



A Revolution Of A Female For Her Self-Esteem In The Male Dominating Society: A Profound Evaluation And Annotation Of Nora Helmer In Ibsen's A Doll's House

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Abstract

The present paper, based on Henrik Ibsen's A Doll's House, can be stated as, it is a very controversial work of English literature for it stimulates the conviction of feminism. As it is shown in the play through the character of Nora that she decides to leave the house, children and everything she maintained herself just because of her self-respect. It is a matter of debate and it is also marked as the initial and rebellious action of female against the ethnocentric mentality of male. The Current Paper targets to discover the mental status of Nora as well as the discussion of the critics regarding freedom of females. It also uncovers other aspects of the society that the decision of Nora really agreeable or the decision of Nora to be free put her into trouble because of the narrow and conventional norms of society and people. Ibsen has put an effort to show the clear picture of a self-respected woman.

Keywords- Feminism, Self-Respect, Conventional, Ethnocentric, Freedom, Agreeable

Introduction

The varied phases of the lives, certain questions are asked regarding a woman frequently, like What is a woman? what is her role? Is she a human creature, a wife? A daughter? A mother? A friend? A lady taking her own initiative, what does she really aspire to get? At times, it seems that the answers of all these questions are too difficult to find. There are varied works, available in the literature but it is also not easy to find the factuality, authenticity as well as impartiality of the definitions and works. This sort of intellectual and witty arguments has provoked the topic of feminism and literature remained a necessary medium to exercise its varied areas of choice. The literature experts' discourse and put the feminism term according to their own intellect and expertise. These experts and scholars portray the characters of their works in such a manner that not only enhance the concept of feminism but also impart an arena to the readers to ponder upon the situation and event. There is a distinguished author, Henrik Johan Ibsen (20 March 1828

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– 23 May 1906) who is known as a prominent Norwegian playwright of 19th-century. He is a theatre director, and poet as well as also known as "the father of realism". He is one of the founders of Modernism in theatre. He has penned down the play *A Doll's House*, it is a revolutionary literary work of his excellence and intellect. It reveals the conservative and conventional notion of the readers regarding the value and position of a woman in a man's world, especially in the rustic areas. The current play is remarkable to its critical attitude toward 19th century marriage rule and regulations, and it is applicable to the women only, the men are not bound in any sort of rules and norms of marriage bond. The character of Nora Helmer, leaves her husband and kids for she was intended to quest herself, represented as a protagonist in the play, has mounted high level of argument at that very time.

The prime notion of Ibsen to woman

The playwright Ibsen had encouraged by the notion and faith that a female can't survive in this advanced and modern society alone as it is male dominating society. As it's men's world, so the norms and rules are chalked out by the them and they assess and judge the woman's conduct according to these parameters. The main target of Ibsen behind writing this play *A Doll's House*, is to focus the agenda of gender differentiation as well as female revelation for her rights, respect and existence at that age.

Therefore, the present work of literature, reflects self-realization of a female for her self-image and self-respect. As it is viewed from the very beginning of the play, the circumstances are very ridiculous and ironical one. It is transparent from the notion of the male members of the society, all looks at Nora as the small kid to take care of, as she is unable to do anything from her own so she is dependent on others.

The play *A Doll's House* is centred to the family domain merely, so she has very less probabilities and possibilities to content her aspiration of self-respect. She is unable to take care of her kids, even they are under the care of others. As she totally dependent to her husband for everything. Nora is also aspiring that at least once it should be like that her husband Helmer should be dependent on her completely. This notion comes to her mind for as she is dependent on her husband so she is putting her honour at stake, he doesn't respect her, it may be possible if he becomes dependent on her so she will be respected by her husband.

