

Research Article

# Nora and Grete's Quest for Self-Identity and their Transformation in a Doll's House and the Metamorphosis: A Comparative Study

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## Abstract

This research provides a comparative investigation of Nora and Grete in Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* and Franz Kafka's novella *The Metamorphosis*. It examines the challenges they have in establishing their individual identities within a patriarchal leadership structure and evaluates them through a feminist lens. Both texts explore women's aspirations for self-identity, the notion of male supremacy and dominance, and the progression of women's evolution. Despite Nora and Grete belonging to different social backgrounds, their aspirations are identical. The study identifies the pursuit of individuality and self-discovery as a crucial link between Nora and Grete. This research also highlights the challenges encountered by women who are subjected to the mistreatment of males resulting in significant transformations in their lives. This study employs a qualitative research methodology, utilizing references from relevant texts and secondary sources to substantiate the article's claim. This study also shows that Nora and Grete were subjected to oppression; but, in spite of this, they show resilience and reject social conventions in order to define who they are. This study claims that, despite women's inherent worth, society consistently views them as inferior and treats them less favorably than men. This paper invites the reader's comprehension by examining these literary works.

**Keywords:** Discrimination, Epiphany, Transformation, Women's Equity.

## 1. Introduction

Women have long been viewed as inferior in the conventional social structure and order dating back many centuries. Consequently, feminism has emerged as a response to the global issue of gender inequality. Feminism encompasses philosophies and movements aimed at achieving equitable social, political, and legal rights. Its objective is to mitigate gender-based violence and inequality. Moreover, feminists prioritize the well-being and rights of women and strive to enhance their social standing. Nora and Grete both reflect the first wave of feminism that swept over literature in the 19th century.

Feminism is characterised by three distinct waves that aim to ensure the social standing of women. In her article titled "What are the three Waves of Feminism?" Anupriya Narsariya explains that the initial wave of feminism emerged in the late nineteenth century and persisted until the early twentieth century. The first wave of feminism is closely linked to the suffrage fight, as its primary objectives were to secure wom-

en's voting rights and achieve political equality. The onset of the second wave of feminism occurred in the 1960s and extended into the 1970s. But others even contend that it continued into the 1990s.

The second wave revolved around the struggle for civil rights, sexual liberation, and women's reproductive rights. Women fought for gender parity, access to professional advancement, and equitable treatment under the law. They also fought against restrictions on contraception, in addition to addressing issues of rape and domestic abuse. The onset of the third wave of feminism occurred in the 1990s, characterized by a broader approach that expanded the scope of feminism and incorporated women of color. It addressed the issue of patriarchy and made a deliberate attempt to rectify the deficiencies of the second wave (Narsariya) [1].

Feminist theory is an extension of feminism that seeks to comprehend gender-based discrimination, power dynamics, and sexuality. Feminist ideology has historically focused on

the ways in which the patriarchal system abuses, marginalizes, and subjugates women within both domestic and societal contexts. It illustrates the historical mistreatment of women by men in patriarchal societies due to the belief in gender distinctiveness and the perception of women as weak. The patriarchal society exhibits systemic bias and discrimination across all sectors (Beauvoir) [2].

The primary goals of feminist approaches are to challenge and transform the degrading perceptions of women, enhance awareness of women's significant contributions across all domains, unveil the extent of male dominance in all areas of life, and advocate for the value and equitable opportunities for women as equal counterparts. Both Nora and Grete are female characters from the 19th century, featured in the literary works *A Doll's House* and *The Metamorphosis*. They are considered feminists because they choose to challenge the traditional conventions of society and strive to establish their independent individuality. Nora plans to set herself free of her husband's control and leave the husband's residence, while Grete takes a job as a salesperson in order to establish their own identity and independence.

### 1.1. Research Question

- The present research was guided by the following questions:
- How do Nora and Grete endeavour to establish their identity and acquire a sense of individuality amidst a patriarchal society?
- How do Nora and Grete demonstrate that they, similar to men, are capable of becoming powerful individuals and independent?
- How do they promote women's rights and feminist thought?

### 1.2. Research Objective

The main objective of this study is to illustrate the challenges faced by Nora and Grete in *A Doll's House* and *The Metamorphosis* in relation to patriarchy and male hegemony. Another objective is to demonstrate how, despite being subjugated, Nora and Grete develop their own identities and grow in strength.

### 1.3. Significance of the Study

This paper promotes the reader's understanding of the concept of feminism through selected literary works. It explores and teaches a woman on how to distinguish herself as an individual and handle the difficulties of living in a patriarchal culture. Furthermore, through this study, a woman could acquire knowledge regarding how to successfully overcome obstacles and attain self-reliance. This research also demonstrates that women are capable of attaining independence and self-determination, thereby empowering themselves and becoming self-sufficient.

