CHAPTER IV

RELIGIOUS MORALITY

WITH REFERENCE TO

• A DOLL’S HOUSE

• THE WILD DUCK

• GHOSTS

• PILLARS OF SOCIETY
Europe, during the life time of Ibsen, was strictly and severely under the impact of revolution. Revolutionary ideas, ideas of rebellion and nationalism, together made appearances on the political scenario. The effects of industrialization were gaining prominence not only in the political and social life but also in the religious lives of the people. People had started reasoning and their faith in the church, in priests and in the Divine power saw perceivable decline at many places yet the curators of religious morality made all possible efforts to rejuvenate it and thereby, grip the society under its clutches. At such an hour, the literary world, with writers like Ibsen, tried to disentangle the society from those useless philosophies of religion, which harmed the society more than profiting it. This chapter shall throw light on efforts by Henrik Ibsen, through his dramas, to expose some of those religious doctrines which had clasped the society only to make it more vulnerable.

Henrik Ibsen never accepted the blind tenets of religion. Levy, in his work, *Discourses on Ibsen*, writes about Ibsen and his perception of religion in the following words, “He saw that religion, as popularly understood and practiced, was a sham and a delusion. He heard people praying in the churches, "Thy will be done." He knew that they did not mean it. He understood that the people "honored God with their lips but their heart was from Him," and therefore he smote them with the rod of his lips and rebuked them in his hot displeasure. He heard pastor praying, "God be merciful unto us, weak and miserable sinners;" but when the same preacher pointed his finger at one of this class and said, "Thou art the man," the rebuke was bitterly resented, and immediate steps were taken to silence the honest teacher of men. He heard the clergy fulminating against the sins and vices and crimes of social life; but he observed that, as the congregation left the church, members would say, "Didn't the minister hit so and so hard this morning?" (16)
He saw what religion has transformed into and how shallow people had made it. For him, religion was an honest service of mankind. He believed that religion was duty, duty towards family, husband, wife, children and most important duty towards self. He propagated the idea of truthfulness and realism. His religion forbade him to blindly comply with the rules laid down in the religious books and scriptures. He was very observant about the adversities produced by the blind adherence to the religious beliefs. His plays are meant to arise the sleeping generation. He endeavors to open the eyes of the readers so that they may differentiate between the real and hypocritical situations and act like wise.

Morality is a very wide term encompassing, an individual, the society around, the religion, values, ethics, etc. The various facets of social morality during Ibsen’s life time have been discussed in the previous chapter titled “Social Morality.” This chapter will be focused on the religious morality.

As discussed earlier, the European society underwent many changes in the nineteenth century. Education advanced, industries were set, mechanization took place at multiple rate, transport increased etc. Where on one side society accelerated to the advancing edge, on the other hand there was a negative acceleration also in the society. Individualism was growing to an extent that people were becoming self centered. Class difference was becoming more and more evident and was constantly flourishing in the hands of the rich. Family ties were becoming loose. Treachery was expanding secretly. Corrupt methods in various official and non official spheres of life were gaining importance.

There were many unsocial activities being carried out but the one issue of growing concern was the issue of the change in the religious morality.
Religion was losing importance. Prior to the commencement of educational activities in a larger scale, the churches meant everything. The churches had the complete control over the social scenario. The priests and clergies flourished. There was a lot of importance given to religion and religious practices but the transformation of the society had a profound effect on the changing conditions.

Religion is best understood as the power of a society to make things sacred or profane in the lives of its individual members. According to Durkheim, the social and religious power of sacredness are one and the same, since to hold something sacred is to demonstrate one’s commitment to and respect for the authority of one’s tradition. … In Durkheim’s view, therefore, religion is not a matter of claims about the universe that are either true or false, but is the normal way that a society constructs and maintains its cherished tradition and moral values. (Religion, Microsoft Encarta, 2009)

On the basis of Durkheim’s explanation of religion we can say that religion is that ‘power’ which is meant to help people in their times of distress. When people undergo any kind of torments or problems in life they seek refuge in religion. Religion is a very broad concept. It is not limited to mere scriptures or holy books or holy places or people involved in religious duties.

Religion is not a method, it is a life, a higher and supernatural life, mystical in its root and practical in its fruits, a communion with God, a calm and deep enthusiasm, a love which radiates, a force which acts, a happiness which overflows. Religion, in short, is a state of the soul....
John Bunyan said, "Religion is the best armour that man can have, but it is the worst cloak." Religion awakens and unfolds in us humility, piety, and unselfishness, but unfortunately it also breeds hypocrisy, humbug, cant, credulity and fanaticism. Religion enables and leads the earnest seeker to the path of light and Truth, through inquiry and honest search for truth. (Microsoft Encarta, 2009)

Religion is a very deep and bottom rooted concept. Religion is our service to God, our service to the pious, our service to humans and our service to living beings. It is our religion which tells us to be truthful, honest, dutiful and kind towards all people. Religion is our selflessness towards society because no religion in world allows inhuman and selfish behaviour. Religion is our allegiance to the omnipresent. Religion is discovering the pure soul within ourselves. Religious duties involve our duty to mankind, our duties to the weak, our duties to the needy within the confines of social and moral obligations. Besides this, we are well aware about the common religious practices which involve paying visits to holy places, reading religious texts and following them, having true faith in God and most important of all abiding by the religious codes of conduct.

Thus we mat say, that religion is to do ‘right’ to ourselves and everyone. Religion is an inspiration for human behavior. Sometimes it contains rules for behavior. It teaches the tenets of the faith. Religion is supposed to be a positive force in the society and will inspire good works and make people feel informed and part of the group.

True Religion must give us a basis for thinking, and consequently, a basis for acting; it must give us an understanding of nature, of ourselves and of other beings. Religion is a bond uniting men
together -not a particular set of dogmas or beliefs - binding not only all
Men, but also all Beings and all things in the entire Universe, into one
grand whole. (Crosbie 211)

Ibsen considered religion much more than as stated by the church. He saw
religion in totality and not simply as an obligation. He studied the various aspects of
society and wrote what he observed in his life through his various characters.

Nora from *A Doll’s House* is one of the Ibsen characters who has justified her
religion in all aspects of life. She is a big inspiration as far as religious morality is
concerned. She belongs to an age when the patriarchal system was in practice. She
was a Christian and her religion taught her to be an obedient daughter, a dutiful wife,
a loving and caring mother, a great friend and a genuine and kind human being. She,
naturally inculcated these religious qualities in her. Till she was with her father, she
always obeyed to his commandments. A caring and loving daughter she was and
continued to be even after her marriage although her services as a wife and mother
multiplied. Any religion requires of a woman to be affectionate, kind caring, and
devoted. And Nora fully did justice to all the duties laid down by her religion.

Helmer himself confesses how Nora makes efforts to keep her family
members happy:

HELMER. Do you remember last Christmas? For a full three weeks
beforehand you shut yourself up every evening till long after
midnight, making ornaments for the Christmas tree and all the
other fine things that were to be a surprise to us. It was the dullest
three weeks I ever spent! (*A Doll’s House* 8)

In the festive times she makes sure she keeps the excitement of the children,
NORA. Yes, yes, it will. But come here and let me show you what I have bought. And ah so cheap! Look, here is a new suit for Ivar, and a sword; and a horse and a trumpet for Bob; and a doll and dolly's bedstead for Emmy.--they are very plain, but anyway she will soon break them in pieces. And here are dress-lengths and handkerchiefs for the maids; old Anne ought really to have something better. (*A Doll's House* 4-5)

She brings different gifts for all the family people including her nurse and maids but nothing for herself. Even when Helmer asks her what she wants she replies in the negative.

HELMER. Very well. But now tell me, you extravagant little person, what would you like for yourself?

NORA. For myself? Oh, I am sure I don't want anything. (*A Doll's House* 6)

Nora is the representation of a wife, a mother, a woman and a daughter. Although she is not given the due respect in her family yet she does not deviate from her duties which her religion had taught her. She confesses to Helmer how she wished to be like her father but Helmer responds in the negative.

NORA. Oh but, Helmer-

HELMER. You can't deny it, my dear, little Nora. (Puts his arm round her waist.) It's a sweet little spendthrift, but she uses up a deal of money. One would hardly believe how expensive such little persons are!

NORA. It's a shame to say that. I do really save all I can.
HELMER. (laughing). That's very true,--all you can. But you can't
save anything!

NORA. (smiling quietly and happily). You haven't any idea how many
expenses we skylarks and squirrels have, Helmer.

HELMER. You are an odd little soul. Very like your father. You
always find some new way of wheedling money out of me, and, as
soon as you have got it, it seems to melt in your hands. You never
know where it has gone. Still, one must take you as you are. It is in
the blood; for indeed it is true that you can inherit these things,
Nora.

NORA. Ah, I wish I had inherited many of papa's qualities.

HELMER. And I would not wish you to be anything but just what you
are. (A Doll's House 7)

Helmer sets the moral standards for his family and his wife. They enact
Helmer's thoughts and lose all reasoning of their own. Nora’s religion forbids her to
disobey her husband or disregard his feelings hence she accepts life from her
husband’s point of view. “People are very inclined to set moral standards for others.”
(Elizabeth Drew, The New Yorker, 16 February 1987) . This goes very true for people
like Helmer who say something and preach quite the contrary. “Saying is one thing,
doing another. We must consider the sermon and the preacher distinctly and apart.”
(Montaigne, Essays, 1588). Helmer always talks of morals and standards which his
society has taught him. While talking about Krogstad, he tells how immoral and
deceitful he is. He says that a person like Krogstad wears a mask of hypocrisy and
that it has a very poor impact on children.
HELMER. Just think how a guilty man like that has to lie and play the hypocrite with everyone, how he has to wear a mask in the presence of those near and dear to him, even before his own wife and children. And about the children—that is the most terrible part of it all, Nora. (A Doll’s House 36)

Ibsen is known for his contrasting characters. He created Helmer to show the moral preaching prevailing during his times. A man, in that age, was believed to be the moral head of the family although the task of inculcating moral values was fulfilled by the women of the family. But the man in the family established his supremacy only when he projected himself as moral and religious. He lost his reputation if he failed to do so just like Krogstad (A Doll’s House) and Engstrand (Ghosts). Helmer strictly believes in an idealistic family where religion and morality were considered most important. He often speaks like a parson.

Helmer suffers from what may be called a morality addiction. When he speaks, he resembles a prophet, giving out sermons to others and especially to his wife. He considers himself the savior of his family and especially his wife.

HELMER. My dear Nora, I can forgive the anxiety you are in, although really it is an insult to me. It is, indeed. Isn't it an insult to think that I should be afraid of a starving quill-driver's vengeance?

