



Ultimate Struggle for Liberation and Independence in the Patriarchal Norms and Values Presented in Henrik Ibsen's Selected Fiction



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Abstract: *This research attempts to analyze Ibsen's new women in the liminal space in his works A Doll's House and Hedda Gabler. The present researcher studies the condition of women and their ultimate struggle for liberation and independence in patriarchal norms and values. The whole research sees the struggle of protagonists as Nora and Hedda by Henrik Ibsen. They become conscious of their rights and struggle to achieve meaningful life but at the same time, it becomes problematic. Both protagonists are trying to come out from the utter domination of their husband or patriarchal hegemony for establishing their own identity or autonomous self but they fall into the liminal space. While representing the new women like Nora and Hedda in A Doll's house and Hedda Gabler, Ibsen put them in the space of liminality where women like Nora and Hedda neither discard the familial values nor are ready to succumb to oppressive patriarchal values in the late nineteenth century. They do not value the formality of both marriage and divorce.*

Key Words: Feminism, Marriage, Divorce, Liberation, Liminal Space

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Introduction

A Doll's House is not concerned with female identity and freedom rather it has been seen as problematic. The play is centered on the theme of freedom as an essential choice between an acceptance of the symbolic castration through the setting for limited freedom within the law, or pursuit of absolute freedom beyond law or society, but

absolute freedom leads to the lack of freedom and annihilation. A female character, Nora is seen to be a transcendental protagonist. She tries to exit her husband's house to challenge patriarchy and to prove herself as a new woman. But unknowingly, she is affirming the patriarchy. If her attempt was a challenge to the patriarchy, she would have stayed in her husband's house to struggle against patriarchal norms and values. She can't be a

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new woman as she escapes and remains in the liminal space because she can't adapt herself there and cannot struggle too. Nora is also transcendental for she has thought about women's liberation and equality only within her mind. But she is unaware of the fact that there is no place as such in the real world. Without thinking about reality, she exists from patriarchy thereby, providing herself as a transcendental character.

Another play *Hedda Gabler* is also centered on the theme of freedom as the protagonist Hedda is trying to get her freedom at any cost and when she is unable to secure her rights, she sees suicide as the only alternative for the protection of herself. She values who she is more than what she can do. She does not care for her competence at all. She simply wants to be the one but her family and social surroundings make her the other. The major problem is the contradiction between her essential self and outer self. This outer self keeps making demands upon her. She is expected to act within prescribed social limits. But she protests against all those limitations by rejecting them, Her protest extends up to the extent of rejecting life itself. By doing this she protests against society to overcome the problem which obstructs her independence, and she chooses suicide. Suicide is normally not a solution rather it helps to promote a patriarchal society. If her attempt was really to prove herself as a new woman she should stay in the same society to struggle against patriarchal norms and values. Rather she escapes and adopts the way of suicide to overcome the problem. So, Hedda is failure to seek her freedom and is unable to protect herself.

A Doll's House and *Hedda Gabler* by Ibsen deals with the internalized kind of consciousness in the woman of the society who was sub-ordinated in the hands of males who have been always been the ultimate cause of women's co-modification. Ibsen is remarkable for their protest against the social rigidities and limitations and cultural

conventions, understanding the equally valuable without being equal. He depicts a woman's search for freedom in the repressive society of the late nineteenth-century world. The subtle representation of a tormented and self- conflicting woman's psychology and the consequence in his life that breeds frustration, isolation, and rebellion culminate in a woman's self-realization. Henrik Ibsen, a renowned realist playwright gave the voice to women, especially in the nineteenth century. He suggested women that know their natural rights of equality and liberty. In most of his dramas, he presents rebellious women characters, who raise voices against society and try to be independent either rejecting the patriarchal social structure or accepting the social structure. Ibsen's female characters try to establish their autonomous identity to declare that women themselves can secure the life, which they have chosen as a result women characters like Nora and Hedda are capable to secure their life in their own choice. However, their ultimate decision becomes an appropriate way of confirming the patriarchal society.

Research Objectives

- To highlight the issues of patriarchy.
- To present the issues of limitations and cultural conventions.
- To project the matters of autonomous identity.

Research Questions

1. How has Ibsen presented the female struggle of women against patriarchy in the selected texts?
2. How do *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler* thematically progress differently?