### 1.4. Scope and Limitations of the Research

This study focuses exclusively on conducting a feminist analysis that compares the major female characters, Nora and Grete, in the plays *A Doll's House* and *The Metamorphosis*. The researchers abstain from discussing the aesthetic or any

other facets of the texts. The researcher examines the two protagonists from a feminist point of view and shall refrain from delving into the feminist dimensions exhibited by the remaining secondary female characters.

Several scholarly articles and research projects with different angles of focus have been carried out on *A Doll's House*. Conversely, there aren't many academic papers about Grete Samsa, the main female character in *The Metamorphosis*. Until now, the two main female characters, Nora and Grete, from the plays *A Doll's House* and *The Metamorphosis* have not been compared. There were no papers, theses, or dissertations that looked at how Nora and Grete's identities were combined.

### 1.5. Literature Review

Multiple scholarly studies have been published analyzing Nora as well as the play *A Doll's House* by examining various facets. In contrast, there is a paucity of articles specifically focused on Grete Samsa, the central female character of the novella *The Metamorphosis*. Gregor Samsa, the protagonist of the novella, has also been the focus of numerous articles. However, there has not been any published work that has showcased Nora and Grete, the major female characters of *A Doll's House* and *The Metamorphosis*, together. There was no academic literature—articles, theses, or dissertations—that addressed the combination of Grete and Nora in particular. This is what distinguishes the scope of this research apart.

In her paper "Transforming Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*", Nina Pelikan, Professor of Literature at Purchase College, State University of New York, argues that the character of Grete, above all the women in the novella, holds the utmost significance (Pelikan) [3]. The researcher asserts that the majority of the articles center on Marxist and Oedipus complex concepts in the novella, *The Metamorphosis*. These articles explore the idea that Gregor's transformation into a bug renders him useless, while also examining his father's portrayal as a dominant role in the novel.

The author focuses on Grete and asserts that Grete is an ideal substitute for Gregor in this story, as she undergoes her own metamorphosis and emerges as an independent woman who earns a living and relishes her liberty. She also asserts that the metamorphosis of Gregor and Grete exhibits a parallel reflection. Moreover, Grete is perceived as extraordinarily superior by her. In the novella, Grete initially demonstrated a lack of power; but, as Gregor undergoes a transformation, Grete seizes the opportunity to develop her own identity without hesitation. She demonstrates that women possess both uniqueness and power equivalent to that of males.

Subham Joshi's article "A Gender Study of Franz Kafka and His Work *the Metamorphosis*" offers a gender-focused analysis of the novella's characters, highlighting the social and political shifts. Joshi argues that Grete functions as the perfect contrast to Gregor in the novella. She accomplishes this by mirroring her brother's metamorphosis and illustrating the detrimental effects of the imbalanced gender power dynamics within a dominant home setting that is deeply rooted in a capitalist contemporary society (Joshi) [4].

The article titled "A Comparative Study of Dehumanizing Gender Narrative in D. H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* and Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*" examines the portrayal of dehumanising gender narratives in these two literary works. Ahmed Tahsin Shams and Ashfaque Ahmed Abir argue that Walter Morel and Gregor Samsa are the sole paternal figures as they effectively fulfill their family's requirements. The person who expressed sympathy to Gregor, according to them, was his sister, Grete Samsa. During the initial weeks, Gregor's sister provided him with care. Once Gregor becomes a source of inconvenience, she completely loses her fondness for him. Grete harbored a strong desire to eliminate Gregor. As per the authors' perspective, the entire family, including Grete, neglects Gregor when he becomes a burden due to the absence of a breadwinner in the family (Shams and Abir) [5].

In her paper titled "Teaching Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* from Multiple Critical Perspectives," Eva Richardson discusses the feminist perspective employed in the text. She asserts that women are perceived as lacking intelligence due to men's historical dominance in the public sphere. Additionally, she finds that men held dominion over society in the western regions as well. Hence, the adoption of the feminist perspective was necessary to eradicate the degrading depiction of women in literary works. Furthermore, she declares that the depiction of women by the western society is erroneous. According to her, Western literature has consistently exhibited masculine chauvinism (Richardson) [6].

In her study titled "Masculine Qualities of Women in Family Life as Seen in Franz Kafka's *Metamorphosis*," Reni Susilowati explores the presence of feminism in Franz Kafka's work and examines the masculine attributes and behaviors displayed by women (Susilowati) [7]. The author examines the central female character, Grete Samsa, who undergoes a transformation into a more masculine identity, and explores the concept of feminism in connection to masculine characteristics.

