

The Silent Suffering: A Comparative Study on Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* and Amulya Malladi's *The Mango Season*

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Abstract

Literature plays a vital role in the lives of younger generation. It expresses emotions, feelings, sentiments and attitudes towards life. Literature comes out through the medium called language. It carries the meaning of the work of art. Though these forms of literature are imaginative, they differ according to the intentions of the author. *A Doll's House* is a three-act play written by the Norwegian playwright, theatre director and poet of 19th century Henrik Ibsen. He presents a bleak picture of the sacrificial role done by the women who belong to all economic classes in his society. In this play the heroine Nora faces a great difficulty to confess the truth to her husband. She experiences a great family tension under patriarchal society, her pressures increases as the play proceeds.

Amulya Malladi's novels mainly focus on family tension, elusive nature of mind, misunderstanding between two generations, conflict between modernity and traditional values, changing status of women etc. *The Mango season (2003)* is a dramatic portrait of a modern young woman Priya, who must ultimately decide between the dogmatic tradition and heartfelt emotions. Both the works reflect the lack of freedom for women in families under patriarchal society; both the heroines struggle to tell the truth in their own family. Both of them tried for their actualization and for their good transformation. It is clear that both the authors speak about the difficulties faced by the women under cultural and traditional family background.

Keywords: culture, tradition, patriarchy, suffering, selflessness, disappointments, transformation

Literature is the reflection of the individuals and the society it not only reflects but also reshapes the same. It plays a vital role in the lives of younger generation. This paper aims to compare two young heroines who differ in time, nationality and culture but faces a common difficulty in the stereotyped societies of their own. *A Doll's House* is a three-act play written by the Norwegian playwright, theatre director and poet of 19th century Henrik Ibsen. He presents a bleak picture of the sacrificial role done by the women who belong to all economic classes in his society. In this play the heroine Nora faces a great difficulty to confess the truth to her husband. She experiences a great family tension under patriarchal society, her pressures increases as the play proceeds.

Amulya Malladi's novels mainly focus on family tension, elusive nature of mind, misunderstanding between two generations, conflict between modernity and traditional values, changing status of women etc. *The Mango season* (2003) is a dramatic portrait of a modern young woman Priya, who must ultimately decide between the dogmatic tradition and heartfelt emotions. Once Jawaharlal Nehru the first prime minister and central figure of Indian politics told, "We talk of revolution- political and economic and yet the great revolution in a country is one that effects improvement in the status and living condition of its women"(Prasad 18).

Now women in India have also started to write about the age old tradition, culture, social and familial dominations upon women. Today the works of Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Prawar Jhabvala, Santha Rama Rau, Nayantara Sahgal, Sashi Deshpande, Anita Desai, Gita Mehta, Rama Mehta, Shobha De, Arundhati Roy, Bharati Mukherjee, Mahasweta Devi, Manju Kapur, Jumpa Lahiri and many more have left an indelible imprint on the readers of Indian fiction in English.

In Ibsen's *A Doll's House* the heroine Nora was initially shown as a playful and childlike character lacks the knowledge of the outer world. But the small act of her rebellion picturises that she is not so innocent or cheerful as she appears before. Nora Helmer is the wife of Torvald Helmer. She has been married for eight years and has three children two boys and a girl. Nora is an enigmatic character, for she is both mask and face beneath. On the one hand, she is dutiful,

unimaginative, spendthrift wife; while beneath the surface masquerade she has borrowed money and enslaves herself in order to save her husband Torvald's life after a physical breakdown.

For seven long years she has borne the cross in silence; she has acted her role as frivolous, submissive wife sustained by the lack of self-awareness and by a false romantic image of her husband for whom she has involved herself in a secret cumbersome debt. The three acts of the play chart her steady progression towards self-awareness and towards a true awareness of the man with whom she has lived for eight years as wife. She realises her position in the stage of marriage with more obviousness and tries her level best to overcome her situation.

