

Chapter V

Conclusion

Henrik Ibsen was the first dramatist to have felt the need and necessity of capturing the various nuances and emotion of feminists. It is not presumptuous to credit Ibsen for initiating, challenging, questioning the narrative of delineating feminine behavior on stage subtly pioneering the sense of rebellion in the European Society and hence befittingly regarded as the social thinker and visionary dramatist. He dexterously used drama as a forceful medium for propagating his social philosophy and artistic vision. Drama, to him, emerged as an instrument that could effectively bring modern values, ideas to people. We find a gradual transition in the causes he espoused from the first phase of his writing when he had written *Catiline* where he focused on the inner motives, on the individual concerns, and on self-realization. In the second phase, he turned to social issues where he attempted to show the struggle between individual and society, between an individual with his/her own set of values and society with its own imposing and conventional set of values. However, in the last phase, Ibsen concentrated on the issues of universal significance. He enlarged the compass of his theatre to include universal issues like a man playing at the hands of destiny, man's struggle against the worldly affairs and man's quest for identity. During this great span of development as a dramatist, Ibsen was consistently unsettled with his environment. To put it differently, Ibsen was a rebel throughout his life. As reiterated earlier from *Catiline* to *When We Dead Awaken*, Ibsen portrayed the characters that rebelled against the society, the state, against the dominating rules and restricting societal norms. He projected the characters with their individual set of ideas, values, plan of action and autonomous style living.

Both his statements, made from time to time and his plays evidently show that he moved between his strong sense of rebellion, his self-assertion and his suspicion of his own ideas, their usefulness. He was full of self-contradictions both as a man and as an artist. Almost every play that he wrote seems to be a correction or a rebuttal of the one or several which preceded it. But such contradictions are inevitable because Ibsen was a great and visionary artist. He was in quest of a binding unity, a dominant truth. His plays reveal the self-realization processes. His rigorous discipline of

turbulent subjectivity guides his craft. It masters the contentions of his spirit and gives his plays a good part of their staying power.

The one word that heavily weighed on Ibsen's mind throughout his career as a dramatist was freedom. He counted it more important than anything else to remain true and faithful to oneself. For him, freedom was not a question of willing this or that, but of willing what one must do because one was oneself and could not do otherwise. We can perceive this broad idea of freedom variously expressed in his plays. He engaged his characters in perpetual dialectic with themselves, with others, with the society or the world at large. His rebellious spirit and his uncompromising idea of freedom provided the necessary essence and impetus to his plays such reflection could be more easily and effectively perceived in his portrayal of woman characters. He looked upon women as life-force, as the embodiment of all the original energy, vitality and devotion.

The counter women, for Ibsen, emerged as the bearers of the strong hatred and rebellious attitude that he had for the traditional world, the conventional society, "the trolls". He looked upon like that section of humanity which had been suffering for ages from neglect, dominance, the imposition of severe norms and deprivation of respectable life. This crisis of identity that he was experiencing from within as an artist discovered its outward counterpart in women. The women characters, therefore in Ibsen's plays represent opposition to tradition, to social norms, to all types of tyranny and dominance.

Even though we find some sort of variation in the women characters as some of them endure the suffering/hardships and some of them acquiesce into surroundings, yet in the ultimate analysis they function as the willful and strong counterparts to their opponents. They become the conductors of Ibsen's sense of rebellion, of freedom and of unmanageable life. It does not mean that they do not have their independent, separate existence/identity beyond their creator's sphere. They are very much independent, willing to venture, taking initiative into new modes of existence. The only thing is that they are motivated by their creator's vision of life, and it is that one should be bold and true to yourself and that you can find your own way of life.

In the present study of Ibsen's women, the researcher has attempted to examine the different faces of women in the selected plays from this perspective. The

present study makes it is evident that Ibsen's women characters emerge in different forms and with different motivations but the real energy of endurance, opposition, submission or self-assertion is drowned from Ibsen's idea of rebel and freedom. All these different women, with their different appearances and motives, struggle very hard to realize their aim, their dream and their destination. Some of them go to the extent of abandoning their familiar environment and plunge into the insecure world and some of them continue to stay with their familiar world and cope with the changing situations.

But in both these cases of breaking away from the world and coping with the world, these women try to rediscover their freedom, their identity, and their space which can establish them on the firm footing of the truth rather than an illusion. These are the apparently different and opposite modes that Ibsen creates in his plays through the women characters try to rediscover their independence, their endeavours to find their space. Some women characters add to their strength. It is very remarkable to note that Ibsen succeeds in showing how the women characters add to their own burdens in their endeavours to find their space. Some women characters prove hurdles in the road to self-realization. In short, Ibsen's women characters emerge from the base of freedom, rebellion, uncompromising nature and quest for self-identity.

In this chapter of conclusion about the study of different faces of women in Ibsen's selected plays, the first and foremost conclusion that the researcher would like to draw is this search for freedom and self-identity. The framework adopted for this study assumed two basic categories of Ibsen's women- a) rebellious women before submissive women and b) instructive modernism is hard but rewarding. Such assumption enabled the researcher to examine Ibsen's women in a more focused and pointed manner. However the different and often contrasting forms with one another, but we can summarily observe that these categories cover various faces of Ibsen's women. The other important point mentioned in the chapter, 'Introduction', is that Ibsen did not portray any of his women characters with any express and explicitly socio-political agenda.

His approach was not feministic in the accepted sense of the term. He believed in the justifiable and rational freedom of women, their social and political equality and their position as independent and respectable citizens of the modern world. His

approach was decidedly humanistic; he was against every kind of oppression, human perspective enabled him to portray the women characters as individuals yearning for freedom and identity. Therefore, we do not find Ibsen's women with any socio-political or economic program for revolution, any vociferous outcry against injustice, any violent act. They are determined, bold, self-assured and confident. They slowly take charge of the situation, assuredly present their point of view and take bold decisions which influence the entire set-up of the play.

Ibsen's women are patient, compassionate, human, tender, caring, beautiful, dutious and yet curiously enough determined, bold, self-assured and independent. They are not destructive or violent; they rise with the definite and logical consciousness against the system which they think encroaches upon their self. These are the different faces of women that we encounter in his plays: women who are modern in their outlook, confident and honest in words and action.

