CHAPTER III
INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Characters and the complexity of their relationships has always remained a soul of drama. Without characters, no plot can be thought of and without the tensions and conflicts amongst them no development of plot is possible. Therefore it will be worthwhile to trace the relationships dealt within various plays of the four playwrights.

The plan of discussion is as follows. The interactions within the characters have been taken in to account with the help of three major heads, viz.

1) Interactions within a family.
2) Interactions without family and
3) Sexual relationships. This is a major category and has been given special focus.

Under the first head, the relationships have been further classified in to three sub categories viz.

1) Interactions within generations
2) Interactions within siblings and
3) Interactions within other family members.

Similarly, further classification has been taken into account for second category, which has been further subdivided into-

1) Interactions within Peers and confidantes
2) Interactions within Neighbours and family friends.
3) Interactions within people with different backgrounds, such as caste, creed, nationality, religion, race, social status, ideologies etc.

The third category i.e. Sexual Relationships has been further classified into following subheads viz.

A) Heterosexual-
1) marital and
2) extra-marital.
3) Lover- beloved.
4) Illicit.

B) Homosexual relationships-
1) male, 
2) female.

**Human Relationships Within Family Members**

There are a variety of relationships within a family. Obviously a variety of interactions and conflicts/tensions are observed with respect to these relationships. Here an attempt is made to discuss these relationships on the basis of –

A) Interaction/conflicts within two generations. It comprises of varieties such as,

1) Father – son
2) Father – daughter
3) Mother – son
4) Mother – daughter
5) Parents – Son-in-law

B) Interactions/conflicts within siblings, which comprises of the relationships such as,

1) Brother – Brother
2) Sister – Sister
3) Brother – Sister
4) Half-brother – Half sister
5) Cousins.

C) Interactions between other family members such as,

1) Brother – Sister-in-law
2) With uncle/aunt
3) With distant relatives.

While considering without (outside) Family relationships, the possibilities are varied, such as, relationships within,

1) Peers and confidantes
2) Neighbours
3) Family friends
4) Strangers and within people with certain kind of differences such as caste, creed, nationality, religion, race, social status, cultural backgrounds, ideologies and era/or worlds as has been observed in Albee’s *Seascape* or T. Williams’ *Camino Real*.

The third category focuses mainly upon sex relationships. It can be subdivided into two major types – 1) Heterosexual and 2) Homosexual. The third category of ‘pervert’ relationships may also be taken into account for the cursory references of relationships between human beings and animals.

Under the head **heterosexual** relationships, the relationships within,

1) Husband and wife (marital)
2) Extra-marital partners
3) Lover – beloved
4) Illicit relationships
have been taken in to account.

Under the **homosexual** relationships two varieties exists i.e. 1) male-male and 2) female-female.

The third kind, which may be named **pervert** relationships, the relationship between human beings and animals or the relationships existing in the world of fantasy have been taken in to account.
While dealing with the aspect of ‘Human Relationships’ the following plays by each playwright have been taken into account.

T. WILLIAMS

1) The Glass Menagerie
2) The Streetcar Named Desire
3) Baby Doll
4) The Milktrain Doesn’t Stop here Anymore
5) Cat on a Hot Tin Roof
6) Orpheus Descending
7) Sweet Bird of Youth
8) Suddenly Last Summer

E. ALBEE

1) The Zoo Story
2) Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?
3) The Death of Bessie Smith
4) The Sandbox
5) The American Dream
6) Seascape
7) FAM and YAM
8) All Over
9) A delicate Balance
V. TENDULKAR

1) Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe! (Silence! The Court Is In Session!)
2) Gidhade (The Vultures)
3) Kamala
4) Kanyadan
5) Mitrachi Goshta (A Friend’s Story)
6) Shrimanta
7) Chimanicha Ghar Hota Menacha!
8) Mee Jinklo! Mee Harlo!
(The last three plays have not been translated so far)

M. ELKUNCHWAR

1) Wada Chirebandi (Old Stone Mansion)
2) Vasanakanda (A Breath of Scandle)
3) Ek Osad Gaon
4) Eka Mhataryacha Khoon
5) Yatanaghar (A Torture House)
6) Raktapushpa (Flower of Blood)
7) Party
8) Aatmakatha (Autobiography)
9) Holi (A Holy Bonfire)
10) Garbo
(The original Marathi plays /One Act Plays have been used for comparative study. Free translations of plots and extracts have been given)
A DIAGRAM REPRESENTING THE SCHEME OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

HUMAN RELATIONSHIPS

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
| A) Within Family | B) Without (outside) Family | C) Sexual Relationships |
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A) Within Family

Within

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generations</th>
<th>Siblings</th>
<th>Other Members</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Old and young</td>
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<tr>
<td>i) Father – Son</td>
<td>i) Brother-Brother</td>
<td>i) Brother/Sister-in-law</td>
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<tr>
<td>ii) Father – Daughter</td>
<td>ii) Sister-Sister</td>
<td>ii) Uncle/Aunt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iii) Mother-Son</td>
<td>iii) Brother-Sister</td>
<td>iii) Wife/Keep</td>
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<tr>
<td>iv) Mother-Daughter</td>
<td>iv) Half-brother/sister</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

B) Without (outside) Family

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Peers and confidantes</th>
<th>Neighbours and Family friends</th>
<th>Within people with certain kind of differences</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caste</td>
<td>Creed</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caste</td>
<td>Creed</td>
<td>Nationality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultures</td>
<td>Family friends</td>
<td>North-South, Ruler-Ruled</td>
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</table>
C) Sexual Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heterosexual Relations</th>
<th>Homosexual Relations</th>
<th>Pervert Relations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital</td>
<td>Extra-marital</td>
<td>Lover-beloved</td>
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T. WILLIAMS’ PLAYS

T. Williams was born in 1914 in Columbus, Missouri, where his grandfather was the Episcopal clergyman. In 1926 his father, who was a traveling salesman, moved his family to St. Louis. Both, he and his sister, Rose found it impossible to adjust with the city life. Moreover the marital relationship between his parents was strained due to their vast cultural differences, she, having a puritan background and he being a liberal. She was gentle and protective whereas he was violent and aggressive. He resented young Tennessee’s frail health. A rift was created between the father and the family.

The siblings found solace in each other’s company and created their own world of imagination. During this period he got involved in her. But this world collapsed with her neurosis and her being admitted to a mental asylum. Then probably he turned to Frank Merlo to substitute Rose and develop a homosexual relationship.

He entered college during the period of the great Economic Depression in the 30s. But he left it after two years to take up a clerical job in a shoe company. He worked there for two years. While working, he spent his evenings in writings. He entered the University of Iowa in 1938 and completed the course. He received a Rockefeller fellowship in 1940 for his play, *Battle of Angels*. He won Pulitzer Prize in 1948 and 1955. He himself had admitted that he discovered writing as an escape from a world of reality where he felt acutely uncomfortable. The source of his themes, characters and settings is clearly found in his autobiographical background. He died on 25th February 1983.
As represented in the diagram above, there are only four major characters which actually take part in the action. Other characters, too, are there. But they are only supporting characters. The main focus remains on two types of relationships- 1) Relationship between neighbours and especially when they hail from two different cultural backgrounds. Therefore the relationship deals at two levels- one as neighbours who are not on friendly terms as they are business rivals too. 2) Relationship between persons with different cultural backgrounds. There is a third level too, which is incidental, still critically important. In the course of events the neighbour come in contact with the wife and her aunt which gives rise to two more relationships- a) male-female relationships, b) relationship between two generations. All these relationships are so entangled with each other that they cannot be discussed separately.

The term neighbours has been used ironically throughout the play. The adages like ‘good neighbour policy’ and ‘tit for tat’ have been used recurrently by both neighbours. One uses it hypocritically and the other uses it sarcastically. As neighbours, there is total lack of cordiality and respect for each other. It is full of distrust, jealousy, hostility and revenge. Therefore this relationship should be mainly considered as the relationship between two business rivals- one is Mr. Archie Lee Meighan – a local southern gentleman who owns a cotton gin. His business is in good shape until a foreigner, Silva Vacaro- an Italian sets up Syndicate Plantation and Gin in the neighbourhood. Obviously, Archie Lee’s business has been adversely affected by the new gin. He is desperate to get the ginning business from his rival.
There is one more reason for this urgency where his wife- Baby Doll enters the picture. His possible happy married life in the future depends upon flourishing of his business. It means in other words that the working of Syndicate gin should stop somehow immediately. His wife has served him an ultimatum that unless the house gets fully furnished with full payment of the furniture, she won’t budge for the marital relationship, which has not established so far as per the mutual understanding at the time of their wedding. Thus Archie Lee is pushed to resort to make a dangerous move. He sets the Syndicate gin on fire. He thinks that his role in the act cannot be proved as his rival Silva Vacarro is a stranger, an unwelcome intruder in a Southern town of New Orleans. As he has anticipated, the citizens and judiciary just refuses to stand by Vacarro’s side. It is obvious that seeking justice is impossible for Vacarro, if he follows the proper channel. So Vacarro decides to get it by another way, which may be described as guerrilla tactics and he completely defeats Archie Lee in the battle of wits.

The following extract will throw light upon the attitude of the local people in the Southern town including the Marshal towards Vacarro even after Vacarro has produce the evidence of arson- an empty kerosene can.

**Marshal:** You take advice of an old man who knows the country like the back of his hand.

It is true that you made a lot of enemies here. You happen to be a man with foreign blood. That’s a disadvantage in this country. A disadvantage at least to begin with. But you added stubbornness and suspicion and resentment.

**Marshal:** I sill say, a warm, friendly attitude on your part could have overcome that quickly. Instead, you stood off from people, refused to fraternize with them. Why not drop that attitude now? If someone sets fire to your gin- I say that is not impossible. Also, I say we will find him. But I don’t have to tell you that if you now take your cotton gin across the river or in another country, it will give rise to a lot of unfriendly speculation. No one would like it. No one.
It means that Vacarro has to turn the business of ginning to the only local gin, that of Archie Lee’s. He decides to do exactly the same thing, but not without some reason, some definite plan of teaching Archie Lee a lesson or two. He takes the truckloads of cotton to Archie Lee who is overjoyed by the sight. While Vacarro and his assistant Rock are heading towards Archie Lee’s gin, Rock is puzzled to find that Vacarro is taking the wagons to the same person who is suspected to have set fire to their gin, Silva Vacarro answers, sarcastically.

Silva: You don’t know the Christian proverbs about how you turn the other cheek when one has slapped…….

Archie Lee hurries down to welcome them. He behaves, as if, he is doing a favour to Vacarro by accepting the work. But Silva Vacarro knows that his gin needs to change the old saw-cylinder. Still Archie Lee assures him that the equipment is in A-1 shape (P.36). Archie Lee introduces him with his wife. She remarks-

Baby Doll: That name sounds foreign.

Silva: It is, Mrs.Meighan. I am known as the wop that runs the Syndicate Plantation.

Archie Lee first time mentions ‘the good neighbour policy, in his enthusiasm.

Archie: It means some cancellations, but you are my closest neighbour. I believe in the Good neighbour policy, Mr.Vacarro. You do me a good turn and I will do you a good turn. Tit for tat. Tat for tit is the policy we live on. (P.38)

This speech is full of irony. He then asks his wife to entertain the gentleman-Vacarro, which is an honour to Vacarro. Then he boasts – which is one more piece of irony.

Archie: This is my baby. This is my little girl, every precious ounce of her is mine, all mine.

Baby Doll yawns but apologizes for it and explains.

Baby Doll: Excuse my yawn, we went to bed kinda late last night.
This obvious discrepancy between the accounts by the husband and the wife of the previous night provides an opportunity to Vacarro for his probe in to the arson.

Archie Lee leaves in an elated mood. He repeatedly refers to ‘the good neighbour policy’ being totally unaware of the consequences.

Vacarro begins a seemingly casual conversation with Baby Doll and is successful in getting precious pieces of information from her to establish a link between Archie Lee’s present state of mind, his exact financial status, the crisis in his marital relationship and he hints at his further plan of action. Viz.

**Baby Doll** : after all what can we do with a bunch of unfurnished rooms.

**Silva**: Well, you could play hide and seek. (P.41)

Unconsciously she reveals the facts that she sleeps alone in the nursery in a crib. She was alone for hours the previous night till Archie Lee returns home. She is afraid to enter the house by herself and so she spent a long time on the swing in the yard till Archie Lee returned late in the night etc. (P.45)

She has unwittingly disclosed the facts, which confirm Vacarro’s doubts about Archie Lee’s role in the gin fire. She soon realizes it and tries to cover it up. Vacarro’s queries become more pointed. She turns defensive. He makes his intention clear under the veil of game played.

**Baby Doll**: You make this sound like I was on trial for something.

**Silva**: Don’t you like to pretend like you are a witness?

**Baby Doll**: Witness of what, Mr. Vacarro?

**Silva**: Why- for instance- say- a case of arson?

**Baby Doll**: Case of-? What is – arson?

**Silva**: The willful destruction of property by fire. (P.46)
This exchange makes her feel nervous and uneasy. She gives evasive answers. Now he alters his policy. His strategy is that of an expert crime investigator. He alternately uses probing, leading question and cross-questioning and also applies an emotional combination of kindness, veiled threats and cruelty just like in a game of ‘cat and mouse’. He also makes use of psychoanalysis and frequently keeps on referring to Archie Lee’s words about the ‘good neighbour policy’.

He resorts to physical and emotional intimacy by sitting beside her on the swing, playing with her bracelet, praising her soft skin etc. baby Doll feels his overwhelming influence upon her body and mind. She wants to escape it and so wants to go inside the house. But she is scared to enter the house by herself, which she thinks is haunted. He exploits her fears, too, for his purpose. (P.55).

The things at the gin take the turn as Vacarro has anticipated. The gin suddenly comes to a standstill as the saw cylinder has given way. This provides right opportunity for Vacarro to send Archie Lee away to get a new cylinder.

There is one more turning point in the situation and the marital relationship between the Meighans. Baby Doll is trying hard to escape from the influence of Vacarro. She needs emotional support from Archie Lee. So she crosses over to the gin. Archie Lee is already annoyed as the gin has stopped working. He gets irritated to find her in the gin compound in front of the Negro workers, which is an unacceptable behavior for a Southern lady. In his harassed state of mind, he slaps her hard without listening to her.

Thus whatever attachment was there comes to an end forever. Vacarro has witnessed the whole drama and he takes full advantage of the situation. He comes forward. He humiliates Archie Lee, threatens him to complete the job of ginning in time and orders him to leave immediately and get a new saw-cylinder. Archie Lee has to obey him, leaving behind the sobbing, helpless Baby Doll. (P.57)
Baby Doll turns for the support to Aunt Rose, but she too is not at home. Thus Vacarro is free to work upon her. He comforts her and when asks her a question about their marital status. She confesses about the situation in which she had to accept the marriage proposal by Archie Lee, he being the only eligible gentleman in the vicinity and father on the verge of death. The last part of her speech is important. She tells, “Archie Lee Meighan was an older fellow and in those days his business was better. You hadn’t put that cotton gin of yours and Archie Lee was ginning out a lot of cotton.”

She further reveals that she is still virgin and she has agreed to the consumption of marriage on her twentieth birthday if he could restore the furniture in the house. This explains Archie Lee’s desperation in getting back the business. (P.59)

Finally Baby Doll makes up her mind to enter the house alone. But she doesn’t allow Vacarro to enter the house while she is alone at home. That won’t stop him. It is easy for him to cut through the screen door, open the latch and get entry in to the house. Now the game of ‘cat and mouse’ starts gradually heading towards the climax. Baby Doll is upstairs. He enters the kitchen, prepares a drink for him. In between he is making the cracking sound of his whip. The mysterious sound frightens her more and more as she is not aware of his being very much inside the house. Finally when he is playing with the hobby-horse in the nursery, she finds it out. For a while the game of ‘hide and seek’ goes on between the two. (P.61-65).

Her panic drives her to take refuse in a dilapidated attic and shut the door from within. She knows that he is standing outside. He is pushing the door from outside. She gets more panicked as the attic floor is giving way. He doesn’t show any mercy upon her. On the contrary, he frightens her more by hinting at the ghosts in the attic. (P.65). He continues to crack his whip. She begs him to go away, so that, she could come out of the dangerous place. He is not ready to trust her. He pushes the door open. She tries to run away to the farthest corner. But the plaster gives way raising a dust cloud. (P.67). He gives her an ultimatum. Either she gives a written statement about Archie Lee’s role in the fire or he steps in and the attic floor goes down. The plaster actually starts falling.
down. So she has to concede. He sends a piece of paper and pencil with the help of a long stick. After she has returned the signed statement, he allows her to come out of the attic. His mission is over. So is his cruelty towards her. (P.68)

As he has got a written statement to prove Archie lee’s role in the fire, his motive behind the visit is over. The relationship between the neighbours has also taken a definite turn. He is relaxed now. He wants to go home and take a nap after all the stress since the previous day.

The new relationship has taken root at this point. She offers him to take his nap there itself. The only place to sleep is her crib in the nursery. He goes and crouches there and instantly goes to sleep. She follows him. She rests his head upon her arm and sings a lullaby to him as he has wished. The male-female relationship comes to the fore from this point.

**Baby-Doll – Silva Vacarro Relationship**

When they meet at first, Silva Vacarro is a stranger for her. She is indifferent and disinterested in him. She even doesn’t know the implication of ‘wop’ when she innocently asks him ‘So, you are a wop?’ Though her husband has asked her to entertain the guest, she doesn’t care. When he asks for cold water, she sends him to the water pump in the yard. (P.39). When he cracks a pecan nut in his mouth and offers it to her, she finds the act offensive. (P.44). Then gradually she reveals many secrets to him related to her lack of education, the situation in which the marriage took place, her still virgin status, their tight financial position and even the details of Archie Lee’s movements on the night of the fire etc. owing to her child like nature. (P. 44-47).

His physical intimacy while they sit in the discarded limousine or the swing is part of his tactics, but that intimacy slowly grows her female instincts, without her knowledge. It is clear that her reasons for not being prepared for marriage are just lame excuses. The fact is, she has never felt that sort of attraction fore opposite sex, in Archie
Lee when she finds a right ‘man’ in Silva Vacarro, her female instincts are aroused, in his presence. Therefore when he intends to leave after getting hold of the written statement, she insists that he should stay and have a nap there itself. She sings lullaby to him, which reveals her motherly instinct, which has remained so far. (P.68).

When the lover-beloved relationship is taken in to accounts it is clear that it is not a mutual attraction at least until the game of ‘cat and mouse’ is over. It develops only afterwards, due to the lead taken by Baby-Doll and due to the cruel treatment she receives at the hands of Archie Lee.

His support has brought about a complete metamorphosis in Baby-Doll’s person. She no more cowers in Archie Lee’s presence. She is defiant. She openly teases him, mocks at him when he boasts of teaching a lesson to the hooligans who whistle at Baby-Doll, she remarks, “Small dogs have a loud bark.” (P.74). She even threatens him with ‘jail term if the truth comes out’ (P.75).

Archie Lee’s undue suspicion about Silva Vacarro and his cruelty towards her pushes her further towards Silva Vacarro. She doesn’t hesitate to let Archie Lee know about Vacarro’s insulting and indecent proposal,

Baby-Doll: Archie Lee, Mr. Vacarro say she might not put up a new cotton gin, but let you gin cotton for him all the time, now. Ain’t you pleased about that? -- And while you are ginning it out, he will have me entertain him, --- it’s going to go on and on! May be even next fall. (P. 75).

In spite of these insults Archie Lee has to ask Vacarro for supper against his wish. His suspicion forces him to ask Aunt Rose if she was home while he was away. When he comes to know that she had left for a visit to hospital to see her dying friend, his wrath is uncontrollable. He pores it upon Aunt Rose, insults her and almost asks her to get out. Vacarro cannot put up with the insults of a helpless old lady. He finds her in a very pathetic situation. He offers her a job at his house and also to drive her there. This
provides further opportunity to Baby-Doll. She hints that she may follow her to Vacarro’s house. She says, “y’ never can tell about things in future –.”(P.82).

Over this when Archie Lee asks, “Anything else around here you wanta take with yuh, Vacarro?” Baby Doll openly teases and taunts him with her remark,

**Baby Doll:** Why, yaiss, Archie Lee. MrVacarro noticed that the house was overloaded with furniture and he would like us to loan him five complete sets of it to --

**Archie:** YOU SHUDDUP! I will get to you later.

**Baby-Doll:** If you ever git to me it sure is going to be later, ha, ha, much later, ha, ha! She teases and annoys him more and more by her words, actions and behavior, especially her intimacy with Vacarro. He directly threatens her, directly accuses both of them for their relations.

He turns violent and prepares to get Vacarro arrested for seducing his young wife in his absence. Then he decides to shoot him. As the situation has gone out of hands, Baby-Doll calls the police station to take Archie Lee in to custody.

In the meanwhile Vacarro has escaped in the front yard and hidden himself in the pecan tree. Soon the Baby-Doll, too, has to join him as Archie Lee after her also. Archie Lee is taking blind shots wherever he suspects them to be hiding. The police jeep approaches and takes violent Archie Lee in to custody. In the battle of wits he is completely beaten on the business front as well as the personal and the emotional front.

Though the relationship between Baby-Doll and Silva Vacarro begins as complete strangers to each other and though Vacarro’s primary motive to establish contact with Baby-Doll is seeking authentic information about Archie Lee’s moves, it finally turns
into an emotional bond, which is finally suggested by Vacarro’s lifted arms to catch Baby-Doll in his arms. Thus it ends in to lover-beloved relationship.

**The relationship between two generations** has been portrayed with respect to the treatment given to old Aunt Rose Comfort by her son-in-law Archie Lee Meighan and a young stranger Silva Vacarro. While Archie Lee treats her shabbily, worse than a servant, Vacarro is genuinely respectful and sympathetic to her. Archie Lee doesn’t lose any opportunity to insult and threatens her. Vacarro comes forward to save her honour and self respect.

Archie Lee keeps on shouting at Aunt Rose for very small reason, for her deafness, for her fear of answering the telephone call (P.14), her inefficiency in cooking and housekeeping (P.73), her forgetfulness of lighting the stove while cooking (P.80), so on and so forth. The final humiliation comes when he asks her to leave their house, though he knows very well that she has nowhere to go (P.81). At this point Vacarro steps in and helps old Aunt Rose to restore her self-respect, her position as an elderly lady and offers her to take home to look after his household. (P.81).

As the attitudes of both- Archie Lee and Vacarro- are contrasting towards Baby-Doll, similarly they are contrasting towards Aunt Rose also. They have been juxtaposed with each other.

Similar contrast has been depicted with respect to cultural differences. The whole Southern town hates the foreigner- Vacarro. They refer to him as ‘wop’. Archie Lee calls him ‘dago’(P.84), ‘GREASY WOP FACE’(P.85) while threatening him with dire consequences.. The marshal, the law-enforcer, just refuses to stand by him even though clear evidence of sabotage is produced by Vacarro. (P.32-34)

Signi Falk makes the following comments regarding the character-types, atmosphere and themes of the play.
The film script of *Baby Doll* is based on Williams’ two earlier One-Act Plays, *Twenty-Seven Wagons Full of Cotton* and *The Long Story Cut Short* which portray rather unsavory poor whites in Mississippi. Baby Doll is a typical example of the girls from this class. She is rich in sex-appeal, equipped with a fourth-grade education but with very definite ideas about social status. Archie Lee is a heavy drinking, shiftless clod who hates Negroes and ‘wops’. Since he cannot make a living honourably, he lives precariously on installment buying. He wants to get rid of Auntie Rose Comfort. (Signi Falk, *Tennessee Williams*, College and University Press Publishers, New Haven, Conn. 1961)

Silva Vacarro creates contrast with his personality. He is a lover-type, full of vitality and animalism. He is determined to get revenge on the arsonist through the witless baby doll. He gets an affidavit from her by frightening her to death. This is an unusual and major experience for Baby Doll. She suddenly grows up, becomes articulate and is sexually awakened by the Italian. (Falk, P115)

The background atmosphere varies from roaster crowing and hymns suggesting, sex and religion, to machinery noises, apparently a symbol of corrupting forces of industrial society. (Falk, P.115)

Auntie Rose is one of the few real characters among the minor figures, grotesques and types, who appear when needed; among these are ‘mendacious’ businessmen and marshals or southern hangers-on who are contrast to the natural sex-mates. Auntie Rose fits into the description by Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie*, of ‘small birdlike spinsters who depend upon their relatives and have to lead life upon their mercy.’

Williams has introduced such issues as race prejudice, duplicity, and brutality in this play. (Falk, P.116)
**CAT ON A HOT TIN ROOF (1957).**

Pollitt Family from Mississippi Delta

(Mr.Pollitt) Big Daddy -------- wife -------- Big Mama (Ida)

(65) | (60) | Sons

-------------------------------------------

Margaret—wife—Brick (27) | Gooper (35) –wife—Mea

A famous football player while at college. Presently a T.V. announcer | A Law Practitioner in Memphis.

| bosom friend

Skipper
(Also foot ball player- now no more)

The focus of human relationships and its complexities remains on marital relationships in this play. There are three married couples, the senior Pollitts, referred to as Big Daddy and Big Mama. The second couple is that of the elder son Gooper and his wife Mea, also referred to as Man Brother and Sister Woman. The third couple is Brick and his wife Margaret or Maggie; sometimes referred to as Cat.

It is Big Daddy’s 65th birthday. All have gathered to celebrate it, mainly because it is most probably his last birthday. He is dying of colon cancer. However the elder couple has been told that it is nothing but ‘a spastic colon’. The couple is excited by the news as the tension of the past three years has been removed. Mr. Pallitt is the richest planter in the Mississippi Delta who owns 28000 acres of richest land. He is a self- made person and therefore naturally proud of it. He is not refined in his manners. Big Mama is a devoted wife. She is bulky, shapeless lady and little childish in her manners. Big Daddy does not exactly have affection or respect for her. But she does not mind it. At least she does not display her resentment for it. If their marriage is to be termed as a successful one, it is because of social restraints, and not out of emotional ties or true attachment with each other.
The second couple is that of Gooper and Mae. This should be called as successful marriage as this marriage has produced five kids and the sixth is on way. The couple feels proud of it. Their union is a true and complete union of body and mind. Both think alike. They support each other, assist, two bodies but one mind is working.

The third couple is that of Brick and Maggie. The marital relationship of this couple is passing through crisis due to some misunderstandings and illusions. They are childless for the same reason. The crisis leads to another crisis related to the inheritance of the large estate. (P.41-43).

On second level this is the relationship between two generations i.e. parents and sons. For some reason the senior couple does not have the same love, affection, trust with the elder son and his wife. Big Daddy detests the whole family and he says so openly. Big Mamma though puts up with them she really dotes upon the younger son-Brick. In the moment of crisis in Act III she plainly tells them that Gooper will not get even the trusteeship of the estate and she and her husband are waiting for Brick to give a success for it.

Big Daddy is also aware of the strained relations between Brick and Maggie. But he is so preoccupied with his critical health, the overwhelming fear of cancer that he could not look in to his son’s- Brick’s problems. However his fears vanish due to the false report. Thus tension being removed he is determined to have heart to heart talk with Brick and solve it if possible, as Brisk has turned almost an alcoholic due to some unknown reason. He, too, feels that Brick is his true heir and he must continue the linkage. Unless the problem between the couple is resolved, his expectations are vain. So instead of participating in the Birthday celebrations, he insists on having private talk with Brick.

Thus at this level the relationship between two generations is not to be discussed for generation gap, but for different attitudes to two children by the parents and the crisis arising due to that.
At the third level is observed the sibling rivalry as fallout of this partial attitude of parents in favour of a ‘good for nothing’ son- Brick. This sibling rivalry is one sided. Gooper and Mae leave no stone unturned to prove brick’s worthlessness. They stoop down to such a level that they try to eavesdrop to know what is happening in the bedroom of Brick and Maggie, which is next to theirs. It is they who reveal the secret that Brick and Maggie do not sleep together and therefore the possibility of their child is out of question. Both openly taunt Brick and Maggie over this thing and many other things. Maggie makes all efforts to cover up the discord. She gets involved in to verbal battles but Brick makes no effort to defend himself. His attitude is completely aloof, detached over the issue. He is more than willing to ruin himself completely. Thus Maggie fends for both with Gooper and Mae but Brick does not care for it.

**Marital Relationships**

1) To discuss the marital relationship with respect to the senior couple a few exchanges between them and Big Daddy’s contemplative and confessional monologue in Act II is enough to throw light upon their relations.

There is a playwright’s note related to their relationship. Big Daddy is famous for his jokes at Big Mamma’s expense, and nobody laughs lauder at these jokes than Big Mamma herself, though sometimes they are pretty cruel and Big Mamma has to pick up or fuss with something to cover the hurt that the loud laugh doesn’t care at all. (P.47)

Big Mamma plays an inelegant trick upon Rev.Tooker, so that the preacher is pulled in her lap. Everybody laughs except Big Daddy. He roars at Big Mamma.

**Big Daddy**: BIG MAMA, WILL YOU QUIT HORSIN’? You are too old and too fat fo’ that sort of crazy kid stuff-- (P.49).

While pondering on ‘mendacity’ or pretences during the discussion with Brick-
**Big Daddy:** Think of all the lies I got to put up with! Pretences! Ain’t that mendacity?

Having for instance to act like I care for Big Mamma! I haven’t been able

Stand the sight, sound or smell of that woman for forty years now! Even

When I laid her! Regular as the piston---

2) **Gooper and Mae**- They are complementary to each other especially while executing their designs and pushing for their common interests. When the dire truth about Big Daddy’s critical condition is disclosed to Big Mamma, she just breaks down. In that situation she seeks Brick’s support rather than Gooper’s. She is not even ready to trust Maggie, then—

**Gooper:** Mama, *I am your son!* Listen to me!

**Mae:** Gooper’s your son, Mama, he is your first-born! (P.92)

Dr. Baugh suggests that in case of severe pain Big Daddy would need morphine to be injected. Mae readily comes forward-

**Mae:** I know ho to give a hypo.

**Gooper:** Mae took a course in nursing during the war. (P.94)

After Big Mama overcomes her feelings, she asserts that Big Daddy wishes Brick to take hold of things. It obviously upsets the couple—

**Mae:** Big Daddy would never, would *never*, be foolish enough to –

**Gooper:** put this place in irresponsible hands!

In the same manner she promptly brings Gooper’s brief-case containing the deed of trusteeship in Gooper’s name and supports his claim to be the worthier successor.

**Mae:** You are eight years older’n Brick an’ always had t’ carry a bigger load of the responsibilities than Brick ever had t’ carry. He never carried a thing in his life but a football or a highball.
3) Brick and Maggie

Magie’s anxiety is double edged. She has no love life due to Brick’s taking to drinking. Secondly, his too much drinking gives his elder brother and his wife to prove him ‘not eligible’ to take the responsibility of the estate after his father’s eminent death. So she is desperate to regain his soberness and thereby his love. She knows, in case, things go in Gooper’s hands; they will almost turn to the status of destitute. She refers to her loneliness and also her love for him.

**Margaret:** Living with someone you love can be lonelier- than living entirely *alone!* –if the one that you love doesn’t love you. (P.24)

She tells him that in spite of his alcoholism, he looks attractive and fit. She also refers to their previous happy married life.

**Margaret:** --- You were a wonderful lover--. Such a wonderful person to go to bed with, and I think mostly because you were really indifferent to it---- *strange?* but true------

She in her contemplative mood refers to Skipper.

**Margaret:** ----- Yes, I made a mistake when I told you the truth about that thing with Skipper. Never should have confessed it, a fetal error,----- (P.41)

Thus it is clear that Skipper has to do something with the rift in their relationship. Brick is visibly upset over the reference to Skipper.

**Margaret:** This time I’m going to finish what I have to say to you. Skipper and I made love, if love you could call it, because it made both of us feel a bit closer to you.

It is a very strange argument. It makes one feel that her adultery is the cause of the rift. But the real cause comes to light later. She comes to the point. She refers to the abnormal attachment between him and Skipper.
Margaret: ---- Why I remember when we double dated at college,----- it was more like a date between you and Skipper. Gladys and I were just sort of tagging along as if it was necessary to chaperon you! (P.42)

Brick claims that it was just a great friendship and she is naming it dirty. He further says

Brick: I married you, Maggie. Why would I marry you, ---- if I was----? She admits that their early married life was really blissful. But for some unknown reason he and skipper decided to turn professional football players instead of taking jobs. She says, “But somethin’ was not right with it! --- Me included ! --- between you. Skipper began hitting the bottle----- you got spinal injury and were on traction bed. Dixie Stars lost because Skipper was drunk. Skipper and I drank all the night in the bar. As we came out I said, “SKIPPER! STOP LOVIN’ MY HUSBAND OR TELL HIM HE HAS GOT TO LET YOU ADMIT TO HIM! – one way or another. HE SLAPPED ME HARD ON THE MOUTH!

Then ran back in to his room – When I came to his room that night, he made that pitiful, ineffectual little attempt to prove that what I had said wasn’t true----. In this way, I destroyed him, by telling him truth----

--- From then on Skipper was nothing at all but a receptacle for liquor and drugs ---- .

The whole account makes Brick so furious that he tries to hit Maggie with his crutch. She doesn’t mind and tells him,“ Skipper is dead! I am alive!” meaning she will continue her efforts to regain him.(P.44)

Later on during his heart to heart talk with Brick, Big Daddy too, hints at similar relationship between and Skipper.

Big Daddy: You started drinkin’ when your friend Skipper died.

Brick: What are you suggesting?

Big Daddy: I’m suggesting nothing. ----- But Gooper an’ Mae suggested there was
something not right exactly in your ------

**Brick**: ‘Not right?’

**Big Daddy**: Not, well, exactly *normal* in your friendship with ----

**Brick**: They suggested that, too? I thought that was Maggie’s suggestion.

Big Daddy refers to the homosexual relationship of his masters Jack Straw and Peter Ochello and adds that when one died, the other quit eating and died soon. Over this Brick gets infuriated and retorts

**Brick**: (violently) Skipper is dead, I have not quit eating!

**Big Daddy**: No, but you started drinking.

**Brick**: YOU THINK SO, TOO? (P.77)

**Brick**: You think so, too? ---- You think me an’ Skipper did, did, did!—sodomy?

together? (P.79)

Brick’s outburst goes on over this issue. He vehemently denies any relationship of this sort with Skipper. Big Daddy’s probing goes on. He wants to know the exact cause of Brick’s behavior.

Big Daddy ponders upon another possibility. He asks

**Big Daddy**: How was Maggie in bed?

**Brick**: Great! The greatest.

But while recounting the days after their marriage he tells that something went wrong with the health of both, Skipper and himself. Skipper suffered from some mysterious fever and he got a spinal injury and was in hospital.
He continues. Skipper was kept out, as he could not play his usual game. Then he felt that Maggie and Skipper became too intimate which made him feel jealous. He accuses Maggie of working upon poor Skipper and pouring in his mind the ‘dirty’ things. He further says that Skipper went to bed with Maggie to prove the allegations false. When it did not work, he thought it was true. The thought broke him down and he died soon after that. (P.81)

Big Daddy knows that the complete story is not out yet. Finally brick gives out the part left out.

**Brick:** Yes! ---- I left out a long distance call which I had from Skipper, in which he made a drunken confession to me and on which I hung up! --- last time we spoke to each other in our lives.------

Big Daddy brings to his notice that Skipper has confessed, but Brick was not ready to accept the truth and his disgust with mendacity is disgust with himself. He did not stand by his friend and faced the truth.

Thus it is clear that the problems in the marital relationship between Brick and Maggie is entangled with Brick and Skipper’s relationship which Skipper has confessed about but Brick is not ready to accept it even to himself. He puts the blame on Maggie unnecessarily and also punishes her by cutting off physical relations with her and himself by resorting to alcohol to forget the nagging facts.

In the revised version Williams gives a hint about restoration of normalcy in their relationship after Brick’s conscience is cleared during his talk with Big Daddy.

Somehow Maggie brings an end to all doubts and speculations about their marital relations by announcing her pregnancy – most probably a false one.
One thing is clear that the issue of Brick- Maggie relationship cannot be discussed without taking in to account Brick-Skipper homosexual relationship. It is true on Skipper’s part, but for Brick it is an extra-ordinarily close, almost ideal friendship. There is nothing abnormal, unnatural about it. But as both lose their former self-glory after the arrival of the third person-Maggie- between them; it seems that there is substance in it though Brick keeps on denying it vehemently.

**Relationship between Siblings**

Another important relationship dealt with in this play is between the two brothers and their respective spouses. Thus the sibling rivalry turns into the rivalry between two junior Pollitt couples.

The elder brother Gooper is legitimately upset over his parents’ discriminatory treatment to the two brothers. From material point of view Gooper has fulfilled all the expectations of his parents. But for some unknown reason, both the parents favour the ‘prodigal’ son, though he just refuses to respond their love, doting and care. This is obviously distressing and disgusting for Gooper. But it is also true that the laws of reason do not work when love and affection are concerned.

This undue favour for the unworthy brother- Brick makes the elder one jealous. His and his wife’s jealousy become manifest- especially in Act III, when he expects the deed of trusteeship to be signed in his favour and both the parents write it off altogether in clear cut manner.

When the reality about Big Daddy’s condition is revealed to Big Mamma, in a state of shock she says, “Where is Brick? Where is my only son? The reference ‘only son’ shocks Gooper and Mae both. They object to it. Over that Big Mamma retorts, “Gooper never liked Daddy.”

Over the issue of handing over the charge of the estate, Mae and Gooper Remark
Mae: Big Daddy would never, would never, be foolish enough to ----

Gooper: --- Put this place in irresponsible hands! (P.95)

In another argument Mae says-

Mae: ---- Why, Gooper has given himself body and soul to keeping this place up for
The past five years since Big Daddy’s health started failing---- And what
did Brick do? Brick kept living in his past glory at college! Still a football
player at twenty-seven!----

Margaret: I have never seen such malice towards a brother.

Gooper: How about his for me? Why, he can’t stand to be in the same room with me!

Margaret: This is a deliberate campaign of vilification for the most disgusting and
sordid reason on earth, and I know what it is! It’s avarice, avarice, greed,
greed! (P.96)

To answer this charge Mae uses a trump card against Maggie and Brick.

Mae: Do you know why she’s childless? She is childless because that big beautiful
Athlete husband of hers won’t go to bed with her!

In his argument Gooper further says---

Gooper: ---- I have resented Big Daddy’s partiality to Brick ever since Brick was born
and the way I have been treated like I was just barely good enough to spit on
and sometimes not enough for that. (P.97)

These words don’t fail to remind one of Shylock’s pathetic speech about the
shabby treatment the Jews received at the hands of Christians (Merchant of Venice-
Shakespeare)
In Act II while reflecting upon ‘mendacity’ Big Daddy has expressed his aversion for Gooper and his family. -----

**Big Daddy**: ----- Pretences! Ain’t that mendacity? ------

Pretend to love that son of a bitch of Gooper and his wife Mae and those five Same screeches act there like parrots in a jungle? Jesus! Can’t stand to look at’em.

Of course it is true that though all the other family members have expressed cruel, biting remarks for Gooper and his family, there is not a single instance of Brick’s utterance against them. Perhaps all his fury is aimed at Maggie and he is disinterested in others and even his own interests. His resigned attitude towards life might be the reason that he utters nothing against Gooper. This responsibility has been taken over by Maggie on his behalf.

The crisis between Brick and Margaret has emerged due to her suspicion about Brick’s homosexual relationship with his friend, Skipper and the fear to lose Brick in that case. In this context C. W. E. Bigsby observes, “Williams’ homosexuality is clearly a key to his personal and dramatic concerns, and it does indeed derive its special power from its unspoken quality. The word ‘legitimacy’ has a special force for Williams, legitimacy obviously carrying both social and aesthetic implications, suggesting, in part, a socially imposed prohibition and, in part, a deliberate refusal to accept a definition which is either reductive or cannot be claimed in its complexity.”

According to Bigsby, Williams himself has denied the possibility of Brick’s homosexuality. Bigsby also observes, “Brick himself is deeply conventional. The source of his guilt, and hence the source of the pain which he seeks to control with alcohol, is that he wholly accepts the rigid and inhuman categories of his society and is deeply worried about what he fears may be his own ambivalence. The same society which rewarded him for his athletic prowess is unforgiving in its insistence on sexual propriety.
To accept society’s accolades is also to accept its sexual and social dictates.” (C. W. E. Bigsby, *A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama*. P.86)

He further observes in the context of Big Daddy’s cancer, “Nor are these weaknesses, moral failures and even illnesses simply presented as private burdens. Big Daddy’s cancer stands as an image of his society. It has destroyed his kidneys and he has developed uremia, which is ‘a poisoning of the whole system due to the failure of the body to eliminate its poison.’ Clearly this is essentially the disease from which the whole culture suffers. Its lies, its injustices, its evasions, its cruelties, have infected the body politic.” (Bigsby, P.87)

Bigsby opines that Williams has attempted to neutralize sentimentality by creating, in the person of Maggie, a tough version of love. He says, “Maggie is strong, tenacious and will no more surrender Brick to alcohol and death than she will her own rights to those like the avaricious Gooper.” (Bigsby, P.87)

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**THE GLASS MENAGERIE (1945)**

**Amanda Wingfield** – A Southern lady with the roots in the glorious past

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Son</th>
<th>Daughter</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tom</strong></td>
<td><strong>Jim</strong></td>
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Tennessee Williams deals with highly complex relationships within the limited number of characters in the play. Out of the four characters, three are the members of the same family and the fourth one- Jim is an outsider but in one way or the other, is closely related with each member.

Here, the focus remains on two major kinds of relationships-
1) **Relationship within two generations** dealing with –a) Amanda- Tom relationship and b) Amanda- Laura relationship.

2) **Relationship without family** dealing with the relationship of each member of the Wingfield family with Jim- the outsider.

3) **Relationship between siblings** – Tom-Laura relationship. This relationship remains at the periphery with occasional references to it. Secondly, there is no antagonism within this relationship.

1) **Relationship Between Two Generations**-

   a) **Amanda-Tom relationship**—This is a highly complex relationship which manifests various angles of conflicts and antagonism between the two; apart from generation gap.

   The major cause of conflict between the two is the **cultural differences**. Though the two belong to the same family, they follow different cultures. She tries to cling to her Southern roots, her glorious past, whereas Tom resents her vain attempts to pretend to be a Southern lady. He wants to accept the reality of the ‘present’ where the values and lifestyle of affluent Southerners doesn’t fit. The readers are introduced with this conflict right at the opening of the play.

   Sitting at the dinner table under Amanda’s watchful eye is an ordeal for Tom. As soon as they start eating, Amanda’s instructions begin.

   **Amanda:** Honey, don’t push with your fingers. ------ And chew – chew! Animals have sections in their stomach ------- to digest food without mastication, but human beings are supposed to chew their food before they swallow it down.------ A well cooked meal has lots of delicate flavours that have to be held in the mouth for appreciation. So chew your food and give your salivary glands a chance to function!
**Tom:** I haven’t enjoyed one bite of this dinner because of your constant directions on how to eat it. It’s you that makes me rush through meals with your hawk-eye attention to every bite I take. Sickening – spoils my appetite- all this discussion of- animals’ secretion- salivary glands- mastication! (Scene I P. 236)

When Tom expresses his resentment over working at the warehouse and his fascination for adventure and movies, the following conversation between the two throws further light on the differences between them. (Scene IV, P.259-260)

**Amanda:** Why do you go to the movies so much, Tom?

**Tom:** I go to the movies because- I like adventure.

**Amanda:** Most young men find adventure in their careers.

**Tom:** Then most young men are not employed in a warehouse.

**Amanda:** ----- Not everybody has a craze for adventure.

**Tom:** Man is by instinct a lover, a hunter, a fighter. And none of these instincts are given much play at the warehouse.

**Amanda:** Man is by instinct! Don’t quote instinct to me! ------ It belongs to animals! Christian adults don’t want it.

**Tom:** What do Christian adults want, then, Mother?

**Amanda:** Superior things! Things of the mind and the spirit! Only animals have to satisfy instincts. Surely your aims are somewhat higher than theirs! Than monkeys-pigs-
Amanda wants Tom to lead a good disciplined life like a gentleman but he is fond of adventures. He goes to movies to partially satisfy the urge. She wants him to ‘rise and shine’, be particular at his work and climb the ladder of success. But he hates the place. He would prefer death instead of spending the whole life at the warehouse.

She imposes all her values upon him. Therefore she doesn’t allow him to read D.H.Lawrence’s novels, which she calls horrible and returns the novel to library. As a grown-up man and only breadwinner in the family, he gets disgusted with her dominating ways and there is exchange of harsh words between them.

Tom: Yesterday you confiscated my books! You had the nerve to ----

Amanda: ----- That hideous book by that insane Mr. Lawrence. I cannot control the output of diseased minds or people who cater them--- (Tom laughs mildly). BUT I WON’T ALLOW SUCH FILTH BROUGHT INTO MY HOUSE! No, no, no ----- !

Tom: House, house! Who pays rent on it, who makes the slave of himself to ----

Amanda: (Screeching) Don’t you DARE to ----- (P.250)

Amanda knows very well of Tom’s aversion for the job, the place and being tied down to the family. She knows about his aspirations and his inclination. She fears that Tom, too, will behave irresponsibly like his father. But she expects him to wait until Laura is settled in her life.

Amanda: ------- More and more you remind me of your father! He was out all hours without explanation! Then left! Good-bye! And me with the bag to hold. I saw the letter you got from the Merchant Marine. I know what you are dreaming of --- Very well, then. Then do it!
But not till there is somebody to take your place.

**Tom:** What do you mean?

**Amanda:** I mean that as soon as Laura has somebody to take care of her, married,--- then you'll be free to go wherever you please,----- (P.261)

She objects to his smoking and suggests that by saving the money over cigarettes he could take a night school course. (P.264). On this background she is all praise for Jim, who has been invited as a gentleman caller for Laura’s sake. She asks a number of questions about Jim and gets more and more excited by the account.

**Tom:** I think he really goes for self- improvement.

**Amanda:** What reason have you to think so?

**Tom:** He goes to night-school.

**Amanda:** (beaming): Splendid! What does he do, I mean study?

**Tom:** Radio Engineering and public speaking!

**Amanda:** Then he has visions of being advanced in the world! Any young man who studies public speaking is aiming to have an executive job some day! And radio engineering? A thing for the future! (P.271)

Slowly, Tom reaches a stage where he cannot put up anymore with the shoe factory work. He admits to Jim that he has paid the dues of the union of Merchant Seamen instead of paying the light bill. He doesn’t bother if the line is cut off; or what his mother would think. He says, “I’m like my father. The bastard son of a bastard! See how he grins? And he’s been absent going on sixteen years.” (P.283)
Finally the tension between Amanda and Tom reaches the breaking point when she discovers that Tom has not paid the light bill and the line is cut off on the same evening of Jim’s visit to Wingfields. (P.289).

It finally bursts out for both Amanda and Tom, when Amanda comes to know that Jim was already engaged and Tom had no idea about it. After Jim leaves, the final clash begins.---

Amanda: You don’t know things anywhere! You live in a dream; you manufacture Illusions! (He crosses to door)

Where are you going?

Tom: I am going to movies.

Amanda: That’s right, now that you’ve had us make such fools of ourselves. The effort, the preparations, all the expense! ----- All for what? To entertain some other girl’s fiancé? Go to the movies, go! Don’t think about us, a mother deserted, an unmarried sister who’s crippled and has no job! Don’t let anything interfere with your selfish pleasure! Just go, ----- to the movies.

Tom: All right, I will! The more you shout about my selfishness to me the quicker I Will go, and I won’t go to the movies!

Amanda: Go, then! Then go to the moon --- you selfish dreamer!

Tom is then fired soon after that for writing a poem on a shoe-box. Then he leaves St.Louis forever (P 311-313)

Thus it is observed that Amanda and Tom could not come to terms with each other, being contrasting personalities in all respects.
Amanda- Laura Relationship

Basically there is no antagonism or hostility between the two. Still the tension is there between the two. It arises mainly due to their contrasting personalities and temperaments. Laura would have pleased her mother, if possible. But she is helpless. She is unable to overcome her complexes, causing anxiety to her mother. The conflict between the two is manifested mainly through the scenes, ii, iv and scene vi during Jim’s visit.

When, in scene ii, during her visit to the Rubicam’s Business College, Amanda discovers about the frustrating account of Laura’s failure to attend the college and complete the course in shorthand and typing, she is disgusted with Laura. All her attempts to settle Laura in life are ruined, precious amount of money is wasted leaving a big question-mark regarding Laura’s future. All her frustration is poured out in her outburst.

Amanda: So what are we going to do the rest of our lives? ---- Amuse ourselves with the glass menagerie, darling? Eternally play those worn-out phonograph records your father left as a painful reminder of him? We won’t have a business-career-
We have given that up because it gave us nervous indigestion! ---- I know so well what becomes of unmarried women who aren’t prepared to occupy a position. I have seen such a pitiful cases in the South- barely tolerated spinsters living upon the grudging patronage of sister’s husbands or brother’s wife! --- Stuck away in some little mousetrap of a room ---- little birdlike women without any nest---- eating the crust of humility all their life!
Is that the future that we have mapped out for ourselves?
Of course – some girls do marry.
Haven’t you liked some boy?
It is clear from the last part of the speech that Amanda is not a type of woman who would give up easily. She has quickly switched over to the other alternative and started working upon that. She implores Tom to bring home one of his nice friends for Laura. Accordingly, Jim is invited for dinner. But this attempt, too, proves another fiasco, firstly due to Laura’s complete non-cooperation with Amanda and afterwards due to Tom’s ignorance about Jim’s being already engaged. Both things cause utter despair for Amanda from both her children.

How Laura has let Amanda down earlier has been revealed through Amanda’s contemplative speech with Tom about Laura. She says- “I put her in the business college—a dismal failure! Frightened her so it made her sick at the stomach.

I took her over to the Young People’s League at the church. Another fiasco. She spoke to nobody, nobody spoke to her. (P.261).

Afterwards, when Jim’s visit is fixed, Laura feels that this must be the same person who was her idol at high school. She has no courage to face him. She declares, “If that is the one that Tom is bringing to dinner--- you’ll have to excuse me, I won’t come to table”(P.277).

The argument goes on. Finally, Amanda sternly tells her, “ I don’t intend to humour your silliness, Laura. I’ve had too much from you and your brother, both! So just sit down and compose your self” (P.278). When the doorbell rings, Laura refuses to open it, saying ‘I’m sick!

**Amanda:** I am sick, too—of your nonsense! Why can’t you and your brother be normal people? Fantastic whims and behavior! (P.279).

Laura is forced to open the door. But she just retreats to safety. She is unable to come at the dinner table. When she is forced to accompany them she appears really sick, fainting, stumbling. So she is to be allowed to retire and take rest. (P.286).
There is no hostility or hatred for each other as is found in ‘Amanda-Tom’ relationship. The disgust appears out of despair and frustration. But both, Amanda and Laura display genuine concern for each other. In scene i, Tom sneers at Amanda’s repeated account of gentlemen callers she used to receive, but Laura is sympathetic and understanding towards it. She tells Tom, ‘Let her tell it. She loves to tell it.’ (P.237). In scene iv, Tom has spent almost the whole night out and returned home at dawn. He is drunk and keeps on chattering. Laura asks him to keep his voice low or else he would wake up their mother. (P.255)

There is a serious quarrel between Tom and Amanda in scene iii. Tom has insulted her by calling her ‘ugly-babbling old-witch’, talking to her very harshly. (P.252) Amanda has stopped talking to him. Laura is restless due to the tension between the two. She beseeches Tom to speak to her and apologize to her for his rudeness. Thus she tries to safeguard Amanda’s self-respect.

**Jim as a confidante**

Jim plays this role for all the three characters of the Wingfield family.

**Jim and Tom**—Jim has been introduced initially as Tom’s only friend at the warehouse. Soon it becomes clear that he is more than just a friend to Tom and this relationship is in a way symbiotic. Jim knows Tom’s secrets, his hidden talent as a poet, his aspirations for adventurous life, his subscription for Merchant Marine etc.

Jim is introduced indirectly in scene v, as a gentleman caller- Tom’s nice friend from the warehouse. It happens through Amanda’s queries and Tom’s answers related to Jim’s habits, earnings, prospects etc.

In scene vi, Tom’s monologue throws light on their mutual comradeship. Tom and Jim knew each other since their school days. Tom is the only witness for Jim’s past
glory at Soldan High School. Jim excelled in almost every field- sports, debating, music, acting- so on and so forth. He was the hero for almost every girl in those days.

He knew about Tom’s habit of retiring to rest- room to work on his poems whenever he found spare time at the warehouse. He would call Tom ‘Shakespeare’ for this habit; and Tom liked it. (P.273-274). While referring to his highly successful career at high school, Tom remarks, “He was shooting with such velocity through his adolescence that you would logically expect him to arrive at nothing short of White House by the time he was thirty.” But something went wrong and Jim was found to be working in the same factory like Tom. Thus both were aware of each other’s secrets.

During Jim’s visit, there is a conversation between the two. Jim advises Tom to join the course in public speaking, as he thinks that both of them are superior to others at the warehouse and the course in public speaking would prepare them for the executive position. He says, ‘You and me, we are not the warehouse type.’ Tom is not impressed by his suggestion. Jim tries to warn him to be careful at the warehouse, or else, he would lose his job. Tom tells him that he doesn’t care as his plans are different. Then he reveals his plans to Jim, which no one at home is aware of.

**Tom:** -----I know I seem dreamy, but inside- well, I’m boiling! – whenever I pick up a shoe I shudder a little thinking how short life is and what I am doing! – whatever that means, I know it doesn’t mean shoes -------- Look.

**Jim:** What?

**Tom:** I am a member.

**Jim:** (reading the paper) The Union of Merchant Seamen.

**Tom:** I paid my dues his month, instead of the light bill.
Jim: You will regret it when they turn the lights off.

Tom: I won’t be there.

Jim: What about your mother?

Tom: I am like my father. The bastard son of a bastard. See how he grins? And he’s been absent going on sixteen years!(P.283)

Amanda and Jim

Amanda knows very well that the visitor is meant for Laura. She has made thorough inquiries about Jim as she looks at him as a potential lover, life-partner for Laura. She is pleased by Tom’s account of Jim. But the preparations she makes for the visit give the impression that she herself is involved in the visitor. She takes care of Laura’s appearance, but also takes special care of her own appearance to impress Jim. She has resurrected her old dress. That dress brings back all the memories of her past glory. She is actually transported to the period of her prime youth; when she met Wingfield and fell in love with him.(P.276-277).

She remains in the same mood and Laura’s failure to entertain the gentleman provides her an opportunity to take that responsibility. Her behavior in presence of Jim is girlish, as if, Jim is the gentleman caller for Amanda. She speaks vivaciously like a young girl. (P.284)

While talking to Jim about Laura, she compares herself with her and unconsciously starts recounting her past and regrets her rash decision to marry Mr. Wingfield, which she has never done so far.

Amanda: ----- All of my gentlemen callers were sons of planters and so of course I
assumed that I would be married to one on a large piece of land with plenty of servants. But man proposes – and woman accepts the proposal! ------
--I married no planter! I married a man who worked for the telephone company!
--That gallantly smiling gentleman over there! (Points to the picture).
A telephone man who—fell in love with long distance! Now he travels and I don’t even know where!(P.285)

Thus during the very first visit she confides in a stranger without his asking for anything. Her speech is very pathetic which removes her mask of a cheerful, dignified Southern lady, though temporarily.

**Laura and Jim**

The relationship passes through various stages of metamorphosis. At first it is like a distant dream. Then when the dream hero actually visits them, it is like ‘a dream come true’ but still illusive. Then the distance, strangeness slowly transforms Jim into a true friend, philosopher, guide and even a lover- though momentarily. Once again, Jim turns a stranger, a dream which dissolves for ever.

Laura makes first mention of Jim in scene ii, after Amanda discovers the fiasco at the Rubicam’s Business College. Amanda is pondering over the other alternative. So she asks—

**Amanda:** Haven’t ever you liked some boy?

**Laura:** Yes. – I liked one once.

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**Laura:** Yes. His name was Jim. (Shows his picture from the page of the school magazine)

Here he is in *The Pirates of Penzance.*

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Laura: He had a wonderful voice and we sat across the aisle from each other Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays in the Aud. Here he is with the Silver cup for debating! See his grin?

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Laura: He used to call me – Blue Roses.

Then she explains how he started calling her with that name.

Laura: Whenever he saw me, he’d holler, ‘Hello, Blue Roses!’ I didn’t care for the girl that he went out with. ------ She never struck me, though, as being sincere ------ It says in the personal section ---- they are engaged. That’s six years ago! They Must be married by now. (P. 246).

These references clearly show Jim’s special place in Laura’s mind, how she has cherished every small detail related to him and at the same time her acceptance to the fact that this dream is unattainable.

Suddenly, in scene vi, the dream seems to become a reality for her, which she is not prepared for. Her heart sinks with anticipation of being face to face with her dream hero. She comes to know that the visitor’s name is Jim O’Conner. Then she just refuses to come to the table for dinner. She is not even ready to face him for opening the door for them. She really feels weak and ‘sick’ and unable to do the small thing. (P.278-279)

When afterwards, she is forced to come to the dinner table, she almost faints and has to be carried to the living room. (P.286).

In scene vii, after the lights are cut off as has been anticipated by Jim, Amanda takes Tom with her to the kitchen and sends Jim to entertain Laura. Laura, though very shy in the beginning, slowly opens up due to Jim’s tactful approach. Then she starts sharing all her secrets with him. He is surprised to find that she remembers about his melodious voice and his acting in the opera at school.
He, too, faintly remembers her and his calling her by a strange name. She reminds him of that name, ‘Blue Roses’. Then he refers to her complex of being crippled and her braced foot making loud noise. Then his role as a counselor begins. He advices her about how to overcome the shyness and the complexes. While doing so, he too, confides in her about his failure in making expected progress career wise.

**Jim**: ----- And everybody has got problems, not just you, but practically everybody has got some problems. You think of yourself as having the only problems, as being the only one who is disappointed. But just look around you and you will see lots of people as disappointed as you are. For instance, I hoped ----- that I would be further along at this time, six years later, than I am now ---- (P.255)

She gains confidence by this admission of disappointment by Jim. Then she talks to him as an old friend, shows him his pictures from the magazine and hesitantly expresses her wish to get an autograph on her programme. Slowly she confides.

**Laura**: You were terribly popular!

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**Laura**: -------- Everybody liked you!

**Jim**: Including you?

**Laura**: I – yes, I – I did, too. (P.296)

Then she hesitantly asks about the girl whom he was supposed to have been engaged with. He clears her misunderstanding.

**Laura**: It said in the Personal Section that you were – engaged.

**Jim**: I know, but I wasn’t impressed by that – propaganda!
**Laura:** It wasn’t --- the truth?

This valuable information renders her relaxed. She then talks about her failure at the business college and her glass menagerie. Over this, he resumes his role as a counsellor. He finally makes the psycho-analysis of her inferiority-complex and advices her, ‘Think of yourself as *superior* in some way.’ While doing so, he too, confides in her about his dreams of bright future.

Then she introduces him with her glass menagerie and her most favourite of them all – the unicorn. He suggests her to dance with him on the music heard from the nearby dance hall. She is afraid to dance at first. He gives her instructions systematically and makes her dance and enjoy it. All her inhibitions vanish in his company.

While dancing they tumble on the table where the unicorn has been placed. The unicorn falls off and breaks its horn. Laura is not at all upset by it. She considers it as ‘a blessing in disguise’. She says, “I’ll just imagine he had an operation. The horn was removed to make him feel less – freakish! ---- Now he will feel more at home with the other horses, the ones that don’t have horns ----.”

The relationship takes a romantic turn from this point. He is quite impressed by her bewitching beauty. At first, he tells her that she looks very different from others. He fumbles for words and then tells her that she was very pretty, but from very different way. She is thrilled by that novel experience. He goes on praising her and suddenly without being aware of it says, “ – Somebody – ought to --- kiss you, Laura!” In the same mood he suddenly turns her about and kisses her on her lips. Laura is bewildered by this new, strange experience. But Jim has realized his mistake and releases her quickly. He is searching for words to apologize to her. He tries to recover himself and finally tells her the truth that he is already engaged to be married.
This confession leaves Laura devastated. The temporary romantic world suddenly gets shattered like a dream. She slowly digests the truth and behaves like a very balanced person without making any fuss over the issue. She just puts the unicorn in Jim’s hand and tells him that she has given it to him as a souvenir.

**The Siblings Relationships: Tom- Laura relationship.**

There is no tension, hostility or rivalry between the two. On the contrary, there are tender ties between the two, which is not observed between any other family members. Tom, who is generally irritated and therefore sarcastic, bitter or rude with Amanda is soft with Laura. He reconciles with his mother and apologizes to her in scene iv, only for Laura’s sake and on her insistence.

Though he hates the warehouse job, he continues with it only for Laura’s sake. He doesn’t want her to be left destitute. He agrees to bring one of his friends for Laura, though he actually resents the idea. Finally, it becomes impossible for him to stay at home, especially after the fiasco with Jim’s visit and Amanda’s harsh accusations of being selfish after that.

He gets himself free from the family ties and decides to pursue his ambition. He leaves the house and keeps on wandering from place to place in search of adventure and peace of mind. However he is never successful in that. He neither finds himself free from his ties with Laura. It is reflected in his last monologue.

**Tom:** I left Saint Louis. ------- I traveled around a great deal. The cities swept about me like dead leaves, ------- It always came upon me unawares, taking me altogether by surprise. Perhaps it was a familiar bit of music. Perhaps it was only a piece of transparent glass. -------

------- I pass the lighted window of a shop. The window is filled with pieces of coloured glass, tiny transparent bottles in delicate colours, -------

Then all at once my sister touches my shoulder. I turn around and look in her eyes.
Oh, Laura -------- I tried to leave you behind me, but I am more faithful than I intended to be!

Tom’s conflict about Laura is internal. It is actually with himself. He is torn between his own aspirations and his tender ties with Laura. He feels guilty for leaving her to her fate while pursuing his own instinct, his goal. Perhaps he reproaches himself of seeking his own pleasure at the cost of Laura’s well-being.

C. W. E. Bigsby, in A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama has analysed the plays by the famous playwrights like Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams and Edward Albee. While commenting on the stage direction about Laura’s character in The Glass Menagerie as a ‘delicate, fluttering white moon-moth’, he comments, “She is a prototype and a whole succession of Williams’ figures, who are so easily broken by the world and whose gift it is to be drawn towards the very flame which will destroy them. Blanche does no less in A Streetcar Named Desire and much the same could be said of Val Xavier in Orpheus Descending and even Chance Wayne in Sweet Bird of Youth. (P.39-40)

About The Glass Menagerie, he observes, “The Glass Menagerie has a deceptive simplicity. Tom Wingfield, oppressed by the suffocating realities of life, breaks away from his mindless job and the tensions of his life to follow his avocation as a poet while serving in the Merchant Marine. But escape is not so easy. He is obsessed with memories and the play itself is the product of not only of his restless imagination but of the guilt he feels at abandoning his mother and sister.” (Bigsby, P.40)

He continues, “Williams creates a tension in the play between the constraints of the physical setting and the various imaginative strategies of the characters who recreate that world, easing its constrictions and resisting its definitions.” He further adds, “Williams’ protagonists are simply romantic in an unromantic world. They are individuals faced with the knowledge that defeat awaits them both in the real
and the imagined world, that other people are the source of their anguish but that solitude is a more perfect hell.”

He says, “The conspiracy, biological or economic, is a felt presence in most of his plays. The choice, in a sense is simple. You either capitulate to it or you resist with the only available weapons- the creative imagination, or a subversive sexuality with the power to deny, if not wholly to neutralize the pull of death. Language operates both as an agent of conspiracy and as evidence of resistance, a poetic reshaping; but it is a different language.” (Bigby, P.42)

He comments about the setting, “The South that Williams pictures is either disintegrating, its moral foundation having been disturbed, or been taken over by the alienated products of modern capitalism. On one hand are the rich, cancerous, their economic power signalled, in Lawrentian manner, through sexual impotence as in Orpheus Descending, or incestuous passion as in Suddenly Last Summer and Sweet Bird of Youth; on the other hand are the new, brutal proletariat, as in A Streetcar Named Desire, who begins by destroying a South, become decadent and end, by destroying even themselves.” (Bigby, P.45)

Tom’s opening speech in The Glass Menagerie contains an implicit attack on America. The collapse of the old world left only a sense of baffled incomprehension, while in Spain a battle was on to construct a new future.

At the end of The Glass Menagerie, the candles of Laura’s life are snuffed out. At the end of A Streetcar Named Desire, Blanche is taken off to an equally lobotomized existence. They now inhabit their fictions entirely. They are invulnerable to further assault, but their invulnerability is the mark of their destruction, of the loss of their humanity, for that is one more paradox which Williams explores in his work.(Bigby, P.49)
**A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE (1947)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stella (25) - A girl from South- marries a commner</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>husband</td>
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<td>elder sister</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stanley Kowalski</strong> v/s <strong>Blanche DuBois</strong> (30) - A southern lady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(approx.30) Polish origin, Ex-army-man, captain of Bowling team</td>
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<tr>
<td>--- <strong>Harold Mitchell (Mitch)</strong> ------------------- buddy of Stanley for years</td>
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<tr>
<td>(approx.30) potential suitor for Blanche</td>
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There are four major characters in the play. However the main focus remains on the antagonistic relationship between the in-laws, Stanley Kowalski and Blanche DuBois. The antagonism emerges at various levels, such as cultural levels, financial interests and ethical values.

All the three factors are closely entangled with each other. Thus the Brother-in-law – Sister-in-law relationship is the major focus of discussion. Other relationships, such as, Blanche-Stella relationship (siblings) or Blanche-Mitch relationship do occur. However, they have to be taken in to account as the offshoots of the relationship between Stanley and Blanche.

**Stanley-Blanche Relationship**

Blanche is the last member who belonged to the Mississippi plantation and estate-Belle Reve. Stella, too, belonged to the same family. But she has left the estate and severed the ties with it long ago. The process of doom of estate has already begun long
ago, since at least two generations. Blanche is the witness to the final moments of doom. She has desperately made efforts to keep up the appearances as a Southerner. She has even resorted to unethical ways for that. But now she has lost everything. So she has to return to her sister and her husband, though reluctantly for various reasons. Thus she arrives in New-Orleans at the Kowalskis.

Stella has left Belle Rev some 10 years back. Now she is married to a Polish lower middle class man in no way conforming with her Southern upbringing. But she doesn’t regret it. She is happy with him. His way of life doesn’t bother her at all. She has adjusted herself with that life style. Tension starts mounting with Blanche’s arrival in the cozy nest of Kowalskies. In spite of her state of near bankruptcy and complete dependence on Kowalskies, she continues with her high-brow, snobbish, hypocritic life style. This is the root cause of the antagonism between Stanley- the only breadwinner and the succor-Blanche. Slowly she discovers of her lies one by one and is determined to crush her hypocrisy once for all; which leads to the disastrous end of Blanche.

Right from the beginning the seeds of conflict become manifest through Blanche’s attitude towards the place, the life-style and Stanley himself.

When she arrives at Elysuan Fields, she can’t believe her sister staying at such a shabby place, with such vulgar people around. It is contrasted with her artificial appearance, life-style and behavior. She has been fired from the school and has turned an alcoholic, but she plainly denies both the facts; talking about it jokingly. (P.121-122).

She expresses surprise over the small two-room dwelling without a door in between and then asks about Stanley. When Stella tells her of him being a Polish, she remarks, ‘They are something like Irish, ------. Only not so—high-brow?’ Stella gives her hint that she should not compare him with Southern gentlemen. He is very different, almost a different species!
She slowly breaks the news of loss of Belle Reve, which shocks Stella. She describes the situation in which the estate was completely lost. She claims that she has been fighting the battle alone, then reproaches Stella saying, ‘Where were you. In bed with your-Polak!’

Towards the end of Scene I, Blanch and Stanley encounter with each other first time. He has the special ability to judge a woman at a glance. He is plain in his dealings. So he doesn’t mince words. After he comes, he offers a drink. Over it she says, ‘I rarely touch it’. He rightly retorts, ‘Some people rarely touch it, but it touches them often.’(P.129)

Stella is in bathroom, hiding her feeling after Blanche’s insulting comment. Stanley wants to know if Blanche has plans to take a permanent refuge with them. So he directly refers to the marriage. She admits to her marriage and adds that the boy is dead. She is visibly upset due to the reference.

Stanley continues his probe with Blanche’s affairs and the exact status of the country place. He is not happy with the statement that it is lost. He wants to see the sale deed. He is interested in Stella’s share in the sale of the property. He suspects that they have been cheated. He says, “It looks to me like you have been swindled baby, and when you’re swindled under the Napoleonic code I am swindled too. And I don’t like to be swindled.”(P.133)

Thus the clash begins over financial interests. He is not ready to take Blanche’s theory of the estate being lost. He searches through Blanches trunk, shows all the expensive dresses and accessory to Stella. He means that Blanche had spent the money on herself, her lavish life-style and thus robbed them of their rights. (P.133). Stella doesn’t approve his uncouth behavior and asks him to go out until Blanch finishes her dressing. His male ego just refuses to take orders from his wife and stays adamantly there itself.
Blanche senses the animosity and tries to deal with it using her feminine charm. She invites him in to put the frock buttons. He doesn’t succumb to her tricks. He doesn’t even try to hide the fact that he has searched through her trunk. Blanch, too, judges Stanley correctly.

**Blanche:** You are simple, straightforward and honest, a little bit on the primitive side I should think. To interest you a woman would have to -------

**Stanley:** Lay ------- her cards on the table. (P.137).

Blanche realizes that she must come clean with everything. After she sends Stella away with some excuse, Stanley asks her for the papers of the estate. When she tries to evade it, he goes forward and starts searching her trunk. She then goes to the trunk and gets a tin-box containing some papers. There are the love letters from her first love too. She doesn’t allow him to touch them. But he doesn’t care for her tender feelings. Then she produces all the papers related to mortgages on the estate. It is clear that the estate was slowly slipping through their hands due to the mortgages over years. He has to accept her claims. Still he defiantly says that he would like them to be studied by his lawyer. Stella apologizes for Stanley’s rude behavior. (P.140).

In Scene III Stanley’s friends are playing poker at his residence. When Stanley finds out that Blanche is trying to flirt with one of his friends, he gets extremely irritated. His being drunk and losing in the game adds to his irritation. He finds his otherwise docile wife being defiant in presence of her sister. He has asked twice not to play the radio. In spite of that Blanche turns on the radio and starts dancing on the tune with Mitch. Stanley loses his balance, comes in shouting and throws the radio out of the window. Stella remarks on his savage behavior, ‘Drunk- drunk- animal thing, you!’ Then she asks his friends to go away. Stanley cannot tolerate her high-handedness, just charges at her and serves her nice blows. Blanche is left aghast by this brutality. She tells Mitch, “Stella is pregnant and in these circumstances Stanley’s behavior is absolute lunacy.” (P.152). After this episode of savagery, Blanche takes Stella to Eunice’s place.
Reconciliation among the couple is out of question according to her standards. But to her surprise she finds that Stella goes back to him after he begs her passionately to come back to him, in his extremely repentant mood. She is terrified. But Mitch, who is lingering there, assures her, ‘There’s nothing to be scared of. They are crazy about each other.’

This is the glaring example of the conflict due to cultural differences between the two. Stella temporarily seems to be caught between her Southern refined, sophisticated grooming of the past and her not so refined present, which she has compromised with.

The direct clash of the cultural differences between the two takes place in Scene IV, only Blanche not being aware of it. Blanche is trying to argue with Stella regarding Stanley’s brutal treatment to her and how impossible it is for Blanche to live with him. Blanche speaks contemptuously about Stanley, ‘what such a man has to offer is animal force and he gave a wonderful exhibition of that! But the only way to live with such a man is to-- go to bed with him! And that’s your job not mine!’ She is planning to get out of there along with Stella.

Stella doesn’t agree with her. She has no plans to leave Stanley. She says, “There are things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark-- that sort of make everything else seem-unimportant.” When Blanche continues with her argument, she remarks, ‘Don’t you think your superior attitude is a bit out of place?’

The debate continues while Stanley enters from outside. But due to the rattle of the train they do not notice it and he could overhear the bitter and harsh criticism by Blanche.

**Blanche:** --- You can’t have forgotten that much of our bringing up, Stella, that you just *Suppose* that any part of a gentleman’s is in his nature! *Not one particle, no!* Oh, if he was just- *ordinary!* Just *plain-* but- *no!* There is something downright – *bestial-* about him! You’re hating me saying this aren’t you?
Stella: (coldly) Go on and say it all, Blanche.

Blanche: He acts like an animal, has an animal’s habits! Eats like one, moves like one, Talks like one! There’s even something—subhuman—something not quite to the stage of humanity yet! Yes, something—ape-like about him, ------- Stanley Kowalski—survivor of the Stone Age! ------- May be he’ll strike you or may be Grunt and kiss you! That is, if kisses have been discovered yet! Night falls and all apes gather! ----- all grunting like him ------- ! His poker night! — you call it- his party of apes!---- God! ---- but Stella—my sister—there has been some progress since then! Such things as art—as poetry and music ---------- That we have got to make grow! And cling to, and hold as our flag!------- Don’t—don’t hang back, with the brutes!

After this emotional appeal is over, Stanley pretends to just have been arriving. Stella embraces him fiercely. He grins at Blanche mockingly. Blanche’s remarks about Stanley had certainly sealed her fate.

In spite of her views regarding Stanley, Blanche continues her policy of flirting with him as she needs his financial support. However he doesn’t budge. He is determinedly collecting ammunition against her. He gives her hints that he is acquainted with her affairs and ill reputation at Laurel. This reference scares her. She tries to explain to Stella, how it is inevitable to flirt with men to get financial support from is an un them. (P.169) She has accepted the truth that she is unwanted guest in the household, especially from Stanley’s side. She promises to leave soon and also confesses that she is looking forward to be supported by Mitch through marriage. Stella is happy to hear that. But Stanley’s designs are contrary to this.

