CHAPTER V
THE LADY FROM THE SEA
Emergence From Marine Unconscious to Wake Living

The play, *The Lady From the Sea* (1888) falls in the same genre as *A Doll's House*, *Ghosts* and *Rosmersholm*, insofar as the search for freedom is concerned. However the theme of this particular search, explores and unveils a new dimension in this play. There are three major characters: Ellida, Dr. Wangel and Arnholm, each a victim of his and her surroundings and circumstances. The minor characters like Hilde, Bolette and Lyngstrand who too, are imprisoned souls metaphorically speaking, unchain themselves one way or the other. The freedom sought is more or less metaphysical. Although each character is diametrically opposed to the other in temperament and inhabiting a different world yet they all strive for psychic liberation making it possible here in to state that there is a linking thread. In Ellida's world which is a metaphysical one, the action manifests itself not on the physical level but on the psychological plane. Of course, she shares great commonality with Nora, Mrs. Alving and Rebecca, nevertheless, she is all the more stifled and restless in terms of psychological subtlety. Her world is poles apart from that of her second husband. Dr. Wangel's world is the generic one of social and professional responsibility where in external realities cause immense suffering, filled as it is, with reason, commonsense and struggle yet also replete with social burdens. Arnholm, the school teacher, lives in a dream-world where he continually leads life with one hope or the other. Hilde and Bolette's cosmos is the one in which the problems of parents reduce children to caged birds battling for freedom. Lastly, the world of Lyngstrand, is the same as that of Oswald or Dr. Rank, in which shadows of death linger broodingly all around. Thus it is in these worlds that Ibsen's characters live and struggle in their search for freedom.
But before I proceed further in analysing the search for freedom in respect of major characters, it will be worth while to go into the genesis of the play in the mind of Ibsen. It will be pertinent to mention how Ibsen conceived it and with what intentions. What were the inspirational objects and sources that went into the making of the play? It will be in the fitness of things to recall here briefly the contemporary reception the play met with, and also the attempts of various critics during the last hundred years or so to study the play. The basic idea behind such a survey will be to differentiate the present analysis from the earlier ones.

To begin with the genesis of the play, Ibsen, after having written a little too much on various historical, social and political issues of the day, felt the desire to shift his focus away from polemics of any kind. For him, as also for public, "an Ibsen play had become more like an argument, in a legal case than an entertainment." This desire, coupled with his passion to be one with the sea once more, as he was during his childhood and youthful days gave birth to this play. His self-imposed exile (1864-1882) away from Bergen and Grimstad to Rome, Munich and Dresden had almost severed his being from his love for Norwegian Fjords and Seas. During the winter of 1885, when he was at Molde, all his memories of the seas became fresh in his mind again and there he heard a lot many strange stories about trolls and Vikings. Two stories in particular fascinated him, the one about a Fin with troll-power in his eyes induced a clergyman's wife leaving behind her husband, children and home, and the second was about a seaman whose wife re-married another man assuming her husband's long absence as his death. During this period, Ibsen also came across Danish translations of Charles Darwin's *The Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871), which influenced his thinking to a considerable extent. Moreover, his innumerable encounters with so-called pillars of society and so-called foundations of church, religion, morality and even ethics had made him an immensely grim-looking person. He had felt so much pain and pathos in the persons of Nora, Beata, Aline Solness,
Oswald, Dr. Rank and Lyngstrand that he had begun to doubt whether mankind's decision to live on land was a judicious one. His eyes could no longer see filth, fraud, hypocrisy, shallowness and decay under the garb of seemingly illumining institutions. His heart underwent a change and his psyche a transformation. His preliminary notes and jottings for the new play reveal his thinking clearly. One of his earlier drafts for this play reads as:

Has human evolution taken the wrong path? Why have we come to belong to the dry land? Why not the air? Why not the sea? The longing to have wings. Curious dreams that one can fly and that one does fly without feeling any astonishment—how to explain all this?

We should take possession of the sea. Build our town floating on the sea. Move them to the south or to the north according to the seas. Learn to harness wind and weather. Something marvelous like that will come. And we—will not be there to enjoy it! Will not 'experience' it!—

The sea's power of attraction. The longing for the sea. People akin to the sea. Bound by the sea. Dependent on the sea. Must return to it. One fish species forms a basic link in the evolutionary series. Do rudiments of it still remain in the human mind? In the mind of certain individuals?

Images of the teeming life of the sea and of 'things lost for ever.'

Thus, such were the thoughts and questions in his mind when he wrote *The Lady from the Sea*, which he provisionally titled as *The Mermaid* in June 1888. As has been usual with Ibsen, people looked forward with bated breath to any new production of the dramatist. And almost in each case, contemporary reception and reaction to the play has been baffling. In this case, a great many Ibsenites rejected the play outrightly. To quote a few contemporary responses will be worthwhile here. *The Times* dated May 12, 1891, described the play as, "It is unquestionably the weakest of Ibsen's plays... As enigmatical as any, it offers no opportunity for powerful acting while its general analysis of character is shallow and its dialogue commonplace."
Standard labelled the play as a farcical comedy about Ibsen's speculation, "What future Woman may have, if she shapes her life wholly without relation to the prerogatives of the other sex."

The Daily Telegraph summed up the reaction of the audience, "Hour after hour passed by and with each the same dull tirade of tedious talk. Dialogue succeeded after dialogue and despair sat on the countenances of the devoted Ibsenites." The Referee was the most vociferous in its comments, "If the piece had been presented under any name but Ibsen's, I verily believe, it would have been hissed off the stage long before the end of it."

It is incomparably the worst of Ibsen's plays and goes on to add, "My Own theory is that Ibsen himself is as cranky as one of his characters and does not know what he means. If proofs were wanted of the disordered intellect of the writer of The Lady From The Sea, they are to be found in abundance in the dialogue of the piece, with its crazy images, and sudden and erratic turns in the current of ideas." Justin McCarthy analysed it as a totally uncreative play. In his review in The Hawk, he described the play as a phantasy piece, "as delicate as a fairy tale, as poetic in its way as Hans Anderson's fancy about the sea-maiden as weirded as the old wind-blown legend of the flying Dutchman. The passionate realism of Hedda Gabler has no place here." Besides such negative contemporary reception of the play, the literary critics too stand divided in rival camps over the assessment of the play. Allardyce Nicoll's study of the play reveals it as "a not uninteresting story of an idle woman's hallucinations is made just a trifle ridiculous by the pomposity of symbolism in which entire action is wrapped... symbols stand out aggressively as they had been intellectually instead of imaginatively conceived, as they had been nailed to the text instead of being organically fused with it."

Nicoll finds the solution of Ellida's problem as too naive and the conclusion of the play having no emotional justification. Michael Meyer states in this play's connection that, "The Lady From the Sea is connected with the previous plays by its emphatic sense of individuality and its statement of imperative necessity of developing
it."\textsuperscript{10} F.L. Lucas makes a detailed analysis of the play. While he traces incidents taken from Ibsen's real life, throws a lot of light on Ibsen's use of symbols and even talks about Freudian concepts of psycho-analysis yet for Lucas, "The theme is again typical of Ibsen. Once more he reiterates his stress on over coming the dead past, on treading down its ghosts. For else the dead past can poison the living future."\textsuperscript{11} Although Lucas states that symbols suffer by being too obviously symbolic yet the play has been unduly disparaged as it remains a wise and human work. G.Wilson Knight, another eminent critic of Ibsen, studies the play in more or less expository terms, looks at the sea as an extra-temporal authority, with powers of the occult. He finds close link between Ibsen's own obsession with suicide and Ellida's neuralgia. Since the play penetrates into the most frightening secrets of human psyche:

Adequately performed, the ending should convince us. It is scarcely a "moral" ending since the moral will is not engaged, though it serves a moral purpose. This happens because the dark powers have been given an independent formulation and to this extent \textit{The Lady From the Sea} might be called a philosophic "morality" using a theology or mythology of the sea and Love.\textsuperscript{12}

In the assessment of Raymond Williams, the play is deficient in many ways. In his opinion:

The Ellida theme in the play is powerful and the tone of statement in its resolution is only unsatisfactory because the play as whole is a hybrid of so many methods and achieves no compelling total form. The early acts are remarkable mainly for their observation of the local scene; in the development of the group of characters, there is a looseness of technique which is surprising when one remembers the play's date. As a result, Ellida's theme is blurred and does not achieve major emotional effect. It seems a half-felt example and its resolution comes to appear didactic for this reason.\textsuperscript{13}

James Walter Mc Farlane, who is one of the most significant signatures in Ibsen's critical evaluation, finds the play as firmly rooted in naturalistic tradition.
and he sees in the play Ibsen's attempts to extend and enrich the naturalistic mode to communicate the irrational sides of life. He writes, "Built into _The Lady From the Sea_ like an armature, giving it strength and rigidity and bracing together its more audacious technical innovations, is a dramatic situation as carefully observed and as naturalistically contrived as any thing one might find in this naturalistic age." Placed in this frame work, the play is an exploration of tensions in a household where a middle-aged widower with two growing daughters has married again and where his second wife is so young as to be not older than the elder of the two daughters. Hans Heiberg, who describes Ellida as spiritual half-sister of Rebecca West, finds the play as a mixture of realism and symbolic drama. In his opinion, "The play took shape as a psychological study of hysteria phenomena so vivid, so profound and clear that the advance of scientific knowledge has never been able to affect it." Errol Durbach studies the play as an illuminating expression of romantic melancholy born out of romantic yearning for absolute freedom. For him, the play is an illustration of the tension between romanticism and reality dramatised through Ellida's psychic bigamy. In his opinion Ibsen transcends the theme of romantic aspiration of Ellida in specific, to aspiration of the whole class of 19th century individuals. He sums up the play as:

Its very romanticism is the middle class malady of a whole chorus of 19th Century provincials, ladies of highly strung dispositions with an expressive yearning for some Edenic condition, dimly remembered as a lost possibility and vaguely hoped for as the ultimate release from boredom, lack of purpose and a deeply unhappy sexual life.

Gail Finney, the author of the famous book _Women in Modern Drama_ (1989), concentrates his her focus in the play on tracing Ibsen's emphasis on the advent of new womanhood and comes to the conclusion that, "_The Lady From the Sea_ may stand as the last word on the question of Ibsen and feminism." Janet Garton, in her recent essay _The Middle Plays_ opines that under the influence of Darwin's _The Origin of Species_ and _The Descent of Man_, Ibsen, in this play "pondered what would have happened if evolution had continued,
in the sea rather than moving to the land." For the central character Ellida, the sea represents all that she has lost and therefore dominates her consciousness. Drawing from folk-belief and folk-legend, which carry much intuitive knowledge of intoxication and possession, Ibsen has dwelt upon the theme of renunciation of passion in favour of affection. Garton lays before us the Freudian interpretation which looks at the play as a study of neurosis. In his opinion, "Ellida is ill--is indeed, in a state bordering on hysteria -- because she is repressing a part of herself. Her dreams of the stranger are fantastical embodiments of what is excluded from her life with the family." Although Janet Garton is not happy with such a neat, summing up of the play as it leaves too many questions unanswered yet Freudian interpretation of the play leads us to have a lot many insights into the working of Ellida's mind.

My analysis of the play with focus on the central theme which is the search for freedom, takes a cue from Janet Garton's appreciation and seeks to answer all the questions left unanswered by the Freudian interpretation. I have attempted to apply principles of humanistic psychology as enunciated by Rollo May, Abraham Maslow, Erich Fromm besides, Freudian Schema to trace the route which Ellida, Dr. Wangel, Arnholm and Bolette follow in their search for freedom.

Before making such analysis it will be worthwhile to describe the broad framework of Rollo May's perspective. According to Rollo May, there are physical and psychological ties between us and our parents and their substitutes - teachers, friends and clergy. There is a physical dependence upon mother because, we are all fed as fetuses through the umbilical cord. This tie is severed at birth but the physical dependence remains. As we grow older, the physical dependence tends to subside but psychological dependence often does not. This is a major problem and the way in which we handle it will determine to a large degree whether or not we will move towards maturity, growth and freedom. In May's own words, "The conflict is between every human being's need towards enlarged self awareness, maturity, freedom,
and responsibility and his tendency to remain a child and to cling to the protection of parents or parent substitutes." The classic Oedipal conflict postulated by Freud is reinterpreted in May's terms of this dependency struggle. Where for Freud, the conflict is sexual in nature, May sees it in terms of power confrontation. The struggle focuses in our attempt to establish autonomy and identity in our relationship with people who are very powerful. This battle for freedom also involves our going through several stages of consciousness. The first stage is that of simple innocence of infants before a consciousness of self is created. Second stage is that of rebellion in which we seek to establish our inner strength. Although rebellion is seen as a necessary step towards evolution of consciousness, it is not to be confused with freedom. While freedom involves defiance and active rejection of parental, societal rules, such behavior is automatic, rigid and reflexive. True freedom, in contrast, involves openness, a readiness to grow. It means being flexible and to change for the sake of greater human values. Third stage involves ordinary consciousness of the self when we are capable of understanding some of our errors and recognising some of our prejudices. We are also capable of learning from our mistakes and assuming responsibility of our actions. May maintains that many people identify such a state of consciousness with being, maturity and health. There is yet another stage, the fourth one, which May describes as creative consciousness of the self. It is a stage that transcends the usual limits of consciousness. We are able to see the truth without distortion. These moments of insights are joyous ones. We attain maturity and move closer to self-realisation when we experience joyous moments. We are able to make choices, confront our problems and take responsibilities for our action. We are not pushed along by deterministic forces. We are not bound by the past, by our role training, by the standards we have been taught by others. We are conscious of these forces but are capable of coping with them and freely choosing to act in terms of them or not. As May puts it, "Consciousness of the self gives us the power to stand outside the rigid chain of stimulus and response, to pause and by the pause to throw some weight on either side to
cast some decision about what our response will be." May argues that although our behaviour is often determined by other events, still we have the freedom to make choices. According to May, we move away from self-realisation and maturity when our consciousness is restricted or stifled. Such a lessening of consciousness results from threats to our own sense of being or existence. Neurosis and psychosis are seen by Rollo May as attempts to adjust to these threats. They are ways of accepting non-being so that some aspects of being can be preserved. To cope with our threats to being, we repress or distort our experience through defensive manoeuvres. The overwhelming threats then recede into unconsciousness. But through these manoeuvres, we deny our own freedom to make choices. We shrink from responsibilities and reject our potentialities.

