CHAPTER II

CONTEMPORARY
SOCIO – CULTURAL
CONDITION OF EUROPE
This chapter deals with the contemporary socio cultural conditions of Europe during Ibsen’s time which deeply influenced the literary work of that period and of Ibsen as well. A brief portrayal of Ibsen’s contemporary European society will be the subject matter of this chapter.

The events before the advent of Nineteenth century lay the foundation for the several changes that took place in that century. The nineteenth century, in broad terms, was a period marked by sudden and unexpected breaks with traditional ways of viewing and interacting with the world. It was a period of revolution. The entire continent was under the sway of several revolts and protests and changes. Right from the start of French Revolution, to the submission of various powers before France, followed by severe oppressions by the French ruler, Napoleon Bonaparte, to opposition by other countries like Austria, England, Russia, Prussia, and in later stage, by Holland, Germany, Spain, etc. the entire continent was under the effect of revolutions. Most of the countries had become hostile towards the oppression levied upon them by France. Austria tried to fight it. “Austria's object had been to destroy Napoleon's system of dependencies and "to restore to their rightful possessors all those lands belonging to them respectively before the Napoleonic usurpations.” (Robinson 620). Similar kinds of feelings were reflected by most countries. The Battle at Waterloo took away Napoleon’s authority. “Finding that the allied armies of the Russians, Prussians, and Austrians, which had at last learned the necessity of cooperating against their powerful common enemy, were preparing to cut him off from France, he retreated early in October and was totally defeated in the tremendous "Battle of the Nations," …” (Ibid 623). By now France had understood the difficulty in re-establishing its supremacy. It was aware that “whatever disagreement there might be among the allies on other matters, there was perfect unanimity in their
attitude toward "the enemy and destroyer of the world's peace." They solemnly proclaimed him an outlaw, and devoted him to public vengeance.” (Ibid 623)

“All the countries oppressed by France wanted to take some strict measure for which all the allies met at Vienna for its session on November 1, 1814” (Ibid 623). They came together against France (1815) and this arrangement lowered the spirit of victory of Napoleon but soon differences arose among the allies (with Russia and Prussia on one side and Austria and England on the other) which reawakened the spirit of conquest in Napoleon. After, great consideration, a settlement was made with the creation of Poland. Number of changes took place in the geographical distribution of the states and a controversy arose regarding the hold over Germany which disheartened Germany, which wanted to be become a national state. Demand for the liberation of Germany gave way to another series of hostilities which was further aggravated because of the suppression by Metternich who imposed various kinds of restrictions on people:

The attack upon the freedom of the press, and especially the interference with the liberty of teaching in the great institutions of learning, which were already becoming the home of the highest scholarship in the world, scandalized all the progressive spirits in Germany. Yet no successful protest was raised, and Germany as a whole, acquiesced for a generation in Metternich's system of discouraging reform of all kinds. (Ibid 635)

Metternich persuaded the other powers of Europe to fight against the revolutionary uprisings. Even Italy was, according to him, "a geographical expression". (Ibid 636) because it did not have any unified powers. He invited Russia, Prussia, France and England to fight against the revolt in Italy but later England
condemned the interference of Metternich in the domestic affairs of Italy. This revolt produced a leader who opposed the tyranny of Metternich in the form of Mazzini who formed an association called ‘Young Italy’ (Ibid 639). There were differences regarding the methods to be adopted for the unification of Italy into a nation. While Mazzini favored republican approach, the others believed in the papal parties. The main obstacle in it was Austria which still controlled parts of Italy:

It had become clear that no effort after reform could be successful either in the Papal States or in the kingdom of Naples so long as Austria held Lombardy and Venice. The expulsion of the foreigner was therefore not merely the task of those who sought to give the Italian race its separate and independent national existence, it was the task of all who would extinguish oppression and misgovernment in any part of the Italian peninsula. (Fyffe 679)

It was only about a half century later that it became a nation after the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. Austria handed over Venetia to Italy. The romans joined Italy and Rome was made the capital. In the Words of Robinson, “the work of Victor Emmanuel and Cavour was consummated by transferring the capital to the Eternal City.” (Robinson 667)

The demand of liberalism reappeared on the scene with the Turkish oppression of the Greeks. A tyrannous domination of Turks was checked by the intervention of England, France and Russia who demanded the freedom of Greece. It was followed by the independence of Belgium. Another course of revolts were prominent during the year 1848. “The Year of Revolutions,” 1848, witnessed the uprising of popular democratic ideas, which began in France and spread to many nations in Europe,
resulting in the fall of several thrones. In 1852 the Second French Empire was established by Napoleon III.” (Morris.)

Opposition grew stronger and stronger to oust Maternichh and to remove any obstructions from Austria so that Italy and Germany be unified:

By the end of March, 1848, the prospects of reform were bright indeed. Hungary and Bohemia had been guaranteed constitutional independence; the Austrian provinces awaited their promised constitution; Lombardy and Venetia had declared their independence of Austria; four Italian states had obtained their longed-for constitutions, and all were ready for a war with Austria; Prussia was promised a constitution, and lastly, the National Assembly at Frankfurt was about to prepare a constitution for a united Germany. (Robinson 646).

Under the influence of Mazzini, Italy declared a Roman republic. It took away all powers of pope.

Austria suffered many set backs but it eventually started to regain its power, which, somewhere, made the efforts for independence of Germany, look quite futile. “Race rivalry proved his friend in his Austrian domains just as republicanism tended to his ultimate advantage in Italy.” (Ibid 647) After a short period, the conditions which had been favorable for Austria altered with the beginning of the Crimean war, “waged by France and England against Russia (1853–1856)” (Ibid 654) in which Russia was defeated. In the meanwhile, efforts were constantly made for the unification of Italy and Germany when another problem of “Schleswig-Holstein affair” arose. Denmark claimed its permanent right over some of the provinces of
Schleswig-Holstein, which were inhabited by German population and which had been under its control till then.

William I, of Prussia and his minister Bismark worked for the independence of Italy. Their scheme was boosted by the Schleswig-Holstein, issue:

What the German people desired in 1864 was that Schleswig-Holstein should be attached, under a ruler of its own, to the German Federation as it then existed; what Bismarck intended was that Schleswig-Holstein, itself incorporated more or less directly with Prussia, should be made the means of the destruction of the existing Federal system and of the expulsion of Austria from Germany.... The German people desired one course of action; Bismarck had determined on something totally different; with matchless resolution and skill he bore down all the opposition of people and of the [European] courts, and forced a reluctant nation to the goal which he himself had chosen for it (Fyffe 939).

