



## A socio psychological analysis of Nora in Henrik Ibsen's "*A Doll's House*"

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### Abstract

This paper sheds light on the socio psychological aspects of the character of Nora in Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House*. All social instructions and conventions are the enemy of every individual because they restrict the characters' personal identity and their freedom. In particular, Ibsen expands this outlook on the women's position whose individuality and freedom are taken by masculine society. Nora, as a woman, a wife, or a mother, behaves like a doll. She is under the control of the invisible hands and the pressures of patriarchal society. Ibsen protests against the position of women in a masculine society which is unfair and under the hegemony of male-dominated powers.

**Keywords:** socio psychological analysis, individuality, masculine society, patriarchal society

### Introduction

Henrik Ibsen was a prominent poet and dramatist of nineteenth century. He wrote many plays for the social cause. 'A Doll's House' is also one of his influential play, in which he raised a voice in favour of women. He sought equality for men and women. Which he subsequently presented in this play through the character of Nora Helmer. The paper aims to analyze the Socio Psychological Analysis of main female character Nora who seeks individuality and autonomous selfhood which she acquires on terms of breaking the shackles of gender role of mother and wife.

The problem of Ibsen's social drama is consistent through all his works. In *A Doll's House* (1879), he especially probed the social problem of the passively assigned to women in a male-oriented society. After considering the plight of Nora Helmer, he then investigated what would have happen if she had remained at home. In *A Doll's House*, Ibsen is concerned with the problem of women's position in society. The theme that is more interesting to him in this play is the duties towards oneself and achieving the individuality and individual rights in the society.

Nora is a multilayered character whose interpersonal relationships are based on social and cultural features of her own personal identity. Meanwhile, human personality is observable and develops mainly through interactions as it embodies itself in interpersonal bonds. This notion asserts that personality is measurable and evaluated through its interpersonal relationships and interactions with other persons and society over time. This paper focuses on Nora's suggestive role based on her personal and interpersonal behaviors, actions, and relations.

In *A Doll's House*, Nora is a woman who constructs her interpersonal relationships in the light of her own vision and scheme. Nora's personality is evolved through her distinct interactions with other close characters such as Linde, Krogstad, Rank and Helmer, the husband. Nora tries to sustain

her submissive role in her relationship with Helmer in order to achieve "a harmonious balance in her domestic life and a perfect control of her realm. Seemingly, Nora's submissiveness is another dynamic trait of her personality. However, Nora's personality has certain positive qualities such as being loving, caring and loyal to her husband and family. Nora is a theoretical preferable and realistic character whose personality guides, forms, and controls her own intentions, desires, and actions. The first suggestive interpersonal interaction between Nora and Helmer is about money; she behaves in a submissive way to make Helmer give her more money. Further, Nora manipulates Dr. Rank when drawing his attention to the way women are unequal partners in society. Implicitly, Nora recognizes that Helmer controls both money and the interpersonal relationships. Nora attempts to compete with him in taking control over money in their marriage experience. Nora's willing to violate the law to save Helmer shows her courage outside the traditional role of women in human societies. On his part, Helmer's selfish reaction on knowing the truth of Nora's deception and forgery constitute a catalyst for her self-realization. However, Nora draws a deviant self-image of her true personality and starts to rebel for her own independence. Relevantly, Nora and Helmer are both "the representatives having origins in every locale and every time;" they live with "different colors and shades". Thus, they both represent the spirit of modern humanity in every society, family, institution, and house.

Noticeably, Helmer considers Nora an extravagant woman who disposes money away from her family's future. Helmer's words confirm his initial image about Nora's personality, "Nora! ... The same little featherhead! ... a slate fell on my head and killed me" (*A Doll's House*, Act I). This is the impression that Helmer maintains about Nora due to her un-understandable behaviors and actions, mainly the issue of money and forging the signature. However, Nora herself asserts this image about her personality when she replies "I

don't suppose I should care whether I owed money or not" (A Dolls House, Act I). However, Nora is keen to cryptically deal with that worrying mystery of money in a resourceful and intelligent Based on her interpersonal relationships, Nora thinks that the character who can manage her financial matters properly should have sufficient freedom. She justifies this attitude because money constitutes a major concern for her and will make her a happy character, especially that her husband has got a new job in the bank that would help in providing the necessary money to pay off the debt to Krogstad, Nora says,

