



## Urge For Gender Equality In Virginia Woolf's "Orlando"

M. Sujatha<sup>a</sup>, Dr. R. Parthipan<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Research Scholar, Assistant Professor of English, Raja Serfoji Government. College (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli), Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, India.

<sup>b</sup>Research Advisor and Associate Professor (Retd.), Department of English, Raja Serfoji Government. College (Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Tiruchirappalli), Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, India.

### APA Citation:

Sujatha, M., & Parthipan, R. (2021). Urge For Gender Equality In Virginia Woolf's "Orlando", *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 17(4), 3048-3050

Submission Date: 11/10/2021

Acceptance Date: 25/12/2021

---

### Abstract

Virginia Woolf's "Orlando" depicts the character of Orlando as a hero who becomes a heroine. This paper aims in bringing the urge for gender equality, gender differences, struggles and conflicts that Orlando underwent as a man as well as a woman. Virginia's works deals with equality, gender roles, gender perspectives such as self-identity, acceptance in society, their role in public life, day to day life aspects, space in literatures, freedom of liberty in thought, work and action. Gender differences dealt in this paper is about the difficulties that a person faces in androgyny. This theme of unison gender is a rare area of interest for female writers. Virginia is in par excellence in handling psychic concepts. Women writers have made the most significant contribution in the field of fiction and it is undoubtedly Virginia's works made the commencement for feminist writers. This paper deals with the turmoil of Orlando for the quest for gender equality and its urge.

**Keywords:** *androgyny, unison, gender-equality, psyche, perspective, turmoil, consciousness.*

---

## 1. Introduction

Virginia Woolf is a noted feminist writer of Victorian Era. In many of her novels she gives the glimpse of the womanliness in women. This novel Orlando taken for analysis deals with a difference. Virginia is of first of its kind to deal with a theme of a hero who becomes a heroine in her novel Orlando. The present paper analyses both the female and male characteristic psyche of Orlando in unison. Virginia is considered as one of the most discussed writers. Her concept of time in this novel is one of the fantastic elements that Virginia properly made use of in depicting the characters revelation. Orlando lives through centuries and thus Woolf is able to give an account of not just individual life, but also presents the British history and how the changing times influence the individual over a longer period.

## 2. Shifting identities

Orlando is a novel of shifting identities. Orlando a young attractive noble person living in England is the protagonist of the novel Orlando. He meets queen Elizabeth; she gives major credibility when chatting up with ladies. He fell in love with Russian princess Sasha. He took up writing poetry seriously as he failed in love. Orlando requests Nick Greene, a poet to evaluate his writing skill.

whereas Nick Greene creates a south park style spoof of Orlando's and publishes it. This made Orlando to burn all his writing. He saves "the oak tree alone". His love with Romanian Arch Duchess Harriet Griselda too failed as he is not interested in her and in anything for a long term. He moves to Constantinople, where King Charles appoints him as an ambassador. Here Virginia makes a twist in the story, when Orlando turns thirty years old and a woman inside, the protagonist faces lot of trauma. which other writers dare to take as a major theme for writing. She illustrates the urge for gender equality through Orlando.

### 3. Gender discrimination

Orlando spend some time with gypsies and returned home to England due to gender discrimination. he was forced to face law suits for the fact that she used to be a man. at that point of time woman were not allowed to own a castle or even to carry back pack as men do. For Orlando the condition became much worse due to this gender discrimination.

Virginia writes,

"At one and the same time, therefore, society is everything and society is nothing. Society is the most powerful concoction in the world and society has no existence whatsoever."

It is the society in which one lives is considered not only as a dwelling place, but also a place of recognition and acceptance among the fellow being.

Virginia quotes,

"A woman knows very well that, though a wit sends her his poems, praises, solicits her criticism and drinks tea, this by no means signifies that he respects her opinions, admires her understandings, or will refuse, though the rapier is denied him, to run through the body with his pen"

Arch Duchess Harriet is now Arch Duke Harry with whom Orlandorefuses the love proposal. Orlando manages to get rid of Harry, for she wants "life and a lover" and proceeds to London. Virginia shows the picture of the feminine psyche, though Orlando was once a male after becoming a female in thoughtfulness and action, the struggle for self-identity in the society continues.

Orlando spends time with Pope, Addison and Dryden, yet she realizes even though they might have great wit in their writing, they are not exactly great people. In the Victorian age she is happy. She meets Marma Duke Bonthrop Shelmerdine whom she calls Shel in short. They both get engaged. Shel sails around Cape Horn. Orlando finishes "The oaktree". She meets Nick Greene who is now a respected literary critic and promises that this poem would be published. The novel ends with the image of Orlando in here backyard, baring her chest and shouting for her husband.

Virginia writes,

It was Orlando's fault perhaps; yet after all, are we to blame him? The age was Elizabethan; their morals were not ours...."

Virginia tries to convince the readers that may be Orlando's action should not be judged harshly. This shows the impartial attitude of the author. Inner life of the character that gives Orlando her identity, not the social trapping of her clothing or her body. Virginia acknowledges that you can't entirely throw off what you are born with. It creates restrictions. Forces her to deal with discrimination that she never encountered as a man.

Virginia Woolf writes,

“Orlando has become a woman there is no denying of it. But in every other respect, Orlando remains precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity”

#### 4. Attire change

Attire changes occurs often. Arch Duke Harry dresses as a woman, later reveals himself as a man. In the same way Orlando wears both gender cloths.

Virginia Woolf writes,

“Clothes have, they say more important offices than merely to keep us warm. They change our view of the world and the world’s view of us”

Orlando manages his transition with grace and a profound truth on seeing herself for the first time in the mirror, she remarks “different sex, same person”. This shows the mastery of Virginia’s talent in portraying the inner self of the protagonist with the stream of conscious technique. Thus, she undoubtedly insisted the urge for gender equality through ‘Orlando’.

#### 5. Conclusion

Let me conclude this paper with this little poem of mine,

***Virginia’s gender portrayal***  
*Virginia ‘sOrlando’ a blended-gender classic*  
*Vividly welcomed by contemporary critics*  
*With depth and delicacy*  
*Portraying the psychic identity*  
*Capable of infusing the inner flux*  
*Orlando lives through centuries*  
*virtually their sense of existence*  
*Seems to be in little restriction*  
*Orlando is in par excellence*  
*Owing to gender eloquence*

#### References

- Bennett, Joan, Virginia Woolf: Her Art as a Novelist, Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1964.  
 Elizabeth. Abel, Virginia Woolf and fictions of psychoanalysis, Chicago University of  
 Chicago press 1989.  
 Woolf; Virginia, Orlando: A Biography New York Harcourt, 1928.