A very clever minister, as Bismark was, he managed to provoke Austria for a war after a series of planned events. He had also managed to get the support Of Napoleon III. The war took place and Prussia defeated Austria. The Germans, north of the main river were grouped under the North German federation. Many other changes were made.

Napoleon felt duped by the victory of Prussia. He had hoped much more but he gained nothing hence, he tried to instigate the Southern Germany to support him in his war against Prussia, but it was of no use. Germany united for making itself a nation. France felt humiliated:
National Assembly had been elected by the people in February, 1871, to make peace with Germany and to draw up a new constitution. Surrounded by the German princes, William, King of Prussia and President of the North German Federation, was proclaimed German Emperor in the palace of Versailles, January, 1871. In this way the present German empire came into existence. With its wonderfully organized army and its mighty chancellor, Bismarck, it immediately took a leading place among the western powers of Europe. (Ibid 665-6)

Next in succession came the oppressions of the Christians by the Turks. Another war was held, with Western Europe (for the rescue of the Christians) against the Turks. The Turks were defeated and a congress session was held in Berlin in which following settlements were made:

The Congress of Berlin determined that Montenegro, Servia, and Roumania should thereafter be altogether independent. The latter two became kingdoms within a few years, Roumania in 1881 and Servia in 1882. Bosnia and Herzegovina, instead of becoming a part of Servia, as they wished, were to be occupied and administered by Austria, although the Sultan remained their nominal sovereign. Bulgaria received a Christian government, but was forced to continue to recognize the Sultan as its sovereign and pay him tribute. (Robinson 667)

The treaty was important in the history of Europe but not fit to solve the problem. It created unrest which was responsible for the next historical war.

In the north of the continent, Denmark, Sweden and Norway, together formed the Scandinavia. Denmark had the hold over Norway for a long time. It is only after it
had disputes with England and it suffered heavy losses that it finally handed over Norway to Sweden:

In 1397 Norway became a province of Denmark and was dominated by that country until 1814, when Denmark ceded Norway to Sweden. …During the Napoleonic Wars (1799-1815), efforts by England to blockade the European continent led to naval clashes with Denmark. Copenhagen was twice bombarded by British fleets, first in 1801 and again in 1807, and the Danish navy was destroyed. As a result, Denmark was largely cut off from Norway. The Danish monarch reluctantly sided with French emperor Napoleon I. By the Peace of Kiel (1814) Denmark ceded the island of Helgoland to the British and gave Norway to Sweden. In return, Denmark obtained Swedish Pomerania, which it later exchanged for Lunenburg, previously held by Prussia… A surge of Norwegian nationalism in the 19th century led to the dissolution of the union with Sweden. Norway became an independent nation in 1905, with a constitutional monarch as head of state and a democratically elected government”. (Microsoft Encarta 2009)

The next era in the history of Europe began roughly from around 1870’s with the new imperialism. Colonization, expansion of trade, economic benefits were some of the notable features of this era:

Although European colonial expansion at the end of the 19th century was called New Imperialism, the motives of colonizers remained the same as in earlier periods. They usually sought economic advantages, but these were hard to disentangle from political and strategic motives.
The main differences in this era were the number of competing colonial powers and the parts of the world they chose to colonize. Almost all European powers participated, and they sought colonies in Africa and in the Pacific.” (Microsoft Encarta 2009)

The nineteenth century was a period of great turmoil in Europe. Wars, unrest, extension of frontiers, challenging the various authorities, etc. were the dominant factors which gave Europe its geographical and political demarcations. But inspite of these revolutions, the period proved fruitful in many ways. There was an immense development in the scientific tendencies of people. Experimentation and discoveries revolutionized the era. In broad terms we can divide the nineteenth century into three parts. The first comprising of the period of Napoleonic wars, which had reactions and counteractions. The second phase comprises of great political changes including the unification of Italy and Germany and the third phase includes the period of colonization by Europe. Political changes were very clearly evident but simultaneously other changes also took place. Among some other noticeable changes that took place during the age were, the rise of nationalism, the extension of military power in many states, reformation in the religious beliefs, expansion of trade and commerce, extensive adoption of new industrialization techniques, urbanization, development of scientific technology, development in literature, etc.

Changes such as the Industrial Revolution and political liberalization spread first and fastest in Western Europe—Britain, France, the Low Countries, Scandinavia, and, to an extent, Germany and Italy. Eastern and southern Europe, more rural at the outset of the period, changed more slowly and in somewhat different ways.

Contemporary Europe had far reaching impacts on all people including the people. Whether it was the affluent class, the middle class or the poor people, none
could escape the affects of the changes that were taking place during that time. As stated earlier, that age not only affected the political life but it had powerful impacts in the social and cultural life of people as well. One noticeable change that took place during those years was in the literary field. Like society, literature also went through drastic changes. Nineteenth century, to be precise, was an age of social transformations. These transformations had profound effect on various sectors of society.

Society has witnessed several alterations from time to time. The impact of these changes has influenced the life of a common man and the situations he lives in. literature, as we know is the representation of the society. the issues prevalent in the society due to these changes have often been the theme and plot of several literary works. Each literary age has certain marked and significant characteristics of its own. These characteristic features magnetize many literati. Ibsen is one of such literati who could not but involve in these issues. Moreover, he has been a great critic of society and the prevalent social aspects which encumber a smooth and prosperous social life. His greatest pieces of works describe the society as it was during his age. This chapter shall throw some light on the contemporary sociocultural condition of Europe during his life time.

Dr. Harold Damerow, writes in his article, “The Nineteenth Century:

The 19th century was also a century of progress, peace, and tremendous social change. The Industrial Revolution which had begun in England during the second half of the 18th century, spread to the Netherlands and France; from there to Germany, Northern Italy, the United States, and Japan. By the end of the century, it was beginning to have an impact on Russia. England played a prominent role for
bringing the change in Europe. The century owes most of its industrial changes to England or to be more précise to the age of Victoria. The reign of Queen Victoria was marked with not only the progress of England but the whole of Europe because England affected the overall development of the entire continent. It was a age of development, characterised by stability, progress and social reforms, on one hand and great problems such as poverty, injustice and social unrest; It was an age of social and cultural changes. The foundation of the Victorian era was laid on the principles of duty and hard work, respectability: a mixture of both morality and simplicity, severity and conformity to social standards (possessions of good manners, ownership of a comfortable house, regular attendance at church and charitable activity); it distinguished the middle from the lower classes and charity and philanthropy: an activity that involved many people, especially women.