The authentic information about Blanche’s wayward behavior in Laurel is a deadly weapon in Stanley’s hands to ruin her and complete his revenge against her for her snobbish attitude towards him.
Now she makes desperate efforts to rope in Mitch without making him aware of the urgency. He has sensed the open hostility in Stanley’s attitude. In Scene IV she and Mitch get privacy in the flat as Stanley and Stella are spending the night out. She encourages him to liberty with her in a very tactful and calculated manner. She tries to create the impression of a well-bred girl with very high morals. She also hints at her inadequate income as a teacher and Stanley’s reluctance to put up with her anymore leading to a marriage proposal by Mitch. Though not the proposal, but some reference to it comes from him. Then she takes him into confidence about her first love, marriage and loneliness after she lost her husband. She in a confession mode narrates all the details about their relationship and its loss. According to it, they were madly in love with each other. He- Allan – was a poet. Suddenly she discovers about his homosexuality. They pretend to lead normal life thereafter. But during a dance, being unable to control herself she hurts him by her words, ‘----- I know! I know! You disgust me------.’ He is unable to carry on after that, Allan runs out and shoots himself. She says, she has lost all the brightness thereafter. Thus she explains why she prefers dim-light only. This heart-rending confession of her first marriage successfully melts Mitch’s heart. The mission is successful.

**Mitch**: (drawing her slowly in his arms) You need somebody. And I need somebody, too. Could it be – you and me, Blanche? (P.184)

Though Blanche is very happy, it is going to be transitory. Stanley is braced with his weapons against her. It is her birthday. While she is in bathroom, he reveals the truths about her tainted character to Stella. He has gathered them from one of his acquaintances from the factory, who knows all about Laurel and the people from there. According to the report, her reputation in Laurel is not more than a cheap prostitute. Now nobody is interested in her any more. She has been virtually evicted by the town mayor and she has been fired from her job as a school teacher as a result of trying to seduce her students. Stella is dumfounded to hear all this.
Stella is actually busy with the preparations of Blanche’s birthday dinner. But now she is devastated to hear the whole account. She is unable to believe it. (P.188-189) Stanley has not still disclosed his conspiracy against Blanche. When Stella refers to the invitation to Mitch, he declares, “I wouldn’t be expecting Mitch over tonight.” It is clear that he has passed over all the information to Mitch. He justifies his doing.

**Stanley:** You’re goddam right I told him! I’d have that on my conscience the rest of life if I knew all that stuff and let my best friend get caught.

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**Stella:** Stanley, she thought Mitch was — going to ------ marry her, ------

**Stanley:** Well, he’s not going to marry her. -----he’s not going to jump in a tank with a school of sharks – now!

His last revelation is a one more blow against Blanche. He is determined to do away with the menace named Blanche.

**Stanley:** She is not staying here after Tuesday. ------ Just to make sure I bought her ticket myself. A bus ticket!

When Stella protests,

**Stanley:** She’ll go! Period. P.S. She’ll go *Tuesday* !

Stanley is in no mood to put up with Blanche’s high-handed behavior any more. He is irritated by her frequent bath. She has occupied the bathroom the whole afternoon, enjoying herself and singing. He verbally attacks her by his rude address to her.

**Stanley:** Hey, canary bird! Toots! Get OUT of the BATHROOM! Must I speak more Plainly? (P.191)
Blanche is brought down to earth by these words. She senses the tension mainly due to Stella’s sad and grave demeanor. She tries to pretend that every thing is normal, though she finds Mitch’s absence from the party strange and ominous. She tries to cut jokes and relieve the tenseness. Stanley refuses to respond. Stella is already upset by his cruelty to her sister. She remarks. ‘Your face and your fingers are disgustingly greasy. Go and wash up and then help me clear the table.’ Stanley is in no mood to be amused by this insult, especially under Blanche’s influence on his wife. He behaves savagely deliberately. He hurls his plate on the floor and retorts, which is actually directed to Blanche,

**Stanley**: That’s how I’ll clear the table! Don’t ever talk that way to me! ‘Pig- Polack- disgusting- vulgar-greasy!’ them kind of words have been on your tongue and your sister’s too much around here! What do you two think you are? A pair of queens? (P.194)

Blanche realizes that something serious has happened between the couple in her absence. She also feels that Stella knows the reason of Mitch’s absence from the party. She wants to call Mitch. Stella advices her not to call him on phone. She fears, if she has been ditched by Mitch.

To add acid to her injury, Stanley offers her a birth-day present in an envelop, which is a ticket back to Laurel.

Blanche is on the verge of lunacy now, as she knows, she cannot go back to Laurel. A little relief comes in the form of Stella, who finds herself in labour-pain. Stanley takes her to hospital. She is alone at home, continuously drinking to overcome her anxiety.

Soon Mitch arrives. He has come to ask an explanation for all her lies- about her actual age, her character. He is very curt. He repeats all the allegations made by Stanley against her especially consuming the liquor very fast. She doesn’t deny the
charges, but tries to explain how it was her emotional need after Allan’s death to fill up the vacuum. She says, “-------- I think it was panic,-------- that drove me from one to another, hunting for some protection ---------- in the most unlikely places- even, at last, in a seventeen –year- old boy but- somebody wrote the superintendent about it- ‘ This woman is morally unfit for her position! ---- So I came here. ---- and – I met you. ----- I thanked God for you, because you seemed to be gentle. -------- But I guess I was asking, hoping- too much!”

She admits to her other excesses too. Mitch seems to be still interested in her. He tries to embrace her, now she remains firm and puts the condition of marriage for physical intimacy. Mitch refuses to marry her, saying, ‘you’re not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother.’(P.207) Thus her venture with Mitch suddenly comes to an end.

Her ordeal, humiliation is still not complete. Fate has one more blow waiting for her. Stanley is fairly drunk. Blanche’s mind is derailed. She is under the spell of illusion that she is going to meet her well-wisher- Shep Huntleigh. She is all dressed for that. Stanley derides her for her lies. Her account is all mixed-up regarding Mitch’s visit to her and receiving a telegram from Shep Huntleigh. He plainly tells her that it is all a story made up by her imagination. He continues to deride her and slowly advances to her in a threatening manner. She calls the ‘Western Union’ office for help while Stanley is in bathroom. Her panic gives him a new idea to complete his revenge. She is ready to defend herself with a broken bottle. He easily overpowers her and rapes her saying, “We’ve had this date with each other from the beginning!” (P.215)

Stella, after returning from the maternity hospital, cannot afford to take Blanche’s story of rape as her happy marriage is at stake. Blanche is now actually mentally derailed. She has nowhere to go. She has to accept the plan of admitting her to the mental hospital.
Blanche is oblivious to all these things. She is in a schizophrenic state under the impression that Shep Huntleigh is coming to receive her. She is preparing herself to leave that place to accompany him.

Ironically, again the poker night is in progress. All of them witness the pathetic scene of her departure. Mitch is unable to stand it. He feels guilty, in a way responsible to push her to lunacy. He accuses Stanley for jeopardizing her future and also the possibility of his marriage with a girl he liked. In the repentant mood he bursts upon Stanley,

**Mitch:** You! You done this, all O’ your God damn interfering with things you ---

**Mitch:** ------ I’ll kill you! (He lunges and strikes at Stanley)

Mitch’s violent reaction and his repentance is a clear sign of development of tender bonds with Blanche. However under the indirect influence of his buddy he has reluctantly broken the ties.

Same is true about Stella. There is not a single incidence of revealing jealousy or hatred towards Blanche. She has always exhibited consideration and understanding even for Blanche’s degeneration. But ultimately, she has to choose between her husband, her happy married life and a sister, who is not anything else but a liability, a menace and a threat to her married life. Her practical choice is her marriage. She cannot be blamed for that.

C. W. E. Bigsby reflects upon the probable hope in the future America through his comment upon the conflict between Blanche and Stanley as, “His destruction of Blanche, a symbolic and actual rape of the vulnerable, is too calculated and cruel to offer any hope for the future which he represents. The only possible future is that constituted by Stella’s child. For Stella’s compassion is real. She negotiates a middle ground. Her actions are dictated by the blend of necessity and love. She alone is able to draw from
Stanley’s signs of a deeper humanity. She alone protects Blanche for as long as she is able. And Williams who once said that the only thing left in the blighted world worth endorsing is the relationship between individuals, evidently finds some grounds for hope in Stella’s power to tamper the extreme, despite her blandness.” (C. W E. Bigsby, *A critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama*. P.62)

**ORPHEUS DESCENDING (1955)**

Val Xavier -------------- Lady Torrance ------ husband----- Jabe Torrance
(A wandering guitar player, a savior to Lady Torrance.) (About 38, daughter of a wop. Carries a child by Val) (Southern planter, dying with cancer, leader of the arson against Lady’s father and his property)
About 30 |
| |
Carol Cutrere ---- sister--- -- David Cutrere
(About 30) (members of the most distinguished family)

The main focus of relationships remains upon the male-female of different sorts. Lady Torrance is at the centre of these relationships. Three men- David Cutrere, Jabe Torrance and Val Xavier, enter in her life at various phases of her life. Among all the male-female relationships, the main relationship with a true bond of love is developed between Lady Torrance and Val Xavier. Just like Baby Doll there is another angle of relationship with the foreigner and strangers.

Apart from Lady Torrance, the male-female relationship of Val is important in case of at least two other female characters, namely Carol Cutrere and Vee Talbott-Sheriff Talbott’s wife.

**Male-female relationship with respect to Lady Torrance.**

1) Lady-David Cutrere relationship as a lover.
The first man who steps in Lady’s life is David Cutrere as an intense, passionate lover, when both of them are in their prime youth. The intensity of their love has been described by Beulah; with reference to the steadily growing prosperity of her Italian father Papa Romano. He had developed an orchard and developed arbours in it for the privacy of the couples. There he served wine to them. Beulah describes in the very first act how Lady began disappearing in one of the arbours with David Cutrere, the richest planter’s young son. The business and the courtship were flourishing simultaneously. He earned a lot of profit as he was providing liquor illegally during ‘prohibition’. The angle of racial jealousy becomes powerful. Romano, who is a foreigner and therefore looked down upon, commits a grave mistake of serving liquor to the Negroes. He has to pay it very dearly. His place is set on fire by local youths. While trying to save it, he gets burnt alive in the fire. The local fire department remains passive deliberately. Lady is left as a destitute after this tragedy.

The tragedy doesn’t end here. The passionate lover- David Cutrere- ditches her and marries another girl from a local respectable family. All these details have been unfolded through a coral character- Beulah. The two acquaintances Beulah and Dolly are discussing the strained marital relationship of the Torrance couple when Beulah comments,

**Beulah:** Well, I wasn’t surprised. Jabe Torrance bought that woman.

**Beulah:** Yais, --------- when she was a girl of eighteen! He bought her ----- cheap because she’d been thrown over and her heart was broken by that- that Cutrere boy ------
Oh, what a --------- *beautiful* thing he was ------ And those two met like you
Struck two stones together and made a fire! (P.247)

Another reference to this relationship comes from Lady herself in Act II, Scene I, when David comes to Lady’s store to fetch his wayward sister, Carol. In fact she doesn’t want to let him touch even the door handle of her store. But he has to enter it for
Carol. On this occasion she pours all the suppressed emotions and reveals a bitter secret, which he didn’t know until that moment.

**Lady:** I have something to tell you I never told you before.

--- I—carried your child in my body the summer you quit me.

--------------

**Lady:** ---------- that summer they burned my father in his wine garden, and you, washed your hands clean of any connection with a Dago boot-legger’s daughter and ----- took that—society girl that—restored your home place and give you such --- well born children----- (probably the reference to having no kids by the wife)

**Lady:** -------- but I had it cut out of my body, and then cut my heart out with it!

**Lady:** I wanted death after that, -------- but I took the next best thing, *you sold yourself.*

I sold *myself*. *You* was bought. *I* was bought. You made whores of us both!

**Lady:** -------- You remember the wine garden of my father? -------

**David:** Lady, I don’t—remember—anything else.-----

Lady actually re-lives the moments with intense nostalgia.

**Lady:** And we disappeared and he would call, ‘ *Lady? Lady?’ How could I answer him with two tongues in my mouth? ---------------

*I hold hard feelings!*--- Don’t ever come here again.------- Because I hope never to feel this knife again in me. (P.296-298)

2) **Lady-Jabe Relationship- Marital Relationship**
Beulah discloses another secret to Dolly on the same occasion in Act I, scene I.

**Beulah:** I wonder sometimes if the Lady has any suspicion that her husband was the leader of the Mystic Crew the night they burned up her father in wine garden on Moon Lake?

**Dolly:** How could she live in marriage twenty years with a man if she knew he’d burned her father in wine garden?

**Beulah:** She could live with him in hate. People can live together in hate for long time, Dolly. -------- I have always noticed when couples don’t love each other they develop passion for money.

The comments on strained marital relationship go on between the two. (P.250-251). What Beulah has said in Act I is later on confirmed by Jabe himself in Act III towards the end of the play. When in her excitement after learning that she is pregnant, she wants to announce it to every one. She runs up to the landing and cries out –‘I have won, I have won, Mr. Death, I am going to bear!’ She realizes her grave mistake. But it is too late. Jabe has gathered all his strength to take revenge upon her. He comes to the landing with his revolver. He takes shots at Val and Lady. Lady is hit while protecting Val. Jabe shouts maliciously, ‘I’ll have you burned! I burned her father and I’ll have you burned!’ Thus she comes to know about the dire truth just a few moments before her death. No wonder that the marital relationship remained strained and Lady remained childless in that relationship where it was the relationship between two un-equals in many in many respects. This relationship lacks basically any trace, any foundation of love. It is a relationship between a conqueror and a conquered or vanquished.

The Southerners never treated the foreigners, especially the Italians as their equals. Lady’s father is referred to as ‘a Dago’, a ‘Wop bootlegger’ etc. He is not one of the members of the landed gentry. So she doesn’t enjoy a respectable, privileged position.
in society. Her only asset is her youth and her looks, her appeal. With the burning down of her father’s wine garden, she is also stripped of her financial power. Her love affair with David is the common knowledge and also her being ditched by him for another rich girl. Taking in to account all these factors, Lady is virtually left at the mercy of some one who would support her. On this background Beulah remarks, ‘Jabe bought her and bought her cheap!’ The most important factor is Jabe’s role in ruining Lady’s life by being the leader of the gang who burned down Lady’s father alive along with his wine garden. Such a relationship cannot be a smooth and normal one.


Lady and Val Xavier meet in strange circumstances. Lady is now a middle-aged woman, grown worldly wise through experience. Val so far has led a life of a wanderer and he is the stranger in the city. Vee Talbott thinks that Lady may need a helping hand in her store as her husband Jabe, who is in the terminal stage of cancer, is on the verge of death.

At first Lady agrees to appoint him but with some reservations. Slowly, without her knowledge, she gets attracted towards him, rather fascinated by his strange charm. After a lot of deliberation, she offers him an accommodation for his night stay with a secret wish for him. This happens in Act II, Scene III after the passionate nostalgic Scene I of the same act between Lady and David Cutrere. It seems that she is badly in need of the male companionship and emotional understanding from someone, which is genuinely extended by Val. They come closer at first physically and then through genuine for each other.

Lady becomes jealous of Carol when she suspects that Val is leaving with her, reveals her possessive attitude for Val which is a clear sign of love. (Act III, scene III)

**Lady:** -------- You’re not conning me, mister. She is waiting for you outside in her high-powered car and you’re ---- (P.336)
He tries to convince her that he has been threatened with his life, if he doesn’t leave that town immediately, by the Sheriff. She is confident that nothing can happen to him when he is working with her. She is not convinced. Val reveals another truth to Lady. He says he would have left the city without meeting her. But he waits for her return. He explains,

Val: -------- but I wanted to tell you something I never told you before. (Places hand on her shoulder) I feel a true love for you, Lady! (He kisses her) I’ll wait for you out of this country, just name the time and the --------

At first she takes it as just empty talk about love. In fact she doesn’t want to let him go. So she refuses to pay his dues. He is ready to leave without payment. Now she takes a desperate step. She knows that he would not leave without his guitar. So she takes away the guitar as a security, which he calls his ‘life companion.’

Lady: -------- I’m going to keep hold of your ‘life companion’ while I pack! I am! I am goin’ to pack an’ go, if you go, where you go! (P339)

Jabe is knocking from above. Val draws her attention to it. She reacts,

Lady : I know! Death’s knocking for me! ---- Ask me how it felt to be coupled with death up there, and I can tell you. My skin crawled when he touched me. But I endured it. I guess that my heart knew that somebody must be coming to take me out of this Hell! You did. You came. Now look at me! I’m alive once more!-------- (P.339)

Thus both confess their true love for each other. Soon after this Miss Porter appears on the scene. She is always suspicious about their relationship. Her inquisitive, prying way has told her the truth. She directly tells Lady,

Nurse: -------- The moment I looked at you when I was called on this case last Friday morning I knew that you were pregnant. (P.342)
Instead of feeling guilty or ashamed Lady accepts it defiantly. When her doubts are confirmed she is in an elated mood. She wants to celebrate the occasion. Val becomes softer to her after this revelation. Of course, the joy doesn’t last long as Jabe has learnt about it and he is determined to ruin Lady and her lover completely which he carries out successfully. He shoots Lady and makes it appear that Val has killed her. So the already hostile mob finishes Val’s life.

Val’s relationship with other females

There is reference of four females associated with Val. The first one comes in Act II scene I, while recounting his past, he refers to a girl he met at the age of fourteen. He thought he was in love with her. But he realizes that it was just an illusion. (P.285)

In the meanwhile as a wanderer he meets many women. But he is interested or involved with none. When he comes to the town, he meets three women- Vee Talbott, Carol and Lady.

Val and Vee Talbott

For Vee Talbott, he is a saviour, Jesus resurrected which she always expected vaguely in her visions. In Act III, Scene II, she comes to the store where Val is working. She has seen the eyes of her savior on the Saturday after Good Friday, while she was heading to the church to pray. She narrates it -----

Vee:----- Along the road as I walked, thinking about the mysteries of Easter, veils! ----- seemed to drop off my eyes! Light, oh, light! I never have seen such brilliance! It PRICKED my eye like NEEDLES!

Vee: A world of light and shadow is what we live in, and – it’s confusing.

Val: Yeah, they- do get- mixed ------------
Vee: ----- And there in the split –open sky, ----- I saw the TWO HUGE BLAZING EYES OF JESUS CHRIST RISEN! -------- And then a great------ his hand! Invisible! I didn’t see his hand! – But it touched me here! (She seizes Val’s hand and presses it to her great heaving bosom) (P.223-224)

It is clear that she has mixed up Val’s hand with that of the Saviour.

Earlier in Act II, Scene II she brings her painting depicting the Church of Resurrection. It is mainly for bringing the dying Jabe to Jesus. She ponders over her style of painting, her psychological need, her urge for painting, her vision etc. Val thoroughly understands her. He even helps her in expressing, what she feels. There is a great chemistry between them. Especially when she tells that it is an antidote over the cruelty and destruction of human life. She has to witness everyday as a sheriff’s wife, he totally agrees with her. His empathy and understanding is expressed in his words –

Val: ----- And so you began to point your visions. Without no plan, no training you started to paint as if God touched your fingers. (She lifts her hands slowly, gently from her soft lap) You made some beauty out of this dark country with these two, soft, woman hands--------

---------- (Strangely, gently, he lifts her hands to his mouth. She gasps.) (P.302)

Val also understands that her hobby of painting has attributed meaning to her existence, her life, which was otherwise meaningless. This creativity is probably the solution to her barrenness and also to the cruelty, destructive attitude of others. (P.301)

Of course on both the occasions Sheriff Talbott fails to understand the relationship. He suspects that Val is trying to seduce his wife. So his attitude towards Val becomes more and more hostile.
Val-Carol relationship

Val is homeless and Carol is an out law, a willful, passionate spoilt girl from a respectable, Southern family of Cutreres. She thinks they are fit for each other. But Val is not at all interested in her. It seems that they knew each other before their chance meeting in Lady’s store. In Act I- scene I, Carol starts conversation with him, as if they knew each other well. Val keeps on denying any previous acquaintance. But Carol is confident. Her words—‘But I can prove that I know you if I have to. It was New Year’s Eve in New Orleans’ support her claim. She gives more details of their meeting. On this background she expresses her wish to spend more time with him as a wanderer. (P.260-261) Val firmly turns down the invitation telling he doesn’t consider him young anymore and he has done away with that life. Carol’s claims are confirmed later on in Act II, Scene I.

Finally she is successful in taking him away in her car. She says there is some snag in her car engine and he would help her by fixing it. Val is disgusted with the gossiping women. So he leaves out with her. She has won some sympathy for her by talking frankly about her ‘outlaw’ status and the reasons behind it. In Scene II of the same act, he has returned to the store in disgust. While talking to Lady he refers to his trip with Carol. He adds, “She made a mistake about me” making it clear that he is not interested in having any sexual relationship with Carol or any other woman for that matter.

Again in Act II Scene I Carol comes and insists on having a private talk with Val. She expresses her genuine love and tender feelings for Val.

Carol: I’d love to hold something the way you hold your guitar ----, with such --- tender Protection! I’d love to hold you that way, with the same – tender protection!
Because you hang the moon for me!

Val: Little girl, you’re transparent, ------- A man’s weight on you would break you like a bundle of sticks ------
Carol: ----- You have hit on truth about me. The act of love-making is almost unbearably painful, and yet, of course, I do bear it, because not to be alone, even for a few moments, is worth the pain and the danger. It’s dangerous for me because I am not built for child-bearing.

At this point Val admits to his former vagrant way of life, but also reiterates that he is no more interested in that type of life. Here he admits to stealing a Rolex watch from someone she knows. He wants it to be returned to that fellow. So he tries to give it to her. She refuses to take it and starts crying. He hurls it to the floor and says, “– That’s my message to you and the pack you run with!”

Her genuine concern beyond sex is expressed through her words—

Carol: I RUN WITH NOBODY! – I hoped I could run with you --- You’re in danger here
Snakeskin. ------- Last night I woke up thinking about you again. I drove all the night to bring you this warning of danger ------- I hoped you’d hear me and let me take you away before it’s too late. (P.293-295)

Again in Act III, scene III she returns to take Val with her as she has learnt about Sheriff Talbott’s ultimatum to him to leave the town immediately. She tells him that he can accompany her in her car. Val has decided to leave but not with Carol. He declares –
Val: I’m going with no one I didn’t come here with. And I come here with no one.(P.334)

Carol’s consistent efforts to take Val away with her, arouses jealousy in Lady’s mind. Soon after this the events take such a sudden twist that Val is unable to leave Lady alone.

Along with Lady his fate, too, is sealed for doom. Finally Carol gets nothing of him except his snakeskin jacket. She takes its charge as an emblem of wildness, which is common to both of them.
Other Relationships

They mainly include marital relationships and the relationship with strangers, foreigners and Negroes.

Marital relationships

Beulah’s comment upon the marital relationship among many couples made in the beginning of Act I reveals the bitter truth regarding marital relationship in general though she makes it in context of Carrence couple.

Beulah: ------- Why there’s couples that loathe and despise the sight, smell and sound of each other before that round trip honeymoon ticket is punched at both ends,-- (P.251)

Apart from Torrance couple, Talbott couple is another glaring example of marital discord. Temperamentally the two poles are apart. Sheriff Talbott is dominating. Opposite is the case of Cutrere couple. She seems to be dominating as she has brought riches to him by their marriage. The monthly check to Carol is signed by her, not David. Another common point is childlessness of the couples. Though not directly mentioned, Lady’s sarcastic reference to David’s wellborn children---- (P.297) and her carrying his child, which she had to abort, tells it all. Vee Talbott tries to satisfy her urge of creativity through her creative paintings.

Relationship with strangers, foreigners and negroes

The hostility arising out of racial differences is conspicuous in case of negro slaves and convicts which is manifest through the conversation between Vee and Val related to the cruelty they witness, in Act II , Scene II(P.301) and Scene III (P.304) when Val empathises with a runaway convict being chased by trained dogs.
Italians and Poles seem to be constant objects of ridicule. Lady’s father- Romano is referred to as ‘the Wop’, ‘Dago bootlegger’ etc. He is punished with extreme cruelty for his crime of serving liquor to negroes. He is burned alive along with his wine garden leaving Lady destitute. Even the fire-brigade prefers to remain passive.  
Same derisive attitude is observed towards the Polish chemist, in Beulah’s words ---

**Beulah:** Dubinsky’d wait on a purple-bottom baboon if it put a dime on th’ counter an’ pointed at something! (P. 288)

Sheriff Talbott treats Val as if he was a runaway convict though there is no evidence against him, just because he is a stranger in the town and more over a good looking youth. (P.326) Afterwards he is killed by the –so called gentleman for killing Lady without checking the facts. They behave like wild dogs and hunt him.

Bigsby describes this play as “another of Williams” fables about the victory of the impotent but brutal materialist over the spiritually sensitive and sexually vital.”( C. W. E Bigsby. *A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama* P.95)

After referring to the high symbolism- mythical and Christian- with respect to Val’s character he opines about Williams’ depiction of South, “Orpheus Descending recasts the South as hell. Beneath his usual concern with human desperation is his most direct denunciation of Southern bigotry. The brutal language of racism echoes through a play which dramatizes a hermetic world trapped within its own myths and historically condemned by its own sexual and spiritual impotence. The dominant images are those of death and disease, while an apocalyptic fire constantly threatens. The South is dying. All signs of vitality are feared and destroyed. The wildness has been tamed. The play ends with the torture and death of the only genuinely vital character.” (Bigsby, P.97)
As the protagonist of *Suddenly Last Summer* is an artist, a poet like Williams, Bigsby tries to relate the artists in his plays with Williams’ concept of the motives of an artist.

He observes, “If the act of writing is an assertion of meaning, a denial of anarchy, it is also inherently ambiguous, suggesting both a positive desire to reconstruct the world and an act of evasion. In *Orpheus Descending*, Vee, paints in order to make sense out of her existence, to deny the cruelty of which she had been a primary witness. She struggles much like Williams, to make ‘some beauty out of this dark country’. But the man, who tries to create a separate world in the form of a garden, is burned down.” He adds, “In *Suddenly Last Summer* the artist/writer is more sinister figure. He compounds rather than contains the anarchic forces at large in the world. His perception of the world is of a grotesque battle for survival. But that perception is in the highly formalized shape of a poem. (Just as Williams contains his own grotesques and dramatizes his own sense of anarchic power and of dominating sexuality) The imposition of order has its advantages but it also exacts a price.

He states, “In this case Catherine is to be sacrificed to Sebastian’s poetry. Her freedom is the price, and it is tempting to see in this story of a writer’s achievement attained at the cost of a relative’s lobotomy- an echo of Williams’ own experience and of the guilt. Yet, Sebastian is not, of course, an adequate image of Williams as a writer. His characters accept everything. He offers no resistance to the world, presenting himself as a sacrifice, compounding the cruelty of existence and of natural process by his own passivity- that becomes the source of evil.” (Bigsby, P.101)
THE MILKTRAIN DOESN’T STOP HERE ANYMORE (1955)

Flora Goforth ---------------------------- Christopher Flaunders
(a former Hollywood actress, extremely wealthy widow on the verge of death) (a young good looking stranger visiting the estate – uninvitedly, nick name- Angle of Death)

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<td>Francis Black ( Blackie )</td>
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<td>( a young secretary to Mrs.Goforth)</td>
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The relations depicted in this play are of very different type. It would be fitting to describe them as ‘inhuman’ relationships rather than human relationships, especially with respect to the main character of Flora Goforth. She is the epitome of all human vices with extremely attractive exterior. She is too self-indulgent, too proud, hypocritic, lustful, unscrupulous character, with a deadly combination of glamour and aristocracy. She is so egoistic that she is not ready to admit even to herself that old age and disease, death my come any closer to her.

All the relationships occurring in the play are with respect to her. However the focus of relationships once again remains upon the male-female relationship. Among all other relationships, her relationship with a stranger, a trespasser, an intruder- Christopher Flaunders occupies the major space. Apart from this relationship two other relationships have been depicted in detail. They are the marital relationships with her first husband Harton Goforth and the sixth and the last husband Alex. Her relationship with her first and subsequent husbands is mainly for the sake of material gains and with the last husband is purely for the sake of love. Her relationship with Chris is antagonistic as well as ‘love-hate’ relationship.
Her actual encounter takes place only with one male, that is, Chris. The reference to others comes in the form of the narration while she is dictating her memoirs to her secretary, Blackie.

**Flora Goforth’s marital relationships**

Out of the six husbands, only two find some space in her narration. She refers to the first and the last husband only.

**a) Mrs. Goforth and her first husband**

The reference to Flora’s first husband comes in the very first scene. She tells Blackie,

_Mrs. Goforth: ------ My first husband, Harlon Goforth, whose name I carry after three later marriages—that dignified financier, TYCOON! ------

was a man that Presidents put next to their wives at banquets in the White House,

Before this Blackie reads from the earlier dictation, which is,

‘----- My first two husbands were ugly as apes and my third one resembled an ostrich’,
tells everything including her opinion about Mr. Goforth.

The second reference to Mr. Goforth is related to his death; again as a part of her dictation.

_Mrs. Goforth:------ It’s night, late night, without sleep. He is crushing me under the awful weight of his body. Then suddenly he tries to make me love. He says,

Flora, I have a pain on my head,------- . And silently to myself, I say,
Thank God, but out loud I say, ‘------ , you want your tablets?------ I reach
up and turn on the light, and I see- death in his eyes! ------ and something
worse in them, terror.------ I got out of the bed as if escaping from
quicksand! I don’t look at him again, ------ I move away from death, terror!
------ I go straight tithe terrace! I leave him alone with his death, his ----- 

In fact, she has mixed up his death and her own imminent death. She starts re-
living the moments and actually goes staggering to terrace herself, mumbling, ‘I’m lost,
blind, dying! I don’t know where I –

When Blackie rushes to terrace to stop her, she begs to Blackie, ‘ Blackie, don’t
leave me alone! (Scene IV,P.177)

While talking to Chris in scene V, she once again refers to her own humble roots
and her meteoric rise in the world of glamour. She recounts, ‘------ and I was still in my
teens when I married Harlon Goforth, ----- . Was barely out of my teens when I became
his widow. Scared to make out a will, he died intestate so every thing went to me.’

Thus Mr. Goforth plays a very brief but highly significant role in her life to
establish her in the uppermost crust of society and leaving behind the estate worth
millions for her.

b) Mrs. Goforth and Alex

This too is a part of her dictation of the memoirs. Right in the beginning of scene
I, she refers to him and his passion for high speed, which ultimately causes his death.
(P.139) In the same scene the stranger, Chris, steps on the estate, while she is
nostalgically dictating her memoirs related to the passionate love between Alex and
herself. She narrates,
Mrs. Goforth: “Cloudy symbols of a – high romance------.”------- The love of true understanding isn’t something a man brings up the road to you every day ------ . But it was brought to me once, almost too late but not quite ------
The hard shell of my heart, ------ broken through, and my last husband broke through it, and I was brought back to life and almost back to –what? – Youth ------
The nights, ------, especially the first one I spent with Alex!
The way that a lover undresses,------ the first night you pass together, is a definite clue to your whole future relationship with him, you know.------------
Then came to rest in a god’s perfection beside me: reached up to turn off the light: I reached up and turned it back on!

At this point coincidently the clamour of watchdogs is heard. They are chasing a trespasser, Chris. He has been assaulted by the dogs. So he is limping. He has come on foot specially to see Mrs. Goforth. (P.143,144) Though she pretends to be completely indifferent, she has observed him through a powerful binocular and noticed a striking resemblance between her true love Alex and the stranger- Chris. Strangely enough, Chris is of the same age and dressed exactly as Alex, when Mrs. Goforth met Alex first time. (P.148) From this point the battle of wits between the two begins in the strange circumstances.

c) Mrs. Goforth and Chris

At first she feigns to be rude and indifferent to the young man. But he strongly reminds her of her lost love, Alex. That softens her attitude towards him. She has secret plans to use him as a lover, a substitute for Alex. So she allows him to stay on the estate and asks Blackie to take him to the ‘Pink Villa’ symbolizing love and romance. She declares,
Mrs. Goforth: ------- I need male company, ------- to be me, the old Sissy Goforth, high, Low, Jack and the game! (P.148-149)

From this point onwards, the game of ‘cat and mouse’ begins between the two. Secondly, her relationship with Chris has been superimposed with her vivid memories about her passionate love relationship with Alex. On one hand she tries to look for Alex in Chris, which he is not. Neither he has any intention or willingness to assume that role or succumb to her wish. Therefore, when she finds in him the image of Alex, she is very soft towards him. She showers all the favours and comforts on him. At the same times she wants to keep him on tender-hooks and convey the message to him that his life on the castle depends upon her mercy. Therefore, it is his duty to please her. If he fails to do so, she would be cruel to him.

Her first act of placing him in the luxurious Pink Villa is her act of softness. But despite the knowledge of his going without food for over five days, climbing up the mountain with his very heavy sack and being attacked by the dogs, doesn’t melt her heart. Blackie makes him take shower and arranges his bed. She has realized that he is too tired and needs sleep for hours. So she arranges for a cold meal for him after he wakes up. (P.156) Before going to sleep, he hands over a mobile he has crafted for Mrs. Goforth, titled as ‘The Earth is a Wheel in a Great Big Gambling Casino’ to Blackie. (P.1555) It is a message for Mrs. Goforth about uncertainty of life.

Blackie shows it to her. Mrs. Goforth ignores it, but is interested to know more about him from Blackie. Though she knows that she is suffering from a terminal illness, she vehemently denies it. In between she admits it unconsciously.

Mrs. Goforth: ----- Blackie, Y’ know what I need to shake off this, ----- depression, what would do me more good this summer than all the shots and pills ----- ? I need me a lover.(P. 158)
She is looking forward to take Chris as a lover, is very clear. But before that she wants to have complete scrutiny of his background. So, while he fast asleep, she has asked his sack to be brought there for inspection. She has been suspicious about him all the while. He possesses all the valid documents, but no cash or traveller cheques, not even additional pair of clothes. So she orders Alex’s Samurai robe to be kept in the Pink Villa. Her romantic moments with Alex are associated with the robe. She recalls that Alex used to tickle her with the point of the Samurai sword, which she found highly thrilling. (P.161)

Then she plans to invite one of her acquaintances, whom she refers to as the Witch of Capri. She knows that she would get more information about Chris from her. She has already found the addresses of some old ladies, dead long ago. She is shaken by this knowledge.

As Mrs. Goforth has expected, the Witch of Capri is full of complete information about Chris. According to her, he has received a nickname ‘Angel of Death’ for his habit of accompanying old ladies during their last moments of life. (P.170) This information rocks Mrs. Goforth. She wants to confirm if Chris is the same person. So she takes her friend to Pink Villa where Chris is asleep. It is confirmed. The Witch adds by narrating an instance with one old Sally Ferguson whom Chris has accompanied until her end and how she remained devoted to Chris referring to him as an angel, a saint! (P.172)

The actual encounter between the two takes place only in Scene IV. All her remarks and actions are suggestive, provocative to trap him in the net of her beauty. She is not successful. When Mrs. Goforth lies about the sign ‘Beware of dogs’ to Chris, Blackie crosses her and challenges her lies. This upsets Mrs. Goforth and she suffers due to her fit of anger. Chris helps her to sit in a chair. Even while suffering with pain, Mrs. Goforth doesn’t fail to take notice of Chris’ attractive face. Both praise each other’s looks.(P.182-183) However she refuses to acknowledge their earlier meeting and her invitation to him. But she is pleased by his mention about her legendary status. She
suddenly opens up and recounts her past right from her being a ‘non-entity’ to her rise as a wife of the richest person, a business tycoon and soon a richest widow.(P.184)

At the same time her treatment to Chris is deliberately cruel. She just ignores his hints of being very hungry or his need for a good breakfast or meals. Her cruelty doesn’t stop here. She dismisses the kitchen staff with the false charges of theft of valuable kitchen articles.

He just keeps on pondering over the individual sense of reality, its acceptance and denial. In the same context to his being avoided as a leper, the tag he has received; ‘Angel of Death.’(P.186) Though this reference upsets her a little, she pretends not to care a bit to his title. She also seems to be determined, not to provide him any food until he fulfils her wish. She tells him that he would not get anything except black coffee.

He takes the clue and stops referring to food any more. When she suggests to play a truth game which was in vogue in the parties. He plainly refuses to do so drawing her attention to its disastrous effects he had witnessed. However he admits one truth that it is his need to have somebody to care for. He uses a metaphor of kittens or puppies. He says that they curl up against each other while sleeping and they keep on nudging each other while asleep, to signal each other of their safety. This is their way of facing the unknown, dark, mysterious. He suggests that he is there to keep her company while she passing through a similar situation. (P.190)

She keeps on blackmailing him for every small favour. She would allow him a cigarette only in return of a kiss. He puts the cigarette away. (P.197) Blackie brings a plate of food for him. Mrs. Goforth asks her to keep the plate on the serving table. As soon as she goes back, Mrs. Goforth orders a servant to take the plate away, with the excuse that she can’t stand the smell of food. She expected some reaction, anger or protest from him. She asks him why he didn’t grab the plate! He coolly tells her, that is the style of dogs. She tells him with disgust, ‘Grab, fight or go hungry!’ (P.197)
Chris is surprised by her callousness, who is otherwise known as patron of art and artists. But he determined to be with her and prepare her mentally for the acceptance of death, which she loathes. She, too, is fighting her battle equally firmly. She keeps on deriding the possibility of death for her near future. She boasts about how she cut off her relatives- her daughter- from her will for the crime of admitting her to the hospital for an emergency operation. At the same time, she admits to be restless and shocked after hearing about the deaths of three of her friends one after another. She admits that she had to refer to many deaths in her memoirs, so she doesn’t deny its role. She adds that as goes to sleep every night, she wonders, if she would see the next morning. Thus she tries to make a brave face against death. (P.198-199)

He points out at the vacuum in her life, in spite of her being occupied in writing her memoirs, her loneliness and her need of companionship, which employees cannot make up for. He gradually refers to everything that she is trying to deny. It includes her lack of friends due to her recent eccentricity, her fading vision etc. This direct, frank talk makes her more uneasy and angry. She orders him to remove and handover the sword belt to her and then offers him her scarf to hold the robe. (P.202-203)

Soon there is a telephone call for Chris. From the conversation, Mrs. Goforth gathers that it is about the death of another lady whom he wanted to meet. She is still in a defiant mood. She announces, ‘Sissy Goforth is not ready to go forth yet and won’t go forth till she’s ready.’ (P.205)

Chris extends his hand to her without a comment. She gives it to him without protest and asks him to hold it softly as the rings cut the fingers. He keeps on hinting at end of everything by referring to merging of great Nile in to the Mediterranean Sea and the pyramids of Egypt- symbol of death.

Her pride is once again dominant. She holds a cigarette in her mouth and waits for him to light her cigarette. When he doesn’t move, she taunts him,
Mrs. Goforth: ----- Didn’t that old Sally Ferguson bitch teach you to light a cigarette for a lady?

Chris: She wasn’t a bitch unless all old dying ladies are bitches. She was dying, and scared to death of dying, which made her a little ----- eccentric ----- (P.206)

Actually this description fits exactly to Mrs. Goforth. But ignoring the cue she continues with her tricks of torture, threats etc. She begins her last trick to tempt him to her bedroom.

In the meanwhile there is heated argument between her and Blackie over the false charges of theft for dismissing the kitchen staff. Due to the excitement she suffers with coughing spasm. She starts bleeding but tries to conceal it from others. She retires to the library asking to call the doctor. (P.209)

Blackie asks Chris to call the hospital in Rome for further advice. Everybody has realized that she is going to die.

Doctors in Rome also confirm that there is nothing to be done now. The local doctor has given her a strong dose of adrenalin. That has revived her spirits. Blackie comments on her behavior,

Blackie: ------- and she’s put on all her rings so that they won’t be stolen. She’s more afraid of being robbed of her jewellery than her life. (P.212)

Mrs. Goforth is in her bedroom. She has managed to sit in a chair. She calls Chris from there. Blackie asks him,

Blackie: -- Can you stand to go in there? (P.214)

Chris : sure I can – It’s a professional duty.
Chris reaches there. But she wants to be tidy before she allows him to enter. She refers to the work pressure and the strain of writing the memoirs, which makes her feel like a house on fire. Chris picks it up as metaphor of death.

**Chris:** Yes, we—all live in house on fire, no fire departments to call; no way out, just the upstairs windows to look out of while the fire burns the house down with us trapped, locked in it. (P.214)

Once again she denies the clue, makes an excuse of shifting to her cooler bedroom and invites him there to talk to him. When Chris reaches there, he finds her nude. He turns away and suggests her to put on something. His refusal to entertain her mood infuriates her.

**Mrs. Goforth:** Modesty? Modesty? I wouldn’t expect you to suffer from modesty, Chris. I never was bothered with silliness of that kind. If you’ve got a figure that’s pleasing to look at, why be selfish with it? (P.215)

Her pride for her assets has not left her been at the brink of death, neither her lust diminished. Her ego is hurt by Chris’ response, although he admits, ‘it was a pleasure’ to view her perfect figure. He tells her that he had come there to serve some purpose in return for a temporary refuge, but she had disappointed him by the callous and shabby treatment, the deliberate starving of him. (P.216)

Over this, she hopes that if she feeds him properly, he would fulfill her will. She comes out of the bedroom in a white robe and calls the kitchen and orders a luxurious meal. Again she invites him to the bedroom. (P.217) He turns down the invitation saying, ‘I am afraid I came here too late to accept these – invitations.’ He adds that if she doesn’t want him anymore, he would leave the place and says ‘goodbye’ to her. She admits her defeat.

**Mrs. Goforth:** Mr. Flaunders, you have the distinction, ------- , of being the first man that
wouldn’t come in my bedroom when invited to enter. (P.218)

He admires her courage, her strong will, but points out,

**Chris:** ------ you really need somebody or something to mean God to you ------.

She challenges him by asking how he would bring God to her! (P.219)

At this point he accepts his defeat in convincing her of his worth. Then he narrates
the incidence, which made him take it as his occupation. He had helped an old gentleman
to die. The man had said, “Help me out there, I can’t make it alone, I’ve gone past pain I
can bear.” Chris had led him in the deep water. But just before the tide took him away, he
had handed over his wallet with all the money to Chris. (P.220) She keeps on taunting
him for robbing a dying man. Chris continues. He then meets a Hindu Swami on the
beach whom he tells about his help to a dying man, over which the Swami says ‘You
have found your vocation’ ------ He hands over the money to the Swami and attains the
unusual peace of mind through the Swami’s touch and smile. He has also learned from
him the significance of ‘silence’ and ‘acceptance of truth’. He is trying to stress the need
of the acceptance of the ultimate truth of death and life. He hints at accepting death in a
calm and dignified manner. (P.221)

She remains adamant. She wants to call her bodyguard to expel Chris from there.
But he has already left with her safe. She asks Chris to go away. Chris ignores it and tells
her that she needs him there for some more time and tries to take her to her bedroom.

Now she is really scared and panicked. She wants to get rid of him. But when he
sets to leave, she explodes—

**Mrs. Goforth:** Did somebody tell you I was dying this summer? Yes, isn’t that why you
came here------? Come on, for once in your life be honestly frank, be frankly
honest with someone!

**Chris:** Yes, that’s why I came here. (P.222)
Finally she accepts that now it is her turn to ‘go forth’. But she wants to face it alone. She defiantly says, ‘you counted on touching my heart because you’d heard I was dying ---. But you miscalculated with this one. This milk train doesn’t stop here anymore. You can go to somewhere else to help some other dying people -----.’ (P.222)

She suffers with another attack due to the exertion of speaking. She has to ask for his help to take her to her bedroom. She has again started bleeding. As he takes her to the bedroom, she proudly boasts about all the exclusive possessions in the bedroom.

Finally Chris is able to make her lie down on bed. The final dialogue between them is like a dialogue between an obstinate child and mother.

**Mrs. Goforth:** *Don’t leave me alone till ----*

**Chris:** I never leave till the end.

(She stretches out her jeweled hand, he takes it.)

When he holds her hand, the rings cut her fingers. So he removes them one by one. She keeps on gasping with every ring.

**Mrs. Goforth:** Be here, when I wake up. (P.223)

Until the end she doesn’t accept the fact that she was going to sleep forever. This shows that it is not her fight with an individual as such. It is with herself, her ego, her pride, her lust and her possessiveness with all her earthly and material wealth, and above all with mortality. Like a true warrior, she doesn’t accept her defeat till the last moment.
Other Relationships

A little space has been occupied by other relationships, such as Mrs. Goforth’s relationship with her peer- Marqueesa Ridgeway Condotti or the Witch of Capri. Both belong to the uppermost crust of the society. Both the women are corrupt from head to toe. Their meeting and subsequent exchange of fire-woks is a telling comment upon the aristocratic ladies. Both are old and suffering from various ailments. They are under heavy medication and therefore lost their appetite. Both are suffering from nauseating feeling. But both refuse to admit that they are suffering. Both do not want to miss an opportunity to convey to other that she is quite aware of the facts.

The Witch: I mailed my wedding invitation the spring before the last to some hospital I
Boston ------- (P.166)

As a counter attack Mrs. Goforth deliberately refers to her illness.

Mrs. Goforth: Are you still living on blood transfusions, Connie? That’s not good, it
turns you in to a vampire -------
Is it true you had that sheep embryo—plantation in – Switzerland? ----- It
Keys you up for a while and then you collapse, completely. The human
System can’t stand too much stimulation after—sixty ----- 

Both are boastful and full of lust even at the age of sixty or above. Both have multiple marriages to their credit. Mrs. Goforth wants to have sex with the young attractive visitor, Chris, even though she is on the verge of death. When Mrs. Goforth takes the Witch to show her visitor, Chris, Mrs. Goforth warns her tauntingly and the Witch retorts,

Mrs. Goforth: Don’t go to bed with him!

The Witch: No, that’s your privilege, Sissy.
Even after that the Witch makes an excuse and goes back to the sleeping man and tries to kiss him. But she is disappointed as he turns over.

Another significant relationship is between Chris and The old Hindu Swami. This is spiritual relationship. It has been depicted through Chris’ narration in that respect after his unconscious assistance to an ailing man who wants to end his life to get rid of agony and suffering.

While returning he meets the Hindu Swami on the beach, he had seen earlier. Chris tells him about his help to the old man who wanted to die. During this there are sarcastic questions by Mrs. Goforth and frank, plain answer by him. He conveys the philosophy of life by answers.

**Mrs. Goforth:** What did he (the Swami) say about that?

**Chris:** --------- He said, you’ve found your vocation and he smiled. ------- and-- he held his hand for the money.

**Mrs. Goforth:** Did you give him the money?

**Chris:** Yes, they needed the money: I didn’t: I gave it to them.

**Mrs. Goforth:** Did he say thank you for it?

**Chris:** I don’t know if he did. ------- They had a belief in believing that too much is said When feelings, quiet feelings—enough,-- Says more—it made me, so quickly, peaceful. That was important to me,------- because I’d come there,----- with the spectre of lunacy at my heels all the way. ------- We sat about a fire on the beach that night: -------

He says the silence of the night gave him the message of acceptance. She wants to know the acceptance of what! He elaborates,
Chris: Oh, many things, everything nearly. Such as how to live and to die in a way that’s more dignified than most of know how to do it. And of how not to be frightened of not knowing what isn’t meant to be known, acceptance of not knowing any thing but the moment of still existing until we stop existing, and acceptance of that moment, too. (Scene VI, Page 221)

All these reflections appear towards the end of the play, as a part of his endeavour to prepare her to accept the ultimate truth regarding mortality of man, although she reveals no impact of this philosophy upon her whatsoever. On the contrary, Chris proves to be the true disciple of the Hindu Swami, who withstands all the hardships- physical strain, starvation, mental torture, harassment to carry out his duty in a poised and dignified manner.

According to Bigsby, Williams’ plays written in 1960s and early 70’s reflect his own predicament, *The Milktrain Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore* being one of them written in 1964. He observes about the protagonists of this phase as, “They have lost their grasp on their lives and their obsessive concern, like that of their creator, is with mortality. Death is the implicit and explicit subject. And throughout the plays which he wrote in the 1960s and early 1970s he presented a series of grotesques, figures reduced to a single dominating feature. Like all his characters, they essentially inhabit separate worlds; sharing only a common desperation. Indeed his language began to collapse, developing into pseudo-poetic rhetoric.

Thus *The Milktrain Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore* dramatizes the recognizable Williams situation of an older woman seeking revivification through a young man. It is hard not to read the play as in some ways the writer’s own response to a growing hysteria.”

He seems to offer his work as consolation, a fictionalizing gesture which stands for that act of imaginative transcendence which is finally the only defense against death.
SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER (1958)

Catherine Holly—Cousin---- Sebastian Venable ---Mother---Mrs. Violet Venable
(A witness to Sebastian’s    (A young eccentric poet)    (An extremely rich, old
Horrifying, ugly death.)    Cousin                            lady, too possessive of
                                 |                                    her son)
                                 |
                                 |
                                 -----------------------------------------------
Dr. Cucrowicz                         George                         Mrs. Holly
A doctor from State      Catherine’s younger brother,  Catherine’s mother
mental asylum            heir to Sebastian’s wealth.    (dependent financially on
                                                                Mrs. Venable)
---------------------------------------------------------------------

The main action in this play takes place initially between Mrs. Venable and Dr. Cucrowicz and afterwards between Catherine and Dr. Cucrowicz. However it reveals the relationship of Sebastian with the two female characters in question. Sebastian is already dead when the play begins, but the whole action reveals around his character. Therefore though he is absent, his relationships with his mother—Mrs. Venable and with Catherine Holly—his young beautiful cousin are of prime importance. Both the relationships are to be considered as male-female relationship.

Catherine, who is alive, is the central figure in the actual action. Other relationships with Catherine are also significant, though they enjoy secondary position. They include,
a) With her family members or blood relations, that is, her mother and brother—George.
b) With the staff at the asylum in general and with Dr. Cucrowicz in particular, as her fate will depend upon his decision.
Male-Female Relationships

Sebastian and Mrs. Venable

This is abnormal type of relationship between a son and a mother. Though the actual relationship is that of a mother and son, they behave like a couple which becomes manifest through Mrs. Venable’s descriptions of the same and her extreme hostility and jealousy towards Catherine, who according to her has challenged her dominance over Sebastian and ruined the regime of complete harmony and understanding between them. She has collapsed after Sebastian’s death. Only once she could stand upon her feet after that and it is for striking at Catherine with her cane, because she believes that whatever Catherine is telling about Sebastian is all lies. There are plenty of instances, revealing their extra-ordinary and rather abnormal relationship.

His heart valve is affected, which leaves him physically weak and completely dependent upon his mother. He addresses his mother by her first name – Violet as a lover would do.(P. 115)

He would write one poem each summer, the remaining nine months were meant for preparation. She equates it with pregnancy. When the doctor asks, “The poem was hard to deliver?”, she answers, “Yes, even with me! Without me, impossible, doctor!” (P.116)

She recounts another incidence when they were visiting Himalayas. Sebastian was so fascinated by the Buddhist philosophy that he was almost determined to turn a Buddhist monk and donate all his properties to the monasteries. She wanted to stop him from that rash decision. So she cables his father to freeze all of Sebastian’s accounts. At the same time she receives a cable from her husband’s lawyer conveying the message of his being critically ill. She was needed urgently there. Instead of going back to the dying husband, she prefers to stay with her son to convince him against his decision. Finally she succeeds. She says,
“--- And from then on, oh, we- still lived in a- world of light and shadow----- But the shadow was as luminous as the light.” (P.120)

**Doctor:** Your son was young, Mrs. Venable?

**Mrs. Venable:** Both of us were young, and stayed young Doctor. (P.121)

She was not ready to admit that she was much older than him. The doctor wondered if Sebastian had led a celibate life until the age of forty.

**Mrs. Venable:** As strictly as if he’d *vowed* to! ------ really I was actually the only one in his life that satisfied the demands he made of people. (P.122)

She further adds proudly’

**Mrs. Venable:** --- We were a famous couple. People didn’t speak of Sebastian and his mother ----- they said, ‘ Sebastian and violet------ are staying at the Lido --------.’ And ----- every time we appeared, attention was centered on *us*! ----- *everyone else!* **Eclipsed**! (P.122-123)

She nostalgically recounts,

**Mrs. Venable:** ------ My son ---- and I ----- carve each day of our lives like a piece of sculpture, yes, we left behind us a trail of days like a gallery of sculpture!

But, last summer – I can’t forgive him for it, not even now that he ‘s paid For it with his life! – he let in this – **vandal**! (P. 123)

She refers to Catherine’s intrusion in their sweet, romantic relationship. She blames her of smashing their legend, the memory. She calls her a lunatic. Mrs. Venable just refuses to believe Catherine’s account related to Sebastian’s morbid, horrifying end. Therefore she has arranged to put her in a private mental asylum. In spite of the harsh treatment under the guise of remedy, Catherine’s memory about the incidence remains intact. Mrs. Venable's malice towards her goes to the extent of prescribing a brain
surgery- a lobotomy to wipe out memory from her brain- to stop her- babbling! She is unscrupulous enough to offer financial assistance to the doctor in his project, a foundation related to brain surgeries, in return for his favour of performing lobotomy upon Catherine. Though he points out that it is a risky operation, she doesn’t bother. He also points out that her memory may not be wiped out. She says,

Mrs. Venable: That may be, may be not, but after the operation, who would believe her doctor?

She minces no words in conveying the threat to withdraw the financial assistance if he refuses to perform lobotomy upon Catherine.

Though Mrs. Venable accuses Catherine of robbing her son from her, the facts appear to be different.

Catherine: She’s not being fair.------ Aunt Violet, you know why Sebastian asked me to travel with him.

--------------------------------

Catherine: You weren’t able to travel. You had a ---

Mrs. Venable: Go on! What had I had? ------ She meant that I had a stroke.

I DID NOT HAD A STROKE! – I had a slight aneurism.

Afterwards Catherine throws more light upon the facts to annul all the accusations.

Sebastian- Catherine Relationship

During the conversation between Catherine and the doctor, the relationship between Sebastian and Catherine is unfolded. She explains why Mrs.Venable was substituted by Catherine, herself.
Catherine: She had a slight stroke in April. It just affected one side, the left side of her face ---- but it was disfiguring and, after that, Sebastian couldn’t use her.

Catherine: Yes, we all use each other and that’s what we think of as love, ----- (P.142)

The doctor asks her if she hates Mrs. Venable. Her answer is too sane to stamp her lunatic though Mrs. Venable is adamant over it. She says, everyone in a drowning ship need not hate each other. Then he further goes deep in to her relationship with Sebastian.

Doctor: What was your feeling for your cousin Sebastian?

Catherine: He liked me and so I loved him.

Doctor: In what way did you love him?

Catherine: The only way he’d accept:- a sort of motherly way. -------- (P.143)

She then elaborates, how they became intimate to each other. She tells how she went through a bitter and agonizing experience in love and betrayal and how Sebastian treated her with sympathy and kindness.

Catherine: --------, one morning my cousin Sebastian came in my bedroom and said: ‘Get up!’—Well—if you’re still alive after dying, ---- you’re obedient, Doctor.—I got up. He took me downtown to a place for passport photos. Said: ‘Mother can’t go abroad with me this summer. You’re going to go with me this summer instead of mother. (P.144)

After this the doctor gives her a truth injection and also hypnotizes her. Obviously her account after this must be considered genuine.
She presents the account of their intimate relationship, which began ‘last summer’. She tells that his kindness made her forget the bitter experiences at the ball. She adds, ‘He was affectionate with me, so sweet and attentive to me, that some people took us for a honeymoon couple until they noticed that we had separate state-rooms, and – then in Paris, ------ bought me new clothes ------ I turned in to a peacock! Of course, so was he one, too------.’ She continues, ‘But then I made a mistake of responding too much to his kindness, of taking hold of mine, ------ of appreciating his kindness more than he wanted to, and suddenly last summer, he began to be restless,------.’ (P.148) It seems that intimacy with any other woman except his mother made him restless.

Then she refers to his notebook in which he would write a poem, a summer poem. Mrs. Venable claims that she would help him to overcome that restlessness and deliver his poem, which Catherine could not do. That caused his destruction as a poet, because he could not write his poem that summer. In attempt to make him write his poem, they return to Cabeza de Lobo, where he had given up writing his poem. Mrs. Venable’s curses continue and Catherine retorts--

Mrs. Venable: Because he had broken our ------.

Catherine: Yes! Yes, something had broken, that string of pearls that old mothers hold their sons by like a – sort of ---- umbilical cord, long – after------. (P.150)

Catherine’s words are a direct comment upon the abnormal relationship between Sebastian and his mother. It is supported by her later account. She then narrates his strange behavior. According to her he suddenly stopped to be young and his behavior strangely changed. He preferred to spend hot afternoons (instead of cool evenings) on the beach; which was divided in to two parts- one private and other public. At this point Mrs. Venable objects saying that a fastidious person like her son would never spend time at a dirty, free public beach.
Catherine tells that there he bought her a swimsuit. She was not ready to wear it as it was a white, thin material and looked transparent when wet. But he did it, according to her, for attracting attention. He was using her for his purpose. What she adds further is shocking.

**Catherine:** ------- I was PROCURING for him!

She used to do it, too.

*Not consciously! She didn’t know* that she was procuring for him in the smart fashionable places they used to go------! Sebastian was shy with people. She wasn’t. ------- We both did the same thing for him,- made contacts for him, but she did it in nice places and in decent ways. (P.152)

Once the crowd started gathering he did not need her help to attract people. The hungry children would follow him as he would pass tips to them for nothing. The crowd was growing bigger, noisier, greedier day by day. Sebastian began to be frightened. So they stopped going out. (P. 153)

Then on that fateful day, they had a late lunch at an open-air restaurant on the sea. Sebastian was dressed in white from head to toe. However he was not feeling well. He was continuously popping the pills for his heart problem. She realizes that he was badly suffering. He was too restless. She recounts his words.

**Catherine:** ‘I think we ought to go north’ he kept saying,

‘I think we’he done Cabeza de Lobo, --------- don’t you?’

I thought we’d done it! – but I had learned it was better not to seem to have to have an opinion because if I did, well ------- he always preferred to do what no one else wanted to do what no one else wanted to do, and I always tried to give the impression that I was agreeing reluctantly to his wishes ------ it was a ---- game ------.
They were sitting near the barbed wire fencing and the naked children gathered outside the fence asking for food. This made Sebastian more restless. He wanted to avoid that sight. The waiters would shoo them away with sticks and all. But soon they would return. Now the band of naked hungry children returned with a sort of music created with empty tin cans which would produce rhythm like ‘Oompa’ resemble the sound of wild hunting dance of tribals. He was terrified by that sound. She says,

Catherine: *He! – accepted! – all –as—how! Things! Are! – And thought nobody had any right to complain or interfere in anyway whatsoever! – except to go on doing as something in him directed ---------*

According to Catherine he accepted his fate, at the same time it all became unbearable to him, especially with his heart condition. He asked the waiters to stop that. She observes, “—This was the first time that cousin Sebastian had ever attempted to correct a human situation! – I think perhaps that *that* was his fatal error ----.”

After that Sebastian suddenly left the table and fled the place. She followed him. She says, “I rarely made any suggestions, but *this* time I *did*.---- She suggested to go down to the waterfront and take a taxi from there or ask the waiters to get a taxi for them. But he refused to listen to her. He shouted at her to shut up and defying her suggestion he started to climb uphill. She knew that his chest pain was growing worse, as he was constantly touching his chest.

The band of naked children followed him with their savage music of hunting. He started running and the whole band screamed at once. The band had taken charge of him. She ran down screaming for help. But before she reached with help of police and waiters everything was over. What they saw was so morbid and horrifying, no body could believe it. The savage hungry children had cut parts of him, torn bits of him away and stuffed them into those ‘gobbling fierce little empty black mouths of theirs.’ There wasn’t a sound anymore. (P.159)
This horrid description of her son’s morbid end is unbearable for Mrs. Venable. She, otherwise unable to stand upon her feet, springs from the wheelchair, stumbles towards Catherine and tries to hit her with her cane. She seems to hold her responsible for shattering the romantic image of her relationship with her son.

Coming back to the relationship between Sebastian and his mother, it seems that there is enough scope to believe that whatever image she portrays of Sebastian is most probably her own inclinations which she imposes upon him. Her influence upon him is so great that it virtually leaves him just as a puppet with all the controls in her hand. Her vivid description of their visit to the islands of Encantadas where the sea turtles come out on the shore to lay eggs and the desperate flight of the just hatched out turtles to reach the water and getting hunted by the carnivorous birds, reveals her own sadistic pleasure in observing and narrating these things. But she maintains that Sebastian saw God in the cruel process of destruction. (P.116-117)

There is one more evidence about his attempt to escape her influence, found in Catherine’s conversation with the sister in Scene III. The doctor’s blondness reminds her of Sebastian’s fascination for blonds.

**Catherine:** Cousin Sebastian said he was fascinated for blonds, he was fed up with the dark ones and was famished for blonds.

According to her he was planning to visit the light, cool, northern countries. He had said to her last summer, ‘Let’s fly north, little bird- I want to walk under those radiant, cold northern lights—I have never *seen* the aurora borealis! (P.130)

This shows that he had no natural inclination for hot, dark(evil), cruel or violent. It seems that his mother has never allowed him to visit the northern countries. That is why he says that he had never ‘seen’ the aurora borealis; which he is pining for.
It is also possible that whatever Sebastian did or accepted as his fate or verdict of God may be his atonement for his sins shared with his mother.

The other possibility is, he is so firmly trapped by the magic spell of his mother that when he finds himself trying to escape from it, he feels guilty. He considers it an act of treachery with his mother and as a punishment he prepares himself to be sacrificed to the savage forces around him.

**The other minor relationships include,**

a) Catherine’s relationship with her blood relations and  
b) Catherine’s relationship with the staff at the asylum in general and with Dr. Cucrowicz in particular.

**a) Catherine and her blood relations**

There are two persons from her family, which take part in the action. Her mother- Mrs. Holly’s role is subordinate. Whatever she speaks is always in behalf of her son- Catherine’s younger brother, George.

Catherine is very affectionate and appreciative for her younger brother. On the other hand his attitude is purely self-centered and mercenary sans understanding or empathy.

In Scene III they meet Catherine face to face after the disaster at Cabeza de lobo. George, without a word of sympathy directly comes to the point.

**George:** Jesus! *What are you up to? Hub! Sister?*  
*Are you trying to RUIN us?*
When Catherine praises George’s elegant looks, Mrs. Holly explains,

**Mrs. Holly:** George inherited Cousin Sebastian’s wardrobe, but everything else is in probate -------- and Violet can keep it in probate just as long as she wants to?(P.132)

She further begs Catherine, not to repeat the horrible story to Violet as it has just about killed her and she is now recovering from the shock!’ She suggests that Catherine should not tell the true story, as there was no one else as a witness to that horror, to satisfy Violet.

**Mrs. Holly:** Oh, sister, you’ve just had a little sort of a- **nightmare** about it! Now listen to me, will you, sister? Sebastian has left, -----! – to you an’ George in his will –

**George:** *To each of us, fifty grand, each!* AFTER TAXES! GET IT?

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**George:** Cathie, Cathie you got to forget that story! Can’tcha? For your fifty grand?

**Mrs. Holly:** Because if Aunt Vi contests the will, ---- she will keep it in the courts for ever!----- (P.133)

Both keep on insisting that she has to drop her crazy story, whether true or not. He says, ‘You got to drop it, sister, you can’t tell such a story to civilized people in a civilized up-to-date country!’ When they realize that she is going to change her version, George’s desperate reaction is—

**George:** Oh, then you are going to tell it. -------, and lose us a hundred thousand!-

Cathie? You are a BITCH!

**George:** ------ She’s just, just—PERVERSE! Was ALWAYS – perverse----
**George:** I’m sorry, Cathie, but you know we NEED that money! Mama and me, -- I got *ambitions*! And, Cathie, I’m YOUNG, I *want* things, I *need* them Cathie! So will you please think about me? Us?

No comment is needed after George’s words. Mrs. Holly has no complaints for Catherine’s harsh, cruel treatment at the mental asylum, without any reason. She calls the asylum ‘a sweet, sweet place’ and ready to praise the good food there, though she doesn’t know anything about it. Catherine is just an instrument for them to inherit Sebastian’s wealth.

**b) Catherine and the Asylum staff**

There is a nurse from St. Mary’s hospital, Sister Felicity, who accompanies Catherine at Mrs. Venable’s residence. She is strict and professional as the staff at mental asylum is expected to be. She is not ready to trust with Catherine. She always threatens Catherine with dire consequences for even small violation of rules. Catherine is cut off from the facilities one by one for her defiant attitude.

Unlike the other staff at mental asylum Dr. Cukrowicz is quite different. Right from the beginning it becomes clear that he doesn’t treat the patients as guinea pigs. He treats them as human beings. So he points out the risks involved in lobotomy and its partial success rate. He is caught between the temptation of huge financial aid for his dream project and Catherine’s fate. He is all prepared to listen to Catherine’s account sincerely. Catherine gets attracted to the young, charming, blond doctor and grabs a chance to get intimate with him physically. (P.147)

The doctor does his utmost to give a fair chance to Catherine. He tries to keep Mrs. Venable away from the interruptions. There is total understanding between the two during the session with Catherine under the influence of truth syrup. He lets her smoke to get her relaxed.(P. 148)
In spite of Mrs. Venable’s primaries against Catherine, his mind is not prejudiced against Catherine. Whenever necessary he tries to defend her from Mrs. Venable’s venomous verbal attacks. Finally he defends her from the physical assault, too. His last remark is significant, in light of the fact that his ambitious project is at stake,

**Doctor:** I think we aught at least to consider the possibility that the girl’s story could be true ---------.

When everyone else, including her blood relations, is callous and hostile towards her, there is only one man, the doctor, who dares to stand by her.

(The critical observations on this play by C. W. E. Bigsby have been incorporated along with the observations on *Orpheus Descending.*)

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*SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH* (1959)

Alexandra Del Lago -------- Chance Wayne -------- Heavenly Finley
Princess of Kosmonopolis. A struggling actor in his late 20s, extremely good looking Chance’s girl, exceptionally beautiful
A legendary Hollywood actress of yesteryears. | | |
George Scudder |
(a doctor, friend,, well-wisher) | Father |

**Tom Junior** ---- son-------- **Boss Finley**
A wealthy businessman, political heavyweight

As usual the focus of relationships remains upon the male-female relationship. Again an extremely good looking young man without the background of high-birth and
good fortune-Chance Wayne- is at the center. The major aspect of relationships is
Chance’s relationship with other women at different levels.

At subordinate level Boss Finley’s relationship with his children and as a public
figure has also been dealt with. At minor level his relationship with his wife and his
mistress also has been touched upon. These, too, comprise of male-female relationships.

Chance Wayne is associated with four women. As per the order of significance
they are- 1) Heavenly, 2) Alexandra Del Lago, 3) Aunt Nonnie and 4) Miss Lucy
respectively.

Male- Female relationships

1) Chance Wayne- Heavenly relationship

This is a dream couple suitable for romantic films. Both are extremely good
looking, graceful dancers, aspiring young actors, madly in love with each other. As usual,
the social constraints and family restraints prove to be great barriers in the fruition of the
love affair.

To add to the woes of the lovers Chance Wayne has inadvertently transmitted the
verbal disease to Heavenly. Its effects upon Heavenly- physically as well as
psychologically are disastrous. This mishap closes the chapter permanently for Heavenly.
The infection has so badly affected Heavenly’s health that an emergency operation
becomes necessary to save her life. As a result of this operation she loses the ability to
bear children. This leaves a deep psychological scar upon her. She loses faith in Chance
Wayne and interest in general. She is as good as dead after the operation.

Light is thrown upon this relationship through Chance Wayne’s nostalgic
reflections upon it in the presence of Alexandra Del Lago. Unfortunately he is not aware
of these developments when he steps in to the town with the intention of winning her love
and taking his girl with him. His nemesis is waiting for him in the form of extreme hostility towards him by Heavenly’s father and brother.

Some evidence of their passionate love appears through Chance’s narrations related to it, in his reflective, nostalgic mood. He, for the first time, mentions Heavenly to Alexandra in Act I, Scene II. She is curious to know more about her. She asks him, ‘Is she pretty?’ As an answer, he shows her a photograph of Heavenly in nude, which he had snapped at the sea-beach. He describes, “This was taken with the tide coming in. The water is just beginning to lap over her body like it desired her like I did and still do and will always, always. ---------- Heavenly was her name. You can see that it fits her. This was her at fifteen.”

Princess: Did you have her that early?

Chance: I was just two years older, we had each other that early. (P.470

He further describes their mutual dedication, “We gave each other such pleasure in love as very few people can look back on in their lives------.’ Her role in his wandering, unstable life is like an oasis, a lighthouse. He says, ‘------- after each disappointment, each failure at something, I’d come back to her like going to a hospital.”

Princess: ------ why didn’t you marry this Heavenly little physician?

Chance: ------Heavenly is the daughter of Boss Finley, the biggest political wheel in this part of the country. He figured his daughter a hundred, a thousand percent better than me. (P.48)

He then describes her strange and changed behavior during his last visit to the town. She asked him to reach their usual meeting spot on the beach. But did not actually meet him. She came in a motorboat, circled around the spot and kept on shouting,
‘Chance go away, ‘Don’t come back to St. Cloud.’ ‘Chance you are a liar.’ ‘Chance, I’m sick of your lies!’ etc. (P.49)

He thinks that if he is successful in raising his status, then she and her father will agree for their marriage. So he suggests that Alexandra could help him in that manner by giving him a break in one of the films produced by her studio. Heavenly may also be given a role opposite him, thus making their love story successful.

That particular night in the town he decides to make a last attempt to win Heavenly. He makes Princess handover a lot of cash and her Cadillac to him, so that he could display himself in the town proclaiming his raised status and win Heavenly’s heart. He tries to contact her again and again on phone. But the message never reaches her. She has to obey the orders of her father as she has dearly paid for her defiance.

Though Heavenly has refused to see Chance, she still cherishes the precious moments spent with him. When her father tries to assert his love, affection for her, she speaks bitterly about his treatment to her and reiterates her love for Chance.

Heavenly: Papa, there was a time when you could have saved me by letting me marry a boy that was still young and clean, but instead you drove him away ----. And when he came back, you took me out of St. Cloud and tried to force me to marry a fifty year old money-bag that you wanted something out of------

Heavenly: ------ I’d gone; so Chance went away. Tried to compete, make himself big as these big-shots you wanted to use me for a bond with. He went. He tried. The right doors wouldn’t open, and so he went in the wrong ones, and- Papa, you married for love, why wouldn’t you let me do it, while I was alive, inside, and the boy still clean, still decent?

Boss: Are you reproaching me for ---?
**Heavenly:** (shouting) Yes, I am, Papa, I am. You married for love, but you wouldn’t let me do it, and even though you’d done it, you broke Mama’s heart, Miss Lucy had been your mistress--.

**Boss:** Who is Miss Lucy?

**Heavenly** : Oh, Papa, she was your mistress long before Mama died. And Mama was just a front for you. (P.63)

In this way Heavenly exposes Boss’ double standards and also exposes his lack of integrity towards his own love and his snobbery.

Soon after when Boss boasts of his bringing a very costly diamond clip for his dying wife to give her confidence that she was not going to diamond make her last moments cheerful, Heavenly sarcastically asks him, ‘Did you bury her with it?’ He answers, ‘---Hell, no, I took it back to the jewellery store in the morning.’ His explanation is, in those days he couldn’t afford that big amount. She continues with her sarcasm.—

**Heavenly:** I guess that shows, demonstrates very clearly, that you have got a pretty big heart after all. (P.65)

Boss is going to address the nation in a live T.V. programme. He wants his children to join him during the programme, ‘as shining examples of white southern youth- in danger.’ She is in a defiant mood and doesn’t want to share the platform with him. But she has to bow to her father’s wish as he threatens her with dire consequences of her defiance for her love- Chance Wayne. He says,

**Boss:** I am going to remove him------. How do you want him to leave, in that white Cadillac he’s riding around in, or in the scow that totes the garbage out to the dumping place in the Gulf?
She has to succumb to the pressure to save Chance from violence and death. This is another proof of her unconditional love for Chance.

2) Chance Wayne and Alexandra Del Lago

Chance Wayne, after his failure to prove and establish himself in the glamour world is leading a life depravity, providing his service as a male partner to rich women of society. While he is working as a beach boy in Florida, he encounters Alexandra Del Lago who is passing through depression after her failure in the recent come-back film. She has completely resorted to drugs to tackle the situation. She needs the support of some man as her addiction has left her physically weak. She also needs a man, as sex is another distraction for her to overcome the frustration.

Chance is a broke- morally as well as financially. He completely depends upon her favours. He is quite attractive and young. He can give her complete satisfaction in bed. Thus their relationship is that of mutual dependence.

Both are passing through a similar phase of failure and frustration. So they have established a sort of comredairy between them. It is more true from her side, though she tries to dominate him at first with the power of her huge wealth and her status, fame and name. He, too, in return tries to exploit her and blackmail her for his own purpose.

After she pours her heart unconsciously in front of him, whom she doesn’t know much, (Act I, Scene I), he has arranged for a recording of her incriminating confessions related to her possessions and smuggling of contraband drugs. (P.35)

Both try to hide their true identities from each other. Still both have guessed correctly and what they are. They are playing a ‘hide-and –seek’ with each other. She tries to squeeze obedience and physical pleasure from him and he- monetary gains with the help of position and her contacts in Hollywood. (P.40-42)
He uses the recording to get her sign the traveller’s cheques for him. She signs the cheques and asks the cashier to encash them only after he satisfies her desire, the way she wants. But at one point she starts feeling genuine concern for him. (P.50-51) Towards the end of Act I, Scene II she tells Chance that blackmailing was not necessary to get things done from her. She asserts that she is his friend. When he prepares to leave with cash, she asks, “When will I see you?” Chance doesn’t promise anything. He just says, “--- may be never.”

