

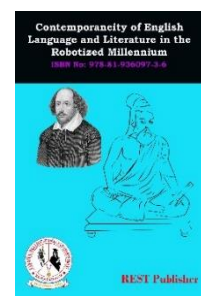
## Contemporaneity of Language and Literature in the Robotized Millennium

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## Silencing The Angle: Women's Creative Struggle in Virginia Woolf's Narrative

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**Abstract:** Virginia Woolf is considered one of the most innovative writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She is the pioneer feminist of the modern age. Her subject matters deal with the rapidly evolving world including a shift in gender roles, modern world challenges, class and race differences etc. Her experiments with the stream of consciousness have influenced the modern world. She did herculean task of bringing women out of the four walls of their houses. She shared her own experiences and presented them openly in the society. She audaciously raised untouched subjects in her works. The present paper deals with the essay 'Professions for Women' which is an abbreviated version of her speech. The essay shows her boldness, openness and foresightedness. She successfully inspires women to stand upright and choose the profession of their choice while breaking the stereotype roles assigned to them in the conservative society.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Gender studies is an area of enquiry for analysing gender identity. Gender studies have its roots in the women's studies concerning issues of women in home, society and politics. Feminism and gender roles defined by the society restricted the women. Literature is one of the fields which has immensely contributed in gender studies. Broadly gender studies analyse ethnicity, nationality, racial and social class, caste, demographic location with more emphasis on gender. A number of theorists like Sigmund Freud, Julia Kristeva and Jacques Lacan etc have significantly influenced the gender study. The history of gender studies examines the different perspectives of gender in the social, cultural, historical and political context. The structured roles are designed to a particular gender according to the practices in different societies. Adeline Virginia Woolf, an innovative and famous author of 20<sup>th</sup> century is known for her essays, diaries, letters and biographies. The originality of subject matter and perfection of stream of consciousness technique raised her range of content. She is the literally giant who is known for her originality. She is a critically acclaimed novelist and essayist and she was a founding member of the intellectual circle known as the Bloomsbury Group 'Mrs Dalloway' (1925), 'Orlando: A Biography' (1928), 'The Waves' (1931), 'Flush: A Biography' (1933), 'The Years' (1936) and her last work, 'Between the Acts' (1941) sum up Woolf's chief preoccupation and her thoughts about human psychology and feminism. She is credited with rejuvenating high imaginative and symbolic narratives in English Literature. Her fiction has been studied for its insightful themes including war, shellshock, witchcraft and the role of social class in contemporary modern British society.<sup>1st</sup>

### 2. DISCUSSION

Virginia Woolf wants women to be free from all the restrictions. She believes that they should enjoy equal rights as men, fair wages, equal pay, equal rights in education and in all the other spheres. Her essay 'Profession for Women' is a speech which she delivered on January 21, 1931 at the branch of the National Society Women Service. It was published in The Death of The Moth and other essay posthumously. Woolf's "A Room of One's Own" is viewed as the first modern text of feminist criticism. Woolf shows that it is difficult for women to come out of the tradition and prejudices that prevail in the society and also within women. In 'Profession for Women' she has described the hurdles and obstacles which came in the way of females. A personal place for women has always been demanded by them. Virginia Woolf has given the description of 'The Angel in the House' which symbolizes a life of woman in the house

who is ready to sacrifice herself daily for the sake of other members of the family. She is regarded as pure, graceful and charming. She has no aim of her own and is always sympathetic, submissive and polite to others. She never let anyone feel that she has a mind and wishes of her own. She works only for the pleasure of the others. She has no identity of her own. Woolf was extremely disheartened with this angel-like figure in the house and she states she murdered that angel in order to get rid of her futile pieces of advice. Her act of murdering the angel in the house symbolizes that how she paved her new path instead of moving on the structured track described for women. The angel pressurised Woolf to be sympathetic, tender, flatterer towards the men and never let her use her own convictions and notions while writing. Woolf shares her experiences that it took long time to control such thoughts and to move on in the profession of writing. According to her the profession of writing has already been opened by the leading women writer by Fanny Burney, Aphra Behn, Harriet Martineau, Jane Austen and George Eliot etc. 'Angel in the House' is a poem by Coventry Patmore. The poem is used as a symbol to refer to the Victorian feminine idols as it clearly describes the duties of wives, mother and daughter. According to it females should selflessly, politely and submissively remained devoted to their children, husband and other family members. They never think of themselves rather they always remain busy in fulfilling the expectations which family members and society have from them. Thus, the phrase 'Angel in the House' symbolizes the expectations of the society from a woman without letting her stand with her own identity. Virginia Woolf used the term to reveal the ghost of gender discrimination which prevails in all the walks of society that leaves not a single profession open for women. Even today it is difficult for some men to acknowledge that women are capable of working in all the professions. They have never been recognised as strong, confident and independent. Physically, morally and mentally they face pressure on to them to fulfil the commands given to them by the males. Woolf boldly announces that even if her case of murdering angel in the house is to be opened before law, she will state that she has killed the angel in her-self-protection otherwise the angel would have killed her. The pressure from society has never let Woolf to pour the true feelings of her heart through her pen. She later felt that she would have utilized that time in learning Greek grammar or seeking adventure in real world instead of fighting with an 'Angel of the House'. According to her it is difficult to suppress a phenomenon, idea or a non-existing fact than to alter a reality as ideas like a phantom haunts people badly in comparison to existing reality. She states that "the Angel of the House was always creeping back when I thought I have dispatched her." 2<sup>nd</sup> Woolf was a writer and it was practically impossible for her to write with the notions of the society and not with the feelings of her heart. The angel dictated Woolf and stood in her way of writing. She did not let her to be what she was but rather imposed structured behaviour which the society demands. The allusion of 'Angel in the House' vitalised the self-identity in Virginia and she demanded from women to stand up for their rights and demands in the society. It seems that Woolf wanted to free herself from the obligations and rules that the society imposed on to her. Her symbolic writings motivate the women of the society and expect them to create an image which has the reflection of their own identity without being influenced by the roles assigned to them in the so-called society of their own. Woolf wants woman to have a room of their own that is a space of their own, their own identity with their own freedom to choose any profession of their choice. The room can be their own but they have to work hard for it and decorate it and furnish it with their constant efforts. The terms and conditions will be different for each and every woman but they have to come up with their own solutions.

### 3. CONCLUSION

Through her essay Woolf inspires women to fight for equal rights and to end the stereotypes roles given to women in the society. She described how much she was conscious prior to writing a review for a novel written by man. She openly shares her experience by stating, "There were two of the adventures of my professional life. The first- killing the Angel in the House - I thing I solved. She died. But the second, telling the truth about my own experience as a body. I do not think I solved". 3<sup>rd</sup> Woolf says that the woman always feels concerned about the notions which man would make about them. She hesitates to speak the truth about her passions which disrupt a woman writer from her state of writing. Michele Barrett is totally right when he says that the circumstances differ for men and women while we talk about writing as the society has different expectation from both of them. Male chauvinism resides at every corner of the society. He states that "the conditions under which men and women produce literature are materially different". 4<sup>th</sup> Woolf boldly advises woman to accept the challenges and enter in various professions to overcome the prejudices which prevails against them in the society. Woolf sums up her argument by saying that "Intellectual freedom depends on material things. Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom. And women have always been poor, not for two hundred years merely but from the beginning of time...women, then, have not had a dog's chance of writing poetry". 5<sup>th</sup>

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