

Literature, Culture and Media
Prof. Rashmi Gaur
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology - Roorkee

Lecture – 29

Interconnection between Literature, Culture and Identity: Woolf and Deshpande I

Dear participants, welcome to the sixth week and fourth module of our course on Literature, Culture and Media. In this module, so far we have discussed issues related with identity as well as ideology. We have seen how ideology and identity are interconnected and how they can also not be separated from the overall culture which is created in our contemporary world. In this module, we would see how identity is created with the help of literary works.

Identity has been defined as a set of characteristics, trades or qualities that make someone different from others. It is an identification of the characteristics which are unique to somebody. The process of individuation is also an integral part of the creation of one's identity because the process of individuation helps us in defining our basic impulses in understanding our dreams and ambitions in a better way and to combine them with our own personality traits.

(Refer Slide Time: 01:57)

Literature, Culture and Identity--Interconnections

- Identity – Set of characteristics, traits or qualities that make someone/something different from others
- Individuation is the basic impulse towards identity – defined in terms of differences or variations
- Identity in terms of individual or groups, provides contexts
- Interpersonal relationships
- Across groups of people; communities, societies, nations and so on
- Individual identity – product of both personal development and transformation and their environment – social, political, cultural

Identity defines not only the individual but we have to look at it from the perspective of a group identity also. Because the identity of a group also provides the context to an individual. It provides a context to the interpersonal relationships of an individual. An individual cannot live in

isolation and therefore whereas the construction of individual identity is important, the social context and the cultural climate is also important for its formation and for imparting a unique flavour to it.

Across different groups of people, communities and societies we find that the identity is being formed not only as a product of individual dreams and aspirations not only through once process of individuation but also we find that the identity is simultaneously being created and transformed through the environment- the social, the political and the cultural environment.

(Refer Slide Time: 03:04)

- Culture, color/race, class and gender overwhelmingly intersect with formation of identity
- Such a connection may not always be explicit, but it informs the discourse/narrative in complex ways
- These factors mould the perception and self-concept of the author, as well as of the audience; underscoring circumscribed practices, societal roles and normative behavior



In this environment, we find that different aspects related with the work colour or race and ethnicity, our economy class as well as gender etc., intersect continually and overwhelmingly with the process of the formation of our identity. Often we find that this connection may not be very explicit but let us say that it is a part of our personality, it is a part of our makeup and cannot be absolutely and categorically dissociated from it.

In the same way, we find that in literary discourse and an literary narratives, these connections which issues of race, colour, class and gender, ethnicity etc., with have with the formation of identity are also exhibited in complex ways, these factors for example the factors of class and race and gender etc., mould the perception and the concept of the self of the author but at the same time they also mould the perception and the self-concept of the reader.

And as we have seen in our discussions of post-modernist theoretical background, it is the perception of the audience which is equally important in internalising the message of a literary product. So we can say that these factors underscore those practices which are circumscribed, they are limited within a periphery, they are not universal and in the same way our understanding of societal roles and what constitutes in normative behaviour in a given circumstances are formed by our constraints and considerations of race, class, gender, ethnicity etc.

Literature represents them the interconnectivity is retained by various literary pieces and communicated in a connotative and suggestive way to the audience.

(Refer Slide Time: 05:22)

- Identity in terms of gender, class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality
- All these various determinants are responsible for formulation, development and contestation of identities
- Itself related to larger institutional and structural forces that constitute sociality
- Certain modes of being and certain identities are privileged over others
- Power dynamics and relations
- Interrogate these dynamics by understanding the dominant socio-political and cultural forms



So, we can say that the formation of identity is normally unfolded in these contexts or pre-cut grooves of gender class, race, sexuality as well as ethnicity and nationality and all these determinants are responsible for the formulation and contestation of identities. Identity itself is a part of a larger institutional or structural force which constitute socialistic modes of being and certain identities are privileged over others.