**Princess:** Never is a long time, Chance, I’ll wait. (P.51-52)

She keeps on waiting for his return desperately. Finally when she hears the familiar sound of the horns of her Cadillac, which Chance has taken with him, she is unable to control herself. Her anxiety has driven her to a lot of alcohol and drugs. She is not in her senses. She has come down in her gown not properly zipped. She desperately wants to talk to him and express her empathy towards him. In her long reflective monologue in Act II, Scene II, she tells him,

**Princess:** Chance, when I saw you driving---- with your head held high, with that terrible stiff-necked pride of the defeated which I know so well; I know that your come-back has been a failure like mine. And I felt something in my heart for you. ------that’s a wonderful thing that happened to me. I felt something for someone besides myself. That means that my heart is still alive, --------, not all of my heart is dead yet, Parts alive still ------ I wasn’t always this monster. -------- When I saw you returning, defeated, -------- gave me hope that I could stop being a monster. ******* You’ve got to help me ------ you can do it. ------ I won’t be ungrateful for it. I almost died this morning, suffocated in a panic. But even through my panic, -- I saw a true kindness in you that you have almost destroyed, but that’s still there, a little-------------. (P.87)

This shows that Chance has played a role of savior for her. She has redeemed, resurrected herself in his company, a revelation, an enlightenment has visited her. She
genuinely wants Chance, too, to overcome his frustration, cast off the mask of mercenary, hard-heartedness and resurrect himself. She wishes to continue that symbolic relationship. Until the end she keeps on urging, appealing him to leave the town along with her, though temporarily she turns the same former arrogant Hollywood legend after hearing about her success in the comeback from her friend. She knows what fate is waiting for him, if he stays back in the town. She really wants to ward off the disaster for him. Thus the relation is initially based on mutual needs, but gradually turns into genuine companionship beyond the physical and material needs.

3) Chance Wayne and Aunt Nonnie

Aunt Nonni is Heavenly’s aunt. She has a silent approval and support to the relationship between Chance and Heavenly. She is a witness to their passionate love affair. Chance, too, tries to contact her only as he only trusts her.

When she doesn’t answer his phone calls, he reaches the residence of Finleys. He calls her from outside. But she is afraid to talk to him. So she flees inside the house. Boss and Tom keep on taunting for her soft corner for Chance. She admits of her visit to Royal Palms to warn him against the impending danger to his life. (Act II, Scene I)

When she suspects that Tom has some plans of violence against Chance, she tries to plead and persuade him against such horrid steps. She begs them to leave the matter to her to get Chance out of St. Cloud. She advocates his case telling Chance is not responsible for transmitting the infection to Heavenly according to Heavenly’s account. Both Tom and Boss are in no mood to entertain her. (P.58)

Again in Act II, Scene II; she takes the risk to pay a visit to Chance at Royal Palms. She wants to keep the visit a secret. So she takes him aside and begs him to leave St. Cloud immediately. She laments over the drastic change, she finds in Chance. She displays extreme affection and real concern for him.
He nostalgically recalls their trip together for the national drama competition, how they enjoyed it and how Chance spent the night together with Heavenly in an unoccupied train compartment by bribing the train-conductor with everything he possessed. (P.74)

He tries to tell her about his plans to bring himself and Heavenly together through the contacts of Princess. She conveys him the sad truth about Heavenly that she is not young now, faded etc. She cannot give him exact details. She promises him to write him if he leaves his address and leave, as she doesn’t want her to be discovered with Chance by the Finleys. (P.76)

4) Chance Wayne and Miss Lucy

Miss Lucy is Boss Finley’s mistress and she is no direct link with Chance. But as she turns hostile to Boss after being humiliated by him, she starts taking interest in Chance, as both have a common enemy i.e. Boss Finley.

At first she taunts and derides him in Act II, Scene II. At the same time admits to his extra-ordinary charm. ‘Y’ know, this boy Chance Wayne used to be so attractive I couldn’t stand it. -------- Every Sunday in summer I used to drive out to the municipal beach and watch him dive off the high tower. I’d take binoculars with me when he put on those free diving exhibitions. --------‘

She is curious to know about his female companion, as she knows that she is a famous old movie star.

She doesn’t want him to be Finley’s victim. So she cautions him of his stay in St.Cloud. She wants to save him. So she repeatedly offers him to drive him to the airport, so that, he would be able to a flight from there out to a safer place. As he adamant to stay on, she points out, ‘Think it over while I’m getting my wrap. You still got a friend in St.
Cloud. (P.85) It is clear that in spite of her derisive attitude towards him, she certainly has a soft corner for him.

**Boss Finley’s Relationships with others**

1) **Male-Female Relationship**

When Male- Female relationship with respect to Boss Finley is concerned, it is clear that he is neither serious and faithful to his wife in spite of their love marriage nor to his mistress, Miss Lucy. He turns hostile to her after learning about his public humiliation by her, from his son, Tom. According to Tom, she wrote in the ladies’ room mirror of Royal Palms, ‘Boss Finley is too old to cut the mustard.’ (P.60) He immediately goes to take revenge upon her, shows her a jewel- box, which she thinks is a gift for her and slams the box shut to crush her fingers between the lid. He tells her the purpose of his callousness to her.

2) **Boss Finley and Tom (son)**

This is a classical example of a political heavyweight and his spoilt brat, who exploits father’s clout for all practical purposes. They are like father and like son – both equally unscrupulous. Tom tries to prove his devotion to his father by organizing the ‘Youth for Tom Finley’ club, as a part of Boss Finley’s political party. He boasts of newspaper coverage he is getting recently and claims that it adds to his reputation. Boss Finley remains unimpressed, even contemptuous. He discloses the facts that the coverage was for all wrong reasons like drunk driving, stag parties for which he has to spend five thousand dollars to hush up the matter.

The verbal assaults continue with the reference to Tom’s miserable academic career, he is getting through the college with the help of fake examinations, answers provided beforehand, stuck in your fancy pockets.’ He terms his ‘Youth for Tom Finley’
clubs as ‘gangs of juvenile delinquents, wearing badges with my name and my photograph on them’ (P.59)

Tom is not at all demoralized by the verbal assaults. He promptly retorts- He refers to Boss’s mistress- Miss Lucy. Boss, at first, feigns ignorance. Tom then provides all the details and then asks- ‘And you ask who’s Miss Lucy? She don’t even talk good of you. She says you’re too old for a lover.’ Again Boss tries to deny it, over which Tom provides every detail to him.

3) Boss Finley- Heavenly (Daughter)

Boss Finley is proud of his beautiful daughter. When her looks remind him of his late wife, he temporarily gets overcome with tender feelings for her. But otherwise hight-handedness is obvious in his treatment to her. It has already been discussed with reference to ‘Chance-Heavenly’ relationship.

Heavenly is a rare asset for Bob Finley. He tries to exploit it for purely mercenary purpose. He doesn’t care at all for what she wants or likes. She is bitter about it. She refers to the fact that Boss had tried to marry her with a fifty year old rich man, as he wanted something in return. He continued with his attempts as per Heavenly’s account. (P. 63)

4) Boss Finley and others, lower in status to him- George Scudder, Chance Wayne and the Negro youth-

His attitude towards all of them is the same mercenary, high-handed and unscrupulous. George Scudder has treated Heavenly for her venereal disease. He himself has operated upon her for removal of her reproductive organs. He has been awarded with the post of ‘Chief-of-staff’ at the Finley Foundation Hospital. He knows all the details about Heavenly’s sex-life and her relations with Chance. He is quite aware of the fact that
Heavenly cannot bear children. But he is forced to agree to marry Heavenly, which is necessary to save the reputation and political career of his benefactor Boss Finley. (P.22)

In spite of all these things Boss Finley accuses him of letting out the secret about Heavenly’s operation, due to which he had to face odd questions publicly as is done by the Heckler.

In Act II, Scene II, Chance encounters his old friends. He comes to know from them about the emasculation of a Negro youth, who was picked at random and castrated for the cause of protection of white women and Boss was going to address the rally to clear his position on the same issue.

A general attitude of hostility is observed against good-looking, young men in almost every play by Williams. Chance analyses it as, ‘sex-envy is what that is and the revenge for sex-envy which is a widespread disease that I have run in to personally too often to doubt its existence or any manifestation.’ (P.81)

Chance and the unknown Negro youth fall prey to this sex-envy of the Southerners towards them. Boss Finley has no qualms about it whatsoever, which is clear from his address to the rally. (P.96)

The Heckler too experiences similar high-handed treatment by the gang of Tom, who throws him out of the hall and beat him systematically to suppress his antagonism to Boss’s snobbery and false claims.

After discussing the Human Relationships with respect to the selected plays by Williams some common points are observed, viz.

1) the strained relationship among the family members.
2) disintegration of family bonds and growing self-centredness in the modern materialistic world.
3) exploration of male-female relationship from various angles and at various levels.

4) Woes of affluence and the glamour world.

5) an extremely good looking, charming young man around 30 without stable, respectable life and women’s fascination for him for various reasons.

6) The hostile, revengeful attitude of Southern gentry towards the outsiders, men lower in status or race etc.

7) Attempt to measure everything in terms of money, material gains and trying to buy everything with the help of it.

It would be worthwhile to take in to account William’s own views regarding the art of characterization, which he expresses with respect to the portrayal of Brick’s character and behavior in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. Brick has resorted to alcoholism to escape from reality and admittance to the facts. In this attempt he is destroying himself willfully. Williams is endeavouring to catch Brick’s mental state in words. He reflects over the issue in the following words – “The bird that I hope to catch in the net of this play is not the solution of one man’s psychological problem. I am trying to catch the true quality of experience in a group of people, that cloudy, flickering evanescent- fiercely charged! interplay of live human beings in the thundercloud of a common crisis. Some mystery should be left in the revelation of character in the play, just as a great deal of mystery is always left in the revelation of character in life, even in one’s own character to himself. This does not absolve the playwright of his duty to observe and probe as clearly and deeply as he legitimately can: but it should steer him away from ‘pat’ conclusions, facile definitions which make a play just a play, not a snare for the truth of human experience.”(P.75-76)

He has also expressed his views regarding hate, anger and in general human follies and weaknesses, which he deals with through his plays. Violence and psychoanalysis are the inseparable elements of his plays. A certain psychoanalyst, well acquainted with his plays, once asked him, ‘why are you so full of hate, anger and envy?’ While clarifying the stand over the issue he reflects upon them; which is also echoed by some of his characters through his plays.
He admits the role of anger and envy but not of hate. He says, ‘I think that hate is a thing, a feeling, that can only exist where there is no understanding. A good physician never had it. They never hate their patients, no matter how hateful their patients seem to be, with their relentless, maniacal concentration on their own tortured egos.”

Exactly the same view has been expressed by Catherine in *Suddenly Last Summer* during her interview with Dr. Cukrowicz. The doctor’s attitude also remains exactly the same as has been opined by Williams.

About the portrayal of human weaknesses he admits, ‘In fact, I can’t expose a human weakness ----- unless I know it through having it myself. I have exposed a good many human weaknesses and brutalities and consequently I have them.’

He continues, ‘I don’t think that I am more conscious of mine than any one of you are of yours. Guilt is universal. I mean a strong sense of guilt. If there exists any area in which a man can rise above his moral condition, imposed upon him at birth, and long before birth, by the nature of his breed, then I think it is only willingness to know it, to face its existence in him, and I think that, at least below the conscious level, we all face it. Hence guilty feelings, and hence defiant aggressions, and hence the deep dark of despair that haunts our dreams, our creative work, and makes us distrust each other.’

Finally he refers to the Aristotelian theory of purgation, and says, ‘It may be that my cycle of violent plays have had a moral justification. I have always felt a release from the sense of meaninglessness and death when a work of tragic intention has seemed to me to have achieved that intention, even if only approximately, nearly.’

He concludes, ‘I would say that there is something much bigger in life and death than we have become aware of in our living and dying.’
(Written prior to the Broadway opening of *Sweet Bird of Youth* and published in the *New York Times* on Sunday, 8 March 1959.)

As per Bigsby’s observations, “apart from Williams’ personal neurosis and depression, in some ways he was also responding to a cultural neurosis, a sense of lost values and the collapse of high hopes, which he witnessed in America in the 1950s. And in *Sweet Bird of Youth* the two themes come together in the form of Boss Finley, a white racist politician. He is both the primary evidence of political corruption and himself subject to the corrosive power of time. He subordinates everything to his lust of power.

While *Sweet Bird of Youth* is Williams’ most direct engagement with, and denunciation of Southern racism, which he dramatizes in psycho-sexual terms, it is equally an assault on American materialism. Boss Finley denies his daughter’s relationship with Chance Wayne as he is not a good political or economic bargain.

There is a savage irony as Chance Wayne is destroyed on Easter Sunday and Boss Finley presents himself as a new god of his society- violent, vengeful, anti-human and apocalyptic.” (C. W E. Bigsby, *A Critical Introduction To Twentieth Century American Drama*. P.104-105)

**PLAYS BY T.WILLIAMS**

In *The Glass Menagerie* T.Williams portrays mainly three characters i.e. mother, son and daughter of Wingfield family. Mrs.Amanda Wingfield is a middle aged Southern lady, presently in a pathetic situation, struggling with life and attempting desperately to settle her grown up children respectably in life. However, her notions of her son- Tom’s future and his aspirations do not match and here lies the seed of conflict. She wants him to rise higher and higher in the social ladder in the material world. But he is a poet, an artist. He wants to escape from the confines of the material world and pursue his goal. Finally he does so, but fails to achieve satisfaction and peace of mind.
In her daughter- Laura’s case, she wants to escape from the material world of reality as she is unable to cope up with it. She prefers her own world of illusion where she feels comfortable with glass animals, talking to them and caring for them. She refuses to have further education or professional training, thus closing the doors for career opportunities and settling in life respectably. She does not have any boyfriend, so that, the other possibility of settling in life through marriage stands non-existent.

Towards the last part of the play, a fourth character enters, who is Tom’s friend and none other than Laura’s dream hero, Jim. She has secretly cherished a dream about him since her school days. Suddenly, a ray of hope appears in her life and thereby in the life of her mother- Amanda. However this proves futile as Jim is already engaged to be married. Now there is darkness forever in the lives of both Laura as well as Amanda.

Here all kinds of conflicts are observed. There is tension, strained relations between Amanda and Tom for various reasons, apart from generation gap. They appear at various levels.

Amanda and Tom are representatives of two altogether different cultures. Amanda is a former member of Southern- aristocratic, affluent, sophisticated, Victorian cultural group. Though she has been stripped of everything except the memories and her desperate efforts of pretension and appearance of a Southern lady. Her past comes alive every now and then where she has enjoyed a position of a most ‘sought after’ dame in the high fashionable society. She observes the manners and norms of that society even with the tight financial position.

Tom wants to live in the present and with the awareness of reality. He just refuses to conform with her expectations of culture and sophistication. He always sneers at her mention of ‘seventeen gentlemen on one evening’ (P.). He finds all those values and mannerisms redundant and ridiculous in the face of dire truth of the present.
There is another debate between the two related to civilized behavior and animal instinct (P.). This represents another level of conflict between the two, namely, civilized/sophisticated v/s barbaric behavior or restrains v/s free play of instincts.

On the third level they differ about their notions of success. It is success in terms of material gains for Amanda, whereas Tom is least interested in it. He wants to pursue his artistic urge as a creative artist, a poet.

At another level he is caught in one more dilemma. It is his responsibilities towards family including his mother and especially his dear sister- Laura and his (goals of self satisfaction) aspirations as a poet.

Thus the relation between Amanda and Tom represents the conflict between Mother and Son at various levels.

The relationship between Tom and Laura reveal hardly any signs of conflict or tension. On the contrary, his feelings towards Laura are too soft and tender. Though he loses his balance while interacting with Amanda, he seems to overcome it for Laura’s sake. He even attempts reconciliation with Amanda after one fierce exchange of words. On Laura’s insistence, he agrees to apologise to Amanda. (P.) He never wants to hurt Laura, intentionally or unintentionally. When he is enraged after Amanda’s accusations, he unwillingly disturbs some of the animals of Laura’s glass menagerie. His gesture after that is genuinely apologetic. He controls his rage and tries to collect and restore them at their usual place. He has controlled his passion of freedom only for the sake of Laura. His bond with his sister is very strong. She, too, seems to be equally worried about Tom. When on one night, he spends that night out, she keeps awake for him. She also cares for Amanda. He doesn’t want Amanda’s sleep disturbed due to the noise of the doorbell when Tom returned late at night.

As opposed to Amanda-Tom relationship, Amanda-Laura relationship develops in a different direction. Laura basically doesn’t have any antagonism with Amanda. On the
contrary she is more understanding and sympathetic towards Amanda’s frequent escapes in re-living her glorious past. When Tom mocks at her habit, Laura argues for Amanda. She says ‘Mother feels better with those memories’ (so let us allow her that relief!)

However, she fails to co-operate with Amanda’s efforts to settle her in life through self-dependence by completing a course in shorthand and typing or through marriage. Laura is a total failure while establishing social relations either on practical level or emotional level. Therefore she stops attending the typing classes and spends time wandering here and there. Not only this, She conceals the fact fro Amanda, until she discovers the truth by chance. It is true that she causes distress for Amanda, but it is not deliberate. It is her incapability in establishing social relationships outside family. Due to the same reason she doesn’t have any friends- either male or female. She prefers non-human or even non-living objects to human beings, other than family members. She causes the same tension and distress for Amanda when Tom has brought home his friend Jim O’Conner for dinner. Laura just refuses to come to the dinner-table. Whenever she is forced to established contacts outside family members, she develops psycho-somatic symptoms such as nausea and vomiting. She throws out at her typing class and almost faints during Jim’s visit.

However she regains her own self due to Jim’s friendly and reassuring attitude. She has secretly cherished the dream of this ‘randezevous’ with the hero of her dreams. It is like her dream come true. Thus it is the first and only occasion of her socio-emotional contact outside family members. She even tends to be normal. Though she is utterly disappointed after the revelation of truth regarding Jim’s ‘engaged’ status, she displays courage and dignity in offering the now normal unicorn as a sovenier. However after his departure Laura retreats in to her world of illusion, permanently.

Brother-Sister relationship takes another turn in case of Tom. He escapes from material world and explores his own world. But his emotional bonds with his sister are so strong that he fails to forget her. Everything related to glass and artificial light such as shop windows keep on reminding him of Laura which adds to his sense of guilt.
Jim—a confidante for all the three characters—
It seems at first that Jim is the only friend and confidante only for Tom. It is true that he
plays that role for Tom. He is the only person at the shoe factory who knows about Tom’s
secret aspiration and also of his faults. viz. Once Tom has received firing for writing a
poem on shoe-box, or his membership of merchant marine instead of payment of the
electricity bill (P.). He jokingly calls Tom ‘Shakespeare’.

Jim also plays similar role for Amanda. When there is reference to her excellent
hospitality, she escapes in to her past and unknowingly opens her heart to Jim regarding
her glorious past, her husband, her first meeting with him and her falling madly in love
with him etc. She forgets for a while that if Jim is ‘a gentleman caller’, he is meant for
Laura and not for her! She is highly pleased after the knowledge of Jim’s attempts and
preparation for rising higher and higher in the social ladder. She expresses her
dissatisfaction about Tom’s attitude in this regard.(P.)

Laura, though reluctant for an encounter with Jim at first, she has unconsciously
guessed right about Jim’s identity. Only she is unable to accept the possibility of her good
fortune. Soon afterwards, she too, becomes friendly with Jim, opens her secrets with him
related to her nervousness while entering the class, the opera in which Jim had played a
Lead role or her desire to obtain his autograph in her autograph book, her curiosity about
a girl whom Jim was supposed to have been engaged, so on and so forth. Thus Jim is the
only character where all the three members of Wingfield family unmask themselves.

Mr. Wingfield never takes part in the action. However his ‘larger-than-life’
photograph appears on the front wall. It is a sign of his lasting impact and unmistakable
presence in the lives of all the three members of Wingfield family.

It seems that Amanda never regrets her decision to marry the extra-ordinarily
charming young man much lower in status to her. She only refers to his charm and never
to his sheer irresponsible and selfish act of deserting the wife with two small children to
bring up on her own. She has taken the whole responsibility of her so to say rash or unthoughtful decision (and its aftereffects) upon herself.

Tom never refers to his father directly. But his glances towards the photograph certainly reveal his mind. He probably envies his father for getting rid of the family responsibilities. He also plans to follow the foot-steps of his father and finally he does the same for his own reasons. This shows the unmistakable influence of his father upon him.

Just like Tom, Laura too, never refers to her father. But Amanda expresses her wish that she should have at least inherited the charm of her father (that would have helped her in getting a husband.

Thus the father too leaves lasting impact not only upon the characters but also upon the readers even in his absence.

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE

Just as in The Glass Managerie here, too, are limited number of major characters. They are two sisters and brother-in-law. Younger sister Stella’s husband- Stanley Kowalski Blanche Dubois
EDWARD ALBEE’S PLAYS

Edward Albee was born in Washington, D. C. on 12\textsuperscript{th} March 1928. At the age of two weeks he was adopted by Reed Albee and Frances Albee. He was brought to New York. He was named after his adopted grandfather who was also a part-owner of the Keith-Albee Theatre Circuit. During his childhood he has to change his schools frequently as his parents changed the residences according to seasons. He felt like uprooted from school. He was sent to a boarding school. By this time his behavior had turned erratic due to which he was dismissed again and again from schools and from Trinity College afterwards.

Albee grew in extreme affluence. However, his family life was not happy. His mother was too young to his father, much larger in stature and a highly dominating woman. On the contrary, his father was submissive. He grew to dislike his parents. His relationship with his mother was highly strained as he failed to conform to her concept of an ideal child. In the person of his grandmother he found someone who loved him.

The origin of a number of themes of Albee’s plays is found in his upbringing. Surrounded with material goods but perhaps deprived of love, he turned into an educational rebel. Finally, he found himself in a sympathetic environment, where he began to write.

His first poem was published at the age of seventeen. He wrote his first famous play, \textit{The Zoo Story} at the age of thirty. It was produced first in Berlin in its German translation. He also produced his early plays himself. Soon he became a name to reckon with and gradually emerged as a leader of the American wing of the “theatre of absurd”. His \textit{Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?} made him a famous and controversial playwright as he was refused the Pulitzer Prize for it. Later on he won it twice for \textit{A Delicate Balance} and \textit{Seascape}. 

- 150 -
Though the title bears the name of Bessie Smith, she actually never takes part in the action. Her presence is made known only through the reference to her by Jack- a Negro well-wisher of hers.

Secondly, the title suggests, the focus to remain upon the relationship between Southern whites and Negroes. However equal or little more space has been occupied by the strained relationships between the whites themselves. To some extent Albee also deals with the relationship between the light skinned Negroes and dark skinned Negroes.

There is an unmistakable reference to the deteriorated financial position of the whites in the background, which results into frustration, moodiness, undue wickedness and verbal attacks targeted at each other. It is manifested through the behaviour of whites. All the characters are linked to the nurse, one way or the other. She pours out her frustration to each of them in a different manner for different reasons.

The Nurse and the Father

This relationship has been directly depicted through Scene ii of the play. Then again she refers to him in the last scene, somewhat proudly, while talking to the Orderly.
It is very clear right from the beginning that the relationship is not at all cordial. It is so tense that it seems to be on the verge of breaking point. One of the reasons for the tension is generation gap and likes and dislikes owing to it. It is also the matter of changing value systems, the Father still clinging to the old values and norms of behaviour of the Southern planters and the Nurse being practical or rather mercenary. She is extremely frustrated young woman and everyone coming in contact with her becomes a victim of her wrath and cruelty.

In Scene ii the Nurse is playing loud music inside. The Father gets annoyed by it for two reasons. Firstly, soft music suits the taste of sophisticated Southerners and secondly, he hates the music which has its roots among the Negroes. He can’t approve anything associated with them. His resentment for Negro music is a general hatred for Negroes by the Southerners. His words, “Turn it off! Goddam nigger records. I got a headache” (P.29) clearly reflect his feelings of hatred and fury against her as she doesn’t follow the norms laid down for Southerners. They are always cross with each other over every petty issue. He doesn’t allow her to take the car, though she is the only earning member in the family. He remains adamant over it, saying he needs the car.

She, too, then retaliates referring to his vain attempt to prove what he is not, his expensive cigars which he can’t afford, to prove himself equal to the mayor and his boasting of his friendship with the mayor. (P.32)To expose his myth of friendship with the mayor, she tauntingly suggests him to pay a visit to the hospital where the mayor has been admitted. She at first says in low tone, “You make me sick, Father” and when he dares her, she says it clearly. It flusters him so much so that he wants to thrash her with his cane. But he realizes that it can’t be done. (P.33-34)

She warns him against his visit to the Democratic Club. She calls his friends at the club ‘a bunch of loafers’. He doesn’t want to lose an opportunity to incite her. So he refers to her boy friend, the intern and asks why she doesn’t ask him to pick her up to work place. Then continues in a derisive tone,
**Father:** Or is he only interested in driving you back here at night. -----when it is plenty
dark for messing around in his car? Why don’t you bring him here and
let me have a look at him!

-------------------------

**Father:** I hear you; I hear you at night; I hear you giggling and carrying on out there in
his car; I hear you!

His attitude towards her and her boyfriend is a clear indication of his jealousy for
her youthfulness and frustration for his helpless pathetic condition. There are glimpses of
her concern for him in between their verbal battle. She puts off the music and promises to
bring his medicine. At first she is even apologetic for playing loud music while he has
headache. She reminds him of taking his pills; though he doesn’t respond positively.

In Scene viii, she speaks proudly about her historian father and his observations
related to Spanish war, which she believes are accurate. This shows that she is proud of
her father like any other normal girl. But the circumstances have driven her crazy to be
arrogant, rude to her father.

**Nurse:** I’ve told you my father is a ------ a historian, so he isn’t just anybody. His opinion
counts for something special. It *still* counts for something special.

**The Nurse and the Intern as a male-female relationship**

Though their relationship has been referred to almost right from the beginning,
their actual encounter takes place in Scene vi. Just before that, while talking to her friend,
the nurse from Mercy Hospital, she refers to him as ‘lover boy’. She is not serious about
the relationship. She only uses him as there is no other alternative except him. He is the
only young white man acceptable to her. She keeps on taunting, deriding him. She has no
plan whatsoever to accept a marriage proposal from him. He is just the means to draw her
frustrations upon and tolerate her whims.
Their attitudes, temperaments are also contrasting. She is completely materialistic and self-centred. She has no qualms in exploiting, blackmailing others either for her gains or just for the sake of her sadistic pleasure. He is romantic, a bit idealistic with nationalistic fervor. She just writes off all such thoughts and emotions. She makes fun of him when he speaks romantically about the landscape at sunset. He hints at his love and desire for her, she remains thoroughly practical, matter of factly.

**Intern:** Here I am-------- tangential, while all the while I would serve more nobly as a radiant, not outward from, but reversed, plunging straight to your lovely vortex.

**Nurse:** ------- You must keep your mind off my lovely vortex ------- you just remain ---- --- uh ----- tangential. (P.51)

He continues with her attempts to woo her. But she is unmoved, even callous.

**Intern:** Ma’am ------- the heart yearns, the body burns -------

**Nurse:** And I haven’t time for *interns.* (P.52)

When he refers directly to his love-sick state pining for the physical pleasure from her, she threatens him of his dressing down by her father for using such a lewd language to a young lady. This irritates him as he is quite aware of her real self. So he retorts sarcastically for her hypocrisy

**Intern:** My God! I forgot myself! A cloistered maiden in whose house trousers are never mentioned ------- in which flies, I am sure, are referred to only as winged bugs.

Here I thought I was talking to someone, ------- whose collection of anatomical jokes for all occasions. -------

Her response to his marriage proposal is equally matter-of-factly

**Nurse:** I am sick of this talk. My poor father may have some funny ideas; ---- but not me!
-------- Forty-six dollars a month! Boy, you can’t afford even to think about marriage. -------- Best you can afford is lust. That’s the best you can afford.

When he claims to love her, she points out that his talk of love is “nothing but a proposition for convenient and uncomplicated bedding down.” She mercilessly compares his economical status with that of the Negro orderly. He is so disgusted that he tells her to ask the nigger to marry her and also taunts her that her hypocrite father, too, will slowly learn to adjust his values for her happiness and security.

**Intern:** ------ Your family is a great *name*, but those thousand acres are *gone*, and the pillars of your house are blistered and flaking-------- Not that your family *ever had*, a thousand acres to go ------ or a house with pillars------

Though he speaks so bitterly, he has still not lost all hope. So he tries to point out the difference in the status of the orderly and himself. But she says, “interns like him are ‘a dime a dozen.”

Then she refers to his secret wish of going to the Front to serve the injured soldiers where his services are really required. She questions his loyalty to the nation, as the injured ones are the foreigners, not Americans. He tries to defend himself by saying that he feels stranded, stagnated where there is no scope for his talent and he wants to help the innocent civilians getting injured during the bombings etc. But she threatens him to disclose his plans to the mayor, so that he would be fired.

However, in spite of the bitter exchanges between the two, she is conveniently willing to let him drive her home at night, as if, she is obliging him. But she doesn’t forget to take a pick at his old car, calling it ‘a beat up Chevvy’. He, too, accepts the offer, though with protest for the limited liberty, she allows. He calls it “tantalizing preliminary love play ending in an infuriating and inconclusive wrestling match------ and finally, in my beat-up car, in front of your father’s beat-up house------ a kiss of searing
intensity ---- a hand in the right place ----- briefly----- and your hasty departure within. I am looking forward to this ritual----- as I always do.” She enjoys his despair. Both have no option except each other. Both continue with their assaults aimed at each other. She gets the opportunity to take the revenge upon him in the last scene when in spite of her advice he entertains the Negro who has brought the severely injured co-passenger to the hospital meant for whites, which is considered a serious crime against the society in the South. This time she is seriously spiteful and even hysteric. She says, “Where are you going to go now --- great white doctor? You are finished. You have had your last patient here ----- a nigger--- a dead nigger lady----.” He has to slap her to stop her hysteric laughing.

**The nurse and the Orderly**

This is a relationship of the White Nurse with a man of subordinate and inferior social standing. This relationship is highly complex and a sort of love-hate relationship. As a superior to him in the hospital, she treats him authoritatively. She exploits him by taking undue advantage of her superior position, superior race and her fairer sex. She orders him to bring a pack of cigarettes for her, but conveniently skips paying for it and enjoys his embarrassment. (P.47) She is contemptuous about him. She expresses her opinion about the discriminatory treatment received by ordinary patients and the mayor but advises him to accept the facts as they are.

She is surprised by his use of sophisticated language. However she doesn’t approve his attempts to prove his compatibility with Whites. She makes fun of his ambition of rising above his lot; advises him not to trust the promises of equal opportunity made by the politicians. (P.42)She also cautions him, rather threatens him for his intimacy with the liberal minded intern. When he turns defensive, she condemns him even for that. (P.44) She has no sympathy for riots and demonstrations by the blacks for their rights. He tries to point out that the police was too heartless to run the Lorries over
the Black demonstrators. She calls them arson. Then she gives him practical advice. “------ if you have any mind to keep this good job you’ve got ------ you just shut your ears-------- and keep that mouth closed tight, too.” She doesn’t forget to demoralize him by referring to his light skin, saying, “At night you keep right on putting that bleach on your hands and your neck and your face---------.” (P.45)

She further derides him by pointing out that he is a misfit among the protesting mob of Blacks, owing to his fair skin, neither is he counted among the lot of Whites. He is genuinely hurt by all those humiliating remarks. So he requests her, “I wish you wouldn’t make fun of me -------- I don’t give you any cause.” She says “sorry” but continues to mock at him. She asks him, “Is it true that you are now an inhabitant of no-man’s land, on one side shunned and disowned by your brethren, and on the other an object of contempt and derision to your betters?” (P.47)

As if, she is obliging him by asking him to fetch a pack of cigarettes, she orders him to bring it without paying for that. After he leaves, she gives a final blow with her remark, “You white niggers kill me” (P.47) which, in fact, reflects her own conflict, she prefers him to many other Whites, but can’t go ahead and think of marrying him. So she pours all her frustration upon him.

They again encounter in Scene viii. She is furious with him for making delay in bringing her cigarettes. She accuses him of eavesdropping and trying to listen to the quarrel between the intern and herself. She is disgusted by his non-committal attitude, his pretence of dumbness and defensive attitude. She plays a cruel game with him. She hints at her willingness to marry him. He dares not taking her seriously. But it is a sort of confession on her part.

**Nurse:** Don’t you know about economic realities? Haven’t you been appraised of the way things are? Our knights are gone forth into sunsets -------- the acres have diminished and the paint is flaking -------- He still pretends not to get her point. So she directly talks about her intension,
Nurse: You go up to Room 206, right now ------ and tell the mayor that when his butt is better we have a marrying job for him.

Orderly: (With some distaste) Really-------- you go much too far -------
Nurse: ------ Well, let me tell you something ------ I am sick of everything------ of the disparity between things as they are------ the thought of you makes me ---- itch— I am sick of him ------ I am tired of the truth------ and I am tired of lying about the truth ------ I am tired of my skin. -------- I WANT OUT! (P.70-71)

But when he tries to be sympathetic to her, she just refuses to accept it.

The Nurse and Jack

This is a relationship between White hypocrites and Blacks The nurse is a representative of all Whites who hate the black Negroes from the bottom of their hearts. Their attitude towards Negroes is cold, contemptuous, unkind, even cruel. This attitude becomes manifest through three white characters, the Father, the Nurse and Second Nurse from Mercy Hospital. The father hates the Negro music and because his daughter relishes that music, he hates her too. The Second Nurse remains undeterred though Jack brings an emergency case, because Jack and the patient, both are niggers. She has no effect of the fact that the case is that of a famous legendary singer, Bessie Smith. She remains adamant. She sternly tells him,

Second Nurse: I DON’T CARE WHO YOU GOT OUT THERE, NIGGER. YOU COOL YOUR HEELS!

The nurse is not at all in hurry to get the patient admitted and treated only because they are not whites. Similar attitude is displayed by the Nurse, too. She just refuses to entertain Jack and asks him to take the patient to a public hospital. (P.72) Similarly, the Orderly, too, instead of showing sympathy to Jack, supports the Nurse. But the white
intern defies her and goes out to see the condition of the injured woman. She threatens him of dire consequences if he goes to see the black woman.

Jack narrates how the accident took place and how Bessie got injured. She gathers from him that they were drinking while they were driving. So she remarks, “-------- serves you right ----- drinking on the road------.” (P.76) She systematically notes down the points, which contribute to breach of law, for example, Jack has fled from the accident spot, he has taken the woman to another hospital before coming to this hospital, etc. Without being aware that he is providing material to be framed, he continues to narrate his misery after the horror of the accident. She asks him his name, so that she may call the police to arrest him for fleeing away from the accident spot. (P.77)

In the meanwhile, the intern has realized that the woman was already dead when she was brought to the hospital. This adds to the heap of crimes committed by Jack. By Jack’s admission to the fact that he was aware of the fact that she was already dead; the Nurse has got enough matter to frame everyone and seek her revenge and satisfy her frustration and despair.

It is interesting to note that whereas the White Intern has a trace of humanity in him, which is clear that from his willingness to stake his job for defying norms, the Orderly seems to be with the White Nurse. He, too, asks Jack to go away and takes her side. He is reluctant to join the Intern to see the injured woman. He seems to have turned hostile to his own people.

It seems that Albee wants to highlight the fact that the Whites are equally hostile with each other as a result of their frustration with the situation they are trapped in. They are overzealous to divert that frustration towards the Negroes in whom they find soft, easily available target.

About Albee’s characterization, Anne Paolucci comments, “Albee has never succumbed to the temptation of using the stage for indignant social commentary. Even in
his early plays, he never actually betrays his characters by reducing them to expressions of *guilt* and *innocence*. His most negative portrayals are handled with sympathetic insight into the complex totality of human motivation. In his hands, his biting criticism of racial intolerance is transformed into a subtle analysis of human inefficiency. (Anne Paolucci, *From Tension to Tonic - Plays by Edward Albee* - Southern Illinois University Press, 1972. P.9)

Regarding the character of Nurse, Anne Paolucci observes,

i) If a dramatic conflict exists at all, it is not between Jack and Nurse but between Nurse and Orderly, the light-skinned Negro. However, Orderly is no match for Nurse’s sadistic mocking. (P.18-19)

ii) Nurse is the demonic voice of reality that gives shape to the confusion around her. (Paolucci, P.19)

She further states,” The violence is wholly inexplicable in terms of surface causes. With both men, Nurse brings on the confrontation and forces them to reveal themselves in their weaknesses. But what makes the most interesting character in the play is the fact that she too is a victim of that same predicament and is forced to take a stand, exposing her own weaknesses. (Paolucci, P.22)

Nurse is the embodiment of existential paradox. Her will is strong, but with every assertion she becomes more empty, more despairing. The last scene represents the climax of her insight into frustration, her fury towards Intern and Orderly is the final willful expression of impotence.” (Paolucci, P.24)
Albee has tried to reflect the family relationships within a typical American family through this short play. That is why he uses generic names for the characters instead of identifying them as specific persons. Here he portrays two types of relationships, namely, i) Relationship within two generations, ii) Marital Relationship.

i) Relationship within two generations -----

The two generations have been represented by Grandma and Mommy. They are mother- Daughter duo. It is a comment on the mercenary and callous attitude of young Americans towards the old generation. They show no sympathy, affection, understanding or gratitude towards their parents. They just dump them in to old-age homes to fend themselves. They are deprived of the solace of personal, affectionate care. It seems that the older generations, too, have accepted their fate with equanimity without grumbling.

When the play begins, Mommy and Daddy arrive on the spot on a beach to survey it. Mommy okays it as, “there is sand and the water beyond.” Daddy remains indifferent over the decision saying “she’s your mother, not mine.” She takes all the decisions; Daddy has just to follow them.
Both of them carry her to the beach. She is obviously reluctant which is clear from her resistance and her expressions of fear and confoundment. She is dumped into the sandbox on the beach, as if, she is being buried alive. They are set to wait for her end and then mourn her death dutifully. (P.11) Grandma is groaning with pain. But Mommy remains undeterred. She, on the contrary, tells Grandma “to be quiet and wait.” Grandma is angry. She throws sand at Mommy as a sign of protest.

As Grandma fails to communicate with Mommy and Daddy, she directly addresses the audience, puts her plea before them and tries to gain sympathy from them, for the unfeeling, callous treatment received from her own daughter. She tries to confide in the audience. She complains, “There is no respect around here!” She wants to bring to the notice of the world the ungratefulness of her daughter. She continues with her rambling,

**Grandma:** My husband died when I was thirty (indicates Mommy) and I had to raise that big cow over there all by myself, lonesome. (P.14)

She has probably sensed the significance of the presence of the young man, while she is counting her last moments. Still, she is ready even to talk to him. She takes another pick at her daughter and her husband by referring to them derogatorily.

**Grandma:** ------ and what’s next to her there ------ that’s she married Rich? I tell you---- money, money, money. (P.15)

Though she is bitter about her present treatment, she admits that she had been kept comfortably until then, after shifting her from her country house to the town.

Mommy is ready to bid goodbye to her mother. She is overcome with grief. Daddy tries to support her emotionally.
Daddy: I---------- I suppose you’ve got to be brave. (P.17)

Grandma gets irritated by that hypocrisy. She mocks at them. She sarcastically says,

“I’m fine! I’m all right! It hasn’t happened yet!”

As the night is over, they take it for granted that Grandma must be dead by this time. Getting rid of Grandma is considered as a job by Mommy. Her mercenary attitude is reflected in her words, “We must put away our tears, take off our mourning and face the future. It’s our duty.” Grandma, who is not dead, yet, mocks at them by mimicking the words. (P. 18) Mommy and Daddy take a last look at Grandma. Mommy is satisfied that everything took place smoothly. She takes the credit for her planning. Grandma seems to be happy during her last moment. Grandma again repeats their words mockingly.

Marital Relationship

Albee depicts that this typical relationship where the wife is utterly dominating and husband, completely submissive. Here Mommy takes all the decisions and Daddy has just to implement them obediently. He has no voice whatsoever. Even for talking to her, he asks her permission. After they have dumped Grandma into the sandbox, he asks for further instructions, “What do we do now?” (P.11) He actually feels restless by Grandma’s groans and tries to suggest that she is probably suffering, but has to keep quiet. Then he asks a seemingly silly question, “Shall we talk to each other?” Her reply is, “Well, you can talk, if you want to. If you think of anything to say ------- if you can think of anything new.” His meek answer is, “No ------- I suppose not.” (P. 12)

This conversation throws light on their relationship. His job is just to listen. Secondly, there is complete lack of any sort of meaningful communication between the
couple. Thirdly, from Grandma’s account, we come to know that Mommy’s interest in him doesn’t lie in his person, but his money. She did not marry ‘the man’ but his ‘money’. Grandma has expressed her disgust towards her attitude in very clear-cut terms.

Anne Paolucci comments upon the symbolism. “The symbolism grows in meaning even as we watch. The Sandbox is the grave, regression, dreams, heaven, escape, peace, even sexual fulfillment. The Young Man is the male body; beautiful, eternal youth, generosity, love, what is gone, what is to come, sympathy, understanding and compassion. Grandma is completely taken with him. He makes her forget her bitterness and irritability. She accepts his kiss gratefully and goes to sleep.” (Anne Paolucci, *From Tension to Tonic- Plays by Edward Albee* - Southern Illinois University Press, 1972. P.27)

She finds obvious criticism of American life, both in *The Sandbox* and *The American Dream* with the particular dramatic idiom and the types. She comments, “What is uniquely and most unmistakably American is the matriarchal complex which reduces the head of the family to unmanly impotence.” (Paolucci, P.28)

She relates the Mommy of *The American Dream* and her myth of a son to the same in *Who’s afraid of Virginia Woolf?* She observes, “Grandma’s account of how Mommy ‘mutilated’ the original baby, provides marvelluos insight into Mommy’s hypocritical denial of sex.

*The American Dream* becomes, in the later play, the Private Dream of a couple much more interesting and provoking than Mommy and Daddy.

The brutal description of the baby’s mutilation, in *The American Dream* is softened not only by metaphor- cliches, but also by transparent symbolism. The Young
Man is The American Dream come back- or, more precisely, Mommy’s Dream, but Mommy, for Albee represents destructive woman and so the Dream becomes universalized as a monstrous conceit. Mommy’s puritanical excesses, her disgust with sex and her irresistible propensity for lust are meant to account for the destruction of the baby and the inability of the Young Man, his twin, to feel any deep emotion.

*The Sandbox* may be considered a sequel to *The American Dream*. In the context of the characters of The American Dream, Anne Paolucci observes, “Pushed to extremes, the dissolution of characters takes on the appearance of *types*, on one hand and *symbols*, on the other- readymade *cliques* and enigmatic representations. The protagonists of *The Sandbox* and *The American Dream* point up the danger in Albee’s plays- but even in these ‘experimental’ pieces the crotchety old women, the submissive males, the frighteningly efficient females, have their own individual charm as dramatic characters.”

**Fam and Yam (1960)**

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There are only two characters in this very short play. Albee has used the acronyms to represent the two generations of playwrights within America. FAM represents the famous, popular, well established generation of elderly playwrights, whereas YAM represents the young, talented, newly emerging generation of American playwrights. As both are meeting each other first time, it may be considered as the relationship between *strangers*. As both belong to the same professional field, they also represent *two generations*, though they lack blood relation. It is not only confined to these two aspects, it also represents the relationship between a playwright and all other components of the theatre industry affecting the career of a playwright. Thus it is a
reflexive critique upon the playwright’s career. One more interesting point is the twist, the relationship which takes place during the course of their first ever encounter. Taking into account all the aspects of the relationship, it seems more appropriate to consider it as a relationship between two generations.

**Relationship between two generations (of playwrights)** –

The encounter begins on the background of a flattering letter received by Fam from Yam, accompanied with a request to see him personally. Fam is obviously pleased by the high praise, but a bit baffled as he doesn’t know the exact purpose of Yam’s visit.

When Yam arrives Fam is already in high spirits, full of feeling of self-importance. He is enjoying his Sherry in the same mood. Yam pumps air to his already blown-up ego, by referring to the aesthetic interior of his drawing room, the neighbourhood of distinguished personalities like Hollywood stars, his comparison with the famous names like Miller, Williams and Wilder etc. (P. 83-85)

Then he refers to his prolific writing career and refers to him as ‘pro’. From this point onwards, Yam begins to set his trap and Fam walks into it so easily without being aware of it, till it is too late. He refers to a critic’s deliberate ambiguity, “pro is synonymous with high-class hack.” (P.86) When Fam offers him a drink, Y skillfully expresses his resentment over drinking so early. (P.86)

Yam has to extend some valid reason for the visit. So he tells that he has to write an article on the theatre and he has come to seek Fam’s advice over it. (P.88)
After receiving all the flattery from Yam, Fam is obliged to at least acknowledge Fam’s new play, which has received wide recognition. So he reluctantly performs the duty, but deliberately pretends to forget its title.

**FAM:** ------ Oh, I’ve -------- I forgot to congratulate you on your -------- success ----- your success ------ your ----- uh --- off-Broadway play. (P.88)

Fam continues to feign ignorance about Yam’s play and admits that he has not yet watched the play. Actually he has sensed a threat from the playwrights like Yam.

**FAM:** The new generation’s knocking at the door. Gelber, Richardson, Kopit ----- Albee -------- you------ you youngsters are going to push us out of the way.--- (P.89)

Yam comes to the point and announces his intention of attacking all the related components directly. Fam likes the idea, but his stand is defensive. Yam calls all of them villains and announces the title of his article as “In Search of a Hero.” (P.90)

Fam gets scared by Yam’s stance, especially, with his statement, that he is going to make a list of everybody, where Fam, too, is concerned. Yam starts making his moves. He starts putting his views in Fam’s mouth. He doesn’t give opportunity to Fam to clarify his stand.

**YAM:** ------ You know these people------- you’ve been exposed to the stupidity ------ the Arrogance------ the opportunism-------.

---------------------------------------------------------------

**YAM:** ----- Here is the list of the villains. ------ The theatre owners------ the producers--- the backers ----- the theatre parties---- the unions ---- the critics----- the directors--
and the playwrights themselves------ . (P.92)

In his confused state of mind, which is a combination of self-complacency, pride, excitement, scare and sense of adventure etc., Fam goes on drinking and getting carried away by Yam’s design. He finds it odd that Yam persistently refuses the offer of drink, but not enough in his senses to realize the implication of the situation. Yam proceeds with his design. He takes the villains one by one systematically.

**YAM:** Now for the theatre owners------ I thought one might call them something like---- ignorant, greedy, hit-happy, real estate owners.

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**YAM:** The producers ------ How about: opportunistic, out-for-a-buck businessmen -----.

Now Fam’s initial reservation, defensive, non-committal stand has vanished. He fully enjoys the direct, strongly worded attack. He is exhilarated. He has started endorsing Yam’s views with full enthusiasm. Now Yam turns his guns on playwrights.

**YAM:** ------ most of playwrights are nothing better than businessmen themselves------- you know------- out for the loot------ just as cynically as anyone else-------

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**YAM:** ------ and that our directors are slick, sleight-of-hand artists------ talking all noble

And uncompromising *until* they get into rehearsal------

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**YAM:**------ and about the critics------ how they have set themselves up as sociological arbiters ------ misusing their function------

------ and tacking into the agencies ----- call them assembly lines------

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**YAM:** ------ and then the pin-heads----- oh, the theatre parties. (P.94)
Fam is so ecstatic by this time that he cannot contain his joy. He has heard everything actually spoken, whatever he wanted to say all these years. He has overthrown all the constraints. Moreover, the thought that the gun is on someone else’s shoulder, might be more comforting to him.

By this time Yam’s mission is over. He prepares to leave. Yam thanks Fam and leaves, leaving Fam in the same ecstatic mood. Yam calls Fam on telephone and thanks him once again, then adds “for the interview”.

At first, the words make no effect. But soon they penetrate Fam’s consciousness. He realizes that he has been tricked by YAM. In his horror he just repeats the words! “THE INTERVIEW!!! THE INTERVIEW !!!!”

Thus Albee has exposed the real faces of all the components associated with Theatre Industry, including the playwrights, where the senior playwrights are hostile and jealous towards the upcoming talent. That is why they refuse to take note of their remarkable achievements.

Richard Amacher cautions about this short play, “not to dismiss it as a mere bagatelle, a trifle. For it poses a serious, ringing challenge to the dull establishment we have accustomed ourselves to calling ‘the American Theatre’. That Inge, Miller, Williams and Wilder did not bring lawsuits against Albee may indicate the recognition of the truth of his charge. Or it would mean that they believed the shoe did not fit them.” (Richard Amacher, Edward Albee.1982, Revised Edition, Auburn University. P.16)

According to Amacher, Albee in his interviews held the critic-led, sheep-like audience of the American newspaper and magazine world largely responsible for the situation outlined in Fam and Yam. In Albee’s words “We hear so often of the
responsibility of the artist to the audience, but far too little is ever said about the responsibility of an audience- of society, if you will- to the people who fashion its entertainments.” Albee calls it, “a round-about of misunderstanding between the critic and the audience, in which the critic believes it to be his responsibility, his function, to reflect what he considers to be the taste of his readers-and the reader-the audience has come to the no less lamentable conclusion that a play review he reads, does, indeed, reflect his taste.” He continues, “It would be laughable game of blind man’s bluff, if the implications were not so melancholy ---- if the damage done to the theatre as an artform as well as an entertainment medium were not so cruel. Because the critic is such a powerful force, ‘the audience tends to take critic on face value’.” etc.

All this outburst has the background of his strong differences with the critic, Walter Kerr over determining the excellence of a play on grounds of ‘its immediate mass appeal.’ (Amacher, P.17)

WHO’S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF? (1962)

George (46)-------- wife------------------ Martha (52)
(A professor of History) (A daughter of the President of the college)

Honey (26) -------husband------------------- Nick (30)
(A daughter of a priest) (A professor of Biology in the same college)

This play deals mainly with male- female relationship. This relationship occurs at two levels – 1) Marital relationship and 2) Extra-marital relationship. In addition to that there is also a relationship between men working in the same field, which is that of competition, rivalry or even hostility. There is a probability of another angle of father-fixation or ‘Electra-complex’ which seems to exist between Martha and her father. However the main focus remains upon male-female relationship.
Male-Female Relationship

There are two couples; the men from both the couples belong to the same field of teaching in a college. The difference is, George is quite senior to Nick, who has recently joined the University in Biology Department. He is around thirty. His wife, Honey, is twenty-six. Another feature of George-Martha couple is, George is six years younger to Martha. Martha’s father has been the president of the college, whereas George is not successful even at attaining the position of the Head of History department. Martha has expected him to follow the footsteps of her father, but he is a complete failure, according to her. Martha is ambitious, flamboyant, eccentric and moody. On the contrary, George doesn’t want to enter the rat race. Moreover, he hates corruption of all sorts. Therefore, he prefers not to vie for either the headship or the subsequent Presidentship. Martha is utterly dissatisfied by his attitude. Obviously, the marital relationship is utterly strained.

The younger cute couple of Nick and Honey seems to be normal. Nick poses a complete contrast with the personality of George. He seems attractive, dashing, full of promise and desire to rise higher and higher. On this background the two couples spend a few hours of a late Saturday night together during which the relationships between the two couples and the relationships between the four as male-female relationships are revealed through the drama. These relationships should be considered as four different combinations amongst them, a) Martha- George b) Martha – Nick c) Nick-Honey and d) George- Honey.

a) Martha – George

They make the elderly couple, married since long. There are obvious signs of strained relationship between them. They do not try to conceal the discord between them is quite unusual. There is nothing usual or normal throughout the play. The couple has
just returned from the party at Martha’s Daddy, after midnight. After returning she asks for a drink and announces that she’s invited some guests because her “Daddy has asked her to be nice with the newly arrived couple at the campus.” (P.14) George is surprised by that crazy behavior. But soon he realizes the reason of urgency. She doesn’t remember the names, but admits his being blond, good-looking with an unattractive wife. She remarks, “-------- and his wife’s a mousy little type, without any hips, or anything.” Obviously, she finds an easy target in him for lust. (P.14) She doesn’t hesitate to tease him over his dissent, or doesn’t try to conceal her disgust towards him.

Both point out each other’s ageing, she, with the mention of his baldness and paunch, and he, by pointing out that still he will always remain younger to her. The verbal battles and battle of wits go on throughout the play. They actually try to hurt and bleed each other. They would go to any extent to achieve their aim. Before the guests arrive, he warns her to behave herself in the presence of the guests.

George: ----- and try to keep your clothes on, too. There aren’t many more sickening
      sights than you with a couple of drinks in you and your skirt up over your head,
      you know -------

They keep on shouting at each other, even when the guests are at the door. Before George opens the door, he warns Martha not to mention the kid. But she remains defiant and adamant as usual. (P.19) The guests feel awkward by the behavior of the host. Nick tries to behave normally. But George makes fun of his efforts. As a formality Nick and Honey praise Martha’s Daddy. Martha is elated. She proudly says, “He’s quite a guy, isn’t he?” Over that George’s remark: “And you’d better believe it”, (P.29) shows how much he detests both, father and daughter and the false praise for her father, just because he is the President of the University. George’s next remark endorses it.
George: “-------- there are easier things than being married to the daughter of the
    president of the University, if you happen to be teaching at the university.”

Martha: Some men would give their right arm for the chance.

George: Alas, Martha, in reality it works out that the sacrifice is usually of a somewhat
    more private portion of the anatomy. (P.24)

After some time Martha has taken Honey inside to bathroom. When Honey
returns, she tells about Martha changing her dress. George knows the intention. She
wants to look more attractive, sexy for the sake of Nick. He gives a direct hint about it to
Nick. He sarcastically remarks,

George: -------- and Martha is not changing for me.------- You are being accorded an
    honour, and you must not forget that Martha is the daughter of our beloved
    boss. (P.34)

After Martha re-enters, she continues with her game of deliberately insulting
George and praising Nick. She humiliates him; by mentioning his failures, and praising
Nick’s achievements in every field, including his well-kept firm body. She ridicules
George by referring to the fiasco, when he was forced to have a boxing match with her Daddy.

In spite of George’s warning about referring to their kid, Martha has mentioned it
to Honey when the two had retreated inside for a while. Now Honey is curious to know
about it. George has taken note of the deliberate defiance. Now he retaliates by making
certain provoking remarks about their kid. Martha, too, is ready for a counterattack. She
taunts him with the meanest way,
**Martha:** George’s biggest problem --------- about our son ------- he’s not completely sure it’s his own kid. (P.49)

George is completely outwitted for the time being. But he readies himself for revenge. Martha is not aware of that. Martha continues to argue vehemently over the colour of the eyes of their son. She wants them ‘green’ as it is the colour of hers and her father’s eyes. George takes this opportunity to voice his anger against Martha’s dominating father. He retorts,

**George:** ------- Your father has tiny red eyes------ like a white mouse. In fact he *is* a white mouse. (P.51)

Martha calls him coward as he criticizes her father in his absence. She accuses him of hatred towards her father. She thinks that he should blame his own inadequacies. She continues with her sneering at him, calls him S.O.B. (Son of a bitch)

She refers to the extra-ordinary attachment between her and her father and hints at her desire to stay close to him. So she has decided to marry someone from the college, one who could take her father’s position afterwards. It is her own decision. She tells that very few unmarried men were around and she liked George, who looked cute then. She was crazy for him. Both become nostalgic with the sweet, romantic memories for a while. (P.54-55) Soon George senses what turn the narration is going to take. He tries to stop her. She defiantly continues and tells Nick that George didn’t have the stuff essential to succeed like her Daddy.

**Martha:** (viciously triumphant)—George didn’t have much----- push------ he wasn’t
particularly aggressive. In fact he was sort of a FLOP. A great ---- big--- fat----- FLOP! (P.56)

Her words make George so furious that he breaks a liquor bottle and is ready to attack Martha if she continues. But she doesn’t stop. She taunts him for his frugal income, his failure in socializing, fund raising, causing disappointment to her daddy. She ends her account with, “So, here I am, stuck with this flop ---- this BOG in the History Department --- somebody without the guts to make anybody proud of him.”(P.57)

Another round of invectives takes place between them when Martha returns from inside. Both use invectives like ‘Monster, Cochon (pig), Bete (brute), Canaille (scoundrel), Putain (whore)’ for each other in front of the guests. (P.65) George tries to tell him that he has tried everything to satisfy her and keep peace between them, but in vain. She again refers to another instance to ridicule George further. It is his attempt to write a novel, which her daddy did not approve. She hints that the protagonist in the novel written by George was none other than himself who had accidentally killed his parents. (P.82-84) Then she vehemently calls him a murderer. George has failed to stop her. He takes everything as a game and asks her what should be the next game, after the game of ‘Humiliate the Host’ is over. Then he suggests the next game to be ‘Hump the Hostess’ as he has rightly guessed Martha’s intention to seduce Nick who is young and charming.

Martha doesn’t hesitate to make advances at Nick. She calls him a lover, asks him for a kiss. Nick, too, is not unwilling, but he hesitates to go ahead while George is around. Martha keeps on tempting him for having sex with her. When George returns, he finds both of them too intimate with each other. He returns unnoticed and then comes back singing to alert them. Martha tidies her dress before he enters. He makes deliberate remarks over the radiant looks. He knows that she wants to have some privacy with Nick.
So George deliberately announces his intention of spending some time with reading a book. Martha is annoyed by George’s cool attitude. She wants to provoke and tease him. So she makes her attacks more direct as he refuses to take hint.

**Martha:** ----- I am entertaining one of the guests. I’m necking with one of the guests.

**George:** Oh, that’s nice. Which one?

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**George:**------- Why don’t you go back to your necking and stop bothering me? I want to read.

**Martha:** Why, you miserable ------- I will show you.

**George:** (with great loathing) No ------- show him, Martha ------- he hasn’t seen it. (Turn to Nick) You haven’t seen it yet, have you? (P.102-103)

This type of relationship within a respectable couple is queerest. It’s the limit of perversity. Martha doesn’t stop with her threats. She asks Nick to kiss her in front of George. Then she takes him to her bedroom. George pretends to remain unperturbed. But says in disgust -----

**George:** (sadly) --------- if you want the boy that much ---- have him---- but do it honestly, will you?

After Martha leaves, he pours out his fury and frustration by hurling the book away at the chimes. As Honey returns due to the sound of the chimes and mentions how the ringing of the bells has disturbed her sleep and frightened her, George gets a novel idea of settling scores with Martha.
George: -------- somebody rang -------- I’VE GOT IT! -------- Somebody with the message 

-------- and the message was ---- our son----- OUR SON! ---- and the message was 

-------- our ----son---- is ---- DEAD! (P.107)

He keeps on playing with the idea and plans its execution carefully. Their son is imaginary. That used to be the part of their private game, when they would imagine having a son and talking about the fantasy son. Right before the entry of the guests George has warned her not to mention their kid to the guests. But Martha has broken the rule defiantly. Here is an opportunity for George to destroy the illusion and an instrument of their imaginary pleasure once and for all, thus depriving Martha of that joy as well as her weapon to torture him, taunt him.

When Martha, in Act III, returns in an excited and triumphant mood, she finds George nowhere. It’s clear from the conversation between her and Nick, that the latter has failed to satisfy her, due to his drinking since that evening. She accepts his explanation, still calls him a flop. Nick gets irritated by her remarks. But Martha doesn’t bother at all. Strangely enough, Martha mentions, “There is only one man in my life who has ever ------ made me happy.” And that is none other than George. At this point, she is in a mood of repentance and confession. In a sort of soliloquy she says,

Martha:------- George who is good to me, and whom I revile; who understands me, and whom I push off; who can make me laugh, and I choke it back in my throat; who can hold me, at night, so that it’s warm, and whom I will bite so there’s blood; who keeps learning the games we play as quickly as I can change the rules; who can make me happy, and I do not wish to be happy, yes I wish to be happy.

George and Martha: sad, sad, sad.

-------- who has made the hideous, the hurting, the insulting mistake of loving me and
must be punished for it.

-------- who tolerates, which is intolerable; who is kind, which is cruel; who understands
which is beyond comprehension.

-------- some night ---- some stupid, liquor-ridden night--- I will go too far---- and I’ll
either break the man’s back----- or push him off for good------ which is what I
deserve. (P.112-113)

She is disgusted with Nick’s failure to give her real pleasure and disgusted with
herself. So she rebukes and insults Nick. Unfortunately George is not there to witness that
sudden dramatic change in her attitude and he goes ahead with his plan of shattering her
world of illusion permanently. He enters from outside with flowers and mimicking the
Italian flower vendor’s reciting the words meaning ‘flowers for the dead’, which is fitting
for his plan. In George’s company, Martha turns more callous with Nick and exposes his
failure. They both are jeering at Nick. When George says “Screw, baby” to Nick, Martha
remarks, “Him can’t. Him too fulla booze.”

Thus the couple, which had been aiming at each other’s throats until that moment,
suddenly joins hands against the guest. Of course, their childish, futile debates over trivial
issues go on. George continues to throw the flowers- the snapdragons at both, Martha and
Nick, to irritate them. Nick asks Martha if she wants him to take any action against
George. She coldly asks him to keep away from their internal matters. George, too, joins
in deriding Nick. (P.120)

George now insists on playing another game, which he calls, ‘bringing up baby.’
Martha and Nick, both have to accept it. Then he insists on bringing the fourth member,
Honey, to participate in the game and teasingly asks Nick to bring his ‘wifelet’ from the
bathroom, where she is resting. Martha has sensed a mischief. So she is reluctant to take
part in the game. He assures her it to be the last game. However before they begin he warns her,

**George:** ------- Martha, you have had------- quite a night for yourself, and you can’t just cut it off whenever you’ve got enough blood in your mouth. ------- I am going to have at you, and its going to make your performance tonight look like an Easter pageant. -------

Martha is actually scared, but pulls herself together and prepares for the last ‘battle’. Nick returns with Honey who is under the influence of brandy. She is making herself a butt of ridicule by her childish behavior.

George slowly turns towards the topic of their son. She begs him not to talk about him. He points out that it is not possible on the eve of his twenty-first birthday. He goes ahead, hinting at Martha’s abnormal behavior with a grown-up son. Nick notices Martha’s restlessness during George’s narration. He suggests George to stop if Martha is unwilling to listen to it. George points out that Nick cannot set the rules for the game. So he should not interfere. Then he makes Martha produce her version of bringing up their son. She obediently begins. Whenever he finds necessary, he adds to it or corrects her. She continues, as if, in a trance. Now George begins inserting the quotes from Bible in Latin. They are the prayers for the departed soul.

Suddenly the tone of emotion- filled touching account takes a twist and she starts blaming George for dragging down the perfect child to his own imperfect level. George doesn’t protest, instead, he shows curiosity towards it. Again the blame game begins with the basest tricks.

As Honey thinks that she knows the horrible truth before it is disclosed to Martha, the whole ordeal becomes unbearable for her. She shouts at them to stop it, stop the
mockery of the dead son. George hints at the surprise, which is still to come. Then he refers to some sad news for Martha. Then slowly unravels it, piece by piece, deliberately referring to her indulgence in incest, achieving extreme dramatic effect upon her.

**George:** Well, ------ while the----- two of you were out of the room ----- for a while ----- well, Missey (Honey) and I were sittin’ here having a little talk----- and the door-bell rang.

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**George:** ------ and ------ it was some little boy about seventy.

-----------------------------------------

**George:** ------ and he had a telegram

He explains that it was a special kind of telegram, which should be delivered personally, when Martha is suspicious about the personal delivery, instead of calling on telephone. Honey interrupts and tries to stop him from breaking the horribly sad news. But he coolly continues.

**George:** I’m afraid our boy isn’t coming home for his birthday.

Again after a brief debate over its probability,

**George:** Martha ------ (Long pause) ---- our son is ------ dead.

He was ------ killed ----- late in the afternoon ------ on a country road, with a learner’s permit in his pocket---------

Martha interrupts with a furious cry “YOU----- CAN’T ----- DO----- THAT!” By Martha’s strange words of protest, “I will not let you decide these things!” etc. and her violent reaction over George’s account and George’s strange attitude towards the whole episode makes Nick suspect some mischief. Slowly the truth dawns upon him that they
never had a child whatsoever. Especially George’s remark over Martha’s hysteric reaction, “You know the rules, Martha.” Nick realizes the truth. Then George points out that she had broken the rules by mentioning the fantasy child to someone else other than the two and that is why he had to bring an end to it once and for all.

Martha is completely outwitted, defeated, left a pathetic figure. Once the game is over, George is ready to support and comfort Martha in her miserable condition. When Nick gathers courage to ask him, “You couldn’t have ------ any?” George’s response is remarkable, “We couldn’t.” More remarkable is Martha’s endorsement of it without putting blame on him. The last conversation between them while George is leading her to the bedroom, is another evidence of their devotion to each other. She accepts his decision to get rid of the illusion about their child. She relies upon his wisdom and allows him to take the decision of curing her from the whim of her fantasy. She is confused, as if, she is deprived of her life support – her fantasy child. When George repeats the lines softly “Who’s afraid of Virginia Woolf?”, she confesses that she is afraid of living life without illusion.

Thus a very unusual even abnormal, unimaginable kind of relationship is depicted by Albee in this play. The sophisticated reader never expects vulgarity, verbal and physical fights, open incest and talking openly about the all pervading adulterous behavior among the academics. But Albee has exposed the stark realities, the dark side of society. While un-masking the face of society, Albee also unmasks the marital relationship between George and Martha. Until the end, the reader gathers an impression of total discord between the couple. But it is proved a totally distorted impression. Undisputedly, the couple is devoted to each other, which is very clear in the last part. But Martha’s version is that of ‘love-hate’ relationship, though at the bottom of her heart, she knows there is place for none other but George, in her heart.
2) Nick-Honey Relationship

This is another marital relationship which has been juxtaposed to highlight and contrast the relationship between the elderly couple. Seemingly, the younger couple is normal or rather ideal. Both seem to be in love with each other, caring and proud of each other. But slowly and gradually, this relationship, too, is unmasked sometimes by Nick’s confession as a response to George’s ‘blind-shot’ questions and remarks and sometimes by Honey’s abnormal and crazy behavior.

Right in the beginning, Martha has rightly guessed that the couple lacks the sexual attraction between them, which is clear by her remark about Honey, “------ and his wife’s a mousy little type, without any hips or anything.” Probably this fact emboldens her in her attempts to catch Nick in her net by using her sex-appeal. When George and Nick are left alone, George mentions Honey’s slim hips and suddenly asks, if they have any kids.

Honey has talked about Nick’s extra-ordinary achievements in almost every field which is a clear sign of her pride to have such a partner. Martha, after returning, goes on passing flattering remarks about all his plus points and hints at her desire for him. (P.34-38)

Honey is not actually capable of having a lot of drinks. But she goes on, though it makes her sick and claims that she doesn’t drink much. Again Honey has to retire to bathroom, as the brandy has made her sick. Again the topic of their kids comes up. Here Nick unveils the secret, in what circumstances they got married! He calls it a ‘hysterical pregnancy.’ Honey thinks, she is pregnant which is why they get married hastily. Nick describes it as, “She blew up and then she went down.” (P.60)
The account reveals two things, one, their marriage was the need of the circumstances and two, they don’t have any kids since then. This time Honey is unable to come out. George and Nick continue with the topic of Nick’s marriage. George has guessed correctly that the real motive behind the marriage was Honey’s money, though Nick talks about their friendship since their childhood and their games related to curiosity about the ‘other’ sex. Here he confesses,

**Nick:** I wouldn’t say there was any ------- particular *passion* between us, even at the beginning ----- of our marriage, I mean. (P.67)

Then he reveals how his father-in-law, who was associated with church and had the church money under his control, died a rich man. He hints at the embezzlement of church money and getting the insurance amount by arranging for the burning down of churches and fraud by other means, too. Thus the ‘money motive’ behind this marriage is exposed and obviously, the variety of relationship. (P.68-69)

Soon he announces his plan of establishing intimate relations with the wives of the key persons who always welcome the young men and rise up the ladder. He also hints at his first target being Martha – the President’s daughter. (P.71) It is very clear that he doesn’t intend to remain loyal to his wife.

Again, after recovering from her sick feeling, Honey wants to have some more brandy, in spite of the general advice against it. She is almost drunk now. Her behavior turns more and more childish. She enjoys the verbal and physical battles between George and Martha. She keeps on repeating the words, which sound funny to her, including George’s words, “Hump the Hostess!” Nick gets irritated by her behavior and asks her to “shut up”, upon which she gets angry with him like a kid.
Even when George is narrating the story during his new game, ‘Get the Guests’ which is, in fact, the story of Nick, Honey and her father, she shows a childlike interest in it with her remarks, “the story sounds familiar”. Only towards the end, she senses something unpleasant about the story. (P. 68-89) Then she blames Nick for revealing the bitter secret related to their marriage. This is breach of trust. Again she starts feeling sick. Nick fears that their marriage is spoiled. She accuses George of being cruel and vicious, as George has exposed the hypocrisy. (P.90) Nick leaves to look after his wife, to the bathroom.

Nick leaves Honey in the bathroom, lying on the floor which seems to be her usual practice. (P.96) Now Martha gets Nick alone. Martha begins her game with Nick, calling him ‘lover’, asking for a kiss etc. Nick is not unwilling. He is only scared of George’s untimely return. But George gives them full freedom, deliberately. Nick goes inside with Martha on her invitation. He has no qualms about deceiving Honey. (P.97-104)

In the absence of the two, Honey returns, partly conscious of herself, still weak and staggering. She is scared. She imagines someone to be removing the covers while she had been lying on the bathroom floor. It is obvious that she is scared of sexual intercourse which would lead to pregnancy and the labour pains. She blabbers – “I DON’T want any ---- go ‘way ----- I don’t want any children. I’m afraid. I don’t want to be hurt ------ please!” (P.105) This gives George insight into the childlessness of the couple. He also realizes the secret behind the sudden “blowing up and going down” of her belly. He sneeringly asks her, “How do you make your secret little murders stud-boy doesn’t know about, pills? Or what? Apply jelly? Will power?” (P.106)

This has completely destroyed the myth of ‘happily married couple.’ Honey’s peeling the labels from the brandy bottles is highly significant and George’s remark on it, is extremely poignant which hints at cruelty and morbidity involved in the act. Only
towards the end, while Martha presents the moving account of the growing years of their son, Honey suddenly develops a strong desire for having a child of their own. We don’t know if the desire would ever be materialized.

3) Martha- Nick Relationship

This is an extra-marital type of relationship which is not a long-lasting attraction, but just a whim of that moment. Another purpose behind this relationship for Martha is, to provoke and hurt George. For Nick, it is a stepping-stone to rise up the ladder of success. However, for both, their motives are not attained.

4) George-Honey Relationship

There is no sexual angle in this relationship. George’s role for both the members of the younger couple is like a priest in whom they could confide and confess about the unpleasant secrets, which they won’t reveal otherwise in normal circumstances. Of course, this confession is not planned in either case. It just happens.

Another angle of this relationship is, Honey becomes the inspiration and a confidante to George’s plan of the full and the final attack on Martha, when George hurls the book in his hand with disgust that hits upon the chimes. The noise of chimes frightens and wakes up Honey from her half-asleep, half-conscious state and she comes out of the bathroom, referring to the noise as ringing of the doorbell. George gets a clue from it and plans his next attack. Here he was going to use the ring of doorbell for a messenger from a telephone company, who according to his plan, has brought a telegram conveying the sad news of their son’s accidental death. George breaks the news to Honey and takes her into confidence. He convinces her that he himself would disclose the truth to Martha and until then she should pretend not to remember anything about it. She agrees and performs
her role exactly as expected. The only thing is, she has taken it at its face value. She doesn’t suspect any game-plan behind it. So she really passes through the horrifying experience of bringing up a perfect child, the end of which she already knows. She also acts as a witness to George’s story. However, there is no attraction or empathy between the two. Occasionally, it is observed that Honey takes George’s side during the verbal battle between the two and irritates Martha.

5) Martha and her Father

Martha’s father never directly appears in the action of the play. But frequent references indicate that Martha is too proud of her father. She constantly compares George’s failures with Daddy’s achievements, his qualities and his position. Even while describing their son’s looks, she insists on green colour of his eyes as both of them, Martha and Daddy, have green eyes. Martha, in Act I, talks about her relationship with him, “Mommy died early, see, and I sort of grew up with Daddy. ------ I admired that guy! I worshipped him------ I absolutely worshiped him. I still do. And he was pretty fond of me too, ------ you know? We had a real ------ rapport going --------- a real rapport.”(P.52)

6) George-Nick Relationship

This relationship begins as a host-guest relationship. Slowly, Nick senses the tension and the hatred within the couple and also Martha’s interest in him. He is ready to take advantage of the situation as an essential strategy to succeed in his career. He starts deriding George to appease Martha. A sort of hostility is developed between the two.

Ironically, he unconsciously reveals the hidden facts related to his marriage. Not only this, he also unravels the fraudulent ways of his father-in-law and confesses one of
his motives in accepting the match with Honey, was her father’s money. He shares the pleasure of criticizing and making fun of their respective fathers-in-law. He joins hands with Martha in deriding, humiliating George to the extent of having sex with Martha in George’s presence and George being fully aware of it. Soon the tables are turned and now it is George’s turn to insult Nick. Thus this relationship is a mixed kind of relationship.

According to Anne Paolucci, “Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? is the first juxtaposition and integration of realism and abstract symbolism. She finds Albee’s experimentation in allegory, metaphorical cliches, grotesque parody, hysterical humour, brilliant wit, literary allusion, religious undercurrents, Freudian reversals and irony to appear as an organic whole in a mature and completely satisfying dramatic work.”

