

**The Struggle for Self-Identity and Transformation of the Female  
Characters:  
A Critical Reading of *The Metamorphosis and A Doll's House***

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Arts in English

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## **Declaration**

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

**Student's Full Name & Signature:**

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## Approval

The thesis titled **The Struggle for Self-Identity and Transformation of the Female Characters: A Critical Reading of *The Metamorphosis* and *A Doll's House*** submitted by Zerin Jahan ID:16303001 of Summer 2020 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

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## **Abstract**

This paper discusses the struggle of women in search of their self-identity due to patriarchal power. This research highlights the struggles of female characters that are marginalized, dependent on men and have experienced consequent changes in their lives.

The purpose of this paper is also to discuss how even being marginalized, the women were emerged as stronger than portrayed and had the ability to not conform to society's norm regarding women's place. This analysis will present the idea that like men, women too possess own identity and their individuality be valued by the society who always holds them back and makes them inferior physically and mentally.

Keywords: self-identity, feminist, subordination.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Feminism**

Feminism is a variety of political, social movements and ideologies that share a common goal or motive and that is to establish, and achieve and maintain the political, economic, personal, professional, social equality of the sexes. Feminism also includes the idea that societies prioritize the male point of view, their thinking, and women treated unfairly within those societies. Throughout centuries, there had been feminist movements with the goal to fight for women's rights, which includes the right to vote, to hold a position in the public office, to receive, and provide education, etc. Not only that, feminists have also worked to ensure access to legal abortions, and to protect women and girls from rape, sexual harassment and domestic violence which was and still now is a common phenomenon throughout the world.

### **1.2 Patriarchy and 19<sup>th</sup> Century Women**

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the status of women remained contained in taking care of children and husbands. Not allowed to work outside, even had no right to proper education. After the industrial revolution, women got the chance to step outside and work. They started to work in the factories; the situation remained unchanged for them. They started to face discrimination and domination even outside. They used to work hard but in return never received their worth. Whatever amount they earned belonged to their husbands, having no right over their earned income. They disallowed to take loan or debt without the permission of their husband. If they did, it considered illegal or their needed to be responsible. Several acts or law passed for women rights. Women got the rights to vote but not in the parliament. It took many women rights movements, however, still at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century not able to find a place for them. They



could not come out of their stereotypical and limited sphere socially constructed for them. The 20<sup>th</sup> century became significant due to two World wars. These wars however gave women opportunity to work outside of the house. As in majority, the male members of the family were engaged in war, gave them an opportunity to earn money for the family; the opportunity to invent and discover themselves in the outside world. Along with this, several laws passed for women's voting rights. Female writers started to appear in the limelight as well as feminist movements were becoming stronger day by day. By the 20<sup>th</sup> century, women achieved the first wave of feminism but not fully successful. In different countries, the situations differ as many women still not allowed to vote, still dominated in the family, and had no right to work without husband's permission. They did not have the right to control reproduction. Politicizing, gender discrimination, sexism more focused on the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **1.3 Waves of Feminism**

Charles Fourier, a utopian socialist and French philosopher coined the feminism or "feminism" in 1837. The words "féminisme" ("feminism") and "féministe" ("feminist") first came into sight in France and the Netherlands in 1872, and then in Great Britain in the 1890s, and the United States in 1910. There were four waves or movements of feminist to ensure the position of women in the society. Each of the movements or waves had individual and different motives and sets of goals for women. The first wave feminism was about women's right to vote movements of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The second wave of feminism was about the women's liberation movement, beginning in the 1960s, which campaigned for legal and social equality for women. Around 1992, the third wave of feminism was about focusing on individuality and diversity. The fourth wave, in around 2012, used social media platform to create strong awareness against sexual harassment, violence against women and rape culture.

## 1.4 Feminist Theory

Feminist theory is an addition of feminism into theoretical or philosophical fields. Feminist theory aims to understand gender inequality and focuses on the issues like gender politics, power relations, and sexuality. Not only it provides a critique of these social and political issues, but it also focuses on the topic of upgrading women's rights and interests. Other themes explored in feminist theory are discrimination, stereotyping, objectification, oppression, and patriarchy. Feminist criticism is a character of literary criticism that stands on feminist theory. It mainly comments on the male dominated literature by using feminist principle. It shows how stereotypical and misogynic literary works can be towards women and it even addresses how the men in the texts are glorified and prioritized. From the very beginning of the civilization, women thought as the weaker companion compared to men. The one victimized, and dominated in every sector of life, whether it is mentally, physically, or psychologically. The relevancy of women in family, community, and society never questioned yet what should be the role, status and priority of women has been highly debatable. As these debates, have never a solid conclusion enough to achieve equality of women, eventually went against women by continuing inequality, discrimination, and inferiority of women by men. Women thought as “other” in the society or the inferior one. Feminist theory opposes the idea. Feminist theories first come to the light in 1794 by the publication of “A Vindication of the Rights of the Women” by Mary Wollstonecraft, an English writer. In 1851, an African women rights activist Sojourner Truth accused that men’s flawed point of view towards women is the main reason for the limitation of women. “Women having limited rights due to the men’s flawed perception of women” (Sojourner Truth, 1851). Numerous feminist theories and ideologies have developed over the years and promote different aim and point of view. In a world, which controlled by man

and covered in male dominance, men graced with power for reason as political and socio-economic. Moreover, they never leave a moment to use that power to manipulate and control their opposites as they have seen and taught to be the superior one. Due to these assumptions, which are not true, that males contain more power than females, gender roles automatically defined accordingly. As the assumptions, been a traditional standard to meet for centuries, women and men both conform to all the cultural ideas established by society, to a point that it becomes difficult for men to accept or welcome any chance of attack or sabotage to their absolute male power. In order to hold the power tightly, men try to build a world or society full of absolute patriarchy of manhood, so that women guarded in absolute patriarchy whether politically, socially, economically, or even sexually, both inside and outside of house. The rise of feminism, not only important but also needed, to turn the gender conflicts into a power struggle between men and women. Due to this, there has been an upgrade of female ideology for freedom equality and search for self-identity or individuality, which results in gradual loss of masculine and patriarchal power of men. From a girl to becoming a woman, women taught strictly, what they are supposed to be in life and not supposed to be in life. From generations, what kind of roles they can or cannot perform or more importantly what kind of roles they should perform and what kind of roles they should not for the morality of always being in the subordinate position.

### **1.5 The Chosen Protagonists**

In the texts of Franz Kafka and Henrik Ibsen, the issues such as discrimination, patriarchy, misogyny, and a struggle for self-identity for women are present. Both of the texts *The Metamorphosis* and *A Doll's House* show how the gender roles and male point of view towards women are socially constructed. The reasons behind selecting these books of Kafka and Ibsen are that both of the writers have the same theme of transformation in these stories. In the

books, the characters face a vital change in their lives in the beginning or in the end. In Kafka's book *The Metamorphosis*, the protagonist is the male named Gregor Samsa unlike in Ibsen's book; as in Ibsen's book *A Doll's House* the protagonist is a female names Nora Helmer. However, instead of Gregor decided to choose his sister Grete and other female characters to highlight. Because, in the book, though the protagonist faced transformation, Grete too throughout the book had major changes in her life, which eventually changed her position in her household. In Ibsen's book, Nora's transformation was a shocking and powerful one at the end regarding the fact that the play took place in a Norwegian Victorian society who had societal norms for women in the society and even in their household. Another reason to choose these books is to show how the different writers displayed their female characters to the readers. Women marginalized been pointed out before but this paper along with this will also highlight how the women bought differences in their lives through their experiences and were strong enough to not give in the norms constructed by society. In both the texts, the position of women is questionable as they are the one crushed under patriarchy and the way their characters are portrayed it seemed misogynic and less valued. Grete Samsa, Mrs. Samsa, Nora Helmer all three female characters were written from the point of view of male which naturally indicates the women's position as secondary.

### **1.6 The Two Chosen Theories**

The paper discussed by cultural and radical feminist theories, which talks about how the difference between men and women are culturally and more psychologically constructed. As women are thought as the weaker individual, this theory will assert that the, power of women psychically and mentally are much stronger than male defined values of women. Radical feminism considers the male-controlled capitalist hierarchy as the most dominating feature for

women's oppression and how much the society need reconstruction and change their views towards women.

