OTHER THEMES

The excitement of studying literature lies in the multiplicity of suggestions and possible interpretations contained in a good work of art. Therefore, apart from the tensions and conflicts in the interpersonal relationships for various reasons, many other themes are observed in the works of these playwrights. They may be listed as

- Degradation, degeneration, decay in various walks of life and decline of values
- Disintegration of family and social structure and maladjustment with the changing social milieu
- Loneliness, alienation and loss of communication
- Infidelity and incest
- Impotence, infertility, childlessness and indifferent or hostile attitude towards children
- Appearance and reality/ Illusion and reality
- Psychological complexes and disorders
- Myth and religion
- Woes of glamour and affluence
- Attitude to death
- Cruelty and violence
- Meaning of life and exploration of truth

Degradation, Degeneration, Decay in various walks of life and decline of values

Degradation, degeneration, decay in various walks of life and decline of the existing value system has become an unmistakable feature of 20th century social milieu, in the East as well as West. Some of the causes responsible for it are common and some others are different. However the impact is similar. The process of degeneration and
decline of Victorian culture was triggered with the theories of Darwin, Freud and Marx. It caught up momentum with the World War I and accelerated during World War II, in the West. All the well knit structures collapsed. The overall situation can be described in W. Yeats’ words, “Things fall apart/ Centre cannot hold/ Falcon cannot hear the falconer.”

In the East, especially in modern India, battles did not take place on the Indian soil. However, there was the background of India’s Freedom struggle and the atrocities faced by Indian freedom fighters as well as the common citizens. Indians had to face the indirect effects of the World Wars in the form of rationing and the atrocious, high handed rule of the British officers. Indians also had to withstand the continued exploitation by British rulers. The situation got worsened with the proposed partition of the then Hindustan under British rule. It further reached its peak due to the disillusionment of the general public in the post- Independence period. Thus in the early ‘40s in the West and late ‘40s in India, the situation was more or less similar. People stopped bothering about ‘past’ or ‘future’. Only the present became significant for them. They also stopped bothering about society or even other family members. Man turned more and more self-centred. Moral, social, cultural and religious values lost their shin. A sort of cynicism and resentment or disrespect was manifested towards these values especially by young generation. They even tried to defy them, rebel against them. The reflection of this attitude and mindset has been reflected in the plays by the playwrights in question.

Tom Wingfield (The Glass Menagerie), Stanley Kowalski (The Streetcar Named Desire), Carol Cutrere (Orpheus Descending), Chance Wayne and the Finley siblings (Sweet Bird of Youth), The Nurse (The Death of Bessie Smith), Mommy (The Sand Box, The American Dream), Martha and Nick (Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?), Clair and Julia (A Delicate Balance), Daughter (All Over), Ramakant, Umakant and Manik (The Vultures), Arun (Kanyadan), Ranju, Sudhir and Abhay (Wada Chirebandi), the hostelites and collegians (Holi), Baby (Yatanaghar), Hemakant (Wasanakanda), Sona (Party), all these characters represent the defiance and cynicism by the young generation. Tom and Carol have parents who hail from Southern feudal lord families. Both find the old value system meaningless and redundant in the changing personal and social background.
Stanley and Chance Wayne have never enjoyed the privileged social status. But they don’t want to acknowledge it. In case of Finley siblings, Heavenly doesn’t find anything wrong in choosing Chance Wayne as her boyfriend though he is nowhere near her social level. His charming personality is the thing which matters for her. On the other hand, for Tom Finley, his father’s wealth and political power has made him a natural heir to it along with the arrogance, unscrupulousness and authority to punish the transgressor-Chance Wayne. Same is the case of The Nurse, who thinks that her so called superior race has the privilege to humiliate others though her family’s financial position is not very sound. Mommys in *The Sandbox* as well as *The American Dream* threaten their mothers of sending them to Old People’s Homes or callously leaves them to die. They have no attachment, respect or gratitude for them. Martha, Nick, Claire and Julia don’t bother for social or cultural norms. Baby defies the norms for the sake of personal revenge and Hemkanta defies them for selfish motives.

