CHAPTER VI

HEDDA GABLER—A DARK FACE

We men, alas, don’t always stick to our principles as firmly as we should.

Woman with a Negative Face

Henrik Ibsen – Hedda Gabler

Ibsen’s success lies in bringing the universe in the soul of decadent and spiteful Hedda. Ibsen’s ability lies in bringing the universe down to the size of a living room. His women characters are astonishing, exciting but never nauseating. Hedda Gabler is an exception. The play that is entitled after the heroine is focused on that single personality Hedda. Ibsen has compressed the vast universe with all its paradoxes and contradictions in a single human mind. HeddaGabler seems to be an extraordinary woman. Bernard Shaw’s sharp pen draws a factual essence of her character in the following words, in his The Quintessence of Ibsenism:

Though she has imagination and an intense appetite for beauty, she has no conscience, no conviction with plenty of cleverness, energy and personal fascination, she remains mean, envious, insolent, cruel in protest against other’s happiness, fiendish in her dislike of inartistic people and things, a bully in reaction from her own cowardice (1955:210).
Patricia Levy quotes the words of Whitney Balliett in her essay about Hedda. She calls her "the most fascinating of all women" (1993:155). It is because her nature is complex and mysterious. Ibsen wonders at woman: " 'A Woman, a woman!- Ah! nobody knows what a woman is capable of! ' " (Templeton 2001:58). Hedda is presented with such vicious and evil nature that many viewers accused Ibsen of "wilful obscurity on the grounds that a Hedda Gabler could not exist" (2001:204). The literary critic of Oslo's Morgenbladet said, " 'Hedda was a monster created by the author in the form of a woman, who has no counterpart in the real world' " (2001:204). Fortnightly review found Hedda to be such an impossible woman, that Ibsen was blamed for inventing Hedda. However, James Huneker agrees with Whitney Balliett that she is a fascinating woman, but his comparison is gruesome, "alive she fascinates as does some exotic reptile. She is representative of her species, the loveless woman" (2001:206).

These representative opinions picture Hedda as a powerful and dangerous woman. She demonstrates many sides and qualities: great alertness to manners and speech, quick scorn, strange humour, cowardice, snobbishness and a frightening distaste for both birth and death. She is very intelligent because her mind works rapidly. She rarely needs to stop a speaker for explanation and more cleverly pushes her interlocutor on to the next point, the next detail. Equally fast are her emotional and intellectual changes.
Hedda with all her fine qualities of a lady, and with the body of a horse rider commands awe and reverence from the simple, pure people, who belong to an inferior class. Hedda’s style of life has been described in contrast to aunts, only to show the different classes that lived together in Norway, and their compatibilities and incompatibilities. Ibsen had the Norway of his time in mind while preparing the background for the play. Aristocrats, officials of the state, officers of the army, and large landowners constituted the leisure class. Next in importance were the professional classes: doctors, professors, lawyers and important merchants who operated the large and growing merchant marine. Below them in prestige were the middle classes, including burghers, small businessmen, artisans, ship’s captains and officers, small land owners, and minor district officials who had privileges. At the bottom of the social scale came the labourers and landless farmers, both in bloodless revolt, upon whom fell the basic maintenance of the state.

**The Plot of the Play**

In the play, Hedda is the representative of the high class, whose style of living is told at the outset. Hedda as a girl has been wandering proudly as General Gabler’s daughter. The play opens with the everlasting aunts of her husband, talking in undertones about the sophisticated habits of these high-class women. One of the aunts Miss Tesman shows the awe and reverence and behaves, “almost as though she was in church or something” (Hedda Gabler 1977:37).
They could only admire her for not getting up from bed and to them it speaks more of the grand life she is accustomed to than of any laziness in Hedda. Hedda’s introduction into the play through the aunt Miss Tesman and Bertha, the servant adds grandeur to her status. Bertha’s comment “she’s a real lady”(26) and Miss Tesman’s memory of her as a girl, certainly keeps Hedda on high places. Miss Tesman says:

General Gabler’s daughter! Think of what she was accustomed to when the general was alive. You remember how we used to see her out riding with her father? In that long black skirt? With the feather in her hat? (27).