It is this broad framework that we have to see Ellida's struggle and search for freedom by going back to her first stage of simple innocence. Born, brought up and grown as a light house keeper's daughter, Ellida is given the name of a ship instead of some decent Christian name indicating thereby that ship without waters is good for nothing as it just can't move. Ellida grows up in close communion with not only the waters of the sea but also with everything closely connected with sea. Surrounded by high mountains and vastitude of the sea, she leads a marine life. So great is the impact of sea on her that sea has become a part of her elemental being. Its flowing waters, ebbs and tides, peace and turbulence, abundance of sea animals like whales, gulls, carps and dolphins etc. are the objects which her eyes come in contact with, first of all. Being a light house-keeper's daughter, she must have come into contact with a large number of boats and ships, sailing from one place to another, giving to her mind a perspective that life is a great journey in which nothing is stationary. Her imagination must have worked at fullest length and breadth, being always close to awe and terror of the roaring seas sending signals of bigness, vastness, destruction and all-embracing power beyond human control. Thus her dependence on the sea was both on physical as well as
psychological level. Since all around her contact and vision was water and water, therefore any other object not connected with the sea is something alienating. To sea, she becomes fully related, with sea she identifies her self and in sea, she develops her roots and therefore wayward and unpredictable nature becomes a part of her being. After her mother’s death in a mad house and the death of father, of whom we know little, she grows up to be described by the priest of the near by vicarage as ‘the heathen’.

Despite such environmental conditioning of her mind, as she grows up, her dependence on the sea on physical level becomes less and lesser. Biological urges of a grown-up women begin to emerge and therefore in order to fill the voids created out of lessening physical dependence on the sea, she develops girlish infatuation towards a blue-eyed sailor who happens to come there one day during autumn with an American ship at Skoldviken for repairs. F. L. Lucas described the infatuation of Ellida thus, "So Ellida became as fascinated by the stranger as the Wedding guest by the Ancient Mariner or as Desdemona by Othello. His eyes in particular, like Ancient Mariner’s were hypnotic! and even ten years later, Ellida could recall his scarf in with its large bluish white pearl like a dead fish’s eyes." 23 It is to this sailor, who later turns out to be a murderer of his mate, she gets engaged in a kind of way. Not that she has seen or known him earlier but the only knowledge she has about him is that he was born in Finland and has come to Norway as an immigrant like Rebecca west. Ellida is told that he had gone to the sea at an early age and therefore he had made many long voyages. He calls himself Friman but later in his letters he signs as Alfred Johnston. The two, Ellida and the stranger have not met very often except once or twice before engagement. But whenever they meet they talk mostly about the sea. In her own words:

About the storms and calms. About the dark nights at sea. And about the glitter of the sea on sunny days. But mostly we talked about whales and dolphins and about the seals that lie out on the rocks in the warmth of the sun. And we talked about the gulls and the eagles and all other sea birds. And you
know... isn't it strange?... when we talked about such things I
used to feel that he was somehow of the same kith and kin as
these sea creatures. 24

But such meetings come to a sudden end when the sailor happens to murder
the ship-captain. In order to escape the arrest at the hands of the police, he
has to hide himself and leave to a safer place in a hurry. Then one morning,
Ellida receives a note from him with a categorical direction for her to reach
Bratthammeran, the head land between the lighthouse and Skjoldviken for an
important meeting. After telling her the reason of his sudden departure, he
does a very strange thing. In Ellida's own language:-

Out of his pocket, he took a key ring, then from his finger he
took the ring he always wore, then he took a little ring of mine
which I had. He slipped these two key rings on to the key rings.
Then he said, that the two were to be wedded to the sea... Then
with all his strength he threw these rings as far as he could out
into the sea (LS.p.63).

And then with all his strength, he threw these rings as far as he could out into
the sea. Both these situations are interesting in the sense that they throw a
flood of light on the stranger - Ellida relationship and their attitude towards
each other. The way Ellida feels in his company, is indicative of the oneness
she develops with him within no time. The mere presence of the stranger
provides her with the feeling of natural satisfaction of her inner cravings. As
long as she remains in his company, she feels herself transported to some
different world, a feeling of transcendence in which she just forgets herself or
her state of being. It is a state of flower-like innocence when she has no will
of her own. Sheer presence of the stranger is enough for Ellida to stand still in
a state of hypnotic spell both in terms of body and mind. G.Wilson Knight
describes the grip of the stranger on her as, "though long parted from her, this
man of the sea and death still exerts on Ellida a compelling fascination which
is one with her haunting house sickness for the sea. He visits her as an
apparition." 25 She stands in total surrender before him. So much so that she
does not feel the necessity of asking the stranger about the provocation that
led him to murder the Captain, his own mate. Instead, she simply accepts his version that he had done only what was right and proper. She does not even doubt his version because it does not occur to her to do the otherwise. Such is the grip of the stranger on her.

Now, to analyze her engagement or wedding with the stranger, we must note that he is a man with a lot of experience about the sea as he had joined the sea at a very early age. Therefore, he appears to be very attractive to her, so far as the satisfaction of her inner cravings are concerned. On the one hand, he feeds to her tendency to remain a child and to cling to the protection of parents or parental substitutes and on the other, he stands before her as a power-principle, who will help her in self-enlargement, self-awareness, maturity and freedom. Whenever he stands near her or before her, he casts spell over her what Rollo May describes as power-confrontation, through which she attempts to establish autonomy and identity in her relationship with him. It is in him she sees full flowering of her imaginative cravings, inner desires and psychological dependence because of his dictatorial and mysterious life-style essential for persons who hold power. But all this while, she does not remain in her senses. She remains enchanted, bewitched, mesmerised and even lost. The question of existential choosing and choosing consciously just does not arise in this state which Rollo May describes as a state of innocence, before consciousness of the self is developed. She herself describes the experience of her marriage with him as "yes you know, at that time, it seemed it had to be" (LS.p.63). That way, it is a type of complete merger of the two, without any thinking about consequences. It is a sort of irrational act, an inauthentic decision, permitting a complete stranger, whose credentials she has never tested or experienced in practical life, to decide things and future course of life for her. But as soon as the stranger's back is turned and he becomes invisible, Ellida comes back to senses and very soon realises, "how utterly mad and meaningless the whole thing had been" (LS.p.63). Perhaps this realisation has come from the fact that sublimation of her marriage on physical level with the
stranger has remained in the air due to his over-riding compulsion to run away to a safer place. Since there is no culmination of her experience with the stranger, the spell created by his sheer presence gets broken very easily. She refuses to send positive responses to his letters, telling her his whereabouts and asking her to write back. As long as he stands present before her physically, things are different. But once he is away, she comes back to the state of mind when she can choose to decide for herself. She writes back to him that everything between them is over and he must no longer think about her, just as she no longer thinks about him. But true to his style of creating mystery around his relationship with her, he just does not take any notice of Ellida's breaking off. Instead, he continues to dictate his terms to her through a number of letters from California, China and Australia that she should wait for him. He writes to her that he will soon let her know when he could send for her and then she is to go at once with him. On realisation of the futility of writing him letters breaking off everything, Ellida decides not to write him further but she does confess that he was a terrifying man with a spell of a strange power over her.

Thus on one level, the stranger comes before her as a part of her enlarged being, offers a dive and insight into her cravings for the mysterious. On the other level, he stands as a power-principle. Therefore her standing as if in a state of paralysis of mind and body is nothing but in May's terminology an idyllic state of innocence, craving for full flowering of mind.

But as Ellida grows into adolescence, her basic biological urges and needs begin to emerge asking for their satisfaction. Her child-hood mate Arnholm comes before her with a proposal offering her a choice but she simply rejects his proposal on two counts. The memory and the grip of the stranger is still tight on her mind and also because he keeps on renewing his promise to take her along through his letters. These two factors stand as stumbling blocks to accept Arnholm's proposal. There is yet another factor and that is
Arnholm does not appeal to her sense of mystery, awe or strangeness. He is too familiar a person and therefore no more attractive or terrifying. He does not appeal to her taste of visual bigness, vastness and breadth. Therefore as she grows up and as the time passes between the stranger's appearance, her 'basic needs' (to borrow a phrase from Abraham Maslow) begin to weigh upon her mind. Her mother being no more, stranger being no more at least for the time being, a feeling of uncertainty and vacuum enters her mind. But when Dr. Wangel, a widower old enough like a father-figure comes with a proposal to provide for her basic needs throughout her life by making her his life partner, she is quick to agree to the proposal. This can be understood in terms of Rollo May's second stage which he describes as 'rebellion'. Her acceptance of Wangel's proposal is a sort of rebellion against her own nature which finds expression in her cravings for the sea and sea life and which could never get concretised through the blue-eyed stranger. It has been a long time since the stranger's departure and there is no guarantee except that he keeps on sending letters without providing for her basic needs. It is through Dr. Wangel that Ellida seeks to realise her inner strength by building upon her basic needs rooted in biology. When Dr. Wangel makes the proposal, Ellida is no more in her state of innocence and that is why she becomes a rebel to break off from her past. In the person of Dr. Wangel, she finds a father-figure who will not only help in satisfying her lower needs but also higher needs which Abraham Maslow describes as meta-needs. Ellida herself explains the circumstances in which she accepted Wangel's proposal. It was a marriage for security blanket, marriage for convenience and was born out of dire-compulsion. While Dr. Wangel couldn't bear the emptiness of his house any longer, he was desperately looking for some one who could fill his dead wife's place and also looking for a mother for his children and she, on her part, '... there I stood helpless, bewildered and quite alone. It wasn't really surprising that I accepted ... when you come along and offered to... provide for me the rest of my life' (LS.p.98).
Thus both Dr. Wangel and Ellida had their own compulsions. But here again, her decision to marry Dr. Wangel was far from being an authentic one. It was made under the weight of compulsions created by non-arrival of the stranger as well non-providing for her by him despite having married her by the testimony of the sea. She herself describes her decision as an act of buying and selling. She tells Wangel, 'you came out there... and bought me... I accepted your terms. I went and sold myself to you"(LS,p.98).

In Maslow's terminology, the question of choosing and choosing freely just does not arise. The decision, both on Dr. Wangel's as well as on Ellida's part is based on the need for satisfaction of deficiency needs, lower needs or basic needs. To place this decision in the broad framework of Maslow's self-actualization process, it comes up that basic needs are more urgent than growth needs. In order to move towards self-actualisation, we must have sufficiently gratified our basic needs so that we are free to pursue our higher transcending meta-needs. To begin with, basic needs include physiological drives, safety needs, belongingness, love needs and esteem needs. But Maslow says that pre-conditions necessary for the satisfaction of the basic needs include 'freedom to speak, freedom to do what one wishes so long as no harm is done to other, freedom to express oneself, freedom to investigate and seek for information, freedom to defend oneself, justice, fairness, honesty, orderliness in the group. Without these basic freedoms, satisfaction of the basic needs is virtually impossible.

While Ellida does have all these freedoms, gratification of her basic needs remains unfulfilled. Therefore, her marriage with Dr. Wangel is need-based, a compulsive act which just does not allow free play of choice, imagination and responsibility. Dr. Wangel, on his part, lacks the basic freedoms mentioned above. He is a widower with two daughters. He has his professional responsibilities. His elder daughter Bolette is old enough to be married off at once. Ellida, on her part is enslaved to her basic needs. Dr.
Wangel wants an arrangement. He overlooks or may be has to overlook the risks involved in his marriage with Ellida. He does not ensure whether Ellida will be able to fit herself well in the scheme of things as he had envisaged or whether his grown-up daughters will accept a woman, almost of Bolette’s age to be the mother or whether the ‘new mother ’ new wife’ will quickly respond to her new environment. Such questions were just not allowed to emerge while the decision was made. Such were the pressing circumstances before Wangel. He really had no choice, given the fact that he had his tiring professional responsibilities to discharge as also domestic ones in the matter of marrying off Botetle and looking after the interests of growing daughter Hilde who badly needs a mother. While Dr. Wangel offers no youthful attraction to Ellida, the sole incentive of providing for her works well and handy. Ellida’s decision appears to be rational, at least in this frame work.

