Chapter IV

The Concept of Perfect Man in Virginia Woolf

--- The Germination of the Ideal of an Androgynous Mind

Virginal Woolf's Concept of Perfect Man is universal as her message is for indivisible humanity. It is the only remedy for the afflictions and miseries of today. The essence of Virginia Woolf's writings is Islamic and Upanishadic. In fact she was Perfect woman, an integrated personality, in the sense Dr. Radhakrishnan was a Momin (Perfect Man) to whom the following couplet of Iqbal has been attributed:

The sign of an unbeliever is that he is immersed in the world,

The sign of a Mumin (Perfect Man) is that the worlds are immersed in him

Virginia Woolf's concept of Perfect Man is the concept of 'Mard-e-momin' who may be both man and woman as both of them have been created of the same 'nafs' (soul) and are equal having the same souls. Virginia Woolf’s mysticism is harmonised with the Islamic mysticism (Islam being the most ancient religion of the world including the teachings of The Upanishads, of Moses and Jesus etc. Sex discrimination is ruinous and venomous at any level as it divides society and
the world producing disintegrated, alienated and fragment personalities.

These facts, which have been mentioned above, are to be kept in view while talking about perfect personalities in world thought. Age-long prejudices against womankind have brought humanity in such a chaos. In order to save the world from annihilation harmonious personalities have to be created.

Virginia Woolf's Perfect Man has consciousness, (Individual as well as Group Consciousness). He is free from chains of Time and space (Bernard, Mrs. Ramsay, etc). He believes in Universal Love, has defiance, loves risks and dangers, is extremely self-respecting, does not bow his head, is a blend of reason and intuition, loves privacy as well as public life, is a Vicegerent of God, has sobriety and insight, self-control and obedience, has faith in action (is a person of action), is capable of distinguishing between good and evil, of transcending the lower self, of conquering the evil, is a free spirit having far-sightedness, hates cunningness, lies, hypocrisy—therefore Patriarchy, despotism, materialism, virulent masculinism and tyranny. Her Perfect Man (insan) is a Dervesh, possessing the spirit of an eagle, is capable of 'dwelling on the rocks of the mountains' (Iqbal). He possesses a unity of being, is a harmonious whole, an entire human being. Virginia Woolf has created such personalities, i.e. Clarissa (Mrs. Dalloway), Bernard (The Waves), Mrs. Ramsay (To The
Virginia Woolf's concept of Perfect Man was germinated in her ideal of an androgynous mind. This very ideal (the derivative being Coleridge for her) has astonishing similarities with the ideal of man presented by great Oriental Sufi, Al-Jili who says:

He is One. He is Many. There is a Universe in Him. His soul is permeating. In its form He is androgynous.¹

Virginia Woolf says:

Coleridge certainly did not mean when he said that a great mind is androgynous, that it is a mind that has any special sympathy with women; a mind that takes up their cause or devotes itself to their interpretation. Perhaps the androgynous mind is less apt to make these distinctions than the single-sexed mind. He meant perhaps that the androgynous mind is resonant and porous; that it transmits emotions without impediment, that it is naturally creative, incandescent and undivided. In fact one goes back to Shakespeare's mind as the type of the androgynous, of the man-womanly mind, though it would be impossible to say what Shakespeare thought of women. And if it be true that it is

one of the tokens of the fully developed mind that it does not think specially or separately of sex, how much harder it is to attain that condition now than ever before. Here I came to the books by living writers and there paused and wondered if this fact were not at the root of something that had long puzzled me. No age can ever have been as stridently sex-conscious as over own ... The Suffrage campaigne was no doubt to blame. It must have roused in men an extraordinary desire for self-assertion; it must have made them lay an emphasis upon their own sex and its characteristics which they would not have troubled to think about had not been challenged. And if one is challenged, ever by a few women in black bonnets, one retaliates.²

The lines quoted above are suggestive of the fact that Virginia Woolf was against the excesses of feminism, that she was not a slogan-raising feminist but a humanist. Hers was never a warrior-like attitude. But she was extremely misunderstood and misinterpreted in spite of the ideal she had presented—the ideal of an andrognous mind which is an attribute of the Divinity, of the Higher Consciousness "within whom there is a Universe", who in its form is androgynous".³ In the forthcoming lines she writes:

Indeed it was delightful to read a man's writing again.

It was so direct, so straightforward after the writing of

2. Virginia Woolf: A Room of One's Own; (Grafton Books, A Division of the Collins Publishing Group. London W 1X 3LA. (First pub. in Great Britain by The Hagarth Press Ltd. 1929. p. 94.
3. Al-Jili : Insan-e-Kamil (The Perfect Man); p. 270.
women. It indicated such freedom of mind, such liberty of person, such confidence in himself...... All this was admirable. But after reading a chapter or two a shadow seemed to lie across the page. It was a straight dark bar, a shadow shaped something like the letter 'I'.... One began dodging this way and that to catch a glimpse of the landscape behind it. Whether that was indeed a tree or a woman walking I was not quite sure. One began to be tired of 'I'... the worst of it is that in the shadow of the letter 'I' all is shapeless as mist. Is that a tree? no, it is a woman. But ... she has not a bone in her body.\(^4\)

This disgust of Virginia Woolf with 'I' is suggestive of her mystical bent of mind which led her to Coleridge about whom she writes:

... but when one takes a sentence of Coleridge into the mind, it explodes and gives birth to all kinds of other ideas, and that is the only sort of writing of which one can say that it has the secret of perpetual life.\(^5\)

And before writing these lines she had said:

What then, it amounts too, if this theory of the two sides of mind holds good, is that virility has now become self-conscious--men, that is to say, are now writing only with the male side of their brains. It is a mistake for a woman to read them for she will inevitably look for

\(^4\) Virginia Woolf: A Room of One's Own, p. 95.
\(^5\) Ibid. p. 97.
something that she will not find. It is the power of suggestion that one most misses.6