When Aunt Rena dies, Miss Tesman, informs Hedda: “This is no moment for Hedda’s house to be a place of mourning”(100). Miss Tesman is not prepared to accept every offer of help from Hedda. With all humility, she refuses: “Why, you mustn’t think of such a thing! Hedda Tesman mustn’t let her hands be soiled by contact with death” (101).

Hedda has married an ordinary professor, George Tesman and has slipped into an inferior class. Hedda’s father has not left much for her except a pony and two pistols, and therefore she has to choose the wrong people to live among with. She is already twenty-nine, a spinster and she could not find an eligible suitor who will be her social equal. She is
forced to make a concession to circumstances and therefore prefers a plodding would-be professor George Tesman.

Hedda has moved into a family whose inmates are simple, affectionate, bourgeois people, whose virtues are their only property. Hedda is ever for insulting them. She is full of veiled insults and testiness about details. She shows contempt for the flowers arranged for her pleasure, and complains that the flowers make the room stuffy. Their courtesy to call on her is not welcomed by her and her stifled cry "what an early hour to call" (34) must be punctuated with annoyance. She finds fault with the arrangements made for her convenience. She goes to the extent of pretending to think that the hat lying on the chair belongs to the servant, and expresses her wish to dismiss her. It becomes embarrassing both to the aunt and Tesman to confess the real owner of the hat. The moment Hedda enters the house, she wastes no time in putting Aunt Julia in her place. She rebuffs the offered embrace, snubs her attempt at humour, insults her pride in the new hat and finally discourages her hopes for a child.

After Aunt Julia departs, Tesman asks Hedda, if she will not call her Aunt Juju that will please her enormously. Hedda snaps her words at him, "Oh no, really, Tesman, you mustn't ask me to do that. I've told you so once before. I'll try to call her Aunt Juliana. That's as far as I'll go" (38).
The Tesmans believe that the capture of Hedda Gabler is a victory for them and for Tesman's social climbing. Aunt Juliana rejoices, "Oh, but, George, fancy you being a married man! And to think it's you who've won Hedda Gabler! The beautiful Hedda Gabler! Fancy! She was always so surrounded by admirers" (29-30). Tesman is equally proud of his achievement. He says "Yes, I suppose there are quite a few people in this town who wouldn't mind being in my shoes" (30).

The aunt in all her simplicity has mortgaged her annuity to furnish the house with wood and carpet, but it has only nauseated Hedda. Her family background is given in detail only to show how Hedda is left miserable among the conventional props of happiness.

In the play Hedda Gabler the scenes involving the Tesmans have considerable interest beyond their sheer information value. There is a preparation of ground for Hedda to wake up to the kind of life that she undertakes after sometime. Secondly, George and Juliana go beyond sketching the background to reveal their own relationship, hearty, open, affectionate, richly delighted with family success. They have memories of their own, which Hedda refuses to share with. The slippers that Aunt Rena embroidered for Tesman cannot invoke any sacred memory for Hedda and she sneeringly commands Tesman to leave her out from such bindings.
Her marriage with Tesman does not integrate Hedda with the bourgeois class and she is a loner in the world of relationship. Ibsen has presented the Tesmans with a common way of thinking, common memories and common attitudes to life, only to prepare for the entrance of Hedda. Jones quotes the words of Ibsen, taken from Ibsen’s ‘Earlier Draft’ of the play: “For Hedda, they appear as an inimical and alien power directed against her fundamental nature” (1977:454).

Hedda’s entry is contrastive to her appearance at the end of the act. She enters asleep, irritated and bored, but wakes up when the talk of professional duel between her husband and Loevborg is mentioned: her relief from boredom comes in the person of Thea, who stirs Hedda to her first real interest. Thea has changed, and she is connected with Loevborg, who was one time her closest comrade and friend. A glimpse of Loevborg’s past life is given through the conversation of Tesman and Brack.

TESMAN : Well, he must have run through his inheritance long ago by now. And he can’t write a new book every year. What? So I'm wondering what's going to become of him.

BRACK : I may be able to enlighten you there.

TESMAN : Oh?
BRACK : Yes. ... you mustn’t forget he has relatives who wield a good deal of influence.

TESMAN : Relatives? Oh, they’ve quite washed their hands of him, I’m afraid (Hedda Gabler:51).