But once she comes to Dr. Wangel’s house as his wife, she at once begins to find a yawning gap between what she had actually thought and what it actually turned out to be. Her decision to marry Dr. Wangel was solely based on the satisfaction of her personal needs, therefore it did not have any scope of allowing anything else. Soon she begins to feel like a caged bird. On domestic front, she finds Dr. Wangel torn between his professional responsibilities and two daughters. Very soon she realises that she does not have any exclusive claim over her husband. He is much too senior in age, old enough to be her father and therefore the question of physical consummation may also not be there. The daughters on their parts, too, prefer to remain separated from her because they are not born out of her womb. Having crossed their impressionable age, they do not belong to her in any way, not to talk of blood relationship. However, Ellida does find a partial satisfaction of her physiological needs like hunger, thirst and sex. She gets social status as wife. A good house to live in and Dr.Wangel’s name and frame are other benefits. Even her safety needs are looked after in Dr. Wangel’s house. But here again,
her satisfaction remains partial. In this context Erich Fromm gives us very illuminating insight into human predicament. To quote him:

*Man cannot live statically because his inner contradictions drive him to seek for equilibrium, for a new harmony instead of the lost animal harmony with nature. After he has satisfied his animal needs, he is driven by his human needs. While his body tells him to eat and what to avoid — his conscience ought to tell him which needs to cultivate and satisfy, and which needs to let wither and starve out. But hunger and appetite are functions of the body with which man is born — conscience, while potentially present, acquires the guidance of men and principles which develop only during the growth and culture.*

Four walls of Dr. Wangel's house do satisfy her hunger, thirst, security and protection but then a great social philosopher Aristotle says that man does not live by bread alone. What security and protection can the walls of brick and mortar offer when there is no human assurance. Protective umbrella of the husband is much more significant than anything else. When she comes to Dr. Wangel's house as wife, she learns that she has many other roles to perform also, the major being that she has to play loving mother to the grown-up children, one of whom is almost of her age. It is in this context that she goes in for a spell of pregnancy to feel what is like mother and mother-like. But here again, exposure to motherhood remains incomplete because the child born dies after a few months. This causes another void in her mind. Her desire to find roots in Wangel's house through the child remains unfulfilled. As Maslow says the need for belongingness and love emerge only after physiological and needs for protection are satisfied. This is an area which poses a formidable challenge to her. Like Erich Fromm's concept of 'need for rootedness', Abraham Maslow argues that all of us need to feel wanted and accepted by other, while some of us find gratification through friends, others through family life, still others through memberships, groups and organisations.

Without such ties, one feels rootless and lonely. Loneliness is an unwanted and painful experience. As for the need for love, in Maslow's
conceptualisation, it is a deficiency need, it is a selfish concern of getting love from others. Once this deficiency love is gratified, we are capable of loving others. Seen in this all-too-brief outlining of the need to love, Ellida finds herself utterly dissatisfied. Even Wangel shares his insight about people like Ellida, who have special affinities with the sea, with Arnholm:

Haven't you noticed that people who live out there by the open sea form a kind of separate race. It is almost as if they live the life of the sea itself their thoughts and feelings ebb and flow like the tide. Any one can never transplant them. Oh, I should have thought of this before. It was sinful to take Ellida away from out there and bring her up here (LS.p.92).

Recalling her own natural world in which there was vastness, open skies, tall mountains, dolphins, nature's bigness, awe, terror and strange beauty, she develops a yearning to go back into that world. She begins to feel stifled and suffocated in Wangel's house on all fronts. She can't obviously belong to the place as a being having special affinity with sea and all its objects. She cries, "The water here is never fresh. There is no zest, no sparkle. Ah! here in the fjords the water is sick" (LS.p.39). Soon after, she feels that she is sick and she believes it makes everybody feel sick. Dr. Wangel describes her discomfort in her new surroundings "There is the fact that you can stand the place. The mountains crowd upon you, oppress you. It is not light enough for you here. Not enough open sky around you. No keen embracing winds" (LS.pp.58-59).

Her yearnings for the sea appear to be crushed and smothered at Wangel's house. So suffocated, she feels in her new environment that the moment he learns about some ship or new arrival in the sea, she cries out, "Imagine sailing with it. If only one could" (LS.p.74). And very vocally expresses her anguish and jealousy at the ships going out again and again in the great open sea, free in its movements, going on long voyages but she has to contend herself with only little trips up and down in the fjords. So deep is her
suffering that she seeks to objectify her personal feelings, "I think if only man had learnt to live on the sea the very first... perhaps even in the sea... we might have developed better than we have and differently. Better and happier" (LS, p. 74). Thus Ellida finds herself a misfit, an odd man out and a freak in her new surroundings which create in her heart a sense of nostalgia for the vastness and waywardness of the sea. All her cravings for the limitless, the unknown, the unattainable, which have gone deep down in her mind and which have formed and shaped her very being, appear to be crushed, cramped and shrivelled. The four walls of Wangel's house, the stationary waters, the routine life, the domesticity of home and the new role models therein stiffen her nerves and therefore, to use Erich Fromm's term, she becomes a 'Freak of nature'. She begins to realise that any attempt to find the reason of existence is bound to be blocked. Despite her close affinity with the sea animals, with whom she has been identifying herself, she is more than an animal, aware of herself, blessed with reason to solve her problems. Besides, she has the capacity to imagine, to create new and useful meanings. Away from the vastness of the sea life, she feels that she can't possibly realise her potentialities in the time available to her. She begins to feel that she can no longer be unified with nature, like the sea gulls and dolphins thereby putting a strain on her mind to deal with her frailties and to engage in a painful struggle with life. Because she is no longer one with nature, she begins to feel isolated and alone at times, aware of her limitations. That is why she asks her husband to build a separate summer house for her where she passes her time sitting usually alone during the day, away from the stale air of the town.

To remain in such a state is sure to lead to insanity. In Erich Fromm's view, such an awareness of her isolation provides her with a fundamental choice—to lead a healthy and productive life by developing her potentialities or she can escape from her freedom by submitting herself to the other or by destroying them. Fromm says that using one's freedom to develop as productive citizen can be painful but it can also be genuinely satisfying,
whereas escaping from freedom by obedience to others, while it produces temporary security, is, in the long run counter-productive and stifles one’s basic nature. We need to relate productively to one another if we are to maintain our sanity. We must unite ourselves with others if we are to survive. Thus the need for relatedness is a direct growth of the existential condition. This relatedness can be relatively constructive or destructive in nature.

It is in this context that she begins to make attempts, of course feeble ones, to relate with Dr. Wangel, Bolette and Hilde. Keeping in mind the respective ages of the two daughters, she realises that she can neither dominate them nor get rid of them. Therefore she has to contend her self with a calm, composed and noiseless way of life maintaining a perfect harmony by keeping away from them. She begins to relate to Bolette and Hilde by methods of compromise. Herself she sits in the summer house, near the verandah where the girls normally sit. She permits her husband to share his time between herself and daughters, “Sometimes he sits by me here and sometimes he is over with the children because, I think that agreement suits all parties best. We can talk across to each other... whenever we fancy we have anything to say” (LS.p.41). Her attempt to relate with Wangel by giving birth to his child is a step towards authentic, genuine and productive relationship. But unfortunately, this relationship can’t flower owing to the death of the child in 4 or 5 months, bringing her relationship back to the square where it started from. For a woman, the death of the first child is always an unbearable trauma. And beyond this attempt of productive relationship, Ellida does not make any other serious attempt to relate to Wangel and thereby ignores the imperative need with which entire mankind is born. Fromm defines such a need of man as:

The necessity to unite with human beings, to be related to them, is an imperative need on the fulfillment of which man’s sanity depends. This need is behind all phenomena which constitutes the whole gamut of intimate human relations, of all passions which are called love in the broadest sense of the word. There are several ways in which this union can be sought and
achieved. Man can attempt to become one with the world by submission to a person, to a group, to an institution or to God. In this way he transcends the separateness of his individual existence by becoming a part of somebody or something bigger than himself and experiences his identity in connection with the power to which he has submitted. Another possibility of overcoming separateness lies in the opposite direction: Man can try to unite himself with the world by having power over it, by making others a part of himself and thus transcending his individual existence by domination. 27

 Besides, there are thousands of ways a woman can invent to make her presence felt in her house. Even small routine domestic chores like re-setting the furniture, changing the sitting arrangements, cleanliness drives, looking after flower-beds, ironing Dr. Wangel’s clothes, catering to the interests of daughters, sharing new designs of embroidery with Bolette, taking interest in Hilde’s games etc, helping Dr. Wangel by preparing his bag for surgery etc. but in none of the areas, she enters with any deliberate attempt and therefore relationship with Dr. Wangel remains non-productive. Instead, she keeps herself strictly aloof from the daughters, even ignoring her important claim to be the lady of Dr. Wangel’s house. Dr. Wangel, Bolette and Hidle too, on their part, do not come out before her with open arms to make her feel comfortable and congenial. Dr. Wangel’s commitments were perhaps many and large. He had to be true to his profession and by carrying on with his professional work he had to earn his bread and butter. His commitment to his daughters, who had unfortunately lost their mother and of course, he had certain social commitments, being a doctor. Another factor is that of incompatibility of his age with Ellida. Dr. Wangel is a little too old and therefore his interest in Ellida does not lie so much in developing the shared intimacies, which one experiences during honeymoon nights. Such are his compulsions that Wangel does not make any attempt to understand her psychological problems or filling the voids with which she has come to be his wife. Nor does Wangel come any where near the wisdom as shown by Gangu, the hero in Munshi Prem Chand’s famous story ‘The Child’ in which Gangu explicitly states that it is not merely by offering bread, one can keep his wife happy. What she needs is
love and force of love. In fact Dr. Wangel takes his relationship with Ellida for
granted and does not feel the necessity of continuous renewal of that
relationship to make it more creative and meaningful. He wants to see only
that Ellida fits herself well as a cog in the machine so that the machine of his
life starts running smoothly. Therefore, the relatedness with Dr. Wangel
remains far from satisfactory because, on the one hand, she develops no
exclusive claim on her husband, on the other, he too does not make any
attempt to give her that sort of feeling. Therefore, she is left with no other
alternative but to live a kind of life from which others are excluded. As for her
relatedness with Bolette and Hilde is concerned, here again, the relationship
remains unproductive and her experience with them is that of strangers living
under one roof. Hilde being too young, much in need of mother, keeps herself
busy in all sorts of naughty and child like pursuits, teasing her elder sister
Bolette in relation to her childhood tutor Arnholm and playing small jokes on
Lyngstrand, like sending regards for Mrs. Jenson whom she does not know
even. She expresses her total surprise at Arnholm’s mention of the ‘word
‘mother’ in relation to Ellida. And yet Hilde is sensitive enough to sense and
analyse the odd unpredictable, pensive and incomprehensible presence of
Ellida in the role of a ‘new mother’ and new wife. Her comment is very sharp:

Oh, no, I can’t ever see us along with her. She isn’t our kind.
And we aren’t hers. God knows why father had to go and drag
her into the house. It wouldn’t surprise me if she went stark
staring mad one of those fine days (LS.p.56).

Instead of addressing her as mother, Hilde describes her as ‘Our Lady from the
sea,’ signifying a completely impersonal relationship. In case of Bolette as
mentioned earlier, she is almost of Ellida’s age, caged in the domesticity thrust
upon her after the death of her mother. Not that she is unequal to the task of
shouldering responsibility of running the house but that even after Ellida has
come in the role of wife, mother and lady of the house, Bolette just does not
offer the keys of the house or kitchen to Ellida. If there is any time left for her
to look after the personal interests, Bolette spends that time reading books on
botany and geography and embroidering patches here and there but the primary focus remains on domestic chores. She just can’t come out of her domesticity because of those two years when father was alone and it just remained that way since then. To cap it all, she is fully aware of her state of being caged and tells Arnholm ' We are so cut off from things here, very largely, anyway"(LS.p.70). Her urge for outside world and self-enrichment through reading and exposure remains crippled under stifling domestic circumstances. She shares her inner sorrow and despair with her childhood teacher Arnholm:

I don’t think life is very different from those old carp down in the pond. They have a pond close by where the great shoals of the wild fish move in and out. But the poor tame local fish know nothing of all. They can never be a part of that life(LS.p.71).

Her agony and pain is pathetically represented by a secluded corner in Dr. Wangel’s garden which is damp, marshy and overshadowed by large old trees on the edge of a stagnant pond. However ' in the far distance of the Fjord is range of mountains with individual peaks'. Such is her despair and helplessness that she feels, "Oh. I doubt, it would make much difference on that score if they get out there "(LS.p.71).

