That the woman who loves him shall, with a glad heart,
go out into the kitchen and chop off her delicate
rosy-white finger – here – just here at the middle joint.

Henrik Ibsen – Rosmersholm

**The Woman and Her Role**

A woman is first and foremost the ‘helpmate’ of man, as to the
original plan of Jehovah in the Garden of Eden, but later she turned out
to be his inner voice, his commander, his peer and sometimes his
opponent too. A man does define himself through woman and she
becomes the author and end of his life. She lives in him as a force and
this force encloses him on all sides. She rules him as a mother, a wife
and a companion and she is there with him at all times, if not as a friend
at least as an opponent. The woman gets an opportunity to watch him as
an infant, a boy and an adult with ambitions. Therefore, the woman is
capable of acquiring and wielding power over man, thwarting his plans
to dominate her.

A woman has also the inclination and time to inspect the ways of
man, watching him, caring for him, checking him and keeping herself
informed of his purposes in life. This attitudinal love and care renders
her an easy access to his mind and keeps her ready with a force to
vanquish him if need arises. She is armed against any move contrary to her whims and fancies. On the other hand a man wishes to associate himself with a dynamic and clever woman, who can manage the house and children and servants for him, run his business and more pleased with if that woman can think for himself and execute his plans. George Eliot comments on this particular leniency of man towards a clever woman in her novel, *Adam Bede*. The conversation between Mr. Craig and Mrs. Poyser goes on like this. "I like a cleverish [sic] woman – a woman of sperrit (spirit) – a managing woman" (1987:498).

It is often the less enterprising man that seeks the companionship of a bold woman, who can decide for him. Ibsen, in *Rosmersholm* has introduced a pair – a man who is in need of the service of a powerful, clever and dynamic woman, the one capable of running his home, managing his public affairs and take decisions for him.

George Bernard Shaw in his work *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* described *Rosmersholm* as the most enthralling of all Ibsen’s works. The charm of the play mainly rests on the character of Rebecca West, who starts her womanhood as a freethinker and despiser of religious morality but ends up into a being of conscience and nobility. Rebecca comes to the house of Rosmer with a mission. She motivates the man to transcend routine. Ibsen perceived that the working of an irresistible force through woman not only brings her on par with man, but also
ascribes to her power and purpose far superior to that of man. This force that dwells in her becomes strengthened in her, in her association with man and she begins to dictate his life to him. Man has to surrender his ‘all’ to such a powerful woman.

**The Plot of the Play**

Rebecca West intrigues to gain admittance to Rosmersholm, where lives a country parson, a gentleman of ancient stock, as a mere adventuress, fighting for a foothold in a polite society. Rebecca being both ambitious and cultured makes herself agreeable to Rosmer family.

The affectionate and impulsive, but intelligent Mrs. Rosmer, the wife of the parson, becomes fond of her to the extent of persuading her to come and live with them. Rebecca readily accepts the offer, because, she has become aware of the parson’s aspirations to become a radical. She calculates the possibility of taking advantage of his attitude to life and attempts to make herself a leader in politics and society by using him as a figurehead.

Once, inside the house, Rebecca decides to remove all the obstacles and Beata, his wife is the prime one to be removed out of her way. Mr. Rosmer may not be encouraged either to profess or to propagate his liberal views, unless his marriage bond with Beata is snapped off. Since Mrs. Rosmer has stopped to influence him any more, Rebecca draws closer to him. Rebecca makes Beata realise that she is
standing as a useless obstacle between her husband and the woman he really loves, and who can help him to a glorious career. She makes Beata become aware of her barrenness too. Soon Rebecca comes out fortified with a fine reasoned theory that Rebecca should leave Rosmersholm if a scandal is to be avoided. She hints that soon a great proximity between Rosmer and Rebecca may develop and an illegitimate child will become a necessity. On hearing it, Beata, who regards scandal as the most terrible thing that could happen, and seeing that it can be averted if Mr. Rosmer and Rebecca marry, decides to quit the house. She makes a hasty conclusion about everything, jumps into the millstream and dies.