But I forgive you, nevertheless, because it is such eloquent witness to your great love for me. (A Doll’s House 47)

Just before reading Krogstad’s letter, he talks of saving Nora if she is threatened by some danger. He says that at that time he would risk everything in order to save her.
HELMER. Do you know, Nora, I have often wished that you might be threatened by some great danger, so that I might risk my life's blood, and everything, for your sake. (*A Doll's House* 79)

But when that moment approaches, when Helmer is suppose to safeguard his wife, he forgets his gospel. He forgets that he had promised to protect Nora from ‘some great danger’. Once when Nora advocates the case of Krogstad, she asks him what he had done and could he not be pardoned so again Helmer gives a saintly answer:

HELMER. He forged someone's name. Have you any idea what that means? (*A Doll’s House* 36)

NORA. Isn't it possible that he was driven to do it by necessity?

HELMER. Yes; or, as in so many cases, by imprudence. I am not so heartless as to condemn a man altogether because of a single false step of that kind. (*A Doll’s House* 36)

In both cases he gives very impressive answers. He says he can do anything to save Nora and that he would not punish Krogstad merely on the grounds of forged signatures. But when Nora is in similar danger just because of forging her father’s signatures (just as Krogstad had done), which she did out of great necessity, Helmer forgets all his prophetic talks of saving her, of coming to her rescue. Nora had always feared that Helmer would risk everything to protect her and Helmer had exchanged similar promises but when the trial time comes, all promises of Helmer vanish and the real Helmer comes out. He blames Nora for her hypocrisy.

HELMER. (walking about the room). What a horrible awakening! All these eight years--she who was my joy and pride - a hypocrite, a
liar--worse, worse - a criminal! The unutterable ugliness of it all! - for shame! For shame!

(Nora is silent and looks steadily at him. He stops in front of her.) I ought to have suspected that something of the sort would happen. I ought to have foreseen it. All your father's want of principle--be silent!--all your father's want of principle has come out in you. No religion, no morality, no sense of duty--How I am punished for having winked at what he did! I did it for your sake, and this is how you repay me. ... And I must sink to such miserable depths because of a thoughtless woman!... And as for you and me, it must appear as if everything between us were as before--but naturally only in the eyes of the world. You will still remain in my house that is a matter of course. But I shall not allow you to bring up the children; I dare not trust them to you. To think that I should be obliged to say so to one whom I have loved so dearly, and whom I still--. No, that is all over. From this moment happiness is not the question; all that concerns us is to save the remains, the fragments, the appearance -

(A Doll’s House 81)

The contrasting character of Helmer put the readers in a state of shock and surprise. The question arises regarding the identity of the real Helmer. Is the prophetic character true of Helmer. Is the one who always preached morality, family values, duties and responsibilities, the real Helmer or the one who cannot face challenges when put to test and cannot keep up his own vows and promises, is the real one. Another question which comes in the mind of the readers or spectators is why all moral don’t and religious values which have been taught to Helmer since childhood,
rescue him. Why does he need rationality now? On the contrary, Krogstad who neither propagates morality nor speaks of it sees a better result because he is not an idealist like Helmer. In spite of being deceitful and immoral he accepts his true self. This acceptance in him enables him to reform himself whereas the refusal of the same makes Helmer the weakest of all. He never accepts reality and lives a life of moralistic illusion created by himself. When he comes out of it he realizes what a religiously and morally weak person he is.

In his plays, Ibsen often ridicules the corrupt religious practices. Whether it is Helmer in *A Doll’s House*, or Rorlund and Karsten Bernick in *Pillars of Society* or Pastor Manders in *Ghosts* all these are the typical examples of moralistic meddlers of society. They preach something and practice the other. They pose to be religious curators. They act more like priests making laws for their families or for society or for others but never practice their own gospels. Religion is like a shield for them which help them to mask their true selves.

In *The Pillars of Society*, Karsten Bernick speaks of his religion, of serving his community. He gives prime importance to his community. Nothing seems more eventful to him than his people. He shows himself enamored with the genuine concern for his society.

BERNICK. We must get out lists of subscribers, and the sooner the better. Obviously our four names must head the list. The positions we occupy in the community makes it our duty to make ourselves as prominent as possible in the affair. (*Pillars of Society* 404)

Karsten Bernick secretly takes on the issue of the railway lines without letting others know about it. When he is enquired about why he dropped down the idea the previous year, he replies:
BERNICK. The main point was that it would not have been to the advantage of the community as a whole. That is why I opposed it, with the result that the inland line was resolved upon.

BERNICK. Yes, undoubtedly. Think what a lever it will be to raise the status of our whole community. Just think of the immense tracts of forest-land that it will make accessible; think of all the rich deposits of minerals we shall be able to work; think of the river with one waterfall above another! Think of the possibilities that open out in the way of manufactories! *(Pillars of Society 405)*

The Function of religion describes the function of religion in the following words:

The...function of religion is dual: first, to give to man knowledge about his own Soul and Spirit by which he can ennoble his mind and elevate his feelings; secondly, to give to man strength born of perception to be a good neighbour to his fellow-men, to be a helper of the needy and to be an...efficient servant of humanity. *(The Function of Religion, Introduction)*

Religion is the service to mankind, the service to God. A truly religious person always thinks about the people around him first and then about himself. The religion of a king allows him to work for his subjects prior to any personal engagement. What a king is to his subjects, Karsten Bernick *(Pillars of Society)* is to his community. His false propaganda of his devotion and obligation to his community are sardonically commented upon by Ibsen. Karsten Bernick is one of those religious and moralistic propagators of nineteenth century Europe (or Norway, to be precise), who used their positions for satisfying their personal desires. In the entire play Karsten Bernick
speaks of the welfare of his community. In the first part of the play we are made to believe that for him his community service is his real religion. Nothing is of more importance to him than his community. He poses to worship his community and people. A religious aura is created by him. He shows great social service to mankind in the form of his duties. He works only for his community and his people. All his dialogues show his genuine concern for his people. The initial part of the play spell binds the readers who are left in great admiration for Karsten Bernick and his dutifulness. But as the plot advances, the original Bernick is unveiled. His so called religion, his community service, all comes out unveiled.

Even when his entire planning regarding the railway project is made known to the people around him, he never for once lets them know his real intentions. Even then, very cleverly, he disguises himself in the clothes of humanity and takes all of them under his confidence.

BERNICK. No, you may make your mind quite easy on that score, Mr. Rorlund. Our little hive of industry rests now-a-days, God be thanked, on such a sound moral basis; we have all of us helped to drain it, if I may use the expression; and that we will continue to do, each in his degree. You, Mr. Rorlund, will continue your richly blessed activity in our schools and our homes. We, the practical men of business, will be the support of the community by extending its welfare within as wide a radius as possible; and our women - yes, come nearer ladies--you will like to hear it - our women, I say, our wives and daughters - you, ladies - will work on undisturbed in the service of charity, and moreover will be a help
and a comfort to your nearest and dearest, as my dear Betty and Martha are to me and Olaf. *(Pillars Of Society 407)*

When Rorlund enquires to him about why the same proposal was dropped down the previous year, he convinces them in a very intricate style

**RORLUND.** But last year, Mr. Bernick -

**BERNICK.** Last year it was quite another thing. At that time it was a question of a line along the coast - *(Pillars of Society 405)*

Since he is one of the strongest pillars of his society, he credits or discredits everything to his society, and his society, his immediate friends, his family and all believe him blindly. Moreover, he is very artful in linking everything with the welfare of his society and hence all are obliged to believe the deceptive words of this ‘morally religious man’.

Whenever Karsten senses any danger, he drapes himself in the cloak of religion and acknowledges the role of providence behind all his actions and achievements, whereas the reality lies hidden underneath and his community is forced to believe his religious and humanitarian powers.

**BERNICK.** Yes, I must confess it seems to me as if it had been the hand of Providence that caused me to take a journey on business this spring, in the course of which I happened to traverse a valley through which I had never been before. It came across my mind like a flash of lightning that this was where we could carry a branch line down to our town. I got an engineer to survey the neighborhood, and have here the provisional calculations and estimate; so there is nothing to hinder us. *(Pillars of Society 406)*
When Lona and Johan, the relatives of Mrs. Bernick appear on the scene, Karsten greets them with all humility as if serving people is his real religion, but the truth does not lay hidden for long. The following scene makes it evident, what a hypocrite Karsten Bernick is. When there are many people in his house he shows a great modesty but when he finds Mrs. Bernick alone, he grabs the opportunity of ridiculing her as if she was the cause of their arrival. In the presence of others, he speaks too highly of values in their community and says:

BERNICK. Oh no; we must not be too hard on foreigners. Of course these folk have none of the deep-seated instincts of decency which restrain us within proper bounds. Suppose they do behave outrageously, what does it concern us? Fortunately this spirit of disorder, that flies in the face of all that is customary and right, is absolutely a stranger to our community, if I may say so - . *(Pillars of Society 410-411)*

Bernick’s feigned piousness and religious reverence are subject to the presence of society only. He wears a religious mask which is taken off while he is at his home and only with his wife. The Pillar of Society i.e. Bernick, undergoes a worldly transformation. The saint in him changes into an impulsive and dominating husband who gets deep satisfaction in scolding his wife and blaming her for all things, other than what he intends. He scolds Mrs. Bernick for the arrival of her cousins, Lona and Johan, as if she had invited them. All his hospitality and dutifulness towards guests, erases away when he is not in the presence of his community.

MRS. BERNICK. And I did not ask them to come home.

BERNICK. That’s it - go on! "I did not ask them to come home; I did not write to them; I did not drag them home by the hair of their
heads!" Oh, I know the whole rigmarole by heart. (*Pillars of Society* 416)

When Aune appears before Bernick, he charges him with being selfish and not considerate about the society. As for himself he continues with the same community welfare motto. He dislikes Aune’s traditional method of working which include preference to manual work more than mechanical work but instead of accepting this, he blames Aune for being selfish and credits himself with being deeply concerned about the society. He tries to convince Aune that all the work he does is for the good of the society and that nothing personal inspires him to speak thus.

BERNICK. We cannot work that way now-a-days. You must not imagine, Aune, that it is for the sake of making profit; I do not need that, fortunately; but I owe consideration to the community I live in, and to the business I am at the head of. I must take the lead in progress, or there would never be any. (*Pillars of Society* 417)

If judged from the humanitarian point of view, Aune is the real pillar of society. He fights for the real cause of his community. He fights for all those old labours who have served in the firm of Karsten Bernick and Co. since ages and now the new machines are ready to replace them within no time. Aune deeply feels sad and disheartened at the new venture as it is about to turn number of its workers, unemployed. He has witnessed the dreadful conditions of his workers and therefore he wants justice for all of them. As the president of the firm of Karsten Bernick and Co. he feels it his moral duty to work for the betterment and welfare of his people. This is the in-depth meaning of religion. Aune holds very strong religious and moral basis. He is genuinely concerned about all his co workers. He tries his best to help them but his honest and kind motives are always misinterpreted by Bernick and his
“community”. Aune tries his best to clarify his honest intentions but Bernick takes the better of the situation and charges Aune of being selfish and concerned about only a few people of his own working class.

