I think marriage must be a kind of miracle. The way a woman gradually changes her personality so as to become like her husband.

**Henrik Ibsen** – *The Lady from the Sea*

**A Half-dead Woman**

*The Lady from the Sea* is the story of a woman, who is waking up into her powers. The play encourages the women through the character of the heroine Ellida Wangel to wake up to the present environment that strangle their growth and impede their progress by restricting their freedom of choice in their 'half dead' state and this sickness will continue if men don't take a remedial step to cure their sickness. Ibsen, in this play shows that more than men helping women to cure their sickness, it is expected of women to assert their power and extract freedom for themselves.

Ibsen thought that as a socialist, he should bring women into consciousness of their power, which has been perceived to have dwelt in them even in the past. After all, they too had lived a hard life in the past and eventually succeeded in breaking the barriers of life. They showed their power to fight with nature, defended their cause, be it environmental or communal or personal. The early women did not wait
for gallant knights to worship and protect them, but they were prepared
to defend themselves when peculiar conditions compelled them to do so.
This power to fight, to protect and to defend themselves has been
inherent in them. There have been stories related of their bravery. While
her husband was away on duty or war, the woman often undertook the
defence of her husband’s castle, supervised the administration of his
affairs and held courts. She knew to protect her honour. She had been
instrumental in changing and civilizing men. But gradually she has been
made powerless.

Ibsen had devoted himself to a special study about them and
learnt much of their predicament and the need to redeem them out of it.
His experience at home also replenished him with the knowledge about
the sufferings of women and their powerlessness. Joan Templeton in her
Preface to Ibsen’s Women, writes, “Ibsen questioned the existence of a
female nature” (2001:xvi) and critically examines the “exclusiveness of
the categories, ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ both within people and with
in systems” (2001:xvi). Equally formative for Ibsen was his mother’s
oppression. Ibsen understood the powerlessness of woman through his
mother. Joan Templeton says: “Ibsen saw his father intimidate and bully
his mother, who became, ... more and more ‘taciturn’, ‘withdrawn’ and
‘melancholy’ ” (2001:7). Therefore it is the wishful dream of Ibsen that
women must know their strength and wake up to exercise their power.
He deemed that the story of Ellida will help him to give a lesson to women on their powers and their need to wake up to acquire them.

When Ibsen wrote this play, he had in mind mostly the women who are already married and finding it difficult to assert their freedom in taking crucial decisions and managing difficult situations in their life. The Norwegian title ‘Fruen’ does not mean ‘lady’ or ‘woman’. The dictionary will show that it is the equivalent of the word ‘madame’ or ‘mistress’ – the title given to a married woman. Therefore, the situation here is akin to wives.

Ellida is introduced to the readers as ‘half-dead mermaid’. The choral figure in the play Ballested speaks of his project for painting a mermaid who is half-dead. When Lyngstrand asks him why she is half dead, Ballested replies, “she’s wandered in from the sea, and can’t find her way back. So here she lies, dying in the brakish waters of the fjord” (Ibsen Plays: Three The Lady from the Sea 1980:128). Ballested confesses that it is the lady of the house who has given him such an idea. Ellida, the real ‘half-dead mermaid’ herself comes out of the sea to enter the play.

With her wet hair streaming over her shoulders, she is greeted by her husband, “Well, here she is, our Lady from the Sea” (136). As the name signifies Ellida belongs half to the sea and half to the land and she is a woman placed between two opposing men. Dr. Wangel
representing the land and the strange seaman – the sea. Ellida has married Dr. Wangel out of duty, but begins to love him later. At the same time, she is haunted by the memories of a Finnish seaman, whom she has wedded years before with no further affinity or relationship due for a man and wife than joining of their rings and throwing them into the sea.

Ellida is the daughter of a lighthouse keeper. She has married the widower Dr. Wangel, since she thought that her marriage with the seaman was only a madness needed to be forgotten. She later confesses to Dr. Wangel about her marriage with the seaman. She says, “Oh, I soon came to my senses, of course. I saw how mad and meaningless the whole thing had been” (157). Dr. Wangel who does not know about her past life feels that she is sick and affected, because she misses her sea life. He isolates her within his household, allowing her no responsibility and separates her from his daughters. He wants to keep her at home, just as she was in home near the sea. He builds for her a private space, an arbor, on the lawn fitting for a woman from the sea than the verandah frequented by his daughters.

