

Pride and Prejudice & A Doll's House:
A Comparative Feminist Discourse

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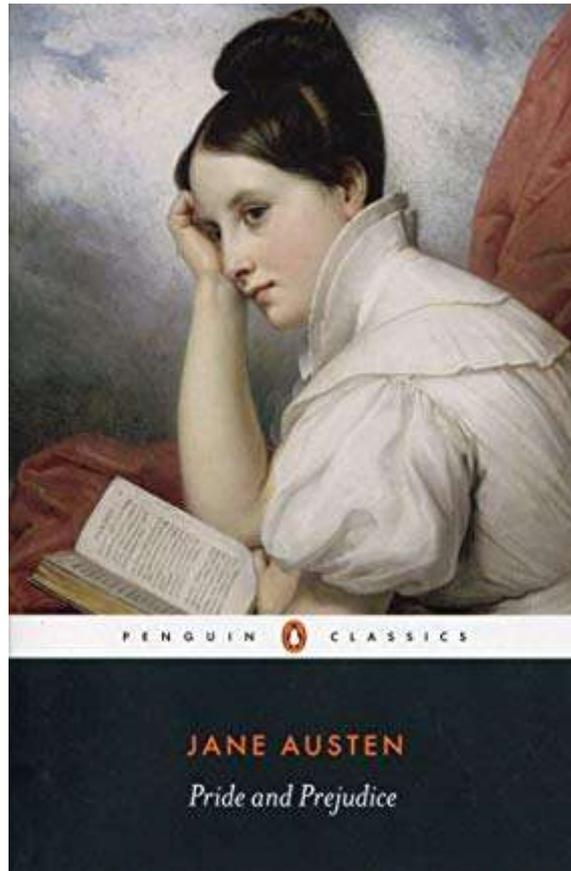
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Abstract

This study is aimed to analyze the feministic characteristics in the novels of *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen and *A Doll's House* by Henry Ibsen. Both are literary greats in the history of English literature. This study is based on qualitative research. This study uses two types of data primary and secondary data. The primary data is from the novels *Pride and Prejudice* and *A Doll's House* and the secondary data are from some of the related journals and articles. Textual analysis of original texts has been done carefully. The analysis based on descriptive methods with the perception of a feminist approach in the novels of *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen and *A Doll's House* by Henry Ibsen. The study compares the feminist discourse of two famous literary writers. The implication of this study is to understand the concept of feminism in terms of literature. This research will give significance for future studies which will be based on the feminism approach of these novels.

Keywords: Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, Henry Ibsen, *A Doll's House*, feminist discourse.



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Introduction

Feminism is a movement that talks about women's rights and social position of women in society. The western society like most other societies, was and is mostly patriarchal that means rules are created by men, views are given by men, perception of men, and the judgment of men regarding women and every other matter in society. The background of feminism is concerned with many different ideas given by many writers and scholars. Virginia Woolf (1989) said women should have their own separate room and money. "Women were called "decorations in the living room" and "angels in the kitchen" (Lili Lu and Zhao: 2015). For many years, the history of English literature was being written by men, and women were only subjects of observation and fantasy.

Wallace expresses that "women's activist, artistic Theory, at that point, connects with the political and social objectives of woman's rights, and it focuses on artistic culture and Theory as a conceivable site of battle and as the methods for possible change" (Wallace 2009: vii). Cuddon characterizes women's activist criticism as: An advancement and development in basic theory and in the assessment of writing, which was well under way by the late 1960s and which has prospered consistently since. It is an endeavor to portray and decipher and reinterpret

