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POWER AND SEXUALITY IN HENRIK IBSEN'S GHOSTS

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts* in the light of his attitude towards the hollowness of traditional Bourgeois marriage and family life. It looks at brutality, falsehood, deception, irrationality, and above all, matriarchal sexual subjugation, and oppression through the patriarchal power and domination between individuals of the 19th century Scandinavian Bourgeois society. This paper is explained by expressing the assumptions of Foucauldian and Belseyian theory of power and sexuality, and *Women in Power in the Early Modern Drama* by Jankowski and Freudian theory of sex and venereal disease syphilis, Menckonian concepts of gender and sexuality, Northam's viewpoint on Mrs. Alving's inner struggle, and Francis Ferguson's criticism on the personality of Pastor Manders and Engstrand. This paper also explicates Captain Alving as a symbol of a dissolute, drunkard, libertine, rakish, sinful and masochistic behavior. Mrs. Alving has been shown as a self-respective, self-egotistic, self-revolutionary figure in the name of social duty and responsibility for which she always conceals herself in fear of outer stigma and scandal. Both Johanna and Regina are the embodiments of the 19th century Norwegian oppressive and degenerative feminism, and Oswald as a cursed and born victimized self of hereditary disease. Both Pastor Manders and Engstrand are symbol of immorality, hypocrisy, stupid respectability and psychological crookedness. Through plot-structure, dramatic technique, and art of characterization, Ibsen's

purpose is to expose everyday problems of Scandinavian women including psychological conflicts, human dilemma, global right and suffrage of female in the modern society.

Keywords: Captain Alving, feminism, ghosts, sexuality, and syphilis

Introduction

Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts* is one of the most criticized plays. The main motto of the modern playwright is to uphold the sexual issues of his contemporary age. In the play, *Ghosts* Henrik Ibsen, with his subtle knowledge and intelligence, has focused on the universal gender discrimination through depicting the dramatic male and female characters based on the 19th century Norwegian Bourgeois customs and values, and the contradictory attitude towards power and sexuality. The playwright as a self-conscious critic cum social reformer of his contemporary age, has unveiled the grim and mysterious images of the then filthy atmosphere. The play embodies of the hollowness and falsity of conventional morality, particularly the hollowness of conventional Bourgeois marriage and family life. His only motto is to deal with the contemporary social issues – the role of religion in modern life, the hypocrisies of family life, the subordinate and subservient status of women and corruption in the familial, social, cultural, and communal affairs are considered unorthodox of his own time. The main antagonists who are faced with conventions, hypocrisy, sexual passion, power, marriages of expedience, corrupt press, vested interest, and hardest of all, the past, both of society or of oneself may involve guilt and hamper autonomy. In the play, *Ghosts*, Ibsen has dealt with the Scandinavian middle class familial contradictory dilemma and pang of inner agonies between the patriarchy and the matriarchy. The modern playwright has demonstrated the spiritual and moral challenges of the society as it became increasingly urban and modern, and the influence of Christianity began to wane. Ibsen laid a great stress upon the norms of hereditary guilt based on power and sexuality. He studied the disordered human psychology and analyzed relentlessly the common relationship between the two siblings and husband and wife. There is much relationship based on sentimentalism, or a desire to dominate due to hypocrisy, sexual oppression, bondage, drug abuse and falsehood. This paper also discusses the Foucauldian and Belseyian concepts of patriarchal power and female sexuality and emancipation, Freudian theory of sex, Mackinnonian concepts of gender and sexuality, Northam's viewpoint on Mrs. Alving, and Francis Ferguson's comment on the personality of Pastor Manders and Engstrand and so on.

2. Foucauldian and Belseyian comment on Power and Sexuality

We can investigate power and sexuality in *Ghosts* by applying Michel Foucauldian concept of ‘discourse’ and the clash of various discourses in society. Foucault’s theory establishes the system of producing knowledge which is bound by psychological constraints where rules and norms have to be perceived. Catherine Belsey (1985) in *The Subject of Tragedy* analyzes the Foucauldian concept of discourse and emphasizes that female sexuality is not autonomous, being regulated severely by patriarchal discourse. Belsey’s theorization of the relationship between patriarchal power and the controlling of female sexuality may be applied to *Ghosts* with a view to fostering power and sexuality among Ibsen’s dramatic personae. This paper highlights how the patriarchal discourse controls female sexuality as reflected in this discussion, where consolidation of power has a direct relation with the issues of sexuality. Foucault, in his theorization of the relationship between power and knowledge, has constantly reiterated the fact that power uses knowledge for its own benefit. He reflects on the ubiquity of power and also sees every relation as a relationship of power. The concept of discourse is connected with the issue of power relation and Foucault shows how different discourses in society contend for power by using knowledge. Foucault also theorizes the connection between power and the discourse of sexuality. He says that power controls sexuality for its own interest and also regulates the “knowledge of sexuality to ensure a knowledge – based administration of power” (Booker 1996: p.125). This Foucauldian idea, that power controls the discourse of sexuality, and decides what can be known or what cannot be known about sexuality, criticized by Belsey in *The Subject of Tragedy*. Belsey’s focus on the discourse of patriarchy controls female sexuality. She observes with an acute sense that patriarchal discourse has excluded women from the “discourses defining power relations in the state” and also from the “definitions of power relations within the family” (Belsey 1985: p. 149). Along with this exclusion comes the issue of control that, according to Foucault, is a way to produce power. Belsey argues that the control of female sexuality guarantees the male subject “supremacy over nature and over time, ensuring the stability of the family and the legitimacy of heirs” (Belsey 1985: p. 165). Her viewpoint suggests that patriarchy stifles female sexuality since it considers female sexual autonomy as a threat to its power and its authority upon the family. Hence for Belsey, the discourse that defines power is male-oriented and excludes women.

