

# The Self Question in Woolf and Deshpande Women: *Gender Performances Through the Lens of Goffman's Dramaturgy*

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## Abstract

Amidst the dilemma on switching gender roles in a conservative society, the experiences of women as a gender in collective has always been the 'other' irrespective of the socio-cultural differences. Even varying in degrees of experiencing the 'otherness', the expectation persists in accepting the otherness as gender roles and gendered responsibilities. The chosen works decodes the ties which bind women to their gender roles and dilemmas in deviating from those to commit to their individual self. The study employs a close analysis of examining the experiences of the female characters and their gender performances. The investigation extends to the application of Goffman's Dramaturgy over the characters' performances of gendered social roles. In conclusion, the article tests the idea of confining women in their gender roles for the benefit of the society by screening them from committing to their individual self as portrayed in Mrs. Dalloway and *That Long Silence*.

**Keywords:** dramaturgy, gender, self, social role, routine, front

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 *Dialogues on Self*

World after with its rapid changes as an aftermath of World Wars, experienced identity and existential crisis among its inhabitants. It paved the way for dialogues on literary and scholarly arena on profound introspection and exploration of self to sought to understand the individual's subjective place. With exploratory researches and debates the complexities of self with the interplay between self identity, cultural influences and rapid pace of social transformation increases. Modernist literature often explores themes of alienation, fragmentation, and individuality, which intersect with the gendered experiences of individuals. The mid 20th century emerged as a modern age with a significant change in how people analyzed themselves. The views on one's self from an individual point of view and experiences incorporating universal ideologies took a shift where people started decoding the effects of history, society and culture on themselves in shaping their identity (Holland, 2001) (Hermans, 2001). It kindled the social dialogue of the individual's concept of self in relation to social groups and other individuals (Brewer & Gardner, 1996) (Van Meijl, 2012).

Modernism in literature is relevant in Gender studies as it provides a framework for understanding the shifting societal attitudes towards gender roles, identities, and power dynamics. It allows for a deeper analysis of how modernist texts challenge and subvert traditional gender norms, highlighting the experiences and perspectives of marginalized groups, particularly women. Virginia Woolf, one among the pioneers of modernist literature ahead of the rise of modernism, dealt with Victorian women's lives and showcased the hurdles attached to their gender norms through her work. She is very affluent among literary scholars for her usage of Stream of Consciousness technique and themes such as trauma, alienation, psyche, and identity. Modernist feminist texts are likely to be seen starting from Woolf with her *A Room of One's Own* demanding the spatial and economic freedom of women to explore their creative ability. Also, Woolf is well known for her introspection on characters' psyche in her works to explore and define the true nature of individuality which is projected as lost among the societal constructs of gender practices.

Influenced much by her works, Shashi Deshpande, an Indian writer excels in depicting the struggles of Indian women in domestic and societal life. With her focus mainly on marriages and female sensibilities instigated on women of the Indian society, Deshpande is known for her realistic depiction and characterisation closer to reality. She also mentions explicitly the influence of Woolf over her writings and admits inspired by Jane Austen and Virginia Woolf's writings during her short stay in the West. With these aspects of modernist elements as similarities in both the writers, the study chooses to select women characters from both the authors' works to estimate the gender performativity in women of society.

Recent scholarly articles provides us with the discourses around loss of one's self and disruption of the same with reasons such as ethnic war, gender and racial discrimination are relevant and carries the effects from the past in the people's lives (P & G, 2023) (S & Mukherjee, 2024) (Joseph Desouza Kamalesh & Suganthan, 2024). The present study sets a similar pace in exploring the reasons in which gendered expectations on an individual's performance hinder their self identity. The notion of "gender identity is a performative accomplishment" (Butler, 2020, p. 353) introduced by Judith Butler in her works is sought after in gender discourse as well and equally in feminist grounds. The present work gets this idea of gender performances and examines the performativity of gender in the context of family limiting gender into binary for the study.