AUNE. I welcome progress too, Mr. Bernick.

BERNICK. Yes, for your own limited circle - for the working class.

Oh, I know what a busy agitator you are; you make speeches, you stir people up; but when some concrete instance of progress presents itself - as now, in the case of our machines - you do not want to have anything to do with it; you are afraid. (\textit{Pillars of Society} 417-418)

Never for once, does Aune speak false. He never talks highly about the whole community or about the good of others but he is truly a religious man because his prime concern has always been with people associated to him. He does not want much from society or from its representatives. He only wants to arrange bread for all those people who are about to lose their jobs because of the introduction of machines. He only wants his firm Karsten Bernick & Co. to be kind and considerate towards all its employees so that mechanization does not bring poverty and starvation for them.

AUNE. Yes, I really am afraid, Mr. Bernick. I am afraid for the number of men who will have the bread taken out of their mouths by these machines. You are very fond, sir, of talking about the consideration we owe to the community; it seems to me, however, that the community has its duties too. Why should science and capital venture to introduce these new discoveries into labour, before the community has had time to educate a generation up to using them? … It is not, Mr. Bernick; but I cannot bear to see one
good workman dismissed after another, to starve because of these machines (*Pillars of Society* 418)

Bernick tries to convince Aune that he must get tuned with the industrial revolution and that the introduction of machinery has always had similar implications but Aune asks him how he would have felt had he been one of those labour class who were undergoing such a pressure.

BERNICK. Hm! When the art of printing was discovered, many a quill-driver was reduced to starvation.

AUNE. Would you have admired the art so greatly if you had been a quill-driver in those days, sir? (*Pillars of Society* 418)

Aune is truly religious. His people have been his prime concern always. Nothing is of more importance to him than the welfare of his co workers. Selfishness has no room in his religiously social life. He is a clear contrast to Bernick who always speaks only about the society but tries to fulfill his selfish motives. All his concern for his society and community fade away at the very issue of profit making. Although he is the strongest pillar of his society, he should be more responsible and answerable towards society but he fools the society and no one dares to doubt him. This is his spiritual effect on his townsfolk.

One of the distinct characters of Ibsen’s age is Rorlund (*Pillars of Society*). He is the most typical example of the religious hypocrites present during the 19th century Europe. He is one of those religious meddlers who never practiced what he preached. The most unique feature with religion is that it often molded according to the comforts of its propagators. There have been people who transformed religion and religious precepts for the welfare of the others and simultaneously there have been people who have altered religious dictums for personal welfare. There have also been
people who have stood by religion as fanatics so much so that even the slightest deviation in the path of religion is not accepted to them whatever the situation or need be. Another fact is that nearly all ages have borne such rigid preachers. They are those people who believe in ‘the claim of ideals’. They are most reluctant to change for the better. They are so much caged in their own philosophies that they hardly find life outside their self created, moral sphere. For them the essence of life lies within their moral and religious bindings although they may be a mirage or illusion in reality.

Whether it is Pastor Manders (Ghosts) or Rorlund (Pillars of society) or the young Werle(The Wild Duck) all believe in the ideals of religion and its sanctity but none has the vision to speculate what their religion is taking them to. They blindly believe in the theories put down by theism but they never question themselves about the efficacy of their religion. They never reason the validity of their blind faith and this is what Ibsen tries to bring out through his plays. Times may change people may change but age old religious preaching do not change because all ages have some Manders or Rorlund or Werle who do not let the Claim of the ideals fall down. Consequently all ages have some Ibsen as well who continue their struggle against such false ideals.

About his storm raising play Ghost, Ibsen writes in a letter to a Danish journalist, Otto Borchsenius. "It may well be," the poet writes,

That the play is in several respects rather daring. But it seemed to me that the time had come for moving some boundary-posts. And this was an undertaking for which a man of the older generation, like myself, was better fitted than the many younger authors who might desire to do something of the kind. I was prepared for a storm; but such storms one
must not shrink from encountering. That would be cowardice. (Letters of Henrik Ibsen 356)

One of the major problems with religion has been its treatment. Nearly all ages have had religious envoys that molded or shaped religion as per their convenience. They do not understand the real function of religion and hence religion fails. A great educationist and visionary, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, in his Recovery of Faith, points out the failure of the religions to perform their real function, thus:

The inadequacy of religion is evident from the disparity between outward allegiance and inward betrayal. Religion is confused with the mechanical participation in the rites or passive acquiescence in the dogmas. Many of those who observe the forms of religion...do not model their lives on the precepts they profess....We must live religion in truth and deed and not merely profess it in words.

Unfortunately religions tend to keep people apart. Humanity is broken up into a number of separate worlds each with its particular religious tradition. To sustain a world community, we need unity, if not identity of spiritual outlook and aspiration. The root meaning of the word "religion" suggests that it should be a binding force. (21-22, 30)

Whether practically suitable or not, the custodians of religion, dictate religious theologies and the common man is forced to follow them else he is declared an atheist or anti social being. This is sufficient to declare him an outcast. The fear of being thrown out of society and the fear of being an isolated individual often force men to accept the all commands of religion whether they have any relevance or not. The result of this is that people blindly adhere to the tenets as laid down by their religion but this secretly gives rise to unethical and immoral behaviour. Superficially, things
seem quite moralistic and true but a deep study into the real life situations shows the real shallowness of the whole society. Most of Ibsen’s plays are a natural and transparent representation of the immoral situations arising due to these rigid religious and social requisites.

Mrs. Alving (Ghosts) is a burning example of being a victim of the society. It is religion which forces her to forget her individuality and forces her to submit herself to the laws of religion. Religion lays complete hold on her personal and private life. Her religion forbids her to enjoy her life and demands her complete submission for the betterment of her husband and her family but ironically the same religion snatches away all her happiness and her contentment. Pastor Manders (Ghosts) is a religion abiding man. He believes in the power of supreme. For him religion stands above everything. Although his motives are usually positive, yet they often lack practicality. He advises for the good of mankind but not for the good of the individual. He speaks as the guardian angel of the society. His ideas are encompassed with good intentions but they are not always practical and fruitful. He believes in his duties more than any personal happiness. Like most moralistic followers of his age, he believes in the fulfillment of the religious obligations more than anything else. He gives special importance to God and Providence. He blindly believes in the judgment of God whether it is practical or not. His trust refrains him from performing even the most important of tasks because he believes in the justice of God. Ibsen shows through Mrs. Alving, the fate of a person who relies on the advices of those people who in turn rely too much on religious philosophies. He awakens us to the fact that faith in any power, visible or invisible is appreciable but blind faith without any thought of correct or incorrect is not very advisable. Pastor Manders is indeed a very dutiful
priest but his actions are always Providence oriented which often result in the negative.

When, in *Ghosts*, the question of insuring the orphanage arises Manders asks whether Mrs. Alving would like to get the building insured. Mrs. Alving replies in the affirmative but Manders convinces her not to go against providence and that if they did so, people would take it as if they had no faith in God.

MANDERS. Shall the Orphanage buildings be insured or not?

MRS. ALVING. Of course they must be insured.

MANDERS. Well, wait a moment, Mrs. Alving. Let us look into the matter a little more closely.

MRS. ALVING. I have everything insured; buildings and movables and stock and crops.

MANDERS. Of course you have - on your own estate. And so have I - of course. But here, you see, it is quite another matter. The Orphanage is to be consecrated, as it were, to a higher purpose. (*Ghosts* 108-109)

MRS. ALVING. There are several people of that sort here, who would very likely be shocked if-

MANDERS. There, you see! In town we have many such people. Think of all my colleague's adherents! People would be only too ready to interpret our action as a sign that neither you nor I had the right faith in a Higher Providence. (*Ghosts* 109)

In order to prove his trust in the supreme, Manders, the priest, tells Mrs. Alving that insuring the orphanage would show their distrust in God and hence people would not regard their motive behind the insurance, very honest.
MRS. ALVING. But for your own part, my dear Pastor, you can at
least tell yourself that-

MANDERS. Yes, I know - I know; my conscience would be quite
easy, that is true enough. But nevertheless we should not escape
grave misinterpretation; and that might very likely react
unfavourably upon the Orphanage. (Ghosts 109)

Religion, morality and duty were the most important assets of the ethical clan
of that age. Priests, clergy’s and other self made representatives of God during Ibsen’s
age lay prime importance to fate and luck. Work, naturally was an important
phenomenon but not “the most important” one. Consequences were not thought about.
Rationalism of men dwindled before their faith for God. Mrs. Alving’s wish for the
insurance of the orphanage was politely curtailed on the grounds of religion and self
image. Manders did not want to hamper his reputation and esteem and therefore he did
not let Mrs. Alving insure the buildings.

MANDERS. Now, as I have been your adviser, and have had the
business arrangements in my hands, I cannot but fear that it would
be I that spiteful persons would attack first of all. MRS. ALVING.

Oh, you mustn’t run the risk of that.

MANDERS. To say nothing of the attacks that would assuredly be
made upon me in certain papers and periodicals, which-

MRS. ALVING. Enough, my dear Pastor Manders. That consideration
is quite decisive.

MANDERS. Then you do not wish the Orphanage to be insured?

(Ghosts 110)
Through the character of Manders Ibsen brings out a derisive criticism of the prevalent religious malpractices and excessive faith in Higher Providence. Throughout the drama Ibsen portrays Manders as a mouthpiece of those people who were the so-called moralistically sound people. Their sole aim in life was to prove their morality at all fronts of life. They could sacrifice any happiness, any rationality, and any thing, to keep up their moral image. Moreover they were those people who did not let a common man live life on his terms. If ever one tried to lead a life differently from the rules as stated by these protectors of moral values, he was severely criticized or disrespected. When Oswald talks about the life in the other parts of the world, Manders is flabbergasted at the conception people hold there. Oswald tells how the people there live with their beloveds and lead a family life without any marriage. Further he tries to advocate their lifestyle and says that yet they lead a very honorable life. All this is unacceptable to Manders who blindly believes in Religious morality. He believes in the sacred institution of marriage. He believes that a home is a place where a man his wife and their children live.

MANDERS. But I'm not talking of bachelors' quarters. By a "home" I understand the home of a family, where a man lives with his wife and children.

OSWALD. Yes; or with his children and his children's mother.

MANDERS. Lives with - his children's mother!

OSWALD. Yes. Would you have him turn his children's mother out of doors? (Ghosts 116)

Where Oswald finds nothing particularly wrong with this new pattern of life, Manders becomes dumbfounded at this description of a family. Manders believes in religion more than happiness, in restrictions than freedom, in values than desires. He
is a rigid fanatic. He strictly believes in the code of conduct laid down by the church. A free and unrestricted life is awfully condemned by religious authorities and by him as well. He believes in the relationship between a man and a woman only after their legal union. Illegal relations are very strictly condemned by him and his religion. When Oswald tells about the relations man and woman held in his artistic circles, Manders critically condemns them.

