

## Chapter One

### 1.1 Introduction

The marginalization of women is a prominent theme in the works of Sophocles and Ibsen. Both are path breaking dramatists who have tried to reach out to the wider society through their plays. Though written within a gap of many centuries, the above two playwrights have been able to highlight the issue of the marginalization of women, as it was present in their contemporary times. Ibsen and Sophocles respectively create two lead female characters, Nora and Antigone, who confront society's expectations of women in fundamentally different ways. Nora goes against the grain of middle class society by first forging her father's signature and then deceiving her husband, Torvald, throughout their marriage. Although Nora and Antigone share some comparable personality traits, like being strong willed and motivated, they confront the men in their lives and their comparable societies in two distinctive ways, which, as a result, leads to two differing denouements.

Despite the fact that Antigone and Nora suffered in their life for being born as women, they were forced to stand up against patriarchal domination. These playwrights have tried to give a voice to their female characters in a society dominated by males. Their characters, Antigone and Nora are forced to break traditional barriers constructed by the male-dominated society. In doing so, both these characters are labeled 'rebels'. But that is not the case. They have been forced by circumstances to right what they felt was wrong and forced to stand up against patriarchal domination. The view that finally emerges from the dramas is that women, as members of society, have distinctively feminine traits which have a rightful and beneficial place and function in the social fabric when respected and not exploited, commercialized or belittled. Whichever way one may look at them the fact is that their individuality and

also their humanity remains ignored and marginalized. While preserving the individuality of women, Sophocles and Ibsen unfold the patriarchal tendency to disregard them and continue their domination.

Antigone feels that her brother needs a descent burial according to the rituals of the land. Though the King warns against the burial, Antigone goes ahead. By going against the diktat of the King, Antigone emerges from the shadows of her siblings to carve a distinct individuality of her own. Though she dies in the end, Antigone is able to say and do what her heart felt. As the central conflict unfolds, Sophocles makes it known that both Kreon's and Antigone's firm stances stem from the two great imperatives that underlie all political action, the needs of the individual versus the rights of the state. Kreon is constrained to act the way he does for reasons of political expediency. He is a newly appointed ruler who has to rescue his people from the chaotic state of civil war and anarchy brought on by the bitter rivalry of Polynices and Eteocles. Antigone's protest against Kreon's decree merely underscores the fundamental truth that conscience is very often above the law. Antigone is the lone individual, isolated from other people and is the representative Sophoclean hero or heroine.

On the other hand, Nora's world changed the moment her husband called her a fraud. Helmer was Nora's world. She was totally devoted to him and cared for him and his children. But later she realized that it was all a dream. Helmer cared for himself and his reputation more than Nora. She was just a doll or rather a trophy wife living in his house. It is good that in the end Nora realizes that she had lived under the shadow of her husband. By leaving him she is able to take control and seek direction of her life.

Ibsen elevated theatre from mere entertainment to a forum for exposing social problems. Prior to Ibsen, contemporary theatre consisted of historical romance or contrived behavior plays. But with *A Doll's House*, Ibsen turned drama into a respectable genre for the examination of social issues, in exposing the flaws in the Helmer marriage. He made the private public and provided an advocacy for women. Nora progressively confronts the realities of the real world and realizes her subordinate position that she had been subjected to. By progressively understanding this position, she still clings to the hope that her husband will come to her protection and defend her from the outside world once her crime is out in the open. A woman of the Victorian period, Nora Helmer was both a prisoner of her time as well as a pioneer. In her society women were viewed as inferior to men and were not provided full legal rights.

Both these women lived in patriarchal dominated societies. Antigone raises her voice against her brother, while Nora realizes the faults in her marriage and walks away from it. They are a source of inspiration to woman kind and teach them to search and exert their individuality. Their strong views raise questions like, what are the circumstances that force Antigone and Nora to break the patriarchal threshold? Why do they go in search for their individuality? It is so because the society around them is not able to come to terms with them being bold females. Both have been treated as social pariah because of their femininity. They are the pioneers for women's identity vis-a-vis the patriarchal resistance and socio-cultural domination. This thesis argues that Antigone and Nora are treated as social outcasts by the society due to the norms it formulates which both of them are trying to shatter. This study will try to find Antigone and Nora's circumstances and reasons to search their individuality.

## 1.2 Sophocles

Sophocles is considered an icon of Greek art. It is said that Sophocles competed in around thirty drama competitions and he won perhaps twenty four and never received lower than second place. The ancients fully appreciated him, but it is hard for the modern reader to divest himself completely of his associations and set a just value on productions essentially Greek as were the Sophoclean tragedies. It must also be remembered that, as the successor of Aeschylus, he endeavored rather to follow and improve upon his works than to create a new species for himself. His artistic career began in earnest in 468 BC when he took first prize in the Dionysia theatre competition over the reigning master of Athenian drama, Aeschylus.

In Sophocles' time, the Greek art of drama was undergoing rapid and profound change. It had begun with little more than a chorus, but earlier playwrights had added first one and then two actors and thereby shifted the action of the plays away from the chorus. Among Sophocles' earliest innovations was the addition of a third actor, further reducing the role of the chorus and creating greater opportunity for character development and conflict between characters. In fact, Aeschylus, who dominated Athenian play writing during Sophocles' early career, adopted this third character into his own playwriting towards the end of his life. It was not until the death of the old master Aeschylus in 456 BC that Sophocles became the preeminent playwright in Athens.

The commencement of his dramatic career was marked by a victory in competition with Aeschylus, under exceptional circumstances. The first prize was awarded to Sophocles, greatly to the disgust of the veteran dramatist, who soon afterward departed for Sicily. The rivalry was not between two works, but between two styles of tragic art, and the subject chosen by the young poet, together with the

desire to encourage his first attempt, was sufficient to outbalance the reputation of the great antagonist, whose verses lacked the air of freshness and youth that hung around the poetry of Sophocles. T. Burns focuses on two related questions about *Antigone*, and says Sophocles puts into the mouth of Antigone an argument justifying her disobedience to an edict of her uncle Creon, who forbade her to bury her brother Polyneices as:

Sophocles' *Antigone* is indeed an early example of the application of the concept of natural law in political argument and debate. This interpretation of the political message of *Antigone* is inconsistent with what we know about Sophocles' attitude towards the fundamental questions of Athenian politics in the classical era of Periclean democracy during the fifth century BC. (549)

Thereafter, Sophocles emerged victorious in dramatic competitions at eighteen Dionysia and six Lenaia festivals. In addition to innovations in the structure of drama, Sophocles' work is known for deeper development of characters than earlier playwrights, whose characters are more two-dimensional and are therefore harder for an audience to relate to. His reputation was such that foreign rulers invited him to attend their courts, Sophocles never accepted any of these invitations. Aristotle used Sophocles's *Oedipus the King* as an example of perfect tragedy, which suggests the high esteem in which his work was held by later Greeks. For more than sixty years Sophocles continued to compose and exhibit tragedies and satiric dramas. Of the one hundred and eighty plays ascribed to him, probably seventeen were spurious. So far from being dulled with age and toil, his powers seem only to have assumed a mellower tone, a more touching pathos, a sweeter and gentler mode of thought and expression.

To the improvements which Aeschylus made in tragic exhibition he added others. He introduced a third actor, further curtailed the choral parts and gave the dialogue its full development. He caused the scenery to be carefully painted and properly arranged, thus greatly increasing the spectacular effect. Sophocles' odes were distinguished by their close connection with the business of the play, the correctness of their sentiments, and the beauty of their lines. His language, though sometimes harsh and involved, was for the most part grand and majestic, avoiding the massive phraseology of Aeschylus and the commonplace diction of Euripides. In the management of his subjects he was unrivaled, overwhelming the spectators with terror or compassion.

