CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

A man ought to be married. You'll never regret it.

Every man ought to be married.

Ernest Hemingway – Men without Women

THE EMERGENCE OF NEW WOMAN

For centuries marriage was considered to be the destiny for woman, irrespective of the fact whether she was happily married or was miserable due to constant oppression by man in the patriarchal set up. A woman was always seen in relation to man. A woman was expected to lose her identity and merge her individuality with that of her husband. Her only concern in life was to see that all services needed by her husband were properly performed to the satisfaction of her husband who was the sole joy in her life. There was no question of raising a word against him even when he was found to be ill tempered, vicious, diseased or drunk. The man was proud and arrogant and he did not want, whatever be the circumstances, the woman to contribute her share towards weekly expenses. It is a kind of dependency she sat down with, unable to contribute anything to the general fund of the family, conscious of rendering no other service to her husband except that of being the mere core of the family. So man continued to be the destiny of woman.
A woman is not destined to be the same for ever, for something has been happening below surface, a hidden traumatic development, which has been lying concealed until women on mass scale came out of their homes to take up roles hitherto have been assigned to men only. Women have been performing many exploits under the supervision of men and became skilled workers even in the ancient days and that is recorded by King Solomon in his proverbs. He praises the women who spins, weaves, buys and sells, running the household business while her husband sits with “elders of the land” (Prov. 31:12). And in every age, there have been exceptional women scholars and teachers, rulers, and pioneers, who have helped to shape the destiny of people. Having been trained in skills, sharing with the man and the responsibility to run all human affairs, it did not demand much effort for women to act independently. They have performed the same acts with more confidence, extending their roles. Today, the women have become indispensable not only to maintain the fire at the hearth, but also even to make men accomplished in their public affairs.

Women have begun to involve themselves in a variety of activities, in all fields of life. They have developed in course of time a closer relation to life and people more than men themselves. Politics has long been depending on women to mail campaign literature, telephone voters, handout materials at malls and on the streets, go door to door to give parties, raise money and be loyal wives, friends
and supporters. Every successful politician has an ardent and unsung corps of female volunteers. When the legal system was first established, it held on the attitude that the women are inferior to men. But even from 1800, women have become involved in legal systems. Women have become stokers too. Penny Colman in *Women in Society: America* refers to Mary Harris Jones, who called herself a “hell raiser” (1994:42). She fought for the rights of working people, miners and railroad workers. She worked by the principle, “no matter what you fight, don’t be lady like” (1994:42). The merchant admirers, who sought new world America on Spanish fleets, also had some women in their ranks. Two notorious female pirates were Mary Read and Anne Bony. The women learnt to earn their living by writing. To validate her theory about women, Colman quotes Virginia Woolf’s words of appreciation for Aphra Behn in her novel *A Room of One’s Own* as follows: “All women together ought to let flowers fall upon the tomb of Aphra Behn. ... For it was she who earned them the right to speak their mind” (1994:19).

Even in the status of a farmer’s wife, the woman could play a major role. She was skilled in dairy production, like Mrs. Poyser, in *Adam Bede*, whose dairy products were adjudged in Hayslope village as the best. A farmer’s wife was good at milking and making cheese and butter and in rearing pigs and looking after pantry. She became the centre of activity for man’s peaceful living.
Women soon began to fill the places of men in factories and offices. Women found that well paid work was available to them. Working class women found jobs as stackers, bricklayers, carpenters and so on – all work thought to be beyond the capability of women.

The change in attitude toward women could be seen on the most superficial level, in the clothes. In order to do men’s work, women had to change their dress. For many women this change became permanent. “For the first time in history legs were to be seen beneath women’s skirts” (Levy 1993:26).

This great change in the attitude and in the life styles of women was due to two factors. The first one is due to the environment created by men by shifting their interest from their wives to machines. The industrial revolution has already destroyed the hoary concept of the family as a productive economic unit. But something far more was taking place stealthily: the sexes were moving at full speed away from one another in all realms except that of physical relations because of the ever expanding machine, interposed between the man and his family. As the machine developed to devour the earth, it entrapped man, its creator, who began to devote increasing time and care to its sustenance. The machine had to be thought out in man’s brain; a technician, a scientist or an engineer, the husband began to find it difficult to communicate with his wife about work. The wife on the other hand was less interested in
abstractions than in concrete issues, less concerned with problems than with people. Even as a young boy he fell in love with mechanical gadgets, and later as a technological husband he had little to tell his non-technological wife. A highly specialized man’s world had grown into contemporary life styles and destroyed the romanticism that used to pervade the man-woman relationship. Thus, women were compelled to attempt to metamorphose themselves into pseudo-men by doing their jobs at home and everywhere. The woman allowed the man to enjoy the god-like power in his newfound life and the man became a visitor in his own household.