MANDERS. Then it is illicit relations you are talking of! Irregular marriages, as people call them!

OSWALD. I have never noticed anything particularly irregular about the life these people lead.

MANDERS. But how is it possible that a-a young man or young woman with any decency of feeling can endure to live in that way?- in the eyes of all the world! (Ghosts 116)

This questioning by Manders is reasonably explained by Oswald but all explanations and reasoning are turned down by Manders who believes that it is mere human weakness and an uncontrolled behaviour of the youth which forces them to lead such dissolute lives.

OSWALD. What are they to do? A poor young artist - a poor girl-marriage costs a great deal. What are they to do?

MANDERS. What are they to do? Let me tell you, Mr. Alving, what they ought to do. They ought to exercise self-restraint from the first; that is what they ought to do. (Ghosts 116)

On further defense of living together, before marriage, from Oswald, Manders blames the authorities for their negligence.
MANDERS. (Continuing.) How can the authorities tolerate such things! Allow them to go on in the light of day! (Confronting MRS. ALVING.) Had I not cause to be deeply concerned about your son? In circles where open immorality prevails, and has even a sort of recognized position! (Ghosts 117)

All defense and arguments put up by Oswald and somewhat supported by Mrs. Alving are not enough to convince Pastor Manders. He is an icon of religion, morals and values. Nothing in world deters his faith in religion and religious values. For him anything can be and should be sacrificed for maintaining the honour of religion. Even if a man has to lead a life full of miseries and sorrows he should readily do so in order to let religious values reign. Years ago when Mrs. Alving undergoes a torment in her married life, when her husband Captain Alving cheats on her and builds up illicit relationship with his own maid, she seeks refuge with her friend, Pastor Manders. Terribly hurt with her husband’s infidelity, she goes to Pastor Manders to ease herself of her grief and to comfort herself but she is not given any comfort or consolation. In that moment when she is in great need of help, she is offered a religious guidance but no support, she is given preaching not comfort. Instead of understanding her difficult position, he always blames her for her undutiful behaviour as a wife.

MANDERS. Yes... Bethink yourself well, Mrs. Alving. You sinned greatly against your husband:- that you recognise by raising yonder memorial to him. (Ghosts 121)

When Mrs. Alving tells him about the difficulties she had in her married life, about the sorrows she had to suffer and about the sacrifices she had to make, Manders speaks plainly regarding law and order and duty etc.
MANDERS. Nobody can be held responsible for the result. This, at least, remains clear: your marriage was in full accordance with law and order.

MRS. ALVING. (At the window.) Oh, that perpetual law and order! I often think that is what does all the mischief in this world of ours. (Ghosts 131)

On knowing how much the lady suffered throughout her life, he was expected to be a friend more than a preceptor but contrary to what was expected of him, Manders always defends religion and duties. Human values empathy was never credential for him. However intense the situation is Manders is concerned only with his ethics and duties. Mrs Alving tries to aware him of the real situation and her lifelong struggle for a decent survival. She tries to explain him what a tortured life she led just to maintain the law and order and she is blamed again.

MANDERS. Mrs. Alving, that is a sinful way of talking.

MRS. ALVING. Well, I can't help it; I must have done with all this constraint and insincerity. I can endure it no longer. I must work my way out to freedom. (Ghosts 131)

There have been many women like Mrs. Alving who sacrificed their lives, all their joys, all desires and even their identity to lead a sacred and dutiful life. If ever they wanted to live life on their terms they were forbidden to do so. Unlike men they were bound by religion, morals, values and fear of society. Men could ruthlessly agonize their wives. They could live life freely without the fear of ethics and virtues because only women were designated with the power of a moralistic homemaker. Men were assigned the task of earning the bread whereas all that happened inside a home were the forced obligations of women. They were bound by their religion to
fulfill their duties and tasks whether they liked it or not. They were forced to teach values to their children and to make them respect their fathers how much dissolute they were. Similar conditions prevail before Mrs. Alving who conceals all truth from her son. She never discloses the real Captain Alving to Oswald and for this she sends Oswald to distant places for his education. She tries her best to keep Oswald away from the truth so that he may always maintain the respect for his father. She has to bear all kinds of remarks of Manders for keeping Oswald away from home.

MANDERS. Recognize now, also, how you have sinned against your son - there may yet be time to lead him back from the paths of error. Turn back yourself, and save what may yet be saved in him.

For (With uplifted forefinger) verily, Mrs. Alving, you are a guilt-laden mother! This I have thought it my duty to say to you. (Ghosts 121)

Manders fulfills all duties of a Pastor but not of a friend. It is only when Mrs. Alving sees the “ghosts” of Mrs. Alving in her house and keeps it a secret no more, she tells the truth of her wretched life to Manders. It is now that she tells Manders why she bore all the grievances and why she sent Oswald away from home.

MRS. ALVING. I had to bear it for my little boy's sake. But when the last insult was added; when my own servant-maid--; then I swore to myself: This shall come to an end! And so I took the reins into my own hand - the whole control - over him and everything else. For now I had a weapon against him, you see; he dared not oppose me.

It was then I sent Oswald away from home. He was nearly seven years old, and was beginning to observe and ask questions, as children do. That I could not bear. It seemed to me the child must
be poisoned by merely breathing the air of this polluted home. That was why I sent him away. And now you can see, too, why he was never allowed to set foot inside his home so long as his father lived. No one knows what that cost me. (Ghosts 124-125)

Mrs. Alving has suffered a great deal because of her husband’s immoral conduct. She feels very hurt about it. It is only she who knows how she managed to conceal the truth from all others. She did so in order to maintain a good and clean reputation of her husband. She did not want to affect the future of her child adversely as any mother would not like either, but one thing which deeply troubles her is her cowardice. She regrets her decision of suffering alone and not telling the truth to her son.

MRS. ALVING. Yes; in my superstitious awe for duty and the proprieties, I lied to my boy, year after year. Oh, what a coward - what a coward I have been!

MANDERS. You have established a happy illusion in your son's heart, Mrs. Alving; and assuredly you ought not to undervalue it. (Ghosts 132)

She is tired of the ‘happy illusion’ (Ghosts 132) which she has created in the mind of her son in the past years. She regrets her decision of maintaining this illusionary happiness at the cost of her real miseries. She further expresses her desire of making free decisions in future, irrespective of any moral constraints.

MRS. ALVING. Well, I can't help it; I must have done with all this constraint and insincerity. I can endure it no longer. I must work my way out to freedom.

MANDERS. What do you mean by that?
MRS. ALVING. (Drumming on the window frame.) I ought never to have concealed the facts of Alving's life. But at that time I dared not do anything else - I was afraid, partly on my own account. I was such a coward.

MANDERS. A coward?

MRS. ALVING. If people had come to know anything, they would have said - "Poor man! With a runaway wife, no wonder he kicks over the traces." (Ghosts 131)

She has hidden the truth from her son out of the social, moral and religious pressure which forbade her to reveal anything and thus defame her husband however self indulgent he was because she was a virtuous wife and her religious duties did not permit her to do so. In this situation Boyesen remarks,

Again, the commandment bids the son to honour his father and his mother; and Mrs. Alving, mindful of this duty, has embellished her husband, in her letters to Oswald, with fictitious virtues. Believing his mother's words, the young man has no choice but to conclude that he is himself responsible for his misery, until the torture which this thought causes him moves Mrs. Alving's pity, and she exposes the dead in all his hideousness. (229)

MRS. ALVING. (Looking steadily at him.) If I were what I ought to be, I should go to Oswald and say, "Listen, my boy: your father led a vicious life-"

MANDERS. Merciful heavens - ! (Ghosts 131)

Wives and mothers like Mrs. Alving are representatives of that class of society who are clutched with morals, ethics, duties, customs and society. In order to make a
decent living they are made to follow the dictates of the “pillars of society” compulsively who in turn may not do the same themselves. Any desire of women to express oneself openly and freely is severely rebuked by the ethical founders of society who consider women a very vulnerable object. They believe that it is their responsibility to repeatedly remind women of their duties whether they like it or not. Mrs. Alving feels remorseful for hiding the true facts from her own son and she feels she behaved like a coward in not doing so but Manders negates the idea by molding the entire theme to dutifulness.

MANDERS. You call it "cowardice" to do your plain duty? Have you forgotten that a son ought to love and honour his father and mother?

MRS. ALVING. Do not let us talk in such general terms. Let us ask:

Ought Oswald to love and honour Chamberlain Alving?

MANDERS. Is there no voice in your mother's heart that forbids you to destroy your son's ideals?

MRS. ALVING. But what about the truth?

MANDERS. But what about the ideals?

MRS. ALVING. Oh - ideals, ideals! If only I were not such a coward!

(Ghosts 132)

She realizes how her obedience to religious duties and her allegiance towards her motherly duties has spoiled the essence of a happy and satisfactory life. Just to keep up the good name of the family she had to bear the infidelity of a treacherous husband. In order to keep up the reputation of her husband she had to remain silent throughout her life. To keep her son aloof of the entire situation and to create an illusionary respect for her son’s father she had to keep her dear son and only support
of her life away from her since his childhood. Her entire life rests on lies and illusions.

One of the functions of the play *Ghosts* is to expose the truth that shallow religious and moral values were given more importance than true conscience and a happy life. It gives us an insight into the life people lived in and around the 19th century. A thorough analysis of Pastor Manders’ character makes us aware what a superficial, religious and moralistic trouble maker he is. On the first reading he seems to be somewhat concerned with duties and the fear of god. But with the progression in the play true character is unveiled. His sacrificial love, his ideas about family, his ideas about being a savior to like Mrs. Alving, Engstrand etc. picture him as an ambassador of morality but soon the real Manders is seen open and bare. All his morality vanishes at the idea of self harm. At various instances we find him horror stricken with the idea of facing an adverse reputation. When the matter of insuring the orphanage comes up, he refuses to it because he does not want to show his disbelief in the higher providence, but the reality behind it is, his fear of ill reputation that he convinces Mrs. Alving also for the same giving various manipulated reasons.

MANDERS. Nor can I entirely lose sight of the difficult - I may even say painful - position in which I might perhaps be placed. In the leading circles of the town, people take a lively interest in this Orphanage. It is, of course, founded partly for the benefit of the town, as well; and it is to be hoped it will, to a considerable extent, result in lightening our Poor Rates. Now, as I have been your adviser, and have had the business arrangements in my hands, I cannot but fear that I may have to bear the brunt of fanaticism -

MRS. ALVING. Oh, you mustn't run the risk of that.
MANDERS. To say nothing of the attacks that would assuredly be made upon me in certain papers and periodicals, which - (Ghosts 110)

Similarly when Mrs. Alving seeks his support in her distressful condition, he sends her back for the fear of risking his own name, although he calls it Mrs. Alving’s wifely duties to serve her husband. He sends her back because he does not want people to talk ill about him. But later on we see Mrs. Alving making the same comment on Manders that he regarded his position most important of all.

