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**REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN A ROOM OF  
ONE'S OWN BY VIRGINIA WOOLF**

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# Representation of Women in *A Room of One's Own* by Virginia Woolf

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**Abstract** – Women have been trying to achieve independence over the centuries. But the things have changed in modern era. Now the women have become more aware about their freedom and identity. Virginia Woolf's famous essay *A Room of One's Own* follows the same tradition. *A Room of One's Own* is actually two lectures given by Virginia Woolf in October, 1928 at two women's constituent Colleges of Cambridge University. She later enlarged these two lectures and published them together as a full length essay in September, 1929. It is generally believed that women are considered unequal to men, and that is the reason they have created less important piece of literature than that of men. In order to clear her point, Virginia Woolf presents the example of Judith, a fictional sister of Shakespeare.

**Keyword:** Women's Identity, Feminism and Patriarchal Society, Male-Dominated World.

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## THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN VIRGINIA WOOLF'S

### *A Room of One's Own*

**Introduction:** - *A Room of One's Own* is actually two lectures given by Virginia Woolf in October, 1928 at two women's constituent Colleges of Cambridge University. She later enlarged these two lectures and published them together as a full length essay in September, 1929. In the present essay, Woolf talks on women writers and their literature, but she further developed it into the issue of women inequality, especially as it restricts women to create new works. She played crucial role for the development of the feminist movement. Actually feminism is a literary theory which suggests that a woman should have the same social and economic rights as that of a man. The present essay can be read as a manifesto of feminist movement.

**Objectives:** - The present paper follows two objectives- (i) The first objective is to study women's Identity and (ii) the second is to study women's contribution in English Literature through *A Room of One's Own*.

**Women's Identity:** - The first argument presented in *A Room of One's Own* is that women are not treated equal to men in the society, and this is the main reason they writes less important piece of writing than that of men. In support of this argument, Virginia Woolf presents the example of Judith, a fictional sister of

Shakespeare. The essay shows that the society always does partiality to women in comparison to men. Judith was always underestimated and treated as second sex. Her literary works were given less importance than that of Shakespeare. Woolf showed that in the Shakespearean age, an equal talented girl as Shakespeare could never achieved success. She was not able to prove her talent due to being a woman. Woolf wants to state that if she were given the same liberty as Shakespeare she could produce better literature than Shakespeare.

Virginia Woolf states that, in literature, a number of famous characters have been women. Even in Shakespeare's plays, women play an important and crucial role. But in real life, women are given the status as being the second sex, the first being men to dominate them. Women have not allowed to educate themselves and have historically been denied the personal rights and leisure time that are the precondition of creative writing. The following lines from *A Room of One's Own* tell all about women's Identity:

You can Call to me Mary Beton or Mary Seton or even Mary Carmichael or the name you please...

It's not the matter of much importance. (17)

These lines from the first chapter tell about the author's search for identity which is maintained till the end of the essay.

According to Virginia Woolf, to make her identity, a woman needs a personal room in which she can spend as much time as she wants without any question. This will enable her to produce good literature without any interruption. When Woolf wrote this essay, the women could not enjoy this freedom and due to this reason their art suffered a lot.

## WOMEN'S CONTRIBUTION

Woolf states that women writers such as [Jane Austen](#), George Eliot and the Bronte sisters have produced some good works of literature but much remains to be done because of not providing of economic and social and political freedom. Woolf famously suggests that impressive and influence piece need financial and spatial freedom, "a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (5).

The most impressive part of the essay is Woolf's creation of Judith, an imaginative sister of Shakespeare, to show that a woman with Shakespeare's skills would have been denied the opportunity to prove herself. Just like Virginia Woolf, who remained at her home and her brother was going to study; Judith Shakespeare is remained at home to become an obedient girl. Woolf states that, "She was as imaginative to see the world as her brother was. But she was not allowed to go to school" (71). Further, Judith suffers a lot in the hands of her father and brothers. While Judith's brother William goes to school, she remains busy in household works.

Virginia Woolf has always been trying to help other female writers to realize themselves as a woman. She is of the view that women writers had the creativity and power to write as equal as men. There are so many other feminist women writers who played a great role in feminist movement such as Simon De Beauvoir's whose *The Second Sex* (1929) questioned on women's related issues. Likewise Kamala Markandaya's *A Silence of Desire* (1960) and Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* (1980) presented the related theme of freedom of the spirit, body and mind. They showed the difficulties of women in a society where male had the dominated power. Another feminist writer named Mary Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) that made her the Grandmother of this movement. Betty Friedan's *The Feminist Mystique* (1963) and Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1970) are another famous works on women's freedom.

## CONCLUSION

Above all, it can be concluded that the feminist movement today carries a variety of goals, both moral as well as political. We have a number of feminist thinkers and activists throughout the political spectrum who argued for equality between male and female. Virginia Woolf, in her essay *A Room of One's Own*, presented all issues related to women. Her purpose was to reform women's condition as well as the

patriarchal society at the time of her writing. Most of the critics praised Woolf for her values and morality that she used in her essays. Through the present essay, she passed a good message to the readers.

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