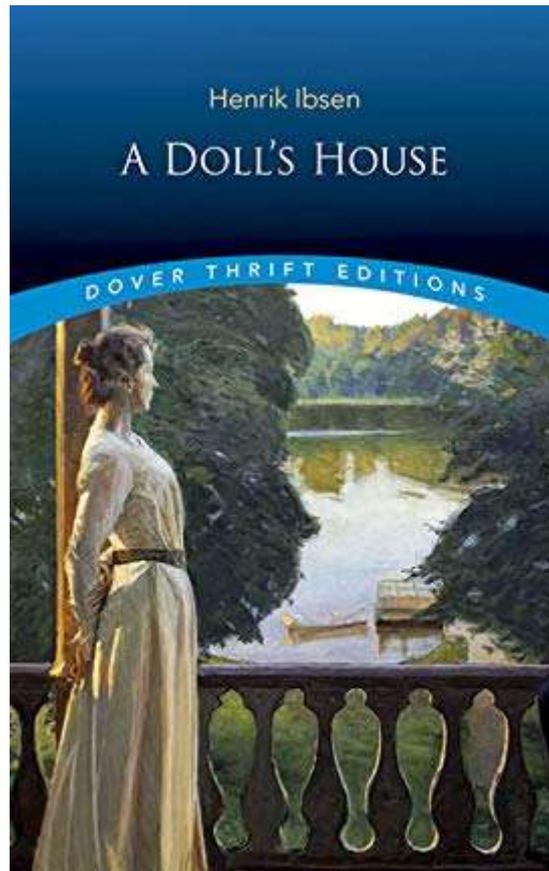
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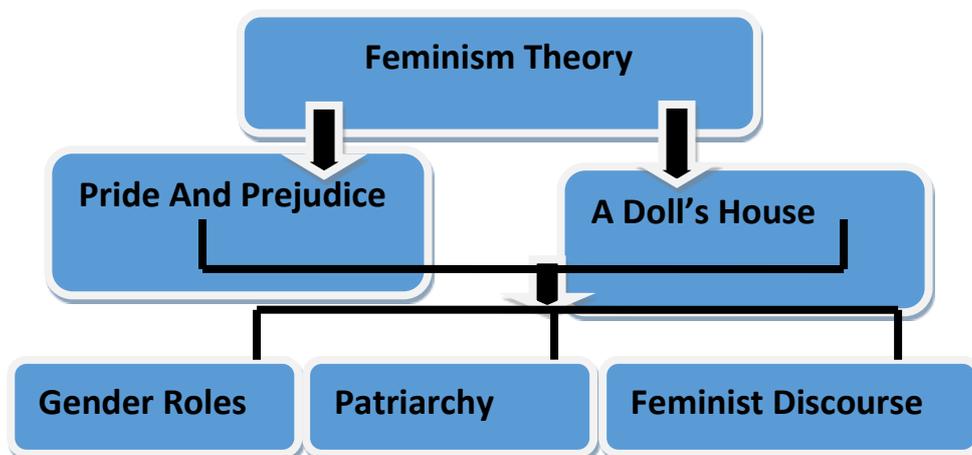
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women's involvement as delineated in different sorts of writing, particularly the novel; and, to a smaller degree, verse and show. (Cuddon 1998: 351)



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Framework of the Study



Theoretical Concept

Feminism is a social critical theory which contains political, social context, economic perspective and history which is about women facing injustices among people. (Ritzer, 2004). Feminism theory is developed to protect the rights of women in society, as culture and social structure developed distinguishable differences between women and men as feasible and because of these differences it creates discrimination and that causes harassment. According to Bell hooks (2002) “Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression”. The motivation behind feminism theory is to separate general society, private split and the pairs of manliness and womanliness mind, body, reason and feeling. (Rice and Waugh 2001: 144) According to Showalter, he recognizes the three famous phrases of modern women in literary development which are: “the feminine, the feminist, the female phrase respectively”

Research Question

1. What are the elements of feminism present in *Pride and Prejudice* and *A Doll’s House*?
2. How patriarchy is a major element in both novels?
3. On what areas both novels are similar/dissimilar in the light of feminism?

Objectives of the Study

- To explore the element of feminism in *Pride and Prejudice* and *A Doll’s House*.
- To discuss patriarchy as a major element in both novels.
- To find out comparative feminist discourse in *Pride and Prejudice* and *A Doll’s House*.

