CONCLUSION

The picture that emerges out of the preceding analysis is that Ibsen’s world is neither a ‘Garden of Eden’ nor a ‘Forest of Arden’. Far from being a utopian world, it turns out to be a place inhabited by ordinary people with ordinary joys and sorrows, participating in ordinary commonplace events. There are no violent occurrences, there are no plagues or such like natural calamities, there is no bloodshed, there are no romantic elopements culminating into marriage. However, the world, as it has been portrayed, is far from being perfect. Its social, moral, economic and religious institutions are already rotten and therefore, fast decaying. Society itself stands with a bull force against the mental, emotional and spiritual growth of the individuals. Instead, the world as seen by Ibsen is a place, the edifice of which stands on the pillars which are fast crumbling. The pillars in the form of institutions, conventions, rituals and normative values are no longer strong enough to hold the edifice intact. There are leakages here and there. While the roofs leak, the pillars themselves cannot bear the burden. The institutions that have been sustaining mankind since times immemorial are no longer awe-inspiring and society and the state have become so powerful instruments of oppression and suppression that individuals no longer feel hale and hearty. The institutions like those of marriage and Church have become dungeons of darkness. While in Ibsen’s world marriages are solemnised out of extraneous considerations, life-partners have to writhe under unbearable conditions. Far from providing the warmth of primary bonds, the institution of marriage turns out to be a machine which grinds basic instinctual urges. While Nora is just one example of demolishing the pseudo-structure of incompatible marriage, there are many others who suffer endlessly under the weight of this institution. Mrs. Alving, Beata, Aline and Mrs. Linde are cases in point, to quote a few. Similarly, far from providing spiritual solace and sublimating edification, Church turns out to be like the palace of La Belle Dame Sans Mercy in which the dame reduces her lovers to terrifying skeletons.
Representatives of the church propagate not the essence of religious ideals but insist on keeping up public faces, wearing up masks and maintaining outer order. There is no insistence on purification of soul or inner mind. Religious leaders like Pastor Manders believe in and propagate religious tenets which go against the very essence of religion. Similarly, myrmidons of traditional morality themselves become immoral to the extent of becoming responsible for forcing others to commit suicide. In the world of business and art, the leaders and the masters become so mean, selfish and wicked that they cut off those very branches upon which they often swing to have the joy of life. There is no human emotion, love, care or concern for partners and co-workers in the world of business. They are dealt with the principle 'eat the orange and throw the peel away'. Knocking down others by foul methods is seen as a sure way to attain and maintain glorious position.

It is in this world that Ibsen’s characters have to breathe, live and interact. Consequently, each of Ibsen’s characters turns out to be a stifled, suffocated and suppressed individual. Each feels constricted in his or her narrow world, under the tight grip of forces which act as stumbling blocks in his or her search for freedom. While forces of convention, expedience, public opinion, corrupt press, vested interest and past (either of society or of one’s own) emerge as strong barriers to be broken or crossed in the search for freedom, Ibsen views his characters as independent human beings, free to guide their destinies. The most powerful stumbling block appears in the form of dead past working as living present. Its impact on characters is so crushing that even the best of intentions turn counter-productive. It is the past which shapes, controls and guides the present. Other impediments in the search of freedom which Ibsen has listed in his plays are grimness of heredity, bad financial conditions and fear of public opinion. These impediments tend to reduce individuals into mere puppets to be controlled and guided by external agencies and thereby forcing them to lead an inauthentic life. But this is not to say that Ibsen paints a dull, dark and dismal picture of the world in which there
is no hope for individuals to grow emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Instead, Ibsen views his individuals as human beings endowed with an innate desire and potential for freedom. Howsoever hard, crushing and grinding external environment may be, his characters always endeavour existentially to attain their much sought after freedom and their search goes on and on. In their search, several patterns and paradigms emerge. He divides his world in three categories — those who prefer to live like fetuses drawing sustenance from some existing external support system, those who challenge the existing order and those who surrender and succumb. At times those who challenge appear to surrender for some time and those who surrender appear to challenge for sometime, but the fact remains that Ibsen’s admiration remains for those who stand single with the flag of freedom.