During our discussions of gender particularly we have seen how certain types of sexualities are giving a hierarchical preference whereas some other types are not and this in itself constitute a hierarchy of power in a given society. So we find that these identities and privileging one over

the other often generates power dynamics and our relationships are also influenced by them. Literature helps us to understand and interrogate these dynamics by explaining the dominant socio-political and cultural forms in many explicit and implicit ways.

(Refer Slide Time: 06:33)

- Culture: Range of human activities
- Way of life; characteristics of particular groups--language, art, literature, religion, cuisine
- Social beliefs, habits, norms, customs
- Hierarchies, attitudes, values, knowledge systems, meanings, notions
- A sum total of learned human behavior
- Complex, abstract and symbolic system of such knowledge particular to groups



The word culture can be defined as a range of human activities. Over the period we find that our understanding of the term culture itself has undergone several changes. In the next module we would be discussing how the word culture has gone through different transformations. But today we understand it as a way of life is a set of characteristics which belong to a particular group for example, a particular language, a particular preference for art, literature, religion even a cuisine for example.

It also defines a collective habit in terms of possessing or sharing social beliefs, habits, norms, customs etc. Whereas culture defines these aspects of our day to day behaviour, we find that it also defines our attitudes towards each other also towards people who are in different power relationships with us. It also defines what type of hierarchies may exist in a given circumstances and how should we assist them and form our own value judgement. Our culture also teaches us to have faith in certain meanings and notions to prefer certain systems of knowledge in comparison to others. Briefly, we can say that our culture is a sum total of our learned human behaviour not only as an individual but also as a member of a particular community or society. It is impossible to define culture in strategic and definitive means. It is a complex yet an abstract

and symbolic system. It is a knowledge which is particular to a particular group and this is perhaps the best way to understand it.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:37)

- “Culture is the **collective programming of the human mind** that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another. Culture in this sense is a system of collectively held values.” -- Geert Hofstede
- “Culture is the deeper level of basic **assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization**, that operate unconsciously and define in a basic ‘taken for granted’ fashion an organization's view of its self and its environment.” -- Edgar Schein

These definitions bring out how identity and culture are inextricably linked. Identity formulates through culture



These definitions of culture also underscore how our identity formation, our understanding of the term identity as an individual as well as has a part of a particular system or society and culture are inextricably linked. Identity is formulated through culture only and here I quote from Hofstede who says that “Culture is the collective programming of the human mind”, the phrase which has been used here is the ‘collective programming’; programming as in any computer program. So, according to Hofstede, we find that culture has been defined as a collective programming of the “human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another” and “culture in this sense is a system of collectively held values”. Edgar Schein also defines culture at a deeper level as “a set of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organisation that operate unconsciously and define in a basic ‘taken for granted’ fashion and organisations view of itself and its environment”.

So, we find that culture formulates the human identity and our perceptions and our belief systems are also formulated by culture. We can say that culture and identity are interconnected.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:16)



Culture is like an umbrella term under which we can look at different aspects of our lived behaviour, different facets of our personality and our societal positioning are also a part of this broad umbrella term.

(Refer Slide Time: 10:30)

Culture, identity and literature

- Literature: lies within the domain of culture along with art, music, religion etc
- Literature reflects identity and culture
- Creates culture as well--adds to the existing system of knowledge about humans
- Identity in Literature:
 - Stories/narratives
 - Character arcs – personal development and transformation
 - Representation of human nature, motivations, emotions, feelings

When we look at the linkages which exist between culture and identity and literature, we find that literature though primarily comes under the domain of culture along with certain other areas like music or religion or art, we find that literature also lies within the domain of culture. It, at the same time, reflects identity and culture. The age-old definition of literature being a mirror to the society confirms this impression.

At the same time, however paradoxically literature also creates culture, it adds to the existing system of knowledge about human beings and at the same time, helps us to internalise certain values in a way that we are able to fashion new values, giving yet new dimensions to the existing culture. Identity in literature is presented and formulated in various ways. Primarily, we can say that with the help of different narratives, fables, stories etc., literature helps us in understanding the formation of identity.

