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Comparative Study

WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION IN IBSEN'S *A DOLL'S HOUSE* AND TAGORE'S HAIMANTI

Farzana Zaman[1]*, Hafsa Binte Minhaj[2] & Md. Azimul Rashid Prodhan[3]

Abstract

A Doll's House by Henrik Ibsen is a 19th-century English drama set in Europe about a girl's marriage journey. The study focuses on Nora's decision to be self-sufficient and to challenge male dominance. Haimanti is a Bengali short story written in the early twentieth century by Rabindranath Tagore, depicting the situation of women in Bengal during the nineteenth and twentieth century. Both are the protagonists of the texts, and both have the idea of emancipation, with Nora being able to express her thoughts on her future life at the end. In contrast, Haimanti died suppressing all of her inner desires. This study aims to provide a comparative analysis of these two selected works in terms of the situation of women in two different ages and cultures.

Keywords: Suppression, male-domination, universal treatment, dowry

1. Introduction

Woman's emancipation is a movement that aims to ensure freedom of self-fulfillment, self-acknowledgment, and self-development for women. The term is used to indicate how women are made to gain access and control of all types of resources in a nation. This study expresses the treatment of women in different cultures, like eastern culture in Rabindranath Tagore's (1861-1941) Haimanti and western culture in Henrick Ibsen's (1828-1906) *A Doll's House*. In *A Doll's House*, the female characters, or protagonists, are Haimanti in the short story, Haimanti, and Nora. Treatment of women in different cultures and societies varies, as Haimanti is treated ill by the suppressive rules of society, such as early marriage, the dowry system, and worse treatment or behavior by the law's house. But in this typical period of women's conservative tendency, Haimanti was educated with a philosophical perspective by her father and supported by her husband studying her favorite books. She got the sense of self-respect and self-identity that tended to her to be true in law's different attitudes and behaviors. Still, in *A Doll's House*, Nora was conserved and monitored by her father and husband, but at first, she didn't understand the meaning of self-respect and self-identity. Whenever she could feel the absence of self-priority, it went away, leaving behind all her relationships in which she was nothing but a showpiece or doll.

The objectives were to compare and contrast the female characters, Nora, in *A Doll's House* and Haimanti, in the text Haimanti, exhibit the social gap, and identify social attitudes toward women in 19th century Europe and 20th century Bengal. However, the study also describes the development of emancipation in Nora and Haimanti and analyzes the universal treatment toward women in a

*Corresponding Email: fzaman007@yahoo.com
[1]Assistant Professor, Department of English, Manarat International University, Dhaka, Bangladesh
[2]Postgraduate Researcher, Department of English, Manarat International University, Dhaka, Bangladesh
[3]English Teacher, Faith International Academy, Dhaka, Bangladesh

dominant male-dominated society. The researcher applied the Observation Method to complete this study. The texts Haimanti and *A Doll's House* have been considered primary sources. However, academic articles, critical essays and journals, and websites have been taken as secondary sources by the researcher for this study.

2. Literature Review

The main idea of this paper has been derived from the texts Haimanti by Rabindranath Tagore and *A Doll's House* by Henrick Ibsen. Ibsen's *A Doll's House* is revolutionary in its idealism, theatre, and gender. Nora's refusal to define herself as a wife and mother is interpreted as rejecting Hegel's theory of women's roles in family and society. There is no need to assume that Ibsen understood the gender relations of women and the family as clearly as Hegel did. Moi (2006) said in his research about Nora's real identity and doll identity, her performance on the tarantella, and women's natural responsibility of being mother and wife. Pittman and Flomenhaft (1970) depicted that Helmer's attitude towards Nora is childlike and doll-like, about Nora's dependency at first on her father and then on her husband, and about her leaving home. Langas (2005) has talked about Nora's treatment as a woman rather than her struggle to gain an identity. Though Langas has talked about Nora's 'emancipation', he attempted to discover the treatment of women in bourgeois society. Mori (2006) talked about author's attempt to portray Nora, that it is the participation of a female character in 19th-century society. And then she brought out Nora's tendency and view that dependency was actually related to money. Nilu (2008) depicted some Western features known to us in some other way, like Tarantella. He has also brought out the matter of the 'doll' that is related to Nora. This narration is essential for this study to make a relationship between Tagore, and Ibsen, and Nilu. Rabindranath Tagore has shown a great understanding of the female mind and given ample space to women and their lives and narratives in his novels, short stories, and plays. Women from different social classes, casts, and characters are presented in his works. Shila (2015) described the social aspects and traditional norms by which Haimanti was treated ill, and finally at the cost of her life, she embraced the eternal emancipation–death. But despite all being educated, her father-in-law, her beloved husband, could not get Haimanti understood as an educated cultural girl. So, here, the psychology and emancipation of Haimanti are not cleared out, but rather social facts are brought out behind her tragic fall. Tagore has talked about important issues like female education, position, empowerment, etc., and he, as well, has strongly articulated the inconsequential issues of women's lives. Several feminist columns from the west and east platforms for the feminists' point of view of 19th and 20th century Europe and Bengal have also been examined for this study. Shila (2015) further brought out the social picture of the male-dominated Tagorian period. Several Islamic overviews were also examined in order to demonstrate the Islamic perspective on women.