The most famous of Sophocles's tragedies are those concerning Oedipus and Antigone. These are often known as the *Theban plays* or *The Oedipus Cycle*, although each play was actually a part of different trilogy. Sophocles influenced the development of the drama, most importantly by adding a third actor and thereby reducing the importance of the chorus in the presentation of the plot. He also developed his characters to a greater extent than earlier playwrights such as Aeschylus. The *Theban plays* or *The Oedipus Cycle* consists of three plays: *Antigone*, *Oedipus the King*, and *Oedipus at Colonus*. Although they are now sometimes published under a single cover, Sophocles wrote the three plays for separate festivals. Sophocles' masterpiece, *Antigone* is possibly the first of the surviving plays to have been written. It is the story of a passionate young woman who refuses to submit to earthly authority when it forbids a proper burial for her brother Polyneices. Illustrating the rival claims of the state and the individual conscience, *Antigone* is an excellent example for the modern social dramatist. On the contrary, Steven McElroy gives credit to Greek writers on writing about the theme of war in *Antigone*:

The ancient Greeks were arguably the first to use theater to create dialogue about war and other weighty matters. So Sophocles' *Antigone*, written in 441 B.C., seems particularly timely yet again as it confronts the futility of war and the price a ruler pays for excessive pride or, as the Greeks termed it, hubris. (4)

The tale of Oedipus takes up the themes of being trapped by fate and family. Oedipus, in Ancient Greek mythology killed his father and married his mother without knowledge that they were his parents. His family is fated to be doomed for three generations. Of Sophocles' more than 120 plays, only seven have survived in their entirety. Of these, *Oedipus the King* is generally considered his greatest work. This tragedy of fate explores the depths of modern psychoanalysis as Oedipus unwittingly kills his father and marries his mother in an attempt to avoid the very prophecy he ultimately fulfills. A masterful work of plot and suspense, *Oedipus the King* is often heralded as a perfectly structured play. While we cannot divide the plays of Sophocles into distinct groups indicating certain periods in his dramatic art, he himself recognized three epochs in his own style. Only seven of the dramas of Sophocles have come down to us, but these were, with one exception, composed in the full maturity of his tragic power, and each resplendent with its own peculiar excellencies.

In *Antigone*, heroism is exhibited in a purely feminine character and in *Ajax*, the manly sense of honor in all its strength. In the *Trachiniæ*, or *Women of Trachis*, are described the sufferings of Hercules and the levity of Deïaneira, atoned for by her death. The *Electra* is distinguished by energy and pathos, and in the *Oedipus at Colonus* are a mildness and gracefulness suggestive of the character of the author. Sophocles' drama, *Antigone*, focuses on Oedipus' daughter Antigone. Antigone is

faced with the choice of allowing her brother Polyneices' body to get eaten by savage dogs or bury him and face death. The king of the land, Creon, has forbidden the burial of Polyneices for he was a traitor to the city. Antigone decides to bury his body and face the consequences of her actions. Creon sentences her to death. Eventually, Creon is convinced to free Antigone from her punishment, but his decision comes too late and Antigone commits suicide. Her suicide triggers the suicide of two others close to King Creon, his son, Haemon, who loved Antigone, and his wife who commits suicide after losing her only son. Antigone focuses on the conflicting duties of civic versus spiritual loyalties.

### 1.3 Henrik Johan Ibsen

Henrik Johan Ibsen is a major Norwegian playwright of realistic drama. He is often referred to as the "father of modern drama." The characters in his plays often mirror his parents, and his themes often deal with issues of financial difficulty as well as moral conflicts stemming from dark private secrets hidden from society. Ibsen is generally acknowledged as the founder of modern prose drama. He moved away from the Romantic style, and brought the problems and ideas of the day onto the stage of his time. Ibsen largely founded the modern stage by introducing a critical eye and free inquiry into the conditions of life and issues of morality. Victorian plays were expected to be moral dramas with noble protagonists pitted against darker forces. Every drama was expected to result in a morally appropriate conclusion, meaning that goodness was to bring happiness, and immorality pain. Ibsen challenged this notion and the beliefs of his times and shatters the illusions of his audiences.

His plays are considered scandalous to many of his era, when Victorian values of family life and propriety largely held sway in Europe and any challenge to them was considered immoral and outrageous. Ibsen's work examined the realities that lay



behind many facades, possessing a revelatory nature that was disquieting to many contemporaries. Ibsen spent the next several years employed at the Norwegian Theater in Bergen, where he was involved in the production of more than 145 plays as a writer, director, and producer. During this period he did not publish any new plays of his own. Despite Ibsen's failure to achieve success as a playwright, he gained a great deal of practical experience at the Norwegian Theater, experience that was to prove valuable when he continued writing. Karen Ford writes about social constraints and painful growth in *A Doll's House* as:

Henrik Ibsen's stifling realist play about misfortune and illusion demonstrates the problems associated with making mature choices when one is considered a “doll child.” *A Doll's House* explores the issues of social convention, a woman's place in a patriarchal world, the price of independence and the nature of relationships. As a piece of realist theatre, Ibsen's work places emphasis on the stagecraft elements of a boxed stage (often with a ceiling), the character's relationship with the space around them, while also having a conscious focus on everyday language and dialogue. (157)

His first play was *Catilina* (1850). It was published under the pseudonym Brynjolf Bjarme, when he was only 22, but it was not performed. His first play to be staged, *The Burial Mound* (1850), received little attention. Still, Ibsen was determined to be a playwright, although he was not to write again for some years. His play, *Brand* (1865), was to bring him the critical acclaim he sought, along with a measure of financial success, as was his next play, *Peer Gynt* (1867). Although Ibsen read excerpts of the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard, it was not until after *Brand* that Ibsen came to take Kierkegaard seriously. Ibsen's next play *Peer Gynt* was

consciously informed by Kierkegaard. With success, Ibsen became more confident and began to introduce more and more of his own beliefs and judgments into the drama, exploring what he termed the “drama of ideas.” His next series of plays are often considered his Golden Age, when he reached the height of his power and influence, becoming the center of dramatic controversy across Europe.

Ibsen published *A Doll's House* in 1879. The play is a scathing criticism of the blind acceptance of traditional roles of men and women in Victorian marriage. Ibsen followed *A Doll's House* with *Ghosts* (1881), another scathing commentary on Victorian morality, in which a widow reveals to her pastor that she had hidden the evils of her marriage for its duration. Even the mention of venereal disease was scandalous, but to show that even a person who followed society's ideals of morality had no protection against it, that was beyond scandalous. Hers was not the noble life which Victorians believed would result from fulfilling one's duty rather than following one's desires. Those idealized beliefs were only the *Ghosts* of the past, haunting the present. Ibsen himself considered *The Emperor and the Galilean* (1873) to be his most important play. However, this heavy drama about Christianity and paganism is generally not included among his most important achievements. *Pillars of Society* (1877) dealt with a wealthy and hypocritical businessman, whose perilous course almost results in the death of his son.

*A Doll's House* (1879) was a social drama, which caused a sensation and toured Europe and America. In the play a woman refuses to obey her husband and walks out from her apparently perfect marriage, her life in the “doll's house”. Ibsen goes even further in *An Enemy of the People* where controversy becomes the primary focus, and the antagonist is the entire community. One primary message of the play is that the individual, who stands alone, is more often “right” than the mass of people,

who are portrayed as ignorant and sheep like. The Victorian belief was that the community was a noble institution that could be trusted, a notion Ibsen challenged. As audiences by now expected of him, his next play again attacks entrenched beliefs and assumptions. Always the iconoclast, Ibsen is equally willing to tear down the ideologies of any part of the political spectrum, including his own. David Drake comments upon the preponderance of symbols in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll House* and writes that:

The overwhelming impression left by the network of verbal/visual images from the concealed Christmas tree at the beginning of the play to the masquerade party near its close is that of a symbolic web of deceit in which the Helmers have long been ensnared. Just as Nora's game is clearly one thick-spun thread in such a pernicious web, her crawling out from "under bordet" unmistakably prefigures her ultimate extrication from deception, as she leaves Torvald still hopelessly trapped within his doll's house. (67)

Ibsen has completely rewritten the rules of drama with a realism which is to be adopted by Chekhov and others, and which we see in the theater to this day. From Ibsen onward, challenging assumptions and directly speaking about issues has been considered one of the factors that make a play art rather than entertainment. He had played a major role in the changes that had happened across society. The Victorian Age was on its last legs, to be replaced by the rise of Modernism not only in the theater, but across public life. *A Doll's House* was the first of Ibsen's plays to create a sensation and is now perhaps his most famous play. Today it is read as part of academic discourse in many secondary schools and universities. The play was highly controversial when it was first published. It is sharply critical of the 19th century

norms on marriage. It follows the formula of well-made play up until the final act, when it breaks convention by ending with a discussion, not an unraveling. It is often called the first true feminist play, although Ibsen denies this. The play ends with the sound of Nora slamming the door as she leaves, while Torvald hopefully ponders the possibility of “the greatest miracle of all.”