At the same time, we find that with the presentation of different characters, with the help of round and flat characters, with the help of those plot structures in which the idea of Bildungsroman is presented, the personal development arc in transformation of culture also helps us in understanding the formation of identity in a human being. It also represents human nature, the motivations, emotions and feelings in a very suggestive manner.

(Refer Slide Time: 12:37)

- Concerns itself with conflict between individuals, individual and society between two communities/groups/societies
- Depicts how identity and culture interact with each other
- Struggles around gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity and so on
- How different hierarchies and institutional forces are at the center of these formations
- Literature as a source of understanding these struggles
- Context--socio-political, cultural, material etc.
- Literature as transformative and ideological
- Not just documents to access what is, but what can be or should be



Literature is not only limited to a mere reflection of our ideas and sentiments but it also narrates the conflict which may exist within the individual between different individuals, individuals and societies between two communities groups and societies. It also depicts how identity and culture interact with each other and what type of the struggles we have to participate in on the basis of gender, race, class, sexuality, ethnicity etc.

At the same time, we find that in various literary motives, different hierarchies and institutional forces are presented as being at the centre of these formations, any good piece of literature helps us to understand not only the process of individuation but also the complete process of identity formation. Literature therefore helps us to understand the cultural struggles as well as struggles which all of us have to face in the process of the formation of our identity.

It also provides as a, context to understand these struggles in the cohesive manner. These struggles may be in the shape of socio-political struggles, the cultural strives, the material difficulties etc., but the literary context which is provided to the reader helps us to associate ourselves better to the situation which is being presented. And therefore literature does not only have the role of a narrator but it also has an ideological role to play. It also helps us to transform as an individual. And therefore, we find that it documents not only what is but also what can be and also what should be. And therefore, we find that the relationship of literature with culture is a very intense one. It is also interconnected because whereas it represents culture, it also helps us in shaping the new cultural norms because it presents not only a record of what is but also the possibilities of what can and also the ethical judgements in terms of what should be.

(Refer Slide Time: 15:14)

- Thus, depicts dominant worldviews as well as the fractures within them
- Challenges notions of dominant culture, hierarchies etc
- Question of identity dealt differently by different authors/characters
- Question of power, vested interests
- Black female writers like Lorde, Maya Angelou, bell hooks deal with the question of racial and gendered identities differently from their male counterparts
- 19th century Victorian novelist and a 21st century writer
- Material, historical and social positions determine the content, form, concerns and themes in literature
- Differences and yet commonalities



This we can say that literature represents the contemporary world views, the dominant worldviews as well as not so dominant worldviews and it also simultaneously represents the inner fractures which run through these dominant structures. It also challenges the notions of

dominant culture and hierarchy by bringing into the focus, the culture of the subaltern. And therefore, we find that literature is open to diverse possibilities.

At the same time, we also have to understand that different authors as well as characters in different works of these authors deal with this issue of identity, what it is and how it is formed in different ways. For example, black female writers like Lorde or Maya Angelou or Bell hooks would deal with the questions of racial and gendered identities differently from their male counterparts and also differently in comparison to the white feminist writers.

In the same way, we find that the worldview which is presented by a 19th century novelist would be very different from the worldview presented by a contemporary 21st century writer, these differences would be there because the circumstances change, the material and historical and social positions would change and they would determine to a large extent, the content, the shape of the narrative, the technical form of a particular literary genre, the concerns of a particular novelist or a particular poet and also the themes which that author is going to take up.

Even though these differences are there and they would always remain there, at the same time we find that there are certain commonalities which exist. A good literary piece is able to transcend the limitations of time and space and would be able to address certain perennial value structures and that is why we find that true literature never becomes dated. Even though the external situations would change, the material descriptions would change, the themes may also change but the values which are being suggested in any good piece of literature would always be able to address the audience, transcending the limitations of time and space. When we discuss how identity is constructed and presented in a piece of literature, we have to be aware of several things which work simultaneously.