## 1.6 The Two Chosen Texts

In *The Metamorphosis*, Kafka strengthens the oppression of women in the house by highlighting the transformation of Grete, from a domestic caretaker, considered as the actual and proper role of a woman to a more controlling one, who breaks out of her stereotypical role but eventually becomes the villain of the story at the end. The word Metamorphosis means transformation, which also means change, and this theme becomes the focus of Kafka's novel. Although mainly focused on Gregor Samsa's transformation but here his sister Grete Samsa's to be highlighted. He represents the female characters through the way patriarchal society wants to see them. It seen that the whole novel is in a first person perspective that means through the lens of Kafka. In the novel, seen that Mrs. Samsa and Gregor's sister Grete represented in the ideal womanhood manner where they hold no identity of their own, that man expects from them. Mrs. Samsa is the ideal mother figure, who takes care of her children, and the household, who again eventually has no say or does not give any opinion regarding any situation. Kafka presents Grete in the same way as her mother. After the transformation of Gregor Samsa, Grete, and Mrs. Samsa devotes their full time to him from making, make food for him to clean his room every day. However, as time passes, gradually everyone becomes disgusted and tired by taking care of him. His transformation to a bug was starting to bother them though his mother, Mrs. Samsa wanted to see him but others obstructed her. In the text, also noticed that after Gregor's transformation, they were facing financial problems, as Gregor was the only breadwinner of the family and due to his transformation, the earning source has stop. They had no other option but to lodge two other families. However, still after all the hardships in the family, they never

bothered to ask or permit Grete to work for any extra income but rather her parent's starts looking for her marriage to a wealthy man for a way to receive money. However, during all the troubles Grete matured in both physically and mentally. Moreover, once Grete started working outside she became dominant in the house and took the position of becoming the breadwinner, which was previously Gregor's position in the family, Kafka changes portrayal of her into a negative one. She has shown somehow as the villain who wants to get rid of Gregor Samsa who turned into a bug and was of no use. Here can observe that, not only Gregor but also Grete had her own metamorphosis, which nevertheless did not put her in the throne of a hero but rather a villain. Her self-identity not appreciated, but this did not stop her from searching one and having one. She found her place in the outer world where she proved her worth for contributing in the house and in the society. This gives the notion, which the society disapproves of anyone, especially a woman, who steps out or want to step out of her gender role. In the novel, *The Metamorphosis*, also seen that, it supports the fact that the assigned male gender roles, through Gregor as a person who only defined by his ability to work, earn money and provide the family. By writing Gregor in such manner, Kafka emphasizes the separate roles of genders, creating a greater effect when Grete breaks out of her assigned domestic female role.

In the play, *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen, the protagonist of the play named Nora Helmer, controlled by his father and later after marriage by his husband. The focus on her character shows her finding of self-identity of herself through the play. The play shows her journey from her becoming a doll to fighting for her independence. The text also shows the relationship of Trevold and Nora as husband and wife. From the outside, looking like a perfect marriage is full of flaws inside. The marriage is no different from any other marriages, which wrapped around social dichotomies, which makes the relationship of husband and wife of owner

and doll more than equal partners balancing shoulder to shoulder. Her husband Torvald is no less than a typical husband who always tries to impose his will on her and expects her to behave the way he wants. She even prohibited from eating the foods she likes and restricted spending money at her will. Helmer expects his wife to conduct by him and treats her as his personal property rather than his partner. Due to which, she never had a sense of individuality. Her actions take place by the norms and rules of the patriarchal society. For the society and to her husband, women's only contribution is bearing child and nothing more than that, in other words only a child bearing machine who should be confined within the four walls of the house. Her husband's status is the only source of her identity. As an individual, she is zero and has nothing to be proud of. This play shows how domestically women oppressed whether it is from her father or her husband. However, in the end, she leaves one home to find another in search of her true worth. Ibsen's character, Nora plays the ultimate living doll for her husband, Torvald Helmer, in the house, which indicated as the doll's house. She contains herself to her husband by closing in her consciousness or sensibility into fitting in her in the clichéd and typical notions of the so-called male chivalry. Following the play, the events occurring in the house somehow exposes her secret, which she kept from her husband. Though the main motive of her secret was to help her husband while he was ill however that did not went according to the plan. Nora borrowed money from Nils Krogstad for the sake of her husband. Nora's only fault was whatever she did was without her husband's consent. A woman whose only intention was to help her husband rather became the criminal only because she did not take permission or his consent, as if she committed any illegal task. While previously showering love and affection towards her and treating her like a careless child, it did not take him a moment to point finger at her and disgracefully condemning her as a failed mother and a wife. At this point, Nora finally understood her contribution or

partnership in this household was and always will be undervalued or underappreciated. Towards the end of the play, the truth about their marriage comes out which has been simply between a doll and its owner more than a husband and wife with typical generic roles. Nora, in the end with the iconic door-slamming act decides to crush and break all pre-established societal norms, which were running in the name of culture and instead start to own experience and give importance to her as an individual. The protagonist Nora hides things from her husband only because of his reaction as she was literally a doll or pet that has no will or mind of her own. As a human, woman, and wife or even as a mother she unable to expresses her opinion towards anything. In the play, due to the forging incident she even thought of taking her life only because to save her husband. Only because of that, husband who has no respect or true love towards her. Rather she was misunderstood her and accused as a liar. Her husband could not handle the fact that his wife could be of any help except taking care of the household. The sexist ideology makes any woman's sacrifices taken as a granted. As if woman sent to this earth only fulfill men's wishers and controlled by them before and after marriage. However, the end of the play gives a twist to the reader and also a shock as no one would imagine a woman of that time would have the courage to break ties and ponder in the outside world also known as men's public space. Henrik Ibsen refuses all the norm and stereotypical ideology against women and presents the character with a new beginning. The play raises serious questions regarding women's submission to men in each role they play, and women's contribution power almost invisible in the public and private place. Her awakening gives voice to women who faces or facing same fate as her to fight for themselves and unburden them from stereotypical societal norms.



## Chapter 2: Literature Review

The search for self-identity for women has been always a struggle. Due to patriarchal power, to women marginalized, dependent on men and seen inferior became a regular picture. This paper aims to discuss the struggle of the female characters in search of self-identity and how even being marginalized, the women were emerged as stronger than portrayed and had the ability to not conform to society's norm regarding women's place. In this section, the paper will briefly talk about the articles and texts of the scholars who have presented their work and researches in favor of this context.

### 2.1 Inequality toward Women

In the article, *Kafka's Metamorphosis through Marxist and Feminist Lens* the writer Hazzaz Ahmed talks about the Marxist and Feminist aspects of the book. He talks about how Marxist perspective shows the economic struggle of the different classes and one's earning ability or inability creates a man's true identity. However, he also talks about how feminist perspective shows the inequality towards the female characters. He claims Kafka's portrayal of woman is nothing but stereotypical and demeaning. He states that the narrative only surrounds one person that is Gregor Samsa. Though the female characters are much more than male, these characters are lacking freedom and always dependent on the male characters. Kafka presented her female characters in the stereotypical way by making them Gregor's caretakers, the way society confides in about the views towards women. If he wanted, he could have positioned Mr. Samsa or any other male character to be the caretaker but as always, the females are the one given the role.

Similarly, in the essay, *Teaching Franz Kafka's The Metamorphosis from Multiple Critical Perspective* the writer Eva Richardson also talks about having different perspective of

the book including feminist approach to it too. She talks about how women thought unintelligent, as men were the one handling the public sphere. Adding to it, she also talks about as the Western world were in grasp of men it was important for feminist approach emerge to question and point finger at the negative portrayal of women in texts. She claims that the West, Western literature, and language has been always partial to male and represented inaccurate picture of women, putting them in their place based on male viewpoint.

## **2.2 Women Having the Upper hand**

However, in the article, *Transforming Franz Kafka's "Metamorphosis"* the writer Nina Pelikan Straus, strongly believes that the female characters, especially Grete, are mainly the major or highlighted characters to Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*. Often observed that normally the readings of *The Metamorphosis* majorly includes Marxist viewpoint and Oedipus complex ideas, being Gregor useless and a burden due to devastating transformation and the other male character Mr. Samsa, the father being portrayed dominant in the book. Nina Straus focuses on the point Grete being the perfect substitute for Gregor in the book, as she too goes through her own metamorphosis and becomes an independent woman able to enjoy her freedom and earn wages. She also talks about how the transformation or metamorphosis of Grete both physically and emotionally is the main groundwork of Straus' argument. In the beginning, Gregor being the wage earner for the family had a solid hold in the family. However, due to his transformation, Gregor put into the position of a dependent man who have no choice but to rely on female help along with automatically receiving the traditional and typical role of women being inactivity and submissive. It can be highly viewed that the transformation of the siblings mirrors each other in the book *The Metamorphosis*. Throughout the transformation, Gregor became the one taken care of and Grete taking care of the family being the breadwinner. The

book started with Gregor's physical and mental transformation and ended with Grete's at the end giving her the upper hand.