The Emancipated Woman

When the play opens, the wife Beata Rosmer is dead by suicide, and Rosmer is left with the agent of the suicide, Rebecca West. The lovers are now free to take up life in the same spot Rosmersholm where all is the same, except that the wife has been removed. There is a transformation taking place within Rosmer owing to the influence of Rebecca. As pointed out by Elizabeth Hardwick, she can be called, “a fiercely engaging woman” (1979:241).

She has entered Rosmersholm with a determination to change Rosmer. It is she who brings the fierce and positive ideals out of him. Lorraine Markotic quotes the words of Lou Andreas-Salome:
Not in vain does she stand at the side of Rosmer, for her guidance causes whatever is unchained and aimless in his disposition to change involuntarily into a positive ideal and to an enthusiastic mission, that aims to bring people help, joy and reconciliation. Not in vain does his soul open to her during their daily living together, with all its hidden moods and stirrings, ‘so fine and tender in his feelings’ (1998:430).

Rebecca has permeated an invincible power over Rosmersholm and the inmates of it. She works with determination to change his constricted thinking and way of life and lead him to a development of an inner life and soul.

Rebecca’s entry into Rosmersholm is neither imperious nor a masculine act on her part, but it is an intriguing one. Rosmersholm itself is a house of ancient honour and pride. Dr. Kroll, the brother of Beata, accuses Rebecca that “you have him in your power” (Ibsen Plays: Three Rosmersholm 1980:86) and Rosmersholm has a family tradition. Kroll reminds Rosmer of his family tradition that “Since time immemorial Rosmersholm has been a stronghold of order and morality – of respect and reverence for everything that is accepted and upheld by the best elements in our society” (62-63). Further, the whole country takes its tone from Rosmersholm. If any rumour breaks the Rosmer tradition,
then it will cause "fatal and irreparable confusion" (63). Rebecca has made her entry into such a house. The fact that the inmates are also respected has its attraction for Rebecca. "A family that for nigh on two hundred years has been venerated and looked upto as the first in the country" (42). The Rosmers of Rosmersholm are known as 'Men of God' and 'Men of War'. They are called the "respected servants of their country" (42).

At the time Rebecca's attention turned to Rosmersholm, John Rosmer is the occupant of this honourable mansion, with his wife Beata. The mere name of John Rosmer is considered an asset. His name is enough to make converts among misguided masses. He never indulges himself in any controversy or battle of life. Rosmer's goodness and incorruptibility, his sensitivity and intellect, his unimpeachable integrity are known and prized by everyone in the country. He commands respect and honour from everyone, as a former man of God. Such is the position of John Rosmer.

Rebecca has a humble background and even her moral background is vastly different from Rosmers. The circumstances of her birth are responsible for her conduct. She is the illegitimate child of Dr. West. That is not all. After the death of her mother, Dr. West takes her into his home and treats her harshly. Rebecca puts up with his tantrums and looks after him until his death. Dr. Kroll who reminds her
of this background suspects that something must be wrong in their relationship. Though Rebecca denies any such filial interest, she can’t deny that she has had an alarming way of life before coming over to Rosmersholm.

Rebecca enters Rosmersholm as an emancipated woman. She has been trained in everything about life by Dr. West. She says that he had absolute power over her. “The Doctor had taught me so many things. Everything I knew about life—then” (91). Stephen. S. Stanton’s assessment of Rebecca gives an idea of her state of intellectual, moral character at the time of her entry into Rosmersholm. He says in his essay on “Trolls in Ibsen’s Late Plays” published in *Comparative Drama*:

Rebecca is emancipated, antibourgeois, contemptuous of most social conventions, amoral, atheistic, temperamentally bold, determined, independent, and seductive, with ‘a pagan passion restrained in gracious refinement’ (1998–1999: 546).