Ellida begins to suffer from a mysterious depression when her baby is born. She feels that the baby has the eyes of the seaman and soon the baby dies. She no longer has any sexual relationship with her husband and experiences a mental and emotional anguish.
When the play opens, Ellida is introduced in this condition and Ballested describes it as 'half dead mermaid'. She is understood by the people of the town as 'the lady of the sea'. Everybody notices a peculiar passion in her for the sea and Dr. Arnholm with whom she was in love in earlier days also finds her to be shaken by the power of the sea. He says, "I rather think that Mrs. Wangel has a special affinity to the sea and everything connected with it" (137).

The reason for Ellida to be shaken thus is that the memories of the seaman begin to trouble her. She is obsessed with a fear that he may come and possess her. She has an inadvertent attachment to the sea. The power of the sea frightens her, yet she wants to be under its influence.

Incidentally, Lyngstrand makes a clay model, with the story of Ellida as its central theme, though he never guesses that the heroine of the clay model to be Ellida herself. He happens to meet a Finnis seaman in a ship, who has taken up the boatswain position after the previous one has been murdered. This new sailor is used to read all the old newspapers that come to ship, and in one such paper has found a news item that interested and excited him. Then, he mutters to himself " 'Married. To another man. While I was away' " (144). He further said, " 'But mine she is, and mine she shall always be. And she will come to join me, even though I go as a drowned man to claim her' " (144). When Lyngstrand relates this story, Ellida confesses to Dr.
Amholm that she is that faithless girl. After listening to this story, Ellida is not able to contain herself with secrets of her life. She volunteers to tell the story of her life to Dr. Wangel.

The seaman used to visit the lighthouse, where her father was working. They had met only two or three times and one day he wrote a note to her asking her to meet at Bratthammeren, the head land between light-house and Skjoldviken. He told her that he had stabbed the captain and so he had to leave. Before he parted, he took from his pocket, a key-chain and pulled a ring off his finger, a ring that he always wore. He took a little ring from her finger too, put these two rings on the key-chain, and said that they two were going to marry themselves to the sea. Then he threw the chain and rings with all his strength out into the sea, and went away. Afterwards, Ellida felt that everything was madness and wrote to him saying that their engagement had no meaning and he should stop writing to her. Nevertheless, he continued to write as if nothing stopped him from doing so.

For sometime, it looked as if nothing could happen and he had got it over, but he had come to her three years ago in her memories. It was exactly the time when Lyngstrand said that he had read out of the newspaper about his girl marrying another man. Ever since, she is unable to forget him. An obsession of him has gone to that extent of putting her mind to illusion about her child’s eyes. Wangel after
listening to the story understands the reason for Ellida’s sickness. She is threatened by the memories of the stranger.

As predicted by Lyngstrand, the stranger comes to the islands to claim her as his own. Ellida refuses to go with him. The stranger does not compel her but tells her that if at all she decides to come with him, she should do so on her own free will. This awakens her state from half dead and makes her understand the import behind these words. Meanwhile, Dr. Wangel persuades her not to go with the stranger, because her life will be ruined. Ellida changes her mind and adamantly decides to go with him. Dr. Wangel begins to analyse the reason behind Ellida’s wish to go with the stranger. Finally, instead of compelling her to stay with him, grants her the freedom of choice. To his surprise, Ellida stays with him and forgets her affinity with the stranger. She treats her friendship with him as a bad dream.

Ibsen has a cluster of thoughts to put across in his domestic plays about the man-woman relationship, the home, the role of woman as a wife, man’s selfishness and the necessity for granting her the freedom of choice as well as individuality. An analytical study of such details as, Ellida’s state of living in Dr. Wangel’s house, their relationship, Ellida’s role as a wife and her awakening into consciousness about the freedom she should have in order to establish her power, would classify The Lady from the Sea as a play that shows that woman is the destiny of
man. A woman compelled to live with a man will only mar his life, but
the mere feeling that she is free can break the buckles of sorrow for a
man and his home and make his life happy.