Research Methodology and Theoretical Framework

This research is qualitative in nature. Theories

presented by Simone de Beauvoir, Nancy Cott, and Maria Mies support this research theoretically.

Textual Analysis

Nora and Hedda show the transitory period of new women where women did not like to remain under patriarchal/male domination rather they decided to be independent and emancipated from the male ideology and tried to get freedom. They are ready to undergo serve their pain and suffering but they do not like to surrender to any forces that challenge their individuality. Although they try to be independent and save their individuality they cannot do so because both women neither discard the familial values nor is ready to succumb to the patriarchal domination, suppression, oppression, and mental torture as a submissive, mute, and docile creature. From the above it is clear that they are remaining in the space of liminality in course of being a new woman or their new womanhood has taken them to liminality.

Nora, the main protagonist of the play *A Doll's House*, is the wife of Torvald Helmer. From the very beginning Nora, The protagonist is treated as an object or the property of her husband. Her husband's first words to her are "my little lark twittering [...] squirrel rummaging [...]?" (562) Nora is considered like a child or a pet as if she has no existence. She seems to be content with this relationship. She manipulates her husband with the same ingenious plot that children use to get their way. Helmer says, "Don't deny it, my little Nora. Spend thriffts are sweet, but they use up a frightful amount of money. It is incredible what it costs a man to feed such birds" (563). Here Nora is confined as a bird, which protects its baby birds with its wings. The woman should give birth to the children and look after them properly by managing time and by casting aside their self and interest. Nora's main purpose is to please her husband and maintain their role properly. Nora is

objectified and stereotyped like animals, birds, and so on.

Hedda Gabler also deals with the position of women in contemporary society where women had to be the victim of patriarchy. Women have been victims of male ideology which untimely cause them to suffer from repression, suppression, and mental torture. Hedda is the main protagonist of the novel, who is pregnant and expects care and love from her husband. But her husband is always busy building his career. He never shows his love and affection to his wife. He never shows his love towards her during their honeymoon trip too because of her husband. She shares her secret with Brack that she didn't like her honeymoon trip at all. So, she says "I've been so dreadfully bored" (609). It is clear in the drama that Hedda never gets love from her husband and becomes frustrated.

Most of his works deeply concerned with women offended the conservatives of contemporary late nineteenth-century European society. However, it was the most daring theme. Indeed his problem plays mainly deals with the theme of alienation from society and breaking down of conventions, the relation of an individual to his/her society and environment. Margaret Drabble, a critic of Ibsen remarks " that his plays are concerned largely with social and political themes but six plays[...] are more deeply concerned with the forces of the unconscious and were greatly admired by a friend" (Drabble 1998, p.490). Hence, Ibsen's pla focuses on personal awakening and inner transformation through conformations with family guilt, social hypocrisy, venereal disease, conventional sexual morality, and materialistic, bourgeois ethics. While going through his typical problem play *A Doll's House*, it advocates the right of women, and especially of wives about their husbands. In other words, *A Doll's House* is about female emancipation. It is a women's predicament that the play; it is the drastic step taken by a

wife with which the play ends; for Nora that is the dramatic escape for liberating the self but when this situation is critically analyzed it is the conformation to the patriarchy.

This indicates that in *A Doll's House* the protagonist Nora is responsible for her deteriorating liberty and freedom. Though she claims her leaving is a solution to the problem created by male ideology. Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* has been interrupted by the drama of pans and pathos, double suppression, and victimization of the women under the patriarch. One of the renowned critics. Clement Scott criticizes *A Doll's House* as a story of Nora; He remarks:

"She is a child fraudulent father, badly brought up, neglected at home, bred in an atmosphere of love less-ness, who has had no one to influence her in her girlhood's day for good. She marries the man of her choice, a practical, hard-headed, unto mantle banker. There is no suggestion that the marriage is forced upon her, she does it for her own free will." (Cott 1987, p.19)