"Torvald has never been willing to do that and I quite agree with him. You may imagine how pleased we are! He is to take up his work in the Bank, and then he will have a big salary and lots of commissions"

(Act I, A Doll's House)

So, Nora's behavior is justified that she wants to save her husband and to acquire value and feeling of pride and satisfaction from which she derives new spirit and personality capable of creating a new reality. Besides, Nora struggles to defend her personality and gender pride by satisfying her own needs of self-respect and self-esteem. In this sense, Nora's "gender norms actually lead to an unhappy ending on both relationship and individual levels," a thing that dissatisfies her desires and needs of social, familial and personality stability. These psychological norms dominate Nora's and Helmer's relationships and affect their personalities. In this context, Eslamie states that Nora works on two major approaches to manage her conflicts, "one is compensation, the other is the development of the sense of superiority" Nora tries to strengthen her personality by independent decisions, behaviors, and actions. Moreover, Nora presents her personality's features in which she starts to weigh her relations with other characters, classifying them according to her pragmatic views into two categories. The first category includes what she adores and sacrifices for which is applicable to her interpersonal relationship with her father in her childhood and her husband now. The second category involves maids in her childhood and her family's intimate friend Rank now with whom she talks and feels pleasure. She says to Rank, "there are some people one loves best, and others whom one would almost always rather have as companions" Seemingly, Nora's classification of others is based on apparent interpersonal relations that are not built on mutual honesty; what guides Nora then is her internal and rooted social, familial, gender and dignity concerns. Nora's identification of her character's features in the light of her interpersonal relationships with others is not built on real facts. Rather, it draws on unrealistic fantasies and mistaken interpretations. In the light of this transformation, Nora becomes a revolution against the circumstances that women used to live in Europe. Nora's words evidently suggest this stance,

"wonderful things don't happen every day,  
But you neither think nor talk like the man  
I could bind myself to. Exactly as before,

I was your little skylark, your doll, which  
you would in future treat with doubly gently  
care, because it was so brittle and fragile."

(Act III, A Doll's House)

Accordingly, Nora loses her intimate interpersonal relations with Helmer, in particular and with other characters in general. Also, Nora's sacrifice causes negative results; her husband describes her hurtfully ignoring the actual reasons for what she has done for him. These entire reasons make Nora rethink her life; she realizes that her life becomes impossible with Helmer who becomes a strange man, then it dawned upon me that for eight years I had been living here with a strange man, and had borne him three children ... I can receive nothing from a stranger" These words center around the intellectual perception of people, this perception means the mental images and impressions left in the individual's memory through people's interpersonal relationships. In this light, Nora gets an adequate perception of her self in relations to others who take part in forming her personality. Accordingly, Nora defies various "values, taboos, anxieties, and insecurities" that haunt her entire life as a mother and a wife Evidently, Nora feels differently of what she believes and sacrifices for her husband; she believes that he will be proud of her sacrifice for him. Eventually, events expose the true image of Nora's husband, different of what she has drawn at the beginning of the play. Thus, Nora hysterically decides to leave Helmer's house and children and shocks readers who in turn blame her for this rush uncalculated step.

### Conclusion

Thus, Nora's mental images of the characters are subjective and unreliable representations of the characters; her individual personality holds an impact on the construction of these images. Ibsen presents Nora full of action-based tension and anxiety to shed light on modern human internal and external conflicts. Finally, Nora uses three specific pragmatic mechanisms to reduce her anxieties that arise from her uncalculated actions and bonds. Nora's needs force her to do commit actions such as forging her father's signature, while her anxiety leads to committing uncalculated behaviors such as dancing tarantella in an illogical mysterious way. Furthermore, Helmer's discovery of the truth of debt makes Nora submit and lose her desire of resistance. Nora discovers that she is part of the social interpersonal web of relationships; she lives her state of estrangement and alienation. She also decides to leave the dress of a doll and live as a human being with dignity and esteem. She never seriously and realistically thinks of radical solutions to her problems, a thing that intensifies her anxiety and leads to her inevitable tragic end.

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