*A Doll's House* criticizes the traditional roles of men and women in 19th century marriage. To the 19<sup>th</sup> century Europeans, this was scandalous. Nothing was considered more holy than the covenant of marriage, and to portray it in such a way was completely unacceptable. It created such a furor, that the play was originally banned in Britain by the Lord Chamberlain. Much of the criticism is focused on Nora's self-discovery, but the other characters also have depth and value.

This study will try to prove that Antigone and Nora are in the quest of their individuality. They have been treated as social pariah because of their femininity. The society around them is not able to come to terms with them being females and therefore both of them are in search of their individuality. They are treated as social outcasts who try to shatter the norms of the contemporary society.

## Chapter Two

### 2.1 Feminism and Female Awakening

Feminism is political in nature. It concerns itself with the marginalization of all women. Feminists disagree with the inferior role inflicted upon them by the patriarchal culture. They talk about how to unmask the culture and challenge it through literary texts. Feminist criticism includes a great variety of practices. English feminist criticism is oriented to textual interpretation. It focuses on women's writing. French feminist criticism is psychoanalytic. It stresses on repression. American feminist criticism is essentially textual and its focus is on expression. Nevertheless, nearly all feminist start from one fundamental perception, recognition of the patriarchal structure of society, that the world is organized by men for the advantage of men. Feminists examine the experience of diversities life of women from all races and classes and cultures.

The feminist movement sought not only to change society's prevailing stereotypes of women as relatively weak and passive, docile and dependent individual but also to eliminate the subordination, oppression, inequalities and injustices women suffer because of their sex. Feminism is a part of women's movement. It is an aggressive conscious feeling of women who begin to reject their own passivity. The main aim of feminist movement is to develop women's personalities and to make them aware about the precarious women's existence in a patriarchal society.

Arvonne Fraser defines feminism, "The object of feminism was to elevate the equal rights and human rights status of women of race. Language or religion in order to achieve equality with men in all fields of human enterprise and to eliminate all discrimination against women" (44). Feminism therefore, studies women as people who are either oppressed or suppressed or rejected the freedom of personal

expression. All women writers who struggle against patriarchy to contain their womanhood are generally considered feminists. Feminism and feminist criticism bloomed up as a self awakened movement in the 1960s. After two centuries struggle for women's writing used to be taken in a pejorative manner. So, women reacted against such automatic disparagement of their work by objecting first to traditional definitions of women handed down by great philosopher scientists, leaders and prophets. Simone de Beauvoir stated in her *Reawakening* that female sex had been subordinated throughout time and contends what Aristotle and St Thomas made their definition about women such as, "The female is female by virtue of a certain with a natural defectiveness", said Aristotle (144).

The words "feminists" and "feminism" are political. These two terms indicate to support the women's movement which emerged in the late 1960s. Defining feminist criticism Toril Moi writes, "It is a specific kind of political discourse; a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for gender in literature" (204). In the same spirit Catherine Betsey says that for the reader there is no innocent or neutral approach to literature: all interpretation is political. In this context she further says that the feminist reader might ask how the texts represent women, what is said about gender relations and how it defines sexual differences. The feminists did so to make women realize that they are not the secondary or complementary part of male but they are equal to men. The goal of the feminist movement is to win the equal rights. So, feminists are ultimately in pursuit of a more radical change for enlightening women of a patriarchal society that exploited women from a long history in the name of sex differences. Feminist literary criticism Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar have quoted Adriane Rich in *Infection in the Sentence* as:

Revising the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction, an act of survival only by actively seeking a female precursor who. Far from representing a threatening force to be denied or killed, proves by example that a revolt against patriarchal literary authority is possible. (1244)

Feminism studies women as people who are either oppressed or suppressed or deprived of the freedom of personal expression. All women writers who struggle against patriarchy in favor of womanhood are generally considered feminists. Today feminists have stepped forward against male dominance in order to enhance women's rights and to secure women's emancipation. Feminist writers take pride in their feminism is also a political theory and practice to break the social bondage of patriarchy. Focusing on this aspect Toril Moi states, "The word feminist or feminism are political labels indicating support for the aims of the new women's movement" (35).

Mary Wollstonecraft was the first to publish the women's problems in a male oriented society. In the case of education, Wollstonecraft viewed in *A Vindication of the Right of Women* that the educational system is man made. It is suited and fitted to men for their benefit that internalize women to become emotional and sentimental women rather than to play the role of a rational and enlightened person. She was in the favor to promote girl's education. Wollstonecraft was aware about the women's limitations in public and private life. She was against women's coquetry and submissiveness to men and their general irresponsibility towards themselves and their society.

Elaine Showalter was another feminist who divided women's literary development into three distinct phases. The 'feminine' phase (1840-1880), where they

imitated the masculine role, the 'feminist' (1880-1920) where they advocated the rights of women and protested male norms and values and the 'female' (1920-present) was the phase of self discovery where women's experiences were their main purpose. Showalter entitled *Women's Writing and Women's Culture* in which she said that women have their own types of culture, women have their own types of body, the speaking style, the language, the capacity of thinking and behaving, all are their own sorts and male have their own . So they are naturally different.

Feminist critics like Mary Wollstonecraft, Kate Millet, Elaine Showalter, Simone de Beauvoir, Virginia Woolf and Susan Gilbert were the renowned critics to enlighten the women about the precarious existence of women in a male governed society. These feminists talked about religion, festival, education, culture, myth, literature, and so on to manifest it that the above mentioned things were the tools for male to dominate and exploit women. By imposing norms, values and culture upon women they dominated the women. But with the development of time the movement named feminism came into existence to deny the male culture, male norms and values that undervalued women as complements parts of men the feminism as a movement aimed awakening women in all sides.

By the contribution of female writers, women in a male governed society begin to understand the ways of exploitation upon them by their fathers, brothers, and husbands. Being conscious women, they began to realize the inferior status of women not because of their sex difference but because of male culture and values. Being awakened women, they attempted to deconstruct all male values, norms and culture in order to reshape the norm and values that will make no difference between male and female. By reconstructing and reshaping the culture they brought the marginalized women into centre. Feminists were always against anti-feminist's views which they



claim were of narrow and conservative disposition. In Austen's time the system of education was different from man to women. The male governed society of that time desired to keep women emotional and sentimental. So the society encouraged women to read sentimental and emotional type of novels.

Austen realized the effect of sentimental novel on women's lives. Due to impact of sentimental novel, Austen in *Northanger Abbey* depicted the protagonist Catherine Morland's precarious situation. This protagonist could not understand the meaning of the text in depth because the society never allowed her to in depth. The society wanted to keep her in emotional and sentimental state rather than to make them rational and intellectual. By providing emotional and sentimental education, the male oriented society made women emotional and sentimental and then claimed that women can not be rational and intellectual. Criticizing the patriarchal education system, Mary Wollstonecraft says:

To do everything in an orderly manner is a most important precept which women, who, generally speaking, receive only a disorderly kind of education, seldom attend to with the degree of exactness that men, who from their infancy are broken into method observe- this negligent kind of guesswork- for what other epithet can be used to point out the random exertions of a sort of instinctive common sense never brought to the test of reason? (94)

Mary Wollstonecraft, through her work *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* emphasized the awareness on the part of women which could only be possible when they are given proper rational education and brought into the mainstream of multi sectoral development of society. She believed in the equality of gender in terms of capacity, skill and intelligence. Wollstonecraft has bitter experience of the educational

system of patriarchal society that deliberately made women inferior by emotional and sentiment type of texts. She criticizes this low type of education for women and says, “I advise my sex not in opinion with a sagacious man, who having a daughter and niece under his care, pursued a very different plan with each” (399). The feminist movement made aware to the female about the educational system of patriarchal society that made the female bankrupt in thinking.