(Refer Slide Time: 18:07)

- In literature, identity is important in two ways.
- Authors have a personal identity, which influences the worldview from which they write.
 - Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) and Walker's *The Color Purple* (1982) have similarities because their authors share common perspectives on issues of gender, and differences because they do not share ethnic or national roots.
- Second, they develop characters who may or may not express their creator's worldview.
- In James Sallis' novels featuring Lew Griffin, characters have different identities.

Let us say to begin with that authors have a personal identity which is influenced by the worldview within which they write, for example, if we take a Margaret Atwood and Alice Walker, we find that Margaret Atwood is basically the Canadian writer whereas, Alice Walker is African and American writer. Atwoods, *Handmaid's Tale* which was published in 1985 and Walker's the *Colour Purple* which was published in 1982 have certain similarities. Because their authors share common perspectives on certain issues related with gender but they are also very different in terms of their dealing with the material circumstances because they do not share the same ethnic or national roots. So let us say that these differences are there but at the same time, commonalities do exist and these commonalities should also not be ignored.

Secondly, we can say that the authors develop characters, who may not necessarily represent their own circumstances or worldview. And here it would be pertinent to quote from the novels of James Sallis featuring Lew Griffin, the writer and character have different identities, Sallis is White whereas Griffin has been presented as a Black person.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:33)

- Literature explores complexities and complications of identity.
- How are identities explored, charted, demarcated, and challenged where boundaries are often overlying and contested
- How have categories such as race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, exile, diaspora, and multiculturalism come about?
- How do they co-exist and what is their relationship to the individual, particular situations, artist, and the arts



So, literature in a way explores complexities and complications of identity. It helps us to understand how identities are formed, charted, explored, demarcated and also challenged and particularly in those circumstances where the boundaries are porous, they are often overlying and contested. It also helps us to understand how these categories which we have referred to earlier come about the categories of race, class, ethnicity, diaspora being into exile multiculturalism etc., how do they come about and how do they influence us, at the same time how do they coexist and what can be their relationship with an individual or in a particular situation for the artist, for the readers and also at a much wider scale for the arts themselves. In order to pursue this aspect of the interconnections which exist between literature and identity formation, I have taken up a case study of two women writers.

(Refer Slide Time: 20:42)

Case Study

Women writers:

- Virginia Woolf (1882-1941)
- Shashi Deshpande (1938-)

I am taking up these two writers; Virginia Woolf and Shashi Deshpande and I would review how gender as a tool has been used to define the way identity and related issues are formed and presented for the individual characters as well as within a given social setting. And we would also discuss the commonalities between these two writers and the differences in terms of their approaches.

The lifespan of Virginia Woolf is 1882 to 1941; she is a major early 20th century writer. On the other hand, Shashi Deshpande is a major contemporary Indian writer born in 1938; she has produced several novels and story collections and has also contributed different essays on various topics.

(Refer Slide Time: 21:42)

Virginia Woolf

- Major 20th century writer along with Joyce and Proust
- Stylistic innovations, Stream of Consciousness technique, Lyricism
- Feminist voice
- “Men and Women” (1920), literature before 19th century was a soliloquy
- Role of technology: changes brought about by Industrial Revolution created a social milieu in which characters like Jane Eyre and Isabel Berners were possible, even if their protest was low key and unspecified
- *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) and *Three Guineas* (1938)
- Referred by Beauvoir, along with Bronte and “sometimes” Mansfield



Virginia Woolf is known for the stylistic innovations which she had introduced through her essays and had also tried to explain in her essays. She is considered to be a prominent figure when we talk about the use of a stream of consciousness technique. Along with Joyce and Proust, she has also used a stream of consciousness technique in a novels to lay bare the inner goings on of her characters. Her novels also have basically a lyrical element in them and since we often talk about the other aspects of a technique as well as about the themes related with feminism which she has taken, this aspect of the lyrical quality of her narratives is often put on the backburner but it is very much there.

If we look at Virginia Woolf’s work from contemporary standpoint, we find that she has been a major feminist voice. In her expository writings particularly, we find that she moves gradually towards a post-feminist stand. In her essay *Men and Women* which was published in 1920, she has fiercely commented on the absence of a woman's voice in literature particularly in literature before the 19th century. And she says that before the 19th century, literature was particularly a soliloquy because it had recorded the voice of man only.