In this regard, females are the subject of sheer negligence and lovelessness under the shadow of male hegemony. Similarly, Hedda Gabbler chooses the ways of suicide to assert herself to overcome the problem which obstructs her independence, she chooses suicide. Suicide is normally not a solution Hedda's act of suicide and her activities in Ibsen's. Hedda Gabbler has attracted the attention of many critics since its publication. Astrid Saether, Director of the Center for Ibsen studies, university of Oslo, Norway, argues that the characters presented by Ibsen show clear views of why there is always a conflict between men and women. In this writing "female expectations and male ambitions in Ibsen's late plays " he writes; "There is a bias between the male and female perception of the world and man. In his notes about the drama, Ibsen wrote: There are two kinds of spiritual law. Two kinds of conscience, one in man and other: but in practical life, the woman is judged by man's

law, as though she were not a woman but a man." (Saether 2006, p.29)

Kott Jan describes it from the psychoanalytic perspective behind Hedda's suicide. For him, the frustration caused by sexual repression leads her to destruction. So, he states, "Two pistols in *Hedda Gabler* are not only the props exploited by Ibsen with iron-clad dramatic logic and preordained consequences. They have also sexual undertones. By shooting herself, Hedda kills the shadow of her father and the child she never wanted. The shadow of the father kills the daughter". (Kott 1993, p.651)

Traditionally, man has been regarded as a protector, a master, and a guardian of a woman. For years, a woman has lived under the protection of either her parents or husband or even her children. This pattern of life outwardly made a female's life safe and smooth but slavish and dependent and this is indigestible for the woman who is striving to be free and self-reliant. She has started to think and feel differently which resulted in form of 'feminism.' As feminism is all about women's right, opportunity, and equality with men, it is believed that will rejects and ends gender biases. According to M.H Abrams:

"It is widely held that while one's sex is determined by autonomy, the prevailing concepts of gender- of the traits that constitute what is masculine and what is feminine- are large-, if generated by the omnipresent patriarchal biases of our civilization." (Abrams 1969, p.235)

The women in the struggle in finding their own place in society proves to be a difficult endeavour since the majority of people are highly skeptical of a woman of her own voice. On the contrary, a deeper look at the destructiveness of the illusions of a traditional society not completely ready to reconstruct those hierarchical allegiances that deeply shaped the relationships between

men and women, on the women who seek to destroy those illusions. The new women today assert that women have often and must always bring about such transformations in themselves and even change in the social system. It is said that females have so many homes to dwell in, father's home, and husband's home as well. Mira Mies defines autonomy as such:

"Autonomous means the preservation of human essence in women [...]. It is also a struggle concept which was developed to demonstrate the women wanted to separate from mixed, male-dominated organizations and to form their autonomous organization, and to form their autonomous organization, with their own analysis, programs and methods." (Mies [1986](#), p.40-41)

A new woman always struggles to affirm her autonomous self. Observing the new woman self, Alison Prentice and Ruth Pierson say, "Women have a human need equal to men's for affection and emotional support but that for the satisfaction of this need women should not have to make a greater sacrifice of autonomy than men" (Prentice 1990, p.164). The autonomous personality motivates them towards self-assertion. That self-assertion leads and encourages them to search for individual respect even in married life.

Many women regard marriage as a relationship between two individuals. They accentuate their own beliefs, existence, and identity, who are free from the husband's imposition of his beliefs. Living with their husbands, they are very aware of their self-respect and individuality, and the serious consciousness of self-existence makes them rebel against any condescending behaviour from their husbands. Quasim Amin elucidates the relation between a man and a woman, "A[...] man realizes that his wife has right to like what he meets her taste, her ideas, and her feelings, and she lives in a manner that she considers compatible with her own point of view" (Amin [1996](#), p.30).

They follow their thoughts and ideas. The sense of individuality makes them aware of the loss of happiness in marriage.

Some women regard marriage as a loss of autonomy, freedom, and happiness. They think that marriage is boring and imprisonment within routine household activities. They have to abandon their will and dreams to fulfill the needs of others. For them, marriage is a continuum of sacrifice, which creates a pseudo-existence under the name of their husbands. Simon de Beauvoir says: "The tragedy of marriage is not that it fails to assure women the promised happiness- there is no such thing such as assurance regarding happiness but it mutilates her, it dooms her repetition and routine" (Beauvoir [1974](#), p.534). The awareness of the neglected condition of household work also demands the support and participation of men in household activities. New women take women primarily as human beings having intellectual psyches and strong physiques just as men have. Women are capable of earning their living and conducting politics and business but they need spare time. It is with the help of men and women that women get leisure time to exercise their psychic capacity, to gain their autonomy and the wholeness of mind and body. And the psychic exercise helps them to remove the social assumption that women are unfitted to the intellectual world. Maris Mies suggests for the men's participation at home, "Men have to share the responsibility for the immediate production of life, for child care, housework, the care of the sick and the old, the relationship work, all work so far subsumed under the term 'housework'" (Mies [1980](#), p.222). Here Maria Mies is in favour of cooperation, love, caring, and sharing mutual understanding and reconciliation between men and women in a family, only then the familial life become long-lasting and prosperous.