Those who do not struggle at all and prefer to cling to already carved paths and goals are in Ibsen’s world enemies of freedom. Helmer, Pastor, Captain and Kroll fall in this category. Their inability to struggle for freedom lies in their overly conditioned minds. In Ibsen’s ethos, such persons can not realise themselves. They can not attain freedom because they are weak at heart and mind. They are always in search of some support system because they always feel insecure and shaky. It will not be wrong to state that people like Helmer, Pastor, Captain and Kroll have a tendency to become fetuses once again because it is in that state that they feel safe and secure. For Helmer, there can not be any freedom in borrowing or lending as both these acts sully one’s personal reputation. To uphold this ideal of leading a clean life, he falls into the abyss of a totally unpragmatic life, simply forgetting that life is a series of compromises which one has to go in for due to compulsions of human sentiments and relationships. Therefore, there can be no question of his freedom, the glow of which lies in the warmth of sentiments. For Pastor, the support system lies in his strict and blind adherence to religious tenets even when they stand as stumbling blocks in the path of self-actualisation. He prefers to walk on already chosen and well travelled paths and any attempt to
transgress those paths must be shunned at all costs. Similarly Rector Kroll is a blind practitioner of those tenets which have already become obsolete and archaic. In his zeal to defend traditional support system, he fails to see the chinks in his own family. He turns a blind eye to the changing times. Therefore, there can be no question of their freedom. To me it appears, such people can not grow as long as they do not come out of their self-enclosing cocoons, be they are made of social or religious textures. They can never become authentic and conscious seekers of freedom and therefore, in Ibsen’s ethos they emerge as caricatures rather than solid and self-affirming human beings.

When individuals challenge the antagonistic powers, forces and institutions, they receive not only tough resistance but also blood-curdling jolts. Helmer hits below the belt when he states that Nora has inherited the habit of forging signatures from her unscrupulous father whom he had once saved from similar humiliation. He traces the genesis of Nora’s crime to hereditary transmission through blood. Nora’s motherhood is challenged by Helmer when the latter comes to know that she has borrowed money from Krogstad. She is threatened with dire consequences and forced to conform to man-made rules. It is a different matter that she fights a victorious battle. Mrs. Alving too challenges Pastor’s religion. She takes a leap of faith by breaking off from the Captain but is forced to return by the Pastor to her legal, lawful husband. However, after water has crossed over her head, she exposes the hollowness of Pastor’s creed as also the double code of morality. Similarly, the moment, Rosmer shows his interest in advanced ideas of the day, his teacher is shoed away and strict monitoring of Rosmer by his martinet father begins. Even Rector Kroll picks up cudgels both against Rosmer and Rebecca. When Ellida expresses her desire to go with the stranger, Dr. Wangel is up on his feet and threatens that he will get him arrested and even shoot him down before her eyes. When Ragnar seeks to stand on his feet by drawing designs independently, using his own creative imagination, Master Builder loses his
temper and snubs him in a highly derogatory tone. Not satisfied with this, he even attempts to snatch and usurp the affections of Ragnar's fiancee Kaza Fosli, a very unpleasant and foul deed. He goes to the extent of depriving Ragnar the joy of standing before his father on the pedestal of success. That way, the established authority, be it of any type, forces the individuals to undergo harrowing and nerve-breaking experiences.