Virginia Woolf has rightly pointed out towards the creativity of Coleridge's mind which enabled him to use the term 'androgynous' in connection with Shakespeare in whose mind the marriage of masculine and feminine principles was consummated enabling him to become a mystic - seer, a physian of the soul. Shakespeare's presentation of an ideal, balanced, harmonious and integrated personality is marvellous. He eulogised man being "noble in reason, infinite in faculties, in action like an angel, in apprehension like a god, the beauty of the world, the paragon of animals".7 There is to be found in Hamlet a man-centred harmony to which man should strive to accord himself. In this play (and of course in plays like As you Like It etc.) man has been exalted and hence Shakespeare's search for Perfect form of man who is made in the image of God and is the microcosm (the nucleus) in relation to God and the Universe the Macrocosm. Thus Hamlet is representative of the divine order of a Universe that surrounded its supreme creation man. It is a journey from the circle to the centre. This surrounding and encircling is symbolical and mystical. Hamlet, a "living stream" 8

8. Iqbal: Javid Namah, Original version (Special Publication), Iqbal Academy, Lahore, Pakistan, 1982, p. 66. This word Zinda Rud (ژیندا رود) occurs in this line in Javid Namah
is to be judged by mystical standards. There is to be found in him a blending of the opposites — reason and intuition and that is his mystery which is unintelligible for the one-sided materialistic minds which do not have any rapport with the spirit of Oriental Sufism, *The Upanishads* and the ancient Egyptian religion. In West feminine modes have been suppressed throughout. It is a spiritual disease for the cure of which feminine principles should act more liberally within the individual and within the society — hence the ideal of an androgynous mind in which intuitive and rational realities are blended perfectly. Coleridge and so also Virginia think that only an androgynous mind can create. Shakespeare's was such a mind that is why he could create such harmonious personalities as Rosalind, Partia, Viola, Perdita and Hamlet. Hamlet could create play-within-the play. His vision of beautiful life, of moral life, compelled him to protest against gross sensuality, lust and immorality. His mother, for him, was a spirit — God incarnated in human form. But he feels dejected to see his mother falling down from the high pedestal. The emergence of an individuality is a mystery. Shakespeare believes in the primacy of 'Living Self'. Self is a stream, a wave to be mingled with the vast ocean — the great Reality which is all-pervading. Al-Jili who has been quoted in the very beginning of this chapter also believed in the primacy of Living Self'. The point of comparison between Jili and Shakespeare, besides being revealing, is quite apt and
pertinent. The very phrase "Perfect Man" had been used by Al-Jili as a title to his book *Insan-e-Kamil* (The Perfect Man) which was published at Cairo in A.H. 1300. This is a phrase, which, according to R.A. Nicholson, seems first to have been used by the celebrated Ibn-al-Arabi, although the notion underlying it is as old as Sufism itself. An illuminating exposition of the *Insan-e-Kamil* is to be found in Dr. Mohammad Iqbal's *Development of Metaphysics in Persia* (London, 1908). This phrase "Perfect Man", according to Nicholson seems to have been first used by Ibn'l Arabi from whom Jili was deeply inspired. In the footnotes Nicholson writes:

In the first chapter of *Fusus'l Hikam* (Cairo, A. H. 1321) Ibn'l Arabi says that when God willed that His attributes should be displaye He created a microcosmic being, (Kawn jami), the Perfect man, through whom God's consciousness (Sirr) is manifested to himself.⁹

Nicholson asks a question in the very beginning of his chapter on "The Perfect Man of Jili".

What do Sufis mean when they speak of the Perfect Man? ... if we seek a general definition, perhaps we may describe the Perfect Man as a man who has fully realised his essential oneness with the Divine Being in whose likeness he is made. This experience enjoyed by prophets and saints and shadowed forth in symbols to others, is the foundation of

the Sufi theosophy. Therefore the class of Perfect Man comprises not only the prophets from Adam to Mohammad but also the superlatively elect amongst the Sufis, i.e. the persons named 'awliya', plural of 'wali', a word originally meaning "near", which is used for "friend", protege or "devotee". Since the wali or saint is the popular type of Perfect Man, it should be understood that the essence of Mohammedan saintship, as of prophecy, is nothing less than Divine illumination, immediate Vision and knowledge of things unseen and unknown, when the veil of sense is suddenly lifted and the conscious self passes away in the overwhelming glory of One True Light. "An ecstatic feeling of oneness with God constitutes the Wali. ... Two special functions of the Wali further illustrate the relation of the popular saint-cult to mystical philosophy (1) his function as a mediator (2) his function as a cosmic power. The Perfect Man, unites the One and Many, so that the universe depends on him for its continued existence. In Mohammedan religious life the Wali occupies the same middle position: he bridges the chasm which the The Holy Quran and scholasticism have set between man and absolutely transcendent God. He brings relief to the distressed, health to the sick, children to the childless, food to the famished, spiritual guidance to those who entrust their souls to his care, blessings to all who visit his tomb and invoke Allah in his name.¹⁰

Further Nicholson quotes Hujweri's words about the four saints whose rank is little inferior to the Qutb himself. Those words are:

"It is their office to go round the whole world every night and if there be any place on which their eyes have not fallen, next day some flaw will appear in that place and they must then inform the Qutb, in order that he may direct his attention to the weak spot and that by his blessing the imperfections may be remedied." 11

From this point of view A Room of One's Own, Three Guineas and her novels are Sufi treatises in which the attention of Virginia, the saint, has been directed to the "weak spot" so that by her blessings imperfections may be remedied.

