CHAPTER VI
CONCLUSIONS

The focus of this study has been the thematic convergence in the plays by the two modern American playwrights, namely, Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee and the two modern Indian playwrights, namely, Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Elkunchwar. The detailed discussion of this aspect has taken place in Chapter III and Chapter IV. In Chapter V, the discussion on other related aspects, such as, symbols and techniques has been dealt with. The observations have been already made with respect to each play and playwright. In the present Chapter, they have been noted down in a consolidated fashion.

The relationship between the two American playwrights, namely, Williams and Albee is more or less similar to the relationship between the two Indian playwrights, namely, Tendulkar and Elkunchwar. There is a difference of a generation between Williams and Albee. Same is true about Tendulkar and Elkunchwar. Though Albee is not directly influenced by Williams, he alludes to him in his \textit{Fam and Yam}.

Tendulkar is directly or indirectly influenced by Western American literature and English movies which has been reflected in the themes, characters, dialogue and techniques in his plays. Elkunchwar’s deep study of Sanskrit literature, Indian Philosophy, English and European literature and English movies has shaped a writer within him. However, he turned to playwriting accidentally after watching one of Tendulkar’s plays, titled \textit{Mee Jinklo! Mee Harlo}! It is to be noted that though Tendulkar’s play proved to be instrumental in awakening a playwright within Elkunchwar, he never imitates Tendulkar.

The bitter childhood experiences are reflected clearly in the plays by Williams and Albee. \textit{The Glass Menagerie} by Williams is considered to be an autobiographical play. The plot, characters and theme show a striking resemblance with his own life. Even
the name of the protagonist is Tom which stands for his own first name Thomas. Many other details, such as his own job as a clerk in a shoe company for two years which he utterly hates and his bringing up in a Southern Puritan family is also reflected in his plays. The strained relationship between his parents, the place of action, St. Louis of the decade of the depression and the alienation of the siblings followed by his sister’s neurosis are found to be reflected in *The Glass Menagerie*. His longing for freedom and his futile attempt to rid himself of the emotional ties has been reflected in the character of Tom.

After the study of the other plays by Williams, already discussed, the common features are as follows:

- His heroes always stand apart from the common American stereotype. On the contrary they become the victims of stereotyped figures representing Business, The Law or The Church. Most of the times his heroes are lonely misfits in an artificial society and an outsider misunderstood by the cotemporaries because they refuse to conform. By ordinary standards they are the failures. However, they are usually good looking and possessing sexual charm which attracts women as well as men. They are of romantic temperament, uncorrupted by the sordid and the mean in American civilization. They are usually artists, poets, actors, musicians or sportsmen.

- The pathetic females who desperately try to cling to their Southern aristocratic roots is a common feature of his early plays. He also portrays another type of Southern women. They seem to represent the conviction that love making is the major reason for existence. Amanda Wingfield and Blanche Dubois belong to the former group whereas Margaret, Baby Doll and Stella belong to the second group. They don’t make much ado about the proprieties of Victorian culture or the restraints of Puritanism.

- There are a number of sexually aggressive women who dominate the men. Carol Cutrere and Margaret represent this category. Margaret does not worry about her promiscuity. She is liberated. She doesn’t hesitate to go to bed with a man to test
his virility. Catherine Holly is the exception who is neither oversexed nor frustrated.

- Another type of Southern woman is the aggressive domineering mother. Amanda Wingfield is at times a heckling and scolding mother who drives her son away from home. Mrs. Venable keeps her son under control and curbs his attempted escape to freedom.

- The leitmotif of ‘individual trapped by circumstances’, relates to the decadence of Southern aristocracy. They have been represented through Carol Cutrere who has turned wild and fugitive, Amanda is reduced to nagging poverty. Big Daddy and Brick, Mrs. Venable and Sebastian are the sterile relics of an older aristocracy. The most obviously trapped individuals are the Southern gentlewomen like Laura and Blanche. These sensitive people refuse to face the truth about themselves which prevents them from making reasonable adjustments. This resistance to reality is also observed in Big Daddy, Brick and Mrs. Venable for different reasons.

