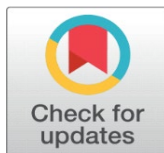
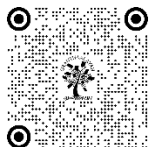


HENRIK IBSEN AS A PILLAR FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research is to discuss Henrik Ibsen as one of the pillars of the societal transformation we see in today's society in contrary with the earlier times. Few of his famous dramas like *A Doll's House*, *Hedda Gabler*, *Ghosts*, are being discussed in brief to justify the research conclusion. An online library research method has been used for collecting the data which has been further analysed by qualitative method and on the basis of analysis it has been revealed that Henrik Ibsen is a prudent and has addressed modern times societal issues through his various play way back. Descriptive method has been used for study of the topic. His work has changed the thinking and point of view of people with time, especially towards women in the society. Women learned to fight for their right and listen to herself, the position of women in the society has levelled up and Ibsen's plays have definitely played an important role in bringing these changes.

Keywords: Society, Women, Change, Equality, Social issues

1. INTRODUCTION

Society has always been a very important part of human life since historic age. It is the element which binds one human with another. Society is something that is run by the people to control the people, so that peace and harmony can be maintained in the community through the societal norms of that community. With time society grew and things that make life beautiful became part of societal norms like marriage, ceremonies, rituals, festivals. Norms for men and women living in the society were implemented with equal weightage, respect and importance to both were given everywhere. With human evolution the society's evolution also took place, the social status of men and women started changing and women were brought under the safeguarding of men due to irrespective reasons. And steadily these norms started becoming evil practices due to which women are deprived of their fundamental and moral rights. Women in many households are still treated as just a care taker of the house and the family and is not provided with right to speak, express or to make any decision for herself or her family.

Earlier the society used to stand for the truth and support it irrespective of the position or social status of the person who is on the side of truth, but this practice also changed with time. The person who has power and money became the truthful person for the majority whereas truth and reality got buried by power and money. Innocent and truthful people

get punishment for speaking truth and for throwing light on reality. In early societies people suffering from any syndrome or phobia were considered untouchable or mentally challenged respectively, but later on with the help of works of many authors such social taboos were abolished and gave relief to those who were/are sufferers. Many authors have addressed these issues through their works in different platforms, i.e., novels, plays, essays, poetry. One of those authors is Henrik Johan Ibsen who through his plays have broken the silence of women and have gradually brought changes in the society towards women's condition in the society.

Henrik Ibsen is one of the famous Norwegian playwrights of 19th century. He spent many years as theatre director in different theatres of many European countries. He was born in Skien city of Norway on March 20, 1828 in a respected family, his father was a respectable merchant. However, things got changed and Ibsen's later years were filled with struggle because his father got bankrupt. He has written many influential dramas and is considered as "the father of realism" due to element of modernism in his dramas. His dramas are still being played all over the world and seems contemporary due to its modernism.

Ibsen has addressed many untouched issues then, which his other contemporary authors were not in favour of even speaking about. His works received many criticisms too because of representing harsh realities of the society and especially for their climax which were not acceptable by Ibsen's contemporary society, but Ibsen continued his work without bothering about criticism and he kept throwing light on the cruel side of the society.

2. SEEDS SOWN BY IBSEN FOR DESIRABLE CHANGE:

As mentioned earlier, Ibsen is referred as "the father of realism", he always presented reality through his works. He was running ahead of his time and brought climax which didn't suit the contemporary society's norms and this way he brought modernism in theatre. He has written many dramas which gives one or the other lesson to the society, not necessarily moral.

One of his most famous play *The Master Builder* (1892) is about ambition, desire, power and fear. It reveals all these complexities of its protagonist Halvard Solness. He is a famous and successful architect who has built many masterpiece buildings in Norway and has made his name in the town. But his ambition and fear of always maintaining the top position in his field have made him use his position and power negatively, due to which the young skilled architects are not able to come up with more innovative ideas and designs. In course of maintaining his position he neglects his family and personal space too. After meeting a young free-spirit Hilda Wangel, who claims to have met him 10 years back and reminds him of his promise of a Kingdom to her, Solness gets attracted towards her and starts believing her, he climbs one of his own constructed towers for her which collapses and he dies. Because of Solness unrestricted ambition he fails to bring balance in to his professional and personal life; and it further leads him to develop insecurities and fear which finally takes his life. Many people at contemporary society used to give so much importance to their professional life and public image that they forget of having a family too, towards whom they have responsibilities and this created a social imbalance in life of such people.