A Room Of One's Own is an essay based upon two papers read to the Arts Society at Newnham in 1928. She had been asked to speak about Women and Fiction in which she brought "relief to the distressed" and has given "spiritual guidance" to those who "entrust their souls" to her care, i.e. women", so that imperfections may be remedied. Encouraging women to write she says:

There runs through these comments and discussions the conviction that good books are desirable and that good writers, even if they show every variety of human depravity, are still good human beings. Then when I ask you to write

11. Ibid. P. 79, the quotation by Hujweri is from Kashf-al-Mahjub, p. 228.
more books I am urging you to do what will be for your good and for the good of the world at large. ... what is meant by 'reality'. It would seem to be something very erratic, very dependable --- now to be found in a dusty road, now in a scrap of newspaper in the street, now a daffodil in the sun. --- It makes the silent world more real than the world of speech - and then there it is again in an omnibus in the uproar of Piccadilly. Sometimes too it seems to dwell in shapes too far away for us to discern what their nature is. But what it touches, it fixes and makes permanent. That is what remains over when the skin of the day has been cast into the hedge; that is what is left of past time and of our loves and hates. Now the writer, as I think, has the chance to live more than other people in the presence of this reality. It is his business to find it and collect it and communicate to it the rest of us ... I am asking you to live in the presence of reality, an invigorating life, it would appear, whether one can impart it or not. I would implore you to be higher, more spiritual. I should remind you what an influence you can exert upon the future ... it is much more important to be oneself than anything else. ... The truth is I often like women. I like their unconventionality. I like their completeness, I like their anonimity. I have indicated what Napoleon once thought of you and what Mussolini thinks now... Young women, I would say you are in my opinion disgracefully ignorant ... The plays of Shakespeare are not by you. I told you in the
beginning of this paper that Shakespeare had a sister; but do not look for her in Sidney Lee's life of the poet. She died young... she never wrote a word. She lies buried where the omnibuses now stop. Now I believe that this poet who never wrote a word and was buried at the crossroads still lives. She lives in you and in me, and in many other women who are not here tonight who are washing dishes and putting the children to bed. But she lives; for great poets do not die; they are continuing presences; they need only the opportunity.¹²

The passages quoted above are exhibitive of the fact that the attention of Virginia Woolf had been ultimately directed to the "weakest spot", i.e. women whom she desired to have possessed an androgynous mind so that they could write exactly what they think. The spiritual guidance of Virginia Woolf is suggestive of her won "Porous" and "androgynous mind.

R. A. Nicholson writes:

"You must know that the Perfect Man is a copy of God. According to the saying of the Prophet "God created Adam in the image of the Merciful". That is so because God is Living, Knowing, Mighty. Willing, Hearing, Seeing and Speaking and man too is all these."¹³

After quoting a few more passages from Jili, Nicholson further writes:

¹² A Room of One's Own, p. 106-107.
These extracts bring out the germinal idea which is developed by Jili into a psychological and cosmological system. The Perfect Man as the copy of God and the archetype of Nature unites the creative and creaturely aspects of the essence and manifests the oneness of Thought with things. He is the heaven and the earth and the length and the breadth.\(^{14}\)

Nicholson quotes Jili's verses out of which one line is given here:

"I have made all kinds of perfection mine own, and lo, I am the beauty of the majesty of the Whole."\(^{15}\)

Nicholson further writes:

Jili treats of the Perfect Man as the spirit whence all things have their origin. He devotes many chapters to the organs and faculties which make up the psychological and intellectual constitution of the Perfect Man -- spirit, heart, intelligence and reflection etc. With the Corresponding celestial being which are said to be created from them.\(^{16}\)

Coleridge, eulogised lyrically by Virginia Woolf, has also dealt with the psychological and intellectual constitution of a man who possesses an androgynous mind. He has also directed our attention towards the origins, towards creativity, towards the Higher consciousness like Jili whose source were Ibn'l Arabi and the Scriptures.

Herbert Marder Writes:

The idea of androgyny makes its appearance here as a corrective for the excesses of feminism. The opinionated mind is the every opposite of a harmonious one, a fact which is further emphasised by Virginia Woolf's choice of Shakespeare as her supreme example of an androgynous writer.\(^{17}\)

The word feminism is to be interpreted in its true sense which was transformed into androgynism by Coleridge and Virginia both. Interpreted rightly this word means quite differently from merely an advocation of women's rights or suffrage Movement or so-called women's liberation. Before interpreting this word in its real context it is necessary to quote a few lines from *A Room One's Own* which tell how the very idea of an androgynous mind germinated in Virginia Woolf's mind:

At this moment, as so often happens in London, there was a complete lull of suspension of traffic. Nothing came down the street; nobody passed. A single leaf detached itself from the plane tree at the end of the street and in that pause and suspension fell. Somehow it was like a signal falling, a signal pointing to a force in things which one had overlooked. It seemed to point to a river, which flowed past, invisibly round the corner, down the street, and took people and eddied them along as the stream of

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Oxbridge had taken the undergraduate in his boat and the dead leaves. Now it was bringing from one side of the street to the other diagonally a girl in patent leather boots; and then a young man in a maroon overcoat; it was also bringing a taxicab; and it brought all there together at a point directly beneath my window; where the taxi stopped; and the girl and the young man stopped and they got into the taxi, and then cab glided off as if it were swept on by the current elsewhere. 18

The detachment of the single leaf from the plane tree is suggestive of separation and division which stands for reason (hence the reference to the Oxbridge students symbolizing intellect). While the union of the girl and the man is suggestive of intuition, synthesis. Pointing out towards the significance of the idea of androgyny for Virginia Woolf, Herbert Marder rightly says that "for Virginia Woolf androgyny was a kind of parable containing a solution to the dilemma of the feminist at war with herself". 19

Here Marder is referring to those who were professional feminists possessing one-sided mind and who actually had no real concern with the miseries of women (as of course Virginia Woolf had very deeply). After describing the very sight of the girl and man getting into the taxi, Virginia Woolf writes:

The sight of two people coming down the street and meeting at the corner seems to ease the mind of some strain. ... Perhaps to think, as I had been thinking these two days, of one sex as distinct from the other is an effort. It interferes with the unity of the mind. Now that effort had ceased and that unity had been restored by seeing two people come together and get into a taxi cab. The mind is certainly a very mysterious organ, I reflected, drawing my head in from the window, about which nothing whatever is known, though we depend upon it so completely. Why do I think that there are severances and opposition in the mind, as there are strains from obvious causes on the body? what does mean by 'the unity of the mind'? I pondered for clearly the mind has so great a power of concentrating at any point at any moment that it seems to have no single state of being. It can separate itself from the people in the street for example, and think of itself as apart from them ... Or it can think with other people spontaneously, as, for instance in a crowd waiting to hear some piece of news read out. It can think back through its fathers and through its mothers, as I have said that a woman writing thinks back through her mothers. Again, if one is a woman one is often surprised by a sudden splitting off of consciousness, say in walking down Whitehall, when from being the natural inheritor of that civilization, she becomes, on the contrary, outside of it, alien and critical. Clearly the mind is always altering its focus, and bringing the world
into different perspectives. But some of these states of mind seem, even if adopted spontaneously, to be less comfortable than others. In order to keep oneself continuing in them one is unconsciously holding something back and gradually the repression becomes an effort. But there may be some state of mind in which one could continue without effort because nothing is required to be held back. And this perhaps, I thought, coming in from window, is one of them. For certainly when I saw the couple get into the taxi cab the mind felt as if, after being divided it had come together again in natural fusion. The obvious reason would be that it is natural for the sexes to co-operate. One has a profound, if irrational instinct, in favour of the theory that the union of man and woman makes for the greatest satisfaction, the most complete happiness. But the sight of the two people getting into the taxi and the satisfaction it gave me made me also ask whether there are two sexes in the mind corresponding to the two sexes in the body; and whether they also require to be united in order to get complete satisfaction and happiness? And I went on amateurishly to sketch a plan of the soul so that in each of us two powers preside, one male, one female and in the man's brain the man predominates over the woman and in the woman's brain the woman predominates over the man. The normal and the comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritually co-operating. If one is a man, the woman part of his brain must have effort; and a
woman also must have synthesis with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilised and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine cannot create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine, I thought. But it would be well to test what one meant by man-womanly and conversely by woman-manly, by pausing and looking at a book or two.20

What comes next in this wonderful treatise has already been summed up that androgynous mind is "porous" and "resonant" transmitting emotion without impediment, that it is "naturally creative", incandescent" and "undivided". This indivisibility of mind (thus of self) is very characteristic of Sufi thought which has been greatly emphasised by Hujweri in his Sufi treatise Kash-al-Mahjub (کشف الهمب) and many other Oriental mystics and Sufis. It is the base of the Sufi concept of Perfect Man.

Virginia Woolf's women, like most of the leading women of Shakespeare, possess androgynous minds harbouring a hidden man in their hearts. In this way the sexes do not alienate and estrange. Thus within the human personality the process of instruction can take place between man and woman. Virginia Woolf has suggested throughout her novels that a character combines masculine and feminine

20. Virginia Woolf: A Room of Ones Own (pp. 92-93-94).
characteristics. She had the idea of an androgynous mind throughout her literary career. Herbert Marder says:

More significantly, in Night and Day Virginia Woolf tells us that Katherine and Cassandra "represented very well the manly and the womanly sides of the feminine nature" (p. 341). The statement is supported by an association between Katherine and Shakespeare's Rosalind (p.p. 175, 306). In To The Lighthouse, speaking of the Ramsay girls, she alludes to the "manliness in their girlish hearts". (p.14) Finally in The Waves Bernard, inventing his own biography observes that "joined to the sensibility of a woman ...[he] possessed the logical sobriety of a man". (p. 55)21

Virginia Woolf had perceived it well that the Western Civilisation had overemphasised the masculine traits and curbed harshly the feminine intuitive faculties which has resulted in a spiritually diseased society, wars patriarchy, imperialism and dictatorships. All man can see of himself—now is "Scraps, orts and fragments".22

This fragmentation of the personality of modern man is the basic cause of the tragic sense of his isolation and loneliness. He is in search of his soul. The only solution to this very crucial problem, according to Virginia Woolf, is to let the feminine principles act more liberally within the individual as well as within the society. In

21. Herbert Marder: Feminism and Art, p. 117. The above quoted lines have been extracted from the essay entitled "The Androgynous Mind " contained in the book.
her ideal of an androgynous mind rational and intuitive realities are harmoniously blended. For making the world more humanised feminine principles have to be brought by women into an entirely masculinised and one-sided world. Virginia Woolf's writings, in their totality are a search for the androgynous mind whose symbol is the lighthouse. Her feminism is constructive laying emphasis on adjustments in the inner lives of the sexes reminding us of Ibsen's philosophy as presented by him especially in A Doll's House. She emphasised, like Ibsen, on the unwritten laws of the mind. Thus her feminism, being very positive, could be named as androgynism, humanism or Unity of Being.

According to Virginia Woolf masculine standards had repressed women's souls to the extent of influencing their attitudes and ideas. She felt that for the first time women had an opportunity to be themselves. She presents them as "strange organisms that had been under the shadow of the rocks these million years and were now timidly crawling into the light".  