There were basically three stratifications of the society in the nineteenth century Europe. The working class, the middle class and the upper class. The working class performed the labour work, the middle class performed cleaning work and the upper class had to perform no work at all. The working class was characterized by poor health conditions. They had very difficult life. Due to the scarcity of money, they had no prospects of education or entertainment. The workers of this class included women and children along with men. They had very long working hours. Scarcity of food and nutrition lowered the health conditions of the people. The living conditions of the people were very dissatisfactory as well. The dwelling places of this class were
characterized with overcrowded dwellings with poorly ventilated homes and no sewage or drainage systems:

Within what seemed a closed and rigid social structure the working classes constructed their own exclusive world, remote from the acquisitive, accumulative impulses of the Victorian economy. In part, it was an escape from the harshness of the real world, in part an attempt to create community in the anonymity of the industrial town. Ultimately, through the growth of education and democracy, improvements in living standards, working conditions, housing, food and dress, the working classes became, to a degree, participant members of society, but for most of the period covered by these writings [1820-1920] they were both excluded, and excluded themselves, from public life...The working classes, it seems, for long rejected this unpalatable and alien notion. (Burnett 18-19)

The working class believed in acceptance of life. They adhered to their routine life meant only to survive and continue the aimlessness in it. They accepted all the terms and conditions of the hardships of life quietly and submissively:

There is a sense of patient resignation to the facts of life, the feeling that human existence is a struggle and that survival is an end in itself. Especially is this so in relation to the early death of wives or children - a fatalistic attitude that 'God gives and God takes away', and that although one may mourn, one does not inveigh against the Fates which, to us, seem to have treated some so cruelly. Such resignation was, in part, the product of a long history of deprivation and suffering by which, for generations past, working people had been accustomed
to poverty, personal tragedy and limited expectations; for some it was reinforced by the religious teaching that this world was, in any case, a vale of tears, and that happiness could only be expected in the life to come. These attitudes are true of the great majority, though not of all. In a few who are politically motivated or involved in trade union activities ... the resentment against misery and exploitation is open and expressed, and it is noticeable that a more critical tone develops over time. [Ibid14].

The fact was that men and women of the working classes were materially very poor. Although poverty reigned in their households, they never complained of it. In other words they had no choice or power to revolt hence they led their lives without any confrontations with it. They worked harder and harder in order to manage their livings and to survive. Their lives were limited to their homes and workplaces. They had no interests in politics or any national events. Their cultural and educational domains rarely existed. Survival was the key factor and sole motivation behind their living. They were naturally robbed off any aspirations and wishes and preferred just to live. In the words of John Burnett:

The picture which emerges is of men and women who are materially very poor by contemporary standards, who are uncomplaining in their poverty, who lead lives of hard work but rarely expect to find fulfillment from it, and for whom the family, interpersonal relationships, and relationship with God are centrally important. Their intellectual and cultural horizons are strictly limited: very few concern themselves with national events or politics, even with local trade union or labour movements; they are uninterested in material acquisition or
achievement as such; they are not socially mobile and barely conscious of class beyond a recognition that the 'masters' constitute a different order of society into which they will never penetrate. Their aspirations are modest to be respected by their fellows, to see their families growing up and making their way in the world, to die without debt and without sin. Such happiness and satisfactions as life has to offer are to be found in social contacts within groups - the family, the work-group, the chapel or, for a few, the public house; here meaningful relationships can be made, experiences exchanged, joys and sorrows shared. (Ibid 18)

The women had to do their own household works and then they had to go to do the chores for the privileged women but some women did work in factories to keep their poor families away from starvation. This was even ridiculed by many men who preferred women to do the household works:

Many groups of men argued vigorously that women should stick to family concerns. By the 1830s and '40s one result was the inception of laws that regulated women’s hours of work (while leaving men free from protection or constraints); this was a humanitarian move to protect women’s family roles, but it also reduced women’s economic opportunities on grounds of their special frailty. (Britannica Encyclopedia)

The men had to go to earn their daily bread. The children belonging to this category were also instrumental in earning and supporting their families by working in mills and factories. Various reforms were introduced for the betterment of these people. The working and lower classes were more liberal with their thoughts,
behaviors, and explored sexual freedom, though high society looked down upon them for doing so.

The next in category come the middle class people. In the middle class families usually only men worked and provide the income to run the house. This class was a conglomeration of people such as merchants, engineers, shopkeepers and other professionals. Richard Trainor has adopted a broad definition of 'middle-class': 'all employers, all non-manual employees and all (apart from the landed aristocracy and gentry) people supported by independent income' (674). E. J. Hobsbawm, in his book *Industry and Empire*, identifies two middle classes: the 'lower middle class', including shopkeepers, small employers, innkeepers, minor tradesmen and so on, and the 'genuine middle class', consisting of legal and medical professionals, large industrial capitalists such as shipowners and mineowners, and those in lucrative commercial occupations, especially merchants and bankers (154-7). According to Fulcher and Scott (2003) "those who came to be called the middle classes are those employed in professional, managerial, administrative and various technical occupations in business and public sector organizations. This includes such occupations as personnel managers, doctors and civil servants" (709).

Middle class families shared a respect for individual achievement. They shared a positive attitude towards regular work. They emphasized education and it served as a basis on which the middle classes communicated with one another. Scholarly persuits were encouraged. In the bourgeois culture, a specific ideal of family life was essential: family as the most important unit, a community held together by emotional ties and fundamental loyalties. Strictly differentiated by sex
and dominated by the pater side, the family was the kernel of the society. (Kocka 234)

Historians of the Victorian period have also seen the keeping of servants as an important indicator of middle-class self-identity. E. J. Hobsbawm, in *Industry and Empire*, writes:

The widest definition of the middle class or those who aspired to imitate them was that of keeping domestic servants. Their numbers, it is true, increased very substantially from 900,000 in 1851 to 1.4 million in 1871 ... But in 1871 there were only about 90,000 female cooks and not many more housemaids, which gives a more precise - though narrow - measure of the real size of the middle class; and as a gauge of the even more affluent, 16,000 private coachmen. Who were the rest of the servant-keepers? Perhaps mainly the aspiring members of the "lower middle class", striving for status and respectability (157)

Many members of this 'lower middle class' would have kept one or at the most two servants, key indicators of their social status. So important was this aspect of middle-class life that some historians argue that social classification systems should incorporate the presence of co-residential servants as a central definition of 'middle class' (Mills and Schurer 157).

Middle-class women were not expected to work, and the census enumerators' books for middle-class areas tend to reflect this, with a very low proportion of married women recorded as having an occupation.