Ibsen with all his youthful experience about the sufferings of
woman, makes a positive study about the present position of woman and
the changes that can be brought about to her advantage. The code of
marriage expects people to marry because they have a good relationship.
The people expect that marriage will make it still better giving them
more opportunity to meet, to love and to help each other and have
children thus fulfilling their desire for recognition and success. The two
make a family expecting it to add more members. Marriage provides its
members with a place where they are met with affection, whereas in
theory they are protected from the stress, which they are exposed to in
their working place, and where the devotion between husband and wife
can be expressed. An important condition of marriage is that the two
partners must trust and love each other. They are expected to be in
sound mind fit to take care of the family. Adultery, cruelty, desertion,
faithlessness in love and addiction to alcoholic drinks and drugs are
some of the grounds for breaking up the marriage.

The code of marriage is one thing and the convention of marriage
is another thing. It breaks the code and instead of mutual role, it burdens
the role of woman reducing it to slavery. The partners in marriage are
held together not by an individual liking or love for each other, but by material prospects and economic compulsions. Marriage is not an enactment of love. Most often it is circumstantial compulsions - financial stringencies, family burden, social pressure or status-complex that impel an individual to enter into a marital engagement. In such a deviation of the code, woman is always at the disadvantage in a male dominated society. The woman is expected to live for the man.

**The Woman and the Need for Freedom of Choice**

Ibsen in this play first and foremost, is agonised about the position of woman’s necessity to live for the man. Lyngstrand tells Bolette, the grown up daughter of Dr. Wangel, “I think marriage must be a kind of miracle. The way a woman gradually changes her personality so as to become like her husband” (176) and further he adds:

She must live for his art, too... Not only because of all the honour and respect she’ll get through him. But to be able to help him to create – to make his work easy for him by being with him and looking after him and keeping him happy and comfortable. I think that must be a wonderful life for a woman (177).

Bolette thinks that Lyngstrand must be a conceited man to have such an expectation from a woman. Among such men, the woman becomes a prisoner. Ibsen is aware of such conceited men who don’t make marriage favourable to women. In his play *The Lady from the Sea*
Ibsen discusses the marriage as a social structure and the reasons for its crumbling. Marriage is often treated as a bargain. It involves selling and buying. Ellida blames Dr. Wangel and herself for making their marriage a bargain. Ellida says to Dr. Wangel:

It was a great misfortune – for both of us – that you and I ever met. ... It had to end in tragedy. After the way we came together. ... The real truth of the matter is that you came out there and bought me. ... Oh, I wasn’t any better than you. I agreed to the bargain. Left home and sold myself to you. ... Is there any other word for it? You couldn’t stand the emptiness of your house any longer. You looked round for a new wife – (186-187).

Dr. Wangel corrects her saying that he was actually looking for a new mother for his children and Ellida continues “You didn’t know if I was at all suited for that. You’d only spoken to me two or three times. Then you – wanted me” (187). Ellida blames herself too. “And I – I stood there, helpless, so completely alone. So when you came and offered to – support me for life, I – agreed” (187).

Having been married to a man, under such circumstances, Ellida feels congested, constrained and imprisoned in the house of Dr. Wangel in spite of enjoying a great deal of warmth of love, care and affection form him. She feels sick and nervous because she feels alien to the
home, and to its members, to its climate and temperament and mood. She has come to a home where its members have private memories of their dead mother, which she is not able to share with. The daughters of Wangel are not able to get on well with her. Hilde tells Bolette: "She’ll never get on with us. She’s not our sort. And we’re not hers. God knows why father ever dragged her into the house!" (150).

This statement of Hilde shows how the very purpose of marrying Ellida is thwarted and the marriage seems a failure. If the members of the house have their private memories, she too has her own private memories. She feels intimate with the stranger and not with Dr. Wangel. As soon as her comforts and wants are satisfied, she longs for a life with the stranger and it may be an unconscious desire because when he comes to call her she shouts, "No, no! Don’t come tomorrow night! Don’t ever come back here again!" (172). Yet, later when he actually comes to fetch her she feels, "Oh, this man tempts me and draws me into the unknown! All the power of the sea is gathered in this man" (205).

Ellida is torn between two lovers – one Dr. Wangel whom she has married for convenience and the other, the stranger who has overpowered her emotion. The stranger asks her to come away with him for the reason, "Don’t you feel, as I do, that we two belong together?" (205).

