . . Anyhow there was no bitterness in
her; none of that sense of moral virtue which is so repulsive in good women. She
enjoyed practically everything” (Mrs Dalloway 87). Clarissa is said to be
extremely sociable. Her zest for life is evident from the incessant parties she
arranges. She likes to visit people, to lunch with them, and to meet them and
invite them. She loves to bring people together, and loves to hear them talking. She also loves “to dance, to ride”. Arrangement of parties and mending her dress, are part of an effort she devotes in order to maintain her self-image as Mrs. Dalloway, wife of Richard. This was the typical role of an upper class lady during the Victorian era. Thomas C. Beattie exclaims Clarissa’s unqualified happiness, especially “her belief that even ordinary life – a motor hooting, a woman shouting, people laughing – is more real and more beautiful than death; and her sense of a renewed, reassembled, unique self now ready to “confront the world” (533). Jacob Littleton claims:

Clarissa artistry is the essential key to understanding her character, and the depiction of that character is the novel’s key event. Woolf is concerned, before anything else, with the absolutely private mental world of a woman who, according to the patriarchal ideology of the day as well as her own figure in the world . . . . (36)

Woolf describes Elizabeth the seventeen-year old daughter of the Dalloways, experiencing London in her own way. She knows that her mother would not like her to walk by herself in strange parts of London, but then, at this moment, her mother seemed to Elizabeth “extremely immature, like a child still, attached to dolls, to old slippers” (*Mrs Dalloway* 152). Woolf presents the discrepancy in the status available to women of two generations, a mother and a daughter. Her theme is always related between a mother and a daughter, a woman with other woman, a woman with a man and also a woman’s bond with the society. She often gives an explanation of the efforts taken by women to have
some identity in the society. Woolf creates a scene to show Elizabeth stepping out from the Victorian ideal womanhood.

When Elizabeth Dalloway steps out and takes the bus up the Strand on a fine June day in 1923, everything seems to suggest that she is the bearer of new opportunities for her sex, a woman who will be able to go further than her mother, still bound to the conventional femininity of the Victorian Angel in the House denounced by Woolf in ‘Professions for Women’. (Rachel Bowlby, Feminist Destinations 70)

Elizabeth is happy that she is free and finds the fresh air very delicious. Woolf wants to bring into focus that the movement though unfamiliar parts to the city it inspired Elizabeth with new ideas of a life. Woolf in the present context explains:

Oh, she would like to go a little farther . . . . She liked people who were ill. And every profession is open to the women of your generation, said Miss Kilman. So she might be a doctor . . . In short, she would like to have a profession. She would become a doctor, a farmer, possibly go into Parliament if she found it necessary, all because of the Strand. (Mrs Dalloway 150-151)

Rachley Bowly states:

Elizabeth’s imaginative venture could be taken as a positive sign of women’s progress: she is driven by ambitious beyond the ken of women thirty years before, and unencumbered by the pressure of masculine interference. Rather, in that she may
become an MP, like Richard Dalloway, she identifies with the possibilities of a paternal profession. (Feminist Destinations 71)

Woolf highlights the unknown, the concealed side of the human personality rather than the known, the familiar, the surface impression. She selects whatever symbol is best suited “to express the inner meaning of a person’s ideas. For her, unspoken words are more important than the spoken words” (qtd. in Hashmi 115). Shahnaz Hashmi feels that Woolf’s characters indulge in frequent interior monologues about themselves and about others. She expresses that her characters symbolize “the constant but futile efforts of the people of the world to keep some kind of lasting balance and order in human life” (116).

Woolf wrote *To the Lighthouse* when her mother died. She wrote in order to reconstruct and conserve her memories. The novel opens the door of the past. Mrs. Ramsay is modeled upon her mother. This helped Woolf in her closure when dealing with the loss and obsession with her mother. Not only her mother but also her father played a major role in her life. Woolf resembled her father uncannily in character traits, in her writing and self-doubts, in her great and malicious sense of humour, in her marriage, in her frugality, in her fear of aging, and in her social consciousness. Both father and daughter shared a strong personality. Woolf portrayed her father as well her mother in *To the Lighthouse*. Mr.Ramsay is none other than the role taken by her father. It relates to his uncontrollable rages and mood swings. At this juncture it is essential to perceive the themes that make part of Mrs. Ramsay’s balanced life which is connected with religion, death, the struggle of day-to-day existence, romantic, sexual fantasies and modern rationalism. Thinking about these themes will make the
readers to connect their perceptive to Woolf’s literary aims. Herbert Marder in regard to the novels *To the Lighthouse* and *Mrs Dalloway* says “it is mainly her descriptions of masculine tyranny which remind us that instance, is at least partially responsible for his wife’s untimely death” (qtd. in Pratt 424).

The publication of Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* was a landmark for the author as well as the development of the novel in England. It won her the Prix Femina the following year, and gained her a reputation as one of Britain’s most important living authors. David Daiches spotlights that in *To the Lighthouse*, “there is a careful weaving together of characters’ consciousness, author’s comments, and one character’s view of another” (qtd. in Tilak 55). The novel was not only a critical success but also very popular, selling in large quantities to a readership that encompassed a broad spectrum of social classes. Since Woolf’s death in 1941, this novel has risen in importance as a focus of criticism concerning issues of gender, empire, and class. Along with James Joyce’s *Ulysses*, it continues to be heralded as a milestone in literary technique. Mark Gaipa depicts Woolf’s views regarding *To the Lighthouse* “. . . in the middle would “break [the] unity in my design”; but after finishing the novel, she told Roger Fry that “one has to have a central line down the middle of the book to hold the design together” (28).

*To the Lighthouse* is largely traditional in its structure. It is seen in three parts. The first part titled as *The Window* throws light on a house party on the island of Skye. Professor Ramsay and his wife are on holidays with their children and some friends. The second part titled as *Time Passed* depicts how during the long years of wars the house is left to dust, silence as well as loneliness. The third
part *The Lighthouse* illustrates the visit to the lighthouse after the passing of the years. Mrs. Ramsay through her quite, efficient and thoughtful personality survives even after her death. Leslie Stephen was a tyrant like Mr. Ramsay. He tells James they won’t be able to go to the lighthouse the next day because the weather won’t be fine. Thus, he is a hindrance in his son’s happiness and life. In Woolf’s life, her father controlled not only her mental development but her intellectual development as well. His father became his daughter’s mentor. Mr. Ramsay parallels Woolf’s father in his need to pass his intellectual nature on to his children. Despite their differences, Virginia and her father formed a special bond, which will not be understood by anyone but each other. His insecurities and flaws became hers, which added to the already enormous struggles in her life. The relationship between the two influenced Woolf’s life as well as her death. Jane Goldman scrutinizes the two major works of Woolf *To the Lighthouse* and *Waves*. She says:

> With its female painter and her female subject, revises the male-dominated elegiac tradition both by manipulating ‘patriarchal chiaroscuro’ and by incorporating ‘the new language of Post-Impressionist colour’ and ‘a new feminist language of colour’. . . . (qtd. in Gillespie 528-29)

Roberta Rubenstein states:

> Woolf elaborates on the sense of horror, the wish for death, and the rhythm of waves rising and crashing that characterized her agonizing experience of depression: I begin to march blindly forward . . . . I say it doesn’t matter. Nothing matters. I become
rigid & straight, & sleep again, & half wake & feel the waves beginning . . . . A year after To the Light House was published, she employed the same phrase, commenting that ‘as sense of nothingness rolls about the house; what I call the sense of ‘Where there is nothing’ . . . . Directly I stop working I feel that if I sink further I shall reach the truth. That is the only mitigation; a kind of nobility. . . . There is an edge to it which I feel of great importance . . . . (38)

Anthony Curtis asserts that the young Kitty Lushington, is generally agreed to have being modeled for Minta Doyle in To the Lighthouse (1927), but according to him she was besides the model for Kitty Lassawade in The Years, while her cousin Eleanor Pargiter is “the character with whom Virginia most closely identifies” (Briggs, Not What 25). However, within the novel these two cousins live on to a calm old age, whereas their originals were “two childless women of exceptional gifts who in their 50s took their own lives” (25). Such an equivalent would undeniably have astonished both of them. It rests on the supposition that in October 1922 when Kitty Maxse fell over the banisters to her death, it was not the mishap as claimed to be. Woolf came to know about her death in the paper and she was unable to figure out how it could have happened. She either overheard a rumour or dive to the conclusion that it was suicide. She had freshly begun a new story about Clarissa, and Kitty’s death suggested to her the idea of Clarissa’s suicide, perhaps to crop up at the climax of her party. Yet almost as soon as she had thought of it, she barred the idea, and instead
introduced a new character, the shell-shocked soldier Septimus Warren Smith, who would become the novel’s suicide instead.

