

NORA AND GIRIJA – THE REAL FACE OF TWENTIETH CENTURY WOMEN

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Abstract

A mind of woman is almost compared to depth of ocean. It has got more secrets, valuable treasures and dangerous trap too. Residing in the male dominated world, the protagonist Nora in Ibsen's 'The Doll House' and Girija in 'Lamps in Whirlpool' by Rajam Krishnan have to face their same social pressure. Even though they belonged to two different continents, they both share the universal pain of womenfolk in all over the world. They both pose the real face of twentieth century women. They broke the chain of slavery which was adorned as ornaments by the society. This paper is an analysis of Nora and Girija and how they can be examples for Jung's Archetypal characters. In literature, an archetype is atypical character, an action or a situation that seems to represent such universal pattern of human nature.

Keywords: Archetypal characters, male domination, collective unconscious, real face.

Introduction

Henrik Johan Ibsen was born on 20th March 1828 in Norway. He was the eldest of his four brothers and one sister. His early childhood days were not so enjoyable. His father became bankrupt when he was eight years old. At the age of 18, he started writing poetry. In 1849, he published his first play 'Catiline'. He left his country on 1864 with his wife. His intrinsic work as a dramatist begins only when he left Norway.

Ibsen's contribution to the field of drama has been exceptionally remarkable and far-reaching. He was both a pioneer and a trend-setter. 'A Doll's House' is probably the most famous and best-known of Ibsen's plays. Almost all women folk could find a tint of Nora's character within themselves.

Rajam Krishnan was born in 1925 in Musiri, Trichy District in Tamil Nadu. Her style is very realistic and her language is very expressive. She was a writer of social conscience and that is why she raised her voice against the injustice done to women either within the family or outside its circle. Lamps in Whirlpool were first published as Suzhalil Mithakkum Deepangal in 1987. The protagonist Girija ascertains her way and come out of its

unfavorable everyday life to find her and not to be under the control of uncomfortable demands and margins.

Archetypal Characters

Psychologist Carl Gustav Jung has described several archetypal characters. All are based in the observation of differing but repeated patterns of thought and action. He also observed that those thought and action are reappearing time and again across people, countries and continents. His archetypal characters are not just 'types'. We cannot categorize any person's character under one 'forms'. His main forms of archetypes are 'The Shadow', 'The Anima', 'The Animus' and 'The Self'.

The Anima and Animus

The Anima (female)/ Animus (Male) or more simply, the Soul acts as a communication with the collective unconscious. The anima/animus represents our true self, our inner real characters and it oppose the 'masks' we wear everyday to the society. As Jung rightly says "Anima and animus are female and male principles that represent this deep difference. Whilst men have a fundamental animus and women an anima, each may also have the other, just as men have a feminine side and women a masculine" Jung saw men as having one dominant anima, contributed to by female members of his family, whilst women have a more complex, variable animus, perhaps made of several parts.

Anima in Nora

Nora's husband Torvald plays the patriarchal male figure to his little doll like wife. However, she is not like a stereotypical stay at home housewife. It is only with her husband that the false appearance continues, and it slowly revealed that the false mask of the pair's relationship. On the surface, we could see Torvald Helmer seems to have great power over everything. Throughout the story, Nora gives the impression that she is in the submissive position with her husband. With deeper analysis, we could find that only Nora is controlling everything and even her husband.

In the beginning of the play, Nora exhibits her womanly charm to Torvald in exchange of money. When she was explaining about her lives to her friend Mrs. Linde, we could see some superiority complex within Nora. She completely monopolizes the conversation. She also explained how she saved her husband with her sense of pride.

She is pretending as a submissive wife in order to balance harmony in her domestic life. She tells Mrs. Linde how she worked hard in order to pay the debt and "it was a tremendous pleasure to sit there working and earning money. It was like being a man" This is the real reflection of her inner mind. She just wants others to know that she is not a superficial creature, but a strong woman who can handle the situation all alone, just like a man.

Collective Unconscious

Nora represents the whole womankind. The roots of prejudice against women have a long history. After the nomadic life, humans started settling near the riverbanks and

civilization started. At those times, women were leading the whole family. Patriarchal system was not practiced during that period. And a woman would take care of the whole community. She had the intuition power, very strong will power and could take hard decisions. But gender discrimination slowly crept in to the society. Men wanted to be powerful and they went out to go for hunting. Women started looking after the kids and household chores. Gender discrimination started by advocating some myths stating that the men are superior in nature than women. Women have been repeatedly embedded with thought that men are superior. Women are weak minded creatures.

Women are not allowed to have education. The kinds of myths of gender and race broke the relationship between women and men. Living in a male dominated world, men think that they are born with power for political and socio-economic reasons. They started showing their power to control their opposite gender to satisfy their masculine genders. Anyhow, twentieth century women characters like Nora and Girija started to retrieve their "collective unconscious". Jung says that in our deeper mind the personal unconscious lies. Beyond that lies the racial or collective unconscious. This collective unconscious is the common groundwork of humanity out of which each individual develops his personal conscious and unconscious life. The collective unconscious is inherited, coming down to us from our primitive ancestors.

Women were very strong in the beginning. They started identifying their strong will power, after finding the ill mind of the men. Nora found out her real self after the disappointments in her life. Even at the last minute, Nora believed Helmer. She thought her husband would come and help her during her horrible misfortune. In the last act she reveals her own self.

Helmer: Explain yourself better. I don't understand you.

Nora: I have waited so patiently for eight years; for, goodness knows, I knew very well that wonderful things don't happen every day. Then this horrible misfortune came upon me; and then I felt quite certain that the wonderful thing was going to happen at last....(page no. 79)

But she went outside like strong women. Like the ancestor women who took hard decisions with their strong will power, Nora also was one among them.

Girija as a Sacrificial Goat

Indian men are financially and ideologically superior over women. Women are kept under subordinate position inside their kitchen. They are not made economically independent and they have to depend upon their husband for each and every thing. But in twentieth century Indian women got some education. Here in Rajam Krishnan's 'Lamps in Whirlpool', the protagonist Girija had finished her PG course. When we take Nora, she has to satisfy only her husband. But in the case of Girija, she has to adjust her typical Indian mother-in-law also. She became a slave to that family doing all the duties. She has to follow the 'madi' rules and acharam as instructed by her mother-in-

law. Her husband never cares about Girija. Like a typical Indian husband, he takes her as an advantage in his life. The male domination and the female submission take place unknowingly because the gender inequalities have evolved over the one million years and it is rooted in our country.

Girija's Self Dignity

One day Rathna, her husband's niece came to their house. Girija was almost awakened by her touching talk of her. Rathna is like an angel giving Girija the blessings by making her to think about herself. This incident changed her life. Now only Girija started thinking about her own skills and she is reminded of her self dignity.

One day, her husband throws the plate because the food prepared by Girija is not palatable. For the first time, she got irritated by his arrogant behavior. At this situation, she does not want to please him. She boldly take a decision to go out of the house and wants to spend some time on the banks of the river Ganga. She got some experiences and she returns back after four days. She is not allowed to enter the house by her family members. She is torn between her worry for her daughters. Girija as a real face of twentieth century women, she seeks a job nearby in a home for refugee children. Then she transforms to a new empowered woman.

Conclusion

When women are not given equal rights and respect, they are ready to show their real bold face. A woman is ready to sacrifice everything in her life for her family. She expects some respect and unconditional love. If that is denied to her, she struggles a lot and become very bold enough to throw away her family itself.

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