3. Patriarchy versus Matriarchy in Ghosts

An analysis of the play, *Ghosts* supports Belsey’s idea and thought that patriarchy has imposed control over female sexuality, and has excluded women from state power and has made their position in the family

“inconsistent” (Belsey 1985: p. 149). The other common theme that runs through the play is the silencing of female sexual individualism to guarantee patriarchy the power it desperately seeks. Power and sexuality are inextricably connected in *Ghosts* introduces a female character where Johanna is not appeared on the stage. She is pronounced through the dramatic dialogue between Pastor Manders and Mrs. Alving. Mrs. Alving, the female protagonist, mentions about Johanna while disclosing her husband’s immoral activities to Pastor Manders. Mrs. Alving states that her husband had a strong physical attraction towards women in society. Johanna, working as a maid servant at the Alving Heritage, fell victim to sexual bondage and found herself in the clutches of Captain Alving. She tells Pastor Manders about her husband’s unsocial behavior that she would live with Captain Alving despite his masochism. Mrs. Alving saw on the sly that he was greatly attracted towards Johanna. One day she observed the illicit sexual affair from the dining room. At that time she was working very nearly. Standing at the door, she heard her own servant whisper: “Stop it, Mr. Alving! Let me go!” (Ibsen 1989: p.30) She felt very much pain on hearing their conversation. In this way, their physical relationship began to develop slowly. At one stage his physical union with Johanna got deepened. Johanna had no power to protest against her master where she was subjected to sexual exploitation. She did not get rid of his immoral deeds. Actually, Johanna has been shown as a disenfranchised woman of her age, and did not get any help from society, where she was confined to the cocoon. She had been totally victim of the aggressive nature of Captain Alving and inhumanly exploited and tormented through sexual violence and rape. We can realize about the sexual behavior and immoral deeds of Captain Alving in Johanna’s voice: “Let me go, Engstrand! Stop it! I’ve been in service for three years with chamberlain Alving at Rosenvold, and don’t you forget it!”(Ibsen 1989: p. 5) It is quite apparent that Johanna had been acting both as a mistress and a maid- servant in the Alving Heritage. She never forgot that Captain Alving had made a chamberlain when she had been working for him. Captain Alving succeeded in having incestuous relationship with the maid servant. When she became pregnant, Mrs. Alving persuaded Engstrand to get married Johanna by giving him three hundred dollars due to social humiliation, and Engstrand also accepted the chance albeit it was a hideous crime from the social point of view. But Mrs. Alving conceals the sinful acts of her husband so that her only son Oswald can not fall victim of dreadful circumstances. In this play, Johanna has been mentioned as a “degenerate” (Ibsen, p.37) character. This female character has been presented in front of us with a view to focusing on the inner faults and vices of Mr. Alving’s personality. In this way, we can be able to realize the forbidden attractions between the master and the maid servant through Ibsen’s creating the off stage scenes and

characters. The following speeches of Catharine Mackinnon are also very pertinent to this paper. Mackinnon argues that sexuality constitutes gender. In other words, there is no alienation between the concepts of gender and sexuality; male and female do not exist outside of the eroticization of dominance and subordination.

As Mackinnon (1982) maintains: *Sexuality, then, is a form of power. Gender, as socially constructed embodies it, not the reverse. Women and men are divided by gender, made into the sexes as we know them, by the social requirements of heterosexuality, which institutionalize male sexual dominance and female sexual submission. If this is true, sexuality is the linchpin of gender inequality (p. 533 quoted in Freedman 2002: p. 60).*

If we consider minutely the fatal circumstances of poor Johanna, we can acknowledge that this is a powerful argument. Sexuality is viewed as the primary form of oppression of women or just one form of oppression among others. Thus, the sexual dominance of Captain Alving and the sexual submission of Johanna may be applied by the judgments of Mackinnon. It is, however, agreed by many feminists that women need far greater control over their own bodies and their sexuality. Moreover, Ibsen has unveiled the conflict and struggle for existence of his contemporary feminism. These types of characters, in the field of literature, have possessed a remarkable place in his major prose plays, where the playwright has emphasized on female oppressions and entangled relationships of different thread through impacting upon an identity of genuflected livelihood.

