CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

While pursuing the study of literature in English, the researcher came across the American playwrights like T.Williams and E.Albee. The prescribed plays by T.Williams and E.Albee had been *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Zoo Story* respectively.

While studying the background of *The Glass Menagerie* especially with the cultural divide between South and North America, certain parallels between the American and the Indian social structure struck the researcher’s sensitivity. That is the sudden transition of financial status within the once affluent class of feudal lords and the tensions and agony arising out of it, the researcher unconsciously started comparing it with the plight of feudal lords in India who suffered something in a similar manner owing to the sudden abolition of ‘Tenancy’ system, which, in one stroke, transferred the ownership of the agricultural lands from the feudal lords to the tenants. Some landlords were aware of the imminent change and they were prepared for the same. But many others who remained complacent and thereby failed to take note of the changes looming large on the horizon in the new political system i.e. the self-governed India, were caught unawares. They received the crude jolt which left them in a state of shock and bewilderment. They could never recover themselves. Many of them were almost reduced to the level of paupers. This situation was dealt with powerfully and in a unique manner in another play by the newly emerging playwright in 80s,namely, Mahesh Elkunchwar in his play *Wada Chirebandi*. It won’t be out of place to mention a famous novel in English by Manohar Malgaonkar who deals with the similar theme and issue, which was related not with the feudal lords but the former Princely States in India. The Princes suddenly found themselves at the receiver’s end. They were stripped off all their power, privileges, status and wealth. Many of them found it very difficult to
cope with the new situation. Similarly, echoes of social transition are also found in one more contemporary play dealing with the similar situation as *Wada Chirebandi*, that is, *The Cherry Orchard* by Anton Chekhov. The veteran director, Vijaya Mehta who has directed *Wada Chirebandi* for the theatre group, *Rangayan*, has already pointed out the close resemblance between Chekhov’s *The Cherry Orchard* and Elkunchwar’s *Wada Chirebandi*.

This led to the exercise of looking for the parallels among the Indian and the Western literature took off without conscious efforts. Gradually the researcher felt haunted by the theme and made up her mind to undertake a systematic comparative study of Indian and Western literature.

It should be noted here that Vijay Tendulkar’s another play *Ashi Pakhare Yeti* has already been compared to T.Williams’ *The Glass Menagerie* especially with the Laura-Jim episode. Much later Vijay Tendulkar wrote the script of a new wave Hindi movie directed by Amol Palekar namely *Thodasa Rumani Ho Jaye* (‘Let Us Be Little Romantic’) and one would find in the credits that the theme of the film owes debt to many other works, one of them being T.Williams’ *The Glass Menagerie*. Now the question arises whether the Indian playwright in question happened to come in contact with the literary works of these playwrights at any point of time. The answer is an emphatic ‘yes’.

Vijay Tendulkar during the period of struggle, took up many odd jobs to earn his living. One of the jobs was translating English Literature in Marathi for the American Embassy. The matter was usually aimed at campaigning their policies and philosophies etc. During the same period Tendulkar must have come in contact with American literature. Being himself an aspiring playwright, he must have been drawn to modern American plays, as a result of which, apart from his assigned job, he must have undertaken translation of some American plays he liked. The One-Act play translated in Marathi and titled *Janawar* (A Brute) was a translation of E.Albee’s *The Zoo Story* and the translator was Vijay Tendulkar. Another American play translated by Tendulkar is
titled *Wasanachakra* which is the translation of T.Williams’ *The Streetcar Named Desire*. This proves Tendulkar’s close contact with both the American playwrights in question.

In case of Mahesh Elkunchwar, right since his childhood he has been reading all sorts of literature-Indian as well as Western—as per his own account. Later on, he took up English literature for his graduation and post-graduation. Then he took up the career as a teacher of English literature. Apart from English literature, he as well as Tendulkar have shown keen fascination for English movies, which they would watch over and over again. Obviously, in case of both, English literature and visual art, both have left deep impact upon them and therefore positively contributed in shaping their careers as playwrights.

The present researcher has to justify the choice of genre, the choice of the particular topic and the choice of these specific playwrights. First of all, about the choice of genre. Though the researcher has equal respect for all forms of literature, she has a special affinity for drama. The researcher always enjoyed teaching of drama and sharing, imparting the experience with the class. Teaching of drama incorporates a special challenge to the teacher. It is truer for a drama in foreign language. A teacher has to create the dramatic situations and atmosphere through his/her power of imagination and innovation without the support of the first-hand experience with the actors, the costumes, the stage setting, the technical aspects of light and sound effects etc. It is true that audio-visual aids can be used. But just making the class listen to the recording or making the visual recording available to them is not enough. Much more is needed on teacher’s part to make them share the joy of drama and the nuances relevant to enjoy and appreciate the same. The researcher has dealt with the Drama Course at various levels and made the students sharing the dramatic experience with her. So drama was the first choice for the researcher.