She continues with the comparison between Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? and the two of Albee’s earlier plays, The Sandbox and The American Dream. She observes, “In Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? the existential dilemma is dramatized with full sympathy in its most painful human immediacy. The weak are redeemed in their helplessness, and the vicious are forgiven in their tortured self-awareness. The domineering figure of Woman is no longer one-sided aberration of The Sandbox and The American Dream; it is a haunting portrait of agonized loyalty and destructive love. The submissive Male is raised to the point of tragic heroism in his understanding of the woman who would kill the things she loves.” (Anne Paolucci, From Tension to Tonic – Plays by Edward Albee. Southern Illinois University Press, 1972. P.46)

About Albee’s handling of the love and sex in marital relationship, she comments, “Albee plays on the theme a number of ways, one of which is the introduction of a kind of Shakespearean sub-plot, in the story of the second couple. Honey and Nick have some kind of sex together, but little love and no children. Her fear of pregnancy is also a fear of sex, basically. Honey’s predicament is characteristic of Albee’s handling of complicated human motivation. He neither blames nor prescribes a moral ‘cure’.” (Paolucci, P.48)
She adds, “Honey, like Martha, is childless; but the parallel is propped up by contrast. Martha wanted children and hasn’t any, Honey doesn’t want them and manages to keep from having them. The two stories move towards the same psychological vacuum. The hysterical pregnancy and the fictional son are conceived in different ways, but they are essentially the same kind of birth. Both are the result of impotence, or rather, a willful assertion which proves abortive.” (Paolucci, P.49)

She continues, “Frustration is the dramatic impulse of the play. The invitation to Nick and Honey is a frenzied attempt at oblivion through a kind of saturnalia; the verbal skirmishes are frustrated attempts at communication; the history of the two couples is the story of frustrated love, the accusations are frustrated attempts at understanding. A frustrated prayer celebrates the end of the nightmare.” (Paolucci, P.54)

A DELICATE BALANCE (1960)

Agnes ------ Husband --------- Tobias ------ Friend -------- Harry

| | | |

| -------------------------------------- |

sister daughter

Claire Julia (36)

As a norm, the characters, the situations, the problems are unusual in almost all the plays by Albee. He tries to explore and depict in depth, the strained human relationships, especially within family. This play, too, is not an exception.
Agnes and Tobias are in conversation. Agnes’ hands are already full of crises. Presently, it is about her eccentric alcoholic sister, Clair. Agnes is at her wit’s end. She must have rebuked her, for which Tobias expects her to apologize to her sister. She doesn’t find it necessary. On the contrary, she finds it necessary to apologize for her.

As if, this is not enough, she receives a phone call from her daughter- Julia, who is coming back home after the failure of her fourth marriage. They are hardly prepared for Julia’s arrival, when a car stops and the couple- Harry and Edna come to them unexpectedly. Soon it is revealed that they have come to stay with them as they are frightened to death about something, probably even they don’t know. They are accommodated in Julia’s room for the time being. Soon, Julia too, arrives and gets highly irritated to find her room being occupied by the guests. The stage is set for crisis, complications. There is enough ammunition for explosion and Claire is ever ready to ignite it. This situation gives rise to the issue of who rightfully belongs there and who are the strangers, outsiders, invaders or succors. What is the place of family members and friends? And above all how to maintain the balance between all kinds of relationships! Thus comes to the fore the debate over different kinds of relationships. The seemingly obvious crisis is between the family members and outsiders. Simultaneously, the marital relationship has also been dealt with, with respect to three couples, Agnes and Tobias, Harry and Edna, Julia and her partners. The relationship between friends is focused towards the end. At the second level, the issue of sibling relationship or rivalry has also been discussed. Among all characters, Agnes’ role is pivotal, who has to maintain ‘a delicate balance’ within the inmates of the house. Therefore it would be justifiable to take into account all these relationships with respect to Agnes. The relationships would be – 1) Agnes – Tobias – Marital Relationship, 2) Agnes–Claire—Relationship with siblings, 3) Agnes – Julia – Relationship between Mother and Daughter, 4) Agnes and the Guest couple—Relationship with family friends.

Apart from these relationships other marital relationships and the relationship between Tobias and Harry should also be taken into account.
A) **The Relationships With Respect To Agnes**

1) **Agnes – Tobias --**

This marital relationship appears normal in the beginning. She is sharing her worries with him and giving him full credit for being a very good husband and helping her to retain her capacity to put up with unpleasant facts and persons. (P.6) Immediately after this, she accuses him of his instinctively defensive stand when her alcoholic, eccentric younger sister, Claire is concerned. He is always evasive on this issue. He insists that she should apologize to Claire, probably for her harsh words. But she just refuses. (P.7) Rift between the couple has been hinted at by their different choices of wines and her pick. She also takes a pick at his passive attitude during crisis. He doesn’t want to discuss Claire’s drug addiction, alcoholism or uncivilized behavior. It seems that he has sympathy for Claire. Both join hands in criticizing Agnes. They have a dialogue in the absence of Agnes, which reveals his secret affair, which Claire knows of and teases him over it. (P.20)

Agnes, after telephonic talk with Julia breaks the news of Julia’s intention to come back. They discuss the matter of all failures related to Julia’s married life. Tobias offers to talk to her present husband. Over this, Agnes bitterly remarks, “I wish you would! If you had talked to Tom, or Charlie ------ or Phil, it might have done some good. If you’ve decided to assert yourself, finally, too late, I imagine--------.” (P.31)This is another occasion about failing his responsibility as a father.

Suddenly, unexpectedly Harry and Edna come. They are scared of something, which they don’t pinpoint. But they are afraid to stay home and that is why they have come to their friends – Tobias and Agnes. The couple cannot evade the duty towards their best friends and Agnes accommodates them without complaint, reluctance or protest, as she knows that Tobias likes Harry very much. Of course she knows that this will create problem when Julia arrives and it actually arises. It takes a serious turn later on. (P.48)
Julia loathes finding her room being occupied by unwanted guests. She is not ready to sacrifice her room for the guests. She is furious. She starts screeching. Soon she realizes her mistake and apologizes to her mother. Agnes is in such a deep despair that she wishes that she should have been born a man as she finds woman’s role very difficult. A woman has to perform a variety of roles simultaneously. She ponders- “If they knew what it was like------ to be a wife, a mother, a lover, a home maker, a nurse, a hostess, an agitator, a pacifier, a truth-teller, a deceiver-------.” (P.56)

She keeps on pondering over the new theory by a psychiatrist, related to reversal of sexes. She is seriously playing with the idea. Julia is not amused by her ways as she thinks that she is trying to be evasive about the real issue. Julia tells her “to go to hell ----.” (P.58) When Tobias comes, she teasingly tells her “your mother has arrived. Talk to him!”

Tobias, too, is distressed by the ‘stale-mate’ related to Julia’s all unsuccessful marriages. He rebukes Julia over it and then resumes his composure. She points out that when she really needed him during her adolescence, he sank himself in sherry. She describes him as “nice but ineffectual” and now while reproaching her he has turned “nasty, violent, absolutely human man!” (P.64) He offers to talk to her husband. But she says that it’s of no use as everyone of them was full of one sort of evil or another. They debate over the follies of each husband.

Agnes reports about the strange behavior of the guests who try to avoid any sort of contact with any of the family members. Julia has already lost her temper over the discussion about the ills of each husband. Claire has added to it by asking about the propriety of Julia’s return. Again the situation is ripe for explosion. Agnes makes an attempt to comfort, coax Julia. Julia remains adamant and refuses to get consoled. (P.75-77) Tobias stops the futile debate by shouting at the two.
Suddenly Harry and Edna appear and declare that they are going home. Agnes feels relieved. But soon the relief vanishes as they clarify that they are going “to get our clothes and things!” (P.77) The stale-mate continues. Julia continues like an obstinate child, “I want my room back!” Tobias doesn’t interfere, remains detached. This proves Agnes’s claim to be true that he’s never taken the responsibility of decision making.

Julia accuses Agnes for her high-handed treatment, calls her ‘pope’, ‘nanny’, ‘drill sergeant’ etc. as she doesn’t allow anyone to discuss the topic of Julia’s recent marital debacle, at the dinner table. Agnes doesn’t refute the charges, but clarifies her stand. She says, she has to do it “to keep in shape, to maintain the shape of the family, to keep it from falling apart.” She further points out that nobody wanted to talk about it but they (Clair) wanted to talk around it and use it as an excuse for seeking revenge. So she has tried to keep the dining table ‘unlittered’ of that. (P.80)

She admits to be strict on the points of manners, timings, tact and graces. But according to her, she is the only member of the family to view the situation objectively, with the ability to see the facts as well as their implications----- (P.81) While she is trying sincerely to clarify her views and stand, Julia and Tobias, both, just ignore her and busy themselves with some unrelated topic. She obviously gets irritated, still continues, “----- the longer view as well as the shorter. There is a balance to be maintained, after all, though the rest of you teeter, unconcerned, or uncaring, assuming you are on level ground -------- by divine right, though that is hardly so. And if I must be the fulcrum--------.”

She finds them still ignoring her, so suddenly says to shake and shock, especially Tobias “-------- I think I shall have a divorce.” (P.82) This is another instance of the lack of harmony, understanding, and rapport between the couple. Though, she is displaying utmost tolerance and patience with everyone including the guests, nobody shows any respect or concern for her.
Though she gives a blow by talking about ‘a divorce’, she has no intention of that kind. She is going to fight the battle till the end. However, she talks of the rift between the two. “-------- and in life: the gradual ------ demise of intensity, the private preoccupations, the substitutions.”

When Julia once again refers to her room, Agnes loses her temper and asks her, “Why don’t you run upstairs and claim your room back! Barricade yourself in there! Push a bureau in front of the door! Take Tobias’ pistol while you’re at it! Arm yourself!” (P.83) Julia later on literally follows the advice.

Edna and Harry return with their bags and baggage. This time there is complete metamorphosis in their attitude. They behave like masters of the house, the authority. Julia gets more irritated. Edna directly asks about Julia’s marital status, which Julia despises. She angrily points out that they are guests in the house. But Edna is not ready to budge. She points out, “We are your parent’s best friends. We are, in addition, your god parents.” (P.96)

Julia starts losing her temper, starts behaving like a child, complaining about Edna and Harry. Agnes handles the situation very tactfully and sends her to her own room. Julia keeps on objecting to the word ‘my room’. Agnes readily modifies it to ‘our room.’ But Julia is not happy. “Your room? MINE!!” she keeps on repeating. She won’t allow Harry go near the sideboard to mix drinks. Then she turns to Tobias, screaming and calling him for help. She runs out of room.

In her absence, the women discuss her behavior, immediately after the loss of her infant brother- Teddy. There is a hint at the sibling jealousy and the sense of guilt after the brother’s death, the genesis of her psychological disorder, her schizophrenia.
In the same context, Agnes recounts Tobias’ behavior too. She suspects that he had lost interest in her, after Teddy’s death. She has even suspected that he was not faithful to her. She asks Harry about it as she thinks, Harry, as his best friend should know it better. When Harry doesn’t support her doubts, she asks Claire. She is probably suspicious of Tobias having relations with Harry or Clair. She has suppressed her doubts for all these years and kept up the appearances of a happy couple. (P.101-103) She directly accuses Claire, “You were not named for nothing.” Claire doesn’t let her know the truth, just warns. She then turns to Harry and Edna, speaks to them in a cross manner. Soon she regains control over herself and says “sorry” to Edna. But now Edna is in a fighting and attacking mood. Claire, as usual, enjoys the scene.

Now Tobias comes and reports about Julia’s hysterics. He asks, why she is doing all this, as if, he doesn’t know the reason. Agnes begins to mention about the invasion by the guests into her room. But she stops, as she can’t say so in front of them. Edna and Harry describe, how Julia has tried to bar them from touching the drinks and take the blame upon themselves for annoying her. Tobias suggests Agnes to go and look after Julia. But she now wants to take a stern stand. She knows through experience that the soothing, comforting treatment will not solve the problem. Agnes goes through the history of her neuroticism. She then tells that she may talk to Julia after everybody is asleep. (P.111)

Soon Julia appears. She looks distraught, face smeared with tears and carrying a pistol awkwardly in her hand. Like a whining child, keeps on repeating tearfully, “Get them out of here -----.” (P.113) Tobias moves towards her, slowly, with comforting words. She hands over the gun to him like an obedient child, keeps on asking “to get them out.” Agnes is really furious now over Julia’s lack of manners. She wants Julia to be punished severely for her violation of all norms of civil behavior. She rebukes Julia harshly. Julia just ignores her and directly addresses the guests, “Are you going?” Agnes and Tobias try to check her. But she doesn’t care.
Now Edna is in attacking and defiant mood. She just refuses to bow to her wish. Both Harry and Edna reproach Julia for her willful ways.

**Edna:** “You return to your nest from your latest disaster, dispossessed, and suddenly dispossessing, screaming the house down, clawing at order -------- willful, wicked, wretched girl----------. (P.115)

Julia is stunned by this attack. She tries to defend herself by talking about the rights, belongingness of each of them. As a reply to Julia’s argument, Edna walks over to Julia and slaps her calmly. Then tells her parents, she did it as a godmother’s duty. Perhaps she means that the same treatment should have been given by her parents to a hysteric girl. She further asserts that they are always wanted, welcomed in the house. Then she advises Julia to learn to ‘co-exist’ with others. (P.115-116)

Agnes calmly accepts their stay and makes arrangements for beds, takes Julia tenderly to her own room. Edna moves to Julia’s room. Agnes and Tobias had to share a room due to newly arisen situation, after a long gap. The next morning when they meet, both have very strange feeling. Both had been ill-at-ease with each other. She comments on the sea-change over years—“----- it was nice to have you there, though I remember, when it was a constancy, how easily I would fall asleep, pace my breathing to your breathing, and if we were touching! Ah, what a splendid cocoon that was. But last night-what a shame, what sadness- you were a stranger, and I stayed awake.” (P.1224) However, she is hopeful to get used to their togetherness.

He has expected her to remain all night with Julia. But Julia had not allowed her to stay with her. Thus she knows that Tobias was not in the room with her. She tells him so. Then she directly speaks about her suspicion. She asks him, if he went to Claire. He
denies any intimacy with Claire. He is a little angry, so he says, “I never go to Claire at night, or talk with her alone- save publicly.” (P.126)

She is a little repentant for her doubts, distrust. She reflects, “Do we dislike happiness? We manufacture such a portion of our own despair-----.” But she has hopes of beginning their life together once again.

Tobias has spent the night alone, awake, in the living room and tried to take stock of the situation and find a way out. He, in his reflective mood, goes on with his monologue revealing his insight. She expects from him a solution over the problem. She keeps on asking him, “And what did you decide?” When she receives a negative answer, she tells him, “------- You must, your house is not in order, sir. It’s full to bursting.” He expects her to help him in that matter. But she expects him to take the lead. She says, she has tried her best to keep the house in order, even in the difficult situation. He blames her of shying away from taking any action. The debate soon becomes hot. She coolly places the responsibility of taking decisions on moral issues upon his shoulders, “as a man of the house!” Again, he blames her that she has never allowed him to do that. But she remains firm on her stand. Soon the debate turns in to a quarrel. Tobias starts yelling without bothering for the guests in the house. However, she keeps her cool. (P.133)

The heated argument continues even after Julia, who is subdued by now, comes, followed by Claire. Both are sent in the kitchen to prepare coffee. The blame-game between the two continues. Again, she blames him for his inaction in Julia’s case, for not sending her back to her husband or advising to try to adjust with her marital life etc. Then she expresses her disappointment with Julia’s happy married life, her motherhood- the hope of which is waning day by day as Julia is crossing the age of safe motherhood. Then she comes to the point, which Tobias has always tried to avoid.

Agnes: When Ted died? ------- we could have had another son; we could have tried. But no ----- those months – or was it a year?
Agnes: ---- I think it was a year, when you spilled yourself on my belly, Sir? “Please? Please, Tobias?” No, you wouldn’t say it out: I don’t want another child, another loss. “Please? Please, Tobias?” And guiding you, trying to hold you in?

Agnes: “Don’t leave me then, like that. Not again, Tobias. Please? I can take care of it. We won’t have another child, but please don’t ------ leave me like that.” Such ---- silent ---- sad ---- disgusted ---love.

Tobias offers some lame defense. She points out; he shouldn’t have behaved, as if, they were engaged in some illicit, secretive type of relationship which should be concealed from others. Her reproach continues.

Agnes: The theory being pat: that half a loaf is worse than none. That you are racked with Guilt- stupidly! --- and I must suffer for it.

She uses this in support of her claim that he has always taken decisions and she has quietly accepted it, tried to put up with it without protest. Then she comes to the natural conclusion that in the present circumstances, too, he should decide about the further line of action. (P.137-139) When she puts the onus on him, he asks her with frustration whether he should ask them to leave; should throw them out. She, as usual, leaves the decision to him, reminding him that Harry is his very best friend. Then he retorts why shouldn’t he throw out Claire and Julia instead or all of them out? She sarcastically suggests it would be better for him to get rid of her, so that, there won’t be anyone to find faults with him. But in that case, she adds, his life will not be the same as he wants. (P.141-142)
After some discussion between Julia and Tobias over the status of the guests in the house, Agnes puts forth her observation regarding Harry and Edna’s problem. She calls their ‘terror’ a disease, a mortal illness, a contagious one, which has posed a threat for others to get infected by it. She compares it with ‘plague’. The old solution for which was to burn down the place, the people, their clothes etc. In modern age the method used is that of quarantine, isolating the people if one wanted to save oneself. Tobias is not ready to look at the problem in a detached manner. He can’t disown his friends because they are infested with some problem. He can’t think of friendship with some conditions attached to it. Again the debate goes on over blood relations-family- its well-being and helping the friends in need of care, togetherness. Again, she puts the facts before him, suggests that she is ready to die of that infection if he wishes so. But he has to decide. Tobias has no answer. (P.152)

Soon Edna and Harry appear and Edna tells that Harry wants to talk to Tobias alone. So, all the women retire to the kitchen. Unexpectedly Harry announces his decision to go back. Tobias is baffled by this sudden change in the situation. Harry explains the reason behind the decision and asks Tobias if he really wanted them to stay. Tobias finds the question out of place, after the close friendship of forty years. He asks Harry, “Don’t we love each other? Doesn’t friendship grow to that? To love?” He keeps on insisting that Harry has to stay there. He has the right to do so. (P.160-162) But Harry and Edna leave as per their plan.

After they leave, Agnes complains about Julia’s taking to drinks early in the morning along with Claire. Instead of supporting her, Tobias admits of his having drinks early in the morning with Harry. Agnes accepts this bitter truth, too. But expresses hope that darkness of night, all the trouble and bitterness will vanish and the daylight will bring order with it. She is ready to begin with a new hope as a home maker.
As the backdrop to the marital relationship between Agnes and Tobias, other two marital relationships have also been dealt with. The reader gets the first person account of the relationship between Harry and Edna, by Edna, while Julia’s marital relationship/s have been discussed and commented by other characters.

Harry and Edna

Harry and Edna seem quite supportive to each other; until Act III. They speak and behave in unison. However, before leaving Tobias’ place, Edna reveals the facts. Here, too, Harry supports Edna. But he reveals the fact only to Tobias. It is a sort of confession.

Harry: Edna and I ----- there’s ------ so much ------ so many--- disappointments, evasions, I guess, lies may be ----- so much we remember we wanted----- so little that we’ve ------- settled for----- we talk, sometimes, but mostly---- no----- I’ve always been a little shy---- gruff---- And Edna isn’t ---- happy --- I suppose that’s it. (P.158-159)

Edna, too, reveals something similar, about her relations with Harry.

Edna: He ----- came to my bed last night, I let him stay, and talk. I let him think ---- I wanted to make love; he ----- it pleases him, I think ----- to know he would be wanted, if he ----. (P.163)

There is no mention of their children. Another reason may be the relationship between Tobias and Harry. Both again and again refer to their mutual love for each other, which is certainly beyond friendship. Tobias also confesses that he doesn’t like Edna, but for Harry’s sake he is ready to accept her. (P.161) A homosexual attraction between the two can’t be denied. However, in case of both the marriages, who belong to older generation, the wives perform their roles well, pretending happy in their married life.
Julia has returned after her fourth failed marriage with Douglas. Tobias reproaches her for her inability to adjust with any of them. He offers to talk to Douglas to bring about reconciliation between them. Julia is not hopeful of any positive results. She says, “Do you really want to talk to Doug? You won’t get anywhere, the compulsives you can get somewhere with- or the illusion of getting- the gamblers, the fags, the lechers----.” Here she is referring to the ills of each husband. She then speaks about each of them pointing out their evils. She remarks, “------- they are after something, the jackpot, somehow: break the bank, find the boy (homosexuality), climb the babe ----.” Tobias refers to one of her husbands, Charlie. He thinks that she misses him. She admits to miss him but not as a husband. She says,“------- Well, yes, I do, but not that way. Because he seemed so like what Teddy would have been.” This throws light upon one angle of her maladjustments in married relationship. She finds her brother’s image in Charlie, not as a life-partner. She cherishes the same affection, tender feelings for Charlie as for Teddy, her younger brother. Her relationship with Teddy and his memory has been very complex. According to Agnes, “after Teddy’s birth, she felt unwanted, tricked. With his death she felt relieved as well as lost.” Thereafter she could not adjust even with class mates and the same was true with the real life mates. In addition to her psychological problem, the partners, too, created problems.

According to Julia’s analysis, Tobias too, had failed as a father to a girl who is stepping in her adolescence. She says, as a little girl she had tried to overcome her burn of suddenly having a rival – in the form of her baby brother. But after the loss of him, Tobias had drowned himself into his despair with the help of alcohol. He was not assertive as a father should have been. She wants to tell him, now reproaching her in a father’s capacity, will not work. Thus it seems that all the three couples suffer from failed marriages for different reasons.
This is the example of sibling-rivalry. There is no clear mention of Claire’s marriage. However there are oblique references to her lot of experience with men. She is Agnes’ younger sister. She is an alcoholic but not ready to admit it. She behaves, as if, determined not to let Agnes have a moment’s relief. She deliberately behaves in an annoying manner and then keeps on teasing Agnes. Again and again, she refers to getting rid of Agnes. In the very beginning she asks Tobias, “Why don’t you shoot Agnes?” (P.14) Agnes is so disgusted with Claire’s ways that she remarks, “The only thing sharper than a serpent’s tooth is a sister’s ingratitude.” (P.6) In retaliation Claire terms Agnes’ treatment to her as ‘brutal’.

Claire is an eccentric woman. She defies all the norms of civilized behavior, not only with Agnes but with everyone. She tries to embarrass a sales woman by asking for the lower piece only of a swim suit. Both talk about each other’s death and the relief they would get out of it. Agnes, while referring to Clair’s alcoholism remarks with disgust, “I wouldn’t mind for a moment if you filled your bathtub with it, lowered yourself in it, DROWNED! I rather wish you would.” (P.28) Claire is not happy to obey Agnes’ wishes. She bitterly comments, “If we are to live here, on Tobias’ charity, then we are subject to the will of his wife.”

The biting attacks are also found in Act II. Agnes refers to Claire’s leaving the nest, probably separation from her husband and says, “She’s learned gaucherie, ingratitude, drunkenness ---- since then.” Claire, too, retorts that their mother used to say, “You would get dumped outa nest or pushed by your sister ------.” The verbal battle continues----

Agnes: Lies. ------ she kept you------ tolerated. Put up your filth, your “emancipated
womanhood.” (then she tells Julia) Even in her teens, your auntie ---- was very---
advanced.

Claire: (to Julia) Your mommy got her pudenda sniffed a couple times herself before she met old Toby, you know.

Here, Claire venomously refers to Agnes’ of having affair before marriage and the subsequent abortions. (P.85)

Agnes is always suspicious about the relations between Claire and Tobias. When Agnes talks about her suffering due to a variety of tensions, Claire taunts, “I tell ya, there are so many martyrdoms here.” (P.110) After Julia’s tantrums, she doesn’t spare Agnes. She observes, “---- And look it Agnes, talky Agnes, ruler of the roost, and maitre d’, and licensed wife—silent. All cozy--- thinking of the menu for the week, planning.” (P.148-149)

Sibling rivalry is also observed in Julia’s case. But it is not hostile as in case of Agnes and Claire. It is a ‘love-hate’ relationship blended with guilt complex after Teddy’s death. It has turned into a psychological disorder, her inability to adjust with any sort of companionship at school or in adult life. This relationship has not been directly depicted as the Agnes-Claire relationship.

Agnes- Julia --- Mother- Daughter Relationship

Agnes is very patient and tolerant in case of this relationship, too, as she is in other relationships. She bears the tension of Julia’s marital problem, but can’t think of any permanent solution over it. She seems to treat the grown-up daughter like a child, a spoilt one. Whatever action Edna takes as a godmother, should have been perhaps taken by Agnes for the hysterics of Julia. (P.115) But she only talks of ‘long soothing talks, pat
on the hand, a gentle massage, or slowly, slowly combing her hair’ etc. as her usual treatment to her hysteric. (P.109)

Actually, she knows exactly when the sudden changes appeared in Julia’s personality, which is clear from her analysis, “Teddy’s birth, and now she felt unwanted, tricked, his death, and was she more relieved than lost? ------ All the schools we sent her to, and did she fail in them through hate ------ or love? And when we come to marriage, each one of them, the fear, the happiness, the sex, the stopping, the infidelities -------.” (P.109) But in spite of her analysis, she has failed to tackle with the real problem.

Agnes also remembers Julia’s strange behavior soon after Teddy’s death. She used to come home with bloody knees. She blames it to her clumsiness, then on her religious bent of mind. But Edna’s judgment is more appropriate. She asks, “Praying on the gravel? A penance?” (P.101) This must have been Julia’s natural response over her guilt-complex, which Agnes fails to realize as she is more occupied with her personal loss—by Teddy’s death on one hand and losing Toby’s love on the other.

Now when Julia is nearing forty, it is too late to groom her and try to fit her in the discipline of the civilized world and family life. When Agnes expects it from mentally disturbed Julia, Julia accuses her of her high-handed treatment and just defies her in every possible way. She knows very well that Agnes despises the early morning drinking and more due to the alcoholic Aunt Clair, she deliberately accepts the offer of drink by Clair as a sign of defiance to her mother’s discipline or appearances.

She doesn’t like the submissive attitude of her mother, especially when the sense of belongingness, her rights in the house is challenged by strangers like Harry and Edna. Therefore she takes a sort of revenge by defying her deliberately. Thus it shows that despite deep affection, concern, expectation of her normal married life, the wrong manner of handling her, leave all her efforts ineffective. She has failed as a mother. Perhaps, what
Claire says in the context of Agnes is true. “If you interviewed a camel, he’d admit he loved his load.” (P.111)

**Agnes and the Guest Couple --- Relationship with family friends.**

Agnes is a little puzzled when the guests appear without intimation or invitation. She is not in a mood to receive any guests at that moment as she is worried due to Julia’s marital problems. (P.38) Moreover, they do not clarify their motive of sudden visit or how long they are going to stay there. The guests just take it for granted that they are always welcome and they can stay for any duration they wished. They create a mystery by talking about their fear, but they never clarify what they are afraid of.

Agnes is neither too enthusiastic in receiving them nor does show courage to tell them plainly that the family is presently passing through a crisis and therefore unable to entertain any uninvited guest. She is just helpless and submits to the wishes of the guests. She accommodates them in Julia’s room, though she knows that it would create a problem after Julia’s arrival, who will not tolerate any encroachment upon her room, especially when she is extremely upset. Agnes’ inaction, passive attitude is responsible for Julia’s violent reaction, her hysterics and overall aggravation of the crisis.

It seems that she performs everything as a duty. Similarly, she performs the role of a hostess- an ideal one. Therefore she doesn’t show any sign of resentment when the guests lock themselves up in Julia’s room or when Edna and Harry impose themselves upon the household or when they reproach Julia harshly and Edna slaps Julia in their presence. (P.116) Agnes actually wants to get rid of them, but doesn’t dare say so directly. She even hesitates to call the room as Julia’s room, which has been occupied by them. (P.71)
She is unable to take any decision about the stay of their guests. So she leaves it to Tobias to decide on that matter, who is unable to ask them to leave owing to his extravagant, unreal ideas about friendship and hospitality and probably unnatural intimacy with Harry.

Thus Agnes, as a hostess, is performing her role either out of compulsion of keeping up the appearances of a reasonably happy, normal family or due to her inability of taking practical and perhaps harsh decisions. When finally the guests decide to leave, Tobias is agonized by their decision, but Agnes remains neutral, unaffected.

**Tobias and Harry** – Relationship between two male friends.

There is something unusual about this relationship. It is hinted at through Claire’s pointed remarks about it. Though alcoholic and drug addict, she has a keen sense of observation. Her comments and remarks are odd, awkward or too bold. But most of the times, there is truth in it. In the very beginning, she asks Tobias, “What do you have common with your friends? Even Harry, your best friend-------.” After repeating the question over and over again, she adds, “------- except the coincidence of having cheated on your wives in the same summer with the same woman-------.” (P.19-20) It means, according to Claire, there is nothing common, no binding force between the two. Still, Tobias claims that he would do anything for Harry without much feeling of loss. (P.21)

Then the testing time really comes when Harry and Edna suddenly drop in with their bags and baggage. Tobias has no objection, nor does he find it necessary to seek his wife’s consent or approval to receive them. He has taken it for granted. He has no objections about their strange ways of behavior or overstepping their rights in the house. He knows that their presence in the house has created a serious problem in their family life and they have upset the whole system or order in the house and therefore it is
essential to take some firm decision regarding it. Instead of taking and executing the
decision, he engages himself in futile debate with Agnes over “who is the decision-maker
in the house.” He keeps on mincing with words and evades the real issue.

Finally, when Harry and Edna decide to leave the house and explain the reason,
had the situation been reversed, they won’t keep even their best friend with them for ever.
Harry and Edna are honest and frank in admitting their limitations and the limitations of
any relationship including friendship. (P.159)

However Tobias cannot digest the truth even to himself. He keeps on insisting
that they should not leave. His situation turns miserable while accepting his best friend’s
leaving him. While imploring Harry to stay, the truth probably is given out. He asks
Harry, “Don’t we love each other after the long friendship of forty years? (P.161-162) At
first when Harry asks him, “Do you like Edna?” his answer is, “Well, sure I like her,
Harry.”(P.156-157) But soon afterwards he admits, “------ I don’t like Edna, but that’s not
half the point, I like you fine ------.” He is ready to tolerate anybody and anything for the
sake of Harry – including his fears, terror which Agnes has termed disease, plague. His
dislike for Edna and willingness to go to any extent for the sake of Harry is a clear hint of
an abnormal relationship between the two.

Anne Paolucci observes, “Albee’s A Delicate Balance and All Over are the most
‘realistic’ and uniform plays. Except for the terror which Edna and Harry insist on, the
realistic representation is never seriously threatened. But the exception is the central
event of the action: either Albee failed as a dramatist or we must look at it in a different
light. The terror, in fact, is not an external event, no surprise. It already exists in Tobias’s
household in a variety of guises. Agnes understands immediately what it is all about
because she has already experienced it. For her, it is the threat of insanity.
Madness lurks within the house long before the ‘terror’ is announced. Agnes jokes about it, but it is a real terror. Claire, the nerve centre of the group teeters on the brink of destruction, unable to tear herself away; Julia, self-centered and immature, keeps a safe distance but feels the pull; Tobias has seen something of the darkness but has deliberately chosen comparative safety of habit and routine; Agnes had faced it and has decided to keep to level ground, although, she is all too often sorely tempted to leap into the abyss.” (Anne Paolucci, From Tension to Tonic- Plays by Edward Albee. Southern Illinois University Press, 1972. P.108-109)

She further observes, “Agnes is the refuge for others. She is just as vulnerable as they, but her will is strong and refuses to buckle under. She urges Tobias to consider the emotional health of his family in making his decision about Harry and Edna. It is not cruelty but love which prompts her to reject her best friends. In her willful determination to protect her own, she guides Tobias into the same kind of rejection – although she is just as ready to go along with some other decision, should he decide to come out of lethargy. The outcome is sensible but sad. Friendship, after all, is- or should be- sacred.” (Paolucci, P.107)

She continues, “The terror which threatens to destroy Agnes’s world is left undefined. However the terror of Edna and Harry becomes in that spectrum the fears of Julia, the emptiness of Claire, the withdrawal of Tobias, the implicit madness of Agnes, a series of nightmares which never break through the veneer of appearances. The terror which Edna and Harry drag with them into their friend’s house is all the diversified horrors of life. Their coming shocks others into frightening awareness of the death that lies in each of them. Their entrance is the occasion for a critical reassessment, on the part of each of the others, of their vices, their shortcomings, their lies and egoism. Julia cannot cope with the challenge; Claire simply reaffirms her preference for oblivion through drink; Tobias comes to the surface of the truth for a moment, only to confess his inadequacy; Agnes recognizes the challenge but knows it is not her decision.” (Paolucci, P.110)
She comments upon the reiteration of Agnes’ pivotal role within the family towards end of the play, “It is Agnes who quietly and efficiently takes command, easing Tobias into the old detachment, the quiet routine which he craves. Agnes provides the clues to the interpretation of events. Her opening allusion to madness gives the theme in its simplest form. Sanity is the necessity imposed upon her. She accepts the world as defined by others around her, not because she really prefers it that way, but because she really truly loves and is prepared to give what they need. Her deceptive calm is an act of sheer will- the painful equilibrium between a Dionysian abandonment and an Apollonian restraint. She forces others to hold their own: Claire must fight back if she is to retain her identity; Julia must be scolded and comforted alternately; Tobias must be spared the emotional demands he cannot fulfill. She molds their lives into a predictable routine, reducing even the vices of the household to familiar ‘cliché’ excesses.” (Paolucci, P.115-116)

Paolucci further adds, “Agnes is the subtle chorus of the play, expanding and reinforcing Claire’s oracular flashes of insight. But she is by no means detached from the action around her. The demands on her are too real; she cannot indulge in indifference or in self-righteous sentimentality. It is up to her to keep things in check, to keep her world from falling apart. The little daily crises are safety valves which keep her from ‘drifting’ off. She is the strongest person in the play- not because she is inspired or clairvoyant, but because she simply is dependable.” (Paolucci, P.118)

She states, “The action of the play moves from symbol to explication in a series of evergrowing circles of meaning, which is Albee’s characteristic approach to dramatic exposition. Out of this dialectic- the kaleidoscopic superimposition of intention and result, statement and insight, truth and paradox- comes the illusion of reality, which is always a delicate balance of literal and metaphorical, familiar particulars and poetic images.” (Paolucci, P.122)
Here, too, Albee has made an attempt to explore the relationship between an old couple of Charlie and Nancy. They have come for a picnic on the sea-beach where they encounter a couple of reptiles who come out on the land from the sea. Albee has used the technique of fantasy where he imagines that the reptiles speak (English) and therefore can communicate with the human couple. However, the scope of their knowledge and understanding the world of humans is very limited. Same is true about the world of emotions which is supposed to be a prerogative of humans. In a way, the reptiles symbolize other world, other race or a sub-human tribe. Albee has attempted to explore the world of human feelings and specifically ‘man-woman’ relationship from other’s point of view; which is very unique. Throughout the play, the atmosphere keeps on oscillating between illusion and reality. Or in other words, the line of demarcation between illusion and reality is blurred.

Albee, here, mainly deals with man-woman or male-female relationship. Its primary focus is upon the relationship between the husband and wife- Charlie and Nancy. It has been juxtaposed with the similar kind of relationship between animals or savages.
Male-Female Relationship

The couple of Charlie and Nancy is an old couple who has carried out all the normal worldly responsibilities and is now in the phase of retired life. Right from the beginning, the contrast in their attitudes is highlighted through smaller and bigger issues. Nancy is still enthusiastic and wishes to spend adventurous life like nomadic on different sea-beaches. She thinks that Charlie is also fed up with the mechanical city life. Charlie doesn’t respond to her positively. He doesn’t want do anything, as if; he has lost interest in life. (P.3-7)

Then she reminds him of all the thrill he used to experience in his unusual game of staying at the bottom of the shallow sea after holding breath. But that too, fails to enthuse him. He doesn’t succumb to her pressure of doing something. However, he at least talks about his childhood dream of living an aquatic life forever. She comments over this, “I wanted to be a woman. I wanted to grow up to that, and all it had with it. -----And, I suppose I have become that.” (P.14)

The rift between the two becomes clear here itself. She has led normal life and she wants to enjoy everything before death. But his tendency is retrogressive and attitude is resigned. Both are aware of the imminent death. But she wishes to face it together-planned or unplanned. But she knows that he doesn’t cherish any of those ideas. She terms him “selfish- right to the end.” (P.11)

She is a little romantic and imaginative. She thinks of a family tree in terms of an image of a pyramid; the building of which begins from the top- from one couple and then it goes on widening, as if, it is floating in the air by magic. When he remains indifferent over it, she remarks, “You have no interest in imagery. None” (P.15)When he once again starts recounting his experience under water, she insists that he should try to experience the thrill once again. She is not ready to accept his lame excuses to avoid that. She says,
“------ go on! Be young again.” But he doesn’t budge. (P.16-20) She only bitterly remarks, “If I were a man ---- I don’t think I’d let the chance go by;--.” (P.20)

She unwittingly compares the thrill with the experience of sex, which is diminishing day by day. It reminds her of the phase in their marital relationship when he had lost interest in her for some unknown reason; and she had thought of a divorce. He is shocked to hear it. (P.20) She had even considered the possibility of another woman in his life. She had patiently waited for the phase to pass. But she had feared that the sex life had come to an end permanently, when she was only thirty, attractive and full of life. She had sought advice from her mother who had asked her to put up with the situation, even if there was another woman. But he had returned to normalcy, eventually. Her mother had said, “even if he is making love with you, he might imagine you as other woman, he may even mention her name while making love to you.” Charlie keeps on denying of having any other woman in his life. Finally she remarks about the romance in life- sex or otherwise- “------ we shouldn’t give up until we have to.” (P.20-25)

She again insists that he should experience the romance of going down the water once again. When he extends the excuse of not having a swim-suit, she suggests him to go naked and adds that he looks quite presentable even at that age. This praise pleases him. Still he doesn’t fulfill her wish. She offers him to go down with him. But he is afraid that she may get drowned as she doesn’t know the technique. Then he adds that he doesn’t want to lose her as she is ‘a good wife’. She, too, reciprocates similar feelings but with some reservation. They keep on exchanging good comments about each other for some time. But her last remark is odd. She says, “Well, we’ll wrap you in the flag when you are gone.” He is hurt and disturbed. He asks her why she is hurting his feelings even after he had given her everything she expected. When he says, “You’ve had a good life”, she is not ready to accept it. Then she tries to explain the reason of her irritability by using an image of a bee-sting. She says that the irritability comes when the expectations are not fulfilled by the partner. (P. 26-33) She points out that he has referred to their past by using \textit{have had} instead of \textit{having}. She means that she is not happy with the present
relationship. She is disgusted with his loss of desire, his contentedness with non-action. She bitterly says, “------ all you want to do is become a vegetable. ---- a lump.” (P.37) She asks him, “Are you telling me you’re all caved in? All close down? (P.38) But even after her outburst he remains passive, cold as before, insisting on “rest, comfort of settling in.” He has no interest in keeping in contact with the people through writing to them. He leaves it to her. She accepts it and suggests him to take a nap or going down the beach and collect some pretty shells.

Suddenly she finds the sea-creatures heading towards them. The boredom suddenly gets transformed into the feeling of fear and horror. Again, the difference between their attitudes while tackling the unknown is revealed through their different responses.

He suddenly assumes the responsibility of protecting her and orders her to get a stick for self-defense or if necessary, to attack the intruders. Actually, he is panicked. He doesn’t realize how she can get hold of a gun when he orders to get a gun. (P.43) Though she gets a stick and hands it over to him, she is fascinated by the sight of the sea-creatures. She praises their beauty. But Charlie is worried about how he is going to defend them with the help of such a small stick, though he brandishes the ridiculous looking stick at the male creature, Leslie.

Leslie, who, too is on the offensive, grabs a large four feet stick and brandishes at them with it. Nancy is impressed by that stick and praises it. Charlie sarcastically thanks her for getting such an unimpressive stick. However, he had accepted his defeat and death in that situation. As if, before dying he wants to assert his love for her, he tells her so, hastily. She, too, repeats the words. However, she is not convinced of the hostility between them and the creatures.
Suddenly the creatures, after staring at the strangers for sometime, race back to the sea. Charlie thinks that either it was a dream or they are dead as a result of poisoning through the rotten liver paste. As a typical husband, he puts all the blame upon her for bringing it unnecessarily. Nancy tries to defend herself. Then she gets amused by his theory and conviction of having been dead due to poisoning and goes on laughing. In the meanwhile the creatures return. Charlie is annoyed by her behavior. He comments, “How can you laugh when you are dead, Nancy?” She remarks, “We may be dead already, Charlie, but I think we are going to die again. Here they come!” (P.50-51) Charlie realizes the horror now.

In this moment of crisis, Nancy takes the lead, decides the strategy to tackle the situation and guides Charlie, too, to save their lives. She brings to use her knowledge of animal behavior. She advises Charlie to display their willingness for submission to assure the powerful one that they don’t intend any offence or challenge. Thus her worldly wisdom helps them to get through the crisis.

Even during the close encounter with the creatures, while Leslie is sniffing them or poking at them, their reactions are contrasting. While Charlie finds it terrifying Nancy finds it beautiful! (P.58) When both the parties are assured of safety, they try to get acquainted with each other. Even here both the males show inhibition, but the females take lead, prod and coax their respective partners to make friends with each other.

During this process, while Leslie is curious to know about everything new, different about the humans, the topic turns to Charlie’s wearing a shirt. Nancy tries to explain that they wear clothes to conceal their sexual parts like her own breasts etc. She is not able to explain the concept of breasts even to Sarah- the female creature, as she doesn’t have breasts as such. She tries to clarify it to Sarah by showing her, her own bare breasts. Sarah is so fascinated by the new thing that she calls Leslie to have a look at it. Charlie suddenly becomes possessive and unfriendly to the other male, though it is not a
man. He curtly says, “I don’t want you looking at my wife’s breasts, that’s all.” Nancy asks him, “Are you jealous?” as she doesn’t find anything objectionable in it.

Leslie’s conclusion is simple. He thinks, they want to hide it because they are sad, ugly or embarrassing to look at! Charlie denies it and asserts that they are in fact lovely. (and that is why he doesn’t want to share the pleasure of it with anyone else.) He says to Nancy, “I love your breasts.” She is pleased. Still she tries to convince him for letting Leslie see them. She says, “I am not an exhibitionist, as you very well know -----.” He retorts over it, “----- except that time you answered the door stark naked -----.” (P.77) Thus they again resume the blame game.

Sarah suddenly recalls that they have seen something similar when they had visited extreme north long ago. She is referring to the whales and their young ones sucking at their mothers. Nancy agrees to it. Sarah tries to help Leslie in imagining what Nancy breasts must looks like. Ultimately, she is successful. But the whole episode makes Charlie restless. He tries to divert the topic from his wife’s breasts. (P.79-80) A somewhat similar attitude is observed on Leslie’s part. He tries to stop Sarah when she refers to their coupling. (P.83)

Again, when the humans are trying to drive home the concept of emotions to Leslie and Sarah, Nancy, while referring to their love and care for the children says, “We keep them with us because they need us to; and we feel possessive about them, and grateful and proud-----.” Nancy is actually aiming at Charlie by her reference to possessiveness. He tries to stop her. She is so frustrated with him that she declares her plan of going alone on a long trip. She adds, “I’ve been married to you far too smoothly for far too long.” She seems to be tired of that bland, routine, spice-less life with Charlie. She ponders over the possibility of having another partner even at her age. (P.88)
This bland, frustrating relationship has been juxtaposed with the romantic, exciting relationship between Leslie and Sarah. When Charlie asks about their first meeting, both of them recount the instance highly enthusiastically, how Leslie fought with the others and won Sarah’s heart forever etc. Charlie uses it to explain the concept of love. (P.89-90)

Then the topic turns to loyalty, fidelity with partners. Charlie thinks that animals freely couple with each other. But Leslie seems to find the query offensive. He even refuses to answer if he has had coupled with any other female except Sarah. (P.92) Sarah feels hurt as she suspects that he has and that is why he refuses to answer. Here, Charlie, as a male, comes forward to defend Leslie. When a similar question is asked to Sarah, Leslie strongly denies it; as if, he doesn’t want to take chance for any unpleasant response. Nancy, too, comes forward to defend Sarah, as if, she has been charged with infidelity. (P.93) Finally, Sarah too, supports what they say.

Nancy once again makes fun of him for his belief that they are dead. At this point with the reference to death, he suddenly turns introspective, starts talking about existentialism etc. He resumes his resigned mood, starts pondering over the imminent death and his acceptance, preparedness for it. Nancy tries to bring him back to a cheerful mood. She uses the feminine tricks of hugging, kissing etc. He slowly starts responding to her when she enters her tongue into his mouth. Soon he returns to normalcy, but feels shy as their romance went on in front of the others. Then she makes him realize that he is very much alive.

Once again Nancy refers to his habit of going underwater (P.109-110) and staying at the bottom of the sea. He tries to evade the topic; by saying that it was only a childhood fancy. Then suddenly he realizes that the creatures have also entered a different world. So he asks them what has brought them up out of water. Just like Charlie, Leslie, too, tries to avoid the topic. But soon opens up and tells the truth about the
growing feeling of the loss of belongingness, losing interest in the surrounding matters. This is very similar to Charlie’s resigned attitude indicating death wish.

This reminds Charlie of the theory of evolution and he refers to the origin of species. According to theory, life originated at the bottom of the sea. Then he refers to the aquatic species like Leslie which long ago didn’t have tail. Charlie fails to digest the idea as he is very proud of his large, sturdy tail and so is Sarah. Charlie and Nancy are trying to drive home the concept of evolution. But the creatures are not convinced.

While they are discussing the points of differences between the human beings and ‘brute beasts’, Leslie finds the reference ‘brute beasts’ highly offensive. He is already irritated as he doesn’t follow the concepts like ‘tools, art and mortality’ used by Charlie and Nancy. However Sarah is curious to know about them. Charlie makes an attempt to clarify ‘mortality’ to Nancy with the help of a familiar experience of parting. Nancy loathes the topic. She calls him heartless, relentless. But he continues to work upon Sarah with the experience of parting for ever and her reaction over it. He tells her, “You’d cry, you’d cry your eyes out.” Sarah really starts crying, wailing, and sobbing uncontrollably with the notion of permanent parting. She wants to go back from the cruel world. Nancy’s grief infuriates Leslie. He challenges Charlie in spite of his repeated apologies. He actually begins to choke Charlie with one of his arms. (P.126-132) Actually, his male ego is hurt by the words ‘brute beast.’ But he makes an issue of making his wife cry by Charlie and pours his wrath upon Charlie. It also shows his possessiveness about her, his sense of responsibility to protect her from physical or emotional injury and also his pride and faith in him.

Thus, Albee, probably wants to assert that the complexity of relationship within individuals is very much alike within humans as well as brutes, which is equally applicable to male-female relationship. Perhaps he also wants to say that animals are better than human beings. They are cent percent devoted to each other, whereas humans
may be physically together but emotionally, psychologically there may be a great rift between them.

**Relationship among aliens**

At another level, Albee deals with this relationship also, using the allegory of a couple of sea-creatures confronted with a human couple. Of course, he makes use of the technique of fantasy and presumes that they share the basic knowledge for establishing communication with each other, though they are not fully acquainted with the modern vocabulary.

Albee tries to establish the sense of hierarchy, superiority among each species which considers themselves superior to others for certain reasons. Above all, he focuses on the sense of fear, insecurity when one confronts with something alien, unfamiliar. This sense of insecurity, self-defense gives rise to offensive behavior. That is why the first reaction during the confrontation by both the parties is to get hold of a tool for self-defense. Another strategy of self-defense is submission when one is convinced of the power of the other. Thus the relationship between the two parties slowly passes through the phases of defense, offence, submission, cautious friendship, physical intimacy and exchanging information and sharing personal matters. It takes place rather easily and smoothly between the two females, but the males always remain cautious and reserved about their respective territories.

One more important aspect of this relationship is the superiority complex cherished by each for various reasons. Charlie looks down upon the sea-creatures as he thinks that man is at the top of the tree of evolution. He remarks contemptuously about their limited linguistic competence and limited intellectual capacity according to him. Therefore he remarks, “It is hard to explain to someone who has no grasp of conceptual matters, who hasn’t heard of half the words in the English language, who lives on the
Leslie already feels offended by Charlie’s remarks, but he is more enraged by his comparison with a fish, whom he looks down upon. After being somewhat pacified, he gives his reasons for despising to be compared or equated with a fish. He says, “For one thing, there are too many of them; they are allover the place ------ racing around, darting in front of you, picking at everything------ moving in, taking over where you live------ and they are stupid! And they are dirty!” (P.96) This sounds like a description of masses of underdeveloped, uncivilized people by the rulers or noble class people or so called superior race of Whites.

Over this Charlie calls Leslie ‘prejudiced’ and ‘bigot’ who himself exhibits similar kind of attitude towards the other species lower on the ladder of evolution. He speaks similarly contemptuously about dinosaurs. His reasoning for their extinction is their ‘pea-nut sized brain’ which failed to help them to survive. While refuting the charge of prejudice, Leslie reflects over the differences between the two groups. He remarks, “Being different is ------interesting; there is nothing implicitly inferior or superior about it. Great difference, of course, produces natural caution; and if the differences are too extreme ------ well, then, reality tends to fade away.” (P.98)

Leslie’s reasoning seems sounder though Charlie is not ready to believe it being Leslie’s own theory. His snobbery makes him remark, “he probably read it somewhere.” Albee, through this confrontation, probably tries to reiterate the point that the hierarchy is deep-rooted long since the origin of species, it is natural.

According to Amacher, “Seascape signifies the rejection of modern civilization by the newts (the reptiles)- the rejection of frightening technology, rejection of human social and sexual mores, rejection-most of all- of the questionable assumption that the evolution of the human species in its long, slow movement from primeval water to the
present mode of existence on dry land is ‘for the better’.” (Amacher. Edward Albee. Auburn University, Revised Edition, 1982. P.166-167)

He adds, “Albee also means that it is impossible to stop the force of evolution as a scientific phenomenon. Implied in the newts’ challenge at the curtain, however, seems to be the idea that a radical about-face in many areas of human existence would most certainly be necessary if evolution is going to be ‘for the better’, equated with progress. Albee does not deny the possibility of such a reversal- in fact, he would encourage it. Albee seems to say that cul-de-sac in which we now find ourselves is of our own making. We are responsible for having taken our species to the verge of extinction.” (Amacher. P.167)

Though the impression of the plot is that of fantasy, Albee has insisted, “Seascape is a completely realistic and absolutely naturalistic play. It is merely a speeded up examination of the process of evolution.” (Amacher. P.316)

**COUNTING THE WAYS (1976)**

He ----- A young couple------- She

Once again in this play Albee deals with the theme of depth and durability of love in conjugal relationship. He has dealt with a similar theme in his earlier plays also. One can say that if he tries to explore the relationship at much later phase in *A Delicate Balance* or *Seascape*, here, in this short play the couple is quite young. Here he probes the depth and intensity of love within a couple at a very early stage of marital life. Only seven years have passed since their marriage. Male-female and husband-wife relationship has always remained a focus of Albee’s interest. Here he peeps into the psyche of a young couple; and explores the male-female relationship from a new angle.
Male-Female Relationship

Here only two characters take part in the action. They are husband and wife. Indirect reference to other relationships has also been made, especially with respect to the wife. Those relationships are related to her nostalgic memories about the boys in her life while she is still in her teens. Another reference is about her sister, but nothing directly related to her. Thus the prime focus remains on the male-female relationship only.

Both, the husband and wife are leading the mechanical routine of their married life. The play begins with an abrupt question from her, “Do you love me?” He doesn’t comprehend the propriety of that question. His casual answer is, “of course”. (P.6)

In Scene ii Albee tries to establish the bond between so called ‘love’ and the tasty food variety provided by the wife and also provided to her. Just as in Pavlov’s experiment, the association between food and love seems to be taken into account by Albee.

The distance, the rift between the couple has been established right in the beginning through the use of separate exits for each of them. This is clearly revealed in Scene iii. In her monologue she bitterly revolts against his complacency. She asks him, “Do you suppose stuffing it in me for you fat and flabby is something I enjoy? ------ hoping it’ll “rise” to the occasion?” She warns him, it will not “rise” to the occasion, even when that day comes. She just refuses to accept his notion of love, which she thinks is, feeding her rich food-items. (P.7-8)

In Scene iv, they try to arrive at the exact meaning of ‘love’, which according to her is “sex”. But he remains confused. He keeps on pondering over it. She suddenly
recalls what her grandmother thought about love. She quotes, “love doesn’t die; we pass through it.” (P.11)

The whole discussion emerges from a newspaper article, *Love In The Afternoon*. Then she ruminates over it and arrives at a conclusion that ‘love at night’ is the real one, though occasionally it is tinged with anger, regrets and hatred. After hearing to her opinion about love he turnts doubtful about her love for himself. He plays the usual game of “She loves me”. “She loves me not” with a rose she has put in a vase. When she finds it out, she comments, “Why didn’t you just ask me?” (P.15) But when she is alone, she tries to undo it by trying to put the petals to the stem. If rose stands for love, Albee wants to assert that whatever is spoiled, ruined cannot be restored, though afterwards He- the husband replaces the vase with a new rose.

This experience of ‘de-petaling’ and trying to reverse the de-petaling transports each of them to their past. He recalls that while young, they used to blow the fluffy dandelions; perhaps for love. She remembers her girlhood when she was sixteen or seventeen. She thinks all the girls and all the boys looked alike with very little differences. Then she recalls how a boy brought her a gardenia flower which she loathed and asked her to let it be placed on her. She had to accept it in spite of her loathing. Her ordeal didn’t end here. Another boy- her schoolmate also came with a gardenia. Perhaps, he was in love with her, though he never mentioned it. And she had to accept his flower too. She keeps on pondering, if his casual conversation had any special significance. Perhaps she was attracted towards him without being aware of it. She confesses to herself, “I never saw the shy boy again. I have thought about him, though, from time to time, during love.” (P.25)

All the while, throughout her nostalgic spell, he keeps on asking about his shirt as he doesn’t find his shirt. But she is lost in the memories, she fails to hear and respond to him. This scene establishes disharmony between them which is highlighted further in the
subsequent scenes. She keeps on referring to the wilting of roses- fading love while he ruminates over, if love is so crucially important for life as other objects like his shirt, water, delicious food, so on and so forth. This thought arises as he suddenly recalls a line from his favourite poet- Auden’s poem, “Thousands have lived without love, but none without water.” (P.26)

He recalls having been wept after Auden’s death. Then he starts pondering over death- its meaning, the ways of dying, slow gradual death, sense of loss and pain associated with it etc. She still talks about “wilting of roses” and then casually mentions them to be kept on the table “between their beds” and he suddenly realizes that their beds have been separated, since when, he doesn’t remember. It means the decay, loss of love, physical intimacy even without being aware of it. He is horrified by the thought. He keeps on asking, “When did that happen?”(P.28 Scene xiii). He is very desperate to know ‘why’ and ‘when’ did it happen. She takes it very coolly, in a detached manner. The following extract is a telling comment on their relationship and probably the marital relationship in general.

**He**: When did it happen? When did our lovely bed ----- split and become two? When did a table appear where there had been no space, in the center of our lovely bed?

**She**: (Very reasonable) Well, I suspect it’s been coming.

**He**: And those beds! ------- they are single; they’re for a solitary, or for a corpse!

**She**: These things sneak upon you.

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**She**: Well, it happens sooner or later, look around you; look at your friends.---- May be we’ll be lucky and it won’t go further.

**He**: (After a second) Further? Further?

**She**: (Quietly; shrugs) of course: separate rooms. (P.33-34)
This conversation also throws light upon men’s and women’s attitude towards these things. She has accepted the facts as they are. She remains unperturbed whereas he is shocked, horrified even panicked by these developments in their relationship. In Scene xvi, he suddenly asks her, “How many children do we have?” She is not sure whether they are three or four! She goes in to check and then announces them to be ‘three’. As this asking is strange, equally strange is her not being sure about the number of kids.

Once again the conversation turns to the food items. He notices one of the items missing from the list. She admits that, that item, Crème Brulee not being there and suddenly asks him, “Do you love me?” She wants to check what he loves more, the delicacies she makes or she as a person! Then in a roundabout way she tells him that by mistake she had burnt the caramel crust over it and that’s how it is spoiled. Again she repeats the same question, “Do you love me?” She also offers to prepare another favourite item for him. (P.45-47) It seems that her thoughts are constantly revolving around the same topic. Again in the last scene, she asks him a more probing question,

She: If you love me ------- how do you know you love me?

He: “How do I love thee? Let me count the ways!”

Though he tries to take it lightly, she keeps on insisting. Then he imagines a dangerous situation like a sudden attack by robbers and asks her if she wants to know how he would behave in that situation! Then he thinks over that possibility and answers,

He: Damned if I know! Protect you probably- if the old animal instinct was working; give it a split second of civilized thought, of course, and who’s to say?

(More serious) I do love you, you know. I mean I’m young enough to make a change
if I wanted—start again, fully, without it being substitutive, or anything. I could do all that, but I’m not going to, I don’t even want to.

She: (Bitter and hopeful simultaneously) Do you cheat on me a lot?

He denies it strongly and once again assures her of his love for her. Then all of a sudden asks her, “Do you love me?” Her answer is not that clear. At first she is evasive. She says, “I don’t know.” Then modifies it, saying, “I think I do.”

Probably right from the beginning she is apprehensive about it. Therefore she asks him about it; again and again. She wants to check whether it is pure love which doesn’t expect anything in return. Finally, she voices the perennial fear in the minds of the wives, if he cheats on her, not only occasionally but ‘a lot’. After his response, she feels assured and therefore comes at the conclusion, that she, too, loves him. (P.50-51)

Bigsby observes, “Counting The Ways is a series of variations on the theme of love, deriving its title from an Elizabeth Barret Browning poem, it examines, in a series of brief scenes, the relationship between a man and a woman, referred to simply as He and She. (C. W. E. Bigsby. A critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama. P.318)

He continues, “Again, Albee’s theme is disintegration, the erosion of memory, the collapse of order, the dulling of emotions, the exhaustion of purpose, a ‘slow falling apart.’ The dominant images are wilting rose and separate beds. Life begins to parody itself and the essence of parody lies in its power to diminish. Albee wants to assert that the human experience is not best defined by pain but by loss. ------ if you can watch your emotions, you know that pain is a misunderstanding: it’s really loss: loss is what it’s really about. Pain becomes the sudden consciousness of that loss. It is the evidence rather than the essence of decline. -----
About the use of language, he remarks, “Language has detached itself from function. Dialogue becomes a game or a formal linguistic pattern rather than an engagement of selves.” (Bigsby. P.319)

**ALL OVER (1971)**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wife (71)</th>
<th>Mistress (61)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Best Friend (73)</td>
<td>Husband (77)</td>
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<td>Daughter (45)</td>
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<th>Doctor (86)</th>
<th>Son (52)</th>
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<td>And</td>
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<td>Nurse (65)</td>
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Edward Albee has presented an unusual set of characters gathered to face a unique situation. He presents the complexity of interpersonal relationships through this set of characters. The characters have been presented as types rather than individuals, though individual attributes have been skillfully depicted.

All the characters are past their sixties except the daughter and the son. However, they too, are not very young, though they behave childishly. The occasion is grave. The master of the house, an affluent business tycoon and a political heavyweight is on the death-bed. All the near and dear ones have gathered to attend the last moment- mostly as a protocol.
The situation is unusual in another sense, too. The man, the husband is not living with his wife presently. The wife has been estranged nearly for twenty years, for the sake of a mistress. Apart from the lawful family members, that is, the wife, the daughter and the son, two more members of the gathering are closely related to him. One is the mistress and another is the Best Friend. The Doctor and a Nurse to assist him are also there, who mostly perform the role of the onlookers, like the chorus of classical tragedy.

If one expects tension and hostility between the two women, Wife and Mistress, strangely enough, they are found to be on good terms with each other. Interestingly, Daughter’s attitude seems to be hostile not only with the Mistress, but also with Wife- her own mother. Son is comparatively much passive. Best friend’s role is also complex. As the Wife of the person who is on the death-bed receives focus by the insiders as well as outsiders, her relationship with every other character related to her husband in one way or the other, will be taken into account.

As is found in almost all plays by Albee, the male-female relationship and its complexity becomes the central issue, same is found in this play, too. Therefore the focus of the discussion will be put on the same. However, Wife’s relationship with Mistress is equally important as Mistress has robbed Wife of her husband, leaving her desolate, lonely. So, this relationship, too, has been discussed in detail.

The dying man and the three women

None of the three women seem to be emotionally shattered at the face of his death. They are there as protocol requires it. When the Wife asks the doctor, “Is he --- dead?” , a small debate takes place between Mistress and Wife over the linguistic issue, the use of right phrase, whether “Is dead” or “have died” is correct. As the doctor doesn’t give any assurance about immediate death, the daughter asks, “Then what was the urgency?” (P.4) But later on she blames Mistress of taking away her father. (P.49) Wife
can compare him, with all tubes and equipment of life-support, with a city, seen from air with its rail-lines and roadways or an octopus, in a detached manner. (P.8)

In the same cool, detached manner they discuss the kind of last rites- cremation or Christian burial. Wife casually asks the doctor about the husband’s progress (towards death) and then asks if he is “holding him back or seeing him through”. The doctor presents a detailed report and remarks that there is almost no flesh for the worms. Over this, Mistress objects and clarifies that it is “flames” and not “worms” as per the man’s wish expressed only to her. (P.21) This debate goes on until the end. Best friend, too, is of the opinion that it should be burial as per the custom and he also insists upon some written document to support Mistress’ claim. (P. 23)

Mistress doesn’t have any claims to be closer to him than Wife or any other family member. She is happy with her status. She recalls, though he stayed with her, he always missed his family especially during X’mas. They had spent one X’mas at a distant island to avoid the festive atmosphere. Even then he had continued to miss his family. After that she had suggested him to spend X’mas with his family. But he never agreed to it. (P.36-38) Wife too, recalls the bitter and sweet memories related to him. Once upon a time they were really close to each other. She comments upon growing rift between them. She says, “---- for a while we were winding down, we were doing it with talk and presence: the silences and the goings off were later; ----“. (P 19) Later on she confesses of her turning alcoholic due to her loneliness and constant supply of liquor from his liquor store, free of cost. Wife is grateful to Mistress for her steadfastness even in adverse conditions and in spite of his occasional cruelty to her. She knows of her broken rib and blackened eyes. And in spite of it he had come to Wife to suggest that she should intercede with Mistress’ father in a political matter which had some connection with mafia. (P.43-44) Daughter cannot stand abuse of her father while he is dying. She is furious and screams at Wife to stop it.
Daughter is too hostile to Mistress. She is not ready to accept Mistress as a part of the family. She doesn’t miss any opportunity to lash at Mistress, hurt and humiliate her. Daughter, while trying to deride Mistress, refers to her two marriages, widowhood and mistresshood. (P.64) She even uses vulgar expression like “fuck you” to insult her. But Mistress treats her as an immature child and clarifies that she is not at all responsible for the deaths of her two husbands, as one died by a heart-attack and another in a car accident. She further adds that she doesn’t expect any share from her father’s wealth. She is content with his love and his company. (P.68-70) Daughter is determined over not allowing Mistress to attend the funeral. Here too, Mistress remains composed and firm. She has decided to attend it, not as a family member but as a family- friend in gray, without any melodrama of grief.

It is surprising that there is perfect understanding between Wife and Mistress. Whenever they are attacked by Daughter, they defend and support each other. While the verbal battle is going on between Daughter and Mistress, Wife has fallen asleep for a little while. Mistress doesn’t allow Daughter to disturb her. But soon Wife gets awakened as she dreams that she had been asleep. She fears that probably something (the death) has taken place while she was asleep. In her dream she has all her past memories mixed up and blended with the present situation. There is an allegory of snapping off of some very familiar thread mixed up with her childhood memory when her aunt had slapped her. The slap in the dream startlingly brings her back from her sleep and dream. (P.75-76).

Daughter is trying to talk to Wife. But she deliberately ignores her even after insistence about answering her by Mistress. She has decided not to talk to her again, unless a formality makes it very essential. While saying so, she uses a situation of visiting a gravesite. Then she picks up the same issue of debate “cremation or funeral” and points out that she would keep on insisting on funeral even if his wish exists in writing. (P.78-79) Mistress doesn’t want to argue over it.
When the wife finds Son overcome with emotions, sobbing over finding everything as it is in the bathroom, Wife rebukes, condemns him for getting moved over trivial things instead of some really meaningful memories related to his father. She reminds him of some of them. Her words reflect her pride over her husband’s behavior as a father and also reveal how she has cherished those precious moments. She says, “Choosing anything, any of the honors, something like he came half way round the world when you were burning up and the doctors had no way of knowing what it was, then, in those times sat by your bed the four days till it began to slacken, then slept.” No! Not any of it! Give us you and you find a BATH-ROOM MOVING?

Well ----- I can’t expect you to be the son of your father and be much; it’s too great a burden; but to be so little is (Harsh) I hope you never marry either of you! (Softer) Let the line end where it is at its Zenith.” (P.80-81)

Wife again and again refers to her love for her husband. She hints at that when she says, “I have loved only once”, after Mistress’ narration about her love story when she and her lover both were in their teens.

In the meanwhile the husband’s condition further deteriorates. He has suffered another hemorrhage, which has hastened him closer to death. Wife again nostalgically recalls the heavenly moments she had spent with him. She refers to their house in the country, outside of Paris and the extra-ordinarily beautiful garden around it. Mistress couldn’t have shared the pleasure to stay there with him as it was burned down. Though she pretends to be lost in the pleasant memories, she is restless and anxious. She suddenly loses her composure and impatiently asks loudly, “Is anyone telling me the truth?” Only when Nurse assures her that he is still alive, she calms down. (P.96-97) As Mistress is curious to know more about the house and garden, Wife continues to describe it, calling it “a tamed wilderness or rather planned wilderness”, but abruptly stops, declaring, she doesn’t want to talk about it any more; as if, she doesn’t want to allow Mistress in the paradise of only two of them.
When the spasm of emotion subsides, Wife, matter-of-factly asks Mistress about her plans after his death. She, too, seriously ponders over it and conveys her thoughts to wife in a way of loud thinking. (P. 100-101) When Mistress asks the same question to her, she remarks that anyway her lonely life after he left her has been a life of a widow and she has adjusted with it. So she doesn’t think that the event of his death will make any significant difference to her life-style. Once again, she gets lost in the memories of their happy family life, but suddenly cuts it short, saying, she didn’t want to talk about it. (P.102)

She has rightly guessed that Best Friend would ask her for marriage after her husband’s death. She makes it clear that she has no plans to accept his proposal. Her justification is, at her age, she is not interested in being someone else’s wife for the remaining short period. But the most important reason she gives to Best Friend is, “------ I am devoted to you, sir, but I am not in love with you. Fill my mouth with mould for having said it, but I love my husband.” (P103) Both, Mistress and Best Friend accept her claim inhesitantly.

Once again, she goes back in memory and recalls their first meeting. She tells, there were many interested in her. But she had no special attraction for any one of them. She continues, “Then he came, accomplished with qualifications, settled in career and full of confidence”. He made her feel like a young child. She felt secure, comfortable as in the company of an elder brother or a responsible grown-up man. She doesn’t still know whether it was love, but she was sure that she was very much willing to marry him if he proposed. They got married after two years. Then she recalls, “thirty years after, he met Mistress and then the happy married life abruptly came to an end”. She wonders what exactly went wrong! Was she herself lacking something? But then she dismisses that thought. (P.103-105)
Soon, the doctor comes and hints that the end may be expected any moment. Wife finds it not easy to face the moment. She feels miserable, pathetic. Mistress advises her “to be a rock” and face the situation bravely. She feels offended and retorts, “You be; you be the rock. I’ve been one, for all the years; steady. It’s profitless.” --------- “You be; you’ve usurped!” A little bitter exchange goes on between the two. Wife can’t forget and digest the fact that Mistress has robbed her of her happiness, despite the understanding. She suddenly declares, she doesn’t love Mistress or anyone for that matter. She repeats it to everyone separately, including Best Friend. Now she turns hysterical, trembling, starts shouting, “I love my husband!!” As the son starts sobbing over this, she shouts at him, too, to stop it.

Mistress remains firm and controlled. She authoritatively asks Wife to stop her hysterics. Wife obeys, calms down, but keeps on talking to herself in broken manner, in a confessional mode of self-reproach. She admits, “Everyone thinks about themselves, no one can help the dying person, actually, those grieving are worried about themselves that what will happen to them after his death”. She further adds that there is nothing like ‘selfless love’! She remarks, “Selfless love? I don’t think so; we love to be loved, and when it’s taken away ---- then why not rage ---- or pule. All we’ve done is think about ourselves. Ultimately.” (P.109-110)

Daughter provokes her by asking, “Why are you crying!” All her defense and self-restraint collapses and finally she accepts her defeat, repeating the words over and over again, broken by sobs, pain and relief, in another hysterical spell, “Because----- I’m ---- Unhappy!” (P. 110) As if, this is the final desperate struggle of the parting soul, immediately after the spell subsides, Doctor declares, “All over” (P.111)

Wife’s behavior reiterates the truth that a woman cannot accept, digest or forget her defeat in love. She may pretend to have overcome the humiliation and coming to
terms with the facts, at a moment of crisis, her defense collapses, her pretence is unmasked. There is a marked difference between the attitudes of Wife and Mistress. Mistress could remain calm, composed, controlled as she is a conqueror. She could retain her dignity, as there is nothing to lose for her, except the physical presence of the man, which she has accepted as an inevitability of the mortal world. On the contrary, Wife has lost everything, long before she was going to lose the last bond of worldly existence of her husband. Naturally, her reaction to the situation is that of a vanquished who finds the last hope, too, vanishing before her eyes. Until the last moment, she is hoping against hope that he may come out of coma, ask for her forgiveness and reconciliation will take place though she is quite aware of the futility of her imagination.

Here, the husband is the cause who casts different effects upon the lives of other two women. As the cause is on the verge of losing it’s existence, there is no point in fighting over it. So the two women make amends. Still, the wound cannot remain concealed at a crucial moment, in spite of the exceptional understanding between the two rivals.

**Wife-Husband-Best Friend** (and his wife)

The main triangle exists between Wife-Husband and Mistress. However, there is another triangular relationship at the secondary level, on one hand it exists between Wife-Husband-Best Friend and on the other hand between Wife-Best Friend-his wife.

When a rift starts widening between Husband and Wife, it seems that Wife and Best Friend have come closer to each other emotionally. As a consequence he has started distancing himself from his own wife. This has affected her mental balance. She has started turning violent, hysteric. As a result of it, she has been sent to a mental asylum.
While doctor is relating his experience with the prisoners doomed with death-penalty, the discussion turns to the legitimacy of killing. Mistress agrees with killing or death penalty for some, of course, for right reason. It seems that Wife doesn’t believe in it. Then she makes an oblique reference to killing by Best Friend of his own wife. Best Friend denies the charge. But Wife means ‘killing metaphorically.’ According to her, the divorce, he has imposed upon his wife, was as good as the death sentence. Her words throw light upon the relationship and the agony of being deserted by one’s husband, the loneliness which is like death penalty and responsible for driving one to insanity. It seems that though she is advocating his wife’s case, she herself has gone through all that pain, suffering, humiliation of being unwanted and the loneliness. So, in a way, she is arguing her own case. When the Best Friend denies the charges, she says, “Just---- divorce. It wasn’t us that did her in--our----- late summer------ arrangement: there had been others. Our ----- mercy to each other, by the lake, the city----- that didn’t take a wild woman.

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-------- no, my dear; fucking- as it is called in public by everyone these days- is not what at her; yours and mine, I mean. Divorce: leave alone. So don’t tell me you don’t believe in murder. You do I do.”

The Best Friend strongly objects to the word ‘insane’ in his wife’s case. However, he admits to her violent behavior, but asserts that it was transitory. Then he relates his recent encounter with his wife, who is still undergoing treatment at a mental asylum. She had been in the back seat of a car and her sister at the wheel. He greets her with the formal greetings, but is afraid of some violent reaction. But she behaves quite normally, without any sign of insanity. She clearly remembers the intimate romantic moments and seems to be conscious of the present. She reminds him how she used to rub her lips against his ear and then grab him by her teeth, till it bled. But she says; now she won’t do it as the hair coming out of his ear prevents her from repeating the act. She has taken his leave in the same composed manner. Though she looked sad, grim, there was no bitterness or spite in her behavior (P.31-35)
This narration shows that he has still a soft corner for his wife and also a guilty feeling for his role in driving her to madness. The Wife also had pondered over seeking divorce and marrying Best Friend. But afterwards she had given up the plan. She has preferred the status of a deserted wife rather than that of an ex-wife. (P.36)

It is clear that the wife was never genuinely interested in the Best friend as a life-partner. Towards the end of the play, she announces it in clear-cut terms that she had devotion for him, but she had loved only one man and that is her husband. (P.103) She must have come closer to him in her distressed state of mind, temporarily, as she had desperately needed some emotional support, companionship during that period. It is also ironical that Best Friend is the seducer of the friend’s wife. There is no hint about the husband being aware of the relationship between the two, though the Mistress is. It seems that she had kept the secret with herself.

**The Daughter’s relationship** with her father and brother –

The daughter is probably a victim of an ‘Electra-Complex’. According to her, she loves her father more than his wife or his mistress. That is why her behavior with both of them is hostile. Out of this conviction she dares to slap her mother, though afterwards she temporarily feels sorry for it. As she is possessive about her father, she hates both the women who could enjoy his company.

