

The Evolutionary Function of Illusion, Disillusionment and Reality in a Patriarchy in the Genesis of a New Self with Regard to Both Genders in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*.

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Abstract: Illusion and reality share an inextricable relationship in human life which is sometimes given to illusory ideas thereby creating a fantasy world in order to cope with the absurdity of life. But when this fantasy gets mingled with reality to a great degree, the difference between reality and illusion gets blurred. It is this disposition that often affects the entire personality of an individual and consequent decisions. Sometimes this illusory world becomes the foundation of survival and gradually pushes one to the edge of emotional collapse. However, when reality barges in, disillusionment results, and this make-believe world gets crumbled in no time. Henrik Ibsen is one such great dramatist whose works border on realistic issues like unequal partnership in marriage, role of women in marriage and motherhood, laws, materialism, ideas of manliness in relation to social reputation, and, most importantly, how an unexamined life is not worth living with the focus being primarily on the individual as the oppressor and the oppressed. However, he does not explicitly talk about these issues in his plays but makes his characters' actions stand as evidence regarding how an individual is capable of progress and can bring about social reformation. This article attempts to show how along with the politics of socio-cultural power structures, Ibsen delineates the problematic position of both genders in a patriarchy in his renowned play *A Doll's House* (1879), by juxtaposing illusion and reality which eventually pave the path for the disillusionment and evolution of both genders.

Keywords - Illusion, reality, disillusionment, individuality, oppression, self-realization, emancipation.

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Introduction

Henrik Ibsen's renowned play *A Doll's House*, published in 1879, with its rebelling unconventional content, succeeded in exposing the domestic politics of patriarchy and making society perceive that women's rights and human rights can never be segregated, for the former is an indispensable part of the latter. He also employed the themes of illusion and reality to bring about the disillusionment and the resultant awakening of individuals. The term 'illusion' here implies how an individual attempts to refrain from harsh reality and the pain of failures by resorting to self-concocted ideas. Through these ideas an individual seeks comfort and security, thereby being blind to 'reality' or the actual truth that lies underneath the veneer. In Ibsen's world, both genders struggle against power structures for their survival. It is evident that Ibsen not only spoke for women and endorsed the rights that were denied to them but also looked at the social issues from a humanistic perspective and considered the situation of men as well. These men functioned as the tools of patriarchy causing oppression to women and in the process also get victimized or oppressed.

As the play opens, the Helmer's bourgeois domestic life is exhibited and the interactions between Nora and Torvald seemingly appear to be very adorable and loving, although the addresses made by Torvald are imbued with his natural dominance.

HELMER: [*in his study*]. *Is that my little sky-lark chirruping out there?*

NORA: [*busy opening some of the parcels*] *Yes, it is.*

HELMER: *Is that my little squirrel frisking about?*

NORA: *Yes!* (Mcfarlane, 2008, p.3)

Through Nora's reciprocal gesture towards Torvald's demeaning addresses with utter joy and approval, at the very outset of the play, Ibsen portrays Nora's unquestioning demeanor exuding her complacency regarding her place in her marriage. It is from here that Nora's illusion is introduced, a world of her own where her husband is almost worshipped like a heroic figure. Nora's illusion is the result of her blind faith and love for Torvald and her inability to comprehend the patriarchal dominance in their marriage. Ibsen employs the innocence and metaphorical blindness of Nora to project how women's dependency on men invariably bestows a sense of superiority upon men like Torvald. The interactions between Nora and Torvald appear to be very casual and unusual and their behaviour towards each other does not appear to be normal. For instance, Nora's attitude towards Torvald is one of appeasement while Torvald's is that of condescending one. Just as she makes every little effort to appease her husband, Torvald too indulges in degrading Nora's personality as a woman at every step which is readily accepted by her to his delight. As a consequence, Nora's unflinching allegiance to Torvald only alleviates her dignity as a woman as well as an individual thereby making her powerless in this marriage of unequal power relations. Ibsen critiques this role of women in the Victorian society through Nora's character whose behaviour conforms to society's expectations at the beginning of the play. It needs to be noted that in a true relationship one would neither resort to appeasement nor seek satisfaction and superiority in patronizing one's mate. Ibsen, therefore, shows how Nora and

Torvald's treatment of each other is reflective of the deviant nature of their relationship where the husband fails to see his wife as his equal in terms of position and capability and the latter accepts this subordination without any dissent.