The essay "The Metamorphosis of Grete Samsa: Understanding the Development of Character Roles Through External and Internal Conflict in Franz Kafka's Novella "The Metamorphosis" was written by Raditya Indra Putra who analyzes the correlation between conflict and the development of personal qualities, with a particular emphasis on its impact on Grete Samsa in the text (Putra) [8].

In the paper titled "Gender Struggle over Ideological Power in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*," Guo Yuehua examines how the play revolves around the social, ideological, and psychological aspects that influence the perception of women, particularly in relation to conforming to societal norms. The author also explores the responsibilities of both the male and female individuals within the institution of marriage. Traditionally, men have held positions of dominance and have sought to exercise their authority over women. Men engage in this behavior in order to uphold their societal standing, dignity, and masculinity (Guo) [9]. In the play *A Doll's House*, the character Torvald is portrayed as economically privileged, whereas Nora is depicted as submissive, relying on

males for support, initially her father and subsequently her husband. Upon reaching the full realization of the hypocrisy of her husband, Nora departs from the house in pursuit of her freedom, thereby liberating her soul from the shackles of patriarchal society.

Priya Kangana argues in her essay "A Comparative Study of Euripides' *Medea* and Ibsen's *A Doll's House*" that marriage is the primary cause of pain in both literary works. The female protagonists achieve self-acceptance through complex and intricate marriages, and even deceit. Both authors have illustrated the importance of honor in marital relationships and how its absence can undermine them (Kangana) [10]. In order to preserve their husbands' esteem, which is crucial for upholding their marriages, *Medea* and *Nora* jeopardize their integrity and reputation. When Torvald and Jason treat their spouses like subordinate "objects" in their relationship, it causes shifts and, eventually, their marriage collapses. This article emphasizes the significance of a strong marital connection, a topic that is absent in both texts.

In her piece titled "The Social Significance of the Modern Drama," Emma Goldman describes the evolution of the protagonist *Nora* in the play *A Doll's House*, as well as the portrayal of her husband Torvald Helmer, who is apparently a wonderful spouse and a man of strong moral principles (Goldman) [11]. *Nora* feels and considers her spouse as a perpetual guardian, and her affection for him is close to unwavering loyalty. *Nora* is aware that her husband would become angry if he were to discover the truth. However *Nora* proceeds with her actions for the sake of her spouse. But ultimately, she receives just humiliation without any compensation. Her spouse and the entire society regard her as a criminal.

In the study titled "Nora in Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and *Komol* in Saratchandra's *Shesh Proshno: A Comparative Study from Feminist Perspective*" by Md. Nesar Uddin examines the portrayal of female suffering by male authors in their literary works, specifically focusing on the characters *Nora Helmer* and *Komol* (Uddin) [12]. According to the author, only a small number of male writers possessed the ability to perceive societal occurrences from a female perspective and thereby depict the challenges faced by women in their creative works. Henrik Ibsen and Saratchandra Chattopadhyay are renowned authors who gained significant recognition for their works that shed light on women's difficulties, aiming to reshape societal ideas of women's status. *Nora* and *Komol* are depicted as advocates of women's rights in their respective works. This essay analyzes both texts via a feminist lens.

"The Doll House Backlash: Criticism, Feminism, and Ibsen" is the title of an article authored by Joan Templeton. The author asserts that Ibsen's primary intention in composing the play was not to instigate a feminist movement. The author asserts that the play leans towards humanism as opposed to feminism (Templeton) [13]. Joan posits that during the initial two acts of the play, the protagonist *Nora* represented Torvald's "squirrel" or "skylark." Hence, she is unable to abruptly adopt a feminist stance in the third act. The author considered *Nora* to be dishonest due to the fact that she consumes sweet macaroons against the wishes of her spouse.

Ishrat Farha Chowdhury's paper "Nora, Damini, and Stella: A Comparative Study of Female Predicaments" uses comparisons of three literary works' heroines to show that women's sorrows are universal (Chowdhury) [14]. She states, that three female characters from three separate literary works—Nora in *A Doll's House* (1879) by Henrik Ibsen, Damini in Rabindranath Tagore's *Quartet* (1916), and Stella in Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) can be brought together in order to show how their actions under specific conditions prove that the suffering of women transcends time, race, and geography.

In their scholarly article titled "A Comparative Study of Nora Helmer in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Dipaboli Bhandopandhy in Samresh Majumder's *Satkahon*," Muntahajat Khan and Salma Haque portray Nora and Dipaboli as advocates for the advancement of women's rights (Khan and Haque) [15]. In this article, the authors evaluate Nora and Dipaboli in relation to their many challenges.