Ibsen makes it clear through the conflict in the mind of Ellida that
peace or happiness in marriage cannot be found through compromise. Ellida has married Dr. Wangel for a compromise. When the memories of the sea awakened her emotions, she feels a great nearness to the stranger. She is only adjusting to the life given by Wangel who finds out that Ellida is no more happy with him, but manages to pull on. He expects "we should trust each other – live together as man and wife – the way we used to before" (152). Ellida refuses to do so and Wangel understands that one "couldn’t find peace or happiness in any compromise relationship" (152).

While Wangel makes his wife feel strange and the stranger makes her feel intimate, Ellida feels the oceanic quality even in her baby, which is not detected by Wangel. The child is the product of intimacy and she finds the child more with the qualities of the stranger than with Dr. Wangel, who is its actual father. The woman’s memories of the stranger bring a close resemblance between the child and the stranger.

The intimacy between the stranger and Ellida is due to their common love for the sea. Ellida has been brought by the seaside and the stranger spoke to her in a language more intimate than Dr. Wangel. When Wangel asks her what they both have talked all the time, she replies, "Mostly about the sea. ... Storms and calms. Dark nights at sea. And the sea on sunny days-" (155), and also about whales, dolphins, seals, gulls, eagles and sea-birds. Then she says, "when we talked about
these things, I had a feeling that these sea-beasts and sea-birds were somehow of the same blood as he. ... I felt almost as if I were one of them too” (155-156). She does not have this sense of belonging in Dr. Wangel’s house. She confesses to him:

In this house I have nothing to keep me. I have no roots here, Wangel. The children are not mine. They don’t love me. They never have loved me. When I go – if I go – with him, tonight – or out to Skjoldviken tomorrow – I haven’t even a key to give up, or any instructions to leave behind. I have been – outside – outside everything. From the first day I came here (194-195).

She complains that it is he who has made her inactive in the house. “It is you who wanted it to be like this. You and nobody else” (195). Ellida rebukes him as responsible for her predicament in his house, “For now there is nothing to bind me here – nothing to give me strength. I feel nothing for you. You, our home, the children – nothing” (195).

Ellida feels suffocated in the house of Dr. Wangel. She thinks that she has come to a dead end. She wants the chords that bind her should be cut off. She disgustedly says, “The life I was born to lead ended when I came to live with you” (195).

The return of her first lover to claim her back is a very common
theme of drama and the conflict that ensues in the mind of the heroine is of key interest, which also promotes ethical values. In this play, more than deciding whether it is right or wrong for Ellida to leave her husband, more attention is paid to the issue and the outcome of it. Ellida does prefer to go with the stranger. It looks outrageous on the part of Ellida to leave Dr. Wangel, who loves her more and keeps her comfortable. But Ellida looks at the whole affair from a different point of view.

Ellida does not like a struggleless life, a marriage performed to satisfy her circumstantial constraints. She says to Wangel, “I didn’t come to your home of my own free will” (187). She has been compelled to accept him due to poverty and mean work, such a marriage is not a real marriage. This marriage is a lie and a mistake. She says, “I see that the life we two are living together is not really a marriage. … My first – that could have been a real marriage” (187-188). Therefore Ellida’s cry to Wangel is to set her free: “I beg you, I pray you, Wangel – give me my freedom. Give me my full freedom again. That’s all that matters now” (188). Dr. Wangel is not ready to set her free. He says, “Ellida, this is a dreadful thing you are asking me to do. Let me have time to think. Let us talk about it again. Give yourself time” (189).

Dr. Wangel’s refusal to give her freedom consists of many factors. First of all he thinks that a woman cannot take decision on her
own. She needs an elderly person, a person stronger than her, more sensible and healthier than her, to take a decision for her. Secondly he does not expect her to love him; rather he counts on his love for her. He tells Dr. Arnholm: "But I ought to have known it from the first. In my heart, I did know it. But I wouldn't let myself believe it. I loved her so much. So I put myself first. I was unforgivably selfish" (181).

Thirdly, he did not think that she needs development in life. He is satisfied that she is safe. He has treasured her and kept her to his convenience. He says, "I've been selfish since, ... I ought to have developed her mind, taught her to think clearly. But no. I never got down to it. I wanted her as she was" (182). Dr. Wangel, even though a medical practitioner, could not diagnose what was ailing Ellida.