Once man’s excitement over his new found life had vanished, he wanted to revert to his position in the house, but the woman has already been holding the post efficiently and powerfully guarding it. Man too had to depend on the woman and take directives from her for his life. Thus the woman has been successful in gaining strong foothold in their households and she planned for the welfare of the family.

Such planning and administration is not something new to woman, for she had been cultivating such qualities ever since the mythological period, and the second factor that has caused a change in the attitude towards woman, is the woman’s capabilities which she had been developing from time immemorial. The introduction to the thesis, dwells upon the power and prowess found in women, tracing from the
mythological period to the present day.

Women are generally discriminated by their two different natures. There is the demure and the dauntless. But, in the ancient days, many were demure and an exceptionally few were dauntless. But today, demure women could be seen only in the pages of fiction, whose inevitable reply is that they are pleased to do any thing as it is commanded by the men. D. H. Lawrence in his essay "Cocksure Women and Hensure Men" says:

The demure maiden, the demure spouse, the demure mother-this is still the ideal. A few maidens, mistresses, and mothers are demure. A few pretended to be. But the vast majority are not. And don't pretend to be. We don't expect a girl skillfully driving her car to be demure, we expect her to be dauntless (1969: 31).

These dauntless women are for defiance, challenge, danger and death on the clear air. These women are always waiting to outman the man. An accomplished woman is an inevitable threat to a man.

Man, on the other hand, has failed to notice this change amidst his busy life. He continues to have the mistaken notion of woman as a defective and incomplete human being, who lacks wisdom and strength and he fails to give full recognition and respect. But long back the
woman has changed her place with man, and it is she who keeps him in the centre of her palm, giving directives for his life. This is what Ibsen wants to bring to limelight about the aspect of woman’s character.

Ibsen’s assessment of woman’s power is rather a discovery. Women should not be taken for granted. She may bow to him, cower under his masculine authority and may like to dance to his tune, only as long as he does not doubt her honesty, or curb her will power or challenge her power to face life. But the moment man becomes tyrannical and unjust, and acts on his ego, the woman with all her engendered power will react in such a way as to leave him fallen and surrendered.

Ibsen attempts to study woman as woman with all her physical charm, beauty, womanliness, limitations and biological differences and points out the strong qualities in her, with which she can rule the home and be the destiny of man. It seems an earnest pleading of Ibsen that woman should not be taken as a species who has been assigned a definite position in the society with her duties defined in clear cut terms, as John Milton has encouraged the world to think. He observes in his Paradise Lost:

... for nothing lovelier can be found
In woman, than to study household good,
And good works in her husband to promote (9.232-234).
According to Ibsen, there is a well of positive traits in her which will be shown by her when need arises. Man's attempt to dominate her can only be a superficial act, for, the woman will not brook such treatment for long. She will have her way when she is cornered or thrown into the wilderness and she is sure to make a path for herself.

Ibsen has keenly observed women in various situations and their deftness in assuming mastery over the man and his household and the dramatist has given vent to his thoughts about her in his domestic plays. The women protagonists of these plays are wives, who have to tackle situations in the households dominated by men. This calls for the women's display of talents and cleverness in their battle of life, wherein, the woman affects the ego of the man, in her strife for establishing her superiority and individuality. Man acts and he attempts to control destiny where as the woman is his destiny. She makes an impact on man's life, and as the woman is, so is man's life.

An Analytical Sum up

The following part of this concluding chapter sums up the discussion of each chapter and draws all threads together to establish that women have a controlled power, a quiet determination, with which they run the household and manage the administration of the home and all its affairs of the past and present. She then, cannot be ordinarily thought of, as a woman, but a heroine, and every accomplished woman is a heroine in her own household. She is thus called because no woman
is free from conflict, while taking important decisions that involve her husband and children's life and future. Yet she plans, executes and decides the destiny of the family members, more so the destiny of the husband. The woman is the author and the finisher of man's life.