"Portal to Forgiveness: A Tribute to Ibsen's Nora" is an article by Vicki Mahaffey that discusses Nora, Torvald, and forgiveness. She provides guidance on the art of self-forgiveness. Defining forgiveness the author states that each individual's capacity for forgiveness is unique. Mahaffey establishes a connection between Nora, the play's protagonist, and this concept of self-forgiveness. Simply put, Nora is the only one capable of forgiving herself and escaping Doll's clutches. According to her, Nora and Torvald are "playing house" in different ways, which explains why their perspectives on forgiveness are different (Mahaffey) [16].

In an essay titled "A Doll's House is the Backlash of Feminism," the researcher contends that women, who are traditionally expected to embody the characteristics of dolls such as fragility, submissiveness, and vulnerability, are actually capable of taking risks irrespective of the circumstances (Yeasmin) [17]. This is in contrast to men, who typically project an image of bravery, protectiveness, and benevolence.

Based on the above discussions, the researcher has identified a research gap in the existing body of literature. Specifically, it has been observed that there is a lack of published works that compare and contrast the characters Nora and Grete.

## 2. Methodology

The nature of this research is qualitative. The researcher collected data for this study to observe how Nora and Grete's lives have changed and to evaluate their fight for self-discovery in the face of patriarchal power systems that oppress women.

The researchers relied on the play and novella to gather reliable data. The researcher accessed the data through library research. Using the data they evaluated Nora and Grete's internal conflicts and how they triumphed over them to become powerful individuals capable of defying societal norms. As part of the research, several feminist theories have been considered. The researcher has shown that oppressed women can fight patriarchy and find their own identities.

The research's trajectory, data gathering, and analysis can all benefit from these recommendations.

A combination of primary and secondary sources has been used to perform the research for the present paper. The primary materials used in this study include Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* and Franz Kafka's novella *The Metamorphosis*. Additionally, other articles written by different authors, which are relevant to the topic, have been employed as secondary sources. The researchers analysed articles authored by Subham Joshi, Md. Near Uddin, Emma Goldman, Vicky Mahaffey, Fahmeda Yeasmin, Priya Kangana, Raditya Putra, Rani Susilwoati, Hazzaz Ahmed, Joan Templeton, Guo Yuehua, Ahmed Tahsin & Ashfaq Ahmed, Muntahajat Khan & Salma Haque, Eva Richardson, and Ishrat Farha Chowdhury for the study.

## 3. Result and Discussion

Feminists claim that women encounter systemic inequality in many aspects of global society. Their self-identity is consistently undermined by a patriarchal culture, where males are regarded as superior and females as vulnerable. Women such as Nora and Grete endeavour to establish their own distinct personalities.

### 3.1. Grete's Struggle in a Male Dominated Society

In "Kafka's *Metamorphosis* through Marxist and Feminist Lens," Hazzaz Ahmed examines the Marxist and feminist elements evident in the novella. In addition, he explains that the feminist viewpoint highlights the extent of women's oppression, and he contends that Franz Kafka perpetuated stereotypes about women. Although the protagonist of the story is Gregor Samsa, there are also strong-willed female characters in the narrative. Nevertheless, these individuals experience a dearth of autonomy and rely on males for support. Initially, Grete performed the role of Gregor's caretaker in the narrative. The novella is written from a male perspective.

Gender discrimination arises within the boundaries of the family unit. In *The Metamorphosis*, the male members of Grete's family discriminate against her. Her brother's role as the primary earner for the family granted him a position of authority inside the household. In a society where men have the majority of power, women are regarded as inferior or submissive. The text demonstrates that Grete's family encountered economic hardship after Gregor's metamorphosis. So, it is clear that Gregor, being the son, was given the responsibility of earning. Contrarily, Grete's family denied her the ability to generate revenue due to her gender. She is assigned the job of a conventional girl who assists with domestic chores. Grete had to rely on her brother for her schooling and future.

Gregor desired to enroll Grete in a prestigious violin academy and Grete also believed that it would be advantageous for her professional advancement. However, upon Gregor's abrupt transformation into an insect, he found himself unemployed and devoid of any source of money. Therefore, he was incapable of securing Grete's admission into a prestigious violin institution. From a feminist standpoint, it is ob-

served that Grete, being a female, is compelled to rely on a male counterpart to shape her destiny due to her gender.

This is the stark truth of a society that is predominantly controlled by men. In the text, Kafka portrays Grete's family as holding the belief that women are not required to contribute financially to the household and should instead remain at home. In a patriarchal society, the responsibility of being the breadwinner is exclusively assigned to males. In the Samsa household, it is evident that Gregor exerts significant effort to support the family. Contrarily, the family selected Grete to assume responsibility for Gregor's care and assist with domestic tasks as she is a female who does not generate income. So, Grete held a position of low standing within the family. But, this is not a matter of her personal decision, but rather a result of societal norms that favor male dominance.