### **2.3 Gender Domination**

*Gender Struggle over Ideological Power in Ibsen's A Doll's House* an article written by Guo Yuehua explores around how the play *A Doll's House* centers around social, ideological and psychological aspects on which women are perceived, especially when it comes to conforming social norms of the society. It also shows the duties of man and woman in the marriage through reflecting on marriage. Typically, men are in the dominant position, trying to manipulate their power to control women ideologically in order to maintain their identity, status, honour and showing off their masculinity to be acknowledged by the society. The article projects, in the play, *A Doll's House* the man is financially superior while the woman is in the subordinate position and kept in the private sphere as she is dependent on men, firstly by her father then her husband. Found the article perfect to back up the idea that the men as always holds the power to dominate over woman who are labeled as inferior. Torvald being a manipulative husband whose marriage with Nora looks nowhere near, as a partnership only prefers selfishly to retain his manliness, which brings him happiness.

### **2.4 Evolution of Nora**

In the article, *The Social Significance of the Modern Drama*, the writer Emma Goldman, talks about the whole evolution of the protagonist Nora. She talks about how Nora's husband, Torvald Helmer appears to be an admirable man with strong moral values, who loves and adores his wife. Nora's love for her husband reached to the point of worship where she believes firmly that the man would always be her shield and protect her no matter what. Nora is the type woman,

particularly the type of wife who would not shy away to help her husband in secrecy at any cost even if that means risking her husband's trust. She is even ready to sacrifice herself to keep the help as secret as possible because loaning money without husband's permission considered a crime. At the beginning, she appears to be a woman who expected to be doll with very little depth in her. However, her act of working properly to repay the money to Krogstad, spending carefully whatever money Torvald lent her may have shown depth and maturity in her than previously thought. The writer also talked about how even when Krogstad threatens her to expose her, the only thing she is worried about her husband's reputation rather her. When Torvald was severely ill and in need of emergency treatment in Italy, she borrowed the necessary amount from Neil Krogstad. Men never lose any opportunity to show his power over woman; Krogstad was no different. Nora kept defending him in the hope that she would receive the same but Torvald being a selfish man shows his true character. The moment he realized he is out of danger, happy about his reputations not destroyed did not even bother to acknowledge his wife's sacrifice. The article concludes with her realizing that she is nothing more than a showpiece, a doll to him. Moreover, slamming the door of the "doll's house" to a new beginning; as well as putting light on the fact that to make a true bond, a true partnership, and both the partners needed to be true and open with true love, respect, and admiration.

### **2.5 Women's Flaws as Female Hysteria**

On the contrary, in the article *The Doll House Backlash: Criticism, Feminism, and Ibsen* writer Joan Templeton had a different take on Nora and the play itself too. This article begins by asserting that the main motive of writing the play was never to start a women's movement and the play is more of humanist type rather than feminist. The writer goes on to argue that the Nora who more of Torvald's 'squirrel' or 'skylark' of the first two acts can never suddenly in the third

act transform herself and make her the flag bearer of “newly fledged feminist”. To him just like other women cases Nora too is a case study for female hysteria. However disagreeing to the point, always been seen that women who develop a voice or a stand for herself is considered hysterical as society cannot accept change or challenges mostly from a woman. The writer attacked Nora again by calling out her honesty pointing to the issues of her deceit as she devoured some sweet macaroons even after her husband Torvald forbade her and then to her association with Doctor Rank. This point seems to drag Nora to the point of manipulative and even unworthy, only because her love for macaroons. Again disagreeing to the point, stating that no one’s eating habits make him or her or loving sweet could make them unworthy. A woman does not even have the right to indulge herself with one or two macaroons, just because her husband forbade so. Templeton eventually drags Nora’s character stating that her flaws hinder the fact that she can represent women however; it does make her represent people as a whole more than just a specific gender. Every human being is associated with flaws; no one is perfect moreover at least, even as a person or people as a whole deserve the utmost respect and self-identity, individualism. The play *A Doll’s House* not meant for feminist movement it still favored to that approach more. Nonetheless, Ibsen never accepted himself as a movement originator saying, "To consult men in such a matter is like asking wolves if they desire better protection for the sheep." Indicating the fact that if men asked regarding women’s issues to have a say their ultimate concern would be to keep themselves as the superiors; not losing their power to woman in any case.

## **2.6 Forgiveness and Freedom**

In the article, *Portal to Forgiveness: A Tribute to Ibsen's Nora* writer Vicki Mahaffey had an interesting take on Nora and Torvald case. Her article is about forgiveness where she starts

the article with a descriptive of what is forgiveness and mostly what it means to forgive someone. She talks about not only forgiving the one who executed harm or damage on the victims or victims but also how to forgive one's self. According to her, the idea of forgiveness differs from person to person, which also implies for Nora and Torvald. She takes the forgiving one's self approach regarding Nora because she is the only one who can forgive herself and lead her way out from the "doll's house". For which the sense of self-identity and transforming oneself for betterment needs to believe whole-heartedly. According to Mahaffey, both Nora and Torvald had different rules while they intended to 'play house'. Torvald's mentality and idea of forgiveness comes from the old established believe that as Nora, the women is the culprit because she lied, therefore he is the one to grant forgiveness to her and continue to live their lives as before. Mahaffey writes in the article, "Torvald's understanding of transgression is the normative one: one must avoid doing or being wronged because both states threaten the preservation of one's integrity. One can forgive and forget only if there is no longer any threat to the status quo." As Nora has hurt his reputation, which according to him is his prized possession, therefore for Nora s the one to forgiven. Nevertheless, on the other hand, Nora does not bother to forgive him for the one-dimensional, farced happy lives they were living which however only surrounded by his reputation and status. Because to her more than any superficial things love, respect and an identity of her own more important. Mahaffey argues that only because of Nora's self-sacrifice that "promoted his stability of being, and the felt "happy"". Even though is possible she would sacrifice it for Torvald. However, she forgives and frees herself from the marriage where there is no partnership but rather full of misconceptions about marriage. A man's honor became more important than own wife, but what about her honor, which she has sacrificed all this years? Who is going to fight for her? A man might leave his wife in danger but to her

husband and family always came first. However, in return she gifted herself a new beginning not conforming to the society who held her down for so long.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 The Research Type**

The type of research in the thesis is a qualitative research. According to Creswell, a qualitative research is an investigation process of comprehension based on distinctive methodological traditions, which explore a social or human problem. Qualitative research studies things in natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpreting phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them (36). The data collected in this research used to analyze the struggle of female characters in search of self-identity due to stereotypical marginalization and inequality towards women and transformation takes place in their lives that helps them to build their individuality.

### **3.2 The Research Data**

According to Neuman, qualitative data come in the forms of photos, written words, phrases, or symbols describing or representing people, actions, and events in social life (328). In the qualitative research, mostly the data are not numeric but mostly analysis based yet having different variety of sources. The data of this research are dialogues, words, conversations, references etc, which eventually be related to analyze the struggle of self –identity of the characters and emerging stronger than portrayed being able to not conform the society.

### 3.3 The Research Source

The sources of the data are mainly secondary resources. Firstly, the texts *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka, translated and edited by Stanley Corngold and *A Doll's House* by Henrik Ibsen, authorized English translation by William Archer. Secondly, the additional references to support the information to analyze the data. The supporting data are mainly various articles taken from the electronic source.

### 3.4 The Research Objective

The reasons of this research is to show that women facing problems and their struggles in both the texts, *The Metamorphosis* and *A Doll's House* are universal and still happening in real life regardless of being in the West or even in the East. The typical mindset to lower women and create boundary around them still exist everywhere, while some are able to fight back however some are still caged in a golden cage involving everyone in daily life. Secondly, the portrayal of the female characters struggles, when women dominated, subordinated, discriminated, and deprived of the freedom they have right on, eventually makes them feel they are nothing but worthless, inferior, depressed which hampers both mentally and physically. For that reason, women must solve their problems themselves, they must fight for themselves with their struggles. Greta and Nora's struggles as the female characters are interesting and worthy to discuss because both had strong determination to prove their ability and worth despite placed in and as stereotypical figures. Both of the female characters living in a patriarchal society are challenged everyday to struggle with difficult conditions. Greta and Nora who lives in a patriarchal society, faces the problems of the patriarchal domination from their very home by their family, husband and father.