### *1.2 Quest for Self in Literature*

The woman question regarding their self-identity and the quest to regain or devise it has been a major part of modern literary texts. The question of 'self' and independence of women in spatial and economical categories for nurturing the creative ability of them arose with Woolf's notion of "Room of one's own" in her prose turned speeches addressing young female students of the west. Shashi Deshpande's works were also seen projecting concerns over the self-identity and individuality of married women of India society. Gender as a byproduct of various cultural invasions and colonial implications altered the position of women in Indian society. The position of women had changed during colonial rule saving them from life-threatening cultural practices. Liberation from stigmas such as sati were abolished in colonial rule, yet it recognized the similar western ideology of women as the other in societal and cultural practices (Jose & Mukund, 2017). Similarities in the status of women of the colonizer culture and colony culture could be seen with differences in class and hybridity in cultural practices (Goyal, 2019). Yet, the position of women of both the cultures could be related. The study also tries to explore the notion of women's experience as a relative one across the globe being the 'other' differing in degrees of subordination. Liberative aspects and submissive positions were recorded in histories of various cultures, and the position of women could be placed in relation under such context. So, the cultural dissimilarities were considered limitation as the similarity of select texts being modern literature and the quest for self-identity is recorded as themes of both the works.

#### *1.2.1 Mrs. Dalloway*

Set in post-World War I London in Victorian England, Mrs. Dalloway by Virginia Woolf portrays a day in the life of Mrs. Clarissa Dalloway in a modernist style. The day happens to be the day of the party which she hosts by the evening as a member of upper-class England. The entire plot reflects the inner struggles of Clarissa over her life choices and munching on the paths not chosen by her. Wavering tension is evident between the success of the party as a part of fulfilling her societal expectations as a woman, and her own desires for individuality.

As Clarissa struggles to maintain her role as a hostess, an attempt she often makes to yield deeper connection with the society and to herself, in a way of pursuing her passion it is her quest to find her-'self'. This internal conflict of hers is mirrored in the character of Septimus Warren Smith, a war veteran suffering from shell shock and dealing with trauma and mental illness. His journey depicts the devastating impact of societal norms on individual identity and a sense of self amidst the external pressures endured by innocent and ignorant norm followers of the society.

The dilemma of female characters over gender roles could be explored through the experiences of Clarissa and Septimus' wife Rezia. Clarissa weighs her role of hostess and a wife as a mere peer pressure which she does to fulfill her gender roles expected from her societal class. Rezia on the other hand tries hard to decide on her husband's care, faces societal dismissal of her concerns and struggles. The text delves into the complexities of identity and societal expressions in the characters of it in a rapidly changing world after war. It exemplifies the struggle in reconciling the self of an individual aligning it with the demands of the society universally.

#### *1.2.2 That Long Silence*

Deshpande's fiction is imbued with empathy and insight depicting the unpleasant reality and the unease factors which triggers dilemma in women confronting the gender roles. The complex advocacy of society as the perpetrator makes her style closer to real human experiences. The award-winning creation *That Long Silence* by Shashi Deshpande is a poignant expedition of a woman who carries a role of housewife, mother, and a curtailed writer in the backdrop of a traditional Indian society under distressing helpless circumstances. When in a forced, pitiful, helpless situation, the protagonist Jaya goes back and forth in her memory lane to assess the reason for her situation.

Trapped in a loveless marriage with Mohan, Jaya's internal struggle to reconcile the expectation of society with her desire for individuality and self-expression holds the crux of the plot. When she finds herself increasingly isolated and unfulfilled without her husband as an authority. She navigates through the past and moves around the complexities of domestic life and the stifling norms of Indian society over women. Towards the end, a clue from the part of Jaya to confront the limitations placed on her as a woman and the societal pressure to conform to gender roles. Deshpande also throws light over the ways in which traditional gender roles limit the opportunities for the personal and especially the career of women. Through Jaya's character, the plot advocates the dilemma in Indian women to confront or to conform to the suffocating gender norms and various factors associated with it.

### *1.3 Goffman's Deciphering of Performance*

Erving Goffman, a Canadian - American sociologist, in his work *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* deals with the performativity of individuals referring to theatrical metaphors. His concept of Dramaturgy distinguishes the performance into three. 'Front stage' is where

the characters perform their societal aspects of gender, their social role, conscious of presence of the audience. 'Back stage' is where the characters express their individuality or have thoughts about it without any audience. And 'Off-stage' is where the characters portray a version distinct from the front stage but in front of an unrelated audience which gives space for individuality and limits it based on societal constructs. He also explains how various parameters affect and influence an individual in expressing them socially. Explains the two types of expressions like verbal and non-verbal where through communication people communicate by giving direct information (Given) and through symbols and impressions communication is "Given off" (Goffman, 1959, p. 6). These expressions which are given off govern the "definition of the situation they come to have." It also depends on the "tradition of group or social status requirement" (Goffman, 1959, p. 6). This concerns the study as applicable in the textual characters.

