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Concept of Feminism in a Room Of One's Own

Virginia Woolf's essay *A Room of One's Own* is a landmark of twentieth-century feminist thought. It explores the history of women in literature through an unconventional and highly provocative investigation of the social and material conditions required for the writing of literature. These conditions which include in this category are leisure time, privacy, and financial independence but they are particularly relevant to understanding the situation of women in the literary tradition because women historically have been uniformly deprived of those basic prerequisites. In her exploration of this idea Woolf launches a number of provocative sociological and aesthetic critiques. She reviews not only the state of women's own literature but also the state of scholarship both theoretical and historical which concerns with the women. Just as Woolf speaks out against traditional hierarchies in the content of her essay she also rejects standard logical argumentation in her essay's form. Woolf innovatively draws on the resources of fiction to compensate for gaps in the factual record about women and to counter the biases that infect more conventional scholarship. She writes a history of a

woman's thinking about the history of thinking women. Her essay is a reconstruction and a reenactment as well as an argument.

This research paper is designed to present downfall of the feminist thought and explain Virginia Woolf's ideas of equality between sexes. Woolf's first book *A Room of One's Own* and *Orlando* are very important for feminist thought. Virginia Woolf wrote many books and articles about gender discrimination during her life. Especially, she dwelled on the equality. Woolf gave lots of lectures about woman and literature. Woolf wrote *Orlando* in 1928 and in 1929. She wrote *A Room of One's Own* which is Woolf's first book about feminism. Especially in this book she dwelled on woman and literature and furthermore she described the difficulties they had encountered. In *Orlando* she describes the struggle between genders. Woolf has been asked to speak on the topic of Women and Fiction. Her main aim is that "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction." This research paper is designed as an explanation of how Woolf arrived at her thesis. The term 'feminism' was derived from the Latin word 'Femina' which means woman and used with regard to the issues of equality and Women's Rights Movement. Ever since there have been women fighting to free their half of the total population of the world from male oppression. Feminism is neither a fad nor a logical extension of the civil rights movement but the protest against the legal, economic and social restrictions on the basic rights of women which have existed throughout history and in all civilizations. My idea of feminism described as in the words of Simone de Beauvoir "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine." Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* p. 301. According to her, women are considered secondary in relation to men from the ancient time. It is not necessity of feminine feature but it is the result of education and social tradition

under the control of men. Women's dignity failed but they stand on the same ground of intellectual and professional equality. This has given rise to social evils also. Feminism is a movement influenced by the ideas postulated, popularized and precipitated by thinkers and authors like Alice Walker, Naomi Littlebear, Judith Felterbey, Michele Wallace, Lillian Smith, Elaine Showalter, Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia woolf, Kate Millett and others. It is a modern movement expressing protest against the male domination. God created human beings and divided them into man and woman with a few basic differences in body and mind and introduced an element of irresistible attraction between the two sexes to help the process of procreation and survival of the species. The question of man-woman relationship did not exist in the barbaric age. Feminist theory is the extension of feminism into theoretical or philosophical fields. A famous Sanskrit shloka signifies the status of women in that age, 'Yatra naryastu pujiyante, ramante tatra devta' means, the place where women are worshipped, god themselves inhabit that place. Women in that time had place even superior to men. At that time no religious ritual was supposed to be complete without the presence of the women. One incident of Ramayana is a proof of this as when Lord Rama was performing 'Ashvamedha Yajna' at that time his wife Sita was not with him and Rama had used the gold idol of his wife in her absence. The prominent feminist novelists in the breed are Nayantara Sahgal, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Namita Gokhale, Shobha De, R. P. Jhabvala, Kamala Markandaya and Arundhati Roy. They occupy prestigious position in Indo-English fiction. After the gender revolution in 1970s, writing by women about women has become a socio-political act. Women writers feel compelled to justify their fears, tensions, conflicts and observations. With a strong element of protest, like their Western counterparts, Indian women writers have deliberately sought the novel as their medium of expression. Their writings reflect a variety of shades, colours and visions. The assertion of identity in their writings deserves a better treatment at the hands of their male counterpart. They protested against the