In Act I of the play, the dramatist focuses completely on the frivolous communication between the husband and wife highlighting the nature of their marital tie. Torvald is made to use words like 'spendthrift', 'sweet-tooth' and, 'pet' while addressing Nora because this makes him feel superior and satisfied considering her a child who needs constant guidance to be on the right path. Nora also appears to be quite glad with the kind of role she plays in the household, constantly being made to feel like the lady in distress and portrayed as someone who can never think of rebelling against or defying her husband's commands. He is not only found playfully reprimanding Nora for her spending habits but also speaking disrespectfully of her father:

HELMER: *What a funny little one you are! Just like your father. Always on the look-out for money, wherever you can lay your hands on it; but as soon as you've got it, it just seems to slip through your fingers.* (Mcfarlane, 2008, p.7)

Here, when Nora is also doubted by him for having eaten macaroons behind his back, she simply denies, which points out that her sworn obedience is a lie. She says:

NORA: [*crosses to the table*]. *I would never dream of doing anything you didn't want me to.* (Mcfarlane, 2008, p.7)

The underlying significance of this statement is realized as the play proceeds and Nora is seen to have committed actions much graver than eating sweets without the knowledge of Torvald. He nevertheless seems to believe in her words. Hence, it is quite clear that Nora and Torvald - both nurture illusory ideas concerning each other's obedience and commitment. In fact, it is this demeanour on their part that does not let them see through the reality of their situation.

In the following conversation between Nora and Mrs. Linde, the former's deepest secret and the greatest matter of pride and joy is brought to the surface. Nora raised a loan to save Torvald's life and she never felt that this action of hers would shatter all her beliefs. In other words, the illusions that she has been cultivating all these years of her marriage. She regarded it to be her foremost duty as a wife and therefore, did not think of the consequences of her action of forging the signature of her deceased father as a legal crime. It can be said that Nora was blindfolded when it came to Torvald and her fidelity towards him until the catastrophe occurred.

Nora's impression of Torvald is clouded to such an extent that despite knowing that "Torvald is a man with a good deal of pride- it would be terribly embarrassing and humiliating for him if he thought he owed anything to me. (Mcfarlane, 2008, p.17), she hardly realized the kind of impact it might have on him. Reality was before her, yet her fallacious nature drew the curtain over her eyes. However, her fear does not go unnoticed when she says "It would spoil everything between us; this happy home of ours would never be the same again." (Mcfarlane, 2008, p.17) The word 'happy' reveals here as quite ironic because so far she experienced a happy, unconflicting atmosphere in her house just because of her obedience and appeasement of her husband which she mistook for her secured marriage and Torvald's love for her.

Nora's uncritical satisfaction with everything in her life is, however, threatened with the appearance of Krogstad who, instead of asking for the borrowed money, blackmails her to influence her husband to let him keep his job at the bank, failing which he would expose her crime before Torvald. At this juncture, Ibsen has placed Nora and Krogstad on equal footing for committing an act of forgery. While Nora's social reputation is still safe, Krogstad is on the verge of losing everything. This compels him to make the most of the situation to climb up the social ladder and get back his lost station. In this context, it may be pointed out that social reputation played a very vital role in Victorian society. The value of an individual depended on his social reputation which ultimately privileged appearance over reality. The difference between Nora and Krogstad lies in their opinion about Torvald where the former is far from recognizing the real Torvald underneath while the latter, though an outsider, could see through his character so well that he is confident of compelling him to give in to his demands. It is his attachment with reality that does not let him entertain impractical thoughts or expect any 'miracle' to happen which would reverse the circumstance he is in.

