

A ROOM OF HER OWN: WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO VALIANT WOMEN WRITERS IN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT: The present paper aims at interpreting a basic requirement for a woman to own a room of her own. In this context, room has some different and unique significance. It is not about some room with four confined walls. It is about a room with no walls. It is not pointing towards one particular woman; it's a story about all of us—our origins, our works of art, and the room we make for each other. It is about women empowerment and their freedom to own their destiny, dreams and their life. To name a few, writers like *Virginia Woolf, Mahasweta Devi, Sudha Murthy, and Maya Angelou* who has jolted the world through their audacious attitude. They have inspired generations of readers with their dazzling plunges into the interior world of their characters. They have actually jumped out of their confined boundaries which the society has framed around women since ages. Feminist Approach has been used in the paper to critically examine the plight of women in the society. All of these dauntless ladies have portrayed women as no more goddess, who can move from bondage of marriage towards the freedom of their own which will pave a way towards creating a room of their own. According to them women can create the force that controls the dynamic of the society. The focus of this paper is on critically looking at the freedom of women and the choice given to them in the society. It is an attempt to conceive and recognize cultural obstructions and to access them realistically with a desire to bring progress in this field.

KEYWORDS: feminism, marginalized, subjugation, discrimination and identity crisis

The world was building a room around them and trying to put them into a glass palace but who knows that they were silently smashing those walls. Because it was about her identity, her self-respect, her acknowledgement and above all it was about her choice. It simply means being independent, resist violence and discrimination and fighting for her rights to be a master of her own life. No matter which country or society one's belong to, there is no denying a fact that women is always marginalised and traumatised beyond imagination. They were meant to carry forward the family's name and treated as children producing machine. She is always treated as 'Other' and never treated as a legitimate part of a society. Literature has always been a base for her roaring voice. Literature has given many of the women writers an identity which paved a way for their independence. When a woman goes beyond her boundaries and walls, she is bold. Being bold can shake the world. As great

French political activist and feminist theorist, *Simone de Beauvoir* talked about the same in her masterpiece work *The Second Sex*. She says,

If her functioning as a female is not enough to define woman, if we decline also to explain her through ‘the eternal feminine’, and if nevertheless we admit, provisionally, that women do exist, then we must face the question: what is a woman? (Beauvoir 14)

Earlier women has always been acknowledged from the perspective of male writer who mostly portrayed her weak and fragile. Women have been treated as a distinct category by various misogynist writings. But the great works like *Mary Wollstonecraft’s A Vindication of The Rights of Women*, *Virginia Woolf’s A Room of One’s Own*, *Christine de Pisan’s The Book of The City of Ladies* has explored a tradition of women’s writing. Using the term “*Women’s Writing*” implies, then, the belief that women in some sense constitute a group, however diverse, who share apposition of difference based on gender. They moved out from manners and childrearing into news and editorial writing, magazine feature writing, textbook writing, scholarship, historical studies, poetry, and fiction, making a Male/Writer definition no longer really possible and the male grip on culture formation harder to maintain.

Considered as a showstopper of feminism, *Wollstonecraft* argues that women, rather than cultivating power from sexual allure, should be honest, intelligent, and independent. Her views about how women’s inborn worth is by improper definitions of the feminine in novels, advice literature, and in educational systems have inspired women for over two centuries. *Wollstonecraft* responds to those educational and political theorists of the 18th century who were always sceptical about women rational education. She argues that women need to have an education equivalent to their position in society, asserting that women are important to the nation building because they are the ones who educate their children and because they could be Equal partners to their husbands, rather than mere wives. Instead of viewing women as mere ornaments to society or simply a trophy wives to their husbands, *Wollstonecraft* comments that they are also human beings deserving all the equality and respect in the society as men. She says,

It is time to affect a revolution in female manners - time to restore to them their lost dignity - and make them, as a part of the human species, labour by reforming themselves to reform the world. It is time to separate unchangeable morals from local manners (*Wollstonecraft* 117)

Similarly, Feminist world is surely incomplete without a reference of The English novelist, critic and one of the foremost modernist literary figures of twentieth century *Virginia Woolf* who has alarmed the world through her feminist writing .She is known for her unique style of writing and she is noted for her argument for a figurative space for women’s writers within a literary tradition dominated by men. These views are expressed in her remarkable work *A Room of One’s Own*. *Woolf* wrote in her diary before *A Room of One’s Own* was published that she thought when it was published she would be “attacked for a feminist and hinted at for a sapphist”. But the best part was although she knew the consequences which have to face afterwards, she still published it and proved that one has to come out of her comfort zone and has to write what your heart is asking for.

Questions of tradition are particularly forced on women. In societies with rigidly defined gender roles, such as the Victorian Britain into which most of these writers were born, tradition is passed down from mother to daughter and father to son. To be crushingly explicit, this often meant that the women learned the techniques while the men learned the oratory. Queries of tradition are also particularly vexed for modernists. Modernism announced itself a break with the past. For a modernist woman, the agitation of traditions multiplies. This can be witnessed in the works of *Virginia Woolf*. She was the first woman who introduced individualization in female population, and was one of the first who create a literature for women in the feminist sense. In the era of the development of writers, *Virginia Woolf* can be considered, with other important writers such as *Emily Dickinson* and *George Eliot*, the most inspiring women of those years. Her brilliant mind, despite her psychological problems, goes far beyond the delegations and the differentiation between the sexes. In her writings, it develops the psychological aspect of human deficiencies that Virginia loved to investigate, motivated by her own life story and she depicted the nature of women. The woman had to be liberated, she had to fight for her rights and had to be proficient at to be able to maintain the desired attitude from men and society. And it is this that seeks to make real Virginia Woolf in her book *A Room of one's own*. This book represents the women's fairest novel ever written. 'But, you may say, we asked you to speak about women and fiction—what, has that got to do with a room of one's own?'(Woolf 1)