cruelty perpetrated on the women by portraying their responses and reactions. The spirit of revolt against mechanical life, mismatched marriages and wayward ways of their life partners was obvious in their writings. The protagonists of their novels are women of a typical Indian society. The plot of their story is woven around the women who negotiate the oppression of a patriarchal society. The modern novels of 80s paid attention to the miserable plight of the contemporary middle-class, urban Indian woman. They attempted to reconstruct Indian womanhood, which has been characterized as ideally warm, gentle and submissive and the view that women deserved only to be kept in subordination to the male members of the family. Many of the Indian women novelists focus on women's issues, they have a women's perspective on the world. The prominent women writers like Anita Desai, Nayantara Sahgal, Shashi Deshpande, Namita Gokhale, Geeta Mehta, Rama Mehta, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Anita Kumar, Meera Syal, Meena Alexander, Manju Kapur and others have distinguished themselves for their boldness in presenting the status of woman in Indian society and for depicting man-woman relationship in fictional form. It is only after the emergence of women writers that we have been able to have a deep insight into the psyche of the Indian female. Woolf makes mention of inequalities and some difficulties that women have because of social conditions. It has been seen that these social conditions include specifically and mostly family life restrictions. Domestic/family life confines woman to the home and isolates her from public sphere. In this framework, the most important issue is probably motherhood issue. For the reason that the woman is supposed to take care of her child at home whereas her husband maintains his life mostly at outside. Woolf sees writing/production processes as biologic motherhood with respect to the metaphor of giving birth to a text. (Abel, Elizabeth: 1993) But mostly, this selection is also beyond women's power. It is impossible even to desire another option apart from marrying a very nice man, confining herself to the domestic life for a woman not having enough money and rights. And the woman undertakes the domestic

responsibilities such as cooking, cleaning and child caring attributed to them. After all, that the woman can be creative is out of the question due to these domestic tasks. Also, Virginia Woolf expresses at her book, *A Room of One's Own*, as: "...For all the dinners are cooked; the plates and cups washed; the children sent to school and gone out into the world. Nothing remains of it all. All has vanished" (Woolf, V. :1945). Depending on all inequalities, difficulties mentioned above, Woolf concludes that women have only one opportunity to overcome all of them and produce something new going beyond nothingness. A room of her own, first of all, means a place and time that a woman can conduct intellectual studies without being disturbed, away from difficulties and responsibilities and that is directly associated with economic freedom. In this study there is the contribution of feminism to women's life and the things that women should do to have equal rights as it has been better described both good and bad sides of feminism when evaluating it. There are of course, some people and groups that use feminism to get privileges as well as writers that are sincere in what they say on the subject of feminism. In one section Woolf invents a fictional character Judith who is Shakespeare's sister to illustrate that a woman with Shakespeare's gifts would have been denied the opportunity to develop them. Like Woolf who stayed at home while her brothers went off to school Judith is trapped in the home. Judith is betrothed, and when she does not want to marry, her father beats her, then shames her into the marriage. While William establishes himself, Judith is trapped by what is expected of women. She runs away from home to London, is harassed and laughed at when she tries to become an actor, and is finally made pregnant by an actor-manager who said he would help her. She kills herself in the end. I concentrate on *A Room of One's Own* which is a notable work and masterpieces of Virginia Woolf, a prominent feminist writer. The woman shall definitely write and publish her writings if she is literally willing to express herself and fight for the idea that women should have equal rights as men. It is true that women fall behind men in some fields so it is

inevitable for them to produce new things in the academic field instead of blaming the opposite sex for this situation. Consequently, I might express that I agree with Woolf on many subjects especially the subjects of education, job opportunities and the matter of deserving the same respect at the community. Moreover as Woolf state women and men should not be opponents but they should create something putting their heads together. A woman and a man are like two sides of face. It is impossible that the woman might be ostracizing him or man might be successful by ostracizing her at 21st century.

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