In *Ghosts*, we do not see Captain Alving on the stage. But, we can realize about his nature and behavior from the dialogue of Mrs. Alving while commenting his immoral and sinful character with Pastor Manders. Mrs. Alving's view of her husband can also be explained by Belsey's idea that the manifestation of female sexuality is considered as a threat to the masculine social order. Certainly, Ibsen has upheld Captain Alving as a careless person, with no great love for his family. He showed no concern for his wife. Though "Society would consider him as one of its pillars"; he is, in fact, "a dissolute" (Ibsen 1989: p. 28), a drunkard, a libertine and a rakish. Even he did not hesitate to seduce his maid-servant. He was a violator of social law and order. He had no shame of the family. He was a masochistic type of person. From social point of view, we sense that no sensible being can tolerate such types of immoral activities and forbidden attractions of Captain Alving in any civilized manner. In fact, Ibsen has exposed the social realities of the then customs. Through the character of Mr. Alving, Ibsen has criticized the 19th century Scandinavian life structure, culture, community, and society. If anyone attends to the deeper ideas and thoughts of his filthy personality, I think, he would, undoubtedly, realize the inner truth why Captain Alving had got involved into the sexual activities with the maid

servant. Then the mystery might be conceptualized in the inner psychology. The physical demand that Captain Alving had expected from Mrs. Alving was not satisfactory. Actually, his wife failed to fulfill the physical and mental attraction of her husband. Therefore, we may sense that such types of unexpected might happen in any human society. Even though Captain Alving is condemned from the social and moral perspective, but I think, Mrs. Alving is no less responsible for the sexual relationship between Captain Alving and Johanna. In accordance with the balance of Justice, both husband and wife may be equally punished. Regarding the character of Captain Alving, Mrs. Alving tells Pastor Manders:

I had to fight, day after day, to keep it secret. After Oswald was born, I thought, things became a little better with Alving. But, it didn't last long. And, now I had to fight a double battle, fight with all my strength to prevent anyone knowing what kind of a man my child's father was. And, you know what a winning personality Alving had. No one could believe anything but good of him. He was one of those people whose reputations remain untarnished by the way they live (Ibsen 1989: p. 29).

In this way Captain Alving's dirty personality is revealed through Mrs. Alving's dialogue. We may say that Captain Alving is the embodiment of the 19th century Norwegian Bourgeois patriarchy through whom Ibsen has drawn the corrupted aspects of the dreadful male gaze. In the play, Ghosts Ibsen has linked the theme of "the Joy of Life" (Ibsen 1989: p. 56) with that of incestuous relationship between men and women of his contemporary age. In fact, the playwright has hinted at the male domination and female bondage of the then society and an illegitimate birth. He does not attack mankind, but, the behavior of man lacks in reason and morality. Man often wears the cloth of reason and morality but, when he gives up that garb, he is nothing but a brute. Thus, Ibsen has criticized the brutality, immorality, irrationality, hypocrisy and above all, sexual oppression and bondage through male power and domination through portraying such male and female characters.

4. Sexual Relationship between Regina and Oswald

This article further throws light on Regina's physical glamour as well as a profound sexual relationship between half-brother and half-sister. In the play, Ghosts Regina is one of the two female characters. Although she seems to be trivial in comparison with the main female character, Mrs. Alving, but Regina is not at all negligible under the over-all consideration of many critics and scholars. The complex sexual relationship in Ghosts can be seen in the incidents through getting involved Oswald and Regina. In the first part of Act I, We find Regina who seems to be around 23 years old, appear as a physically and psychologically strong young woman, determined and