The paper discussed by cultural and radical feminist theories, which talks about how the difference between men and women are culturally and more psychologically constructed. As women are thought as the weaker individual, this theory will assert that the, power of women psychically and mentally are much stronger than male defined values of women. Radical feminism considers the male-controlled capitalist hierarchy as the most dominating feature for women's oppression and how much the society need reconstruction and change their views towards women.

### **3.5 Radical Feminism**

Feminist theory holds different schools of theories such as cultural, social; Marxist etc. from all of them radical and cultural theories chosen to analyze the data. Radical feminism mainly pays focus on women's oppression as men based on capitalist hierarchy dominate women. According to Rosemarie Tong, in her article, *Feminist Thought A More Comprehensive Introduction* radical feminists claim that power, dominance, hierarchy, and competition characterize the patriarchal system. Furthermore, radical feminists think that it cannot be reformed but only ripped out of the root and the branch; taking out problem from the very core (2). It cannot said that the situations caused only for patriarchy's strict legal and political structures that should be uprooted and changed to lead the way to women's liberation, however also its social and cultural institutions especially the family and organized religion that also must be uprooted. This means that the patriarchal system strongly planted and causing oppression toward women. Radical feminism critics and believes family must be erased because family is the first place where women live as a daughter, sister, wife and a mother. Women receive forms of discrimination firstly and easily from their families. In the text, *The Metamorphosis* Greta's situation recalled as a character that is discriminated in her family against the breadwinner of the

house Gregor. As Gregor being the male and provider receives the capitalist hierarchy against Greta. The revolutionary feminists in 1960's and 1970's, were given the term radical feminists and the ones paving the way for a change. According to Tong

Radical feminists say that patriarchy is the source of women's oppression. This movement affected by the conflict theory, which states that there are two classes in the society, namely a) economic class system that is based on the relations of production, and b) gender class system that is based on the relations of reproduction. The oppression toward women is due to the gender class system (4)

According to radical feminists, they argue that the source of women's oppression is the whole society based on patriarchal system capitalist and biologically too. This system centered on what men wants, what men needs, what men thinks; overall on men's interest. Therefore, this movement sees that the biological factors are the basis of gender discrimination too. It assumes that the physical control of women by men is a form of oppression toward women. Here, radical feminists show that the patriarchal system is the power source of men over women, which based on the control of men over women's reproductive and productive capacity. The main problem of many forms of discrimination toward women is men themselves with the orthodox ideology of patriarchy. However, in the text, *The Metamorphosis* focus would be on productive capacity based on gender class system. Tong claims

women's oppression is more fundamental than any other forms of human oppression. into five meanings: 1) that women were, historically, the first oppressed group, 2) that women's oppression is the most widespread, existing in virtually every known society, 3) that women's oppression is the hardest form of oppression to eradicate and cannot be

removed by other social changes such as the abolition of class society, 4) that women's oppression causes the most suffering to its victims, qualitatively as well as quantitatively although the suffering may often go unrecognized because of the sexist prejudices of both the oppressors and the victims, and 5) that women's oppression provides a conceptual model for understanding all other forms of oppression (49)

This focuses on the points that women are the first group who get not one but many forms of discrimination. The various forms of discrimination happen everywhere all around the world, in all aspects in the society. The discrimination toward women is very difficult to ignore and erase and cannot erase through the other social changes like the abolition of class in the society because it deeply sowed in the society culture, which is hard enough to remove, but have to remove. The discrimination itself causes a pain for women as victims and various forms of discrimination towards women give a real picture or the true example that seeks to understand the other forms of discrimination.

### **3.6 Cultural Feminism**

Cultural feminism shows how the difference between men and women culturally and psychologically constructed as it puts a lot of emphasis biologically. As women are thought as the weaker individual, this theory will assert that the, power of women psychically and mentally are much stronger than male defined values of women. According to Lewis, in his article *Cultural Feminism What Is the essence of Being a Woman?* cultural feminism is a variety of feminism which focuses on the essential differences between men and women, that purely based on biological differences. Furthermore, cultural feminism gives character to those differences special and superior virtues in women. The phrase "essential differences" refers to the belief

that gender differences are natural, as they are the part of the *essence* of females or males; the differences not chosen rather part of the nature of woman or man. However, cultural feminists differ to the point as these differences based on biology or cultivated socially. Those who strongly believe that the differences are not biological, but are cultural, conclude that women's "essential" qualities are so deep-seated by culture that they are endless. When talked about essential qualities of men and women, culturally it has been set that men are superior and powerful and has the right over women, on the other hand women are often told or seen to be caring, quite, soft or mostly like a doll; the inferior one. All this differences based upon biology or genetic, however the question arise a woman who has the biological power or blessing to bring a life into this earth, how can that body or woman be considered weak or inferior. Cultural feminists argue that traditional male behaviors for example, aggressiveness, competitiveness, and domination, are very much harmful to society and specifically to particular fields within society. Instead, the cultural feminist claims, the behaviors considered weak as caring, cooperation, and affection would make the world better. In the play, *A Doll's House* Nora's character portrayed to be caring, childish, obedient wife, and mother to three children however, her position in the book in her own house inferior and disvalued. A woman who is a wife also a mother has no respect or a place of her own. According to Lewis, the one who argue that women are biologically or inherently more kind, caring, nurturing, also argue more for more involvement or equal involvement of women in decision-making processes in society and particular fields in society. Culturally people surrounded themselves with typical mindsets forget that in personal and in public sphere equal partnership of men and women are necessary, rather than one sided. Kate Millet is one of the well-known feminist. According to David Carter, in *Literary Theory* Millet's main argument is focused on the fact that oppression of women ideology, especially patriarchal

ideology which is used only for the welfare of men, where women are nowhere to be found. This ideology or culturally embedded thoughts oppress women in both domestic and social life (94). Moreover, she claims that, root cause of the oppression toward women is patriarchal ideology, which for many years deeply put within the society. This mindset grows slowly however, it spread among the people in the society and forces its influence to capture their thought. It is provided and received by the people generations after generations. Whether it is taken consciously or unconsciously, this thought oppresses women's movement and empowerment in all aspects of life and becomes a toxic culture in a society. Millet further focuses that relationship based on power structure, whether in a system of society or in a private system if one group is controlled by other human groups, there never were any equality or in a woman's case any self-identity. It creates imbalance, which leads to a dead end. In Nora's case she fought through her struggles and transformed herself to find her individuality where she is respected as a woman, wife or mother.

Feminist theories always tried to create awareness of patriarchal control, exploitation, marginalization, and oppression of women in domestic and social life. It shows that men throughout generations in the patriarchal culture have treated women unequally. The reason women are treated unequally by men is because of the false belief of gender difference between men and women, and thinking that women are to be controlled in every sphere, every time sidelining women. The common goal is to change the degrading views of women, raise awareness of women's roles in all aspects, to reveal the extent of male dominance in all aspects and women being valued, and given the equal opportunities to be of equal partners.

## Chapter 4: Analysis

### 4.1 Struggle finding self-identity

Feminist theory is a mirror which to show the world how women everyday in their life struggles to rise up on their own, find their individuality which always gets crushed by the dominating patriarchal world which leading inequality between men and women in a society.