From this exchange, it is clear that, he comes from a propertied influential family, that he is intellectual; that he has failed to fulfil his promise. Hedda and Loevborg also remember their past and a little bit of information can be got from their conversation. Loevborg speaks to Hedda: “Yes, Hedda, yes! Do you remember? How I used to come up to your father’s house in the afternoon – and the General sat by the window and read his newspapers – with his back towards us –” (73).

Loevborg’s words show that he is socially acceptable to both Hedda and her father General Gabler. His social position allows him to call upon them. Hedda and Loevborg have been thick friends: Loevborg told her about things, which no one else knew about – then. He remembers such close moments, “oh, Hedda, what power did you have to make me confess such things?” (73). It has been a great moment of sharing love with each other. But when he makes advances towards her, Hedda takes one of the pistols of her father and threatens to kill him. That becomes the end of the affair for Hedda, though Loevborg never keeps her out of his mind. It is for this reason of her earlier affair with
Loevborg, that Thea has awakened an interest in Hedda. She begins to act, dispatching Tesman from the room, and deftly extracting the story from Thea. Her query is “tell me, Thea, how did this – friendship between you and Eilert Loevborg begin?” (47). Her answer sends Hedda to a deep thinking, which has even revised her life’s ambitions. Thea says, “I developed a kind of – power over him” (47).

Thea explains the nature of her power over him: “He gave up his old habits. Not because I asked him to. I’d never have dared to do that. I suppose he just noticed I didn’t like that kind of thing. So he gave it up” (47). Hedda exclaims, “So you’ve made a new man of him! Clever little Thea!” (47).

_Hedda Gabler – Dark Motives_

Hedda is not going to allow a woman to be cleverer than she is. She can be too smart for any one, especially for a girl like Thea, who had a humble beginning and ended up in marrying a magistrate. Moreover, what she could not get, should not be enjoyed by Thea. She lost Loevborg, but that does not mean that Thea should get him. She destroyed him and Thea should not make him a man again. Thea once told her, how she is not sure of his love, because there is the shadow of another woman whom he is never able to forget, a woman, who threatened to kill him with a pistol. Hedda does not show any hurry to reveal the reference to that woman with a pistol, who is herself, but decides to have her way. She cannot allow Thea to make him a changed
man. It is the jealousy that works in her. She asks her, “oh, if you could only understand how poor I am. And you’re allowed to be so rich, so rich!” (81), and her anger and jealousy mounts up that she utters passionately, “I think I’ll burn your hair off after all!” (81).

Hedda declares her expectation of him after conquering him with her power. “Then he’ll be himself again! He’ll be a free man for the rest of his days!” (80). Hedda expects him to be once more in his old habits of drinking. She wants him to become a dissipated man, which will be according to Hedda, his real freedom.

Hedda’s plot to make Loevborg himself again begins in her own house; she is preparing her manoeuvres. She says disingenuously to Tesman, and Brack, that Mr. Loevborg can sit here and talk with her. Loevborg once again feels happy to see Hedda, though he is not able to get over the fact that Hedda has married George Tesman. He acts in a gentle way, informing Tesman that he will not stand in his way of life. He will wait for his further feats, till George’s appointment is over. This does not interest Hedda in anyway. She curtly tells George, “leave me out of it, please” (69). Her eyes are on Loevborg and not on his profession. She invites him to stay and dine with Thea. But Hedda must tell the servant to change the table. Her order to Bertha of course is to prepare punch in the backroom, a little gambit designed to separate Brack and Tesman from Loevborg, who is abstaining. This is followed
by her use of picture-album, an overt recreation of the setting in which she and Loevborg were once so intimate, and they get into the past.

Loevborg reaffirms his love, which is secretly enjoyed by Hedda. He once again asks her the reason why she did not shoot him the other day. He accuses her for being a coward. Hedda as part of the game, tells him that, it was not cowardice but life filled with love for him. Thea joins them and Hedda determinedly sits between them. Thea is very happy because Loevborg thinks that she has inspired him. Loevborg affirms it, saying that he can never touch the drinks again. Hedda puts her power over the man to test him. She asks Loevborg to drink. He denies and declares that she has not power over him "where this (drinking) is concerned" (76). The temptress begins tempting him.