Rosemarie Tong writes about

Wollstonecraft: "A woman must, Wollstonecraft believed, obey the commands of reason and discharge her wifely and motherly duties faithfully" (Tong 1989, p.16). Since motherhood reduces them to routine duties and responsibilities, the notion towards motherhood as a load generates an indifference between mother and child. New women also give more attention to their individuality and self-respect and accordingly are careful not to violate their children's individuality and self-respect. The individualistic attitude of new women has created a different perspective toward sexuality. Sexuality reminds people of erotic pleasure, which is completely a private matter. It is considered to be natural and essential for the continuation of human existence in the world. The new women tend to be more liberal in the matter and more conscious to have rights over their bodies and sexual relation.

New women also consume sexual freedom, which has become part of their lives, conducive to their mental and physical health. Taking and having free sex is a liberating and reinvigoration source for them. It is a kind of entertainment, which is beyond marriage, love, and maternity. They enjoy sex just as men do. Maim Attallah quotes Averil Borugess: "We have a far more promiscuous generation, and it may be that today's young women are interpreting a sexual relationship as a simple on its own, not as a long-term relationship, which could have been our social conditions" (Attallah 1987, p.570). They like to have control over their body and sexuality. Jane Freedman clarifies Crystal Eastman's notion about new women's sexuality: "The desire echoes feminists' continuing concern with giving women control over their own bodies, providing them with the power and the knowledge to enjoy their sexuality and to have children if and when they wish" (Freedman 2002, p. 59). The new women are very conscious of their bodies and sexuality. They no longer want to

be passive givers of their bodies to males. They demand freedom and self-authority in sexuality. The firm belief in sexual freedom for women also leads to economic independence.

Economic independence means the right to earn independently and the freedom to spend income and expenditure. Economic self-dependence becomes an assuring factor for their self-respect in marital life. It gives support to self-duty and self-responsibility. Attallah quotes their remarks of Frances here: "If a woman has no means to earn a living, she is dependent upon a man. When she is dependent upon a man, she is not free and she also does not trust him, because if you're dependent, you can't trust. There cannot be a healthy relationship if you're dependent upon somebody else for survival". (Attallah 1996, p.500)

In a patriarchal society, a wife should laugh if her husband laughs, and feel sorry if he is sad. Nora, being a member of the same society shares her happiness and sorrow according to the mood of her husband. When Helmer is made manager of the bank, she becomes so happy that she forgets everything. While talking with Dr. Rank she expresses her happiness.

Rank: Why do you laugh at that? Do you have any real idea of what society is?

Nora: What do I care about dreary old society? I was laughing at something quite different something funny. Tell me, Doctor, is everyone who works in the bank dependent now on Torvald?

Rank: Is that what you find so terribly funny?

Nora: (*smiling and Humming*): Never mind, never mind (*pacing the Floor*) Yes, that's really immensely amusing: that we – that Torvald has so much power now over all those people. (*The bag out of her pocket.*) Dr. rank, a little macaroon on that? (568)

According to Hedda marriage is not her will but a compulsion. She says “it was the passion for the old fold mansion that drew George Tesman and me together. It was nothing more than that, which brought on our engagement and the marriage and the wedding trip and everything else” (611). Analyzing Hedda’s ideal concept of marriage she seems trying to escape marriage life as radical feminists believe marriage is one of the greatest obstacles for women to think about their future. But Hedda’s ideal concept and her reality are different. If she really would feel marriage is an obstacle to her world of free life she must not marry Tesman. She gets married to him of her own will but she says it’s not a marriage. She evaluates marriage in terms of profit and loss, sees the possibility of profit, and accepts it. By taking marriage in such a lightly manner, she is destroying the culture in the name of improvement. If she was a new woman, she wouldn’t have to marry a man only for the house which she loves. How can we believe a such woman would build a society? Is she herself destroying her home? Hedda’s concept of marriage seems completely opposite to the activities she is doing in terms of her married life. So, it is one of the reasons that remain her in the space of liminality. Nora, in *A Doll’s House*, always thinks about how to please Helmer. She says, “[...] I’ll do anything to please you Torvald. I’ll sing for you, dance for you” (573).