### 1.3.1 Front, Social Role and Collective Representation

The set of expressions which are changed according to the situations are thus marked by him as 'front' and several fronts of an individual while performing at different situations or settings govern the 'social role' which the individual carries in his actions. Thus, Goffman denotes this exchange of information metered according to the societal standards as 'performance' of an individual in a societal context. He further deals with how these performances shape an individual's 'routine' and a 'collective representation' where individuals are marked together under a social category. An individual performance framing a collective representation of a larger group in a society is for convenience. Goffman formulates this theory irrespective of any gender attributed to his model.

## 2. Literature Review

Simon Johnson Williams in his work *Appraising Goffman* marks that initially his theory was not welcomed much by his peers intentionally and on the same hand, graduates and students were seen much interested and praising the work of him decoding an individual from a sociological perspective. He also notes that Goffman's ideas were welcomed posthumously among his peers validating his contributions (Williams, 1986). Goffman was criticized much in his early career for his unfiltered opinions in his writings. Alfred Schutz in his works comments over Goffman that he sets a sexist tone of society in his work which is clearly authentic close to real in depiction (Schutz et al., 1967). Similarly, Mary Jo Deegan through her work based on a debate over Goffman's works embodies a sexist attitude with himself expressing that, He agreed to her accusation of being a "MCP Male Chauvinist Pig from 1949-51" (Deegan, 2014, p. 76). However, she expresses that he expressed his change of attitude in his writings after that as not sexist but a realistic way of depicting a sexist society and to the astonishment, she opines that "impression management" (Goffman, 1959) reveals that lives of women are shaped by demarcated by conventions and thus finds him a feminist (Deegan, 2014, p. 77). As Stanley Raffel points out, the key criticisms on the work of Goffman were considered as from Gouldner, Garfinkel and Habermas. Goulder criticizes that Goffman's model makes us humans as "too superficial and especially, too amoral beings" and Garfinkle advocates against the contradictory nature of Goffman's claim of constantly hiding important aspects of a social life and opines that it is unnecessary and impossible to interpret things which are hidden. Finally, Habermas criticizes the "need constantly to practice deceit" as presented by Goffman and suggests that impression management could be modified to convey the true expressions to the world. Raffel comments the suggestion of Habermas as "potentially cruel recommendation" (Raffel 2013). He also adds that however the claims of these three criticisms are valid, Goffman has submitted enough contributions in his work to be taken and appreciated seriously. Application of his theoretical methods in various sociological fields could be witnessed through Ester Krisnawati application of Goffman's Dramaturgy in analyzing vlogger's Presentation of self in social media (Krisnawati, 2020). Goffman's theories are considered as "useful information and scattered ideas useful for those who would do theoretical work" (Inglis & Thorpe, 2023). For decades now, his theories have been taught and discussed in the sociological classrooms and among scholars decoding societal practices. Meaghan McIntyre in 2020 applied Goffman's Dramaturgy theory, analyzing how individuals perform their gender in front and back regions. Through Woolf's *To The Lighthouse*, the study derives gender as a mouldable construct highlighting the transformation of characters around World War I in the text (McIntyre, 2020). As for the gender issues faced by women are concerned in the contemporary society disparities in stages of women's carrier post marriage is addressed as

In the early career stage, this is because of their marital, childbirth, and childcare concerns; while during the mid-career stage, women face career breaks because those responsibilities increase as well as the need to care for elderly parents. In the late stage, career breaks are caused by the need to care for partners and grandchildren (Ud Din et al., 2018, p. 1524).

The caregiving responsibility assigned to the societal role of being woman is burdening and paves way for inequality in shared responsibilities after marriage between genders. Bonnie Zare explains that "Many of Deshpande's novels trace a similar pattern of a woman seeking to strip off layers of illusion to find the principal elements all human beings possess" (Zare, 2004, p. 100). The emptiness which is formed by the routine created by the front post marriage adapting or trying to adapt the societal role expected is referred to as illusion and the individuality or self gets evaded in the pursuit of societal aspects of married women. Sarah Grand, the person who coined the term 'New woman' believed that "The man of the future will be better, while the woman will be stronger and wiser," (Grand, 1894, p. 272). Her predictions over gender equality are becoming a reality and are expressed in recent literary works. Even decades earlier, writers such as Deshpande included men too as the victim of the patriarchy following the conventional norms of being the man and trying to cope up with the masculine image through her male characters.