A fundamental goal of feminist theory was to analyze gender relations. The study of gender relations included to what were often considered the feminist issues. The purpose of feminist theory was to avoid thinking about gender. Feminists are proud of their femaleness and have made a vital tool to femininity to perceive their existence. Viewing the discrimination upon women by patriarchal culture and society Toril Moi writes, “Feminist criticism, then, is a specific kind of political discourse, a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism not simply concern for gender in literature” (204).

In patriarchal society men defined women as other and men as universal because of sex difference. The radical feminist insisted that the root of women’s oppression were buried deep in patriarchy was sex gender system. Kate Millet in her *Sexual Politics* (1970) argued that sex is political primarily because the male- female relationship is determined by it. But the feminism as a political movement awakened women about their miserable existence in the male governed society because of sex difference. By making conscious to the female about their precarious situation this movement helped women gain not only in legal, political and economic liberties and equalities but also in sexual ones.

The feminist movement awakened to the women that women will always remain subordinate to men unless inferiority of sexual concept is reconceived and

reconstructed. The concept of male hegemony is not new in a patriarchal society. Women in the society consciously or unconsciously consent to their subordination before male. They are encouraged “Freely” to choose their inferior status and accept male exploitation as natural. History is only male centered and women are completely absent. The concept of history for women is inappropriate. Males have thought themselves as the ruler of the world. From the historical time they have made women inferior. The patriarchal society thought that man’s existence is possible without women. Because man is the subject absolute whereas woman is an incidental and inessential being Rosemarie Tong quotes Millet’s *Sexual Politics* in *Feminist Thought* about the male’s superiority in patriarchal society as:

Patriarchal ideology, according to Millet, exaggerates biological differences between men and women, making certain that men always have the dominant, or “ masculine, “ roles and that women always have the subordinate, or “feminine, “ ones. This ideology is particularly powerful because through conditioning, men usually secure the apparent consent of the very women they oppress. They do this through institutions such as the academy, the church, and the family, each of which justifies and reinforces women’s subordination to men with the result that most women internalize the sense of inferiority to men. (96)

Women followed their duties set by patriarchal society without any question and they never tried to challenge it. The modern feminist critic Virginia Woolf questions, “Whether part of the housework was her task” (34). The male structured society compelled women to think that was their destiny and women did not think necessary to revolt against this thinking.

Thus, it became easy for men to convince women that their role in life was to be wives and mothers and to serve the family. Generally women were taught 'drawing room' piano playing and dancing in the place of real education like boys got.

Rosemarie quotes Betty Friedan in *Feminist Thought* that, "Patriarchal society thinks women are ideally suited only for certain occupations – teaching, nursing, and clerking-are largely incapable of other tasks" (28). The feminist movement enlightened the women about their confinement within the four walls of a house Rosemarie asserts, "Feminists tend to agree, a person's biological sex should in no way determine his or her psychological or social gender" (31).

This movement made conscious to the female about the domestic oppression by male upon women and then, it encouraged the women to challenge male-oriented social structure that prevented women in public life. Feminist movement gave inspiration to question the assigned role of female in the society. Feminists aimed at deconstructing male made position of women in a house to make them acknowledge the reality of female power. For a long period women's publications had been among the materials removed from the public and school libraries. As a result they could not write. Virginia Woolf is quite unsatisfied of this situation. She raises question about this precarious situation and vents her ire as:

The most superficial enquiry into women's writing raises a host of questions. Why, we ask at once, was there no continuous writing done by women before the eighteenth century? Why did they then write almost as habitually as men, and in the course of that writing produce, one after another, some of the classics of English fiction? And why did their art then, and why to some extent does their art still, take the form of fiction? (33)

Tong sensed the hierarchy between male and female because of biological differences. She sees domination and restriction upon women by male culture and male oriented society. She finds women as an object for pleasing male. In such a miserable existence, she feels necessity to deconstruct male made culture and male oriented society in order to be free from any type of bondage. She writes:

Feminists have explicitly articulated the ways in which men have constructed female sexuality to serve not women's but men's needs, wants and interests – what women must do [...] is to reconceive female sexuality, this time in the image and likeness of women. Although this reconception is difficult, it is potentiality empowering. Liberated from the Procrustean bed of male - defined and male controlled female sexuality women are discovering the richness and diversity of the female body sensing within it the power of what some formal women spirit rising. (72)

Thus feminism awakened women with the new idea to struggle against the male dominated society to free women from the male trap. By enlightening the female, feminist advocated for emancipation and equality. But feminism as a political movement awakened them to dismantle all the disciplines of patriarchal society to address the absence of women in various academic areas by uncovering women's achievement. Female awareness tried to dismantle the conventional patterns to establish nonsexist ones. The issues like identity self individuality and freedom became the common features for feminists to awaken women.

Kate Chopin is a female novelist from America who has delved into the depth of women's psycho-social realities and has scrupulously examined women's body, soul and mind. Her novel, *The Awakening* demonstrates a women's self realization

that shocked the patriarchal world and awakened desire and vigorous longing for freedom. Female awakening is an important and exciting experience that introduced new ways of seeing both the world and one self along with placing women at the center stage is the learning process, challenging both the content and form of education of male made.

Similarly it inspired women to publisher their books and articles to challenge the old assumption that prevented women to be a writer and created new territory where women will have the equal space like men. In a patriarchy, women were constrained by society and culture. But female awareness encouraged women to challenge what it means to be female in a male governed society. Female awakening discloses the sexual discrimination occurring perpetually and also shows how women have been empowered to speak of their rights in the recent era and have cultivated awareness among them. Rosemarie's quotes, "As Dally sees a patriarchy, oppressive gender roles will be deconstructed as a result of a revolution that predicts, will begging with dissident women" (102).

That awareness has not remained limited to voicing out of the women's rights and sexual equality in the public and to create a political propaganda Kate Chopin explores how a woman tries to redefine the traditionally accepted patriarchal norms advocating freedom.

## 2.2 Female Awakening and Literature

In the past "women's literature" has been a pejorative term. Women were prevented to be a writer or their works were ridiculed and mocked by the male – oriented society. Just as culture, society, myth, religion and politics were out of access for women in the same way literature could not remain exception. Literature also became a tool to oppress and suppress women. So before women's awareness

literature was male centered. It subordinated women and never represented women as dominate or as superior rather it treated women as a part of men. Feminism awakened women about the precarious women existence in male constructed literature. So they began to question such phallogentric literature in order to secure women's participation equally like male in literature. Bell Hooks argues for the feminist movement.

According to Hooks, "Feminist centralized the experiences of all women especially the women whose social condition have been least written about studied or changed by political movements" (27). In the past literature was an approach for male to marginalize the women as the other. That literature claimed that Adam was created by god and women was created out of Adam's rib. Feminism aroused consciousness to the women about their subordinated condition in literature. Feminists like Wollstonecraft, Austen, George Eliot, Bronte, Janeway, Woolf, Doris Lessing, Beauvoir, Plath, Bronte, Chopin, Porter and so on protested the male literature with a goal to form their own literature.