Now the second point is, why comparative study. Again the topic emerges out of the researcher’s own experience while teaching drama as a part of English literature. It is observed that
1. Indian students—especially from rural and underprivileged background cannot easily empathize with the foreign culture; foreign characters and themes conveyed through them. If it is linked to their own cultural and thematic experiences and also literary works familiar to them, they can easily grasp it and relate themselves with the works of foreign authors.

2. The interdisciplinary studies have been proved more meaningful and fruitful, especially relevant with the concept of global understanding. Therefore along with the trend of studies related to feminism, Marxism, Dalit and Black literature, there is growing trend is observed towards interdisciplinary studies.

3. About the choice of these particular playwrights. When modern Indian playwrights are discussed, the first prominent name that comes to mind is that of Vijay Tendulkar. His place in modern Indian drama is like that of Ibsen in Western drama. Apart from Tendulkar, other prominent names are Girish Karnad, Mohan Rakesh, C.T.Khanolkar, Satish Alekar, Badal Sirkar, Mahesh Elkunchwar, so on and so forth. However the researcher has selected these two playwrights for certain reasons. As a lot of resemblance and a sort of continuance of style and technique between the two modern American playwrights namely, T.Williams and E.Albee, similar kind of relationship or link is observed between the two Indian playwrights, namely Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Elkunchwar. Moreover when themes, techniques of development of plot, the choice of subjects and characters etc. are concerned, there is a lot of resemblance observed amongst these four playwrights. V. Tendulkar resembles in some respects to T.Williams, while in some other respects to E.Albee. Same is true about the other Indian playwright- Elkunchwar. That is why; the researcher found it worthwhile to take up the comparative study related to themes, techniques, interpersonal relationships observed in the works of these four playwrights. However the main focus will remain upon the themes.

When one talks about the Modern Indian Drama, the first name which comes to mind prominently is that of the veteran playwright, Vijay Tendulkar. His famous play *Cantata! Court Chalk Ache!*, originally written in Marathi, literally brought about
revolution upon the scenario of Indian drama and theatre. He rendered a new face, a new definition to Indian drama. Many other Indian playwrights followed suit afterwards. One among them who emerged prominently is Mahesh Elkunchwar. His first famous full-length play, which received wide critical acclaim, is _Waadaa Chirebandi_. He handled this form with his own unique style. This play was afterwards translated in many other Indian languages including Hindi and English. The English translation has been titled _Old Stone Mansion_.

Though both these playwrights basically wrote in Marathi, they cannot be confined to the boundaries of a single Indian language or cannot be restricted to a specific region. They are true representatives of the voice of modern literary India. Therefore, the study of the works of both these playwrights will be undertaken in the present research project as the true representations of modern Indian drama, which they deserve in their own right.

While discussing modern drama, the world scenario must also be taken into account, as the drama was revolutionized originally by the Western playwrights- the European as well as the American playwrights. The reasons may be embedded in the sudden change experienced by the West at all levels. The political equations changed. Changes were also experienced within the social system, which were consequently reflected within the family relationships. Similar kinds of changes were observed within India though for different reasons. Naturally, the response, the reaction of the sensitive and creative mind was also similar. The same has been reflected in the creative field including literature and specially drama which can widely reach out to the people. Therefore the researcher found it interesting to undertake the task of comparative study between modern Indian drama and modern American drama. The researcher has selected two representative playwrights from each background. The Indian playwrights are Vijay Tendulkar and Mahesh Elkunchwar and the two American playwrights, namely, Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee.
All the four playwrights belong to the second half of the 20th century or post World War era. It is true that the political, social, cultural or spiritual backgrounds for the Indian and American playwrights are certainly different. In spite of the differences, the combined effect of all these factors as reflected in their literary works seems to be similar. One more fact must be accepted that the writings by the Indian playwrights in the similar vein began a little later as compared to the American playwrights. Therefore it will be enlightening to explore the possibility of the influence of American playwrights upon the Indian playwrights and also to analyse their works and find out the instances of parallels and differences between them at various levels.

So far a lot of work has been done on each of the playwrights as independent studies and also under different heads such as *Modern American Drama, Post war American Drama, Modernity in Marathi Drama, Plays Dealing with Psychological Problems* so on and so forth. However to the best of the researcher’s knowledge, so far, no comparative study has been undertaken between these two American and Indian playwrights mentioned earlier.