Moreover, Bolette considers herself duty-bound both to father and her younger sister Hilda. Even in the new arrangement, her perception about her role is no different from her earlier one because she finds Ellida a misfit in her father’s house. She tells that Ellida just does not take any interest in the things which mother used to do so well. She dreads leaving her father to her stepmother because she isn't very good at doing all the things, “There are so many things this one doesn’t even see or may be doesn't even want to see---- or doesn't care. I don’t know which it is which mother used to do so well"(LS.p.73). In fact, Bolette has possessed her father as a daughter so fully that she wants to help her father come out of his predicament by all means. Being true to her role as a daughter, she sees that Ellida is quite incapable to
help Dr. Wangel. Being a doctor, he has to attend to sick people all around, therefore he has got to surround himself with happy faces, there has to be joy, happiness and sunshine at least in his house. But when Bolette finds that Ellida does not provide him with that much-needed sunshine, she places herself at his disposal more and more as if it is her religious duty and even at the cost of her claims over herself. At times she does get upset that she is destined to stay here is the pond. Bolette finds Ellida unwilling to stay at Wangel’s house in the presence of two daughters. She is of the opinion that it might still work with Hilde because she is scarcely more than a child, but with her, it is different because of her age. Therefore Bolette just can’t open up before Ellida. She leads such a closed, cloistered and centred life that she hides important happenings or functions in her house from Ellida. For example, Bolette celebrates her departed mother’s birthday every year with a lot of gusto, enthusiasm and creativity, decorating her house with flags and other material. And all this is done in the physical presence of Ellida. Although, Bolette make sure that Ellida is kept in the dark about the purpose of the event in the family yet she can’t do so. How traumatic it is for Ellida when she learns through Lyngstrand that even after she has come to take dead mother’s place, the girls as well as Dr. Wangel still believe in living their lives by memories of the past. Thus Ellida finds her new place as a water-tight compartment. Errol Durbach epitomises the whole bruised psyche of Ellida in a very illuminating manner:

Because Ellida’s marriage with Dr. Wangel is a human and not an ideal union, it is by definition imperfect. And the imperfections are manifest. She is the second wife - too young to relate maternally to his grown daughters, too inexperienced to find a place in the well-managed domesticity of his house hold and apparently frustrated in her need to be needed by the children. She believes them all nostalgically bound by memories of the dead wife and mother just as she feels bound to her past life with the stranger from the sea; and she excludes the family from her secret memory as they exclude her from theirs. There is nothing in the family structure, she says, “to support me---- to help me---- to draw me in, no sense of things in common, of shared intimacies. She seems, in other world free from the ties that normally bind one to home, children and
husband and it might seem perverse for her to cry out so insistently against a lack of freedom. But to be rootless in a house, on the outside of every thing is not to be free. The step mother -second wife is like the mermaid, an ambiguously 'half-being and that is what makes her predicaments intolerable. Neither free nor bound, she is merely a detrop, an alien. To exchange alienation for commitment, which will be Ellida's implicit choice at the end of the play, may seem like the ultimate abandonment of the free spirit to the rules of bourgeois domesticity. But it may also be the complete fulfillment of the self in the needs of human family.

Far from developing a productive orientation, Ellida fails to have a sense of relatedness and therefore self-defeating alienation is the natural result. This alienation produces feelings of loneliness and powerlessness as nothing appears to her compatible with her own values and principles. The more she tries to come closer to the family of Dr. Wangel, the more she finds herself distanced. The compromise formula chosen by her in which neither she interferes in the lives of daughters nor permits others to interfere with her life just doesn't work. Combined with lack of rootedness, in the sense that she has neither mother, father nor brother, sister relationship, she feels like an old carp unable to come out of the pond. Thus when her basic needs of rootedness and relatedness remain unrealised, she begins to have obsessive view of her cravings for the unknown as unattainable.

Since environment in Dr. Wangel's house is neither conducive nor congenial, Ellida feels uncomfortable and her discomfort finds its expression in different ways in different situations. For example, despite beautiful decorations of the house. Ellida declares, "How stiflingly hot it is under the roof"(LS.p.40). Her volcanic boredom born out of her unrootedness and unrelatedness finds poignant expression, when at a critical moment she tells her husband.

There is absolutely nothing here to keep me. I have no roots in your house, Wangel. The children aren't mine. What I mean is, I don't have their affection. Nor ever have had. When I go------ if
I dare go——— either tonight—with him or tomorrow to skyljoldviken—I haven’t even so much a key to give up—— or instructions to leave——— anything at all—— I am completely without roots in your house. I have been on the outside of everything, right from the very first moment (LS.pp.107-108).

Regarding her relationship with Wangel, she says that there is nothing to hold her there, nothing to support her. Nothing to draw her in—— no sense of shared intimacies. She finds herself directionless, supportless and helpless. Environment in Dr. Wangel’s house is just not the fertile ground for satisfaction of her basic needs. Seen in the larger frame work of Maslow’s conceptualisation, if the environment is restrictive, the individual is likely to develop in neurotic ways and when any of the basic needs are not fulfilled, the person becomes such. In order to move towards self-actualisation, we must have sufficiently gratified our basic needs so that we are free to pursue our fulfillment of the higher transcending needs. Individuals become such when needs are thwarted.

Coming back to Rollo May’s frame work, Ellida’s unrootedness and unrelatedness bring about a state of confusion and bafflement. And the primary result of this confusion and disintegration of her values is that she begins to feel empty from inside and isolated from Wangel and his daughters. The vastness and complexity of problems that confront her contribute to these feelings. This is not to say that she becomes literally empty or without potential for feeling. Instead, her experience is that of powerlessness in which events seem beyond her control. She does not seem to be able to direct her own life to influence others or to change the world around her. As a result Ellida develops a deep sense of despair and futility. Eventually, she sees that her actions make no difference. She even thinks of giving up wanting or feeling to become apathetic. There is no outside authority to correct this feeling because she is neither rooted nor related and therefore falls a victim to painful anxiety. Such circumstances appear to restrict her potentials to grow as human being. There appears a conflict in her mind. Alone and empty, she feels that there is a
danger to her existence or her values she has identified with her anxiety. In May's language anxiety can be understood only as a threat to 'Dasein'. This anxiety engirds her in the form of various abstractions. But when Lyngstrand acquaints her with her real predicament in terms of the story which turns out to be truly similar to that of hers, her anxiety becomes concretised and ontological. He tells her the story of a sailor who was fond of reading old newspapers. One day, when he was coming to take along his wife whom he had wedded by the testimony of the sea, he learnt through an old newspaper that she had played foul to him and married another man. He made a kind of moan, his face turned white like a chalk, he started crumbling the newspaper together and tore into pieces and said to himself quietly in an incantatory tone, "Married to another man... while I was away’ He said, ‘...But mine she is and mine shall remain and she shall follow me though I return home as a drowned man from the dark sea to claim her"(LS,p.48). The moment Ellida listens to this resolution of the stranger, her hands start trembling. The sense of being paralysed engirds her.

The stranger seems to exert a stronger, terrifying and benumbing influence on her by remote. In fact, it is not Lyngstrand who can see the unfaithful life and the avenger so clearly as she herself. She begins to feel guilt as well as despair. In fact, the encounter with the stranger in absentia is the culmination of unfulfilled needs, aspirations, desires and longings, in the stifling and restricting environment in Dr. Wangel's house. This unfulfilment transports her to obsessive thinking, expressing itself in endless staring on the blank, wringing her hands and asking for security. She tells Lyngstrand that they should either go inside or down to her husband as it is so stifling there. Not only this, another strong expression of her obsessive anxiety is that she starts going to the sea daily not only to satisfy her cravings for visual bigness but also to assimilate that bigness in her being by taking a dip in the sea. So regularly does she go to the sea that people around start calling her the lady from the sea. Henrik Ibsen, too, introduces her in the play as wearing a lightweight wrap and her wet hair hang loose about her shoulders. She is seen by the people going in her bathing suit for her daily bath, notwithstanding inclement weather
conditions. Dr. Wangel himself describes her going to the sea as "I can't really make out what there is wrong with her. But all she seems to live for somehow, is bathing in the sea" (LS p.38). The more she goes to the sea, the more uncomfortable and panicky does she become. In fact, coming back and going to the sea as a daily ritual is nothing but the oscillation of her mind between the forces of regression and progression which are prevalent in every human being. Fromm describes such a mental state as:

Man's life is determined by an inescapable alternative between regression and progression, between return to animal existence and arrival at human existence. Any attempt to return is painful, it inevitably leads to suffering and mental sickness, to death either physiologically or mentally (insanity). Even a step forward is frightening and painful too, until a certain point has been reached where fear and doubt have only minor proportions. Aside from physiologically nourished cravings (hunger, thirst, sex), all essential human cravings are determined by this polarity. Man has to solve a problem, he can never rest in the given situations of a passive adaptation to nature. Even the most complete satisfaction of all his instinctive needs does not solve his human problem; his most intensive passions and needs are not those rooted in his body, but those rooted in the very peculiarity of his existence. 

Even Dr. Wangel offers to take her away to some new and safer place for change. She rejects his proposal saying that she has no salvation. She stands obsessed with the idea that she can't get rid of the horror and the mystery of the sea, "I know only too well that ... I shall never be rid of this thing, not even out there... I am afraid it will never be. Never in this world" (LS p.65).

And despite the fact that it has been a considerably long time she has met the sailor, he always seemed to come back. Therefore, under this obsessive phobia she refuses to live with Dr. Wangel as his wife and explains in categorical statement, "Because of the fear that man strikes into my heart and the fear is so terrible... such as I think only the sea could hold" (LS p.66).

This fear has been eating into her being for almost three years or a little more when she was expecting the child. It was that very moment when
Johnston learned about her faithlessness. Slowly, the idea of the stranger begins to weigh large on her mind resulting in Ellida having hallucinations of him, “Yes suddenly I find myself seeing him standing there quite clearly in front of me. Or rather a little to one side. He never looks at me. He is just there”(LS p.67). And he looks like the one out at Brathamarren. The thing, she sees most clearly is his breast pin with a big bluish white pearl in it. The pearl looks like a dead fish’s eye and it seems to stare at her. It is pertinent to mention here that the stranger is nothing but the externalisation of the blue element in her own being because it is with the blue she has been related to, right since her birth. Recurrence of this blue colour is Ibsen’s unique way of conveying her deep seated unfulfilled desires beautifully enumerated by Jolande Jacobi in the following words:

Blue has always been regarded as the colour of the spirit, the heavens, the upper world. In certain religions, the soul rising upwards after death is called a little blue smoke. Blue is the colour of the most heavenly gods... Blue, because of its spiritual implications, was often regarded as safeguard against evil spirits, it was employed in magical operations designed to ward off of water demons... The ‘blue flowers of romanticism’ another indication of the symbolic value of the blue, it stands for man’s yearning for the sublime to the exclusion of all bestial urges.  

Thus, on all these counts Ellida has been suffering this agony through obsessions and hallucinations silently and alone without telling Dr. Wangel. Sometimes, this terrifying grip takes its form like that of a hysteric woman. She cries out, “Help me, if you can! I feel this thing closing in on me more and more”(LS p.67). So tightening does the grip and obsession of the stranger become on Ellida that on the one hand, she does not permit Dr. Wangel to come near her physically and on the other hand the baby in her womb is influenced by her obsessive thoughts. This results in the birth of the child, having inherited the colour of the eyes exactly similar to that of the stranger. Therefore, she just can’t show her agony because something altogether unspeakable was also there and that was about the mystery of the child’s eyes.
The child's eyes changed colour with the sea when the fjord was calm and sunny, his eyes were the same when it was stormy. She herself tells Dr. Wangel about those eyes that she had seen like that before out at Bratthamerean ten years ago, much to the astonishment of Dr. Wangel. Ellida expresses her mental agony through her out burst, "Oh what is this... Draws... tempts ... here me into the unknown. That contains all the concentrated power of the sea"(LS.pp.119-120).

Such a crippling obsession brings Ellida on the verge of insecurity and even insanity. Such is the weight of anxiety that she stands enfeebled and baffled and feels like coming out of such a state of mind and situation. Rollo May suggests an answer. He contends that when we do not know what we want or feel and when we stand in the midst of general upheaval and confusion, we sense danger and turn to people around us for answer. We may turn to them because we have been taught by society to rely on others in the time of crisis, yet paradoxically, the more we attempt to reach out to others to ease our feelings of loneliness, the more lonely and desperate we become. Many of us need to be going on with some one all the time and feel safe and secure, we tend to cling to partners. We do not like or respect, we are afraid that others will think less of us if we do not have a steady partner. As we suffer in silence and try to make the best of a bad situation, we learn to adjust to the person to stifle our individuality in order to protect the status quo. We yearn for security and yet are stifled by it. The burden of obsession becomes so nerve-breaking that she is left with no alternative but to pour out her soul before Wangel. That is why after sharing her agony with Wangel, she feels absolutely calm, composed and serene. In her own words, "Oh, I really feel wonderful ! I feel so incredibly happy. So secured, so secure!"(LS.p.74). Although sharing her heart's burden does bring her a sense of relief and security yet it is going to be of temporary nature because encounter with the reality has not yet taken place. So for reality has come before her in abstractions and vague appearances despite their strong potency. She is yet
to see and meet the blue eyes of the stranger in flesh and blood. At the same
time, she knows and understands the resolute will of the stranger who has
recently declared that she will remain his and his only. Therefore, the feeling of
fear overtakes her and she herself confesses that it is out of the fear of the
stranger that she can't come out of her obsession and start living with Wangel
as a wife with normal state of mind. But it is a simple psychological law that
any person who is possessed with fear or some fixed notion, must come out of
it. Neurosis and psychosis are only defense mechanisms to avoid confrontation
with reality. And one can't be in the state for a long time. He or she has to
come out of it. Moreover, when the danger of the stranger's imminent arrival
comes near and nearer, Ellida's consciousness gets more and more restricted
and therefore, severe anxiety overtakes her, which in turn compels her to think
more and more both about her past and future. Therefore, before she confronts
the reality, she has to ensure herself whether she understands her situation in
the proper perspective or not. She attempts to view her relationship with the
stranger in terms of her future and also with Wangel in the same reference.