Bourgeois culture could flourish only in towns and cities. There had to be peers with whom one could meet in clubs or associations at feasts and cultural events. For all these kind of practices one had to have a sound economic status. Class
difference persisted. The merchants, entrepreneurs, capitalists, the learned professors, judges etc. tried to maintain distance from the aristocracy and the monarchy. However, time headed towards the lessening of the gap between the aristocracy and the middle class as seen later. The middle classes could be seen purchasing the aristocratic lands, bourgeois aristocratic cooperation at the upper level, the imitation of the aristocratic lifestyle by the rich upper middle class families. These propertied groups who were usually, lawyers and clergy, doctors and officials, professors and teachers etc were the influential class of the society.

The third in social stratification comes the elite class or the upper class. This class enjoyed several advantages gained through inheritance. The wealth came from inherited lands or investments. This group included people from the church and nobility. The lower classes had opportunities to gather and socialize at church and during holidays. The upper classes held their own social events and utilized number of occasions to gather throughout the season.

As far as the livings of women were concerned, the women of the upper middle class enjoyed a complete education which was set as an eligibility criterion for them for their marriage. The other classes however did not enjoy the privilege of receiving a full and complete education always. The life of a lady was set upon certain social codes and rules. They had to be, in particular, very careful about their appearance and social behavior. They were forbidden to enjoy a free and self willed lifestyle as the men could. This condition usually prevailed with the female fraternity in totality else they were not accepted as respectable social beings:

Class was not merely an economic affiliation but also a scale of behaviors and norms that varied by status and gender. Both parties, but especially women, had to pass character tests to be considered
marriageable. The main requirement for a man was that he be a good
provider; the primary requirement for a woman was chastity, and an
occupation with an unsavory reputation was enough to sully the most
blameless woman. Moreover, any fall in her past life or even one with
the defendant indicated to some men that such a woman was not due
the title of 'wife (Frost 82).

The lives of men were also based on certain social codes of conduct. But this
was more to be followed in the upper classes. Here the men had to follow the rules
meant for them like the rules of being a great father and a protective husband. They
were socially restricted to follow the duties of the head of a family. They held their
prime duties towards their ladies and families. Social gatherings were often places
where the social etiquettes had to be followed in conformity.

Societal norms taught men and women to behave with modesty and
prudence. Those in the upper echelons of society closely adhered to rules of etiquette.
Forms of entertainment varied in different classes. Middle and upper classes read and
studied novels and other form of literature whereas the lower class did not get the
opportunity to do so. The working hours and the kind of work meant for the working
class left them with little time and opportunity to enjoy life through literary sources of
entertainment. The women of the lower class had their lives indulged in hard labor
and toil. On the contrary the life of the women of the higher classes joined various
social groups. But certain things that remained unchanged for all the women were the
social restrictions imposed on them. Women had only two professions left for them
which included either writing or being a governess. Writing was not one of those
works which could be carried by all women and the other work of being a governess
did not stratify them in any class. Being a governess was being between a servant and
a lady who meant neither a lower class nor a middle class. Earlier women were not allowed to obtain any formal education but slowly things changed and they were permitted to take admissions in colleges and universities. With certain reform laws in England situation of women altered. With the passage of time they could enter the fields of teaching, medicine and law etc., otherwise apart from education, their living schedules included specific sports and outdoor activities but they were specific and limited. With the passage of time the women sports increased in number and allowed more and more female participation.

Men had a difference in their living patterns. As a dominating gender, they mobilized in life more freely. They joined various social clubs and social meetings. These clubs and meetings also included games such as gambling and other card games. A man could amass great wealth simply by choosing a woman of great means, as her property would transfer to the man once married. But laws remained more in favour of this powerful gender. Where a woman had to prove number of things to be divorced from her husband, the man could gain it only on the grounds of proven adultery which is why the legal procedures remained quite low. A man was not only a master of his own life but the entire power of the family remained under his sole discretion. The wife was the moral head who was responsible for the entire family’s moral behavior.

The family was chiefly patriarchal with the man as the head of the house who lived with his single wife and children. He represented authority and responsibility towards his family. Socially he was forbidden to keep relations with more than a woman.

The 19th century family life comprised of the man as the head of the family with his wife and children dependant on him. The child was usually the centre of the
family. While in the wealthier homes, much of the child-rearing activities were performed by nursemaids and governesses, the children were always under the perusal of their parents and the parents derived much more pleasure from them than admitted. The fatherhood determined the fate of the child.

Marriage was a very respectable institution, a very holy part of the society. It was based on strict disciplinary values and familial codes of conduct. “Marriage and the family was all that was "holy" and wholesome and idealized that domestic values triumphed over a heartless world. But this premise was not the norm as prior to 1837, life in the Victorian period had consisted of much promiscuity”. (Hughes 28)

Families had their own importance although wives were dominated by their husbands. As stated earlier they were expected to accept their husbands however they were without any protest. They had no choice and had to accept whatever came their way whether they liked it or not. They could not raise any voices or stand for themselves. “One's wife was expected to accept the immoral behavior of her husband as she retained the rank of his "first and dearest friend." It wasn't until the 1830s-1840s that "home" became the cultural norm.” (Cruickshank and Burton 181). It was the wife's duty to always respect and obey her husband. In times of distress she had to soothe her husband and family. At home, the man's failings in other areas could be overlooked. They were not in turn, however, to bring up her domestic issues as they would only serve to disturb the cheerful and delightful complacency of the home. Much advice on this subject was received in the women's publications that she should not expect the same kind of support from her husband as her husband received from her. The working fronts were quite distinct for the two genders. A husband was the official caretaker of his family and the wife was the custodian of the home. The areas of management of both the individuals were distinct.
Alfred Lord Tennyson explained this concept of gender difference most realistically as suitable for those times. In his poem, *The Princess*, he differentiates the tasks of the husband and wife which enabled the household in its smooth functioning:

but this is fixt
As are the roots of earth and base of all;
Man for the field and woman for the hearth:
Man for the sword and for the needle she:
Man with the head and woman with the heart:
Man to command and woman to obey;
All else confusion…

The middle-class European man expected their homes to reflect a moral vision of life and thus affecting the family as a whole for the better. It was, of course, the woman's duty to be moral teacher, whether she was a mother, a sister, a daughter, or a wife. A woman was an incarnation of spirituality, purity and morality. The wife was the moral head who was responsible for the entire family's moral behavior. “She will be very lonely while living with her husband. She must not expect to open her heart to him fully, or that, after marriage, he will be capable of the refined service of love. The man is not born for the woman, only the woman for the man. "Men cannot understand the hearts of women." The life of Woman must be outwardly a well-intentioned, cheerful dissimulation of her real life.” (Ossoli 175)