Chapter II deals with the power of woman on man, as explicit in A Doll's House. Initially, Helmer's is a normal home, with pleasant living conditions, where the male dominates and the female submits. Helmer shows possessiveness towards Nora, dictating the principles of life and watching her obedience. To him, the religion is summarized in one line, "Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands" (Eph 5:22).

Nora, having understood his masculine vanity allows him to treat her like a doll and makes no protest against it till at last, he fails to live and act according to her expectations. She honestly hopes that one day, her husband may show the amazing miraculous love in compensation for her sacrifice. But Helmer clearly tells her "But nobody sacrifices his honour [sic] for the one he loves" (A Doll's House : 86). If "hundreds and thousands of women have" (86) made such sacrifices, women are created for making them. That is what a woman is made for, to make sacrifices and love the man and her children. At any cost, she can never leave her husband and children. When Nora expresses her decision to do so, Helmer is shocked. He asks her, "Surely you are clear about your
position in your own home? Haven't you an infallible guide in questions like these? Haven't you your religion?" (84). Nora takes a firm decision, against all the teachings of the clergyman. Again Helmer commands her to stick to her position of a wife and mother, in the name of 'conscience'. He says, "This is incredible talk from a young woman! But if religion cannot keep you on the right path, let me at least stir your conscience. I suppose you do have some moral sense?"(85). Nora declares that she does not understand religion of conscience, or law of marriage but she has understood only one thing that "the law is different from what I thought"(85).

Tradition, perhaps, may accuse Nora of an 'insane mind' when she decides to quit the house. Helmer tells Nora, "You are ill, Nora. You are delirious; I'm half inclined to think you are out of your mind" (85). Nora replies readily "Never have I felt so calm and collected as I do tonight" (85). She wants to leave her husband and home.

Nora's act of leaving Helmer, has stripped him off his vanities, and her act does change the life of Helmer. In fact, a man ought to change himself the moment a woman enters his life. Whether a man likes or not, the entry of a woman in a man's life changes his thinking, his life style, his prospects and thereafter the man has to change his plans, and revise his whims and fancies. The tenor of his life mainly
depends on the attitude of the woman towards him and towards the society. Unfailingly Nora is the destiny of Helmer.

Nora has been a woman, apparently submissive, but possessing a heart of courage which is expressed in her convictions and actions. Her love for her husband is sincere, genuine and unpretentious. Her efforts to save her husband’s life should not be treated lightly. She too does it with a risk. The more risks the sacrifice contains, the greater is her love. She has done something, about which Helmer should be proud of. Had he been a little thoughtful he would not have thrown her ‘sacrifice’ like a faded button rose. Nora is a sensible woman, who makes him realise where he has miserably failed in his life. They have been living together all the eight-years of their married life and not once Helmer has turned aside to question the genuinity of her love. Nora wins the heart of Helmer before leaving him. She makes him realise, what a love and sacrifice are hidden in the person of woman.

Nora could not have been the heroine of this play, if she had left the house in tears, wailing for her husband. She walks out triumphantly, making Helmer feel that the house is ‘empty’ without her. She leaves a vacuum. A man’s life without his wife becomes a ‘vacuum’. Nora is triumphant not because she is ruthless in her abandoning of her husband and home. She is not appreciated for the courage she has shown in leaving the house to face the world alone. She is not adored for
slamming the door on her husband's face, which marshals the way of freedom for all the women of Europe. She is not given credit for her decision to leave the house, when her husband refuses to sacrifice his honour for the love of his wife. In fact, Nora is to be highly respected as a heroine, for the way she has left an indelible impression in the life of Helmer as a wife. He greatly misses her when she leaves the house. He realises that he cannot get a substitute for Nora. She alone can be his wife. There lies the success of Nora. Ibsen proclaims in this play that, man may try to control destiny but woman is his destiny.