Herbert Harder Writes:

Self-conscious emulation, self-conscious defiance, both deformed the mind and diverted women from the goal, which was to be themselves. Political feminism could not bring about this freeing of the mind, Virginia Woolf believed, because like all political movements it created divisions in society rather than healing them. Virginia Woolf's aim, both as feminist and as artist, was, to contribute to this

23. Virginia Woolf: A Room of One's Own; p. 147.

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exploration of feminine values. Thus, as Joan Bennet observes, she brought to the feminist cause something much more interesting and profound than advocacy of equal rights. It was her real contribution to unveil the essential quality of female experience where it differs from the male.24

It is unavoidable to quote Herbert Marder a little further. She says:

In spite of the profound differences between the sexes, Virginia Woolf felt that it is fatal to speak consciously as a woman. They must recognise that both sexes are present in the mind; they must conduct their lives so as to give each element expression and to join both in a harmonious whole. Then their femininity would cease being a puzzle to them. This ideal appealed to Virginia Woolf precisely because she was so far from attaining it. She could not help brooding about her grievances, although she repeatedly warned others against doing it. Even during middle age..... any hint of condescension in a man made her suffer agonies. She was vulnerable because, almost in spite of herself, she felt profound reverence for the masculine intellect... Her novels are a record of this search for wholeness.25

Much has been written on Virginia Woolf’s feminism and her ideal of an androgynous mind. Marder's book, containing a chapter "The Androynous Mind", is quite illuminating. Nancy Bazin has written Virginia Woolf and the Androgynous

24. Herbert Marder: Feminism and Art, (pp. 106-107).
Vision in which she has related Virginia Woolf's ideal of an androgynous vision with her illness and with her manic-depressive nature which is, according to her, characteristic of genuine writers and mystics. Some of the critics have rightly traced mythical patterns and influence of prehistory and Egyptology on her feminism (which is intuitionism or 'Wijdan'). Only N.C. Thakur, being an Indian, with a knowledge of the Oriental Sufi poets, of the Western philosophers and that of The Upanishads has been able to trace out the affinities between Rumi and Virginia Woolf as well as the echoes of the The Upanishads (and of Aurobindo) in Virginia Woolf's writings.

In spite of many efforts on the part of researchers, the word "Feminism" in general and Virginia Woolf's feminism in particular have not still been interpreted and defended satisfactorily so that she could be placed among those who changed the currents of time and influenced world thought!

In its widest and most appropriate sense of the word feminism is equivalent to Humanism or Intuitionism to be distinguished from Women's Liberation Movement (an organised political movement.). Due to its equation with Women's Lib this word has been quite defamed. The present hour needs a reinterpretation of this word.

Feminism is that specific trend which has been influencing the mystics, sages, poets and philosophers and above all the prophets since times immemorial. Adam was
the first mystic and Abraham was all intuition and Prophet Mohammad was the greatest mystic and besides these many others as Arabi, Jili, Rumi, Iqbal and Aurobindo etc. in the Orient and Plotinus, Dante, Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Bergson, Mill, Ibsen, Goethe, Henri James, Coleridge and Virginia Woolf etc. in the Occident, all of them are somehow or the other inclined towards intuition. All those who have presented the ideal of Universal Love (ishq) are inclined towards feminism or intuitionism. Dr. Mohammad Iqbal says in one of his couplets:

Dauntless did love leap into Nimrod's fire.
Reason is still immersed in the spectacle from without.
Rumi says:

The Man of Faith has no fear of loss and gain
His heart is the Throne ('arsh-e-Rahman') and he himself is its possessor.

Mathnavi

According to Virginia Woolf Universal Love has no place in a greedy materialistic society. This love wells up within her own soul and so also in the souls of the major
within her own soul and so also in the souls of the major
personalities she has created, i.e. Clarissa Dalloway, Mrs.
Ramsay, Mrs. Swithin, Eleanor, Septimus Warren Smith,
Bernard etc. It makes them long for death which is
communion, which is mingling. Death is Universal Love as
it was for Abraham. Uttering the messages of love,
Septimus, in Mrs. Dalloway, becomes a visionary. He (for
whom "there is God", there is no death, tree are alive") is
not willing to conform to the worldly sense of proportion.

Rumi says in his *Mathnawi*:

They are disenchanted towards physical existence,

Love is all gain without possessing

the property named life.

I died as mineral and became a plant,

I died as plant and rose to animal.

And:

Oh! let me not exist! for non-existence

Proclaims in organ tones "To him

We shall return." (The Ascending Soul)

For saving this world of ours emphasis is to be laid on
love and Intuitionism. Those who have integrated
personalities, do not lead an ivory-tower life but are
dedicated to the uplift of their community. Mrs. Ramsay,
Mrs. Swithin, Bernard etc being visionaries serve others.

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26. Rumi, Poet and Mystic, p. 103.
Intuitionism, (Universal Love), is sincerity and purity of heart. Rumi says:

*Love and tenderness are human qualities
Anger and lust are animal qualities
Woman is the ray of God...
She is creative: she is not created.*

'The Love of Woman'

*Mathnavi, 2431*

Ibn'l Arabi says in *Fusus-ul-Hikam* - a treatise on the nature of God:

*God is never seen immaterially and the Vision
Of Him in woman is the most perfect of all.*

Jili thinks that the meaning of the word "origin" means mother-mother being the greatest reality --- the Absolute Reality who creates and harmonizes.

Tqbal has mentioned Al-Jili's opinion that Perfect Man is the protector of the universe. Therefore for the continuity of nature the appearance of Perfect Man is a necessary condition. Tqbal feels that it is easy to keep in mind the fact that the Absolute Self who had given up her absoluteness again comes back into the Perfect Man. Without the Perfect Man it was impossible for Her to do it.

Virginia Woolf, always had in her mind an ideal of womanhood and motherhood and was desirous of the evolution of woman as a harmonious personality. She was a Feminist in the sense Arabi, Jili, Aurobindo, Rumi and Tqbal, etc. were.

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27. *Rumi: Poet and Mystic*, p.44
Whenever she tried to play the role of an active feminist, she tried to establish the relationship of the advocated matters with the spiritual life of women and interpreted those laws of mind and spirit which have never been written on paper. The light of universal ideas has brightened her novels. Her prose is symbolic and poetic. Thus the popular opinion about her as the originator of the stream of consciousness technique is to be rejected altogether. At the level of thought she was labelled as "feminist" and at the level of art she was called a mere technician. It was done to decrease her status which, actually, was sky-high.

