

## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis is a study aiming at exploring the social, biological and psychological limitations realized in Henrik Ibsen's plays which not only end the pleasures of life but also bring his protagonists to the state of 'nonbeing' (meaningless existence). This state of 'nonbeing' drives them to drastic and desperate actions. They are filled with fright and terror, become rebellious, and undertake extreme steps which not only ruin their own lives but also affect others badly. They either commit suicide or induce others to do so. Ibsen sensed feeling of alienation of the man of the nineteenth century of his own society. He reveals the terrible fact that by its complexity and prejudices the modern society, and particularly the emerging bourgeois class, had become a force implicitly hostile to self- fulfillment. In his plays, particularly in realistic prose dramas, he explores that the subtle powers of society exert through its agencies- social, economic, political, moral, psychological, and biological, as external limitations upon individual's freedom, and self-realization. Ibsen's protagonists possessed by aspirations and desires, confronted by these limitations, cannot create a world, where in they can assert their own individuality and freedom. This thesis explores that these impediments particularly social, biological and psychological limitations affect and influence Ibsen's protagonists badly. It also focuses that what miseries and sufferings are faced by the characters when boundaries are set for them. These limitations create disorder and chaos, and prove to be the unconquerable obstacles in their lives. Ultimately the protagonists find themselves involved in a series of conflicts and troubles which almost always bring ruin to them and force them to injure others. Either they strive to overcome these limitations, or succumb to them, in both cases, they suffer. In the face of these limitations, life becomes meaningless and unbearable for them.

The movement of this study follows the pattern of discussion and analysis. I have planned Chapter I as an introduction about Ibsen's protagonists' limitations with necessary details of Ibsen's realistic prose plays. Chapter II concentrates on the social limitations faced by Ibsen's protagonists. These limitations not only bring ruin to them but also prove disastrous for their near ones. Focus is on *A Doll's House* and *Ghosts*. Chapter III focuses on the biological limitations. It is observed that the predecessors, the older generation in Ibsen's dramas, affect the destiny of the successors. Mostly, the past actions of the parents bring despair and death to their children. Oswald in *Ghosts* suffers from syphilis, an incurable disease in those days, Hedvig's defective eyesight in *The Wild Duck*, and Dr. Rank in *A Doll's House* suffers from a fatal disease: all these hereditary diseases crush their individual happiness and bring them death. Chapter IV explores the psychological limitations of Ibsen's protagonists. In *The Lady from the Sea*, we find Ellida's psychological association with the sea and its negative effects on her domestic life. *Hedda Gabler* is a play revealing a woman's psychological egotism that forces her into isolation, and self-destruction. The focus of the final Chapter V is on Ibsen's life, limitations he faced in life, and the plays, which bear the autobiographical resemblances with the author's life.

This study is a research based on primary (text of the plays) and secondary (criticism on the plays) sources, using analytical research design.