Chapter III Ghosts discusses the character of Mrs. Alving. It focuses woman as a supreme power in the life of man. A Doll's House shows what an emptiness Nora has created in his house, by her slamming of the door behind her. Ghosts shows what could have been done by a woman if she stays back with her husband and takes care of the management of the affairs of the man and his household. Mrs. Alving returns to a house, which does not have a conducive atmosphere for a woman to live in. Her husband enjoys an illicit relationship with a servant maid, drinks at all times, forces his good wife to give company to him in his drinking moods. Such a family situation is not a welcoming life for a woman. But Mrs. Alving does stay back and takes the reins of the house. As a consequence she keeps up the image of Mr. Alving from getting tarnished with spurious names, and makes people think of him as an important pillar
of the society. The memorial built by Mrs. Alving only enhances his personality as a philanthropist. This sacrifice of the woman makes her, 'a worth living' human being and adds more purpose and meaning to the life of Mr. Alving.

Mrs. Alving is a daring and powerful woman. There is a problem waiting for her at every milestone of her life. Her compulsory marriage with Mr. Alving and her forsaken love for Pastor Manders, who always treats her as an untouchable property keeping her at two arms distance even when she needs an embrace of love to overcome the disheartening failure in life are the prominent problems of her life. Added to these, Mr. Alving's indulgence in debauched life, and his immoral ways, her son's return to her as a wreck, whose life has to be stopped by the same hands that rocked him in the cradle dampen her spirit. Mrs. Alving withstands all these troubles of life, because she is a woman of determination. Mrs. Alving has mastered courage to stand against all threatening incidents of her life. The ideals that have been the yardstick of her life are broken relentlessly to let herself live. Living becomes more important to her than life in all its ideals. Her compulsion to murder her son has brought a sense of purity in her life because she has made sacrifices to purge the family of its impurities.

Mrs. Alving is no longer a slave to 'ideals' that smothered her
life. She has learnt from her son about 'the joys of life'. She has one chance to redeem herself, if she obeys her conscience despite all conventions. The blind idealist must recover her sight and should endeavour to act independently without the reference made to love; she should be ready to relieve him. This realization of Mrs. Alving makes her heroic. Her decision to set her son free is a sign of heroism. Any one can do it, but it will not be called heroic; any other person can do it. It cannot be heroic. But when a mother does it, it is beyond doubt heroic.

Mrs. Alving’s life shows that a woman can cause an impact on the lives of her family members. Mrs. Alving is a strong woman who seeks odd situations and deals with them in concrete reality. She works in the flesh rather than in spirit. No other testimony can be appropriate enough to bring out the full effect of her heroism, than the words quoted by Bernard Shaw in his *Quintessence of Ibsenism*. He says “…even those who are most indignant with Nora Helmer for walking out of Doll’s House must admit that Mrs. Alving would be justified in walking out of her house” (1955:67). These words of Shaw are the greatest compliments to the woman who has made herself the destiny of the whole family.

How great her cause can be seen from the important query raised by the public after reading *Ghosts*. Zucker records them in his
biography, “Would a mother ever have the right to put a merciful end to her son’s suffering?” (1929:173). But Mrs. Alving’s courage surpasses all human limitations and shows her a super woman, by the way she silences Pastor Manders by her answer to the dramatic question raised by him after he had upbraided the sodden Carpenter Engstrand for marrying Chamberlain Alving’s maid: “To go and marry a fallen woman for a paltry fifty pounds!” (Ghosts:58). Mrs. Alving’s prompt reply, “what about me? I went and married a fallen man” (59) shows the persistent and unflinching courage of Mrs. Alving from the first to the last.

The show of courage of Mrs. Alving is seen in her standing resolutely for marrying a ‘fallen man’ and drawing an iron curtain on his debauched life so that people would praise him as the great ‘pillar of the society’ and murdering her own son in order to protect the honour of the family and make the men to continue to believe in the purity and greatness of a man’s life. Mrs. Alving has been the guardian of the honour of Alving’s family. What a woman can do is a question juxtaposed with what a woman cannot do?

Ibsen’s next play Rosmersholm vividly and straightforwardly shows the power of woman on man, “a controlled power, a quiet determination” (Rosmersholm:25). This power is not a force, but a torment, an attraction. Rebecca lures Rosmer and this is a common man’s attraction for a woman. Rosmer is torn between the love of two
women. The one, Beata, docile, quiet, innocent and the other Rebecca, vivacious, intelligent, clever and a bookworm. Rosmer prefers Rebecca when he wants to thrust himself to the public and misses Beata when his charm for public life fades.