Woolf makes Lily to complete the painting in the end of her novel and she too completes her novel. She gives life to her novel through the strong spirit of a simple woman Lily. Thus, both prove their aptitude. Lily provides evidence regarding ‘painting’ and gives a hard-hitting respond to a man like Charles Tansley who remarked “women can’t paint” and Woolf provides evidence regarding ‘writing’ and gives a strong answer back to the society who considered women as inferior and useless. Both as the writer and the painter faced obstacles in their life but they moved forward with their mission. The Italian critic Salvatore Rosati who in her essay written in 1933 comments on Woolf’s ‘psychological impressionism’ in To the Lighthouse. She says that the last section mostly the interpretation of the present with the past memories forms, in a surreal ambiance, “a continuity of psychological texture and an evocative power which shows a close relationship between the art of Virginia Woolf and that of Katherine Mansfield” (qtd. in Angela Smith 91).

Woolf paints a lucid picture of a modern world lacking consciousness. She hints that humans act as indifferently as the furniture in an empty house, or as apathetically as time. Masculine along with feminine stereotyping is a major theme in Woolf’s writing. In a subtle article written in 1927 for the Dial, a Chicago magazine which published fiction by Mansfield and Woolf, the American poet Conrad Aitken spots that, in Mrs Dalloway and To the Lighthouse, Woolf writes “as if she never for a moment wished us to forget the frame of the picture, and the fact that the picture was a picture” (146).
*Orlando* (1928) takes place in England and the Near East. Orlando grows, during 342 years from an Elizabethan boy of sixteen to a twentieth century woman of thirty-six. It is a fantasy-biography which belongs to a class by itself. It is based on the life, personality ancestry and literary background. It also tells about the life, personality, ancestry and literary background of Woolf’s friend Vita Sackville-West. Orlando is the mixture of Woolf’s own opinion concerning art, position of women and sexuality along with of the life story of her close friend Vita Sackville-West. These two principal motives cannot be separated because they are bound together. In the novel the readers are shown how step by step the changing process of personality takes place in Orlando. It gives the quick look of freedom he enjoyed being a man and after becoming a woman. It portrays the Elizabethan period in all its rich movement and colour. Orlando’s multiple personality is focussed. It shows the unjust and unequal position of women and how women are persecuted as well as bounded by male dominated society for no good reason.

Orlando, the protagonist is first known to the readers during his youth in the Elizabethan period when he was having a passionate affair with a Russian princess. Next he is shown as a British Ambassador Extraordinary in Turkey. Later Woolf puts an end in the change of his personality by changing him into a woman, and continues to live throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This book is well-known for its clearness, vivid picture and sequences of its descriptions. This novel has a humorous liveliness. When Orlando travels on board the English ship, in women’s clothes, she instantaneously begins to experience the difference. The skirts, which she is
wearing, make her feel uncomfortable. The reaction of the people with her makes her feel the difference. This makes her to realize herself as an alien in the society.

Woolf takes an opportunity to show that the gender roles are not biological but societal. The difference in the sex is twisted by the society. The society has made man as the dominant sex and women as an inferior one. Gender can be said as a concept imposed on people who live in the society. Woolf again makes the world know the truth by attaching one more scene where she makes Orlando to go out into the night. However, this time instead of wearing women’s costume she wears men’s dress. She finds herself taking on traditional male mannerisms. She has no fear because now she is a man according to the society. She can walk freely and act upon his wish. Hence, society discriminates between man and women. If society allows the freedom of gender neutrality, people will be more liberated as individuals to take steps according to their nature and personality.

Woolf shows how with the advent of the Victorian period, his character as a real woman takes place. She marries Marmaduke, who leaves immediately after the ceremony to continue his career of sailing around Cape Horn. Orlando completes the cycle of womanhood by giving birth to her first child. Her effort of writing poem is seen when the readers are made known that she wins a prize for her poem, “The Oak Tree”. Orlando belongs to a new generation of women similar to that of twentieth century women. Ruth Gruber looks upon it as a satire on criticism and adds that it is as much the history of Virginia Woolf’s own literary growth as that of Miss Sackville – West of England. She appears to take her poetic development from that of romantic child to a woman asking the
realities modulated by her sex. The theme of Orlando is sex and gender, the discrepancy between men and women; the quality of history; the ‘spirit of the age’; interconnectedness; truth, fact, and poetry. One of the most important themes in Orlando is the connection between fact and imagination.

_A Room of One’s Own_ (1929) explains how Woolf was requested to deliver a lecture on “women and fiction”. It was a complication of lectures Woolf gave at Cambridge on the topic of women and fiction. In this slim volume she argues that talented female writers face the two obstacles that are social inferiority and lack of economic independence. Woolf focused on the essential point that a female woman writer, in order to write fiction, needs an allowance of at least £500 a year as well as a private room. Anne Fernald says that Woolf unwraps _A Room of One’s Own_ with an autobiographical anecdote. It is an anecdote which highlights the reader’s attention on Woolf’s idea on the subject of women and fiction, not on herself. She appeals to her mood, her opinion, her own knowledge, inspecting received opinions against the text and herself. Thus there is a sense of literature being open to anyone who is willing to do that kind of rigorous thinking. This thinking is not based on any one’s education or any system.

Woolf feels that this essay should be taken very personally by women students. Regarding Woolf’s adoption of the narrator, Anne Ferald says, “Mary Beton is a less competent researcher than Woolf, who is thus able to stand between readers (especially undergraduates, most especially women undergraduates) and Virginia Woolf, the famous author and critic . . .” (176). Woolf dramatizes Mary Beton’s complexities as a succession of disruptions and
disturbances, each of which proffers the readers a replica for dealing with, adjusting, and even achieving from the interruptions and distractions in her own life. There are many characters brought by the writer. She writes, “Call me Mary Beton, Mary Seton, Mary Carmichael or by any name you please.” (A Room of One’s Own 2). Mary Seton is a student at Femham College and friend of the narrator’s aunt. Judith Shakespeare is the imagined sister of William Shakespeare. Unable to gain access to the male stage of Elizabethan England, or obtain any formal education, Judith would have been forced to marry and abandoned her literary gifts. Mary Carmichael is a fictious novelist. Mr. A is an imagined author. With all these characters, Woolf is able to express her strong viewpoints on the liberation and equality of women.

Her 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 right for women to write of her own and if a woman wants to write, she needs a room and before all this, she needs education. The anguish she must have felt at not having that right must have tormented her. A woman must have enough independence to provide for herself and realize her dreams. 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 feels that a modern woman has to work hard if she aims to be equal with man and achieve the same status like him. The first step she can begin is through education. Education is the greatest
weapon to achieve status in the society. However, it was denied to women in the early age now women have started gaining education. Only when women succeed to bring changes on the social and cultural levels they can win the match, which her former generation has, began with men. There would emerge a new society, a unique world for women.