The prime duty of the women of the house was to cater to the moralistic and spiritual needs of her family before anything else. John Heaton of Leeds told his wife Fanny that he often felt disturbed, angry or misanthropic; "I hope you will "preach" to
me whenever you feel prompted to do so, that you may instill some of your goodness into me and make me more like yourself. (Heaton 4)

She was the most influencing factor in a child’s life. She shared all good values with her family including her husband. This is how she contributed in the social development. She was supposed to comfort and soothe the family through her contribution as the moral head of the family. In short, a woman was everything but an individual. Another important role of a woman in the society was that of a governess. The disaster this brought to the life of a woman cannot be neglected. Contrary to a lady, a governess was forced to work in all kinds situations. She could be blessed enough to get an opportunity to work in a pious family atmosphere but she could be equally cursed to work in such places where immorality was deep rooted. She was always in fear of losing her purity and the society feared her unintentional contribution in lowering the social and moral values. In other words, the governess "was meant to police the emergence of undue assertiveness or sexuality in her maturing charges and she was expected not to display willfulness or desires herself". (Poovey 196)

In his notes to *A Doll’s House*, Ibsen wrote that "A woman cannot be herself in contemporary society; it is an exclusively male society with laws drafted by men and with counsel and judges who judge feminine conduct from the male point of view."

Talking about the immorality that prevailed in Norway, which affected the image of a woman, he replied, when interviewed by R.H. Sherard, for an article that appeared in *The Humanitarian* in 1897, about woman in Scandinavia, in the following words:

What is the position of women in Scandinavia? In some ways advanced. You must have seen our 'studentessen' walking about the streets in their academicals. Many of these girls come up from the
country and live alone in lodgings, and, as you may have noticed, are very well able to take care of themselves. Again, where society is as thoroughly immoral as it is in the towns of Norway, and here in particular, woman enjoys more power than she does when the virtues are practised. Consider for instance, the position that woman holds in Paris, where the courtesan of the hour has more power than the corps of ministers. The position is not one that flatters the woman-idealistic, but there it is none the less.

Ibsen blamed the contemporary society for the plight of a woman. He believed that it is the society which drives the women in a situation where she is forced to accept her downfall and compromise with her virtues. This was a common situation in Europe where most of the women living away from their homes and usually belonging to the working class met this fate.

Earlier the entire authority of running a life lay with the man but slowly things changed. The man still remained dominant but now his main task concentrated on his work outside his home whereas his wife took care of the family needs and requirements. The home was the wife's domain and the outside world her husband's. There was a gradual change in the 'patriarchal organization':

Between 1820 and 1870, war had been raged against those who practiced physical-force patriarchy, much of which existed in the working class. Domestic violence was kept very much hidden within the family. It wasn't until the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 that divorce was transferred from the jurisdiction of the Church to the civil courts where it was handled more quickly and at a lower cost. As the number of divorces began to rise, so did the publicity in the daily
newspapers with no details left out. Instead of the negative reaction to this form of behavior, the advice publications still enforced the male dominance in the family unit. The failure of the marriage was deemed the wife's fault. The message was still clear; the husband's duty was to provide for the family and govern it, the management of the family belonged to the wife. (Venn 246-70).

The children had special places in the family. Where the ethical values were transferred to a child through her mother, the financial security was given to him by the father. But the father played a very authoritative role. He adopted the means of beating and punishing the child whenever necessary. This often led to severe physical punishments. But as time went on, these attitudes began to change and in 1889 laws passed to prevent cruelty towards their children.

The period witnessed a distinctive change in ideas regarding gender relations. The traditional idea of natural male supremacy was heading towards the modern notion of gender equality. Constant and vigourous efforts were made but by no means achieved. Important legal, educational, professional and personal changes took place, but by 1901 full, unarguable gender equality remained almost as utopian as in 1800. The Married Women’s Property Act of 1882 and 1892 removed the husband’s control over his wife’s money. Yet political changes did not take place until after the First World War when the 1918 Act allowed women over 30 to vote. Women over 21 had to wait until 1939.

Among the many changes that took place in Europe, one of the major changes which took place was the commencement of the industrial progress followed by the Industrial Revolutions:
Industrialization took place earlier and more rapidly in Britain than anywhere else because existing conditions were favorable in England. A system of internal waterways and canals and the absence of physical barriers to trade made the transport of goods less difficult than in other nations. Coalfields and thick forests, located conveniently close to large deposits of metal ores, provided fuel to power the furnaces that produced iron. Thriving commercial banks provided financing for investments in industrial plants and machinery. (Microsoft Encarta 2009)

England had been the crux of the industrial progress. The availability of resources enhanced the industrial progress in Britain:

The year 1851 was memorable in England as that of the Great Exhibition. Thirty-six years of peace, marked by an enormous development of manufacturing industry, by the introduction of railroads, and by the victory of the principle of Free Trade, had culminated in a spectacle so impressive and so novel that to many it seemed the emblem and harbinger of a new epoch in the history of mankind, in which war should cease, and the rivalry of nations should at length find its true scope in the advancement of the arts of peace. (Fyffe 829)

Small towns were overtaken by growing industries to become uncoordinated and sprawling industrial dwelling areas. Rail towns soon developed as main rail junctions. These towns were close to other industrial towns like which became densely urban, by 1850 half the working classes shifted to cities. The agricultural
revolution was another feature of this change. The new and more mechanized methods of farming proved a boon in this field:

Agricultural improvement not only produced more food at cheaper prices, it also allowed farms to produce more food with fewer workers. Workers who could no longer find work on farms migrated to the towns in search of employment. As a result, there was a dramatic shift in population during the 19th century from the agricultural southeast to the Midlands and the north, where industry was located. (*Microsoft Encarta 2009*)

Time and the arduous and strenuous practices reduced and farming became easy and fruitful but with certain limitations. The rich landowners adopted these techniques and brought a great advancement in their business. This helped them earn a lot of money but on contrary it had very damaging effects on the lives of the peasant class. They had neither land nor money to employ new methods of farming. Rather they were left in a even more wretched and pathetic condition. Even if any of those had any land at all it was very little and hence it was of no use. So they sold these lands and shifted to nearby towns to work as labors. Thus the condition of the rich class bettered and that of the poor class worsened. The growth in technology had either very beneficial or very harmful effects.