Ibsen draws a huge canvass on which his women characters actualize his notion of a free, liberated, modern and independent individual. All his plays are successive attempts to espouse his ideas especially in the delineation of women. This kind of study holds greater relevance and significance for this reason that through and in his women characters, we can perceive adequately Ibsen's human concern, his urge for freedom and his commitment to the establishment of the respectable life for all sections to society. The study of his women offers another dimension to study his plays. It gives a fuller and subtler picture of the humanity that Ibsen had in mind. Because it is in the portrayal of women that Ibsen offers an incredible variety of experience, full functioning of human potential and uncompromising resistance to everything mean, low, degrading and exploitative.

His male characters offer a very dominant, all-embracing and imposing view of their world where they are responsible for what they say or do. However, Ibsen's women offer the picture of the other side, the dominated and repressed side of humanity where either submission or suicide is the only alternative. Ibsen through his women characters catches the view of the unspoken reality which is invisible but very effective. It is a very fascinating study to examine how Ibsen presents the human potential in different manifestations in his plays.

Among Ibsen's positive values are his strong women who embody non-conformist ideas about the society, the state and the suffocating environment. He presents women with titanic intensity on a dwarf's scale. He singularly creates women who are large and capacious enough to sustain all shocks and surprises in their way of self-realization and at the same breath depict women who collapse by a single stroke of their situations. This is being truly realistic that heightens not only the dramatic effect but sheds lights on the reality of human existence.

It is a point worth mentioning in the final assessment of Ibsen's treatment of women that he portrays women characters in a more unconventional and unprecedented manner. His treatment of women is very different from that of Greek and Renaissance drama. In the Greek and Renaissance drama, women are portrayed as violent and at times destructive. Ibsen's women achieve great stature with their action and speech. His strong women possess not only strength but also authority; men often seem mere wax for their moulding. Explaining Ibsen's women characters, G. Wilson Knight makes a very perceptive and pertinent observation:

“We have two primary female types: the strong whether dark or light, and the softer and more sweet-natured, the latter normally of lower dramatic status despite instances of formulated approval, than the former”. (1966:109).

This classification neatly sums up Ibsen's women with the only addition to be made about the modern posture of the women characters. Ibsen's women are characterized by their urge for self-realization as everything else becomes secondary and subsidiary before it. Both sexual and Christian love bends before the women characters confrontation with the realities of their encounter with the society, the environment in which they are forcefully set in.

The women wage war against them and then with the environment they live in. Their confrontations reveal their different faces, their motives, and their destination. Their fight is chiefly against convention, hypocrisy, sexual passion, marriages of experience, a corrupt press, and vested interests. Their hardest fight is perhaps against their past, either of society or of oneself, which may involve guilt and hamper their freedom. Ibsen portrayed such confrontations and thereby revealed the inner strength and passion of his women characters. He hardly presented them in erotic form or in a promiscuous manner but often played down sex in its physical and

passionate form. He attempted to elevate man-woman relationship to the spiritual level where self-realization could be possible in mutual correspondence. Respectability was Ibsen's watchword in his portrayal of his women; he did not portray altogether promiscuous women but attempted to see the quest for identity fulfilled in and through them. He handled more tender and therefore more difficult issues through the portrayal of women characters.

Ibsen's women, of course, are not as easily categorized as the women in the Greek or Renaissance plays as mentioned earlier. Ibsen brought immense variety and subtlety in their very constitution and that made them complex. Every women character in his selected six plays constitutes a different case. She is not just different from other women character in the play but different from herself. Her appearance and real nature often contrast and create a complex impression upon the audience. The women characters reveal unexpected motives, decisions, initiations as if these are the weapons that they bear to fight against their antagonists. Such vacillation, of course, is only apparent, inwardly, these women characters prepare themselves to face and fight their enemies. But as mentioned earlier, Ibsen introduced tremendous variety and subtlety by the dint of which any intelligent and tenable categorization or labelling fails to account his women. Nora, Mrs. Alving, Gina, Hedda, Catherine and Petra all exhibit immense variety and subtlety and show several faces in the course of the action of the play

As this study of Ibsen's women and their different faces was done in accordance with the framework adopted and elaborated in the opening chapter, the basic types- and their actions and speech were examined. The first type of women or the face that was considered for examination was the women in a marital relationship of the wife. Ibsen's conception of the man-woman partnership was based on his social philosophy. He strongly believed in the concept of equality and condemned any kind of exploitation or deprivation either on the part of man or woman. He strongly criticized the conventional categorization of men and women and when he found such categorization forcefully and deliberately made in the case of women, he argued in the favour of women. He was against the conventional categorization of women as obedient, dutiful wives because he thought that such role imposition only crushed the freedom of women and deprived them of their real identity and life. Such conception can be seen at work when Ibsen portrays wives in his plays.

Marriage Ibsen believed is healthy only to the extent that they contribute to the partners in realizing their true selves. But this ideal notion of marriage hardly gets materialized in practical life. On the contrary, marriage works as an instrument to perpetuate the dominance of one partner over the other and Ibsen was precisely against this exercise. For him, marriage should enable the partners to realize their respective identities. He looked upon man-woman relationship as an effort towards discovering true nature and identity. In the present study of women characters, Ibsen notion of ideal marriage breaks down and gives way to the dominance of the male partners. In this face of women characters, we specifically come to Nora Helmer in *A Doll's House*. If we streamline Ibsen's central conviction that there is little hope for mankind unless every individual becomes an authentic person of all whose acts must spring from the deeper self, it is equally applicable to men as well as women.

Applied to *A Doll's House*, in the present study in the second chapter, we find Nora's position cornered. From the first, we observe that Nora and Torvald do not know each other very well, though, of the two, Nora is certainly the more aware. After having examined the play from this point of view, we come to know that Nora is nothing else but a "lark", "a squirrel", "a spendthrift", "a little woman", "and a little liar". He has forgotten that she persuaded him to go on the trip to Italy which saved his life; he barely inquires how she procured money for it. He cannot possibly know that she saved most of her allowance for clothes, engaged in needlework and crocheting for others, working far into the night as a means of earning enough money to pay back the debt incurred for Torvald's sake. Torvald hardly realizes these small but very effective acts that Nora does for him and for the well-being of the Helmer family. In all essentials, Torvald is more ignorant than Nora, for she has already faced and survived a crisis, taken difficult and dangerous action on his behalf. Torvald suffers from his rigorous middle class code of proper conduct. It is because of this conventionally self-righteousness attitude of Torvald to Nora that Nora's position becomes suppressed. Nora does not understand how and why her husband fails to recognize her commitment, her sincerity of purpose and her devotion to her family. Nora is unable to convince Torvald of her sincerity of purpose in forging the cheque which weighs so heavily on her mind. She can hardly reason with him because the heart has reasons that reason does not know.