*The Years* (1937) is considered with good and evil. The Years is a scenic novel it makes the readers remember people and action more than the mood and attitude. The central idea traces in the life of the Pargiter family from 1880 to the ‘present day’ of the mid-1930s. There is a fusion of past and present. It’s a family oriented novel as well as a last novel of Woolf. It is concerned largely with the conception of time. Woolf reverts to the manner of her earliest phase, which is largely traditional. There is beauty in the style of the novel. This novel resembles somewhat the general motive of the novel *To the Lighthouse* marking of time as the chief protagonist of recorded life. Woolf’s characters are alive with the excitement of life. This novel has a perfect beginning and a perfect end. Woolf’s novels have got a quality which keeps on sieving every character and gives a clear idea of their motives as well as life. She has got a good collection of people thinking, feeling and brooding by themselves, with vague memories and sharp present sensations. It neither retreat into history nor knocks at the future. At the end of the novel, there is a get together of both generations – a perfect family gathering that affirms continuity in human relationship.

The novel almost covers the period of Woolf’s own life, a sixty-year span that witnessed massive historical changes. It is a period of late nineteenth century colonial expansion, World War I and the consequent skepticism, and the
depression and cynicism of the 1930’s. Woolf narrates it through the lives of three generations of Pargiters. Although social environment is more important here than in any previous novel, Woolf does not merely provide a historical chronicle but also explores such themes as uniting the one with the many, bringing order to chaos, and seeing with the androgynous vision. The Pargiter family remains a part in spite of the occasional gathering. Eleanor is at the age of twenty-two, when the novel opens. She is unsurprisingly cheerful, efficient, and spends her time for social work. She is the support of the family during her mother’s persistent illness. After her mother’s death, she continues to live with her father as his housekeeper and companion. She stays with him until he dies when she is fifty-five years old. She sells the house on Abercorn Terrace and goes to live alone. When she is over seventy, she still finds in her life a continual discovery and enjoys the prospects of a bright new day. She is gifted to take pleasure in the family get together. There are many variations in the present and past generations regarding freedom of communication, profession and living.

*Between the Acts* (1941) is Woolf’s last novel. This novel she finished only a few days before committing suicide. The title chosen is very appropriate because it deals with events which happen in intervals between the “Acts” of a pageant staged in the barn of neighboring manor house, according to weather. Woolf chooses the action for twenty-four hours. This novel shows the novelist’s zeal for experiment. The theme and technique of this novel reveal certain characteristics of Woolf’s outlook and vision of life. The central event is the historic pageant that was about to take place as it has done annually for seven years. It tells about Oliver’s family – his son, daughter-in-law, their two children,
his widowed sister Mrs. Swithin, Miss la Trobe the pageant mistress and acquaintances all become the part of the audience for the pageant. The present are seen in relation to the past history of England. It also tells about the isolation of human beings. Miss La Trobe’s pageant introduces the British history and literature, endowing each major age with a symbol of its unity: the Canterbury pilgrim, Queen Elizabeth, Queen Anne, the Victorian constable.

Woolf relays on the stream-of-consciousness for her characters Isabella and Giles separately. She clearly weaves the story into one whole. This novel has been described as the most symbolical of Woolf’s novels. The action moves backwards and forwards in memory. Woolf shows the continuity of life and the healing power of time which matures the thought of a person and the demands made by life. This novel was unfinished work, published posthumously by her husband, but this is a work of great brilliance and charm which sparkles a new promise. After this Woolf wrote no more. She committed suicide drowning in 1941. Thus it was an end to her literary career of value and significance. The readers have lost a literary giant in the work of art. Though she is no more she gives the touch of magic spell to all who listen to her voice and it is passed from one generation to the other. Given below are some of Woolf’s other works which the researcher has touched upon to highlight Woolf’s literary talent.

Woolf became one of the founders of modern feminism (along with Simone de Beauvoir) and her theses were compiled in two collections of essays A Room of One’s Own (1929) and Three Guineas (1938). However, her critical views of male-dominated society were reflected in the majority of her works including Mrs Dalloway (1925), To the Lighthouse (1927) and Orlando (1928).
Her feminism was partly due to a complicated epoch she lived in. The strict Victorian age was over and the society was searching for its new structure and it opened the way towards the female liberation and other forms of release. Suffrage movement achieved a great success in 1928 when women gained the equal right to vote with men. Woolf’s feminism was the stem for her another idea and that is the idea of androgyny. Woolf was convinced that a great artist should have the androgynous mind. The androgyny can be regarded from many points of view, as the perfect balance of male and female aspects of human mind. However, according to Woolf, an androgynous person is above all sex, i.e. completely genderless. This is particularly important for artists in order to understand the objective reality, to depict authentic male and female characters and not to be restricted and limited by the boundaries of their own sex.

Woolf was conscious about the fact that this ideal state of mind is not likely to be reached, because female and male minds are different, or even contradictory. In general, women are sensitive, intuitive and emotional, whereas men are analytical, aggressive and cynical. With regard to Woolf’s feminist attitudes, there is no wonder that she preferred female qualities and criticized the male ones, yet she was convinced that a human should reach at least the basic level of comprehension and understanding for the other sex. Woolf has not only a flair for writing novels but she has also penned in the other literary genres like short stories and dramas. Some notable works are: A Haunted House in 1944 is a collection of 18 short stories. It was written between 1906 and 1941 (shortly before her death). It was produced by Leonard Woolf after her death. The first six stories appeared only in her previous collection Monday or Tuesday in 1921. The
six stories are *A Haunted House*, *Monday or Tuesday*, *An Unwritten Novel*, *The String Quartet*, *Kew Gardens* and *The Mark on the Wall*. These stories were noticed by the reviewers claiming that her approach to writing was both “new” and had “beauty”. *The New York Times Book Review* analysis for *A Haunted House* is that they give the impression as perfect, and as functional for all their beauty, has spider webs. Lucio Ruotolo records Malamud’s reply to an interviewer when he was asked to define physical love. His respond was steeped in Woolf: “Love in essence enlarges the self and compels the self to ask ‘What does it mean? What should it mean?’ ‘In Kew Gardens’ ends with Virginia’s own affirmation: “I don’t think two people could have been happier than we have been”” (336).

The next six appeared in magazines between 1922 and 1941. They are: *The New Dress*, *The Shooting Party*, *Lappin and Lappinova*, *Solid Objects*, *The Lady in the Looking-Glass*, and *The Duchess and the Jeweller*. The final six works: *Moments of Being*, *The Man who Loved his Kind*, *The Searchlight*, *The Legacy*, *Together and Apart*, and *A Summing Up* were unpublished, although only *Moments of Being* and *The Searchlight* were finally revised by Virginia Woolf herself. *Moments of Being* was published after her death. It’s her only autobiographical writing, considered by many to be her most important book. *Moments of Being* consists of 5 autobiographical essays: *Reminiscences* (1907), *A Sketch of the Past* (1938), *22 Hyde Park Gate* (1920/1), *Old Bloomsbury* (1921/2), *Am I a Snob?* (1936). Dean R.Baldwin marks; *Lappin and Lappinova* is Woolf’s finest stories in conventional mode. The characters are portrayed as alive and the writing is eloquent, sharp and meaningful. “The story’s point therefore, is
not that marriage is necessarily bad for a woman, but that marriage to a young man like Ernest can be destructive” (Poole, A Study 304).

In “Reminiscences”, the first of five pieces, she focuses on the death of her mother, “the greatest disaster that could happen”, and its effect on her father, the demanding Victorian patriarch. Three of the papers were composed to be read to the Memoir Club, a post war regrouping of Bloomsbury, which exacted absolute candor of its members. *Moments of Being* is a collection of posthumously-published autobiographical essays by Woolf. This collection was first found in the papers of her husband, used by Quentin Bell in Woolf’s biography, published in 1972. In 1976, they were edited for publication by Jeanne Schulkind. The second edition was published in 1985. The original texts are now housed at Sussex University and in the British Library in London.