### 3.2. Nora's Struggles in A Male Dominated Society

There has been a longstanding disparity in the treatment of men and women over generations in a patriarchal society. Men exert control over women, who are expected to conform to the prescribed gender norms placed upon them by a male-dominated society. Women are deprived of autonomy and lack the privilege to defy regulations. Males exhibit superiority throughout all sectors, including personal affairs, politics, social life, and education. This gives rise to numerous conflicts between males and females. In his play *A Doll's House* Ibsen explores the societal responsibilities of women and their pursuit of self-identity. In Nora's social structure, males hold a position of superiority and exert authority over women. In this context, the interaction between men and women is characterised by a hierarchical structure, where one gender has a position of superiority while the other is submissive, rather than being equal.

Men are perceived as physically powerful in societies where males hold a dominant position and assign women a subordinate role. Feminist critique claims that the male-dominated culture is responsible for the creation of all stereotypes that relate to females. Patriarchy advocates for the notion that women should rely on their husbands for support.

They hold the belief that good women should possess specific attributes, whereas those who lack these qualities are seen to be wicked women. In the play *A Doll's House*, it is evident that Nora strives diligently from the outset to fulfill her roles as a dutiful daughter, wife, and mother. However, Nora gradually came to the realization that women are consistently oppressed by a culture that is predominantly controlled by men. Despite her arduous sacrifices and diligent efforts to achieve success, her unique identity and integrity go unrecognized. Subsequently, she resolved to defy societal norms and constraints, embarking on a quest to establish her own unique identity.

In a patriarchal society, women are considered weaker than males. However, theorists of feminism demonstrate females as significantly more powerful as the patriarchal society represents them. In *A Doll's House*, the researchers, from the very beginning, noticed that in her father's and later at

her husband's house Nora represented as a doll. Her father took all the decisions of Nora before her marriage. Nora was worried about her father's response since she found that she had no freedom and individuality in her father's house. Nora experienced that she was unhappy in both her father's and her husband's household. It seems Nora carries out her duties as a responsible wife, mother, and daughter throughout the play.

When Nora's husband fell ill, she, as a devoted spouse, obtained a loan from Nils Krogstad without her husband's permission in order to support Torvald's medical treatment. However, she discovered that the predominantly male society disapproved of her attempt and misinterpreted it. The woman's capacity to receive a loan was dependent on acquiring her husband's consent, as evidenced by this circumstance. Nora's spouse was unappreciative of her assistance and believed that any assistance from women would diminish his masculinity. Torvald's honour is more important in this circumstance. Following this, Nora came to the realization that there is no space for her, irrespective of the degree to which a woman is devoted to her family.

Upon discovering Nora's debt and fraud, Torvald ascribed culpability to her. He labelled her as a criminal. In addition, Torvald perceived Nora as an unsuitable mother. Similarly, at first, Krogstad also blackmailed Nora by exposing her forgeries to Torvald. Later, Torvald had a sense of comfort upon getting a letter in which it was said that he should not reveal what had happened. He was well aware that his honour would not be disregarded in any way. He ascribed the action to Nora. Subsequently, she realized that Torvald had never viewed her as an independent individual with feelings, but rather as a source of pleasure. She understood that Torvald's love for her was conditional upon her conforming to his rules, but she crossed the line into disobedience when she started expressing her own viewpoints.

It is evident that *A Doll's House* depicts how the protagonist, Nora Helmer, is subjected to male dominance within her household and how she eventually becomes aware of her own identity. Initially, Nora complied with the expectations imposed by a patriarchal culture on women. Nora consistently served the family. Her husband fails to recognize or appreciate Nora's intrinsic value as an individual. She sacrificed her own happiness for the sake of her husband and children, yet her selfless act went unacknowledged by the patriarchal society. Nora's decision to obtain a loan revealed Torvald's true character. Furthermore, she understood the inherent characteristics of the patriarchal society, which prioritizes the husband's self-esteem over that of the woman. Helmer declares in the third act of the play, "What an awful awakening! During all these eight years.....she who was my pride and joy.....a hypocrite, a liar....worse, worse.....a criminal. Oh, the unfathomable hideousness of it all! Ugh! Ugh!" (Ibsen) [18].

It is obvious that Torvald Helmer, the husband of Nora, was incapable of acknowledging the selfless act that Nora performed for the benefit of their family and for him. The re-

searchers discovered that she was considered a hypocrite and a criminal due to her borrowing money for her husband's medical expenses. As soon as Torvald realised that Nora could be held accountable for the damage to her reputation that this action could cause, he became enraged. He failed to recognise her worth or provide her with protection. This demonstrates that husbands in male-dominated societies lack appreciation and reverence for their wives. Women are expected to do everything for males, but receive nothing in return, not even an expression of gratitude.