**HEDDA**: People might think you didn’t feel absolutely and unashamedly sure of yourself. …

**LOEVBORG**: People can think what they like. …

**HEDDA**: I saw it so clearly in Judge Brack a few minutes ago.

**LOEVBORG**: Oh. What did you see?

**HEDDA**: He smiled so scornfully when he saw you were afraid to go in there and drink with them. … I saw him wink at
Tesman when you showed you
didn’t dare to join their wretched
little party.

LOEVborg: Didn’t dare! Are you saying I
didn’t dare? (77).

When he refuses to go in spite of her persuasive tempting words,
she smiles, and comments, “firm as a rock! A man of principle! That is
how a man should be!” (77). Hedda has one more last weapon – betrayal
of trust. She turns to Thea and tells her as loud as to be heard by
Loevborg that as she confessed, in the morning to her. Thea need not be
panic anymore about Loevborg turning into his old habit. When
Loevborg hears that Thea ever doubted his honest word to abstain from
drinks, and his friendship, he becomes disappointed in “the courage of
her convictions”(76), which a while ago, he was referring boastfully to
Hedda. With a vengeance he turns to the room where the punch is kept.
He then acknowledges Hedda with thanks for telling the truth about
Thea’s doubt about him.

Thea, who all along this scene is apprehensive about the
motivation of Hedda, quietly sobs, “Hedda, Hedda! Why did you want
this to happen?”(78). The friendship of Thea and Loevborg trembles.
He suspects that Thea followed him to the town only to keep an eye on
him. Now Loevborg is ready to join the party, the three leave the house
and Hedda turns triumphantly to Thea. Loevborg will reach home at ten
o' clock. Hedda says, "I can see him. With a crown of vine leaves in his hair. Burning and unashamed!"(80).

Hedda is confident that she has more power over the man than Thea believes to have on him. Thea has to keep on doubting whether her power over him, which has changed him to a good man will continue or not. Loevborg who has changed from his old habits may fall into it again. But Hedda has no such doubt, that the life once reversed can easily be changed. She speaks triumphantly and confidently to Thea, "you can doubt him as much as you like, I believe in him! Now we'll see which of us-"(80). This unfinished sentence does mean which of them will have power over Loevborg. Can he abstain from drinks? When Hedda has power over him, he cannot be the new man, but he has to become the old man with drinking bouts. Thea becomes scared of Hedda’s emotions:

MRS ELVSTED : Let me go! Let me go! You frighten me, Hedda! …
HEDDA : Rubbish! First you’re going to have some tea, you little idiot. And then
– at ten o’ clock – Eilert Loevborg
– will come. With a crown of vine leaves in his hair!(81).

Hedda has completed her work of ruining of Loevborg and Thea.
Hedda is yet to see the result of her work on Loevborg. Tesman brings the news of the loss of manuscript that he planned to publish, which is the result of the inspiration of Thea. Though this is quite welcoming, she is disappointed that, Loevborg did not come with a crown of vine leaves. Loevborg enters talking wildly of his ruin, his despair, and his broken will. But when he rejects Thea and suggests that they must stop seeing each other, he also lies to her about the manuscript. Hedda’s excitement begins to rise. She believes him. When he says that he is broken, that he can neither reform nor plunge into debauchery and that he is bent on suicide, she takes a final chance on Loevborg, asking him for a beautiful death. Hedda sees a last hope to destroy him. She wants him to do as she directs him: “Just this once”(98). She extracts even a promise that he would kill himself with the pistol that she had given him.

Hedda ends the ruining of Loevborg completely not leaving any trace of it. The discovery of the manuscript may change the course of her shaping the destiny of Loevborg. Therefore she turns to the fire and throwing the pages into the stove whispers to herself:

I’m burning your child, Thea! You with your beautiful, wavy hair! *(She throws a few more pages into the stove).*

The child Eilert Loevborg gave you. *(Throws the rest of the manuscript in)* I’m burning it! I’m burning your child! (99).
The substance of the final part of the story of Hedda is extremely fascinating. Hedda returns to the world of Tesmans again, which she still chafes. Thea enters with the news of Loevborg, not knowing anything about his whereabouts or about his death. Brack brings the full story. He tells her a beautiful story of the end of Loevborg that enumerates his courage. For a moment Hedda feels triumphant. But Judge Brack is going to do his office of telling the truth and only truth. He proceeds with terrible deliberation to strip every glamorous detail from the event of Loevborg's death, until it appears in all its degradation. Hedda gave him the pistol to drive it through his head, which will be a beautiful and 'brave' death. But the judge reports to her that the bullet pierced the lowest part of Loevborg's stomach. Nor was it suicide. The people of the tavern had to send the bullets in him, when he accused them of stealing his manuscript.