#### 4.1.1 Gender Discrimination within the Family

In the text *The Metamorphosis*, the narrative centers on Gregor Samsa. Apart from the male characters, there are three female characters in the novel and they are Gregor's mother, Gregor's sister, and the house-cleaner. In the article, *Kafka's Metamorphosis through Marxist and Feminist Lens* the writer Hazzaz Ahmed talks about the Marxist and Feminist aspects of the book. He talks about how Marxist perspective shows the economic struggle of the different classes and one's earning ability or inability creates a man's true identity. However, he also talks about how feminist perspective shows the marginalization towards the female characters. He claims Kafka's portrayal of woman is nothing but stereotypical and demeaning. He states that the narrative only surrounds one person that is Gregor Samsa. Though the female characters are much more than male, these characters are lacking freedom and always dependent on the male characters. Kafka presented her female characters in the stereotypical way by making them Gregor's caretakers, the way society confides in about the views towards women. In an article it is stated that, "Kafka hold in suspension European, urban, and early twentieth century masculine attitudes towards women and transforms this attitudes by presenting Grete and Mother Samsa in the roles of Gregor's caretakers and feeders and then revealing their rebellion against these roles" (Vejas). If he wanted, he could have positioned Mr. Samsa or any other male character to be the

caretaker but as always, the females are the one given such roles. Here Kafka portrayed the women the way they presented to the world from the beginning of time. Every aspect of the world viewed from the male point of view, the attitude towards women or females have been of masculine attitude. In the text and in modern world today this is a prominent example. However, the world has changed, became modern but still society views the world from the male perspective not allowing women to come out of their shell and shine. Grete being an obedient sister took care of her brother the way society conforms women. Radical feminism argues about the fact that male-controlled capitalist hierarchy works as a characteristic to women's oppression and how the whole society needs to reconstructs their values and concept about females. The society needs to change their views in order to give women roles beside the stereotypical ones. This means that the patriarchal system strongly planted and causing oppression toward women. Radical feminism critics and believes family must be erased because family is the first place where women live as a daughter, sister, wife and a mother. Women receive forms of discrimination firstly and easily from their families. In the text, *The Metamorphosis* Greta's situation recalled as a character that is discriminated in her family against the breadwinner of the house Gregor. As Gregor being the male and provider receives the capitalist hierarchy against Greta. Women are more than household machines whose lives only do not surround to be under dominated patriarchal society and be the second sex or the "other". The family worried about being financially not solvent after the transformation of Gregor, it indicates that Gregor was the only provider as he was the son. On the other hand, Grete being the girl or daughter not handed over the opportunity to contribute to the family-income rather she is for providing help with the household chores of the family (Swag). Not only is she, occupied with stereotypical domestic roles but her education and future also dependent on Gregor. He wanted her to enroll in a violin

institution so that she can pursue her career. Here, can be seen, due to Gregor's transformation and not being able to work, a pause has occurred for Grete's enrollment. Nevertheless, feminist theory would pursue it in a different manner. Grete's gender role has made her dependent on others for her own future. She is not being able to work and pursue it on her own. Because Kafka presented the issue of dependency and inequality between the siblings, that women are much more suitable at home rather than being outside contributing to the family. She, not only deprived of her rights, but also deprived of the world outside and its realities. The society has given the tag of provider or earner only to the men of the family. As seen in Samsa family, Gregor working hard to run his family as the only provider. Gregor's father has imposed all his dreams on his shoulders and Gregor contributes the major part in his family-income. On the other hand, Grete, the one who has been chosen only for taking care of Gregor and the family however nothing more than that.

#### **4.1.2 The Other Female Characters**

If observed in the text, the other female characters beside Grete too faced the same portrayal. Gregor's mother, Mrs. Samsa too portrayed as a male-dependent woman. In the text, it showed that either she is requesting her husband Mr. Samsa not killing Gregor or she is hiding behind him seeing Gregor as a big horrible bug. It is not just only showing her weakness or fragility as a woman but also it questions her "mother nature" too. Because a mother, always thought and seen, that whether her children are experiencing bad times or even if they commit unfortunate events, the love, and affection of mother never changes. In addition to that, women as mothers are the strongest figure despite of the situations whether good or bad. However, here Kafka has portrayed Mrs. Samsa as someone weak and minor in her characteristics. Besides, she is as an earning member of the family (Pyle). Apart from taking care of the family members and



taking care of the house, she used to sew clothes to add to the family income. However, the reference of her work and earning money is less in the text. In addition, it seems that her contribution been taken for granted. Nowhere, in the text or no character in the narrative has mentioned or talked about it ever, even for not once have anyone seemed to be thankful to the woman for helping in the family, earning and maintaining the family as well. His mother just like any women in the society underappreciated for their contribution inside or outside the house. However, on the contrary, Gregor's mother has been also shown to be dependent on the other family members and she is portrayed to have no authority or saying over her family except for agreeing to the decisions given by Mr. Samsa. This provides the notion that how women in their own house deprived of decision-making and dominated by husband whereas they are the one taking care of it more than men takes care. On the other hand, Gregor's father seems to be dominating strong character in the novel and his view and thoughts towards women seems to be very negligent. When they lost Gregor and Grete became the breadwinner of the family, the first and foremost idea that triggered his mind about Grete was her marriage (Swag). It seemed like he lacks confidence about her daughter being independent without a man. Sadly, Grete's female dominance is not a victory for her, as since she returns to the typically feminine role as a wife and homemaker once Gregor dies. Her parents decided her to get married

While they amused themselves in this way, it struck Mr. and Mrs. Samsa almost at the same moment how their daughter, who was getting more animated all the time, had blossomed recently, in spite of all the troubles which had made her cheeks pale, into a beautiful and voluptuous young woman. Growing more silent and almost unconsciously understanding each other in their glances, they thought that the time was now at hand to seek out a good honest man for her. And it was something of a confirmation of their new

dreams and good intentions when at the end of their journey the daughter first lifted herself up and stretched her young body (Kafka 42)

It seemed her father rather looked at it as an economic purpose by saying that Grete's future husband can contribute to the family income, which will fulfill their future wishes, and it might compensate the failure of Gregor to fulfill that demand. Being Grete's father, he is likely to believe in a stranger rather than his own daughter, a man who he even does not know about. Moreover, Grete's marriage appeared to be a kind of business deal to him rather than a marriage, which is a social demand. The dominance that Grete showed by having control over the household, only worked to convince her parents that Grete needs a husband to control her. They live in a patriarchal society that believes the only goal for women is to marry a "good husband" or an "honest husband" who can 'own' them. In an essay of Richardson it is said that, "women were thought to be unintelligent (at least in part because they were generally less formally educated than men), and many women accepted that judgment. It was not until the feminist movement was well under way that women began examining old texts to reevaluate their portrayal of women and writing new works to fit the "modern woman" (35). She talks about how women thought unintelligent, as men were the one handling the public sphere. Adding to it, she also talks about as the Western world were in grasp of men it was important for feminist approach emerge to question and point finger at the negative portrayal of women in texts. She claims that the West, Western literature, and language has been always partial to male and represented inaccurate picture of women, putting them in their place based on male viewpoint.

The house cleaner in the narrative been portrayed as a woman who was the first one to see the corpse of the bug and shouts out to Gregor's family for giving the news. "When she quickly realized the true state of affairs, her eyes grew large, she whistled to herself, but didn't

restrain herself for long. She pulled open the door of the bedroom and yelled in a loud voice into the darkness, ‘Come and look. It’s kicked the bucket. It’s lying there, totally snuffed!’ (45). In this few sentences, the lady shown to be a cruel, fool and subordinate gender in front of the readers. The house-cleaner could have been a man or even maybe Mr.Samsa. The woman could show to be in tears or in remorse seeing the dead body. Instead of portraying women with a class, the women portrayed as a subordinate gender to men that house-cleaning characters should always be a women.

#### **4.1.3 Strong Patriarchal Power**

In the play *A Doll's House* playwright Henrik Ibsen inquires about the women's role in the society and critically symbolize their search for identity and individuality. For centuries, it been seen that men and women have been treated unequally whether physically, mentally, psychologically in the society which truly believes in patriarchy system. Patriarchy is the name given to the whole complex system of male dominance by which most societies used to run earlier and still run now. In this system, men are the controller and women become the follower or bound to become the follower. Men have full power to treat and control women and, thus, women only follow what men say or need as the head of a society. In this case, women had given no right or chance to break the rules. Therefore, men held superior to women in all segments of life such as in domestically, education, politics, and social life. Furthermore, this condition raised many problems between women and men.

In the play, observed that Nora plays her role as a daughter, wife and mother ideally. Ibsen in the text shows that how women play a powerless position in the male dominated society. Simone de Beauvoir writes in her book *The second sex*, “males don’t interpret females according

to females themselves, whereas they regard females as independent ones... males can be taken as the reference to define and distinguish females, while the reference to define and distinguish males cannot be females. 'She' is the Essential in opposition of the Inessential. 'He' is the subject and the Absolute, whereas 'she' is the Other" (26). Here, be seen that, male domination at its highest peak making females considered as the "other". The relationship seen of as subordination and dominance, the essential and inessential, and the other and self between male and female are prominent. Therefore, in patriarchal society, male's position considered positive and powerful and females play a passive and inessential role. Feminist criticism says that the patriarchal society or the male dominated society set all the stereotypical ideologies about women. It preaches the ideology that women should be submissive and bound to their husbands who are the authority of them. This society set the beliefs that women dominated or authorized. They impose certain attributes to women that women should have the certain qualities or else they labeled as a bad woman. In the play, from the very beginning Nora tries her best to be the ideal daughter of her father, ideal wife of her husband and mother of her children. However, gradually she realizes that these are all the vague ideas of the patriarchal societies to oppress the women. There is no acceptance of her identity, and honor even after sacrificing and trying to provide the best. Therefore, she decides to refuse all the restrictions and starts on a journey to provide her the best.