Standing a contrast to Rosmers of Rosmersholm, Rebecca has a hectic job before she could win their hearts and retain them too. Rebecca has come to Rosmersholm with some expectation too. She says:

When I came down here from the North – with Dr. West –
I felt that a great new world was opening up for me.  

I wanted to be part of this new age that was dawning. To share in all these new discoveries—! (Rosmersholm: 91).

Rebecca like ‘sunshine’ absorbs everyone in the house. As a matter of fact, the first person to be enchanted by her is Dr. Kroll himself. The moment he sees her, he believes her, ‘passionately’ believes her. He helps her to have a footing into the house. The reason may be that he is able to recognize a power in her that can change the old into new. He admires her efficiency in making the old room look attractive with flowers everywhere. When he visits Rosmersholm eighteen months after Beata’s death, he still has praises for her for the way she ran Rosmersholm during those last unhappy months of Beata’s life. Rebecca convinces him in such a way about her own sacrifice of her youth for other people. Thus, Kroll himself is much attracted and bewitched by Rebecca. He even wonders, “whom could you not bewitch – if you put your mind to it?” (85). It is Kroll himself, makes way for her to enter Rosmersholm, misconstruing Rebecca’s feelings towards him as ‘favourable’. Only after coming to know that Rebecca has destroyed the name and tradition of Rosmersholm and has played a role in sending Beata to her death that Kroll realizes that she is a 'dangerous' person. He tells her, “I’m not any longer so foolish as to suppose that you felt anything for me” (85-86).
If Dr. Kroll, a level headed school master, a less prejudiced man can fall into the clutches of Rebecca how much more the innocent Beata could have trusted the wily Rebecca is a question that does not raise any controversy. Beata is an ordinary woman brought up in Christian faith, a strong adherent to Rosmer tradition. Rebecca bewitches her too. Everybody believes that Rebecca arrives at Rosmersholm at a time, when it needs her service. The arrival of Rebecca is that quick to sow seeds of anxiety in the heart of Beata about her husband who no sooner she enters than falls sick. As a contrast to Beata’s quietness and modesty, she is lively and fearless. Beata always bows to her in everything and so she makes room. Rebecca clears herself of the sin of bewitching Beata confessing that it was Beata herself who begged and prayed her to come to Rosmersholm. This behaviour of Beata makes her entry easy for her. Kroll too remembers this act of his sister. He talks further:

Yes, after you’d bewitched her too. Or would you call that friendship, what she came to feel for you? She began to worship you, to idealize you, and in the end, it developed into a – What shall I call it? – into a kind of desperate infatuation (86).

After this, it does not require much effort for Rebecca either to guess the situation at Rosmersholm or make strategies to make her way
Rebecca feels that she should take action. She does it in a very cunning and wild way. She makes Beata feel that barrenness is something for which a woman is to be blamed. Rebecca does not talk to her openly about it. She brings some modern books into the house that deal with the purpose of marriage from the so-called progressive modern viewpoint. These books talk about barrenness and illegitimate children and they point out to Beata that she is barren. This knowledge about barrenness makes Beata conduct herself in a strange manner. She gets into uncontrollable sick fits of sensuality and she expects Rosmer to reciprocate them. She frightens Rosmer by her behaviour, who all the more withdraws him from her and becomes attached to Rebecca. Not long after this event, Rebecca begs and prays that she should be allowed
to leave Rosmersholm. Though she doesn’t have any intention to leave Rosmersholm, she wants to put Beata into anxiety about the tradition of Rosmersholm. She makes her believe that there is a necessity for her to quit the house. She later in her confession says, “I didn’t want to leave. I wanted to stay here” (93). But she tells Beata that if she doesn’t leave Rosmersholm, there is a possibility for giving room for a scandal at Rosmersholm, and that she may expect an illegitimate child. Beata believes in this web of lies and treachery. Moreover her suspicion grows more because she sees them together. Rosmer mentions it later when he cries over the sufferings of Beata. He says, “She must have noticed that we read the same books. That we loved to be together, and to talk about all these new ideas” (72). Beata’s frenzied behaviour is brought upon her by Rebecca. She herself confesses that she lured – who ended by luring Beata into “The labyrinth – that led to the millrace” (92). Thus, Rebecca makes her stay in Rosmersholm more permanent and powerful.