Hedda crumbles at this latest news. She is disappointed about that way her pistol did not work in him. She feels a kind of defeat. When Brack says that it is her pistol and she may have to come to the court, Hedda finds herself in the power of the judge, "I'm in your power, Judge. From now on, you've got your hold over me" (114).

Thea has already occupied the chair next to Tesman, to write the manuscript again. She has started inspiring the other man – Tesman. George has become so careless about Hedda in his enthusiasm to write
the book, therefore, he nonchalantly tells the judge, “you’ll have to keep Hedda company from now on, Judge, and see that she doesn’t get bored” (115) and asks him to keep the company, who will only be delighted to do so. He has been after Hedda for a longer time, even before Hedda married George Tesman. Brack’s first exchange with Hedda – “May one presume to call so early?” (49) clearly shows that they speak the same language, a more elegantly mannered language than that spoken by anyone else around them. Together, Brack and Hedda are cynical, allusive, witty, and alert. He often attempts to play with her feelings, but Hedda is always ready with her pistols to stop him when he advances. However, the Judge has shortcomings. He fails to understand the seriousness of Hedda’s mind. Therefore he does not expect Hedda to shoot herself and his mind is lurking with the delightful thoughts of spending the evenings with her. But he is shocked, just as Tesman and Thea are, to hear the shot coming from Hedda’s room and her suicide makes him say his usual familiar sentence, “people don’t do such things!” (116).

Hedda is presented to us, through the powerful eyes of Brack. Brack is so attractive on the first and second meetings, so witty and so quick, compared to Tesman, that, there is an expectation that Hedda likes the company of Brack. Hedda’s act of committing suicide is vague, because, it seems as if Hedda must be looking forward to an
evening with Brack. It is not understood by Brack why Hedda should kill herself.

Hedda is not a character to be understood, unless one can account for every blackest thought that comes out of her heart. The artist in Ibsen has so manipulated the situation that everything that appears promising and bright turns to be ugly and the events that draw towards climax, drop giving enjoyment and reveal the enigmatic character of the heroine.

Hedda is introduced to us in all her totality, her past and her present. The machinations of her mind are so vast and complex that she is at once beautiful, rich, aristocratic, vicious, dirty-minded and hysterical.

Ibsen presents in this play, two groups. Hedda versus all the other good women characters. Miss Tesman, Bertha and Miss Rena parade before us, exhibiting their good qualities, whereas Hedda is set in contrast with them. They possess inner beauty, whereas Hedda is devoid of that inner purity and beauty. She is found to be attractive with which she ensnares everybody, but she becomes a victim of her own vicious schemes.

Miss Tesman, aunt of Tesman has totally sacrificed her life for the well-being and happiness of George, her nephew. She, as a selfless
soul, pivots her heart on the marriage of George with Hedda and she thinks that to have married Hedda is the greatest prize that a man has achieved. Ironically, Hedda enters into the life of George as a serpent to spoil the Garden of Eden – the tranquil atmosphere of George’s home. Her marriage with George is a total hoax, and she would never rise to his expectation. Marriage, a sacred institution, has failed to earn the attention of Hedda and it has happened in her life so that she can be comfortable. She has married him for convenience, for he has offered a villa to her. In fact Hedda has exploited the blind admiration of George, for he is one of the insects drawn towards Hedda’s physical beauty to be burnt and crushed. She has had the privilege of a host of admirers and she takes a pride in conquering them and in making them her slaves – Eilert Loevborg and Judge Brack.

Hedda Gabler’s world is full of dark ulterior motives and wicked strategies. It is so black, and dark that one cannot even imagine a gleam of goodness in her. A normal human being would have at least shown, at some point of time, traces of a sense of guilt remorse and a desire to be redeemed from such vicious thoughts. Being made of different stuff, she takes pleasure in inflicting harm on others, devastating them, ruining them completely without letting the party even suspect of her evil intention.