She wants above all to please him, she loves him, and he is her knight. She constantly play-acts for him. She is his baby and at least her things she is his beloved by his words. In turn, she treats Torvald like a child. Nora's coquetry is for the most part inspired by her husband's appetite for it. Torvald works simultaneously on two things: he is more concerned about his position, his social status, his image, and he is interested in making Nora acquiesce to his form of morality. He is not a villain in the normal sense of the word but his concern and his moralizing make him blind to his wife's sincerity and her nobility of action.

He is more concerned about the evil effect that a bad mother leaves on children. However, he knows that a bad father can have a similar unfortunate effect on children. What is most obtuse in his moralizing is not its substance but that it is hardly the result of any experience. What Torvald says is bookish; it is the template of the day. Torvald felt literally frightened out of his wits by the prospect of dismissal from his position and said unkind and harsh, ruthless things to Nora. But as Nora announces her determination to leave him, he begs her not to believe what he had said to her seriously. He was so dismayed at the thought of public disgrace. Torvald explanation and justification of what he has done to Nora betray his prioritizing his position and morality. Nora does not react to Torvald's ranting but reacts to the realization that he has thought only himself. In the impending calamity, he neither considers its causes nor is governed by the impulse to protect her. Nora, for whom, love is everything, above the letter of law, public opinion, even religion, discovers that his love is a more a matter of convenience, not a commitment of the self. Thus her love, for him, is destroyed. It is here we realize Nora's transformation from the featherbrain to the thoughtful woman.

The play, *A Doll's House* very effectively reveals the premises for Nora's evolution before Nora breaks away from her husband and decides to step out of the house, there are so many things that we learn about her and her decision. It is this face of Nora-modern, self-aware, confident and ready to run risks-that really becomes the mainstay of the play. It is not that Nora's transformation lands her into something comfortable, clear and self-assured world. She gropes sadly in a maze of confused feeling towards a way of life and destiny of which she is most unsure. Despite all this, Nora has to take her decision; she cannot stay in the familiar world which is as strange and uncertain as the unfamiliar world. She must take steps to educate herself. Because

that is the only way, she can reach any understanding of herself and the things around her. She must learn to stand on her own, alone and autonomous. This is Ibsen's prescriptions for Nora and through her for all men and women. It is after all the struggle for realizing one's idea of what is worth-living and important. On the other hand Torvald Helmer's sense of propriety is dictated by society. He is greedy for money but extremely conscious of borrowed money. All this makes him blind to the practicalities of life and he behaves in a very hypocritical manner. Nora's sense of rightness is governed by her own intuitive concern. She does what she feels right. She protected her father, and she tries to protect her husband, she cares for her children, and she gets a job for Mrs. Linde. She is generous, dutiful, caring and committed.

Her sense of rightness can be seen in her final and conclusive decision to leave the house. When she finds that her image of herself and her domestic life is shattered, she does what she feels she must do to become a true person. *A Doll's House* thus reveals the two very dominant faces of a woman whom we regard as stereotypically and conventionally as we do with a doll. In the first half of the play, we have the first apparent face of Nora as a woman. She is a dutiful wife, caring mother and a household woman. We find her speaking and behaving in the same way in which any household wife does. She is obedient, subservient and surrenders to her husband like a tamed bird. She enjoys her marital life, revels in the love of her husband and children. But it is in the second half of the play that we come across Nora's second face as a woman. There is complete transformation by the end of the play. Nora reveals her deep-seated, self-searching face. Now she is not dutiful and loving wife and caring mother. She is emerging as a much unexpected different woman. In this face, Nora is unconventional, individualistic and uncompromising. This different face what play is all about, it is a journey of the transformation from the submissive, categorized face to an assertive and individual face perhaps Ibsen expected the 'new woman' to rise to this face of her personality. It not only gives the woman her true face, but she true self also. It is simultaneous awareness of the realities of life and to the truth of the self-Nora transition from doll-like appearance to a self-searching honest human being constitutes to the most fascinating study of the play. Nora true face is achieved in her realization of the unreality of her marriage, the questioning of her relation to an alien society, her leaving her home and family. Nora is thus the true woman character that constitutes the first type of woman that Ibsen has conceived. It is this conventional

and non-conventional face of Nora that gives the real strength to the play. Significantly enough, Ibsen no more emphasizes unnecessarily that Nora as a woman must liberate herself from the world that is not her own that suppresses her true self. It is as a human being that Nora arrives at this stage in the play.

Mrs. Alving in *Ghosts* constitutes yet another face or type of woman. Unlike the many Ibsen women who are forthright for good or evil, Mrs. Alving comes up as a woman of tragic conflict. In her character, we realize an effective blend of Ibsen's feminine type, the domestic maternal woman and the energetic woman. Repressed by centuries of old values, Mrs. Alving gradually wins freedom only to be brought up against the final and fearful choice. Mrs. Alving is unlike Nora.

Bowing down under the pressures of the society, she keeps flogging the dead values. She does not go by her own conviction and therefore suffers in striking the balance between her conviction and convention, between her assumption of moral conduct and the fearful revelation of truth. She does not have courage enough to face the truth and fearful as well as conscious of public exposure, she tries to conceal many truths about her husbands and her son. She tries to rationalize her attempts at decency, morality, and respectability which are in fact mere compromises or tricks that she adopts to save the Alving family from public disgrace. 'Ghosts' refers to Oswald Alving's disease of syphilis as much as to Mrs. Alving's vain attempt to hide her husband's promiscuity and her son's disease. As Oswald's mother under special duress, Mrs. Alving momentarily tends to countenance the possibility of her son's unknowingly marrying his half-sister when Pastor Manders explodes against her willingness to acknowledge such abominable relationships, Mrs. Alving calmly replies that there are dozens of married couples in the town who are related in such a way. Her refusal to face the truth of this relationship and equal justification reveal her maternal affection for her son. She is curious about this maternal and feminine vitality. It is this face of Mrs. Alving face that distinguishes her from other women characters in Ibsen's plays. When Mrs. Alving hears Oswald making advances just as his father had done many years ago had done, she cries, 'Ghosts!' as if history was repeating once again. Mrs. Alving is haunted by the inheritance of the Alving family and also by the ghosts of innumerable old prejudices and beliefs.