In her article "Gender Struggle over Ideological Power in Ibsen's *A Doll's House*," Guo Yuehua examines the ideological, psychological, and sociological aspects that influence society's perception of women, with a specific focus on their conformity to societal norms. The author further examines the spousal responsibilities of both men and women. Typically, males are the dominant gender and attempt to exert control over women through their power. Men attempt to maintain their status, honour, and masculinity in this manner. Torvald possesses a prominent economic standing, whereas Nora is considered subordinate (Yuehua). Because her principal sources of support consist of her spouse and father, both of whom are male. The article seemed appropriate by the researcher for establishing the thesis that males invariably hold power and exert dominance over females who are considered inferior. Torvald exercises dominance over Nora in order to demonstrate his masculine strength.

Helmer addresses Nora as a powerful woman in the first act of the play, informing her that she is mindful of his position on these issues—that there are no obligations and borrowing is strictly prohibited! When a family is founded on debt and borrowing, it loses its freedom and attractiveness, according to Torvald. He conveys to Nora that they have courageously resisted thus far and will not surrender at this moment (Ibsen). This demonstrates Nora's adherence to the directives of her spouse. She never expresses her viewpoint. Additionally, this demonstrates Nora's consistent effort to satisfy her spouse. This clearly demonstrates patriarchy's strength. The relationship between a spouse and wife, however, ought to be equal. Nora might attempt to inform Torvald about the debt incident if the two had a good-natured relationship.

"The Doll House Backlash: Criticism, Feminism, and Ibsen," an article by Joan Templeton, argues that the primary intention behind Ibsen's play was not the establishment of a feminist liberation movement. The play, according to him, is more humanistic. Templeton contends that Nora, the play's protagonist, was Torvald's "little squirrel," "little lark," and "little skylark." Hence, she is unable to abruptly adopt a feminist stance in the third act. Nora, according to Templeton, is a case study for female hysteria similar to that of other women (Templeton) [13]. The researchers expressed disagreement with Joan's viewpoint on the grounds that in patriarchal societies, women who assert their rights and become conscious of them are labelled as hysterical women. Templeton regarded Nora as an unscrupulous individual due to her acceptance of delectable macaroons against Torvald's prohibition. The researcher once more disagrees with Joan's position, arguing

that an individual's affection for macaroons does not render them deserving of unworthiness. It illustrates the male-dominated society's cruelty towards women. The male-dominated society expects that in order to satisfy her spouse, a woman must compromise her desires.

In the first act of the play, Helmer harbours doubts about Nora and indirectly inquires whether she has consumed more than two macaroons. Nora responds negatively advising Torvald that she should not even consider carrying out his prohibition (Ibsen 29-30). This demonstrates that Nora puts her husband's desires prior to her own. Torvald believed that Nora spent an excessive amount of money, he characterised her as a spendthrift. However, she was accumulating funds in order to pay back Krogstad. Despite the disclosure of the information, Torvald continued to hold Nora responsible, labelling her a fraud and a criminal unfit to have children in her company. But the truth is Nora endured this entire ordeal with the intention of saving Torvald's life due to her deep love for him.

### 3.3. Nora and Grete's Transformation

Nora and Grete experienced subjugation under the patriarchal society shown in both *A Doll's House* and *The Metamorphosis*. They have also experienced significant transformations in their lives that have permanently impacted how they live.

### 3.4. Nora's Evolution from a Doll to a Thinking Woman

The relationship between Nora and Helmer deteriorates significantly at the ending of the play. Nora's belief in her husband's ability to safeguard her from any threat was proven wrong following the disclosure of Nora's debt. Torvald's anger was ignited upon reading Krogstad's letter of blackmail, leading him to label his wife, Nora, as liar, hypocrite, and a criminal. A husband of integrity should not subject his wife to such degrading treatment, as Torvald did. He can inquire of Nora the reason for her unauthorized borrowing of money from Krogstad. However, he holds her responsible. Nora endeavors to disclose this confidential information to Torvald on numerous occasions; however, she is unable to do so successfully due to Torvald's lack of regard for her as an independent individual. Nora got hurt by Torvald's impolite conduct. Nora has come to the realization that, similar to her father's household, she is seen as a mere doll at Torvald's residence. Heartbroken, Nora informs Torvald in the play's third act that she moved from her father's hand to his. Torvald had everything set up according to his tastes, and Nora has to conform to them. Nora states that Torvald and her father have greatly harmed her, leading to the futility of her existence. (Ibsen 163). Nora came to the realization that this house had never belonged to her. She was merely a puppet. During this phase, Nora made a pivotal decision that had a profound impact on her life: she chose to walk away from her husband and her family. She came to the realization that despite all her efforts, she just received humiliation and nothing else. Her husband never regarded her as an independent individual.