In the time of Jane Austen, George Eliot and Mary Wollstonecraft to advocate for women literature was a great problem because sincerity, sacrifice and devotion were considered natural virtues of women. At that time men used to treat the feminist as an enemy because they clearly spoke against the patriarchy. Feminists like Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf, and George Eliot presented women protagonist in literature ignoring traditional women's roles and attempting to establish female dignity like Miss Catherine Morland in *Northanger Abbey*. The purpose of feminists in literature is to study and restudy well known women authors. Likewise women literature aims to discover the neglected or forgotten women writers and thus to forge an alternative literary tradition as Elaine Showalter in *A Literature of their Own* (1977), provides an

overview of women's literature. Similarly Rosemarie Tong declared what Beauvoir said in *The Second Sex*:

In a chapter summarizing the writing of five male authors about women, Beauvoir demonstrated the ways in which each of these authors depending on his own specific self image, and constructed for himself ideal women. Montherland, the solar spirit, seeks pure animality in her, Lawrence, the phallicist, asks her to sum up the feminine sex in general. Claudel defines her as a soul – sister, Breton cherishes Melusine, rooted in nature, pinning his note on the women – child; Stendhal wants his mistress intelligent, cultivated, free in spirit and behavior, an equal. (205)

What is common to these distinctively different ideals of women is that in each case the ideal women is urged to forget, deny, or in some way negate herself. History is largely responsible for the plight of women in literature when awareness arose in women they began to hate male writers and male literature which excluded women while, at the same time they searched to achieve maleness. The self aware women in their writings described their dependence on man; second, their anger to their situation and at the same time their rebellion feeling. Virginia Woolf speaks for women that a woman cannot fulfill her literary ambition in the shortage of social and economic support.

She discloses the reality in her essay, *A Room of Ones Own* and writes, “A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction” (4). Money and freedom is therefore, the essential thing for woman for a successful writing. Feminism is the organized movement which promotes equality for men and women in political, economic and social spheres. Being a broad movement, feminism embraces



numerous phases of women's emancipation; that aims to understand women's oppressions in terms of race, class, gender and sexual preferences and its efforts lies in changing it. Feminists try to explore women's personal as well as common experiences of sufferings, exploitation and oppression and their struggle for independences and liberation, feminism tries to discover all forms of violence and oppression against women of all different socio-political contexts. Women were and are violated due to their body and this matter is also studied, examined and experiences by feminists.

Though the condition of women still remains same, feminist political movement emerged in 1960 with an aim to enhance the status women both in theory and practice; somehow succeeded to elevate women's status. Women, after this movement try to break the prevalent tradition that women are inferior in comparison to male ideology.

## Chapter Three

### 3.1 Antigone's Search for Individuality

Antigone is irreducible to either kinship or civil discipline because she is an autonomous agent, the only one among Sophocles's characters who succeeds in carrying out a plan according to her own desire that favors individuality and choice. Antigone is a resolute and heroic female protagonist, who pits her individual free will against the intractable forces of fate and against the irrational and unjust laws of tyrannical men, like Creon. Basically, the play centers on the conflict between the steadfast protagonist and an equally resolute antagonist. Antigone's determination is to bury her brother as a private affair of the heart. This deeply individual concern is set against Creon's motivations, which are political.

Antigone first shows her individualist qualities when she chooses to challenge the most powerful male in Thebes, Creon the King. The challenge occurs as both a defiance of Creon's laws in Antigone's burying Polynices, and on Creon himself. In the drama, Antigone has her first conversation in the play with Creon. She is very strong in her tone and her opinion. "I've been accused of folly by a fool" (77). This line in particular suggests Antigone's assertive opinion by saying that Creon is a fool. Such opinion shows that Antigone does not show Creon respect for either being a man in a patriarchal society or the King. By speaking with the strength of a man, she is pushing for equality of the sexes and searching her individuality.

ANTIGONE: Your edict, King, was strong,

But all your strength is weakness itself against

The immortal unrecorded laws of God.

The are not merely Now: They were, and shall be,

Operative for ever, beyond man utterly. (79)

Throughout the play *Antigone*, Antigone exemplifies distinguishing attributes of her individuality which deserves honor and much acclamation. Honor must be earned and not given out freely without any cause. As the daughter and sister of Oedipus, Antigone certainly has issues with her lineage. Antigone's bravery and self-righteousness indeed captured the imaginations of readers. She takes pride in her beliefs while everyone downsizes her actions. Antigone displays a character of loyalty, integrity, and a significance of commitment to her family. Antigone knows that Creon's law was in contrast to the gods' law. Antigone gains admiration because of her devotion to her dead brother, her respect for the gods and their law, her firm resolutions, and her fearlessness. In deciding to perform the rites of the burial of her dead brother, Polynices, she is influenced by two considerations. Her religious duty demands that she perform the burial rites even though her action will mean a violation of the order issued by King Creon. Secondly, the dead man is her brother, and as she repeatedly tells Ismene and Creon, she cannot desert him. She claims that no leader has the right to keep her from her own family and from her duty.

Antigone openly challenges and defies the rule of men, including her uncle and King of Thebes, Creon. The Thebian society controlled by men has kept a lid on women's individuality so much so that even a member of the royal family, Ismene, speaks of the futility in attempting to clash with the rule of man. Furthermore, Creon asks Antigone if she is "ashamed to differ from such men [the Chorus]?" (81). This suggests that in Thebian society when an individual, such as Antigone, disregards the society's generally believed ideology; they are impelled by others to feel unwanted. But not only the King, Ismene, Antigone's sister as well refers to herself and her sister as being inferior to men thereby underestimating their individuality. But on the other hand, Antigone's spirit is filled with bravery, passion and fury. It allows her to

symbolize the very essence of a woman. She is strong enough to do what her conscious tells her despite the laws of the land.

The role of the individual in *Antigone* is very important. Antigone herself is a strong individual character, who is not willing to allow her brother to be dishonored, no matter what the cost is to her own body. Women generally do not have the courage to stand up to their husbands. Yet Antigone is brave enough to disobey Creon's law and ready to face the consequences. Antigone exclaims that an improper burial for Polyneices would be an insult to the Gods. She vows that Polyneices' body will be buried, and Creon declares that anyone who interferes with his body shall be punished.

ANTIGONE: They say that Kreon has sworn

No one shall bury him, no one mourn for him,  
 But his body must lie in the fields, a sweet treasure  
 For carrion birds to find as they search for food.  
 That is what they say, and our good Kreon is coming  
 here  
 To announce it publicly; and the penalty –  
 Stoning to death in the public square! (72)

Sophocles' two main characters are placed in peculiar circumstances that force them to act the way they do. There are fatal consequences for themselves and others. Their very personalities seem to initiate the play's central action, and a conflict of interests soon erupts between these two people of almost equal heroic stature. One is committed to serving the public, and the other is led by the demands of her conscience. First, Antigone opposes Creon's law and buries her slain brother. She does this because she is compassionate and loves her brother very much. Her

impetuous personality and incestuous love drives her to disregard the will of the struggling King Creon and bury her brother.

ANTIGONE: But I will bury him; and if I must die,

I say that this crime is holy: I shall lie down

With him in death, and I shall be as dear

To him as he to me.

I is the dead,

Not the living, who make the longest demands:

We die for ever...(73)

Antigone's spirit is filled with bravery, passion and fury. It allows her to symbolize the very essence of women. She is strong enough to do what her conscience tells her despite the laws of the land. Many examples in the play prove that Antigone's character is capable of making her own decisions in the name of justice. Antigone's quest to give her brother a proper burial against her brother's decree shows her resoluteness to stand up against the state and patriarchal domination. The ideal of female character in *Antigone* is boldly and severely outlined. Her indignation at Ismene's refusal to take a part in her daring resolution and the manner in which she afterwards rejects Ismene are a proof of unshaken courage.

ANTIGONE: Go away, Ismene:

I shall be hating you soon, and the dead will too,

For your words are hateful. Leave me my foolish plan:

I am not afraid of the danger; if it means death,

It will not be the worst of deaths – death without honor.

(73)

Sophocles uses the characters Ismene and Antigone to show the different characteristics and roles those women are typical of interpreting. Traditionally women are characterized as weak and subordinate, and Ismene is portrayed in this way. Ismene is a coward and refuses to help her sister because she fears men. Through the character of Antigone, women finally get to present realistic viewpoints about their character.

ISMENE: But oh, Antigone,

Think how much more terrible than these

Our own death would be if we should go against Kreon

And do what he has forbidden! We are only women,

We cannot fight with men, Antigone! (73)

Sophocles has portrayed the contrasting relationship between Ismene and Antigone. They vary greatly in their respective attributes. Ismene is breathtakingly beautiful, while Antigone is plain. Ismene shows demure feminist characteristics and Antigone is brave while Ismene is frightened. Ismene claimed it was an outrageous thought to stand up to a man. Her view of the inferiority to men came from the many laws restricting the lives of women. Women lived most of their lives in their homes. They were allowed on the streets with the company of a man, or for the reason of a funeral or religious festival. They were not allowed to own property. They lived their lives under the control of a male figure.