Literature Review

Mary Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) talks of Feminism as the liberation of the last mentioned womanist looks to characterize and guard the political, social, monetary and social privileges of women. There is a perception of the human being that man is a hero since the development of world. Woman is dependent on man and man never admits woman’s intellectual superiority and equality. Wang (2011), writes that among the female writers, Jane Austen was an outstanding and remarkable female writer. Austen’s novels usually reflected experiences of her life. (Monteria, 2008:109) Jane Austen was very conscious of the position of women, of the glaring differences between genders, and the lack of women’s education.

The idea of Marxist feminism which is debated by Donovan (1991), is based on the patriarchal view of the world. “The Marxist Feminist claims that it dismantles capitalism, customarily ruled by a patriarchal society, delivers a way to free women”. (Hennessy & Ingraham, 1997: 3) Marxist feminism identifies the point of view of men. Marxist feminism theory suggests that impartial point of view of the world should be based on one’s accepting reality. Marxist historicism theory proposed by Jameson clears this concept. Jameson proposes that the effect of politics, social theory and economic history should be included in the development of pieces of literature. Jameson is one who comes with an entire new understanding. (Sullivan, 1991:571) Newman observes *Pride and Prejudice* closely and

comments “women are at the mercy of the male control of the means of production” (1983: 699).

Millet's *Sexual Politics* (1969) was worried about the portrayal of women in writing and contended that "male scholars misshape women by partnering them with male abnormality" on the same page. It was distracted with archiving and dissecting the impacts of culture and belief system on ladies. This sort of feminism saw workmanship, literature and life as indistinguishable; the way ladies were depicted in literature has an effect on the treatment of ladies, all things considered. According to British Feminism, the male centric culture does not abuse women just through literature, but socially and financially; the family structure makes women be monetarily subject to men. This sort of feminist criticism does expect to scrutinize society as well as to transform it. (Bressler 1999: 178)

Research Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature. Textual analysis is a technique which researchers use to communicate or interpret the text. Textual analysis explains the message, function, content and structure in the text. The main consideration is selecting the specific kind of texts and defining the method to analyze them. Comparative study is an effective method to use in order to know the attitude and knowledge of two writers or two works.

Comparative study shows two parallel sides of similar and dissimilar objects or events. This study also consists on comparison of two studies. Researcher has used descriptive qualitative method. The purpose of using this method is to analyze the novel of *Pride and Prejudice* and *A Doll's House* with the perception of feminism. This study is based on primary sources such as novels and secondary data sources are relevant articles and journals. This study finds the comparative feminist discourse in *Pride and Prejudice* and *A Doll's House*.

Findings/Results

Gender Role

According to the novel of 19th century, husband is superior. Marriage is an important theme at that time. Jane Austen clearly introduces that theme in her novel with the starting sentence of her novel:

“It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife”. (Austen 2008, p: 2)

Women marry rich men for their economical support not for their love. Jane Austen presents most typical example of Mrs. Bennet in the novel of *Pride and Prejudice*. Mrs. Bennet has five daughters, and she wants her daughters to marry rich men. Mrs. Bennet listens about a rich and young man who comes to the neighborhood and the writer makes the following comment:

Mrs. Bennet forces her husband Mr. Bennet to visit him and inviting him for dinner to select their one daughter for marriage. (Austen2008, p: 3)

Elizabeth refuses to marry Mr. Collins, her mother considers it a most inappropriate thing. Mr. Collins will inherit her properties after the death of her father. Mrs. Bennet thinks Elizabeth causes her financial downfall and says the following:

“I tell you one thing Miss. Lizzy, if you are refusing every offer of marriage then you never get life pattern, even after the death of you father you will become alone and no one here to maintain you. (Austen 2008, p:69)

Elizabeth thinks of Mr. Collins as a foolish man. She rejects the proposal of Mr. Collins. Mr. Bennet encourages Elizabeth on her decision.