When he challenges Nora's consideration of the potential societal judgment that she may face if she were to abandon her household, spouse, and offspring, Nora boldly responds that she is not contemplating this matter; she simply acknowledges that she must do it. Then Helmer warns her that she must not abandon her most sacred obligations. However, Nora courageously responds that she has other, equally essential responsibilities, responsibilities to herself (Ibsen 166-167).

Nora's talk with Helmer showed that she's not worried about what men would think if she quits her husband's house. This reveals a transformed Nora, who feels that her duties to herself are more important than those to her husband, kids, and family. Nora comes to the realisation that her spouse is self-centered and will never value her sacrifice.

Vicky Mahaffey, in her article, "Portal to Forgiveness: A Tribute to Ibsen's Nora," explores the concepts of forgiveness and self-forgiveness. According to her, each individual holds a unique understanding of forgiveness. Mahaffey asserts that Nora and Torvald held contrasting perspectives on forgiveness when they were engaged in a make-believe domestic scenario, each according to their own separate set of principles (Mahaffey) [14]. Torvald's concepts of forgiveness are grounded in common norms and regulations. Torvald asserts that upholding morality necessitates preventing from engaging in wrongdoing and avoiding being subjected to wrongdoing. For a wife, such as Nora, her family comes first. However, for a man such as Torvald, prioritizing reputation takes first place, so placing his wife at risk. Finally, Nora comprehends the reality and embraces a fresh start where she no longer fears the patriarchal society. She is not Torvald's wife, but rather an independent and sensible lady.

In the third act of the play, while engaged in a conversation, Helmer reminds Nora of her conventional duties as a wife and mother, Nora fearlessly proclaims that she no longer holds that belief; and she asserts that, "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" (Ibsen, 167-168).

Here, the researchers discovered a transformed Nora, who is no longer a mere doll but a defiant individual. Nora came to the realisation that she must prioritise her own responsibilities before attending to any other obligations. The patriarchal society consistently imposes constraints on women's lives. Nora has demonstrated her courage as a valiant combatant, fearlessly battling against a multitude of injustices and oppressive regimes throughout her lifetime. Nora departs from her husband's residence as it hinders her personal growth and self-actualization. Nora's display of feminism is evident in her ability to defy societal norms with fearlessness. She demonstrated that women possess individuality and can lead independent lives without relying on men. Ibsen's conception of Nora exemplifies the importance of women's lib-

eration. The researcher discovered that a woman can excel in life when provided with adequate opportunities. However, having the influence of a patriarchal culture impedes their progress and restricts them to a position of inferiority. By establishing Nora as an independent woman who challenges societal norms, Ibsen demonstrates in this play that women are capable of developing their own identities.

### 3.5. The Transformation of Grete from a Young Girl to a Responsible Woman

The novella, *The Metamorphosis* is mainly about Gregor Samsa and his metamorphosis. However, the major female character of the novella, Gregor's sister, Grete, was another person who had undergone a metamorphosis. Gregor was the wage earner of the family but after his transformation into a bug, he was jobless. In this hard situation, Grete's family does not allow her to seek any job to help the family. Grete had to depend on her brother for education and future. But after Gregor's transformation, a pause has occurred in her education. And, Grete's family was not tense about her future or education. Rather, they told her to take care of Gregor. Because, instead of working and supporting their families, male-dominated society encourages women to take care of the home. But, Grete wants to make her career. The researcher believes that if Grete got a proper opportunity she might do better than Gregor in Career life.

In her paper titled "Transforming Franz Kafka's 'Metamorphosis,'" Nina Pelikan asserts that the female characters, particularly Grete, hold the utmost significance in the novella, *The Metamorphosis*. She asserts that the majority of the articles center on the Marxist and Oedipus complex concepts in the novella. This article explores the idea that Gregor, who becomes a bug, is rendered useless, and his father, Mr. Samsa, is shown as a dominant figure. Nina Pelikan focuses her emphasis on Grete and asserts that Grete is a perfect substitute for Gregor in the text, since she has undergone her own metamorphosis into a self-reliant individual capable of earning income and experiencing independence.

Throughout the novella, it becomes evident that Grete gradually becomes aware of her lack of power within the household and her reliance on others for her future and education. She also understands that her place in the family and in society will always remain the same if she doesn't take advantage of the chance to work. Following Gregor's metamorphosis, they were going through a difficult time. After that, Grete made a choice for herself. Seizing the chance, she began working as a sales representative, eventually earning the family's income and establishing a dominant role in the home.