Having removed the obstacle, it is easy for Rebecca to overpower Rosmer who by nature is shy and reticent. Rosmer is a coward too. He is diffident to pursue his new path because he is afraid of his wife too. Therefore he keeps his views to himself until the arrival of Rebecca. He says, “as long as Beata was alive, I was still in doubt – still battling with myself. And I fought that battle alone. I didn’t speak of it to a soul” (59). He confesses to Rebecca that he is a coward because he does not know how to let Kroll know of his change of heart. After breaking the
news to him, he says that he slept deeply and peacefully. “I don’t know when I last felt as easy in my heart as I do now. Oh, I’m so thankful I got that off my chest” (54).

Rosmer's change of heart forms the main burden of the play and therein Ibsen shows how a woman can turn a simple pastor, a man who hates public activity and spends his time walled in by books to become an ally with the forces of emancipation. The 'Quiet Rosmer', the passive pastor has changed his position regarding his faith and boldly declares to his brother-in-law, “In my mind, a new spring has dawned. A new youth, a new way of thought” (48). He has formed a motive for his living. He says, “I want to bring together men from all sides in a spirit of unity” (49). And his ultimate aim is “to make all the people in this country noblemen” (49).

Rosmer envisions a future where everyone will be emancipating their minds and purifying their wills. He makes Kroll shudder, saying, “I am no longer a man of God” (50), and adds that he no longer has the faith. This encounter with Kroll, makes the matters difficult for Rebecca, because the next morning Kroll comes to Rosmersholm to enquire and cross-examine Rosmer to bring the truth out. He suspects Rebecca to have played the game on Rosmer to make him turn into an apostate, but he does not have an idea of Rebecca's game in sending Beata to death. He informs Rosmer that “there's some game being
played in this house behind your back” (57). Kroll also points out that, “she’s been accustomed for so long to having her own way here” (57). He accuses Rebecca for converting Rosmer to an apostate. Kroll also gives him a warning that if he wishes to continue his association with Rebecca, “it is absolutely essential that this change of heart, this dreadful apostasy into which she has lured you, be hushed up” (62). Rosmer stubbornly refuses to do anything like that and stands firm on his conviction.

The strange fellowship with Rebecca rejuvenates the former priest and he in his excitement calls this new experience as the ‘living life of today’. It is Rebecca who has brought in him such a sea change. Kroll is the one person who has been carefully detecting the hand of Rebecca in transforming the priest into a renegade. He holds her responsible for all the changes that have taken place at Rosmersholm. He blames her for cold blooded, remorseless and ruthless acts. He further accuses her, “you couldn’t have gone on here year after year pursuing your end so calculatedly. Yes, Yes – you’ve got what you wanted” (86). The strongest of all his complaints is that, “you have him in your power – and Rosmersholm too” (86).

From all these accusations, it can be understood that Rebecca influenced Rosmer to become an apostate and Rosmer’s change of heart has been a turning point in his life. Thus, through Rebecca, Ibsen wants
to show how a woman can change the way of life of a man. What more, Rebecca makes him believe that he has a capacity for leadership when he doesn’t have it. Joan Templeton, in her Ibsen’s Women says that “Rosmer is thoroughly deceived about his capacity for leadership and Rebecca’s grandiose view of him as moral path finder is an excellent example of love’s power to blind the judgement” (2001:190).