**Disintegration of family, disintegration of social structure and maladjustment with the changing social milieu.**

Disintegration of family, disintegration of social structure and maladjustment with it is a recurring theme found in the plays by both the American playwrights in question. This theme is more frequently observed in Elkunchwar’s plays as compared to Tendulkar’s. In America, the problem of disintegration emerged due to two main factors—

i) American Civil War and the consequent Abolition of Slavery law.

ii) The Great Economic Depression of 1930s.

The Civil War brought about the divide between Southern and Northern States of America. In this war, South was not only defeated but it left a long-lasting impact upon the lifestyle of Southerners. Most of the feudal lord families suffered with great financial losses and personal losses which resulted into disintegration of families. Some of them managed to adjust with the changing circumstances, but many others failed to do so. The superiority complex of many Southerners proved to be a great obstacle in their attempts
to adjust with the changing social milieu. They kept on clinging desperately with the old Victorian, Puritan, Aristocratic life-style or at least tried to keep up the appearances.

A similar impact of the Great Economic Depression was observed in the later period. This depression reduced many of the affluent families to the state of paupers. In the still later period a class of traders, businessmen and industrialists emerged on the scene. This was the class of people; those got flourished suddenly as a result of two consecutive World Wars. They were rich but did not belong to the prestigious families of the original settlers; and that is why they were looked down upon, sneered at by the so called prestigious family members of former feudal lords. They were considered upstarts and were not accepted as equals, by the Southerners.

Slavery was abolished legally after the Civil War. However many Whites never accepted it and practiced it at personal level. All these factors get reflected in the plays by T. Williams and Albee. It is also true about other contemporary playwrights from America and Europe.

More or less similar situation existed in India. Instead of Civil War, there was freedom struggle, followed by Independence accompanied by Partition. Parallel to abolition of Slavery Act in America, there was an Abolition of Tenancy Act and legal / constitutional provision of a number of facilities to downtrodden classes. Both these provisions shook the existing social structure. It proved to be a severe blow for the feudal lords and upper caste people. It adversely affected their social and financial status. Partition reduced many of the rich merchants from the newly formed Pakistan to poverty who migrated to India leaving behind all their wealth, established business and property. Many of them lost their near and dear ones during the communal riots erupted during Partition. Just like in America, a newly rich class of merchants, traders and political leaders emerged in India. Owing to the constitutional provisions bestowed upon the so far deprived class of people, they could enjoy many facilities in the field of education and employment. This situation inculcated new confidence and even defiance among them. Overall degradation in all walks of life worsened the situation. Naturally it affected the
family set-up as well as social set-up. Reflections of this situation are found in the works of the Indian playwrights.

Amanda Wingfield of *The Glass Menagerie* tries to adjust with the tight financial position of the present. She belonged to a Southern affluent family of landlords. However, she tries to pretend, as if; she is still a member of the affluent class. But her son, Tom hates those pretences. This is the main cause of tension between the two. She never approves of his ways and ambitions. As a result, he flees away to pursue his goal without bothering for his mother or unmarried sister. The Wingfield family gets completely disintegrated. Stella- the younger sister of *A Streetcar Named Desire* gets easily adjusted with the changing social order and gets married to an unsophisticated factory worker like Stanley Kowalski and becomes happy. But the elder sister Blanche Dubois makes desperate efforts to keep up the appearances of the former Southern lifestyle, in spite of the deteriorating financial conditions. She even resorts to adultery for its sake, but doesn’t accept to admit the truth, and meets the inevitable tragic, pathetic end. *Baby Doll* is another glaring example of disintegration of family. Financial condition of both the families- Baby Doll’s father as well as Archie Lee, is unsound. The only eligible bachelor from the respected Southern families is Archie Lee. That is why Baby doll’s father marries her with him. He dies without making any provisions for the future of his unmarried sister or his daughter. Archie Lee, too, is gradually pushed towards the edge of bankruptcy. He is not ready to accept and adjust with the changing social structure. He is hostile towards his upstart business rival. He even goes to the extent of burning down his rival’s- Silva Vacarro’s- cotton gin. In the process, his family gets disintegrated as he loses his mental balance due to utter frustration. He loses his business, his wife and his prestige. He is going to be stamped as a criminal. In *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Heavenly- the beautiful daughter of the wealthy politician, doesn’t find anything wrong in choosing Chance Wayne- a charming young fellow, an aspiring actor, much below her social status, as a soul-mate. But her hypocrite father and brother can’t accept it. However her aunt supports her and assists her whenever possible.
In Albee’s plays too, this theme plays a prominent role. The strained relationship between The Nurse and her father, their tight financial condition, their taunting each other over it and father’s vicious remarks over her relations with The Intern are enough to throw light upon the disintegration of their family. She criticizes him for his hypocrisy and pretences for getting counted among the prestigious families. But she herself behaves the same way. She also is caught between the dilemma regarding a choice of a life-partner. Her pride of her roots forces her to choose a White Intern. At the same time she is quite aware of his unsatisfactory financial condition as compared to The Orderly, who is nowhere near her social status when his race or his position in the hospital is concerned. She is tempted to choose him but her social background doesn’t let her do so. The Orderly is of mixed blood and for the same reason he is neither accepted by Whites nor Blacks. Thus The Nurse and The Orderly, both represent the problem of disintegrating social order. To some extent, The Intern, too, represents the flux within social structure. Whereas The Orderly hesitates to help the severely injured Black singer, The White Intern defies The Nurse’s threats and takes lead in helping the Blacks. Their behavior also throws light upon the resistance and reluctance of Whites to let Blacks enjoy equal rights which the constitution has bestowed upon them.