Through the similar actions of Nora and Krogstad, Ibsen has pointed out how the power structures are responsible for creating chaos in one's life. If women had the right to raise a loan and did not require the consent of a male figure, Nora would not have needed her father's aid. Instead she could have managed everything on her own. This would not have landed her in such legal trouble. Moreover, if social reputation had not been prioritized to determine an individual's social value, Krogstad may not have adopted such unethical ways in his life. It cannot be denied that Krogstad did commit a crime which is not justifiable but had society given him a chance to rebuild his reputation, things may have turned in a better way. In this connection, it can be said how power structures are responsible for oppressing an individual and simultaneously making him emerge as an oppressor himself for the sake of his own interest. Thus, one's unfair doings could be the result of social compulsion to keep up the appearance in a society that, in general, looks down upon people who suffer from ill-repute without considering the matter on humanitarian grounds.

As Act I of the play nears its end, Nora's deliberate dependency on Torvald and her inability to be decisive even about trivial matters is revealed when she responds to Torvald's question and says:

HELMER: *Aha! So my impulsive little woman is asking for somebody to come to her rescue, eh?*

NORA: *Please, Torvald, I never get anywhere without your help* (Mcfarlane, 2008, p.34)

Since the very beginning of the play, the interactions between them appear to be superficial, lacking the normal conjugal behaviour towards each other. As they speak, it seems as if Nora purposely presents herself as the meek and helpless woman to seek Torvald's attention and provide him with the opportunity to play the role of her rescuer which he would gladly accept to prove his masculinity. As readers we realize that Nora does have the capacity, courage and strength as a woman to make decisions in life. However, her propensity is to appease him and cling to her world of fancy where Torvald is none but her saviour, an emotional strategy to attain the feeling of safety and security.

In this regard, it would be justified to refer to the 'bear and squirrel game' in John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (2011), another famous realistic play, that focuses on the life and marital struggles of an intelligent and educated but disgruntled young man of working-class origin, Jimmy Porter, and his equally competent yet impassive upper-middle-class wife Alison. The bear and squirrel game, though of an adolescent nature, allows Jimmy and Alison to express their simplest affection for each other, which they fail to do in their conjugal life. They take resort to this game to escape from the harsh realities of life but this, too, loses its charm and purpose because the world of fantasy can only provide a temporary respite. Nevertheless, they do identify the issues responsible for all the vexation associated with their conjugal life, face the reality and reunite to start afresh.

Osborne, in his play, made it quite clear how genuine affection between two people, despite their class differences and frequent conflicts, can keep them coming back to each other. Their relationship was devoid of any illusion and superficiality which helped in sustaining their relationship. Even the harsh reality failed to keep them away from each other. The root of Jimmy's tirades and assaults towards Alison has been purely his unpleasant experience as a representative of the working class along with his grudge against the injustice inflicted upon them. It was not driven by any kind of traditional notions related to gender roles as the playwright does not miss to highlight the emotional side to his nature as well as his need to be understood by his wife with regard to his suffering. While the origin of Nora Helmer's suppression and the consequent failure of her marital life is caused due to her husband's stereotypical patriarchal dominance, selfishness and sense of superiority. Hence, it can be said that the relationship was toxic for Nora and it was essential for her to confront reality even though it meant the collapse of the wedlock. Therefore, reality should never be kept at bay for the sake of ephemeral solace since whether it is illusion or fancy, it would certainly collide with reality at one point and either strengthen or split apart everything.