optimistic, high ambitious, and convinces that she has a stay in Paris ahead together with Oswald, the son in the Alving Heritage where she herself has been brought up. In fact, she is an illegitimate daughter of Captain Alving. The Captain had a sexual relationship with a maid servant of his wife, and this Regina is the product of that affair. But, she does not know this mysterious truth. She knows that she is the daughter of lazy, inactive, inferior minded carpenter Engstrand, and whom she scorns through words like. “Alright, now, get out of here. I’m not going to stand around, having rendezvous with you.” (Helland 2006: p.86) In the first act of the play, Mrs. Alving sees that Regina is very much attracted towards Oswald. She is not at all hesitated to connive at him. Mrs. Alving sees the presence of both of them in the dinning room. Oswald tries to grasp Regina. From the dinning room, she hears the crash of a chair being knocked over. At the same time, Regina says sharply, but keeping her low voice: “Oswald! Are you mad? Let me go!” (Ibsen 1989: p. 32) Regina starts distraughtly at the half open door. Oswald coughs, and begins to hum. Mrs. Alving thrills in fear. She observes the prenatal existence of her own husband and Regina’s mother in the relationship between Oswald and Regina. At one stage, Mrs. Alving supports this profound sexual relationship by breaking all sorts of conventional reformation. Oswald feels that his salvation lies in Regina’s physical glamour that is full of vitality and joy of life. He wants to go away from home taking Regina with him. He would like to work again with a new lease of life and fresh energy painting: “Light and sunshine and holiday – and shining, contented faces” (Ibsen 1989, p.58). He is afraid of remaining at home with his mother, where all his instincts should be warped into ugliness. But, when Regina understands her true relation with Oswald, She decides to leave the Alving Heritage. She, apparently, declares that there can never be anything serious between them. She is not going to stay out at the Alving’s home in the country and wear herself out looking after invalids. Regina feels the awakening of joy of life in her, but, it is the joy of her mother’s kind, a sullied joy. The values which are deeply rooted for so long in her soft heart, is now devastated like a turbulent storm of heredity. In this regard, Regina says: “If Oswald takes after his father, I should not be surprised but what I’ll take after my mother” (Ibsen 1989: p.68). She decides to go to the “Sailor’s Home” an euphemism for a brothel. Obviously, Ibsen seems to suggest that Regina has no option but to succumb to the combined forces of hypocritical, moral codes and heredity which act as her fate. “What must be must be,” (Ibsen 1989: p.68) is what she says in a bitter-sweet resigned tone. We see that Regina’s struggle for freedom from sexual bondage does not succeed in any true sense. Ibsen wants to hint at the shining and existing unsubstantial false trammels, social values and the impact of heredity jointly on which Regina’s fate is controlled. The physical relationship between Regina and

Oswald may be supported because they did not know their secret siblings. In fact, Oswald wants to get rid of his venereal attack through Regina's love and mental satisfaction is contained in her love, affection and physical relation. But in the long run, Oswald does not save himself from the cruel past. Regina also falls victim of cruel fate. For her livelihood, she is compelled to follow her mother's business.

5. Jankowski's Concept of Patriarchal Power and Sexual Bondage

As Theodora A. Jankowski (1992) in *Women in Power in the Early Modern Drama* argues, an adult woman remaining unmarried is considered unacceptable and threat to society. Unmarried women in the late medieval and early modern period were seen as harmful to the "marriage paradigm", and it is marriage that defines a woman's normalcy adding to this is the powerful patriarchal control that women are subjected to, both before and after their marriage. Jankowski says that it is the father who ensures that his daughter would be married off as a virgin while "the enforcement of marital chastity, along with the production of heirs, becomes the task of the husband" (Jankowski 24). Patriarchy, in the form of the father and the husband, imposes an absolute control over women throughout their life. The sexual bondage in the play, *Ghosts* serves as an example of Jankowski's idea that patriarchy controls the female body. Captain Alving being a man of high rank was acquitted though he had committed a crime by having a sexual relationship with a helpless woman Johanna while he was holding a position of power. Moreover, Oswald's sexual relationship with Regina is regarded as 'incest' because of brother-sister relationship. From the moral point of view, his union with Regina is "upon a tabooed relationship"... she is his half-sister and is illegally recognized by any religious or social law as an invalid marriage. Regina's decision to be a prostitute and her rejection of Oswald's proposal can be taken as a proof of her determination to stand firm against patriarchy. Hence Regina's fury at Oswald's marriage - proposal is more dreadful when Mrs. Alving pleads with her to accept Oswald's demands. It shows that the patriarchal representative is bent upon exploiting female sexuality. The affection of male dominated power in violating the female body is firmly resisted by Regina when Oswald pleads with her to save his life by accepting his marriage proposal. She is furious with Oswald when she knows her true relationship from Mrs. Alving, and regards Oswald's proposal as an incestuous commerce. As a woman of individual identity as well as freedom, Regina, leaving the Alving Heritage, decides firmly to follow her mother's business (i.e. prostitution), and rejects Mrs. Alving's and Oswald's request. In this time, Regina violently replies: "No, thank you! A poor girl has got to make the best of her life while she's young. Otherwise, she'll be left high and dry before she knows where she is. And, I've got the

joy of life in me too, Mrs. Alving” (Ibsen: p. 68). Regina’s decision to marry Oswald is further proved that female sexual autonomy is constrained by the dictates patriarchy that sees marriage as the only means to ensure a woman’s status of normalcy. Her decision to marry not only overturns the adamancy that she rejects Oswald’s proposal but it also signifies the extent to which ‘power’ imposes itself upon the female body. Power, in the play, *Ghosts* is thus connected with power and sexuality in a complex way where the privileged are always advantaged by the law and order. The act of “producing” and “managing” the social guidelines of sexuality is “controlled” by the authority. Hence Captain Alving’s violation is not punished under the pretext of patriarchal power while both Regina and Johanna have been dominated and oppressed in the *Alving Heritage* by the name of social or traditional bondage. Moreover, the female body becomes the center of patriarchal control and a ground to display patriarchal “Power.”