In her relationship with the stranger, she understands that he appeals to
her love and fascination for the mysterious, unknown, vastness, waywardness,
openness and variegatedness. His very appearance in her life all of a sudden,
his antecedents, his eyes, his hectic schedule, his act of murder of a mate
without any apparent rhyme or reason and running away to some unfixed
destination etc. --- all contribute to and go well with her love for the mystery.
Above all, his strange and terrifying and yet enchanting style of marrying her by
the testimony of the sea by joining the two rings together only to throw them
into the wide sea, again is an act which helps her look at life and future with a
sense of awe. His promise of coming back to take her along with him to an
unfixed place at an uncertain date and unfixed time is again an expression of
her love for the unknown. On the one hand, all these factors contribute to
terrifying strangeness, on the other, they are nothing but solid expressions of
Ellida's deep cravings for undefined goals in the absence of parents or parental
substitutes. All these things feed to her tendency to remain a child, psychologically dependent on forces more powerful. As all these awesome experiences have gone deep into her unconsciousness, with her decision to marry Dr. Wangel which she was obliged to go in for due to reasons which were at variance with the values she had been up holding. And it can also not be denied that at Dr. Wangles house, she can’t find sublimation or fulfillment of any sort. Even though Dr. Wangel’s house does help her in having partial satisfaction of basic needs but what about meta-needs which are of equal importance for sublimation? Now that the stranger is about to come to take her along, she stands confronted with a choice - whether to continue her stay with Dr. Wangel or to go with the stranger. Two interesting parallels come to my mind. The first one is that of James Joyce’s Eveline who, too, was caught in such a dilemma but she comes out of her indecisiveness by throwing all her weight on the promise which she had given to her dying mother. Moreover she preferred to go by societal norms. The second one is that of Aline Solness (Master Builder’s wife) who had at least a memory of nine little dolls to relive her past. In Ellida’s case, there are no such parental or societal obligations and therefore her choice is all the more difficult. Moreover, this choice is going to alter the course of her entire life. In terms of this choice, she begins to view both the marriages. In her marriage with the stranger, she introspects a great deal and finds nothing but confusion. However, she does realise that everything in her life has been based on compulsions, it just could not be otherwise. It just happened, the stranger did everything as if by force. Never did he seek her consent. It was an act that sprang out of an irresistible impulse, a wild passion, an uncalculated move and therefore a highly emotive act. It was perhaps an inauthentic decision because it was never a conscious one. Had it been a conscious decision, she would never have permitted him to leave her behind alone and to wait like Penelope. She would have accompanied him through thick and thin. And the way the stranger was travelling the whole world, writing letters to be from different parts of the globe-China, Australia, California would have satisfied her instinct of love for the new and the unknown. Had the
decision been willful, she would not describe it as 'mad folly', 'wildly idiotic' and 'incomprehensible'. She herself describes her marriage with the stranger, "The whole thing is quite incomprehensible. I do not know how I could begin to describe if you would only then think I was ill or else completely mad"(LS.p.44). Therefore it was a decision, if at all it can be called one, taken in a state of paralysed mind.

It is with this survey in her mind that she compares her marriage with Dr. Wangel. The comparison between the two decisions brings out a lot many similarities. While in case of the stranger, she had no will of her own, in case of Dr. Wangel, things were no different because Dr. Wangel too did not offer her any wilful choice. He only offered to provide her for her life, not out of any love for her but out of his pressing domestic compulsions. It was his self and personal interest, that he had in mind and she, too, on her part allowed her self to be sold. She feels in retrospect, her marriage with Dr. Wangel was a give and take affair, a transaction. Her this decision too, was coloured by her compulsions of ground realities.

So for the stranger has remained a dreamy figure as he has left her with a promise only, which he may or may not keep. Nevertheless, he has left behind something which is directly related to the mysterious, unattained and unknown. Therefore, his name carries a bigger force in her mind as compared to Dr. Wangel whose world is stifling, small and closed. Errol Durbach brilliantly sums up her dilemma:

The 'halfness' of the mermaid's divided nature is located not only in the sea-land dichotomy, but in the tension between romanticism and reality, dramatised most brilliantly in what Rolf Fjelde calls Ellida's psychic bigamy - her legal and binding land marriage to a demonic and mysterious prince of darkness. There is no question, for Ellida, of living within a single cosmology. She is committed to both: to land marriage, which satisfies her urgent need for security but which negates her freedom, and to sea marriage, which satisfies her romantic
...yearning for an absolute freedom but which provides no security whatever against the fears of freedom itself. 31

And it is this dilemma which gives birth to severe anxiety, very soon to be converted into psychic conflict. But instead of living in conflict and uncertainty, she focuses upon her immediate experience as it comes before her. In such a situation, Ellida views the world of natural phenomena from a subjective perspective, a world filled with uncertainties, a world which in many respects is absurd. The key question emerges: what should she do? Should she retreat into nothingness or should she, in Tillich’s words, have the courage to be?

It is solely up to her to make a choice and take action. As Kierkegaard says that truth exists only as the individual himself produces in action. She assumes god-like status in existential design. She feels the necessity of assigning a meaning to her existence and act in terms of it to exercise her freedom and act authentically. To be authentic, she has to be what she is. If she lets others, the stranger or Dr. Wangel define goals for her, it will again be an inauthentic act. However, she has a choice and that is, she may decide to follow moral dictates of the world, an easier way of coping with her problem. Such a decision is easier than facing responsibility because exercise of freedom is costly. Such a decision is not going to help her as it is bound to produce self-alienation, apathy and despair. And it is this despair which has engirded her already, and she wants to come out of it. This anxiety, conflict and despair pose direct threat to her Dasein and the question of choosing between ‘being’ and ‘non-being’ begins to emerge. Now is the time when she has the freedom to move backward or forward to cope with her anxiety, which Kierkegaard describes as ‘dizziness of freedom’. There is a fundamental choice before her. If she decides to assume responsibility and question the person or persons, she will be using her experience of anxiety constructively. If she fails to ask pertinent questions, she will be denying her responsibility and blocking her freedom and in Rollo May’s theory, will be a victim of guilt, which like anxiety is also an ontological characteristic of human existence. Guilt will
occur out of the realisation that she can choose and yet she is failing to choose. In case of her failure, guilt will over power her. Therefore, to come out of this conflict, she realises that she will realise her freedom and potentialities only to the extent that she, in her own consciousness, plans and chooses her goals. In May's theory, the more conscious we are, the more spontaneous and creative we will be at the same time. Ellida's objective then is to increase her consciousness. According to May, in such a situation, severe anxiety tends to restrict consciousness and we try to defend ourselves from pain through a variety of defense mechanisms. It is in this larger framework of mind that she prepares herself for confrontation with the stranger as also with Dr. Wangel. But here again, she can't confront them separately one by one. She has to face them together, in each other's presence so that the claims of the two upon her mind and body could be discussed and analysed for the final decision. Both the stranger and Dr. Wangel come before her with pre-possessed minds—the stranger as her lover and Dr. Wangel as her husband and both of them want her to decide in their favour. But then, neither the stranger can overawe her nor Dr. Wangel can force her. It is she and she alone who has to decide on the basis of her inner strength and values.

As for the actual encounter with the stranger, it is going to be very decisive and therefore there is an ample scope of fluctuations. However, it is going to be based on what Rollo May calls 'consciousness of the self' which will give Ellida a chance, of course for the first time, to realise some of her prejudices, follies and errors etc. Her reactions are at once normal and at once hysteric, at once logically convincing and at once irrational, involving all sorts of feelings - those of fear, strangeness, mystery, anguish and dread. However the battle against the stranger is going to be fought more on the psychological front than on the physical plane. There is an extreme tension in her mind as to how to face him. Her mind works so fast that she begins to waver between hope and despair. Samuel Hynes attempts to solve this enigmatic and erratic behaviour in psychological terms. He opines: "Vision is simple while it is
spiritual. When man tries to transform into matter with human hands, vision becomes complex. The principal complexity is the human cost.” On the one hand she welcomes him, on the other hand she refuses to recognise him with a volley of questions: Who are you looking for some one here? But when the stranger looks at her to explain the purpose of his visit, she stands startled and in a half-choked voice staggers backwards only to forbid him to look at her or she will shout. It is out of this initial dread that she puts her hand over her eyes.

Encounter with reality is always dreadful, there is always resistance and therefore she has to be assured by the stranger that he will not harm her. Despite this assurance, when the stranger tells her that her has come to fetch her, she re-coils in terror. Taking the first step is not so easy a thing as she had been thinking in the past. Moreover, despite non-fulfillment of meta-needs at Dr. Wangel’s house, she has never been a victim of any debauchery as in the case of Mrs. Alving in the play Ghosts nor has ever Dr. Wangel humiliated, down-graded or abused her as Helmer had been doing to Nora. On the whole, Ellida is treated honourably enough in the house of Wangel. It is a different matter that certain things are kept secret from her by Wangel’s daughters and that too was done for her sake. Therefore, re-coiling in terror is but a natural reaction, psychologically convincing. The stranger, too, on his part understands that he has come to fetch Ellida, after a gap of so many years and she is no more the same enchanted being as she was during the time of their joining the rings and therefore, he has to act very carefully, tactfully and intelligently. This reminds me of Adam’s Eve who had lost her innocence after eating the forbidden fruit. He can’t take her away by force because she is now Mrs. Wangel and not Ellida. However, his interest and purpose is well served only if he addresses her by first name i.e. Ellida despite objections from Dr. Wangel. Moreover, he left her as Ellida and therefore to Ellida does he want to talk. After all, Ellida has waited for him for a considerable span of time as a faithful beloved. There is a hell of difference between her situation now and situation then. Therefore, she has to be treated differently. She has to be given
an option, a choice to decide - , "I am asking you whether you don't want
to" (LS p.45). In fact the tone and tenor of the stranger's pleadings before Ellida
is such as appear to be compulsive and binding on her. On the surface level, it
does appear that he wants to take her along out of her free will but the reality is
that he offers her no choice whatsoever. Errol Durbach analyses his final
correspondence with Ellida:

There is, as Rolf Fjelde puts it, a 'compulsive and devouring
limitation about the Stranger, his inability to acknowledge
Ellida’s freedom to reject him (which she has already tried to do
on a number of occasions), and his implicit denial of individual
liberty as the right of each to liberate himself, in his own way.
Elida may be intoxicated by his ‘free will’ formula - but the
Stranger’s terms qualify it drastically; and, in the final analysis,
he can offer her nothing but the punitive consequences of not
choosing his version of freedom; ‘And be clear about one thing;
he warns her, - if you don’t leave with me tomorrow, that’s the
finish of everything... I shall never come here again. You will
never see me again. Never hear from me, either. I shall be as
though dead and gone from you forever’. There is a Brand-like
obsessiveness about the man, a romantic tendency to deal
only in extremes and to ignore the middle ground on which
human decisions are generally made without such be-all or end-
all compulsions. The stranger’s gift of ‘free will’ flies in the face
of Ellida’s yearning for freedom. He presents her with an
ultimatum which, in the nature of all such choices, implies no
alternative whatsoever.39

With such dictatorial and authoritative directions to her, the stranger expects
that Ellida should come out with her decision at once. He simply forgets that
her state of mental anxiety is such as requires cool and calm understanding of
the situation rather then heated frenzy to decide. But still she is in a state of
stupefaction because initial response to reality is always disturbing and
therefore distancing. Therefore when the stranger wants to know her opinion,
her reaction remains hysterical, “No, no, no! I will not. Never, never, I will not.
I tell you. I can’t. I won’t. (in a lower voice) Besides I daren’t” (LS p.77). She
is no more cool, composed, serene or peaceful and therefore her immediate
refusal to go with the stranger has no firm basis and therefore not final. Had it
been final, she herself would have left the scene, never to look back. On the contrary, she stands as if in a state of physical paralysis and cannot take even a step away from there. Despite having said no, she remains in a state of fear and clasps a tree by the pond for support. Even after knowing that the stranger can't take her away by force, she gets panicky, "Don't touch me. Don't come near me. Keep away. Don't touch me. I tell you" (LS.p.78). The reaction, no doubt, is hysterically conditioned yet it is very significant because by now she has come to realise that the stranger should not be allowed to play any significant role in her decision making. She wants to maintain an equidistance, at the same time, she clings tightly to Wangel's arms and cries, "Oh Wangel! Save me! Save me... if you can!" (LS.p.78).