She is aware these ghosts of the dead past as much as she is aware of the fearful and disgusting behavior of her husband. Though she does strongly frown and is disgusted of his affairs, but lacks the determination, fortitude and courage to forsake her husband and walk out of domesticity. Many times she wanted to leave her idle and wanton husband after she became aware of his character. She ran off to seek the refuge with the man she loved, Pastor Manders. Though he may have shared her feelings, he triumphs over his own instinct and performs his duty as a pastor, insisting that she fulfill her marital obligations. Unlike Nora even after much more provocation Mrs. Alving does not slam the door.

Compared to Nora, Mrs. Alving has many genuine reasons to leave the house and abandon her husband. Even though she is not causing of this battle but she is aware of the repercussions. The traditional beliefs and prejudices, Mr. Alving's wanton behavior and Pastor Mander's support at this crucial time could have easily taken Mrs. Alving on the other shore of her life. But she prefers to stay back with the given world, the Alving house and tries very hard either concealing the Alving's wantonness or justifying it in her own way. She has her own determination, her own battle to fight. The consequences are the inherited ailment of which Oswald becomes the victim. Mrs. Alving like Nora has her own sense of rightness which is directed by her duty towards an image of the Alving family and by her affection towards her son. But her sense of duty, her obligations do not help her to come out of the worse situation, contrary to that, they bring misfortune to her and her son. She tries to save her son from the knowledge of his father's true character by sending him abroad at an early age. Further, all along is busy in inculcating, creating and constructing the image of a perfect gentleman so that her child always holds his father in high esteem. She even uses his bequest to build an orphanage in his name. But the orphanage burns down and Mrs. Alving endeavour goes futile. This is a symbolic suggestion of the fact that all institutions based on falsity and deceit finally meet with their inevitable and desirable destruction.

However, this is not the only instance in the play when Mrs. Alving tries to conceal the wantonness of the Alving family. To hush the scandal of her husband's affair with the housemaid and the imminent birth of the child, Regina Mrs. Alving gives a hundred dollars to the carpenter Engstrand to marry the 'fallen woman'. The marriage ceremony is performed by Pastor Manders who does not know the reality.

When he comes to know the reality of this marriage, he questions Mrs. Alving and expresses his disapproval. But Mrs. Alving has her own rationale for such arrangement of the marriage. She argues she will no longer be bound by hypocritical conventions. She must work her own way to freedom. This is the implicit irony of the situation. Mrs. Alving claims to break away from the traditional bondages. On the contrary gets entrenched in them. The consequences of her action is that instead of breaking free from her family inheritance of promiscuity, corruption, and deception, she increasingly endorses corruption and wantonness. She yields to the almost ritual marriage of convenience for money and argues that one must countervail such conventions or "ideals" and duties. Mrs. Alving blames herself for creating illusions in Oswald's mind regarding his father. She should have told him the whole truth and calls herself a coward for not having done so.

The play's unseen character, Captain Alving, takes on a new dimension in the light of Mrs. Alving expanding consciousness. When Oswald first appears, Manders too is struck by his resemblance to his father. This suggested resemblance is very symbolic in the sense that it implies the continuity of the father's wantonness, the family inheritance in the form of Oswald. Mrs. Alving confirms Manders observation and says that Captain Alving has no real aim in life and that he was filled with a joy of life. Oswald has inherited that "joy of life"- the wantonness. Even Regina, Alving's illegitimate daughter, though something of a slut has inherited some of that joy of life, as does Oswald, the half-brother. It is in all these and other incidents that we realize the wanton nature of the Alving family. Mrs. Alving lives in this kind of family which has the history of wantonness and corruption and yet she claims to be doing what she thinks right. She is unable to break away from the frame of her family; she has to live with all the promiscuity and frivolity. In her staying with the disgusting frame of the family, she has to inevitably undertake certain things which not only betray her explicit claims of social conformity and morality but point to her own submission to the "ghosts" of the Alving family. This does not mean that Mrs. Alving approves what her husband did or what her son intends to do with Regina. But now she has accepted the inevitability of these things borne with at the position of her family. This is the tragic conflict that she wages against her own righteousness.

Mrs Alving as mentioned earlier is the personification of maternal affection as much as struggling wife. Her face is her consistent fluctuation between her own

consciousness of rightness and her maternal affection for her diseased son. Compared with Nora, Mrs. Alving lacks the will power, the necessary determination to do what she feels right and morally correct. Mrs. Alving following the way of her world entered into a marriage recommended by her family and its cohorts. Then following her instinct, she turned to the man she loved, Pastor Manders.

Contrary to Mrs. Alving's desire, Manders lives up to his own profession and code of conduct. He emerges as a counterperson to Mrs. Alving and a striking contrast to the Alving family. He brings Mrs. Alving to the path of righteousness which is prescribed by social tradition. Having recognized her error, Mrs. Alving resolves to live her life honestly, though her past failures make the avoidance of tragedy impossible. Mrs. Alving never recovers from the effects of her initial blunders: her marriage to Captain Alving and her meek submission to and approval of his wanton behaviour and her frustrating attempts to conceal his wantonness from the eyes of her son and the public. Her approval continues even with the wanton behaviour of her son. She attempts to hide his vicious intentions, his disease. She does not stop at that. She continues to falsely justify her acts of concealing the truth of the Alving family. If the Alving family inheritance of wantonness continues from the father to the son, Mrs. Alving hopeless attempts to save her family from public disgrace continue. In her inevitable attempts to save the image of her family, Mrs. Alving partakes with the same corruption of the family. Despite all these trying situations, Mrs. Alving emerges as the most significant and moving character in the play. As a human being living in adverse conditions and fighting with all odds, Mrs. Alving maintains her own convictions. Her deep-seated face of a true beloved, and honest and committed partner and a righteous person are hardly ever explicitly entertained in the play. She is a convinced woman from within and she knows that her conviction as an individual and her confidence in her own sense of morality will help her in the need of the hour. The other face of her character is her willing submission as a wife and mother to the promiscuous behaviour of the Alving family. Having once accepted the role in the Alving family, Mrs. Alving plays it with all sincerity and devotion. As possible and permissible to her, she does not run away from the battlefield but tries hard to bring the things under her control.