Mr. Bennet said to Elizabeth, “your mother said if you couldn’t marry Mr. Collins, she will never see you again and if you will do, then I will never see you again. (Austen 2008, p, 68)

Miss Lucas was willing to marry Mr. Collins. When Mr. Collins proposes to her, she swiftly accepts his proposal of marriage. Jane Austen explains that she married him to establish her status, but she did not know how long it would take to establish. Similarly, Miss Bingley uses all technique and power to attract Mr. Darcy toward her and to marry him and in this way, she could maintain her social status, because she belongs to rich family and does not want to marry a poor or a man of lower status. According to Miss Bingley, Mr. Darcy was perfectly matched with her because he was rich, well-educated and handsome. But everyone does not think in same way, for example Miss Bennet has debate with Mr. Darcy on the first ball and he does not capture her fancy. Miss Bennet considers him a horrible, disagreeable man. She has her own view of him:

Mr. Darcy likes to walk in his fancy by himself and is handsome not enough to dance with him. (Austen 2008, p: 9)

Pride and Prejudice portrays the real picture of British society. It is based on events of daily life that were happening over there at that time, especially among the middle class, which was aspiring to rise up, and the aristocratic class which looked down upon the ones below them.

In the novel of Ibsen, *A Doll’s House*, Helmer and Nora’s relationship looks more like that between a master and the doll in his hands.

Nora said “no fun for in marry. You always kind with me, but home is like playroom and I’m doll-wife in your home and doll-child in my papa home. I think it was great fun for you when you are playing with me for great fun. Helmer that is our marriage”. (Henry, p: 6)

Mrs. Linda proposes a marriage relationship to Krogstad in this novel and she sacrifices her life, happiness and potential. Mrs. Linda marries a rich man in order to support her brother and mother. The words of Mrs. Linda:

“My mother alive and she were helpless and disable. I have to support my two brothers, so I don’t deliberate about me and to reject his proposal”. (Henry, p. 42)

Nora presents her existence as a human being not as mother and wife. Nora says, “I also have other responsibilities like as sacred”. Nora thinks about responsibility herself. Helmer replies, “really what are those duties?” Helmer views that major duties of Nora are toward her children and husband, and other things are not important for her except these. Nora replies those duties which she has for herself.

Helmer: Before all else, you are wife and a mother.

Nora: I don’t believe that any longer. I believe that before all else I am reasonable human being, just as you are, or, that I must try and become one”. (Henry, p: 43)

Women show sacrificial character in the novel *A Doll’s House*. The woman character in *A Doll’s House* sacrifices her love to Krogstad in order to marry that man who would support her poor family with monetary help. The nanny character also sacrifices her time for her own children in favour of Nora’s family to earn a living. Women’s participation in society is recognized in the conversation of Nora and Krogstad, when they both debate on law and position.

Nora says, “I don’t believe on those law which not allowed to daughter to stand by her father care, wife have no right to work for save the life of her husband”. Then she says “I don’t much know about laws but there would be laws give authorizing for such thing. Do you have no knowledge about that laws which lawyer should have? Mr. Krogstad you are very poor lawyer”. (Henry, p: 16)

Patriarchy

When Feminism movement appeared, it was led by Virginia Woolf and many others in literature. The work of Virginia Woolf *The Room of One’s Own* claims that man has considered woman as an inferior and lower creation for many centuries. Ibsen wrote about the neglected position of women in society. Ibsen gives great statement in Norwegian Women’s Right League on 26 May 1898:

“I have been more poet and less social philosopher than people generally tend to believe. I am not even quite clear as to just what this women’s rights movement really is. To me it has appeared as a problem of mankind in general. My task has been the portrayal of humanity”. (Innes, 26)

In the novel *A Doll's House*, the character of Torvald believes in patriarchal society. Torvald dominates Nora and binds her to follow his rules and orders. But Nora senses self-realization, grows in her self-knowledge and fights against patriarchal society. She understands the reality of society and her position in her family. Ibsen not only talks about us but also talks about our position and situation. The difference between Ibsen and others is that, he uses common people in his works and provokes them to change their situation and their inner world. Ibsen's novel *A Doll's House* is a light for that people, who are in the control of masculine society and public opinion. The novel *A Doll's House* discusses the problem of social class and the position of women, who are targeted in society and treated as victims. Nora is the protagonist and makes her journey to realize herself and endures till she is victorious, which is an unexpected miracle, and it comes on time.