MANDERS. A wife is not appointed to be her husband’s judge. It was your duty humbly to bear that cross which a higher will had seen fit to assign to you. But instead you . . . hazard your good name, and very nearly ruin the reputation of others.

MRS. ALVING. Others? Another’s, you mean?

MANDERS. It was extremely inconsiderate of you to seek refuge with me. (Ghosts 120)

When Mrs. Alving says further about how he neglected her again he indirectly talks of his position.

MRS. ALVING. Yes; and in my husband's lifetime you never came to see us. It was business that forced you to visit me when you undertook the affairs of the Orphanage.

MANDERS. (Softly and hesitatingly.) Helen - if that is meant as a reproach, I would beg you to bear in mind -

MRS. ALVING. - the regard you owed to your position, yes; and that I was a runaway wife. One can never be too cautious with such unprincipled creatures. (Ghosts 122)
Another example of Manders’ hypocrisy of being a religious pillar of society is, when the orphanage is set to fire because of his own carelessness and mishandling of burning candles and he quickly transfers the blame to the immorality reigning at Captain Alving’s home. Not for once he feels his moral responsibility behind the great loss conferred upon the Alvings’ because of his fault.

MANDERS. Terrible! Mrs. Alving, it is a judgment upon this abode of lawlessness. (Ghosts 156)

After committing such a crime, he doesn’t accept it first and when he does, he is least concerned with the irreparable loss of the Alving’s. He is only disturbed by the harm the incident will bring to his reputation.

ENGSTRAND. There wasn’t another soul except your Reverence as ever laid a finger on the candles down there.

MANDERS. (Stops.) So you declare. But I certainly cannot recollect that I ever had a candle in my hand.

ENGSTRAND. And I saw as clear as daylight how your Reverence took the candle and snuffed it with your fingers, and threw away the snuff among the shavings.

MANDERS. And you stood and looked on?

ENGSTRAND. Yes; I saw it as plain as a pike-staff, I did.

MANDERS. It's quite beyond my comprehension. Besides, it has never been my habit to snuff candles with my fingers. (Ghosts 156)

Engstrand is an eye witness of the mishap. He is a stubborn, shrewd and an opportunist who does not let the opportunity of trapping Manders go out of hand and makes him own the truth and makes him accept that his concern lies solely with saving his reputation.
ENGSTRAND. And to think that such a thing should happen to a benevolent Institution, that was to have been a blessing both to town and country, as the saying goes! The newspapers won't be for handling your Reverence very gently, I expect.

MANDERS. No; that is just what I am thinking of. That is almost the worst of the whole matter. All the malignant attacks and imputations - ! Oh, it makes me shudder to think of it! (Ghosts 159)

Throughout the play Manders poses to assign himself with the duty of guiding people to the path of righteousness and justice. He guides Mrs. Alving, Engstrand, Regina and also Oswald because he believes that religion and morality can be best followed and guided by him. All his conversations make us feel what a great man and preceptor Manders is but a minute scrutiny of the Manders reveals what a big hypocrite he is. Whenever Mrs. Alving needs him and his support, he flees to a more secure place in order to conceal his weaknesses as a moral and religious preacher. Out of Engstrand and Pastor Manders, Engstrand can be awarded better points as a human being because he does not boast of morals and principles, like Manders. He does not refuse shelter, even to an immoral woman like Johanna. Rather he renders all support and social protection to her by accepting her as his wife and by giving her daughter a social recognition. Although he does it out of greed yet he does something worth human compassion. He is not a great and virtuous man or a big moralist and he does not profess it either. He is a deceitful man and everybody doubts him also because he has not created a false domain for himself. He is like any ordinary human being, most susceptible to human follies and this he proudly accepts.

ENGSTRAND. Why - a man's conscience - it can be bad enough now and then. (Ghosts 137)
Similarly, Regina is another character who is truer than Pastor Manders. She boldly confesses her weaknesses. She does not like to go with her father and so she does not give moralistic excuses for it. She knows that her father is untrustworthy and so she confesses it without considering what the pastor would think about it.

MANDERS. But a daughter's duty, my good girl - Of course, we should first have to get your mistress's consent.

REGINA. But I don't know whether it would be quite proper for me, at my age, to keep house for a single man

MANDERS. What! My dear Miss Engstrand! When the man is your own father!

REGINA. Yes, that may be; but all the same - Now, if it were in a thoroughly nice house, and with a real gentleman -

MANDERS. Why, my dear Regina -

REGINA. - one I could love and respect, and be a daughter to -

(Ghosts 103-104)

At the idea of running a sailor’s home, first she refuses but when she comes to know about the truth of her mother and the disease of Oswald she decides to go with Engstrand. Even when Mrs. Alving warns her and tells her not to go and even when Oswald requests her to stay with him, she refuses her plainly without any show of hypocrisy and kindness or compassion. She does not bother about religion, her duties or moralities or what the society would say. Her sole concern is with her life and her happiness.

REGINA. If I'd known that Oswald was an invalid, why - And now, too, that it can never come to anything serious between us - I really
can't stop out here in the country and wear myself out nursing sick people.

OSWALD. Not even one who is so near to you?

REGINA. No, that I can't. A poor girl must make the best of her young days, or she'll be left out in the cold before she knows where she is.

And I, too, have the joy of life in me, Mrs. Alving!

MRS. ALVING. Unfortunately, you leave. But don't throw yourself away, Regina.

REGINA. Oh, what must be, must be. If Oswald takes after his father, I take after my mother, I daresay. - May I ask, ma'am, if Pastor Manders knows all this about me? (Ghosts 165)

In the play Ghosts, Ibsen brings a contrast between moralistic preachers and common people who believe in practicality more than religious fiction. This play is a kind of an eye opener for all the readers who are left to judge what is more relevant, preaching morality but not following it or being real and not as moralistic as expected up by the religious institutions.

Once again, there can be no doubt that Ibsen has most accurately put his finger on a pseudo-morality in which shame or social disapproval takes the place of personal conscience or true moral principle, and in the name of which, people are made to suffer misery, degradation, and even violence. This is no mere figment of Ibsen’s imagination. Where in the play Ghosts, he exposes those hypocrites who use religion as an armour, in the play The Wild Duck, he exposes those who misuse religion for the protection of morality, truth and justice and end up with a situation of nothingness.
Manders is an official representative of church who is assigned with the task of aiding the society in becoming more truthful, honest, moralistic, dutiful and sacrificing but he works on the contrary because all his efforts to improve the society lay limited to the weaker people who, he knows, will submit themselves to his dictates but he is not able to apply the same philosophies for the stronger ones. He teaches all lessons of obedience and loyalty to Mrs. Alving and Engstrand but his rules change when it comes to reforming Captain Alving or himself. Hence he uses religion and morality in line with his own wish and for his own profit. But the case completely alters in The Wild Duck, where Gregers is not assigned any religious task of raising the moral level of the society yet he does it. He unnecessarily pokes his nose in the life of others to bring a complete transformation in their lives even when it is not required and it culminates in complete destruction. Both the plays deal with characters picked from real life who talk about values, respect, and humanity but without any base or reason or use.

Gregers Werle in The Wild Duck is a prototype of Manders with one difference. Where Manders’ intends to become selfish, Gregers does not intend so. His aim behind reformation is to establish the ‘claims of the ideal’. He wants to bring about a change in his friend Hialmar’s life. He wants to give a strong base to the relationship of Hialmar and Gina whose relationship rests on a lie which they themselves are unaware of.

Gregers comes to his father’s house after a very long time. To honour Gregers visit, his father invites many people to a gathering. Gregers invites his one and only friend Hialmar who is the son of Old Ekdal. This man, old Ekdal was once Werle’s business partner but due to some scandal he had to go to prison but now he does some
odd jobs at Werle’s house. When the two friends meet they get nostalgic. Gregers asks him if he is happy with his life and he replies in the affirmative.

**GREGERS.** But tell me now, Hialmar: are you pretty well satisfied with your present position?

**HIALMAR.** (With a little sigh.) Oh yes, I am; I have really no cause to complain. ... In short, I thought it best to break, once for all, with my old surroundings and associations. It was your father that specially urged me to it; and since he interested himself so much in me. (*The Wild Duck* 702)

During their conversation Gregers learns that Hialmar is settled in his life because of Mr. Werle, his father, who has contributed a lot, in establishing him in life.

**HIALMAR.** Yes, certainly. He didn't wish it to be generally known; but he it was and of course it was he, too, that put me in a position to marry. Don't you - don't you know about that either?

**GREGERS.** Yes, yes - whatever you like to call it. Oh, I can’t tell you how glad I am to hear this of father. - So you are a married man,

**GREGERS.** ! That is further than I shall ever get. Well, I hope you are happy in your married life?

**HIALMAR.** Yes, thoroughly happy. She is as good and capable a wife as any man could wish for. And she is by no means without culture. (*The Wild Duck* 703)

All this conversation is sufficient enough to make anyone believe how satisfied Hialmar is with his life. A sensible person would never interfere for the worse, in such a family where everything is going well. But Gregers is different from such people who give importance to a simple and happy life. He believes in an
idealistic life. Gregers believes in ‘truth’. He believes that to live a happy life is not as important as it is to live a life based on truth however pains’ giving it is.

When he talks to Hialmar about the progress he has made in all fronts of life, he feels happy but simultaneously suspicion grows in his mind. He doubts his father’s intentions therefore he questions him regarding the scandal.

GREGERS. (Softly.) Are you sure that he alone was to blame?

WERLE. Who else do you suppose?

GREGERS. You and he acted together in that affair of the forests (The Wild Duck 711)

Gregers is an impartial human being. He knows his father best. He knows that his father is not as innocent as he feigns to be and that Old Ekdal is not purely responsible for the scandal hence when his father says that it was Ekdal who committed the crime he does not believe it. Rather he defends him by saying:

GREGERS. Lieutenant Ekdal himself seems to have been very much in the dark as to what he was doing.

WERLE. That may be. But the fact remains that he was found guilty and I acquitted. (The Wild Duck 711)

This play is a conflict of beliefs. The father i.e. Mr. Werle believes in a free life without any morals and values. He gives more importance in solving his purpose; hence he does not fulfill his religious task of mentoring his child. He does not guide his child or his grown up son to the path of righteousness and justice. Therefore he does not fulfill his duties as a father and guide. On the other hand Gregers is a staunch believer of truthfulness and morality. He believes that life should never rest upon a lie whether it shatters any happy household. He believes in truth and firmness in relation but he himself hardly follows it. He hardly lives with his father. His religion teaches
him to respect his father. His religion teaches him to perform his duty as a son but he does not do so. He is a religious moralist as far as truthfulness is concerned but not when duties are concerned. This dual character of Gregers is what Ibsen tries to tell us about. He talks about the happiness of his friend but never about the happiness of his old father. On the contrary, he doubts his father’s aim behind his, helping the Ekdals. Moreover he doubts his father’s character behind arranging Ekdal’s and Gina’s marriage.