Though, at first, it looks as if a black veil is thrown upon the character of Rebecca, soon, the veil is removed to show her virtues. She seems to be an angel in disguise. Rosmer's admiration and preference for Rebecca is justified. It is she who brings a sparkle in his otherwise dull and sedentary life. She makes him express his vision about his mission. D. H. Lawrence in his essay "Love and Life" says "No man works so well and so successfully as when some woman has kindled a little fire in his veins" (1969:18). This Rebecca has done for Rosmer. Therefore Rebecca has to be taken as a new woman, and it would not be a mistaken identity if she is taken as a role model.

When Rosmersholm appeared, feminists hailed Rebecca West as the portrait of an emancipated woman, who embroiled "'the gospel of the future'" (Templeton 2001:181) for women. Rebecca destroys herself to prove her love for a man, and here is a new woman with the old ideal of feminine self-sacrifice. Rebecca has played to perfection the role of sacrificed woman. No woman would like to reveal her dark motive to the man whom she loves and it is equal to a criminal
deliberately confessing his crimes, knowing the enormity of the crime, and the punishment that may follow. But blindly intent on relieving Rosmer, Rebecca decides to confess to him her responsibility in Beata’s death. This she does only to give him ‘the joys of innocence again’. She also absolves him of his responsibility in Beata’s death and tells him “You are innocent. It was I who lured – who ended by luring Beata into the labyrinth” (Rosmersholm:92). Rosmer can continue to live in Eden while Rebecca takes the blame for the fall.

Rebecca has made the weak man strong. Rebecca’s nature is strong and wild, but while tamed by the weak, she becomes infected by him, until she herself becomes weak and sickly. As she confesses to Rosmer that the blinding and uncontrollable passion for him, “broke my will – and frightened me for ever” (99). Her love for Rosmer has made her a slave to laws that never had mattered to her before. She even destroys herself to prove her love for him. Thus, Rebecca, the strong dominates Rosmer, the weak and in turn, she has become so weak and mentally sick, that she obeys the orders of Rosmer to fall into the millstream. The change that Rebecca has brought in Rosmer, is done at the expense of Rebecca changing herself from strong to weak. Though Rebecca herself never dreamt of changing for good she does it for the man whom she loves.

Lorraine Markotic says “There is clearly a transition from the
Rebecca who arrives at Rosmersholm, intending to conquer it, to the
Rebecca who throws herself into the millstream with Rosmer at the end
of the play" (1998:428). She becomes deadened into inertia, loses the
power to act because she follows the Rosmer's way of life.

The villain of the piece is the woman's unbridled, unchecked love
for man. First Beata is ready to prove her love, and allows herself to be
carried away by the waters. And next, Rebecca's selfless love has made
her fall into the stream. The woman, Rebecca, has played such a vital
role in the life of Rosmer, that his fate is interlocked in the fate of the
woman. He could not imagine a future without the strong Rebecca, who
has enlivened him with strength of mind.

Rebecca depletes herself to make him strong and Rosmer could
not envisage a life without her. He does not wait for another woman to
come on his way to enlighten him. He is more than satisfied with the
life he shared with Rebecca. After Beata's death he still lived, for there
is a Rebecca to make him happy, enlighten him, and to strengthen him.
He has a desire, a longing to live and enjoy life. But Rebecca has
culminated his life through fulfilment of his own ideals, most of all, in
their own personal life. He feels a sense of completeness and does not
hesitate to follow her even in death.

Ibsen shows in this play *Rosmersholm* how the man depends on
the woman, in a way, that he trusts her for his entire course of his life.
Wherever she leads, there the man goes. The woman is his destiny. Inside the marriage order, it is always the woman who is followed by the husband. The final conversation between Rosmer and Rebecca shows that the man's destiny is inseparable from the woman's destiny and she is his destiny:

**ROSMER** : The husband shall go with his wife, as the wife with her husband.

**REBECCA** : But first tell me this. Is it you who go with me? Or I with you?

**ROSMER** : That we shall never know.

**REBECCA** : I should like to know.

**ROSMER** : We go together, Rebecca. I with you, and you with me (Rosmersholm: 109).

The play shows that the woman has shaped the destiny of man. She has been taking Rosmer to different groves of life and put him in and out of ideals. The woman attracts him and makes him dependent on her. Rosmer who has been hesitant to make a public confession of his liberal views does so after the arrival of Rebecca. He absorbs from her the courage, the boldness and the force of life, which she manifests in her character during her association with him. The man always wallows in ego, self-centred will and fails to impart his qualities to the woman. The woman ever watching out the character of man attempts to mould
him to her desire and her destiny must necessarily be his destiny.