This study has been inspired by the striking similarities between the works by the above mentioned American and Indian playwrights. For example the technique used in *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* by E.Albee and in *Silence! The Court Is In Session!* by Tendulkar is very similar. In the former, Albee uses the technique of ‘game play’ based on certain assumptions, by mutual understanding, which actually takes serious turn towards the end. Similar technique of ‘mock trial’, a sort of game to pass time has been used leading to similar consequences in *Silence! The Court is In Session!* Both the plays implement the devices of deliberate verbal assaults, de-masking of persona and exposing the true selves of the characters, the brutes behind the masks. The plays begin in light vein, but gradually take a very serious turn leading to disastrous consequences. Striking parallels are found in other works too, with respect to characters, themes, social backgrounds etc. In some respects V.Tendulkar’s plays resemble T.Williams; plays too. Both are interested in depicting the predicament of women, pervert sexual
behavior, consequences of new social order, disturbances within the social system, generation gap etc.

On the other hand plays by Elkunchwar resemble in some respects with Albee and in some other with Williams’ plays. For example, the problem discussed in *Wada Chirebandi* (Old Stone Mansion) is very similar with the problem discussed in *the Glass Menagerie* or *The Street car Named Desire* by Williams. The upset social hierarchy is at the root of the plays by both the playwrights. Obsession with the themes of death, violence, abnormal personalities, pervert sex are observed in Albee’s plays and also in William’ plays.

In some plays by Tendulkar, we come across similar themes, for example, sex and violence are predominant features of the plays such as *Gidhade (The Vultures)* *Sakharam Binder, Ghashiram Kotwal*. Violence along with the battle of wits is observed in *The encounter in Umbugland*. *Kamala* and *Kanyadan* deal with another social issue of predicament of women and also with the issue of changed social order which is the outcome of modern period and the political reforms wiping out the boundaries of caste, class etc. This is also observed in the plays by T.Williams, for example, *Street Car Named Desire, the Glass Menagerie* and some other plays like *Baby Doll*.

All the four playwrights have experimented with form, style and techniques, for example, instead of the usual division of the plot between ‘acts’ and ‘scenes’ they make use of scenes or blocks only. The characters establish direct contact with the audience. Their characters are generally abnormal- either physically or psychologically. Many times they are self destructive, restless, pursuing either peace of mind or the absolute truth. They are constantly moving, travelling from place to place in search of their goal. Sometimes they succeed as in case of Chris of *The Milk Train Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore* who after his encounter with an old Hindu *swami* gets enlightened about the nature of death. As a result he dedicates himself to the mission of giving company to the dying souls who desperately try to cling to life. He helps them to accept the reality,
the death and helps them to make their last moments peaceful and happy as far as possible.

The reference to an old Hindu *swami* and some other references to India, both by T.Williams and E.Albee hint at the influence of East, especially India upon the American playwrights. It shows that the influence is not only one-sided; if at all the possible influence of American culture and literature upon the Indian literature is to be taken in to account. The influence seems to be mutual.

There is no denying that both the Indian playwrights have certainly experienced a close contact with the works of both these American playwrights. As has been mentioned earlier, Tendulkar has translated the plays by both the playwrights, *The Glass Menagerie*, *The Street Car Named Desire* (T.Williams) and *The Zoo Story* (E.Albee). They are titled in Marathi as *Kanchghar, Wasanachakra and Janawara* respectively. The critics of Tendulkar find unmistakable resemblance between his *Ashi Pakhare Yeti* and Laura’s problem from *The Glass Menagerie* (T.Williams)

Both Williams and Tendulkar provide detailed instructions regarding the settings, techniques and stage directions. Both experiment with the style and technique.

All the four seem to be preoccupied with the issue of death. Their characters are found to be reflecting upon ‘death’. They either dread it or are obsessed with it. All the four playwrights deal with this issue from various angles.

Their characters are generally misfits in the world of reality. Therefore they prefer to live in the world of fantasy, dreams and illusion. They do not find solace in either of the worlds, as a result, they turn violent and either destroy themselves or others, who come in contact with them. As they fail to conquer the world, they try to find solace in cruelty, brutality. Such a close resemblance between the works of these four playwrights with respect to various aspects of drama has prompted the researcher to undertake a close analysis of the selected works of these four playwrights.
The list of the plays by each of them, which the researcher has gone through is as follows. No distinction has been made between One-Act plays and Full Length plays, as basically they belong to the same genre.