While a few of the challengers face the hostile forces bravely, there are others who can't cope up with the antagonistic forces. Mrs. Linde, Beata, Mrs. Solnes, Ellida, Dr. Rank and Oswald fall in the category of those who surrender before hostile forces. While Mrs. Linde has to surrender before economic compulsions, her surrender turns out to be an act of bad faith. The motive with which she surrenders simply can not produce the desired result. She has to sacrifice, her love for the sake of external considerations and as such her aspirations and cravings remain far from being satisfied. She has to come back to her old helpless condition. Ellida, too, has to sacrifice her mystic lover for the satisfaction of her basic needs and marry Dr. Wangel. Beata’s surrender is to the grim traditions of Rosmersholm. Surrender in respect of Oswald and Dr. Rank is of different kind. While Ellida, Mrs. Linde and Beata do have other options before them, Dr. Rank, and Oswald do not have any. The irrevocability of hereditary influences is as powerful as Greek concept of fate. They die in a miserably wretched condition, asking for our sympathy and love. But it must be noted here that although the two sets of characters that Ibsen has created have their own compulsions both to rebel and to surrender. This is not to state that Ibsen ever approves of their surrender. It is because their surrender has not brought them any relief or amelioration of their distress. Mrs. Linde has to rectify her earlier mistake to decide things for herself. Though belatedly yet intelligently, she chooses with an open mind and one is sure that she will be in happy position to realise herself. Beata’s surrender leads her to bouts of depression and therefore, naturally to the mill race to drown herself. Mrs. Aline remains a passive viewer of events and lets things happen to her
and to her husband. Ibsen does not present her as a very inspiring character. As long as Ellida Wangel remains in a state of surrender, she continues to waver between two extremes. She can not find contentment, peace and joy in life. She can neither satisfy her basic needs nor meta-needs. The moment she chooses to face the reality boldly by taking a decision, she at once stands fully convinced of the need to realise herself. Her surrender results in her feeling of being suffocated, constricted and stifled. But her wilful and responsible decision taken out of creative consciousness opens up new vistas before her.

As for those who do not surrender and take up cudgels, they turn out to be self-actualisers. Nora stands fully awakened. In her decision to quit her husband's home, she gives strong kicks to the traditional morality system, customs and ethics. She breaks into smithereens all that Helmer and his male-dominated world stands for. Mrs. Alving turns out to be a woman in possession of first-hand knowledge about the pseudo and false world of Pastor. Her description of Pastor Manders as a 'big baby' speaks volumes of her newly acquired wisdom. Pastor's joining Engstrand's company is Ibsen's comment on the need for at least some satisfaction of biological needs which Pastor has been neglecting so far for fear of public opinion.