In *A Doll's House*, it is explicit that Nora and Torvald have never been successful in knowing each other. They were completely oblivious of the true nature of their significant other. That Nora was always obedient to him made Torvald underestimate her individuality as well as her capabilities thus taking her for granted. Nora's self-built image of Torvald kept her from discerning the selfish, self-absorbed Torvald Helmer. In the initial part of the play, Nora appears to be quite satisfied and glad with Torvald's behaviour towards her for she loved to feel helpless, she enjoyed the feeling of being rescued by him and it is this notion that led her to expect a 'miracle' that will be brought about by him. It seems as if she needed reassurance and, therefore, indulged herself in these thoughts imagining him as the valiant, self-sacrificing man madly in love with her and this is evident in these lines:

NORA: *You see Torvald is so terribly in love with me that he says he wants me all to himself.*

HELMER: *When it comes to the point, I've enough strength and enough courage, believe me, for whatever happens. You'll find I'm man enough to take everything on myself.*

NORA: *[in command of herself]. That is something you shall never do.* (McFarlane, 2008, p.46)

Torvald here brags much about his strength, courage, and manliness which he eventually

contradicts with his insensitive words and selfish actions. By doing so he himself breaks the image that is the product of Nora's so long-held illusory ideas concerning his unquestionable love for her.

The following words spoken by Nora to Mrs. Linde exhibit her deep-seated confidence and faith in him which is the result of her lack of insight.

NORA: *And if somebody else wanted to take it all upon himself, the whole blame, you understand...*

NORA: *Why should you? You see something miraculous is going to happen.*

NORA: *Yes, a miracle. But something so terrible as well, Kristine- oh, it must never happen, not for anything.* (Mcfarlane, 2008, p.58)

It may be pointed out that Krogstad's threat heightens Nora's illusory state and her survival begins to revolve around a 'miracle' that she whole-heartedly expects and is simultaneously terrified of. Although her affection, care, and concern for Torvald is, undoubtedly, indisputable, and she is apprehensive of any harm that may befall him, but somewhere she is harbouring this belief that Torvald's love for her would make him confront the situation with courage and save her from any danger provides her with an indescribable strength from within. Torvald is always there for her, it is this very conviction upon which her illusory world is built.

Nora has, indeed, been giving indulgence to inflated ideas about Torvald but it is also noticeable from her utterance at the end of Act II that she is no longer mentally fragile and is prepared to face the vicissitudes of her fortune. Here, when she responds to Torvald saying "Then you are free." (Mcfarlane, 2008, p.62), it sounds ambiguous. It may either imply Torvald being free of Krogstad's headache or being free of this wedlock. It also underlines a sense of impending disaster. Her conversation with Mrs. Linde reflects that she no longer wishes to manipulate the adverse situation to her advantage. Act II thus lays the foundation for the catastrophe as manifested in Nora's words when she says to Mrs.Linde:

NORA: *You shouldn't have done that. You must let things take their course. Because really it's a case for rejoicing, waiting like this for the miracle.* (Mcfarlane, 2008, p.62)

Act III begins with a conversation between Mrs. Linde and Krogstad which displays how different their relationship is from Nora and Torvald's. Mrs. Linde had to sacrifice her love for the sake of her domestic responsibility concerning her sick mother and young brothers, and she is too practical to nurture fanciful ideas. Similarly, Krogstad's miserable plight made him all the more realistic and he does not hesitate to accuse Mrs. Linde of discarding him for the sake of social elevation. Since their relationship is devoid of illusion, appeasement, and pretention, it ultimately enables them to accept each other the way they are and so they do not even undergo or suffer any disillusionment. Even their reunion is the outcome of their mutual decision which attests to their equal status in their relationship. In fact, despite Krogstad wanting to get his letter back from Torvald, Kristine necessitated the revelation of the secret by disrupting the course of events that would benefit Nora in the long run. She does what Nora should have done long back for herself. Mrs. Linde's pragmatic approach to deal with a life crisis is represented when she says to Krogstad:

MRS. LINDE: *....Helmer must know everything. This unhappy secret must come out. Those two must have*

the whole thing out between them. All this secrecy and deception, it just can't go on. (Mcfarlane, 2008, p.68)

This sets the ground for Nora's eventual disillusionment, realization of her worth as an individual, and emergence as the New Woman.