Even when women characters were presented, the perceptions were that of a man how does a man views a woman's life to be, so the women herself was absent. So as early as 1920, she was telling us how literature is also a record of the silence of women. She was also one of the first writers to talk about the ameliorating impact of technology on the lives of human. She has

recorded the impact of technology in whatever shape it was found in her days on the lives of women.

And she has also talked about the changes which have been brought about by the Industrial Revolution which created a social milieu in which an emancipated women character could be created by various authors. She has said that characters like Jane Eyre and Isabel Berbers were possible only in a climate which was created basically by the Industrial Revolution even though their protest was low key and unspecified the elements of liberal feminism which we find in them would not have been possible without the role of technology.

So, we find that Virginia Woolf is one of those early feminist who have talked about the significance of technology for liberating a woman's life. She is also known for her books, *A Room of One's Own* which was published in 1929 and *Three Guineas* which was published in 1938. In these books as well as in several other essays which have been penned by her, Woolf has talked about the significance of an independent space for a woman, the significance of education also.

The concept of economic independence by and large is only referred to by Virginia Woolf because she has been stopped by her circumstances from dwelling in detail about that. Still we find that along with Bronte and 'sometimes' *Mansfield*, she is one of those writers who have been referred to by Simone De Beauvoir in her seminal text, *The Second Sex* published originally in 1959 and translated into English in 1961 as those women writers who had the capability to portray the life of women in a significant manner.

If we compare the works of Virginia Woolf with a works of Shashi Deshpande, we find the presence of several common themes. The narratives may look different because the society they are depicting is different, the material circumstances are also different. The cultural quotes in terms of dress and language are also different but we find that the basic concerns have lots of commonalities and similarities.

(Refer Slide Time: 26:42)

Shashi Deshpande

- Padma Shree award in 2009
- *Sahitya Akademi Award for *That Long Silence* (1990)*
- Belongs to the second generation of Indian novelists: prolific writer; eleven novels; seven story collections; children's books; spy novels and perceptive essays. Interestingly, themes have remained unchanged.
- Lyrical element
- Feminist voice: moves towards post-feminism
- Issues of higher education and economic independence and what it means to women
- Social milieus – comparisons with Jane Austen



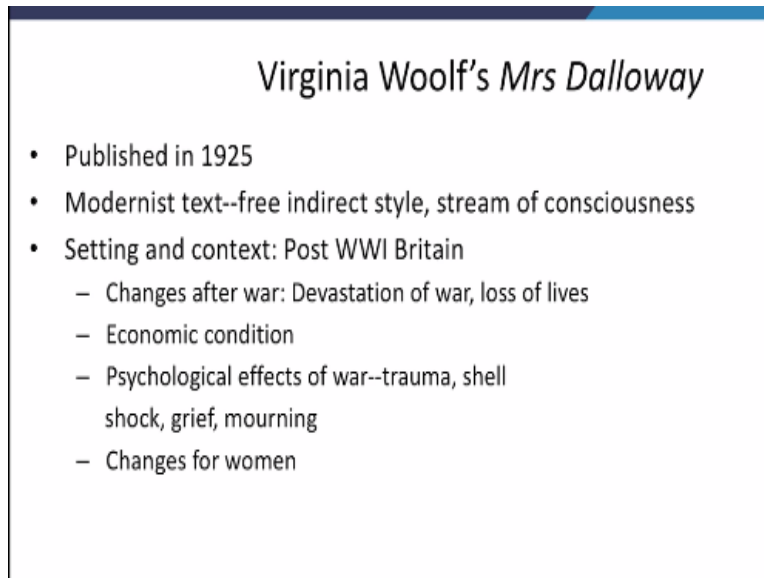
Shashi Deshpande has been awarded the Padma Shree award in 2009. Before that she had won Sahitya Academy award in 1990 for her novel *That Long Silence*, she belongs to the second generation of Indian novelists that is she has grown up after the work of the three breaks had become popular in the Indian scenario. She is a prolific writer, she has published so far eleven novels, seven story collections, several books for children, spy novels and several other expository and perceptive essays.