KREON: No, no: good lives are made so by discipline.

We keep the laws then, and the lawmakers,

And no woman shall seduce us. If we must lose,

Let's lose to a man, at least! Is a woman stronger than we?

(83)

The core difference between the two of them lies in Antigone's willingness to create change and define her individuality and Ismene's hope that she can make it through life without creating waves. This difference manifests itself most brilliantly in the burial of Polynices. Antigone is willing to risk anything to have her brother buried with honor, while Ismene worries solely for the safety of her sister. This behavior continues throughout the novel, with Ismene acceding to Creon's demands, and Antigone taking brave risks. In the end of the play, Antigone even takes her life in her own terms.

ANTIGONE: You need not be:

You have yourself to consider, after all.

ISMENE: But no one must here of this, you must tell no one!

I will keep it a secret, I promise! (73)

*Antigone* enables a weak maiden to conquer a powerful ruler, who is proud of his wisdom and ventures in his unbounded insolence to pit his royal word against divine law and human sentiment. Her sentence is a punishment for being a woman and rebelling against King Creon. Women were needed to be subversive and demure. By trying to assert her individuality, Antigone pays for it with her life. Although ancient Greece was a male-dominated society, *Antigone* portrays women as being strong and capable of making wise decisions. Later, it is ordered that Antigone be led to the dungeon, where she is to die of starvation, and thus bewails her fate:

O tomb, my bridal chamber, vaulted home,

Guarded right well for ever, where I go

To join mine own, of whom the greater part

Among the dead doth Persephassa hold;

And I, of all the last and saddest, wend

My way below, life's little span unfilled.  
 And yet I go, and feed myself with hopes  
 That I shall meet them, by my father loved,  
 Dear to my mother, well-beloved of thee,  
 Thou darling brother. (86)

A well established theme in *Antigone* is the right of the individual to reject society's infringement on her freedom to perform a personal obligation. This is seen through Antigone's refusal to let Creon dictate what she is allowed to do with her family members. She says to Ismene about Creon's edict, "It is not for him to keep me from my own" (76). This theme brings up the issue of whether Antigone's will to bury her brother is based on rational thought or instinct. Creon advocates obedience to man-made laws while Antigone stresses the higher laws of duty to the gods and one's family. Antigone responds with the idea that state law is not absolute, and that it can be broken in civil disobedience in extreme cases. Eventually, Antigone is caught for what she has done and brought before Creon. She denies nothing that she has done, and appears proud that she stood in her moral convictions despite what Creon had ordered to be done.

ANTIGONE: But if I had left my brother  
 Lying in death unburied, I should have suffered.  
 Now I do not.  
 You smile at me. Ah Creon,  
 Think me a fool, if you like; but it may well be  
 That a fool convicts me of folly. (79)

In Sophocles' *Antigone*, one of the many conflicts found is men versus women. The ancient Greek times believed in the undeniable domination of men. In



*Antigone* there are many references that link to the oppression of women. His convictions seem true to a large population of men. Antigone emerges as a heroine who pressed forward following her own personal convictions, despite the consequences. She tells Ismene at one point, "I will bury him; and if I must die, I say that this crime is holy: I shall lie down with him in death, and I shall be as dear to him as he to me," (72). She, however, in her stubborn disposition, challenges Kreon to punish her in a way by her obvious defiance. This, in turn, causes Kreon to become more stubborn in his declaration. It is this lack of compromise, perhaps, that aids in the chaos that follows. In the end the overall message seems to point out that individuals should follow their own personal convictions, and that people should not allow themselves to become corrupt by power, but instead look to higher powers for guidance.

### 3.2 Nora's Search for Individuality

Nineteenth century feminists praised Ibsen's work and saw it as a warning of what would happen when women in general woke up to the injustices that had been committed against them. The question of women's rights and feminist equality is an important aspect of understanding *A Doll's House*. Ibsen felt the issue was more complex than just women's rights and that he hoped to illuminate the problem of individual rights. Yet women have continued to champion both Ibsen and his heroine, Nora. Social reform was closely linked to feminism. In embracing women's equality in *A Doll's House*, Ibsen is really arguing for social justice. Ibsen criticizes many different aspects of society from the way that the male figure is so dominant in marriage, how the woman does not have much of a role in society, and finally how reputation is more important than morals. Ibsen supported economic reform that would protect women's property.

To find oneself is the most important task in a person's life, and sooner or later, every woman comes to this realization. As time goes by, there is always hope the realization comes sooner than later. Knowing that only she can make the changes she needs in order to grow, Nora walks out of the house to find and educate herself. With the realization that her marriage had been a lie, the world is different outside, and that there are people who will help her get through life, Nora decides to become her own person. As many women do today, Nora decides it is time to meet the world and to think for herself, with no other person to please but herself.

Nora's character, who throughout much of the play is oppressed, presents an inauthentic identity to the audience and the play attempts to discover her authentic identity. The common denominator in many of Ibsen's dramas is his interest in individuals struggling for an authentic identity in the face of tyrannical social conventions. This conflict often results in his characters' being divided between a sense of duty to themselves and their responsibility to others. *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen tackles women's rights as a matter of importance.

Nora is a dynamic character in the play. Ibsen has created the character of Nora who struggles with her identity. She goes through many changes and develops more than any other character. Nora, at the beginning and throughout most of the play, is an inauthentic character. An inauthentic identity is when a person believes their personality is identical to their behavior. However subconsciously they know that it is not true. She is a grown woman who was pampered all her life by men. Nora was spoon-fed all of her life by her father and husband.

She believes in Torvald unquestionably, and has always believed that he was her god or idol. She is the perfect image of a doll wife who revels in the thought of luxuries that she can afford because she is married. She is very flirtatious, and

constantly engages in childlike acts of disobedience such as little lies about things such as whether or not she bought macaroons. Nora goes through life with the illusion that everything is perfect. She doesn't see that the law does not take into account the motivation behind her forgery.

NORA: It's not easy to answer that, Torvald. I simply don't know.

I'm all confused about these things. I just know I see them so differently. From you. I find out for one thing, that's the law's not at all what I'd thought –but I can't get it through my head that the law is fair. A woman hasn't a right to protect her dying father or save her husband's life! I can't believe that. (592)

Ibsen acknowledges the fact that in the 19th century life the role of woman was to stay at home, raise the children and attend to her husband. Nora is the stereotypical character in *A Doll House* who is portrayed as a victim. The play features Nora seeking her individuality through realizations and challenging her comfort zone. Ibsen, through Nora and her personality, depicts the role of a woman not as the usual comforter, helper, and supporter of man, but introduced women as having her own purposes and goals. Nora progresses during the course of the play eventually to realize that she must discontinue the role of a doll and seek out her individuality.

A woman cannot be herself in a society, which is an exclusively patriarchal, with laws framed by men and with judicial system that judges feminine conduct from a masculine point of view. In contrast to many dramas of Scandinavia at that time, which depicted the role of women as the comforter, helper, and supporter of man, *A Doll House* introduces women as having her own sense of freedom and individuality. Throughout the play Torvald is condescending towards Nora and forces her to act and

look in a way that pleases him. Nora allows Torvald to play dress up with her. No matter what the situation, Nora has to consistently remain Torvald's quiet, happy, little doll. Torvald's continual reference to Nora using bird names parallels Nora's image of herself. For example, in Act I, Torvald continually refers to Nora as his "little featherbrain," his "little scatterbrain," his "squirrel sulking", and most importantly his "song bird." These images of weak birds characterize Nora as a weak person. Nora ends her doll life by leaving her doll house to learn and explore on her own. She is no longer a doll under the control of her master. Her state of shocked awareness at the end of the play is like the awakening of society to the changing view of the role of women.