Her own immediate personal whims take precedence over
anything else. Much of Hedda's character can be derived out of her action. Hedda has never digested or tolerated other people's happiness. She goes to the extent of playing with her father's pistols. The destructive force in her pines for establishing a stamp. The traditional roles of taking the part of a good hostess, throwing parties, riding a mare are some of the things that Hedda cannot afford due to paucity of funds, but she can always amuse herself with her father's pistols.

When Judge Brack observes and remarks about her queer behaviour, Hedda replies, "sometimes a mood like that hits me. And I can't stop myself"(61). This is a very typical nature of Hedda and she creates every opportune moment to mock at others and have her malicious glee. This glee carries her too far that she makes Tesman believe that she loves the late Prime Minister's house. Tesman, not able to sense her true nature, has to borrow money from his aunts to please Hedda. She triumphs over Tesman in making him buy the house, though honestly speaking, she does not have any genuine interest in that. Hedda has an art of capitalizing on the weakness of others.

Hedda has been nurturing and cherishing only evil thoughts and all her actions are set to destroy the happiness of others. The fruit of sin is death. She has allowed herself to do only sinful acts and this has resulted in frustration. We see her, a totally frustrated individual with no redemption, but only suicide.
Ibsen, places Hedda in the midst of good selfless souls. Miss Tesman dreads to spoil the happiness of the new couple by stitching a shroud for Aunt Rena. She believes that if at all stitching is done, it must be only for a good purpose. She carries good and noble sentiments with her in order to bring peace and harmony. She thinks of accommodating some poor invalid, who needs care and attention in the place of Mrs. Rena after her demise.

Hedda has always duped Loevborg to imagine that she has loved him as conveniently as she has made Tesman believe. She has drawn a snare or a trap to make men fall into that, Mr. Loevborg has taken her association so seriously that to him she has been acting like a confessor and he on his part has confessed everything to her. She decides destiny for others. She cleverly manipulates each and every step to bring the final catastrophe. First she makes Loevborg attend the party so that the assumed transformation in him would disappear giving place to his old bad habits. Thea smells the evil intention of Hedda but by then it has become too late. She becomes the victim in the hands of Hedda and her concluding words in Act-II sets the tone of Hedda's intent. "You frighten me, Hedda! "(81) sounds so ominous that one can smell a rat in the mind of Hedda.

When Tesman comes bringing the manuscript of Loevborg, Hedda starts thinking on the line of destroying him completely. The
gust and enthusiasm with which Loevborg has worked to bring a book must be snapped. Moreover, this success story of Loevborg is possible only because of a woman behind him. The envy she has always felt towards Thea, takes gigantic leaps when she understands how her association has brought out the creative spark in Loevborg. The negative image of Hedda can only take things to her advantage. Her successful sneers arising from morbid feeling, dissatisfaction, disappointment and assumed superiority take ugly dimensions in ruining the life of Loevborg and Thea.

When Loevborg finds out that he has made a mess of himself, he feels sorry for not standing up to the expectations of Thea. He condemns himself and he feels that he has failed to stick to his promises. Brack echoes this in his remarks thus: "We men, alas, don't always stick to our principles as firmly as we should" (90). When Loevborg discloses the fact that the manuscript is destroyed, she felt that's the end of everything. The book, a joint venture of both Thea and Loevborg, appears like a child to her and the destruction of the manuscript can only drive her to think that he has killed the child. The book that would have trumpeted aloud the creative spark of Loevborg has not been allowed to see the dawn by the wicked plan of Hedda.

Hedda and Thea are completely juxtaposed to each other. While the latter takes all the trouble to build him, the former loses no single
moment to destroy him. The final part of the third act confirms this, for Hedda takes pleasure in burning the manuscript, whereas Thea leaves in frustration when she hears that Loevborg has lost the manuscript. Hedda delights herself in seeing the disappointment in Thea and vows to destroy her completely. She is also a contrast to Miss Tesman who finds a spiritual satisfaction in housing invalids whereas Hedda derives pleasure in invalidating people.