She does not think about her life, health, and responsibilities but always thinks of ways to please him. As a wife, she is very keen to retain her husband’s affection and therefore tries to humor in every possible way. She cannot plan her costume for the party. Her dependence is clearly seems in the following conversation.

Nora: You know, there isn’t anyone who has your good taste- and I want so much to look well at the costume party. Torvald, couldn’t you take over and decide what I should be and plan

my costume?

Helmer: Ah, is my stubborn little creature calling for a lifeguard?

Nora: Yes, Torvald, I can’t get anywhere without your help. (574)

This conversation makes it clear that as a submissive wife who is dependent upon her husband. She presents herself as if she were a machine or an object for Helmer has no thinking power at all. She shows her dependent attitude time and again because her religion says that her interests should be conditioned by her husband's interests. She further says, "Oh it's absolutely necessary, Torvald. But I can't get anywhere without your help. I've forgotten the whole thing completely" (584). Hedda on the other hand has a strong desire to control men by being a ruler. So she says “for once in my life; I want to have power over a human being” (619). She feels happy in prescribing the norms for others. She wants Tesman to follow her suggestions. Similarly, she wants other characters to act according to her wishes. Here in this case too Hedda is unable to understand the reality. Her theory of domination is only based on what she has seen in a patriarchal-dominated society. In a patriarchal-dominated society, we see a male dominates the entire members of the house and rule over them according to his wish. This way, he shows his power over a human being. Hedda too just wants to copy from the such ruler. She takes a gun and tries to show that she is as powerful as a man. Generally in conventional society, we rarely see a woman carrying a gun. Similarly gun itself is a symbol of power. She has seen from childhood that her father used to carry a gun to control others. So she believed she would be strong by threatening people with a gun in hand. In this matter too Hedda fails to handle the issue in an appositive way or from a new woman's perspective. The fact that Hedda Gabler rejects motherhood can be symbolically seen in the scene of the burning of the manuscript. In the last act, Hedda

burns the manuscript of Eilert Lovborg which he had prepared with the help of Mrs. Elvsted. Eilert Lovborg and Mrs. Elvsted jointly prepare a manuscript for a history book, which Lovborg loses on the way. But he tells Mrs. Elvsted that he deliberately destroyed it. Mrs. Elvsted is heavily shocked by this news. It is something beyond her capacity to tolerate.

Therefore she says to Lovborg "this thing you've done with the book for the rest of my life, it will seem as if you have killed a little child" (625). She has taken the manuscript the way she takes a child. It is the result of cooperation between males and females. As the child is the result of the union between male and female, so is the manuscript. For her, the manuscript represents the child. In destroying the manuscript, Eilert Lovborg destroys the child. The word "Child" strikes Hedda Gabler.

In burning this manuscript, Hedda Gabler is burning her desire for a child. She cannot emotionally identify with the child. Hedda Gabler is so self-conscious in an ideal world that she even takes the child as a challenge to her autonomous existence. She wants to exist as a free being, having no responsibility towards society and family. Therefore, she creates a wall between herself and the child she is begetting in the future. The reason behind burning the manuscript is nothing but referring it as to the child of Eilert and Mrs. Elvsted. Here Hedda's hateful act shows that she is completely wrong way on her understanding of who is the subject of her protest. In other words, she does not find out the real subject of patriarchal domination. There is not any cause to be jealous of Mrs. Elvsted. She is her friend and she is supporting her to create a book. But Hedda does not understand it and she is jealous of Mrs. Elvsted and her relationship with Eilert Lovborg.

Nora is a character who is awake to the new consciousness. She says that her father at first dominated her. She got freedom from

being dominated by her father when she married Helmer. But again she continued to be tormented by her overweening husband. Having been wedded to Helmer she thought that she is an emancipated being. But destined to be dominated never left her. Hence from early childhood to her married life, Nora had been tormented by domination. This short conversation shows Nora's anger toward his husband and father. This conversation also shows the memory of her past. The memory of the past preoccupies the present too. A person, who intends to change society and want to establish an autonomous self, always live in the present and seeks for better future for oneself and for other too. Taking herself in the memory of the past she is doing nothing to trouble herself. So it proves that though she tries to establish herself as a new woman, she is not successful in bringing out her as a new woman completely.

