



Self and Gender in Mrs. Dalloway by Virginia Woolf

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to inspect concept of feminism in Virginia Woolf's Novel 'Mrs. Dalloway'. The study demonstrates how patriarchal society degraded women in different fields and under question their gender and identity. Virginia Woolf as a feminist writer constitute a climate in which how women faces with this discrimination. Mrs. Woolf discloses that despite the development of technology and modernity in an industrial city like a London, how sexual differences between men and women become enormous day by day, impede their advancement and how this kinds of society can influence and direct women life to the annihilation due to their corrupted point of view.

Keywords: Feminism, gender, identity, self.

Introduction

It is mentioned in the novel that characters struggle to preserve their soul. For example Septim's commits a suicide. By this action he wants to protect his soul through killing himself. If he submitted to go to asylum his body will be preserved but his soul will be injured. So he preferred to die with honor instead of living with disgrace. On the other hand Clarissa's soul has been injured because of her marriage with Richard. Due to male dominated society and her own social position as a lower class citizen she has to endure this harsh humiliation. By marriage she became Mrs. Dalloway¹. Change of the name can be considered as change of one's identity. So marriage depicts her dependence to a male sex. Despite her desire to Sally, she yielded to the so-called social standard of male structure leadership society. In this story women through marriage change their family name to their husband's family name, it depicts that they don't have identity by themselves, they are dependent to men even in their father's home before marriage they carry a fathers family name. This bitter fact expresses one characteristic of male dominated community.

In a community when a woman can't have little fixed family name for herself how can have freedom of speech and freedom of action? It depicts a kind of dominance both physically and mentally impose on women since the beginning of the creation it view as a weakness, dependence and deficiency for women and superiority for men. Unfortunately this is the way of the world; this is the way the world ends. For example, Sally changed to Lady Rosseter after marriage.

There is a fact about 'self' within Clarissa. She wants to be free from her own husband and prefers to have her own room and stay there alone. She looks for her 'self' in loneliness because she can't find it during her lifelong. At the same time, she

remembers Peter and Sally in her loneliness. In the story, narrator refers to Clarissa's role as a nun so reader can concludes that there is a similarity between nun and Clarissa both of them suppresses worldly pleasure in them.

The word 'tree' is a kind of symbol in this novel. Universal symbol of 'tree' is growth and being alive but here trees are destroyed through cutting. The aliveness and freshness of a tree can related to the memory of characters in the novel. For instance, Peter's and Sally's memory is alive in Clarissa's mind; Clarissa's memory is always in Peter's mind. Clarissa revisions the entire events in the past and present but these memories and aliveness of the mind ruined just because their relationship wasn't fruitful and successful it is devastated like a trees of the novel. When Clarissa saw Peter she told him: "remembers my party tonight". It displays that she isn't disappointed with Peter's love.

There is an undeniable connection between "self" and "identity". When a person doesn't have self can't have identity too. This self suffers and can't show something from itself as an identity. For example, Clarissa ambivalent action toward Peter and Sally, she can't have stable feeling towards male sex or a female sex; she cannot choose man or woman even after having heterosexual marriage with Richard. This relationship disconnected by separating her room. When a person doesn't have self for herself she can't have identity, too. In this way, by comparing Clarissa with Septimus you see that While Septimus soars beyond all restraint into the open sky; Clarissa ascends to an imaginative space, an 'attic room' still contained within her symbolic house⁵. Mrs. Killman as another example is a woman but behaves and dresses in mannish form. Her "self" gives her manly deeds. It induces a contrast between her physical appearance as a female and her conduct as a male. Her "self" as a man by manly feature with her womanly body cause her to

have vague identity in a society where she lives in. in this way, every members of the community look down on her manner and appearance.

It is mentioned in the story that Clarissa feels a kind of frivolous chatter box in front of Peter. This lack of believing in oneself is due to the pressure from community of England that imposed on women. Society has pessimistic and critical point of view on female sex. Through Clarissa's activity like giving party, buying flower and reading books she wanted to fulfill her internal emptiness that society grasp from her. On the other hand, these activities give her an identity. Actually she has two self, an internal and external one. First, she suppressed in herself and the latter she have to wear as a social mask to communicate with her external world because if a person can't wear different social masks based on the different situations it paralyzes her daily life, due to the fact that too rigid social mask cause irritability.