Interestingly, we find that in the work of Shashi Deshpande, as we can say in the works of Virginia Woolf the themes remain unchanged. As we find in Virginia Woolf we find also in Shashi Deshpande, the presence of a lyrical element. These two writers are able to use language in an evocative manner which is almost poetic. The feminist voice is present in Deshpande too, unlike Virginia Woolf we find that in a novels, she gradually moves towards a post-feminists stunt.

She has also taking up issues of higher education like Virginia Woolf. Whereas, Virginia Woolf had not been able to take up the idea of economic independence in a novels, even though, she had started to hint at it in a several essays which were published after her lifetime, she had not been able to talk about the total economic emancipation for a woman because it was still so far away in the contemporary British society.

But we find that Deshpande has taken up this theme in the contemporary Indian milieu and has talked at length about it. In terms of her social milieus, sometimes Deshpande is compared with Jane Austen and we would come to this point later on but I would like to say that she still has many commonalities with Virginia Woolf.

(Refer Slide Time: 29:04)



The slide features a title 'Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*' centered at the top. Below the title is a bulleted list of key points. The first bullet is 'Published in 1925'. The second is 'Modernist text--free indirect style, stream of consciousness'. The third is 'Setting and context: Post WWI Britain', which is followed by four sub-bullets: 'Changes after war: Devastation of war, loss of lives', 'Economic condition', 'Psychological effects of war--trauma, shell shock, grief, mourning', and 'Changes for women'. The slide has a blue header bar at the top and a thin blue line on the left side.

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*

- Published in 1925
- Modernist text--free indirect style, stream of consciousness
- Setting and context: Post WWI Britain
 - Changes after war: Devastation of war, loss of lives
 - Economic condition
 - Psychological effects of war--trauma, shell shock, grief, mourning
 - Changes for women

To illustrate the concerns of Virginia Woolf in detail, I have taken up the case of *Mrs. Dalloway* particularly. Published in 1925 *Mrs Dalloway* is often considered to be a modernist text with its free indirect style, the use of the stream of consciousness in a controlled manner. The setting in the context is of the post First World War British society. It also tells us about the changes which have taken place in the British society after the war, loss of lives, the devastation which has been unfolded, the economic condition, the deterioration, the psychological effects of war, the trauma, they grief, the loss of life and changes which it entailed particularly for women.

(Refer Slide Time: 29:40)

Themes:

- Fragmentation of identity--gender and class
- Marriage
- Alienation and loss of meaning
- Destruction of traditional bourgeois values
- Post war trauma-shell shock
- Economic hierarchies
- Decline of religion
- Technological changes--progress and destruction



The themes which have been taken up in Mrs Dalloway are also the themes which interestingly Virginia Woolf has taken up in the rest of her novels too. The fragmentation of identity from the perspective of gender as well as class, the obsession with marriage or the absence of marriage, the resultant alienation and loss of meaning as well as the destruction of certain values, the economic hierarchies, the decline of religion and the technological changes in terms of progress as well as in terms of destruction have been repeatedly taken up in a novels.

(Refer Slide Time: 30:31)

Stream of Consciousness

- William James coined the term in *Principles of Psychology* (1890)
- Psychology--simply the character of thought, consciousness
- Flows like a stream--not structured rationally like language
- Human consciousness--linguistic content, images, sensations
- Thoughts aren't linear, web-like, a combination of words, images and sensory experiences etc
- Modernist writers adapted this understanding of the nature of thought/consciousness to create the stream of consciousness technique to probe deeper into the recesses of characters, psychological realism



The idea of a stream of consciousness as a technique was taken up by Virginia Woolf in the beginning of the 20th century. The term was coined by William James in 1890, in his treatise *Principles of Psychology*. So whereas in psychology it is simply the character of thought or

consciousness, we find that Virginia Woolf along with Joyce had used this technique in literature to represent the inner goings-on of her characters.