A Doll's House (1879) is also one of his most performed play which represents the gender inequality issue in society. It reflects the social status of women in 19th century when they were limited to the roles of mothers and wives. They were not given legal and financial independence; no loans were given to them and thus were made financially dependent for everything on their family's men. Through Nora's character Ibsen has tried to bring some light on these issues of the society.

Nora is treated like a child or say mere doll by her husband Torvald in their home. He always controlled her like she has no right to express her own thoughts or use her own mind. Nora's husband never gave her the respect of an equal partner and made her feel dependent in every possible way. However, Nora secretly tried to help her husband by taking a loan to repay his husband's debt. She was not offered loan because she is a woman due to which she forged her father's signature to secure the loan. She struggles to repay the loan without bringing it to her husband's knowledge. She becomes furious when things went out of her tolerance limit and she refused to fulfil the societal expectations that decides and controls her behaviour, act and roles. She finally leaves her husband, children and house to save her self-respect and identity.

Ghosts (1881), one of Ibsen's controversial plays is also based on the subject which was considered as a taboo then, i.e. inherited syphilis. In this play a son carries the sins of his father. It was performed first in 1882 and caused a scandal due to the sensitive issue of sexual promiscuity and venereal disease. Mrs. Alving whose husband has died due to this disease hides this truth from her son Oswald and also that their house help Regine is his half-sister, of which Regine too is not

aware. Mr. Alving had affair with his maid Johanna, who later married Engstrand and raised Regine as child of Engstrand. There are many secrets hidden in this drama but the one which relates to social taboo is the disease Mr. Alving was suffering from and it inherited to his son Osvald, who thinks that he has this disease due to his own wrong deeds. There are many more plays of Ibsen which have touched one or the other social issues of the society and have to go through so many criticisms at that time. He is considered founder of modernism because his work has made his audience think about the norms of the society which turned as evil practices with time and through his work he wants to bring the change in society which we can see in modern times.

3. CONCLUSION

To sum up the research the researcher wants to write that due to works of Henrik Ibsen and many other authors we are able to see a drastic change in the society where the authors' lived in and in the society, we are living in. Their presence of mind and vision of upgradation in societal norms to bring balance in the society made the changes gradually possible. Henrik Ibsen is a writer who stick to realism in all his work without even thinking about the criticism he may receive for it. He never compromises with the truth and believes in equality for everyone. He sees the world as a common man and his writing reflects it. He writes what he sees and observes around him without manipulating the truth no matter how much bitter it looks to others. In all his work one can't find any imaginary work as it is free from fantasy, supernaturalism and mystery.

The Master Builder shows that being over ambitious and opting negative way for achieving it, also becomes social evil in a way. Solness is creating hurdles and barriers for new talents who wants to come up with new and innovative ideas to maintain his position of top architect in the town and in a way Solness was obstructing societies development. This play conveys that change is rule of the society and that who doesn't change become extinct. It also says that balance is necessary in life.

At the end of A Doll's House, his character Nora shook its audience because the act of the climax was not expected by a woman in the contemporary society. It made people realize that women also need liberty and equal rights, the way men are given in the society. They deserve to be respected inside the house and in the world outside as well.

Likewise, in Ghosts, the societal taboo thing made Mrs. Alving hide truth from everyone about his husband and especially from his son Osvald due to which Osvald suffers the disease his father Mr. Alving passed on to his generation. Had he been aware of this situation earlier he could have consulted the Doctor and have treated himself on time.

Henrik Ibsen with his experience time to time covered many such social issues through his work and he presented the mirror to its society in the form of his dramas. His plays have been staged by almost every generation and has brought so many changes in the society and have changed thought process of people with time. Some of his plays were even not discussed publicly then because of the social taboos it covered. The interested people used to talk secretly about his works. He proved that though he is harsh about showing society's true face but what is wrong is wrong and has to change one day. With his zeal and uncompromised work, he made people think his way and look the contemporary society through his vision. His vision of establishing equality among men and women, rich and poor, throwing light to evil practices of society like not even talking about venereal disease, about snatching opportunity from new talents and manipulating truth with the help of power made him write such influential and convincing plays.

Seeing the present scenario where women gets all the rights and freedom which men enjoys, where voice of a poor and needy is heard and where equal opportunity to every talent is being provided, where all kind of disease are discussed openly and almost all diseases have medical treatment and people are not scared of talking about it on time, the writer can say that the works of Ibsen has helped a lot in these transformations. Ibsen has fore-vision in his work through which the society gets a direction to proceed towards betterment and every time one goes through his work he gets to learn something new as his work covers many social and moral aspects. His work still seems contemporary, as in many parts of the world these evil norms exists and the researcher believes that Ibsen's work will help in transformation of such societies.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None

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None

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