Furthermore, "death" is another important concept which is repeated through the novel. Also, "Love" along with "death" are inseparable parts of life. Virginia Woolf was aware of this fact and these two concepts are happened several times in '*Mrs. Dalloway*'. One part of the story speaks about an old woman that singing a song about "love" and "death". In a window shop, it was written "Fear no more that heat O 'the sun /nor the furious winter "this line is from Shakespeare's '*Cymbeline*'; a funeral song that says death brings solace and comfort after life hard struggle. these lines was repeated by Septimus and Clarissa a lot it depicts that destructive effect of war on peoples attitude that understand absurdity of a life and blur their mind. Both Septimus and Clarissa consider death as release in difficult time; especially in war time human lose their faith to God and things in a world. They reach hopelessness and conclude that this world is unsafe place and everything is vanished by death. There is no guarantee for anything, that's why death is a secure way to get rid of hazardous and unsafe place.

Also, in this case, Cristina Nicolae believes that there is something in Clarissa's life that prevents her from feeling love, passion, thus committing suicide, if one might say so, at the level of heart but not of the body, whereas for Septimus the heart is in the body ("fear no more, says the heart in the body; fear no more"), therefore his suicide is at the level of both heart and body. Life (also implied in the idea of the party) and death are brought together as the man's death becomes part of Clarissa's life on the latter hearing about the suicide².

In this story, characters are divided into reader and non reader. Clarissa and Septimus Warren Smith can consider as reader but Richard and Lady Bruton are known as non-reader. Both Septimus and Clarissa read Shakespeare and Shelly. Septimus used to be a poet before World War I. These two characters suffer internally, mentally and have deep thinking to the matters in their environment. This suffering is due to too much understanding that generate through reading. Clarissa understood that through his marriage with Richard she became

Mrs. Dalloway so she has a sort of dependence to him; this matter makes Clarissa challenge this norm and tradition instead of accepting this truth very easily.

Human should contemplate about everything before accepting it. Clarissa believes that religious and scientific matters can't be a touchstone for people because when a person pretend something in appearance it is exactly vice a versa in inside. Clarissa is from an upper social class so this materialism can't blur and distort her vision and common sense to her world around. At the other hand, she always pays attention to everybody and everything; for example her old neighbor. Despite she doesn't even know her name but feels sorry for that old woman's present situation as a poor, lonely and weak. She wasn't indifferent to others because she wants every good thing for both herself and for others.

Clarissa has feeling to her world around and other people. Some people accept everything easily without understanding its philosophy; they accept just its surface so that's why Clarissa reads Plato, the philosophy of the life is important for her. Human can reach a perfection in a way that scrutinize any incidents and realities happening around him or her; these incidents should make a person to contemplate about its philosophy and reason otherwise there is no difference between human and animal. Animal satisfied themselves with ordinary activities like eating, sleeping and defecation but human being as a lord of creator shouldn't gratify himself with these ordinary deeds but they must surpass beyond these activities. If human beings obey everything without questioning its reason, do same activity as others without considering its meaning and its consequences; in fact there is no innovation in the world and nothing new occurs. This is the typical characteristic of a person that study and enrich his soul and intellect through reading. The more you study the more ideas you have. According to the Bible the more you now the more you suffer.

At the other hand, in the field of this study, dress of characters is remarkable in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Clarissa has been wearing a yellow hat. She takes off her hat because she feels silly and is not comfortable with it. It shows her lack of confidence that the male leadership structure gives her. Despite her willing, she has to wear uncomfortable habit; this means the critical view of a society is important for her. Lady Bruton as the other woman in this story wears an ugly mackintosh. She thinks that it gives her a power. It comes to mind that weakness which is reminded by patriarchal community caused she became obsessed with power and her gender as a physically weak creature. There is a psychological belief that those who pay attention their clothes a lot they suffer from internal emptiness and they want to express themselves through clothes. On the other hand, Septimus' shabby coat can have two interpretations the first refers to his point of view about life which is deep and his rich soul. Septimus as a person that sacrificed his life for country, appearance is not important for him. The second conclude from his present condition as shellshock and his philosophical

disappointment toward life which affects his appearance. According to a Psychological view, style of dressing depicts what kind of point of view they have toward life? in general term, a person's clothes, a restaurant where he eat, a music he listens all of them demonstrate what kind of personality he has? And what kind of person he is? Oscar Wild says:" only superficial person can't judge other person from his or her clothes".