*A Sketch of Past* is the longest and most significant of the pieces giving an account of Virginia Woolf’s early years in the family household at 22 Hyde Park Gate. A recently discovered manuscript belonging to this memoir has provided material that further illuminates her relationship to her father, Leslie Stephen, who played a crucial role in her development as an individual and as a writer. *The Duchess and the Jeweller* (1938) is a short story by Virginia Woolf, being an advocate of addressing the “stream of consciousness” shows the thoughts and actions of a greedy jeweler. Woolf makes a thematic point that corrupt people do corrupt actions for purely selfish motives and often without regret. It was first published in British Harper’s *Bazaar Magazine* in April 1938 and subsequently published posthumously in 1944 in the collection *A Haunted House and other Stories*. *Flush: a biography* by Woolf appeared in 1933. Sally Beauman writes
that every publisher’s list should have a book about a dog, and *Flush* is a delighted and unique classic by Woolf. It is a biography of Elizabeth Barratt Browning’s spaniel (1840-54). Flush was a great popular success and to add more to its surprise it is a feminist book. Although ostensibly about the taming of a pedigree dog, Flush addresses the way society tames and classifies women.

*Three Guineas* is a book-length essay published in June 1938. Although *Three Guineas* is a work of non-fiction, it was initially conceived as a “novel essay“ which would tie up the loose ends left in her earlier work, *A Room of One’s Own*. The book was to swap between fictive narrative chapters and non-fiction essay chapters, demonstrating Woolf’s views on war and women in both types of writing. The unfinished manuscript was published in 1937 as *The Pargiters*. Woolf felt that the idea of a “novel-essay” wasn’t working and thus she separated the two parts. The non-fiction portion became *Three Guineas* and the other part fiction portion became Woolf’s most popular novel during her lifetime. *The Years* charts social change from 1800 to the time of publication through the lives of the Pargiter family. It became so well-known that the pocked-sized editions of the novel were published for soldiers as leisure reading in World War II. The last book is *Roger Fry* which Woolf saw into print before her death. It is her one serious full-length biography. Brenda Silver states that “. . . much of the material Woolf noted for her biography of Roger Fry is at King’s College, Cambridge, still accompanied by the occasional Woolfian note” (Heine 759). Merry Pawlowski spots that in *Three Guineas*,

Woolf imagines a woman of her class, the ‘daughter of an educated man,’ as she ‘issues from the shadow of the private
house, and stands on the bridge which lies between the old world and the new’ to contemplate the power of her ability to earn her own money and escape the slavery of dependence on a father or other patriarchal figure. (723)

R.L. Chambers puts his views regarding Woolf’s technique that she advanced the frontiers of the English novel by the mastery of a new and potentially fruitful technique and thus she will be found in the list of great novelists. Woolf was a ceaseless experimenter who tried many methods and imported to the stream-of-consciousness technique a new pattern and infused a new life into it. She uses the technique of the interior monologue. Woolf takes the readers directly into the minds of her characters, and shows the chaotic flow of ideas, sensations and impressions and in this way she brings her readers close to their psyche. Woolf believed in the power of the mind, she makes the readers think regarding the characters, her views, position of women in society, the changes to be brought about in the society and other things. Woolf does not merely provide the externals of characters but renders the very souls of her personages with intensity and immediacy. Woolf’s novels are great stimulants to thought. Her novels are contemplative and natural in tone. Woolf has departed from the Victorian traditions of the novel and she has made an attempt to give the novel a new direction, form and awareness. Thus, her work has a rare artistic integrity.

Woolf presents the stream-of-consciousness of her characters not as a photographer but as an artist. Woolf’s picture of human mind is in close harmony with her aesthetic vision of life. The reading of her novels always gives the
readers a fresh and original experience, and one comes out of it with an altered perspective. Few novelists have such power of influencing the soul. Woolf may not be an architect or originator of the stream-of-consciousness novel, yet it is in her novels that ‘the stream-of-consciousness’ technique finds its balance. Woolf has succeeded in imposing form and order on the chaos inherent in the novel. She was also one of the most forceful and original theorists of the stream-of-consciousness novel, and by the exposition of the aesthetics of this kind of novel, she did much to throw light on its technique. Thus through this she brought out its superiority to the conventional novel.

According to Lessing Woolf experimented throughout her life for literature, trying to make her novels express what she understood as the most delicate about life. Woolf was trying not only to understand the world but also to come in terms with her childhood traumas, and consequently her relationship with reality becomes complicated and ambiguous. Woolf in her novels brings the texture of life, which contains feelings, feelings that contains a package of happiness, love, hate and frustration. Woolf also explains about the conflicts in the inner mind of the people who are unable to decide and come out with a conclusion. She also focusses on the lack and improper way of communication between men and women, marriage and other issues that refer to human interaction. She has succeeded in imposing form and order on the chaos inherent in the novel of subjectivity. Ralph Freedman’s Virginia Woolf: Revaluation and Continuity, presents a scholarly collection of essays in which five of the essayists are women, but the editor appears to have been channeled by critical, not sexist, guidelines. His edition specifies that Woolf studies have reached “a new and
more exacting level for critic and reader – a plateau from which it will be difficult
to climb higher” (Magalaner, Revaluation 687).

Woolf in order to enrich her language uses vivid metaphors and symbols. Her language is the language of poetry; her prose-style has the assonances, the refrains, the rhythms, and the accents of poetry itself. Woolf is a spiritualist as contrasted with the materialists like Arnold Bennett, H.G. Wells and Galsworthy. Woolf rejects the traditional modes of expression and concentrates her attention on the rendering of inner reality. Woolf explores the novel to find out how life is lived, not just as an entertainment or propaganda, the vehicle of some fixed ideas, theories, or a social document. She exposes men and women in all sorts of combinations and thus explores the truth about life. Woolf skillfully presents the fact of life which is ignored and not bothered by the society. In her novels there are scenes and images which stream smoothly without any interruptions. There is a tremendous growth in her novels and each contributes to a better understanding of the other.

Woolf binds herself with her fabricated characters then lets the characters to mix up with the environment. Mary Lyton finds Woolf as “civilized, literate, and entertaining” (Magalaner, Books and Portraits 278). Woolf employs symbols because she feels that symbols successfully communicate the inner reality or psychological truths. The symbols, which she uses, are clear, understandable and easy. Regarding symbols she believes that a symbol should have, some similarity to the thing symbolized which should make the symbol splendid. The effectiveness of symbols can spell a magic on the readers only if the meaning is understood. She praises Ibsen’s symbols. She feels that a symbol should not
inform but should also suggest and evoke. It should be one single whole, and not appear as in two separate parts. Woolf employs and tosses aside all images, symbols which she had prepared. She feels that it’s the right way of using them not in set pieces as she had tried out first but simply as images never making them work out. Thus she retains the sound of the sea, birds, dawn and garden subconsciously present, doing their work in the earth. Woolf regarding character remarks that it is her chief novelistic concern.

Beverly Ann Schlack argument of allusions in Woolf’s texts helps to outline the precise identity of a character and the tone of a particular passage illuminates a novel’s underlying structure. It also offers a plausible answer to an important critical question. Her analysis of literary references in *Jacob’s Room* successfully demonstrates “Woolf’s efforts to balance an ironic against an elegiac viewpoint” (qtd. in Tenenbaum 291). Elaine K.Ginsberg and Laura Moss Gottlieb edited *Virginia Woolf: Centennial Essays*. The title itself is too remarkable for this collection of sixteen essays – papers presented at the Woolf’s centenary celebration at West Virginia University in 1982. The price, as well, seems a bit sheer for conference events even though “the conference must have had its dramatic movements considering Joanne Trautmann’s opposition to and warning against the current reductionism in Woolf scholarship” (qtd. in Rowe Centennial Essays 350). Eric Warner reveals, “The frequency with which *The Voyage Out* is cited as seminal, as favourite, and as historically paramount surprises the reader who clings to the evaluations of the Fifties” (Magalaner, Centenary Perspective 353).
Woolf’s views regarding her form and pattern in her novels are different. She feels that in a novel there should be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love-interest or catastrophe in the accepted style. According to her, there should be reality and it should be exposed. Evaluation of the importance of events and scenes in her novels are made on the basics of their achievements on the consciousness of her characters and not upon their function in the plot. Woolf knows that the death of those whom we love is the profoundest of all human sorrows but even in this sorrow she gives a soothing effect to the plot. She conveys a lyrical rhythm of life in her works shows the continuation of life and gives a healing effect to her characters through incidents. Woolf’s novels are lyrical as they convey poetic experiences of death and life, pain and pleasure as well as the complexities of life. Woolf expects a perfection plot, theme and characterization for her novels. She wants a good finish always and whatever she offers has lyrical intensity and artistic perfection. She uses the time in a new way and thus links her story in the novel. Woolf’s writing serves to explore the non-rational controlling energies in her characters’ mind.

