



REVOLUTIONARY QUALITIES IN NORA OF HENRIK IBSEN'S "A DOLL'S HOUSE"

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ABSTRACT

Henrik Ibsen was born on March 20, 1828, in Skein Norway. In 1862, he was exiled to Italy, where he wrote tragedy *Brand*. In 1868, Ibsen moved to Germany, where he wrote one of his most famous works: the play *A Doll's House*. It is regarded as the first feminist play. It focuses on the woman's place in society and also shows the revolution in the mind of a woman. Ibsen's play, *Doll's House* Nora, the main character in the play, is first shown as a woman who reveals her status as the wife of a city bank manager Torvald Helmer. The play builds to a crisis point when Helmer momentarily abuses and rejects his wife after learning that she once forged her signature in order to borrow to help save his life. From this central turning point, Nora sees her status in a totally different light, as that of a doll wife. He saw the woman's world as one of the human values, feelings, and personal relationships. While men dealt in the abstract realms of laws, legal rights, and duties. In a 'Doll's House' Nora can't really see how it is wrong to forge a name in order to save a life. But Torvald would rather die than break the law or borrow money. This difference in thinking traps Nora. The world of Nora and Helmer is exploded during their discussion of their motives and behaviour. Her final closing of the door at the end of the play signifies that she is going out into the world that is full of possibilities.

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A Dolls House by Henrik Ibsen written in 1879 was the first feminist play, revolutionary and realistic play. *A Doll's House* depicts the role of women as subordinate in order to emphasize their role in society. Ibsen himself noted down certain points before writing the play. He wanted to highlight the fact that society has set different moral laws for men and women. A woman is always judged by man's laws and male point of view. Another idea that Ibsen wanted to present was that a woman cannot be herself in modern society. She is treated only as an object in propagating the race. She is oppressed by the manipulation from her husband. She always faces moral conflict and bitterness, despair and defeat. It is this confusion and conflict which leads Nora to leave the house without having an idea of what is right and what is wrong. She is left

in utter confusion. Because of her natural feelings as a human being and belief in the authority of a male dominated society.

The initial picture of the Nora is of a doll's wife, who plays "spy lark" and "squirrels" with her husband and she is excited at the deliberation of a choice of consumer luxuries at last allow her-self now that Torvald is assured of good income. Nora is always trying to make her-self happy by buying things: dresses, shoes, candy etc., rather than doing anything meaningful with her life.

Nora's carrying off many small deceptions of her husband, even by Nora's shifting of the fault for the macaroons to Christine. Nora emerges as a somewhat dubious type, not well suited to the picture her husband has of her. Nora goes through life with the illusion that everything is perfect.

Nevertheless, Ibsen shows the entire picture of Nora does not prepare us for final action. The depiction of Nora is predestined to be artistically unconvincing for it is the picture of two quite unlike women. She is the dutiful, acquiescent wife, Torvald's "little squirrel". She is the desperate scheming, unexpectedly resourceful wife trying save an ungrateful husband from disaster. Gradually the central character Nora reveals that she is not just a "silly girl" as Torvald calls her. She is intelligent and possesses capacities beyond mere wifery. Ibsen shows the clear exploration of Nora's character and the nature of her relationship with her husband.

Nora is totally dedicated to her children and her husband. She is conscious of weakness and totally understands his need to feel in control. She therefore always humours him and helps him to feel that he takes all the important decision in their life in order to accomplish this, she knowingly plays out the role of a feeble scatterbrain. She is, however, quite capable of taking crucial action. When Torvald was desperately ill and needed a long recuperative journey to the south, he obstinately refused to borrow money. But Nora had to raise a loan behind her husband's back from Krogstad by forging her father's signature in the bond. As her father was also very ill, she forged his signature. Nora was so determined to save her husband that she committed fraud to do so. This preference shows that Nora is both courageous and persistent. She values love over the law. She will sacrifice herself for the family. Her purpose in life is to be happy for her husband and children. Nora did believe that she loved Torvald and was happy. She had a passionate and devoted heart that was willing to do almost anything for her husband. Nora is proud that she borrowed money to save her husband's life without his knowing it. She thoughtfully helps him keep his proud image of himself as the head of the family. She knows that he loves her for being pretty and amusing.

Ibsen shows her character in a realistic way. Nora cannot think that she has done wrong in forging her father's signature to get money or that the law will punish her or that Krogstad would do anything to disrupt her happy and comfortable family life. All actions of Nora are governed by her

relationship to her husband. At first, she will not tell him the truth about her debt to Krogstad because she is afraid that it will destroy his love for her. She is not able to understand that law does not concern itself so much with motives of a crime as that of the actual crime itself.

She thinks that she can convince Krogstad with her tears, her superior air and her self-pity. But Krogstad threatens to reveal the truth about her forgery. When the crisis strikes her she will not tell him the truth because she imagines that he will take the guilt of the forgery on himself to save her. Now Nora becomes obsessed with ways to save him. She tries to borrow money from Dr. Rank by a slight exercise of her feminine charms over him. When this fails, she thinks of committing suicide. When Helmer begins insulting her instead of taking the guilt upon himself, Nora sees through the bare reality of her life. Their marriage is fake and mutually beneficial because of their social status. They are not really in love. Nora begins to understand everything now. She now realises that her life has been a child's game of make-believe. In other words it is false life, away from reality. For eight years of marriage, she had waited for Helmer to sacrifice himself for her as she had done for him. When he fails to do so, she realises that she has all along been living with someone whom she does not understand and does not respect. Nora is placed in such a situation that she is expected to play the roles of a wife and mother, but as a doll wife and doll mother catering to the needs of her husband and children without having an individual liberation. Suddenly she casts off years of pretending to be what had been expected of her. It dawns upon her now that her main duty is now to herself.

She intends to form her own opinions on life and what she thinks right irrespective of what other people will say. Now that she reviews her past life clearly in the light of her new awakening, she wants nothing to do with her husband. Suddenly Nora's character is forced to continue her inauthentic role of a doll and seek out her individuality, her new authentic identity. She comes to realize that her whole life has been a lie. She lived her life pretending to be the old Nora, and hid the changed woman she had become. Ibsen explores

the notion of freedom and responsibility juxtaposed with the restricting force of social conditioning. He does not underestimate the power of determinism.

Ibsen also demonstrates the essential freedom of men and women to act decisively in shaping the quality of their lives and responses. This tender-hearted, kind and submissive, Nora decided to abandon her husband, children and all. It is because the utter gratitude, uncompromising selfishness, false sense of social values and male-chauvinism of her husband Torvld Helmer. Nora for the first time in her eight years of marriage sees her husband in his true colours. She does not want to live with a stranger, any longer. So she breaks out of her cage and walks into freedom for the realization of her selfhood. Ibsen believes that freedom of the individual is more important. He feels sorry for women as they are denied of the rights and opportunities that men have an enjoy. He also makes an attempt to study the Man, Women relationship in a marriage not just as 'living together', but as a kind of companionship of the souls. So finally realization and revolution she has undergone. It is the male dominated society that has undermined her to stultifying life. She decided to go into hostile world and educate her-self. Her gradual realization of self-identity finally leads her come out from the family. We see her transform from a subserveint wife to a liberated individual.

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