The real pathos and beauty of her character are seen in her face of a mother who helplessly tries to resettle the lost life of her diseased son. She tries to keep

Oswald away from all corrupting influences but helplessly collapses at knowing his diseases she exonerates Oswald from all his immoral acts and tries to justify his position. She performs all this with a nagging consciousness of morality and social recognition on one hand and inevitability of approving and concealing wrongdoing on the other hand. This being heroic, worthy of great appreciation, her trials have not made her weak but on the contrary, made her a confident person she has achieved new integrity. It has led to work, to self-cultivation, and to efficiency. Her life that has been "one long fight", gives her strength and dignity. She battled the ghosts and though defeated she never communicates a sense of being defeated. This is the glory of Mrs. Alving's character, the face of a woman who bravely and dauntlessly encounters the evil and in spite of defeat glows with the pride of having fought. Mrs. Alving is that kind a person who is battered, battled and destroyed but who still moves with certain assurance as though destined to victory. Unlike Nora's character Mrs. Alving fights out her own battle, she does not simply decide and her real fight does not remain a matter of conjecture.

Nora's fight remains unrealized in the play as she steps out of her house. The test of her character lies ahead when she will face the unfamiliar world. She is uncertain about the nature of fight and trouble lies in the unknown world. This is perhaps the great difference between *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*. *A Doll's House* shows Nora taking a bold decision of abandoning her family. It features only her resolution; the re-confrontation with the consequences of such resolution is out of the perspective of the play. Nora's real test lies ahead which the play only touches upon. With *Ghosts*, we are in the midst of the battlefield. Here, Mrs. Alving cannot do just by resolving; she has to face and fight what she so strongly dislikes. *Ghosts* does not show the woman in resolution but the woman in action who fights a losing battle. Mrs. Alving is an individual much ahead of Nora in the sense that she exhibits her courage, confidence and unbeatable spirit. Nora's adversaries are limited: her husband can only verbally criticize her with the hope to draw confirmatory response Nora does not have an affair-making, wanton, aimless and dull husband; she does not have a diseased, wasted son who is not much different from his father. In the conditions that are less harsh and difficult, Nora resolves to forsake the house that she thinks only encashes upon her and does not give space to flourish. With Mrs. Alving, there are more problems than solutions; she does not have any way out. It is because of this

comparative difference in the family set-up, environment and mental abilities that Mrs. Alving appears as a glorious character that does not fade into adverse conditions but tries to flourish in her own way. Therefore the title of the play, *Ghosts*, is more aptly applicable to Mrs. Alving. She has entered the world that it is disgusting, and she can do nothing to change it too humanly.

Superficially, perhaps encounter a more common, ordinary face of a woman in *The Wild Duck*, *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts* present more penetrating, influential and potential women characters than *The Wild Duck*. Nora and Mrs. Alving emerge as full-grown, self-sufficient and bold women. They have their own positions, and they are phenomenal in the working of the play. In *The Wild Duck*, apparently at least, the situation is different. There are two woman characters in the play, Gina and Mrs. Sorby. The female child Hedvig occupies an almost central place in the play, but we cannot treat her as woman character either like Nora or Mrs. Alving. Gina and Mrs. Sorby are not apparently as impressive and heroic in stature as Nora or Mrs. Alving. Ibsen does not paint any of the woman characters in *The Wild Duck* on a large scale and in a decisive manner. Gina and Mrs. Sorby are not Ibsen's modern women; they are not new, bold, self-aware and rebellious. They perhaps constitute the other face of Ibsen's women that is meek, submissive and subservient. But this is only apparently true. It is true that Ibsen did not give any key role to these women in the play. But they have their share, their contribution that we cannot overlook. In their very small stature, their mediocracy betrays their potential and significance. It is in this perspective that Gina's character needs to be assessed. Here we do not have a usually rebellious self-assured, fighting face of Ibsen woman but an apparently insignificant and trivial face that certainly decides the course of the action of the play. Gina's character is in no way a gifted, elaborately portrayed and spectacular character but she has her own qualities to her credit that not only show her integrity, strength, and adaptability but also heightens her image in the midst of the abnormal Gregers and the suspicious Hjalmar. Gina's character is constructed as undramatic; she is colourless to dull. But contrary to this dramatic aura that Nora and Mrs. Alving possess, Gina is genuine, responsible and committed. Her status as a housewife may apparently reduce her to insignificance but her devotion to Hjalmar, her care of Hedvig and her practical sense of responsibility bring her to significance. She is surrounded by the people Hjalmar and Gregers in the present time and was troubled by the old Werle in the

past. The very fact that the play swings between illusion and truth and that this duality acquires thematic importance in the play only due to Gina, establishes her relevance and important place.

Gregers is motivated by the idea of making people aware of the truth and in the case of Hjalmar and Gina, he desires to put their marriage on the foundation of the truth. It is here that Gina's role is very crucial. Greger's knowledge of Gina's past relationship with the old Werle becomes the only truth in the eyes of Gregers and afterward in Hjalmar. According to Gregers and Hjalmar, Gina's present marriage to Hjalmar is simply an illusion that she has deliberately maintained to hide her past affair. It is interesting to see Gina's reaction to all this and her assumption about her own morality and rightness. Gina gets neither intellectually nor emotionally entangled into the issue of truth and illusion. She understands things on the practical level. Her truth is her present relationship with Hjalmar, Hedvig, and the Ekdal family. Her past is simply an illusion for her that she wishes to forget as quickly as possible.