Many look upon *To the Lighthouse* as Woolf’s finest achievement. Her novel *To the Lighthouse* focusses of marriage, time and death. In a further development of her subjective mode, plot is completely abandoned, unity and coherence endowed with imagery, symbolism, and poetic elements. This technique reached its extreme in *The Waves* (1931) where Woolf depicts the passage of time through the impressionistic interior monologues of six characters, and again attempted coherence through recurrent imagery and symbol. Critics have praised the poetic prose of *The Waves*. Woolf’s posthumously published
novel *Between the Acts* (1941) which combines prose, poetry and dialogue, demonstrating Woolf’s continued desire to escape the scope of the novel. Rhoda is the most vividly and sensitively imagined character and at the same time seems to be more closely and personally identified with Woolf herself than with Susan or Jinny. In Woolf’s novels from *Jacob’s Room* to *The Waves* there is far less scene-setting and none of it understandable, deliberate stage-managing disappears, is in fact dissembled; the method is poetic and the unity is found to be a poetic unity. The unity is intentionally achieved in a new way which reflects faithfully the mode of thought, re-echoes with remarkable clarity the emotional harmonies and discords of Woolf’s own time. She is *par excellence* the novelist of the nineteen-twenties. In *The Diary of Virginia Woolf, Vol. III, 1925-1930* Woolf pens in her Diary, “The dream is too often about myself. To correct this, to forget one’s own sharp absurd little personality, reputation & the rest of it, one should read; see outsiders; think more; write more logically; above all be full to work . . .” (McLaughlin, The Diary 322). Mr. E. Albert comments:

As might be expected of one of her background and artistic gifts, Virginia Woolf is a prose writer of genius. It is in her prose style that her poetic qualities are most clearly seen. It has all the poise and charm of the cultured woman and conscious artist . . . . *The Waves* is the best example of this, and the precision of her images is in keeping with the accuracy and delicacy of her character analysis. (Varshney, Common Reader 61-62)

Woolf is not like other writers because she likes to spend her time in investigating her novels. She sees her book from enough distance to provide her
with a detached point of view. Woolf’s insistence on the scene radiating from a center tends to give the novel an organic form. She likes to call it a form because this form that her attention as soon as she comes to the realization of reality. The virtue of a perfect novel lies not only in its sense of reality but also in its perfect form. In Mrs Dalloway Woolf had insisted upon going into depth and removing a layer after layer and in her later years she started admiring the idea of a design. T.E. Apter, who is a novelist and critic says, “The creative perceiver notes new possibilities, while the destructive perceiver sees only what is publicly known. Clarissa Dalloway exemplifies the creative perceiver in a good chapter on Mrs Dalloway” (McLaughlin, A Study 284).

Each of Mrs.Woolf’s novels has inspired a lively curiosity as to the next. Mrs.Woolf makes one sense the complexity of getting a common measure to estimate fiction. Woolf’s work is consequently adventurous as well as intellectually imaginative and it really summonses a higher test than is applied to most novels. Among contemporary writers of fiction, Woolf is a curious and anomalous figure. In some respects, she is as “modern” as “radical”, as Mr. Joyce or Miss Richardson or M. Jules Romains. Robert Kiely informs that Woolf once wrote, “I reflected how what I’m doing is probably being done better by Mr.Joyce” (McLaughlin, Beyond Egotism 320). Kiely reveals that she wished to move beyond her individual experiences in order to reveal “a new equilibrium, the understanding of which involves elaborate reader collaboration” (321). She is a highly self-conscious examiner of consciousness, a bold and original experimenter with the technique of novel-writing. But she is also, and just as strikingly, in other respects ‘old-fashioned’. The aroma of ‘old-fashionedness’
that rises from these highly original and modern novels from the pages of Jacob’s Room, Mrs Dalloway and those of To the Lighthouse is a quality of attitude. Such a quality is now a day old-fashioned, but none the less has got fragrant, of spirit. Kerstin Elert’s theme is that of ideal of Victorian womanhood and he says that “The idea of Victorian womanhood seems a clumsy, ineffectual way in which to approach the vivid, complex and changing women . . . present the reader, not with cultural reflections, but with the shapes of universal female lives” (McLaughlin, Portraits 284).

The readers find Woolf’s people as gentle people; her houses are the houses of gentlefolk; and the consciousness that informs both is a consciousness of well-being and culture. Woolf’s draws her characters from the upper-class London society, the society in which she breathed and lived. Her range of characters is limited like that of Jane Austen. Her people are ordinary men and women whom one comes across in their real life. She presents only a few dominant persons and concentrates on them against the background of mass of humanity. Woolf’s world is crowded as in the streets of London. She has created perpetual, intellectual, moral as well as women of distinction. Susan Merrill Squier presents a detailed and convincing answer to Woolf’s own question “Why do I dramatise London perpetually?” Woolf wondered about this in the last year of her life. Squier comments that Woolf used the city in her works “to explore the cultural sources and significance of her experience as a woman in a patriarchal society . . . appears as setting, image, and symbol, reveals the literary techniques she used to attain an authentic voice as a woman writer” (3). Squier’s close readings proffers widespread facts that Woolf’s subtle yet radical “reshaping of
the city’s meaning – both as an actual place and as a literary image – was central to her development as an artist” (Rowe, The Sexual Politics 815-16).

David Cecil mentions that Woolf’s most vividly realized characters are contemplative solitaries. Woolf is not interested in plot because she takes pleasure in characters. Moreover she is of the opinion that the distinctive quality of the novelist is permanent interest in “character in itself”. As an artist her concern was to understand the reality as well as the convention. Her attitude is primarily that of an innovator, experimenter, conscious of infinite possibilities, and ready to try anything. Woolf places her strong thought on a new concept of novel initiated by James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson, etc. She was of the belief that the novelist must expose himself to life and yet be detached from it. Her views on the novel find expression all through her literary career in her diaries, letters, articles and critical essays. Howard Harper opines that Woolf’s narrative consciousness is on a typical pursuit for some kind of transcendence, a quest that cannot lead to the purpose but finds its achievement in “the compelling necessity and the strange beauty of the effort itself, a necessity and a beauty which we recognize as transcendent despite everything we know” (Rowe, Between Language 287).

Woolf attained a depth of poetic understanding, a vitality which was seemed to be lacking in the earlier novels or perhaps it merely indicates a final triumph of technique. One admires Woolf’s touch of sheer will to imagination and work that is born of mind’s eye. Woolf’s triumph is sure because her selection is invariably precise and very imaginative, that in the end she makes a beautiful success of it. Woolf uses the streams of consciousness techniques of her
characters in every novel to make them amazingly alive and make the readers to feel them and get a vision of theirs. These people are astoundingly real; they belong to a special class. Helen Southworth exclaims that Woolf in a letter to Elaine Robson expresses her wish to be half-French. She writes “I wish I were French and English as you are, like an ice that is half strawberry and half lemon” (84).

Woolf’s characters are magnificently real. One lives and moves with them in their beautiful house till the novel comes to an end. One feels the minute textures of the character’s lives with their own vivid senses. The readers start inheriting their imagination towards life, crave for freedom, thoughts and feelings. It is her art to arrange life and set it stripped before her readers. Thus she stirs her imagination and sense of beauty. Woolf gazes at life with a new vision. Life, reality and human life as it is actually lived formed the basic of her novel. The final pages (entries of the years 1940-41) of the fifth and final volume of Virginia Woolf’s *Diary* provide a stressful experience. Woolf crafts one discrepancy several times in her *Diary*, perhaps with a hint of malice, that is “the gap between outsiders like herself − creative artists directly involved in life and art − and comfortable insiders protectively nurtured by secure careers in the universities . . .” (Magalaner, The Diary 353).