Apparently it may appear that she wants to have the cover of Wangel's protective umbrella but here again, it is to be noted that she does not want to be saved from the stranger, rather she wants to be saved from herself. She is only asking Wangel to stand nearby so that she is able to come out of stranger's fear and mysterious spell which his very presence causes over her. It is like asking Wangel to remain standing as another alternative choice. It is only when choices remain in focus that she can choose clearly and consciously. For Dr. Wangel, the stranger's claim over Ellida may have been childish nonsense but for the stranger "the rings bound us as solemnly as any church-wedding" (LS.p.80). Finding Dr. Wangel and Ellida before him, the stranger budges from his earlier style a little and declares, "If Ellida wants to come with me, it must be out of her free will" (LS.p.80). But for Ellida, exercise of this free will is not going to be a quick affair. A lot of time and thinking are required because such a decision must come out of the consciousness of the self and not out of rebellion. Therefore, the stranger gives her time until tomorrow morning when he will come again to settle with her alone. But all this time, the stranger's tone remains firm, even dictatorial. The more the stranger shows his toughness, the more the burden falls on Ellida's mind. It is very interesting that when he gives her time to think and decide, he threatens her also that it will be
the finish of everything if she does not leave with him. The stranger acquaints her with his decision that if she does not go with him, she will never see him again, never hear from him either and he shall be as though dead and gone from her for ever. But it is out of his confidence in her that he gives her the final dictation, “Be ready to leave tomorrow night. I shall come here and collect you” (LS.p.81). This ambivalent attitude of the stranger helps him in maintaining his mysterious awe and powerful influence. That is why, Ellida finds it rather impossible to resist the call to be ready to go with him but the question of ‘tomorrow or never’ begins to haunt her. It is out of this state of mind that she forbids Dr. Wangel from getting the stranger arrested by the police on the charges of murder, which he has himself confessed before her. She tells him, “No. We want nothing of that. If you say something I shall deny it. He must not be imprisoned. He belongs out there on the open sea. He belongs out there” (LS.p.82). And yet the reality of the situation forces her to cling passionately to Wangel, “Oh, My dearest husband... save me from that man!” (LS.p.82). The fact that she has addressed Wangel as dearest husband and the stranger, who has created so big a stormy situation as ‘that man’, is indicative of the psychic conflict which in Freudian parlance is described as conflict between Id and Ego. Within a short span, this conflict reaches alarming proportions, given the time limit set by the stranger for Ellida to take a decision. She utters in a low trembling voice, “O Wangel... Save me from my self!” (LS.p.83). The sea, the stranger and Ellida seem to stand in a straight line. Therefore, the dread of separating herself from the two is frightening. However the choices before her are many, despite limits set by the stranger.

The first obvious choice before her is that by responding to her impulses, she can slam the door of Dr. Wangel’s house and go with the stranger. But this choice is not easy as she is no more an inexperienced child whose inauthentic decisions will be exonerated. By her long stay at Dr. Wangel’s house, she has begun to feel attraction for the life on land, although such an attraction has not found its expression yet. Moreover, going with the
stranger out of sheer impulsiveness is not going to help her. She has become a fully grown adult, with full consciousness of her self as also her meta-needs. Life with the stranger is surely going to be full of uncertainties which have been troubling her for a long time and it is out of her uncertain future that she craves to come out. That is why she runs forward and backward, not knowing what to do, whom to consider her prop. The second obvious choice is that she sends the stranger back from where he had come with a firm refusal. That is, of course, very painful because human beings don’t live by bread alone. After all the stranger, his presence and associations with him are such things to which her mind responds naturally. She considers herself a part and parcel of what the stranger stands for. Such a choice is again limiting because she will have to go to Dr. Wangel, in whose house she already feels like an old carp caught in shallow waters. It is out of this mental dilemma that she weighs the pros and cons of both these alternatives and such a debate in her mind helps her in realising the consciousness of self and it is out of this consciousness that she shuttles between Wangel and the stranger.

The more she reaches near the momentous decision, the more panicky does she become. In order to hide her panic, the first thing she does is to escape the decision-making process by hiding herself in her room, not even going for her daily bath, which seemed to have become the guiding principle of her life since recent past. She locks herself up in the room. This locking up, turns out to be of great help to her because when she comes out of the room, she is quite calm and cool, much to the surprise of Dr. Wangel who expresses his astonishment, “And she is so changeable... so unpredictable... so erratic” (LS.p.92). The locking up may be an escape from confrontation with the physical reality but it provides Ellida with much needed rest and seclusion to explore her inner strength to face the impending crisis. It is by shutting herself up in her room without Wangel or the stranger that she circumspects her relationship with Wangel and the stranger. In case of Dr. Wangel, she comes to the conclusion that it was a misfortune that she met him and married but the
way they came to live together, was surely to end in catastrophe and therefore there was no point in deceiving and lying to each other. Although, she is projecting the failure of her marriage on circumstances born out of their dire compulsions and yet she considers herself equally responsible. Yet she blames Wangel for the entire mess because he was obsessed with the idea of filling the emptiness of the house and also because Wangel just couldn’t think whether Ellida was the lady suitable and fit enough to fill that slot or not. She describes Wangel’s decision as an impulsive act, “You had barely seen me... only spoken to me two or three times... then you found your self wanting me... and...”(LS.p.98). On her part, she accepted him when she was helpless, bewildered and quite alone. And therefore, this realisation brings her to the point of view that she shouldn’t have accepted. She declares,” Never... not at any price. Far better to have had the most menial of jobs... the most beggarly existence ... of my own free will... and of my own choice”(LS.p.99). This is despite the fact that she is given fullest freedom of action in Wangel’s house. Ellida’s realisation that she did not come of her own free will troubles her and therefore she views her relationship with Wangel as, “I see that life we are living together... is no real marriage”(LS.p.99). And in contrast the marriage with the stranger might have been a real marriage because a promise freely given is just as binding as a marriage. It is out of this feeling that she utters vehemently, “I want to leave you Wangel! Please let me go!”(LS.p.99).

Just as with the stranger, she observed no social formalities, so in the event of leaving Wangel, she wants to leave him without formal divorce because, “I don’t care in the least about formalities. It is not the outward form that matters. What I want is that you and I should agree, of our own free will to release each other and cancel the transaction”(LS.p.100). Conversation between Ellida and Wangel is very revealing:

**ELLIDA.** My dear, how little you understand me! I don’t care in the least about the formalities. It’s not the outward form that matters. What I want is that you and I
should agree, of our own free will, to release each other.

WANGEL. [bitterly, nods slowly]. To cancel the transaction, you mean.

ELLIDA. [quickly]. Exactly! Cancel the transaction!

WANGEL. What then, Ellida? Afterwards? Have you thought what the outlook will be for the two of us? How life would be for you and for me?

ELLIDA. It won’t matter. Life will have to go on as best it can. One thing only is important, Wangel! I beg you, I implore you-let me go! Give me my full freedom again!

WANGEL. Ellida, this is a terrible thing you are asking of me. Let me at least have time to consider it. Let us talk it over more carefully. And give yourself time to consider what it is you are doing! (LS.p.100).

So great does her concern for freedom become that she refuses to entertain any genuine concern of Dr. Wangel for her secure future. She just does not bother about her future as long as she lacks her basic freedom. Given the force of her new ideal, she asserts that she must have that freedom today because she wants to face the stranger as a completely free agent. She does not want to dodge the central issue by claiming to be another man’s wife nor by claiming that she has no choice. Because, then it will be no real decision. It is out of complete consciousness of the self that she explains her free will, “I must be free to choose. Choose one way or the other. I must be able to let him go away alone or go with him” (LS.p.101).

She wants to face the reality not as a possessed creature i.e. not as a socially wedded wife of Dr. Wangel nor as a mystically united beloved of the stranger. It is because it is for the first time she has been given a choice and a conscious choice is before her whether to choose the wayward ways of the sea or to choose life embedded in social responsibility. Leaving Dr. Wangel and going with the stranger may be a difficult experience but under the situation
when alternatives are available, both choices have the same connotations i.e. allowing her to make a decision out of full consciousness. Therefore she refuses to share the moral anxiety of Dr. Wangel, who being her husband can't throw her into the uncertainties of future in the hands of an unknown stranger. The argument she advances to Wangel is that when she married him, she knew not much about him. He too, was more or less, a stranger. For Wangel, this idea is morally horrible and unthinkable, but for Ellida, it is something terrifying and attractive. How deep is her desire to be free to be able to decide is well-spoken in her own words, “That is why you must give me my freedom. Release me from all ties. I am not what you look me for. You can see that now yourself. Now that we understand. We can separate... freely”(LS.p. 102). She advises Wangel not to protect her because, “What is there to protect me against. There is no external power or force threatening me. The thing is more deeply seated, Wangel! The pull is within my own mind. And what can you do about that?”(LS.p.102).

In fact, such a state of mind can best be illustrated and understood in terms of Freudian concept of neurotic anxiety. While for Wangel, implications are moral, for Ellida, her ego is threatened by internal forces. As Freud explains that in case of neurotic anxiety, the ego is aroused by its perception of the possibility of its being overwhelmed by the instincts of the Id. The basic paradigm is one of conflict. In this case the conflict exist between incessant instinctual demands of the Id for the same object and the attempts of the ego to counter act the object Cathexis, thus protecting itself from being overwhelmed (anti-cathexis). Her neurotic anxiety born out of Id-ego conflict, comes as a danger signal to the ego that the instinctual demands of the id are striving for expression and that ego is struggling to avoid being overwhelmed, seized and made helpless. Ellida’s neurotic anxiety emerges, clinically speaking, in three different ways i.e. free-floating anxiety, phobia and panic reaction. The fact that she shuts her self up in the room, does not go for her bath (which was some time back had become almost a ritual for her) and looks calm and
composed is nothing but an expression of her free floating anxiety because it springs from her general apprehension that something dreadful will happen to her. The way she refuses to recognise the stranger, the way she hides herself behind Wangel, the way she asks the stranger not to touch her are all expressions of her phobic anxiety because it is manifested in her intense irrational fear. This fear is irrational because it is out of proportion to the actual physical danger presented by the actual feared object in the person of the stranger. The object of fear is nothing but symbolic representation of a temptation to instinctual gratification and behind this phobic anxiety is actually a primitive wish of the id for the object. The moment the stranger comes and presents himself before her with an avowed aim, she stands motionless, still, benumbed and paralysed. All these are expressions of her panic anxiety. She develops a sudden, intense debilitating fear, with no apparent reason. Such a behaviour is an attempt to rid herself of painful anxiety by doing that which id demands. Thus the conflict is genuinely intra-psychic as it occurs between two major provinces of her personality. It is very difficult for Ellida to cope with it since it exists within her mind and because neurotic anxieties are always within the person, therefore they cannot be handled by mere escape or avoidance. It is in the broad frame work of Freudian analysis that Ellida acquaints Wangel with the futility of his efforts to stop or restrain her from taking her own decision. Since she can't come out of her neurotic obsession without facing the stranger as a free individual, therefore the question of observing moralistic concerns just does not arise.

Now that she is on the threshold of the decisive moment that is going to influence her whole life, she stands utterly bewildered, sometimes she thinks that by tomorrow she will have ruined any promise the future held and lost whole of her freedom, and other times she strongly feels that she belongs to the stranger. Torn between two claims over her, she asks finally, "So how can you help me against this? What advice can you give me?"(LS.p.103). On her part, the advice she seeks is not going to be binding, yet Wangel may offer him
something utterly new, she thinks. No wonder, she finds Wangel a step ahead from his earlier stand and position, in that he does agree to give her freedom, not now, but tomorrow when the stranger would have gone and left. It is at this stage that Bolette, who makes an attempt to unlock the knot of her obsession by asking her if she has ever spoken a single loving word to Hilde:

Ellida [half aloud to Bolette]: What's wrong with Hilde? She looked quite upset!

Bolette: Have you never noticed what, day after day, Hilde has been yearning for?

Ellida: Yearning for?

Bolette: Ever since you came to this house?

Ellida: No. no! What?

Bolette: One single loving word from you.

Ellida: Ah! Could this be where I am needed!(LS.p.104).

It is through this questioning that Bolette offers her a new choice and that is that Ellida can enter meaningfully into the realm of motherhood which is a very comfortable position, unchanging by the ravages of time and urges of instinctual outbursts. She clasps her hands to head, stares straight ahead, motionless, as though torn by conflicting thoughts. This is the choice about which she has never thought of so far i.e. mothering Hilde's affections. This idea, in fact, never occurred in her mind earlier because of Bolette, who was as grown as herself. Ellida had been viewing Hilde only in relation to Bolette and never as a child craving for mother's affections. Therefore, Bolette's question turns out to be an eye-opener because it is to Hilde that she can creatively belong. But this choice or option though apparently appealing remains vague and in the air till the stranger comes before her finally. Wangel has already expressed his approval to give her freedom, Hilde has already entered her mind as a new object to work upon and both these things transport her to the world in which freedom and responsibility go together.
she comes out of her lock-up to come near the shore, but not without suspense about final half-an hour torture. She is intent on talking to the stranger herself because she must make her choice of her own free will. To Wangel's attempt to stifle her choice, Ellida gives a strong and firm rebuff:

You can't stop me from choosing. No body can forbid me to leave with him... go with him... if I happen to choose that way. You can hold me here by force against my will. This you can do. But what you can't do is stop me from choosing... choosing in my mind. Choosing him and not you... if I decide. I must choose that way (LS.p.107).

She is candid enough to tell Wangel that there has been nothing in his house to hold her, nothing to support her and nothing to help her, to draw her in. She even goes many steps further when she tells him that life for her in any real sense lost all direction from the moment she came to live with Wangel. Now that the man she should have clung to just as she clung to Wangel is coming after her for the last and the only last time, a chance to start her life afresh, to live her own life... a life both terrifying and alluring, she can't forego. And yet she fears that the bold step she is going to take may not turn out to be an utter failure. She falls a prey to the dread of her decision. It is out of this dread, she starts wavering and tells Wangel. “Believe me there are moments when I think how peaceful, how re-assuring it would all be if I left everything to you... and tried to ignore all these alluring yet destructive forces. But I can’t. No, no, I can’t”(LS.p.108).