6. The Inner Conflicting Struggle against “Ghosts” of Mrs. Alving

Mrs. Alving is the representative of the 19th century Scandinavian feminism; she is one of the most powerful women of his plays. Through her, Ibsen has exposed the unexpected truth of the then Bourgeois culture and community. The playwright has also focused on the silent mystery of all characters. Undoubtedly, Mrs. Alving is the round character. In this way, we may guess the underlying significance of the whole domestic tragedy of the *Alving Heritage* through the dialogue between Mrs. Alving and Pastor Manders. Mrs. Alving has securely locked up all the repressive mental suppressions and conflicts. Instead of getting rid of the exorcism. She, following the advice of Pastor Manders, the personification of false, conventional stupid respectability, sends her son Oswald to school away from him, and has assiduously nurtured the myth of her husband as a noble and worthy figure, presumably suffering all the while in silence bitter agonies of shame and frustration. But now, on her husband’s death, she wants to free herself of the past in all its forms. She wants to set up an orphanage with the Captain’s money, on the one hand to pacify any rumors, there may be of her husband’s immoral, sinful life. Mrs. Alving sees the stranglehold of her “dissolute” husband on herself even after his death in Oswald’s preference for unconventional joys of life. However, she gets rid of her superstitions regarding Duty and Decency and braces herself to make a new beginning only to be crushed by the terrible denouement that her son has contracted venereal disease “Syphilis” as an inheritance from his father. Mrs. Alving seems to find explanation and confirmation of all sorts of things. She has been thinking of in those books. Pastor Manders, on the other hand, considers such books improper reading, and condemns them unread, having perused only something, enough in his opinions, of what has been written

about. And, he glibly justifies his action by saying: “My dear ...there are many occasions in life when one must rely upon others. Things are so ordered in this world; and it is well that they are” (Ibsen 1989: p. 14). However, his hypocritical nature is made explicitly when a second or two later he adds that as long as Mrs. Alving does not talk about those books or act according to their principles there is no harm in her reading them privately. Mrs. Alving, tired of all this cant and hypocrisy, bursts out at one point, “Oh! That perpetual law and order! I often think that what all the mischief do here in this world” (Ibsen 1989: p. 37). She hankers for a life of freedom. She wants to break the shackles of all constraints and cowardice imposed on the home of ideals. Therefore, her anguished cry, “Oh! Ideals! Ideals! If only I weren’t such a coward!”(Ibsen 1989: p.5) Mrs. Alving’s growth and development constitutes one of the strongest appeals of ghosts. We know her identity when she is a middle aged woman; her heart battered and lacerated, tries desperately to face the truth without any false trammels. She discovers in less than a year of married life that her husband was a rake and a libertine. She, then, fled from him, took refuge with the clergyman and intimate family friend, Pastor Manders and refused to go back to Captain Alving. But, the Pastor sent her back to her husband, telling her, “... a wife is not to be her husband’s judge. It is your duty to bear with humility the cross which a Higher Power has, for your own good, laid upon you.” (Ibsen 1989: p.26) Mrs. Alving goes back and keeps home for about two decades for a “dissolute” husband, persuaded by Manders to shoulder the yoke, of what he calls Duty and Obligation. But, now twenty years later, she confesses to Manders that her whole soul has rebelled against that as something “loathsome.” Her appreciation of the role of joy in one’s life sets her apart from the stereotyped character of a harassed, duped wife. Mrs. Alving’s quest for life and joy adds an extra dimension to her character and lifts her from merely being a vehicle for the debunking of traditional values. From Belseyian point of view, we may say that Captain Alving had imposed power and domination on Johanna, and had excluded her from social right and responsibility. Finding no other alternative way, Johanna had been compelled to follow the path of prostitution. The dramatist has focused on female sexual bondage and subordination of his contemporary situations through portraying the two neglecting characters- Johanna and Regina. In Act II, Mrs. Alving tells Manders that she must work her way out to freedom. She regrets her past cowardice and would like to be free of her “superstitions awe for Duty and Decency.” And, here at this point Ibsen links the theme of “the joy of life” with the incestuous relationship. Mrs. Alving sees that Oswald is attracted by Regina, who, unbeknown to him, happens to be his half-sister. She feels that joy is an important creed of life and she longs to say to her son: “Marry her, or make what arrangement you please,

only let us have nothing understand about it” (Ibsen 1989: p. 38). Clearly, she has traveled a long way mentally from her earlier stage of blindly and docilely adhering to hypocritical canons of conventional morality, but in actual life she is still unable to say those words to her son. She is still “pitiful coward”, and she, unerringly, diagnoses the reason for her cowardliness. She is timid because she cannot get rid of the ghosts that haunt her. And, in one of the most moving, important, theoretically effective and revealing speeches of the play. Mrs. Alving elaborates in answer to a query of Pastor Manders:

Ghosts! When I hear Regina and Oswald in there, I seem to see Ghosts before me. I almost think, we're all of us Ghosts, Pastor Manders. It is not only what we have inherited from our father and mother that 'walk' in us. It's all sorts of dead ideas, and lifeless old beliefs, but they cling to us all the same; and we can't get rid of them. Whenever I take up a newspaper, I seem to see Ghosts gliding between the lines. There must be Ghosts all the country over, as thick as the sand of the sea. And, then, we are one and all, so pitifully afraid of the light (Ibsen 1989: p. 39).