An unexpected set-back comes in the life of Rosmer, when Kroll begins to cross examine him. Indeed a woman can change the life style of a man. This opens his eyes to unearth the reasons for the death of Beata. He understands that his association with Rebecca should have hurt her. He looks at his friendship with Rebecca as a guilty one. He makes an open confession of his sorrow for the death of Beata. The inherent preacher’s moral lesson on happiness is delivered in a preemptive tone and guilt. He feels that all his attempts to make men noble have become futile, since “For a cause to win a lasting victory, it must be led by a man whose soul is joyful and free from guilt” (Rosmersholm:84). Rebecca does not want to accept such a view of Rosmer and forbids him to talk of these things in a morbid tone. She entreats him not to think of Beata and to throw away her memories. She calls them as wretched superstitions that make him turn his back upon life. Rebecca encourages him to establish a new relationship to the world outside “Live, work, act. Don’t sit here brooding over insoluble riddles” (74).
Rebecca's advice works its way into Rosmer's heart and he proposes to marry her, but to his surprise, Rebecca refuses his offer and that shows the turning point in the life of Rebecca. As for Rosmer's mission of ennobling people, he has failed miserably. Kroll calls all his circle of friends together at his house. They make him realise that the task of making the world noble is not for him. Rosmer thoroughly destroys all the works of Rebecca on him by uttering a sentence, "And anyway, it's such a hopeless idea, Rebecca. I shall forget about it" (98).

Rebecca is not disheartened by these words of Rosmer, but surprises him saying, perhaps it's the best way. For a moment, Rosmer thinks that Rebecca has lost her hope in Rosmer's capacity to be a leader for such a cause. He complains that she never had any faith in his capacity. She tells him, "I believed we two might do it together" (98). But she too is no more interested in the cause for which she has devoted herself all these years. She has ennobled herself and that is revealed in her confession.

Rebecca's confession of her acts of sins, web of lies and treachery is a tale of a woman's power over a man. She reveals her inner motives for her acts of treachery. She comes to this state of surrender because the words of Rosmer ennoble her. She feels transformed by his words and the guilt in her obstructs her path to nobility.
Rosmer has been talking about sin and guilt but he seeks expiation from his guilt by proposing to marry Rebecca. It is something Rebecca has been longing for and perhaps it is the motive for which she sent Beata to death, but to his surprise, she refuses to marry him. It is in this confession that Rebecca is understood as a noble soul.

Rebecca, of course, lands in Rosmersholm with a motive to become a successful woman. She also thinks that she could manage to find success and happiness. She thought that she could achieve anything because she is not afraid of anything. She has her free will. She is not afraid of any relationship. But she soon finds herself possessed with an uncontrollable passion for Rosmer. She knows that she could never reach Rosmer until he has been set free physically and mentally. Therefore she takes action by sending Beata to her death. But her constant association with Rosmer has made her understand that a cause can never attain victory if it is rooted in guilt and sin. She becomes ennobled from within while Rosmer explains to her, the suffering of his heart to think of his part played in Beata's death. Rebecca is sudden in her change of heart.

At this point of Rosmer's life, he is seen to toss between his two ways of life associated with two different women. When Kroll makes him discover the secrets around the death of Beata, he is smitten in heart about his failure to detect the feelings of his wife, Beata. Ever since his
association with the emancipated woman, Rebecca, he allows his Rosmer way of life to get buried. He forgets the disciplined way of ennobling people with innocence as the base to build up a life of happiness and joy. He gets excited with the liberal views and feels rejuvenated. But his joy is only short lived, since the inherent Rosmer tradition dominates him, once the agent is powerful. He falls into fits of passion and sorrow to think of the Rosmer life that he has discarded. When the thoughts of Beata occupy him, he prefers the path of traditional moral to unrestricted freedom. This brings a catharsis in him.

Rosmer’s sudden awakening from the bosom of Rebecca like ‘Samson in Gaza’ makes him realize that he is guilty. He releases himself from the power of one woman to fall into the power of another woman Beata, whom he feels, “has become hideously alive again” (71). Beata puts him into a different conscience. He cries for his past, innocence and feels deceived by Rebecca. He gets himself out of the clutches of Rebecca and makes himself a stranger and huddles close to Beata by throwing away the new ideals. He feels that he is now in the nagging memories. He says: “When I think back, why, it was almost as though my life depended on it, the way I kept her apart from us, and from everything that concerned us” (72). Her eyes seem to haunt him even now, “always silent, silent – watching us – noting everything –” (72). Rosmer tries to get out of this new influence, ‘nagging memories’
by offering to marry Rebecca. But Rebecca seems to have experienced a different ennobling of the soul and refuses to marry Rosmer.

