



FEMINIST READING OF A *DOLL'S HOUSE*

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ABSTRACT

Gender and sex had been often debated in the society based on its relation with one another. Women's body has long been used as a canvas for painting in the outlines of patriarchal domination. The patriarchal culture essentially identifies women in a biological context and recognizes them on their reproductive capacities. For the patriarchal society female body was the root cause of sexual subjugation, but feminist critic Kate Millet rejected biological determinism and highlighted the social construction of womanliness as the root cause of female subjugation. Judith Butler goes another step forward and argues that sex as well as the female body is a social construction rather than a biological phenomenon.

Keywords: - Domestic violence, feminism, Gender, Sex, Protest

INTRODUCTION

The present paper attempts to show the place of woman in the patriarchal society. The heroine of the play tries to show or create her existence though she is secondary for her husband. A well-known Norwegian play writer Henrik Ibsen published a famous play *A Doll's House*. Though it is not written as a proclaimed feminist play, but a slightly serious woman centered reading. It surfaces many feminist issues like rights of the women, and especially of wives in relation to their husbands. It explores how these patriarchal forces work and voice a protest where the body that is used for the violation of the women becomes a means of their protest.

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Ibsen presents the problem and leaves the solution to the readers. The problem is: What is the position or status of a woman vis-à-vis her husband and her home? The play deals with the rights of women in general; and it advocates 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 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. In the 19th century Europe, the idea of a woman violating her marriage vows and exhibiting a mind of her own by refusing to render unquestioning obedience to her husband was something entirely alien. Ibsen in this play thinks too much of women's rights and too little of their duties. His purpose in the play was limited. He wanted to show that, if a woman was not allowed to establish her own identity and develop her own individuality. She could not be really happy. So, the same thing happens with Nora in '*A Doll's House*'.

When the play opens, we find that Nora has been, and still is, leading the life of a pet in her husband's home. As a consequence of her discovery of Helmer's true character, Nora decides to leave Helmer. When he tries to dissuade her from leaving him, she gives him her reasons for leaving. She tells him that first her father and then her husband had wronged her under the paternal roof, she had to adopt the opinions and views of her father; and under her husband's roof she had to adopt the ideas and the tastes of her husband. Her father used to treat her as his baby doll, and her husband had been treating her as his doll wife. Now she has realized that she has a mind of her own; now she wants to establish her own identity and, in order to do so, she must educate herself. As for her duties to her husband and her children, there is another duty which is even more sacred, and that is her duty to herself. It is no easy thing for a woman to leave the security and the comfort of a middle class home and to go forth into the wide world without having any resources and without even knowing what she would do. Nora's exit from the house of her husband acquires a heroic quality, and we admire her for the drastic step which she takes.

At the end of the play, Nora shows herself to be an emancipated woman, a woman who has liberated herself from the involvements of a domestic life in order to discover herself and to stand on her own legs. There is nothing impossible or incredible about her decision at end



when she discards her conventional ideas of marriage and declares her independence from her husband's control.

Researcher concludes the paper with a message, to those women who led this kind of life in their husband's home. The exit from their husband's home is a turning in their life; their exit can prove to be a new starting point for them. It awakens a sense of individual responsibility among woman. 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.

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