All the characters in '*Mrs. Dalloway*' suffer from a kind of regret. In this story, the story of Othello is mentioned. When he killed Desdemona he felt remorseful, then he killed himself. This regret brings dissatisfaction to characters. Clarissa wanted to be with Peter or Sally but she couldn't, Peter wanted to marry with Clarissa but he was not successful. Peter regrets about her unsuccessful love with Clarissa but he couldn't reach her, this suppression made him jealous about others situation. He envies Richard because he can't occupy his wife and envies Hug Whitbread through his successful position. He can't bear those things in others that he himself doesn't achieve. He also regret about his past position in Oxford University and his rejection by Clarissa. Also Rezia regrets about her present life that have with her husband because she expects a happy life with children but she doesn't have it. Septimus as a male character was trying to have a better future after war but he was failure. The next character is an older woman called Carrie Dempster. When she saw a young woman in the park she regrets her young age. Mrs. Killman has regret about Clarissa's present class as an upper class, her beauty and her life.

Killman's point of view to Clarissa is full of aversion when she compares herself with Clarissa. She realizes that those things that Clarissa has she doesn't have. She doesn't express these things to Clarissa directly but shows it indirectly through both her action and her looking. Sometimes things can't say by our tongue but our eyes express them very clearly. If people tell a lie their eyes reveals it. People eyes are a mirror that reflect what is in their inside; through people eyes one can understand their depth of heart and essence.

Mrs. Killman's ugliness is her weak point. She thinks that Clarissa teases her and all the time asks a question from herself why should I suffer and have such a face? With these ideas Mrs. Killman kills herself emotionally. She also suffers from her own classification, her German name, her appearance and her social position as a person who lost her job because of war. Killman wants to have dominance on Elizabeth's belief like Sir William that has dominance on his patients. This dominance on Elizabeth refers to her thought that her class in society, her faith and her appearance which all dominated her; that's why she wants to retaliate on Elizabeth. Her faith become under the question several times. She pretends to be religious but she destroyed religion through some actions like envy, homosexuality, aversion, rage and gluttony. As a religious person, she searches a guilty for her condition. As the novel shows us, she satisfied herself with shopping and eating

greedily. Abbey can be a place for her to take a refuge and protect her from things that she doesn't have. First she buys mackintosh then she buys a Army and Navy petticoat; through these garments she thinks that she can hide her class of society wrath, lust, envy and love. Each of them if can't be controlled by human it can result wretchedness. As a matter of fact, these are mentioned as Seven Deadly Sins in Bible that has sharp contrast with religion. Mrs. Killman through religion and Sir William Bradshaw through science want to express themselves. Because of their weak point in their personality they use religion and science as an instrument to progress their aim and manipulate individuals so this wistfulness brings them suffering and make them sick. There is some wistfulness that ends with death.

In this novel all the characters are stuck in past and it seems that they are not happy with their present situation; for example Peter thinks about Clarissa even when he married with Daisy, Clarissa as a married woman think about Peter and Sally, also Septimus thinks about his dead friend, Evans, when he was in the park. When Clarissa goes to flower shop she remembers past time and remember her old friend Peter Walsh suits her.

Here memory plays an important role here. There is famous Indian proverb that says: if someone carries past memories on his back it curves person's back; he should smash the past under their feet to become tall. Clarissa thinks about past all the time suddenly she finds herself in present. She can't concentrate on present, by this way she not only destroys her present but also eradicate her future. When someone suspend in past lose present, too; because today is the tomorrow that someone waiting for.

One of the negative consequences of world war was feeling insecurity and the author of '*Mrs. Dalloway*' depicts it skillfully. Clarissa as the main character of this novel has this insecure feeling from beginning. When she was single in her father's estate suddenly she felt that something terrible might be happened. She thought that her party is not going to perform well and it was true feeling because Lady Bradshaw announces Septimus's suicide. In the party, she saw Sally that married and have five children. In spite of this fact, among all guest in party she feels lonely. At the party she feels insecure because she thinks that Peter teases her dress. All proves her insecure feeling. It was in her unconscious before war and after war. This insecurity comes from war and male leadership structure. Both inflicted by men.

Clarissa expresses her feeling toward Sally in this way: "match that burn in a crocus". It represents that Clarissa's passion overcomes her reason and her love is filled with lust. So, it is physical love not spiritual love. Match sparkles suddenly and extinguish quickly. Her love toward Sally is as same as match it is not the deeper one. When she saw Sally in party the way she imagine Sally in past, is totally different from present time and Sally seems less lovely to her. This instability in her feeling comes from the pressure of the society of that time and inflicted

her which paralyzed women rationally to think impulsively.