- The favourite theme of Williams is sex. He uses sex as the symbol of freedom, as a great liberator, as the only valid manifestation of religion and of love and as the synonym of love. The female characters like Carol Cutrere, Margaret, Mrs. Goforth, Alexandra Del Lago and Heavenly are the manifestations of this theme. A strange combined influence of Puritan upbringing of renunciation and the natural instinct is found in the characters of Laura and Blanche. Their Puritan upbringing makes them hysterical about sex. If the instinct proves to be dominating, it drives the refined young lady like Blanche to prostitution.

- He has dealt with a number of deviations from normal sexual expressions, for instance, homosexuality in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, pederasty in Suddenly Last Summer, fornication and implied pederasty in A Streetcar Named Desire, fornications and its adverse consequences in Sweet Bird of Youth and masochism in Baby Doll etc.

- Williams also touches upon religious themes. He gives his characters a symbolic religious meaning, for instance, Vee Talbott finds Jesus Christ in Val Xavier and
Sebastian finds God in the horrible violence in nature. The names of characters, Chris and Jim, also hint at Christ.

- Williams makes use of objects as symbols very effectively. The prominent examples are Laura’s glass animals and the unicorn, Val’s snake-skin jacket, Blanche’s trunk full of faded dresses and the letters in the centre of the stage suggesting her intrusion, Vacarro’s whip, Lady’s confectionary and the jungle with its hideous cries in *Suddenly Last Summer*, etc.

- Characters directly establish dialogue with the audience as is the case of Tom of *The Glass Menagerie*. He recites a great block of exposition, thus bringing Brecht’s ‘A’ effect to the play. Exposition has been achieved through the gossiping of the women in *Orpheus Descending*. Some times a telephonic conversation has been used for this purpose, as in *Sweet Bird of Youth* and *Baby Doll*.

- The technique of making the presence of the character felt which doesn’t take part in the action, has been used. Mr. Wingfield of *The glass Menagerie*, Skipper of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Sebastian of *Suddenly Last Summer* and Mr. Goforth and Alec of *The Milktrain Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore*, are the prominent examples.

Albee, too, has suffered from loneliness, alienation and uprootedness, not due to poverty but due to excessive affluence. Another painful childhood experience has been the strained relationship between his parents. His own relationship with his adopted mother had also been strained as he could not fit himself to her concept of an ideal child. These things make recurring appearance in his early plays. He doesn’t keep on harping on his childhood experiences for the themes of his later plays. However, the man-woman relationship remains central to his plays.

- The dominating wives are found in his early plays - *The Sandbox, The American Dream* and *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* But the major focus remains on mother-daughter and mother-child relationship. He targets the callous attitude of the young generation towards the older people as well as the young children.
• His other plays deal mainly with the different aspects of man-woman relationship. He depicts the couples at various phases of life but none of them is happy and contented, for instance, one of the two couples of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is middle aged and the other is young. The couple of *A Delicate Balance* is above sixty whereas the couples in *All Over* and *Seascape* are above seventy and that of *Counting the Ways* is comparatively much younger.

• He deals with the relationships other than man-woman relationship in the plays like *The Death of Bessie Smith*. It deals with the conflict between father and daughter. It also depicts the issue of the woes of impoverished White Southerners who find it difficult to accept the realities and cope with them. *A Delicate Balance* discusses the issue of relationship between friends and also with siblings and offspring whereas *Seascape* depicts the relationship between human beings and sea-creatures. It is like an allegory on racial differences. He handles a very different theme in *Fam and Yam* which is between two writers belonging to two generations.

• The female characters of his later plays are extremely patient and of understanding nature, for instance, Agnes of *A Delicate Balance*, Mistress and Wife of *All Over* and Nancy of *Seascape*.

• Loneliness, alienation, absurdity of existence, lack of communication, sex, cruelty and death remain the recurring themes of his plays.

• He makes frequent use of allusions to contemporary persons and events.

• He has experimented with the length of the play. Some of his plays like *The Sandbox, Counting the Ways* and *Fam and Yam* are very short.

• His preoccupation with the linguistic aspect is significantly manifested in the plays like *The American Dream, Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, Seascape* and *Counting the Ways*. The characters keep on mincing on the linguistic aspects like semantics and syntax.