On the contrary to Greger's Hjalmar's concept of truth, Gina's concept of truth is very pragmatic, decidedly practical. She is not the woman who sentimentally neither involves in any kind of mode of life nor idealizes any concept. She denies glorification and revels in a fantastic world. She is a very much down-to-earth woman who interprets everything from the practical point of view. She emerges as a complete contrast to Hjalmar's dreamy and unpractical character. She has her own vision of life, of the ideal in life and of the morality. It is in striking contrast with Hjalmar's ideal of life. He pursues honestly and truth which is possible only in his dreams and not in the real world, of course, this does not mean that Gina tries to justify wantonness or tries to endorse her past affair with the old Werle. The only thing that she does not want to live the burden of the past, she hopes to cast away all past affiliations and live life a fresh. She knows that she made mistake in the past, but that was not her fault. She was forced to engage into an immoral relationship with old Werle. Even though she cannot be excused on this account but that does not suggest that her presence should be spoilt, she should not be punished for the mistake in the past for which she was hardly responsible. This is the blunder of perception that Greger's and Hjalmar's commit. They treat Gina's past as the only truth and her present as the only illusion. They fail to perceive the relativity and reversibility of such polar perspective. What Gregers and Hjalmar take as the truth is, in fact, the projection of their convenient positions. For

Greger's truth implies the relationship based on honesty, on mutual trust-at least in the case of Hjalmar and Gina. Generally speaking, he detests "lie in life" which in fact is his own perception. He considers his father to be the symbol of corruption; wantonness and dishonesty that made his mother suffer lifelong.

When he learns Gina to be the ex-maid of his father and love angle of his life, he refrains from disclosing it to Hjalmar. He thinks it is moral duty to make Hjalmar aware of the truth and thereafter base their marriage on the foundation of truth. But underlying all this ideal claim is his revengeful attitude to his father and Gina and his pursuit of truth, in fact, lie in his villainy. His revelation is bound to wreck the marital relationship of Hjalmar and Gina. On learning the truth about Gina, Hjalmar will not forgive her and base his relationship with Gina on more firm and honest ground. Contrary to all this, Greger's stubborn attitude to truth and its revelation, Hjalmar's bears disastrous consequence in the play. Greger becomes the cynic in the name of truth and not only is instrumental in causing havoc in the Hjalmar-Gina relationship but also brings about the death of poor Hedvig.

Hjalmar's claims of truth and honesty are equally unpractical and pretentious. He, too, fails to recognize Gina's commitment and sincerity of purpose. He is more carried away by her past affair than her present commitment to him in the present relationship. Hjalmar lives in the world of fantasy, where his dream of the perfect, innovative photographer and notion of true and ideal life dominate all other considerations. He does not understand the basic facts of human life and the necessities of relationship. Greger's plays upon this fantasy-ridden mentality of Hjalmar and drags him into the past of Gina. The resultant implication arising out of Hjalmar's concept of truth being confined to Gina's past destroy their marriage. He fails to understand Gina's real face, her undoubted devotion to him, her great care of her innocent girl Hedvig. She is determined to forget everything past and live life a fresh.

Another conspicuous trait of her character is her openness, her honesty in confessing the truth about Hedvig's parentage. When Hjalmar asks her about Hedvig's father, her reply is very candid and honest. She denies having any knowledge about Hedvig's father. The reply antagonizes Hjalmar, misinterprets it and breaks away from

her. Gina stays very calm and quiet and stoically takes breakdown of her relationship with Hjalmar.

Gina had tried to keep the secret of her past affair with the old Werle as far as possible and is determined tries to keep Hjalmar away from the company and influence of Greger's. But when Hjalmar discover about the affair, she remains very calm and unresponsive. She knows that she is very honest and true, and does not suffer from pangs of feel guilt about her past. This self-confidence and determination enhances Gina's character despite her dull and colourless personality. She is the epitome practical sense, reality, honesty and commitment. She knows her business very well and never confuses the reality of life with the dream. She does not have stupidity sentimental ideas, unwanted and harmful glorification of the moral conduct and wild pursuit of truth. She prefers matters of fact mode life for her, and the present makes sense and the practical life becomes more important. She has her own calculations about the people like Greger's and she is not likely to be break down under his damaging influence. She is not idealistic like Gregers and not deceivable like Hjalmar. Nobody can deceive her and can play on her psychology. She confesses that it was her serious mistake to be engaged with the old Werle, but that was all due to the inevitability of the situation. She is not shameless to justify her past affair but she explains that she deliberately did not disclose it to Hjalmar out of the fear of misunderstanding. She emerges as the contrasting face in the play-contrasting Greger's and Hjalmar's hypocrisy, fantasy and hollowness.

Mrs. Sorby is the extension of Gina's practicality. She is comparatively more calculated and enterprising in her approach, speech, and actions. She presently lives as the maid in the old Werle's house and expresses her desire to get married to him. She is very open and blatant even about her flirtation with the old Werle. Mrs. Sorby likes to live a comfortable and rich life which she finds with the old Werle. Unlike Gina, she does not have endurance, power, commitment to family and sincerity. Her role is minor compared to Gina in the play, but she serves to demonstrate the calculated face of a household woman who has neither colour nor fascinating feature.

The Hjalmar-Gina relationship constitutes the marital face of Gina's character, whereas the Hedvig-Gina relationship constitutes the maternal face of Gina's Character. She functions as a very caring, loving and committed woman but as it

happens with all Ibsen characters, Gina also suffers from the past, the trolls that shatter her present.

Hedda Gabler's character embodies the conflict between the urge for instinctive sensual life and the fear of restrictions of social customs and traditions. Hedda's character may be seen as the extension of Mrs. Alving in the sense that Mrs. Alving wishes to run away from the Alving environment but in the name of social norms and obligation she has to live in the family and fight against the 'ghosts'. Hedda is also an enlarged version of Mrs. Alving in that she marries a mediocre intellectual and desires to live comfortable and carefree life and but still has to adjust with the situation. Hedda is aristocratic by temperament and behavior also; she has that 'joy of life,' which vigour and vitality that every Ibsen character reverberates with; she loves rich life and likes to engage into affairs that give her pleasure. But like most of the other Ibsen characters, Hedda is afraid of public scandal. Unlike other types of women characters, Hedda is destructive in her intentions and actions and hardly ever works as a compassionate, caring and human being.