### 2.1 Research Gap

Goffman deals with an individual's expression of 'self' in a social space and the factors shaping, guiding, and affecting the performance of an individual. The study finds the model of his, suitable for equating to estimate how individuals perform and are expected to perform

in a societal scenario. It aims at estimating how different individuals who come under the same social cadre are expected to experience and perform the same role. The study takes the parameters ascribed by Goffman in distinguishing levels of performance such as 'front', 'social role' and 'collective representation' in explaining how women are gendered and expectations are posed on them in society. Also aiming at finding out the various reasons and factors which enable them to lose the individual self of women. It estimates how the characters experience and perform gender portrayed in the works of Woolf and Deshpande. Both these authors' works come under the modern literary arena where an individual's expression of self and how it is shaped, affected, and restricted by societal norms and expectations portrayed in a formal and methodical society is portrayed. Additionally, the study aims at analyzing how gender roles and expectations imposed on it are relatable across cultures and societies by comparing an English author Woolf from the colonizer culture and Deshpande from a Post- colonial colony culture. Also, the study aims at showcasing the performance of gender and the loss of individuality is of their own making. And thus, changes should also be kindled from within to gain their individuality.

### 3. Methodology

The study atones to the qualitative feminist analysis of Mrs. Dalloway by Virginia Woolf and That Long Silence by Shashi Deshpande highlighting both the text's female characters. The study compares both the characters' performance of gender to adhere to the societal standards yielding them in a search for individuality while experiencing emptiness in life. The performance of gender is aimed to be proven as an act of self and not forced on by society. Applying Goffman's Dramaturgy model in the female characters, the study aims at deciphering how the sociological setting of a family demands a care giving manner in a woman offering a convenient position as the other. The setting is explored in guiding the performance of women through textual analysis and all the way down to theoretically deciphering the reason for gender to be prevalent in the society.

### 4. Discussion

The notion of Goffman is that everyone performs a role ascribed to their position in a society to be a part of it. Performance is marked out in Goffman's work as an 'activity of an individual' which differs and relies on time and space, in-front of a particular/ specific audience. The key factors of influence here are the time and duration in which the individual does the activity, and the space which encompasses the presence of the audience/observer and the relationship of the individual with them. Technically he refers to these factors through the concept of setting and manner. Setting as demarcated by him encompasses physical location, props, scenery, and he adds that it is immovable mostly which enables the character to perform the particular action or in a manner which the individual sees fit. Different settings might require different performance from an individual. In rare cases, the performer takes the performance with them and makes it their 'routine'. Goffman further goes on and simplifies by introducing the 'Front' on an individual which he/she changes according to the setting and audience (a part of setting). Whenever the performance or activity of an individual changes, Goffman interprets that as a change in the front of the individual "regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance" (Goffman, 1959, p. 22). Front acts as an expressive equipment which is chosen by the individual *intentionally or unwittingly*. Change of front or choosing a particular front depends upon the setting. In the context of both these texts chosen, Jaya is seen mostly in the setting of the house where domestic aspects take place. The setting portrayed in the work too consists only of houses as in Jaya's parental house and marital house. The confines of setting only to houses acts as a façade of Jaya's limited exposure in her life. Similarly, Clarissa is also seen describing things inside the setting of house and not anywhere else except for her walk along the London streets. As a result of confined space in both the characters the fronts needed to be performed in these spaces are also not extended beyond caregiving. Limited exposure to space results in limited manners expected from them thus confining their front.

A 'social role' is formed when a group of performers carry on similar activity in a specific or similar setting. Validation is granted to the social role formed as similar performances are delivered as a collective by individuals of the same category. This social role is defined irrespective of the number of performers performing the same front in a particular/ specific/ similar setting. Thus, a social role is instigated and validated. For example, Goffman gives the social role carried out by lawyers in the presence of a judge. This performance demands order, language, and systematic behavior. Thus a front of an individual as a lawyer (social role) in a court (specific place) is validated by the performance of the individual and in similar collective performers. However, change in setting often changes or demands the individual to put on a varied front.