However, it can be stated that Nora is a woman, who is not having her own desire to lead her life according to her own way, she has to live her life according to the norms and rules chalked out for her by the male dominating members of society, keeping the image of an ideal female in their minds. The societal rules and norms are generated by the males and allotted to the females to follow to establish a sign of an idealness of a mother, daughter, sister and wife. It can be stated as this type of mentality reflects like some puppet show, where the playlist has the thread of the dolls in his hands and make them dance according his own wish. But the male members should not take females as a puppets or dolls, they are also human beings like males, females are also a prime part of

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the society similar to males. Therefore, the character of Nora, has been represented by Ibsen through his play that females are not puppets or dolls, they are having their own aspiration and self-respect.

Self-realization of Nora for her self-esteem

The consciousness of the human beings is taken as feeling of sense of the moral goodness or good conduct of inner self, aspiration and a sense of gratefulness to perform good and righteous manner. There are so many speculative questions, which arouse that whether it is right to perform a bit of wrong activities, like to conceal a fact or exposing something which is really wrong to protect a life of someone or to secure an esteemed post. In fact, the human beings perform some activities which are really wrong, even then they know very well that it shouldn't be performed, even if it is performed for something good of others. Torvald, the character of the present play would have done something wrong and with the passing of time, at the end, it reflects that he is a type of person, who allows himself to do something wrong to correct his previous mistakes. The female character of the play, Nora possesses the same sense which Torvald Helmer possesses but he takes his sense to be justifiable and whatever Nora is doing that is unjustifiable as if he has taken himself judge of the destiny of Nora.

It is reflected from the nature of the play that the character of Nora has been portrayed in such a manner that she is subject to be a socialized and cultivated to be a subaltern to the male counterparts and if she raises her voice as she does at the very end of the play. She is criticized and she is regarded as immoral woman.

Therefore, it can be stated that the women are not having authority to implement their own wishes, aspirations as well as they can't follow their conscience while on the other hand men are always having liberty to implement whatever they wish and can pass their judgement to others on the basis of their personal notions and beliefs. As Nora declares that she is intended to leave the house and kids, her decision and declaration amazes Torvald as well the readers. The playwright Ibsen focuses on the event when all Torvald and the readers begins to blame Nora to take such decision.

Notion of Ibsen about society

Ibsen, the playwright has reflected through his intellectual work of art that if a female takes decision beyond the conventional limits and ancient norm of the society, she is taken as a stranger, getting rid of marriage bond and household drudgeries. If she steps out of the doors of the house, she is levelled as characterless and bad woman, she gets respect within the doors of the house, it is no matter whether she is disappointed or pleased. There are the traditional critics will not justify the act of Nora as praiseworthy while the modern critics especially female supporters or feminist will appreciate the unconventional and revolutionary act of a simple and lucid housewife toward the advanced bold world outside. A critic James MacFarlane has stated that 'In closing the

door on her husband and children, Nora opened the way to the turn-of-the-century women's movement.'

Nora has taken a very risky as well as bold step, in fact, it will not be wrong to state risky or dangerous step for she decides to go outside for the first time, going beyond the household drudgeries and if someone does something first time the experiences are always full of danger and adventure. The sense of self-respect and ego consciousness of Nora have aroused for the differentiation and the discrimination, she was encountering since her childhood to her wedded life. If her husband Torvald would have provided the similar rights and chances to his wife Nora to cooperate in household earning, as Nora has got sudden provocation of self-esteem in herself may not have taken place to push her to leave her husband, kids and house. It is crystal clear that the discrimination takes place at every place whether that house or work place and it is the main reason which discourages and demotivates the female to do something good and advanced.

The husband of Nora, Torvald has very conventional and orthodox thoughts about the females so when the issue of forgery comes and Nora shows some involvement in it, he is not comfortable at all, it troubles him a lot. He must have trust that a woman is a very respectable creature and she will not take any sort of step or decision which destroys her modesty even in great crisis and difficulties. He must have an idea regarding female that one of the prior charm and beauty of a lady, is that reservation with modesty, lucidity of character, self-respect in eyes and not showing any concern while she is admired by anyone.