The stranger is having a different attitude towards freedom. He tells Dr. Wangel, "If Ellida wants to come with me, she must come of her own free will" (171). He likes her, loves her and he mutters that she should be his, yet, she should have freedom. These words of the stranger awaken the mind of Ellida. She realises that she has not been comfortable all these days because she does not have the freedom to say that she does want to stay back or go. This is where the stranger touches her. His words let her 'come on her own free will' change the entire thinking of Ellida. She knows what should be her next step. She needs freedom to make a choice. This awakening changes the life of Ellida.
She has to set herself free from the binding affections of either Dr. Wangel or the stranger. She is not sure whether she wants Wangel or the stranger. But she knows one thing. She wants freedom. She asks him to give her freedom to make a choice. Dr. Wangel is shocked to hear a word as 'Choice'. He exclaims, “You speak of choice? Choice, Ellida? In this?... Do you realize what you’re saying? Go with him?” (189).

Thereafter, all her musings are towards an awakening of the womanpower. A woman need not think of choosing a man only for physical comfort, protection and future. These are pretexts, which give the marriage an appearance of solidarity. Dr. Wangel asks her whether she trusts her whole future into the hands of a stranger. Ellida stuns him saying, “Didn’t I put my whole future into your hands?”(189). Wangel feels that the seaman is a complete stranger. Her curt reply is, “I knew even less about you. But I went with you” (189). He says he wants to protect her. She replies, “Protect me? What is there to protect me against? There is no power or force outside me that threatens me” (190).

Here, Ellida emerges with full power. She wants no more a life of slavery. She has power to go in search of life, find out what she is, and who she is and have a life of adventure. Before marrying Dr. Wangel, she did not rely on this power within her. She wants to step out of the world with this power and learn by herself what it is like. Ellida tells him, “I am not the woman you wanted to marry. Now you see it
yourself” (190). Her awakening into freedom and her realization of bondage can be well seen in her confession to Dr. Wangel. She forcefully utters her emotions:

Wangel! Let me say this – and say it so that he hears it too!

Of course you can keep me here. You have the power and the means to do so. And that is what you want to do. But my mind – my thoughts – my dreams and longings – those you cannot imprison. They strain to roam and hunt – out into the unknown – which I was born for – and which you have locked me away from (205-206).

A most surprising decision is made by Ellida after freedom is given to her. She reconsiders her decision and decides to stay back. The play is more impressive for this turn, and this reflects Ibsen’s views on freedom. Ibsen does not insist only on freedom that should be given to women. He says that a woman is capable of making the right choice, if freedom of choice is given to her. Ellida seems to make a wrong choice, preferring to go with the stranger. Dr. Wangel’s fears are not without ground. But she, upon granting of freedom, reverses her opinion. To make her reverse her impression, Dr. Wangel should show changes in his attitudes, behaviour and action. The question that is raised is, does Dr. Wangel change?
The long argument between Wangel and Ellida make them both understand each other and observe in different perspectives the many positive qualities in each other, which they have failed to notice earlier. First of all, by questioning Ellida and diagnosing her mind, Wangel learns that Ellida needs the freedom of choice. Richard L. Barr observes in this context: “In his (Wangel) own words, he learns to ‘see’ more and more of what once eluded his notice by finding ways to relate her words and deeds to his own view point” (1991:472).

These revisions do not simply lead to a treatment but they may be the cure itself because strange symptoms logically disappear once they become familiar. He understands the reason for her ailment and gets into reflections of his own. She does not have memories of Wangel, she has memories of her own. He understands that her aberrant emotions are not so unusual, because his feelings for her seem quite like her feelings towards the stranger.

Like, the stranger, Wangel also puts the freedom first, and he is willing to sacrifice their relationship. A while ago, he said, that he is her husband, so he should act for her and as a husband he has the right to take away the power of acting from her, but later he says that he is ready to give her the freedom and she can make her choice. This changes everything for Ellida. Believing that her intimacy with Wangel is both permanent and unique, she overlooks parallels between her attraction to
him and her feelings for Wangel. But once she compares him with the stranger, she finds Wangel more lovable. Ellida finds the stranger increasingly strange and Wangel more intimate.