Woolf’s theme is based on human life. She reveals the very spring of action, the hidden motives which impel men and women to act in a particular way. She makes the readers enter into the minds of her characters and thereby shows the chaotic flow of ideas, sensations and impressions. She renders the very souls of her personages with intensity and immediacy. Woolf is proficient in
creating a number of memorable, many-sided and rounded figures. They can be said to be among the immortals of literature. The theme containing the inner life of man is related to the outer life of trees, birds, fishes, meadows and seashores. Reading Woolf’s novels give freshness, a kind of original experience and one comes out of it with an altered perspective. She has the power of influencing the souls. Critics have exposed the symbolical meaning in Woolf’s novels. Regarding her purpose Woolf comments:

What interests me in the last stage was the freedom and boldness with which my imagination picked up, used and tossed aside all the images, symbols, which I had prepared. I am sure that this is the right way of using them . . . . I hope to have kept the sound of the sea and the birds, dawn and garden . . . . (Varshney, Mrs Dalloway 77)

Woolf writes that she keeps in touch with her vision, according to the ideal which exists in her mind. Woolf’s traits in writing a novel show her artistic sincerity and integrity. Thus it is the incredibly hallmark of a great artist. Woolf observes the new facts and the old facts in a new way. She connects the outer world with the inner life and the inner world with the outer. The outer world is the society and inner world reflects the nature of the character like passions, thoughts, feelings, intuitions, sensations, interests, etc. Woolf strongly believes in the power of mind and makes her readers think. Her novels are great stimulants to thought. Woolf observes beauty even in the most unlikely places. Woolf’s humorous treatment of the beautiful is one of her distinctive contributions to the English novel. In Woolf’s novels, the readers can witness a clearly definable
theme. Woolf is not satisfied with the work of the great predecessors of the naturalistic and realistic school. Woolf comes across the spiritual note in the writings of the Great Russian novelists and according to her possesses ‘the features of a saint’.

Woolf tags on the technique of the internal monologue and the stream of consciousness, yet her work does not wallow in filth, nor does it seem to be sick and distrait. Woolf’s work has escaped some of the worst excesses of this modernist school. She has a greater sense of order, restraint, and a greater dignity of bearing. The poetic quality of her fancy and lyricism behind her writing redeems her work in making the readers imagine and enter into the minds of Woolf. One can find Woolf’s work having a lyric rather than an epic quality. But it has a greater sense of order, spotlessness and purity. The most outstanding aspect of Woolf as a novelist is that she discarded the existing technique and themes. She emphasized on the fact that the novelist should find out life, the whole life which has got connection with the never-ending reality. Shahnaz Hashmi engraves in her writing that Woolf employs contacts with the habitual realities of life, in order to fabricate the utmost possible effect. “A small incident, a mere ritual, any ordinary external happening, is enough to ring a bell somewhere in the mind and then memory starts moving back and forth” (120).

Woolf style is so enchanting and magical that even the strangest things can happen without seeming unnatural. She has got an awfully weird and individual style. Her style has the finish and polish of a well-educated person. She has got a very charming, lovely and lady-like style. She has her own style of narrating. Her work is an active influence on other writers and a subtle influence
on what have come to expect from modern literature. Woolf in most of her novels deals with a feminist view. She likes to disclose to the world women’s sufferings as well as their background. Woolf unlike other novelists relies more on intuition than on reason. Joan Bennett in *Virginia Woolf Her Art as a Novelist* feels that her sentences are “fluid, superficially inconsequent, yet beautifully ordered and controlled in their rhythm and their sequence of images” (vii).

Woolf as a woman knows her limitations and she feels that this fact limits her world in another aspect also. She avoids the theme of passionate love, being a woman she could not write freely about sex so she avoids it altogether. Woolf’s mind was of great power and of marked idiosyncrasy. She delighted in the byways of literature and in eccentric, half-forgotten writers and characters. She is fond of writing regarding gifted women, the famous and also the obscure. Her feminism was a spur to her imagination in a number of essays where she breathes a new life into minor women writers whose gallant personalities deserve to outline their works. Kushen discusses about the several essential relationships Woolf had with women especially (Julia Stephen, Vanessa Bell, Katherine Mansfield, Vita Sackville-West, Ethyl Smyth). He renovates the relationships in order to trace their effects on Woolf’s life and art. “From these relationships was ‘a significant stimulus to her creativity’ ” (Ferebee, *Nature of Communion* 354).

Woolf’s subject of her writing is the miniature world of people like herself, a small class, a dying class- the ‘middleclass’. Woolf sees the great evil in human conduct regarding the sin of possessiveness, the greedy after which is not in the true nature of things owned by men, nevertheless, which is by undeniable another’s right. Woolf through gradual stages works out a boldly new
artistic form. Her works are impressionistic renderings of the infinitely small and transient elements, out of which the web of man’s daily experience is woven. Her novels are internal monologues and in every novel's plot is considered to be the utmost importance. The plot is quite trouble-free, cut down to a minimum of facts and it is totally internal as long as the tragic doom, and death, are not missing. Jane Marcus explains that

Woolf’s work is ‘an active political effort of committed socialist feminism,’ and her novels are ‘personal acts of expiation to her mother for her father’s sins, as well as public acts of expiation, songs of sisterhood to atone for her mother’s inability to accept feminism’. (Hill-Miller, New Feminist 637)

Woolf finds that the universe is trapped within the mind, while the mind is attached with the universe by means of a cosmic thrill, experiences its aspect like discoveries directly and instinctively recognized. Woolf’s world of perceptions is a crowded one. Woolf aim was to accept only the ultimate beauty of life, that is, the beauty of spirit. She was a writer and a reader whose sole purpose was to enjoy and make others take pleasure in literature, the literature that was purposeful and useful. Woolf has great admiration for Proust, James Joyce and Chekhov. Woolf’s personality is but a metaphor of her existence and her existence, in its own turn, is a symbol of the human condition at any given time. Woolf prefers insight to sight therefore she ranks novelists like Defoe, Sterne, Jane Austen and Tolstoy who were guided by insight, as higher than those who depended only on sight. Woolf’s key purpose was the communication through fiction of a sense of reality, but her conception of reality differed
fundamentally from the realism of novelists such as Arnold Bennet and John Galsworthy. Woolf senses that reality is an inward subjective awareness and to converse a sense of it the novelist must abandon the attempt to construct an external world little by little and devote himself in crafting the character through the complexity consciousness.