3. Women's Emancipation in Haimanti and 20th Century Bengal

Set in Nineteenth Century Colonial Bengal, Tagore's writings portray the problems within Hindu custom and patriarchy, the uproar of spiritual and intellectual tension between Bengali Renaissance and tradition, marked by the emergence of colonial education, and the lives of Bengali Hindu women at the juncture of all these social events (Shila, 2015). Tagore's works are seen as breaking the false conventions of his society, freeing women from their shackles (Shila, 2015). In the Tagorian period, a woman was just a living agent, like a human in front of a tiger. Haimanti has received the knowledge aligned with nature and natural phenomena but in reality, coming to law's house, she finds the society in disguise that begets the inner conflict resulting into her tragic death. Her age was concealed; her father was proven incorrect; he was Haimanti's idol, who taught her to be truthful. Opu's thoughts, Haimanti's father's conversation with Opu, a few speeches by Haimanti, and diverse behaviors or treatments of the in-law's members have all been used to present Haimanti's inner feelings, emotions, and tastes. Tagorian's groom's father's attitude was like the statement of Opu about his father as a traditional person: "My father is aggressively in favour of society's diktats." Thus, in terms of their perspectives on the revolution, my father and grandfather came across as

diametrically opposed figures. The father believed that the future son-in-law would inherit everything her father owned. Haimanti's father had prioritized her and loved her daughter with everything he had. In the twentieth century, women were not educated or given the same importance or facilities as men. Haimanti's father, on the other hand, lacked such a mindset and initiative. She did not learn how to worship or pray. But the people of her in-law's house pinched her, saying that her father was an atheist. How could she learn that? Opu could understand her feelings; her messy, disappointing face and glance devastated him. The 20th century Bengal depicts a male-dominated, inhuman society that hesitates to accept marriageable young girls. Dowry, despite being illegal, plays a role in this phenomenon. Older brides require a larger dowry before marriage, the prevalence of dowry forces women to marry at a young age. Dowry is one of the primary causes of domestic violence.

4. Women's Emancipation in *A Doll's House* and 19th Century Europe

The play is significant for how it deals with the fate of a married woman. In 19th century Europe and North America, men and women were expected to fill separate spheres of society. Victorian women faced financial and sexual disadvantages and inequalities in their marriages. Marriages for Victorian women became contracts that were difficult, if not impossible, to get out of the problem. Women's rights groups fought for equality and, over time, made strides in attaining those rights and privileges. Women's education in the United Kingdom was historically designed to teach middle and upper-class girls enough to make them attractive marriage material for men, and lessons were frequently taught at home by poorly educated governesses. Women were not allowed to vote and were almost entirely shut out of politics. Women were seen as property by their husbands. When a Victorian man and woman married, the woman's rights were legally given over to their spouse. Women lose ownership of their wages, physical property, and all cash they acquire through marriage. Education was seen as making women better wives and mothers, not transforming their lives. Girls should be educated to be 'decorative, modest, marriageable beings." The drama *A Doll's House* starts with the shopping matters of the protagonist Nora. She seemed so happy buying gifts for her husband and children that she purchased some macaroons just for her. But here, we see the loss of freedom to have macaroons as Nora's husband, Torvald, thought it was a waste of money. He must dominate her wife as a house dominator. As a young girl, Nora exclaimed whether she could do a job or not. She was also unaware of women's emancipation or power as women could also earn like men. Nora had sacrificed her education and creativity to take care of a family. She had tried all the time to make her husband happy. We see women's everyday lives like Nora, Linde, and Anna in this drama. Linde's life expresses the helpless condition of a family. Anna left her house and children to seek the financial support for her family and to take care of Nora's children. Nora did tremendous hard work and sacrifice for the pay-out of the loan. Nora knew Torvald wouldn't accept her, and she might leave her family and lovely time. When Nora was about to lose everything, he was busy gaining more notoriety and fame. Nora could understand that she had wasted her time loving Torvald and keeping him happy. She should finish her studies and become self-sufficient, not dependent on others. Her emancipation of being an independent woman led her to sacrifice her children and family.