Mrs. Alving sees this but too clearly when she discovers that though she does not want Oswald to inherit a single penny from the purchase money Captain Alving had paid for her, all her sacrifice does not save Oswald from the poisoned heritage of his father. She learns soon enough that her beloved boy has inherited a terrible disease from his father, as a result of which he will never again be able to work. She also finds out that, for all her freedom, she has remained in the clutches of Ghosts, and that she has fostered in Oswald's mind an ideal of his father, the more terrible because of her own loathing for the man. She realizes her fatal mistake. Indeed, a crime on which the sacred institution is built, and for which thousands of innocent children must pay with their happiness and life, while their mothers continue to the very end without ever learning how hideously criminal their life is. Mrs. Alving who works herself out of to the truth; even to the height of understanding the dissolute life of the father of her child, who lives in cramped provincial surroundings, and finds no purpose in life, no outlet for his exuberance. It is through Oswald, that all this becomes illumed to her. Mrs. Alving struggles and suffers mightily and in her travail affirms the greatness of the human sprit. In this regard, Northam (1971) comment on Mrs. Alving may be mentioned:

Mrs. Alving at last has been freed from the gloom of ignorance induced by convention. She sees with dreadful clarity the consequences of her subservience to public opinion. Her freedom is cheerless, but, she is at last aware of stark reality, even though her awareness is achieved through tragedy... Mrs. Alving imagines herself to be enlightened enough to exorcise the Ghosts of the past actions; but, she comes at length to know the complete

irrevocability of deeds done long ago (p. 73 quoted in Chowdhury 1978: p. 12).

Mrs. Alving, like a true tragic protagonist, perceives truth at last through the irreparable wreck of her present life. As her world, finally, collapses, she becomes aware of the utter superficiality of her earlier view that she might some day live as though the past had never been. It is through her abandonment of all hopes that she, finally, comes to terms with life. When she first notices the physical change in Oswald, she shrieks, but soon she controls her shrieks and stares at the horrible scene in complete silence. She accepts the inevitable. Moreover, sexual relationship between Pastor Manders and Mrs. Alving before her marriage is also manifested through their dialogue. Mrs. Alving had a sexual relation with Pastor Manders that we can realize through their dialogue:

Mrs. Alving: Oh, how can you say that? Oswald takes after me.

Manders: Yes, but there's an expression at the corner of his mouth, something about his lips, that reminds me so vividly of Alving at any rate now then he's smoking.

Mrs. Alving: How can you say that? Oswald has much more the mouth of a clergyman, I think.

Manders: True, True. Some of my colleagues have a similar expression. (Ibsen 1989: p. 21)

From their conversation, it is, apparently, proved that a sexual relationship is deeply grown up between Mrs. Alving and Pastors Manders that we may realize while expressing at the corner of Oswald's mouth and his lips. Ibsen, with subtle knowledge, has highlighted the physical attraction between Mrs. Alving and Pastor Manders while they were talking about the physical appearance, especially mouth and lips of Oswald.

7. Hypocritical Behavior of Pastor Manders

Both hypocrisy and immorality are noticed in Pastor Manders's personality. Though Manders is a pious and devoted Christian, we are told that he had an illicit relationship with Mrs. Alving before her marriage. He is the spokesman of old morality, of duty or ideals. But despite his professed rectitude, he is a timorous fellow, extremely sensitive to public opinion. It is his weakness which prevents him from holding the hand of Mrs. Alving, and later allows Engstrand to blackmail her. His behavior with Engstrand shows that he is not only a poor judge of people but also gullible and childish. His final decision to support the proposed home for the sailors is a kind of brothel which makes a mockery of all his teachings. Pastor Manders is fully conscious of plays the role of an active partner and who is the full supporter of Engstrand's plan to set up the social, moral and religious laws; he indulges his incontinence to the full and a brothel. Even being quite aware of his

status and moral values, he does not consider his indiscretion illegal and pretends to himself that he keeps all values rightly, and does not violate them in the least. One begins to doubt whether his morality is just an eye-wash. Pastor Manders is the subtle villain of the whole play. His play is to establish prostitution with a view to earning money and to burn the orphanage of the Alving Heritage though persuading Engstrand. From the ethical point of view, Pastor Manders is also the comprising of crime.