She reaches the place where the stranger had asked her to wait. The stranger, on his part, has come fully equipped with all the requirements they may need on the way because he just does not want any delay to come in their way. He has arranged even a cabin for them in the ship and yet he does not want to take Ellida away by force, fraud or guile but out of her own free Will. For Ellida, the answer lies in wringing her hands, “To decide! To decide one's whole life! And no going back”(LS.p.119). The choice has to be decisive. With Wangle around, Ellida does have choice but with the stranger there is no
choice, "I hold on to you like this because I cant not do otherwise" (LS.p.119). Not that the stranger can't find any other woman to marry but that Ellida is the one who has never questioned his will and on his part, he understands her mind too well. But when Ellida finds that the stranger is all set to kill Wangel, she at once stands in front of Wangel, "No, no. Don't kill him: kill me first" (LS.120). In fact the intention of the stranger is not to kill Wangel but only to see the reaction of Ellida at Wangel's elimination from the scene. Ellida is absolutely justified in hiding Wangel because after all she had spent good deal of time with him and Wangel had never given her a cause bitter enough to break off from him. Therefore, to decide things once and for all, she speaks with increasing vehemence:

Wangel, Let me say this and say it so that he hears it! Of course you can keep me here! You have both the power and means to do that. And that is also what you mean to do! But my mind... my thoughts... my desires and longings... these you can't bind! Then they will go roving, ranging... out in to the unknown... which I was made for... and which you have shut me away from! (LS.p.120).

For the first time, Ellida accuses Wangel of stifling her imagination by not allowing a kind of life she was made for. She blames Wangel of transporting her to a place which just could not allow her to have free play of her cravings. In Maslow's terms, Wangel never cared for her meta-needs. He, his daughters and the surroundings were such as did not let Ellida realise herself. As all existentialists blame society to a large extent for not allowing people to be true to their natures, so does Ellida. In Freudian scheme, society works through super-ego mechanisms to restrain the expression of uncivilised impulses. In existential design, society waylays individuals by inducing them to behave in inauthentic and self-alienating ways. While the stranger offered her an illusory world, Wangel's world came out to be no better. Therefore, all her struggle turns out to be an existential search to know and recognise who really she is. In both cases, Ellida feels she has lost not only her sense of identity but also sense of relatedness to nature. This is how she accuses Dr. Wangel from a
point blank range of stifling her imagination. The moment Wangel finds her in such an accusing mood, he at once decides to free her from whatever grip he had over her but he does not free her out of fun or anger. Instead, he frees her out of total love. While giving her ‘absolute freedom, he also frees himself from her responsibility. He tells Ellida that the freedom which she is seeking can’t be attained without responsibility. The two have to go together. From henceforth, she will be responsible for all her actions. While Ellida now, is free to choose, her eyes are opened to the fact that Wangel has acted so, out of immense love for her and she begins to see, “How blind I have been not to see it”(LS.p.121).

G. B. Shaw describes her altered state of mind as:

The moment she feels her self a free and responsible woman, all her childish fancies vanish: The sea man becomes simply an old acquaintance whom she no longer cares for; and the doctor’s affection naturally produces its natural effect.

And since Wangel has acquainted her with a new dimension of life that freedom can’t be realised and felt in a vacuum or void, she learns that it can be realised only through assuming responsibility. She feels the jerk, “Freedom... and responsibility too? That puts different aspect of things”(LS.p.121).

At once she understands the significance of Dr. Wangel’s offer of freedom and responsibility together and therefore even when Dr. Wangel has freed her, she refuses to give any importance to the last warning given by the ship’s last bell. She turns, looks intently at the stranger to tell in a firm voice, “Never can I go with you now”(LS.p.121). and clinging to Wangel, ‘ Oh I will never leave you now’(LS.p.121). and closes the whole chapter with the stranger for ever. Out of this consciousness of the self, she enters the final stage of creative consciousness, in which she actually attains maturity. She is able to see the truth without distortion. The moments of her insight into the significance of freedom which is inextricably linked with responsibility are joyous ones and she comes closer to self-realisation because now she is able to make choices, confront her problems and take responsibility for all her
actions. She reaches the stage in which she is not pushed along by deterministic forces. Now she finds herself not bound by the past, by her role training or by the standards she has been taught by the others. She stands fully conscious of those forces and at the same time, capable of coping with them and freely choosing to act in terms of them or not. As Rollo May puts it, “consciousness of the self gives power to stand outside the rigid chain of stimulus and response, to pause and by a pause to throw some weight on either side to cast some decision about what the response will be.” It is out of this creative consciousness of the self that she tells the stranger, “You will now longer have any power over me at all. To me, you are a dead man... one who came back from the sea and who now returns there. But I no longer fear you. Nor am I swayed by you” (LS, pp.121-122). After all, although the stranger has left, he has left a vacuum which must be filled and that is possible only if Ellida makes some serious attempt to explore some alternative. Dr. Wangel is there but he was there earlier also. She has to place and understand her old decision in some new frame. Fromm sums up such a situation:

Man finds himself surrounded by many puzzling phenomena and having reason, he has to make sense of them in some context which he can understand and which permits him to deal with them in his thoughts. The further his reason develops, the more adequate becomes his system of orientation, that is, the more it approximates reality. But even if man’s frame of orientation is utterly illusory, it satisfies his need for some picture which is meaningful to him. Whether ever he believes in the power of a totem animal or in a rain god or in the superiority or destiny of his race, his need for some frame of orientation is satisfied... the need for a frame of orientation exists on two levels, the first and the more fundamental need is to have some frame of orientation regardless of whether it is true or false. Unless man has such a subjectively satisfactory frame of orientation, he can not live sanely. On the second level, the need is to be in touch with reality by reason, to grasp the world objectively. But the necessity to develop his reason is not as immediate as that to develop some frame of orientation, since what is at stake for man in the latter case is his happiness and serenity, and not his sanity.
Now, as Bolette had suggested her that she should at least have spoken a soft
world to Hilde, Ellida's decision is coloured by her new productive orientation.
As her decision will come out of her free will and choice, she at once becomes
ready to devote herself to Wangel, with the hope that he too will reciprocate in
the same way but there will be a third force of love also and that is devoting
time to children. Ellida's declaration that 'I shall win them' springs out of her
realisation that life just can't be pushed or pulled along in a vacuum. Despite
their mutual incompatibility, it is with this force of love and patience that Dr.
Wangel is able to win her affections, bring her back from the point when she
had become a wreck on the brink of nervous breakdown and that love can't be
allowed to stagnate. It, in turn, has to be transferred to. The mermaid in
Ellida has to die and a mother in Ellida has to take birth. Such a state of mind
can well be illustrated in the light of Erich Fromm's 'Frame of orientation and
devotion' concept. In Fromm's terms, we all need a perspective on reality, a
frame of orientation and devotion, if we are to live productively. Such
orientations are necessary because we need to make good sense out of our
many experiences. Productive Individuals utilise reason as well as feelings in
their attempts at adaptation. A very fine illustration of such an adaptation
emerges when Ellida's previous conception that the biggest mistake of
mankind is the choice to live on land rather than on sea, undergoes a
metamorphosis. She tells Arnholm, that once a creature has settled on land,
there is no going back to the sea. Francis Ferguson sums up her realisation:

The miraculous cure is proved when Ellida herself realizes that
her cherished freedom which the doctor gives her at great cost
to himself does not really consist in following her unregenerate
passion, as she had assumed, but in power to choose her own
course, according to her new clarified vision of her self of other
people, and of the real world. 37

Fromm maintains that we need an object for devotion and that form and content
of that object differs widely among people. For Fromm, freedom is seen not in
traditional terms but in form of ideals such as love, truth and justice which we all
struggle to attain. It is out of this productive orientation that Ellida begins to see
her future in terms of her relatedness, first with children and then with Wangel. She develops a fundamental attitude, a mode of relatedness in all areas of human experience. Such an attitude encompasses her mental emotional and sensory responses to another, to one self and to things. It involves use of her powers and maximum realisation of inherent potentialities. Fromm states that we can use our powers and capacities only if we are free and independent of control by others. Under these conditions, we are able to use our reason and imagination to penetrate to the essence of our experiences. We are capable of mature love, of understanding on an intellectual and emotional level. The fact that she develops an active concern for children Bolette and Hilde for their well-being and benefit is indicative of the realisation of what F. L. Lucas describes as, “Lastly, though freedom is vital, the only real freedom is in the end, not political but personal and individual and freedom means responsibility. Only by accepting personal responsibility, one can become personally free.”

Such a concern involves knowledge of others and an acceptance of other’s weaknesses as well as strengths. By her decision to stay with Dr. Wangel, Ellida fulfills all her needs - the need for identity, in that she becomes aware of her own characteristics and capabilities, need for relatedness, in that she feels the necessity to be in contact with and with one another, need for rootedness, in that she visualises her role as a mother and wife both in Dr. Wangel’s house, and finally she satisfies the need for transcendence to resolve her conflict by acting in a creative manner. Such are the lineaments of her freedom. In visualisation of her new role in the broader perspective of freedom, a very significant question springs up and that is to what extent Dr. Wangel or the stranger contribute to her freedom. While both Dr. Wangel and the stranger have their own personal goals and roles, the fact remains that the final decision lay only and only in the hands of Ellida because freedom is not something which can be had for the asking or something to be sold or purchased in the market or something which some one else can find for us. Instead, it is like the sea in which one has to delve deep to explore and find the shell which contains the pearl of freedom. Fromm’s analysis is illuminating:
Man is everywhere in chains, and his chains will not be broken till he feels that it is degrading to be a bondsman, whether to an individual or to a State. The disease of civilization is not so much the material poverty of the many as the decay of the spirit of freedom and self-confidence. The revolt that will change the world will spring, not from the benevolence that breeds "reform", but from the will to be free. Men will act together in the full consciousness of their mutual dependence; but they will act for themselves. Their liberty will not be given them from above; they will take it on their own behalf.  

Search for freedom in case of Bolette and Arnholm, too needs to be examined as their search too, is based on the question of active choice. Their search adds another dimension to the fundamental article of freedom. Bolette and Arnholm are two important characters in the play, each in his or her own way feels stifled under the weight of crushing circumstances. Both of them struggle a good deal to attain this freedom to realise themselves. Bolette, being the elder daughter of Dr. Wangel develops very strong personal constructs, out of which it is difficult for her to come out. Her world view is conditioned by certain ideals which she has been experiencing by virtue of being the eldest daughter. She has seen her real mother providing her father with all the comforts which are necessary for healthy running of the family to make him utterly satisfied and happy. The joy and happiness in the family is what Bolette has been experiencing while growing up and therefore she develops for herself a fixed image of a woman who is duty-bound, looking after husband, sacrificing all the personal comforts for large well-being of the family. Similarly, while being a student, she develops a fixed image of her teacher Arnholm and fails to read any emotion or feeling in her teacher, which a young and growing girl has always the spark and potential to read. For her, both her father Dr. Wangel and teacher Arnholm are fixed images, each standing for almost the same idealistic virtue. It is this conditioning that helps her fit well into the slot created by the sudden and untimely demise of her mother, leaving her father alone. For almost two years, she has to cage herself in the walls of domestic responsibilities and mothering Hilde, who is a little too small to look after
herself. All the burden of domestic chores falls on her shoulders after mother’s
death and she, on her part, allows herself to be domesticated. Much to the
detriment of claims which she has over herself to attain self-realisation and self-
actualisation, she begins to view everything with her departed mother’s eyes
and therefore has to neglect personal ambitions. She involves herself so fully
and so well in the performance of family obligations that she just does not let
Dr. Wangel feel the absence of her mother. Things turn out to be worse when
her father comes into more trouble i.e. always wrapped up to solve his new
problems born out of his new marriage with a woman who suffers acutely from
neurotic obsessions. She does not question the decision of her father in going
for another marriage and bringing home a new mother for her and Hilde. But
when she finds Ellida very different from her mother, she concentrates the
control of household in her hands and let Ellida spend her time the way she
wants. She makes no attempt whatsoever to hand over the keys of the kitchen
or other rooms to Ellida, in order to cater to her own personal ambitions.
Instead, she remains glued to the performance of duties like her mother used to
perform. It is in this broad framework that Bolette allows her to be cocooned.
She conceives everything as fixed and does not permit any change in the fixed
constructs which she has developed for herself while growing up. Her
childhood tutor, too has become a thing of the past not only because a lot of
time has passed since his departure from her home but also because
whatever he had taught her has become almost obliterated under the heavy
weight of domestic circumstances. And yet Arnholm does command respect in
her heart. But he, too remains an idea, a fixture and a person who is as good
as his father. She views him not as a man but as a teacher and as a friend of
her father. As long as Bolette leads her life according to the fixed notions, fixed
ideals, personal impermeable constructs, she remains a stifled creature. But,
the moment Arnholm acquaints her with a new world which is wider, bigger and
broader, she begins to view everything in terms of choices. No doubt her initial
reaction is that of total rejection of Arnholm’s proposal but later when she
compares the alternatives, she finds his proposal far more attractive.
Therefore, she agrees to his point of view. This is not to say that she surrenders her freedom before Arnholm but she accepts him because he is the man who has come back to offer her a richer, fuller and freer life and that too out of his basic altruistic nature.