The Three Guineas, which had been considered by Forster to be a "cantankerous" and quarrelsome book is actually a Sufi treatise in which she has presented suggestions for preventing war and a valuable advice to women that they should not compete with men as they have a better role of their own, of renewing a sense of life and of the importance of life in men and thus protecting them from their lust for war and death. With the help of great consciousness of history she has indicated towards the evolution of civilization. According to her intellect and intuition are to be harmonised for achieving the wholeness of personality. All the writings of Virginia Woolf are a search for such a being who is an ocean of love. This ideal is an evolved form of ancient Egyptian goddess Isis and the Vedic goddess Aditi. The special attributes of God indicated by Sheikh Hujweri, author of Kashf-al-Mahjoob, are akin to that pious
being who was all-pervading in the universe in Pre-history adorned with beauty (jamal نبأ،) majesty (jalal نبأ) and perfection (Kamal نبأ)، whose gnosis is the real faith, who manifested Herself in the form of mother in whose presence we go back to our lost paradise. Such a self, being all inclusive, can never negate any one whether man or woman or any manifestation of Nature.

Bernard Blackstone has said:

*Virginia Woolf has been called a feminist. But more truly we might call her an androgynist because she puts the emphasis on the mystery of completion and on the completion of separate superiorities.*

In the thirteenth chapter of *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge quotes from Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Before quoting Milton he gives the heading to the chapter: "On the imagination, or escmplastic power":

> O Adam, One Almighty is, from whom
> All things proceed, and up to him return,
> If not depraved from good: created all
> Such to perfection, one first nature all,
> Indeed with various forms, various degrees
> Of substance, and in things that live of life;
> But more refined, more spirituous and pure
> As nearer to him placed, or nearer tending.
> Each in their severe active spheres assigned,

Till body up to spirit work, in bounds
Proportioned to each kind. So from the root
Springs lighter the green stalk, from thence the leaves
More airy; last the bright consummate flower
Spirits odorous breathes. Flowers and their fruit,
Man's nourishment, by gradual scale sublimed.
To vital spirits aspire: to animal:
To intellectual!—give both life and sense,
Fancy and understanding; when the soul
Reason receives, and reason is her being,
Discursive or intuitive.30 (Paradise Lost, bk. V.)

After the transcription of some passages of this
chapter for press Coleridge received a letter from one of
his friends in which following advice was given to him in
the following words:
But as for the public I do not hesitate a moment in advising
and urging you to withdraw the chapter from the present
work, and to reserve it for your announced treatises on the
Logos or communicative intellect in Man and Deity.31

The subject and its treatment was, according to that
friend very "abstruse and treated abstrusely"32 having
relation in "abstruseness to Plotinus". Considering this
criticism judicious Coleridge condensed his subject and
wrote:

30. S. T. Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, (ed.J. Shaweross,
32. Ibid. (p. 202)
The Imagination, then, I consider as primary or secondary. The Primary Imagination I hold to be the living power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the infinite I Am. The secondary Imagination I consider as an echo of the former, co-existing with the conscious will, yet still as identical with the primary in the kind of its agency, and offering only in degree and in the mode of its operation. It dissolves, dissipates, in order to recreate; or where this process is rendered impossible, yet still at essentially vital, even as all objects, as objects are essentially fixed and dead.33

Further he says about Fancy:

Fancy, on the contrary, has no other counters to play with, but fixities and definites. The fancy is indeed no other than a mode of memory emancipated from order of time and space.34

To Coleridge fancy is a mechanical process which receives the elementary images—"fixities and definites." According to him imagination is able to create rather than merely reassemble from the senses—and unifying them into a new whole. Imagination is an organic faculty which is not like a machine, but like a living and growing plant. In the 14th chapter of Biographia Literaria there occur his statements that the synthetic power which is the

imagination reveals itself in the balance or reconciliation of opposite or discordant qualities: of sameness with difference; of the general with the concrete; the idea with the image ... Imagination harmonizes the most disparate elements into an organic whole, a unity. The associationists, Gestalt, Freud and Jung—all have discussed the concept of imagination.

In his introduction to *Biographia Literaria* J. Shawcross writes about Coleridge:

... and he made his first acquaintance with a philosophy of mysticism in the writings of the Neoplatonists. To the study of Plato and Plotinus was added that of Boehme and other of Christian mystics. Coleridge was driven to question the trustworthiness of intellect as a universal guide. Not by the process of reasoning but by a direct intuitional act, the poet feels himself brought into communion with a reality itself emotional, the omnipresent mind whose most holy name is Love. To this Love the soul must be attracted and absorbed.

Shawcross further quotes Coleridge:

*The universe itself, what but an immense heap of little things?... My mind feels as if it ached to behold and know something great, something one and indivisible* And it

36. Ibid: p. xiv (from introduction by Shawcross.).
is only in the faith of that, that rocks or waterfalls, mountains or caverns give me the sense of sublimity or majesty! But in this all things counterfeit infinity'.

(Letters, p. 228).

The search for an androgynous mind is actually a search for wholeness, for indivisibility of self which has been characteristic of the Oriental Sufis hence a relationship of the Orient and the Occident. This is the self which does not negate the material objects. Dr. Mohd. Iqbal says:

How unlike the spirit of the Quran, which sees in the humble bee a recipient of Divine inspiration and constantly calls upon the reader to observe the perpetual change of the winds, the alternation of the day and night and the plants swimming through infinite space.

Their concern with the indivisibility of self shows their deep interest in the spirit of the regenerated, whole man. They seem to yearn for human salvation. The essence of Coleridge's speculations are to be found in the following words of Shawcross:

The secondary imagination is essentially faculty of media vision, and its medium is the sensible world.... yet the capacity to appreciate the concrete embodiment is regarded as universal in man.

