

**Communication between a man and a woman with reference to Henrik Ibsen's play  
*A Doll's House (1879)***

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**Abstract:**

Communication begins at home and is important part of human relations and peaceful life. Any society can develop good values through appropriate communication. A negative person would communicate negatively, spreading negativity to the family and that different families and communities makes the society. Henerik Ibsen represents such a society where economy plays the vital role in human life. It leads to the positive or negative actions and hence the communication. One can understand this through the Ibsen's characters in his play *A Doll's House*, Torvald and Nora, where finances come in between the relationship of married couple. Nora is a submissive wife dedicated herself to look after her husband and three children, whereas Torvald is a tyrannical husband who is more practical than emotional in relationship. Ibsen reflects the mirror image of the society and traditional life style with gender stereotypes in 19th century Norwegian society.

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Communication is an umbrella term to connect all living creatures to each other as per its nature. Non-verbal communication holds very important place; whereas the silence is the best communication. It is circumventing spheres in a process in different areas. It holds all the aspects of the society. The economic aspects are reflected on communication as well, in many instances. Sometimes poor are more generous or polite in communication where rich or elite can be stingy. Marriage is the smallest unit of the social institution so called family. It functions as a medium to make a community and then a full-fledged society. The words communion and community come from the Latin origin 'communis' means to bring together. The purpose of communication is to come together and value others importance in one's life. And marriage is the institution where two persons come together to lead a happy, better, and productive life. There is no concept of gender stereotypes where there is familial harmony in any institution. Henerik Ibsen was a great artist who is compared to Shakespeare for his prominent plays like *Peer Gynt (1867)*, *A Doll's House (1879)*, *Ghosts (1881)*, *An Enemy of the People (1882)*, *The Wild Duck (1884)*, *Rosmersholm (1886)* and *Hedda Gabler (1890)* etc. His play *A Doll's House* is a realistic, naturalistic and a problem play, depicting psychology, human behaviour and problem of a common man. Nora is from a wealthy family and extravagant in her school days, but under social construct, she is not privileged to get emotional security of her father after marriage with Torvald Helmer. Torvald is a taciturn man, rigid minded and what Nora realises at the end of the play, is that, he is a selfish and narcissist person who does not recognise her dedication and sacrifices as a wife. Her devotion to the family, good qualities and hard work suffocates under the load of Torvald's masculinity, which is called as patriarchal stereotypes where women are judged through the masculine lenses.

Marriage is not only the sacred tie of the two physical bodies but also of two minds and souls. It is requiring a lot of understanding, honesty, trustfulness, integrity and loyalty to carry forward or run the family, as an institution. Flawless communication is required to run this institution, otherwise it becomes like 'a master and a slave' kind of relationship. Nora feels a lot for her own life and happiness but she sacrifices it for the sake of her husband and children. Torvald does not recognise her value for what she deserves and that is reflected in his ways of communication with her when he calls her a

little bird, a lark, a skylark, a featherhead or a little person. It reflects his personality how much credit she gets or the space Nora occupies in his life. She has no credit to what she deserves. For Ibsen, 'Marriage involves human dignity, responsibility, community and mutual trust.' (4) It has to be from both the individuals. The communication must be two-way communication otherwise it cannot be a complete or justified. There are difficult situations Nora faces alone in her life that is full of challenges after marriage. As she tells her school friend Mrs. Linde, how she struggled and worked hard with Torvald for financial reasons. She worked hand to mouth in order to run the family and in such a situation, what all a woman need from her companion, is that of a close emotional bond and warmth of communication. In this situation, when Torvald is a callous husband, Nora seems a timid woman having no space in his heart. Ibsen sees 'womanly qualities hidden, fled away and misunderstood.' (5) She is Simone de Beauvoir's 'The Second Sex' under the social construct of power hierarchy; deprived of the happiness that she deserved. Had there been a proper communication between the two, Nora would not have breakdown at the end of the play. She realises that Torvald could have been more understanding husband. He could have understood her values and contributions in his life. She realises that she has been treated like a doll under the authority of Torvald, where she had little space for her full-fledged individuality.

Many feminists questioned over the freedom of expression, equal rights of man and a woman advocating physical and financial security of women. George Bernard Shaw treats every woman as queen in literal sense. He recognises the women power and finds the space to women as to what they are. About a century ago from the publication of this three-act play, *A Doll's House* (1879). Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) criticises the social stereotypes against women that they exist only to please men. She proposed the idea that women and men should be given equal opportunities in every field, may it be education, work, or politics etc. Constitutional or legal rights are things apart, but the social individual equal rights are important to be practiced in life. It requires more and more education and awareness to develop such kind of culture in society. Wollstonecraft gives importance to reason, virtue and knowledge. For her, 'Knowledge and virtue naturally flow, is equally undeniable, if mankind be viewed collectively.' (16) Trio is important for human happiness and perfection of nature.

Gender based stereotypes has to be minimised. *A Room of One's Own* (1929) is another work, an extended essay by Virginia Woolf advocating the personal space for women in daily life based on her lecture in October 1928, at Newnham College. 'For her, a woman needs money and room of her own.' The space not only for women but also for any being is very important, may it be physical, moral or personal. Everyone's personal space has to be respected, the human space and that of the animals. Then, in such cases, only communication can fetch its original impact. The proverb, 'as you sow so you reap' is applicable in the area of communication.

The world has realised the communication crisis and lack of human touch during the covid 19 lock down and global health emergency, in spite of internet and technology. Thus, it can be observed that the society needs more reformation regarding the conduct of communication aspects in the familial lives of the post pandemic world.

**Citations:**

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