She doesn’t lose any opportunity to deride Mistress. She accuses her of, “preying for men, a gold digger, trying to stake claims upon the share of her father’s property etc”. She displays the pervert interest when Mistress narrates the episode of her love-life in her teens and keeps on taunting her. She has never accepted Mistress as a part of their family. She even blames her of robbing away her father from her. (P.49) She is determined not to allow Mistress to attend the funeral of her father.
Probably for the same reason, she is unable to find a life-partner until the age of forty-five. Her complex seems to have turned into a serious psychological disorder. That is why she substitutes her brother for her father. She also demands a massage to her neck and back, from him. She derives a sensuous pleasure from it. She never feels satiated with the massage. She gets irritated if he stops massaging or complains of his fingers aching. (P.61-65) This shows that how possessive she has been of her father and also of her brother.

Anne Paolucci observes about Albee’s use of stage props, “Albee has surpassed others in this technique. His use of stage props is intimate and discursive, not mere background or sheer experimentation, but living dialogue which expands as awareness increases. Perhaps the most intriguing and ambitious of these ‘props’ is the dying man in All Over. The unseen patient, who has been kept alive in the hospital with tubes and transfusions, is the source of life for the people gathered in the room where he lies. He is the heartbeat of the dramatic action; the others nearby are ‘wired’ into him like the T.V. cameras downstairs and the audience itself are ‘wired’ into the action.” (Anne Paolucci, From Tension to Tonic- Plays by Edward Albee. Southern Illinois University Press, 1972. P.7)

Anne Paolucci finds the set of characters in All Over reminiscent of the people in A Delicate Balance, but the play more static and less suggestive. She has expected the dialogue to be sharper, insights more revealing, the characterization more varied. Still, she ranks it with the best of Albee’s repertory.

She comments, “The living is dying just as surely as the unseen patient behind the hospital screen. They make sounds but there is no energy to sustain them; they talk of love but there is no trace of it. All Over is the dying breath of an exhausted past. There is no meaningful future ahead, only the heightened immediacy of the present moment- the present which is gloomy and inarticulate, buried in self pity and isolated intentions, as
artificial as the temporary illusion of life provided by the tubes, injections and medication. In final analysis, this monotonous, subdued skirting of psychological realities may have been exactly what the dramatist intended; the death vigil is the unmistakable sign of impotence.” (Paolucci. P.122)

Neither Amacher is happy with *All Over* as it lacks ‘dramatic urgency’ and the characters are ‘thin and sketchy’.

About the characters of *All Over*, Amacher says, “Their mutual surrender of complexity and individuality is expressed in their identification with role. They have indeed allowed themselves to become allegorical, a reductive process identified as such by Agnes in *A Delicate Balance*. And the metaphysical implications of this situation are no less clear than the social. With their god dead they will be left to a task of self definition which is beyond them because they have a long since surrendered their independence and freedom. Their only virtue lies in their sheer fate of survival. (Amacher. Edward Albee, Auburn University. 1982. Revised Edition. P.313)

Bigsby interprets *All Over*, “The collapse of the spirit. He also describes it as’ the slow extinction of those human qualities’ which might be used to counter the natural absurdity of man’s condition.

Albee seeks the broader social and cultural implications of the play by invoking the deaths of the Kennedys and of Martin Luther King. Indeed, the dying man is precisely presented as an icon of this society, his death attracting the attention of media. To some degree, indeed, it may be possible to distinguish in the play an allegory for America itself- a country which had pulled itself ‘up by its own bootstraps’, which once accepted ‘all the responsibility to itself, the Puritan moral soul’.” (C. W. E. Bigsby. *A Critical Introduction to Twentieth Century American Drama*. P. 314)
VIJAY TENDULKAR’S PLAYS

Vijay Tendulkar was born in 1928 in a middle class but culturally rich family. His father had a rich library which also included Western literature. His family, friends and school-teachers have positively contributed to his shaping as a creative writer. His father used to direct and act in the plays. As a child, Tendulkar used to attend the rehearsals and recite the dialogues. His school teachers, V. V. Bokil and D. B. Mokashi happened to be creative writers who provided him invaluable guidance.

Another factor influencing his career as a writer was his fascination for films. He would study the dialogues from the famous director, V. Shantaram’s classics. He was equally crazy of Hollywood films. Some times he watched them with the money meant for school fees. He was not keen about further formal education. So he did not opt for University education.

He shifted to Mumbai where he tried to earn his own living. He took many odd jobs. This was the period of struggle for him, when he learnt stark realities of life. In due course, he settled into journalism. Here he had to write on a variety of topics in different styles. Simultaneously he continued with his creative writing. This period enriched his world of experience and taught him to look at the happenings without prejudice. It also provided him with a lot of germs for creative writing and enabled him to mould his style and diction suitably.

His association with the American embassy as a translator brought him in contact with the American literature. He has translated atleast two plays by Williams, namely, The Glass Menagerie and A Streetcar Named Desire and a play by Albee, The Zoo Story.
He is a prolific writer. He champions socially significant issues. He explores the depths of human psyche as well as the nature and meaning of human existence. His place in the History of Indian Drama is comparable to that of Ibsen in Western Drama. He has always experimented with the dramatic experience, techniques and methods of presentation. He got to be acknowledged as the father of Modern Indian Drama with his landmark play, *Silence! The Court Is In Session*. (1968). He has remained a controversial writer for his bold themes. He was harshly criticized for the obscenity in language and action for his plays like *The Vultures* and *Sakharam Binder*. His *Ghashiram Kotwal* earned him recognition throughout India and abroad. He has always remained an inspiration for the playwrights of the younger generation, like Mahesh Elkunchwar, Satish Alekar and many others.

He passed away in 2008.

*SILENCE! THE COURT IS IN SESSION* (1968)

(Damale) Sukhatme

Kashikars-------------Benare--------------Karnik

Ponkshe        Samant        Balu Rokade

In this play Tendulkar focuses upon complex interpersonal relationships. However it is different from other plays by him, in the sense that he doesn’t deal with any sort of blood-relationship or marital relationship. The exception is the Kashikar couple. But that has been dealt with tangentially. Here, Tendulkar has set a vast canvas of a small section of society associated with Ms. Benare, one way or the other, Ms. Benare being at the centre. Here, he mainly discusses man-woman relationship but at a different level. Secondly, he doesn’t deal with Ms. Benare’s relationship with any single man, but he
reveals different faces of man and exposes a brute, a vulture behind the mask of a human being. Therefore, the interpersonal relationship should be discussed accordingly, that is, Ms. Benare’s relationship with other men.

**Ms. Benare and other men around her**

The play begins with a light vein. Ms. Benare is a part of an amateur theatre group which presents the shows of a mock trial at different places. The group has arrived at a place a bit early. The show is to take place at night. The members of the team want some entertainment in the meanwhile. As no other resources are available at that small place, someone suggests playing a game of a mock-trial within the members. All agree. They have to fix the charges and the accused. The men, who are in majority, decide that Ms. Benare should be the accused. Being a woman, the convenient charge against her is to be an infanticide. From this point the line between reality and fantasy starts fading. Consciously or unconsciously, everybody is aware that Ms. Benare is passing through something similar to it. Thus their choice of charge and the accused emerges naturally through their subconscious. The whole play is ‘a play within a play’. Ms. Benare undergoes complete metamorphosis through the play.

Everybody is aware of her superior status as compared to them for various reasons. She, too, is quite aware of that and keeps on asserting it. Her behavior in the beginning is proud, snobbish, gay and dominating. Slowly, gradually she is downsized, so much so that, towards the end she is left a completely vanquished pathetic figure. In a way, there is an unspoken understanding within other members of the group of making her a target, hunting her to death. Unfortunately, she is unable to see through the trap and falls prey to their design. The main adversaries of Ms. Benare are Mr. Kashikar and Mr. Sukhatme. Others only support the conspiracy in their own capacity. Therefore it would be better to analyze the relationship of each of them and the causes of their hostility with her separately, as well as, as the team of hunters.
In their usual show Karnik plays the role of an accused; the trial being conducted against President Johnson who is to be charged with the possession of atomic weapons in the mock trial. It is clear that two members of their usual team will not be able to make it for that night’s show. One is prof. Damale who plays the role of the counsel for the accused. Another is one Mr. Rawate who plays the role of a fourth witness. Sukhatme who plays the role of the prosecuting counsel is willing to perform the role of other counsel also. They decide to train a local person, Mr. Samant for the role of fourth witness in the absence of Mr. Rawate.

Mr. Kashikar’s highhanded style has been established through his treatment to his wife and Balu Rokade whose position in the Kashikar household is not better than a servant. Balu normally plays an insignificant role of an usher. He has no dialogue. He wishes to play the role of the fourth witness in the absence of Mr. Rawate. But Kashikar curtly says “No” to him. Every now and then he insults his wife, who has taken it for granted.

Ms. Benare’s prudish attitude, looking down upon others, has also been established in the beginning. She wants something to read. So Samant offers her a pulp fiction. She turns down the offer saying she does not read that kind of books. Then Sukhatme deliberately offers her the Holy Scriptures like Bible and Bhagwat Geeta. She turns down that offer too, saying she is not that old to read those books. Then Sukhatme who is a lawyer in real life too, suggests playing a game of conducting a trial in an imaginary case against someone. All agree with the idea.

Samant is sent out to bring cigarettes and Ms. Benare leaves to take a wash. In her absence a plot is hatched against her. They ponder over the idea of making someone else an accused. Everybody offers to play the accused including Balu and Mrs. Kashikar. But they are silenced by Mr. Kashikar. It seems that they have some knowledge of Ms.
Benare’s affair. So with a secret understanding all arrive at the decision to make her the accused for a change. (P.72-73) Then they think about the charge to be leveled against her. Kashikar remarks, “It should be a charge with social significance.” That gives Ponkshe an exciting idea which he shares with others; who readily accept it.

Ms. Benare who is humming a song about a poor sparrow whose nest has been robbed by someone is surprised by Ponkshe who announces “her arrest for the crime of an extremely grave nature.” She is to be brought before the court. Ms. Benare is stunned. Before she realizes, all assume their roles. A stand for the accused is arranged around her. Kashikar, as a justice, announces the charge against her which is that of infanticide under section 302 of I.P.C. All take positions for the game of hunting. (P.74)

Samant, who is a novice to the game, as well as, the relationship between Ms. Benare and others, is shocked after realizing the nature of the charge. Unwittingly, he refers to a similar case related to a widow. While Ms. Benare is exasperated by the charge, others coolly discuss the social significance of the charge, enjoy their pans and cigarettes.

After this deviation all return to the main business. Benare’s addressing Balu Rokade as “Balu’ irritates him as it has a derogatory sense. Still she continues to address him in the same manner. She has regained her composure in the meanwhile. So, in the same vein, she mimics Kashikar, who constantly insults his wife. Benare is reprimanded for taking the court proceedings lightly. Others support Kashikar on the issue of seriousness. Benare denies the charge of infanticide strongly. Sukhatme, as a counsel for the prosecution is asked to present his argument. He delivers a speech on the nobility, holiness of motherhood. Kashikar couple helps him with some famous quotes in this regard. Benare makes fun of it by comparing the speech with a school composition and again mimics Kashikar’s words of reprimand.
Ponkshe is summoned to the witness box as the first witness. After the formalities of oath etc. Sukhatme starts his interrogation. Benare mimics him too. From this point, the real game begins. There seems to be secret understanding between the two. The choice of questions and answers is deliberate. Benare has not realized the design. So she still takes everything lightly, making fun of them, mimicking them.

**Sukhatme**: Mr. Ponkshe, is the accused married or unmarried?

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**Ponkshe**: To the public eye, she is unmarried.

**Sukhatme**: How would you describe your view of the moral conduct of the accused? On the whole like that of a normal unmarried woman?

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**Ponkshe**: It is different.

**Sukhatme**: For example?

**Ponkshe**: The accused is a bit too much.

**Sukhatme**: A bit too much- what does that mean?

**Ponkshe**: It means -----, on the whole, she runs after men too much.

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**Sukhatme**: Mr. Ponkshe, can you tell me- does the accused have a particularly close relationship with any man- married or unmarried?

**Benare**: (Interrupting) Yes, with the counsel for the prosecution himself! And with the judge. To say nothing of Ponkshe, Balu here or Karnik.

**Rokade**: Miss Benare, I’m warning you, there’ll be trouble. (P.81-82)
All protest against the lack of seriousness. The judge, Kashikar, too has left his seat temporarily. After returning, he busies himself in getting hold of his ear-pick. Actually, everyone of them is making a mockery of the court proceeding in their own way by chewing *pan*, smoking, ear-picking etc. But all of them blame only Benare for taking it lightly. It is clear that they have singled her out as a target of their animosity. Ponkshe even goes ahead to stamp her behavior as lunatic, hinting at the derailment of her mind.

The next witness is Karnik who is termed as a great actor; though his acting is very melodramatic. Karnik disappointed Sukhatme by giving strange answer even to the leading questions. Sukhatme tries to get Karnik’s opinion about Benare’s conduct, and that too, in her real life. Here, too, Sukhatme fails to squeeze the desired answer from Karnik. Then he assumes more attacking stance. He seems to be determined to implicate Benare.

**Sukhatme:** Mr.Karnik – have you, in any circumstances --- seen the accused in a compromising situation? Answer me yes or no. Yes or no?

**Karnik:** Not me. But Rokade has.

**Rokade:** (confused) Me? I don’t know a thing! (P.85)

Finally Sukhatme is successful. Now he calls Rokade to the witness box though he has denied having any knowledge about Benare’s conduct. Rokade is reluctant to depose in the witness box. Karnik, too, tells that he was not serious about his statement. He only wanted to pass the buck to someone. But he is ignored and Rokade is forced to come to the witness box by Kashikar. Rokade has to obey. He is trembling with fear. Kashikar’s stand is noteworthy. When Rokade was begging for some significant role, especially in the absence of one of the witnesses, he was denied permission by Kashikar. But when he finds it convenient, the same Kashikar forces him to appear as a witness. Mrs. Kashikar, too, supports this plan and entices Rokade to prove his mettle by
providing “a marvelous, unbroken bit of evidence.” She promises him a better chance later on. As usual she is silenced by Kashikar for overstepping his territory.

Everyone is putting pressure upon Rokade, Kashikar by deriding him for his pitiful appearance and threatening him to speak, Mrs. Kashikar, appealing his manhood and showing his guts, Sukhatme, coaxing him to speak something etc. Nothing helps him overcome his fear, but Benare’s constant teasing makes the magic. Now he is determined to take revenge. He gathers courage and starts speaking. Benare’s nemesis begins.

**Rokade:** I’ll tell you. I went to his house some time ago.

**Sukhatme:** Whose house? -------

**Rokade:** ------ I went to—to Damle’s house!

**Rokade:** Yes. I went there in the evening. As night was falling. And there- *she* was!

Miss. Benare.

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**Rokade:** (looking at Benare) Now laugh! Make fun of me! (P.86)

Benare is tense. All others are excited and curious to know more. Sukhatme shows a pervert, cruel curiosity in knowing what Rokade saw there. Kashikar, as a judge, remarks that the question is too personal. Benare, too, objects to the queries about her private life as it has nothing to do with the trial. She is actually shaken by the unexpected disclosure. Nobody pays heed to her protests and Rokade is encouraged to provide more details. However Rokade is unable to add more spice to the account. The relieved Benare again starts making fun of him which provokes Rokade to be more vicious. Unwittingly he exposes her completely. He asks her, “Then why did your face fall when you saw me? ----- Damle got rid of me. Without letting me come in.” (P.87) Benare makes a weak attempt to take it lightly. She defiantly says that she may be seen alone with many other men. She asks them does that mean that her behavior is suspicious! Sukhatme wants it be
recorded as evidence against her. Benare has provided them with some ammunition against her. They proceed with greater enthusiasm.

Sukhatme senses that he could get more spice from Samant. So he calls him to the witness-box. Samant is confused. He cannot make out between real and imaginary. After some stray talk they return to Samant’s testimony. Sukhatme asks questions to Samant from where Rokade has left. He prompts Samant that he reached at Damle’s room half an hour after Rokade. Samant is more confused. But they force him to imagine it for the sake of the trial. Finally, he prepares himself for it. He is amazingly inspired. He presents his account so convincingly that everyone praises him. He tells that he visited Damle’s room, but he did not let him in. He had come there to arrange Damle’s lecture. So he stayed there while he heard a woman sobbing from within. As per his judgment, the woman was not a family member as her manner was secretive. His next imaginative addition highly excites all of them. He adds, while waiting outside Damle’s door, he heard some words spoken by the woman. All are impatient to know the words. Samant looks into the book in his hand and reads from it, “If you abandon me in this condition, where shall I go?” His further account leaves Benare tenser and others more blood-thirsty. Now he quotes the conversation between Damle and the woman.

Samant: “Where you should go is entirely your problem. I feel great sympathy for you. But I can do nothing. I must protect my reputation.”

At that she said, “That’s all you can talk about, your reputation? How heartless you are! He replied, “Nature is heartless.”

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Samant: If you abandon me, I shall have no choice but to take my life.” “Then do that. I also have no choice. If you kill yourself, I shall be in torment.”

Samant: “But this threat will not make me budge an inch from my considered course of
action,” he said. She replied, “Bear it in mind that you will not escape the guilt of murdering two”—two? –I’m wrong—no, I’m right—“two living beings.” And then there came a terrifying laugh. (P.92-93)

All this account is unbearable to Benare as it is too close to the truth. She protests vehemently. Everybody, including Samant, agrees that it is all made up. Samant tells that he has quoted all that from the book with him. All others find it so thrilling that Sukhatme wants him to go on. Now Benare threatens to leave if it goes on in the same manner. Mrs.Kashikar remarks hypocritically, “But my dear Benare, as your conscience is clear, why flying into such a violent rage?” Sukhatme cannot get any further matter from Samant as he cannot get that page. But he does not fail to instruct to note down everything as a part of evidence against the accused.

Benare is annoyed, agitated, frustrated. She breaks into tears; and leaves. Others openly discuss the fun they had derived from the episode. Only Samant feels sorry for Benare. They also discuss the possibility of an affair between Benare and Damle. Sukhatme strongly believes about its truth value. Surprisingly, it is supported by Rokade, who is otherwise tongue-tied.

Benare returns. All hush up. She is determined not to let it go any further. Without speaking to anyone, she prepares to leave the room and bring an end to their enjoyment at her cost, once for all. She moves to the door. But the door has been locked from outside as the bolt is not working properly. She keeps on trying and banging on the door helplessly. Samant goes to help her. But the door won’t budge. All are overjoyed perversely as they find that the escape route for their quarry is barred. They look forward to complete enjoyment of their hunting expedition. They decide to call Benare- the accused to the witness box. They now take everything very seriously, as if; it is a real trial for a real crime. Then onwards they turn more hostile towards her, with sharpened weapons; as they have smelled the blood.
Benare is stunned and speechless. She does not respond to being summoned to the witness-box. So Mrs. Kashikar volunteers to fetch her there. She fails to respond to other instructions also such as taking oath etc. Again Mrs. Kashikar takes the responsibility, but without success. They proceed without her taking an oath. But she is warned of contempt of court.

Sukhatme deliberately addresses her “Leela Damle.” Samant innocently tries to correct him. Sukhatme asks her routine questions. But she is not in a position to answer any of them, as if, she is only physically present there, but her senses are numbed. Sukhatme is playing lawyer’s role quite seriously to the hilt. When she fails to answer the question related to her age, they decide her age to be around thirty four and then she is questioned for the reason of being unmarried till so late. In the meanwhile Kashikar has put the blame on the social reformers like Agarkar and Karve for the behavior of women like Benare, their free-will and spinsterhood etc. When Benare does not open her mouth at all, Mrs. Kashikar is summoned as a next witness. She is too eager to do so. She is asked the reason behind Benare’s being still unmarried, in spite of all her qualities. The exchange between the two is a classic example of venomous attitude and mud-slinging business of the society.

Mrs. Kashikar: Damn the explanation! Anyone who really wants to can get married in a flash!

Sukhatme: You mean that Miss Benare didn’t want to----

Mrs. Kashikar: What else? That’s what happens these days when you get everything without marrying. They just want comfort.

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Sukhatme: What do you mean by ‘everything’? Give me an instance.
Mrs. Kashikar provides many instances of Benare’s outrageous behavior. However Sukhatme is not pleased. He says, “------ at the most you can say all this shows how free she is.” Then she provides more solid evidence against Benare. She points out that Benare wants only Damle to accompany her after the late night performances. She adds that if others like Kashikars themselves offer their company, she avoids them and slips away with Damle. Sukhatme is pleased with this piece of interesting evidence. However he tries to display his impartial attitude. So he suggests that she must have preferred Damle’s company as an elderly responsible family man. Mrs. Kashikar is enraged by that remark as it suggests that Kashikars are not responsible. So she points out that on one occasion she made advances even to Rokade who is young and unmarried. Sukhatme is pleased with this new information. He now wants Rokade to come to the witness-box. He deliberately goes to Benare and remarks “the game is warmed up, hasn’t it?” to tease her.

Rokade is reluctant to give details. Not only Sukhatme, but everyone including Kashikars start pressing him, prompting him. Finally, Rokade gathers courage to open his mouth. According to him Benare held his hand, but he got it freed from her. Then she had asked him not to tell about it to anyone. Benare opens her mouth after this complete lie. But she is silenced and reprimanded for obstructing the proceedings. Rokade adds that she had threatened him with dire consequences, in case, he tells to anyone. Sukhatme points out that this is an utter outrageous act with a much younger boy, who is just like her brother. Moreover, she had threatened him and tried to cover up her sinful deed! This support to his lies emboldens Rokade. He adds that he had slapped her after that. He also boasts of reproaching her for her behavior and describing the whole episode to Mrs. Kashikar. Kashikar forgets his role and pours his wrath upon Rokade for confiding in his wife and keeping him in the dark about it. Rokade apologizes to him. As he does not have anything more to add, he leaves the witness-box. Mrs. Kashikar is surprised by the last part of slapping Benare, as Rokade hadn’t told her about it. Samant, too, does not believe it due to his experience with Benare’s behavior. But nobody wants to pay heed to him.
Ponkshe is impatiently waiting for his turn. When he is summoned, he throws another bombshell. He says, “Just ask her this. Why does she keep a bottle of TIK-20 in her purse?” (P.104) Sukhatme continues his probe with Ponkshe as he has got hold of new powerful incriminating evidence against Benare. Ponkshe, instead of answering a question related to TIK-20 bottle- a bottle of poison- tells about something else. It is about a note from Benare, requesting him to meet her at a restaurant. Then he describes the secret meeting with her. According to his account when she opened her purse for a handkerchief a bottle of TIK-20 had rolled out. Sukhatme is more curious to know what happened between the two in the privacy of a family room. Benare is silently pleading him not to disclose her secrets. But Ponkshe goes on callously. What he reveals is quite shocking.

Ponkshe: She made known her desire to marry me.

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Sukhatme: ------- Did she tell you she was in love with you, etc?

Ponkshe: No. But she told me she was pregnant. (P.105)

This sensational revelation drives them more curious to know the name of the man making her pregnant. Ponkshe hypocritically continues,

Ponkshe: Miss. Benare made me promise never to tell anyone the name of the man who- so she said- had made her pregnant. So far, I have kept my word.

Kashikar: ----But what I don’t understand, Ponkshe, is why, if Miss. Benare was

Pregnant by one man, she expressed a desire to marry another --.

They want to know Ponkshe’s answer, which was obviously negative. Benare’s plight is quite pitiable. She tries to stop Ponkshe from revealing the name. But she is silenced by the so called judge- Kashikar. He then orders Ponkshe to give the details of
their conversation. Ignoring Benare’s protests, appeals and threats, Ponkshe continues.
The first piece of information is Sukhatme’s harsh criticism by Benare about his poor performance and bad reputation as a lawyer. This is enough to add oil to fire. Then the next bombshell comes which is targeted at Kashikar.

**Ponkshe:** ------ Kashikar torments poor Rokade. Because he constantly suspects an entanglement between him and his wife. Because they have no children, you see

This is a most sensitive issue for Kashikars, which Benare has hit at. It is enough to assume utter hostility towards her. Karnik is dying to know what Benare has spoken against him, especially about his poor acting talent. But he is disappointed there. According to Ponkshe’s account, she then has opened the topic of marriage, his expectations about a wife. In a round about manner she has proposed her own case as an experienced bride in an unusual way. On his asking, she has clarified about the unusualness. He recounts the conversation,

**Ponkshe:** ------ She replied, “The girl’s just gone through a shattering heartbreak, and” wait, I will think of the exact words—yes- “the fruit of love” – here she stumbled a little—“is in her womb. Actually it is no fault of hers. But her situation is very serious indeed. She wants to bring up the child. In fact it is only for the child she wants to go on living and get married.” -------

Then Ponkshe had asked the name of that fellow. She had defended him. Ponkshe adds, “Then she said, ‘she worshipped that man’s intellect. But all he understood was her body.’ She added other things on the same line. How she couldn’t find a place in Damle’s life.” Thus Damle’s name is revealed. According to Ponkshe she had fallen to his feet. But he had reproached her for considering him so worthless. Then she had pretended, as if, everything was just a joke and left hurriedly. However, Ponkshe didn’t believe it, as
there were tears in her eyes. Sukhatme is greatly pleased to have stronger evidence against the accused.

Now Karnik comes forward to add something. According to him, Rokade’s account of his confrontation with Benare was incorrect, as Karnik himself was a witness to the whole episode; who was standing in the dark to watch everything. It was true that Benare was pressing Rokade for marriage. She had promised to support him. But Rokade lacked the courage to marry her without Mrs. Kashikar’s permission. Secondly, he was not ready to accept her in that condition. He was scared of society’s reaction. Finally, he had threatened to reveal everything to Mrs. Kashikar, which had enraged her so much that she had slapped him. Though Rokade denies the truth, it is clear that his lie is exposed.

Karnik has to add some more spice to malign Benare’s character, which he has come to know, merely by chance, Benare’s cousin had passed him the information about Benare’s one more attempt of suicide. Sukhatme readily grabs it as a precedent to the bottle of TIK-20. The reason was her disappointment in a love-affair, that too, an immoral one. She had fallen in love with her maternal uncle at the age of 15. Kashikar and Sukhatme, both are highly excited. Sukhatme remarks, “-------- The present conduct of the accused is totally licentious. -------- But it now seems that her past, too, is smeared in sin.” (P.111) It is all unbearable for Benare. She gathers her strength to leave the place. But Mrs. Kashikar makes her sit down with full hostility, as if, Benare is a real criminal who is trying to run away.

Now Kashikar is so excited that defying the norms, he himself wants to appear in the witness-box. Even Sukhatme is surprised by his gesture. He makes Sukhatme call him to the witness-box. He is too prejudiced against the grown up unmarried girls whom he calls “a sinful canker on the body of society.” Then he adds some more evidence against Benare. He refers to the conversation overheard at Nanasaheb Shinde’s residence. He had
come to know from Nanasaheb that the woman was a school-mistress. His guess is, Nanasaheb was referring to none other than Benare. He could relate it clearly now with Nanasaheb’s telephonic talk with someone about dismissing a female teacher for her immoral behavior, of being pregnant without marriage. Benare is shocked by this new piece of information. This is the last straw for Benare’s doom.

Now Sukhatme’s role as counsel for prosecution is over. He assumes the role of a counsel for the accused. He behaves, as if; he has already lost the case. He deliberately calls the names of Prof. Damle and Nanasaheb who cannot appear in the witness-box. As there is no one to defend Benare, the job of the counsel for prosecution has been easy. Sukhatme is asked to plead the case as a counsel for prosecution. Sukhatme makes a highly spirited speech taking stock of all the so called crimes committed by Benare. He urges the court to show no mercy for her womanhood and pronounce the severest punishment to her for the grave crime. The same Sukhatme makes a plea for mercy for humanity’s sake.

As a rule, Benare is offered an opportunity to say something in her defense. She is speechless. She knows that her words will hit only the deaf ears. Still all thoughts crowd in her mind to clarify her position. Instead of her open argument, Tendulkar has presented it through her soliloquy which creates deeper impact than her words. She confesses to everything including her attempts of suicide. But she has enjoyed the experience of being alive anew, after her failed attempt. She wants to live life fully, be among the children as their devoted teacher. She feels the pangs of being robbed of that joy through her dismissal. She had never let the shadow of the suffering fall upon the children.

She confesses to her first love affair with her uncle while she had just stepped into her teens. But everyone had opposed their marriage and the lover had meekly backed out leaving her in a lurch. In the rage and frustration, she had attempted suicide by jumping from the terrace. Her second experience of love had been equally distressing. She had
worshiped the unusual intellect of Prof. Damle. Unfortunately, he could not look beyond her body. She does not regret the heavenly pleasure enjoyed through her body. Now she wants that body only for the sake of the fruit of their love. She never wanted to kill the life shaping within her. On the contrary, she wanted to give the child a father to be called its own and a good name. That is why she had to compromise and marry anyone even someone as insignificant as Rokade. But the narrow view of the so called representatives of society had failed to understand her.

As Benare does not utter a single word to defend herself, she is taken guilty and Kashikar starts pronouncing a sentence. Ironically, he forgets that in the mock-trial, the charge against her is that of infanticide. But the sentence pronounced is for the sin of immoral pregnancy and she has been ordered to destroy the foetus in her womb. Over this, she suddenly starts protesting against the verdict. She sits on the stool sobbing and then collapses.

She is still sobbing while the local people start arriving for the night show. All realize that it is the time for the show and Benare is not in a position to perform. All gather around her and try to convince her that she should not take the happenings of the evening seriously as it was just a game. Actually everyone knows that they were much beyond the boundary of ‘just a game’. The bottle of TIK-20 is the strong evidence of their lies.

Thus this ‘play within a play’ throws light upon the human tendency to grab the opportunity to settle personal scores against each other. Secondly, it throws light also on the mob psychology. The so called human beings behave like a pack of wolves that chase the quarry till its end. While doing so, an underdog like Rokade gets emboldened to take his bite. An innocent person like Samant, too, contributes inadvertently to the evil game as he takes the game at its face value.
The common reason behind the hostility against Benare is jealousy due to her superior status and taste as compared to others. In addition to that everybody has his own reasons for revenge. All the men folk unanimously agree over the subordinate position of women in society. Kashikar and Sukhatme seem to be staunch advocates of that ideology. Both are against the freedom of women. Kashikar voices his opinion in this regard every now and then. He does not find anything wrong in deriding and insulting his own wife in public. Sukhatme, too, quotes the orthodox view regarding women, “Na Stree Swatantryam arhati” etc.

Benare’s superior airs and her style of ridiculing, criticizing everyone has added to her enemies. She finds only one man, Prof. Damle, suitable to her intellectual level. But the man, after crossing the limit of intellectual companionship, has disowned the responsibility of that relationship. Of course, the blame cannot be put completely upon him, as Benare goes ahead with the relationship, despite the full knowledge of his marital status. Middleclass Indian Society has not still digested the concept of a single mother. It is still considered a sin, a taboo. Therefore, if the society considers her guilty, there is nothing wrong according to social standards. The only flaw in their action is, they perform it under the guise of a mock-trial but treat it as a real one.

According to Barve, “The conflict manifests through the verbal attacks directed at each other. The conflict is intensified as the imaginary charge proves to be true and the ‘made-up’ testimonies speak the truth unwittingly. The sadder part of the conflict is, the hunting down of the spinster, Miss Benare by the members of the sophisticated society for her fault of getting carried away by the youthful lust.

Benare gets trapped literally as well as psychologically. But this trapping doesn’t remain confined to Benare only. It may symbolize the trapping of the thinkers, visionaries and social reformers, too. It is the suppression of the ideal self by the social self. This symbolism lifts the play to the universal level. It also imparts in the power of an
explosive tragedy.” (Chandrashekhar Barve, Tendulkaranchi Natake, Rajhans Prakashan, Pune, 1985. P.44-45)

Arundhati Banerjee has commented on the various aspects of Silence! The court is in Session. In the appendix of Collected Plays in Translation. “With the production of Shantata! Court Chalu Aahe in 1967, Tendulkar became the centre of a general controversy. He had already acquired the epithet of ‘the angry young man’ of Marathi theatre, but now he was definitely marked out as a rebel against the established values of a fundamentally orthodox society.

The set of characters is a miniscule cross-section of middle-class society. Their characters, dialogues, gestures and even mannerisms reflect their petty, circumscribed existences, fraught with frustrations and repressed desires that find expression in their malicious and spiteful attitudes towards their fellow beings. Leela Benare, the central character of the play, is the only exception. Possessing a natural lust for life and the spontaneous joie de vivre, she ignores social norms and dictates. Being different from the others, she is easily isolated and the victim of a cruel game, cunningly planned by her co-actors.” (Banarjee. P.570-571)

About the violence in the play she observes, “The violence that Tendulkar’s later play would be associated with, already makes itself felt in this play. In the persecution of this helpless woman, a fierce psychological violence becomes evident. The latent sadism of the characters surfaces during the process of the trial. Tendulkar has explored their psyches to the extent of revealing the hidden sense of failure pervading their lives.----.” (P. 571)

She further adds, “On the surface, Tendulkar seems to have adapted the model of naturalistic drama. But the integration of the play within a play creates an additional dimension where the demarcating line between reality and illusion is often blurred.” (P.572)
Samik Bandyopadhyay, in the introduction to *Collected Plays in Translation* has made some general observations about the plays included in the collection and also some observations related to the specific plays. He observes, “Tendulkar studies power and violence in spaces institutionally defined, the specificities more often than not serving to camouflage the violence in the exercise of power. The institutions that are exposed with their power mechanisms include media (*Kamala*), performance (*Silence! The Court is in Session*), the family (*The Vultures*), ---- society and morality (*Kanyadaan*) and sexual mores(*Sakharam Binder* and *A Friend’s Story*). As the institutions come to *embody* power, power assumes an institutional *body*, its practice defined and determined within the parameters of the particular institution. ------

His exercise generally falls into a pattern that projects a woman as both provocateur and victim, and somewhat marginalized observer-confidante, who often doubles as narrator-commentator. The *body* of the woman and the institutional *body* of power come into collision in Tendulkar’s plays, sparking off and calling forth varying intensities of violence.” (Introduction. p. xlii-xlili.)

About his use of violence Tendulkar once explained his position, “As a writer I feel fascinated by the violent exploited-exploiter relationship and obsessively delve deep into it instead of taking a position against it. That takes me to a point where I feel that this relationship is eternal, a fact of life however cruel, and will never end.” (Introduction. p.xliii-xliv)

Samik Bandyopadhyay adds, “*Silence! The Court is in Session*, the first Tendulkar play to become part of the New Indian Drama phenomenon of the sixties and the first significant modern Indian play in any language to center on woman as protagonist and victim, locates its heroin Benare not at an acquiescent receiving end, but at a point of conflict where as aggressive-transgressor of the sexual mores of her
community, she challenges the executors or power in absentia. It is part of Tendulkar’s
dramatic strategy that Benare’s immediate persecutors in the play are as powerless as she,
and all their exertions to cut Benare down to size are more their striving after power than
a real exercise of power.” (Introduction p. xlv)

KAMALA (1982)

Sarita -----------------------------------Jaisingh
(An upper middle-class housewife) (A high profile journalist)
\ /               /
\ /               /
\ /               /
\ /               /

----------- Kamala -----------
(A tribal woman bought by Jaysing)

Though the title of the play is ‘Kamala’, the play mainly deals with the changing
relationship between the couple, Sarita and Jaysing. Kamala is instrumental in rendering
the insight to Sarita about her real status in the marital relationship. Kamala functions as a
catalyst in the process of Sarita’s enlightenment or epiphany about her real status and
accelerates the dormant process of her urge for exploring her real self, establishing her
independent identity just like Ibsen’s Nora from A Doll’s House. As Sarita’s Character is
the key figure in the play, her relationship with the other two major characters, namely,
Jaysing- her husband and Kamala- the tribal woman he buys and brings to his house for a
short while, have been taken into account.
1) Sarita- Jaisingh

Sarita and Jaisingh’s relationship is like a typical middle-class Indian couple. The husband is working at a responsible position as a journalist in a national level prestigious English newspaper. His reputation is very high. As almost all house-wives assume a subordinate position in the relationship, finding nothing wrong in it, Sarita, too has taken it for granted. Right in the beginning, she is found working as a P.A. to Jaisingh, as if, Jaisingh, her husband is her boss. She is afraid of his fury, in case she fails to perform her duty properly. She receives the phone-calls for him, notes down each call with the name of the caller and the message, diligently.

In between, one of the calls is received by Sarita’s father, Kakasaheb who is also a journalist in his own right. The call received by him is a threat-call for exposing some leader’s illegal deeds through Jaisingh’s news story. Naturally, Kakasaheb is worried about his safety. Sarita has learned by then, not to take such threats seriously. However, Kakasaheb is not convinced. So, after Jaisingh comes home, he refers the issue to him. Jaisingh, conveniently takes it for granted that Sarita must have complained of feeling insecure and therefore starts blaming her. He is not even ready to listen to her denials. (P.10) Thus, Tendulkar establishes the nature of relationship between the two, right in the beginning as he wants to build the subsequent twists and turns in the same on this foundation.

Jain, one of Jaisingh’s colleagues reaches at their residence. He has suspected of some hot news story in possession of Jaisingh and that is why he has reached there. The one who is otherwise a buddy, is not at all welcome there at that hour. Jaisingh does not want the cat to be out before the ripe moment. So he warns Sarita to keep an eye on Kamala and not let her out in any case. He also tells her not to ask Jain for lunch. During that visit, Jain makes a telling comment upon Sarita’s position in the house; though it is seemingly a light hearted comment.
**Jain**: Hi, Bhabhiji, I mean an English ‘hi’ to him and a Marathi *hai* (Alas!) to you. This warrior against exploitation in the country is exploiting you. He’s made a drudge out of a horse-riding independent girl from a princely house. *Hai, Hai!* (Theatrically to Jaisingh.) Shame on you! Hero of anti-exploitation campaigns makes slave of wife! – (To Sarita) Bye, lovely bonded labourer------- (P.17)

When Sarita comments that lunch was ready and Jain should have been asked for lunch, Jaisingh gets annoyed and asks her, “Are you a fool?”

Jaisingh wants to present Kamala at a Press conference. Kamala’s sari is soiled and torn. So Sarita wants to give her one of her old saris to change into. But Jaisingh prohibits her strictly to bring any change in Kamala’s appearance without his permission. He is not moved by Sarita’s repeated appeals about taking a woman out in a torn sari. (P.21)

Jaisingh returns from the Press-conference along with Jain. Both are highly excited. They describe the questions asked by other journalists to Kamala. One of the questions is related to ‘free-sex’ among the tribals. Some express curiosity about the fate of illegitimate children born out of such relations. Sarita feels upset by imagining such embarrassing question being asked publicly to a woman. But the matter is not very serious for the two men, whereas Kakasaheb, an old fashioned journalist does not approve the way they enjoy it at the cost of a poor woman. Sarita remarks with disgust, “So while they were asking her these terrible questions, and making fun of her- you just sat and watched, did you?” (P.30)
Jaisingh tries to defend his case by telling that he did everything to expose the criminal practices of flesh trade going on in broad daylight. Over this kaka seb remarks, “And you sold a woman to them to do so.” Jaisingh is already drunk as he is celebrating his victory with his friend. He feels offended by this remark. He dares Kakasaheb to take back his words. Sarita realizes the gravity of the situation and comes forward to tackle the tense situation with a womanly patience and presence of mind. Jain takes their leave and Kakasaheb, too, retires to his room. She knows that Jaisingh is too drunk and it would worsen if he does not have some food. So she coaxes him to eat something. Jaisingh is not in a mood to pay heed to any word of wisdom. He further wants to celebrate his victory with the usual ‘manly’ way, by having sex before dinner. He insists upon it. However, Sarita is not willing for it at that moment. He, at first, hints at his desire, then makes appeal to co-operate with him. When he finds her still reluctant, he warns her about his rights.

**Jaisingh:** ------- I am your husband, after all. What was wrong about what I said?

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**Jaisingh:** ------- Don’t I have the right to have my wife when I feel like it? Don’t I? I’m hungry for that too—I’ve been hungry for six days. Is it a crime to ask for it?

When he finds Sarita still not responding positively and leaving for kitchen, he gets furious, calls her “The bitch!”, gulps the remaining drink and goes upstairs alone. (P.32)

Jaisingh’s behavior cannot be stamped as callous, brutal or self-indulgent as it is always taken for granted that a wife must bow to the wish of the husband without protest. Moreover, it has been a practice between the two since their marriage and Sarita had never protested till then. How should Jaisingh come to know about the sudden change in her attitude and her mood? So he is obviously baffled by the unexpected resistance and therefore gets enraged.
Perhaps Sarita, too, is still not aware of the real cause behind her disturbed state of mind, which has roots in the remarks by Kakasaheb and Jain regarding her status in the house. The epiphany comes after her late night conversation with Kamala about man-woman relationship. Kamala, with her innocent remarks imparts a great enlightenment to Sarita in this regard.

At first, Kamala asks about their children and comes to know that Sarita couldn’t bear any. Then she is curious to know how much was Sarita bought for. She had taken it for granted that women are always bought by men. Sarita deliberately retains the misconception and tells her the price he has paid for her. Kamala remarks, “It was an expensive bargain, memsahib. If you pay seven hundred, and there are no children ----.” She thinks that he must be very unhappy.

**Sarita:** How many children do you have, Kamala?

**Kamala:** I’ll have as many as you want. And work as hard as you want. I can work hard from morning to evening. (P.54)

She then suggests an arrangement so that both can be accommodated in Jaisingh’s life smoothly. Sarita agrees to it with a little amusement.

Next morning Jaisingh prepares to take Kamala to a home for destitute women. He knows that buying a human being in an auction is a criminal offence and he might be arrested for that. So he wants to finish his job as quickly as possible. Again there is a bitter argument between him and Sarita. She does not want Kamala to be dispatched off to the women’s home. She wants to keep her in the house. She tries her best to stop Kamala’s shifting to the orphanage. Once again she has to swallow the defeat as Jaisingh is too firm and stern about his decision. He is a little angry, too, due to Sarita’s undue
protests. He orders Kamalabai to bring Kamala’s things and Kamala to join him. Before going, he proclaims his position in the house in a stern manner, “It’s I who takes decisions in the house, and no one else”.

He gives instructions to Sarita as usual, before leaving and tries to explain his stand to Kakasaheb, who he thinks must be feeling awkward due to the tension between him and Sarita. He tries to tell how crucially important it is, not to keep Kamala in his custody, which would make his case weak, he might even get imprisoned for the criminal offence. Moreover, he does not want Kamala to be handed over to police custody. Perhaps because he knows what fate Kamala would meet if they get her custody.

Here, too, Sarita’s insistence on keeping Kamala with them doesn’t seem reasonable. Taking into account the consequences of that humane but unthoughtful act, would she prefer Jaisingh’s possible imprisonment and losing Kamala in the hands of callous policemen, is the question. Kakasaheb, too, blames Jaisingh, writing off his reasons being shallow. (P.43)

Sarita continues with the mood of protest and non co-operation with Jaisingh. In spite of his telephonic message about the party they had to attend, Sarita just refuses to accompany him. She says, he never asked for her will. She just ignores his instructions about getting ready or the sari she is to wear etc. Again there is a heated argument between the two. Finally, he accepts her refusal and decides to go ahead alone. (P.45)

After Jaisingh leaves, Kakasaheb arrives home. Sarita is Already in a forlorn mood. She slowly reveals her woes to him in a bitter manner. She wants to call a Press Conference to expose the hypocrisy of the man, Jaisingh Jadav, who calls himself a great advocate of freedom.
Sarita: I am going to present a man who in the year 1982 still keeps a slave, right here in Delhi. I’m going to say: this man’s a great advocate of freedom. And he brings home a slave and exploits her. He doesn’t consider a slave a human being—just a useful object. One you can use and throw away. He gets people to call him a sworn enemy of tyranny. But he tyrannizes his own slave as much as he likes---. Listen to the story of how he bought a slave Kamala and made use of her. The other slave he got free—not just free—the slave’s father shelled out the money—a big sum. Ask him what he did with it.

Kakasaheb is stunned to hear this sort of things from Sarita. He asks her, “What on earth happened between you two?” She answers, “Marriage.” Kakasaheb does not understand why suddenly, ten years after marriage, the realization has come. She answers,

Sarita: ------ I was asleep ------- Kamala woke me up. With a shock ------ I saw the man I thought my partner was the master of a slave. I have no rights at all in this house. Because I’m a slave. Slaves don’t have rights, ---They must only slave away. dance to their master’s whim. ------When he says pick up the phone, they must pick it up. When he says, come to a party, they must go. When he says, lie on the bed- they- -

Kakasaheb tries to explain the psyche of a man. He also confesses of giving somewhat similar treatment to his own wife. She asks him if he wants her to follow her example and blindly obey the husband! She ponders over the qualities of ‘a man in real sense.’ According to her if they lack that capability, they must be called women.
While she is in the agitated mood, the doorbell rings. Jain has come with shocking news of Jaisingh’s dismissal as he has aimed at the hornet’s nest and upset some political heavyweights. The owner of the newspaper cannot invite and afford their wrath. As a result, Jaisingh has been fired. It seems that Jaisingh who is at the party, is not aware of the latest developments related to his career. So Jain wants him to be urgently called back. He wants the bitter truth to be disclosed to him tactfully. Sarita, who is bitter and upset till then, braces herself to handle the new crisis. She forgets her own woes for the time being.

Jaisingh returns soon. He senses the tense atmosphere at home. The shocking news of his dismissal is conveyed to him in due course. Jaisingh is already in high spirits due to the events taking place in rapid succession and disturbed by Sarita’s suddenly changed behavior. After this new unexpected, humiliating treatment, he gets highly excited, agitated at first. He is already drunk. After the initial excitement, he just collapses into the sofa. Actually, Jain wants to chalk out a further plan of action to deal with the situation. As Jaisingh is no more in a position to discuss anything cool-headedly, Jain leaves. Sarita temporarily sets her plans aside, to get rid of the slavery. However, she is not going to drop the idea. She tells Kakasaheb, “----- at present I am going to lock all that up in a corner of my mind and forget about it. But a day will come, when I will stop being a slave. I’ll no longer be an object to be used and thrown away. I’ll do what I wish, and no one will rule over me. That day has to come. And I’ll pay whatever price I have to pay for it.” Presently she assumes the role of a mother and decides to take care of Jaisingh, the innocent looking master, who badly needs her support at that moment of crisis.

In this play no other relationship has been developed as much in detail as Sarita-Jaisingh relationship. The other two characters of Kamala and Kakasaheb, come as foils to the characters of Sarita and Jaising respectively. Kamala’s character has been used to make Sarita fully aware of her status in the marital life. Kamala’s brief company develops a sort of comraderie between the two. Her innocent queries trigger and
accelerate the process of scrutinizing her relationship with Jaisingh. It helps her arrive at certain conclusion, and she decides to isolate herself from Jaisingh’s sphere and establish her own independent identity.

In the character of Kakasaheb, the other side of man, a husband and a journalist has been delineated. This character has been juxtaposed with that of Jaisingh. As a man and as a husband he displays understanding and empathy for others including Kamala, Sarita and his own wife. His character highlights the ego and self-centredness within Jaisingh. Jaisingh is not at all involved in Kamala as another woman in his life, though she has taken that sort of relationship for granted. Therefore, no relationship is developed between the two. Thus only one significant relationship remains to be considered; which is between Sarita and Jaisingh.

Chandrashekhar Barve states, “The play deals with an independent identity of a woman in the context of a woman in the context of a woman bought by Jaisingh, a journalist to prove the ruthless fact of flesh trade-taking place openly.

This action functions as a spark of enlightenment for Sarita who realizes her status being not better than a slave. The remarks by Kamala and Jaisingh’s journalist friend, Jain prove instrumental for this realization. All the dramatic action of Sarita’s rebellion takes place on the backdrop of Jaisingh’s press conference full of thrill, suspense and some hilarious events.”

Barve finds the end a bit bland and compromising where Sarita takes a decision of ceasefire as she knows that Jaisingh needs her most in the moment of utter frustration as he is shocked to hear the news of his dismissal due to vested interests in the scandal of flesh-trade. (Chandrashekhar Barve. *Tendulkaranchi Natake*. Rajhans Prakashan, Pune, 1985. P.62-63.)
According to Arundhati Banerjee, “There is more to Kamala than the jibe at contemporary journalism. Tendulkar explores the position of women in contemporary Indian society. Through Sarita who is in her own way as exploited as Kamala, Tendulkar exposes the chauvinism intrinsic in the modern Indian male who believes himself to be liberal-minded. Like Kamala, Sarita is also an object in Jadav’s life, an object that provides physical enjoyment, social companionship and domestic comfort. ------ Like most of Tendulkar’s sympathetic women characters, she does not have the spirit to rebel against her present condition. Instead, she extends emotional support to Jadav when at the close of the play he is treacherously deprived of his job. But the dramatist also suggests that Sarita cannot unlearn what she has come to realize. ------ There is a faint hope of her attaining independence sometime in the future.” (Banerjee. Collected Plays in Translation. Appendix 1. P.581)

THE VULTURES (1971)

(Hari) Pappa -----------------------------Uncle (Sakharam)

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|                               |                               |                                        |

Rajaninath                    Ramakant                     Umakant                      Manik
(illegitimate son)            |                              |                              |
\                        |                              |                              |
\--------Rama

Tendulkar uses a unique set of characters in this play where the characters are competing with each other with respect to greed, selfishness, unscrupulousness, cruelty and violence. Only two characters are exception to it. One is Rama- Ramakant’s wife. She is a silent sufferer. The other is Rajaninath, the illegitimate son of Pappa. Though he stays in the same bungalow, he is not accepted as one of the family members. He stays
alone in the outhouse. He is different from the other three legitimate children. He is not selfish or cruel like them. He despises all of them. Rama shows concern for him. She has soft corner for him. But he does not reciprocate it.

All other characters are photo-copies of each other when their character and personalities are concerned. Pappa has cheated upon his brother and robbed him of his share of the property. The brother who is left to lead a pauper’s life returns to Pappa after fifteen years. The two brothers have a heated argument over the money matters. Uncle is on the verge of death. All the three siblings suggest different ways to get rid of their uncle. They have no sympathy either for their father or uncle. They call both of them swindlers. During the argument between the two brothers, Manik has overheard something about Pappa’s hidden account. All the three torture Pappa and force the truth out of him. They make him sign a cheque for that amount. Once they have robbed Pappa off, they plan to get rid of him also. Only one thing can be said about this selfish set of characters, ‘Like father, like children.’ There is nothing special about the interpersonal relationship amongst them, except their extreme selfishness. When man-woman relationship is concerned, the relationship between Ramakant and Rama should be taken into account. There is a third angle to this relationship, which exists in the form of Rajaninath. Therefore this relationship has been discussed somewhat in detail.

**Ramakant-Rama-Rajaninath**

Ramakant and Rama are husband and wife. Ramakant treats her as a typical Indian husband would treat his wife. She is completely dominated by him. She has no voice regarding any major or minor issues. She just has to obey him. She is the misfit in the family of the rogues, the members of which are ever-ready to catch each other’s throat.
She shows sympathy and concern for everybody, the gardener- Jagannath- who is not paid his dues and instead gets slapped by Ramakant or Pappu who is abused and ill-treated by his own children. She is equally concerned about Rajaninath whom she secretly wishes to be treated as an honourable member of the family. In scene iv, Act I, she secretly takes tea to Rajaninath. But he doesn’t welcome that charity or concern from her. He dares her to bring it openly, especially in front of Ramakant. But she admits that she lacks the courage to do so. He displays detachment, indifference towards her gestures of concern. It is clear that he has no respect or attachment with any member of the family including Pappu. He detests them. He calls them vultures. At the same time, it is clear that there is a sort of understanding between the two and Rama finds solace in talking to him.

In act II, scene ii, again, Rama and Rajaninath confront with each other. She has brought tea for him as usual. This time, he has just woken up and he appears with his bare chest to open the door for her. She gets unconsciously tempted by the display of his manly physique and that is why becomes a little restless. She glances furtively at his bare chest every now and then and feels guilty at the same time. The talk of his sleeping just in under-wears disturbs her. He unwittingly refers to her dream of having her own baby. She unconsciously opens up her wound of not having that good-luck. Rajaninath realises of having touched the sensitive issue and quickly apologizes to her for hurting her feelings. Over this, she opens her heart to him and talks of her ordeal, the grief of not bearing a child, in her long monologue and dying a death every day, every moment. She unconsciously moves very close to him. Actually, the cause of her barrenness is Ramakant’s impotence due to heavy drinking. But he makes her resort to the blessings of Swamis, astrologers and doctors for treatment. She tells him, “It’s not the fault of doctors, of learned men, of saints and sages! It’s not even my fault! This womb’s healthy and sound, I swear it! I was born to become a mother. This soil’s rich, it’s hungry. But the seed won’t take root. If the seed’s soaked in poison, if it’s weak, feeble, lifeless, devoid of virtue—then why blame the soil? ------- And then, if that seed should constantly shrivel, should decay? If all those dreams – flow away one day? Not once – but many, many times, the same thing! That the soil should be on fire with thirst ----- and should
have to endure a fast without water!” She is fed up with her plight and the ordeal she has to go through, for no fault of hers. She expresses a wish either to end her life like the satis or bring an end to Ramakant’s life to end the whole farce. She tries to control her tears. She prepares to leave. But Rajaninath stops her and holds her tightly. She is caught in a dilemma. She wants to have the genuine experience with a real virility of man. At the same time, she makes a weak attempt to get free from him. Ultimately, she gives up. However, they don’t go ahead. He understands her wish. But he is not willing as he thinks, that after all, the seed he bears is also the gift of corrupt blood. He tells her, “The seed’s diseased. All else is good. But the vital core that takes root, that’s rotten. A curse has infected it------.” (P.240-243) He adds that the consequence of this curse is another curse of burning bodies and burning minds. They have to put up with it.

Afterwards, when a heated argument takes place between Ramakant and Umakant, Umakant goes on ridiculing and abusing Ramakant, in his fit of rage. Then he sarcastically refers to Rama’s pregnancy and her frequent miscarriages. Then he dares Ramakant, “And how do you know this brat’s yours?” He goes ahead and suggests that it is the seed of Rajaninath—the bastard. Though Ramakant strongly refutes the charges, suspicion has taken root in his mind.(P.255) To worsen the matters, Rama unwittingly speaks sympathetically about Rajaninath. Her attitude towards Rajaninath boosts his suspicion. Moreover, she talks about his unwillingness to get married, his strong opposition to the very idea. Ramakant tauntingly remarks, “Quite right. If all your needs are being satisfied, why get entangled?” However, in her innocence she fails to take note of his sarcastic and accusative tone.

Later on, Manik, who wants to settle scores with her brothers as they had made her suffer a lot, targets Rama for that purpose. She resorts to black magic and inflicts a curse of miscarriage. Ramakant for whom his own child being on the way, is the only solace in the adverse conditions, gets upset by it. At the same time, the suspicion of the child’s legitimacy is also nagging him. So while comforting Rama, who is afraid to death
with the thought of abortion, says, “My child won’t die. Not because of that bitch’s (Manik) curse. If it’s mine, that is.”

Rama gets devastated by the veiled accusation. But Ramakant doesn’t wait to listen to her or explain anything to her. Again, when Ramakant goes on drinking in his utter frustration, he is babbling repeatedly in a drunken state, “He’s my stepbrother’s kiddie. Not mine! ------.” He wants that child to be aborted.

Thus Tendulkar has dealt with this triangle, however, not so intensely, as it is not the main theme of the play. The theme is the utter selfishness of everybody and their lowering themselves to the level of brutes or even below that.

According to Chandrashekhar Barve, the interaction of the play takes place between the highly sensitive and tender-hearted Rama and all other unscrupulous and ruthless members of the family. Rajaninath who stays in the garage is a witness to the atrocities going on in the bungalow and Rama’s torment by the behavior of the others. If the inmates of the bungalow are vultures then Rama and Rajaninath are the two innocent birds. The play begins in a flashback where Rajaninath laments over Rama’s undue suffering. The play is dominated by a series of the act of horror; still the strain of pathos due to Rama’s devastation is unmistakable. (Chandrashekhar Barve, Tendulkaranchi Natake, Rajhans Prakashan, Pune, 1985. P.48)

He further states, “The modernity of this play lies in the choice of the theme which throws light upon the fast degeneration of morals in the society. The play received very harsh criticism for the obscene and lewd language as the middle-class audience had never come across such a language till then.
Just as the diction, the content of *The Vultures* is also very novel. It exposes the brutality, violence, total materialism and unscrupulousness within man. Tendulkar throws light upon the moral and cultural degradation through this play.

The features of rebellion attitude in the context of this play compromise Tendulkar’s boldness in handling the theme of portraying the dark side and perversity within man without bothering for the reaction of the audience. His use of the flashback technique, choice of events and portrayal of characters are also part of it. (Barve. P.84)

Arundhati Banerjee observes, “The entirely different nature of the work underlines the astonishing range of Tendulkar’s dramatic genius. ------ It was with the production and publication of *Gidhade* that Tendulkar’s name became associated with sensationalism, sex and violence. ------ The play is a ruthless dissection of human nature revealing its inherent tendencies to violence, avarice, selfishness, sensuality and sheer wickedness. ------ The decadence and degeneration of human individuals belonging to a middle-class milieu is exposed through the interactions among the members of a family.---- Tendulkar’s making Rajaninath recite three poems, at the beginning and end of Act 1 and at the conclusion adds a special dimension to the play. The innate compassion of the dramatist, who remains an objective onlooker for a major part of the play, neither condemning nor judging either the characters or the actions, finds expression in the lines of these poems. His deep empathy for the victims of human viciousness flows like an undercurrent throughout the play.” (Banerjee. Collected Plays in Translation. Appendix 1 P.575-576)

Samik Bandyopadhyay draws attention to Tendulkar’s underscoring the similarity between *Shantata* and *Gidhade*, “In Gidhade it is the pack of human vultures pitched against a defenseless female character, the wife of Ramakant. In *Shantata* it is Ms. Benare against a pack of middle-class vultures. In *Gidhade*, Rajanikant, the bastard
brother, suffers for the defenseless female in the play. In Shantata it was the character of Samant who did it for the psychologically mauled Ms. Benare.

About the symbolism in this play he observes, “the bird calls serve as a non-human sound reference, offering sound transfers / translations for the human acts which have lost their humanity altogether. While the first scene closes on ‘the loud screeching of the vultures’, the second opens with a cuckoo call that ‘suddenly ends on a strangled note’, presaging an ‘uproar’ breaking rudely in upon Rama’s prayer to the basil in the courtyard. The obscenities, ‘exchange of shouts’, ‘the sound of blows…of beating’ do not allow Rama to ‘concentrate on her prayer any more.’ The disruption of a sacred act in a way intimates the violent destructive process at work stifling and strangling the normal rhythm of relationships working through a family.” (Introduction, p. 1)

A FRIEND’S STORY (1982)

Pande Dalvi (Manya Dalvi)

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|   \ /   |

Bapu (Shrikant Marathe)

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|   |   |
|   |   |

Mitra (Sumitra Dev) ----- Nama (Namita Deshmukh)

It is the story of a selfless friendship between Bapu and Sumitra on one hand and the unusual relationship between Sumitra and Nama on the other hand which leads to a serious crisis and grave consequences. All the characters are college students. If the period of early 40s is taken into account the portrayal of, Sumitra’s character is too bold. Same is true about other relationships.
There is nothing new about the secret love affairs within the college students. But a sustained lesbian relationship is something extraordinary. Its manifestation so openly seems improbable, especially in the old fashioned small town depicted in the play.

There are four characters which are entangled with each other in different ways. Bapu is an onlooker. Sometimes he acts as a catalyst to initiate and accelerate the relations between the characters. Among the four characters, two love triangles are developed. The two female characters are common in both of them. One triangle exists between Pande-Sumitra and Nama, where Pande is madly in love with Sumitra and she is obsessive about Nama. Second triangle is formed by Sumitra-Nama-Dalvi. Nama is going steady with Manya Dalvi and Sumitra has captured her in her net. To secure her catch, she is prepared to go to any extent. She applies all tactics to isolate Nama from Dalvi. All these relationships are sex oriented relationships. However, the theme and the focus remain upon the homosexual, lesbian relationship between Sumitra and Nama. This is an abnormal, unusual interpersonal relationship which has not been still accepted by the society. Naturally the focus of the discussion related to interpersonal relationships will remain upon Sumitra-Nama relationship. Equally important role has been played by the pure friendship between Mitra and Bapu. It is absolutely free from sexual attraction between opposite sexes. The relationship between Mitra and Nama will be better understood in the light of Mitra-Bapu relationship. Therefore this relationship will be discussed before Mitra-Nama relationship.

**Sumitra-Bapu Relationship**

Sumitra who is addressed as Mitra throughout the play comes in contact with Bapu by chance. Then the friendship takes root and starts developing. Thus Bapu happens to know Mitra rather closely. There is pure friendship between the two. Though they belong to opposite sexes, there is no trace of sexual attraction between the two. On
the contrary, she seems to convey the same thing again and again that she doesn’t feel attracted towards men. Afterwards, she drops hints about her sexual inclination. Thus the relationship between Bapu and Mitra is that of buddies. Bapu performs the role of a confidante for Mitra. Apart from the role of a buddy, Bapu tries also to be a philosopher and guide to Mitra. But he is not successful in that respect.

Bapu meets Mitra to return her photographs which he finds outside the ladies’ room. His curiosity is aroused as he finds the photographs rather bold where she is with some boys who look like rogues. Bapu is an underdog, a harmless boy and Mitra is too frank. Right from the beginning she talks freely about herself, her masculine traits and interests. Their personalities are completely contrasting. She likes field games, but Bapu, owing to his frail health can’t even swim. Even during their first visit, she plays the host and pays the bill for tea, which is otherwise a male prerogative. (P.422)

Perhaps she finds the unobtrusive, shy Bapu a trustworthy fellow who would keep her secrets with himself. She wants to confide in him about her strange, abnormal self. So she invites him one evening to meet at college ground. During their meeting she refers obliquely to her being different. She tries to convey it through a physical contact. She holds his hand in a tight grip and then asks him how he felt. Actually she wants to know if he felt something like an electric current, female charm etc. Bapu, in his introspective mood says that the touch was “strong and cold” and he had felt the urge to get his hand freed at any cost. However, he also feels that he has come much closer to Mitra. All others including his room-mate Pande think that a love affair is brewing between them. Pande even wonders what a green-horn like Bapu can do in this respect without the guidance of an experienced person like him. They fail to understand a pure friendship between the persons of opposite sexes. (P.426)

Soon afterwards he comes to know about Mitra’s failed suicide attempt. There is a variety of rumours related to it. He is baffled by them. After her recovery she joins the
college again. Bapu wants to talk to her. They decide to meet in the evening. Though Bapu hesitates to ask directly about her suicide attempt, she offers to tell him but in a cryptic manner. Then she starts pouring her heart to Bapu. She talks about her feeling ‘at home’ with boys, the constraints of her family, their attempt to settle her marriage with a suitable boy and their efforts to bring them together deliberately etc. She has tried to bend to their wishes. But she finds it impossible, as she doesn’t experience the thrill or excitement in his company which is natural for a girl. Neither she likes flirting of men with her. She is providing all this account in a third person. Her confession continues.

**Sumitra:** ------ The girl brooded------. She concluded that she was deficient in some way. ------ And so she ---- performed an experiment (P.432)

Her experiment consists of an attempt to try sexual intercourse with a servant in the house. The result is devastating. She makes Bapu promise that he would never tell about it to anyone and then continues.

**Sumitra:** ------ and he got to know ---- and she got to know---- this is not for her --- she is not among those who----- she was different----- she could never become a man’s partner in this ---- never----- The girl resolved to die. (P.432-433)

She has not dared to confide about it with her family. She is not sure whether they will understand or even know that such a condition exists and even if they knew, she feels that they may find it easier to feign ignorance. Bapu is unable to believe in what he has been told. He doesn’t know if it is an inborn trait or an acquired trait. However he finds it all bizarre, repulsive and --- abhorrent. He tries to get more information from his friend Pande. Pande refers to it as ‘frigidity’ among women which is quite different from lesbianism. Pande also labels such women as ‘eunuchs’! (P.434)
Again by a coincidence Pande gets Mitra to play a male lead in a play where all characters are portrayed by girls. This incidence gives two different twists to Mitra’s story. One is, Pande gets so impressed by her authentic, confident portrayal of a male lead in the play that he falls madly in love with her, without being aware of her sexual inclinations. Second, Mitra comes in close physical contact with the heroine of the play – Nama. She finds a soft target in Nama to satisfy her desire. From this point the relation between the two girls begins to materialize. Here, too, Bapu plays a crucially important role as a true friend to Mitra. However, he takes a back seat from here. He just remains a silent witness to the turbulent development in Mitra’s sex-life and personal life.

**Sumitra-Nama Relationship**

When Bapu goes to congratulate Mitra after the performance, he doesn’t find her elated about her grand success as the male lead. She is worried about tomorrow. Nama, too, is ready to leave with her boyfriend, Dalvi. She casually says ‘Good night’ to Mitra. Mitra’s reaction over it is very unnatural. She just walks towards Nama, hugs her tightly and kisses her. Bapu and Dalvi both disapprove it.

Here Pande is knocked out by Mitra’s performance. He is madly in love with Mitra. He tries to bring pressure upon Bapu to bring him and Mitra together. When Bapu refuses to bow to his wish, he resorts to drinking. Ultimately Bapu has to disclose the truth about Mitra to him. Pande gets so frustrated that he decides to join army which is a sort of open invitation to death. He has no wish to survive after his heartbreak. In this way the chapter of one-way love between Pande and Mitra comes to an end abruptly without Mitra being aware of it, in the least.

Meanwhile, Mitra meets Bapu a few days after the play. She, at first, hints at her fascination she has started feeling for Nama. Then she directly confesses that she has fallen in love with the girl. Bapu is stunned after hearing to this horrible truth. Without
bothering for his bewilderment, she pushes her demand. She describes how the physical intimacy with Nama has enthralled her. She also clarifies that what other took for the realistic, convincing acting during a love scene with Nama was not acting at all. It was her genuine feelings for Nama. That experience had been a sudden enlightenment of her true self to herself. She tells, “I knew I didn’t want a man. I need a woman. I’m different, different.”(P.440) Then she drops another bombshell, which puts Bapu in a fix.

**Sumitra**: I need your room. -------------- Where no one can disturb me ---- Me and- Nama. I can’t live without her. (P.441)

In her usual way, she threatens him, gives him an ultimatum that she wants that room and if he fails to do as she had wished, their friendship would come to an end. With this threat Bapu has to manage things as she had wished. He is now on the mission to leave the room free for that particular afternoon. He uses a variety of tricks and excuses to make Pande to agree for that.

It was not easy for Mitra to prepare Nama for that unusual relationship. But somehow she achieves success in it later on. When Nama fails to turn up for their first meeting, Bapu guesses it correctly by Mitra’s subdued spirit and offers to ask Nama the reasons for not keeping the appointment. Mitra reluctantly allows him, as if; she was thus making a favour to him. Mitra knows that Dalvi, Nama’s boyfriend will not let her go, which is why Nama is avoiding her. Over this, Bapu advises Mitra to leave Nama alone. But Mitra is obsessed with her. She threatens and scares Nama. In the meanwhile, she assigns Bapu a responsibility of gathering detailed information about Dalvi to malign his character and free Nama from his influence. She is ready to go to any extent for this. Soon Bapu comes to know about the means Mitra had used for that.

One afternoon Manya Dalvi comes to see Bapu in the library and takes him out for a private talk. There he makes Bapu write something to confirm his suspicion, accuses
him of writing those filthy letters to Nama and her father, and then gives him a sound beating without any explanation. Afterwards Bapu realizes it to be Mitra’s mischief, one of her tactics to isolate Nama from Dalvi. She has no scruples for resorting to such means for achieving her aim. On the contrary, she makes fun of Bapu for getting beaten without any fault of his. When he asks her explanation for imitating his handwriting while writing those letters, she coolly says, “It won’t be like that again.” (P.453) Her explanation for writing such dirty letters is,

**Sumitra**: Because I’m like that. I’m a lousy person------ If you refuse to accept it, what can I do? At any cost, I want to get Nama out of his control. ----- I don’t care if you never see me again. (P.454)

After the entire struggle finally Mitra is successful in getting Nama in her folds. It goes on for sometime. Now Pande, too, is not there as he has left the town to join the army to overcome his frustration in Mitra’s case. However, one day Dalvi, who must have been keeping a watch on Nama, catches both of them red-handed in Bapu’s room. Nama gets scared. But Mitra remains defiant. Dalvi orders Nama to accompany him and lashes Mitra with harsh words. He has realized about Mitra’s relationship with Nama. He calls Mitra “a bloody lesbian bitch” and threatens her with dire consequences if she tries again to cast her evil spell upon Nama. Mitra has turned wild with humiliation and especially as she has been robbed of her prey. She pours all her fury upon Bapu’s belongings in the room by shattering everything to pieces. (P.456)

Bapu guesses rightly what must have happened. He tenderly and cautiously enquires about it. Mitra seems to be hurt more by Nama’s submission to Dalvi like a pet. She takes it as Nama’s treachery. Bapu is satisfied that Dalvi has not created a scene. Once again he tries to give a word of advice to Mitra. But she ridicules him by calling him ‘Bapuji’. She is not ready to give up her *catche* so easily. However, before leaving Bapu’s room, she apologizes to him for all the damages and promises to compensate it.
Surprisingly, Nama too disapproves Dalvi’s behavior. She wants to convey a message to Mitra that she was helpless in that situation. She had again decided to see Mitra the next afternoon. Only she is not sure if she would be able to make it or not. Bapu asks her who interests her in real sense, Mitra or Dalvi! Nama ponders over it but she is confused and unable to decide.

Soon the relations between Mitra and Nama are re-established. Bapu has no idea how Mitra has managed everything including Dalvi. But they start using Bapu’s room for their secret meetings. Bapu keeps the practice of locking the door from outside and returning to the room at an appointed time.

It seems that Nama has lost interest in Dalvi which soon becomes clear. One day, soon after Mitra and Nama leave the room, Dalvi drops in. He is inquisitive about the cigarette butts found in the room, as he knows that Bapu doesn’t smoke. But he has come with another proposal for Bapu. He wants Bapu’s room for secret meetings with Nama as their usual arrangement has turned risky for some reasons. This proposal puts Bapu in a real crisis. Moreover Mitra becomes furious over it. She won’t allow Dalvi’s encroachment upon the place which she is using for her secret meetings with Nama. She can’t digest the thought of Dalvi using the same place with Nama. She warns Bapu not to accept Dalvi’s proposal. Bapu finds himself in a fix. To escape from this crisis, he surrenders the room and starts sharing another room. Mitra is furious over it as Bapu’s move has upset her usual arrangement. She condemns him for his cowardice. But he doesn’t give in. He accepts his weakness.

After Bapu backs out from Mitra’s affairs he keeps no information about how she carries on with her affair. But he is surprised by Mitra’s borrowing money from him occasionally, as he is aware of her affluent family background. As usual, she doesn’t care to take him into confidence for her reasons. It seems that she needs the money for the arrangement of her secret meetings with Nama. Bapu gets an opportunity to talk to Nama
about it during the college picnic. Though Nama is reluctant at first, soon she opens up. She tells him that Mitra scares her by her short temperedness and headstrong behavior. She is also scared of her possessiveness, her dominating attitude. Whatever she adds then, is horrifying, revealing Mitra’s perversity.

Nama: ------ I joked about getting married ------ Do you know what she did----? Nearly strangled me. ----- .She made a joke of it----- But its scary all the time, isn’t it?

Nama: Don’t know how to say it ----- because it is quite weird ------ whenever we are together ------ she --- asks me about Dalvi and myself---- that is ---- how we ----- enjoy. She can’t take it if I refuse to ---- her whole face changes----- I get scared – I don’t like all this-------. (P.470-471)

After this, Bapu tries to warn Mitra about it. He wants to convey her that she must get herself prepared for the inevitable end of the affair. She is enraged by Bapu’s letter. She makes her intentions clear.

Sumitra: Nama can’t get away. I hold her in the palm of my hand. She knows that if I want, I can make her eat dirt.

Sumitra: I can make our relationship public. I can break her marriage proposal. If she leaves me, she has nowhere to go. Understand? (P.472)

Mitra also provides him information about Dalvi’s new affair with some other girl. Thus her main rival has backed out and Nama is in the whole and sole possession of Mitra. Mitra is to decide Nama’s fate regarding her marriage. Bapu is disgusted with the idea of blackmailing someone whom you love. Mitra doesn’t care for it. Due to Mitra’s
behavior, Bapu gets repelled from her. He starts losing interest in her. He begins sympathizing with Nama. He decides to free Nama from Mitra’s clutches. However, he doesn’t know how to do it. He feels helpless and ashamed of himself for being unable to help Nama.

The affair takes an unexpected turn. It becomes a public scandal after someone publishes their story with fictitious names. Bapu comes to know about it after his return from the vacation. Still he is curious to know Mitra’s response to it. He feigns ignorance over the scandal. But Mitra directly refers to her rustication from the college. She curses Nama for her about-turn. Nama has tried to deny everything at first and then put the whole blame upon Mitra saying, “Mitra had tricked her, ruined her, blackmailed her.” Mitra is not ready to accept Nama’s defense as according to her, Nama was not unwilling for their relationship. However, she still feels the same craving for her. That is why she has decided not to expose Nama with the help of the proofs in her possession contradicting Nama’s claims. She is ready to forgive her for the treachery, but she wants to continue their relationship in any case. She still hopes that Nama would and should take the risk of stepping out and meeting her. She herself is ready to go to her house, at least for having a glimpse of her. Mitra feels like ‘a fish out of water’ without Nama’s company. She madly keeps on waiting for Nama at their usual haunts. Bapu is shocked to know that they used to meet at a dwelling in a slum. Mitra’s hopes go in vein.

