

PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN IBSEN'S PLAYS: A FEMINISTIC PERSPECTIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT- The present study is framed to study the feminist analysis of Ibsen's plays and entitled as, Portrayal of Women in Ibsen's plays; A Feministic Perspective. These plays depict the convictions and culture of society in the period of 19th century. The aim of this study is to highlight the suppression, oppression, subjugation, unjust treatment, inequality for women by the male dominated society. This research study tends to focus the rights of women which have been not given to them. It advocates the free rights of women with the hope that after giving these rights they will be able to live an independent life.

Keywords: gender roles, individuality, patriarchy, feminism, portrayal of women.

Type of study: Original Research Paper

Paper received: 16.07.2018

Paper accepted: 12.0.8.2018

Online published: 01.10.2018

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1. INTRODUCTION:

1.1. Background of study

All the women of the world have different images in their own societies. The present study tends to highlight the portrayal of women in Ibsen's two famous plays, *A Doll's House* (1879) and *Hedda Gabbler* (1891). These plays show that how women are facing oppression and violence in different ways in spite of playing many major roles. A woman is actually considered as a weak, irrational being, who is much valueless than men in the society. The present study shows that how Ibsen has portrayed the women of Norwegian society during 19th century. It is the worldwide problem of all the women of this Earth that they have to suffer with different kind of issues created by the male-oriented societies. To overcome these issues many movements of feminism, theories and researches have been done. The present study has also highlighted the issues of women and tried to mention all the points which can be helpful to solve these problems and may also assist in the further research. Theories of feminism are the highlighter for these problems. Feminism is an umbrella term which not only works for the rights of women but also discussed the social, economic and political issues of the society. Feminist criticism advocates all the rights for women which are equal to men. Its objective is to develop the sense of roles of women in all the aspects of literature as writer, character, reader etc. This research discusses the women roles and rights with the help of many theories. It narrates that how social convictions compelled the women of that century to take extreme step of leaving homes as the female characters of the plays Thea Elvsted and Nora left their homes and Hedda

committed suicide. Anne Marrie the nursemaid of *A Doll's House (1879)* was compelled to leave her own but illegitimate child because the society does not allow keeping an illegitimate child and she will not have a respectable place and position in the society. The important theories which are discussed in this research are the Feminist Theory and Feminist literary criticism.

A Doll's House is the master piece of Ibsen which describes the strict conviction of the male dominated society of 19th century. It highly forces women to be submissive to men and suppressed by men. In this play, women collapse to masculine authority and raise the feminine authority which is revealed in the 4th act of the play when the heroine of the play takes step to leave her husband's home in order to get freedom and to recognize her own identity and values alone in the society. The heroine of the play recognizes her own identity and value and rejects to take the help of a male authority by refusing to his offers of help.

This is Christmas evening. Nora comes home with a lot of shopping bags and boxes. Her maid Helene opens the door to receive Christmas tree. Nora advises Helene that her children must not see the Christmas tree before Christmas. Her husband greets her by calling him with per name as sky lark. He comes out of his study room and teases her at spending too much money and because of her spendthrift nature. But Nora says that he must be freer in spending money as he has left law practice and has a very good position as a bank manager and going to start a new job in January. After sometime Torvald went to his study room and visitors come to their home. First Dr. Rank comes and then Mrs. Linde visits. She came after ten years. Nora is very happy to see her again. Dr. Rank went to chat

with Torvald and Mrs. Linde and Nora get engaged in recalling past memories. Mrs. Linde told that her husband got dies three years before and that she wants a job for financial help to decrease her loneliness. Nora told that her husband is going to get a new job and he will have a handsome salary package and commission. She reveals that she herself had to do odd jobs of sewing other people dresses and embroidering. She also tells that she was too much clever in getting money for the recovery of her husband's health when he was ill and Dr. suggested him a warm climate and so they had a trip to Italy for this purpose. She got the loan and will return very soon bit by bit. Nil Krogastad also visits Helmers' home. He is the employee of the bank where Torvald works. Torvald comes from the study room and Nora tells him that Mrs. Linde needs a job. Torvald says that he will help her in getting a job in the bank. Actually Kdrogastad was the person who approved the loan of Nora for the trip to Italy. Nora forged her dead father's name to secure money. Torvald plans to fire Krogastad as he thinks him a fraud and disloyal person and Krogastad threatens Bora that he will reveal the illegal activity of Nora to her husband and to make him silent otherwise she would have to forbid her husband to take any step against her. It is the next day and Nora is upset because of the development of the previous day. Mrs. Linde comes and helps her in sewing the torn costume which she will wear in the party of neighbors' home. Dr. Rank comes and Nora discloses to Mrs. Lind that he is going to die with tuberculosis. Torvald comes from the bank Nora says to her husband that he should not fire Krogastad but Torvald get angry and says that Nora shouldn't favor him and that the job of Krogastad in th e bank will be given to Mrs.Linde. He also sends a letter