It is also a technique which Virginia Woolf and other novelist used to probe deeper into the recesses of the characters to represent the psychological realism.

(Refer Slide Time: 31:00)

- Attempt: capture thought as is; rejection of the omniscient narration prevalent in 19th century realist texts.
- Predecessors: Henry James, Conrad, May Sinclair, Dorothy Richardson
- Fully explored in the hands of modernist writers like: Virginia Woolf and James Joyce
- Use of the technique to depict a worldview that is peculiar to modernity as industrialization and consequential urbanization reach its peak in 20th century
- Technique not the same as interior monologue
 - Mingles thoughts with impressions/perceptions



In its predecessors we can look at the figures like Henry James, Joseph Conrad, May Sinclair, or Dorothy Richardson but let us say that it has been fully explored in the hands of Virginia Woolf and James Joyce. This technique is also different from the interior monologue because it mingles thoughts with impressions and perceptions and also does not follow any logical sequence and takes certain liberties with language also to present the psychological and emotive goings-on of a character.

The novel is based on a day in the life of Clarissa Dalloway and whose character has been explored and whose identity formation has been laid bare before us with the use of this technique.

(Refer Slide Time: 31:58)

Clarissa Dalloway

- Stream of consciousness as an adequate form to explore the contradictory movements in Clarissa's interiority--constantly shifting
- Tries to understand her own experience of the world in which she occupies a superfluous position.
- Her upper class status--privileged, wealthy and oppressor (as opposed to Miss Kilman, her daughter's tutor)
- Her gender marginalizes her--dispensable, a used body
- The two functions that the society accords her: Mother and sexual object (for her husband)
- Experiences a moment of shock in her meeting with Hugh--awareness of her decaying body, her mortality; identity incumbent on her husband, Richard Dalloway



Clarissa Dalloway has tried to understand her own experiences of the world in which she has occupied so far is superfluous position. She has an upper classes stature, simply because on the basis of her marriage to Mr Dalloway. She feels that her gender has marginalised her and she has been a dispensable person a used body. The society has given her only two rules that of a mother and that of a wife.

(Refer Slide Time: 32:40)

- Attempts to reformulate her identity by revaluing her past decisions and her relationship with the people in her life
- Insecurity of losing her sense of selfhood makes her choose the dependable Richard Dalloway
- Leaves Peter Walsh--requires demanded complete annulment of selfhood.
- Thus, affirms her anxiety of preserving a selfhood
- Yet her consciousness broods over moments in which she paradoxically defines herself as "very young; at the same time unspeakably aged".



And she experiences a moment of shock when she meets with you becomes aware of a decaying body her mortality, the limitations of a gendered identity. In the course of the novel we find that Clarissa Dalloway attempts to reformulate identity by revaluing her past decisions and her relationships with people in her life, for example. her in security of losing her selfhood when she

chooses to stay with dependable Richard Dalloway illustrate of marrying Peter Walsh who was perhaps you know more demanding.

Her consciousness broods over moments in which she paradoxically defines herself simultaneously as very young and at the same time unspeakably aged. We find that the process of identity formation based on one's gender choices has been given in detail. The inner vacuity which is present in a women's life, the compulsions which she has to take up on the basis of playing her societal roles like throwing a party etc., are laid bare in the character of Clarissa Dalloway.

(Refer Slide Time: 34:00)

Elizabeth Dalloway

- 17 year old daughter of Clarissa, whose beauty is being noticed
- Society perceives her in terms of her physical attractiveness
- Prefers her history tutor's (Kilman) company, who encourages Elizabeth to make her own identity and grab opportunities--career, independence
- Marriage not the only option
- Unlike Clarissa, Elizabeth has some idea about the hardships faced by those who have been affected by the post-war economy--the lower and working class
- Uncertainties owing to her gender and related conditioning



Interestingly, we find that these attempts are duplicated to a certain extent and are also valorised in the character of her daughter Elizabeth Dalloway, a 17-year young girl whose beauty is being noticed. But we are told by Virginia Woolf that she also has started to have a certain aspirations in terms of her career. So we find that whereas through the character of Clarissa Dalloway, Virginia Woolf has presented how gender played a very significant role in the formation of her identity. In the character of Elizabeth Dalloway, we are being told how the changing societal circumstances and the worldview has enabled Elizabeth Dalloway to think in a slightly different way about the gender choices which have been given to her. In *Mrs. Dalloway* we find that through the portrayal of Clarissa Dalloway, Virginia Woolf has told us how the role of class and gender is important for the formation of identity.