Now forces against her have joined hands in the form of Dalvi and Pande who has returned recently from war after being declared unfit for action due to his disability. Dalvi especially is haunted by the feeling of revenge against her. He has vowed to ruin her reputation completely wherever she goes as she is forced to cancel her admission from the present college.

In the meanwhile, Nama comes to Bapu to tell him that she was leaving the place for good. She was to go to Calcutta to her sister, where her marriage was to be fixed. She
makes him promise not to disclose it to Mitra. Bapu promises likewise but as if, under compulsion, passes the information to Mitra, after Nama had left for Calcutta. Of course, he doesn’t forget to give his usual advice to her, though he is aware of its futility. Soon Bapu realizes that Mitra had fooled him as usual. However, she is not successful in tracking Nama in Calcutta and she has to come back. Bapu is angry with her for her breach of promise.

Hereafter Mitra’s rapid downfall begins. She is expelled from the house. She starts living in a ladies’ hostel. According to Pande who is an ex-armyman, Mitra is a regular visitor at the army-club. She gets drunk there at the expenses of army officers. He hints that she had resorted to prostitution in return. As Bapu is unable to believe it, Pande takes him to the club where he witnesses the whole drama. In her drunken state, she has been babbling about Bapu with contempt. Bapu gets upset due to it. Next morning Dalvi conveys him the news of Mitra’s suicide the previous night, in a dispassionate manner. In this way the chapter comes to a close forever.

According to Chandrashekhar Barve, A Friend’s Story is a tragedy of an unusual love-affair intertwined with other characters and love-affairs making it more complex. Bapu is the witness and the narrator of the drama who also interprets the actions.

It depicts Mitra’s transition from her unusual fascination for Nama, her aggressive, dominating and even cruel attitude to her, her agony to achieve and retain her for herself and her final collapsing in the absence of Nama. This action has been complemented by the reactions and responses of other characters over Mitra’s action. It includes Bapu’s confoundment, Pande’s craze for Mitra, vengeance of Dalvi and Nama’s deep involvement in Mitra.
Barve finds the end very pathetic and moving. He feels that its impact is felt through its penetrating power and the emotional turmoil it creates. (Chandrashekhar Barve, *Tendulkaranchi Natake*, Rajhans Prakashan, Pune, 1985. P.64-65)

Rohini Hattangadi who has played a lead role in *A Friend’s Story* has tried to analyse Mitra’s character. She observes, “Mitra has accepted her abnormality upto a point. She then allows herself to flow with the stream. The reasons for this are: her stubborn nature, her desire to do what she wants to do, social conflict and her rebellion. There is one person who tries to understand her and that is Bapu. In spite of not liking her attitude, Bapu always helps her and is always beside her. The relationship between Bapu and Mitra is unique. Right from their first meeting, they strike a rapport. Bapu’s simple behavior, his opinion of her- after getting to know her better, and the events which take place afterwards, make their relationship solid and strong.” (Rohini Hattangadi. Collected Plays in Translation. Appendix III. *Note on A Friend’s story*. P.593)

She further observes,” Many of Tendulkar’s characters like Miss. Benare in *Shantata!* --- and Manik in *Gidhade* live in a cocoon and it is an amusing experience to see the characters slowly shed their layers and come out different and stronger.” (Hattangadi.P.594)

About Nama she observes, “Nama’s involvement with Mitra is confusing. She is fond of Mitra, likes being with her, but the relationship is a burden for her. She finds it difficult to cope with it. But she cannot totally reject Mitra.”

She concludes, “All these characters in *Mitrachi Goshta* create a great tragic experience. The playwright tries to understand Mitra through Bapu. As Bapu fails, so do we! The end is inevitable!” (Hattangadi. P.595)
Deolalikar family is a happy family, where all the members stay together in a true democratic spirit. The relations between parents and children are friendly, in real sense. The parents are devoted social workers with complete faith in Seva-Dal tradition, Gandhian ideology and values. The children, too, are brought up in the same tradition. They are given complete freedom to make their choices. However, there choices are unconsciously governed by the value system, the ideals they have been brought up with. The whole family and especially Jyoti has to put up with the dire consequences of this freedom which is supported by the flimsy foundation of impractical, unrealistic values. That gives rise to serious crisis in the family and growing rift between the couple- Nath and Seva. At another level, Jyoti and the Deolalikar family gets isolated from each other for ever. Jyoti severs all the ties with her family, rebuking all the false ideals they are made to imbibe. The whole family has to witness Jyoti’s ruin helplessly.

All the events take place in early ‘70s, just around the emergency period; when Dalit movement has had taken firm roots in the soil of Maharashtra. The abolition of caste system was an off-shoot of the Seva-Dal ideology and activities. On this background, one day Jyoti makes an announcement of having accepted a marriage proposal from a dalit youth who is a writer and a poet. She is quite impressed by his literary talent. He exploits her liberal ideological background and plays his cards very
cleverly. He just hints at the fact that though people talk of equality, none will be willing to marry a dalit like him! Provoked by this challenge, Jyoti agrees to marry him, without giving much thought to the consequences.

Seva is not against the marriage, in principle. But as a mother, she wants to check other aspects to ensure her daughter’s security, stability and happiness in her married life. She is practical; on the other hand, Nath doesn’t bother to check these practical aspects. He is overexcited just by the fact that his daughter is going to marry a dalit in a true spirit of a social reformer. She is going to bring his ideals into practice. So he declares his wholehearted support to the marriage. He is even ready to oppose his wife for her overcautious stand. After the knowledge of his background, Seva firmly opposes the marriage. She is almost sure that this marriage would spoil Jyoti’s life. Thus a conflict emerges between the couple-Nath and Seva. At secondary level, the conflict between Jyoti and Arun has been depicted. Thus Tendulkar deals with the conflict and relationship between two couples. At the same time, it is a conflict between two cultures, the upper caste, refined, sophisticated culture of Jyoti and her family and the rough, uncouth culture of Arun- the dalit youth and his violent ways, his brutality.

The two couples in question are Nath-Seva and Arun-Jyoti. Tendulkar deals directly and mainly with the conflict between Nath and Seva, however it arises in the context of Jyoti’s decision of marrying Arun and her marital life, full of suffering. The conflict between the second couple has been hardly depicted directly. Whatever the readers come to know is through the account provided by Seva about Jyoti’s suffering due to Arun’s brutal treatment. Jyoti is never found complaining about it. That is why the conflict and the relationship between Nath and Seva must receive the focus of the discussion.
Nath-Seva relationship

At the beginning of the play, the impression about this relationship is that of excellent understanding and harmony. Both are fully occupied with their social activities, so much so that they hardly spend a few days together under the same roof, as they have to look into the social problems by turns. Still both seem to be devoted to each other.

Soon, this image of happy family starts crumbling with Jyoti’s announcement about her decision to marry Arun- a dalit boy. Right from this point, the rift between the views of Nath and Seva is manifested. While Nath is ecstatic after hearing about it, Seva’s reaction is cautious. Nath constantly plays the tune of his value, ideals and the democratic ways which they have brought up the children with. But before giving her consent, Seva wants to know all the details about the boy. Of course, Jyoti is not asking for their consent. She just wants to inform them about her decision. She is firm with her decision. The first glimpse of the differences is found in their reaction over Jyoti’s announcement, “---- I have decided to get married.”

Nath:  (Excited) congratulations!
Seva:  (surprised) Decided! (P. 504)

Over Seva’s reaction, Nath extends his full support to Jyoti as she is a major and thereby free to make her decisions. He gets more elated to hear that Arun is a dalit. On the other hand, Seva gets increasingly disappointed to know that neither he has any special qualification nor a steady and an adequate income. She finds nothing positive about his family background. Naturally Seva gets too worried about Jyoti’s future. Again Nath comes forward to defend the background as it is common among dalits. Constantly this tug-of-war continues between the two over every point related to it. When Seva advises her not to make haste and try to understand him more before taking the decision,
Nath mocks at her and calls it ‘nonsense’! Jyoti’s account of her consent to the marriage proposal shows how casual she is about her marriage.

**Jyoti**: -----Arun asked me, isn’t the very idea of marrying me dreadful to you? I said, what is dreadful about that? Arun said, you don’t think that I am absolutely worthless fellow? I said, no! He said, this is incredible, and added, in that case let us get married. And I nodded. (P.507)

Whereas Nath is a little disappointed to find that there is no thrill or romance in this affair, Seva is distressed to find that Jyoti has made the decision so lightly. When Jyoti wants to bring Arun home, both of them welcome the idea. Again, Seva repeats her word of wisdom about the boy’s stability and compatibility of life-styles, to be looked for in a lifelong relationship. Seva’s opinion about Arun worsens further during Arun’s first visit. When Seva enters, she finds Arun manhandling her and Jyoti in tears. Still she tries to be civil with him. But he horrifies her by his rudeness, and the portrayal of the morbid lifestyle of his future family. He accepts that his B.A. doesn’t have much scope in the job market. He casually adds that in that case, he would begin brewing illicit liquor where his wife will serve the customers and his children would take care of other trifles. (P.517) When Jyoti tries to cover up the whole thing as a joke, he shouts at her using very filthy language.

When Nath comes home, he is too enthusiastic in extending all hospitality towards him. He offers imported cigarettes to Arun, though he himself doesn’t smoke. He fails to take note of the tense atmosphere. Arun’s response is very cold. Then abruptly he gets up to leave and leaves immediately. After he leaves, Seva declares her disapproval for Arun. Nath accuses her for her biased attitude against dalits. Then she retorts,

**Seva**: (Sharply) Don’t imagine you are the only one with a liberal soul among us. We too know what it is to look beyond caste. (P.521)
Jayprakash, too, supports his mother and recounts Arun’s behavior before Nath came; and his brutality with Jyoti which Jyoti has to endorse. However, she tries to defend him. Nath also follows suit. Seva is disgusted by the adamancy of both. However, she declares her firm dissent for that marriage as she is convinced that Jyoti can never be happy with him. Even after that Nath continues his refrain of ‘experiment.’ Seva is deadly against her daughter’s life being used for an experiment. Jyoti also admits all his follies. But she declares, “I made a commitment and now I can’t run away.” In any case, she was not going to change her decision. Nath wants others to accept it and even support her. (P.525)

Seva plainly tells him, “------ This is a home, not your party where you can impose your discipline.” She is ready to break the party discipline and revolt. As expected, Nath stands firmly behind Arun. He also reminds her, Jyoti’s breaking the commitment would add to the age-old suffering of the downtrodden. It would amount to treachery, and as a father, he would feel ashamed of his daughter if she runs away from the battlefield. (P.527)

The conflict between the two intensifies further after Jyoti’s marriage. There is nothing to feel happy about the marriage. In the absence of an independent accommodation, Jyoti is still staying with her parents. She has to work and earn as Arun has not a steady job and adequate income. Moreover, they find bruises and marks of his cruelty to her, upon her body. Nath, too, has lost his sleep over this issue.

Nath has decided to solve the problem in his own way. He proposes that Jyoti and Arun both should stay with them until they can manage to have their separate house. Seva resents that idea as she knows that she won’t be able to put up with such an uncouth fellow living in the same house. But Nath reasons with her. He doesn’t want the married couple to stay separate immediately. Secondly, he thinks that this arrangement will automatically keep Arun’s brutality in check. When he asks about their views on it,
including Jyoti, she bursts out, “I have left him------ I am not going back to him again------ never.” (P.535) She refuses to give any details. She neither wants their sympathy nor consolation. Nath gets upset by these developments. He wants to bring about reconciliation between the two. When Seva speaks sarcastically about his soft corner for Arun; he gets furious and shouts at her which is not his usual self. Then he tries to convince her and explains his stand.

Nath : Seva, let not this wonderful experiment fail! --- We must save this marriage. ------

This is not just a question of our daughter’s life, ----- this has ---- a far wider significance. ------- (P.537)

Seva, though against that marriage, promises to stand by him as a true life partner and perhaps a comrade, colleague in the party. Arun has come home to see Jyoti after her cool and indifferent response on phone. She doesn’t wish even to see his face. He is drunk. He creates a melodramatic scene of repentance and curses himself in a filthy language. When even after that Jyoti doesn’t appear to budge, he takes out his knife to cut off his hands as a penance for tormenting her.

Nath, too senses the artificiality of Arun’s behavior and raps him and asks him to behave himself. Then Seva asks him about his beating Jyoti ruthlessly. He gives excuses of his hot-temper and loss of control, especially while drunk. Seva promptly points out that he has been treating Jyoti the same way even before their marriage and when he was not drunk. Over this he resorts to arrogance and defiance. He deliberately refers to his caste and cultural differences. He then brings to her notice that Jyoti had agreed to marry him with full knowledge of his background. He says they should blame Jyoti for her foolishness and not him. As usual, Nath comes forward and puts the onus upon Jyoti to see that the marriage works. Perhaps, after realizing Nath’s views, Jyoti comes out and without talking to anyone else goes to Arun and asks him to leave with her. Seva feels
helpless once again while Nath feels very proud of her. He remarks, “The training I gave you has not been in vain.” (P.541)

Once again, the vast difference between the attitudes of Nath and Seva towards Arun is underlined. Arun’s autobiography has been recently published. Nath is highly impressed by it. He showers praises over him for his talent. It creates a sharp contrast with Seva’s account of Jyoti’s plight and her pathetic condition. Nath just fails to understand the complexity of this man who describes the humiliations they have undergone with such a sensitivity and at the same time can kick his pregnant wife on her belly till she starts bleeding! He gets disturbed and worried for Jyoti’s safety after hearing the account.

Seva speaks very bitterly of his dependence upon Jyoti’s earnings without being a bit grateful to her. Now she directs her attack towards the ingratitude of dalits in general. She knows of Nath’s resentment over this view. But she is determined to voice them as they are not the views of someone who has formed the opinions by sitting in an ivory tower. She has worked all her life for the downtrodden and then arrived at certain conclusions. She remarks that the idler wants to enjoy at Jyoti’s cost. Physically, financially and emotionally he blackmails and exploits her. He is doing it deliberately as his revenge against the upper class society, as if, it is his mission. (P.544) She is more frustrated and disgusted over Jyoti’s stubbornness. She wants to bring Jyoti home and keep under her care, at least until her delivery. But Jyoti is not ready to relent. She wants her to be left to her fate.

Nath has to encounter with another crisis. He is asked to speak on Arun’s autobiography at a public debate. On the background of recent developments, he is highly reluctant to participate in the debate. He turns down the request during a telephonic conversation. Seva is so enraged that she wants to expose Arun publicly for his hypocrisy and his double standards. She also refers to his taunting Jyoti about her caste and abusing
them very foully. She is unable to utter those filthy words. After Nath’s insistence she has to tell about Arun’s horrifying inventions to malign them. Arun has remarked that Nath is impotent and Jyoti is the daughter of someone else. He goes ahead to accuse Seva of pushing the girls from Seva Dal to prostitution for the sake of leaders. These invented abuses are beyond Nath’s capacity to tolerate and understand. Still, he takes a strong objection to Jayprakash’s calling Arun ‘a bastard’ for his beastly ways.

Soon, Arun himself arrives at the door with his supporters and well-wishers, a dalit leader and the publisher of his book. He behaves too snobbishly, goes on bragging about his great achievement and special status among the literary circle and the intellectuals etc. He tries to put pressure on Nath by reminding him of their relationship and the possible interpretation of their strained relations. When he fails to net Nath with all these tactics, he resorts to mock self-reproach and veiled abuse of Nath and his family. He refers to the subordinate treatment given by upper-caste people like Nath, despite their socialist background. However, Nath remains firm on his refusal to preside over the debate. He doesn’t want to submit to Arun’s blackmailing tactics. (P.533)

Surprisingly, Seva’s opinion is exactly opposite to Nath’s. She suggests or rather insists and begs him to accept the invitation to preside the debate for the sake of Jyoti’s safety. She fears that Nath’s refusal would be used as a weapon against Jyoti and she would have to undergo more torture, more suffering at Arun’s hand. She points out that they have no alternative but to bow to Arun’s pressure. Nath feels helpless but accepts her suggestion.

Though Nath showers praise on Arun’s book during the debate, he is fully aware of the hollowness of his words. After returning from the function, he seems to be a completely changed man. He blames himself for being ecstatic about the book at first and advocating Arun every time whenever Seva found faults with him. Now he calls the book
a hoax and Arun, an opportunist. He is worried about Jyoti’s reaction over his falsity, who has been an outspoken critic of his speeches so far.

Seva is grateful to him for obliging her. But he admits that he has resorted to falsity first time in his life, and it is not comparable to Jyoti’s sacrificing her whole life for the sake of his ideals. He blames himself for her ruin as it he who has encouraged her to go ahead with her thoughtless decision. He is overcome with self-reproach.

Nath: ----- I put our social commitments to test. ------ I closed the doors upon her return.

I realize all this now.

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Nath: ------ I had this maniacal urge to uproot casteism and caste distinctions from our society. As a result I pushed my own daughter into a sea of misery. ------

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Nath: ------ She took her father’s words for gospel truth. She was guided by her father’s humanism and liberalism. (P.557-558)

He also blames a politician, a social reformer within him. He calls the politician ‘a chess player’ and compares Jyoti with ‘a pawn that gets knocked out.’ To add to his pathetic condition, Jyoti comes to give a last blow to him. Actually, Seva has taken him to the bedroom to have some rest and divert his attention from the self-reproaching mood. But after hearing Jyoti’s voice he comes out. Now it is Jyoti’s turn to lash him with harsh words.

She deliberately behaves like a stranger, ignores the offer of eating with them or even to step into the kitchen. She expresses her strong objection for Nath’s attending the function, and praising the book. She is not ready to accept his reasoning as she knows that it was his attempt to save her from Arun’s wrath. Nath has to admit that it was also
one of the considerations. She refuses to be counted among the family members. She also
knows that he hates Arun for his treatment to her.

When Nath advances his usual theory of ‘hate the sin and not the sinner’, she
explodes. She rejects the theory altogether. She has tried it with Arun. She has realized
that a man and his inherent nature cannot be separated and one has to accept the man in
totality along with the evils. It is practically impossible to arouse the god within a man.
She says, she has wasted all these years to discover the truth. She has discovered the truth
only because of Arun. She declares that she has accepted Arun as he is as she cannot
reject him. Moreover, she reminds him that she is only following his values, not to run
away from the battlefield. She calls those false values a drug which had numbed her
senses and says that she will continue to sacrifice her life as a guinea pig and tauntingly
asks him to continue his experiment.

Finally she points out that the man who brought them up with the dose of ‘truth
and goodness’ has conveniently run away from them (for the sake of his daughter). Then
why did he close all options for them, is her question to him. She blames him for turning
them into cripples by administering the doses of shallow ideals. She gives him a parting
blow by declaring that she has severed all ties with their world of ideals and
sophistication. She says, if she comes in contact with this world, she starts hating her own
world of untouchables in the slums. She also warns her mother not to ever visit her house
and leaves without seeing her. Nath is thus completely defeated, ironically, by his own
ideals and values. He finds them toppling down before his eyes.

**Arun-Jyoti Relationship**

This relationship has not been depicted much in detail, though it is the cause of
the conflict between Jyoti’s parents. This relationship passes through three stages only on
Jyoti’s side. Arun remains the same person from the beginning to the end. For Jyoti, the
first stage is that of innocence and ignorance, second is resistance and struggle to cope up with the situation and third is that of acceptance, resolution and determination of a soldier. These are comparable with the three phases of a river, the initial stage of enthusiasm, then the stage of struggle, negotiating all sorts of obstacles and the final stage of composure, depth and selfless dedication.

Jyoti accepts Arun’s proposal of marriage without giving it a deep thought in the natural enthusiasm of an adolescent, combined with the sense of adventure. There is also the influence of ideals instilled within her by the parents. In the second stage, she tries to fight with the evil, the demon in Arun. She even decides to revolt and break the relationship at one point of time. During this stage when she refuses to talk to Arun on his arrival at her father’s residence, she probably realizes of her father’s views regarding her marital relationship during his discussion with Arun. Therefore she takes the decision of going back with Arun.

**Arun**: I am what I am -------- and shall remain exactly that. And your Jyoti knew what I was even before she married me. In spite of that she married me, she did it out of her own free will.

**Nath**: ------- It is absolutely true that Jyoti married you out of her own free will.

Therefore it is Jyoti’s duty to put all her strength into making it work. (P.540)

After this incidence she never comes to her parents to seek help, refuge or emotional support. Whenever she is referred after that, it is always an indirect reference by Seva or Nath, about her suffering and pitiable condition. She appears only in the last scene after that to declare that she has cut off her return routes, so that she could fight her battle on her own, single-mindedly.
In between, she has tried to judge Arun, tapped the possibility of moulding his character and person; and arrived at the conclusion that it is a futile exercise. Therefore she has decided to accept him as he is. Moreover she has realized that Arun’s way of manifestation of love is thoroughly blended with bestiality. Within the same man is hidden a passionate lover, a tender hearted poet and a demon. Her love for him is not lost, which is clear from her reflections upon his behavior.

**Jyoti**: ------ Filthy cursing is a part of his frenzied love, a sudden shower of hard, ardent kisses accompanies the rain of blows. After going through these miseries, if the broken body finds some rest and wakes to engage itself in the routine, then, a few lines come to hand, lines steeped in feeling, fragments of poetry filled with the throb of pain ------ And a fresh start is made, love springs once again; ------------

However the same feeling doesn’t seem to be reciprocated by Arun. He seems to be cunning, calculated and a different kind of hypocrite. He puts to use his backwardness, his untouchability, the suffering through generations by his forefathers and exploits, blackmails emotionally the naives of upper caste like Nath and Jyoti He employs all tactics of a rouge to get what he wants. He is completely unscrupulous in this regard. He speaks in a highly sensitive manner about the suffering of the backward caste people, but doesn’t hesitate to make the weak and helpless like Jyoti suffer at his own hands. Neither he regrets tormenting her physically and emotionally nor feels ashamed of depending on her financially to make merry with his friends. He shamelessly advocates his violence, saying, it is the outcome of his hot-temperedness and the influence of alcohol, though he has no answer to Seva’s observation that he is violent even when he is sober. There is not a single instance of his love and concern for Jyoti. It seems that a marriage with Jyoti is a convenient and essential stepping stone for his rise up the social ladder and a tool to pour out all his urge of revenge, suppressed by his class for generations. Thus this love relationship seems to be one-sided.
Barve finds this play highly intense. He observes that Jyoti’s decision to marry a *dalit* youth, Arun causes ripples in the quiet lake of the family life. Their consecutive actions give a blow after the other to the Devalalikar family. It triggers a violent storm within the family. It is the emotional as well as ideological turbulence.

He further states that Jyoti has attained knowledge about Arun’s dual personality where the two contradictory traits are found within the same person. This play imparts a dialectical and dynamic experience of the interlinked cog wheels of unity in diversity and *vive versa* through the characters of *Kanyadaan*. (Chandrashekhar Barve, *Tendulkaranchi Natake*, Rajhans Prakashan, Pune, 1985. P.66-67)

*Kanyadaan* has been translated by Gowri Ramnarayan. In the Afterword she has made some observations especially about Jyoti’s character. She observes, “At the end, Jyoti is forced to come to terms with her fate as Arun’s wife, as she realizes that it is not possible to improve people and change society. Tendulkar has focused on a problem that there is no bridge between the various sections of society, and that the attempt to overcome a taboo often leads to greater pitfalls than one can handle. (Gowri Ramnarayan, Appendix IV to *Kanyadaan. Collected Plays in Translation*. P.597)

Tendulkar was awarded the Saraswati Samman for this play. There are some excerpts from his speech at the ceremony. He explains his stand while writing this play. He asserts, “I have written about my own experiences and about what I have seen in others around me. I have been true to all this and have not cheated my generation. I did not attempt to simplify matters and issues for the audience ------ though that would have been the easier option. Sometimes my plays jolted society out of its stupor and I was punished. It is an old habit with me to do what I am told not to do. My plays could not have been about anything else. They contain my perception of society and its values and I cannot write what I could not perceive.” (Tendulkar. Appendix IV. *Collected Plays in Translation*. P.598)
TENDULKAR’S EARLY UNTRANSLATED PLAYS

When Tendulkar’s early plays are taken into account, some of them show a strong thematic resemblance with the plays by T. Williams. Not only this, some of the themes recur in his later plays. For instance, the conflict between the artistic aspirations and the practical considerations and the agony of a person when caught between the two is found in Mee Jinklo! Mee Harlo! (My victory! My loss!) written in 1963. It causes tension between the marital relationship of the protagonist and his wife and her mother. (family members) T.Williams deals with a similar theme in The Glass Menagerie while portraying the conflict within the protagonist and his conflict with his family members, especially his mother.

Another early play is Shrimant, (The Aristocrats) where Tendulkar deals with the problem of incompatibility between the husband and wife’s family members. It has been dealt with from a different angle in his later play Kanydaan. This has been a recurring theme in T. William’s plays also which is found in The Streetcar Named Desire in the form of the conflict between Blanche and Stanley.

The third play, namely Chimanicha Ghar Hota Menacha! (Humble Nest of a poor Sparrow!) strongly resembles in its psychoanalysis of the characters and the technique of playing a game with the help of illusion to E, Albee’s plays like Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf? That is why these plays by Tendulkar have been included for the sake of discussion, though they have not been translated.
(Gopalrao Joshi) Dada ---------- wife ---------- Akka (a practical woman)
( a retired professor)                             |
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| (Younger daughter) (Son) (daughter) |
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Madhav-Anu Relationship

It is a love-marriage between Madhav and Anu. She has fallen in love with his acting in the college drama. However, acting career was not looked at with high esteem, in those days. So she gives other reasons for her choice. Madhav is a clerk with a moderate salary. He is totally disinterested in this job. He is carrying on somehow. His in-laws disapprove his craze for theatre. They want him to prosper in his job. That is why Dada has invited Madhav’s boss to try for Madhav’s promotion. Madhav, to avoid this meeting, spends time outside after his show, though he has promised to return home in time. Such a behavior has created tension in the house. Akka is highly critical of him. But Anu tries to defend him. He gets irritated by the constant pressure for progress at the office. When the pressure is unbearable for him, in a spur of a moment, he declares his intention to resign from the post for the sake of the theatre. His sudden decision gets a boost in the guise of the praise he receives from his true friend and critic, Shekhar. (P.24-28) But Shekhar gives him practical advice, to carry on with his job. He has to accept it for the time being. During these tense moments, he pours his frustration upon Anu. She tolerates it patiently and at the same time tries to compose him. Finally he has to bow to her wish. He agrees to go to see his boss with Dada.

Her parents strongly oppose theatre as a career for two reasons. First is the instability in the field and second, a lack of respectability to it. They want their daughter to lead happy and carefree life.

In spite of all the resistance, Madhav resigns from the job and dedicates his life for his passion. Now he is happy, but others are suffering. Anu’s suffering is worst. She has to fight on various fronts. She has to tackle with the resentment of her parents, the poverty at home, the creditors coming at the door, Madhav’s frustration and his mood-swings after he gets cheated by the contractors and above all, her pregnancy which means an additional responsibility. She begins losing her patience. Her health is deteriorating.
day by day as a result of physical and mental torment. To add to her woes, she has heard the rumours about Madhav’s interest in Shalini- his co-star. Her suspicion turns into a belief when she hears Madhav addressing Shalini during his soliloquy.

Even in these dismal circumstances, Madhav is hopeful of improvement in the situation. He is looking forward to his ‘night’ for his next show. He has plans of running theatre on co-operative basis. He and his friend Shekhar have decided to sacrifice their ‘nights’ for the initial shows. He hopes that there will be a regular income thereafter as the middleman, the contractor will be eliminated. But wishes are not horses. Anu refuses to dream like Madhav. She is more practical. She offers him a proposal. She offers him the amount of Rs.10000, her father had deposited in her account. She wants him to clear all the debts with the help of it and keep the remaining amount for the future expenses. She allows him to restore the amount whenever he gets it. He feels relieved. But Anu’s offer comes with a condition. The condition is, Madhav has to keep away from the theatre thereafter. Madhav has to accept the condition reluctantly. He tries to protest. But she gives him an ultimatum that if he wants to continue with his theatre, then she would bring an end to their relationship. She even hints at her suicide. Thus Madhav is forced to oblige her. He really loves her, though he equally loves the theatre. Though he agrees with her proposal, he is determined to perform in the show that night. (P.59-70)

Madhav has now left the theatre and turned a popular comedian in cinema. He has to make all sorts of compromises suitable for his image as a comedian. In fact, he resents all those stupid things. But he knows that his financial position has been improved a lot. Therefore he can’t think to give it up. Anu is happy on one hand as the sound financial position has rid her of all the worries. But she is doubtful about Madhav’s happiness. Madhav doesn’t let her know about the conflict, the agony he is experiencing. Still she is aware of it. That is why she avoids to attend the felicitation ceremony arranged in his honour. She extends the excuse of ill-health of their son. On the other hand, Akka- her mother is too excited about the ceremony. Madhav himself is caught in a dilemma of genuine, realistic, artistic portrayal and the cheap comedy he is doing presently. His
feeling of self reproach is supported by Dada’s frank criticism of his clownish acting in the popular comedies. Anu strongly defends him saying “artistic representation may satisfy a true actor, but it fails to earn money. One has to look at it as an occupation.” But Dada does not agree with her. He equates selling one’s art, with prostitution. (P.84)

In the meanwhile Anu has learned to handle the financial transactions expertly. However, she has sensed Madhav’s restlessness, discomfort with his present status. She coaxes him to open his heart freely to her. She even suggests him that he may talk freely to Shalini. She knows that there is a perfect understanding between the two. She is prepared to let him bring Shalini as his companion, if that makes him feel better. She regrets her former decision of keeping him away from the theatre. She finds that the prosperity has left him unhappy and miserable. He has lost his peace of mind. (P.95-97)

While she is trying to understand his inner feelings, he suddenly declares his intention of not attending the felicitation ceremony arranged to honour him. This decision is triggered by Shekhar’s arrival. He finds that a truly dedicated artist like Shekhar is wasted though he has sacrificed his whole life for theatre’s sake. Shekhar, though doesn’t condemn Madhav’s clownish acting, avoids praising it. He just ignores Madhav when Madhav is in high praise about his achievements in cinema. He finds his own image in Shekhar who is now completely addicted to alcohol. He knows that his inner voice, his urge is calling him for artistic theatre. Cinema and comic roles have failed to provide him that satisfaction. Now he is determined to go by his instinct, his true interest. Thus he has arrived at the decision of giving up cinema forever. (P.97-99)

While Akka is disappointed by this decision, Dada admires him for his courage to voice his opinion freely; though he is somewhat doubtful about it. He is not sure that Madhav will go ahead firmly with his decision. Anu once again declares her disapproval with his decision. She reminds him of his responsibilities towards his family. He gets annoyed by her stand. He begs her to try to understand his plight. He talks in an agitated
manner. He feels, as if, he has strayed away from the right path and trapped in the wilderness. He takes pity on himself as there is no room for his artistic interpretation of the inner feelings in the role of a comedian. Even here he has tried to give artistic touch to his roles. But the audience has failed to take note of it. The ignorant public knows only one thing, that whatever the comedian does, they have to laugh. They are unable to take note of the depiction of his suffering through the mask of gaiety. (P. 102-103)

Anu has no objection for his new resolve. But in that case, she doesn’t hold him responsible for his family. She has decided to look for a job to support the family. She wants to find Madhav happy; not sad, grumbling and full of self-pity. She is even ready to take the responsibility of conveying his decision of not attending the felicitation ceremony, to the organizers. (P.104)

However, suddenly Madhav makes an about-turn. He has realized perhaps, that he can’t pursue his dreams without sound financial support. He must make a lot of money by performing such foolish roles. He wants to utilize that money to establish his own theatre-group. He dreams of providing all the facilities to the select talented actors, to pay them the worth of their talent etc. This new resolution provides him some solace. So he decides to continue his ordeal with cinema and declares that he is going to attend the ceremony.

Anu, who is not aware of the storm in his mind, gets disappointed. Akka, who has been disheartened by Madhav’s earlier decision, is now elated. She congratulates Anu for her victory. But now Anu is disheartened. She takes it as her own defeat, Madhav’s defeat, his loss, as he had failed to stand by his decision.

It shows that though she opposes Madhav’s craze for theatre, she really wants him to be happy. But she cannot ignore practical considerations for which she has to blackmail Madhav. She puts conditions before him in return for financial aid from her
personal account. She also threatens him with suicide. Again, towards the end, when he wants to change his track, she tells him to have his own way. But she says, in that case, their paths would be separated. In spite of that when he cancels his plan and prepares to attend the function, she feels sorry, not only for him, but also for her.

Barve states, “The conflict within the play arises out of Madhav’s craze for acting and his struggle for that on one side and his difference of opinion on this issue with his wife Anu and her family members, on the other side. The difference arises out of the two different ideologies, namely pragmatic and non-pragmatic.

Besides the external conflict, there is internal conflict within Madhav’s mind, what Madhav likes to do and what others expect him to do. In a way, this is also a conflict between two contrasting desires, two egos.” (Chandrashekhar Barve, Tendulkaranchi Natake, Rajhans Prakashan, Pune, 1985. P. 38-40)

**SHRIMANTA (1955)**

Dada (Wagle) ---------wife-------------Malini

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Son | daughter

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Bhau | Doctor | Mathura

| (a family doctor, friend, well wisher) |

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Wife | husband

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Ratna | Shridhar (Redkar)

- 303 -
In this early play, Tendulkar mainly deals with the theme of class distinction and conflicts between the persons owing to it. In an unusual situation, the respectable and affluent Wagle family is forced to accept the relation between their daughter Mathura and a young man, Shridhar, an upstart, a rogue and unsophisticated person. Mathura is pregnant without marriage. It is an outcome of an affair with a married person which makes it impossible to marry her with that man. Termination of pregnancy is the usual way employed to save the reputation of the family in such circumstances. However, it is risky for Mathura as per the doctor’s opinion; as Mathura is a frail girl and already undergone the operation for appendicitis. Doctor advises Dada to marry her off with some insignificant person who would be willing to marry her even after the full knowledge of the situation. They are actually planning to ‘buy’ a groom with their money power to hush up the matter and save the family name. (Mathura is already in her fourth month of pregnancy. Obviously the delivery is expected hardly within six months of the marriage which is enough to create the scandal among the high-brow society. Secondly, a hasty marriage with such an incompatible fellow is also enough for the eyebrows to be raised. It is clear that the very foundation of the plot is based on flimsy assumption.)

In this situation Shridhar’s entry takes place in the aristocratic Wagle family. Doctor has brought him there to be introduced to them. Before that he has made him aware of the exact situation. Right from the beginning, the resentment to accept such a person as a son-in-law is observed clearly. But they have no alternative. Dada expects him at least to be humble, meek and grateful for his good luck. On the contrary, Shridhar deliberately behaves to make them realize that he is obliging them by accepting the proposal. He behaves in an uncouth, arrogant manner, keeps on sneering at their ways, teasing and taunting them. Finally, he asserts his superiority by accepting the proposal without any monetary gains.
On this backdrop he becomes a family member, as he is asked to stay with them in the same house. Even after that he refuses to change his life-style and invites the wrath of the family members, including Mathura.

Soon after this marriage, Bhau too gets married with Ratna. Her behavior is also snobbish like others. Bhau, the unworthy son is jealous of Shridhar. He thinks that Shridhar is being showered with a lot of favours unnecessarily, nobody objects to his way of life, whereas everybody is ready to find faults with him. As Dada’s ego is hurt, he too is a strong adversary to Shridhar. There is no question of love, attachment or respect for Shridhar on Mathura’s part. Thus the whole family stands against Shridhar, as if, he is living on the enemy soil. Therefore the relationship should be considered as the relationship between Shridhar and Wagale family.

**Relationship between Shridhar and Wagale Family**

When Dada and Malini’s relationship with Shridhar is taken into account, Malini’s attitude seems to be that of submission and conciliation. She has accepted this relationship for the sake of their daughter’s and family’s name. So she never is hostile towards Shridhar. On the contrary, whenever Dada and Mathura express their fury or loathing for Shridhar’s ways of behavior, she tries to lessen the bitterness or tension.

Dada is strongly against Shridhar, right from the beginning. He looks down upon him. He gets disgusted as he has to put up with the arrogance and the insulting remarks by Shridhar. He prefers his daughter to be dead instead of tolerating someone like Shridhar who is nowhere close to his status. The first insult at the hands of Shridhar is when he goes on raising his price at first in the bargain and then surprises him by announcing that he is ready to marry their daughter for no price. (P.17-25) His broadmindedness is revealed through his attitude towards Mathura’s affair. He doesn’t condemn her. (P.21)
The second instance takes place at the time of the naming ceremony of the newborn baby. He insists that it is his privilege to choose the name as the father of the baby. He is not ready to accept the name they have given during the ceremony. He insists on renaming the child as ‘Keshav’. Dada gets extremely annoyed. Mathura tries to demoralize him by pointing out sharply that it is not his baby. He, too, dares her to tell the name of its father. He doesn’t want to participate in the feast if his word is not to honoured. Finally, Malini convinces Mathura to do as Shridhar has wished. (P.44-50)

Shridhar stays home for the feast after that. But he has invited another disgrace for the family by inviting his friend there. This friend is a prisoner released after serving 10 years in a jail for a murder. His appearance is filthy and grotesque. But Shridhar doesn’t bother to make him sit on the sofa. He also orders Mathura to bring food for his friend. He spills and spits the food around. It is unbearable for all others. But Shridhar is determined to exercise his right to receive and treat his guests; without caring for their resentment. After Shridhar takes his friend-Keshav to his room, Mathura begins to clean the mess as a penance for the torment she has caused the family. For Dada, Mathura’s words and act are heart-rending. (P.51-57)

The hardest blow comes in the form of a crisis at Dada’s factory. The workers are on strike under the leadership of none other than Shridhar. The workers have bluntly told Dada to make negotiations with their leader, Shridhar. (P.80) Bhau, his own son is of no help in this crisis. On the contrary, he is prepared to leave the house as a protest against the biased treatment he has been receiving as compared to Shridhar. But in this situation, Bhau finds an opportunity to prove himself superior.

At first, Ratna hints at getting rid of Shridhar, as a way out of this crisis. Malini is not ready for it as she finds it like robbing Mathura off her husband and the baby of its father. Bhau suggests a divorce for Mathura and if possible, her remarriage. Dada slowly
tends to agree with the proposal. He asks Bhau to convey that decision to Shridhar. But he is reluctant to take the responsibility. Everybody offers some excuses. So finally Mathura prepares to carry it out. When she proceeds towards the stair-case, she finds Shridhar standing on the landing. She realizes that he must have heard every word of the discussion regarding him. Still she conveys him the decision.

Shridhar ignores her and asks Doctor about a girl named Krishna. He realizes from Doctor’s gestures that the girl is no more. Then, in his long monologue, he echoes their views about him, condemns them for their mean way of thinking, their plan to eliminate him forever. He owns all his vices and follies and then dares them to take action against him. (P.87)

Mathura is so furious that she asks for Dada’s pistol to kill Shridhar. He is not scared by Mathura’s stance. He dares her to shoot him. Dada offers him to leave the house and the town. He promises that no action will be taken against him, in return.

Shridhar realizes Dada’s plans to malign his name by spreading the news that he had backed out for the sake of a certain amount of money. He, therefore, turns down the offer. Dada promises him to keep it a secret. But he is firm. He then brings to their notice that he had never spent Dada’s money. Whatever he won through betting was enough for his expenses. When Bhau links him with the prostitutes, he retaliates. He makes Doctor tell the truth about an unfortunate girl, Krishna, who had been deceived by Bhau and had died a miserable death that very morning. Nobody wants to believe him. Dada thinks that he is making baseless statements. He asks Shridhar to get out or else threatens to call the watchman for that. Shridhar himself doesn’t want to stay there, anymore. He hurls the money to Dada which he had taken from the safe to help his friend Keshav to make a new beginning in life. (P.89-90)
Suddenly, he turns to the room where the baby is asleep. All are scared. When he comes out, Mathura asks him what harm he has done to the baby. His answer brings about a complete transformation in her attitude towards him. He answers, “I kissed him, hugged him tight, caressed him and told him ‘not to forget’ his father-.” Then he leaves the room. His words melt down Mathura’s heart. She realizes that despite being fully aware of baby’s parentage, Shridhar genuinely loves the baby, as if, it is his own child. It is like an epiphany. She decides to leave the house and stand firmly by Shridhar’s side for the sake of his selfless affection and attachment for the child. First time ever, she refers to Shridhar as the father of her child, by acknowledging his status. In a way, she admits that Shridhar is wealthier than anybody else in the house when purity of heart is concerned. (P.89-92)

The cause of the conflict, the tension between Shridhar and the family members is mainly cultural differences and the vast difference in their status which is nothing else but the financial power. It doesn’t arise out of ideological differences or difference in the views. However, an undercurrent of sociological, communist ideology is found in the plot. Therefore, it will be more appropriate to consider it as the conflict of class difference rather than conflict at personal level.

Barve observes that the conflict begins with a rogue entry into the aristocratic and very rich, prestigious family of Dadasaheb. He states that externally it is a conflict between the two classes- the rich and the poor. Internally, it is a conflict of egos, between the two. With respect to Bhau and Shridhar, it is the crisis about assertion of identities. Shridhar protests against the practice of his worth being determined in terms of wealth. He wants to be treated as a human being.

Barve opines that Shridhar’s challenge is not only to wealth or snobbery. He challenges the inhuman and savage attitude of the so called sophisticated people. It is mainly a crisis between two egos, one respecting the humanity and the other ignoring it

*CHIMANICHA GHAR HOTA MENACHA*. (1959)

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<th>Malak (the landlord)</th>
<th>Muni (the estate agent)</th>
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Malak- Tenant- couple relationship

The newly married couple of Govinda and Kamal has to stay separately in the absence of an independent accommodation. They are desperately in need of a rental house to spend their married life together. One such accommodation is offered to them by an estate agent named Muni. The accommodation is not a self-contained flat. It is just a
room in a flat, separated by a wooden partition. The landlord has put many strange
conditions before the agreement takes place. One of them is, they should never appear
happy and cheerful. They have to keep on shouting, quarreling, weeping, looking
depressed etc. They can’t invite any friend or a relative to stay with them. The toughest
condition is, they can’t have a baby as no extension of family is allowed. It is true that
beggars can’t be choosers! They have no choice but to agree with the queerest conditions.
The couple finds the way out to enjoy life but to make an appearance of unhappiness to
satisfy the condition. Govinda’s cousin Chander invents many devices to keep up the
appearances. They go on defying the conditions with the devices. They are under the
impression that they have kept these secret arrangements safe from the landlord-Malak.
Unfortunately, he has found out about all their devices meant to mislead him. Muni
comes to warn them. Soon Malak arrives. He orders them to vacate the place
immediately. They try to reason with him. But he is not ready to budge. Govinda and
Kamal find themselves in a miserable condition, as they have defied the last condition,
too. Kamal is pregnant and they have made arrangements to guise the fact when the baby
is born. Now all their plans prove futile. Kamal tries to argue with Malak. She protests
against the condition of denying them the parenthood. She asks sarcastically, “Can there
be a condition like this? Why didn’t you ask us to stop breathing, instead?” (P.66)

When Malak points out that they have defied the conditions, she asks, “Did you
tell us about your spying on us? It was not ethical on your part.” Govinda points out that
they have not defied the conditions openly. (P.67) Malak remains firm on his stand. He
calls them ungrateful cheats; threatens them to move immediately. Now the couple tries
to beg for mercy, try to promise him to follow the conditions strictly. But it is of no use.

Kamal feels miserable by the idea of dismantling their nest, built up so
painstakingly, with a great enthusiasm. Their appeals, their misery fail to melt Malak’s
heart. When he finds them not willing to destroy their nest, he comes forward and starts
hurling the things out. When he throws away a flower-vase, it gets shattered along with
Kamal’s heart. She has some tender feelings linked with the vase. Her grief is
uncontrollable. She starts recounting the memories unconsciously. It is the memory of her first and lost love, Mohan. They were deeply in love with each other. Suddenly, he comes to know about his suffering from tuberculosis. He realizes that his days are numbered. He doesn’t want her to remain in grief after him. He had insisted that she should look for another life-partner and live happily. He believes that to be meaningful, for every healthy person. Finally, she has to bow to his wish. She has then come across Govinda who had also been passing through a similar phase then. She had explained the whole situation to Govinda who then had agreed to marry her. Mohan, her first love, had sent the vase as a wedding gift to them, which Malak has shattered. After the narration, Govinda promises Malak to vacate the place the next morning. (P.71) As if, Malak’s perverse desire to see someone suffering from some extra-ordinary grief, perhaps greater than his own, is satisfied. His attitude towards them suddenly takes a U turn. While Kamal is narrating the whole story, he gradually gets overcome with emotions. By the end of the narration he starts sobbing. Perhaps he feels that the couple has suffered enough. And there is no point in tormenting them further. All his antagonism miraculously dissolves. He withdraws all his conditions and urges them to stay there as long as they wished. This is a turning point between their relationship.

To boost this transformation one more addition takes place in the guise of Kamal’s aunt, Vrinda Mavashi. She has been a trapeze artist and a happy-go-lucky person. She wants to enjoy life fully. Tears and melancholy have no place in her philosophy of life. She passes funny comments on each of them. Then suddenly asks about the shards scattered around. Kamal hints at shifting to some other place. She changes the gloomy mood by her free behavior. She doesn’t hesitate to tickle Malak to make him laugh. All break into laughter along with Malak. (P.72-73)

After this transfer scene and after a few months, all the members are found living together like a family. They are busy in the preparations for the naming ceremony of Kamal’s baby. Govinda and Kamal are out on the mission of invitations. Malak has just returned from the shopping for the ceremony. It is learnt that they are going to invite all
the members of the ‘cream of society’ from all fields- political leaders, Bollywood stars, journalists, ministers, governor, so on and so forth. The aloofness, cynicism, sadism of Malak is completely vanished. It is replaced by a desire for life, all the tender feelings which he wants to shower upon the baby- Chimaji. Soon, Govinda and Kamal also return and report enthusiastically about their mission of invitations. According to Kamal’s account, the governor had offered them his helicopter for it and he himself was to address the function etc. (P.77-93)

It is obvious that every detail of the account is the invention of their world of fantasy. But none of them raises doubts or expresses disbelief. It is a sort of ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ on part of everyone in the house. But Muni is not ready to be a part of the game. He is angrier to find a cynic like Malak being a part of it. He is determined to expose the falsity, the illusion behind it. (P.93-97)

He points out that there is no real baby, what they are treating as their baby is just a plastic doll. He has come there to blast the illusion. He condemns all of them for showering their affection upon a plastic doll, like fools and maniacs. (P.94-95) Muni knows the whole truth. He is forced to give the details when he finds their defiance to admit the truth. He pronounces the truth without mincing words. He tells Kamal, “you’ve miscarried the baby and there is no possibility of another baby as per the doctors.” Govinda is still not ready to budge. He claims, “Suddenly one day the lost baby met her. He apologized to her for the error and expressed his wish to come back to her. Thus she’s brought the baby home.” Muni is not ready to accept the tales. All are enraged by his obstinacy. Malak wants to teach him a lesson.

Kamal is hurt by the bitterness and that too, on that auspicious day. The baby is not pretence, an illusion for her. She narrates of her plight after realizing about the miscarriage, how miserable she felt when she came to know that she can’t have even the glimpse of her own baby etc. She had lost all interest in life. All were trying to comfort
her, make her overcome her grief and suddenly she had heard her baby calling her. It was from a baby doll from a toy shop. For her, it is not just another toy. According to her, it behaved like her own baby. She has started calling him Chimaji. She has been treating the doll as a real baby.

Such a deeply emotional account doesn’t make any effect upon Muni. He proves that everything including the stories of telegram and helicopter and invitations are just ‘made up.’ In fact, Kamal and Govinda have kept on wandering aimlessly the whole day through the scorching sun. Finally, he dares them to bring the baby out to prove their point. All come forward to protect the illusion. (P.97-101)

In spite of Muni’s attack, Kamal is not angry with him. She ignores his claims and urges him to attend the naming ceremony. Instead of accepting the invitation, Muni demands for Chimaji as his commission. In fact, Muni has found his stepmother in the doll and that is why he hates it. He wants to destroy the bitter memories of his stepmother by destroying the doll. (P.101-104) After hearing the whole account, Kamal’s resistance vanishes. Perhaps she feels that his need for the doll is greater than hers. She goes in and brings the bundle of the baby and hands it over to Muni. She urges him to do, whatever he wanted to do with the doll, but softly and tenderly without hurting it. Her complete surrender brings about a transformation in Muni’s attitude. He gives the bundle back to her. Kamal is surprised by this gesture. She asks him the reason. Over this, Muni refers to the doll as Chimaji proclaiming his willingness to participate in the game of the illusion. (P.104-105) Malak is overjoyed by this reversal. He relates Muni with Chimaji as ‘Mama’- the maternal uncle. Thus the conflict is resolved satisfactorily.

It is observed that Malak’s attitude in the beginning is cynic, and sadist. It is the result of his extreme suffering right since his childhood. The account of his life since his birth is unraveled during his interview with his potential tenants- the couple, Kamal and Govinda. He never had the experience of attachment, affection or emotional bonding,
being the son of a licentious woman. He was left to his fate since the age of six. He has never known joy, happiness or cheerfulness. Naturally, his attitude towards the happy, contented people is revengeful and hostile. He can’t see anyone to be happy. That is why he puts strange conditions to his tenants. (P.33)

In spite of his antagonism and despair, the tender heart within him still seems to be alive. Therefore, though he feigns disapproval towards the display of love by Kamal and Govinda, it has certainly aroused the suppressed feelings within his mind. He admits to Muni, “I wish I live life anew.” (P.34)

This inclination gets clearly manifested after Kamal’s heart rending account of her first ungratified love and her lover’s death due to the incurable disease. As a result, he withdraws his demand of getting the house vacated. Not only this, he, for the first time displays his sentiments openly. He starts sobbing after hearing the account. (P.71)

He feels equally shattered after Kamal’s miscarriage and therefore participates in the game of illusion wholeheartedly. When Muni tries to unravel the truth, he gets furious. He is ahead of others in his attempt to defend the illusion. (P.101-102) He gets elated to find that Muni has backed out from his claims and is willing to be a part of the game of illusion. (P.105) Thus the relationship passes through stages of the utter hostility to extreme affection which forces him to fight even for the falsity- the illusion.

Barve explains Tendulkar’s stand behind the play as, “Happiness is a kind of feeling. Presently, when man is deprived of the real happiness, he needs either false happiness or the illusion to survive.” (Chandrashekhar Barve, Tendulkaranchi Natake, Rajhans Prakashan, Pune, 1985. P. 37)
According to him the play throws light upon the pathetic truth— if man has to accept an artificial life-style then he seeks refuge either in unnatural heaps of sorrow or illusive, imaginary joys and happiness. However, the action progresses towards the end in a very odd manner which fails to clarify the playwright’s motive. Probably Tendulkar could not decide upon the specific end of the play according to his own account. (Barve. P.38)

MAHESH ELKUNCHWAR’S PLAYS

Mahesh Elkunchwar is born in October 1939 in the family of feudal lords in Vidarbha, Maharashtra. At the tender age he was adopted by his uncle. Emotionally, he could never settle there. Being snatched away from the family and the familiar surrounding at the tender age he, too, felt uprooted like Albee. He failed to adjust himself with the new surrounding, which resulted into his rebellion and adamancy.

He turned to reading to overcome agony of loneliness. He opted for English literature at college and later on became a lecturer in English. During the college life he got fascinated by English movies in addition to English literature. He has also studied Sanskrit literature and Indian philosophy in depth, to understand the meaning of life and nature of death. His works reflect all these features unmistakably.

However, he turned to playwriting accidentally after watching Tendulkar’s Mee Jinklo! Mee harlo! in 1965. He found playwriting a powerful medium of expression. His first One Act Play was published in 1967 in the prestigious magazine Satyakatha. Many other plays were published in the seventies. His Wada Chirebandi (1982) brought him accolades and recognition throughout India.
Though influenced by Tendulkar, he never imitated Tendulkar. He developed his own style and techniques to suit his themes. His plays have been translated into Hindi, English and many other languages. Some plays like *Holi, Party* and *Wada Chirebandi* have been adopted for the films. (Source: 1. Elkunchwar, Mahesh. *Maunraag*, Mauj Prakashan, 2005, 2. Rajadhyksha Aashish, Bandopadhyay Samik and Arvikar Sanjay, *Baatcheet Mahesh Elkunchwaranshi*. Rajhans Prakashan, Pune, 2008)

**WADA CHIREBANDI (OLD STONE MANSION) (1982)**

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<td>[Tatyaji (Venkatesh)]------His widow------ Aai</td>
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<td>Bhaskar—Vahini</td>
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In this play Elkunchwar depicts four generations of a once prosperous family of feudal lords. He deals with the gradual decay of the feudal system through the characters and the interpersonal relations between them. At one level, it is the conflict between every two generations. At another level, it is the conflict of interests among the siblings. At still another level, it is the interaction between the value system of the old order and the present modern world. The interpersonal relationships in this play are highly
complex. They work as a web of relationships intertwined with each other simultaneously at various levels. The conflict between every two generations may be termed as vertical relationships whereas those within siblings may be termed as relationships at horizontal level. The vertical conflict has been presented through the two generations, where the elder generation has been represented by Tatyaji and his widow, Aai. The younger generation comprises of their children, mainly, Bhaskar, Sudhir and Prabha. The conflict between the siblings has been delineated mainly through the conflict of interests between the two brothers, Bhaskar and Sudhir. The conflict between Prabha and Tatyaji has been presented indirectly, as Tatyaji is no more and that is why does not take part in the action. The conflict between Prabha and her brothers has been presented directly. However, the focus remains upon the relationship between the two brothers, Bhaskar and Sudhir. Naturally, their family members, too, become part of the conflict. It is true that the relationship seems to be antagonistic through the major part of the play; however the undercurrent of the attachment, family ties proves to be stronger at the moment of crisis. Therefore relationships do not seem to be depicted in a linear fashion. They appear to be a web of complex relationships with a variety of ties with each other. They are manifested through the course of development of the events in the play. That is why the major focus of discussion will remain upon the relationship between Bhaskar and Sudhir, the two brothers.

**Relationship between the siblings**

**i) Bhaskar and Sudhir**

The depiction of this relationship begins on the backdrop of their landlord father Tatyaji’s death. The family members waiting for his arrival from Mumbai, on the fifth day since Tatyaji’s death. The antagonism between the two is revealed right in the beginning. While all other members are awake even at late night, including the just widowed Aai, Bhaskar is fast asleep. He constantly keeps on accusing Sudhir for the lack
of attachment to his roots, to the family and the ancestral place. The root cause of this hostility seems to be different. It is the vast difference between their life-styles, financial status, educational levels etc. Actually Bhaskar and his wife are jealous of Sudhir’s superiority at each level including the superior level of his wife- Anjali with respect to her looks, fair complexion, urban background and superior sub-caste, Kokanasthas, among Brahmans. This attitude explains the cause of sarcastic comments by Bhaskar and his wife, referred to as Vahini, about Sudhir’s travel by taxi or his high blood pressure as an ailment of his affluence, during the first encounter between the families of Bhaskar and Sudhir.

Though Bhaskar has spent his whole life in the small village and has not as much education as Sudhir, he is not a simpleton. On the contrary, he proves to be superior in his strategic moves concerning the family matters. Immediately after Tatyaji’s death, he has taken the charge of the family matters. According to Aai’s account, the first thing he did after it is, getting charge of the keys tied to Tatyaji’s janave, the sacred thread. (P.40) He tactfully opens the topic of the expenses towards the last rituals related to Tatyaji’s death, the pending grocery bills, the curt refusal of the grocer to sell the things on credit and his tight financial position etc. Sudhir is equally reluctant to contribute to the expenses. His logic is simple. He has never claimed the share from the income. It is Bhaskar and his family which is solely utilizing the profit from the property. In fact, he offers the excuse of not possessing such a large amount as he has to set suddenly from Mumbai. (P.11-13) Finally, Aai offers the money she has set aside for emergency. She is distressed to find both of her capable sons shying away from their responsibility towards their diseased father. She doesn’t want bitter arguments over the issue of expenses related to the rituals after the death of her husband.

Before the mourning period is over, both the brothers have started planning the strategies to grab a major share of property. Bhaskar doesn’t bother to enter the worshipping room to get hold of the family gold. He has kept it secretly in his custody. Sudhir is equally unscrupulous. He indirectly hints at the share of property and family
gold. But Bhaskar and Vahini evade the topic tactfully. Instead they keep on playing the
tune of hardships they suffer at the native place. Bhaskar, however, for the first time
acknowledges the plus points of Anjali and assigns the credit to her Kokanastha origin,
while comparing the achievements of their sons, Parag and Abhay, respectively. (P.19-
20)

Tension goes on mounting between the two over the repairs of the Wada, getting
an electric power supply and Sudhir having a T.V. set at home. Bhaskar’s selling out the
big, heavy brass and copper utensils one by one etc. adds to it. (P.25-26) When Bhaskar
refers to the feast to the whole village as per the custom, Sudhir resists the idea on
account of the huge expenses beyond their capacity. Bhaskar finds it essential for the
sake of the family prestige. Sudhir’s advice is to perform the rituals on a limited scale to
manage the expenses within the available limited funds. But Bhaskar and Vahini can’t
accept the practical suggestion. Bhaskar is ready to mortgage the only assets remained
with them. He deliberately suggests that he would have to raise the money against
Vahini’s jewellery. But Vahini straightaway refuses to part with it. Another option is to
raise it against the plot of irrigated land. Neither Bhaskar nor Sudhir is willing to sacrifice
their shares. Here Chandu offers his share for his father’s cause. (P.28-29) It is not only
the issue of the present expenses. In fact, the grocery bills for the three previous years are
pending and the grosser has refused to extend the credit further. He has insisted on
clearing the earlier dues. It means that much more amount is required. Finally Aai offers
her share of the Wada to be sold. Both of them readily agree with it, whereas Chandu and
Prabha are aghast with the selfishness of their brothers. (P.31)

When everything else is settled, late at night, Bhaskar shows Vahini the family
jewellery in his custody and insists that Vahini should put on all the ornaments. Bhaskar
wants to grab it for himself. But Vahini resists the idea and asks him to distribute it
within the four of them immediately after the mourning period is over. Here, Vahini rises
above the mean, selfish motives of Bhaskar. She thinks herself only the link between the
generations. She doesn’t want to rob others and invite their curses in return. She asks Bhaskar to keep the jewellery box safely in the worship room - the devghar. (P.41-43)

In the meanwhile out of the attachment and concern for Parag, Sudhir promises Parag to take him to Mumbai with him. But Bhaskar and Anjali both oppose the idea for different reasons. Bhaskar honestly thinks that Parag who has many bad habits including drinking, would render bad influence upon Abhay and nothing good will come out of it for Parag himself. Anjali doesn’t want to take the additional responsibility of Parag owing to her hectic schedule as she is a working woman. Secondly, she knows that Abhay has no bonding with Parag, whose grooming has taken place in totally different and rustic surrounding. (P.33-35)

The things suddenly take an unexpected turn and characters are put to test, where Sudhir’s spontaneous response during family crisis in real sense raises him above his seemingly mean, selfish motives. Ranju, who is quite aware of her father’s intentions with the family jewellery and his keeping it secretly in his custody, elopes with it on the provocation by her tuition teacher. There is a risk not only to lose the material wealth but also the family reputation. Sudhir immediately goes after them to Mumbai, traces Ranju with the help of the police. The jewellery cannot be recovered but he brings back Ranju to avoid the scandal. Her teacher has deserted her after he gets hold of the jewellery. This selfless act of Sudhir melts down all the barriers between the two brothers. Bhaskar feels extremely grateful towards his brother. Not only this, Anjali, too, withdraws her resistance to take Parag to Mumbai. Now, it is she who insists on taking him with them. But Sudhir turns down the idea owing to Abhay’s strong objection for bringing Parag to stay with them. Thus the relationship passes through different phases of distrust, hostility, affection and bonding. (P. 45-50)
ii) Prabha and the brothers

Prabha is a despaired and frustrated spinster. The reason is, she has not been allowed to study further in spite of her talent. According to Tatyaji it was not becoming for the girls from the landlord, Deshpande family to send the girls away for education. She has argued with her father over the issue, but in vain. Had she got the opportunity like Sudhir, she would have been self dependent and well settled like Sudhir. But now even for the small things like latest books to read, she has to wait for years for her brother’s arrival from Mumbai. Her talent has been wasted due to the outdated orthodox values. This situation has made her a little cynical. That is why her comments and remarks during the conversation with her brothers and their wives are always bitter, sharp and sarcastic. She is quite aware of the self centredness of both her brothers, Bhaskar and Sudhir and their wives who are in league with their husbands. There is no question of any clash or antagonism with Chandu who is meek, submissive, uneducated and powerless. His status in the family is no better than a servant or a slave. Thus Prabha’s conflict remains confined to other two brothers and their wives.

The glimpse of this antagonism is manifested right at the opening of the play. Anjali’s saree gets caught in the tractor and is torn while entering the house late at night. Prabha taunts her for wearing rags deliberately so that nobody should expect any help from them. She is also angry with Sudhir for not keeping the promise of bringing books for her. (P.8) She also passes bitter comments on Bhaskar’s selling large utensils one by one, when Bhaskar expresses his inability of buying a T.V. set. She pushes her demand of continuing her higher education. According to Bhaskar, it was not the question of values, but it was impossible to spend on two children at a time, as Sudhir, too, was staying away from education. He also returns the attack related to her marriage. He blames her for rejecting the proposals. She points out “none of them was educated and those who were ready to marry her, were in a similar financial condition as theirs, living in the present with the memories of the past glory!” Bhaskar taunts her, with her inadequate education,
why the educated grooms should accept her! She points out that it was not her incapability but the obstinacy of Tatyaji. (P.26-27)

In this case too, Bhaskar and Vahini are directly or indirectly responsible for shattering Prabha’s dreams. Bhaskar’s selfish and cunning act of taking the jewellery box secretly out of the safe and keeping it with him has aroused Ranju’s curiosity and tempted her to take it and elope with her lover. Vahini has always defended Ranju unnecessarily whenever Prabha had raised objections for Ranju’s frivolous behavior, her unusual interest in everything filmy, the whistling by the master at night and Ranju’s reaction over it. (P.12-16) On the contrary, when Prabha gets involved in a heated argument with Bhaskar over her education and marriage, Vahini blames Prabha for setting a bad example before Ranju. She ignores Ranju’s undue interest in her teacher. (P.27)

When Sudhir is set for his return journey after the rituals are over, Prabha has locked herself in a room. She is so frustrated to find the last hope too vanishing before her eyes; that she finds any sort of communication with anyone in the family, futile. She knows that her brothers are not going to help her out to fulfill her ambition. (P.50)

iii) Chandu and his brothers

Chandu, without education and the cunning of his brothers has been reduced to a status of a ‘beast of burden’, in the family. Aai and Prabha feel concerned about him. But he never raises his voice in protest. He goes on working hard, sometimes even without food. When his foot gets injured by the metal sheet of the tractor, nobody finds it necessary to send him to a doctor for proper treatment. He is always being exploited physically as well as financially. Only once he confides into Aai about his aspiration of opening a small shop of his own. Aai promises to talk to Bhaskar about it. But he reveals that Bhaskar has already turned down his demand of some capital amount for setting up a
shop. Bhaskar is not ready to part with money and part with the slave like Chandu. But he hypocritically has offered the excuse of the family status for which running a shop by the member of the prestigious family is below dignity for Deshpandes. (P.45)

Chandu’s injury is serious. Vahini suggests Bhaskar to take Chandu to a physician. But Bhaskar is indifferent. He doesn’t want to spend money over an insignificant person like Chandu. (P.41) Again after ‘Ranju episode’ Anjali finds Chandu’s injury has been worsened. She suggests Sudhir to take him to a doctor, or else there would be a risk of an amputation. But Sudhir is also reluctant to spend any more money and time. He had to spend a lot of money for Ranju- episode. This shows that the female counterparts of the brothers are more sympathetic, humanitarian towards Chandu as compared to his own brothers. As a gesture of affection and concern, Anjali has given one Sudhir’s shirt to Chandu. Sudhir just asks Bhaskar to take Chandu to civil hospital at Amaravati though he doesn’t believe that Bhaskar will do so. Thus the brothers are apathetic while their wives display empathy towards Chandu.

iv) Parag and Abhay

Parag and Abhay are cousins. They never meet each other in the course of the play and Abhay doesn’t take part in the action. However there are recurring references to Abhay, especially in comparison with Parag’s degenerate behavior. Both of them belong to the same age group. But Abhay’s career is promising whereas Parag’s case is hopeless. Parag has left the school and with the influence of bad company, resorted to smoking, drinking and killing time out of the house. However, there is a hint that they must be very close to each other during their childhood. But due to the later developments, Parag has developed inferiority complex. Still he is eager to see Abhay.

When Vahini suggests taking Parag to Mumbai, Sudhir, though reluctantly, promises so to Parag. But Bhaskar strongly objects to it saying Parag would spoil Abhay.
Not only that but he also attributes the credit of well grooming of Abhay and his good qualities to Anjali, whom he has always been criticizing. While comparing Abhay and Parag, Bhaskar comments that Abhay owes his good-looks, fair complexion, diligence and intellect to his Kokanstha mother- Anjali and Parag has inherited the drawbacks of Deshasthas like laziness, indolence etc. (P.18-19)

Parag very affectionately enquires about Abhay’s studies and his cricket. He is eager to see him. Sudhir too, maintains the mood and gives made up account of Abhay’s concern for Parag. (P.33) Finally, Sudhir discloses to Anjali about the true feelings of Abhay towards Parag. During his brief visit to Mumbai, in connection of Ranju’s affair, Sudhir has talked to Abhay about bringing Parag to Mumbai. Abhay has strongly resented the idea. He plainly tells Sudhir that he feels ashamed of Parag’s rustic background. He also threatens that if Parag comes there, he would introduce Parag to his friends as a servant, not as a cousin. In fact, Anjali too is aware of Abhay’s indifferent attitude towards Parag. But she didn’t want to hurt Parag’s feelings. (P.48-49) It shows that the rift has grown too wide in the next generation owing to the vast difference in their backgrounds, grooming and life-styles.

According to Kamalesh Elkunchwar turned to writing after the gap of seven years. Then he wrote Wada Chirebandi in 1982. He talks about this period and Wada Chirebandi in the annex of Wada Chirebandi. “I could now look at things with better understanding. I realized the inevitability of human agony and felt the need of probing into it. The play is certainly not autobiographical. But I had been a part of this ethos, its relationships, customs and traditions. I have witnessed from close quarters the degeneration of such wadas and its members. The process is still going on. It is like ‘Old order changeth / yielding place to new.’(W. B. Yeats, Second Coming) Old is vanishing and the new can’t be easily accepted. In this situation one seeks something which is permanent. What is more permanent than human relations with its tensions? It is surprising to see, how man’s meanness and nobility get combined together in such a situation. While trying to isolate from each other they get more involved with each other.
because of sheer humanity at the base. Thus truth of human life fascinates me greatly.”
(Kamalesh, Natakkar Mahesh Elkunchwar, Sandarbha Prakashan, Pune, 1997. P.101)

Kamalesh has mainly analysed the female characters and traced Aai’s transformation from a daughter-in-law in the family of feudal lords at the peak of their glory through the deterioration of the glory, her widowhood and her present declining position in the household. Her transition is leading her to her growing resemblance with Dadi who has lost contact with the present. He finds the delineation of Aai’s journey traced in a highly deep and sensitive manner. She, according to him, stands as a symbol of complete surrender to and the acceptance of destiny. (Kamalesh. P.106-107)

He further observes about Prabha and Dadi, “Prabha represents a suppressed rebellion within the feudal lord family. She keeps on oscillating between rebellion and frustration. She wants to change herself and others as per changing times. Finally, she also gets completely defeated with Ranju’s misadventure; thereby losing all the family gold and bringing an end to Prabha’s ambitious dreams. Elkunchwar has created a clear contrast between these two characters. Aai stands for traditionalism whereas Prabha stands for modernism. (Kamalesh. P.109-111)

Dadi stands for the ceaseless time. She is detached from everything in the present. She cannot relate herself with the present through her senses or through communication. She is not even aware of the loss of her son, Tatyaji. Her life is pathetic. Dadi who is otherwise unable to move by herself is mysteriously found near the tractor in the front-yard nearly at midnight talking to the departed soul, Tatyaji. Elkunchwar has thus brought the past (Dadi) and present together.” (Kamalesh. P.118)

Kamalesh makes the following observations with respect to the female characters.
• There are in all six female characters with their ages ranging between 16 and 92. They make deeper impact as compared to their male counterparts.

• The females assimilate themselves with the traditions of wada more effectively though they become the part of wada-culture by marriage.

• The female characters appear more lively and natural.

• The women who step into wada through marital relationship like Dadi, Aai, Vahini and Anjali are all manifestations of the immortal image of the Mother Earth in the sense of their virtues like broadmindedness, understanding, acceptance of bitter realities without fuss, suffering, merging of their identity into wada-culture and tradition. They receive this identity as a heritage.

• The females like Prabha and Ranju, born in the wada-culture try to break free from its traditions in the contrasting ways. Prabha, who wants to study further, is not allowed to do so, whereas Ranju who is not interested is forced to study. Prabha cannot step out for further education while Ranju has to return to wada after her misadventure.

Sandhya Amrute observes, “Wada has witnessed the complex and intensely emotional events within society, family and individual lives over a long period. The wada has ruled over the minds of its inhabitants through generations. Elkunchwar depicts the degeneration of this culture in an objective but lively manner. He brings together a variety of personalities and presents a unique pattern through their contrasts, tensions and interpersonal relationships.” (Sandhya Amrute, Elkunchwaranchi Natyashrusti, Vijay Prakashan, Nagpur. P.99)
She further adds, “Elkunchwar transcends the boundaries of regionalism and depicts the psychological interplay highly objectively. Therefore this play cannot be confined into the frame of regional or commercial drama.” This is an answer to Kamlakar Nadkarni’s harsh criticism of the play, writing it off as just another family drama, a revised edition of ‘Kolhatkar-Kalelkar’ style sentimental drama. (Amrute. P.103)

She points out, “Wada Chirebandi doesn’t get entangled into the events related to individuals or narrow regionalism. Neither it advocates some noble, lofty and sublime ideals in an artificial manner. There is no hero, heroin or a villain. He only depicts the conflicts between the individuals in a realistic manner, and presents a social phase during a period of transition.” (Amrute. P.104-105)

Sandhya Amrute, like many others is tempted to compare this play with Chekhov’s Cherry Orchard. Elkunchwar himself accepts his play to be written in a realistic-naturalistic style of Chekhov. She observes, “There is nothing grand, heroic or extra-ordinary. The characters are commoners trapped into the vortex of adverse circumstances. Elkunchwar depicts them in a detached manner. He doesn’t take sides. This style is very much like Chekhov’s.

There is also an existential angle to this play. Man is a lonely and trivial creature in the whole cosmic scheme. Man feels helpless while fighting against the odds. They fail to understand each other. Man as well as life is a complex puzzle owing to its complicated nature. The blood relations, instead of reducing the loneliness, increase it. Suddenly their interpersonal tensions burst open. Exactly the same thing happens with the characters of the play immediately after Tatyaji’s death. Their identities were suppressed until Tatyaji was alive. Therefore, Tatyaji’s death brings sorrow as well as relief to each of them, providing them an opportunity to give way to their frustrations. Again they get subdued due to the forces of circumstances. This situation throws light upon the illogicality, absurdity of human life and its pain, suffering and agony. The situation of devastation of
traditional values and lack of a set of a new value system puts them on the path of unknown destination. This is a typical Chekhovian style. In this respect *Wada Chirebandi* is a Chekhovian play.” (Amrute. P.107-108)

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**EKA MHALARYACHA KHOON (MURDER OF AN OLD WARDEN) (1970)**

| Man 1 ---------------------- Man 2 |
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| | | |
| | | |
| | --- The old warden --- | |
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In this highly imaginative One-Act play, Elkunchwar has attempted to delineate the mental states of three persons while passing through the later stage of life. As he wants to represent types, no proper names have been used for the characters. Only generic names like Man 1, Man 2, Woman etc. have been used. Elkunchwar also emphasizes the inevitability of death and man’s ignorance and denial to accept it. Though one refuses to admit the fact, everyone is certainly aware of it at the subconscious level. He has presented this complex relationship of ‘man’ with death through an allegory of prisoners and the warden and their attempt to defy death in a variety of ways. As the three prisoners are sailing in the same boat, they develop a sort of comraderie with each other. Elkunchwar also points out the fact that even in the face of death; man is not freed from the earthly instincts and emotions. There are two obvious levels of relationships observed in the play. One is the collective interaction of the three with the old warden which is that of hatred and hostility. Another level is the interaction between the three earthly souls.
1) Relationship between the prisoners and the Warden

The prisoners’ hands are tied with ropes and the ropes are held by the Old Warden. They are endlessly treading through the barren land in a scorching sun. Their feet are bleeding, they are worn out, walking further is impossible for them. They are furious with Warden who is dragging them to a prison. The attitudes of Man 1 and Man 2 are different towards him. Man 1 is furious to him, he curses him. But Man 2 mocks at him, derides him. Man 2 wants to tease and torment Warden in this fashion. Woman with Man 2, is also teasing Warden. She teases him for his amnesia due to old-age. Man 1 wonders how the old man can walk continuously without being tired. Woman despises even the shadow of the old man. Man 1 gets annoyed with the helpless situation. He reflects, “Whether you listen to him or not, we can’t hope of freedom. ----- the old man will never let us be happy.”