Compared to Nora, Mrs. Alving and Gina, Hedda stands apart. She is different in many ways and at times opposite to these earlier women characters. She enters into marital relationship with Tesman but unlike Nora, Mrs. Alving and Gina she never behaves as a dutiful, loving and committed wife. She does not tolerate the mention of her child even though she is shown pregnant from the beginning of the play. She does not possess all those features of the "new woman" that Nora; she does not fight against the traditions beliefs and stereotypical roles. She is not motivated by the idea of self-realization; she never finds her identity lost or crushed. This is where Hedda establishes a very different face, a very different type of the Ibsen women who is neither rebellious nor submissive, and who neither forsakes the given role and environment nor fully adopts with the ways of the world.

Hedda's interests are aristocratic. She used to ride with her father, and still possesses and amuses herself with his pistols. She was married to a middleclass academician, Tesman whose work she despises and loathes his domesticity. The prospect of a child to her is agony. She is deliberately cruel to her husband's sweet natured aunt. She dislikes living tied with the same person in marriage and gets irritated at peoples well-intended interest in her approaching maternity. She takes all

this to be absurd, boring and killing. She takes interest in sexual matters as a male being does. She disapproves the word 'love' because it demands commitment, involvement, and monotonous living. She hates physical advances though she enjoys listening to sex-secrets from the male angle. Interestingly enough, her imagination can be sexually flared, but she is terrified of scandal and admits to cowardice. She blends heroism with conventional respectability and this dual conditioning, together with her abnormal sexuality, forces her into a state of violence. Hedda is unable to face herself; she does not know how to handle her inheritance and her instincts. Metaphorically speaking, she shuts out the sun because she dare not face her own fire. Hedda appears to lack the positive qualities of normality and abnormality, being without the social ease of the one or the daring of the other. We have to identify that Hedda is unlike the generality of women; she faces all the difficulties that arise from her nature.

Nevertheless, Hedda emerges as an impressive character. This is primarily because she is unlike other Ibsen characters and because she personifies the struggle between instinct and reason, between social respectability and wild ecstasy. Hedda is more attracted to Ejlert Lovborg, a more creative talent than her husband Tesman's dry researches. Before marriage, she had a close association with Lovborg that she was forced to abandon for fear of scandal. As a consequence, Lovborg takes heavily to drinking and was rescued by Mrs. Elvsted, an old school companion of Hedda's whom she had once bullied. Hedda realizes that the seemingly fragile and soft Mrs. Elvsted has had the courage to leave her husband and look after Lovborg. She has been the inspiratory force behind his successful book. Frustrated Hedda, out of jealousy and inability to break free from her set-up, intentionally tempts to Lovborg to drink and in a terrifying scene burns his manuscript. This, she claims will free Lovborg from Mrs. Elvsted's influence and enable him to live his full-fledged creative life. The fact is that Mrs. Elvsted has done what Hedda had long desired to do but could not do accordingly. Hedda wished to mould human destiny which obviously she achieve and having discovered Mrs. Elvsted done this Hedda is unable to restrain herself from spoiling Lovborg. Mrs. Elvsted emerges as a powerful woman who drags Lovborg out of drinking, passion, and frenzy and reactivates his creative energies.

Hedda's bringing almost disastrous end of Lovborg has its roots in their close association before Hedda's marriage to Tesman. Both shared common lust for life that

lent fire to their companionship. But there had been no question of marriage. Lovborg had spent days and nights of drinking. Hedda, a strictly raised General's daughter, hardly could know anything about such things. This gives us insight into Hedda's behavior. Hedda is a passionate being in a society where marrying a "wild poet" was unthinkable and an affair with a known debauchee scandalous. Now as a married woman, she resists the thought of adultery. She is independent in other respects but as far as marriage is concerned, she is not. She will not allow any man to dominate her, and that is why she neither cares for her past associations nor her present marriage to Tesman. She calls Mrs. Elvsted a poor stupid woman because she allowed men to dominate her. Whereas the fact of the matter is that Mrs. Elvsted has shown candid courage which Hedda cannot show. This has trapped Hedda in the inevitable position.

Repressed, Hedda's passion and power can only bring destruction. She is a moral coward under the burden of social inhibition. She becomes a corrupting and destructive force. She destroys the man she has not dared to love and destroys herself to avoid the consequences of her cowardice. She does not have the courage to slam the door on an unloved husband Hedda is the very opposite of Nora. Nora escapes the marital and social cage whereas Hedda gets enclosed in the cage. Hedda cannot assert herself in any positive way she has only the desperate boldness to do away with herself one of the important dimensions of Hedda's character is that she appears to be separated from the realities of life. She avoids everything ugly and painful; she cannot tolerate the sight of weakness and death. She is already pregnant when the play opens but she dislikes even the mention of it not only because she hates her husband but because she cannot bear the responsibility of bearing and rearing a child. She wants to safeguard her importance. This explains the reason why she dislikes the insipid and dry Tesman. Brack had frustrated the possibility of Tesman entering into the politics and finds life with Tesman, more insipid and uninteresting. She finds herself subjugated, forcefully reduced to her present condition.

Repressed and frustrated, she can only ruin, cannot create. This is the face of Hedda Gabler who never rises to the occasion to prove her rebellious gesture nor to wholeheartedly accept the prevalent. As an Ibsen character, Hedda is very much different from other characters; she epitomizes the constant fluctuation, the constant moving back and forth into reality and illusion. When she finds reality challenging her issues aristocratic and gentle world, she tries hard to alter it and finally tries to

violently ruin it. On many occasions in the play, Hedda reacts in such violent ways ruining everything/everyone she dislikes.

Unlike Nora, Mrs. Alving and Gina, Hedda does not have any notable qualities attributes that can make her an independent character. She suffers from her own inbuilt flaws-jealousy, impatience, non-commitment and distrust for other people. She lives in her own island, world of aristocracy and gentility that cuts her off from the real world. In reaction, she brings violence and destruction not only to others but also to herself. Thea, on the other hand makes the most of her life riding on her association with different men at different point of time, thereby exemplifying the truism that to achieve self fulfilment, she must live through the success of men. This explains her association first with her husband, then Lovberg and later Tesman.

In the given milieu the presence of Catherine and Petra of "*An Enemy of the People*" in an otherwise male-centric play is bound to raise eyebrows. Revolving around Dr. Stockmann and his conflict with authority, the play espouses the concept of "responsibility" and "manipulation" However, a close analysis unravels few interesting surprises. The plays resonate with the prevailing mood endorsed by the likes of Dr Stockmann's patriarchal belief that reforming society is man's work simultaneous raises some pertinent questions on the role of women and expectations in that society.