This rapid urban growth was of course produced by the development of new factories operating with steam power (Watt), other discoveries such as the battery (Volta) and the textile mill (Cartwright), and to the spread of the railways in the 1830s and 1840s.

Yet with the growth of industry, the swift populations spurt and spread of the railway changed the character of Britain too rapidly for many to understand.
Urbanism gained momentum with the new rail and transport methods. The country people drifted towards town areas in search of work and employment:

The development of English manufacturing industry which took place between 1790 and 1830, accompanied by the rapid growth of towns and the enrichment of the urban middle class, rendered the design of Pitt, which would have transferred the representation of the decayed boroughs to the counties alone, obsolete, and made the claims of the new centers of population too strong to be resisted. (Fyffe 648)

By 1850 half the working class shifted to Britain. Industrial growth, development of cities, population spurt, development of railways etc. all braced up the newer side of Europe. Small towns were purchased for the establishment of growing industries which attracted huge population making these areas densely urban.

Changes such as the Industrial Revolution and political liberalization spread first and fastest in Western Europe—Britain, France, the Low Countries, Scandinavia, and, to an extent, Germany and Italy. Eastern and southern Europe, more rural at the outset of the period, changed more slowly and in somewhat different ways.

As the Industrial Revolution progressed, there was further social stratification. There was a large gap, for example, between skilled and unskilled labor, but beneath the industrial workers was a submerged "under class" — contemporaries referred to them as the "sunken people" —which lived in poverty. In mid-century skilled workers had acquired enough power to enable them to establish Trade Unions (Socialism became an increasingly important political force) which they used to further improve their status, while unskilled workers and the underclass beneath them remained much more susceptible to exploitation, and were therefore exploited. (Encyclopedia Britannica)
The railways proved a boon as far as employment factor was concerned. People from far and near came with a purpose of earning their daily breads. The lives of millions of people were changed as suddenly the masses were able to travel further than ten miles in one direction. Now all could manage rare day trips to newer areas.

The railway carriages were divided into classes and were facilitated accordingly. The third class or the poorest of all was the most perilous of all. Soon the entire railways had to be roofed according to the laws. This was the time when number of developments took place. This was a revolutionary age. The entire society underwent changes. As discussed earlier, capitalism grew:

Roads were laid, huge and handsome prisons were constructed, commerce was extended, manufactures were encouraged, unions were formed to repress dram-drinking, and many more or less useful things were achieved. The only misfortune was that by such means men believed that they were solving the great problems of Government. Everything which lay beyond the province of the necessaries of life was mere rodomontade, to be sternly reprehended. The people were to be as uniform and commonplace as the clerks in an office, or the soldiers of a regiment. (Jaeger 149)

In spite of the great turmoil, developments could also be seen. Science was gaining importance. Scientific inventions and discoveries were being performed. Where on one side science was doing miracles, on the other side the discovery and machines were proving a curse or the labor class. Mechanization had introduced machines everywhere. Industries were being set up and the older ones were also getting mechanized. This change in the age old industrial pattern posed a threat for the labor class who were being dismissed from their works. The more the machines were
used the more people were thrown out from their jobs. This resulted in extreme economic conditions. The business class was becoming richer whereas the labor class was undergoing economic deterioration. The class difference was increasing.

Due to the industrial revolution, after 1871 England, France, Germany and Italy were rapidly industrialized. Imperialism was increasing throughout Europe and was being assisted by Nationalism. “France and Great Britain's strong nation-states had inspired jealousy throughout the rest of Europe; other nations, disorganized as they were, wanted to unify.” (Introduction to the Victorian Period: Drake)

To further quote in the words of Long:

A glance at any record of the industrial achievements of the nineteenth century will show how vast they are, and it is unnecessary to repeat here the list of inventions from spinning looms to steam boats, and from matches to electric lights. All these material things as well as the growth of education, have their influence upon the life of people and it is inevitable that they should react upon its prose and poetry, though as yet we are too much absorbed in our sciences and mechanics to determine accurately their influence upon literature. (Long 454)

Different types of people were emerging. Employers moved away from their industrial source of wealth. They bought country estates and several generations later were often considered landed gentry. On the outskirts of towns managers built villas. Owners built new streets of houses at the perimeter of town and these were occupied by skilled workman and artisans. This situation has been very distinctly portrayed in the drama, The Pillars of Society. Apart from these many other literary works have brought before us the real contemporary society. The modern society and the old rural way of life have been contrasted in Hardy’s novels, such as Tess of the D’Urbervilles
or *The Mayor of Casterbridge*. The towns grew rapidly, without care for dignity or for human welfare. Women and children were exploited in factories. The industrial towns were no better than jungles where the law was the survival of the fittest. We can see all these problems in Mrs Gaskell’s *Mary Barton* and in Dicken’s *David Copperfield, Oliver Twist, Hard Times*...

Wealthy households flourished. A wealthy wife was supposed to spend her time reading, sewing, receiving guests, going visiting, letter writing, seeing to the servants and dressing for the part as her husband’s social representative. For the very poor people, things were quite different. Fifth hand clothes were usual. Servants ate the pickings left over in a rich household. The average poor mill worker could only afford the very inferior stuff, for example rancid bacon, tired vegetables, green potatoes, tough old stringy meat, tainted bread, porridge, cheese, herrings or kippers. Theatres and theatrical companies, dancing and musical societies, dinner parties all were the hobbies of the upper class people there.

The social and economic conditions of Europe greatly determined the attitude of people. Its effect was felt in various spheres of life. Living patterns changed. The working conditions changed. Political changes were remarkably evident. Democratic patterns were taking shape. In England, with the introduction of The Reform Bill 1832, power fell into the hands of the middle classes:

The Chartist movement, begun in the late 1830’s...demanded universal male suffrage, vote by ballot, equal electoral districts, annual parliaments...The Reform Bill Act of 1867 finally extended the vote to most industrial workers and that of 1884 extended it further to include virtually all adult males. (Diaches 951)
The effects of the various movements in England were far and wide. They echoed in the many other parts of Europe.

The social conditions of any place affect its cultural conditions as well. The changes in society bring changes in the people and this change leads to change in the thinking and culture aspects of people. The growth of science catalyzed the growth of education. Scientific inventions and discoveries promoted education. Development took place in various branches of science such as Chemistry, Physics, Geology, Botany, Zoology, Anthropology and Astronomy. Astronomy grew in the hands of Astronomers like Laplace, John C. Adams (in England) and Urbain Leverrier (in France). Sir Charles Lyell’s ‘Principle’s of Geology’ attracted the attention of people towards itself. In zoology, another epochal investigator was Chevalier De Lamarch, a French Botanist and Zoologist, who gave theories on invertebrates. Other subjects also became popular.