Mommy of *The Sandbox* as well as *The American Dream* shows no respect for mother. The former is ready to dispose of her just like an old, useless piece of furniture and brings her to die on the sea-beach. The later threatens her mother to pack her off to the Old People’s Home. She treats her mother like a servant. She doesn’t want her to get enlightened about the things around. So she asks Daddy to break her T.V. This Mommy looks at her adopted child as an investment. When she is not satisfied with the development of the child, she arranges to dispose of the child also. Through these two Mommys Albee throws light upon the newly developed self-centred and mercenary attitude of the modern man who neither cares for older generation nor for the younger generation.

The same attitude is observed in the characters of Martha and Nick of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* Martha defies all social norms for the gratification of desire.
Nick, her counterpart is ready to gratify the desire of the wives of influential persons in the University to climb up the ladder of power. Both do not bother about the fidelity to their spouses. The family members of *A Delicate Balance* are living under one roof. But their relations are extremely strained. Clair, the younger sister deliberately behaves in such a way to irritate and provoke her elder sister, Agnes. Agnes suspects her husband-Tobias, to be disloyal to her. Tobias is unduly interested in his friend’s wellbeing than his family’s convenience and happiness. Julia is unable to settle with her husbands, even after trying four times. She is not happy or grateful towards both her parents. She blames her mother for her high-handedness and father, for his failure to provide emotional support to her when she needed it most, after the death of her baby-brother. She herself had felt extremely jealous about him, whom she had taken as a rival in her parent’s affection and attention.

Same can be said about the family of *All Over*. Husband and Wife have already been separated for over thirty years. But the remaining members are also not very close to each other. Mother and Daughter keep on blaming each other. At one moment when the heated argument reaches its peak, Daughter dares to slap her mother. In return, Mistress slaps Daughter. Husband has stayed with Mistress until the end. The Wife has come very close to Husband’s Best Friend after the former has deserted her. As a result, Best Friend’s marriage gets broken. His wife has turned a neurotic. The Wife and The Best Friend cannot come together in a wedlock. The Husband is a top-rank politician. Despite this fact, he openly stays away from his lawful wife and his family which is the example of social disintegration. It is also ironic that Best Friend tries to seduce Wife.

Complete disintegration of family is observed in Tendulkar’s *The Vultures*. Almost all the characters are extremely selfish and unscrupulous. The level of attachment and affection between the family members is at the bottom, except the two characters, Rama and Rajaninath. The three siblings, Ramakant, Umakant and Manik are hostile to each other. Ramakant and Umakant join hands, only to torture Manik and exploit her affair with The Prince for their own selfish motive. Mania’s miscarriage takes place as a result of the conspiracy by her brothers. But the same Manik doesn’t hesitate to employ
black magic against Rama, to bring about her abortion. The older generation is not free from this evil. Much earlier, their father, Pappa has deceived and exploited his own brother. He has kept the reserve funds in a secret account. Both his sons torture him to extract the information about it from him. In spite of all this plotting and cheating, Ramakant is reduced to nothing at the end. Rajaninath is one more example of disintegration of family as he is Pappa’s illegitimate son. He has been accepted but not as a family member in the main house. He stays in the outhouse.