NORA: I've waited now so patiently eight long years— for, my Lord, I know miracles don't come every day. Then this crisis broke over me, and such a certainty filled me: Now the miraculous even would occur. While Krogstad's letter was lying out there, I never for an instant dreamed that you could give in to his terms. I was so utterly sure you'd say to him: Go on Tell your tale to the whole wide world. And when he'd done that. (593)

Nora lives in a dream world, a child fantasy, where everything is perfect, and everything makes sense. She thinks that the world would never condemn a woman who tries to save her husband's life or to protect a dying father. Nora simply does not understand the ways of the world, and the final realization that she is in real danger of risking hers and her husband's reputation, and worse, makes her snap out of the childish dream she had been living.

Nora saw it as her obligation as a loving wife to break the law so she would be able to save a life, especially when it was the life of her husband. Nils Krogstad for example accused Nora of violating the law to which Nora replies:

This I refuse to believe. A daughter hasn't the right to protect her dying father from anxiety and care? A wife hasn't the right to save her husband's life? I don't know much about laws but I'm sure that somewhere in the books these things are allowed. And you don't know anything about it-you who practice the law? You must be an awful lawyer, Mr. Krogstad. (573)

Another was the way that he dressed her for the costume party. All this time Nora had pretty much been loyal and listened to all of what Torvald had said, and then the one time that Torvald could have been loyal to Nora and believed her and been on her side he didn't and instead was thinking about himself. Torvald, being so busy with his life and his big ego, is never concerned about Nora's thoughts and feelings upon any subject at all. He assumes, like most men at the time, and still some today, that all Nora needs is protection and amusement, just like children that need to be sheltered from all harm, and taught how to behave properly. He orders her around throughout the whole play, and fancies showing her off to his friends, as a proud father would do so.

Throughout the story, Torvald is constantly angry with Nora. He also tries to control everything she does. One example of Torvald's dominance was his forbiddance of macaroons in the house. Torvald would constantly disallow the slightest pleasures that she aspired to have, such as macaroons.

HELMER: So— a regular banquet, hm?

NORA: Yes, a banquet – champagne till daybreak!

And some macaroons, Helene. Heaps of them—just this once.

HELMER: Now, now, now—no hysterics. Be my own little lark again.

(585)

Torvald views his public persona as more important than his private, he is unable to understand or appreciate the suffering of his wife. His reaction to the threat of public exposure is centered on himself. It is his social stature, his professional image, and not his private life which concern him most. For Nora to emerge as an individual she must reject the life that society mandates. To do so, she must assume control over her life. Yet in the nineteenth century, women had no power. Power resides with the establishment and as a banker and lawyer, Torvald clearly represents the establishment. Nora, when aware of the situation, realizes there is nothing else to do but to make him see her as a woman and an adult. Rather than remain part of a marriage based on an intolerable lie, she chooses to leave her home and discover for herself the individuality which life with Torvald has denied her.

NORA: I mean, then I went from Papa's hands into yours. You arranged everything to your own taste, and so I got the same taste as you – or I pretended to; I can't remember. I guess a little of both, first one, then the other. Now when I look back, it seems as if I'd lived here like a beggar— just from hand to mouth. I've lived by doing tricks for you, Torvald. But that's the way you wanted it. It's a great sin what you and Papa did to me. You're to blame that nothing's become of me? (592)

*A Doll's House* depicts the role of women as subordinate in order to emphasize their role in society. The inferior role of Nora is extremely important to her character. Nora is oppressed by a variety of tyrannical social conventions. She is oppressed by

the manipulation from Torvald. Torvald has a very typical relationship with society. He is a smug bank manager. His job entails many responsibilities. He often treats his wife as if she is one of these responsibilities. Torvald is very authoritative and puts his appearance, both social and physical, ahead of his wife that he supposedly loves. Torvald is a man that is worried about his reputation, and cares little about his wife's feelings. Nora and Torvald's relationship, on the outside appears to be a happy. Through Torvald's character, Ibsen discards the public view of man to expose a more realistic depiction of male superiority.

HELMER: It's so incredible, I just can't grasp it. But will have to patch up what ever we can. Take off the shawl. I said, take it off! I've got to appeases him somehow or other. The thing has to be hushed up at any cost. And as for you and me, it's got to seem like everything between us is just as it was – to the outside world, that is. You'll go right on living in this house, of course. But you can't be allowed to bring up the children; I don't dare trust you with them – Oh ,to have to say this to someone I've loved so much! Well, that's done with. From now on happiness doesn't mater; all that matters is saving the bits and pieces, the appearance. (590)

Nora is treated like a child in this relationship, but as the play progresses she begins to realize how phony her marriage is. Torvald sees Nora's role as being the subservient and loving wife. He refers to Nora as "my little squirrel" (565), "my little lark" (565), or "spendthrift"(565). To him, she is only a possession. Torvald calls Nora by pet-names and speaks down to her because he thinks that she is not intelligent and that she cannot think on her own.

Whenever she begins to voice an opinion Torvald quickly drops the pet-names and insults her as a woman through comments like, "wonders that you couldn't possibly help me with," and "Nora, Nora, just like a woman"(565). Torvald is a typical husband in his society. He denies Nora the right to think and act the way she wishes. He requires her to act like an imbecile and insists upon the rightness of his view in all matters. After she reveals the dastardly deed to her husband, he becomes agitated. In his frustration he destroys her innocence and self-esteem. This disillusion marks the final destructive blow to her doll's house.

HELMER: Oh, what an awful awakening! In all these eight years – she who was my pride and joy– a hypocrite, a liar – worse, worse– a criminal! How infinitely disgusting it all is! The shame! I should have suspected something of the kind. I should have known. All your father's flimsy values –Be still! All your father's flimsy values have come out in you. No religion, no morals, no sense of duty–Oh, how I'm punished for letting him off! I did it for your sake, and you repay me like this. (590)

Slowly Nora's character is forced to discontinue her inauthentic role of a doll and seek out her individuality, her new identity. She comes to realize that her whole life has been a lie. She lives her life pretending to be the old Nora, and hides the different woman she had become. The illusion of the old Nora continues well after she becomes a new person. When she realizes that responsibilities for her are more important, Nora slams the door on not just Torvald but on everything that happened in her past. By the end of the play Nora eventually sees herself as an ignorant person, and unfit mother, and essentially her husband's wife.



NORA: No, only lighthearted. And you've always been so kind to me.

But our home's been nothing but a playpen. I've been your doll-wife here, just as at home I was papa's doll-child. And in turn the children have been my dolls. I thought it was fun when you played with me, just as they thought it fun when I played with them. That's been our marriage, Torvald. (592)

It takes time to change into a new person, but after she became a person who cannot stand to be oppressed by Torvald any longer. Ibsen uses the idea of a doll because a doll always maintains the same look, no matter what the situation. A doll must do whatever the controller has them do. Dolls are silent and never express opinions or actually accomplish anything without the aid of others. This doll is Nora's inauthentic identity.

Her authentic identity is in the process of being built while Torvald calls Nora his "little lark", his "little squirrel", and a child. Nora grows even stronger. It is complete and presented to the readers when Nora when she stands up to Torvald and does the opposite of what he wants. Torvald makes many futile attempts to make her stay concerning her duties to her husband and children to which Nora tells him that she has other duties, duties to herself. Torvald pleads with her that before all else, she is his wife and the mother of their children, to which Nora says:

I don't believe in that anymore. I believe that, before all else, I'm a human being, no less than you-or anyway I ought to try to become one. I know the majority thinks you're right, Torvald, and plenty of books agree with you, too. But I can't go on being satisfied with what the majority says, or what's written in books. I have to think over these things myself and try to understand them. (592)

She does not tolerate Torvald's condescending tone or allow him to manipulate her any longer. Nora must follow her own convictions now and decide for herself what her life will be in the future. Her rebirth has led to her own independence. Another man will never again control her and she is now free of her controlling husband. Nora's decision to leave the false life behind and discover for herself what is real is directly symbolic of woman's ultimate realization. Nora is utterly confused and she must strive to find her individuality.