The seekers of freedom must have a set of values before them and those values must be based on productive orientation of life. They must help their upholders in adopting the 'being-mode' of life which stands for creativity, spontaneity and freedom. And those who live by those values are sure to attain self-realisation and freedom to become active choosers and decision makers and those who do not have these values are bound to fare badly. And those, who accept distorted version of those values to guide them are bound to suffer endless misery, even death. Helmer, for example was more concerned with his personal honour, esteem and name. He does not understand that the machine of life cannot be lubricated by those rules and regulations which are alien to the
authentic mode of life. He simply does not know that family life is governed by values of love, compassion, sacrifice, care and responsibility. Treating a wife as a child, a stranger, a servant or a bank employee involved in some forgery is no sound response of a husband towards his wife. After all, it is the wife who mothers children and becomes the co-sharer of her husband’s bed. He should have learnt these values from Mrs. Linde who realises that it is through the mutuality of family life that one can attain much needed solace and security which are essential ingredients of freedom. Nora learns a new value system in that as a human being, she must protect her honour. Living too much by roles or masks leads to no good. Had it not been so, she would have continued to stay on with Helmer. Mrs. Alving’s value system is too much closed, narrow, shrunken and self-annihilating. Moreover, it has been handed down to her by Pastor Manders who himself does not understand it fully. It is impermeable in nature and therefore, poles apart from the instinctual expressions of life. As long as her value system remains based on the ‘Having-Mode’ of life, it can not provide succour and freedom. Pastor, too can’t go in for developing propositional constructs of life because he thinks that, the values which he is supposed to propagate both by precept and practice are sound enough to lead him to freedom. But Pastor is servile to the blind adherence to tenets without verifying their veracity on the basic essentials of life. After all, the goal of religious morality or ethics is to promote human happiness and if all these institutions do not help individuals in realising this goal, one must throw away such a value system, Ibsen opines. Since Pastor does not do that and does not permit others to break away from, the result is bound to be impoverishment of human relationships. The declaration of Mrs. Alving, “I must have my freedom” is the direct outcome of Pastor’s value system which, instead of enkindling new light and wisdom, suppresses the instinctual expressions which aim at the summum bonum of life. Akin to Pastor’s value system is that of Captain’s, Rebecca’s, Kroll’s and even Master Builder’s. While Captain Alving’s life is synonymous with the limiting constructs of life, his sole aim and pattern is the satisfaction of carnal joys of life even at the cost of ignoring basic primary
bonds which add colour, warmth and meaning to life. He is sure to become a slave of sensual dissipations culminating into miserable death. He has no productive orientation of life. For him, his life-partner and even his son are no more than mere instruments to contribute to his personal pleasures. While he was in such a financially sound condition that he could very easily go in for ameliorating the lot of others, he does no such thing. He remains fixed to his earlier army life in which he got ample opportunities to eat, drink and be merry. He does not come out of that script and brings that script to his family dynamics which brings ruin both upon himself and his family. His ‘having-mode’ is so sickening that he becomes solely responsible for his family disaster which includes the most horrible and gruesome tragic cries of Oswald for the Sun. While Rector Kroll’s value system can not be clubbed with that of the Captain yet it is also very limiting and outdated. It does not permit Kroll to let fresh air come into his house with the result that his belief in orthodox tenets of religion is already attacked by the new ideas of the day. His wife and children no longer agree with Kroll now on the foundation of his ideological beliefs. Since he does not permit himself to keep abreast with the changing times, therefore overwhelming frustration is bound to occur. No doubt, Kroll succeeds in showing Rosmer as well as Rebecca the mirror in which they can see their real faces and thereby bringing both to the point of pact suicide by making them realise their guilt, yet he himself stands as no gainer. Ibsen treats him more as a caricature and less as a man with solid ground under his feet. Rebecca and Master Builder stand in one category. Both, in their search for freedom, become obsessively neurotic because both of them are insecure at hearts. Both of them have deep seated inferiority complex. Master Builder’s inferiority complex is born out of his waning creative potency and this realisation makes him shudder at the thought of losing his superior most position as the Master Builder. The freedom with which he used to take decisions is going to be transferred to some other hands i.e. youth and next generation represented by Ragnar Brovik. In order to compensate for his complex, he indulges in subduing, subjugating and enslaving others even at the cost of basic human
etiquettes. He even begins to take the help of the occult to maintain his superior position but here again it must be stated that his value system is centred around his personal selfish motives. There is no shift in his participation to what psychologists commonly call social good or larger good. He could very easily bask in the glory of his disciple's achievements. With Ragnar, he could grow by fusing his talents with those of his own in a sort of fine blend of tradition and modernity to develop a new school of building artistry. Instead, he remains fixated to his egoistic state of mind. He could very easily become Ragnar's friend, philosopher and guide to facilitate his growth in the larger interest of society but he does not do so. Therefore, the result is bound to be frustration and consequent fall. Similarly Rebecca, in her excessive zeal to hide the stigma of her birth out of socially unacceptable relationship, becomes obsessively neurotic. Instead of employing her will to power for some constructive use, she falls a prey to the trolls of destruction. Her belief that her freedom and self-realisation lies in capturing control of Rosmersholm and its numero uno, lands her into the quagmire of such inordinate ambitions, out of which it is impossible to come unharmed. Since, she too does not have any productive value system, linked with the 'being-mode' of life, all her attempts to free herself from her complexes come to naught and even lead her to den of guilt. Her senseless pursuit of freedom leads her to commit suicide but only after she has caused a great deal of harm both to herself as well as to others. Having lost the luxury of soul, her freedom lies in the sado-masochistic merger in the mill race.