Shawcross indicates that the system in which Coleridge existed "had no place for the God of Coleridge's faith, as a

40. The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam., p. 3.
spirit to whom self-Consciousness is essential, a being in whom supreme reason and a most holy will are one with an infinite power (Confessions of Faith).42

It is very natural on the part of the inquisitive reader to have a desire to know about the God of Coleridge's faith and his conception of doctrine of Logos. While talking about Fancy and Imagination in *Biographia Literaria* Coleridge mentions an 'androgynous mind' which is harmonious one combining masculine critical side and feminine intuitive side, i.e. light and dark. For Coleridge moon is androgynous having inner and outer harmony-female in receiving the influence of the sun, male in dispersing the principle of productivity and fertility. According to Coleridge moon is androgynous possessing harmonising power uniting Isis and Osiris. Isis represented the female productive force of Nature (her symbol was the cow in this capacity). She was also, with Osiris, ruler of the lower world. Isis and Osiris myth related that as a king of Egypt Osiris had civilised his people but had been murdered and his body cut down in pieces by his brother Set. Isis, his sister and wife collected and buried his remains and with his son Horus took revenge on Set, the author of all evil. Thus Osiris was regarded as the god of the dead but the source through Horus of renewed life.

This very concept of homœ-androgynous, of bi-sexuality has been also found, besides Egyptian religion, in the *Vedas*

42. *Biographia Literaria*, p. xxiv.
- the ideal of 'ardhnarishwara' (अर्धनारीश्वर) -- psychology of
  the sexes in the Vedas- of ek(एक), anek(अनेक), of One and
  Many (as has been referred in connection with Al-Jili and so
  also in Virginia Woolf).

The ancient legend of homo-androgynous was - that the
original man (Adam in Paradise before Eve was created) the
first created, was bi-sexual. The most probable explanation
of this mythological tradition is that they were originally
symbolical Gylphs or sculptures to be translated into words,
literally into the common names of the several Figures and
Images composing the symbol. The healing power of Nature
was included in the myth of Isis. Isis is patiently seeking
to find out the pieces and restore her lost husband.
Several possible interpretations of the myth have been
discussed by Plutarch. (Isis identified with the sea, Osiris
with the Nile). Another interpretation would make Typho the
orb of the sun and Osiris that of the moon, in view of the
moistening nature of the latter, compared with the
destructive heat of the sun. According to this
interpretation the moon would be androgynous uniting Isis
and Osiris- the female and male principles. Sun-moon,
head-heart, represented the active or masculine, Isis the
passive and feminine nature.

For Coleridge moon is a harmonising power. The ideal
of harmonious mind is the root of Coleridge's philosophising
on Fancy and Imagination. Imagination, according to him
dissolves, diffuses and dissipates in order to recreate. He

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says that a great mind must be androgynous. Isis and Osiris were consequently identified with all the objects of the world of existence in ancient Egyptian mythology. According to Plutarch there were carved the following words:

*I am, whatever there was, is and will be and no mortal man could unveil me.*

Faith in the Unity of Being (Wahdatul Wajud) was gradually increasing among philosophers. Bruno and Spinoza were very prominent. Those who believed whole-heartedly in this doctrine were scared of expressing them as it was considered to be Atheism. But later on, there emerged Lessing, Goethe, Fitche, Schelling, Hegel, Coleridge and Virginia Woolf etc. Plato has said that it is difficult to know about Supreme Reality. And if anyone happens to know it is impossible to say it.

Ibn'l Arabi, Jili, Rumi, Aurobindo etc, in the Orient, believed in the Unity of Being. Iqbal also, ultimately was fascinated by this doctrine. His concept of Perfect Man has affinities with the Perfect Man of Jili who belongs to the school of thought which holds that Being is one. Summarising Jili's thought, Nicholson writes that, according to Jili:

*Pure Being or God and Being joined to not being, i.e. the world of created things. The essence of God is unknowable per se; we must seek knowledge of it through its*

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43. *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*, These lines are from the chapter "The Perfect Man of Jili", p. 82.
names and attributes. It is a substance with two accidents, 
eternity and everlastingness; with two qualities, 
creativeness and creatureliness; with two descriptions 
uncreatedness and origination in time; with two names Lord 
and Slave (God and man); with two aspects, the outward or 
visible, which is the world to come ... Pure being, as such 
has neither name nor attribute; only when it gradually 
descends from absoluteness and enters the realm of 
manifestation, do names and attributes appear imprinted on 
it. The sum of these attributes is the universe which is 
phenomenal. ---- The so called phenomenal world is no 
illusion as the self-revelation of the Absolute ... Jili 
makes Being identical with thought. The word expresses 
God's idea of Himself or as Ibn'l Arabi puts it "we 
ourselves are the attributes by which we describe God. God 
is necessary to us in order that we may exist while we are 
necessary to him in order that He may be manifested to 
Himself.44

This need of a God, rather a personal God, remained 
throughout with Coleridge as well as Virginia Woolf, along 
with many saints and sufis. The Biographia Literaria as 
well as Virginia Woolf's writings are a search for that 
"Pure Being" who is invisible but manifested everywhere, who 
is Love and Justice. Actually they are in search of 
themselves. This search led them to the doctrine of Logos. 
They had faith in the Unity of Being -- hence their concept 
of Perfect Man (or Androgynous Mind) whose sources were Boehme, primitive Egyptian religion and Plotinus (whose sources were Egyptology and The Upanishads.