(Brok, 2013, p. 219) states that "Hope is an important human experience. It gives us a reason for existence, a sense of, and anticipation for, the future, and a motivation to live out our ambitions and desires." This is rightly applicable to Nora's thoughts and expectations with regard to Torvald. Despite her precarious and threatened state, she always believed that her husband's love for her would one day result in the fulfilment of the 'miracle' that she has always been hoping for thus proving his unquestionable affection for her. Even after encountering Krogstad's threatening words, she continued to nurture the same hope as before that had provided her with a reason to live and be in wedlock. Nora's high held impression about her husband made her await an opportunity where she would live out her desire and emerge triumphant on account of her husband's valiant deeds. However, things do not turn up the way she has expected and Ibsen makes her witness the actual reality of her marriage.

In Act III, Ibsen exposes the truth that for Helmer love and desire rely on fantasy and that he pretends to be secretly in love with her in their relationship thus showing his preference of appearance over reality. His violent, unfeeling reaction towards Nora stands as evident to this. After the revelation of Nora's secret, Torvald's true comes to the surface and Nora comprehends the reality of her situation and says:

NORA: *[looking fixedly at him, her face hardening]. Yes, now I'm really beginning to understand.* (Mcfarlane, 2008, p.77)

Nora's disillusionment thus begins and for the first time, she notices how in an instance Torvald loses all his love and respect for her. His attitude is completely unforgiving which underscores the superficiality of their relationship. It comes as a major blow to Nora when he considers her true affection for him to be nothing but a weak excuse to defend herself. Torvald's self-centeredness and concern only for his own safety unmasks him thoroughly. His previous boasting to protect Nora from every calamity proves to be an empty gesture and instead, his crude selfishness becomes visible. As far as Nora is concerned, she silently and calmly listens to all his accusations. In this circumstance, Torvald still demands Nora's unshakeable allegiance to his commands asking her to keep up the appearance of their marital life for the sake of social respectability. No matter how disrespectfully he treats her, she must continue to obey him and conform to the role assigned to her by society through acceptance and appeasement of her husband. Not only does he disregard Nora's feelings, but also denies her the right to privacy when he prevents her from reading the letter sent by Krogstad.

HELMER: *Give it to me. [He snatches the note and shuts the door.] Yes, it's from him. You can't have it. I want to read it myself.* (Mcfarlane, 2008, p.79)

Helmer's change in behaviour once he becomes assured of his safety completes Nora's disillusionment. She sheds off the garb of the old Nora and speaks determinedly declaring her transformation as a woman. It is she who proposes that they should discuss the matter and also

asserts her place as an equal partner in the relationship demanding the same recognition from Torvald. Nora's realization regarding her treatment by the two male figures in her life namely her father and her husband, regarding how they overpowered and suppressed her individuality led to her awakening. She accuses both of them of having wronged her and not allowing her to become the person she wanted to be. She acknowledges the truth that her marriage did not change her designation as a 'doll'; she became Torvald's 'doll wife' as she was her father's 'doll child'. Surprisingly, Torvald's attributions are not confuted by Nora, instead her acceptability strengthens her resolve to educate herself on her own without any sort of assistance. To the Victorian audience, such an unconventional initiative taken by a woman was something unacceptable for women of that era were supposed to be the 'angel in the house'.

Ibsen used Nora's disillusioned state to convey how patriarchy subjugated and exploited women denying them their rights and deserving place in society. He projects how marriage functions as a patriarchal tool where equal partnership is denied to ensure the superiority of men. Nora thus serves as his mouthpiece and opens a new door for women when she utters:

NORA: If I'm ever to reach any understanding of myself and the things around me, I must learn to stand alone. That's why I can't stay here with you any longer. (Mcfarlane, 2008, p.83)

This statement made by Nora overturns the traditional notions related to gender roles upheld by society and marks the beginning of a new chapter in the life of a woman where she is no longer ready to accept her marital life as her only refuge and destination. Although she worshipped Torvald initially as a chivalrous figure, her epiphany concerning Torvald's nature and their marriage converts her definition of love and duty. Her decision to leave her home, her husband, and her children reveals how she has overcome the idea of a duty to others and focuses on herself.