GREGERS. I have learnt that it was you who paid for his training. And I have learnt, too, that it was you who enabled him to set up house so comfortably.

WERLE. Well, and yet you talk as though I had done nothing for the Ekdals! I can assure you these people have cost me enough in all conscience.

GREGERS. Have you entered any of these expenses in your books? …Oh, I have my reasons. Now tell me: when you interested yourself so warmly in your old friend’s son it was just before his marriage, was it not?

WERLE. What do you mean by that? (Flaring up.) You are not alluding to me, I hope?

GREGERS. (Softly but firmly) Yes, I am alluding to you.

WERLE. And you dare! You presume to! … (The Wild Duck 712)

The way Gregers converses with his father is an absolutely a nonconformists way of talking. How much ever guilty he is, yet he deserves a better treatment from his son because a son is supposed to respect his father at least till his crime is not proven, but the moralist, Gregers forgets all religion and morality within his own
house. When his father queries who instilled that notion and suspicion into his mind, he replies:

GREGERS. My poor unhappy mother told me; and that the very last time I saw her. (The Wild Duck 713)

Gregers is fully aware of the pain her mother bore because of her husband’s infidelity. He has been close to his mother and has seen how miserable her life had become. He himself suffered from deep anguish because of his father’s immorality. He is very well acquainted with the pain of being neglected and loneliness. He had suffered the pain of being a son of a treacherous father. So how could he let his religion and morality overtake him. How could he transfer his grief, his anxiety to his friend, Hialmar’s peaceful and happy household? But this he does. All his thoughts are led by that superficial and unsubstantial morality which brings an uncontrollable storm in his friend’s life. When his father asks him about his leaving the house he replies by saying that he is leaving the house to fulfill some mission in life.

WERLE. You are going! Out of the house?

GREGERS. Yes. For at last I see my mission in life. (The Wild Duck 717)

Here Gregers decides to leave his father’s house with some adventure or we may call mischief, running in his mind. He does not reveal about it to anyone but he immediately goes to his friend Hialmar’s house. Gegers is a restless soul while Hialmar is a satisfied man, very happy in his family life.

HIALMAR. (Stretching himself.) After all, there’s a more homely feeling about this. A free-and-easy indoor (The Wild Duck 725)

Whenever he is gloomy and sad he looks out for peace and calmness in his home which is the happiest place on earth for him.
HIALMAR. (Breaking off the melody, holds out his left hand to Gina, and says with emotion) Our roof may be poor and humble, Gina; but it is home. And with all my heart I say: here dwells my happiness. (*The Wild Duck* 729)

He loves his family dearly. He loves his daughter dearly and his daughter loves him dearly. She does all whatever she can to make her father happy. Ekdals are a close knit family. They present an example before all the people. They respect their elders, they love their younger ones and they come together in the times of need and sorrow. They represent an ideal family, a family as stated down by various religious institutions. They comply with all religious morals and duties which is rare to see. All things go well and the family lives happily and satisfied with whatever they have. They have no complaints with life and all family members feel for each other. Life runs smooth but Gregers Werle, the moralist cannot bear this. He doubts the character of his father and his previous made Gina who is now a happy and deserving wife of HIALMAR. In order to establish the claims of the ideal, he leaves his father’s house but decides to stay in town. He wants to find out the truth behind Hialmar and Gina’s marriage. He goes to Hialmar’s house where another doubt crops up in his mind regarding the parentage of Hialmar’s daughter who is suffering from continuously deteriorating vision.

Although Gregers professes religious and moral values but he has never thought about the validity and usefulness of these values. He believes in these values without thinking whether they make lives happy. Even the greatest of moralists preach the moral values for attaining some kind of satisfaction. People may not always be idealistically moral but if they are not immoral and are leading a simple and decent life without any vices, they are spared by all kinds of moralists. But Gregers is
different. He cannot see the morality hidden in the lives of the Ekdals’ which has helped them nurture themselves. Had he been a man of reason he would have analyzed that religious attitude of those people. He would have understood that all family members comply with their religious norms by respecting each other, by loving each other and by caring for each other. He cannot see the happiness and peace prevailing at the Ekdals’ home. Without any second thought or second opinion he goes to Hialmar’s house and his visit results in turbulence. Here Ibsen has tried to open the eyes of his readers to the reality. He has tried to draw a distinct line, to limit how much any ideal is to be followed. He has picked up lifelike characters in this play. He received a lot of criticism for writing such a play but on detailed analysis we see that there are many such propagators like Gregers who uphold the flag of morality. They try to teach the society all moral values but never follow it themselves and what is worse, that they never care about the consequences these religious and moral values may bring as in the play *The Wild Duck*.

The suspicion in the mind of Gregers does not let him rest in peace. For further queries, he goes to Hialmar’s house where he asks everything about Hialmar, Gina and Hedvig.

GREGERS. And she is your only child?

HIALMAR. Yes, the only one. She is the joy of our lives, and (lowering his voice) - at the same time our deepest sorrow, Gregers. ...She is in serious danger of losing her eyesight. ...Oh, you can imagine we haven't the heart to tell her of it. She dreams of no danger. Gay and careless and chirping like little bird, she flutters onward into a life of endless night. (Overcome.) Oh, it is cruelly hard on me, Gregers. (*The Wild Duck* 730-731)
Gregers has still many doubts in his mind. He wants to eradicate all suspicions regarding the family relationship, hence he continues his enquiry.

**GREGERS.** She promises to be very like you, Mrs. Ekdal. How old is she now?

**GINA.** Hedvig. Is close on fourteen; her birthday is the day after tomorrow. (*The Wild Duck* 731)

Now he tries to correlate the age of Hedvig with the number of years Hialmar and Gina have been married. This shows what a clever man he is.

**GREGERS.** It makes one realize one's own age to see these young people growing up. - How long is it now since you were married?

**GINA.** We've been married - let me see - just on fifteen years.

**GREGERS.** Is it so long as that? (*The Wild Duck* 732)

By now Gregers develops interest in the life of Ekdals' and he now he wants to find out the reason behind his father's intentions of helping Hialmar and his family. When he comes to know that Ekdals have a room to rent, he decides to take that room for which he seeks permission from Hialmar who agrees but Gina is not very happy with this deal.

**GREGERS.** May I have the room? If so, I'll take possession first thing to-morrow morning.

**HIALMAR.** Yes, with the greatest pleasure.

**GINA.** But, Mr. Werle, I'm sure it's not at all the sort of room for you.

**HIALMAR.** Why, Gina! How can you say that?

**GINA.** Why, because the room's neither large enough nor light enough, and
GREGERS. That really doesn't matter, Mrs. Ekdal.

HIALMAR. I call it quite a nice room, and not at all badly furnished either.

GINA. But remember the pair of them underneath. (*The Wild Duck* 738)

Gina does not want Gregers to stay there. She has become apprehensive and she doubts something bad may happen that is why she insists on not letting Gregers possess the room but Hialmar, who is a very simple person does not understand the reason of Gregers stay, hence he permits Gregers to stay there. Gregers comes there and starts with his purpose. While his conversation with Hedvig on his very first day, he comes to know of Hedvig’s fondness for his parents.

GREGERS. Tell me now - when you are sitting in there looking at the pictures, don't you wish you could travel and see the real world for yourself?

HEDVIG. Oh no ! I mean always to stay at home and help father and mother. (*The Wild Duck* 750)

Hedvig has weak eyesight which is nearing towards blindness (and which is some kind of confirmation for Gregers that she is his father’s illegitimate daughter from Gina) therefore she is not allowed to go to school.

GREGERS. Are you, too, fond of being in there with the wild duck ?

...But I suppose you haven't much spare time; you go to school, no doubt.

HEDVIG. No, not now ; father is afraid of my hurting my eyes. (*The Wild Duck* 748)
On further conversation Gregers also learns about the compassionate nature of this child. She is not only fond of her parents but she also loves and pities her wild duck. Her clean and innocent heart feels the loneliness for the wild duck. She feels that unlike other members of the garret, the wild duck is all alone because all others live with their family. It is only the wild duck who has no one with it. She feels very sorry about the wild duck.

HEDVIG. And then she is so much to be pitied; she has no one to care for, poor thing. ...No. The hens too, many of them, were chickens together; but she has been taken right away from all her friends. And then there is so much that is strange about the wild duck. Nobody knows her and nobody knows where she came from either. (The Wild Duck 750)

Hedvig is a very simple and innocent child. She is away from all cares of the world, yet she is very balanced and responsible. Her world and her happiness is limited to her parents and specially her father. For her, her father is the person with whom she shares the strongest bond. Her father’s anxiety troubles her. She is grieved with her father’s sorrow. Even the readers are touched with the character of Hedvig. She earns the love and admiration of all who get to know her. But Gregers, the religious and moral curator, feels an obligation to solve the puzzle of Hedvig’s birth. Just as a priest considers his moral duty to guide the society to the path of morality, similarly Gregers feels it his moral responsibility to remove all falsehood from his dearest friend’s life. For him, his religion is to enable people to live a truthful and moralistic life.

Gregers is not a troublemaker or a destructive person. Instead he believes in the purity of souls but his chief problem is his self created moral imperative to purify
the sinful instincts of others. He has himself become the torch bearer of morality. All what he has seen and learned from his mother and religion since his childhood, result in his idealistic approach to life. Gregers’ insistence on the ideal condemns him to a false gospel that drives him to the betrayal of his friends and brings ruin to their houses. In an article on, “Ethical implications in Ibsen's drama”, Daniel Haakonsen (1969) observes that Ibsen places his protagonists in a conflict between two mutually incompatible moral standards, between idealism on the one hand and responsibility for other people’s happiness on the other (p. 14). “Time and again Ibsen’s plays demonstrate that the responsibility one feels for others is in conflict with one’s own endeavour to pursue a lofty and daring aim” (p. 14). Gregers, like Manders is a victim of his self created philosophies and responsibilities. No one in the world tells him to disinfect the world of its sinful human pests but he decides to cleanse the souls of others himself even if they disapprove of it. Heedless of what others say or do, he just wants to carry out his mission in life, which is, in the words of Relling, “presenting something he called "the claim of the ideal". “ (The Wild Duck 760)

To accomplish his mission, he starts off by demoralizing Hialmar who is least interested in Gregers’ complicated and frightful talks. Gregers starts his mission by speaking thus:

GREGERS. My dear Hialmar, I almost think you have something of the wild duck in you. ... You have dived down and bitten yourself fast in the undergrowth. … I don't say that your wing has been broken; but you have strayed into a poisonous marsh Hialmar: an insidious disease has taken hold of you, and you have sunk down to die in the dark. (The Wild Duck 757)
This is shocking and frightful for an aspiring but simple photographer. He tries to dissuade Gregers from continuing his ludicrous talks but of no use. Gregers is determined to persevere his ‘mission in life’. He comforts Hialmar by proposing to be his savior.