• He makes use of unusual props, the best examples being the dying man in *All Over* and the sand dunes in *Seascape*. 
The use of games and play technique is observed prominently in Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? Similarly the technique of hide and seek has also been used in some other plays by Albee.
• He normally depicts the female characters with more detail dealing with their problems. He seems to be sympathetic to them. He portrays the women in a variety of different situations, for example, Lila Benare is a modern woman who defies the social norms by being pregnant without marriage, Kamala is bought in a human flesh market, Jyoti, from upper caste family, defies the tradition by marrying a Dalit youth and Sumitra establishes a lesbian relationship.

• He deals with the exploration of human psyche in the plays like Chimanicha Ghar Hota Menacha, Mee Jinklo! Mee Harlo! The vultures, Kamala and A Friend’s Story. He has also dealt with mob psychology in Silence! The Court is in Session.

• He introduced the modern techniques such as the use of limited number of characters, avoiding the clichés, combination of main plot and sub-plot, use of soliloquies, avoiding the unnecessary use of highly figurative and poetic language, use of realistic language and short sentences, employing appropriate symbols and depiction of man-woman relationship etc.

• He has dealt with a variety of themes, issues, characters and dramatic forms and techniques suitable to the content of the play. His themes are socially significant. He deals with the theme of class-distinction and true nobility of mind in Shrimanta. Mee Jinklo! Mee Harlo! deals with the dilemma and the agony of an artist who is caught between the practical considerations for the sake of his family and his inner urge. The character of the artist, Madhav closely resembles with Tom of The Glass Menagerie. Kamala deals with the illegal practice of human flesh trade and subordinate position of women in society whereas Kanyadaan deals with the issue of caste differences.

• In Silence! The Court is in Session, he deals with the issue of brutality of man especially when he is a part of a mob. This theme is common in many other plays by him. He has used a new technique of a mock trial in this play. He has also made use of the technique of soliloquy to throw light upon the turmoil of inner feelings of Leela Benare.

• A cornered woman, who finds herself in a fix and the faces the situation in a poised manner, is frequently found in his plays, for example, Mathura of
Shrimanta, Anu of Mee Jinklo! Mee Harlo! Benare of Silence! The Court is in Session, Rama of The Vultures, Kamala and Sarita of Kamala and Jyoti of Kanyadaan. This is a portrayal of an image of a typical Indian woman. This is unlike the defiant and rebellious women of Williams’ and Albee’s plays. There is only the exception of Sumitra of A Friend’s Story.

- He is interested in a variety of interpersonal relationships, their complexities and their disastrous consequences. In a way, he is interested in delineating the struggle of a man to be treated as a human being. It is mainly observed in Shrimanta, Chimanicha Ghar Hota Menacha, Silence! The Court is in Session, The Vultures, Kamala and Kanyadaan in the struggle of Shridhar, the couple- Kamal and Govind, Leela Benare, Rama, Kamala and Sarita and Jyoti respectively.

- He also depicts the conflict between the ideologies as in Shrimanta, views of life as in Mee Jinklo! Mee Harlo!, cultures and ideologies as in Kanyadaan and sexual orientations as in A Friend’s Story.

- While depicting the perennial struggle, he makes use of the devices of irony, biting verbal attacks, sharp language and satire. He tries to explore the depths of the problems from sociological, psychological and family point of view.

- While depicting the fundamental and eternal struggle, he aims at the depiction of the inevitability of the suffering and the unwavering attitude of man despite his suffering.

- He has combined the Western form and the indigenous folk art to achieve the desired effect.

- He has always raised his voice against the social evils like exploitation and atrocities through his plays.

- He is more interested in depicting the perversity or abnormality in man.

- His characters try to develop their own philosophy of life. They engage themselves in exploring the ultimate truth and self-knowledge through their experiences of life.

- Frequent allusions to contemporary persons and events are found in his plays.
• Innovative techniques have been used especially in *Silence! The Court is in Session*, such as, mock-trial within a mock-trial, use of chance element, juxtaposition of the contrasting elements and comic relief.

• The English translations are not sometimes as effective as the original Marathi scripts. The impact of the original dialogue is reduced or sometimes lost.

Elkunchwar also suffered from loneliness, alienation and uprootedness like Williams and Albee. Besides this, his background of Sanskrit literature, Indian philosophy, Western literature and movies have contributed to his personality as a playwright. All these components are found to be reflected in his plays.