In *Silence! The Court is in Session*, the so-called cultural police do not allow the independent woman, Leela Benare to enjoy motherhood as a single parent. On the contrary, in the mock trial, she is convicted and pronounced a punishment of terminating the illegitimate pregnancy. In *Kanyadan*, Nath and Seva, both are dedicated social reformers. They do not just preach the principles of equality, but are eager to bring them into practice. The opportunity comes their way in the form of their daughter, Jyoti’s choice of a life-partner, Arun who belongs to the lowest class. There is no question of resistance on their part for the inter-caste marriage. Here, Tendulkar has dealt with other possibility of the marital relationship in case of such marriages. Here Arun, the dalit youth has turned arrogant due to the newly found sense of equality and privileged status. He misuses the equal rights and treats his wife brutally. He uses her as an instrument of his desire of revenge against upper caste people. He exploits her financially, physically and emotionally. He blackmails her father for the public acknowledgement to his recently published autobiography. Jyoti, unable to satisfy both the parties- her parents and her husband, decides to sever the ties with her parents. She is determined to fight her own battle, alone. This relationship causes the strain between the couple of Nath and Seva, between their idealism and pragmatism. Thus the family gets emotionally disintegrated. Social order is changing. The upper-caste members are willing to accept the change. But the response from the other side is unexpected, painfully shocking and vindictive. Tendulkar has dealt with this theme in *Shrimanta* also where the upper-caste family has to accept the marital relationship of their daughter, Mathura with Shridhar, a rootless fellow from a lower class. Here, too, the son-in-law, Shridhar deliberately behaves in a
Elkunchwar has dealt with both the themes, disintegration of family and disintegration of social structure mainly in his trilogy beginning with *Wada Chirebandi (Old Stone Mansion)* where the financial condition of the former feudal lord family of Deshpandes is continuously deteriorating. But they feel the social obligation of keeping up the appearances with the former pomp. In this attempt, the family starts disintegrating. Some of the family members like Sudhir and Prabha want themselves to change along with the changing social structure, changing times. Sudhir wants huge expenses upon the rituals to be curtailed. Prabha, in spite of her talent, is not allowed to leave the place for further education because of family prestige. She wants to break the barriers of social status and fulfill her ambition. Ranju proves to be a black sheep in the dignified family background. She brings disgrace to the family by eloping with her teacher who dupes her with all the family jewellery. Her brother, Parag shows no interest in education, but takes interest in all sorts of vices like smoking, drinking etc.

Sudhir’s son, Abhay has lost contact with the joint family at the native place as he has stayed in Mumbai all these years. He has not only lost contact in literal sense, but emotionally also he has got distanced from the members of the joint family. He strongly resists the idea of bringing Parag to Mumbai. He threatens to introduce Parag as a servant to his friends. He looks down upon the family members staying at his native place. He considers them rustic. Parag gradually learns to adjust himself in the changing social structure. He puts to use his personal degenerated status and establishes himself firmly in the corrupt, degraded social structure, in the later part of the trilogy. The disintegration of the family takes a reverse mode. Once again, the fourth generation of Deshpande family comes close in the form of Abhay and Parag. They almost become soul-mates in the third part, *Yuganta*. But both remain restless and unhappy despite their material prosperity. However, same is not true about the third generation. Prabha never recovers from the shock of finding her dreams vanishing before her eyes, as a result of the loss of the family jewellery during Ranju’s misadventure. Chandu, the youngest brother, at first starts living
in a temple like a destitute and then vanishes on one fine day. The family has to sell a part of the mansion, which stands for their glorious past, to the money lender, with whom it is mortgaged.