"NORA: I have another duty equally sacred.

HELMER: You have not. What duty might that be?

NORA: My duty to myself." (Mcfarlane, 2008, p.84)

Patriarchal pedagogy has made women believe that their sole duty and responsibility should be towards their bread provider, thus raising the man to a demi-god status where his words are pronouncements and therefore, cannot be defied. But when defiance results and women lend foremost importance to duties to themselves, the fabric of patriarchy gets disintegrated. Torvald Helmer is so attuned to Nora's subservience that he could never imagine that Nora would discard all her marital duties and choose to be dutiful only to herself and would hardly pay an ear to his dissuading words. He was, indeed, not ever prepared to experience such a repercussion since it does not befit patriarchy and that is what he has been also made to believe.

Through Nora Helmer's exemplary behaviour, Ibsen shows her uncustomary decision as a stepping stone to embarking on an unknown, unseen journey to 'try' to be an individual. She rejects the accepted notion of the time and prioritizes her individuality thereby showing how an individual can make progress and be instrumental in bringing about reforms in society. It is, however, irrefutable that Nora's orientation has actually made her perceive Torvald as the man who would always step forward and shoulder the blame to rescue her who is glad to projecting

herself as the 'damsel in distress' giving him the opportunity to fulfil his role. This would not only make her perform her social role perfectly but also portray Torvald as the valorous man he is supposed to. Hence, patriarchal ideology that privileges men over women making them dominate is equally responsible for making women nurture such illusions with regard to the other gender.

HELMER: *First and foremost, you are a wife and mother.*

NORA: *That I don't believe any more. I believe that first and foremost I am an individual, just as much as you are or at least I'm going to try to be.* (Mcfarlane, 2008, p.84)

The old Nora is none but every woman who is a part and parcel of this social structure. In the play, Ibsen's attempt to make a married woman trample patriarchy for the sake of an independent existence and seeking answers to the questions that she had never contemplated or doubted before, was in itself ground-breaking. When Nora says that "...I'm going to try to be", it clearly underlines her consciousness about the uncertainty, that she may not have positive gain yet she is hopeful of her endeavours. Thus, she escapes from the place called 'home' that stifled her breath and inhibited the growth of her authentic Self.

Despite Nora wishing for a 'miracle' to end all her trouble, she did not become selfish and so also thought of ending her life to rescue Torvald. In this regard, it would be apt to glance at how these two characters looked upon marriage. For men like Torvald, marriage is synonymous with obedience, submissiveness to dominance, and a tool to keep up social appearance. He did not consider Nora his equal ever in the relationship and therefore, remained content with the notion that women like Nora cannot be decisive in life or raise their voice against any injustice by their male counterparts. They always need their man to decide things for them. While Nora's way of thinking and her decisions are governed by intense emotion where the well-being of her dear ones counted the most to her and therefore she could jeopardize anything, unlike Torvald.

Illusion or illusory ideas often tend to become an emotional support for human beings to combat the absurdity of life. The fear and insecurity of losing something might lie in their unconscious and thus they feed on such consoling illusions to calm down their perturbation. But reality is inevitable and results in disillusionment replacing blind emotionality with a rational line of thought. Illusions result in blindness and unnatural dependency or codependency that prevents an individual from getting out of the cocooned domestic life and this is indeed detrimental to one's intellectual growth and. Ibsen has wonderfully brought out how emotional fantasy can also lead to the repression of individuality and a false sense of security but once reality dawns, even the so long loved, trusted and respected man in the marital tie turns a 'stranger' and his house becomes nothing more than 'a strange man's room'.