#### 4.1 Routine

In certain cases, the social front, and the individual front (self) is seen conjoined when an individual decides to carry on the same front irrespective of the setting. A feminine nature of a woman who performs as a caregiver for her family. Irrespective of the setting and audience, the observers (society) expect women to be feminine in all their actions. They are hence expected to stick to their social role as women and carry the same front irrespective of the setting. This voluntary or involuntary action performed by women forms their 'routine' in performing a front. "the role we are striving to live up to this mask is our truer self, the self we would like to be" (Goffman, 1959, p. 19). Formation of routine from chosen social front is due to repetition in performing social front and adapting such as routine leaving a personal front in question. Hence, the social front takes over the individual front forming a routine in performance. Goffman describes this with the manner of a Lawyer in public and domestic settings. A lawyer, presumably a professional man, changes his front in various settings. He performs a role in front of a judge, and he takes on a different front in an informal social gathering. The routine of women is also seen shaped by limiting her mobility physically and mentally within the confines of her social role as a woman, resulting in a confined expectation offering a similar setting hence fails in promoting the need for a different front from a woman as an individual.

Routine makes or tends to make a front of a person and the performance associated with it more real. The realness is instigated as the individual travels from a disbelief in the performed front on a personal level to believing one's one performance resulting in validating and making the front closer to real.

At one extreme, one finds that the performer can be fully taken in by his own act; he can be sincerely convinced that the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality. When his audience is also convinced in this way about the show he puts on and this seems to be the typical case then for the moment at least, only the sociologist or the socially disgruntled will have any doubts about the 'realness' of what is presented (Goffman, 1959, p. 17).

This *realness* is formed or constructed by the mind due to limited exposure than the performed routine. Routine plays a significant role in the travel of a character from disbelief to belief in validating a front to be real and accepted in the society gaining a mass to follow and believe in the front and its social role demonstrated. Thus, a collective mass is represented under the front and a social role is expected from the individuals on the similar or specific group associated to follow and perform the same front abiding the established social role. In a similar way, evolution in the social role of familial women could be related and traced from the cultures through sociological evidence through research. Literary evidence is to be contrasted with the ideology of Goffman in the coming sections and women's lives are to be tested with the parameters of front, social role, collective representation, and routine.

#### 4.2 Ideation of the 'self' Question

People perform and remain performing their front to fulfill the gender roles imposed by society. Instructions and symbols are available in society and are passed on to generations with culture and tradition as agents. These gendered societal codes or symbols are exemplified as passed on cultural norms in the select texts for the study. One among such instances is Jaya getting instructed by Mohan to dress better to perform the class they aspire to become. "Don't wear those shabby things, even at home. And why don't you make yourself a nice housecoat- you know, like the one the M.D. 's daughter wears." (Deshpande, 1989, p. 61). This acts as a reference to achieve a societal class through performance and improvising the setting unto the societal standards. Similarly, the codes for an ideal woman are seen referred to in the texts, for instance, the reference to Kumkum on the forehead of a woman symbolizing her status of married to a man is considered respectable and sacred in Indian society. In *That Long Silence*, the instance where a husband's importance in a woman's life is described as "Don't forget, he keeps the kumkum on your forehead. What is a woman without that?" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 53). To match the experiences of women with societal codes across culture and class, a similar instance found in Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* in the form of usage of gloves could be referred to. "Uncle William used to say a lady is known by her shoes and her gloves" (Woolf, 2018, p. 8). Garcia Madrid is his work traces *Mrs. Dalloway* as a text which carries sartorial fashion such as gloves and other fashion items shaping gender in a society and the ways in which "social status linked to sartorial fashion" (García-Madrid, 2018, p. 9) in the text. These codes are set as props to perform a certain role ascribed by the society to be denoted as ideal women. To be respectable and honorable or even to be considered as women as part of the society, these manners are expected to be always fulfilled and failing to adhere to it attracts criticism and a sense of judgment. Similarly, the care giving manner (front) is always expected from a woman of society even at the cost of her individuality.

During the prolonged performance of such manners (fronts), the societal front which women perform merges with the individual front and a unified front predominated by caregiving activities is established. These caregiving activities imposed over women include taking the subordinate or the secondary position to the authority of the household which usually is a male persona as projected in the literatures. Both the protagonists' character showcases these attributes of being the secondary. Jaya in *That long Silence* expresses her role of being secondary and dependency over her husband as her profession and livelihood. She takes up the society-imposed role of wifehood into a stage where she feels not knowing him completely as a failure of her complete self. "wasn't he my profession, my career, my means of livelihood? Not to know him was to admit that I had failed my job" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 75). This gives the clear picture of Indian women's social role as a marriage with various fronts including motherhood, caregiver of the elderly and the wife's front as described by Jaya above. Similarly, in *Mrs. Dalloway* the high Victorian codes for women were projected as followed by Clarissa and as a character who chose her life as a Victorian ideal woman by marrying Mr. Richard Dalloway. Her thoughts on emptiness after a certain point of time in a Victorian woman's social role is expressed through her realization of lack of things for her to do in life after marriage and child rearing for a woman in such a societal role.