It is not clear about the qualification of Nora but it is stated that she has completed nursing from Florence Nightingale that has enhanced the trend to earn living for the female during 18th century. At that very era the females are prohibited to go for any professional degree because of the male domination and conventional thoughts of the society. As it is seen in a great level that the females, who have done their professional degree as a doctor, but they are accepted into the degree of nursing, as they are subject to invigilation and supervision, it is due to the authority of male doctors. So, discrimination between male and female is seen everywhere in every profession.

However, Nora is completely capable to begin her new life adopting all the revolutionary social challenges. It is hidden about the education and qualification of Nora but it is reflected from her activities that she stitches well. She can start her new life accepting the radical social chances offered at that era but proper training is needed. She is fully aware about the fraud and blunder of forgery, so it can be stated that she is somewhat educated and qualified, but again the issue raises that this much education is enough for her to stay alone, away from her house and husband and earn her living. So, in case of Nora some training is required for if she leaves her husband Torvald so she leaves the financial cooperation as well. So, a proper training should be provided to the women to earn their living, who have lived their life within four walls and wish to do something to protect their self-respect.

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It is exposed from her behaviour and activities that she is very intelligent and understands the law suits very comprehensively. She also has some knowledge about counterfeiting asseveration, she also has experience of crudeness of persecution of males, even then this thing is not preventing her to take risks and challenges in her life. It is not that she is experienced in her own ways, there is no surety that she will not be pestered or molested several times after stepping outside her traditional boundaries and limits. As she was staying with her husband, he uses to insult her. When she put an effort to step out her husband's acknowledgement, she can also be blackmailed or insulted by some outside male. Consequently, it can be assumed that a woman like Nora have several chances to face uncountable insults and torture in the outer world, by those males, who are totally unacquainted and unknown. So, it can be stated that she is unable to take care of her security and protection alone. This statement will not be wrong, it is a fact as she is unable to protect herself from the insult of her husband. Undoubtedly, her husband loves her very much, if a man, who loves her, can insult her so much, the males in the outer world, who don't have any attachment, connection or emotions for Nora, can insult and torture her in any extent without considering her at all.

There are several critics, who are criticising Nora, stating that she is an emotional fool and the act of her, leaving her house and husband, is an outcome of over ruling feelings. There are numerous questions rising in the minds of the critics and readers like Was Nora unconscious about the harsh reality of men outside? Did she aware about the consequences after leaving the house outside or unaware about the facts? These questions have left unanswered like a riddle to the critics and the readers. Nora on the other hand, has confusion in spite of her determination and firmness of decision. She herself states that how will she turn out, and all over whatever she knows that is she has to take a step. A possible answer could be like, what all needs that is a human spirit and initiative, and Nora has shown by taking a revolutionary initiative beyond the conventional boundaries of society.

In addition, all these questions enfold into one pivotal inquire and that is can a female live without the cooperation or company of a man? This question can be replied in a very easy manner in this 21st century. The females are having several legal rights like rights of medical facilities, education, distribution of property, marriage decree and facilities of employment. A woman can lead a protective and safe life without the company of male under the authoritative administrations of 21st century. In fact, a woman can cooperate her husband, father and son on the basis of her education and employment. Ibsen has got his play A Doll's House published in 1879 and the decision out leaving the house for self-esteem in 18th century, it is really an unexpected effort from the side of a female. At that very 18th century, the women were not having authority of speech, education, employment and freedom of speech and so, the step of Nora was brave and contentious one. In a nutshell, it can be stated that she began the glimmer of feminism as well as enormous longing of individual self-esteem as a female in 18th century.

There is a feminist, who has evaluated the character of Nora as a very complex and entangled one, even for an actress, who has ever performed the character like this on the stage. He describes about Nora that she has proved herself even in that role which is very much difficult and complex for the most polished actresses. On the other hand, the actor should be as the prancing, affectionate, aqueduct who lives in the house of her husband, beyond all these, the actress should persuade the audience that there is such a person, who deals with all the situations and conceals everything and when the situations become unbearable she decides to leave her husband's house to seek self-respect.