Rosmer's path of life is decided according to the woman that dominates his life. But Rebecca takes her hands off Rosmer and is ready to throw away a great prize as Rosmer, for the noble life that she wishes to pursue thereafter. A redeeming trait of Rebecca's character is that she could change her views and correct herself when her object of ennobling of men is a fixed idea in her mind. She never wishes to give up her goal, but is clever to find out the right path to lead a noble way of life. She comes to Rosmersholm with a trunk full of books given to her by Dr. West. She follows the instructions given in the books and the trend has already been set in by leaders like Peter Mortensgaard to encourage the people to live a life without ideals.

Rebecca enters Rosmersholm with a determination to become famous and put the world under her feet. The atmosphere in the town is conducive to grow in her the new ideas. In the few years that she has lived at Rosmersholm, she has been aggressive in her acts impairing the personalities of all who have shared the roof with her. She has been trampling without compunction on those who thwart her desire and prevent her from fulfilling the purpose that she has cherished in her life. Rebecca sets her heart on Rosmer and to get at him, she destroys ruthlessly all who cut across her path. This rancorous conduct may be
attributed to the unjust environment, economic insecurity and imbalances that she has experienced in the house of Dr. West. Such an environment has impelled her to become a self-willed woman.

But she is a keen observer of life and having experienced the negativity of life, she is able to assess the positive side of life calculating the good and the bad. The Rosmersholm has a way of life, which cannot but ennoble people. Rebecca tells Rosmer:

But then, I began living here with you – alone in peace, just the two of us – when you shared all your thoughts with me, unreservedly – every mood and feeling, just as it came to you – then the great change happened. To me, I mean. Gradually, you understand. Almost imperceptibly – but irresistibly. To the very depths of my soul (100-101).

Rebecca after this could shed off the dross in her and purge herself from all baseness that has been nurturing her aggressiveness. She is quick to clear her mind and lifts herself up from the base and mean ideals. She shines brightly in the act of self-sacrifice, for the greater glory of her companion. She enters into a fresh revolt, which is not intended to gain supremacy over him but to create a new harmony. There is nobility, greatness in her soul revealed in her dedication and devotion and she shows a voluntary preparedness to be submerged in her partner's ideal.
Rebecca slowly replaces Beata’s place. It is not in the way that Rosmer expects Rebecca to replace Beata. Rosmer makes a hurried decision to marry Rebecca and the reason for such a proposal is to get himself away from the nagging memories of Beata. His sin pricks him and nags him in the form of Beata’s memories and he wants to shut his mind to it. But the reformed Rebecca wants to be a substitute for Beata in the same noble way in accordance with the law of Rosmersholm. Rosmer tells “Rebecca – if I were now to ask you – will you be my second wife?... The place left here by the dead must not stand empty” (75). When Rebecca wonders, “I – take Beata’s place –?” (75). Rosmer answers her, “Then her part in the saga of Rosmersholm will be finished. Completely finished. For ever and ever” (75).

Rosmer does not want to ennoble his life by retention of Beata’s memories. He wants to do away with Beata. He says:

I will [sic] not go through life with a corpse on my back.  
Help me to throw it off, Rebecca. And then let us lay all memories to rest in freedom, and joy, and love. You shall be my wife – the only wife I have ever had (75).