Virginia Woolf has talked about various themes which were never touched in the society and always credited as a Social Taboos. Homosexuality, so valiantly recited and lived, has exalted Virginia Woolf as heroine of Nineteenth century. The sexual ambiguity, treated in many ways from *Woolf*, can be portrayed from this perspective that every human being has two characteristics. As Freud wrote, many years ago in his work *Three essays on the theory of sexuality*, there is always something male in women, and something female in men, argument also reported by *Virginia* in the book *A room of one's own*.

Mahasweta Devi is one of India's most dauntless women writers. *Mahasweta Devi* has her own style of representing stories from the context of doubly marginalized women. She believes in writing for the tribal, downtrodden, and underprivileged. *Devi's* work uniquely stands out in the sea of popular fiction of today. She is considered as one of the boldest Bengali female writers. She has used her hand as a missile to bombard the world with her bold and fearless writing. India's most glorious writer, applauded as much for her fiction as for being a gallant chronicler of social justice. She is taken as a typical creative writer in bringing the challenging stories from the subaltern groups. With her book, "Breast Stories," *Mahasweta Devi* is known for her feminist status. Her women protagonists have an immense sense of self-respect and are prepared to fight all their struggles to the end. Depicting Dalit women like a lioness is what her pen always wished to do.

Mahasweta presents Draupadi (Dopdi), twenty seven year old tribal women as a strong female character, transgressing sexual orientation and social standards. Dopdi is named by her mistress and she is in the list of wanted persons who had killed the mistress' husband, Surja Sahu a land-owning money lender, because he refuses to share water with untouchables. A reward of two hundred rupees is announced for her head. Dopdi herself has seen that notice at the Panchayat office. Mr. Senanayak, an official, deliberately corners Dopdi in

the evening. She is kept at the canvas-camp till the dinner time. Senanayak permits the officials to do whatever they like. Her hands and legs are tied to four posts. Over the course of a few days, Draupadi is repeatedly raped, tortured by multiple police officers who state that their orders to “make her”. She becomes unconscious. In the morning she is brought to the tent. As the guard pushes a bucket of water forward, for her to wash herself, she laughs, throws the water out of her tent. On seeing the General the dishonoured Dopdi walks towards him to exhibit what has happened to her.

Senanayak walks out surprised, and sees Draupadi, totally naked, walking towards him in the bright sunlight with her head held high. The nervous guards trail behind ... Draupadi stands before him, naked. Thigh and pubic hair matted with dry blood. Two breasts, two wounds. Draupadi wipes the blood on her palm and says in a voice that is as terrifying, sky splitting and sharp as her ululation,

What’s the use of clothe

You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man?

She looks around and chooses the front of Senanayak’s white bush shirt to spit a

There isn’t a man here that I should be ashamed. I will not let you put my cloth on me. What more can you do? Come on, counter me – come on, counter me –? (Devi 36)

She pushes Senanayak with her exposed breasts and for the first time, he is afraid to counter an unarmed woman. *Mahasweta* use the body organs to put forth action. Draupadi has used her body as her greatest weapon. The body which was brutally raped, tortured and abused becomes the very missile for her. After being raped by countless men, she preferred to stand straight and face the world naked reflects the warrior inside her.

Mahasweta has always been vocal about her views. Through this short story and her daring protagonist Draupadi who has actually transformed herself to Devi and reverted back to those so called dominating class in the roaring language This story again reflects the idea of woman’s choice which teaches the society that no means no. Her body is not a property or wealth of this society. It is her body and her choice.

Valiant women writers were presents in all the corners of the world. Being a Black Woman in America in the early 1900s, was like being dead meat due to the brutal and racial discrimination against the Blacks. Back then, all rebellious black women were feminists. One of whom was, *Maya Angelou*. She was respected as a spokesperson of black people and women who represents black people globally. Her works have been considered as a representation of Black culture. But she has to always face the extreme hatred of white people and always looked down to her, but unlike every ‘black slave’, *Angelou* never gave up. She always had her agitation at the back of her mind and she fought back through literature and her writings. Her famous works ‘*Phenomenal Woman*’, ‘*The Reunion*’, ‘*Still I Rise*’, ‘*His Day is done*’, and etc. still continue to inspire, not only every woman but also the men. She is best known for her series of seven autobiographical volumes, which focus on her childhood and adult experiences. The first and most highly acclaimed, *I Know Why the*

Caged Bird Sing (1969) portrays the first seventeen years of her remarkably tough life. She says, “I am a feminist. I’ve been female for a long time now. I’d be stupid not to be on my own side.” (Angelou 71)

The efforts put in by these bold writers were commendable and will be acknowledged for centuries as these writers deal with major backlashes from mainstream society. To name a few contemporary writers like *Margaret Atwood, Shobhaa De and Anita Nair* have also followed the footsteps of these writers. According to them women should always look after their own interests and choices without getting influenced by others. They have to come out of the glass walls build by the society around them. So having a room of one’s own is simply having a life of one’s own choice. It could be about a life partner, career or any choice in different spheres of life. Rules of this conventional society should not bar her way in creating a Room of her Own

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