Since Ibsen emerges as a powerful champion of the spirit of freedom to be attained through spiritual revolution in the heart of man, his contribution must be seen in the light of those freedom thinkers who either preceded him or followed him in this respect. Though, since the signing of Magna Carta onwards, thinkers have been advocating, one and all, the right to political freedom yet in their attempts, the cause of human freedom stands automatically served. In this context, Ibsen, though falls in line with Hobbes, Locke, Voltaire,
Rousseau and modern existential thinkers like Jean Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, Soren Kierkegaard and Erich Fromm yet Ibsen's contribution to the concept of freedom stands singled out in respect of its more practical ethos. To me it appears, Ibsen agrees with Voltaire in that there are certain natural laws which stand as ideals of best possible original arrangement on earth and it is for man to sift those laws for himself. At the same time, Ibsen's viewpoint stands poles apart from 17th century political philosopher Hobbes who justifies absolute state as the sole means of protecting society from selfish nature of individuals. For Ibsen, an individual is a creative entity and not like a levithian in a state of nature which is nasty, brute and short. While Hobbesian view is that it is the fear of death that leads individuals to enter into a sort of social contract, Ibsen on the contrary states that it is the duty of each individual to confront death boldly and consciously. In this respect, Ibsenic viewpoint is more akin to that of existentialists who regard encounter with death as sine qua non for freedom. Levithian state will have to be viewed as living death from the perspective of Ibsen. His Oswald, Dr. Rank and even Master Builder confront death with full knowledge of the consequences. Each one of them confronts death boldly and heroically. While Hobbes believes that society arises only by convention, Ibsen expresses his strong disgust against the convention-based society. To him, convention is sickening to the extent that it virtually drains out the life force, the Elan Vital of individuals. Berson's elan vital pertains to energy which evolves, changes, revolves and never allows itself to be arrested. So life-force or life energy can not be dragooned into any final mould. In this respect Ibsen's Bergsonian approach towards freedom is anti-Hegelian because Hegel too, denies personal immortality and treats human individuals as insubstantial beings of secondary importance even in their life time. Hegel states that true fulfilment is to be found in self-annihilating submission to the purposes of social institutions, in particular the state. Ibsen, is in fact anti-state and considers society and state responsible for crushing the Dasein or life force of individuals. For Ibsen, an individual is certainly not something like inert material arbitrarily thrown into the surroundings. He expresses his strong disapproval for those
people who view man as a gloomy creature lost in distracting his attention from the fact of death or extinction, thereby trivialising his freedom of choice. For him, no man should be content to follow conventional routine. In this respect, Ibsenic freedom is more akin to West German existentialist Martin Heidegger who states that authentic life is possible if freedom is exercised with a sense of essentially creative nature. Ibsenic view emerges that man, as a temporal being, the seer and pursuer of projects must conceive the world around him in terms of its availability for his active purposes. He must not take things lying down and let waters overflow his head, simply for the sake of adherence to society and its conventions. In this respect, his search for freedom corresponds to that of Locke who sets forth the view that state exists to preserve the natural rights of individuals. Ibsen, like Locke, is of the opinion that when society and states fail in their task, individuals have the right and sometimes, it is their duty to withdraw support and even to rebel. That is why Ibsen, notwithstanding harsh criticism (even by dramatist like August Strindberg) enjoyed being addressed as the writer of *A Doll’s House*. His Nora and Mrs. Alving stand as towering rebels, though their experiences differ greatly. And those like Helmer, Kroll and Pastor who continued to follow herd-instinct, remain in Ibsen’s eyes mere shadows. There is much more in Ibsen’s world than Helmer’s dry morality, Pastor’s rigorous religion, Rebecca’s fatal new radicalism or Master Builder’s blood-sucking artistry can offer to individuals. With Rousseau, Ibsen might have enjoyed sharing the enlightenment view that it is society which perverts natural man, the noble savage, who lives harmoniously with nature, free from jealousy, want and selfishness. Last but not the least, Ibsenic view of freedom, to my mind corresponds to that of Indian Nobel Laureate Rabinder Nath Tagore whose ideal of freedom is more in consonance with that of Erich Fromm’s being-mode of life that it is an ever-widening process. Like Tagore, Ibsen conceives freedom and truth inextricably linked to serve as true pillars of society and mankind so that individuals are not led astray into dreary desert sand of dead habit. It is the dead habit that
becomes convention and it is the convention which plagues and kills the free spirit.