Rebecca’s refusal to marry him surprises him because she has entered Rosmersholm with a wish to become the second wife to him. And it is for this reason that she has taken action. But Rebecca has changed her passion into love. She says, “All the rest – that blending, sickening
passion – faded away from me. All my tormenting furies fell silent and still. A calm came over me – the kind of calm you find on a bird-cliff up in the far north, under the midnight sun” (101). Rebecca explains to Rosmer that the sickening passion that propels her to commit murder vanishes from her during her association with Rosmer’s way of life. The passion has changed into love. She says: “The great and selfless love that asks for nothing more than companionship” (101).

Rebecca has become a real substitute for Beata not in her place but in her character. Like Beata, who gives up willingly her place as wife to avoid the scandal at Rosmersholm, Rebecca does it more than Beata by refusing to take the place offered to her freely. Rebecca has surrendered herself to Rosmer’s way of life. The innocence, which is the secret of joy and happiness, should be maintained if one has to walk on the path to victory, if one has to acquire the capacity to lead man to be ennobled. Rebecca says:

That’s what’s so dreadful – that now, when all life’s happiness is offered to me with open hands – now I’ve become the kind of person whose conscience about the past makes it impossible for me to accept it (102).

She does not want another scandal at Rosmersholm.

Rebecca after the transformation has become a real substitute of
Beata. She respects Rosmersholm just the way Beata has done. She shows the same sacrificial love that Beata has expressed. Rosmer’s recapitulation about Beata is “She must have noticed how happy I began to feel after you [sic] came here” (72). “It was her love for me that threw her into the millrace. That fact remains inescapable, Rebecca” (83).

Rosmer is unable to believe Rebecca because he has become lukewarm water. He is neither hot with the new ideals nor cold with Rosmersholm way of life. He loses faith even in the very cause for which he has dedicated himself to work. Ennobling men has become a hopeless dream, a wild delusion that he no longer believes in. He says, “People cannot be ennobled from without, Rebecca” (102). But Rebecca argues that it is possible with love, the pure love that shows itself in sacrifice. Beata has shown the way. Rebecca is also ready to follow Beata.

Rebecca shows the sacrificial love to Rosmer to redeem him, to give back faith to him, faith in himself, faith in his mission and faith in God. It is she who destroyed him once and now she wants to restore him to his original position. Once Romser declared to Kroll that he was willing to abandon his position as a man of God. He calls his faith false and ambiguous but Rebecca wants to restore him back to his faith. He cannot get back his faith unless she proves it following the example of Beata. Rosmer screams in madness, “Then give me back my faith! My
faith in you, Rebecca! My faith in your love! I want proof! Proof!"
(103).

Right in time, Ulrik Brendel who has shown him this new path of
nenobling men, comes to their house. He derogatively speaks of the
editor of the ‘Morning star’ Peter Mortensgaard that he is a man without
ideals – that is precisely the secret of action and of victory. It is the sum
of all the world’s wisdom. Then he continues his lesson to his pupil.
He tells Rosmer:

And now learn a lesson from your old tutor. Blot out
everything he ever imprinted on your mind. Build not thy
citadel on shifting sand. And take care – proceed warily –
before you build on this charming creature who now
sweetens your existence (105).

The words of Ulrik Brendel bring out the nature of Rebecca’s character
after becoming ennobled by Rosmer. She has become a charming
creature and she has already begun to sweeten his existence.

Rebecca is still a teacher to Rosmer now in a good way
encouraging him to have faith in him. She instills courage in him. “Take
up the fight again, John! Only try, and you’ll see! You will win! You
will ennoble hundreds of souls – thousands! Only try!” (107). Rosmer
replies that he no longer has any faith in that. Rebecca cites herself as an
example, “But it has already stood the test. You have ennobled one human being at least. Me, for as long as I live” (107).

Rosmer has become irredeemable. The wicked Rebecca could be redeemed by him, because she has an innate desire to be really noble. She is ready to do anything to restore him back to Rosmer’s way of life. Both of them remember the last piece of advice given by Brendel:

That the woman who loves him shall, with a glad heart, go out into the kitchen and chop off her delicate rosy-white finger – ... that the aforesaid adoring woman – equally gladly – shall snip off her incomparably formed left ear (105-106).