• His plays are not autobiographical but the culture, setting, his feeling of loneliness and his experiences as a college student are certainly reflected there.

• High symbolism is a prominent feature of Elkunchwar’ plays. Sometimes the whole play is presented as an allegory, for example, *Eka Mhataryacha Khon* and *Ek Osad Gaon*.

• The image of darkness dominates most of Elkunchwar’s plays. It is not only the darkness around, but it is the all pervading darkness, occupying the psyche and the future of the characters. *Yatanaghar* is a glaring example of it. Most of the times, the sequence of events leads to a disastrous end. Still, the plays do not seem monotonous.

• Elkunchwar’s plays are unique and independent of each other with respect to themes, content and form. He also varies the style and technique as per the demand of the play.

• Overwhelming presence of death occurs in almost all the plays.

• Normally his characters are found to be suffering from loneliness, alienation and inevitability of sorrow and suffering.

• The titles of his plays are unusual and quite appropriate to the essence of the plays.

• Humour appears usually in the form of paradox, irony or satire. This makes the humour sharp and penetrating. It is possibly due to the unmistakable shadow of sorrow and suffering.
• Hardly any influence of his contemporary playwrights like Tendulkar or Alekar is found in his plays. He doesn’t resort to the external conflict, story element, usual characterization or melodrama. His focus remains upon the exploration of human psyche and nature of sorrow. Most of the times, it explores the subconscious and the darkness within. He has adopted or modified the form according to the need of the play.

• His dramatic world has been developed on three levels.
  i) The vacuum and meaninglessness of modern life, pain, sorrow, darkness, futility, frustration, helplessness, loneliness and alienation.
  ii) Resistance, defiance or denial of indulgence, self-centredness, barrenness or illusive creativity, the oppressive, faceless, brutal social system, the corrupt practices in the field of education and elsewhere, etc.
  iii) Developing a new philosophy of life to overcome the nothingness

• Elkunchwar believes that a script should be a happy combination of excellent literary values and its adaptability for performance.

• Unlike Tendulkar, he is not influenced by any external doctrine or ideology. Therefore his characters attain self-knowledge through experience of life.

• His concept of experimentation is beyond the experimentation in form or content. According to him, experimentation is incorporated in the exploration of human mind which is unfathomable and the agony which is unending.

• According to him, his writing is his attempt to establish a dialogue with his ‘self’.

• His emphasis is rather on the development of characters than the plot or the story element. Their journey begins from external conflict- darkness at the subconscious and from individual subconscious to the social or universal subconscious.

• He is more interested in transforming the incidence into experience and the experience into self-knowledge. He wants to share it with the readers/audience.

• Creation and creativity is found to be a special area of interest for him. He believes that the ultimate goal of human life is a genuine creation. Most of his characters found to be aiming at the same. However, they fail in attaining their goal. In many of his plays, he deliberates on the theme of creation and creativity.
He mainly focuses on the creativity of an artist and that too, as a writer. A woman’s giving birth is also considered a creation by him.

- He presents the dramatic experience from various angles and levels simultaneously. This makes the experience more complex and comprehensive. *Atmakatha* is the best example of the same.

- He doesn’t make a distinction between a One-Act play and a Full-length play. According to him, the content decides the form. He also believes in providing a unified experience without the interruption of intervals.

- His dramatic experience emerges out of the combination of Freud’s theory and the concept of tragedy, in a broader sense.

- His plays deal with the eternal values irrespective of place, time, social background or language. Thus it becomes closer to universal idiom.

- He makes highly effective use of pauses. In his plays ‘silence’ speaks louder than words.

- There is an overwhelming and recurring presence of the concepts of success and death in his plays. He deals with the concept of death at various levels, such as, pursuing success, desperate efforts for preventing the decline from the peak-position, realizing the futility of success after attaining it and turning down success etc. Death does take place in almost all his plays. In some cases there is a shadow of death looming large at the background. He has deliberated on death from various angles at length.

- He presents his own philosophy of life through his plays, which advocates abstinence from the material aspects and keeping away from temptations. He wants to accept life as it is and try to understand oneself. He expects one to overcome personal sorrows and suffering and fill oneself with mercy and generosity.