It is mentioned in the novel that Peter has a dream. In his dream, he is a solitary traveler and images of women surrounded him. According to Freud, dreams are representation of our oppressed desires. "For Woolf, as for Freud, unconscious drives and desires constantly exert a pressure on our conscious thoughts and actions. For psychoanalysis the human subject is a complex entity, of which the conscious mind is only a small part since we can have no knowledge of the possibly unlimited unconscious processes that shape our conscious thought⁴. This oppression shows them in the form of dream. He wasn't successful about his love with Clarissa so he cannot fulfill Clarissa's memory even by his marriage with Daisy. That's why all of them are collected in his unconscious and show itself in the form of women's images in dream. There is a similarity between Peter in 'Mrs. Dalloway' and Stephan Dedalus in 'A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man'. Septimus and Stephen Dedalus are guided and controlled by women but there is a contrast between these two characters. Stephan, at the end of the novel, didn't need to women and became an independence artist but Peter remained dependent to women. Although, he divorced Daisy but he thinks about Clarissa. Women give a kind of security to Peter and his dream justifies this matter. As if these women give Peter security, protection and forgive him like a mother.

Gender

Dependency among the characters of this novel is noticeable. They are dependent to each other physically or emotionally, for example Clarissa is dependent to Richard physically to protect her and materialistically to distort her social position, and at the same time is dependent to Peter and Sally emotionally, also Peter is dependent to Clarissa's affection, Killman to Elizabeth and Lady Burton to Richard through writing a letter. Lady Bruton asked Richard and Hug to write her a letter and called Richard as a prime minister. Reader can understand that she is the weak person that can't write herself a letter. There is a contrast between Lady Bruton and Richard, Richard is so powerful not only write a letter for her but also write a history of her family.

Furthermore, this dependency refers to the social contracts of the time. In this case, Dr. Isam M. Shihada in his article says:

Before the mid of the 19th century, women were considered weak intellectually and physically. Such concept was consolidated by social conventions. According to that concept, society was divided into two worlds: private and public world. The private world implied that women should stay at home. They were not allowed to work or learn. They were educated only in a way that suited their claimed weak nature such as sewing, nursing and painting. The sole vocation for women was marriage⁵.

As we see in this novel, Clarissa has to marry Richard because

of two reasons. First, she was from middle class and in order to change her class married Richard to be an upper class because his money gives her power and position. Second, is because of male dominated society that considers marriage as a means that brings social and physical security and honor to a woman and believes that homosexual relationship as taboo so she submitted to marry in a traditional way.

The world's creation is in a way that women physically and financially is dependent to a man this dependency make them weak in men's eyes. Apparently, she protected physically and materially but in reality it degraded her personally. This reality brings her dependency in any form and shape and brings a basement. But both this marriage and her class as an upper one doesn't solve her problem definitely. Despite marriage she thinks about Sally and Peter again. This marriage doesn't have a good outcome. One can conclude that running away from one difficulty brings several individual difficulties.

Clarissa wants to find her lost individuality in past and present. She finds it by giving party and buying flower, reading books and going to the friend's house alone. These kinds of activities give her identity to be herself and she can express herself through these things which are oppressed in the past time. Clarissa wants to prove her identity in society but there is an obstacle. Something prevents her but she struggles in order to reach her purpose. Patriarchal attitude has been shown as the obstacle and keeps women in margin. Whole of the story is the struggle of a women. Through party she can find her squashed and under questioned identity which is ignored in present society. In such a society being woman is a crime and sin. Women's identity is defeated by men because their desire and passion is not important. They should be according to the standard and norms which is dictated by patriarchal criterion.

In this atmosphere woman can't have progress because they are limited to the social standard of patriarchal community. Off course Social feminists thought that psychology, patriarchy and capitalism determine women's destiny, so the oppression of women is rooted in social, economic, and psychological factors⁵. in order to have progress, in order to reach a goal one should have eliminate some obstacles but here female can't overcome these obstacles. Any movement whether physically or mentally becomes criticized and they are under the magnifying glasses of men. They expect and restrict female to be a mother or wife which is not true opinion. On the other hand, some of them can't be a qualified mother or wife even a man can't be a qualified father or good politician; he can ruin the society, nation and sometimes the whole world by his doctrines. First of all, regardless of one's sex, a person should see what kind of ability he or she has, based on this capability, they should determine their criteria and make a progress in the main fields. People abilities are different from each other maybe a man can be a good cook and a woman can be a good driver or vice a versa. It depends on how someone nourished one's abilities. If individuals have a glance in a whole universe a contrast idea

comes to one's mind that the whole part of the world governed by men; these men bring nothing but destruction, war, genocide, rape and hardly solace.

What really happen to men's common sense, wisdom and superiority that claim all the time? One of the most important and ridiculous criteria in this fabricated society is that those things that is considered as dishonor and uncommon for women become common, honor and advantageous for men. Clarissa and Sally finally married because they submitted to the tradition and male structure leadership force. First, they violated these rules then they became submissive and finally, their community overcomes them. This marriage brings them suppression and unsatisfactory situation. In the case of Mrs. Killman and Elizabeth this is different.

