

Ibsen had become interested in women's independence, and already in his play *The Pillars of Society* he had drawn two women, Lona and Dina, both of whom had minds of their own. He had also felt much impressed by a book written by his friend, Camilla Collett on the status of women. Furthermore, at the Scandinavian Club in Rome he had put forward a proposal that the women members of the Club should be allowed to vote at its meetings. When his proposal was defeated, he had walked out of the Club in a mood of fury. Thus there was a definite background against which Ibsen wrote *A Doll's House*. When the play was staged, it had the affect of a bomb-shell. Today, of course, it is difficult for us to appreciate the sensation that the play caused. To the Nineteenth century Europe, the idea of a women violating her marriage vows and exhibiting a mind of her own by refusing to render unquestioning obedience to her husband was something entirely alien. Of course, it is only at the end of the play that the refusal comes. Nora in the play not only defies her husband at the end but makes him look small. The very subject of the play was one which was bound to give rise to endless discussion. The play had a message for society: it sought to awaken a sense of individual responsibility among women. Whether Nora acted rightly or wrongly, naturally or unnaturally, in leaving her husband, her home, and her children in order to develop her own individuality- this was hotly debated by people after witnessing the play on the stage. It may seem to some that Ibsen in this play thinks too much of a women's right and too little of her duties, but Ibsen was not dealing with the status of women in all its implications and in every context. His purpose in the play was limited. He wanted to show that, if a women was not allowed to establish her own identity and develop her own individuality, she could not be really happy. If Nora had continued to live with Helmer for ever under the conditions in which we find living with him at the beginning of the play, she would have felt wretched and miserable, and even the normal duties of her life would have seemed irksome to her under those inhibiting conditions. The method which Nora adopts at the end to get out of her intolerable situation may appear to be destructive and may seem to be a threat to the stability of all homes and families but Ibsen's aim was to point out a particular weakness and flaw in the social fabric and to leave constructive philosophy to others. He diagnosed the malady, and left the cure to others.

important parallel is between Nora and Mrs. Linde. These two women move on parallel lines but in opposite directions. Ibsen draws them in sharp contrast on their first appearance. "Nora enters, humming gaily." Nora is clearly happy; she is a sentimental wife and a sentimental mother. When Mrs. Linde appears first, she is in a travelling costume. She is, in other words, a stranger out of her normal environment. In contrast to Nora's gay humming, Mrs. Linde is embarrassed and hesitating. Soon afterwards we learn that she is paler, thinner, and much older than Nora. We also learn that she is a widow with no property and no children, "not even any sorrow or grief to live upon." Her life is absolutely empty, with no one to live for any more. And she has been earning her livelihood in the business world of which Nora knows nothing. Existence outside a doll's house can be most unhappy.

A Doll's House is a problem-play or a thesis play. It does not, of course, offer any ready-made solution to the problem with which it deals, but a dramatist is not bound to offer solutions. Ibsen presents the problem and leaves the solution to the reader. The problem is: What is the position or status of a woman vis-à-vis her home? The play does not deal with the right of women in general; nor does it advocate the emancipation of women in the sense in which we understand the word "emancipation". It merely shows us the sad consequences of the subordination of a married woman to the control of her husband. The play focuses our attention on the conjugal life of a middle-class couple and shows us the relationship existing between the husband and the wife and the possible consequences of that particular kind of relationship. The play deals with the predicament in which a married woman finds herself on account of the excessive control which her husband exercises upon her; and it shows the method which the woman employs in order to get out of that predicament. Marriage is thus very much the theme of the play, and Ibsen therefore appears here as a dramatist of social realities. The particular social reality which engages Ibsen's attention in this play is marriage and the position which a married woman occupied in her home at the time when this play was written. Ibsen is definitely on the side of Nora in this play, and she wins our sympathies also. Thus it would not be wrong to say that A Doll's House is a feminist play, even though Ibsen himself refused to accept this description of the play.

Deliberating The Rights of Women, Their Liberation and Emancipation WSR to Henerik Ibsen's A Doll's House

BA. Part-I

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In the portrayal of women, in tragic depth and technical mastery, *A Doll's House* goes far beyond most of the tragedies of Ibsen's time on the continent. There are many strong and well-integrated women in Ibsen's plays, and the majority of them have the instinctive ability to make the right choices. However, it is only in the great dramas of ideas and in historical settings that they are able to express themselves fully. In a bourgeois society, as portrayed in *The League of Youth* and *The pillars of Society*, they are pushed to one side, declared incompetent, and restricted by customs and conventions. Rebellion smoulders in several of them, but it is not until *A Doll's House* that it develops into an irremediable conflict between the women and existing society. Incidentally, the play is based on a contemporary marital story.

Of Helmer, we are to assume that he is a competent man of affairs; otherwise he would not have received the appointment on which he is about to enter, nor would he wield the new broom with such ruthless vigour. Outside business hours, there is nothing to distinguish him from the run of ordinary professional men, if it were not for a touch of perversity in his amatory constitution; he likes to indulge in fantasies of his wife in fictitious circumstances which enhance her erotic appeal; he even likes his corporeal eyes to see her in such circumstances, as is shown by his purchase of the Capri fisher-girl's costume and his insistence on her dancing the Tarantella in public.

The situations, in which the minor characters in *A Doll's House* find themselves, illustrate in some way the central predicament of Nora. The first

important parallel is between Nora and Mrs. Linde. These two women move on parallel lines but in opposite directions. Ibsen draws them in sharp contrast on their first appearance. "Nora enters, humming gaily." Nora is clearly happy; she is a seasoned wife and a contented mother. When Mrs. Linde appears first, she is in a travelling costume. She is, in other words, a stranger out of her normal environment. In contrast to Nora's gay humming, Mrs. Linde is embarrassed and hesitating. Even afterwards we learn that she is paler, thinner, and much older than Nora. We also learn that she is a widow with no property and no children, "not even any sorrow or grief to live upon." Her life is absolutely empty, with no one to live for any more. And she has been earning her livelihood in the business world of which Nora knows nothing. Existence outside a doll's house can be most unhappy.

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