In *Holi*, too, there is a glimpse of defiance of the existing social order by the young generation of the hostelites. The boys rebel against the highhandedness of the Principal of the college. They deride the speaker’s hypocrisy and make him retreat. In *Yatanaghar*, the whole family gets disintegrated as a result of Baby’s spiteful designs against the family members whom she holds responsible for her invalid status. She is also jealous of other fit members. That is why she sees to it that they don’t enjoy happiness. She doesn’t let her brother, Ramesh and his wife, enjoy the pleasure of each other’s company. She encourages Ramesh to smoke, against the medical advice, for his being a T.B. patient, and brings about permanent separation between him and his wife. Finally, she remains alone with only her companion, Kamal. She, too, deserts Kamal at the end.

Disintegration of family has remained a common theme in Elkunchwar’s other plays also. In *Raktapushpa*, Padma is distanced from husband- Bhau, daughter- Lilu and son- Shahshi for different reasons. She pretends to lose interest in all material pleasures, including conjugal relationship as she thinks that she cannot recover from the shock of the sudden loss of her young son- Shashi. At the same time she takes undue interest in a young boy- Raja who is staying with the family as a paying-guest. Because of Raja, Padma and daughter Lilu turn rivals. Their relationship remains strained. Padma keeps on flirting with Raja though she calls it a motherly love. Lilu has suspected it all the while. Finally, she gets its evidence in the form of the love letters written by Padma, naturally to Raja, though she has not addressed them to anyone in particular. She tries to expose her mother in front of her father- Bhau. Of course, he doesn’t take it seriously as he is aware of Padma’s mental state.

On the contrary, Padma is not at all considerate. She keeps on blaming him, for not feeling the loss of their son as intensely as herself. She also blames him for many other reasons; such as, enjoying the pleasure of the newly built spacious bungalow out of the
insurance money of Shashi’s policy, losing interest in her or not observing Shashi’s anniversary so seriously etc. Bhau is very sympathetic towards Lilu as well, as she has to put up with her mother’s whims. But when Lilu accuses Padma of her interest in Raja, with the solid evidence of the letters written by her, Bhau slaps her hard for her impudence. The remaining two members, going well with each other, also get distanced from each other. Thus all the relations between the family members get disturbed.

In *Wasanakanda*, the family ha been almost disintegrated. Due to the dictatorship of the father; son- Hemkant has deserted home. He comes back only after his father’s death. He wants to support his young sister emotionally. But while doing so, he seduces her. They are punished with life by the villagers for the sin of developing illicit relationship. Thus it brings about total annihilation of the family.

In *Party*, Damayanti’s family gets disintegrated. Her love-marriage proves to be a failure. Husband turns to drinking. Daughter-Sona’s love-affair, too, proves to be a failure. She becomes an unwedded mother. By doing so, she has also defied social norms. The relationship between mother and daughter remains strained as Sona has a strong conviction that her mother is interested in many other men. She openly refers them to as her boyfriends and accuses her of causing death of her father by making life impossible for him. Damayanti has a very good rapport with Barve, the famous and acclaimed writer. In one slippery moment, she even admits it to him. Barve and Mohini, the former actress, share a ‘live-in’ relationship. Mohini is pining for his love and affection, but Barve is fed-up with her. She is quite aware of it. This ‘live-in’ relationship is another example of defiance of social norms.

This play also deals with the theme of corruption and moral degradation in every walk of life. Vrinda who calls herself a communist activist is very shallow. She uses the ideology just as a fashion but avoids accompanying Amrut who is actually striving to get justice for the tribals. She is snobbish in another respect too. She pretends to be disinterested in men, but grabs every opportunity to flirt with them. When her attempt of intimacy with the inexperienced Bharat fails, she starts sneering at his unpolished
manners. She refuses to accompany the rich, successful playwright, Agashe as he is a capitalist, according to her. Towards the end she expresses a wish to marry him. Agashe is equally snobbish. He is willing to marry Sona, in spite of her tainted background, only for the sake of the potential material gains. The moment she turns down his proposal, he uses very crude language for her.

Elkunchwar also exposes the myth of a ‘Welfare State’ which favours the wealthy industrialists at the cost of the fundamental rights of the tribals. Government machinery doesn’t hesitate to inflict atrocities upon the poor tribals to oust them from their legitimate habitat. Thus government acts against its own laws and defies the constitution.