#### **4.1.4 Limitations of Nora as a Daughter and a Wife**

Cultural feminism shows how the difference between men and women culturally and psychologically constructed as it puts a lot of emphasis biologically. As women are thought as the weaker individual, this theory will assert that the, power of women psychically and mentally are much stronger than male defined values of women. From the very beginning of the play,

noticed that Nora represented as a doll in human form, firstly, in her father's house and after marriage in her husband's house. Before her marriage, her father used to take all the decisions of her life. He gives her daughter's hand to marry with Torvald without asking her permission or opinion and even without asking whether she wants to get married or not. She has no opinion of her own in her own house. She even keeps her opinions hidden from her father, as she is too afraid of his reaction. She discovers that she has no individuality or freedom in her house.

"While I was at home with father, he used to tell me all his opinion, and I held the same opinions. If I had others I said nothing about them, because he wouldn't have liked it. He used to call me his doll-child, and played with me as I played with my dolls" (Ibsen 163). From her own house where she spent her childhood to her husband's house women taught always be a doll that has no say on her will. Though called or said her house but it never felt like one rather it is more like father's house. She realizes that she was not happy in her father's house and same thing happened in her husband's house too. In the play, she does everything to be a proper wife and a proper mother. She sacrifices her little pleasures and opinions to fulfill her "sacred" duty as a daughter, wife, and mother. Everything was good and happy until she did something by her own. She took loan from Nils Krogstad for the sake of her husband's health however without her husband's permission. She thought that whatever she did was for husband and it would help him recover. However, her thoughts took a turn when she gets to acknowledge that whether it was for her husband but not accepted in the male dominated society. A married woman cannot take loan without the consent of her husband even though whatever she did was just to help him. Rather than appreciating the help, a man's ego became the bigger picture. Gradually Nora realizes that does not matter how much you give yourself to others at the end of the day there is no chance for her own intelligence; she had to work according to the male's opinion. Nora finally realizes the

reality of women in the society when the loan incident comes in front to Torvald. Torvald addresses Nora as a liar and hypocrite and take the rights of children from her. She addressed as someone who cannot be a good mother. Taking the advantage in his own hand, Krogstad too blackmailed Nora so that she can put good words for Krogstad in the bank. After a while, when Torvald received an apology letter from Krogstad he become happy, relieved knowing that his honor and ego will not be tarnished. It is when Nora realizes that she would never receive her place in the house, not as a wife and not as an individual. She understands that she was loveable, until she accepts all his opinion, dominated and fulfils his expectations but when she starts to give her opinion, she becomes a villain.

#### **4.1.5 Limitations to Express Self**

In his play, Ibsen portrays his female characters in a very traditional and stereotypical way. In the play Ibsen wants his reader to show that how the situation of women was then in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Norwegian society. It seen in the play that how the protagonist Nora Helmer was treated in her house and how she realizes her individuality. At the first phase of the play, Nora Helmer plays a role of idealized women of the society. She takes care of her husband and children and work for them all the time. She is mostly confined within her house, shopping and neighbor party. Marriage is the concept which confined women in the restricted life whereas marriage brings two lives together forever in love. In the play, women not respected and recognized as an individual human being. Their contribution has shown up to only for sacrificing their happiness, life for their husband and children without being valued for their sacrifices. Nora's action of borrowing money showed her the true face of her husband and the society whose ego, honor and respect much superior rather than a wife trying to help her husband by being by his side when needed. "What an awful awakening! During all these eight years---she

who was my pride and my joy---a hypocrite, a liar---worse, worse---a criminal. Oh, the unfathomable hideousness of it all! Ugh! Ugh! (154). Torvald was unable to understand the sacrifice of Nora for him. Just one incident made her a hypocrite from his pride. When he sees that, the whole responsibility of the incident and it would somehow destroy his reputation he become furious. He starts to humiliate Nora instead of appreciating her and protect her from the incident. This is the actual scenario of male and female or of a wife and husband. Women have to sacrifice everything for the men but the men in turn cannot be thankful even to acknowledge.

*Gender Struggle over Ideological Power in Ibsen's A Doll's House* an article written by Guo Yuehua explores around how the play *A Doll's House* centers around social, ideological and psychological aspects on which women are perceived, especially when it comes to conforming social norms of the society. It also shows the duties of man and woman in the marriage through reflecting on marriage. Typically, men are in the dominant position, trying to manipulate their power to control women ideologically in order to maintain their identity, status, honour and showing off their masculinity to be acknowledged by the society. The article projects, in the play, *A Doll's House* the man is financially superior while the woman is in the subordinate position and kept in the private sphere as she is dependent on men, firstly by her father then her husband. Found the article perfect to back up the idea that the men as always holds the power to dominate over woman who are labeled as inferior. Torvald being a manipulative husband whose marriage with Nora looks nowhere near, as a partnership only prefers selfishly to retain his manliness, which brings him happiness. Nora, the childlike wife of Torvald never taught to go against the norms of patriarchal society. She has the false ideology that it is disrespectful to contradict against male whether it is her father or her husband even when they are wrong. She

never thought or even projected her opinion even if she has one. She had the utmost believe that her husband will protect her or in return also will be willing to sacrifice himself for her.

In the article, *The Social Significance of the Modern Drama*, the writer Emma Goldman, talks about the whole evolution of the protagonist Nora. She talks about how Nora's husband, Torvald Helmer appears to be an admirable man with strong moral values, who loves and adores his wife. Nora's love for her husband reached to the point of worship where she believes firmly that the man would always be her shield and protect her no matter what. Nora is the type woman, particularly the type of wife who would not shy away to help her husband in secrecy at any cost even if that means risking her husband's trust. She is even ready to sacrifice herself to keep the help as secret as possible because loaning money without husband's permission considered a crime. At the beginning, she appears to be a woman who expected to be doll with very little depth in her. However, her act of working properly to repay the money to Krogstad, spending carefully whatever money Torvald lent her may have shown depth and maturity in her than previously thought. The writer also talked about how even when Krogstad threatens her to expose her, the only thing she is worried about her husband's reputation rather her. When Torvald was severely ill and in need of emergency treatment in Italy, she borrowed the necessary amount from Neil Krogstad. Men never lose any opportunity to show his power over woman; Krogstad was no different. Nora kept defending him in the hope that she would receive the same but Torvald being a selfish man shows his true character. The moment he realized he is out of danger, happy about his reputations not destroyed did not even bother to acknowledge his wife's sacrifice. The article concludes with her realizing that she is nothing more than a showpiece, a doll to him. Moreover, slamming the door of the "doll's house" to a new beginning; as well as putting light on the fact that to make a true bond, a true partnership, and both the partners needed



to be true and open with true love, respect, and admiration. The strong patriarchal dominance in domestic life makes women as wives or mother unable to do what they want to. They only become the complement of men without appreciated for her efforts. They given less importance than men because of that what women do regarded as unimportant or unnecessary. Their voice is unheard which cannot be a standard or even cannot be trusted nor to give a look at. In Ibsen's play, *A Doll's House*, Nora is only repeating or confirming what her husband says because she has no right to express her true feelings in front of him just the way she had none in front of her father.

**Helmer.** Nora, Nora! what a woman you are! But seriously, Nora you know my principles n these points. No debts! No borrowing! Home life ceases to be free and beautiful as soon as it is founded on borrowing and debt. We two have held out bravely till now, and we are not going to give in at the last.

**Nora.** [going to the fireplace]: Very well---as you please, Torvald (1.25)

From the dialogue above given, clearly showed that she is only repeating what her husband says without expressing her own opinion. The relationship of a husband and wife should be of equal partners, one should not obey one another. If she given the chance to speak up her mind she would have shared the incident of the loan and she would have been able to make her husband understand the circumstance under which she had to take this particular action. In the dialogue above Nora said as you please meaning at the end all that matters he being pleased, without any worry of others around him.