NORA: Perhaps. But you neither think nor talk like the man I could join myself to. When your big fright was over – and it wasn't from any threat against me, only for what might damage you – when all the danger was past, for you it was just as if nothing had happened. I was exactly the same, your little lark, your doll, that you'd have to handle with double care now that I'd turned out so brittle and frail. (593)

In Act III, when Nora slams the door as she leaves, she is opening a door into the hidden world of the ideal Victorian marriage. In allowing Nora the right to satisfy her need for an identity separate from that of wife and mother. Although the play ends without offering any solutions, Ibsen has offered possibilities. To his contemporaries, it was a frightening prospect.

### 3.3 Comparison and Contrast: Antigone and Nora

Antigone and Nora are two bold women who dare to transgress the diktats of the patriarchal society of their times. They sacrifice themselves for what they think is right and proper. Antigone was adamant to give her brother a descent burial and Nora realizes that all her life she had been treated as a doll. Therefore, we see that both Antigone and Nora are strong and determined women who are able to resist the

hegemony of the males. Comparing Antigone and Nora, both come across as individuals who were vehemently opposed to oppression and repression. Antigone is a noble, heroic victim and willful stubborn character. Antigone stands for the rights of the individual that are set in opposition to the rule of the state.

Antigone's loyalty to her dead brother, her care for him, is inspiring. The heroine, Antigone puts forward an argument justifying her disobedience to an edict of her uncle Creon, who stops her to bury her brother Polyneices. Antigone fights for the justice of traditional belief, while a tyrannical Creon fights for a right based on might. Creon's mounting rage is matched by Antigone's willful obstinacy. After she has been condemned, Antigone states that she hopes by her actions to be welcomed to a home among the dead members of her family. Antigone stands noblest and most heroic, defiant of man's rule and insisting on God's justice.

Like Antigone, Nora develops into a willful and stubborn character that leaves her sweet home in the end. Nora depicts the role of women as subordinate in order to emphasize the need to reform their role in society. Her ideal home including her marriage and parenting has been a product of society. Nora does not at first realize that the rules outside the household apply to her. Nora's decision to leave this false life behind and discover for herself what is real is directly symbolic of woman's ultimate realization. The mere fact that Nora's well-intentioned action is considered illegal reflects woman's subordinate position in society, but it is her actions that provide the insight to this position.

The differences between Antigone and Nora can be seen in the approaches they adapt to achieve their means. Antigone from the beginning of the play is adamant to disobey Creon. Nora thinks her world is like a dream with everything going on smoothly. It is only at the end of the play that she realizes that her dream world has

been shattered. Antigone belongs to the royal class and yet still considered herself a commoner. Nora belongs to the middle-class and is happy adjusting to life in it.

Antigone's conflict is with her uncle and Nora's is with her husband.

Antigone is the lone individual, refusing to sway or be swayed by any in the community. Not taking other people's advice, Antigone decides to fight alone when Ismene abandons the former. She is autonomous and for Antigone, both knowledge and judgment are an individual affair. But Nora on the advice given by Kristine decides to confront Torvald. Mrs. Linde is an inspiration to Nora, because Kristina has experienced the independence that Nora longs for. Kristine has the forethought to see that Nora's lies will only cause her pain. Kristine tells Nora that a healthy relationship must go on without lies. Antigone has a single mission which excludes all else. She is also fully self-centered. She will not discuss her judgment and remains unyielding. She never doubts the wisdom of her course. She isolates herself. She acts under the illusion that only she is able to grasp the meaning of higher justice. She can only conclude that she does not belong in this world, which so misunderstands the nature of right action. Antigone's self-certainty and self-isolation cut short all possibilities for full deliberation. On the other hand Nora walks out of her husband and children to fulfill her responsibility to herself. When Nora sheds her doll's dress and steps out into the real world, she opens up a new realm of possibilities for all women. Nora struggles to break free from the constraints of her dominating husband represents her views on the freedom of women. The defiant act of Nora, the play's heroine, has inspired countless women in their fight for liberation.

Thus, we see that there are common and differing characteristics between Antigone and Nora. One belonged to the aristocratic ruling class while the other to the middle-class. But both of them were successful in inspiring women to assert their will

and individuality. The determined twosome shows that traditional boundaries can be transgressed. It only requires guts and determination that Antigone and Nora possess.

## Revolt Against Male Domination

Both these women lived in patriarchal societies. Antigone raises her voice against the King for her brother, while Nora realizes the faults in her marriage and walks away from it. Both these women are a source of inspiration to womankind and teach them to search and exert their individuality. Both of them are revolting against the patriarchal and male-dominated societies.

While Nora puts on a convincing performance of being a submissive, selfish and foolish woman during the first act, there are early signs that this is not the real her. When she asks Torvald for more money despite having just been on a spending spree, she appears selfish and grasping. But we soon discover, in her conversation with Mrs Linde, that she is not squandering the money to satisfy her own desires, but using it to pay off the loan she took out in order to save her husband's life. In doing so, she has denied herself new things so that her husband and children can have all they need. Her arranging the loan and the trip to Italy and her subsequent careful management of money show an astonishing strength of character. In addition, she secretly takes jobs to pay off the loan, a step towards the independence she finally embraces.

Nora begins the play fulfilling a role that society prescribes for women, that of dutiful wife and mother. Her role is restricted to such activities as creating a beautiful home, meeting the needs of her husband and children, and singing and dancing prettily and seductively for her husband. Ibsen points out the dangers of having an individual's life defined by society in a way that ignores their personal identity and individuality. In leaving Torvald and her children, she will outrage society and stigmatize herself. This is a terrible price to have to pay for self-fulfillment, but inevitable, given that society and the individual are so much at cross-purposes.

Society wishes to preserve the status quo, whereas self-fulfillment often means pushing and breaking boundaries. Ibsen, through *A Doll's House*, has an impact upon society's view of the subordinate position of women. In course of the drama, Nora has learned that the ideal union takes place when husband and wife regard each other as rational individuals who are aware of society's demands and can fulfill their separate responsibilities with sophistication and mutual respect. As the play progresses, Nora faces a life changing decision to abandon her duty as a wife and mother to find her own individuality.

Ancient Greece was a male-dominated society. Traditionally women were characterized as weak and subordinate. Through the character of Antigone, women finally get to present realistic viewpoints about their character. *Antigone* indisputably belongs to the best works of Sophocles. The ideal of the female character in *Antigone* is boldly and severely outlined. Kreon's fear propels her to turn her head to the disrespect that has been shown to her brother, Polyneices. These sorts of actions ultimately prove that Antigone is courageous and willing to stand up to men, which was completely against the norm at that time. Her spirit refuses to submit to the role of a helpless woman like her sister Ismene. She is so scared that she will be left all alone without Antigone that she is willing to die with her. Antigone is stern, resolute and possessed.

The general meaning of Antigone is that sometimes people need to do what they know is right despite the consequences. Antigone asks for her sister's help in burying their brother Polynices. The burial becomes a cleansing ritual of sorts for the family after having suffered so much death and destruction. This is indicative in how Antigone views her own actions. The determination to do the duty with affection and piety dictate her. Ismene is gentle, timid and feminine. She attempts to dissuade

Antigone from an act which will cost her own life, but Antigone rejects such counsel with contempt.

Therefore, we can say that Antigone and Nora are able to assert their individuality in *Antigone* and *A Doll's House* respectively. It seems very hard to go against the social values but both of them are fighting the contemporary male-dominated society to search for their individuality. Though there is a vast difference in the time frame of the two dramas, nevertheless Antigone and Nora have been able to raise their voice and assert themselves. Both are treated as social outcasts by the society due to the norms it formulates which both of them are trying to shatter. This study, particularly, has delved into Antigone and Nora's circumstances and reasons to search their individuality. I am aware that there are various aspects we can explore about these characters for comprehensive understanding of the societies they represent and the values they are made to uphold. Nonetheless, this research will be a great help in understanding the plight of women during the time of Sophocles and Ibsen. A single research work cannot do justice to the richness of the text. Therefore, the present research is limited to an analysis of the research for individuality and hence might be inadequate to study an array of problems surrounding the societies of these times.



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