In Atmakatha, too, the small family has been disintegrated, in spite of the concern of the couple, Rajadhyaksha and Uttara, for each other. The root cause of it lies in the defiance of social norms by the so called responsible and caring person, an idealist-Rajadhyaksha. In the absence of his wife, he seduces his sister-in-law, Vasanti who is nearly 30 years younger to him and as good as his daughter. Here, too, Elkunchwar exposes the snobbery and hypocrisy of the so called idealists and public icons. In personal life, he commits the sin of breach of trust; he violates the oath of fidelity with wife. The same is true about Vasanti. In this case, he is doubly guilty. He cheats on his wife and sister-in-law, Vasanti whom Uttara has trusted with him as a daughter.

In his professional life, too, he is proved to be a big snob. He has to admit that his literature would not pass the test of time as it is escapist in treatment. He has never acknowledged the potential of young writers like Devdatta. He calls himself a Gandhian and always boasts of his status as a freedom-fighter. But as Pradnya, a young researcher points out, he has avoided protesting against the unjust Emergency as other idealist writer like Durga Bhagwat had done.

His relationship with three women belonging to different age groups is also a sign of changing social order. Uttara is his lawful wife, belonging to his own age group. Vasanti is nearly thirty years younger to him. The third woman Pradnya is like his grand-
daughter. She is also a harsh critic of his person as well as his literature. He never encourages her to fall in love with him. Still, unconsciously, she falls in love with him. These are the examples of disintegration of social structure.

**Loneliness, alienation and loss of communication**

Loneliness, alienation and loss of communication are a curse of modern life-style. Naturally, it has been reflected in the plays by these modern playwrights. Laura of *The Glass Menagerie* is the glaring example of it. She is caught between her mother’s expectations and her own limitations and shortcomings, due to which she confines herself to the illusive world of glass animals and establishes communication with them instead of real persons from her family, school and society. Only once she opens up, that is with Jim, her idol since her school-days. Another example is Brick of *The Cat On a Hot Tin Roof*. Just like Laura, he too, confines himself to his world of personal grief and tries to drown himself in alcohol. He refuses to communicate either with his wife, Margaret or his father, Big Daddy, though both are highly concerned about him. He considers himself guilty for the death of his friend and that is why denies all pleasures to himself. Big Daddy has no communication with his wife in real sense. He never takes her into confidence. He, himself is denied the information regarding his health status who is suffering from cancer and is on the verge of death. His elder son, Gooper, talks a lot. But it is in no sense, a genuine communication. His talk is part of his plot and plans related to acquiring his father’s huge estate after him and keeping Brick out of it.

Same is true about Archie Lee of *Baby Doll*. He is dominating, but he has no communication with his lawful wife, Baby Doll as is expected between a normal couple. There are only threats and conditions from Baby Doll to concede to his wish of establishing conjugal relationship. In *Suddenly Last Summer*, Catherine Holy gets isolated from everyone for different reasons. She is also barred from communicating the truth for the selfish motives of everyone around. Her aunt Mrs. Venable doesn’t allow her to tell the truth about her son, Sebastian’s unnatural, grotesque death. Her mother and brother, too, support it with the fear of losing the huge amount to be inherited. Mrs.
Venable has planned more severe steps to obliterate her memory. Thus alienation is forced upon her by vested interests.

In Albee’s plays, mainly the older characters get isolated, alienated, like Grandma of *The Sandbox* and *The American Dream*. According to Albee the younger generation avoids establishing any contact with the older generation, so much so that they are ready to dispatch them away and get rid of them. Another conviction found in Albee’s plays is, husband and wife cease communicating with each other genuinely after the initial phase of enthusiasm in love. He has dealt with the theme of loss of communication within the couples at different phases of marital relationship through various plays; The Couple, Nancy and Charlie of *Seascape* is almost in the last phase of life. They have spent a considerably long period with each other. But Charlie behaves, as if; he has lost interest in life, as well as, wife. Even in the old age, she has retained her enthusiasm and romanticism. His response is cold towards it. He keeps on pondering over death. At one moment, he gets almost sure that he is dead. Then Nancy helps him realize that he is still alive as he could respond to her romantic tricks, at least for a short while.