On the contrary, in the article *The Doll House Backlash: Criticism, Feminism, and Ibsen* writer Joan Templeton had a different take on Nora and the play itself too. This article begins by asserting that the main motive of writing the play was never to start a women's movement and the play is more of humanist type rather than feminist. The writer goes on to argue that the Nora

who more of Torvald's 'squirrel' or 'skylark' of the first two acts can never suddenly in the third act transform herself and make her the flag bearer of "newly fledged feminist". To him just like other women cases Nora too is a case study for female hysteria. However disagreeing to the point, always been seen that women who develop a voice or a stand for herself is considered hysterical as society cannot accept change or challenges mostly from a woman. The writer attacked Nora again by calling out her honesty pointing to the issues of her deceit as she devoured some sweet macaroons even after her husband Torvald forbade her and then to her association with Doctor Rank. This point seems to drag Nora to the point of manipulative and even unworthy, only because her love for macaroons. Again disagreeing to the point, stating that no one's eating habits make him or her or loving sweet could make them unworthy. A woman does not even have the right to indulge herself with one or two macaroons, just because her husband forbade so. Templeton eventually drags Nora's character stating that her flaws hinder the fact that she can represent women however; it does make her represent people as a whole more than just a specific gender. Every human being is associated with flaws; no one is perfect moreover at least, even as a person or people as a whole deserve the utmost respect and self-identity, individualism.

**Helmer.** [threatening with his finger]: Hasn't the little sweet-tooth been playing pranks to-days?

**Nora.** No; how can you think such a thing!

**Helmer.** Didn't she just look in at the confectioner's?

**Nora.** No, Torvald; really---

**Helmer.** Not to sip a little jelly?

**Nora.** No, certainly not.

**Helmer.** Hasn't she even nibbled a macaroon or two?

**Nora.** No, Torvald, indeed, indeed!

**Helmer.** Well, well, well; of course I'm only joking.

**Nora.** [goes to the table on the right]: I shouldn't think of doing what you disapprove of.

**Helmer.** No, I'm sure of that; and, besides, you've given me your word---[Going towards her.] Well, keep your little Christmas secrets to yourself, Nora darling. The Christmas-tree will bring them all to light, I daresay (1.29-30)

From the above dialogue, seen she even had to fight with her wishes to keep Torvald satisfied and happy. In her efforts of being the good wife, she always careful of behaving appropriately and not fulfilling her wishes for example her sweet desire of macaroons. Though he said he is joking but it shows her habit of eating macaroons displeases him.

#### 4.1.6 Nora's Image as a Weak Woman

The image of Nora, in the play shown in a way that a mother and a wife not able to manage the home properly without spending too much of money. She even addressed by her husband as 'spendthrift'.

**Helmer.** Can you deny it, Nora dear? [He puts his arm around her.] It's a sweet little lark, but it gets through a lot of money. No one would believe how much it costs a man to keep such a little bird as you.

**Nora.** For shame! How can you say so? Why, I save as much as ever I can.

**Helmer.** [laughing]: Very true--- as much as you can---but that's precisely nothing.

**Nora.** [hums and smiles with covert glee]: H'm! If you only knew, Torvald, what expenses we larks and squirrels have (1.28)

Nora's spending habit makes Torvald taunt her as she buys things that are not important and rather useless. She had shown as a wife who only takes money from her husband as much as she wants somehow but unable to save any. Only if he knew, her habit of spendthrift only done on purpose, so that she can cover the secret that she takes and save up the money to repay Krogstad

as soon as possible. She lets Torvald think her as a weak woman not being able to spend less only to save her family from the worst.

Another incident took place in the play that shows her as a weak woman who cannot be trusted as a mother to take care of her children.

**Helmer.** The thing is so incredible, I can't grasp it. But we must come to an understanding. Take that shawl off. Take it off, I say! I must try to pacify him in one way or another---the matter must be hushed up, cost what it may.---As for you and me, we must make no outward change in our way of life---no outward change, you understand. Of course, you will continue to live here. But the children cannot be left in your care. I dare not trust them to you.—Oh, to have to say this to one I have loved so tenderly---whom I still---! But that must be a thing of the past. Henceforward there can be no question of happiness, but merely is saving the ruins, the shreds, the show----(3.156)

After the truth was unfolded Torvald lost his temper and not in a good emotional state.

According to him, Nora is a liar, criminal and a weak woman with whom he does not trust his children. To him a woman like Nora should not be around his children because according to him she has committed a crime that has no forgiveness. Hence, she is a weak woman from whom her children will not receive any care or attention. To him his wife was perfect until she listened and followed him however; the moment the secret is out, she became someone unable to manage her marriage and children.

#### **4.2 Transformation of the Characters**

In both of the texts, *The Metamorphosis* and *A Doll's House* the characters went through a transformation in their lives, changing their lives forever.

#### 4.2.1 Care Taker to Bread Winner

In *The Metamorphosis*, not only Gregor but Grete also went through a transformation, she was also another person facing metamorphosis. Once Gregor becomes less capable of serving his family, Grete becomes more dominant. After her becoming the one to provide her family, Kafka shifts her portrayal into a negative one, giving the societal manner of disapproving of a woman, who encourages or due to different circumstances steps out of their gender role. “Gregor earned enough money to meet the expenses of the entire family and... it was his secret plan that she, who unlike him, loved music, should be sent next year to Conservatory, regardless of the great expense involved” (Kafka 20). Grete as usual expected to wait around for Gregor to earn enough money for her to career to pursue in music, letting her future fully dependent on his ability to earn enough money. Her education and working ability less bothered just like any female in the household, because society expect them to look after the house hold rather than from earning and contributing. Grete, if given chance might shine in life even better than Gregor and in coarse of time, his transformation gives Grete an opportunity to gain dominance in the household.

In the article, *Transforming Franz Kafka's "Metamorphosis"* the writer Nina Pelikan Straus, strongly believes that the female characters, especially Grete, are mainly the major or highlighted characters to Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*. Often observed that normally the readings of *The Metamorphosis* majorly includes Marxist viewpoint and Oedipus complex ideas, being Gregor useless and a burden due to devastating transformation and the other male character Mr.Samsa, the father being portrayed dominant in the book. Nina Straus focuses on the point Grete being the perfect substitute for Gregor in the book, as she too goes through her own metamorphosis and becomes an independent woman able to enjoy her freedom and earn wages.

She also talks about how the transformation or metamorphosis of Grete both physically and emotionally is the main groundwork of Straus' argument. In the beginning, Gregor being the wage earner for the family had a solid hold in the family. However, due to his transformation, Gregor put into the position of a dependent man who have no choice but to rely on female help along with automatically receiving the traditional and typical role of women being inactivity and submissive. It can be highly viewed that the transformation of the siblings mirrors each other in the book *The Metamorphosis*. Throughout the transformation, Gregor became the one taken care of and Grete taking care of the family being the breadwinner. The book started with Gregor's physical and mental transformation and ended with Grete's at the end giving her the upper hand. Eventually, as Gregor becomes less humanlike, Grete becomes more dominant in the family dynamic. He feels ashamed and a burden to his family whenever his family discusses certain issues like money, as he lost his position as a provider, he also somehow lost control and power. "Whenever the conversation turned to the necessities of earning money, Gregor would let go of the door and throw himself down on the cool leather sofa which stood beside it, for he felt hot with shame and grief" ( Kafka 21). By not being able to work and provide, Gregor loses the dominance he had once, Grete, on the other hand, starts having more dominance in the household dynamic. Gregor's earning used to be the only source for Grete and her future in the violin academy but once Grete positions herself in Gregor's place and the roles reversed, she not only becomes her source of her future but also she showed that if a woman provided situations she can rise up to it. Once Grete started stepping outside, leaving her stereotypical feminine role behind, she immediately turns into a villain in Kafka's eyes.

His sister, before running to business every morning and afternoon, hurriedly shoved any old food into Gregor's room with her foot; and in the evening, regardless of whether the

food had only been toyed with or—the most usual case—had been left completely untouched, she swept it out with a swish of the broom (...) could not be done more hastily (32)

As his sister no longer prioritizes, or give importance regarding what Gregor wants, or what would “please” him, this makes her a rebel and someone who went against her gender role who break barriers in life. Grete also described as being tired and sick of her daily domestic life and as she dares to walk out of her feminine role, she becomes the ultimate villain in the text. Moreover, Grete portrayed as the one to wish for Gregor’s death, “My dear parents”, said his sister and by way of an introduction pounded her hand on the table, “things can’t go on like this. Maybe you don’t realize it, but I do. (...) we have to get rid of it” (Kafka 37). This bold cold-hearted statement gives the idea to the reader the way Kafka sees Grete. The moment a woman breaks out of her domestic role to be in control, the patriarchal society views women as a threat. She taking over Gregor’s place and becoming an important character in the dynamic threatens the patriarchal system.