PLAYS BY T.WILLIAMS

*The Glass Menagerie*
*Streetcar Named Desire*
*Orpheus Descending*
*Cat On a Hot Tin Roof*
*The Milk-Train Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore*
*Suddenly Last Summer*
*Night of the Iguan*
*Baby Doll*
*The Rose Tattoo*
*Camino Real*
*Something Unspoken*

PLAYS BY E. ALBEE

*The Zoo Story*
*Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*
*A Delicate Balance*
*Tiny Alice*
*The American Dream*
*The Death of Bessie Smith*
*The Sandbox*
*Everything in the Garden*
*Seascape*
*FAM and YAM*
Counting The Ways and Listening
Quotations from Chairman Mao-Tse Tung
All over

PLAYS BY TENDULKAR
Silence1 The Court Is In Session!
Sakharam Binder
Kamala
Kanyadan
A Friend’s Story
Encounter in Umbagland
Ghashiram Kotwal
The vultures

PLAYS BY M.ELKUNCHWAR
The Trilogy including Waadaa Chirebandi
Ek Osaad Gaon
Ekaa Mhaataaryacha Khoon
Holi
Waasaanaakaanda
Party
Aatmakathaa
Sultaan
Zumber

PREMISES
Edward Wright in his Understanding Today’s Theatre (2nd Ed.,1972. P.13-14) takes into account three Levels of dramatic criticism, that is, 1) Literary 2) Theatrical 3) Practical. He elaborates on each level as follows.(P 13-14)

1) Literary level
a) It emphasizes primarily the literary values inherent in the written drama. Here greater emphasis is put upon the script than the production.

b) The philosophical and sociological aspects, too, are taken into account, such as impact upon and contribution to the individual’s life and his relationship to the world.

c) Other aspects of script like form, style, structure, language, characterization, originality and techniques are studied in detail. Thus the first level criticism is interested in or concerned with the written drama and not in theatrical effectiveness, popularity etc.

2) **The Theatrical level** At this level the drama turns into a play. Then the aspects like, how well it will be enacted, what will be the psychological impact in production, are taken into account. Here main interest lies in theatre magic arising out of the cumulative effect of actors, scenery, technique, light and sound effect etc.

3) **The Practical level** Here the people involved in the production of the play are primarily concerned with the commercial value of the play that is its popularity, sustainability and thereby profit earned through it. Thus one can say, that the centre of focus is the playwright at the literary level, director at the theatrical level and the producer at the practical level.

The following points need to be highlighted as a scheme followed in the present study:
1) The study will be confined to the first level, that is, the literary level, the script or the written drama. Though in the course of discussion the word ‘play’ is used, it has very little to do with the theatrical effect.
2) The meaning of play for the sake of study means both, the Full-Length plays as well as One-Act plays because the works of both Albee and Elkunchwar comprise of One-Act plays as well as Full-Length plays.
Moreover, some of the plays by E. Albee are adopted plays, which are not included in the purview of the study.

4) Though the researcher has tried to study as many plays as possible, available to her, not all the plays find place for detailed discussion. The plays showing close resemblance with each other are mainly taken into consideration. The plays by Tendulkar which are highly acclaimed, studied and debated upon viz. *Sakharam Binder, Ghashiram Kotwal* and *The Vultures* are not focused for certain reasons, which will be explained in the forthcoming chapters.

It is true that sex, death, violence, cruelty and perversity have been the recurring themes of the plays by all the four playwrights. However a lot of research has been already done on the themes of death, violence and cruelty, especially by the Western scholars such as Anne Paolucci, Richord Amacher, Ruby Cohn and C. W. E. Bigsby etc.

Equally interesting area is found in ‘human relationships’ which has been drastically changed in the post World War era. The interpersonal relationships have been depicted with the new dimensions exploring the new angles to these relationships. The focus of the interpersonal relationships remains mainly upon sex-oriented relationships and to some extent upon the relationships or tensions/conflicts arising out of generation gap. Therefore the researcher has planned to devote a separate chapter for the discussion of interpersonal relationships. The other themes will be dealt within the subsequent chapters. The overall scheme of the research work will be as follows:

Chapter II will deal with social milieu, in which the social aspects making impact upon the sensitive mind of an artist will be taken into account. As the social aspects are different to some extent within Europe, America and India, they will be discussed separately. However they differ in kind, the impact they make upon social life and social order is somewhat similar, probably owing to the underlying resemblance of their nature. Therefore the social milieu will be explored from this angle.
Chapter III and IV will deal with the themes from selected plays by each playwright. As mentioned earlier, Chapter III will be devoted to interpersonal relationships which are mainly sex-oriented. Chapter IV will deal with other themes, such as death, violence, cruelty etc. which are recurring themes found in the plays by all the four playwrights.

Chapter V will deal with other aspects of drama, such as, symbols, techniques, craftsmanship etc. here; too, the similarities related to all these aspects will be traced. They will be supported with the concrete examples from the relevant plays.

Chapter VI will deal with observations and possibilities of further studies to be undertaken by research scholars in the future.