GREGERS. Don't be afraid; I shall find a way to help you up again. I too have a mission in life now; I found it yesterday. (The Wild Duck 758)

Hialmar insists on putting an end to his frenzied talks. He tells him how happy and contented he is with his life and that he is not wishful of anything else but Gregers calls his happiness an effect of marsh poison.

HIALMAR. That's all very well; but you will please leave me out of it. I can assure you that - apart from my very natural melancholy, of course - I am as contented as anyone can wish to be.

GREGERS. Your contentment is an effect of the marsh poison. (The Wild Duck 758)

One man, who knows Gregers best, is Relling. He has an old acquaintance with Gregers as he practiced for sometime at Hoidal where Gregers works. Since then he is aware of Gregers fancy for presenting ‘the claims of the ideal’.

RELLING. And did you ever manage to collect that claim you went about presenting? (The Wild Duck 760)

Relling tells how, ‘He went round to all the cotters' cabins, presenting something he called "the claim of the ideal," (The Wild Duck 760). On further conversation he credits Hialmar as a happy man with an “excellent wife, shuffling quietly in and out in her felt slippers, with that see-saw walk of hers, and making everything cozy and comfortable about you.” (The Wild Duck 761). He continues by
praising his daughter Hedvig also. Relling is well aware of Gregers’ unpredictable ambitions. He finds something foul behind his stay at Ekdal house, therefore he tries to strengthen Hialmar’s bond with his family by reminding Hialmar how happy he is in his family and that he has “a noble mission to labour for.” *(The Wild Duck 761)* He tries to make Gregers aware of the importance of family in Hialmar’s life and he also warns Gregers not to play his morality game at Hialmar’s household.

RELLING. (To Gregers.) Come now, don't you find it pleasant, for once in a way, to sit at a well-spread table in a happy family circle?

RELLING. (Goes up to him.) Look here, Mr. Werle, junior: I have a strong suspicion that you are still carrying about that "claim of the ideal" large as life, in your coat-tail pocket.

GREGERS. I carry it in my breast.

RELLING. Well, wherever you carry it, I advise you not to come dunning us with it here, so long as I am on the premises *(The Wild Duck 762).*

GREGERS. And if I do so none the less?

RELLING. Then you'll go head-foremost down the stairs; now I've warned you. *(The Wild Duck 763)*

Gregers is diseased from the pest of idealism growing within him. He accepts it before his father that his only mission in life is to tell Hialmar the truth. But the reality is that by doing all this he only wants to ease himself of the guilt and make his life happier.

GREGERS. I intend to open Hialmar Ekdal's eyes. He shall see his position as it really is - that is all.

WERLE. Is that the mission in life you spoke of yesterday?
GREGERS. Yes. You have left me no other. ... The wrong done to old Ekdal, both by me and by - others, can never be undone; but Hialmar I can rescue from all the falsehood and deception that are bringing him to ruin. Besides, if I am to go on living, I must try to find some cure for my sick conscience. (*The Wild Duck* 764)

Gregers is adamant on revealing the truth to Hialmar because he feels his idealism will work out wonders and he will purge Hialmar’s relation with Gina and Hedvig from all sins, the lie has done and so he reveals the truth to Hialmar which brings a storm in his house. Hialmar’s married life which was very satisfactory a few moments ago had been completely destroyed by an irrational custodian of ethics. All his happiness, homely coziness, family affection etc. had vanished.

HIALMAR. (Striking his hands together,’) And this is the mother of my child! How could you hide this from me?....You should have told me at the very first; - then I should have known the sort of woman you were...Oh, this dull, callous contentment! To me there is something revolting about it. Think of it -s never so much as a twinge of remorse!... That was a delusion. Where shall I now find the elasticity of spirit to bring my invention into the world of reality? Perhaps it will die with me; and then it will be your past, Gina, this will have killed it. ... Oh, the whole dream has vanished.

It is all over now. All over! (*The Wild Duck* 772-774)

All efforts of Gregers tumble down. Nothing good or great happens as expected by Gregers. His claim of ideal doesn’t work out wonders. Instead the family runs under the risk of ruin. In spite of all this tumult, Gregers feels that the family will undergo ennoblement and a positive change will occur in the family. He is
overconfident about his success as the self declared priest of the family. Despite the ruin brought by him in the Ekdal family, he continues to preach his gospel till the end of the play. The only difference is that his targets alter with time and situation. Sometimes he tries to enlighten the soul of his friend, Hialmar. The other time he tries to enlighten Old Ekdal. Sometimes he tries his gospel before his father, Hakon Werle or sometimes before Relling and when he feels situation not under his control, he tries his bogus moral preaching before Hedvig.

Throughout the play, he tries to overpower people with his useless and excessive fundamentalism. Every now and then he speaks like a spiritual leader trying to reform the society. In spite of Gina’s, Relling’s, and Werle’s efforts to refrain him from telling the truth to Hialmar, he tells him everything. He talks of bringing a change in Hialmar and Gina’s relationship, but he wishes to become the “demigod” in their lives. He talks like a priest. He talks of issues beyond an average human being’s perception. He is the Pastor Manders of “The Wild Duck”. After shattering the lives of the Ekdal’s he has the audacity to speak like an innocent priest.

GREGERS. After so great a crisis - a crisis that is to be the starting-point of an entirely new life - of a communion founded on truth, and free from all taint of deception. … I confidently expected, when I entered the room, to find the light of transfiguration shining upon me from both husband and wife. And now I see nothing but dullness, oppression, gloom... But you, Hialmar? Surely you feel a new consecration after the great crisis... Yes indeed, there are endless things to be considered. You three must be together if you are to attain the true frame of mind for self-sacrifice and forgiveness. …To lay the foundations of a true marriage. …No
doubt it is as good a marriage as most others, worse luck. But a true
marriage it has yet to become. (*The Wild Duck* 775-776)

Visual references have been frequently made in the play. Sometimes it is
Hakon Werle’s weak eyesight which have been referred to, sometimes Old Ekdal’s
parentage is related to the weak eyesight and sometimes it is Hedvig’s approaching
blindness which attracts the reader.

WERLE. The fact is, I am not so fit for work as I once was. I am
obliged to spare my eyes, Gregers; they have begun to trouble me.

(*The Wild Duck* 731)

HIALMAR. She is in serious danger of losing her eyesight. Gina.

Ekdal’s mother had weak eyes. (*The Wild Duck* 731)

On a closure study of the play, we see that there are many others suffering
from vision disorders. Werle or Ekdal’s mother or Hedvig are optically unfit
characters but others suffer from some other type of visual defects. The most self
claimed virtues people are most poor in visualizing life. To begin with, Gregers is the
person with the weakest vision. He is neither farsighted nor can he see what is useful
and what is unnecessary. Throughout the play he acts like a Blind Freddie. He never
uses his power of vision to comprehend any situation and act accordingly. He way of
seeing, converts reality into parables and symbols. His claim of the ideal brings
turbulence in the lives of Hialmar and Gina and still he asks Hialmar:

GREGERS. (Laying his hand on Hialmar’s shoulder) My dear Hialmar

- was it not a good thing I came? …Are you not glad to have had
your true position made clear to you? In his deepest sorrows, when,

“I have passed through the bitterest moments of my life”, he
replies, “But also, I trust, the most ennobling.” *(The Wild Duck 782)*

Hialmar is as insane as Gregers. He is totally blind in reasoning and applicability. He does not use his senses to judge his wife and daughter. He uses Gregers’ blurred eyes to see the world. He sees what is shown to him not what he should see. He is most vulnerable and in maximum danger in looking at his future.

Hedvig is physically weak in sight but her sense of reason, practicality and bonding is far more clearer than that of Hialmar. Her interpretation of situation is very sharp. She easily senses the tenseness of situation and acts in accordance. When she sees her father upset, she tries to cheer him. When she sees him busy, she volunteers to help him. When she sees him angry, she obeys him. Hence she is mentally and spiritually much more reflective than any other character.

One character who can be called to be blessed with a clear moral and spiritual vision is Relling. He not only has a better vision but a better clarity in understanding the implications of different actions. At the arrival of Gregers in the Ekdal home, Relling starts suspecting him and warns him of not committing any foul action. Sensing the danger hovering over the Ekdal’s he tries to persuade Hialmar in accepting his good fortune, in having a wonderful family and he reminds him of his obligations towards them. Later in the play, when Hialmar and Gina discuss about the immoral foundation of their relation, it is Relling who alarms them of the impact it may have on their daughter, Hedvig who loves them dearly.

RELLING. Yes, you must be good enough to keep Hedvig outside of all this. You two are grown-up people; you are free, in God's name, to make what mess and muddle you please of your life. But you must deal cautiously with Hedvig, I tell you; else you may do
her a great injury... I am not talking about her sight. Hedvig is at a critical age. She may be getting all sorts of mischief into her head.

GINA. That’s true - I've noticed it already! She’s taken to carrying on with the fire, out in the kitchen. She calls it playing at house-on-fire. I'm often scared for fear she really sets fire to the house. (*The Wild Duck 777*)

Gina and Hialmar do not see what Relling sees regarding the psychology of Hedvig. He tries to warn all of them including Gregers not to play with the child’s reason as it may have disastrous implications but neither Hialmar nor Gregers see through them and thus they force her to sacrifice her life for her family. On the contrary Gregers, uses Hedvig and her ‘wild duck’ for his ‘claim of the ideal’. Gregers knows that the wild duck is the most important creature on earth to Hedvig. Therefore he persuades her to kill her wild duck. Gregers speech is as unclear as his vision. Once he talks of his wish to become a dog than Gregers Werle, Hedvig listens to him carefully. She understands what her parents don’t that Gregers meant something else by his wish of becoming a dog.

GREGERS. If I could choose, I should like best to be a clever dog...Yes, an amazingly clever dog ; one that goes to the bottom after wild ducks when they dive and bite themselves fast in tangle and sea-weed, down among the ooze. ...Hedvig. Do you know, mother - I believe he meant something quite different by that..., Oh, I don't know ; but it seemed to me he meant something different from what he said - all the time. (*The Wild Duck 739-740*)

Since that day she believed that Gregers always said something while he meant something else. Gregers in turn never understood what effect all this caused in
her innocent mind. Instead of consoling her and treating her in accordance with child psychology, he provokes her to kill her duck in order to prove her love and loyalty towards her father.