Grete defies the traditional expectation of the patriarchal culture that women should be confined to their homes and not be the primary breadwinners. Nina Pelikan argues that the metamorphosis of both Gregor and Grete reflects each other. During Gregor's metamorphosis, Grete acquired the responsibility of caring for the family, while Gregor became the recipient of care. The novella commences with Gregor's transformation and concludes with Grete gaining the advantage. In due course, Grete will progressively acquire greater

authority and assertiveness within the household, while Gregor undergoes a diminishing of his human qualities. He feels a deep sense of humiliation and views himself as a burden to his family.

Gregor's inability to work and provide for his family demonstrates his loss of power within the household. In contrast, Grete begins to exercise greater authority inside the household. Now, Grete assumes the role previously held by Gregor and she serves as the main breadwinner for both herself and the family. Grete demonstrates to the patriarchal culture that given equal opportunities and favourable circumstances, women can surpass any hindrance, excel, and establish their own individuality.

Moreover, Grete expresses her concern to her parents, stating, "My dear parents, things can't go on like this. Maybe you don't realize it, but I do. ... We have to get rid of it" (Kafka) [19]. Here, we see a transformed Grete who prioritizes herself above all others. She defies her conventional feminine role and starts her own career as a saleswoman. Despite being the main breadwinner for the family, she possesses the courage to inform her parents that they have to get rid of Gregor. This is what puts the man-ruled civilization at jeopardy.

This clearly demonstrates that Grete has transformed into an independent individual who now possesses a distinct sense of self. By going against the grain of her male-dominated society, she became the breadwinner and began to voice her thoughts on domestic issues. So, their shared defiance of patriarchal society's shackles on individuality is the central similarity between Nora and Grete. The reality that they both underwent significant life changes is another way in which they are comparable. Feminist ideology is reflected in the actions of both protagonists. Their unique ways of defying the male-dominated society were the main point of difference between them.

In *The Metamorphosis* initially, Grete was a weaker female character. The men in her household had complete control over her. His brother was her only hope for her future and education. Later on, transformed Grete defied the male-dominated society, took a job as a salesgirl, and established her own independence at home. She succeeds against the odds because she finds her own path, rejects conformity, and establishes her independence from the male-dominated culture.

However, Nora's defiance was more bold and fearless than Grete's; she departed her husband's home in pursuit of independence. At the beginning of the play, Nora plays the role of Torvald's submissive wife [20-25].

In order to make him happy, she did everything. In turn, Torvald showed her no respect and gratitude. In a culture that was predominately male, she was regarded as a criminal despite the fact that she had taken out a loan in secret in order to save the life of her husband. Therefore, in pursuit of independence, she chose to leave her husband's residence. In this instance, her defiance surpasses that of Grete; she abandons

her husband, children, and family in pursuit of her freedom and independence. She demonstrates that women possess individuality and are capable of leading independent lives without the need for male assistance. She slams a male-dominated society with her final act of shutting the door and departing from her husband's residence.

#### 4. Conclusion

Grete and Nora exhibit comparable qualities. Both Grete and Nora share characteristics that are comparable in their efforts to challenge the patriarchal system of authority in society. Though their approaches to rebellion are distinct, they both challenge the patriarchal society and its traditional values. Both experience gender-based discrimination and are subjected to oppression in a male-dominated society. Nevertheless, they fight, win, and demonstrate their worth. In the novella *The Metamorphosis*, Grete undergoes a profound transformation following Gregor's metamorphosis into an insect. She seizes the chance to establish her own identity by securing employment, assuming the role of breadwinner, and asserting her position of authority within the family.

Compared to Grete, Nora in *A Doll's House* demonstrates a higher degree of courage through her defiant action by leaving the house that prevents her from being an independent individual. From the beginning she made every effort to ensure the happiness of her spouse, children, and household. However, upon the revelation that she had borrowed funds from Krogstad to cover the medical expenses of her ailing spouse, she was stigmatized as a criminal by a male-dominated society that disregarded her altruistic nature, good intentions and selfless love. That episode serves as an epiphany to Nora, leading her to realize that she has been treated as a mere doll throughout her life, both in her husband's family and in her father's household.

Additionally, she becomes aware that her husband's moral integrity is not as genuine as he claims it to be. After realizing this hypocritical mindset, she makes the bold decision to find out if society or she is correct, and she boldly makes the decision to leave her spouse's residence, an action that upsets and shocks the male-dominated society. She breaks her marriage and liberates herself from all constraints that impede her development as an individual.

Nora and Grete demonstrated that women possess the capacity to triumph over adversity, develop their own sense of self, and demonstrate individuality equal to men. However, society consistently impedes their progress and seeks to subordinate them. They stand up for women's rights, encourage other women who are down and out to break free of patriarchy, and inspire them to choose their individual trajectories in life.

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