She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up the Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa anymore; this being Mrs Richard Dalloway (Woolf, 2018, p. 8).

It could be rendered that Clarissa and Jaya observe that their individuality is lost or forgotten even by them while trying to achieve and in excelling their societal roles as 'Ideal Woman'.

This sense of blurring of fronts in performing gender, societal roles is due to the demand for time and space while on a path to achieve, thrive and excel in the role of being an ideal woman. Ud Din, Cheng, Nazneen finds out that the caregiving responsibilities imposed over women takes a toll on women's career advancement which leads to disparity in gender (Ud Din et al., 2018). Losing one's career for the needs of family creates an emptiness in women as time passes through the mundane domestic responsibilities imposed. This performance is never ending and demands the characters choosing or being forced to take it up to make it a routine. The confining nature of the routine with limited or no exposure to the social spaces limits their horizon within the performed role's reach. Thus the 'Mundane Spaces' comes

into play. Ghosh and Reddy explore the space of Indian married women portrayed in movies which are closer to real life. The spaces of women are thus demarcated and found as mundane. Their special focus being the kitchen, they explored how the spaces which women are exposed to, limits their horizon of experiences and the repetitiveness in chores deprives them of creative ability (Ghosh & Reddy, 2022). Similarly in a recent work on *That Long Silence*, it is explored that limiting women's spatial access results in confining her intellectual abilities in the mundane intellectual space of domestic activities pertaining to the loss of individuality in the character of Jaya (A & G, 2024). This mundane space thus portrays the formation of routine explained by Goffman in human's performing of Gender roles or Social Roles which consists of several fronts. The more the routine intensifies, the more it screens the individual or the front concerning self from the character.

Goffman differentiates 'true' and 'real' meaning in a performance. The 'true' meaning is something which is performed, and the 'real' meaning is the intention of the character while trying to convince the audience with their 'true' meaning. In the case of Jaya and Clarissa, they perform gender not because they are into the role which they perform or out of likeness towards the actions, it is to fulfill the societal roles expected of them. Goffman introduces a cynical aspect in a character to explain this manner. "A cynical individual may do it for what he considers good for their own and the sake of the community" (Goffman, 1959, p. 18). Here cynical represents the meaning similar to sincere. The blurring of fronts is due to the character's inability to distinguish between the 'real' and 'true' performance as their routine is shaped with the confined mundane performances which they adapted. In an extreme case, when an individual is accepted completely, and the audience accepts the act, the "impression of reality he stages is the real reality" (Goffman, 1959, p. 18). When the impression 'given' by Clarissa and Jaya as they enjoy being the caregiver or the party hostess becomes 'real' to them, the audience accepts it as it is part of the societal standard and accepts it as the societal role voluntarily taken or accepted by them and acknowledges the meaning 'given off'. Thus the writer in Jaya and the loss of individuality in Clarissa went unnoticed under the meaning 'given off'.

The self-question (realizing the lack of individuality) arises only when this performance faces a disturbance, in the case of Jaya or when the character reaches a stage where the societal role's expectations are found mundane as in the case of Clarissa when she faces a lack of front to take on to perform. To delve further into the factors which necessitates the self-question, A and G in their article explores Confucian philosophy that, to understand an individual's lack of 'self' or 'individuality' space and time are essential factors to be availed to decipher with the mind that a problem persists in their nature of being (A & G, 2024). It could be related to the 'backstage' phenomena of Goffman in a performance. Characters, when they put down their front, move from front stage to backstage where their individual or true identity is being performed, there is a chance of introspection occurring. In the case of women, the diffusion of individual front into professional or care taking society prescribed front while performing their role as women, the journey or routine demands losing the self voluntarily or involuntarily to achieve being 'Ideal woman'. It is only when they afford time and are exposed to a wider horizon in time, space, and experience (different fronts forces during a problem) they get to their backstage to realize the lack of themselves. Absence of prescribed role models and standard instructions from authority (men) could also be counted as a factor driving the characters backstage as in the case of Jaya and Clarissa.