Nora's husband Torvald Helmer expects her to play the role of a beautiful, careless and a happy wife. He gives her money for pretty clothes and to dance in a party to excite his desires. She in turn plays hide and seek with her children, gives them presents and pretends to herself that she is a good mother when in fact they are raised by the nurse, Mary Anne. The title *A Doll's House* should be seen in relationship to the theme of home. Nora has never left home. She was confined in her father's home and to do what he wants. She then goes directly to her husband Torvald Helmer's home where she is treated as a child. She is protected, dressed up, given pocket money, but she is not allowed to be herself. She has no experience of life outside her homes. She must leave home to stop being a doll to realise her full potential as an individual.

This play draws a parallel to make believe, world in which children play at life with their dolls. Children make the dolls perform social roles over which the lifeless dolls have no control. A parallel is suggested by the title and by several speeches in Ibsen's play between the life that is represented in the house and the false life of a doll's house. This analogy is most clearly stated when Nora says that she is her husband's doll and that the children are her dolls:

NORA. But our house has never been anything but a play-room. I have been your doll

wife, just as at home I was Daddy's doll child. And the children in turn have been my dolls. (3. 99)

Through her words the readers can clearly understand the feelings and emotions of a typical traditional woman:

NORA. It's right, you know, Torvald. At home, Daddy used to tell me what he thought,

then I thought the same. And if I thought differently, I kept quiet about it, because he wouldn't have liked it. He used to call me his baby doll, and he played with me as I used to play with my dolls. Then I came to live in your house. (3. 99)

NORA. You have never understood me...I've been greatly wronged, Torvald. First by my father, and then by you. (3. 100)

In these words Nora Helmer accuses her husband Torvald Helmer for treating her as anything but a doll-wife. She tells Helmer that both her father and he never loved her nor cared for her true feelings. She was his glamour- doll and provider of fun like his pet. He was looking upon her as his possession. So, no wonder Nora feels that their marriage has become a ridiculous affair.

According to Malladi, the Indian women are carrying the great burdens of their family and society. She has slaved herself for her husband, children, family and social conditions. Indian women take pride in their sufferings and live with the ideas of subjugation entrusted on them for centuries by the patriarchal society.

In *The Mango Season* the heroine Priya who is twenty seven years old returns to her mother land India to visit her family in a sweet mango season. She is in love with an American, but the ancient family tradition forces her to marry a groom from their own caste in arranged marriage. Priya's torment becomes extreme when she could not confess her family about her love. She finds herself in a position to decide between romance and tradition.

The Indian heroine Priya Rao left her motherland at the age of twenty to do her studies in U.S. After seven long years she returned to India to meet her family with the news that she is engaged to a loving and kind American, Nick Collins. She obviously knows that it will surely break the hearts of her family. It is when the Brahmin caste women churn into frenetic activity such as engaging themselves in preparing mango pickles, involve in great physical labour and gossiping about marriages.

The heroine Priya is enormously overwhelmed while returning to her own country India. During her childhood the summer season was all about mangoes, she and her brother Nate enjoyed the mangoes, the sweet juice that dripped all over her hand, neck and mouth. But now she sweats as if she never faced the Indian summer before.

But in India her relatives remain the same. Her mother and father told her that it is time for her marriage and insisted a nice Indian boy as her groom. Priya could not possibly tell her family about her passion for Nick. She loses her balance when she is forced to choose between the love of her life and love of her family. *The Mango Season* is delightful trip into the heart and soul of a well-educated traditional young Indian woman.

It is a piece of art about women in Indian tradition. She wonderfully sets Priya between two opposite worlds. She is a modern woman with full of knowledge but could not break her grandfather's heart with the betrayal of marrying a foreigner. As she could not deny her mother she agrees to meet the young Indian man who desires to marry her.

Both the works reflect the lack of freedom for women in families under patriarchal society; both the heroines struggle to tell the truth in their own family. Both of them tried for their actualization and for their positive transformation. It is clear that both the authors speak about the difficulties faced by the women under cultural and traditional family background.

Women of today desire their due and rightful place in the family and society. They want their family to trust, love and respect their uniqueness and individuality. If they understand their feelings and appreciate their qualities of selfhood by giving them proper freedom and opportunities they will surely dazzle the whole world.

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