The couple of *All Over* is also old. But the separation between them has taken place long back, about thirty years ago. Now the husband is on the death-bed, beyond the possibility of communication. The couple of *The Delicate Balance* is around sixties. In the beginning, they appear to care for each other. But as the play progresses, the rift between their relationship gets unraveled. They have stopped sharing a bedroom soon after the death of their baby son. Since then, he has always avoided her. When they had to share a room, both feel extremely awkward and cannot sleep. There is a reference to his crush on some other woman. Agnes, too, suspects that he has an affair with her sister, Claire. His excessive concern for his friend, Harry also indicates his isolation from his wife.

In case of *The Sandbox* and *The American Dream*, there is minimum communication between the husbands and the wives because the wives are dominating and they don’t allow their husbands to talk. The couple like Nick and Honey of *Who’s
Afraid of Virginia Woolf? is quite young. Their’s is a love marriage. They are acquainted with each other since their childhood. They appear to be devoted to each other. Soon the myth of their happy marriage gets exposed through George’s probing questions. Nick expresses his willingness to flirt with other women for personal gains. He actually tries it with Martha, the hostess, much senior to him in age. It is also revealed that they got married in hurry due to the misunderstanding created by Honey about her being pregnant. She still has been cheating upon him by getting the pregnancies terminated secretly.

No such problem exists between the couple of Counting The Ways. But without any obvious reason, they have got distanced from each other. He realizes it suddenly on one day as he finds that their beds have been separated. Both wonder if there exists any love at all between them. T. Williams and Albee, both have depicted the theme of rift, loss of communication within the couples as a rule. Same cannot be said about Tendulkar’s earlier plays. However, it is observed in his later plays. Rama of The Vultures or Mrs. Kashikar of Silence! The Court is in Session have accepted the usual subordinate role of Indian wives. But Sarita of Kamala suddenly realizes of her slave-like status in the marital relationship and vows to rebel against it. Thus the rift begins. Alienation has already taken place. Only she realizes it much later.

In Elkunchwar’s Ek Osad Gaon, Stree and Tapasi, both are lonely. All the people have deserted the town leaving behind Stree alone. She has accepted her loneliness. Tapasi’s loneliness, alienation is self inflicted. He is wandering alone, without getting involved in any place or person, as a sort of penance. Both coincidently come in contact with each other. They also get tempted to find comfort in each other’s company. But Tapasi overcomes the temptation and leaves her and the place. Once again both remain lonely and alienated.

This theme is recurringly observed in Elkunchwar’s other plays too. Baby of Yatanaghar alienates herself from the family members for the sake of revenge. At first, the family members, especially her father, isolates himself from her as he feels guilty of being responsible for her invalidity. After the realization of the truth, she turns hostile to
the world in general. In the process, she gradually isolates herself from others. Finally, she is left alone. Of course, a savior arrives in the form of Keshav towards the end to lead her to the path of salvation.

In *Raktapushpa*, too, the three remaining family members, Padma, Bhau and Lilu get alienated from each other due to distrust, sexual frustration and sex envy. In Vasanakanda, alienation takes place at various levels. At first Hemkanta distances himself from his father, his home and his country for the sake of pursuing his talent in art, disapproved by his father. When he returns to support Lalita, his lonely younger sister, emotionally, after the death of his father, he takes her to a lonely village and a deserted mansion. Thus both of them isolate themselves from the world. They become very intimate with each other for a short while. Soon a rift starts developing between them and goes on widening until the end. The villagers also outcast them and punish them for incest. Finally, Lalita brings about the ultimate isolation of both of them from the world, by setting the old mansion on fire.