When woman wonders about how Man 2 can get everything so lightly, he explains, “What is the use of fury? It proves more troublesome for oneself. It is better to make fun of everything. It’s my philosophy. It proves irksome to the tormentor. Because he cannot punish us for defying and at the same time is scared of mockery by us. It enrages him more and more.” (P.59-60) Man 1 wonders about Warden’s attitude beyond all feelings and emotions. Man 2 secretly wishes to get rid of Warden. But he denies any evil suggestion by that. All of them are very angry. But Warden doesn’t seem to have any plan of providing them food. Man 1 feels like attacking Warden and use him as food. They want to satisfy their fury by abusing Warden.

The Warden never reacts verbally. He only keeps on prodding them with stick. Woman is exhausted. But she is determined to go on walking. On the contrary, Man 1 is determined not to take a step further. Both want to try their patience against Warden’s
insistence to keep them walking. Woman wishes the old Warden to get singed by the heat.

In the meanwhile, there is a digression. All the three recall their past experiences. It is also a sort of confession and logic behind their value systems. The heat is unbearable. Woman wants some shadow. Man 2 is always ready to protect her by his shadow. But she is interested in Man 1. However, he doesn’t respond to her. He prefers not to have his shadow at all; which is not easily possible. Man 2 suggests him to go to darkness so that his shadow will cease to exist. But they cannot free themselves from Warden. Man 2 comments upon Warden’s attitude of giving no response. This strategy of indifference blunts the protests.

The heat is too intense now. Woman suggests to play some game as a distraction and to kill time. Man 2 starts singing. They join him. Then they start running around Warden, due to which the ropes tied to their hand now get tightened around Warden. They are overjoyed by this achievement and a sort of revenge against Warden. Man 2 thinks of escape as Warden is tied down. But they cannot free their hands from the knots of the rope. It suggests that one cannot run away from destiny or death, which is controlled by the Almighty himself. As it is no use binding Warden, they decide to untie. It is a sort of acceptance and surrender to the fate. (P.68-72) When they are thinking about getting freed, Man 2 jokingly suggests to murder Warden. They are bored as the stock of the songs also is over. Man 2 suggests a game of ‘vocabulary test’ of a different kind. Woman wants to learn cruelty, while Man 1 insists on ‘vocabulary test’. Man 2 has a solution. They will use all the invectives in their stock for Warden and then the winner would tickle Warden. (P.73-74) Man 1 hesitates to use abuses in front of Warden, Woman suggests Man 2 to use them and they would say them after him. Man 1 mocks at Man 2 for using meek invectives and then recites all the strong invectives. Afterwards, he feels ashamed of it. Man 2 encourages him to do so for the sake of cleansing of his emotions. But Warden has no effect of all that. He doubts if Warden is alive. Suddenly
Warden comes back to life and charges towards them. They tumble upon each other. (P.75) They also push Warden.

When it stops, Warden somehow balances himself. Others are excited. At the same time they are on the verge of losing their physical strength and also patience. They are desperate to bring an end to it by any means. They would prefer freedom even by way of death. Now man 2 makes the same suggestion seriously. Man 1 is apprehensive at first. But Man 2 boosts his confidence, and prepares him for the plan. Woman, too, is ready for the plan. Suddenly, all the three attack the old Warden. He collapses and suddenly darkness looms over them. They check whether old Warden is really dead. (P.76-77)

Though Warden is dead, they get frightened with the pitch dark. They go on blaming each other. Woman brings to their notice that they are free now and they should run away for their lives. Suddenly, they hear the frightening wild calls of foxes and wolves. They think of offering Old Warden’s dead body to the animals to save themselves. But the attempts are futile as they are surrounded by the animals. Woman has accepted her fate. But the two men try to escape. They are helpless. She asks them to stay there and accept their fate. She faces it bravely while the men are miserable.

Here Elkunchwar has presented Man’s struggle with death, where Warden is a harbinger of Yama, the god of death. All the three human beings are past their prime. They are in the phase of their last journey. Man’s reaction to death is varied which is represented through three types. In spite of Man’s awareness of the inevitability of death, Man tries to evade it until the last moment. Man 2 who feigns boldness and disrespect for the superiority of death, by making fun of it, finally gets reduced to pitiable condition. He sobs, feels miserable by the stark reality. Man 1 is not very different. Both try to flee away from death. At the last moment, he just refuses to face the reality by closing his eyes and ears. Woman who is supposedly weaker and frail accepts the inevitability with
eyes wide open. Her attitude is ‘manly’, stoic which is highlighted on the backdrop of the panicky response of the two men.

**Relationship among the three earthly souls**

All the three must be strangers to each other at the beginning. But after passing through the dreary, ruthless routine they have formed a communion and started sharing their feelings. They are more or less common towards Warden as he is the tormentor. In the beginning, they employ different ways of resistance. But soon, they start thinking collectively; express their distress, frustration, animosity towards Warden and sharing their experiences even if they are painful. In this way, they come close to each other.

Man 2 recounts his deprived childhood, pestered with poverty, mother’s sufferings etc. There was no scope for demands or insistence to get something. As a reaction, only one goal was set for him that was to make money and grow rich. His father, a man of principles, had never asked him about the means employed for making money. He had enjoyed the affluence without raising any doubts. He confesses about his unethical practices as a doctor. He is fully satisfied by what he had achieved. He doesn’t bother now for the prison or the hardships. (P.63)

Man 1 is a rather sophisticated person. He also recounts his miserable childhood, his suffering due to his stepmother. He describes the ways she used to torture him. She is afraid of his being the sole successor of the property. In fact, he is not interested in it. But he takes its custody as a revenge against her and the injustice he has suffered.

Woman praises Man 1’s glistening dark complexion. Man 1 admits of his complex for the dark skin and the cosmetics he had used as a teenager to look fairer. Afterwards he had realised to be an asset. Now he is proud of it. Man 2 is a little jealous of Man 1.
He criticizes his concern for the physical appearance; the figure etc. Man 2 points out that starving oneself for maintaining figure is not possible for someone, for whom starvation had been the part of his life. Man 1 agrees with it and shares his experience of a man who looked greedily while Man 1 had been eating. He adds, because of that he would feel guilty and lose his appetite. (P.65)

Even in this situation, Woman expects a privileged treatment from men. She wants one of them to make shadow for her to save her from the burning sun. Man 2 offers her his shadow. Ironically, she goes on praising Man 1’s dark complexion, making Man 2 somewhat jealous. Man 1 calls her corrupt for her flirting with Man 2. This provokes her to reveal her past. She is fed up with all the ‘man’ kind including her father. She referred to the man who enjoyed sex with her and then fled away from the responsibility. She had been punished by her father. He wanted to expel her out and her mother had tried to force in medicines to abort the foetus. Thus only she had been stamped being corrupt and made to suffer. (P.66)

Man 1 agrees with her and shares another instance of injustice with him. While in service, he was denied permission for examination and barred from his chances of advancement. Those hypocrites had advised him to do something for the sake of society while they were deeply involved in frauds. When Man 2 objects to the use of ‘bastard’ in the presence of a woman, she points out that at that age the differences between man and woman becomes immaterial. She also challenges Man 2 for calling her shameless. She asks, should she be stamped shameless if she opens her heart. She points out that people have judged her by her behavior only. No one really tried to realize her pining for love. Now she is completely disillusioned of love. She is distressed to find that in spite of all the bitter experiences, she is still hopeful of true love. She wants to destroy that hope. The wound of the forced destruction of her unborn baby is still fresh in her heart. She blames the men who corrupted her. As a revenge, she had utilized their bodies to remedy her pain. (P.67-68)
In spite of her pathetic account, Man 1 feels neither pity nor empathy for her. He is not ready to provide her shadow. Instead, he would prefer not to have shadow at all. (P.68) He keeps on teasing and insulting her. When Man 2 suggests a game of vocabulary test, he explains the meaning of vocabulary to her. He is not ready to acknowledge her ability, though she is a graduate with English. He is not ready to treat her as a respectable lady. Man 2 is not behind while teasing Man 1. Man 1 is not ready to utter the filthy words of abuse. So Man 2 calls him ‘a puritan’. Man 1 accepts the challenge and showers the filthiest invectives and then feels guilty. But Man 2 comforts him by telling that it is good for purgation of emotions.

Man 1’s sophisticated background doesn’t allow him to accept the plan of murdering the old man. However, he agrees to it after being convinced by Man 2. But after killing him, blames Man 2 for dragging him into crime and sin.

Towards the end both men make desperate efforts to save their lives. Finally, they accept the death as there is no alternative. On the contrary, Woman accepts it stoically, in a dignified manner. She confesses that once upon a time she had destroyed the beginning of life and now at the end of the journey, she had destroyed the end of life (by participating in the plot of killing an old man who was very close to death). By that deed, she had destroyed herself. Now only the formality of her end is to be completed.

Thus, it is observed that until the last moment man’s behavior is controlled by his petty emotions, egos, and value systems, such as looks, reputation, grooming, jealousy, revenge, hatred and fear. At the same time, companionship and communication also prove to be a need, especially in extremely adverse conditions. That is why all the three reveal the shameful, painful secrets of their past, probably which they had suppressed at the bottom of their memory. It underlines the fact that interpersonal relationships are too complex.
Kamalesh has interpreted the *Mhatara* as ‘death’ or ‘destiny’. If one’s attitude towards life is like bondage, then the feeling of futility is inevitable during the journey of life. If one fully accepts the limited freedom and continues his journey honestly and with clear conscience, then one gets free from the feeling of futility. (Kamalseh, *Natakkar Mahesh Elkunchwar*. Sandarbha Prakashan, Pune. P.26)

Sandhya Amrute interprets the *Mhatara* as a symbol of social norms and restraints. The three persons are the rebellions. Social restraints rule the society through generations. That is why the man is old; *Mhatara*. The punishment of treading the path continuously is for their rebellion. They want freedom. Only *Stree* has accepted it as a challenge. She defies the norms in spite of the punishment. She fails to understand the paradox between honouring and celebrating motherhood, but terminating a foetus of an unmarried girl as it is a taboo. (Sandhya Amrute. *Elkunchwaranchi Natyasrushti*. Vijay Prakashan, Nagpur. P.179)

She further adds, “The play is presenting the conflict between values arising out of inevitability of life and various types of social constraints, man’s defiance of them, his helplessness and above all his fear of the terrifying death.”

However, she finds the three mortal characters of two men and a woman rather ineffective and typified. She agrees here with the other critic, Pushpa Bhave. But she finds in this play the most effective and powerful manifestation of Elkunchwar’s artistic talent. (Amrute. P.183).

Researcher’s observations about the symbolism in the play are similar to those of Kamalesh’s observations.
In this highly symbolic and short One act Play, there are only two characters. Both are far beyond their prime, and hope of any bright moments in their lives. They meet temporarily by chance.

An ascetic during his wandering in search of his goal halts in a deserted village to rest for a while. There is no one in the village except a woman who is knitting a shawl in a monotonous pattern of ‘one knit, one purl’. She is accustomed to be alone with the only company of her own thoughts, memories and her mechanical knitting. Once upon a time she would have welcomed the company of another human being. But now she has adapted herself for a lonely, drab lifestyle. In a way, she has overcome her desires. Now unexpectedly, a man has entered her world and upset the quietness and the uninteresting routine, unknowingly. Elkunchwar has depicted the ups and downs in the relationship, just like the ripples in a quiet pond after a stone being thrown in it. As the pond regains its former quietness after the temporary disturbance, the woman’s life, too, returns to its former way.

The woman as well as the ascetic both are doing penance in their own way. The woman, by resisting the temptation of companionship and the ascetic by abstaining from material pleasures and constantly wandering in search of some kind of spiritual goal.

At first, in her reflective monologue, she recalls how the village got gradually deserted. When she realizes, all had already left, leaving her alone, without asking her, if she wanted to accompany them. She had thought of following them to the next village. But she is afraid of their refusal to accept or welcome her. So she decides to stay where
she is. She is continuously knitting a shawl in a simple pattern without any complicated designs. She is pondering over what would happen of the shawl after her! She takes all the possibilities into account and wonders if it will be of any use to someone, at least, after her death. She begins to talk with the shawl, treating it as a close companion, addresses it by endearing names, expecting it to provide warmth to her after death. But soon she realizes that dead body doesn’t feel anything and there is no need of warmth to a dead body. (P. 83-85)

At the same time, she resumes her mechanical knitting, while she finds a stranger heading towards her. She doesn’t want any more contact with people. So she asks him to go away. She also points out that there is no one to give him any alms and she herself is starving since long, so much so that her hunger has been numbed. (P.86) She is suspicious that he is going to rob her of her shawl.

He begs her to let him rest for a while and then he would proceed further. But she is trying to resist the temptation of someone’s company even for a brief spell. In spite of her protests, she begins a dialogue with him asking him about himself. During their conversation, he tells that though people offer many things to him he never accepts anything as his penance is that of abstinence, not to get involved in anything through body or spirit. (P.88)

Though she tries to be aloof and detached his presence has certainly cast some influence upon her. Without her knowledge, the pattern of her knitting is changed. She realizes it and tries to resist the temptation and so asks him firmly to go away. She shouts at him. Frightened, the ascetic tries to get up and walk forth somehow, but tumbles down. Then she takes pity on him and allows him to stay for a while. (P.89) Again, she resumes a dialogue with him. Instead of answering her queries, he just goes on repeating the questions. She gets fed up and points out that, if he doesn’t even know about his destination, then his aimless wandering is futile. Therefore he should better stay there.
She realizes that she is getting carried away, so she suddenly asks him to leave. Her mind keeps on oscillating between temptation and denial. His mental state is not different. Both are trying hard to fight off the trap. (P.90-91)

The ascetic warns himself that he should not stray away from his path. He should keep on treading the path, in spite of all the hardships and suffering. The woman, too, blames him for putting obstacles in her path of penance as she has realized that his arrival has brought about a lot of change in the pattern of her knitting. It has started revealing the lively beautiful patterns of leaves and flowers. It has happened every time after a human contact. She begs him, asks him pathetically,

**Woman:** “Why have you come to stir my quiet life? After you leave I will have to undo the knitting. ----- but now no strength is left in me to do this over and over again. I won’t let you go.

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**Woman:** “-------- so many came and left to bring ripples in the quiet pond. Every time I had to face the painful ripples. No one stood by me to support me like a shore. Every stitch in this shawl is my heart beat. I won’t let you go. You will have to cover yourself with this, at least, as a shroud.” (P.93)

She continues her pleading, beseeching—

**Woman:** You are denying yourself. Don’t deny me my right to offer. I will receive everything by giving, my lord----

The walls have started crumbling down, for me as well as you. No strength is left in you to go on further. It’s no use continuing your penance. You will achieve nothing by it. You have lost your goal; the bird has fled away and vanished. Now be the bird and I ‘ll be the cage. I am getting suffocated under the
burden of this shawl. Accept it and let me breathe freely. (P.94)

The ascetic feels like a sinner even to hear such a tempting talk. He recalls how he had been tortured once by the police, as they took him for a thief. After they found the real culprit, they had thrown him out. He had felt very lonely then. Then he had committed a sin of being tempted for human bonds. Since then he had given up the signs of a sannyasi and started with his penance. He also recalls how his stepmother used to ignore him and how he had been being naughty deliberately to draw attention towards him. Then he regrets for recollecting the personal memories which is not allowed to an ascetic. He tries to free himself from the newly developing bonds and resume his painful lonely path. (P.95)

The woman is not ready to accept the path of loneliness. She confesses how she has realized the advancing old age, suddenly while looking at her reflection in the mirror. She found her image like an alien. Her own lifeless eyes frightened her so much that she started running away to escape from them. She had an illusion of entering a dark passage inside the belly of a python, from where no one can hear you.

This description of her fears by the woman has reflected the fears of the ascetic. He feels like looking at his image in the mirror. He blames her for holding a mirror in front of him and making him look at his image which is another sin. He is horrified and trembling. He is shivering, but is determined to free himself from the bonds. As he is shivering with cold, she offers him the shawl. He firmly turns down the offer and somehow moves ahead. (P.9) The woman looks in despair in his direction and begins undoing the lively, attractive patterns, to resume the drab pattern of ‘one knit, one purl’. (P.97)
Thus the woman and the ascetic both swing to and fro between hope and despair, temptation and abstinence, past and present companionship and loneliness. Ultimately, the loneliness, the isolation wins.

Kamlesh and Sandhya Amrute both agree over _Ek Osad Gaon_ being an allegory. Kamalesh finds a relation between the ‘deserted’ village and the life of the lonely woman, _Stree_. She is leading a bland, mechanical routine symbolized through the shawl she is knitting in a mechanical pattern. _Tapasi’s_ arrival brings some hope of change and the pattern of the knitting gets automatically altered into signs of life. As the hope of his company is lost she feels the burden of undoing the lively pattern.

Kamalesh states, “Elkunchwar continues to brood upon the human relationships, their complexity, mystery and agony. It has always remained a focus of his plays. This journey of exploration begins with the present play.”

Kamalesh further observes,

1) _Gaon_ also means ‘human body’. The ‘one purl, one knit’ pattern represents the drab routine which brings about stagnation in the absence of change.

2) People get involved with each other unconsciously. But a person collapses with the breaking of the ties.

3) One cannot foresee the consequences of the emotional involvement. (Kamalesh, _Natakkar Mahesh Elkunchwar_. Sandarbha Prakashan, Pune. P.27)

Sandhya Amrute observes that Tapasi stands for denial, abstinence whereas _Stree’s_ attitude is optimistic. However, the consequences of both types of penance are the same. It is the manifestation of abstract human experience. It also represents existential agony of man within the vast universe. (Sandhya Amrute. _Elkunchwaranchi Natyashrushti_, Vijay Prakashan, Nagpur. P.185)
She quotes Pushpa Bhave who observes that the play proceeds from sentimentalism to truth. It is freed from the conventional dialogue, still loaded with poetic language. It is touching, still bearing deep philosophical meaning. (Amrute. P.188)

HOLI (THE HOLY CAMPFIRE) (1970)

Unlike Elkunchwar’s other plays, there are a number of characters present in this One-Act play, as he has portrayed hostel life here. He has very deftly dealt with a variety of relationships among the hostelites and also the relationship between hostelites and the Principal. These relationships also go on changing through the course of action. Elkunchwar has thrown light on various facets of interpersonal relationships. It appears, as if, one is witnessing the unlimited number of patterns through a kaleidoscope. However, the focus remains upon the homosexual relations among some of the boys. The action of the play begins with the reference to such a relationship between Shrivastav and Lalu and the roots of the devastating ending also are found in the same, namely, the unusual feminine traits observed among some boys. Therefore, the focus of discussion will naturally remain upon the homosexual relationships, though other types of relationships will also find a mention.

Lalu------------------------Shrivastava
|                                  |
|                                  |
|                                  |
|                                  |
Ranjit-----------------------------Anand

Shrivastav is a dominating type of character who treats Lalu with high-handedness. He shows interest in physical intimacy with Lalu. He is suspicious about Lalu’s interest in Ranjit whereas Anand is jealous of Lalu for Shrivastav’s interest in him. Boys like Gopal are well aware of this jealousy. So he taunts Anand in a very lewd
language and asks him to keep a watchful eye upon Shrivastav’s sex organ. Anand’s reaction over it is just like a girl. Gopal teases him more by saying “my dear Anandi! Don’t slap me please, or else you will hurt your delicate wrist!” (P.101-103) Anand is more than willing to accept Shrivastav’s dominance, even the exploitation. Shrivastav frequently demands money from Anand just like an extortion. If he fails to give it, he straightway sells out Anand’s belongings. He has sold out Anand’s goggles. (p.103) When Anand tries to ask explanation he just asks him to shut up.

Anand is also interested in another macho man, Ranjit. That is why he is jealous of Lalu whom Ranjit is more interested in. But he complains about Lalu’s jealousy for him. (P.107) There are other instances of his jealousy for Lalu. Lalu seems to be a sincere student. That is why a girl named Kunda asks him for his notes. Others are teasing Lalu over it. Anand remarks, “Lalu just bluffs (about Kunda) and you blindly trust him.”(P.108) When Lalu mispronounces the name Maugham, Anand points out his mistake and insists on correct pronunciation. (P.109) Lalu just keeps on wondering about the cause of Anand’s jealousy.

Though Anand is interested in the macho men like Anand and Ranjit, Lalu doesn’t seem to be interested in such a relationship. He expresses detest about the relations between Anand and Shrivastav. When Ranjit finds him alone, he suggests Lalu to accompany him. But Lalu firmly refuses the invitation. But his attitude towards Ranjit is not vindictive. He had lied to the warden about Ranjit’s absence from the room at night to save him from punishment, makes it clear. He genuinely feels sorry for Ranjit’s bruises caused due to the shards on the hostel wall compound. (P.110-111)

On the contrary, Anand flirts with Shrivastav, pesters him constantly for his company, displays possessiveness about him and succumbs to his exploitation. He always provides money to Shrivastav as he doesn’t want to lose his company. Shrivastav, too, utilizes the situation fully and continuously exploits and blackmails Anand. Anand
considers himself Shrivastav’s beloved and begins mock quarrel with him. Shrivastav doesn’t care at all. He tells Anand, “I am going to change my room. You can have another partner.” Over this, Anand threatens him with a suicide. This threat, too, shows no effect. He coolly says “You’d rather lose your life, instead of five rupees.” This remark works like a magic and Anand promptly gives him money. (P.111-112) In return, Shrivastav protects him from another group of dominating boys.

Anand tries to bluff about his confrontation with Kunda, the college queen regarding his notes. No one believes him. Soon it is clear that she has asked for notes to Lalu and not Anand. Lalu feels equally awkward and shy when Kunda comes to see him. He detests the remark, “Two sweet little lovebirds!” in that connection, by a girl. He passes harsh remarks about her behavior. While Ranjit genuinely admires his intellect and creative talent, Anand criticizes him for his rudeness with girls. But nobody entertains him. (P.116-117) Soon the same girl returns and apologises to Lalu for her excesses.

Though Lalu doesn’t succumb to Ranjit’s pressure tactics, he is not angry or revengeful towards Lalu. When the hostelites decide to protest against the injustice suffered by Banergy in his rustication and arrange protests against the Principal, Lalu tries to caution him and others. Ranjit, too, seems to care for Lalu who has certainly bright career ahead. Ranjit warns Lalu, not to get involved in the protests and vandalism. He forces Lalu to go back to the hostel. This shows mutual respect and concern between the two. (P.122)

The students are already in the mood of revolt as they have been denied the legitimate holiday on the occasion of Holi, the festival of sacred bonfire in which the evil is to be burned down ceremonially. To add to their ire, a lecture on ethical practices has been arranged and attendance has been made compulsory. In fact, a custom of purgation and cleansing of soul is also associated with Holi, when people abuse each other freely by
throwing away all the restraints of morally approved social behavior. Arranging a speech on ethical behavior on such an occasion is an irony, a mockery of the custom. Perhaps the North Indian Principal is not aware of this custom or he is unduly strict.

The students are determined to turn the speech in a fiasco. Accordingly, the students object to the Principal’s speaking in Hindi instead of Marathi. They continue to deride the speaker in the same mood. They are not in mood to listen to any one. It all turns into a chaos. They hurl eggs at the dais. The hall is full of catcalls, yelling, shouts, crackers, roughening and vandalism. They successfully make the speaker and Principal leave the hall. (P.123-126)

The warden Mr. Karkhanis enters. He condemns their behavior. The boys seem to respect him and that is why obey him without much protest. When the Principal returns to the scene and asks Mr. Karkhanis to give the names of the boys, Karkhanis tries to protect them by saying, “I couldn’t pick up one or two, sir. There were so many.” (P.128) Here Anand enters the scene and reveals his utter meanness by his act of treachery with his fellow hostelites. He offers to give the names of the boys involved in the act. He satisfies his jealousy towards Ranjit and Lalu and begins his list with these two names. Though he has served the purpose, the Principal calls him ‘a petty insect’ for his mean act. (P.129)

Whereas Lalu is genuinely concerned about Ranjit’s fate as he had been a leader of the mess, Anand’s behavior is dubious. He praises Ranjit for his daredevilry. Shrivastav probably knows the real Anand which is why he becomes suspicious about him. He directly asks Anand where had he been during the whole episode. Anand offers some excuses, which is another instance of his bragging and plain lying.

Now Ranjit and the whole gang is in the mood of revolt. They decide to celebrate Holi- the holy bonfire on the college campus as a sign of protest and defiance. Soon the
warden comes with the grave news that all the names have reached the Principal, and all of them have been detained, including Lalu. Ranjit has been expelled from the college. He has to leave the hostel within 24 hours. The strange thing is, there is no inclusion of the names of Anand and Shrivastav, but Lalu who was not present on the scene has been detained. Others accept their punishment, but try to argue for Lalu who is innocent. (P.180) But Lalu shows his mettle by accepting the punishment along with others. The warden has full sympathy for the boys, but he can’t help them.

Gopal rightly suspects Anand being a traitor. Anand pretends ignorance. Shrivastav doesn’t want them to be suspicious of him. That is why when Gopal and Vasant are ready to burn down the furniture in the holi, Shrivastav joins them. (P. 131) All start taking the wooden chairs out in the open to make a fire. Anand tries to stop Shrivastav from joining them.

Anand: Binnu, you should not get involved in this. Once I have saved you, but now you’ll be caught.

Shrivastav: It means that you’re the traitor.

Anand tries to silence him. But Shrivastav exploits this opportunity to blackmail Anand. He threatens, if Anand refuses to admit, the secret will be revealed to all. Anand gets enraged by this ingratitude and says, “I hate you! Beggar! A blackmailer!” (P.132) This throws light upon the ‘love-hate’ relationship between the two.

Shrivastav slaps Anand on his face and starts calling others. He doesn’t want them to suspect his role. Now Anand is frightened to death. He begs him not to do so. But now the matter is out of control. When Gopal comes in, Shrivastav discloses the fact of Anand’s treachery. Now all gather there. Ranjit displays his balanced mind. He doesn’t allow others to take action against Anand unless Anand himself admits the fact. Again Anand lies and tells them that he was forced to do so by the Principal, whereas the truth is exactly opposite. (P.133)
Now Anand has to pay the price of his treachery as per the norms of hostel life. Anand’s impotence is an open secret. Anand is ready to apologise in writing. But that won’t compensate for the detentions or expulsion of Ranjit. Still Ranjit is ready to be soft towards him. But others are not in a mood to listen to Ranjit. They are determined to teach him a lesson. Now they directly refer to his impotence, his femininity. They all deride him, tease him for it and talk of exposing his weakness. Lalu feels disgusted. He doesn’t join them. Shrivastav further discloses his other secrets. He goes on begging to Shrivastav. But that goes to the deaf ears. It’s all so painful, shameful and humiliating for Anand that he threatens to commit a suicide. Nobody takes him seriously. Ranjit makes one more attempt to spare Anand as he takes pity upon him. While they are talking about giving Anand a female role in a college drama, a new idea suddenly strikes them. Shrivastav has a sari in his room which is meant for his sister. They are planning to drape him in that sari and take him in a procession. Madhav who is another balanced boy, tries to stop them. Ranjit, too, supports him. But now their imagination is fired. Anand begs Ranjit for protection. Ranjit expresses his inability saying, “You must pay for what you have done!” They all enjoy dressing Anand in a sari despite his protests. Gopal has another hideous idea of shaving Anand’s eyebrows and head. Now others feel that the matter is crossing the limits. But Gopal doesn’t budge. Gopal wants to carry out his plan of exhibiting Anand draped in a sari the next morning. So he locks him in his room. Anand has broken into tears. (P.135-137) Madhav and Lalu regret the happenings. Lalu is determined to leave the hostel. He cannot tolerate the disgrace and humiliation through the exploitation of inherent blemishes. Taimur teases Lalu and asks if he would like to be dressed in sari. (P.136) Ranjit is protective about Lalu. Probably he knows that Lalu is not impotent, though he looks frail, delicate like a girl. Owing to his village background he feels shy. But he has no feminine inclinations like Anand. Lalu is sensitive to the feelings of Anand unlike other robust boys. That is why he gets upset by witnessing the treatment forced upon Anand. He wants others too, to feel similar empathy for Anand. So he asks Taimur if he doesn’t feel hurt when others call him ‘Taimur’ for his lameness. Taimur pretends to take it lightly which is soon proved otherwise.
Soon the mood gets transformed completely as Shrivastav who himself is shaken, tells others the shocking news of Anand’s suicide. All are petrified. Taimur, who has so far carried on his bearing of composure, suddenly loses it and hurls his crutch at Gopal whose excesses are responsible for the extreme step taken by Anand. He also bars Gopal from calling him Taimur. His wall of defense suddenly collapses and he breaks into tears. Lalu finds everything nauseating. (p.138-139) Thus Anand’s jealousy is at the base of severe action against the students. Anand accepts dominance by Shrivastav in return for the pleasure he seeks from Shrivastav. But the same person leads him to take a drastic step by humiliating him and exposing his dark secrets. Of course, the unrest among the students due to the highhandedness of the Principal pours oil to the already burning fire. It spreads like forest-fire and almost everyone gets singed into it.

Apart from the sex-oriented relationship and antagonism, Elkunchwar has touched upon various other aspects of relationship. One of them is teacher-students relationship. The two sides of it are depicted through students’ relations with Principal Pande on one hand and with the warden Karkhanis on the other. Principal Pander relies upon his authority and treats the students as prisoners and imposes his will upon them without trying to understand the mentality or psychology of the adolescents staying away from their parents. That is why they feel proud to defy him whereas Warden Karkhanis who makes least use of words, earns their respect. Though they do not agree with him, they obey him without any argument. (P.127)

When the Marathi boys are constantly found engaged in verbal battles, Shrivastav- a non-Marathi criticizes the Marathi people for infighting.(P104) Afterwards, Pande also passes a similar comment about the qualities of Marathi people. (P.119)Thakur is critical about of Vasanta’s rustic dialect. Vasanta, too, retorts for the so called cultured, refined language and behavior of the upper caste people. (P.106) Vasanta, a son of a landlord doesn’t bother about the fine of five rupees. But the same amount is too big for a commner like Gopal. Vasanta is always antagonistic towards cultured,
refined, upper-caste people, especially the *Brahmins*. He blames them for ruining everything under the guise of culture and traditions. (P.118)

The clash between Pande and Banerjee emerges out of Pande’s derisive reference to the licentious behavior of Banerjee’s mother, a very sensitive issue for Banerjee. It is an attack on his self-respect which leads to his counterattack at physical level upon Pande. Pande gets a serious head-injury, which leads to Banerjee’s rustication by the Principal, who happens to be Pande’s uncle. Principal Pande’s biased attitude and action against Banerjee, proves to be a spark causing a fire. The life of almost everyone is affected badly due to it. (P.119-122) Banerjee becomes a victim of the enmity between the Principal and his father, according to one of the boys. Thus Elkunchwar has depicted the complex relationships among the hostelites hailing from varied backgrounds.

*Holi* deals with the issues related to the college life, its complexities and the disastrous consequences of the undue strains especially within the students and the administration.

Kamalesh observes, “This play reveals the dire truth about the young generation which defies the old values which itself is hollow, lacking any value system. Obviously, their rebellion against the old value system proves to be vain and self destructive. The students, in a way, become the victims of the prevailing social system. He also takes note of Elkunchwar’s effective use of the differences within the students over the variety of issues like culture, virtue, obscenity, conscience and the linguistic as well as regional differences. (Kamalesh. *Natakkar Mahesh Elkunchwar*. Sandarbha Prakashan, Pune.P.29)

He comments, “The smooth running of an educational institution depends upon the harmony and the rapport within its components. In the absence of it, the students turn to perversity, cruelty, frustration, bitterness and various other complexes. That is why these relationships must be taken care of. He thinks that *Holi* is a warning to the field of
education which is currently infested with corruption, anarchy and unscrupulousness. Through the play Elkunchwar raises his voice against all these ills in the field of education.” (Kamalesh. P.30)

Kamalesh, as well as, Sandhya Amrute find the use of realistic and harsh language, sometimes even full of obscenities, fitting to the theme. She finds in this play a close resemblance with *Silence! The Court is in Session* where the play begins as a game but takes a devastating turn at the end. She thinks that Elkunchwar has caught the mood exactly and created an authentic atmosphere of hostel life. He has dealt deftly with the mob psychology of the students and unmasked the aggressiveness, cruelty and brutality underlying beneath. (Kamalesh. P.188)

Sandhya Amrute also observes certain points about Elkunchwar’s experimentation in this play as

1) It breaks the barriers of place as different places have been used for different scenes
2) The stage property has been used flexibly and the actors themselves arrange it as per the requirements. (Sandhya Amrute. *Elkunchwaranchi Natyashrusti*, Vijay Prakashan, Nagpur. P.194)

From existential point of view, this play reiterates the futility of human existence, inevitability of death and man’s helplessness, loneliness, alienation etc. Its essence lies in the realization of self through merging of self into the larger entity. Some times it results into the self-destruction. (Amrute. P.193-195)
There are only three characters which actually take part in the action of the play. Baby is the central character. She is an extremely beautiful but crippled daughter of a businessman. She is twenty five. Kamal is her companion cum maid-servant. Other members of her family are no more. We come to know about Baby’s relationship with other members of her family either through the conversation between Baby and Kamal or through Baby’s re-living the past in her imagination or illusion. Most significant of these relationships is between Baby and her elder brother- Ramesh. Ramesh’s wife doesn’t stay with Baby anymore. During the course of action a telegram is received conveying the news of her death. The third character, Keshav enters towards the end of the play and brings about a complete transformation in her attitude towards life. The basis of Baby’s relationship with others is hatred, revenge or jealousy arising out of her self centredness and self pity. However, there are different shades of relationship with Kamal and Ramesh. Her relationship with Keshav is established at a very different and higher level. These three are more significant relationships which are to be discussed here.
i) Baby-Kamal Relationship

This is mainly a love-hate relationship. Both depend upon each other to satisfy emotional and to some extent physical needs. Kamal depends financially, too, upon Baby. Kamal is like the other self of Baby. Many times she functions as a mirror to Baby, to praise her beauty and gratify her ego. She, every now and then gets indulged in self-praise, mainly the outward beauty of her face, eyes and hair. She makes Kamal repeat the words of praise over and over again. Kamal says, “I’ll give the same reply you expect from me.” (P.1) Baby is so obsessed with her own beauty that she says, “If my eyes have lost the charm, I’d prefer to die.” (P.2) At the same time Baby tries to assert that she doesn’t depend upon Kamal at all. She seeks the pleasure in tormenting Kamal. That is why she deliberately refers to her ugliness which had horrified her during their first encounter. She is quite aware of Kamal’s interest in combing her hair. Therefore, she bars her from it and insists on doing it herself. (P.5) She purposely refers to Kamal’s status merely as a paid servant.

As Kamal seeks pleasure in caressing Baby’s soft, silky hair, she argues with Baby, brings to her notice her frailty, inability to comb her own hair. Finally, Baby has to surrender. Kamal takes charge of Baby’s hair. It seems that the feel of her hair arouses her. She describes it in terms of sexual intercourse. “Even after all these years, your hair remains a mystery for me. It’s like a pitch dark torment, like a furious cobra throwing poisonous blue rays through every curve. It makes you twist and turn like an electric shock.” She begs her not to keep her away from brushing her hair, not to part with her. Suddenly, Baby realizes her own power and takes charge of the brush, thus robbing Kamal of the pleasure. (P.7-8) Baby deplores her behavior like a slave. She calls her a caterpillar, asks her to leave her and seek job somewhere else.
Kamal is deeply hurt and so accuses Baby of causing death of all the family members. She points out that she won’t find anyone like her to tell lies about her beauty, though it is fading day by day. (P.9) Now she deliberately torments her by repeatedly referring to her being crippled. Finally, Baby surrenders; reconciliation takes place between the two. Kamal resumes brushing Baby’s hair.

The doorbell rings. Kamal doesn’t want anyone coming in between the two. Baby is aware of it. She becomes suspicious of Kamal when Kamal tells that someone had rung the bell by mistake. Then she points out that she had been jealous of Ramesh. She won’t allow her to talk about him after his death. When Kamal denies it, she reminds her how she had broken into tears after his death and how she had described every detail of his body- his pink lips, hairy wrists, chest and thighs. In a way, she had wished to mentally torture Baby by it. It was a sort of revenge according to Baby. (P.11-12)

Kamal remains firm on her stand and points out; she had even stolen his lighter for her. Baby turns nostalgic by the mention of it and describes sensuously every moment in the company of Ramesh while he smoked. It is her way of gratifying her desire for Ramesh. She asks Kamal to bring the lighter and light it. With the burning of the flame, she gets transported to the memory of his company while he sat in front of her and smoked. Every movement by him arouses her. (P.13)

Actually, it is her way of revenge against Ramesh’s wife who hates his smoking. Therefore Baby encourages him to smoke secretly in her room. She believes that his wife has robbed Ramesh from her and the smoking would develop a rift between the two. Baby is successful in her plan. The possession of his lighter is like a trophy of victory for Baby against his wife. In fact, his wife, Vahini has never wished that anything belonging to Ramesh should be in possession of Baby. Baby feels triumphant by having the lighter in her possession. She says, “Ramesh has touched everywhere in this room, can she destroy it? And his voice which I have preserved in my ears?” (P.13-15)
Baby and Vahini have always despised each other. Kamal soon brings the news of Vahini’s death by heart fail. Baby feels relieved, but at the same time feels sorry that there is no one now to be jealous of. Kamal deliberately reminds her how Ramesh got distanced from her after marriage and how deeply hurt she was. He had visited her four days after his marriage and that too along with his wife. Her pitying glances were too painful for Baby.

Baby admits to Kamal that she had hated everyone except Ramesh. Kamal points out that she was responsible for Ramesh’s death. Baby denies the charge saying how is it possible to wish the death of the only man in her life. Kamal continues, “You did it because you couldn’t achieve him. You knew of his T.B. still you made him smoke.” Baby is not ready to admit the charge. She argues that everyone made his life miserable, so she had tried to provide solace to him by allowing him to smoke in her room. Kamal doesn’t accept it. She is firm with her stand. She retorts that it is her habit to destroy the thing if it is not available to her. Kamal further makes her jealous by revealing about her sex relations with Ramesh, which was not possible for Baby. She describes the details of his body to prove her point. Not only that, she has also revealed about Baby’s secret desire for him. She points out that thereafter he had stopped visiting her room alone. He had always avoided meeting her since then. This is all unbearable to Baby. She just refuses to believe Kamal. She asks how it is possible for Ramesh to have relations with an ugly woman like Kamal. Kamal gives another blow by drawing her attention to her not being crippled like her. Baby bursts into tears. Kamal knows that was a too strong dose for Baby. Again she apologizes and tries for a reconciliation. (P.20-22)

Now Baby feels defeated. She has lost interest in life. She asks Kamal to bring the sleeping tablets. Kamal knows that her existence is meaningless without Baby. She suggests that they both should commit suicide together. Baby agrees. Kamal brings the tablets. But she wants to adorn Baby before that. She wants to caress her hair one last
time. Then she would make Baby sleep on the bed like a princess and she would sit at her feet with her lips upon them. She wants to die peacefully in that pose.

She begins brushing Baby’s hair. Then takes the jewellary pieces one by one, describes every piece before decking her with them. She also praises Baby’s features. All the images she uses are associated with cruelty and violence. Baby begs her to describe ‘man’ as she has had a first-hand experience of it when Kamal describes ‘man’ as cruel, heartless etc; she wants Kamal to treat her like that. She wants to experience ‘man’ through Kamal. Kamal promises to do so. Baby has substituted Kamal for Ramesh. She gets switched to her world of fantasy with Ramesh. (P.24-28) But in her imagination Ramesh refers to her crippledness. In her distress, she begs Ramesh to end her life. In fact, she herself is pressing Kamal’s hands around her neck. She is eager to end her life. Kamal, too, hastily finishes the make-up. But Baby looks ugly by that hasty make-up. Now Kamal starts administering the sleeping tablets to her. (P.29-30)

Suddenly the doorbell starts ringing. Kamal ignores it. In fact, Kamal had received one more telegram earlier from Keshav, Ramesh’s friend, conveying his arrival. Kamal doesn’t want a third person between them. So she had concealed it from Baby. She lies with her. When Baby insists on having a look at the paper she has hidden, Kamal forces her to take the tablets, threatens her that if she refuses Kamal would take them thus leaving her alone. Still Baby refuses to take them. During their scuffle, the tablets get scattered around. Kamal’s plan is spoiled. Keshav, too, has entered. Kamal is angry. She asks him to leave the place at once. But he ignores it. (P.31)

Kamal points out that Ramesh is dead since long and he should not come there. She blames him of ruining their beautiful world. Baby takes the opportunity and complains about Kamal’s attempt to kill her. Kamal refutes the charge and reminds her how she has dedicated her whole life for Baby’s sake. She blames Keshav, too, for reaching there ahead of his plan; thus spoiling their plan of ending their ugly lives.
together. Baby admits it. But she is not ready to let Keshav leave. She insists that he should stay. Now her mind is changed. (P.32-33)

The dialogue between the two begins. He slowly but successfully convinces her of the futility of revenge and shows her a new direction to utilize one’s life positively. He has convinced her successfully of the power of helping others and bringing smiles, a ray of hope in their lives. (P.33-41) Kamal has realized that she has become redundant now. When Baby wants to take her leave before leaving with Keshav, Keshav finds her nowhere. She has ransacked everything before leaving the house forever. Thus the relationship of strange bonds between the two comes to an end. In a way, Baby has conquered the dark, ugly, destructive side of herself and learned to look at life positively, which is symbolized by opening the window thereby bringing fragrance and bright light inside. (P.41-42)

ii) Baby-Ramesh Relationship

Ramesh, her elder brother is the only man to have entered Baby’s life. She has no access to any other man due to her crippledness. That is why she becomes possessive of him. When he gets married, she takes his wife as her rival in seeking Ramesh’s attention and affection. She employs all tactics to separate them from each other. One of them is making him smoke against his wife’s wish. When she comes to know about his suffering from T.B., she should have barred him from smoking which is certainly fatal for a T.B. patient. But she encourages him with the secret plot of pushing him quickly towards his end. She finds a sadist pleasure in it as he won’t be available even to his wife. Thus her revenge for his wife would be complete.

Even after his death and after his wife had left the house, her desire for him remains undying. She is unable to have sexual pleasure from him. But she projects her
desire upon the objects which belonged to him, such as his lighter. The lighter does the
magic for her. She gets switched over to the world of fantasy with the flame of the lighter
where there are the two of them only. The scene between them in her world of
imagination has been depicted on page 14-15, after her conversation with Kamal and
Kamal’s playing with the lighter.

She unexpectedly comes to know about Kamal’s sexual relationship with him
which makes her more jealous of her. But ironically, she tries to know more about his
body and mind through Kamal. After Kamal’s revelation, Baby again enters in her
fantasy world; where she talks to him. But during this visit Ramesh condemns her for her
illicit desire for him. He does not allow her to keep the lighter with her. (P.23)

But immediately after that Baby expresses a wish to die. But before that she wants
to hear every detail about Ramesh from Kamal. Again she experiences herself to be with
him. She tries to entice him by her extra-ordinary beauty. She openly demands sexual
pleasure from him. She has gone mad with desire and lust. But this time Ramesh points to
her crippledness. She begs him to end her life, in case, he cannot gratify her desire. But
actually she is taking Kamal to be Ramesh and pressing Kamal’s hands around her neck.
(P. 27-28) Thus her love and possessiveness for Ramesh is found to be laced with cruelty.
As she is unable to keep him for herself, she sees to it that no one else especially his wife
should be able to enjoy his company. By her extreme possessiveness for him, she had
made life his life miserable. His marital relationship had always been full of tension. Not
only this, she has hastened his death by making him smoke. She achieves two things by
it. One is a sadistic pleasure by keeping his wife, her rival away from him. Secondly, as
Kamal has pointed out, she causes bringing an end to his life, again deriving a pleasure of
revenge. If she cannot get something, she should destroy it, as is her perverse tendency.
Though she denies it, she knows it to be true. (P.21)
iii) Baby and her Parents

Baby is hostile towards her parents and especially her father. Of course, there are legitimate reasons for that. She takes revenge upon them by exhibiting her lifeless legs, purposely, in front of others. She reveals the cause of hostility to Kamal many years after their death. The memory of that night is still vivid in her mind.

She narrates the dialogue between her parents which she had overheard. They think that she is asleep. Father comes to mother’s room where she is asleep. He despises her presence there. He is not even ready to touch her. He hates ugliness and crippledness. Actually, he feels guilty in her presence as he knows that he is responsible for her pitiful condition. What she gathers from their conversation is, their financial condition was tight. They were not in a position to afford the responsibility of one more child. That is why it was decided to get the foetus aborted. However, the expected result is not seen. Mother wants to stop taking medicines any further. But father points out their inability to raise a second child. In spite of that the abortion doesn’t take place. But those medicines have affected the lower part of her body.

Mother wants father to reconcile with the situation. But he hates her so much that he doesn’t want even to look at her. He calls her evil and curses her for ruining the peace of mind. Mother accepts it as a punishment for their plan of foeticide. Father wants to keep her away in a sanitarium as they are quite wealthy now. Mother resists the idea. She only reflects that Baby should have come little later after their condition had improved. (P.18-20) The thought that she was an unwanted child and they have made all efforts to end her life before birth makes her feel bitter. Since then, she is resolved to take revenge upon her parents by tormenting them with her behavior.
iv) Baby-Keshav Relationship

This is a very different kind of relationship. There is no emotional bonding of either love or hate. It is not even a conventional relationship between opposite sexes.

He arrives at a critical moment when Kamal is trying to kill her, first by forcing her to take sleeping tablets and then, after her refusal to take them, by trying to strangulate her. Thus he arrives and plays the role of a savior for her. But his role is not restricted only to free her from Kamal’s clutches. He frees her from many other evils and leads her to the path of salvation, liberates her from the shackles of physical and psychological barriers.

Kamal hates the idea of anyone coming between her and Baby. That is why she has concealed his telegram from Baby. She asks Keshav to go away. But Baby is scared for her life. So she begs him not to leave. Kamal finds herself losing the battle. She curses Keshav for ruining their plan of embracing death together. But she seems to be determined to end her own life. After she leaves a dialogue between the two begins.(P. 32)

He refers to the darkness and the stale air in the room. But Baby has kept the windows shut for the last ten years since Ramesh’s death, as she abhorred the sight of Ramesh’s funeral procession. Now she has lost the ability to face light. When Keshav reminds her of his earlier visit, she admits to have resented his coming as it had distanced Ramesh from her during the period of his stay.

She is unable to believe his claim that he has come specially to see her as nobody has given her as much importance so far. She finds him different in other respects too. He doesn’t insist on anything, neither indulges in false praise. He remarks that she is looking
horrible in that gaudy make-up and adds that now she doesn’t look as beautiful as she looked during the previous visit. He also refers to her graying hair. (P. 33-34)

Baby is surprised by his coolness while referring to his lost love, his fiancée who expired before their marriage. He is not making fuss of his unbearable grief. When he declines her offer to smoke, she gets disappointed. He points out that she is insisting on unnecessary things, but denying the easily available things like sunlight. She says that she is scared of light. She feels that she will get dissolved in light. He emphasizes the importance of the same- being one with light and gaining the power of omnipresence. She gets baffled. He explains it to her by narrating the last moments before Rama’s, his fiancée’s death. She had smiled at him before her death. He was lost in his irreparable loss. During his wandering, he had come across a dying orphan. The child, too, had asked him to hold his hands, just like Rama. When he held his hands, the child had given him a smile before death. This instance had provided him solace and also given him his mission. Since then, he had been wandering with the sole purpose of bringing comfort to the dying souls. He experiences Rama’s smile on every dying face, thus enabling him to experience her smile and her love for him again and again. (P.36-37)

The whole experience is very different and bewitching for Baby. She, in a way wants to test him and shows her lifeless legs to him. She is surprised not to find any sign of detest or loathing on his face. She loses the edge of her weapon by his response. She feels ashamed of herself. She fails to understand why he is so kind to her unlike others. First time in her life, she feels like getting out of the abyss. She is confident of his support in her attempt. She begs him to get her out of that torture chamber. But she doubts if it would be possible with her lameness. She also fears that all the painful memories linked with the house would chase her. Still, she wishes to accompany him and help him in his mission of making the last moments of the dying souls happy. She is determined to overcome her shortcomings.
She is in a confessional mood. She admits that she could never forget her crippledness and the injustice inflicted upon her for no fault of hers. She has used the hatred as a bond between her and the others. Still, she has remained lonely. She hopes that it might not be so in case of love. Keshav doesn’t agree with it. He asserts, it is the same even with love if it is possessive. Slowly, Baby gets enlightened through the dialogue with him about truth.

**Baby**: Then it’s all a play of imagination then!

**Keshav**: It’s true of hatred, too!

**Baby**: No. It is a burning truth.

**Keshav**: When you’re tied with something, it’s the truth then, but it torments you.

**Baby**: Then should we run away from truth?

**Keshav**: No. It won’t free you from that. But you have to realize its limitations. Then the truth gets melted. It vanishes.

**Baby**: Then what is the truth after all? (P.39)

He compares the concept of truth with dreams, which are true for that moment, but after waking up they vanish. Still he emphasizes the importance of dreams as one can choose his dreams. He continues to ponder over the image of dreams. He admits that his dream is full of dirty, filthy, grotesque things as the path, he is heading, is infested with cholera. He would have to clean them. But by holding their hands, by giving them company and providing some solace brings you a peace of mind. It may be another dream.

He points out that the whole world is like a torture chamber which is full of suffering, pain and despair. That is why one has to break the barriers of home, get over the boundaries of the narrow space and go out to blow upon the wounds of others. That is the only thing one can do. He is not scared of the possibility of infection. He takes it as an opportunity to be the part of their suffering in true sense.
Baby is overwhelmed by this strange concept. She insists on accompanying him. He brings to her notice the limitations of his support. He would be the guide only. The journey is full of hardships and she would have to continue it on her own after a certain stage. She may lose her path, may face the dangers, horrors and temptations. Even after that, there is no assurance of achieving the destination. However, Baby gets deterred by none of them. Then she displays a sign of emancipation. She heads to the shut window on her own; tries to open it. But she has not enough strength to open it which had remained shut for years. She requests him to help her. He just asks her to apply more force. She tries hard with all her strength. Suddenly, the room gets filled with bright light. She gets spellbound by that novel experience; describe the light as a radiant lotus with millions of petals.

The complete metamorphosis of Baby’s character is an allegory of her spiritual journey from evil to noble, from darkness to light, from ignorance to enlightenment, where Keshav’s role is like an angel or a savior, who shows her the path of salvation. Keshav may also be considered an angel of death who makes her realize the true meaning of life and helps her in shedding the walls, the inhibitions of evil emotions of revenge, jealousy, pride and provides her an opportunity to confess to her own guilt, thus preparing her to accept death with clear conscience. It is significant that Kamal has announced to end her life which is meaningless without Baby. She has ruined everything before vanishing from the house. It probably symbolizes the evil, dark side of Baby’s self which is destroyed before she follows a new path of light. (P. 40-42) It has also a symbolic meaning of getting one with the heavenly light, merging into the cosmic flame, the union of Atma and Paramatma.

Kamalesh interprets the Baby-Kamal-Keshav relationship as follows “Baby and Kamal both are unmarried and sexually starved which results into their bitterness and cruelty. Kamal has looked after Baby since her childhood. Kamal is her mirror. They are two facets of the same person. After Keshav’s arrival Kamal walks out. It means that
Baby’s perverse desire for Ramesh has left her. Along with Kamal’s departure all the ugliness, cruelty, darkness and self-centredness leaves her. Keshav brings light in her life and helps her broaden her view. Everyone has ‘Keshav’ as well as ‘Kamal’ in their minds. But one has to keep away ‘Kamal’ and follow the wise path of ‘Keshav’.” (Kamalesh. Natakkar Mahesh Elkunchwar. Sandarbha Prakashan, Pune. P.33)

Secondly he reads the metaphor of ‘cosmic village’, He Vishvachi maze ghar in this play, which advises us to break free from the confinements of narrow space of personal sorrows and enter into the vast space outside. According to him, Baby’s crippledness is man’s dependence upon destiny. (Kamalesh. P.32) He also observes that ‘Baby’ symbolizes a child which reflects Baby’s childlike pliant, innocent character.” He adds that Baby has not matured as a female which is not acceptable. Unless she attains puberty, she won’t be able to feel the desire, lust for Ramesh. (Kamalesh. P.31)

He comments over a little dramatic imbalance here as he finds that the philosophy expressed by Keshav has been emphasized deliberately. (Kamalesh. P.31)

Sandhya Amrute has analysed the play in much detail. She observes that with Yatanaghar, Elkunchwar has tried to deal with psychological disorders, probing its nature and causality. The action of this play takes place on the mind’s stage. Elkunchwar has developed a new technique of fantasy, illusion and flashback or memory for the scenes. With this play he has turned from the issues of life, birth and death to psychological swings. (Sandhya Amrute, Elkunchwaranchi Natyashrusti. Vijay Prakashan, Nagpur. P. 199) She also suggests a lesbian relationship between Baby and Kamal. Just like Kamalesh, she too refers to Kamal being Baby’s ‘looking glass’, but which reflects a false image of her’s. (Amrute. P.203) Their’s is a love-hate relationship. Though Baby’s life is full of suffering, she asks Kamal to treat her cruelly. She wants to experience the masculine cruelty through Kamal. She hugs Kamal tightly which is a clear indication of their lesbian relationship. The realization that she cannot have the first hand experience of
manliness, brings about her disillusionment. It makes her turn to self-destruction. Kamal has no separate existence without Baby. So she has no alternative but to end her life. (Amrute. P.204-205)

Her observations related to Keshav’s role and his philosophy to overcome personal sorrows is similar to those of Kamalesh. She also comments upon the expanding scope of the image of darkness. It grows on as darkness within Baby, within her room and within the cosmos. Even Elkunchwar himself endorses the observation related to the overwhelming presence of darkness in his works.

Finally she comments, “Though the play doesn’t end in death, it is still a tragedy as it imparts the experience of pathos and agony.” Madhav Manohar calls it a genuine experience of a pure tragedy. (AmruteP.209)

RAKATAPUSHPA (1972)

| Bhau ------------ wife ------------ Padma |
| | |
| | |
| Son: Shashi | Daughter: Lilu (15) | Paying guest: Raja (16) |

There are only four characters actually taking part in the action. The fifth character, Shashi is no more. However, he is referred to quite frequently by Padma and Lilu. Despite of limited number of characters, the relationships between them are highly
complex. Between them exist a variety of triangular relationships, such as, i) Padma – Bhau – Lilu, ii) Raja – Lilu – Shashi, iii) Shashi – Padma – Bhau and iv) Padma - - Raja – Lilu. However, the last two types are more significant, which have been focused here.

All these relationships arise out of the womanly instinct of possessiveness for a man, fear and insecurity in the absence of such a man and the attempts to attract the men around them. It is natural in case of Lilu who has just come of age and equally awkward in case of Padma who is trying desperately to catch the attention of men around her, Bhau and Raja.

In the triangular relationship of Padma-Bhau-Lilu, Padma seems to hate Lilu. She thinks that Bhau favours Lilu unduly. She keeps on lashing Lilu with her sharp tongue. She derives sadistic pleasure by hurting the feelings of Lilu.

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reasons. He further points out that she never cared for Shashi, as much as she is doing so for Raja. Even earlier, she has blamed him for building a spacious house out of the compensation money after Shashi’s death.

In fact, she uses the topic of Shashi just as an excuse to receive the focus of attention. She is actually worried of having lost her charm and power to attract men in general. Padma tries to attract him, reminds him of her pretty looks. When she doesn’t come to the point, he wants to leave the room and take food. She accuses him of talking of food. He, too, points out that he feels equally sad about losing their son, though he doesn’t display his grief. Her mood is constantly changing. Suddenly she switches over to her former mood of accusation and starts showering abuses upon him,

Padma : ----- I lost my darling son and you dare to raise a bungalow out of the insurance money! Aren’t you ashamed?

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Padma : Why didn’t you donate that money? You killed my son! (P. 89)

Bhau refuses all the charges with the help of concrete instances and also proves that she had never displayed any sign of a special attachment for him which is a common thing in Raja’s case. He brings to her notice the futility of blaming each other. She continues with her tantrums. Bhau is fed up of her mood-swings. Now she uses her sure weapon and asks him,

Padma : ---- Are you bored of me as I do not look attractive any more? I keep waiting for you. I feel very lonely.

Bhau : I thought that you were asleep. Moreover you have been avoiding me since long. After Shashi’s death you wanted the arrangement of separate bed-rooms for us. Now I feel it awkward.

Padma : I don’t want to enter the debate. I do want a baby again. (P.92)
Though Bhau gets confounded by her strange demand, he tries to fulfill her wish unsuccessfully. She moves away from him. Bhau tries to convince her that it is not possible now at their age. By this remark he had touched the sensitive spot. She gets infuriated by the reference to her inability to conceive, her loss of fertility, which is the root cause of her anxiety. (P. 92-93)

After the blame-game and the frustrating experience of sex, Bhau points out that they are now past the age of their productive phase. She is not ready to accept the truth. She pours her frustration upon him and asks him to get out of her room. She finds Lilu standing outside their room. She scolds her for eavesdropping and her perverse interest in man-woman relationship. Then she asks Lilu why she had gone to Raja’s room. Padma’s accusations trigger the explosion. Lilu is waiting for the opportunity to lash at her.

**Lilu**: I didn’t go to his room in a wedding saree. I’m ashamed of you. You’re not a mother, but a filthy woman. I found all these letters in your room and it is you who goes to Raja’s room every now and then, not me!

Bhau can’t tolerate Lilu’s behavior and slaps her hard. She gets petrified for a while, but soon regains her senses. She knows that she has now lost the support and sympathy of her father, too. She is alienated. She goes in without responding to Bhau’s sincere appeals. Padma tries to convince Bhau desperately that all those letters were imaginary, just written to pass time, without addressing anyone in particular. She breaks into sobbing. Bhau pities her and tries to comfort her. (P. 93-94)

The fourth triangular relationship is the central theme of the play. The presence of Raja, the young boy in the house, turns into the cause of rivalry between Padma and Lilu, the mother and the daughter. Both try to catch his attention, unconsciously. Padma thinks
that she is substituting him for her dead son, Shashi and her love for him is merely motherly affection. But the way she expresses jealousy for his mother, keeps secrecy about her insistence of not allowing him to pay for his stay and her attempts to please him, it is clear that for her at least, the relationship is purely a male-female relationship. If she thinks that she loves him as a mother, then it is an Oedipal relationship. That is why she considers Lilu as a rival in getting Raja’s attention. Both, Raja and Lilu are aware of it at subconscious level. That is why when Padma makes demands of intimacy or showers excessive favours upon him, Raja feels awkward, nervous, defensive and guilty.

The antagonism between Padma and Lilu gets manifested right in the beginning. Lilu brings tea only for Bhau as she knows that Padma will refuse to take tea if she brings it. The first skirmish between the two takes place over it and as expected, Padma says that she would take tea after Raja returns. When Lilu refuses to prepare tea for him, Padma blames her for being jealous of him. She complains about Lilu’s attitude towards Raja. (P.46-47) Lilu dutifully reminds Padma of taking her medicines. But she just ignores it. Soon afterwards Padma admits that she is getting jittery unnecessarily. Lilu is trying to put up with it as she is aware of her psychological problem after Shashi’s untimely death. However, she feels hurt by Padma’s treatment to her. Bhau talks to her about her marriage and the wedding saris to be bought, to boost her spirits. Padma overhears this talk and taunts him that he won’t think of buying a rich saree for her as she has grown old. Soon Raja arrives and tea is offered to him, though he doesn’t want it. It infuriates Lilu. She declines to take tea. She screams and leaves the place. (P.54-56) On this occasion Padma seems to substitute Raja for her lost son.

Padma has decided to observe fast on that day in the memory of Shashi. But when Raja insists that she should also eat, she praises him for his concern for her which according to her is not found in her family members. (P.57) Though Raja is a paying-guest she doesn’t accept the charges from him and warns him to keep it a secret from others. (P.58) She grabs every opportunity of physical contact with him, for instance,
makes him swear by placing his fingers upon her throat, that it is as good as his own house (and she is his mother), though he shies way from touching her.

It reminds him of his own mother. But Padma resents that topic. She turns down the idea of meeting his mother. She wants to claim him as her own son. That is why when he emphasizes his mother’s qualities, she gets angry as it means that she is not good, according to her interpretation. (P.59-60) Raja changes the awkward topic and enquires about her health. He also remarks that she doesn’t look so old, which pleases her. But she despises his remark about her graying hair. She conceals her displeasure and starts describing how pretty she had been when she was young by referring to her photographs. His remark, “Kaku, you’re still good-looking” is very pleasing for her. (P.63) Over this, she deliberately opens the topic of his feelings about love. He realizes that she has removed the pornographic magazine from his room while tidying it. He gets disturbed and warns her not to hobnob in his room during his absence. She senses his anger, holds his hand and makes him admit that he is not angry. He gets his hand freed, reluctantly admits to forget his anger and escapes to his room. (P.63-65).

Now she turns to Lilu once again and gives a sermon on the precautions to be taken by the young girls, especially during the menstrual period, which Lilu highly despises. Then she curses her for forgetting her dead brother’s anniversary and talking about wedding saris on that very day. (P.65-67) Lilu is wiser and familiar with Padma’s mood-swings. She is also aware that this is natural during the menopausal phase of Padma. She asks her to take rest and not to worry about her delayed monthly period. (P.67)

Padma retires to her room and takes out all the old photographs and her costly saris. While she is sitting with all those things around her, Raja comes to her room to ask for the magazine. She avoids talking about it and insists on showing him the old photographs and her saris. Raja, innocently praises the smell of new clothes. He asks her
why she doesn’t wear these saris. She pretends to have lost interest in those things, in
general. Then she refers to her headache and suggests that she’d like if someone
massages her forehead. This is an invitation to him. He starts pressing her forehead while
Lilu enters the room suddenly to ask him for meals. Raja feels guilty. (P.68-70) He senses
her disapproval. He follows her. She is angry by finding him in her mother’s room and
being so close to her. A bitter exchange of words takes place between the two. Both
blame each other on trivial issues. She asks him to look for another accommodation. Over
this he tells her about Padma’s insistence on his staying with them even for the next year.
Now she is determined to make him leave immediately. She reproaches him for tolerating
the insults afflicted by her and calls Padma ‘a snob’ and him ‘a spineless clown.’ She
ridicules him by comparing him with her brother. She warns him against trying to
substitute him. She feels happy by hurting, insulting him. (P.70-74)

By this time, Raja is completely demoralized. He announces his plan of going
back to his native place until the end of the month and then to shift to some other place.
Now Lilu takes pity on him. Her animosity slowly vanishes and reconciliation between
them takes place unconsciously. She starts talking to him like a peer, referring frankly to
his unrefined ways for which he becomes a butt of ridicule in the college. She also
suggests him to practice English speaking at home. She refers to his merit with a mock
anger. Soon their conversation turns to the dissection which is a part of the Biology
syllabus as a foundation for his aim of taking a medical course. With his favorite topic,
his inhibitions disappear. He starts explaining her the parts of flower. She gets enchanted
by his involvement and style of explaining a difficult topic though she doesn’t understand
much of it. She tells him so, by which, he, too, gathers courage to tell her that he likes her
and he brings a flower for her everyday, but is afraid of her reaction and that is why, has
never told her about it. She, too, confesses that she likes him for his dedication, his talent
etc. At the same time they are apprehensive about their indulgence with each other. They
are not sure if it right. While Raja takes her leave, she apologises to him and asks him to
forget about her wrath and her ultimatum of leaving their house immediately. (P.75-82)
Thus complete reconciliation has taken place between the two. There is no trace of
hostility now.
Soon, after Lilu leaves, Padma enters Raja’s room. She is in her wedding saree. She says that she has put on that saree as Raja has suggested so. Raja becomes restless by her behavior. Padma reflects her own thoughts. She laments upon her ageing. In fact, the thought of her vanishing youth and charm has been disturbing her rather than the loss of her young son. Raja doesn’t want to stay with her in the darkening room. But she has no intention to move from there. She stretches herself on his bed, tries to open her heart to him. When he switches on the light, she asks him to put it off. She is in a depressed mood. When she refers to it, he suggests calling a doctor or at least Lilu to help her. Unconsciously he refers to the talk between the two. This information arouses her jealousy. She suggests Raja to press her forehead as usual. Raja feels more awkward. In spite of her protests, he switches the light on.

Meanwhile, Lilu finds that Padma is not in her room, but a bunch of letters is found on her bed. She takes the letters to the drawing room, goes through them and gets stunned. Soon Bhau, too, arrives. He asks for Padma; who emerges out of Raja’s room. Both are shocked to find her draped in a wedding saree. She offers explanation for wearing that saree without their asking, begs Bhau to understand her mental plight. Then proceeds to her room and asks Bhau to come there.

Padma has planned a new move to separate Lilu from Raja; as she has become suspicious of their intimacy. Now she is ready to sacrifice Raja’s company if she gets the pleasure of robbing Lilu of the same. She tells Bhau that she is going to ask Raja to look for another accommodation. She doesn’t want to let the two young people-Lilu and Raja-stay together. Bhau remains neutral over the issue.

After the frustrating experience related to sex, referred to as earlier, she gets infuriated and asks Bhau to get out of the room. She pours her wrath upon Lilu for eavesdropping and blames her for showing perverse interest in man-woman relationship.
Lilu is ready for counter-attack. When Padma asks her explanation for going to Raja’s room, she lashes out;

**Lilu**: I didn’t go to his room in a wedding saree. I’m ashamed of you. You’re not a mother, but a filthy woman. I found all these letters and it is you who goes to Raja’s room every now and then, not me!

Those letters must be the imaginary love letters written by Padma to Raja. Being exposed, Padma gets demoralized and tries to assert her innocence. She maintains that she has written those letters without addressing anyone specifically. Bhau understands her agony and supports her. He even slaps Lilu for leveling such mean charges against her mother.

Thus an unusual conflict between the mother and a daughter has been depicted, the cause being influencing the same man, the perennial cause of rivalry observed between two females. To some extent, Padma is afraid of Lilu’s influence over Bhau too, whenever Bhau tries to comfort Lilu during the tense situation at home.

With respect to *Raktapushpa*, Kamalesh points out the high symbolism in the play beginning right from the title. He also takes note of the psychoanalysis of the two females- Lilu and Padma- in the play as the title symbolizes both of them. He analyses the title and the deliberate ambiguity in the word *Rakta*. “Rakta is blood, through which the desire is experienced. The result of desire, lust is a fruit; a creation. Thus he throws light upon the relation between lust and creativity.” (Kamalesh, *Natakkar Mahesh Elkunchwar*, Sandarbha Prakashan, Pune. P.35)

One of the females, Padma, is on the brink of losing the creativity which results into a psychological trauma. The other is Lilu who has just entered the phase of maturity,
creativity. Both naturally get attracted towards the same male, Raja present in the house which proves to be the cause of conflict between the two. Their relationship is also love-hate relationship similar to that of the Baby-Kamal relationship.

Towards the end of the play Padma makes a desperate attempt to test her ability, but she fails. She collapses due to her failure. Her depression due to the loss of her young son has been blended with the psycho-somatic effects as a result of the menopause.

She wants Raja to fill up the vacuum created due to the loss of her Son, Shashi. Elkunchwar has very skillfully recorded all the psycho-somatic changes in her behavior. (Kamalesh.P.39) Sandhya Amrute has already observed Elkunchwar’s changing tendency to explore human psyche and psychological disorders with respect to *Yatanaghar*. She adds, “Padma under the influence of her depression due to the loss of the only son, tries to shower all her affection upon Raja. Lilu cannot substitute him as a brother. She gets unconsciously attracted towards him.”

Her comment on blood-relationship is significant. “Though Padma considers Raja a son, there is a tinge of sexual attraction. The reason is, there is no alternative for blood ties. One cannot be a mother to someone else. She cannot accept this truth from Raja. At the same time her specific gestures at Raja clearly indicate her sexual interest in Raja.


She takes note of the symbolism in the dissection of a flower and the consequent illustration about the process of fertilization in the plants by Raja to Lilu. But she expresses a doubt about the fruition of the newly emerged love between the two, as the flower, the symbol of their love has been destroyed. (Amrute.P.213)
Elkunchwar has said about the symbol as well as the title that they have emerged unconsciously, naturally and they fit appropriately, as if, they are fully integrated with the plot. (Amrute. P.213)

About the tensions in the family relationships, she observes, “All the characters are living under the same roof but the tensions have devastated them completely. They are lonely in spite of each other’s company, which is proved by the rift between Bhau and Lilu. This is the inevitability of the human life. Still, there is a ray of hope as Padma gets Bhau’s emotional support.

The lives of all of them are filled with darkness of sorrow, pain and agony. Bhau’s greatness lies in his broadmindedness in spite of the darkness.

Elkunchwar himself observes that with Raktapushpa, he has come out of the influence of Western drama. He claims Raktapushpa to be his independent creation, which is very true. (Amrute. P.217)

**WASANAKANDA (1975) (Desire in the Rocks)**

**Hemakant (35) ---------------- Sister------------------ Lalita (20)**

Only these two characters take part in the action almost throughout the play. Hemakant and Lalita are siblings. But the relationship between them is that of a male and a female, which is socially unacceptable. Secondly, when they meet each other after fifteen years, they are just like strangers to each other. They have only vague memories
of each other. No wonder that after the long gap, when they meet each other in real sense, they are like just a male and a female to each other.

Though their father doesn’t take part in the action, his reference comes frequently which throws light upon the relationship between the father and both the children. This relationship plays an important role in the later development of the relationship between the two siblings. Both are alienated from the father for different reasons. Perhaps, in case of normal family background, the illicit kind of relationship wouldn’t get developed between the two. As these two relationships are linked with each other, both relationships should be taken into account.

Relationship between father and the children

Father’s relationship with both the children lacks any sort of attachment, bonding, affection or tenderness. It is only strict discipline and authoritarianism. The father is a highly affluent feudal lord who owns huge mansions in almost every city. Mother is no more. Thus the possibility of affection and warmth comes to an end. The son, Hemakant fails to conform to the expectations of his father. He is an artist and not at all interested in proving himself the worthy successor of his father. Father refuses to support him financially. He rebels against his father and goes abroad. He returns only after his father’s death. Father has left him nothing in his will. Lalita has been nominated as the sole inheritor of the huge fortune. After his father’s death, there is no one to stop him from pursuing his goal. Lalita has no experience of love and affection so far by any of the family members. It is the first time that she finds someone like Hemakant who really loves her. She worships him and is ready to offer him anything he wants, including her body and spirit.

Her memory of her father is only about a routine inquiry of one or two sentences daily. Otherwise, she is looked after by servants as per the instructions by the father. On
In this background she comes in contact with her elder brother and naturally she seeks all kind of support from him. Thus the relationship begins.

**Lalita- Hemakant relationship**

Hemkant is a rough and tough, experienced man of thirty-five whereas Lalita is a simple, innocent girl of twenty who has never been exposed to the practical aspects of the real world. There are clear signs of emotional exploitation of Lalita by Hemakant. There is every possibility of Lilita’s infatuation for him. But there are also indications that she is trying to overcome the temptation. She avoids looking eye to eye with him for the same reason. On the other hand, Hemakant always threatens to leave her if she doesn’t surrender herself to him. He is going to use her as a model for his sculptures. She resents the idea of baring even her spirits to him. He uses the technique of combination of love and fear to ensnare her. He praises her beauty and also narrates the tales of cruelty and oppression by their forefathers, arousing the fear of ghosts in her mind; and thereby making her surrender to him. He suggests that having sex with him would expel her fears. Slowly, he arouses her by kissing every part of her body and getting successfully what he wants. (Scene I)

In Scene ii, the relationship has been established between the two. She has shed all her inhibitions and has started behaving like his beloved. He tries to fulfill her whims, though reluctantly. But suddenly, certain poses of her inspire him to make sketches. So he turns indifferent to her moods and starts making sketches. He is not even ready to let her share his art even as an appreciator. Here the stark difference between their attitudes towards love and sex get manifested. She values the genuine experience of the union through all the senses, its upheavals, rhythm, the music and orchestration of the whole thing. She wonders how he could trap them in his sculptures. Hemkant doesn’t seem to bother for that experience. Now she understands why she could never hear the echo of the music created in her body from him. Lalita can’t isolate body and spirit whereas
Hemakant is satisfied with physical pleasure only. However, Lalita still wants to have pleasure. Now she doesn’t shy away from it or try to enjoy it secretly. On the contrary, she wants to celebrate the interplay of the desire without any inhibitions. She lets the torch burning and wants to synchronize the rhythm of the musical instruments outside with the bodily rhythm during their union.

The attitude of both of them goes on changing in the third scene. Hemakant turns more and more indifferent towards her. On the contrary, she grows almost addicted to him. She feels that her existence is meaningless without him. His aloofness rends her heart. Her craziness for him reaches the extent that she starts suspecting a rival in her love. He just ignores her, gets annoyed by her pestering. He tells her that there is nothing special about her and he is not at all answerable to her. He just refuses to be the slave of her moods. In fact, she behaves like a slave to him, spreads her hair in his path and hugs his feet. He finds her behavior disgusting. Now she accuses him of not loving her as deeply as she loves him. When he threatens to desert her, she apologises. Then he obliges her and sits by her and pats upon her head to comfort her. She is ready to die at that moment of ecstasy. Her sense of insecurity turns her moody. She wants him to pronounce his love for her at least to satisfy her. His reluctance and indifference infuriates her and she starts showering abuses upon him. She refuses to call him an artist and remarks that he is not even as good as a mason. She compares him with a leech, sucking her blood and his heartlessness with the barren land and the rocks. She calls the sculptures filthy and obscene. This direct attack on his creativity upsets him. A heated argument on creativity takes place between the two. According to her, only she is creative in real sense as she could create life within her; whereas his art is lifeless. She expects him to feel proud by that news and expects his emotional support during that delicate phase. Instead, he accuses her of using her pregnancy as a weapon or as fetters to tie him up with her. But he refuses to be bound by it. Her argument that the baby is going to immortalize him and not his sculptures doesn’t deter him from his decision of deserting her. She feels helpless and miserable by his heartless behavior.
The love and devotion is one-sided. It is underscored in the next scene. Lalita’s baby is still-born. She sings a lullaby to him, before handing him over for the last rites. She blames herself for her sin. However, Hemakant doesn’t agree with her as he fails to find anything sinful in the relationship. Lalita wants the last rites to be performed properly and by Hemakant himself. But he hands over the baby to a beggar for burial, who is paid a large sum for that. She feels agonized by the information. She recalls the curse upon the mansion by the beggar woman who had been buried alive with her baby beneath the foundation of the mansion. She thinks it to be a natural consequence to give birth to a still-born baby at the accursed place. Her agony and self reproach shows no effect upon him. He doesn’t agree with her views. On the contrary, he blames her for dragging him along with her. He claims that he had never forced her in the relationship. It was her willing choice. She had enjoyed the pleasure equally. She argues that she wanted to restrain her desire for him, but instead of helping her in her attempts, he had encouraged her to indulge in the sinful relationship. He doesn’t get convinced at all. He is defiant about the social norms. He wants to go by instinct and finds tormenting oneself unnecessary. She gets fed up by his attitude.