Chapter V discusses *The Lady from the Sea*. Ibsen’s focus in this play is on the woman who wakes up to realise her power. Ellida is sandwiched between the devout love of two men. Her husband Wangel has given her shelter and good home, making her forget her sordid pecuniary life she had been leading hitherto. But Ellida has been obsessed with the memory of a sailor, whom she once briefly knew. As her life becomes unchallenging and isolated from the past, the stranger has grown increasingly alluring in her imagination. Ellida’s barely understood and half-conscious longings for life become personified in the stranger. She doesn’t have any specific emotion or an attachment to him. In fact, she has almost forgotten him. But it looks as if Wangel revives his memory.

Wangel gives Ellida no responsible tasks, no way to make her life with him meaningful but confines her to the distressing narrowness of his existence. It is at this time that the memories of life as free as the sea dominate her. The stranger becomes a reality, which she believes to be her dream. She thinks of the sailor as the father of the child, believing that both have eyes ‘like the sea’. When the stranger returns, Ellida is compulsively drawn to him. She insists upon the freedom to choose between the stranger and Wangel. The question is whom will the woman
choose? Will she choose a man who is only a dream or does her thought rest on a man who can give her the comforts of the world?

Ellida, who has been dreaming to the point of derangement wakes up to consciousness. She refuses to make a choice until Wangel stops making decision for her. He should give up Ellida to get her back, and it needs a sacrifice of true love. A woman can understand the intricacies of a man, more than he can understand himself. She can identify the springs of love if they are genuine.

Ellida represents women who don’t like to be just an ornament for man or be an appendage to a man’s existence. She must take up her own life. She does not believe in a daring exit or a dramatic death. She loves a life of action. She wants to be a ‘crown’ to man, to assist him in his daily activities and a ‘helpmate’ in the real sense. But many a women are fated to be ‘dolls’ or a pendant to the chain worn by men. Ellida, the moment she is given the freedom to act as a wife, steps into action to win her two stepdaughters’ affection:

WANGEL : Ellida! Ellida! We have found each other at last. Now we can live-for each other-

ELLIDA : And with our memories.Yours as well as mine.

WANGEL : Yes! Yes.

ELLIDA : And with our children, Wangel. Our two children.
WANGEL : *Our [sic] children?*

ELLIDA : They are not yet mine. But I shall win them

(The Lady from the Sea : 207-208).

The play ends with a sunny note bringing home the truth that women are the homemakers. Ellida has shown that she can bind the broken families, can share the 'private memories' of the inmates and make herself part of the home. Women not only love freedom and responsibility but are also responsible for determining the destiny of man as enunciated by Ellida.

Chapter VI *Hedda Gabler* is a discussion on the character of Hedda Gabler, a woman with an ill ambition to destroy the man who has loved her. She is not a resuscitator, but a destroyer of life. Hedda aims at destroying all those who come into contact with her, except Judge Brack who is too clever for her. She has two pistols with her, left to her as a legacy by her father. She decides to destroy both the men, the one who has married her and made her life ridiculous, and the other who has loved her earlier and attempted a sexual assault on her. Had not Thea Elvsted been there as a rival to claim his love, Hedda would have changed the destiny of Loevborg, more than what Thea had done in his life – namely to inspire him and make him write the history of civilization. Having missed the opportunity, her mind will be at rest, only if she is going to destroy what Thea has brought on him and remove all the traces of Thea's work on this professor.
Hedda challenges Thea: “You can doubt him as much as you like. I believe in him! Now we’ll see which of us - ” (Hedda Gabler : 80). This is a horrid challenge that shows Hedda as an evil power waiting to destroy the good in Loevborg and overpower him with evil. She keeps asking Loevborg “Have I no power over you at all?”(76). She could get this power only by villainy – to betray the fear of Thea about his getting back into drinking bouts. She has already known Loevborg so close as to have learnt his expectations with respect to trust. As the general proverb says, ‘once bitten twice shy’, Loevborg will quit when people do not trust him. He once quit Hedda because she doesn’t trust him as a man, who is in love with her, but shows her pistols to shoot him. She knows that to undo what Thea has done on him, namely the restoration of his dignity, she has to betray Thea’s real purpose in coming to town. Thea comes in the morning to look out for him with a growing anxiety about his tripping into old habits. This information irritates Loevborg and he not only quits her but also returns to his old life. Hedda, who has been waiting with expectation for such a turning point in his life, feels conquered.