This to a great extent have been answered in the depiction of Catherine and Petra, the only females in the play. Catherine is a stereotypical wife and mother, concerned with her family's happiness, security and material comfort. There's a future generation to worry about; Dr Stockmann's choices are going to have serious ramifications for his child. In fact, she is apprehensive and nervous at Stockmann's conflict with authority and evinces more timidity. However, finding her husband cornered and ridiculed, backed against a wall she does not hesitate in confronting men and making her concerns explicit. Mrs. Stockmann declares that she is behind his cause for truth. Women does not count for a lot here, but then there was not much could be done about that plain reality.

Furthermore, Ibsen created the character of Petra to challenge the stereotype of women, to make sense of the new spirit of feminist independence. She is an unmarried teacher, passionate, intellectual, impish and hot-headed. She is a strong,

independent woman, opinionated woman who will not back down when in the presence of a man: "Father, He can't speak to you like this" amply demonstrates her strength and spunkiness. Thus, both Catherine and Petra while offering offer interesting contrasts also at the same time share similarity. For instance, if Catherine on finding her husband cornered is unafraid of confronting men and making her concerns known, Petra too who is, as female characters by late 19th century standards is quite modern champions vociferously her father's cause. These are issues, things not assigned ordinarily to women to do during this time. Both these women, Petra more so than Catherine, are rather atypical for women of their era and thus fit in comfortably with the other iconoclastic women of Ibsen's oeuvre.

In the final analysis, the researcher would like to offer the following observations about the different faces of women in Ibsen's selected plays. He was writing plays at that period of modern time when women were mostly forced to live to major stereotypical roles: wife, mistress and mother. Marriage and maternity were the principal roles given to women in the name of traditional social norms and practices. Ibsen realized how a large section of humanity was subjected to prescribed roles and social practices. Women were deprived of freedom, identity, and social status and were forced to follow the socially approved patterns of behavior. Ibsen intended to depict this social reality in his plays.

Of course, Ibsen was not writing with any express agenda or intention like feminism; he was not writing for socio-political equality and status of women. He was writing for the deprived section of humanity which he thought should be given their due place and significance. Ibsen looked upon his women as the rebellious spirits, sighting very hard for liberation from the social tradition and for self-realization.

In order to give a dramatic effect to his women characters, Ibsen placed them in midst of unfavourable and testing circumstances. He believed in the vigour and vitality of women, in their endurance power and commitment. But they have rebellious spirit as well which Ibsen shows in form of the "new woman". Ibsen dramatizes women fighting for their position and this leads them to their self-realization. However, Ibsen never abandons the ground of reality in the depiction of his women characters, and the reality of women in the practical life is that they find themselves in equally undesirable conditions. They cannot break away from the

traditions and practices that their society has imposed on them nor can they wholly follow them. Half-hearted, bewildered and frightened to take bold steps, Ibsen's women struggle very hard with their environment and with themselves. Ibsen portrays some women characters that are rebellious, bold, honest to themselves and ready to run risks for the sake of self-realization.

This may be called first serious interrogation with the women issue reflected through Ibsen's plays. However, not all Ibsen's women are bold enough to break away from the tradition and that is obvious through the foregoing discussions of the selected plays. This leads us to another face of Ibsen's women- the battled, frightened women. These women can neither perform their domestic roles nor can break away from them. They have their own ideas about life, about love and marriage and they wish to behave as per the dictations of their self not as per the dictations of society. But they cannot venture to do what they feel right and suitable. They often struggle with themselves, with their instincts and the social recognition and norms that confronts them. Mrs. Alving, Gina and Hedda belong to this category this face that is often faceless. These women characters live without their own face compromising with their environment. Mrs. Alving has her own desires and ideas about leading life which she cannot do because she is set into the disgusting world of the Alving family. Struggling with herself and fighting the ghost of the Alving family is her destiny. She cannot think of her desires as she has to live with the truth of inherent disease of the Alving family. Pastor Manders works as her conscience and submits her to the role - playing in the wicked and wanton world. We see Mrs. Alving degrading to the mean and frivolous ways in her attempts to conceal the wantonness of her husband and son and to justify her son's promiscuity. In fulfilling her obligations towards the Alving family, she becomes the part of meanness, frivolousness, and corruption. Caught in this conflicting situation, she still exhibits immense determination and courage. She tries to save the image of her family and save her diseased son. This is the beauty and strength of her character. She makes the most of the situation she finds herself in. Gina's character is the repetition of the same pattern with some differences. Contrary to Mrs. Alving, the fault lies with Gina. She triggers the issue of moral turpitude. Her past affair with the old Werle sets the Ekdal family on fire.

However, Gina calmly accepts everything; she makes no complaint and does not try to assert herself. She knows that she is right in her own way and her past

should not spoil her present but she is helpless in all this. Like Mrs. Alving, she submits herself to the situational changes. She is not as energetic and charming as Mrs. Alving and as bold and rebellious as Nora. She is a mediocre, ordinary household woman who knows the practical business of life. But her dullness and simplicity work as her qualities. These qualities enable her to accept the untoward incidents calmly and quietly.

It is noteworthy to perceive that Ibsen portrays these characters in a realistic and constructive way. They struggle with themselves and with their surroundings. They suffer the rift between the convention and their conviction; they try to fulfil both the contrasting pulls. They try to follow the conventional patterns and follow their own convictions. But they are not destructive and violent. With Hedda, however Ibsen dramatizes this struggling face of a woman with hues of destruction and violence. Hedda does not have positive qualities like Mrs. Alving and Gina and she does not have enough courage and determination like Nora.

Thus, Ibsen portrays very different faces in his selected plays adopting different theatrical devices and idioms. His patterns of a portrayal of women vary but the essence of showing humanity in all its spectrum remains the same. The present study through the analysis of six representative plays reiterate him as the champion of the marginalized, voiceless section of society, particularly of women-folk. His plays kindle messianic consciousness in them and enthuse forcefully the necessity and possibility of bringing healthy transformation in the society where each one, irrespective of his or her sex, social status, caste, creed and religion, may lead an independent and prosperous life.