Woolf also regards novel as a means to the lofty end. It is like the exploration of the soul. She is aware of the super-refined in herself, and is not in the least ashamed of it. Woolf has got a diverse feeling of life. The process of living and the sensitivity of things, the passion of response to the stimuli of sights and sounds and the vision of people living their unexciting busy lives, full of minute thoughts as if there were no universe around them and no death at the end, aroused the excitement in her. Kumar Chandradeep reveals:

The experience which Mrs. Woolf takes hold is basically the reality of life and death-the significance, in a word of the flow of consciousness on which human beings are borne from birth to death . . . through her protagonist, Virginia Woolf proves that victory can be won in the name of the self over the hosts that oppose human life. (38)

Woolf was contemplating to change the form of the English novel in order to render it more fully receptive to the experience of life. In a letter to Clive Bell written that year, she mentions her thoughts about the books she was planning to write and how she will re-form the novel. A decade before her death, while working on The Years, she was still mediating on the scope and form of the novel. Despite the resounding success of Mrs. Dalloway and To the Lighthouse
her quest for a satisfactory form did not bring to an end. She aims at “immense breadth” and “immense intensity” along with the form of the novel. She envisages that a novel should hold together satire, comedy, poetry, and narrative. She realizes the changes that have to be brought in the novel. She was a working novelist throughout her adult life and a discriminating reader much longer. In addition, her varied experience had saved her from being confined by any age, genre or national tradition. She not only brought professional maturity but also an extremely well-stocked mind. *To the Lighthouse* had freed Woolf from the obsessive, haunting memories of her parents. Asher says, “She likened this creative process to a kind of psychoanalytic purging: “I suppose I did for myself what psychoanalysts do for their patients” (51). Throughout her life, Woolf at intervals used to write short stories. Hafley says:

It was her custom, whenever an idea for one occurred to her, to sketch it out in a very rough form and then to put it away in a drawer. Later, if an editor asked her for a short story, and she felt in the mood to write one (which was not frequent), she would take a sketch out of her drawer and rewrite it, sometimes a great many times. Or if she felt, as she often did, while writing a novel that she required to rest her mind by working at something else for a time, she would either write a critical essay or work upon one of her sketches for short stories! (40)

Woolf thinks a lot about the relation of the world that the novel creates to the life and that which is perceived by the novelist. For her the novel seeks rather to rearrange and refashion it. The reordered Universe of the novel is not muddled
by the confusion of life whereas it is possessed by neat structural relationships that can be visualized by the mind. Woolf not only excels in her work but also her interests are wide, her literary understanding is deep and her judgment is fresh. Unlike her father, who supposed that literature is “a combination of raw materials which are all to be found in the dictionary” (qtd. in Sharma 89). Woolf assumes that words “flutter and agitate” subsist in the mind and believes that books “light up many windows from where one can watch “the famous dead . . . and fancy sometimes that we are very close and can surprise their secrets” (89). Woolf’s suggestion for her readers is that they should keep the characteristic in mind as it can help them to develop both a clear literary perspective and a finer literary discrimination.

Woolf chooses a medium that is more sophisticated and consciousness. She requests her readers to keep the moment alive and wished that they should not forget the frame of the picture, and the fact that the picture was a picture. Woolf has brought her method of writing novels to such perfection by allowing it to flow by itself. Her artificiality has become natural, the mediate has become immediate. There is a glow in her novels, which gives a poetic apprehension of life of extraordinary loveliness. Nothing happens, in the household of odd nice people, and yet all of life happens. The tragic futility, the absurdity, the pathetic beauty of life the readers experience is a world seen through Woolf. Thomas Caramagno elucidates that Woolf “deliberately shaped her novels to explore her anomalous experiences [with illness] and to express her insights about them” (431). He comments that for Woolf “fiction became a source of nurture because it could mirror back to her a creative self that was not contracted, numb, infantile,
or self-deluding” (qtd. in Reid 431). Caramagno further says that *To the Lighthouse* allowed Virginia Woolf to judge her mother and hence to free herself from the myth of the “angel in the house”.

Woolf not only shows the readers the externals of the characters but also renders the very souls of her personages with intensity and immediacy. She believed in the power of the mind and therefore she makes her readers think. Her novels are great stimulants to thought and are contemplative as well as natural in tone. She has departed from the Victorian traditions of the novel, and has given the novel a new direction and awareness. Woolf’s most important contribution to the novel lies in the field of technique. Her concentration on women’s education and economic independence aligned her with the old-school feminists of the 1920s and ‘30s while her campaign to end women’s poverty reflects the views she shared with the progressive feminists. Yet it was her primal concern with the female artist and that artist’s need for both the physical and cultural space to create led Woolf beyond the polemics of her day to address a contemporary audience.

Woolf’s novels are distinctively ‘modern’ in the broadest sense, which is unlimited to speak out and difficult to define. The readers can feel the new challenge felt by characters in their attempt to confront life. In a context of atheism the ‘new’ individual had to search for a meaning in life. Woolf’s works are distinctively modern as they reflect the innovative, unsupported awareness of the human condition as well as the plight of women in the society. Her journalistic and polemical writings show that she made a significant contribution to the development of feminist thought. Woolf’s contribution for supporting the
women of her society is built up through her novels for their enlightenment. Her consciousness of being a woman and a writer also urged Woolf to cast down the conventions the patriarchs had built. Woolf opens our eyes to the new sources of delight, new hope, new world and new strength and happiness. Woolf merges beauty with accuracy, and gets her effects, not by idealizing and decorating it but by appealing it to the aesthetic sense.

Woolf is now widely accepted as a ‘mother’ through whom twenty-first century feminists think back, but she was ambivalent towards the suffragette movement. Through an examination of the ideas expressed in A Room of One’s Own shows how she struggled hard to bring out women’s voice. Two suffrage characters are painted in the novel The Years and Night and Day they are Rose Pargiter and Mary Datchet respectively. It reveals how Woolf’s feminist ideas were informed by suffrage politics, and illuminates connections and allegiances as well as highlights her passionate resistance to a certain kind of feminism. Woolf also magnifies the importance of life and death in humans. She deals with all sort of themes connected with life, women and society. Woolf’s works are often closely linked to the development of feminist criticism, but she was also an important writer in the modernist movement. She is considered to be a strong feminist. Feminists are different from others because they disagree over the sources of inequality, they try to find ways to attain equality, and also the extent to which gender and sexual identities should be questioned and critiqued. Alison Booth mentions,

Woman, most simply, figures as the other in history – even as the ‘other half,’ the lower classes, are feminized . . . authors’ works in part
attempt to do, might be to challenge the hierarchy of the spheres, subverting the predominance of the masculine self, the public realm, and the ruling classes . . . . (3-4)

Besides she exposes the fact that Eliot and Woolf appeared to have launched an attack on masculinity myth particularly egotism in the form of a commemoration of the feminine selflessness and influence that have been traditionally considered the harmless underside of patriarchal myth. Booth says:

Women writers face not only the obstacle of preconceived womanhood, but also the perhaps more daunting problem of the conception of greatness itself. To be great, in patriarchal culture, is to resemble the male hero, and certainly it is to have some standing in a public story . . . . (4-5)

According to Woolf

The individual author’s claims to originality should be waived, especially as women authors recognize the sufferings they have in common: For masterpieces . . . are the outcome of many years of thinking in common . . . so that the experience of the mass is behind the single voice. (9-10)

Woolf was among the exceptional writers who have put their talents and ideologies into writings, particularly as a patron of equality to women. Considered as one of the founders of feminism, there were quite a number of literary works that shows Woolf’s passion for endorsing feminism. In her struggle of portraying feminism Woolf realized the fact that all traditional women are trapped by traditional values. Thus she designs “modern woman” and through
her she seeks a female place and constructs a new gender relationship in the modern society. The modern woman is a “sign of victory” for the coming generation. Through her works one can see her influence on feminism. Aside from the individual personality of Woolf as a backer of the female gender, her influences can be derived from her intelligence in writing her feminist philosophies that have seized and appealed to the belief of the masses. As Pamela Transue has rightly pointed out, “The only meaningful feminism, in Woolf’s view, is that which moves beyond bitterness into a creative vision of a new and more equal partnership between the sexes which will benefit both” (Ferebee, Politics 354-55).

The whole world believe that Woolf left a literary treasure that increases with time, this can be counted as one of its new jewels. Woolf succeeds in her aim to convey inner life, to display life as an aspect and function of the mind. Moreover, she realized that the assets of common themes were really inadequate for her purpose. Hence she adopted a very peculiar, a very individual style. She apprehends time in the form of the changes it brings about, just as an artist is recognized through his creation. She presents every trivial aspect of her works and wonderfully points her world having a touch of colour, of texture, the enduring nature of night, the house, of the wave, the breeze, the dry leaves, etc. Thus, she succeeds in creating an inner landscape in the minds of the readers. The invisible things are shown through the description of the past, present and future, which are seen and sensed. Woolf feats all by expressing the indescribable, the invisible, that is contained within it, decay and destruction, the forces of era warning against the forces of life. Most of her inestimable works not only reveal
the stream of consciousness of their characters but flow like a stream themselves comforting the reader’s perception with its pleasant-sounding buzz. William Evans looks upon Virginia Woolf writing to a “formula”. He says that this “formula” consists of “eight families of structures: sound, balance, comparison, repetition, abbreviation, interruption, amassment, and leit-motif” (Poole, Strategist 305).