Rosmer places a choice before Rebecca. She must leave Rosmersholm, because he wants to marry her. Rebecca has already told him that she will quit the house if he talks of marriage. Secondly he is not willing to trust her for the second time and does not allow a companionship between them. She can restore both his faith in her and his task of ennobling men, if she dares to walk on the bridge like Beata and throws herself into the millrace. Rosmer asks a fatal question to Rebecca. “Have you the courage – and the will – with a glad heart, as Ulrik Brendel said – for my sake, now, tonight – freely and willingly – to go the way that Beata went?” (107).
Rebecca asks him what will be his stand if she shows the courage like Beata to jump off into the millstream. Rosmer's answer is positive. “Then I would have to believe in you. I would regain my faith in my life's work. Faith in my ability to ennoble humanity. Faith in the capacity of man to be ennobled” (108). Rebecca decides then and there, “You shall have your faith back” (108). Rosmer still doubts her courage, her determination and her faith. But Rebecca says that she has been ennobled by Rosmer. He has taught her the great ideal “The crime that I have committed – demands atonement” (108).

Rebecca decides to go the way of Beata, only because she believes that “If I go, it will save what is best in you” (108). She wants to save Rosmer. She wants Rosmer to hold on to Rosmer ideals and ennobles thousands of people just as he has done to her. Moreover, Rebecca chooses this way of self-immolation, because she feels otherwise a cripple. The crime that she has done will be forever a corpse weighing on her back, crippling her. She also decides that she should retire from the 'game' she has been playing all along.

Rosmer all on a sudden speaks out that he too wants to join her. Rebecca does not suspect that he wants to throw himself overboard. She thinks that perhaps, he still does not trust her and that may be the reason that he wants to accompany her. She immediately agrees to his accompanying him hoping that he wants to witness her show of courage.
But when they draw near the stream, Rosmer is unable to leave Rebecca. He is convinced of her honesty. Rosmer accepts her as his wife. He accompanies her until they both fall into the millstream.

The ending is very controversial because they both could have revised their life and could have lived a life of ‘ennobling men’. But apart from the moral approach, the social import that is appended to the tale is that the woman takes the man along with her. The man lives too dependent on the woman that he is unable to think of a future, bereft of her.

Ibsen rounds up the character of Rebecca West, glorifying her, who has taken her association with men, as something more serious than an amusement of an idle hour. She has been a co-worker, a partner in her lover’s plan, with a definite purpose. When, the fulfillment of such a purpose requires a sacrifice of higher price she is ready to do it, with no excuse or second thought. To make Rosmer follow his life of nobility, and to relieve him from his guilt, she is ready to bring out the dark secrets from the inner recesses, which paint her as a woman of devilish motives. Yet, she wants to uphold the ideals of the man whom she loves and reinstate the man to his original innocence. If her act of jumping into the stream can restore the man to his nobility, she wants to do it, without reconsidering the pros and cons of her act, for her own benefit. Thus Rebecca sacrifices herself to help the man realise his goals. Ibsen
gives an optimistic picture of the woman, and the extent of her good will to the man and the family, which she loves, though the play ends in a gloomy suicide.

Ibsen's women are an infinite variety in themselves, and there is a unity in their diversity. All women have the self-sacrificing nature, but each woman reveals it in her own way, for each one seems to find herself in different circumstances. Rebecca West is a singular type, a woman, who changes for good. But, whether she is bad or good, she keeps the man in the center of her wheel of life. If she is bad, she influences him with her own bad condition, if she changes, and becomes good, she keeps the man in the center and exposes him to all the good her life can render to him, for the woman is the destiny of man.

In the following chapter, the researcher wants to delineate one more woman type from the 'infinite variety' and show how Ellida, who has been picked up by Dr. Wangel to be the mother of his children, affects the life of the man and his family, until she wrenches the power from man to decide on her own, the kind of path for her life. Woman, will be the destiny of man, and man has to yield to the woman, at last.