It is noted that the character of Nora Helmer is a debatable image, who arise the notion of feminism as an advanced female character on the bold new world. If she is compared to the African Mistress in Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness, it will be found that her ungovernable personality to the notion of the subordinate, if her revolutionary and courageous image is compared to Ayesha in R.Haggard's She. It is a history of adventure; Nora is found more energetic and bolder while Ayesha's alteration into a monkey suggests her end. If she is compared to the heroines of Shakespeare, she stands as an exceptional personality. Nora is frank and straightforward to her husband Torvald in regard of living her life on her own rules and conditions.

She is also criticised to shatter the terms and norms of womanhood like leaving her husband and kids, keeping the responsibilities of a woman aside without considering her duties for her house, husband and kids. It is acceptable that Nora has fought with her husband for he insulted her but what about the children, they are innocent totally and even they are not responsible for the quarrel and disturbance between Nora and Torvald. A woman is expected to take care and protect her kids but Nora decides to leave them for her yearn of self-esteem. Actually, the notion of rearing kids was a matter of complete discussion at that 18th century, the question was whether a father or mere a mother is responsible to the security of kids, infact parenting term came out from the side of sociologists. Just after this the same question has seen to connect it to the feminism and then it become a high topic of argument.

The sudden feministic provocation of self -esteem and ego in Nora came to the image or the appearance of her old friend Mrs.Linde. She is a female, who is having complete contrary notion and image while comparing to Nora. It may be happened that the image and personality of Mrs.Linde has imparted a provocation to the self-esteem and self-realisation to Nora and it may also be happened that her unconscious comparison is come out of an eruption to an yearn of self-acknowledgement at the very end of the play.

It can also be stated that this is the conventional notion and idea of almost all the people, who do not want to cooperate anything that goes beyond the tradition or conventional and devout in the name of tradition. The people and the socialist have one notion and belief that a beauty of a flower preserves in the garden and looks good there only, for it is the right place of a flower. They impose Nora not only for being irresponsible as another but also a dishonest as a wife. It is not known that what has taken place with Nora after

she leaves home. It may so happen that she has protected her life for a better one. It is again a mystery whether she has protected or destroyed her life under the harsh authority of the man's world outside. The playwright has left the readers with an open question as well as he has provided sufficient time to judge the last attempt of Nora for her self-realization and self-esteem.

Conclusion

The playwright Ibsen has imparted readers an opportunity to make an image of Nora, outside world. As he is a social critic, he visualizes the image of woman in the late nineteenth century, the females are insulted, discouraged and demoralized in their personal and professional life. They try to earn their living to sustain their life. It may also be happened for it is not disclosed, it can be imagined that Nora may live a single working woman life with satisfaction and self-respect or she may get wedded with someone to begin a new life. Even it is possible that whatever is calculated, may be contrary to that that in her life.

The playwright, Ibsen has never reattempted to create another series or sequence of describing the journey of Nora's life, which would have imparted some clue about her. Even from the side of Torvald, it is difficult to pass any statement whether he has got married and began a new life or he has transformed into a more dutiful and responsible person for her kids as he has to perform two roles together the father and the mother for his children. A question also has aroused in the relation of Torvald that it can be easy for a male to run a family without the cooperation of a wife or can a male stay without love and care of his wife? It also evokes the confusion whether a father can take care and rear children without the support of mother? These all are the social occurrences that plumb out the decision of Nora, living her life all by her own. It is again a question to the readers that Do all should follow the way Nora has done? The answer would be most probably not. The act of Nora really needs boldness and courage that can pacify and smoothen the emotions obstinately, which human beings often fall for. The female instincts of Nora are more powerful than motherly love and affection, marriage promises. She is a woman that is after quest of self-respect and self-realization so she moves outside the world to get both to find satisfaction in her life.

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