Darwin’s researches into the origin of species came before the world in the form of his book, The Origin of Species which appeared in November 1859. This book was shocking for those who had related life and birth to the Divine order. Goodman has quoted the words of E. Albert which state:

There can be little doubt that in many cases material wealth produced a hardness of temper and an impatience of projects and ideas that brought no return in hard cash; yet it is to the credit of this age that intellectual activities were so numerous. There was quite a revolution in scientific thought following upon the works of Darwin and his school, and an immense outburst of social and political theorizing which was represented in his country by the writings of men like...
Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill. In addition, popular education became a practical thing. (Goodman 231)

Scientific progress had begun in the eighteenth century and it progressed continuously even in the nineteenth century and the real uses and advantages of these was most remarkable in the nineteenth century. It was these scientific developments which laid the strong foundation for the various revolutions during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some of the examples of the scientific progress which completely changed the lives of people are as follows:

The steam engine with its application in mine and factory machinery, in railroads, in steamships, in printing presses and so forth was a common place by 1840. Gas lighting had replaced oil lamps and candles in city streets and homes. The telegraph had revolutionized communication. Even photography was reaching a high pitch of skills during forties. In the next half of the century, to be sure, great improvements were introduced in all these techniques, and countless new mechanisms were added, but it was not till near the end of the century that the public was introduced to a fresh round of fundamentally important inventions- the automobile, electric lighting, the telephone, the phonograph, and wireless telegraphy. (Goodman 16)

The Encyclopedia Britannica gives a better and wider knowledge of the industrial development in Europe in the nineteenth century:

In 1840, British steam engines were generating 620,000 horsepower out of a European total of 860,000. Nevertheless, though delayed by the chaos of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, many western European nations soon followed suit; thus, by 1860 British
steam-generated horsepower made up less than half the European total, with France, Germany, and Belgium gaining ground rapidly. Governments and private entrepreneurs worked hard to imitate British technologies after 1820, by which time an intense industrial revolution was taking shape in many parts of Western Europe, particularly in coal-rich regions such as Belgium, northern France, and the Ruhr area of Germany. German pig iron production, a mere 40,000 tons in 1825, soared to 150,000 tons a decade later and reached 250,000 tons by the early 1850s. French coal and iron output doubled in the same span—huge changes in national capacities and the material bases of life. ... .

Steam shipping plied major waterways soon after 1800 and by the 1840s spread to oceanic transport. Railroad systems, first developed to haul coal from mines, were developed for intercity transport during the 1820s; the first commercial line opened between Liverpool and Manchester in 1830. During the 1830s local rail networks fanned out in most western European countries and national systems were planned in the following decade, to be completed by about 1870. In communication, the invention of the telegraph allowed faster exchange of news and commercial information than ever before.

These scientific discoveries changed the outlook of man. The blind faith in God and Divinity shook. Like political unrest, mental unrest and inquisitiveness occupied man’s thought. Reasoning was replacing faith to some extent. People had started viewing natural phenomena’s in the light of science and facts. Superstitions were lessening and so was the orthodoxy. A scientific aptitude was building up which
paved way for better educational prospects. The miracles of the church transformed into the miracles of science.

Literature was also benefitted with scientific inventions and theories. Number of books appeared. Some were literary while the others were scientific and both kinds of books helped in changing the approach of men in life. Thoughts of people accelerated. More progressive outlook had started to creep in men. Realism had stepped in the thresholds of people’s mind. The conditions of societies were changing. Literature has always been the resultant of these changing conditions in one’s society. It has “always two aspects, one of simple enjoyment and appreciation, the other of analysis and exact description...Behind every book is man; and behind the man is the race; and behind the race are the natural and social environments whose influence is unconsciously reflected.” (Long 1-2.)

Industrial transformation was accompanied with many other changes in the society and in the lives of people. Where mechanization speeded up the production of goods and eased the production quantitatively, it fell as a curse for the people who had worked in the cottage industries till then. Their skills were now replaced with machines which directly affected their economic conditions. The people like the rural handloom weavers thrown out of work by the new cotton-working devices. These people had struggled day and night to keep themselves alive and now their livelihoods had been taken away from them. Poverty entered their thresholds making their lives all the more miserable and wretched. The industrialists, on the other hand, flourished even more. Their profits had started multiplying day by day. They sold their products in various colonies and earned huge amount of profits. Thus the industrial development came as a boon to some and as a curse to the others. The depiction of the
factory situations has been very truly shown in the works of Dickens and some instances of this condition have also been shown by Ibsen in some of his plays.

Since unemployment increased and urbanization grew, people came towards towns in search and expectation of some sources of living. The extraordinary industrial development made the town-dwellers increase: the poor had to live in slums, segregated quarters characterized by disease and crime. Due to this economic imbalance a substantial part of Europeans were seen living in slums, under very unfavorable conditions. They had no proper housing or residential accommodations, no sanitation, no hygienic surroundings, no schools no law and order:

Life was rather precarious in other ways since the kinds of sanitary knowledge and measures we take for granted in the twenty-first century simply did not exist in much of that Period. Outbreaks of typhus and cholera due to unsanitary water were a fact of life, even for those above the lowest levels of society, and the same was true of infant mortality. Medical care might be more deadly than the condition for which one sought relief. All in all, during the early and even the middle Victorian Era, many aspects of life that now seem safe and not worth remarking upon cried out—not often with immediate success—for systemic and sustained attention. (Introduction to the Victorian Period: Drake)

They were subject to grave and severely substandard living conditions. Their hours of work began at 5.30 a.m. and were never less than ten p.m. The degrading conditions were so awful that drunkenness and opium taking was usual as their homelife had so little to offer. Their lives exemplified their own kind. Consequently, the social unrest increased and the Government had to make Social Reforms such as
the legalisation of Trade Unions (1882) and the Third Reform Act (1884) which granted the right to vote to all male population. In 1906 the Labour Party was born. The 1820’s saw in Spain and France a liberalism, which soon spread to the rest of Europe. Freedom of press and speech were demanded by the liberals although it took some time to unify for the male suffrage and rest of the voting issues but the issues were soon settled and accepted in England. With the rise in democratic values, the spirit of togetherness and brotherhood increased. With reference to the changes that took place in England, Long says:

Amid the multitude of social and political forces of this great age, four things stand out clearly. First the long struggle of the Anglo-Saxons for personal liberty is definitely settled, and democracy becomes the established order of the day. The king, who appeared in the age of popular weakness and ignorance, and the peers, who came with the Normans in triumph, are both stripped of their power and left as figure heads of a past civilization. The last vestige of personal governments and of the divine right of rulers disappears; the house of commons becomes the ruling power in England; and a series of new reform bills rapidly extend the suffrage, until the whole body of English people choose for themselves the men who shall represent them. (Long 453)

While mentioning the second, he throws light on education and its positive impacts. He also tells that religious tolerance grew during this period and a feeling of brotherhood was evident but there was “profound social unrest”. “Slaves in Africa had been freed” but, “that multitudes of men, women and little children in the mines and factories were victims of more terrible industrial and social slavery.”(Ibid 453) To free these Long victims was also the growing purpose of that age and till today.
Third, he says that since it is an age of democracy and education, it is comparatively an age of peace:

England begins to think less of pomp and false glitter of fighting and more of its moral evils, as the nation realizes that it is the common people who bear the burden and the sorrow and poverty of war, while the privileged classes reap most of the financial and political rewards. Moreover, with the growth of trade and of friendly foreign relations, it becomes evident that the social equality for which England was contending at home belongs to the whole race of men; that brotherhood is universal, not insular; that a question of justice is never settled by fighting. (Long 453-454)

The fourth remarkable feature of this age was the, “rapid progress in all the arts and sciences and in mechanical inventions” which has been mentioned above.

The various movements of the contemporary Europe had a profound effect in England. England had been the core of all European developments. These developments further affected the life, thinking and beliefs of people of England. This also resulted in the change in the literary patterns of English literature.

Literature owes much to England. The works of various writers have in some way or the other been reflections of their surroundings, their society, their community and their nation. The contemporary sociocultural conditions of Europe influenced English literature and some of the main characteristics of the literature of this age are as follows:

There was some kind of revolt against materialism. Materialism had brought a certain change in the attitude of people and had forced the writers to notice it. The great writers:
Feel the exhilaration of living in a time of rapid progress; but few of them can enjoy it without criticism. In nearly all the literature of the time there is a note of revolt against deification of material progress…Mathew Arnold’s definition of poetry as ‘a criticism of life’ is applicable to the poetry of his time. The revolt is explicit in Tennyson’s ‘Maud and Locksley Hall’, in Carlyle, Ruskin and Arnold, in most of the novelists. It is implicit in art’s whole treatment of contemporary life. (Goodman 236.)

It was an age of great speculation. Old beliefs had to be removed and new beliefs had to be made way for. The task was difficult. The writers pondered deeply over this issue. The ages old religious beliefs were severely shaken. New thoughts and old dogma’s clashed in this age:

The ancient system of thought was shaken at its foundations; traditional landmarks were swept away: intelligent men of all sects and classes were deeply stirred by the spirit of speculation and unrest. Hence the skepticism, the continual heart searchings, the widespread melancholy which are among the persistent features of higher Victorian literature and the strenuous moral spirit which makes it so different as a whole from the literature of the first half of the eighteenth century. Hence, too the strong reaction against the domination of science in many quarters; the religious revivals initiated in the High Church movement; and outside the Church itself, the unceasing proteste of some of the greatest poets and prose writers against the materialism to which science seemed to lead. (Ibid 239)
The protests arose in two ways, one against the disbelief towards the Divine and the adoption of the mechanical view and on the other hand it was against the harsh materialism and the increasing commercialization of the age which had changed the human outlook.

Though the situations in the entire continent changed, romanticism continued to exist but slowly it gave impetus to realism. The literature had bent towards the realistic life. It was posing threat to the Victorian romanticism. The novels of this age were being profoundly influenced by realism.

The novel was coming more and more closely to grip with the problems of representing contemporary society without a romantic vesture, describing the manner of its high and low life and interpreting its social and moral dilemmas. By the end of the century realism had captured the novel and the drama and had made serious inroads into the domain of poetry. (Ibid 239)

After a situation of great turmoil, the poetic spirit also underwent some changes. There was development in poetry. Earlier the poetry was written with a purely aesthetic aim but now the aim was transforming to a moralistic one. Poets like Tennyson, Browning, Carlyle, and Ruskin had become more like moral preachers. However:

The early nineteenth century is one of the most unrewarding periods in the English theatre. It was a great era in poetry and fiction but men of letters when they came into the theatre seldom found themselves in a congenial atmosphere. The audiences were content with farce and melodrama and extravagant displays and no management had the courage to attempt any elevation in their taste. (Ibid 320)
Many poets attempted writing tragedies but few attained any distinctions. Tragedies were written and dramatic monologues were written but they did not attain the heights which were expected. It was only when Thomas Robertson revived the drama. The earlier dramas lacked literary qualities and a good stage direction but Robertson mastered these areas. Other playwrights during that time were Gillbert, Grundy and Pinero, “By their clever craftsmanship and keen appreciation of stage effects, they did good work in creating a lively illusion of reality. But the main complaints against these plays were their free use of soliloquies and other artificial devices that there was nothing serious about their plot construction and characterization.” (Ibid 321)

Drama was changing. All the aspects related to drama were changing. Themes, plots, art of characterization, direction of play, etc. all were changing but nothing noticeable about the drama was taking place. Experiments, alterations and many new techniques could not elevate drama to a distinct position:

But the greatest change that came over the English Drama is attributed almost entirely to Henrik Ibsen, the great Norwegian dramatist, who was popularized in England by William Archer and Bernard Shaw. In Shaw’s words, Ibsen’s dramas describe ‘stories of lives, discussion of conduct; unveiling of motives, conflict of characters in talk laying bare of souls discovery of pitfalls- in short illumination of life. The influence of Ibsen was contagious all over Europe. (Ibid 321)

Ibsen started writing what were known as ‘social plays’. He began his career as a poet but situations diverted his creativity towards writing drama. He dealt with colossal to realistic themes. The change in Europe could not go unnoticed by this playwright. He preferred to choose his themes, plots and characters from real life in
their real way. He emphasized on individualism and portrayed the black side of excessive and irrelevant morality. “The object was to satirize, not the invented characters in the plays but the audience.” (Diaches 1104)

Thus we see that the contemporary sociocultural condition of Europe greatly altered with the political, economical, educational, religious and scientific developments. These changes not only affected the entire age but they produced revolutionary consequences in the entire set up of the continent. The outcome of some were good and healthy while some led to miserable results but somewhere these changes have determined the literary forces so strongly that many great artists are the outcome of this age.
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