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REPRESENTATION OF STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN LITERATURE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE OF VIRGINIA WOOLF'S TO THE LIGHTHOUSE

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ABSTRACT

Literature, which intertwines within such fields as history, philosophy sociology, psychology and so on, it is a discipline wherein language is used as a medium of expression. In the twentieth century, criticism and literature received tremendous achievement and growth. As a part of it, the psychological approach entered into the field of literature. This paper tries to discuss how psychology plays a vital role in literature. All kinds of psychological studies are past- oriented since the past; it is believed accounts for the present. Freud and Jung, two great pioneers in psychoanalysis, have necessarily given two different views on creative ability. Many writers very much influenced by their theories. Such writings actually illustrate the findings of modern psychology. Thus had Freudian psychology has had deep rooted impact on modern literature. Virginia Woolf was conversant with the works of Freud and Jung. In a way, she wrote her novels by employing the technique called stream of consciousness. In her novel, *To the Lighthouse* Virginia Woolf successfully handled this technique stream of consciousness. It also found in her other novels such as *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Waves*. In this difficult technique the author almost disappears and the reader directly experiences the feelings and the thoughts of the central character.

Keywords:

Stream of Consciousness, Psychoanalysis, Interior Monologue, Psychology

*Life is not a sense of gig lamps symmetrically arranged;
life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the
beginning of consciousness to the end.*

-Virginia Woolf

In the twentieth century criticism received tremendous achievement and growth. As a part of it, psychological approach entered into the field of literature. Freud and Jung, two great pioneers in psychoanalysis, have necessarily given two different views on creative ability. While Freud attributes creativity to an individual's neurosis, Jung elevates it, calling it an ability to transcend personal neurosis and participate in the creative urge of the collective unconscious. In a way, Jung's theory of creative activity is very close to the theory of inspiration. Their contributions to psychoanalytical literary criticism through their different theories of the unconscious have enriched our appreciation of literature.

Virginia Woolf is one of the great writers and thinkers who sought to give to the English novel a new direction, a new form as well as a new spiritual awareness. She knew the value of the sense of safety conferred by systems of thoughts and behaviours, but she knew too that those are human conventions, not ultimate realities. As an artist her concern was to comprehend the reality as well as the convention. Conventional conceptions of the novel she entirely rejected replacing emphasis on incident, external description had straightforward narrative by an over-riding concern with character presentation by the stream of consciousness.

The term 'stream of consciousness' or 'stream of thought' was coined by the American psychologist William James to delineate the characteristics of unconsciousness imported into fiction. Thoughts go on passing through our mind. They are not necessarily a chain of connected ideas. Our thoughts constantly arising in our mind are not systematic and coherent. Any idea may arise at any time. The stream of consciousness technique strives to present a picture of the incoherence of our mind. It is called the device of 'interior monologue' which was used by the French novelist Dujardin. It enables the readers to enter the inner life of a character straightaway.

Woolf's novels are the best examples of the narrative technique 'streams of consciousness. Moreover, it is the most common theme of Woolf's novels. She expresses her feelings and thoughts through this technique. Like Virginia Woolf, James Joyce also used the similar technique in the novel *Ulysses*. But there was the biggest difference between both novels. Because Virginia does not force the readers directly into the minds of her characters. Only she depicts the character's thoughts and thinking through the inner consciousness of the character.

The use of narrative techniques of the stream of consciousness and the interior monologue marks a unique in the form of the novel because through these techniques the author can express the flux of a character's feelings, emotions, thinking and impressions often without any logical coherence. According to Virginia Woolf, the traditional novel did not express life adequately. She had the opinion of that life was a mirror of ever-failing atoms of experience and not a narrative line. She tried to experiment with the same technique in her novel, *To the Lighthouse*. In which almost all the characters reveal themselves very much in the similar way. And also she portrays characters through the inner consciousness.