Now that Ibsenic viewpoint has been compared and contrasted with that of other freedom thinkers, a definitive statement about Ibsenic concept of freedom is called for. For Ibsen, blind conformity is anti-freedom because conformity to external codes drains out the very essence of 'being' and thereby reduces the individuals to the state of mules and asses. While sociability is the meta-basic need of Homo Sapiens, yet this does not mean that an individual can't be social by standing alone. Standing alone, in Ibsen's ethos is that state of mind in which an individual is able to pursue the project of life as an independent human being and not as an agent or tool of some external agency. The questions that spring up out of the complex situations of life have to be faced and answered with an adult mind by letting one's implosions explode in the most positive manner and not merely satisfying oneself by treading the paths chosen by others. Walking on the less travelled by roads has its own charm and value because satisfaction of self-choosing is there and therein lies the freedom. Merely cocooning oneself in personal constructs which are born out of one's conditioning and programming at the hands of authority figures is like accepting the state of being a levithian, which to Ibsen's mind is highly abject and therefore, uncalled for. Ibsen would agree with Erich Fromm in that as a freak of nature, man's freedom lies in maintaining that freakness. It is the supreme duty of each one of us to go in for continuous expansion in the Japanese 'Kaisen' tradition on all fronts. Single strokes of Nora, Regina and Hilde, through which they leave bag and baggage behind, to take a quantum leap of faith is what Ibsen approves of in the most adultatory terms. While Ibsen himself stood alone on most of the occasions, he would like each one of us to follow him. But that does not mean that Ibsen gives licence to those who stand alone in their senseless pursuit of freedom because, senseless pursuit leads to conspiring, calculating and wily machinations, which are the very enemies of the luxury of soul. Such machinations are bound to produce
frustrating dementia and kill the urge to live. Moreover, if one stands alone in his or her pursuit of freedom, one has to transcribe all one’s desires in the productive mode. Merely parroting about ideals of illumination, advancement and enlightenment of mankind is not going to produce any result. While Ibsenic view emerges that, one is and should always be on toes to give a free play to one’s aspirations and cravings, the contours must be drawn within reasonable and responsible limits. One must come out of one’s levithian state to choose and choose freely but must always be fully prepared to own responsibility of one’s actions. Freedom divorced from responsibility is no freedom. It is simply a frenzied mania. Somewhere and sometime, one has to start, even if it is too late. Lastly, there has to be a radical shift from authority relationship to that of relational model in which needs of each other are met in a meaningful, reciprocal and productive manner.

In fact, in Ibsen’s world the concept of freedom comes out to be something like self-perception, self-realisation, self-understanding, self-enlargement and self-affirmation. It is diametrically apart from political freedom which is limiting in nature. For Ibsen, search for freedom is a continuous process, struggle and endeavour. Freedom is not something one can preserve in a store house. It is a never-ending striving towards being and becoming even if it may bring death and destruction for some and nerve-breaking experiences for others. In this respect, James Walter Mc Farlane quotes on page 368 a letter in his self-edited book titled *Henrik Ibsen*:

> As to the question of liberty, I assume it is nothing more than a disagreement between us about words. I never permit myself to make liberty synonymous with political liberty. What you call, liberty, I call liberties and what I call the fight for liberty is nothing more than the unceasing, living absorption of the idea of liberty. He, who possesses liberty other than as something striven for, possesses it dead and soulless; for the concept of liberty is characterised by the fact that it constantly develops as it is being acquired and if therefore during the fight a man stops and says ‘Now I have it’, he simply shows by this that he has lost it.
Finally, if one is to deduce certain principles upon which the entire edifice of Ibsenic search for freedom stands, one can stand before Ibsen and listen to him speaking thunderously:

- Don't become tools in the hands of external agencies as if you are something inert. Man is not a creation of circumstances or destiny; he can make them.
- Do not accept ready-made solutions to your problems as human nature and human situations are highly variegated.
- Always test the veracity of every gospel on the canvas of your instinctual psyche.
- Shun anything and everything if it goes against spiritual sublimation.
- Do not conform because conformity promotes herd-instinct which goes against the very nature of freedom. Create your own blue-print for life. Don't blindly copy some great person. Every person is an island to be tackled differently.
- Stand alone with the strength of productive orientation towards life. Nothing in life has meaning except the meaning that you attach to it.
- Shun Having-Mode and adopt Being-Mode of life because freedom lies in enkindling the freedom of spirit in others.
- Truth and responsibility are the basic ingredients of freedom and if freedom is divorced from these two verities, it becomes a senseless simulacra.
- Be authentic and coin the metal you have in yourself. Our dominant genius inside is like a sleeping tiger. Therefore, awaken the giant within.
- Luxury of soul is the other name of freedom in Ibsen's ethos.