Wangel explains it, “your restless yearning for the sea – your yearning for this stranger – all that was nothing but an expression of your longing for freedom. Nothing more” (The Lady from the Sea : 207). Ellida is able to say goodbye to the stranger with a free mind, heart and soul. “Your will has no power over me any longer. For me you are a dead man washed up by the sea, whom the sea will soon claim again for her own. I no longer fear you. I no longer want you” (207).

Ellida too has discovered this intimacy with Dr. Wangel. “Am I so close – so very close to you then?” (206). What Ellida finally sees is the possibility of relating her most intimate perceptions to Wangel by working to share with their memories, “Yours as well as mine” (207).

Indeed, immediately after affirming her bond with Wangel, Ellida seeks to cultivate, similar intimate ties with the children, acknowledging them as “our children, Wangel. Our two children. ... They are not yet mine. But I shall win them” (208).

The above scattered references to the play show Ellida’s winning power over a man, whom she has married. The woman can be rebellious if she is denied her privileges and man cannot control her,
once she is waken to her powers. The man has to yield to the
desires of woman, if he is on the search for a quiet and comfortable life.
Dr. Wangel, could have had a deserted and forlorn life, if he had failed
to diagnose the ailment of Ellida. Right in time, he preserves the
happiness of his life by offering her the freedom she wants. A woman
can control the destiny of man.

A summing up of Ellida's position between two men will unravel
the dramatist's intention to portray the stages of development in the
emergence of the woman. The woman has become conscious of
acquiring the power that will give her social independence and
individuality. The acquisition of such power starts in the freedom of
choice.

The Lady from the Sea apparently is a revision, extension and
redefining of the theme that it is found in A Doll's House and Ghosts.
In Ibsen's domestic plays, the conflict between the woman's world of
personal relationship and human values against the man's world of legal
rights and duties are discussed, keeping the interest of the woman in the
centre. In The Lady from the Sea the woman is centred between two
men, the one Dr. Wangel, her legal husband, and the other, the seaman
who has led her into a fictitious marriage with oaths of imaginary love.
If the woman's condition is to be symbolically understood, then, it
should be that Dr. Wangel tries to domesticate her where as the seaman
invites her to a life of freedom. Lorraine Markotic while commenting on the seaman observes that “the stranger is an empty signifier, a symbol of the unknown, a blank screen upon which Ellida projects her desire” (1998:433). On the other hand Wangel is substantial, always living at the elbow of his wife, showing no reluctance to protect her, and to caress in her trouble.

Placed between two such powerful love, Ellida does not know how to define her feelings and therefore expresses a vague inarticulate dissatisfaction. She feels empty and aimless in spite of the abundance of love shown by Dr. Wangel. He is very patient and takes utmost care to provide her with all comfort. He becomes anxious over her state of mind. He goes to the extent of inviting Dr. Arnholm to the house, to help him in straitening the mind of Ellida. He tells Dr. Arnholm, “you knew Ellida when you taught out at Skjoldviken” (The Lady from the Sea: 136). Dr. Arnholm agrees that he met Ellida offen when he went to the light-house to see her father. Dr. Wangel requests: “Talk to her about the old days Arnholm. It will do her so much good” (136).

Dr. Wangel also plans to shift his dwelling place to a climate that will suit her. He does not mind uprooting himself, as long as Ellida is comfortable:

WANGEL : And now my poor sick child shall go home again.
ELLIDA : What do you mean?
WANGEL : What I say. We are going away.
ELLIDA : Going away?
WANGEL : Yes. Somewhere by the open sea. Somewhere where you can find a real home. The sort of home you long for (153).

Her husband Wangel is not a tyrant. He is not even like Helmer or Rosmer and is genuinely concerned about her. All the same, she feels unhappy, and she longs for something. Something different. Biddy Martin calls it, "a problem that has no name" (1991:135).

The nameless problem of Ellida may be for the way Wangel treats her. He has married her not out of love. Women, who consent to such marriages, soon become tried of the luxurious wants, attained in an easy way, and once again they look for love. Ellida now, being made much in the house, feels disappointed that not only her freedom is curbed, but even her very entity as a mother for the children has become meaningless. Wangel takes Ellida from her home by the sea to the remote sea land town where he works as a doctor. He gives Ellida no responsible task, no way to make her life with him meaningful. Nonetheless, he chains her to the distressing narrowness of his existence – she, who is accustomed to sweeping shores and infinitive horizons. It seems as if Wangel had done more injustice to Ellida by offering her
such a stifled existence relieving her from poverty and it is a genuine wish that, Ellida should be allowed to go with the seaman. Again it looks outrageous on the part of Wangel, when he advises Ellida to reconsider her wish to go with him. Wangel looks more dominating when he tells the seaman on behalf of Ellida that she will not come with him, and he should not come to his house anymore.