Mr. Tesman is disappointed almost in Hedda but she wastes no moment to turn the table completely and say that she has done it only to his advantage, which brings a sparkle to his eyes, and leaves the matter to rest. When Hedda starts a new tale to satisfy Tesman, he promises to remain silent about the burning of the manuscript. Hedda’s subtle villainy is revealed when Brack discloses the secret about the pistol that Hedda has given to Loevborg. Hedda, who has been thinking that her acts and the motivations behind them are totally unintelligible to others, is shocked to understand that Brack has carefully been following her mind and that her villainous deeds cannot escape from the scrutiny of Brack. He starts blackmailing her and tries to take advantage of his knowledge about her scheme. Brack’s final words have a great impact on the act of Hedda ‘people don’t do such things’ or it may refer very specially to the women folks ‘Women’ don’t do such things.

Ibsen’s portrayal of women has never been abnormal and queer
circumstances have granted them empowerment. Situations have always seen them as conquered individuals, but Hedda is different. She becomes a victim to her own suppositions and assumptions. She toys with human beings and manipulates situations to see their fall.

Ibsen projects his views on the institution called marriage through Thea and Hedda. The different ways these two react to marriage reflect the pattern of Ibsen's society and the role of women in building the home.

Thea has married a magistrate who is twenty years her senior. Thea cannot have the satisfaction of being loved by her husband. She says thus, "I think he just finds me useful. And then I don't cost much to keep, I'm cheap"(45). Thea finds her life cumbersome and she is left with no choice except to run away from him. The liberty the woman always craves for, when refused is sought after on her own. On the other hand she finds in Loevborg a perfect companion whom she believes has made a real person of her. He is the one who has taught her to think and to understand.

It is usual on the part of a woman to feel the necessity of being loved and taken care of. The love that she extends to man would bear a balmy and smoothing effect on man that it would cure him of all his ills and would keep him to do away with his bad habits. This is where the wonderful, positive qualities inherent in woman take healthy measures
to set him right. Thea's exemplary qualities of redeeming Loevborg completely from his bad habits, weaning him away from all the poisonous elements bring home the fact that Ibsen has an unshaken faith in the power of women.

Hedda, presented as a destructive force, continues to play hide and seek with the emotions of Mrs. Thea Elvsted for she knows that she would never allow Elvsted to enjoy the friendship of Loevborg. To Hedda, marriage has only been an institution of boredom and monotony. Her husband Tesman has never given an iota of thought about the interest of Hedda. His primary interest is to gather details about the history of civilization. Ibsen, through this character, shows how man takes things for granted and he never even dreams that a woman whom he has married would have different interests. He always thinks that she must simply toe in line with him, having the same line of interest. Hedda has never attempted to understand her husband, nor has shown any inclination to respect his feelings. The pity is Tesman is totally blind to the true character of Hedda for he is swept off his feet by the physical charm of Hedda.

Ibsen purposely endows her with the cunning tricks of Cleopatra and wicked qualities of Lady Macbeth in conniving strategies to accomplish an evil act. A possessive, adventurous and devilish spirit overwhelms and subdues the soft, feminine constructive spirit found in a
woman. Such a woman cannot make a man’s life worth living.

Ibsen introduces in Thea Elvsted, a foil to Hedda. Hedda rejects all offers of emotional and practical movement in life and affairs of the man she has just chosen as husband. Thea Elvsted is deeply involved, emotionally and practically, with Eilert Loevborg. Hedda having chosen to live within the conventions of a society is guaranteed material security and social respectability. Thea has broken the formal tie which society prizes most, the marriage tie, and has given up material security and social responsibility in order to search for Loevborg and, if he needs her, to take care of his. Thea has challenged the conventions of society in a way which one might have expected the aristocrat Hedda to have done. She is basically a soft character, timid, she is Tesman’s old flame and at the end of the play she and Tesman join together in the project of reconstructing Loevborg’s work. She guards human decency and imposes moral discipline. But when it comes to measure their strength and power to face situations in life, and triumph over people, it is Hedda who could do it, because she is a strong character.

This chapter focuses its attention on the character of Hedda Gabler, who seems to have an unusual ambition in life. Her very emphatic words, “for once in my life I want to have the power to shape a man’s destiny” (80), show her bold decision to undertake the shaping of man’s destinies. Had she been exhibiting positive characteristics in her
thoughts, behaviour and attitudes, a good prospect can be expected of the man, with whom she forms her alliance, but in action, the work must have had the effect of being uttered between the grit teeth.

Hedda has undertaken the mission of shaping the destiny of Loevborg as she has confessed to Thea. Her words once show that, she attempted to do it before, but failed and her next target is Loevborg. Indeed, she is not successful with Tesman. Her conversation with Brack, the judge will unravel how lightly she has taken her marriage with Tesman, “Having to spend every minute of one’s life with – with the same person”(57).