to Krogastad for his dismissal. Krogastad comes to Nora and says that his demand is changed now. He not only wants to secure his job but also wants a good position in the bank. Otherwise he will disclose everything to her husband and he put a letter in the mail box of Torvald . When Krogastad left Mrs. Linde comes and Nora tells everything about the loan to her. Mrs. Linde replies that she is the good familiar of Krogastad and she will talk to him to help her and not to tease her. Nora dances the tarantella dance in the masquerade ball so wildly that her husband gets inspired very much. Mrs. Linde meets with Krogastad who was her fiancée in the past. She says that she married to another person just to support her family financially and she still loves her. She also pleads on the behalf of Nora. Krogastad agreed to reconcile with Mrs. Linde, they also decide to marry each other. He also agrees to retrieve the letter from the mailbox of Torvald. But Mrs. Linde says that they must have reality for their good relation. After when Helmers come from the ball, Torvald read the letter, he has annoyed and he calls her wife a liar lawbreaker and a hypocrite. He says that she will not be allowed to bring up the children as she is not trust worthy person. Meanwhile maid brings the Krogastad's letter, Torvald reads the letter in which Krogastad apologizes and returns the incrementing letter. Torvald is very calm and fearless now. He says to Nora that he forgives her for everything which has done. But Nora's behavior is changed. She looks a completely changed woman. A women free from the convention of male dominated society. She is not ready for reconciliation. It has awakened the sense of value and identity. She rejects Torvald's all talks and offers and left his home with the slam of a door.

Hedda Gabler (1891) is the master piece of Henrik Ibsen which was published in 1890. In this play, it is described that how the oppression of misogynist society affected the lives of two main characters i.e. Thea Elvsted and Hedda Gabler. The themes of this play describe the rights of women in 19th century society. This play highlights the realities of marriages which seem very good conventionally but are not suitable for women in reality. Main theme of this play is the theme of marriage according to which the marriages in the play were baseless. The two women Hedda Gabler and Mrs.Elvested were compelled to accept the first marriage proposal. Mrs Elvested married to a 20 years' elder person in order to save life financially and Hedda Gabler married to George Tesman to find a meaningful life. But both the marriages proved to be failed as there was no love in both the marriages which is the base of marriage. Hedda Gabler was unable to move or do anything without her husband and Mrs.Elvested was depressed as her husband had no special interest in her life rather he used to be busy in his business works. That's why Mrs.Elvested left her husband's home. Other themes in this play are freedom and equality which are the main themes of feminism. Hedda Gabler, the daughter of the famous General Gabler had spent a luxury, independent life at her father's home. But in her husband's home she was not allowed to do anything according to her own will because she was a woman. She had not freedom of spending life according to her own choice but only according to her husband's way of living. This shows the inequality between men and women at that time which cause the inner conflict and mental pressure and cause a severe depression in her

mind and lead her to a tragic end. Hedda committed suicide in order to set her free from the boredom, tiresome of her life and strict convictions of the society.

Hedda, the daughter of General Gavler married to George Tesman out of her boredom of life. She married him to change his life but she found life with him very dull. During their honeymoon trip her husband was engaged in his research for the book of history which is going to be published soon. He prefers his career life to his married life he must give preference to his new bride but he does not do so. He is hurt struggling to receive position of professorship in the university. And old friend of Hedda, Thea Elvsted came to them and informs them that Ejlert Lovborg has returned to town and has written a book on history which is highly respected. He is the biggest competitor of George Tesman. He had once love affair with Hedda in the past but he is now under the control of Thea Elvsted as Thea has a big role in leaving his habit of alcoholism. Hedda is jealous of too much involvement of Thea in Lovborg's life. Ejlert Lovborg is also going to write the new book on history and it had all the traits which the book of Tesman is missing. Hedda is suffering with a complex and jealousy. Firstly, Thea has control over Lovborg and secondly he is going to be more powerful than her husband. These things give Hedda more tensions. Later on Hedda encourages him to have a drink but he refuses and Hedda becomes very much jealous because of the influence of Thea over Lovborg. Lovborg went to a party and joins Tesman and Brack. When he returns from the party he found that his manuscript has lost. Hedda found that manuscript and burnt. She also encourages Ejlery to commit suicide and shot in the temple but accidentally he was shot in the stomach and got died. This was