Wangel does not feel any necessity to refer to Ellida's feelings, regarding her wish to stay back with him or go with the stranger. With an unnerving anxiety he decides for Ellida. Though this attitude of Wangel towards Ellida's question of choice is born out of his wish to plan for Ellida, yet it gives her a feeling that she is trapped, isolated and confined within mountains, when she should enjoy the freedom of the sea.

On the other hand, the stranger wields a different power over Ellida. He approaches her in a mild way though it is Ellida who becomes excited about him. The moment he appears at the fence in the garden she cries “Oh, my love – have you come at last?” (The Lady from the Sea: 168). Ellida becomes uneasy and cries again in frenzy, “Who are you? Are you looking for someone here?” (168).

She raises a series of questions to him. Whom does he want to see? and what does he want from her? She expresses her anger at his appearance and purpose, “The eyes! Don’t stare at me like that. I’ll
shout for help" (168). She urges him to “Go! Go away! Don’t come back! Never come back again!” (168-169).

In fact, Ellida is not dominated in any obvious way. A woman has a stubborn will to stick to her familiar surroundings and change is accepted as a secondary law, when she is caught in a situation that cannot be altered. Ellida has been used to a life of freedom. She cannot get confined to a town’s life. She does not like her life to be isolated from the past and therefore grows increasingly allured by the stranger. It is not a specific emotion or an attachment with the stranger. Thus, Ellida stands between two different men, who claim her love. It is here, that the question, whom did Ellida choose to stay with, and why, has formed the ‘denouement’ of the play.

The play strikes a happy turn, because of the transformation in Wangel. Ibsen, through the transformation of Wangel shows how it is important for a man to understand his wife, for a successful married life. In fact, the entire focus of the play is on the changed attitude of Wangel towards his understanding of Ellida’s problem.

Wangel’s love for Ellida deepens, after the visit of the stranger. Wangel seems to be blindfolded, not understanding where exactly he has gone wrong in his treatment of Ellida. The stranger’s words that Ellida should take a decision of her own, about choosing the man, awakens Wangel into a realization of Ellida’s condition. Wangel’s
change has been slow and gradual. He shows an absolute love or a 'miracle' of love.

Ellida has seen the 'miracle' which Nora longed to see and even at the end of the eight years of Nora's marriage, she could not experience the miracle of love, a selfless love from Helmer. The turn of the play is in Wangel's sudden decision to give up Ellida. All along he knows that he has lost Ellida, because she has been expressing a wish to go with the stranger. Yet, Wangel checks her choice, because he wants to safeguard her against going with such a stranger whom he believes that he is not going to offer her a comfortable life. The act of Wangel's granting freedom to choose anyone of them shows his selfless love towards her, because by now he is sure that Ellida's heart is entwined with the stranger. At the decisive moment, Wangel's own wishes and hopes recede and Ellida realises that her husband is concerned with her well being than with his own need to 'have her around'. She suddenly understands the love behind his decision and no longer feels estranged from him or trapped by him. Wangel's demonstration of love and concern for her has convinced Ellida.

The significance of Wangel's change is that it has carried Ellida from the crisis. Ibsen's focus is upon the woman, whose will is awakened. Lorraine Markotic says, "The life of the imagination is not the negation of the life of the will, but it's slumbering potential"
Ellida has become invested with a power to make her life as well as the life of her husband meaningful. It is Ellida, who decides the destiny of Wangel.

The chapter that follows expounds the character of Hedda Gabler. She has been projecting in her only the negative qualities, which detriment the progress and advancement of the man whom she married. Contrary to other heroines, Hedda has developed hatred and an unfounded viciousness in her, with which she strengthens her power to destroy the men, who come on her way, but a sensible man will escape the tyranny of the woman's passions and keep him unscathed. Hedda shoots herself, when she is unable to destroy the man and destroys his child in the womb, to spite the man whom she married. The character of Hedda Gabler is the face of a painter who wants to shape the destiny of men to destruction.