Hedda pretended her love for Tesman, and pretended her admiration for the Prime Minister’s house, which was bought in all seriousness and commitment to please her. But she is honest enough to confess that, her little frivolities had its consequences “I’ve-made my bed and I must lie in it” (62) and Hedda shows her dislike “God knows I didn’t” (63). She wants very much to ill shape the destiny of Tesman. She tells Brack, the judge that she wants Tesman to go into politics. The surprised Brack honestly replies that Tesman is not made to become a politician and wonders whether Hedda could understand it. Brack is surprised at Hedda’s wantonness and asks her, “What satisfaction would that give you? If he turned out to be no good? Why do you want to make him do that?” (63) Hedda’s reply is that “Because I’m bored” (63).
Hedda constantly makes attempts to destroy Tesman. But he is strong in his purpose, and goal.

Her account of her honeymoon shows Tesman on a different plane. Though he married Hedda with great admiration, he is level-headed regarding his love life. She tells Brack that she didn’t enjoy her honeymoon, since he was busy collecting material. Hedda’s comment is that “he’s very clever at collecting material and all that” (58). Hedda entered into this marriage contract hoping that she could destroy the life of Tesman. She mistook him for a simpleton when he alone of all her admirers begged her for her love. She tells Judge Brack:

... And when he came and begged me on his bended knees to be allowed to love and to cherish me, I didn’t see why I shouldn’t let him. ... It was more than my other admirers were prepared to do, Judge dear (58).

But the initial pretence of character disappeared in Tesman when, Loevborg appeared. With his book on civilization, his interests become diverted. Having failed to destroy Tesman, she now turns her attention to Loevborg, in whom she was in love with once, and whose weakness she can rely upon, to fulfil her mission of ill shaping his destiny.

Hedda is surprised that he has changed for good, and the debauchee has become renowned with a good book to his credit all for
the love and inspiration of a woman. Hedda’s ambition to destroy him mounts up. She makes him drink, lose his manuscript and drives him to madness to get killed in the bargain. Thus, Hedda destroys the life of Loevborg.

Hedda never does anything without reason. She is angry about her own circumstances that has restricted her life, and made her socially handicapped. All that she could boast are two pistols. She has one for Tesman and one for Loevborg. The pistol that she has for Tesman could not be either given to him, or used for him, and she satisfies herself by pointing it towards her with Tesman’s baby in her womb. Tesman is least affected by Hedda and escapes his ill-fate by quickly making friendship with Thea, who has built up the fortunes of the broken man Loevborg and to the same constructive ends entrusting himself.

The second target of Hedda is Loevborg, whose progress in life irritates her, not because he is more popular than her husband, but the poor girl Thea could take up what she has thrown away – namely Loevborg, and get mutual benefits. She decides to throw him back into the gutter of drinks and she succeeds. She fails only in the method of destroying him, but completes her plan of shaping the destiny of him.

Brack could have been one of the targets of Hedda but he is cleverer than her, who secretly follows her actions. He has been allowed to go to her inner recesses one or two times and therefore he knows that
Hedda will strike him one day. He always follows her at a distance, derives a little glee in his last act of stripping all the glamour from the tale of Loevborg’s death, and keeps her informed of the real manner of his death. When, Hedda has no more aim to point out her pistol, she turns it towards herself and kills her.

Hedda’s intention has been to destroy all the men, George Tesman, Loevborg and Brack too. But Tesman and Brack are smart or equally smart, as Hedda and only Loevborg, become a victim of her viciousness. Ibsen makes a fair deal in the portrayal of the character of Hedda, and shows that women are not always, constructing human destiny. Sometimes they destroy it too. There are un-feminine women besides Hedda and they too are the destiny of men who cross them in life.

The chapter that follows concludes that woman is the destiny of man. It throws light on the two factors – the environment and the inherent power and prowess in woman – that have shifted her position from a doll to an active woman, who remains in the centre, controlling the destiny of man. It also gathers the threads of all the preceding chapters, and sums up the discussion, to establish that the woman is the destiny of man. It distinguishes the woman of the plays, as heroines who have found their own solutions to their problems in life.