Seen in this broad frame work, Bolette is found always busy in sewing, washing, embroidering, looking after Hilde and doing small little things of domestic value. Despite her interest in reading books on botany and geography, looking after the house comes first. However, as and when she finds time, she does lay her hands on reading something educational in the world and that is to fill the voids created in her mind due to non-realisation of her life’s ambitions. Despite being too engrossed in domesticity, she does feel the agony, "we are so cut off from things here “(LS.p.70). In her heart of hearts, she might have welcomed her father’s decision to go in for second marriage but when the new life partner turns out to be an invalid, obsessed with certain preoccupations, behaving in abnormal ways, leading a life as a stranger, rootless, unrelated, unidentified, unloved and one as a freak, she becomes more concerned, responsive and caring towards father and Hilde. Ellida, new entrant in her family just does not fit in the space created by Bolette's mother. She tells Arnholm that her step mother is not very good at doing all the things, “There are so many things she doesn't even see or may be does not want to see... or doesn't care... I don't know which it is which mother used to do well”(LS.p.73). Far from providing much-needed jocund company to Dr.Wangel, Ellida creates an additional plethora of problems forcing Dr. Wangel to be wrapped up in finding solutions. Initially when, Bolette's mother was alive, Dr. Wangel had done so many things for Bolette like hiring the services of home tutor so that Bolette is able to realise herself through education. Even he had planned to send her abroad for higher education but due to problems with the arrival of Ellida, Dr. Wangel has lost his grip on such initiatives, much to the neglect of Bolette's growth needs. Therefore, Bolette makes some attempts to acquaint her father regarding this
neglect of her ambitions through her tutor Arnholm but in vain. Arnholm fails to discuss this aspect with Dr. Wangel because the latter is deeply enmeshed in his nerve-breaking problems. Moreover Bolette is told that financial condition of Dr. Wangel has nose-dived to such an extent that sending her abroad or to university has become almost an impossibility. It is out of this realisation that she becomes a victim of despair and depression which is manifested in many of her utterances before Arnholm. Since her father is a little too busy in her problems, she begins to view Arnholm as a father-substitute. This is another personal construct which she develops under the existing conditions. But on psychic level, she suffers immensely and gives vent to her agony in so many ways. One of those ways is to go back to her old ways which she spent in the cradling and caressing care of her mother. Therefore, she take pains and extra-care to celebrate the mother’s memories by decorating her house, arranging colourful flowers, hoisting flags, placing embroidered stools here and there. The entire decoration she does is to keep her mother’s memory alive. While celebration of her mother’s memories remains a very personal event, yet in order to avoid public questioning about the propriety of enlivening her mother’s memories in the presence of new lady of the house, Bolette gives it a different colouring and others are made to believe that every thing is being done in the honour of her childhood tutor who is coming to their house after a gap of ten years or so. But Bolette’s pressing engagements in the family are so many and deep that she can’t live for long in the memory of old days and therefore she pours out her heart and soul before Arnholm who has tremendous impact on her. But Arnholm is not the man terrifying or attractive like the stranger was to Ellida. Instead, he is only a father substitute, a fixture in her mind. Moreover, as Bolette learns, Arnholm has come to find a cure for Ellida’s nervous problems to relieve Dr. Wangel of his mounting tensions. She is absolutely ignorant of the fact that her father had called him to offer Bolette’s hand to him. She is unable to read anything from Arnholm’s face at all. Therefore, when Arnholm shows an exclusive interest in her, she is able to share her inner cravings with him.
But at the same time, as her father's problems increase, she begins to feel more and more stifled, suffocated and inconvenient. The pictures of surrounding ponds, stationary and shallow waters, the old carps, damp and marshy lands tax her mind because they appear to her as stumbling blocks in her imagination. Her mental agony and pain is beautifully represented by the secluded corner in Dr. Wangel's garden, which is damp, marshy and overshadowed by large stagnant ponds. And her search for freedom and self-realisation is represented by her description that, in the far distance of the fjord is a range of mountains with individual peaks. There is a continuous struggle in her mind regarding the claims which her family situations have on her and claims of her own personal cravings. As for claims of the family, she sometimes believes that leaving father in the hands of a nervous wretch, obsessed woman will be a sin, especially when there is another family member Hilde, who is too young. She just can't break off the shackles of physical as well as psychological world. Her statement, "But I don't think I have the right to leave father" (LS.p.72), is indicative of her inability to leave father.

As regards claims of her 'being' over herself, she finds Arnholm to be the most suitable person to discuss her problems with because she has seen and felt that her father has lost his interest in her due to his own problems. She herself describes her father's conditions, "Poor father has so many things when it comes to point ... for he does not have initiative" (LS.p.72). She finds that her father and new mother are much wrapped in each other. Wangel has so little time to think about her and her future. Therefore in Arnholm, she finds a likable man. She develops a very positive opinion about him. She herself tells that Arnholm is a very good person to have as a friend and advisor who is always ready to help whenever he can. Despite being well off, he has not yet married. Bolette imagines that it is probably not been easy for him to find somebody because practically all the young girls he knows have been his pupils and he says so himself. Therefore, it is upon him that she places her faith but this faith is linked to his closeness with father because Bolette can
not go beyond the thought of getting assistance from her father, “I have no body else I can turn to” (LS.p.110).

To convince Arnholm about her mental condition, she indulges in talking about various issues in great detail, which have been hampering and clipping her urge for outside world for self-enrichment. At times, she becomes a victim of deep seated despair and hopelessness, “Oh, I doubt, it would make much difference on that score, if they did get out there” (LS.p.71). While for Arnholm, the large influx of visitors in summer makes the place nearly like some great traffic junction with the whole world in transit, for Bolette:

Not for us who live here permanently. What good is to us if the world passes through here on its way to the midnight sun? we can’t ever join them. We shall never see any midnight sun. Oh no, we have to go on living here in our nice little fish pond (LS.p.71).

It is out of this despair that she pours out her psychic anguish that she has been pining and longing for to get away from there to know more about all sorts of things. Therefore, she indulges in an act of bad faith when she requests Arnholm to decide things for herself by talking to father. The moment she empowers Arnholm, he is quick enough to come to her rescue. Although he looks totally altruistic and appears parental for Bolette, yet there is keen desire in his own heart to do something for himself also. The realisation that he is already thirty seven years old, with gray hair and still unmarried, is one of the factors that Arnholm is munificent enough to bail out Bolette out of her present predicament. He, therefore, offers his help in realisation of her dreams but leaves the decision entirely on herself. He tells her:

Indeed it depends entirely on your...whether you strike out into the world. Learn all the things you want to share and all the things you sit here dreaming about. Lead a sunnier life, Bolette? (LS.p.110).
Arnholm, on his part, is absolutely right because he is fully acquainted with the predicaments Ellida was placed in and through which she had come to marry the stranger and Dr. Wangel. He knows that in both the cases, she had not exercised her free will through choice and the result was domestic turbulence. He is already very late for marriage and therefore, he can’t run the risk of smothering Bolette’s choices. Moreover, Bolette too, on her part, understands the agony of her father as well as that of Ellida, born out of lack of choices. Therefore, Arnholm is very categorical in telling that choice is hers, “It is you only have to decide’, whether to accept the offer to get away, to see the world, to learn something really thoroughly and all those things that have seemed such a beautiful, impossible, dreams and all those incredible to realise” (LS.p.111). Her first reaction at Arnholm’s offer is that of surprise and astonishment followed by a sense of joy, “Oh! I could laugh and cry for joy. For sheer happiness. So I am really going to have a chance to be. I had begun to fear that life was passing me by” (LS.p.111). Arnholm’s offer comes before her as a silverlining in an otherwise dark future she had begun to visualise. For the first time, some one had come out in the open to do things for her which, her father should have naturally done. The reaction of joy also comes out of the feeling that she has been equating Arnholm with her father, a fixed idea. A choice has been offered, whether to stay on in the stifling family atmosphere or to go outside for personal enrichment. But very soon, Arnholm defines his offer that he will offer her all he can with a question tag: Will you be my wife? Such a question coming from a person whom she had been seeing in the image of father, naturally comes as a shock and therefore it is natural for her to reject the proposal out rightly, “No, no, no! it is impossible! Absolutely impossible” (LS.p.112).

Here again, coming to Eric Berne’s concept of child-parent relationship, childhood being the most impressionable period of life, a child tends to develop fixed relationships, fixed images, in which dynamics of changing relationships remains beyond comprehension. Moreover, her own
fixed role as playing mother to Hilde and nurse to Dr. Wangel, has almost
deadened her creative imagination, that she fails to read or understand the
facial expressions, motives and overtures of her childhood tutor. The fact that
long back Arnholm had developed an illusion about her, when she was a child
and he was her tutor is just beyond the range of her thought and imagination.
Therefore, she finds it hard and rather impossible to come out of her construct
about Arnholm. Not only this, the fact that Arnholm had come to assist her
father, is another factor which cements Bolette's belief in the fixed status and
role as a father figure. That is why, she shudders at the proposal made by
Arnholm and utters, "Surely you can't mean what you say. A man who was
once my tutor! I can't think of you ever being anything else to me"(LS.p.113).
But the moment Arnholm acquaints with the reality of futuristic vision of her life,
especially when her father is no more and when she is married off to a
stranger, she re-enters into a world of dreams, which have been sustaining her
for so long. She stands quiet and deep in thought to speak, "Imagine! To be
free... and to be able to travel. And not to worry about the future. Not to have
stupid worries about living to make ends meet"(LS.p.115) and therefore, begins
to think and see how nice, comfortable secure she will be with Arnholm's arms
around her. In stead of marrying a stranger with or without the presence of her
father, she finds herself safe enough with Arnholm because it is up to him she
has been looking during childhood. Her decision is a wilful exercise of choice,
therefore bound to be permanent. By agreeing to marry, she frees herself
from her fixed pre-emptive personal constructs, which have been hitherto
hampering her freedom.

The foregoing disquisition has given a detailed cartography of the path to
freedom of Ellida, the principal protagonist of The Lady From The Sea. The
discourse used primarily the perspective of Rollo May on the stages of
consciousness, fortified by Erich Fromm's perspective on freedom. The
argument has shown, first the innocence of Ellida and how this innocence was
projected on a mysterious sailor Friman to the point where she became, in
clinical language, a case history of an obsessive compulsive disorder. Driven
by loneliness and weary of waiting for Friman, to return from his wanderings on
the sea, she makes a conventional prudential marriage with an older man Dr.
Wangel but is unable to relate to her husband because of the residual fixation
on Friman. She is unable to relate to Wangel’s two daughters Bolette and
Hilde. Her inability to take charge of the new task evokes a matching alienating
response from the daughters also. She is not able to relate to the restricted
outer environment which is devoid of the vast vistas and expanses of the sea
scapes. Her alienation results in psycho-sexual mal-functioning in every way.
Fortunately, the break from the massive alienation comes when Friman returns
to claim her. In this terrifying encounter, with insight and will, she chooses to
reject him and moves epiphanically into what Rollo May designates as creative
consciousness, skipping in the process ordinary consciousness. It is an event
of arrival, sudden apocalyptic. Her arrival sets up a chain reaction in the lives of
the grown up daughters Bolette and young Hilde. Rightly Aldous Huxley
points out in Human Situation that even a small change in one’s consciousness has significant consequences for others, good or bad. Bolette,
who had stepped into the shoes of her dead mother taking care of a father, is
also able to make a leap in accepting with due deliberation the proposal of her
ex-tutor Arnholm. She frees her self from her constructs and her introjected
’surrogate wifely role’ to the father and motherly role to her younger sister. Her
journey on the road to freedom with love, surrender and responsibility is also
now on the cards, as has been pointed out in the course of the argument that
freedom for Erich Fromm is a blend of reason, imagination , love and devotion.
Without these axial lines, freedom is a travesty of selfishness and egocentricity.
Bolette frees herself, as has been shown in the last few pages of the
disquisition from what Eric Berne calls the child-parent role. She becomes an
adult who decides for herself and enters in to an adult relationship with her
suitor and looks forward to a life of meaning, replete with new opportunities and
possibilities. From her stale, stifling environment, she turns to fresh woods and
pastures new.
Because of the above mentioned changes in the family dynamics, it is hoped that Dr. Wangel will re-new himself with insight and wisdom. One can look forwarded to growing old along with him and look for the best yet to be.

The only person who stands as a hostile force against freedom is Friman who exercised an occult will on Ellida and who on his return tries to brow beat Dr. Wangel. He is not a major character but a domineering, disturbing presence, who is finally laid to rest.

The message of the play for reader's life realities is in terms of the categories of relatedness, rootedness, reason, devotion, imagination (cf. Erich Fromm), and categories of the trajectory from innocence to creative consciousness (cf. Rollo May), is that one should not allow one self to be controlled and fettered by an outside force howsoever vast and enchanting it may be or by any fixed sacrificial role. To enter into vital relationships freely with caring concern, commitment and responsibility, honouring the basic human intercourse of mutuality and dependence, without losing sight of autonomy, one should be human above all and not become a victim of archetypes especially in terms of their fascinating psychedelia.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


4 Ibid., p.246.

5 Ibid., p.247.

6 Ibid., p.249.

7 Ibid., p.250.

8 Ibid., p.251.


19 Ibid., p. 118.


21 Ibid., p. 161.


Michael Meyer tells us the significance and source of Mrs. Wangel’s name as Ellida. He says that, in the Saga of Frithiof the Bold, there is a ship named Ellidi, “which”, Halvdan Koht points out in his biography of Ibsen, “there means something like ‘the storm-goer’. Such a name gave a stronger suggestion of storm and mysterious troll powers; the ship Ellidi in the Saga was almost like a living person fighting its way against evil spirits that tried to drag it down”.

23 F.L. Lucas, p. 211.


(All subsequent quotations from the text have been taken from this edition and marked as LS in parentheses).


27 Ibid., pp.30-31.