disgusting for Hedda. Later on George Tesman says that he will rewrite Lovborg. Hedda asks to Tesman that if he needs her help. He replies, “*nothing in the world.*” He chooses Thea Elvsted for this work. Judge Brack investigates from Hedda about the suicide of Lovborg. During investigation it is revealed that he will black mail Hedda sexually as Lovborg shot himself with Hedda’s pistol. And he also tells that she will have to face scandals if he discloses all. After sometime she goes to a small room and shot herself with her own pistol. Everyone was thinking that perhaps she was playing with pistols as she often plays but this time she really shot herself and committed suicide. They found her dead body in a small room.

1.2 Objective of the study

The objectives of this research are:

- 1.To describe the patriarchy system as practiced in the chosen plays *A Doll’s House(1879)* and *Hedda Gabler(1891)*
- 2.To describe the significances of Ibsen’s plays *A Doll’s House(1879)* and *Hedda Gabler(1891)* against patriarchy.
3. To identify the gender roles played by women in these plays.

2. LITERATER REVIEW

A play or drama has a central importance in the world of English literature. It is basically a story which consists of actual historical events. This genre also consists of relational and emotional development of realistic character. The themes of drama play an important role in the development or establishment of the plot. These themes are based on actual events of life and story of drama reveals the

reality of issues of life. The heroes and heroines of dramas often suffer with inner and outer conflicts. The writer of the plays focuses on the real life events of the characters in the story to open the secrets of inner and outer complexities of the society. He uses different elements in this case, irony, humor, tragedy etc

Ishomuddin in his article, *Patriarchy in Ibsen's A Doll's House*, say that Norwegian culture defines the women's position as she is only fit to household work and looks after children and husband. They have to be locked into their own houses and are not allowed to move outside freely as men such kinds of things were only suitable for men to do. Men and women both are opposite poles and they have fixed opposite places in the society. Men work outside and run the circle of their home and hence are considered to be the head and in this way they control the lives of women. So, men and women should not have equal rights.

Abdul Baseer and other (2013) in, *The Use of Symbolic Language in Ibsen's play A Doll's House; A Feministic Perspective (2013)* conducts that the oppression of men on women with the help of symbols and signs and tells that women are being exploited in the male dominated society. Women are unable to get their equal rights as they are not considered equal to men. A reference of Kristeva's Feministic concept of Symbolic Language to *A Doll's House* is used to better elaborate the patriarchal system. The word "My" has very symbolic meanings. It refers to the sense of possession, own property, something personal, a thing which is under your control.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is a qualitative research. Qualitative research involves the variety of data and information which include the routine problems of an individual's life i.e. biography, case study, observations, experiences, story of some one's personal life interviews etc. This research contains a rough idea about the problem in advance. Each conversation in this method gives different information and meaning may vary not exact like Quantitative research. It carries symbolic meaning of data. Its data is unstructured kind of data. It focuses on the question that how do things work, so it surrounds 'How' and 'Why.' The output of this research is in the detailed descriptive form. So, this research is a qualitative research which is used to understand the symbolic problems with the help of an ideology used by Ibsen in his both plays which completely describes the patriarchal system towards the social and economic problems faced by the females in Ibsen's plays. The method of this research is textual analysis.

4. FINDINGS

The present study tends to analyze the portrayal of woman in Ibsen's plays *A Doll's House* and *Hedda Gabler*. Different theories of feminism are used to explore the injustice, oppression, subjugation, sexualities and inequalities towards women of Norwegian culture and society in 19th century. The analysis of different female characters in both the plays show that how women were oppressed by the men of that time. Many rights were out of their reach due to the limitations of society.

5. CONCLUSIONS:

The feminist problems and issues are worldwide phenomena. It is necessary to review and highlight these problems again and again to kill these problems permanently. In order to overcome the disturbance among men and women, authentic polices, laws and rules are needed. The current laws enacted are not sufficient and are not helping to solve the issues among men and women. The present study has identified the continual of the crimes of women oppression is a lack of attention towards these circumstances. Many ways and solutions, can be taken out to bring the prosperity in the life of women by applying strong policies to avoid any inconvenience in the society.

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CONTRIBUTION OF AUTHORS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This research work was carried out in collaboration between three authors.

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