It shows that Nora has two faces and that makes her personality complicated. There is a key to understand the character of Nora, and that key is Nora's preoccupation with lying. Nora speaks a lie about the macaroon to her husband.

"Nora to her husband, you know Torvald, I never doing anything again your wish" (Henry, p: 3) and later Nora says to Dr. Rank, "Yes, well, these are the ones Christine gave me". (Henry, p: 11).

Nora says to Torvald that, some Christine especially came to see you, "And imagine, now Nora's traveled all this way to talk to you". (henry, p: 17)

Nora continuously speaks lies. The habit of Nora to speak a lie was subconscious as she fought against that oppressive environment. It was the secret source of her joy and happiness.

Helmer says to Nora "your father has instability and irresponsibility, all of that quality he given to you, no sense of duty, no morals, and no religion". (Henry, p. 39)

Helmer becomes contrary and turns against his first belief, *"I am not cruel person to judge the people with their single action, person would be re-establisher of themselves and get success, if the person accepts their mistake and takes the punishment of their crime". (Henry, p: 18)*

Helmer considers Nora as he judges Nils Krogstad and expects the same action. In fact,

"Helmer judges the people for their bad action, without knowing about their situation, motives or their circumstance". (Henry, p: 18)

Pride and Prejudice is a realistic novel and gives a very good description of the age. At that time England was the place for aristocracy. The passage in Jane Austen describes "A gentleman can be a younger son of the gentry who has not inherited an estate and who has

taken holy orders, or he can be the son of a man who has made much wealth in business and has been brought up as a nobleman to do nothing”. (Mr. Bingley in *Pride and Prejudice*) (Prewitt Brown 76)

When Mr. Bingley comes to the neighborhood, Mrs. Bennet sees him as the husband of one of her daughters only because of his fortune. However, Mr. Bennet says the following words,

“Elizabeth is not half handsome as Jane, nor half as good-humored as Lydia”. (Austen 2008, p: 4)

In the first ball, Mr. Darcy directly says to Elizabeth she was not handsome enough to attract him.

Maybe she was not well appointed in her appearance, but Elizabeth believes to become a tolerable woman in the eyes of Darcy. (Austen 2008, p: 8).

The thought of Mr. Bingley was different from others. Mr. Bingley says, *“Elizabeth was very agreeable and very pretty”.* (Austen 2008, p: 8).

Pride and Prejudice reveals the outlook of a patriarchal society and it was social domination of men over women and that is a major or the highlighted theme. The themes of patriarchy are presented through Bennet family. The aim of Mrs. Bennet’s life is to find husbands for her daughters. For example: Mr. Collins who is a cousin must marry one of the daughters of Mrs. Bennet, if not their property will be left to him, and the daughters and mother will become destitute after the father’s death. This situation created by the laws of patriarchy; women have no right to inherit and have their own property. When Mr. Collins proposes to Elizabeth, she rejects his proposal of marriage, because she does not find him a suitable person and he is not a match for her sensibilities. However, the close friend of Elizabeth, Charlotte marries Mr. Collins because Charlotte Lucas wants to secure her future and status. Patriarchal society presents the concept of male dominancy. *Pride and prejudice* is one of the best examples of patriarchal society.