Woolf boldly states that a woman should have a position in the society and she should not be dictated by men about how she should write fiction. The literature should be accessible to everyone, regardless their gender, because the objective reality of the world is neither male nor female. The greatest writers are above all gender. It is incurable if anyone writes keeping their sex in their mind. The readers must have realized it through Woolf’s essay *A Room of One’s Own* in which she has stated that a difference between man and women is only a social construct and it can be changed. Mary M. Childers points out:

If Virginia Woolf were one of those continuing presence the speaker of *A Room of One’s Own* announces ‘true poets’ to be, she would still be hovering around us now, intrigued by how her writing has been discussed by feminists in the U.S. during the 1970s and 1980s. It would delight and maybe also frighten her that she is referred to, even jokingly, as the matron saint of feminism. (61)

Like Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* (1949) claimed that a female role was artificially enforced to a woman. Men and their view of the truth dominate the world. The men are convinced that they are
naturally superior and “in the right”, that women are irrelevant and “deficient”, because they do not have qualities preferred in the male-dominated society. According to Beauvoir, the important part of full independence is that women should try to realize to awaken their own importance and they should not to be afraid to make a difference of opinion. Women should not grab themselves as secondary to any further extent and they should take steps confidently as a free individual. Daniel Albright attempts to persuade the readers of the elemental unity of Woolf’s idiosyncratic art by diverting everyone’s mind to the essential indefiniteness of Woolf’s vision: “[A]s to whether the world is fundamentally objective or subjective, exterior or interior, she vacillates . . .” (qtd. in Baker 293).

Woolf was not only an artistic author, but also a rational and a social critique. In her writings, she frequently voiced her outlook about bias in the society which excludes women and is based on opinionated moral and narrow-mindedness. Her voice is distinctive; her style is her own; her work is an active influence on other writers. She was an experimenter who managed to combine the pleasure of narrative with those forceful interruptions that the mind needs to wake itself. Woolf was not an imitator. She was an innovator who re-defined the novel and pointed the way towards its future possibilities. Art is communiqué. Thomas C. Beattie writes:

Like Chekhov, Woolf sought a final harmony, a completed meaning growing out of an embodied intention. Like him she also recognized that fictional worlds resist closure because they continue to reverberate in the imagination; they go on just as life
goes on. But Woolf saw even further. While unity, coherence, resolution, and a completed meaning were essential to her satisfaction and to her art, she also perceived that the moments of meaning at the ends of her novels . . . . (521-522)

Woolf’s extroverted self-esteem shows that she is an outline for many other women to look at. She inspired many women to think beyond their imagination into deep depths, by not letting man’s judgment taint their thoughts. Woolf’s sets her story in an imaginary place so that her readers can feel comfortable and unbolt their minds to what she is narrating. Woolf throws her views on the readers based on the real discrimination experienced by women throughout Victorian society. Her theme of relationship between women and men in society is carried out all over her work. She is noted for her works where she explores the meaning of communicative process especially in terms of gender.

Michael Levenson’s unveils the key question:

‘What is the individual,’ is, of course, the question that dogs all debates about authorial intention, the question that lurks behind all the controversies about ‘self-censorship’ of texts . . . a question that authors ask, not a question readers ask about authors. (qtd. in North 986)

Woolf role in feminism, along with the personal relationships in her life, influenced her literary works. Her relationships throughout her life contributed not only to her literature, but the quality of her life as well. Woolf states that she was in a queer mood, thinking herself very old: but now she is a woman again as she always is when she writes. Woolf’s main theme for all her novels is reflected
through the female’s struggle for self-expression. Silver spots out that “Virginia Woolf has become a primary site for waging a number of gender-encoded cultural battles, especially those about feminism itself” (qtd. in Jones 3). According to Jane Marcus Woolf’s life has served historically as “the prototypical narrative for the woman artist and for the feminist, . . . serves as ‘a mirror of feminist fears’: ‘Her symptoms have stood for the symptoms of a whole social movement’ ” (3).

Julia Briggs exclaims that Virginia Woolf was never the less deeply aware of the uniqueness of the twentieth century as well as the break between her parents’ generation and her own, a break that she defined in various ways, often as the divergence between the Edwardians and the Georgians. Briggs declares that Woolf classified herself as “a Georgian, alongside T.S.Eliot, D.H.Lawrence, James Joyce and Dorothy Richardson, writers who would now be defined as Modernists” (5). On May 1922, Woolf wrote to a friend “By the Edwardians, I mean Shaw, Wells, Galsworthy, the Webbs, Arnold Bennett. We Georgians have our work cut out for us . . . . Orphans is what I say we are – we Georgians – ” (The Dead 5). Briggs further reveals:

Woolf was to define and redefine, to locate and relocate the gulf that seperated not only the past from the present, and the Edwardians from the Georgians, but also the life of the family from the life of the individual, Victorian romance from modern love, the ‘Angel in the House’ from the New Woman, yet she never entirely disassociated it from her own experiences of personal loss. (5)
Woolf novels thus bring a new dimension in Woolf’s feminism. She connects the theme with the essay and keeps on focusing about women and their hidden talents. Like her characters of her novels Woolf also discusses female writers like Jane Austen, Charlotte and Emily Bronte, and George Eliot who indeed managed to overcome their circumstances and produced works of great and lasting power. Woolf always tries to find out what life actually means. She is of the view that small moment, trivial matters, simple experiences and perception gives meaning to life. She creates “new-fangled” women for the society. They aim to change the existing society by creating an alternative society. They reject the charge of rules, role of marriage that is decided for them and wish to live together with equal rights and freedom.

Woolf was among the rare writers who have put their talents and ideologies into writings, particularly as a patron of equality to women. Considered as one of the founders of feminism, there were quite a number of literary works that show Woolf’s passion for promoting feminism. Much of Woolf's literatures depicted her strict criticism on how the society put little importance to the female gender. In addition, she showed in the background of her works how prominent the female gender can play important roles in the society, both socially and politically. Andre Viola mentions that Woolf “holds a special position in relation to Frazer’s book” (Buds 239). A good deal of Woolf’s works has in fact depicted political thoughts that have endeared the hearts and minds of many readers. Woolf emphasizes the importance of education along with women’s struggle in life. She also encourages them through her protagonist’s self-reliance and fearlessness in plenty. Bette London figures out,
“Woolf has become the American feminist’s favorite cultural icon, the mother to whom we turn in hope of finding a mirror of ourselves . . . Woolf is merely a mirror to her reader . . .” (qtd. in Burns 343).

Every novel in the end signifies an optimistic conclusion that women can really outshine men if they have a strong desire to win. Woolf wants women to come to the forefront of the struggle and take their part as actors in the dominated society. Woolf has been branded as a feminist who wants to generate a new role for women in the society and lend voice to the themes of loneliness, passivity, anguish, ignorance and unequal gender treatment. Considering the documents of feminist literary criticism, Bette London writes,

It is clear that Woolf has become the dead body in whose name feminism erects its monuments and dates its history. Breathing life into her spirit, responding to her words, resurrecting her image, do we become Woolf’s other sister? More important, do we want or need this kinship? (qtd. in Jones 4)

The information in the following chapter of this thesis will aim to explore how Woolf’s works have influenced feminism. Included in the discussion are the ideologies and philosophies that she has embedded and conversed in many of her works. Moreover, this thesis will aim to discover how the novels, essays, and articles of Woolf had promoted the feminist movement and how she has given her strong feminist views in women’s unique world. She is measured as an eminent feminist essayist. Woolf is considered one of the greatest innovators in the English language. Her novels are true to life and the next chapter will steal a look into the souls of her imagined characters through a sequence of scenes and moments.