5. Islamic Overview Regarding Women

In Islam, women are given three times more priority than men. Islam has never said that a family is only responsible for a mother; rather, it is said that a family is a combination of male and female contributions. It is said that there lies 'Jannah' under the mother's feet. At the same time, a wife has duties and responsibilities to her husband, and at the same time, a husband also has duties and responsibilities to his wife. A wife and a husband are complementary to each other. The perfect and absolute example of a husband is our prophet Mohammad (SAW). A husband and a wife have a strong connection bonding relationship filled with love, care, respect, mercy, and kindness. Allah (SWT) said in the Quran, "And one of His signs is that He created for you from yourselves mates, so that you may find tranquility in them; and He placed affection and mercy between you."Indeed, those are signs for people who give thought" (Ar-Rum, 30:21).

A person is good in Islamic eyes when he is good to his wife. And Abu Hurairah (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated that the Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "The most complete of the believers in faith, is the one with the best character. And the best of you is those who are best for their women" (Jami'at-Tirmidhi, 1162).

Dower (Mahr), in Islam, is something else that is opposite to the traditional dowry system. In Islam, dower (Mahr) refers to the payment from the husband to his wife, one of the fundamental requirements for getting married. It is the husband's responsibility to pay it to his wife. The dower (Mahr) can be adjusted through the consensus of both the husband and the wife. Dower (Mahr) is the testimony of unparalleled honor and socio-economic status given to the women by Islam.

6. Findings and Analysis

Both the authors are not feminists, but their protagonists in this study are female. The plot is based on their suppression and oppression by society and family members. Haimanti is about the women who, in the early 20th century, were suppressed and worst treated by the members of their in-law's house. At that time, women were not considered educated and had no scope for education. The dowry system, women's suppression and oppression were invaded throughout the culture of Bengal.

On the other hand, in *A Doll's House*, Nora wanted a lovely and peaceful life. She had suppressed her dreams and wanted only to get love from her husband. But the male dominating attitude of her husband has made her mind to leave him. From both sides, women are imprisoned by their respective cultures. Money plays a great role in both texts. Haimanti was treated well when her in-laws thought her father had huge money and that, in the future, Opu would be the only possessor of that money. When they came to know that her father had to incur debt even for the simple marriage of Haimanti, as he owed nothing, they started maltreating her, indicating her personality, activities, experience, and family. On the other hand, Nora's life was lovely and smooth, although she was outwardly suffering from a money problem. Her husband learned about the money sanction by forging her father's signature. Nora could understand the importance of earning money; it gives the feeling of a manly attitude. The protagonists of the selected texts of research, Haimanti and Nora, are sacrificial-minded, high-thoughtful, brilliant, faithful, and lovely. They both had the power of emancipation, but in the end, Haimanti lost by herself as she didn't dare stand against her in-law's house and Nora didn't let her be lost as she was able to sacrifice the will of her family.

7. Conclusion

According to social change and rituals, women in one country can differ from another. Identity is one thing that can be established by one, which is the feeling of emancipation. Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* is about a European housewife, Nora, who had all the scope for learning and establishing herself but sacrificed everything for her family and love for her husband. On the other hand, Tagore's Haimanti is about a Bengali girl. Haimanti gets married after seeing her father's well state. Haimanti was suppressed by her lovely and wealthy dreams, which she knitted. She had a feeling of emancipation that taunted her for each behavior and the converse of her in-laws'. The difference is that Nora could come out of her house to get back her identity, but Haimanti couldn't leave her house to get free air and refreshment. Similarities: both female characters have to fight to regain their freedom, respect, and identity. The situation, reason, or plot is different from the present world. Nowadays, women are as advanced and fast as men. But social behavior, family rules, and male dominance are still remaining. But some men understand their sisters, wives, and females. There are lovely, understandable in-laws' houses that are helping their daughter-in-law for a better future and life. Islam also does not permit men to govern and restrain women. Instead, it is said that a husband and a wife are more than in a relationship like a friendship.

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