Hedda is vicious, evil and repulsive. Her deeds are extravagantly unkind. She insults, mocks, snubs, and destroys. She is committed to no cause but destruction. It is difficult to defend Hedda Gabler since she commits unforgettable crimes against the defenseless Loevborg and Thea Elvsted. Lisa Elaine Low in the essay, “In Defense of Hedda”
comments on Hedda: “She is a destroyer. Like Clytemnestra, she is a manslayer. Like Medea, she is an infant slayer. ... she kills past and present, parent and child. And then, she kills herself ”(1982:43). But, man’s life has to necessarily be shared with such a woman as Hedda Gabler and she too is man’s destiny.

These women who belong to the gallery of portraits of the domestic plays have developed certain praiseworthy characteristic traits in them, apart from the usual traits, which a woman just for the virtue of being a woman is expected to show. Submissiveness, passivity and lack of initiative are considered positive traits by some men, who believe in male domination. A great thinker like Ruskin has defined the character making of a boy and a girl with a well-drawn margin in their difference. He observes in his *Sesame and Lilies*, edited by Albert E. Robert:

> For there is just this difference between the making of a girl’s character and a boy’s – you may chisel a boy into shape, as you would a rock, or hammer him into it, if he be of a better kind, as you would a piece of bronze. But you cannot hammer a girl into anything. She grows as a flower does,- ...she may fall, and defile her head in dust, if you leave her without help at some moments of her life; (1996:81).
So it is a general opinion that a woman cannot be ‘hammered into anything’. But Ibsen dares to relate a different story about women, through his heroines in domestic plays. They have the masculine character also in them, which when need arises will develop according to the power and strength of the individual woman. His heroines have been showing submissiveness, passivity and modesty in taking initiatives but that is as long as things get on smoothly. When situations demand their heroic actions, they wince not ever a wee bit, but emerge as personalities who dare to meet any challenge in life. Nora, in A Doll’s House has been showing womanly submission through out her married life, but when the ‘miraculous love’ does not happen, she opts for an exit. Mrs. Alving in Ghosts is too submissive that she cannot even refuse the man she doesn’t like, but emerges with stupendous grandeur when she has to take decision about her son’s catastrophe. Rebecca in Rosmersholm has been showing a brave character from the day she enters the house till the day she jumps into the millstream. Exceptionally there has been submissiveness and passivity in her personality, which gets displayed in her, at the time of her transformation. Ellida in The Lady From the Sea not only wakes into her power but also shows an unbreakable will power to make her life happy. Hedda Gabler is different from all the other heroines in the sense that, she has an inbuilt negative trait in her character that makes her more unbearable.
These women are called heroines because they undergo a conflict, between their prescribed gender identity and their individual autonomy. To be more precise, these women experience a conflict when the society dictates them what they must be and what they are to become. The status of heroine has to be assigned to a woman who conquers the hurdles and emerges victorious out of her conflict-involved situations. Nora has been debating within herself, whether to leave her home and children, and the husband for whom she has sacrificed her life. It certainly must have been grim and gruesome like the conflict in the mind of King Lear, when, he fails to assess the love of Cordelia whom he decides to make 'dowerless'. Finally, when Nora walks out of the house, it is a great strain for her to strip herself of her home and children but walks as a loner. Yet the determination, with which she presents her purport of teaching herself the duties of a woman, distinguishes her as a heroine with special attributes of courage and power.