The mentioned society can't influence and penetrate their ideas. Norms and conventions of society can't distort Elizabeth's thought because she believed herself and determined in her way and her relationship with Killman. Her name is symbolic as it is said in the novel and reminds reader Queen Elizabeth I. She with her policies and military ingenuity made England as an important country in Europe. The Elizabeth of the Novel has academic education and has social position in society as Mrs. Woolf considered these are good advantages for woman that brings self confidence and identity. Mrs. Killman despite her homosexuality and her social position as a history teacher she is the victim of the patriarchal society as it is told in the story she is dressed, acted and behaved like man. Killman rejected the convention of the patriarchal society in which she lives. It may pose a question in a reader's mind why all women are not reacting like her?

The point is that people capacity is different from each other, each of them react differently. Those who are more sensitive act dissimilarly. Even heterosexual woman doesn't like to be degraded and ignored in any fields. Here woman like Killman with manly conduct and dress are mocked and woman like Rezia with womanly behavior and manner are mocked, too. So one can concluded that there is something wrong with England society in that time in which has sadistic and pessimistic view point to female sex. They have misogynist perspectives toward women. They believed women as a second sex. The society caused Killman to hate her femininity and repressed or hidden her femininity through men's dress. They have abusive point of view toward them, when a woman understand this bitter reality she will become desperate and frustrated. As a result she illustrates misbehavior like homosexuality and manly behavior. If a reader scrutinizes females actions in this novel, he or she recognized that women do everything want to find their under question identity. Women are the victim in this society. For example, Septimus doesn't like her wife but married her because he can't sleep at night alone or Peter leaves Daisy in India then come to England and think about Clarissa. Peter after divorcing Daisy can't accept and digest this matter that Daisy can be with another man. These characteristics are typical for

male dominated society, they think about their own advantages.

According to the story, Sally is the symbol of wild woman that has brutal disposition, smoking cigar and has black hair. But this is patriarchal society's point of view. Smoking cigar has nothing to do with being savage and wild. Male dominated society pin an etiquette to such women as a rebel. Smoking cigar is as same as drinking water. If Smoking cigar is bad for women it is bad for men, too. In traditional classification, they classified activities base on the individual's genders. Smoking cigar is harmful and hazardous for both of them and it has a mal effect on their health. So there must be no difference between men and women.

Conclusion

Virginia Woolf was one of the feminist writers whose attitude influenced her writing; her literary work is about woman's right and position in male dominated community. She is the victim of such society that undergone father dominance and society dominance and brother rape. Off course, she was affected by her father's domination of his wife and daughters³ and suffers these realities so screams this fact in her novels. Her concerns about feminine issues are depicted in novel like '*Mrs. Dalloway*'. In this work she indirectly shows that women should have equal rights as men. In *Mrs. Dalloway*, she mentioned that both sexes can be a heart of consideration in terms of being capable or incapable. She proved that besides being mother and wife, woman can arugment their own identity not through their erotic organ but through their social movement.

Woolf indicates that men and women can have the same negative and opposite feeling such as patriotism and having social activity. She pictured that the male sex has dominance on female life from the beginning that make their situation pathetic and it never ends. Yesterday, it was her father and brother today her husband and tomorrow her son. In this novel pessimistic and critical view of a man made woman advancement disabled.

Here men look down on women and this malignant looking can penetrate woman's flesh and skin. It can lead them in a way that has irrecoverable result. In '*Mrs. Dalloway*' society if masculinity doesn't use as weapon and femininity doesn't utilize as a weakness, in such atmosphere they can fulfilled each other's need and shortcoming. If woman doesn't seen as second sex and sexual object for men's pleasure but regard as a human being, they will have healthy marriage and nourishing the healthy children. Theses healthy children make healthy society tomorrow. If family became balanced society is balanced, too. By looking to Dalloway's family, reader can't witness a productive union and disunity between husband and wife caused their daughter, Elizabeth, misbehavior as a homosexual.

Marriage is like a tree, children are the fruits of this tree if the tree is not the healthful tree, and the fruit of the tree is not healthful, too. For sure, those men that have such unhealthy

opinion about women, they will grow up in the poisoned family that polluted the society which is called the patriarchal society. Before the matter of power and gender propose, a person should elevate his or her soul in a way that makes him unrepeatably creature in the whole universe.

Mrs. Woolf's encourages women to get an identity and become educated one in this society. When they confined themselves in home and don't have communication with external world their identities become neglected twice and it is affirmation stamp to a male dominated society.

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