When Nora realizes she is an individual at first. She wants to think things out for herself and get things clear. Whenever Helmer talks about religion and morality. Nora replies that she does not know what religion is and what morality is. Nora feels that it is the laws of society that allowed a woman to spare her old fathers feeling on his deathbed, that laws allowed a woman to save the life of her husband. She then tells him that she has ceased to love him because he is not the man she has thought that one day a miracle would happen and he would prove he too was capable of making a sacrifice for her but she has found miracle did not happen. She takes back her wedding and comes out slamming the outer door behind her. She puts:

Listen, Torvald –I've heard when a wife deserts her husband's house just as I'm doing then the law frees him from all responsibility in any case, I am freeing you from being responsible. Don't feel bound, any more than I will. There has to be absolute freedom for us both. Here, take your ring back. Give me

mine [...] you and I both would have to transform ourselves to the point that-

Oh, Torvald, I've stopped believing in miracles. (593)

From above we come to know Nora's actualization and creation of identity happens in the atmosphere of freedom. But freedom not only can preserve her happiness and identity. As marriage naturally adds one's responsibilities and gives the feeling that one is not alone in one's life world. Nora cannot understand that. A new woman wants to seek her identity while struggling within the family. But Nora wants to escape from home to prove herself as a new woman. But this act of leaving home only makes Nora an escapist instead of being a new woman.

Findings

Nora to some extent is a New woman, who struggles for a long to release herself from her traditional husband Helmer who use to make her without respecting her own identity. Similarly, Nora rejects the treatment of Krogstad that he would reveal all her secrets, rather she decides to be independent. Her husband tells "Abandon your home, your husband, and your children! And you've not even thinking what people will say" (592). Nora does not care about anything. She says, "I can't be concerned about that. I only know how essential that is" (592). She challenges all the patriarchal norms, values, and traditions that women should be obedient toward the male and has the courage that she would face the problem, which has chosen.

This sharp talking shows that she is emerging as a new woman from the previous and innocent one. Now she has completely abandoned her previous mechanical belief. Especially, she is seeking emancipation and self-neglecting all patriarchal norms and values. She puts "I have to stand completely alone if I'm ever going to discover myself and the world out there so I can't go on living with you." (592). From this, we come to know that

she evaluates herself as more important than anyone else. Nothing is more valuable to her than herself. So she wants to live alone to preserve her happiness and to respect herself. But only by living alone too, she cannot establish her self-respect. Though she does many things and activities to prove herself as a new woman she can not completely be as she always wants to escape from every activity.

Similarly, Hedda too respects herself. Hedda from the very beginning of the play wants to save her respect and is ready to do anything to save her self-respect. Hedda is a self-centered woman. Self-centrism refers to the state in which a person gives priority to oneself in every decision. When we talk about self-centrism, we are referring to that sort of behaviour that is oriented towards the self. A self-centered man does not care for others' pains and pleasures and only thinks of what pleases and pains him/her. The protagonist Hedda Gabler, gives priority to herself, rather than to her husband and family members. Their pain and pleasures are not a matter of her concern. She feels it is her responsibility to protect her happiness. She is pleased to avoid the news of sickness and death. She cares for what pleases her while making decisions, not about what other people say about her. The heroine is self-centered because the love of the self is her guiding principle.

Hedda's ideal thinking is opposite to the idea of her suicide in reality. However, she feels suicide is something courageous act, though she is not doing so to show courage, she is doing it because she cannot face the challenge of life. We can not take her suicide as a courageous act. She is caught when Brack reveals the truth about the pistol. She knows that she'd confront a public scandal if this case is taken to the court. She can be protected from facing a public scandal if this case is taken to the court. She can be protected from facing a public scandal if judge Brack keeps silent. But the price of

