**Significance of the title *Ghosts* by Henrik Ibsen**

"Ghosts" is a play written by the Norwegian playwright Henric Ibsen. It was written during the autumn of 1881 and was published in December of the same year. First staged in 1882, it is a scathing commentary on nineteenth century bourgeois morality. Originally titled "Gengangere", which translates as "The Revenants", the play was later translated as ghosts much to the dismay of Ibsen. Unlike its predecessor "A Doll's House", the play failed to garner appreciation instead became a black sheep in the history of 18th century literature. Derisive attacks came from all sides and ultimately the book became a sorry figure both in terms of intellectualism and finance.

The paramount meaning of the title can be attributed to the worn ideals and principles of law and order so misapplied that they have no actual significance. The play has living entities such as Pastor Manders and Mrs. Alving which coagulate this notion. Pastor Manders appears as a moralising but empty-headed standard of society representing the thesis of the drama: that a society which unwittingly destroys individuality and encourages deceit and perpetuates disease-physical as well as emotional upon its youthful members. All the untested maxims and abstract dogma that Manders maintains are ghosts. This is proved in the unauthentic hypothesis of Manders who views the society in a single frame. A blinkered conventionalist, the pastor exists in his own stereotypes where people conform to those stereotypes. Dispositions such as "It is not a wife's part to be her husband's judge" and "We have no right to scandalise the community" shows how he accepts all the verbal expressions of social principles but is unable to deal with instances where doctrine does not apply. This is best explained in his paradoxical statement "A child should love and honour his father and mother". Mrs. Alving retorts "Don't let us talk in such general terms. Suppose we say: Ought Oswald to love and honour Mr. Alving?" Thus, in this instance he is not able to provide a justified explanation which points out his faulty hypothesis. He readily accepts Engstrand decision to set up a Sailor's House which is nothing but a brothel further displaying his deranged moral standards. He thus represents the ghost of empty social standards, devoid of intellect and spontaneity.
Mrs. Alving, though an emancipated idealist follows some of the instances of superficial morality and social standards. The greatest quintessence is the alleged covering of her spouse's infidelity through benign acts which are again ghosts of empty social standards. She is well acquainted with the immoral nature of her husband. But instead of courageously facing the truth, she opts to cover her husband's licentiousness. This is reflected in her sincerest attempts such as the marriage of Johanna the maid with Engstrand, sending her son to languish at a boarding school, and concealing the true identity of Regina. On top of this she also dedicates an orphanage in the memory of late Mr. Alving. Thus, she is also somewhat trapped within these ghosts of superficial standards of society.
The second meaning is applied to those ghosts who are the sins of the past, firmly rooted into the present and haunting the future. An ancient axiom goes like this "Every family has a skeleton in its cupboard". Thus every family has its own secrets of the past which if unearthed will dishevel the future. The major characters namely Mrs. Alving, Oswald and Regina are subjected to the sins of the past and the ghostly imagery is of the late Mr. Alving.
The spectre which haunts Mrs. Alving is of the infidelity and bad character of her husband. She is forever traumatized by the indecent actions of her husband. Therefore, she starts seeing the ghost of her husband's vices in other people. When she views Engstrand a drunkard, she immediately associates it with an avatar of her husband who too was a drunkard. After witnessing Oswald and Regina in a near incestuous relation, the ghost of her husband's past start haunting her. This ghostly imagery of the past was the seduction of the maid Johanna by Captain Alving. Thus, after seeing Oswald and Regina together, she exclaims "Ghosts! When I heard Regina and Oswald there, I seemed to see ghosts before me." Her condition has become so pervaded by Mr. Alving's past that while reading "ghosts glide between the lines of the newspaper". Further, she starts imagining ghosts all over the country, appearing as thick as sand.
Oswald is the next recipient who too, is haunted by his father's past and by the "legacy" his father bestowed upon him. He represents the doomed product of a diseased society. As the old doctor rightly says, "the sins of the father visited the son", Oswald has become the recipient of genetic syphilis. Due to such grave illness he has become a "living vegetable", incapacitated and enfeebled. He is forever displayed in a sickly manner unable to live a youthful life. His only joy of life is her paramour Regina who upon learning the truth leaves him to a life of prostitution. This is too due to the lies of the past which mars the future. Again, it was his father's licentious relationships which led his mother to send him to a boarding school, lynching his childhood.
Regina is the last receiver of Captain Laving's illicit sexual life. She is the daughter born out of the illicit union of the captain and his housemaid Johanna. The housemaid is later married to Engstrand in order to save Laving's reputation which eternally devastates the legitimate right of Regina as the daughter of the house. She is forced to live a penurious life under a carpenter's name and become the nurse of her half-brother. The obfuscation of events leads to her unknowingly make her half-brother her lover and ultimately turning to prostitution.
The final interpretation of the title is through the dwindling character of Oswald. Nothing is permanent and thus like Oswald, we ourselves are ghosts, just waiting for our deaths. He knows he is going to die, and waiting for death makes him a lunatic wheedling for euthanasia. He repeatedly pleads in front of his mother to emancipate him so that he can embrace the sun. Thus, the sun is the symbol of inevitable truth which reflects the evanescent nature of life and that we all have to die one day. On the other hand, the sun is also a symbol of hope which Oswald yearns. He is hopeful that in the next life he will truly be blessed like an artist exploring the bounties of God freely and ultimately attaining "the joy of his life".