#### **4.2.2 Transformation as the Villain**

However, Grete’s transformation made her look like a villain also it made her parents immediately seek a husband for her. Once her parents saw her being the independent person she is, the first thought that came to their mind was her marriage. “Mr. and Mrs. Samsa, as they watched their daughter getting livelier and livelier, that lately, in spite of all the troubles which had turned her cheeks pale, she had blossomed into a good-looking, shapely girl. Growing quieter and communicating almost unconsciously through glances, they thought that it would soon be time, too, to find her a good husband” (42). Her gender and social freedom somehow

convinced her parents to get her a good husband. It seemed her father rather looked at it as an economic purpose than social purpose by saying that Grete's future husband can contribute to the family income, which will fulfill their future wishes, and it might compensate for Gregor to fulfill that demand. Being Grete's father, he is his likely to believe in a stranger rather than his own daughter, a man who he even does not know about. Moreover, Grete's marriage appeared to be a kind of business deal to him that gives the notion that society believes a woman's only goal is to wait for a career man, and get married to him. They were shoving back their daughter in being the homemaker and playing the same stereotypical role from which she just came out.

#### 4.2.3 Struggle for Independence

At the end of the play, after the truth is revealed the situation between Nora and Helmer gets worse than imagination. When he read the letter from Krogstad, which stated everything regarding the loan, he fumed with anger. His initial thought was how Nora commits such a heinous crime, embarrassing him. She borrowed money from someone who will never think twice harming anyone or taking advantage. His main thought was it might hamper his reputation, as this is the only important aspect in his life whatever the background story is. In fact, Torvald cares less about Nora and does not care whether it was to save him or not. Seeing the real face of Torvald broke Nora from inside which led her to take the greatest decision in her life, which is leaving her family including her children. The reason behind the decision is she finally understood that does not matter how hard she puts her effort to be the ideal wife and mother, she will always be disappointed and underappreciated. She wanted to live a life not as a wife or a mother but as Nora, an individual.

**Nora.** It is of no use your forbidding me anything now. I shall take with me what belongs to me. From you I will accept nothing, either now or afterwards.



**Helmer.** What madness is this!

**Nora.** To-morrow I shall go home---I mean to what was my home. It will be easier for me to find some opening there.

**Helmer.** Oh, in your blind inexperience—

**Nora.** I must try to gain experience, Torvald.

**Helmer.** To forsake your home, your husband, and your children! And you don't consider what the world will say!

**Nora.** I can pay no heed to that. I only know that I must do it.

**Helmer.** This is monstrous! Can you forsake your holiest duties in this way?

**Nora.** What do you consider my holiest duties?

**Helmer.** Do I need to tell you that? Your duties to your husband and your children.

**Nora.** I have other duties equally sacred.

**Helmer.** Impossible! What duties do you mean?

**Nora.** My duties towards myself (3.166-167)

From the above dialogue, observed that this Nora and the one read about have a difference. This is a changed Nora with a sense of her own. She became a woman who has no fear leaving everyone because she understood that giving herself to her husband's wish of her being a 'doll' will only drag her downwards. She not only presented her opinion to her husband but also to the whole society by not conforming to their thinking anymore. She understood a man like Torvald would only think about himself and his reputation in the society.

#### **4.2.4 Doll to a Rebel**

In the article, *Portal to Forgiveness: A Tribute to Ibsen's Nora* writer Vicki Mahaffey had an interesting take on Nora and Torvald case. Her article is about forgiveness where she starts the article with a descriptive of what is forgiveness and mostly what it means to forgive someone. She talks about not only forgiving the one who executed harm or damage on the

victims or victims but also how to forgive one's self. According to her, the idea of forgiveness differs from person to person, which also implies for Nora and Torvald. She takes the forgiving one's self approach regarding Nora because she is the only one who can forgive herself and lead her way out from the "doll's house". For which the sense of self-identity and transforming oneself for betterment needs to believe whole-heartedly. According to Mahaffey, both Nora and Torvald had different rules while they intended to 'play house'. Torvald's mentality and idea of forgiveness comes from the old established believe that as Nora, the women is the culprit because she lied, therefore he is the one to grant forgiveness to her and continue to live their lives as before. Mahaffey writes in the article, "Torvald's understanding of transgression is the normative one: one must avoid doing or being wronged because both states threaten the preservation of one's integrity. One can forgive and forget only if there is no longer any threat to the status quo." As Nora has hurt his reputation, which according to him is his prized possession, therefore for Nora s the one to forgiven. Nevertheless, on the other hand, Nora does not bother to forgive him for the one-dimensional, farced happy lives they were living which however only surrounded by his reputation and status. Because to her more than any superficial things love, respect and an identity of her own more important. Mahaffey argues that only because of Nora's self-sacrifice that "promoted his stability of being, and the felt "happy"". Even though is possible she would sacrifice it for Torvald. However, she forgives and frees herself from the marriage where there is no partnership but rather full of misconceptions about marriage. A man's honor became more important than own wife, but what about her honor, which she has sacrificed all this years? Who is going to fight for her? A man might leave his wife in danger but to her husband and family always came first. However, in return she gifted herself a new beginning not conforming to the society who held her down for so long.

**Helmer.** Before all else you are a wife and a mother.

**Nora.** That I no longer believe. I believe that before all else I am a human being, just as much as you are---or at least that I should try to become one. I know that most people agree with you, Torvald, and that they say so in books. But henceforth I can't be satisfied with what most people say, and what is in books. I must think things out for myself, and try to get clear about them (3.167-168)

The dialogue above shows Nora the main female character successful in overcoming her problems. She has acknowledged that before anything is else she is a human being; she has identity on which she wants to work on. She wants to start another journey of her, which be surrounded by her only. This journey will not hold her back, nor it will marginalize her, not it will let her dominate her by others. Her sense of herself will help him reach her potential. The strong patriarchal domination only creates limitations in women's life doing their activities in domestic and social life. Here, Nora tries to fight over her struggle journey embarking onto the other. It is a proof that women are capable of everything from dealing domestic life to social life. Adding to it, a proof that women are independent and if they are determined to change their life for good, no one can stop them. She is a warrior surviving against discrimination and oppression in her life, and tackling them with utmost grace. Her struggles are a symbol of independence although she has to leave her family, the hardest thing for a woman. Through his play, *A Doll's House*, he tries to pinpoint the reader that women can be independent, have their sense of themselves, have their identity to prove the society wrong. An opportunity is all that takes a woman to outshine man with their abilities. Nora's illusion confined her and the break of that illusion was no short than a miracle. She became her own strength and miracle to change her life. Her experience of the world will help her to become the best version of herself. Though Ibsen's plan for this play was never for feminist play, however it can be considered as one as it

shows the importance of women's liberation. The difference between fairytale and reality both discovered throughout the play through Nora and Torvald.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

On conclusion, Kafka and Ibsen wrote characters of Gregor, Grete, Nora, and Torvald to show the power dynamic between males and females in their stereotypical roles. Both the texts, emphasizes the oppression that women face and still are facing, Grete not being able to pay for her own education, from acquiring a job that would set her free, she is placed right back from where she started by just one word and that is "marriage". The absurd and typical ending of the book makes it very difficult not to raise question about certain facts. Both the characters Grete and Gregor, focuses on gender stereotypes by showing how societies force typical stereotypes gender wise. In Ibsen, Nora the main female character represents women in general that are very much capable and independent to lead their own life, on their own terms. Her journey of struggle lead her to solve her problems and come out of a life which was never truly hers' it was more of a 'doll' less of Nora. She is successful in showing strength and gaining independence in her life. Nora's struggles include such action that not permitted for her by the society. She literally broke the orthodox rules which were the obstacles in her life be herself. She also refused to conform to the assumptions the typical ones that attached to women, which contained in a limited sphere. Here, she tried to show the fact that she is capable enough to experience the world. At the end, her final decision was unexpected yet fulfilling considering her situations. Her desire to think about herself and finding the self which she lost in the midst of being Nora, the daughter, Nora, the wife and Nora, the mother. Finally, her desire to transform her life without the burden to be a 'doll' anymore shows woman can be strong as any man; and not to consider them weak due to gender. Feminist perspective makes clear it for the reader to understand that how the authors has

placed the women aside from being a major part in the text, whereas they can contribute and flourish as much as men do.

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