- He advises indirectly to seek one’s origins, establish bonds with them, learn to look at one’s suffering in a detached manner and prepare oneself to be one with the larger entity. This is a very different type of the philosophy of life boosting the morale of people in the frustrating situation around. It is very close to the ancient Indian philosophy.
The common features observed among the two American playwrights and the two Indian playwrights studied are as follows:

- All of them deal with the theme of changing social order and its impact upon society and individuals. They also deal with the individual ways of compromising with the situation, their success or failure.
- The tension within family members remains the focus of interest in the plays by all of them. They deal in detail with man-woman relationship.
- Most of the themes of their plays are common. Albee and Elkunchwar deal with the theme of professional rivalry among the writers, as a major theme.
- Actual physical violence is mainly observed in the plays by Williams and Tendulkar. In Albee’s and Elkunchwar’s plays physical violence is rare. Their characters resort to verbal attacks.
- Loneliness, alienation, loss of communication and the feeling of absurdity of life has remained the common concern for all of them.
- When sex related themes are concerned, the Indian playwrights are one step ahead of their American counterpart. However, all of them deal with the aspect of perversity related to sex. The Indian playwrights deal with this theme in a variety of angles and they have dealt with this theme more openly and boldly.
- All of them are interested in understanding the inner feelings. Therefore they engage themselves in exploring human mind.
- Child has no place in the scheme of their plots. Barrenness, childlessness, and impotence have remained the major concern for them.
- Presence of death remains all pervading for all of them. However, their attitude towards death differs. Albee treats it in the manner of Black Comedy whereas Elkunchwar is serious about it. He tries to explore the possibilities of looking beyond death. He emphasizes the acceptance of death with dignity and as absolute truth. Some of his plays are pure allegory of death.
- Most of the techniques are also common. All of them use the technique of games and play for the development of plot, very effectively.
• Some of the characters of these playwrights display a close resemblance with each other.

• The plays by Williams and Elkunchwar are rich in symbolism. While Albee and Tendulkar are found to be dealing mainly with socially significant issues.

• All of them have experimented with techniques according to the need of the individual play. There are innovations in the division of the play and employing one or two characters as a narrator or chorus of Greek tragedy. They have also employed the techniques of film-industry such as flash-back or freezing of a scene, scenes of dream or imagination.

• All of them provide the stage directions meticulously.

Suggestions for further study

During the course of this study the researcher’s major concern was related to themes. Though she has discussed the use of symbols and techniques in the plays by these four playwrights, it was observed that the plays by Williams and Elkunchwar are rich in symbolism. Another aspect is the use of language especially by Albee and Elkunchwar. Both are very keen about the nuances of linguistic aspects. All the four playwrights have employed a number of innovative techniques. These aspects certainly call for further study in detail.

One more observation is related to the plays in translation. The researcher has made use of Tendulkar’s plays in English translation as a primary source. But Elkunchwar’s original Marathi scripts have been used for this purpose. While going through the plays in English translation, it was observed that the English translations sometimes fail to convey the meaning intended by the playwright. Sometimes the original force, punch and effect of pun was found to be either reduced or lost. On the background of these observations, the researcher would like to suggest some areas for further studies, in addition to some of the points included above.
The plays by Williams and Elkunchwar are very rich when use of symbolism is concerned. It would be an interesting topic to undertake the comparative study of symbolism in the play by these two playwrights.

Albee and Elkunchwar are very keen about the linguistic aspects which are reflected in their dialogues. The stylistic analysis of the scripts by each of them would be a worthwhile topic for research.

When the original scripts and their English translations are compared many times the original punch of the dialogue gets reduced or even lost. It either distorts the meaning or reduces the impact. From this point of view, the comparative study of the original scripts and their English translations would make a significant enrichment in this field.

The plays by Tendulkar and Elkunchwar have been compared with the plays by American playwrights. The same Indian playwrights may be compared with European playwrights or with contemporary playwrights from other Indian languages.

The Researcher finds the journey of exploration through the works by these playwrights, highly rewarding, enriching and enlightening. It has certainly enhanced the scope of her view-point and provided an insight to appreciate other literary works from different angles.