#### 4.3 Gender as Collective Representation

To understand and estimate a performer, an observer needs to have and be familiar with manageable vocabulary of fronts, which needs segregation of fronts creating a need for grouping among a variety of performed fronts. As Goffman puts the notion "There are grounds for believing that the tendency for a large number of different acts to be presented from behind a small number of fronts is a natural development in social organization" (Goffman, 1959, p. 26). This might be the reason for gender to have been instigated in the past and/or prevalent still in contemporary society.

Radcliffe Brown states that the nature of collective representation formulated and followed by society "as a means of providing a less complicated system of identifications and treatments" (Goffman, 1959, p. 27) in a society, to maintain a less ambiguous state in systematizing gender and for the convenience of it, collective representation or segregation is imposed.

different routines may employ the same front, it is to be noted that a given social front tends to become institutionalized in terms of the abstract stereotyped expectations to which it gives rise, and tends to take on a meaning and stability apart from the specific tasks which happen at the time to be performed in its name (Goffman, 1959, p. 27)

Thus, forming a social role with an established front of a collective representation. As in the case of the study, the social role of women and the specific front associated with motherhood as a caregiver is established for the females of the society. As a result of this, a collective representation of women as caregivers, mothers, and enablers of other family members at the cost of their individual self is established as a front for females of the society. Confusion and chaos arise when women try to break free or deviate with a discourse from the established front when recognising the lack in their 'self'. Goffman has the notion that fronts cannot be invented for an individual to perform. He segregates fronts into two as Established front and non-established front. Established fronts are those in practice where individuals take it up and perform and are often recognised by the society which are to be used for societal roles. Meanwhile non-established fronts could be derived from available fronts to form a non-established societal role. As fronts could not be created, societal roles which are created with available or established fronts tend to disrupt the ease of accepting such societal roles formed with non-established fronts. Socio-political movements gain momentum when women of such thoughts in changing a social role come together to realign the structure of the social role of women as a new collective representation. Naturally, females are associated with the gender norms of a woman in the society. Theoretical and pragmatic discourses are now in effect demanding the ties of gender to sexuality to be

realigned. As collective representation is a product of society's convenience, resistance must be expected as the convenience is disturbed while trying to decode, understand, acknowledge, and govern a new social role and the fronts associated with it.

The study argues that women choose to perform, reframe, and resist gender. In the case of Jaya and Clarissa, they chose their gender performance and framed their societal role at their convenience. Jaya expresses it as "I hadn't stopped writing because of Mohan; I could not possibly make Mohan the scapegoat for my failures" (Deshpande, 1989, p. 145). Similarly, Clarissa expresses the freedom she had in her marriage as,

For in marriage a little license, a little independence there must be between people living together day in day out in the same house; which Richard gave her, and she him. (Where was he this morning, for instance? Some committee, she never asked what) (Woolf, 2018, p. 5).

While in the party Clarissa is seen bothering only about the caregiving aspect aiming at the success of the party, whereas Lady Bruton and Lady Bradshaw are involved in dialogues on politics and other societal issues. Both these characters express that they are to be blamed for aiming at fulfilling their societal caregiving role and limiting their horizon to the convenience associated with it, limiting their creative ability by themselves. This acceptance of societal role is partially responsible for the framing of their role and conveniently put as a societal gender role of women in the society as a 'Collective representation' for defining culture. Evidently gender is a performance where men and women try to please or conform to societal expectations. But in similar cases like the women characters discussed, they limit their potential for their convenience. This is referred to by Ghosh and Reddy as "Though the 'other' might appear to impede these women's growth, these women create a space of their own in the dually oppressive/liberating private space" (Ghosh & Reddy, 2022, p. 19).

Goffman's concept of Dramaturgy provides insight into the formation of a social role, that various social 'setting' demands individuals to deliver performance with appropriate 'front' which is accepted in society's views. An individual may take up several fronts based on the setting in their daily life. The similarity in performance forms a 'social role' expected of similar individuals in the particular setting and of similar kind. The repetition in performances creates a 'routine' in individuals in that setting. Thus the formation of Fronts and Social Roles in society is deciphered. The evidence in discussion above exemplifies the ways in which fronts and social roles are prescribed to women and the accepting nature of such social roles in women in marriage pertaining to caregiving. When women as a 'collective' are seen accepting their position and practice caregiving as their social role in marriage, a 'gendered social role' was formed, approved and validated through decades of practice. The texts show their protagonists accepting these roles through marriage, practicing caregiving after marriage in the family resulting in degradation of their 'self' without realizing it.