NORA: [*putting on her coat*]. *I can't spend a night in a strange man's room.* (Mcfarlane, 2008, p. 87)

This utterance from Nora closes all doors of reconciliation and hope for Torvald. Her cold, indifferent attitude reflects her profound new-found convictions resulting from the discovery of the grim actualities related to her existence as a woman. Therefore, the illusion of love and marriage ends abruptly for both of them in their life where Nora refuses to play the 'skylark' anymore and withdraws her unrealistic belief and says:

NORA: ...Oh, *Torvald*, I don't believe in miracles any more. (Mcfarlane, 2008, p.88)

Ibsen has dexterously treated feminist issues with a humanistic approach perceiving women foremost as individuals and endorsing the legitimacy of their rights. Nora Helmer, the New Woman, is bestowed with the right to be her actual self and thus she steps outside the domestic confinement to seek an independent identity breaking herself free of all the ties that overshadowed her place in society as an individual. Her 'doll' identity as a playful commodity, a mere entertainer by Torvald simply did not let her assert her individuality and know her potential as a woman and what she was capable of. It is only when she refuses to perform the feminine role assigned to her by the patriarchal structure, her emergence occurs as the strong determined New Woman, all set to encounter the world without any male assistance.

Considering the role of patriarchy, it is necessary to figure out how this social structure victimizes men as well. By fitting in they become servile to the patriarchal doctrines. As social standing was prioritized above everything else, it gave rise to class distinctions which resulted in oppression. It is this social compulsion on men that makes them desperate to go to any length to preserve their social reputation and Krogstad is no exception in this regard. He does not suffer from any compunction while threatening Nora. Similarly, since social reputation was of utmost priority to Torvald, he was severe and unbending with anything that would degrade his status and so he preferred to keep up the appearance of a marriage that is devoid of love, trust, and respect. Undoubtedly, Torvald is a self-absorbed, domineering man but even he seems to suffer from certain social compulsions and obligations as a man.

Ibsen's attitude to both the genders bears impartiality and a humanistic treatment of their situation where although his focus is primarily on feminist issues, he is equally conscious of the fact that men are also not free of tribulations and oppression in a patriarchy which in turn perpetuates their oppressive behaviour towards the other gender to hold on to their social image of masculinity. Bell Hooks in the Introduction to *Feminism is for everybody: Passionate Politics* (2000, p. ix) has said, "Most men find it difficult to be patriarchs. Most men are disturbed by hatred and fear of women, by male violence against women, even the men who perpetuate this violence. But they fear letting go of the benefits. They are not certain what will happen to the world they know most intimately if patriarchy changes. So they find it easier to passively support male domination even when they know in their minds and hearts that it is wrong." This supports the notion that patriarchy causes oppression of men by making them perform the role of a dominant patriarch which makes them oppress women to retain their superior status in society. Nora's final words, undoubtedly, disillusion Torvald and make him give up his complacency with regard to her place in the marriage and realize his deficiencies as a husband and his responsibility for the failure of the relationship. Ibsen's humanistic approach makes us perceive the truth as to how patriarchal ideology makes men consider their dominance, suppression of women, both in private and public domain, as absolutely natural. It is this distorted patriarchal orientation that is the root of gender inequality. Hooks (2000) believes that men do have the capacity to change and grow and in Ibsen's play this is reflected at the end of the play through Torvald's emotional collapse where he is seen hoping for a 'miracle' that would bring Nora back to his life. Hence,

Nora's own disillusionment eventually leads to Torvald's acquaintance with the reality of their marriage thereby making him also evolve as an individual.

Conclusion

To conclude, illusions are embraced by individuals irrespective of their gender and their pre-conceived notions pertaining to social institutions and the assigned gender roles get disillusioned with reality knocking at the door. Mrs. Linde and Krogstad empathize with each other's plight and Torvald accepts Nora's wishes and respects her ability to decide for herself while Nora embarks on a new journey of self-learning and self-discovery. Thus, illumination or self-realization commences for all concerning one's cognizance of life and most importantly, one's place and worthiness in society as an individual.

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