This novel *To the Lighthouse* accounted as her masterpiece, about the study of the members of the Romney family, which was published in 1927. It has been regarded by many critics as the best of her novels. It became the best seller immediately after its publication. It is not a novel in the traditional sense tells neither a story nor portrays characters on the traditional lines. This novel shows a firmer mastery of the 'stream of consciousness' technique than its predecessor. Thus she rejected the traditional narrative style of technique and followed a new kind of technique more suited to her purpose.

The novel delves into the minds of its characters in a stream of consciousness approach. The character's thoughts and feelings blend into one another. While shifting the point of view frequently from person to person, the author develops her characters through their thoughts, memories and reactions to each other. *To the Lighthouse*, as a psychological novel, plot is subordinate to and dependent upon the probing delineation of character. Events may not be presented in chronological order but rather as they occur in the character's thoughts associations, memories and dreams. It takes the reader back and forth through the character's past and present lives.

*But what have I done with my life? Thought,
Mrs.Ramsay taking her palce at the head of the
Table and looking at all the plates making.....
.....What at? She didi not know. She did not mind.*

*She could not understand how she had ever felt
Any emotion or affection for him. (90)*

The story is laid in the Island of Skye in the Hebrides, near the west coast of Scotland. It revolves around the lighthouse. The Ramsays have their summer house there and they come to it with their eight children and a number of guests. The isolation of a few characters in a remote island results in intensity of effect. The author is able to concentrate on three main characters and the gain in intensity is enormous. The characters through their physical closeness create a multiplicity of contacts, but each also withdraws into his haunted solitude. Though living together, each is an isolated soul.

*They did nothing but talk, talk, talk, eat,
eat, eat.... women made civilization impossible with
all their 'charm', all their silliness.(93)*

Here, Woolf actually tries to make readers to understand the mind set of males for females. The major themes of this novel are death, solitude and memory. Illusion and Maya make man's attempt towards salvation futile. In *To the Lighthouse*, Woolf has shifted her attention from life to art and stressed that stability and permanence can be achieved through art alone, life has no ultimate reality or permanence.

The boundary between one's present self and one's past is so imprecise that they inevitably merge into one another. Moreover, these two complementary realities are not mutually exclusive; the first envelops and conceals the second. Virginia Woolf had to pass through the present moment in order to recover time past, without betraying either aspect of reality.

The third person narration is a very common narrative technique which is used in novels. Her use of direct speech for the interior monologues of her characters makes it easy for her to work into these mental soliloquies a number of statements and ideas which are outside the range of knowledge of character she is dealing with. The completion of the circle is another quality of narrative technique which is used by Woolf.

Virginia Woolf seems to delight in confusing us by inserting a recollection or anticipating a reaction, so that past and present and future seem to flow into one another in an unbroken stream of consciousness. *To the Lighthouse*, where again and again, we are struck by the discrepancy between what a character says and what he thinks, between the simplicity of the action, and the richness and complexity of the stream of consciousness.

As Erich Auerbach points out that the physical actions that take place could not have occupied more than thirty seconds. But the thoughts recorded are much more extensive and they not help us understand Mrs.Ramsay but also reinforce the major themes of the novel- the inevitable ravages of time, the ruthless and the human struggle to endure. Woolf realized that she was not alone in wanting to explore this new territory of the mind. Thus blending people's inward feelings and keeping dialogue to a minimum, Woolf develops her many dimensioned characters in a unique and memorable way. The dynamic between the characters are expressed more effectively by their thoughts than by their words.

To sum up, Virginia Woolf has contributed significantly to the development of modern novel in both theory and practice. She abandoned conventional devices and originated her own specific techniques. Her masterpiece, *To the Lighthouse*, serves an excellent example in analyzing her literary theory and her experimental techniques. Woolf has portrayed the lighthouse as a symbol and it has various meanings and memories within. Thus, the lighthouse stream of consciousness is used as unifying factor in the novel. *To the Lighthouse*, is a great work of Woolf because of its construction, which is fully overlapped with psychological associations. Thus this paper deals with the use of modern stream of consciousness as a narrative technique.

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