8. Engstrand's Filthy Personality

Engstrand is the greedy character in the play, Ghosts. He is the main culprit, traitor and hypocrite. His physical deformity symbolizes psychological crookedness. He is selfish, shrewd, cheat. He is detrimental to society. Unlike Pastor Manders, he knows his business very well how to intrigue people around him. He conspires with the help of Pastor Manders to burn the orphanage of the Alving Heritage. Though he has no institutional background, he is adroit in conversation and an adept in the artistic simulation. He has more audacity and intelligence than Pastor Manders whom he can easily blackmail. With his collected money, Engstrand hits upon a plan to establish "a kind of hostelry for the sailors" like the "captains and officers and the tip-top people" (Ibsen 1989: p. 6). He reveals his sinister design to Pastor Manders of whom he feels the necessity for the establishment of the brothel. For this, Engstrand persuades Regina to get indulged in the prostitution with a view to earning money in the most unfair means. He never hesitates to earn money in the most unfair means. It is observed in the last scene of the play that both Engstrand and Pastor Manders succeed in burning the orphanage of Captain Alving and in establishing the "Sailor's Home." In this regard, we can accept the statement of Francis Fergusson (1954) that embodies of the personality of Pastor Manders and Engstrand:

Ibsen brings all the elements of this composition together in their highest symbolic vacancy. The orphanage has burned to the ground; the Pastor has promised Engstrand money to his sailors' Home which he plans as a brothel; Regina departs to follow her mother in search for pleasure and money (p.170 quoted in Selina 2006: p. 246).

Pastor Manders persuades Engstrand to blackmail Mrs. Alving, and to establish prostitution with a view to earning money in a dishonest and immoral way. Thus, Ibsen has created melancholic and dirty atmosphere, where both Johanna and Regina fall victim to sexual bondage where they find themselves in the clutches of patriarchal power and domination. Both of the two female characters bear the testimony of the 19th century Scandinavian Bourgeois society. In this way an obvious and explicit theme of the play is the exposure of the hollowness and falsity of hypocritical

cannons of conventional morality, particularly the hollowness of conventional Bourgeois marriage and familial conflicts, patriarchal power and female sexual bondage and oppression, incestuous relationship between half -brother and half -sister , a secret plan to establish prostitution and persuade women to get involved in it for livelihood, struggle for self-identity and self – respectability and so on. This is done through a series of debates between Mrs. Alving and Pastor Manders, between the Pastor and Oswald, between Oswald and Mrs. Alving, but, especially, through the debates between Pastor Manders and Mrs. Alving.

9. Freudian and Menckonian viewpoint on “Hereditary Disease”

Regarding ‘Hereditary Disease,’ Freud argues that congenital ‘variation of the sexual constitution’ upon which the greatest height falls but the existence may be easily understood and can be established through the later manifestation. The variation of the original disposition must lead to the formation of an abnormal sexual life. One calls these ‘degenerative’ and considers them as an expression of hereditary deterioration. In more than half of the severe cases of hysteria, compulsion neurosis etc. which Freud has treated through psychotherapy that their fathers have gone through an attack of syphilis before marriage they have either suffered from tabs or generasis, or there is a definite history of lues. The children, who are later neurotic, show absolutely no signs of hereditary lues so that the abnormal sexual constitution is to be as the last off-shoot of the luetic heredity. It is from Freudian thought to put down a descent from syphilitic parents as a regular and indispensable etiological determination of the neuropathy constitution. The hereditary relation of the positive perverts is not known because they know how to evade inquiry. The perversions and psycho neurosis in the different sexes of the same family are so distributed that the male members or one of them, is a positive pervert, while the females are negative perverts or hysterics (Brill 1938: pp. 623-24). Thus Freudian concept of hereditary disease may be applied in Ibsen’s Ghosts for which the whole Alving Heritage is eventually turned into devastation. Regarding ‘Syphilis’ H. L. Mencken comments:

... a woman who continues to cohabit with a syphilitic husband may expect to have defective children; ... that a neurotic and lascivious woman is apt to be horrified when she finds that she is pregnant; ... that the world is barbarously cruel to a woman who has violated the seventh commandment or a man who has violated the Eighth (McFarlane 19621: p.20).