Comparative Feminist Discourse

The novel of Jane Austen “*Pride and Prejudice*” and Henrik Ibsen “*A Doll’s House*” deal with theme of feminism. Their novels brought revolution about women’s rights and their position in society. *Pride and prejudice* is a classic novel which was published in 1813. This novel shows a real good picture of the society of that time. Austen concludes her novel with a romantic ending in which the main character of the novel is bound in marriage to the man she had despised. After the novel of Austen, seventy years later Ibsen wrote a great novel which is strongly based on the theme of feminism. The period between 1813 and 1879 brought great revolution and change in European society.

Jane Austen and Ibsen have particular purpose behind their publications. Their novels clearly describe the purpose to inspire the people of society. Jane Austen was agreeing with rule of society, but she wants to improve the system of marriage and tries to change the reason of marriage. On the other hand, Ibsen wants to make women independent. The women of 19th century have limitations. They have no right of vote, right to speak on legal issue, right to make properties, unable to make own status. However, view of world gets changed. Industrialization starts growing. Women saw their bright future. Women got right of vote and education. Women started writing and raising their voice in the form of literary piece of works. People who are open minded they supported the women. Austen presented that women marriage for their protection but not for their appropriateness, that was not their appropriate choice. Even Elizabeth and Jane also married with rich men, but their intention was to share their mindedness with their life partner. Marriage was significant fact to connect them with their partner emotionally but rather to make their fortune. At that time novel was published, Jane and Elizabeth thinking was not overvalued. Jane Austen portrays logical thinking and develops compatibility in marriage relationship. However, the character of elder Bennet considers marriage for protection and support. Austen shows inappropriate match by developing the character of Elizabeth. Austen shows that audience understands the wedding of ill-suited man and women. Austen also understands that there is some condition which is difficult to avoid as the character of Charlotte Lucas, she marries Mr. Collins for economic security. They marry for comfort but not for affection and love. Elizabeth was strong character in her novel and her pride was sufficient for her to defend herself.

“You are not entitled to know my (concerns); nor will such behavior as this, ever induce me to be explicit,” [13] Elizabeth elucidates to Lady Catherine de Bourgh”.

Elizabeth knows her position in life and society and she rejects Mr. Collins with his future inheritance. Jane Austen wants to propound this idea to her women readers, not to marry the man with a future inheritance, just for the sake of economic security. Jane Austen wrote this novel and it seems to suggest to the women that it is better for them to wed the right man with whom one can find happiness.

Henry Ibsen wrote the novel, *A Doll's House*. Ibsen wrote that novel at a time when society started to notice women's rights. The purpose of his writing seems to be that women should start thinking about themselves. Ibsen was not agreeing with the system of the society at that time. Jane Austen accepted part of the system of society, but she wanted to change the concept of women being the second class citizens. She showed how the laws of inheritance and other things did not support independence of women. However, Ibsen was not agreeing with the structure of society and criticized the social system in his novel, wanting to change the views of audience about the rights of women. *A Doll's House* was published seventy years after *Pride and Prejudice*. In the novel of Ibsen, it was very clear that Ibsen looked far into the future. Ibsen developed the character of Nora; she would have been an unimaginable character for Jane Austen. Austen would never have imagined that a woman can leave her house, children

and husband for learning about herself and become independent. Nora becomes an inspiration for the women of 19th century. Ibsen introduces the other woman character Kristine Linde to present the image showing women can work for their family, while she signifies the future of working women. Ibsen contrasts the Linde with Nora, the woman who was bound and treated like a doll in her existence, who will never be able to think independently.

Conclusion

Austen and Ibsen wanted to see man and woman together in status quo. women should become independent spiritually, mentally and physically. Their novels are way forward to fight against the women injustice in terms of status, economic standing, courage, educational equilibrium. women have no right of education and property as they are nowadays. Women have not their own properties and women do not have right to develop their own status. Women are only dependent on men and want to marry a rich man to make their higher status. In fact, Austen is a woman because of that she understands women condition well rather than man. There are many occasions presented in the novels that clearly present that marriage was most important for women to find higher status, respect and security. Both writers did their utmost to lift the condition of women in society. They brought great revolution in society and women started to think about themselves and became independent.

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