Vita Sackville West has associated Virginia Woolf with Coleridge. She says:

"She and Coleridge both seem to me to combine the unusually mixed ingredients of genius and intellect, the wild fantastic, intuitive genius on the one hand and the cold reasoning intellect on the other."45

Reynold Nicholson, summarising Jili's thought, writes:

The Absolute cannot rest in diversity. Opposites must be reconciled and at last united. The Many must again be One. Man is the Cosmic thought assuming flesh and connecting Absolute Being with the world of Nature.46

Virginia Woolf, in company with Jili, felt that each is part of the whole. For the best expression of this feeling we must go to The Waves:

I am not one person, cried Bernard, I am many people. I do not know who I am, Jinny, Rhoda, Susan, Neville or Louis or how to distinguish my life from theirs.47

Harvena Richter has dealt with this very concept of One and Many, or the multiplicity of Self in her book The Inward Voyage. She refers to Virginia Woolf's method of mythic

45. Vita Sackville West: from a letter in Recollections, (Fd. by Joan Nobel, 164 - 165.
double, the archetype of self. She, has referred to the influence of Jung's Collective Unconscious on Virginia Woolf. This concept of One and Many, of Change, of Time is very ancient whose roots go to ancient Egyptian religion and *The Upanishads*, and after that Plotinus and the Oriental Sufis and later on Kant, Spinoza, Schlegel, Fitche, Bergson, Goethe. Virginia Woolf, (being all-inclusive) has assimilated the Occidental as well as the Oriental thought through every possible source. As the writer of this thesis finds the thought of Arabi, and Jili etc. very comprehensive and all-inclusive and in company with the thought of Virginia Woolf, it is desirable to enter within Arabi's and Jili's minds which ultimately attracted Tqbal to the utmost due to its humanity.

Harvena Richter has rightly traced out the influence of Jung on Virginia Woolf. But, the Western mind, being usually one-sided and analytical, (with a few exceptions) is incapable of seeing the world as a whole. Therefore, like many others it was quite natural with the author of *The Inward Voyage* not to relate Jung with the Oriental Sufis.

Idries Shah writes in his illuminating book on Sufism:

*Freudian and Jungian psychology have not the freshness to the Sufi mind which they have conveyed to the West. Freud's sexual arguments are noted by the Sufi Sheikh Ghazali in his Alchemy of Happiness (written over 900 years ago) as being standard among Muslim theologians. The Jungian archetypal theory did not originate with professor*
Jung but was stated by sufi master Ibn Al Arabi as Prof. Rom London notes in his book, *The Philosophy of Ibn Arabi*. Mr. Shah further adds:

We may mention Jung's admission that Western psycho-analysis is only that of a beginner compared to that of the East.

Psycho-analysis itself and the lines of thought to which it gives rise - surely a distinctly Western development — are only a beginner's attempt compared to what is an immemorial art in the East.

Idries Shah further says:

For Ibn Arabi, as for all Sufis, Mohammad represents the Perfect Man. At the same time it is necessary to know what is meant by Mohammad. Ibn Arabi is more explicit on this point. There are two versions of Mohammad — the man who lived in Macca and Madina and the eternal Mohammad. It is this latter one of whom he speaks. This Mohammad is identified with all the prophets, including Jesus. This idea has caused people with a Christian background to claim that Ibn al Arabi or the Sufis or both were secret Christians. The Sufi claim is that all the individuals who have performed certain functions are in a sense one. This oneness they call in its origin "haqiqat-e-Mohammadia", the Reality of Mohammad.

R. A. Nicholson says about the Pre-existence of Mohammad:

At an early date the dogma of the pre-existence (of Mohammad) established itself among the Shiites and ere long the Sunnis too adopted it. We find it in many sayings attributed to Mohammad; for example in famous Haidith "I was a prophet whilst Adam was still between water and the Clay", i.e. before Mohammad's body was created, the pre-existence form of Mohammad which is the first thing that God created, was conceived as a celestial light (nur-e-Mohammadi) became incarnated in Adam and in the whole series of prophets after him from generation to generation, until its final appearance, according to the Sunnis, in Mohammad himself, according to the Shiites it passed from Mohammad to Ali. The Sufis make use of this doctrine in their own way. By them the light of Mohammad is identified with Divine Spirit which God breathed into Adam, with the Neoplatonic nous, which is the first emanation from the One and with the Logos, which, according to some Christian gnostics becomes incarnate in prophets and carries on the cycle of Revelation. The Islamic Logos doctrine, as it may fairly be called, assumes various shapes and is set forth in such a mystical fashion that its details are often difficult to understand. But the main features are clear enough. Mohammad, that is, the essential Idea (haqiqat) of Mohammad as opposed to its earthly manifestations, is regarded firstly as the centre and animating principle of the whole
created universe, the spirit and life of all things, and secondly as the mediator of Divine grace, the Channel through which God imparts knowledge of Himself to his worshipers and endows them with every spiritual gift. 51

Before writing all this Nicholson had written in detail about Ibn'l Farid, an Arabic mystic who is a more typical Sufi according to him. He refers to Ibn'l Farid's poem which has been addressed to the Divine Beloved. Swearing a most solemn oath by all Her attributes of beauty, majesty, and perfection, he speaks his last word that "she is the desire of his heart". Of which She replies saying that "The true lover must die to self". Nicholson says that union with God can be attained only through 'fana' when the self "passes away" from itself and by thus dying lives in God (baqa). 'Fana' is described as a process wherein the soul is stripped off all its desires, affections and interests, so that in ceasing to will for itself it becomes an object of the Divine will, that is the beloved of God. Ibn Farid's utterance "Ana Hiya" (I am She) is an evidence of Pantheism and other such utterances have been ridiculed and condemned. It has a prophetic strain being remindful of Isis. Virginia Woolf's utterance in the Holograph Draft of the Waves: "I am the thing in which all this exists" 52 is very similar to Ibn Farid's utterance. It was omitted from

51. R.A. Nicholson: *The Idea of Personality in Sufism* (Idarah-I-Adabiyyati-Delhi, 2009 Qasim Jan Street, Delhi, 1923, 76); (p.58-59)

the final draft by Virginia Woolf. Both of them aspired to play Isiac roles. They sought inner harmony, the ideal of androgynous vision, of One and Many, the multiplicity of self, of consciousness and group consciousness leading towards enlivening and regeneration of humanity. This was one of the most prominent aspects of the Concept of Perfect Man.