silence is so high that she cannot afford to pay it. She will have to do whatever he wishes her to do. The price of silence is becoming his mistress. She has two alternatives; either to face a public scandal or to become his mistress. She can neither confront a public scandal nor can she be his mistress. Hedda Gabler seems to realize her predicament when she says "So I am in your power, Judge you have your hold over me from now on" (633). In contrast to her desire to rule over human beings, she is herself ruled. She comes to such a situation in which she fails to assert her autonomy. Hedda knows that everything she touches "turns ridiculous and vile" (632). The situation made her so much afraid that she would not be able to hear the scandal about her. In this situation, she is completely unable to face the challenges of her in front and commits suicide. So her suicide is not a courageous or beautiful thing but to run away from the challenges in life. Hedda is doing a great crime by killing herself. She not only kills an individual subject but also the voice she is trying to raise being a new woman. In her ideology, it may be a courageous thing but in reality, her act is a complete acceptance of the patriarchy. In other words, she is supporting the patriarchal society by killing herself in the name of braveness. Hedda could search for alternatives rather taking suicide.

Suicide is not the solution for a person. Ibsen states in his note on *Hedda Gabler* as "the happiest mission of life is to place the people of today in the conditions of the future" (643). So taking her towards death is spoiling her possibility of attaining freedom. By taking suicide it seems that she is taking her step back from society and struggling in place of trying to attain freedom. Her suicide does not give any courageous meaning to women who are fighting for women's rights. She is losing a battle of struggle and she is being an escapist by doing suicide. In this regard, Carloline believes "She dies to escape a sordid situation that is large of her own

making; she will not face reality nor assume responsibility for the consequences of her acts. The pistols, having descended to a coward and a cheat, bring only death without honor" (649).

Hedda's act of suicide too symbolically shows action against ill patriarchal norms and values. Slamming the door and act of suicide is the explosion of her energies against patriarchy. These acts are a challenge to patriarchy. Both of them want to be an individual with an established identity bedecked with freedom. But when Nora moves towards an unknown zone in search of identity, it is very difficult to say whether she gets identity or not. In the same way, Hedda's act of suicide also moves her toward an unknown zone. Both Nora and Hedda's decision is one-sided, temporary, and further encourages patriarchal domination. If they are new women they should think that patriarchy has got some evils but they should be corrected living in the same structure. But instead of living and struggling within society, they choose the way of nowhere ness. In this way, they are escapist and separatist. That's why they are attempting to be new women but in practice, they remain in the space of liminality because of their unknown destination.

The patriarchal indoctrination compels the women to be marginalized and suffocated. Whenever the women understand that they are excessively commodified and are provided a subservient role in society, their realization and dissatisfaction bring internalized resistance into their minds and hearts. So, revolting against male ideology is an indispensable factor, to establish a just society excluding any sort of marginalization. The central characters in *Hedda Gabler* and *Doll's House* alienate themselves from the patriarchal norms and values. The rebellious female characters Hedda and Nora long to challenge the male ideology for their liberty and self-identity. They even escape from their rights

and duty to get one's rights. Rights and duty come together and complement each other. So, one cannot escape from duty if she/he wants the true changes in life. Similarly, we also have learned from the dramas that women must be positive and be able to unite with other colleagues to achieve true means of independence. It gives us a key lesson that an individual's effort is always fruitless. Hedda's and Nora's failure also has given us guidance that we should, first of all, find out the real subject of patriarchal domination if we want to bring systematic and positive change. Rejecting the existing life and problem is not the true sign of a change maker. We must be able to face the challenge, understand the situation, and try to turn it positively to reach the destination. We must be able to change the negative attitude of patriarchy by being female itself not trying to be male. Ibsen in both plays *Hedda Gabler* and *A Dolls House* tries to present a strong feminist as he does in his other plays. However, there is some politics of conformity to patriarchy embedded in

their movement of resistance.

Conclusion

The whole research work has projected the problems of the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century women in the light of feminism, a movement that flourished in the 1960s and 70s, to show female attempts to be enlightening their individuality. As feminist critics advocate that ideology developed by the male to disintegrate the female wishes is the central cause of female trauma and pangs. To delimit, the researcher has focused on Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*, in which central characters Hedda and Nora implant the seeds of resistance to liberate themselves from the patriarchal ideology to save their autonomous self. Hedda and Nora both figure out the transcendental escape from male chauvinism. Both of their ways of resistance do not ultimately carry out the total release but they invite the confirmation of patriarchal norms and values.

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