Mrs. Alving in *Ghosts* is also seen in similar situation, though, she has gone through many conflicts, right from the time of marrying Mr. Alving to the last act of murdering her son. She seems to be in the same conflict like Hamlet 'to be or not to be' and the difference is, before it is too late, she takes a decision to do something which many mothers dare not do. She distinguishes herself as a heroine of stupendous power.
Rebecca in Rosmersholm submits herself to the conflict, after her transformation. Had she not changed, it would not have been difficult to accept the marriage offer of Rosmer. It is something she longs for. But it comes at a time, when she is not in the mind to accept. Her conflict is, whether to eat the fruit of her hard work or throw it away to restore the man whom she loves. She has worked very hard to worm her way into Rosmersholm. She has become guilty of sending Beata to death, over-powering Rosmer’s innocence with apostasy and now she has to negate everything. But, she emerges victorious by preferring to do the most difficult thing namely-refusing the proposal, and showing her real love for him by jumping into the stream. She too distinguishes herself as a heroine of courage and power by rejecting what she loves to possess. She also takes Rosmer with her while jumping into the millstream and thereby proves to be his destiny.

In The Lady from the Sea, Ellida has to make a choice between two men. One, Dr. Wangel and the other the Stranger, the sailor. The husband Dr. Wangel neither disturbs her emotions nor incite her love for freedom. He even does not ignite the troubling pulses of her heart. He is calm and lulls her emotions to sleep. The sailor rouses the storm in her mind and probes deeper than her heart. He matches with her spirit of freedom. She gets into a conflict but her conflict does not require a
Hedda Gabler has been under personal conflict caught in a whirlpool of vicious emotions and destructive thoughts. She has the choice to live, and to die is not her wishful choice. However, to destroy the child of Tesman, she has to die. Therefore to live or die is her conflict and the evil predominates more than good in consonance with her nature. She is vicious and bold to accomplish what she wishes to bring about on the people whom she doesn’t respect.

The researcher has been highlighting on the situations in the domestic plays, wherein man is shown, desperately yielding himself to abide by the dictum of woman, and depending on her goodwill to keep his home from crumbling into shreds. The womanpower is the driving force behind all his activities and whether the woman lives or dies, it is the man who becomes affected by her actions. This study has delineated the character of woman choosing five of Ibsen’s domestic plays, wherein women have been dominantly and powerfully shaping the destiny of their men. In A Doll’s House, Helmer realises that he has been foolish to call the woman for ‘settling of accounts’ and he has been trapped by her on the same footing. He realizes that the happiness of his life is in the hands of Nora, and therefore wails for her, pleading her to
come back to him. Much depends on her positive answer. His destiny is interlocked with her, for she has to come back to manage his affairs and his home and children. She is the lawgiver and the force behind running the home and the family. The woman is the destiny of man.

In the second play, *Ghosts*, Mrs. Alving has proved that a woman can cover up any ugly ‘corpse’ by her will power and create dream fame. She shows that it is in the hands of the woman, to build a starlit dome even over a drunkard and dissolute man, and keep his name untarnished. Mrs. Alving has changed the destiny of Mr. Alving. He dies as one of the pillars of the society, in the eyes of his countrymen.

In *Rosmersholm*, Rosmer and Rebecca come to realise that they are one. Raymond Williams says in his *Drama from Ibsen to Eliot*:

Rosmer is a creature of his past, the ‘death in life’ of Rosmersholm. To fight his way out to life, to bring light ‘where the Rosmer family has from generation to generation been a centre of darkness’, his own strength is insufficient. While he has faith in Rebekke [sic] he can act; (1964:89).

This clearly reveals the power a woman has over the man and she controls his destiny.
The Lady from the Sea is yet another play in the tradition of A Doll's House where the woman threatens to leave the man if the right to make choice is not accorded to her. It is the man who yields to her and woman who consolidates his affairs for him. His life depends upon her decision.

Hedda Gabler is a play about Hedda, the contaminated woman, who prevails upon every male in the play with her evil disposition. The men fall a victim to her viciousness, and she like Samson in Gaza, pulls down the roof not only on her, but on everyone who touches her sentiments.

The researcher has arrived at the conclusion that the women protagonists in the selected domestic plays of Ibsen play significant roles as wives and have created a great impact on the minds and lives of their men. They have consciously or unconsciously moulded or twisted the destiny of the males bound to them. That man, in the gender sense, is overpowered by the woman when the curtain falls, is vividly discussed in each of these plays. Hedda Gabler emphatically voices Ibsen's conviction when she declares “for once in my life I want to have the power to shape a man's destiny”(80). It may therefore be concluded that in Ibsen's domestic plays, woman is man's destiny.

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