## 5. Conclusion

Women of society face challenges in conforming to the gender norms expected from them being the other. As the United Nations organization in 2024 proposes inclusion of women promoting economic empowerment, it helps in referring to Woolf's notion advocating financial and spatial independence for nurturing their creating ability. The idea on both these is to make women self-sufficient. While is arguably a performance enforced by society to maintain order and to avoid chaos. Problem arises when these societal roles are demanding much from a select group expecting them to maintain their role even at the cost of their individuality. The portrayal of Clarissa Dalloway and Jaya in the selected text showcases the struggles faced by women when confining themselves to the prescribed norms of society for women. The interplay of societal expectations and the individual identity leaves them at emptiness as women are expected to take the fronts prescribed as their individuality.

As Goffman says, the blend of professional and personal front is expected in the case of woman after marriage to fulfill the societal role of a caregiver ascribed to woman. Thus, for the convenience of society, the collective representation of such performers who perform the same role are termed as ideal women. Where adhering to societal norms is rewarded with representation. When the agents associated with the role of women, evidently the family is taken out of the scenario, women are left without a purpose at emptiness as experienced by Jaya on Mohan leaving and Clarissa feeling emptiness when feeling saturated in performing the gender norms. This instance in a woman's life is where both the authors demand the individuality in a woman to sustain, overcome or to restart the scenario in life.

Applying Goffman's Dramaturgy to both these texts, it could be arrived at that the societal expectations through gender roles are part of society as a structure for a convenient functioning model. Conforming or deviating from those expectations are partially the performer's option. What does force the performers is the criticism and inconvenience to be met at the personal level while deviating from the structural construct. When individuals of the same kind come together as a collective representation of their deviated notions from the structure, movements such as feminism through various media arises. But texts such as mentioned in the study are dealing with the issues in the micro level of individual self to seek a possible solution tailored based on individual experiences and requirements based on performances.

This method is quite reliable as multitude of voices and opinions could collide and while on a path to change an established convenient model in the structure, a collective change could result in collective resistance and even an exchange of sides could happen when collision of opinion occurs.

As Deegan says, "Sociologists are expected to 'see' the world and record it as it is rather than try to change it" (Deegan, 2014, p. 79). The study sees Goffman's depiction of society and individual's performance because of keen observation. His sexist expression as claimed by Deegan validates the neutrality of Goffman's work. The study applies his decoding of individual's behavior on women in the text to

analyze the position of women in society because of their presentation of self.

“Female identity is a process’ and writing by women engages us in this process as the female self seeks to define itself in the experience of creating art” (Gardiner, 1981, p. 361). The article finds that women were not exposed to the realization of these aspects of losing the self and in cases they assimilate this loss of self as part of their role in the caregiving ‘front’. In women’s case it is a never ending ‘routine’. This social role makes the protagonist women dependent on their male counterparts as they are seen as authorities in the household setting controlling economy and space being the ‘breadwinner’ and privileged to enjoy much space inside and outside the household. The article finds these practices being the routine in households as the center of ‘gendered social role’. Secondly the study analyzes the ideation of the self question in women as the rupture of the social role were women realize the nature of caregiving as a dependent role with unequal treatment in the society. The characters' realization of lack of self, practice in authority and control, experiences in facing deciding situations in life rather than following readily available societal rules(role) as the emergence of the formation of self in these characters. These situations force them to a position where women step outside their routine and explore individuality. The safe haven of being subordinate is taken away and they are forced to a new horizon without clutches and unlimited possibilities and vulnerabilities. The years of norm following nature leaving the women characters perplexed is observed through the study. Both the text projects women themselves as the cause for their situation. With the textual evidence which are close to reality, the sociological position of women as ‘subordinate’ or the ‘other’ could be a decision of their own which they attain. It is non-negotiable that the society was ignorant towards the position of women for decades. But the change was addressed and is continuously being addressed so that Goffman’s sociological theory of performing oneself in a society could be applied to women as they have the possibility unlike the past to opt to explore their individuality. The study finds confined exposure and limited opportunities due to marginalized treatment of human potential according to gender stratified social roles and expectations are reasons causing an individual’s loss of self identity and consciousness. Limiting to women as in the case of the study with relevant textual evidences. So the study advocates that in order to change the position of women in the society, changes should be made from individual level. The needy should try to find the lack of individuality and ought to opt and perform the inconvenient model to devise a model of their shared responsibility. Collective representations are made of micro fragments and gender as a collective representation assuming women as subordinate is in a phase of change and eradicating such could only be achieved from within.

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