Thus Freudian and Menckonian concept regarding venereal disease can be applied in the play, Ghosts we see that heredity is an important issue of the same family; ‘Syphilis’ is a hereditary disease which stands for poison in relation to sexual life. It has had poisonous effect upon Captain Alving

and Oswald. Society considers Alving as one of its pillars though he is “a dissolute,” a drunkard, “a degenerated,” “a libertine” and a rakish. The sexual attraction of Captain Alving makes a permanent impression upon Oswald at the age of seven. In Paris, Oswald lives a bright and happy life among the comrades, but according to him that is too much for his strength and he is incurably ruined for life by his own heedlessness. At the end of the first act scene where Oswald appears “smoking a big meerschaum pipe” (Ibsen1989: p.19) looking like a dead image of his father, and he makes a pass at Regina and presumably, tries to grab and kiss her, recreating for Mrs. Alving the ghosts of the past from the “conservatory” – her husband and their maid. Thus, Ibsen shows the effect of syphilis as a hereditary disease leading to the softening of the son’s brain at the age of 20 or so for the father’s promiscuous living before or about the time of the child’s birth is medically untenable. Ibsen’s *Ghosts* is not only about syphilis but also about the consequences of human predicament “about the cause of some kinds of suffering, and its relationship to moral responsibility.” Oswald is attacked by an ancestral curse namely syphilis. He says to his mother in accordance with his doctor’s comment: “The sin of the father is visited upon the children” (Ibsen 1989: p.5). Both Captain Alving and Oswald have been affected by venereal disease. Consequently, both of them fall victim to tragic downfall. On the other hand, Johanna and Regina, following no other alternative way, find livelihood in prostitution. Through plot-construction, dramatic technique, and art of characterization, Ibsen has unveiled a perfect image of the 19th century Scandinavian feminism. This suggestion seems to be that Oswald is fore doomed “worm-eaten” from his birth. His physical relationship with his half-sister, Regina has brought about a dreadful change not for his own tragic end but for the whole Alving Heritage. The sinful incestuous union and rakish behavior of his father has influenced Oswald to a greater extent. Ibsen’s *Ghosts* is about human predicament which is almost archetypal namely a situation of bondage or confinement and man’s struggle for freedom from it. Ibsen’s purpose is to expose hypocrisy, stigma, false trammels, incestuous relationship between men and women, and upsetting of the apple-cart of traditional values of the 19th century Bourgeois custom and values. He is outraged by the hypocritical behavior of Norwegian society which has first indulged and idolized him and, then, has turned malignantly on him. He feels that such behavior deserves punishment; he knows how to inflict in on society. Ibsen also directs his attitude against the emptiness and carelessness of the male members of society.

10. Incest and Taboo

Formidable taboo regarding incestuous relationship works in human mind in all societies and cultures. The relationships which are regarded as

‘incest’, being changed with the passage of time and society, (In the part of Leviticus of Bible about the 14 relationships have been regarded as incest for a long time in Europe, are altered and reevaluated in the later period). The principal relationships which are almost tabooed and forbidden in all human societies, and are not altered. They are - the sexual relationship between father and daughter, son and mother, and brother and sister. It is said that these types of relationships are considered beyond the natural sexual relationship in the moral sense of the modern people. Those who have tasted this forbidden relationship are sinners, and law-transgressors of Almighty Creator. In Scandinavia these types of notions in human mind are interred and planted for a long time that the wrath of God would be showered upon these wrong – doers. The legislation of punishment has been prevailed for the criminals according to the state law. The incestuous relationship is accepted as dreadful social and religious injustice throughout the Northern Europe due to this crime, the capital punishment is sentenced to death, and property of the criminals has been confiscated and forfeited by the state/king, or is exiled from the state. The “sinners” are prevalent of capital punishment with a view to getting rid of the flame of anger of God. During the middle 19th century of the Northern Europe, the prevalent concept was somewhat changed regarding incestuous relationship. Though the passage of time is changed slowly, in course of time the incestuous matter in the mind of the common people emerging from ‘sin’ was regarded as social injustice. Though the custom of capital punishment was almost mollified and annulled due to this crime at that time, it is expressed that the capital punishment was announced illegal as a punishment of incest in 1842 in Norway. The Western Litterateurs are regarded as the first or best by ascertaining existence, nature and result of this problem. Perhaps, none of them have acknowledged incest as a natural relationship, or have tried to give acceptability, but they have regarded its existence as social complexities.

11. Conclusion

In conclusion, we may say that the issues of power and sexuality cannot be separated in the play, *Ghosts*. In fact, the outcome of the play is decided through the clash of the discourses of power and sexuality where the assertion of power is directly or indirectly related with the controlling of the sexual discourse in the society. In *Ghosts* incestuous relationship becomes an issue around which the clash between power and sexuality revolves. Mrs. Alving’s ‘complexities’ make her falter as she fights with the ghosts of the past actions for power and possession of her only son and of the whole Alving Heritage. The question of power controlling sexuality for social welfare remains complicated and undismissed as Henrik Ibsen shows that it is in the very nature of man that he cannot resolve the conflict between

salvation and morality, individual sexual impulse and social responsibility. Henrik Ibsen has created a permanent impression of a middle class society upon which the female body is fixated to ensure that the discourse of power and sexuality remain masculinity. The play, *Ghosts* continues to evoke wider interest because the complex portrayal of the discourse of power and sexuality remain central concerns in today's societies as well.

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