(Refer Slide Time: 35:11)

Miss Kilman

- Clear opposition between Clarissa and Kilman—detest and hate each other
- Clarissa feels Kilman thinks of herself as a superior and looks down upon her as she has no identity apart from her husband.
 - Rivalry over Elizabeth
- Kilman—angry, embittered, unhappy and discontent
 - Marginalized in terms of gender, class and ethnicity
 - Unattractive, middle-aged woman—not sexually desirable, her old Mackintosh is symbolic of her deprivation
 - Unmarried, lower/working class status
 - Educated but, dismissed from her job because of anti-German prejudice during the war
 - Tries to take refuge in religion

And this aspect is further contested and elaborated on with the character portrayal of Miss Kilman, Miss Kilman who unlike Clarissa Dalloway is marginalised in terms of gender, class and ethnicity. So the challenges which she has to face in her life have been portrayed because of these different ways in which identity is constructed.

(Refer Slide Time: 35:37)

- Issues related with marriage, lack of choices, societal pressures, absence of economic independence in contemporary milieu
- Expository writings are more advanced, though raises several issues in her novels which formulate and frame a gendered identity for her women characters
- Betty Flanders in *Jacob's Room* – loneliness of a woman, limitations of options
- Susan's practical musings about marriage in *The Waves*
- Katharine in *Night and Day*
- Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse*

So, we find that when these three major characters, Virginia Woolf has presented this idea that gender is the main focus for our identity formation as it exposes women to a particular process of conditioning and it also tells them to choose from the given hierarchy. So we find that issues related with marriage, lack of choices therein societal pressures to choose a particular type of a

person for marriage, absence of economic independence in contemporary British society are the topics and themes which have been repeatedly taken up by Virginia Woolf to discuss how this issue of identity formation takes place.

We also find that her expository writings are more advanced and though she has raised several issues in a novels which formulate and frame a gendered identity for her women characters not all the ideas which she has presented in her expository writings have been truly reflected in a novels. The repetition of these themes can be seen in *Jacob's Room* through the presentation of Betty Flanders.

In *The Waves* when Susan practically muses about this concept of marriage through Katherine in *Night and Day* and also through Lily Briscoe in *To the Lighthouse*. When we look at this themes taken up by Virginia Woolf, we find that in certain other major novelists and certain other representative novels of a particular time zone, similar issues have been taken up.

(Refer Slide Time: 37:13)

Some Other Novels

- Jane Austen's novels: women's destiny tied to their ability to marry into a decent family
 - *Pride and Prejudice*: marriage is the central theme; Mrs Bennet's desperation to find husbands for her daughters
 - Women didn't have right to property (primogeniture laws), and so no alternative viable careers other than being a governess
 - Charlotte marries Mr. Collins simply to have a respectable life as there are no opportunities for her
- Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre* finally marries Rochester
- George Eliot – tragic fate of Maggie Tulliver (*Mill on the Floss*) – cannot be reconciled to societal norms

When we look at the novels of Jane Austen or *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte or George Eliot, we find that these women novelists were struggling with the concept of marriage and how they were obsessed with it because a contemporary society did not give them any other viable alternative. So how marriage was a compulsion and women were struggling to escape this compulsion and were unable to find a way out.

So, we find that even though the awareness of a gendered situation is very much there in these women novelist, the constraints of the contemporary society are also discernible in them. In the next module when we would take up Shashi Deshpande, we would find how in the novels of Shashi Deshpande, because of the passage of time, certain constraints have been done away with but still we find that certain commonalities are very much there. Thank you.