They have been ostracized by the villagers. The villagers are heading towards them to punish the sinners. Lalita has seen in her dreams, the goddess commanding them to punish the sinners. The villagers have caught the beggar with the baby before the burial. She wants to go out and get her baby in her arms. But he doesn’t allow her. He defies the theory of sin and punishment. He claims that the villagers are jealous of him for his wealth and possession of a beautiful girl like Lalita. That is why they are hostile towards them. They have also disfigured his sculptures to punish him. He suffers greatly by the ruin of his art. He expects her to support him in his misery and asks her to be close with him. However she has lost interest in the intimacy. She shrinks away from him, finds his touch filthy. All the tenderness, the desire has been reduced to ashes. She feels that their paths have been separated now. She wants to distance herself from him and the ominous place. She leaves the place with the promise to come back. Both escape the wrath of people by fleeing away from the place. Both keep on wandering aimlessly and drift to the same place after a long gap. Lalita is undergoing penance in the meanwhile, in
a strange manner. She has turned a prostitute and let everybody enjoy her physical beauty, as per the command of the goddess. She is completely worn out, looks devastated, but doesn’t complain.

Perhaps her pathetic condition, her prolonged suffering, brings about a transformation in his heart. He first time ever confesses his guilt. He owns the responsibility of ruining her. He admits to have taken undue advantage of her faith in him and her being scared of him. He has been unscrupulous and that is why has never hesitated to exploit her emotionally and physically. He has used her merely as an instrument. He had thought that his detachment, his capacity not to get involved emotionally in his model has been his strength. He regrets to find her suffering for his sins. He begs her to alter her ways and stop tormenting her body and spirit. But she is convinced by now that drowning herself completely in the bog of sins is the only way of absolution of her sins. Her ultimate gesture of penance is to surrender herself to him, when she loathes him. He, too, needs her badly, but he is not ready to accept her in this manner.

She is surprised by his confession and by his words that he needs her. She is not ready to believe that he really needs anyone. He admits to one more fact that her theory about truth, life and creativity was right. He had realized that his creation, his sculptures lack the truth, the life. He had never experienced the same attachment for his creation as Lalita has exhibited with her creation, the baby. She has wished to save the baby from the wrath of the villagers, whereas he had not acted likewise while they were ruining his creation. He had fled away to save his life. Now he finds his sculptures ugly, lifeless and obscene. He empathises with her feeling of giving birth to a still-born baby.

After his confession she points out that his indifference, aloofness was feigned and he used it as a shield from the risk of involvement. He was not ready to immerse himself fully and accept the pleasure and agony equally. He was not prepared for the
strife and after the realization he had suddenly collapsed. He had never tried to penetrate through the hard shell and reach the core to the light of truth. He was afraid of getting scorched by the heat at the core. He had no courage to admit the truth even to himself and there lies the root cause of his failure in instilling life into the sculptures. Same is true about their relationship. He had never tried to reach her heart, the source of truth. As a result, he could gather only the outer shells and not the core of truth. He wonders if he could have achieved it, had he tried in a right manner. She doesn’t assure him anything. She admits that she, too, has not still found it and may not ever find it. She advises him to accept even the failure as one’s fate, without complaint. By this time, he has accepted her superiority in the spiritual journey. She holds his hands tightly and looks at him mercifully.

They suddenly realize to have been surrounded by the villagers, carrying torches. They are slowly closing in. She stoically accepts her fate and surrenders herself to them. Hemakant begs her not to leave him alone. He is ready to fight with them to defend himself. He hurls his hammer at them. They start pelting stones at them. Some of them drag Lalita by her hair.

Both are badly beaten by the mob. Lalita’s head is tonsured. Hemakant is crawling. Lalita feels sorry for him. She tries to console him by saying, what he did was done unconsciously, but they have failed to understand it. She also assures him that she is no more angry with him. She further adds that one should not get angry or sad; one can only forgive life and fate. He is unable even to hold his head straight. She supports him and assures him to bring an end to all the torment. She calmly takes a torch and goes on setting the wooden mansion on fire, then takes his head in her lap and pats it. The whole mansion is on fire. The penance is complete.

The relationship between the two goes on changing through the play. At first, his stature appears to be lofty. He has denounced wealth for the sake of his art and assumed a
life full of struggle, suffering and poverty. He is almost like a god to Lalita. He has a lot of experience of the world around to his credit, whereas Lalita is too young, inexperienced, never had been exposed to the stark realities of the world. She totally depends upon him. He is the protector to her. This relationship goes on developing at two levels, physical and spiritual. At both levels it passes through different phases. At physical level, both are infatuated with each other; with the difference that she tries to restrain herself, being aware of the illicitness of the relationship. In phase I, he plays the role of a seducer. He courts her, woos her and persuades her to surrender herself to him. She accepts it hesitantly. In phase II after he has won her, he loses interest in pampering her or even satisfying her wishes. Now she is completely indulgent, wants to attract him and celebrate the desire without any inhibitions. But he is not in a mood to entertain her wishes. He is indifferent to her. In phase III, she starts feeling insecure due to his aloofness. She insists that he should express his love again and again. She is ready to be satisfied even if they are only words without real feelings. At this stage, she behaves like a slave to him and begs for his favours. She even turns jealous with the thought of a rival in her love to him. She considers his art to be her rival. In phase IV, she is bearing the seed of their love. She is thrilled by it. But this news fails to excite him. He is not even ready to carry out his responsibility even as a father of the child. On the contrary, he is planning to desert her and dedicate himself to his art. She is completely disillusioned. But she had accepted her fate. Actually, she needs his overall support in that state. His attitude doesn’t change even at the moment of utter distress for her, having a still-born baby. Their attitudes are quite contrasting towards the disaster. She is sentimental. He is painfully practical.

With respect to spiritual level, she is at the bottom in the beginning, whereas he appears to be a man of principles, dedicated to his art, creativity, who has denounced all material pleasures for its sake. The myth of denunciation and penance gets gradually exposed from part III of the play, through their concepts of creativity. According to her, creating a real life within oneself is the creativity in real sense and not his work with the lifeless rocks. In part IV, when the villagers have turned hostile to them, he begs for her physical and moral support. After his utter indifference to her, even during the most
delicate moment of her life, she has developed a sort of loathing towards the physical contact with him. About moral support, she can’t believe that he ever needs anyone to support him. She has realized by then that their paths are totally different. She wants to follow her path on her own.

Only in part V, when they meet each other among the ruins of his sculptures, he confesses that he is responsible for ruining her and exploiting her body and spirit, for his selfish motives. He has used her just as a model for his ambition. On the other hand, she has assumed a real path of penance by tormenting her body to the utmost for the sake of absolution. She has resorted to prostitution. As an ultimate step, she is going to surrender herself to him, whom she detests most.

He, for the first time displays the signs of empathy for her suffering. At this point, she analyses his psychology and points out that his pretence of detachment was his protective covering. He never wanted to get completely involved in anything. He had never tried to reach the core of the truth. He was not ready to risk his safety. He was scared of the heat at the core. She also deliberates upon her search of truth and admits frankly that she, too, is still groping in the dark and she is not sure if she would ever reach at the ultimate truth.

The difference in their spiritual strengths is further emphasized through their attitudes towards death. They know that the villagers are heading towards them to penalize them for their sins. She remains composed, but he is scared. When the mob approaches, she surrenders herself to the mob, but he makes a vain attempt to defend himself by hurling his hammer towards them. In spite of her physical suffering and disgrace, she has retained her strength to support and comfort him. At this stage, she attains the stature of a saint or the savior, who in spite of her own suffering doesn’t utter a word to curse the people. Just like Jesus, she is ready to forgive them for misunderstanding Hemakanta’s motives and punishing him. As the concluding act of
mercy and penance, she herself sets the wooden mansion on fire, takes Hemakant’s head in her lap and faces the end in a dignified manner.

Kamlesh observes five phases of Lalita’s journey of relationship with Hemakant in the five scenes or parts of the play. He calls them fear, love, adoration, absolution and liberation. “The phase of fear is related to her childhood when she was extremely afraid of her father. With the support of Hemakant the fear vanishes and the love-phase begins. She surrenders herself to him and wants to become one with him. The union does take place. However, she misses a reciprocation of response from his body. This phase intensifies into the adoration phase. At the same time his indifference is sensed by her. She thinks that the revelation about their expected baby would bring him back to her. But she gets disappointed by his response.” (Kamalesh, Natakkar Mahesh Elkunchwar, Sandarbha Prakashan, Pune. P.67-68)

He continues, “The baby is still-born which gives rise to the feeling of sin. Thus she endeavors to get absolved from the sin. The last phase is that of liberation and salvation. She has attained self-knowledge. She can look at her own suffering in a detached manner; her mind is full of mercy which enables her to forgive Hemakanta. She sacrifices her life and attains salvation. (Kamalesh. P.70)

Sandhya Amrute has analysed this play in detail from the point of view of its high symbolism, exploration of the source of inspiration and motives behind creative art, concept of sin, existential and philosophical views about sin and creativity. She opines, “The whole setting of the background is full of huge rocks, the holy procession and the wooden mansion are all symbolic. The rocks stand for the barrenness, the procession symbolizes cosmic, perennial values and wada stands for the curse of life.” She finds even the characters symbolic. Hemakant represents an artist whereas Lalita stands for intensity of life. Their being siblings is also symbolic. An artist’s attitude towards life is neutral and detached. Life flourishes with the help of the artist. They are lovers only in
this sense. However, if an artist looks at life just as a medium of experience and is
detached about it then his love turns into adultery, a sin. Obviously, its outcome is corrupt
and / or dead like the obscene, ugly sculptures or the still-born baby.” She finds the
combined effect of Hindu philosophy and existential philosophy behind this symbolism.
(Sandhya Amrute, Elkunchwaranchi Natyasrushti, Vijay Prakashan, Nagpur. P.44)

She refers to the anecdote related to the human sacrifice within the foundation and
observes, “No social structure can be flawless and sacred if it is founded by destroying,
suppressing other component.” (Amrute. P.46)

Then she turns to Lalita-Hemakant relationship where Lalita is completely
devoted to him whereas he remains indifferent. She gets deeply hurt due to his attitude.
She curses him saying, he has to pay for it. She observes, “This curse is not restricted to
Hemakant only. It applies to her also as she has become part of him. Hemakant doesn’t
take it seriously.” But Sandhya Amrute feels that Elkunchwar has linked Lalita with the
divine power which makes justice of our deeds. In this respect, she finds the symbol of
procession of goddess very meaningful. (Amrute.P.50)

She adds that this is the playwright’s metaphysical probe into the immortal
values. It is not confined to love, but it extends to the probe of the inspiration behind the
creativity, the concept of sin, truth of life etc. She comments, “It is not only the tragedy
of the illicit relationship between the siblings, but also of the conflict between the value
systems of an individual and society.” (Amrute. P.51)

She further relates Hemakanta’s character and his choice of the rocky terrain as
his destination. She observes, “It is his destiny. He is barren at the subconscious level just
like the barren landscape, being deprived of love, affection and sympathy. He is cut off
from his people, home and also from the society. This alienation has resulted into his
masochism. It is his way of asserting himself. He treats Lalita with the same indifferent
and sadistic attitude. He wants Lalita also to turn rocklike. Then only he would be able to relate himself with her.” She also quotes Pandharipande’s theory of ‘alienation being the basis of the whole experience of Wasanakanda’. (Amrute. P. 52-53)

Sandhya Amrute also relates Hemakanta’s failure as an artist and the lust. She observes, “It is true that the sex-desire is the basis of life. Though it is a guiding force of life, life is not merely desire. It can neither substitute life nor art. (Amrute. P.53)

She also comments upon the contrasts between the persons of Lalita and Hemakanta. If Hemakanta uses the shield of chauvinism and sadism for his alienation, it is complete dependency in case of Lalita. She has never in her life taken her own decisions. It is her destiny which leads her finally to self-realisation and attainment of absolute truth.”(Amrute.P.54-55)

Regarding the concept of sin, she comments, “Lalita finds illicit relationship sinful as she has been brought up with the Indian philosophy. She finds a link between her suffering and her destiny and accepts the punishment as a part of her destiny.

Hemakanta thinks of the same issue on existential level. He doesn’t find anything sinful in his relationship with Lalita. His actions are guided by his own motives and inspirations. He neither seeks advice nor blames anyone.” (Amrute. P.57)

She observes that by linking the concept of sin with the creative process Elkunchwar has tried to combine creativity, spirituality, desires and inspiration together. (Amrute.P.60)

Sandhya Amrute remarks about the end of the play, “After her penance, Lalita seems to be absolved of her sins. There is only pure and sacred love and mercy in her
heart. This is the combination of love and enlightenment. Her gesture of comforting Hemakanta affectionately lifts its level to spirituality and holiness. A tragic is transformed into a sacred feeling. There is no villain in the play. Everything is predestined and man is helpless to change it. In this respect, this play is close to the Greek tragedy.” (Amrute.P.64)

Sandhya Amrute’s comments about the limitations of the play are as follows

- It is a perfect intellectual sculpture. This perfection hampers the effectiveness. Thus it fails to attain the grandeur of tragedy.
- The philosophy of Wasanakand has been presented verbally instead of presenting through a dramatic experience. It fails to make a ‘dramatic statement.’
- The playwright has attempted to seek the source of human instinct, love and sin and the creative process through the existential as well as spiritual level. However the focus is not clear which equally confounds the audience and the critics, both.

Still, according to her Wasanakand is important for its literary values as well as dramatic values. (AmruteP.68-69)
PARTY (1981)

Damayanti --------- Barve --------- -----Mohini
(a rich influential lady) (an established writer) (a former stage artist)
|                            |
daughter                     |
|                            |
Sona                         Bharat ----------------- Agashe---Vrinda (a socialist)
(an emerging writer)         (a popular and successful writer)

Elkunchwar depicts the interpersonal relationships in this play at three levels, i) man-woman relationship, ii) relationship among the persons belonging to the same profession, iii) relationship between the rulers and the ruled.

Man-Woman Relationship

When man-woman relationship is concerned, there are four women in question, Damayanti Rane, her daughter- Sona, Mohini, who is living with Barve for seven years without marriage, Vrinda, who calls herself a social activist and is a spinster at the age of thirty-five.

Damayanti is a widow, but a very rich and highly influential lady among the elite society, her father being a cabinet minister. She is also a patron for artists; due to which the interested persons hover around her to gain her favours. She is fully aware of her strength and uses it deftly with the pretence of unbiased stand. The men around her are Doctor, Barve, Agashe and Bharat. There is a reference to her late husband during the argument between her and Sona. There are no indications of attraction between Doctor and Damayanti which is observed between persons of opposite sexes. Doctor and Damayanti belong to the same age group. However, he is just a friend to her whose moral
support is crucially important for her, especially to resolve the tension with her daughter. He is the only person whom her daughter Sona respects and regards as a father-figure in the absence of her own father. Doctor, too, needs her friendship for some unknown reason. However their views regarding most of the things differ greatly which is clear from their opinions about the worth of Amrut, Bharat and Barve as writers as well as persons.

The second man is Barve. There are a number of instances revealing her bias for him. The play begins with the reference to the party arranged in honour of Barve for winning a prestigious literary award. Whenever Doctor hints at Barve’s hypocrisy, his manipulations for fame and lime-light, she comes forward to defend Barve. According to Doctor, Barve’s award is a scale to measure popular success. On the contrary, Damayanti asserts that he deserves it and he is the best among all Marathi writers. (P.6) She tries to impress it upon Doctor un successfully by referring to Barve’s gesture of donating the award money for the cause of charity. (P.7)

Afterwards, the topic of a writers’ delegation to be sent to U.S. opens. Barve pretends to be disinterested. Doctor suggests including Bharat and Amrut, being young writers with new ideas. Damayanti promptly rejects these names and insists on Barve’s inclusion. She offers some flimsy excuses for the rejection; in spite of Doctor’s insistence. When Agashe claims that Barve, too, is acquainted with commercial success by way of the royalty of his plays, films based on them and translations of his plays, Damayanti staunchly defends Barve, calling him “avant-garde” instead of commercially successful. (P. 35-37)

After Sona’s clash with Agashe over the marriage proposal, heated argument takes place between her and Damayanti. Damayanti feels hurt and frustrated. She is depressed. Barve tries to comfort her and praises her as “one of the most cultivated women I’ve ever come across.” (P.63)She further confesses about her failed marriage,
her disillusionment about her love-marriage soon after the marriage and continuing with the relationship full of discord for twenty years. She admits to have made a mistake in choosing a wrong person as a life-partner. She confesses, “I need somebody, I need you.” (P.62-66) Barve, too, confesses that he doesn’t love Mohini anymore. He expresses a wish to stay away from her at least for some time and he wants to use the opportunity to go to U.S. alone. She asks him, “Do you want me to ring up Papa?” Barve nods to do so. (P.71) Then she arranges for his inclusion in the delegation for purely non-literary reasons.

Even when Barve confesses about the shallowness of his writings, his smart manipulations to prove himself a classical writer, she tries to defend him and is ready to compare him with the genius of Shakespeare. (P.69) She is actually pondering over accommodating Bharat in the delegation, but drops the plan as per Barve’s advice. It is clear that Damayanti is very close to Barve emotionally.

Agashe, too, is a famous playwright. But his plays are for masses, not for classes, which Barve is known for. He doesn’t have emotional bonding with Damayanti. However, he is always a part of Damayanti’s parties, being rich and famous. Damayanti is interested in him as an acceptable match for her daughter, Sona, though there is no emotional bonding between the two. Actually, there is no compatibility between the two. He is fifteen years older to Sona. Sona hates him for his selfish motives. She knows very well that Agashe is willing to marry an unwedded mother like her, sheerly for monetary gains. That is why she hates him more. In spite of this fact, in addition to her adverse opinion about him as a playwright, Damayanti keeps on insisting and putting pressure upon Sona to accept his marriage proposal. She doesn’t find him worthy to represent Indian playwrights abroad. But she is ready to accept him as a family member only for the sake of social status. In the same context she refers to her own marriage and argues in favour of the marriages of convenience.
**Damayanti:** Ninety percent marriages take place for practical benefits and they are successful marriages. Why do you think your father married me?

**Sona:** You said, it was a love-marriage.

**Damayanti:** I thought so. But he was not my man. ------ Papa was a leading practitioner and a national leader. He knew the benefits of it.

**Sona:** Papa is dead. He is not here to defend himself.

**Damayanti:** He’d be drunk every night.

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I tried to introduce him with the classical aspects of life. But he never cared.

He was one of those who always live in their flesh.

**Sona:** You nagged him and I’ve always hated you for that.

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You made him miserable and you want to make me miserable now. You are ashamed of me, my wanting looks, graces, accomplishments. You often said, I live at surface-level like Papa, why, because I don’t like the crowd of pseudo- artists around me, like you.

**Sona:** Papa was a gem! He was a lion! But very simple and innocent. You gave him inferiority complex by your so called intellectuality.

**Damayanti:** I always tried to share everything with him, but I never forced anything upon him or you.

**Sona:** Yes. You simply ignored me. You wanted to get rid of me. So you sent me to Shimla Boarding School.
Sona : And, please, keep your boyfriends away from me. (P.56-58)

The conversation throws light upon Damayanti’s failure with a life-partner. Even afterwards, she cannot settle with anyone around her, though she has a perfect understanding with Doctor and a secret desire for Barve. It also throws light upon the tension between her and her daughter and reveals the roots of it.

The second female character is Sona. She is passing through the phase of disillusionment in love. The man responsible for it is one Mr. Sahani, who belongs to the glamour world and is a member of Damayanti’s friends-circle. He is ready to marry her, but wants freedom to continue his extra-marital affairs. Sona expects fidelity towards her and in the absence of it, refuses to get married. He is ready to continue the relationship without marriage. He must have tried to black-mail Sona with the help of her love-letters in his possession. But Sona hasn’t cared a bit. (P.47) The second man who is trying to enter Sona’s life, is Agashe. There is no trace of love between the two. Actually, Sona hates him and he is well aware of it. But he can’t overlook the multiple benefits of this marriage of convenience. Even Damayanti tries to convince her to accept Agashe’s proposal. But Sona remains firm over her decision. (P. 55-56)

The third man, after her disillusionment in love, is probably Amrut. Both are of the same age group. According to Damayanti, Sona respects only two persons, Doctor and Amrut. Doctor, too, agrees that Amrut was the right person for her. Perhaps he knows something about the understanding between the two. (P.8) This theory is strongly supported by Sona’s violent reaction after learning about Amrut’s murder, towards the end of the play. Sona breaks into tears and becomes hysteric after hearing the details about it from Jogdand, a journalist. (P.79)

The third woman is Mohini. She has only one man- Barve, in her life. She stays with him without marriage. But she is devoted to him more than a wife. She has quit
stage for this relationship. According to Damayanti, Mohini loves Barve to distraction. She has turned blind to everything else, even the fact that Barve has lost interest in her. Probably she knows it. That is why she has become more possessive of him. She has resorted to drinking to obliterate the painful fact. She feels insecure. She fears that she has lost her charm, her beauty. So she visits beauticians who tell her that her skin is perfect and it doesn’t need any cosmetics. (P.69-71) There is one more angle of Mohini’s barrenness for her frustration. (P.38)

The fourth woman is Vrinda. She is a communist activist. She belongs to an affluent family. Probably she is still unmarried at the age of thirty-five, as per the party discipline. Now she behaves, as if, she is famished of sexual pleasures. She desperately grabs every opportunity for the proximity with men. She is snobbish in this regard. She tries to net the two bachelors- Bharat and Agashe, though neither fits into her ideal for a man. She has written off Agashe for his capitalist background. She has refused to come in his car for the same reason. Bharat is a rustic who doesn’t suit her social level and her refinement. She doesn’t miss any opportunity to taunt and insult Bharat. She insults him for his poor English saying, “Better switch over to Marathi, Charlie. You speak rotten English. And your grammar becomes terribly erratic when you are angry.” Bharat retorts, “I’m not a rotten communist, at least.” (P.28) She ridicules him for imitating Barve in every respect; calls him “a weakling”. Afterwards, while criticizing Agashe, she passes a remark in his favour.

Vrinda: With all my intense dislike for him, I must grant him his originality.

Bharat: (bitterly) Thanks!

Vrinda: No need. It was not to flatter you. You still remain a rustic, developing into a coffee young-man. (P.25)

She tries her tricks upon Agashe and Bharat simultaneously. After the heated argument between Sona and Agashe, Vrinda teases him,
Vrinda: Why don’t you try to propose me?

Agashe: You don’t like to join me in my car, I being a capitalist. Then how would you marry me?

Vrinda: I don’t have any objection for a capitalist husband. Isn’t my father a millionaire?

Bharat: (in a light vein) One can’t choose one’s parents.

Vrinda: But one can definitely choose one’s husband!

Agashe: Not at your age!

Vrinda: Insect! (P.34)

After Agashe leaves, she tries her game with Bharat, she apologises to him and asks him jokingly, if he is afraid of being seduced! (P.34) Though she says so, her behavior with Bharat after that is exactly that of seduction. She pretends to be friendly with him and advises him to stop being awkward. She holds his hand to seek a promise from him. She flatters him by referring to him as a real peacock among the flock of feigned peacocks. He, too, expresses his frustration over being ignored deliberately. Over this she entices him by offering to send him with a delegation to Russia as she has contacts with the communist leaders. He is overcome with gratitude. Then she again takes his hand with the pretence of reading his palm. By this his inhibitions get vanished. He too makes fun of her.

Bharat: Do you, a Communist, believe in stars?

Vrinda: (lightly) I’m a disillusioned Communist.

Bharat: So this new illusion!

Vrinda: Hey, Mr. Rationalist, give me your hand! (Pulls his hand)
He suddenly feels nervous for his unfiled nails. But she accepts him, being different from the pseudo-sophisticated lot. She cautions him against them. She keeps on flattering him and presses his hand tightly. Then she hints at his inadequate experience about life which is essential for effective writing.

**Vrinda** : It’s time you really understand life in its totality. You seem to have inhibitions.

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You must get married. But marry a well-connected girl. It helps a lot, you know!

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(reading his palm) Your wife won’t be very beautiful, but certainly wealthy and intelligent. ----- She’ll help you to shape your career. (P.40-45)

Then she invites him to dance, offers to teach him dance-steps and begins the training. While doing so, she hugs him tightly and passionately brings her mouth to his. He feels awkward and gets himself freed from her. By his reaction, Vrinda loses interest in him. (P.47) Once again she resumes her former stand of deriding him.

There are indications of her soft-corner for Amrut as both share the communist ideology. It is revealed through her reaction and confession after the shocking news of Amrut’s murder. She is actually devastated after hearing about it, but somehow she controls herself. Jogdand is going back to unearth the matter. He asks if she wants to join.

**Vrinda** : No, No. I’ll not break down. I know I should accompany you.

**Jogdand**: ------ Coming?

**Vrinda** : No. I don’t have that much strength in me. Did Amrut really miss me?
----- We shared the dreams of transforming the whole world. And then we drifted apart. O.K. Bye! (P.80)

Now she knows that her hopes to share life with Amrut have vanished forever. So she turns her guns on Agashe once again. She has already shared her experience of loneliness with Sona, “It’s very difficult to stay alone.” (P.48) Towards the end, when the party dissolves, she offers Agashe to join him in his car. Agashe reminds her of her objection for his being a capitalist. She says, “Never mind. Let’s go.” Agashe presses her hand. She doesn’t protest. This is an indication that she has finally compromised to accept Agashe. (P.80)

At second level, the relationships emerging out of the professional rivalry has been depicted. Barve, Agashe, Bharat and Amrut are all playwrights. It has also an undercurrent of the conflict between ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’. Barve and Agashe belong to the group of ‘haves’ as both are established and recognized playwrights in their own right. On the other hand, Bharat and Amrut are young, emerging writers. They are struggling and aspiring for recognition which they have not still achieved. Thus they represent the ‘have-nots’. Perhaps Amrut withdraws from the race, being disgusted by the dirty politics. Vrinda refers to this issue during her conversation with Bharat.

**Vrinda**: ----- Beware of these people. They will never let you go ahead.

**Bharat**: ----- It’s all right about Agashe. But Barve?

**Vrinda**: You’re a simpleton. You know something about professional jealousy. Even the greatest of the writers is not free from it. ---------
Bharat: Did they treat Amrut, too, in the same manner?

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He must have quit due to frustration. There are also rumours of his heart-break. (P.43)

Damayanti is not a writer. But she is a patron and a king-maker. She, too, plays her role effectively in depriving Bharat of name and fame. Right in the beginning, she refers to Bharat as ‘a good chap’, over which, Doctor comments, “I marvel at your capacity to confuse things. Why don’t you call him a good writer instead of a good chap?”

Damayanti: He’s good basically, but a little awkward and over-ambitious.

It’s natural for a person hailing from lower strata.

Doctor : Your gang is going to ruin him systematically. (P.13)

As the insiders of the elite group, the observations and remarks by Vrinda and Doctor must be considered as authentic. Even afterwards, plenty of evidences are found of biased treatment to Bharat by almost every member of the party of ‘haves’ including Vrinda, who is cautioning Bharat against them.

After Barve’s inclusion in the delegation is fixed, Damayanti ponders over including Bharat, too. Conversation between the two throws light upon their attitude, “Don’t give him the opportunity so early. Doubtlessly, he is gifted. But the quick recognition will make him feel self-contended and his level of writing will decline. Let him be with us. That’s enough for the present.
Damayanti: He feels we’ve ignored his play.

Barve: We didn’t. We know that too well.

Damayanti: I’ve written an article in Young Writers’ Journal. He’s hurt as I have not mentioned him. He’s just begun afterall. Isn’t it?

Barve: Leave it. The frustration helps ultimately. Let him struggle. Struggle and grow. (P.71-72)

When the topic of delegation is being discussed, Agashe has taken it for granted that Barve’s seat is sure. Doctor insists that young writers like Bharat and Amrut should be sent. Barve and Damayanti, both, deliberately ignore it. On Doctor’s continued insistence on their inclusion, the objections raised by Damayanti are very funny and equally amusing are the counter points raised by Doctor.

Damayanti: Nobody knows Bharat beyond our group.

Doctor: So what? With apologies to Barve, I ask, how many know Barve in U.S.?

Bharat is young and fresh. He has got strikingly new ideas. This is the right time for his exposure to new things.

Damayanti: ------ He’s so fidgety and awkward. Shouldn’t the delegates have minimum dignity?

Doctor: I’ve seen many Americans picking their noses or ears.

Of course, Doctor’s argument proves futile and Barve’s name is fixed. In between, Agashe apparently lightly suggests his name to be sent. Damayanti feigns ignorance. She even feigns to be offended by the reference to her contacts in Delhi.

Damayanti: Moreover, you write commercial plays. This delegation is only for ---

- 396 -
Agashe : (Furious) What do you mean by commercial? Are we commercial because our plays run successfully and make us rich? What about the three hundred shows of Barve’s play, the film based on it and the royalty of translation of it in fourteen languages? Still you call him non-commercial?

Damayanti: That’s called avant-garde.

Doctor : Not at all. The real avant-garde is Bharat.

At third level, the relationship between the rulers and the rules has been depicted through narration by Jogdand about the atrocities inflicted by government machinery upon the tribals to uproot them for the sake of the powerful lobby of industrialists. When someone knowledgeable like Amrut comes forward to organize the ignorant tribals to fight for their rights, he proves to be a nuisance and gets eliminated by hook or by crook. Jogdand also takes a pick upon the so called fashionable social workers like Vrinda, a communist and committed intellectual like Barve and Damayanti.

Jogdand : Amrut has been arrested.

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Vrinda : Don’t you read newspapers? Amrut has organized the tribals. Everyday the demonstrations are going on.

Damayanti: Really? I read only the reviews.

Jogdand : The peace is illusive. The situation may explode any moment.

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Damayanti: ------- But police force must’ve been deployed.

Jogdand : Do you think, it’s for maintenance of peace, law and order?

Agashe : You seem to be biased for Amrut!

Jogdand : I’m a journalist. I seek and record the truth. You, too, can go and see. You’ll
have first hand experience of life, at least?

**Barve**: How did all this start?

**Jogdand**: Armed police are there for last two weeks on the land of tribals. Amrut brings a huge protest march. Suddenly a stone hits the police and then lathi-charge, tear-gas and firing begins.

**Vrinda**: It’s stupid! Revolution can’t be brought about by such peaceful demonstrations. We had differences on this point.

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**Bharat**: why doesn’t government look into the matter?

**Jogdand**: Govt. is helping the big industrialists to erect their projects on the traditional tribal-land by cutting off the forests. They will be provided all facilities, whereas the tribals had to walk miles for the sake of drinking water.

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Govt. wants the same land as the rates of the farm-land will shoot up meteorically. Whose land it is you know? It belongs to the respected C.M.’s wife! There is no irrigation at present. But there are plans to take water there through canals.

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**Jogdand**: You won’t believe it. But on one night, their huts were set on fire. Three children and a woman were burned to death. Amrut took the injured people to a hospital fifteen miles away. But the doctor was or sent on leave. Amrut was enticed with bribe, threatened to stop his activities. But he is fighting his lone battle. (P.49-53)
As Amrut doesn’t give any positive response to the pressure tactics, he is released from custody and callously murdered; to suppress the voice of resistance against government atrocities. Jogdand is almost sure that some tribals will be charged and hanged for his murder. Thus the mask of rulers of ‘Welfare State’ has been removed.

Kamalesh feels that Party has given a new direction to Elkunchwar’s playwriting. He further observes, “Party is a play of anglicized pseudo-sophisticated group where the playwrights with drastically differing viewpoints about life, come together. He deals with the two issues of an unwedded motherhood and the exploitation of the tribals and related politics. He unmask the real faces through the attitude revealed by each of the party members towards the issues. Elkunchwar has delineated the interpersonal relationships and its complexities more deftly. Bharat is Elkunchwar’s mouth piece to a larger extent.” (Kamalesh, Natakkar Mahesh Elkunchwar, Sandarbha Prakashan, Pune. 1970. P.75)

Kamalesh notes down the special features of Party being, “Excellent use of the three unities, slow and careful unraveling of the conflict, excessive use of English by the party members, symbolic use of growing darkness, awareness of technical nuances etc. In addition to that Elkunchwar also takes a bird’s eye view of the contemporary theatre, playwrights and their values. He also explores the element of alienation in case of each of the characters.” (Kamalesh. P.75-76)

Elkunchwar himself admits that he wanted to trace his career-graph within the theatre circle. Party was an attempt in that direction. In this respect he attempted to explore the following things through Party.

- Phenomenon of creation and self evaluation as a playwright
- Human relationships, their obscurity, unpredictability, illogicality etc.
• Tradition and modernity, corruption and genuine-ness, professional rivalry, social service and politics, narcissism and snobbery of the playwrights etc.

• Value system of an artist as well as his frankness, morality and integrity. (Kamalesh. P.77)

Kamalesh further observes, “Amrut and Doctor symbolize conscience. Still they have become homogeneous with the action. The relationship of each character with Amrut indicates how much conscientious each of them is. Doctor’s role is that of Damayanti’s conscience-keeper. The significant observation with respect to the characters of Barve, Agashe and Bharat is, “Elkunchwar loses his balanced and neutral stance as the characters of Bharat, Agashe and Barve remind one the real life personalities of Elkunchwar, Bal Kolhatkar/ Madhusudan Kalelkar and Tendulkar respectively. Especially Bharat has been clearly utilized as the writer’s voice.”(Kamalesh. P.79)

Sandhya Amrute comments about the set of people in Party, “All these people are intellectuals and elites. They can’t relate themselves with the realities of life. They have isolated themselves from real life. They are self-centred persons living in their own shell. They prefer to ignore the path Amrut has chosen. They confront the stark and horrible realities of life with Amrut’s murder. But they lack the courage of facing it. They find it convenient to confer martyrdom upon Amrut and return to their world of falsity.” (Sandhya Amrute, Elkunchwaranchi Natyasrushti, Vijay Prakashan, Nagpur. P.89)

About the existentialism and self-realisation of characters in the play, Sandhya Amrute observes, “Amrut has tried to impart meaning to life as per his own instinctive force. ‘Not god, but man is the creator of his own life’ is highly applicable to Amrut. Sona, too, tries to shape her own fate by living independently with her child, as a single mother. All others appear lack-luster on the backdrop of Amrut’s character. Their lives seem trivial, meaningless and frivolous. They have been alienated from themselves and also from others. These people are lonely in the crowd. They try to conceal it with the
help of self-deception. They need parties to ward off this loneliness. Their sense of alienation gives rise only to pain, anxiety and agony.” (Amrute.P.91)

About the influence of Chekhov, Sandhya Amrute quotes Samik Bandopadhyay from the foreword of Party in English translation, “----- Elkunchwar’s critique of this ‘set’ revolves in a Chekhovian space around it, as he shows them up in their pettiness and pretensions, and opens up at the same time- in the flashes only- the sores that fester wounds that they nurture within ----.” Still she doesn’t find a total influence of Chekhov except the closeness with his humanism. She further comments that this is the beginning of his next Chekhovian play, Wada Chirebandi. (Amrute.P.92)

Elkunchwar’s limitations with respect to Party, she observes, “Elkunchwar fails to exhibit a broad view-point, understanding and empathy towards the characters. He ignores the fact that everyone is responsible for his own decisions and each has his own logic behind it.” However, Elkunchwar himself owns this drawback and says, “I tried to proclaim a moral judgment. I lacked the wisdom and maturity to avoid it then.” (Amrute.P.93)
**ATMAKATHA (1989)**

**Pradnya -------------- Anantrao Rajadhyaksha (Anand)**
(A research scholar) (A successful ageing writer) (75-78)

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**Pramod**

Uttara--- sister---Vasanti ---------(Devdatta)
(ageing separated 50
wife) 70

Fictional parallel characters [(Urmila) (Vasudha) (Charudatta)]

Elkunchwar deals with the interpersonal relationship at four levels in this play.

1) Man-woman relationship, ii) Relationship between the persons from the same profession, iii) Relationship between siblings and iv) Relationship between the creator and creations i.e. a writer and the fictional characters.

Man-woman relationship has been depicted mainly through the writer, Rajadhyaksha’s relationship with the three women in his life- 1) his wife, Uttara, 2) his sister-in-law, Vasanti and 3) Pradnya, the research scholar, working on his novels. At a secondary level, the relationship between Vasanti and Devdatta, as well as the relationship between Pradnya and Pramod, her boy-friend, has also been depicted.

The three women in Rajadhyaksha’s life belong to three different generations. He comes in contact with them at three different stages of his life. He gets married to Uttara
when he is young. His sister-in-law, Vasanti, enters his life when he is in his late forties. Pradnya, who is in her early twenties, enters his life in his late seventies. Rajadhyaksha and Uttara belong to the same generation. Both share the ideology, life-style and sensibility. Both have complete faith in each other. They are devoted to each other and there is complete understanding between the two. There is only one lacuna, that is, Uttara could not bear a child, while Rajadhyaksha is very fond of children. They are even thinking over adopting a child.

As the trust and devotion is supreme, equally great is the shock of breach of trust. It becomes a prestige issue for Uttara. She leaves him on the same night of the realization of the treachery. She leaves Mumbai and settles in Pune. He keeps on writing letters to her, owning his guilt, asking for forgiveness and begging her to return to him. She had hardly ever replied to his letters. Nearly after thirty years, she calls him to ask, if he has any objection in publishing the letters written to her. She wants to do that as she knows about his plan of writing his autobiography. She is not sure that he would present the account impartially. She wants to present her side before the readers and that is why she has taken the decision. When she calls him, he gets too excited and tries to talk to her, as if, everything is normal. She doesn’t encourage him and responds in a very formal or even matter-of-fact manner. She pretends to observe the formality of asking permission before publishing the letters. While recounting the telephonic talk to Pradnya, he becomes very sentimental.

Rajadhyaksha: I know she wanted to see me. But she was not ready to say so. She is worn out. She has suffered a lot.

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I wonder why she should publish the letters. She’s so many things to write about. She was a dancer, stopped it after marriage. Then turned to socialism under the influence of my socialist friends- circle. (P.10-11)
Afterwards, Uttara tells Vasanti about his phone call. He has learnt about her plan of publishing the letters. He doesn’t want her to do so. He points out that she should have sought prior permission. She asks him if he would allow her. In a way, he has expressed distrust. That is why Uttara gets determined to publish the letters. Uttara refers to his high-handed behaviour. She knows that he won’t call casually. He would make the other surrender completely. She grieves over the change in his character. She recalls, “He had been a genuine poet, an idealist, a freedom-fighter. Afterwards he started encashing his sacrifices like other Gandhians. His priorities changed. In this bargain he lost the sweetest and most precious things of life. He was completely exposed during Emergency.” (P.18-19) She is not ready to see him as she doesn’t want him to see her in that pitiable condition due to arthritis. She frankly admits the tender side in his person which is manifested when he took care of her during the attacks of asthma.

According to Rajadhyaksha, Uttara had lost control and made a great fuss after she came to know of his illicit relations with her sister, Vasanti. She had accused him of ruining the life of both of them; reminded him of his moralist, idealist stance and the vast age difference between them. Uttara considered Vasanti as her own child. She had never dreamt of such a relationship between the two. Her ego was hurt to find that he had substituted her with Vasanti. She wonders, in what respect he found Vasanti superior to her. According to Rajadhyaksha, he had took pity on Vasanti as Uttara ill-treated her. Then she felt lonely and so he had tried to provide emotional support to Vasanti. (P. 29-30)In fact, Uttara had handled the whole matter in a very balanced manner. Still, he had defended himself by saying that Uttara had brought a temptation in the house in the form of Vasanti. Uttara had owned her drawback of being barren and accepted that she had no place in the house anymore. So, she had insisted on his staying with Vasanti. (P.34-35)

Uttara expresses her real concern for Rajadhyaksha to Vasanti. Both the sisters have reconciliated now. But he is lonely. When Uttara is talking about him nostalgically, she believes that he must be suffering from hick-ups as per the common belief.
Surprisingly he, too, expresses a similar belief in case of Uttara. (P. 39) When towards
the end, Vasanti gives her a jolt by disclosing a secret guarded so long about
Rajadhyaksha being Dilip’s father, though she is devastated, she wants to convey that
good news to Rajadhyaksha. She says, “All the three of us could never test a real joy. Let
him, at least experience it towards the end of life. The vicious circle of tormenting each
other must be stopped somewhere.” She somehow recovers herself and tries to call him.
Unfortunately he, too, is trying her phone, perhaps instinctively. Both find each other’s
phones engaged. Finally, both disconnect it simultaneously. Her last attempt to make him
happy fails. (P.51) But it underscores the real concern and understanding between the
two, in spite of their words and actions contrary to that.

The second woman in Rajadhyaksha’s life is Vasanti. Uttara has brought her to
stay with them in the town. Vasanti is twenty years younger to Uttara and twenty five
years younger to Rajadhyaksha. She is like a child to them. Uttara has never expected
Rajadhyaksha to get attracted towards her, but it has happened. After the secret is out;
Vasanti has deserted Rajadhyaksha and his house forever. Uttara feels that by this act,
Vasanti has obliged her greatly. But Vasanti has felt guilty for adulterating her own
sister’s married life. (P.15) When Uttara and Vasanti are discussing Rajadhyaksha’s
novel and the portrayal of a particular episode in that novel, Uttara recounts the exact
conversation between the two. Vasanti had confessed that she could read the invitation in
his eyes right from day one. Uttara offers her to stay with him. She is ready to leave. The
difference in their attitudes towards him is manifested through their words.

**Uttara** : Both of you stay together. I’ll quit.

**Vasanti**: I won’t. I don’t love him

**Uttara** : Neither will I. I love him.

When Uttara asks her, how exactly it happened with such an upright person,
Vasanti tells her after so many years that Uttara had been in prison and Rajadhyaksha
tried to entertain her in Uttara’s absence. He used to introduce her with the stars at nights. On one such occasion, they crossed the boundary. (P.38)

Rajadhyaksha feels humiliated as Vasanti had gone to his rival, Devdatta who is not rich and successful like him. He had kept on visiting Devdatta as a gesture of generosity. But Vasanti had never even come out during his visits. While talking to Pradnya, he criticises Vasanti’s way of life. He blames her for ruining the life of her son, Dilip who has cut off contacts with her. Rajadhyaksha comments, “He must have got fed up with Vasanti’s behavior, who keeps on changing her boy-friends. The present one is about thirty five and Dilip is around thirty”. He also blames Devdatta who gave her a child and died without making provisions for the two. He olds Devdatta responsible for Vasanti’s leading aimless life. She had been a good dancer. But now she had stopped it and she is running dance classes. He remarks that she keeps on changing her boy-friends every two years and that is why Dilip must have decided to keep away from her. He only wonders that why he feels so much for Devdatta’s son. In his novel, he has depicted Dilip to be his own son. Devdatta has only given his name to him to save Vasanti and the child from the disgrace.

He still doesn’t know how Uttara came to know about his relations with Vasanti. But he is sure that Vasanti herself must have told her about it. Because, according to him, Vasanti was young, innocent, inexperienced, who couldn’t have withstood the strain of concealing it for long. His judgment regarding Vasanti doesn’t go well with the real Vasanti. In fact, Vasanti had remained defiant and unperturbed. When Uttara expresses concern over the consequences of the relationship, she coolly tells “Don’t worry. We’ve taken precautions.” She has done it with full knowledge, not as an amateur. Not only this, but though she knows very well about Rajadhyaksha’s pining for children, she doesn’t let the truth out about Dilip being his child.
When Uttara is repentant for causing suffering to Vasanti, she tells her that Rajadhyaksha has given her something invaluable like Dilip. Again, what she has done has been planned systematically. She had tried her power of attracting men upon Rajadhyaksha. After the confirmation of pregnancy, she has cut off relations with him, but never let him know the truth. After the revelation, Uttara tries to convey the news to him to provide him some solace in his last stage. She fails to do so in time. Thus Vasanti is not so innocent as Rajadhyaksha has thought. But she is mature, calculated, firm and ambitious.

The third woman is Pradnya who comes in intimate contact with Rajadhyaksha. She has chosen Rajadhyaksha’s literature as a topic for her Ph.D. thesis. She analyses and criticizes his literature as a part of her study. She also tries to explore his personality as a writer. He is a highly acclaimed writer. Presently he is writing an autobiography. She has volunteered to take the dictation for it, so that, she may use it for her research. She is bold and outspoken. She doesn’t feel any pressure of his tall personality. She directly points out his vanity when he tries to conceal his age. She doesn’t bother to express her frank opinions about his works.

**Pradnya:** I have gone through your works in detail. I had to. How boring it was! A good solution for insomnia! Sheerly vague idealism! Only your early poetry is genuine. So touching, so intense! How did you lose that tempo? (P.4)

When he remarks that she should consider herself extremely fortunate for getting the opportunity of working with him, she says, she has accepted the job for purely ulterior motives as she could get some authentic matter through it. But she finds nothing new in his dictation. She then suggests him that he could actually explain his reasons for not doing certain things. She accuses him of avoiding to speak about his contemporaries-a trendsetter like Mardhekar in his autobiography. She also wants him to explain his
stand about Emergency if he considers himself an idealist, a freedom-fighter. He tries to explain it in a roundabout manner. She irritates him by pointing out,

**Pradnya:** You didn’t return your Padmabhushan like Phanishwarnath Renu. You neither resigned from the government committees. (P.3-6)

Pradnya refers to Uttara’s publishing the letters by Rajadhyaksha to her, without his permission. He tells her that she did ask for his permission on telephone. She points out that Uttara doesn’t have his permission in writing. In a way, she remarks that if he wishes he can deny the telephonic talk. He jokingly comments, she is sure of his denial, if need arises.

Both of them freely discuss her love-affair and her boy-friend. Rajadhyaksha tells her to get married as early as possible. He wants to perform the *kanyadaan* rites as he has no child and she has no father. (P.20) This shows that he treats her like his darling daughter and that is why he doesn’t mind the frequent bickering between them.

From Pradnya’s love-affair they turn to Rajadhyaksha’s famous love-affair. She comments that he has made the whole episode very bland, dull and without any warmth or blood in it. (P.21) She adds that readers feel cheated by his style. He keeps on arguing his stand adamantly like a child. He calls his style ‘restrained’. She quotes his own words related to restrained style which he had used earlier in the context of Devdatta’s poetry. He curses her mock-angrily. She asks him, if she should change her topic as her adverse remarks infuriate him. She warns him that he should be prepared for harsher criticism in her thesis. She doesn’t want to lose his friendship for the sake of her thesis. Rajadhyaksha surrenders. He prefers something written on his works to being ignored and forgotten.
altogether. Normalcy is resumed between them. She tells him that she makes Pramod jealous by using his name. She also tells him, “Pramod feels that I flirt with you.” He, too, admits that he likes her company. He is not sure whether he understands her. (P.23)

She turns to his relationship with others; especially as he is known for probing human mind in deep. But he admits that whatever he has understood about human mind is only a tip of an iceberg. She brings him to the right track and asks him to explain his stand, if he is referring to his personal relations or the relations between his fictional characters. She is actually referring to his autobiographical novel where he had tried to probe the relationship between him and the two women in his life- his wife Uttara and her sister- Vasanti. He claims that it is his attempt to understand the psyche of both of them. She doesn’t agree. She harshly criticizes his portrayal of the characters, especially his depiction of the protagonist as a poor fellow caught between two women and a dumb rival like Charudatta. She doesn’t find it convincing. She calls it a failure. He tries to defend his stand. “In that case”, she says “the span of understanding of your generation is very limited.” Rajadhyaksha is reluctant to admit Devdatta’s worth as a poet. But Pradnya remarks, “He was much ahead of the times, but the contemporaries ignored him.” Again, Rajadhyaksha defends himself, as if, she is accusing him. (P.26-27) Rajadhyaksha still experiences the tension between them. She brings to his notice that Devdatta has expressed his gratitude towards Rajadhyaksha’s moral and financial support. Over this Rajadhyaksha points out that Devdatta has never acknowledged his literary talent, he had always pined for. Thus he confesses about his innermost feelings including his drawbacks to Pradnya. Pradnya plays a role of a buddy to him. Once again, she turns to his portrayal of the scene between Urmila and Vasudha in his autobiographical novel. He has depicted it in a melodramatic fashion and shown that the revelation was a shock to Urmila. Pradnya doesn’t agree that an experienced and responsible woman like Urmila should remain off-guard. Pradnya’s judgment is correct which is found in the recollection of the actual scene between the two by Uttara. It is also proved that Rajadhyaksha’s judgment about Vasanti’s character is not right either. Not only this, Vasanti is too shrewd to test her strength upon him and keeping him away after her purpose is served. (P.31-34)
On that particular day, Rajadhyaksha misses Uttara greatly. As per Indian belief, he feels that it must be giving her hick-ups. He realizes that Pramod must be waiting for Pradnya. That is why he reminds her of Pramod and asks her to leave. But she gets annoyed by his insistence. He is surprised by her reaction. He starts probing. Finally, she says that they have quarreled and she won’t see him any more. He offers to bring about reconciliation between them. She doesn’t allow him. On the contrary, she threatens him to stop coming to him. She keeps on arguing and offers many excuses for not seeing Pramod again. Finally she complains—

Pradnya: He feels jealous of you. He also feels that I don’t care for him. He gets irritated as I spend a lot of time with you. He accuses me of getting involved in you.

She declares that now she has really stopped caring for him. He asks her to go in and bring drinks for him. Meanwhile, he gets lost in the world of imagination, where his characters- Urmila and Vasudha accuse him of their false portrayal and imprisoning them in the false manner, in his fiction. When Pradnya returns, she finds him lost in his books. She teases him over his overindulgence in his books. He suddenly asks her, if she has ever behaved in a false manner! He admits to his falsity while portraying the love-triangle between himself, Uttara and Vasanti. Pradnya feels uneasy by his confession and deliberations upon falsity. She prepares to leave. He asks her to stay. She suddenly breaks into tears. She regains her composure and confesses about her falsity.

Pradnya: There’s no dispute between us. He considers it to be a craze. But I’ve told him to forget me. He is devastated. He is not in the least jealous of you.

Rajadhyaksha is flabbergasted. He is confounded by her words. Then she suddenly moves forward, rests her head upon his knees and breaks into tears. Slowly the
truth dawns upon him. For a while, he is unable to decide how to react over it. He doesn’t separate himself but pats upon her head affectionately. She slowly calms down and gets away from him and takes his leave. He suggests her to take a break next day. She assures him that she won’t create a scene again. She confesses, “I don’t know how and when I got involved in you. I had decided never ever to let you know. I’ll not refer to it again. But now it is not possible to go back to Pramod.” Rajadhyakha is distressed by this unexpected development. He tries to reason with her, advises her not to cut off relations suddenly like that. On the other hand, he advises that one must go on developing bonds. When she refers to the distancing between her and Pramod, he tries to explain that the concept of distance is illusive, with the help of the distance between the stars and the earth and the light received from the stars. He tells her that one must be happy for the light received (instead of thinking of the distance). Due to the whole episode, he has arrived at the decision of canceling the plan of his autobiography.

Thus the relation with Pradnya is very important as it helps him to grow, to metamorphose and to get enlightened with self-knowledge. For Pradnya, the relationship passes through the stages of a researcher, an intelligent critic of his works and his person and the fan of the person in him. This relationship turns her life topsy-turvy. Whether she goes back to Pramod or not is not clear. If she is convinced by his reasoning, she should reconcile with him. Perhaps Rajadhyaksha tolerates her impertinence because he has been aware of the contradictions in his writing and also in his character which he has never dared to admit even to himself. In a way, Pradnya represents his conscience which makes its presence felt in the last phase of his life.

**Relationship with Devdatta**

This relationship has two angles. One angle is that of professional rivalry and the other is that of sex envy. Both, Rajadhyaksha and Devdatta are poets and writers. However, Devdatta dies at a very young age. While Rajadhyaksha is being forgotten
while alive; Devdatta has been attracting attention by scholars. He is being rediscovered. The general opinion about his work is, he was much ahead of times and that is why he could not receive recognition he deserved. This rivalry has been endorsed by both, Uttara as well as Pradnya who love him most. When Vasanti refers to Devdatta with trust and respect, Uttara remarks, “He deserves that. He died too young. But his very name would disrupt his (Rajadhyaksha’s) sleep. These writers are so jealous of each other!” (P.15) Afterwards, Pradnya also refers to it. She quotes Rajadhyaksha’s words, he had used for the criticism of Devdatta’s poetry. He had explained the relation between restraint and the style of his expression. She points out that he had written the only article about Devdatta’s poetry whom she calls Rajadhyaksha’s most detested contemporary. (P.22)

Pradnya observes that he had portrayed Devdatta (Charudatta of his fiction) as a man of ordinary talent, a highly jealous person, whereas the facts are opposite. He keeps on arguing that he has portrayed Devdatta as per his perception. He ignores the facts that his writings have developed a fresh interest among the critics and scholars. He is not ready to accept Devdatta’s worth. Pradnya, too, remains firm on her stand. She remarks that he was deliberately ignored by his contemporaries. She is aiming at Rajadhyaksha. He points out that he had tried to include his name in different committees and conferences. But he always kept himself away. By this remark, Rajadhyaksha again avoids to acknowledge Devdatta’s talent. Pradnya then touches another sensitive issue. She asks his opinion over Vasanti’s decision of staying with Devdatta after leaving him. The following dialogue between the two underscores Rajadhyaksha’s jealousy for Devdatta.

**Rajadhyaksha:** I was grieved, humiliated. She left me is all right. But for whom? For a mediocre writer like him who lacked good looks, qualities or talent?

**Pradnya** : His photographs are not easily available.

**Rajadhyaksha:** That way, he was good-looking. But he had lost all the grace owing to his addictions. But why do you make me speak about him?
Pradnya : Because I don’t get anything of it in your autobiography.

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Rajadhyaksha: Now you know how mean I am; still you keep on coming to me.

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Rajadhyaksha: People depart, leaving behind the tensions. Now I have to carry on this burden until death.

Pradnya : Did he feel the tensions? He’s written in such a good manner about you.

In his last illness----

Rajadhyaksha: Yes, he was completely drained. With all his adamancy, obstinacy- I’d always appreciate his pride- I wished him to remain so. (P.26-27)

On Devdatta’s part, too, reservations are observed. He has frankly mentioned about Rajadhyaksha’s support during his illness, praised him for his generosity, but deliberately avoided to speak about his writing. Rajadhyaksha blames him for making Vasanti’s life aimless, who gave her a child without making provisions for their future. Vasanti had not pursued her art of dancing and there is no stability in her life. (P.28)

Relationship between Uttara and Vasanti

They are sisters with a wide age-gap of twenty years. Uttara is superior to Vasanti in every respect which starts developing a sort of jealousy and rivalry in Vasanti’s mind. Uttara treats her as subordinate because of age difference and the lack of accomplishments. She considers Vasanti as her child. She herself is childless. But she has underestimated or misjudged Vasanti which is proved by later developments and Vasanti’s actions.
When Uttara has grown old enough to forget and forgive and look at the things in a detached manner, she discusses the topic of Rajadhyaksha with Vasanti. Vasanti suggests Uttara to see Rajadhyaksha and resolve the matter. She says it’s of no use as he had lost interest in her. If not Vasanti, he would have been attracted to someone else. This remark underestimates Vasanti’s power as a woman. She retorts, as if she was not worthy of his love and Uttara has been trying to convince her the same thing for the last thirty years. Vasanti accuses her for finding nothing worth appreciation in her. It is clear that they had cut off all relations with each other in the meanwhile. Now Uttara tries to explain her stand and what exactly happened between the two. She had accepted her defeat and asked Rajadhyaksha to stay with Vasanti. But he was not ready to accept it. He wanted all the three of them to stay together. While the two were discussing the matter, Vasanti had left the house to stay with Devdatta. Uttara recounts the whole conversation between them when she had owned the shortcoming in her, her failure to bear a child for him. She had surrendered her rights as a wife.

Both disapprove the way Rajadhyaksha had depicted the whole episode in his autobiographical novel. He had depicted the scene of disclosure, between the two, very melodramatically, with Uttara in dark and Vasanti in bright shades. Still, it remains a mystery for Uttara, why should Vasanti behave like that to ruin her loving sister’s life. She asks her so. The explanation furnished by Vasanti throws light upon the rivalry she feels for Uttara.

**Vasanti:** You were too proud and confident about your position. You were not ready to take note of others. You could skillfully humiliate others.

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You were always keen on pointing out my drawbacks. You’d appreciated my dance show and then demonstrate a dance pose so beautifully that the whole impact of my performance would get nullified. You treated me just as your
dependent.

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You were treated like a queen whenever you came home. Everyone used to be under the pressure of your status. But what was your contribution to it? You enjoyed all the privileges only because of your rich and famous husband. You made me feel very small.

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I was never in the race with you. But when I found you behaving like a conqueror, I vowed to defeat you by winning the heart of the person who attributed you special status. I’d already sensed his interest in me. The insults went on piling in my mind. I achieved what I wanted and decided to leave you the ruins of your home to rule upon. That’s why I left the house and went to Devdatta. But the last laugh was yours.. You, too, left the house the same night.

Uttara points out that her suffering was greater as she was utterly lonely. Vasanti had the company of Devdatta. By that one act all the complications have emerged in the lives of all the three of them. Now the bitterness between them has vanished. Uttara’s patronizing behavior reminds her of the same Uttara who used to pamper her in her childhood. (P.35-38)

Though Vasanti says that Uttara’s act of leaving Rajadhyaksha’s house for ever, has given her an upper hand in the conflict, actually, Vasanti is the ultimate winner. She has defeated both, Rajadhyaksha as well as Uttara. She has empathy for Rajadhyaksha. But she doesn’t cherish a soft corner for him as Uttara does despite their separation for thirty years. In real sense, she is not able to sever the emotional ties with him. On the contrary, Vasanti takes all this as a game to defeat her proud sister and prove her strength. There is no emotional involvement on her part. When Rajadhyaksha calls Uttara, Vasanti
picks up the phone. She deliberately emphasizes the fact that he has no important place in her life. He refers to explaining his position. She curtly replies, “I never expected one and I had no intention to offer it.” (P.13) She also lets him know that she has been in a ‘live-in’ relationship with a young painter, Salim and Uttara is asking her to leave him. She says, “Once I listened to her and left you. It won’t happen again.” (P.13-14)

She has once again conquered him by convincing him, without his being aware of it, till the end. Thus she has killed two birds with one arrow. She never provided the solace to Rajadhyaksha of being a father though she knew very well about his intense desire for that. She has also vanquished Uttara, her strong and able rival by achieving what she could not, a child by Rajadhyaksha. (P.50-51)

**Relationship between the creator and the creations**

The fourth type of relationship is between the creator and the creation, i.e. Rajadhyaksha and the characters of his autobiographical novel, where he has changed the names of the characters a little bit. He changes Uttara to Urmila and Vasanti to Vasudha. He has written the scene between the two through his imagination with the confidence that the things must have taken place the way he thought. Both the characters are unhappy about the portrayal, because it is far away from reality and it is too artificial and loud. Both decide to go to the writer and ask him explanation and express their discontent over it. (P.42)

Both appear in Rajadhyaksha’s world of imagination. Urmila feels pity for his loneliness in the old age. Vasudha gets amused that the person who used to write about loneliness without its experience, has become lonely but has stopped writing. Urmila tries to take his side and asks her to use the word ‘creativity’. She asserts that artists create a new world through their power of imagination. Urmila resents the idea of their life being
controlled by others and their destiny being decided by the artists. The characters have no freedom to decide their likes and dislikes, looks, expressions and emotions. Urmila tries to understand the writer who must have his own reasons, his sorrows and whose destiny must have been decided by someone else. Vasudha is amused to find her coolness, her empathy that the writer has depicted being fussy and herself as an innocent girl suppressed by grief and injustice. She also resents the mannerism of nail-biting given to her character.

Urmila continues to defend the writer. But Vasudha is fed up of the shallow joys and sorrows. She wishes to revolt and lead life intensely. She wants to get free. She points out that he has made injustice to Urmila as well as Uttara. Urmila agrees that Uttara must have detested the character. Vasudha tries to ask explanation to him. Then she convinces Urmila to talk to him. Both go to him. He asks their motive to approach him. Vasudha angrily tells him about her reservations, her dissent of their portrayal. She expects them to be allowed to grow naturally, not being treated like puppets.

Rajadhyaksha tries to defend himself, saying, he has portrayed them as he understood them. Vasudha says that he has understood none, neither the original persons nor the characters based on them. Urmila, for the first time ever, expresses her resentment.

**Urmila:** He did not want to understand anyone at all. He only wanted to caress his own imaginary sorrows. He tries to paint it artistically. He never bothered about our feelings, our desires.

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You imposed your feelings upon us because you were angry with Uttara, I’m nagging, fussy. Charudatta is an ordinary writer as you were jealous of him. You loved Vasanti, that’s why she is simple, innocent.
Vasudha: Above all your self pity! That’s why Anand is a poor fellow. Did you ever try to understand others? It was not at all necessary to show that I was helpless and sought refuge with Charudatta. Of course, had I been free to behave as I wished, I’d certainly go to him. He was a genius. (P.42-45)

Rajadhyaksha admits to his follies. But he is unable to change the life of his characters. He has immortalized the characters. His characters have no hope of salvation. Urmila compares the two of them with living dead, lying in the tomb of his novel. Very sadly she asks, “Should a writer sow such lies?” She continues with her lashing and asks why can’t he observe people plainly, without any prejudice and try to relate himself with others afresh every time! That would certainly reduce a lot of complications and agony. By saying so both vanish. (P.46-47)

Thus towards the end of his life he tends to admit his mistakes and failure in judging people. He is in a confessional mode. That is why he voices them and owns its responsibility. He also tries to advise Pradnya, not to repeat the mistakes he had committed.

Kamalesh finds this a mature play appearing at four different levels simultaneously. It traces the incidents in the past, interprets them, relates them and appears as unified whole. The four levels, according to him, are

- Exploring human relationships along with its complexities, obscurities and tensions.
- Truth and various faces of truth
- Issues related to art and creativity. Creator, creation, his visions and the artist’s failures and frustrations while materializing them.
- Autobiography as genre and its deceptiveness and falsity. (Kamalesh, Natakkar Mahesh Elkunchwar, Sandarbha Prakashan, Pune. P.126)
Kamalesh finds a link between Party, Wada Chirebandi and Atmakatha which begins in a group, then moves through a slice of society and flows towards individual dynamics. (Kamalesh.P.127)

Elkunchwar himself has elaborated upon his own interest in the form ‘autobiography’. He observes the following points in this connection.

- Sudden inclination towards the reading of autobiographies.
- Extensive reading of autobiographies in Hindi, English and Marathi.
- Multifaceted nature of truth and tensions of human relationship felt through the reading of autobiographies by two closely associated literary figures, Haribhau Mote and Vishram Bedekar. (Kamalesh.P.130)

Kamalesh observes that Elkunchwar tries to explore the causes of failure of the form ‘autobiography’ after the frustrating experience of a number of autobiographies by many artists. On this background Atmakatha plays a significant role.

He further adds, “All the four characters of Atmakatha are mature and intelligent. However they fail to know themselves. Therefore they proceed towards suffering and frustration. The reason being no body is ready to merge their self, their ego. It proves a barrier in their attempt of the search of the self.

Towards the end of the play, Rajadhyaksha realizes his failure in portraying characters in an authentic manner. It is true about most of the Indian writers, whose characters display the writer’s personality most of the times. Elkunchwar emphasizes the need and inevitability looking at people (and characters) without any perceptions and prejudices.”
Kamalesh once again refers to Elkunchwar’s interest in probing the nature of complex interpersonal relationships. He finds a peculiar set of characters in *Wada Chirebandi* as well as *Atmakatha* where the characters are involved with each other and still they try to hurt each other with verbal attacks. They are selfish and still they are ready to sacrifice for each other. (Kamalesh.P.130)

Regarding Rajadhyaksha’s character he observes, “Search for truth is the ultimate goal of Rajadhyaksha. Elkunchwar uses it to present the theme of nature of truth and various manifestations of the same. Rajadhyaksha tries to reach the truth through the interpersonal relationships. But he does it through the intellectual point of view. Therefore he remains away from truth. He even becomes aware of it. He has also tried to reach the truth through a fiction. Thus he presents three versions of truth—first the actual incidence, second, portrayed through imagination and third, the hearsay version. It baffles even the audience. Rajadhyaksha gets enlightened towards the last phase of life in his loneliness. He realizes the falsity, deceitfulness of his life. He gets convinced that same is true about his proposed autobiography. He takes his creation along with him and proceeds for his eternal journey. However, he remains unaware of another creation, his son by Vasanti, Dilip. This is the greatest tragedy of his life.” (Kamalesh.P.130-132)

About the Pradnya-Rajadhyaksha relationship, Kamalesh presents two interpretations. One is, Pradnya is a symbol of Rajadhyaksha’s conscience as her name suggests. Second is Pradnya’s Electra-complex. Both are lonely. Pradnya with her frankness and outspoken attitude creates a strange attraction between the two. Her attitude leads Rajadhyaksha to his enlightenment about himself. He gets disillusioned about his material success and honours.

Pradnya, too, resorts to falsity. It is revealed when Rajadhyaksha asks her if she has ever told lies. This question makes her shed her mask of falsity and admit her infatuation for Rajadhyaksha.” (Kamalesh.P.148)
Elkunchwar’s own philosophy of life and his philosophy as an artist is similar to the philosophy explained above. It means that the playwright’s philosophy of life, art or creation has been reflected in *Atmakatha*.

Sandhya Amrute also finds the action of the play taking place at different levels simultaneously. She deliberates in more detail upon the nature of ‘truth’. She observes, “Elkunchwar presents three different versions of truth. It doesn’t mean that only one is true and others are untrue or lies. It only means that it is an inadequate truth. This style of presentation makes the contents more complex and deep.” (Sandhya Amrute, *Elkunchwaranchi Natyasrushti*, Vijay Prakashan, Nagpur. P.132)

She explores various faces of truth as Elkunchwar has dealt with in the play, namely

i) The original truth

ii) Each one’s impression of truth

iii) Artistic representation of truth

iv) Reader’s discovery of truth, and

v) The nature of truth after hearing about it from others (critics).

She further observes, “In spite of the complexity of contents, Elkunchwar has handled the theme in a masterly fashion. He displays an excellent grip upon the technique.” (Amrute.P.133)

Just like Kamalesh, she too finds Pradnya being responsible for awakening Rajadhyaksha’s dormant conscience. She forces him to come out of his world of illusion and self-deception. The tragedy is, Rajadhyaksha has realized his mistakes he has
committed in the past and also realized his helplessness as he cannot undo them now. In a way, Rajadhyaksha explores his own self, his existence through his search of life and truth. In this respect Elkunchwar is completely successful in presenting Rajadhyaksha in the light of existentialism. (Amrute. P.138)

She remarks about Atmakatha as a play. “Atmakatha develops three processes simultaneously; internal conflict of Rajadhyaksha, his external conflict and the conflict between the actual persons and the fictional characters based upon them. It gives rise to the questions like, ‘what is truth? What is the relationship between facts and their artistic representation? What is the difference between artistic/poetic truth and actual/objective truth?’ etc. The play aims at dealing with the mental conflict during the creative process.” (Amrute.P.138)

About the portrayal of the characters, she observes, “his characterization is deliberately obscure, their behavior is not logical. Sometimes they are full of contradictions and paradoxes. Still they are complementary to each other. Some critics find them to be deceptive. The playwright too, wants them to be mysterious, illogical and complex and unpredictable. He has successfully attempted to shape such complex characters and attained a happy balance through the complementing and contrasting elements.” (Amrute.P.141)

With respect to Pradnya-Rajadhyaksha relationship she observes, “It is shocking to find an intelligent girl like Pradnya getting involved into an old man like Rajadhyaksha. Moreover, she has rightly realized his worth as a littérateur. On this background, it sounds illogical, infeasible.” She feels, perhaps the playwright wanted to make the use of the technique of sudden twist in the story through Pradnya’s behaviour.” (Amrute.P.142)
In this respect Elkunchwar has provided the psychoanalysis of this incidence. “It is true that she finds a father-figure in Rajadhyksha. Gradually, it undergoes transformation. One cannot say that she loves him; it is not physical or sexual attraction as it exists between her and Pramod which is natural. One more possibility must be taken into account. Is she afraid of the love-instinct? Some people suffer from ‘love-hate’ relationship about love. It is possible in Pradnya’s case as she has never experienced the fatherly love/ affection in her childhood. When such a girl gets attracted towards an old man, it is somewhere in between a father and a lover. She must have realized his greatness unconsciously. That is why she gets fascinated by his personality and has turned to his literature for her research. The relationship is nameless. It may be an inevitable outcome of her loneliness.”(Amrute.P.143)

She finally remarks, “The playwright has allowed the characters grow naturally. It tries to probe the depths of human psyche and explore its complexities. His characterization not only appeals the emotions but also appeals the intellect and makes one turn to introspection and reflection.” (Amrute.P.143)

About the technique she remarks, “Elkunchwar wanted the dramatic experience to be a unified whole. That is why he fits it into a single act without an interval. The time of action is also complementary to the mood of the play. It begins in the evening; slowly it turns into dark night with the sky being filled with stars towards the end. (Amrute.P.144)

She comments about the element of existentialism in this play, “Not only Rajadhyaksha but all other characters also fit into the concept of existentialism. They hold themselves responsible for their own decisions. They become lonely and alienated in the process. It underscores the illogicality, absurdity, futility and painfulness of human existence. Elkunchwar has delineated them deftly and in depth. (Amrute.P.163)
She observes the limitations of the play. She finds Rajadhyaksha as well as his protagonist in the fiction ‘a pathetic character’ which gets caught between the proud Uttara and the revengeful, adamant and egoistic Vasanti. The truth about his son, revealed at the end makes him appear more pathetic. (Amrute. p.163)

Secondly, she finds Vasanti’s character flawed, as she establishes relationship with Rajadhyaksha not through a natural instinct but as an act of revenge, which hampers the natural progress of the action. She also finds Vasanti to be portrayed unnecessarily callous and flat. Naturally, Vasanti seems to be responsible for the tragedy. Another critic D.V. Deshpande also endorses this view about Vasanti’s portrayal. (Amrute. P.163)

While concluding the chapter it can be said that a common theme observed in almost all the plays taken up for the study is the strained marital relationship due to a variety of reasons and sometimes without any apparent reason. A number of examples may be cited to support this observation, for instance, Amanda has been deserted by her husband (The Glass Menagerie). Lady and Jabe Torrance are hostile to each other throughout the play (Orpheus Descending). Big Daddy is apathetic towards Big Mom, though she is devoted to him and the relations between Brick and Maggy are highly strained (Cat On a Hot Tin Roof). Same is true about Archie Lee and Baby Doll (Baby Doll). This theme is a highlight of almost all the plays by Edward Albee. In addition to that, the female characters of his plays are extremely dominating. On the contrary Tendulkar’s plays conform to the Indian tradition where females are submissive, in spite of the strained relationship, for instance, Sarita (Kamala), Rama (The Vultures), Mrs. Kashikar (Silence! The Court Is In Session), Jyoti and Seva (Kanyadaan), Anubha (Mee Jinklo! Mee Harlo!) etc. Mahesh Elkunchwar has changed the trend gradually. The females of his Wada Chirebandi like Aai, Vahini and Anjali are submissive, to some extent. It may be due to the period in which the action is set. But in his other plays like Raktapushpa, Wasanakanda, Party, Atmakatha, they appear in different shades. They cannot be termed either dominating or submissive. Baby of Yatanaghar is revengeful; Padma of Raktapushpa is fussy and tries to get attention, making issue of the loss of her
young son. It is boosted by her husband, Bhau’s considerate attitude. Lalita of 
Wasanakand is submissive in the beginning. But she gets metamorphosed through the 
course of action and attains a lofty stature, almost that of a saint or savior. Every female 
of Party has a different type of personality and has to face a different type of conflict. But 
every one is strong in her own way and each stick to the chosen path and fights her own 
battle. Same can be said about the females of Atmakatha, real as well as fictional.

This strain is also observed in the male-female relationships where the knot has 
not been tied, for example, The white Nurse’ relationship with the White Intern and 
Orderly with mixed blood. (The Death of Bessie Smith), Rama and Rajaninath (The 
Vultures), Benare’s relationship with Damle, Ponkshe and Balu Rokade (Silence! The 
Court Is In Session), Stree and Tapasi (Ek Osad Gaon), Woman with Man1 and Man 2 
(Eka Mhataryacha Khoon), Padma-Raja- Lilu (Raktapushpa), Vrinda’s relationship with 
Amrut, Bharat and Agashe, Damayanti-Barve-Mohini relationship (Party), 
Rajadhyaksha’s relationship with Uttara, Vasanti and Pradnya (Atmakatha). 
Elkunchwar’s female characters display more variety, more subtle and realistic shades. 
They are intelligent and firm with their stand. Overall, they are superior in all respects as 
compared to the females portrayed in the plays by other three playwrights.