GREGERS. … But suppose you were to sacrifice the wild duck of your own free will, for his sake?... Suppose you were to make a free-will offering, for his sake, of the dearest treasure you have in the world! *(The Wild Duck 790)*

Hedvig takes his words seriously but instead of killing the duck she kills herself.

The conversation following Hedvig’s death, gives us an insight into the mind of Ibsen. Through Relling, Ibsen asks his audience to judge themselves, what excess of morality leads to. The moral preacher who teaches all others to lead a pure, truthful and pious life gets transformed into the morally most corrupt man. He and his religious idealism kill a child. His lifelong faith has been in repentance. Since the beginning of the play he talks about guilt conscience and repentance. His gospels have always been about truthful foundations, enlightenment, acceptance, repentance, etc. but when he is put to test all these vaporize like the “marsh vapours”. Instead of taking the blame of Hedvig’s death and instead of repenting for the same, he finds nobility in this act.

GREGERS. Hedvig has not died in vain. Did you not see how sorrow set free what is noble in him? *(The Wild Duck 812)*

This conversation is not only on religion and duty. It is a conversation of two fundamentals, of idealism and anti idealism or pragmatism. Relling, the pragmatist, talks of the truth actually existing in the world whereas Gregers talks of the idealistic truth.
RELLING. Before a year is over, little Hedvig will be nothing to him but a pretty theme for declamation.

GREGERS. How dare you say that of Hialmar Ekdal?

RELLING. We will talk of this again, when the grass has first withered on her grave. Then you'll hear him spouting about "the child too early torn from her father's heart;" then you'll see him steep himself in a syrup of sentiment and self-admiration and self-pity. Just you wait! *(The Wild Duck 812)*

The moment Gregers feels weak, he comments:

GREGERS. If you are right and I am wrong, then life is not worth living.

RELLING. Oh, life would be quite tolerable, after all, if only we could be rid of the confounded duns that keep on pesterin g us, in our poverty, with the claim of the ideal. *(The Wild Duck 812-813)*

Relling warns Gregers repeatedly not to play with the lives of the Ekdal’s. He knows what a sick and incurable man Gregers is. He tries to shelter Hialmar from this diseased and fallacious pastor. He tells Gregers that his creation of illusion is far more productive and valid than his useless and inept claim of ideal.

RELLING. You are a sick man, too, you see. …First of all there is that plaguing integrity-fever; and then - what's worse - you are always in a delirium of hero-worship; you must always have something to adore, outside yourself. *(The Wild Duck 795)*

He asks him not to “rob the average man of his life-illusion, and you rob him of his happiness at the same stroke.” *(The Wild Duck 797)*
The wild duck is symbolic of human weaknesses. Where on one side Ibsen portrays the character of Gregers, as an idealist, who gives all importance in presenting the claim of the ideal and in setting up home based on a truthful foundation, irrespective of the consequences, on the other side he draws the character of Relling who is full of human frailty, who is not a moralist yet he is thoughtful of consequences. When Gregers speaks of idealism, truthfulness, ennoblement, a taint free life, Relling speaks of happiness, satisfaction, affection, peace and security. When Gregers talks of ‘the claim of the ideal’ (760), Relling talks of ‘happy family circle’ (762). There is a basic difference in the vision of the two people. Both are real caricatures of society with conceptual and perceptual differences. One believes in destruction and regeneration while the other believes in strengthening the existing one, however it is. The former is indifferent and carefree about the repercussions and the latter’s actions are consequence oriented. Ibsen has put forward both characters to enable his readers (and spectators) to decide which of the two to follow. He does not teach us what to do but he guides us in making the correct choice. He is not didactic but his plays arouse the didactic spirit of his readers and spectators. His plays develop in us a sense of analysis of the real situation. We cannot but reflect over the problems, think over their probable solutions and reach some conclusion. In the words of Menken, “Ibsen’s chief interest, from the beginning to the end of his career as a dramatist, was not with the propogation of ethical ideas, but with the solution of aesthetic problems. He was, in brief not a preacher, but an artist and not the moony artist of popular legend, but the alert and competent artist of fact intent upon the technical difficulties of his business.” (H.L. Mencken, introduction, x-xi)

Ibsen was a playwright. Accordingly he applied a dramatic method He did not preach morality or religious philosophies. He did not teach his audience and readers
what to be and what not to be. He did not become the messiah of his countrymen trying to liberate them from the clutches of immorality. He just aroused the sleeping senses of the people by acquainting them with unforeseen situations of life. He did not move with the crowd. Instead he made his own way but he never forced people to follow him.

When Bernard Shaw and some other English critics criticized him of being a socialist more than a dramatist, William Archer came to his rescue:

“...A grave injustice has been done Ibsen of late by those of his English admirers who have set him up as a social prophet, and have sometimes omitted to mention that he is a bit of a poet as well. ... People have heard so much of the 'gospel according to Ibsen' that they have come to think of him as a mere hot-gospeller. As a matter of fact, Ibsen has no gospel whatever, in the sense of a systematic body of doctrine”... He illustrates, or rather illumines, a general principle by a conceivable case; that is all.” (Franc 35)

Ibsen has not been dogmatic. His plays are usually real life situations which most of his counterparts don’t approve of. Whether it is Helmer’s home or Mrs. Alving’s home or Ekdal’s home, in all cases he presents before us incidents of real life. He never tells us which path is to be followed. He always leaves it at the choice of the readers or audience to decide what they should and what they have to do. His plays and characters show their immense potential in presenting their understanding of society and relationships, of religion and sin, of love and devotion and of freedom and obligation.

His caricature of Helmer is of a familiar man. His Pastor Manders, Karstern Bernick, Rorlund, Gregers, Engstrand, etc. all are those characters quite frequently
visible in the domain of society. At some point or the other, in our lives, we do come across such people. As for ourselves, we also rebuke such people but when Ibsen does so we call him a moralist, a prophet etc.

In his Christiania speech of May 26, 1898, Ibsen tried to explain his point of view:

> Whatever I have written has been without any conscious thought of making propaganda. I have been more poet and less social philosopher than people generally seem inclined to believe. ... My task has been the description of humanity." But even after Ibsen's definite announcement of his purpose, there still prevailed that attitude that considers Ibsen as a violent propagandist. (Franc 36)

As stated earlier Ibsen does not preach morality or religion but at the same time he doesn’t even nullify it. He also believes in God and truth and morality etc. but his limits are defined. He does not go beyond horizon in propagation of these ethical values. He knows what and how much to follow. Some of his characters have been created to bring the truth before the world. They show a demarcation beyond which life wrecks. Relling, for example, alarms the readers of the consequences of excessive moral life. He is not an atheist. He also believes in family and values and parental and filial duties that’s why he tells Hialmar to perform his duties towards his family. He also tells him and Gina to keep Hedvig away from all the mess, the religious morality has brought in their lives. He also takes good care that Old Ekdal be happy and above all he performs all his duties as a friend and a guide and helps the Ekdals when they need him the most.

Mrs. Alving is another character who has suffered the excesses of religion, duty and morality. She has suffered a lot at the hands of self created fate. She
sacrifices everything to keep up the reputation of her husband. She bears all pains to keep her son away from the disgraceful atmosphere of the house but what happens. She loses her husband and son both. Had she been with her son in his early years she would have got some more time to spare and worst of all, when she requires some help, guidance and support, no moral principles, no religion and no duties come to her rescue. Even the officially declared Pastor alienates her then what can be said about a common woman like Regina. Pastor’s blind moral guidance alienates her.

Hialmar is another toy at the hands of morality. The moral dogma’s shatter his happy family life. He loses his most beloved daughter Hedvig and his life becomes useless and out of his control. Religion and morality take away the essence of his life. Similarly this morality squeezes all happiness and charm out of Hialmar’s life and forces him to live alone. Karsten Bernick is an exception. He also preaches morality but does not make use of it in his personal life. He always speaks of morality but unlike other characters he never means it. He makes all personal profits and when he gets trapped by Lona, he accepts it and asks to be pardoned in front of the entire community and his truthfulness wins everybody’s heart. Thus he is accepted as The Pillar of Society.

As early as 1882, in the preface of a translation of "A Doll's House", by Henrietta Frances Lord, Ibsen was introduced as a didactic dramatist who never took up his pen without the intention of preaching some gospel. Wilfully misunderstood, Ibsen has been represented as a sociologist, agnostic, atheist, realist, idealist, pessimist, anarchist, socialist, when in reality he is merely a dramatist. Believers in any cause found it comparatively easy to adjust his views to theirs, and to hail him as master. (Franc 34)
Ibsen’s plays have received severe criticism. One of the most important reasons for this criticism is that Ibsen has written truth in it. He has written the plays without any manipulation. They are based on the real situations of day to day lives that is why when people watched them perform, they were left in arguments. Had they been mere fragments of imagination they would not have been discussed the way they were. Miriam A. Franc writes:

The Academy of March 23, 1901, asked: "Why have Ibsen’s plays so lamentably fallen flat in England?" and answered "Because they are true. We do not want truth on the stage. The playwrights don't want it, the critics don't want it, and the public won't have it. Let that fact be acknowledged. Truth is too exotic for us." And what man, out of an evening's pleasure, wants to hear the truth about heredity, about the evils of modern marriage, about the shams of society (156)

Ibsen has written the truth in his plays. He has presented before us the life as we most commonly see it. We often hear people around us speak about morality but we seldom see them practicing it. Ibsen’s plays are universally visible truths. He has presented to us both facets of the religious morality. He has shown us what is to be moral and religious in the real world. Simply mugging up the religious philosophies without appropriate relevance and without an eye to the result they produce, is not worthwhile. Everything within practical confines is beneficial. The improper and excessive use of anything is harmful. Moral preaching holds the same rule. It can be disadvantageous and can bring ruin in any form. His plays are like eye openers for everybody. Many a times we understand the probable conclusion but the halo of morality doesn’t allow us to accept the truth. Ibsen does not try to instigate us to disown the moral and religious principle. Instead he puts forward the efficacy of the
proper and opportune use of these. It is left for us to decide what to do and what to avoid. It is we who have to understand the rationales behind his plays and the importance they hold. It is not Ibsen who tries to influence us with his religious and moral dogmas. It is the human reason and clear-headedness which shakes our instincts and dissuades us from frittering away our moral strength in unimportant issues. To sum up, Ibsen’s dealing with problems, religious and social issues has been remarkable. He is truly the greatest dramatist of realism. In the words of Edmond Gosse:

He prepared a dose for a sick world, and he made it as nauseous and astringent as he could, for he was not inclined to be one of those physicians who mix jam with their julep. There was no other writer of genius in the nineteenth century who was so bitter in dealing with human frailty as Ibsen was… That he probed deeper into the problems of life than any other modern dramatist is acknowledged, but it was his surgical calmness which enabled him to do it. (75)
WORKS CITED