In *Party*, almost all the characters pretend to be very close to each other, but there is hardly any attachment observed between them without the exception of blood relation of Damayanti and Sona or the love relation of Barve and Mohini. Sona despises her mother’s friend-circle and her intimacy with some of them, like Barve. During the heated argument between them, she accuses her mother of making life impossible for her father. This conversation also reveals the rift between Damayanti and her husband who is no more. Damayanti has her reasons, but Sona is not ready to accept any one of them. Regarding her marriage also, she doesn’t care a bit about Damayanti’s word of advice. She remains firm on her stand of rejecting Agashe’s marriage proposal. Mohini is deeply in love with Barve. But Barve doesn’t reciprocate it. Mohini, at the back of her mind, is quite aware of it which makes her feel insecure. She makes frantic efforts, not to let Barve slip from her hands. Regarding other characters too, there is conspicuous element of jealousy and distrust which doesn’t let any one of them build up strong, meaningful bonds between them.
The very basis of *Atmakatha* is alienation and loss of communication between Rajadhyaksha, his wife Uttara and his sister-in-law, Vasanti. After the breach of trust of marital relationship, Uttara has stopped every kind of contact with Rajadhyaksha. She has left the house and the town. She has not cared to respond to his letters though he had kept on writing for two years after the break-up. Vasanti, because of whom the break-up has taken place, has also left Rajadhyaksha. The two sisters, too, have stopped seeing each other for a while though afterwards the patch-up between them takes place. The distancing is so intense that Uttara has not bothered to seek explanations either from Rajadhyaksha or from Vasanti for the breach of trust.

In case of Uttara and Rajadhyaksha, the isolation seems only to be in literal sense, as both of them constantly keep on thinking about each other until the end. It is not the case of Vasanti. In her case, the isolation is deep rooted for Uttara as well as Rajadhyaksha; for different reasons. She has developed a sort of complex about Uttara, owing to the latter’s seniority and superiority in almost every field. She starts feeling like an underdog in Uttara’s company. Probably unconsciously, she accepts the challenge of proving her superiority over Uttara by conquering her forte, her husband. Once her purpose is served, she loses interest in him, too.

In case of Rajadhyaksha, too, Vasanti displays no special attachment. On the contrary, she has tried to defeat him on every front. After leaving his house, she has gone to his sworn rival, Devdatta and stayed with him. Not only this, though she has severed all sorts of contact with him after leaving his house, somehow she has managed to conceive by him. She has never let the truth out. She has deliberately kept it from him as she doesn’t want to provide him solace and make him feel proud of his fatherhood. Rajadhyaksha’s alienation is not confined only to real people. He is alienated from his creations also. His fictional characters, Urmila and Vasudha who stand for Uttara and Vasanti of real life, approach him with the charge of their false depiction. This shows that he has failed to establish genuine contact with the real characters as well as to himself. This is a classic example of an alienation of a person from himself.
Infidelity and incest

Another recurring theme observed in the plays of these four playwrights is Infidelity and incest. Blanche Dubois of *A Streetcar Named Desire* keeps relations with a number of men after her failed love-marriage. Ultimately, she is dismissed from her teacher’s job for trying to seduce one of her teenager student. Lady Torrance of *Orpheus Descending* was pregnant before marriage by David Cutrere. Afterwards she establishes relations with Val Xavier and gets pregnant by him as a vengeance against her heartless husband, Jabe Torrance. Carol Cutrere, too, wishes to establish similar type of relations with Val, but he doesn’t respond to her. David Cutrere, Lady’s lover is an example of infidelity. In spite of his violent love relationship with Lady, he deserts her and marries another wealthy woman. Val Xavier doesn’t belong to the upper class. But he is famous for having relations with many women.

Margaret of *A Cat On a Hot Tin Roof* is not disloyal to Brick. But she wants to investigate the nature of relationship between Brick, her husband and his intimate friend, Skipper. Therefore, she decides to test his potency. In this case Margaret doesn’t want to cheat her husband. On the contrary, she does so to bring him back to her. However, instead of being close to her, a great rift gets developed between the two. In *Baby Doll*, there is no trace of love and attachment between Baby Doll and Archie Lee. Despite this fact, she tries to defend her husband in front of Vacarro, his rival. But afterwards, things take such a turn that unconsciously, she gets attracted towards him. She responds to his manliness and nobility. Finally, she deserts her husband while he is in a mentally derailed state.

Flora Goforth and Marquessa Ridgeway of *The Milktrain Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore* are extremely lusty women whose sex desire never gets satisfied. Both express interest in much younger Chris Flaunders. Flora, in her capacity as the hostess, puts
pressure upon him, blackmailing him and enticing him in a variety of ways to make him satisfy her desire. The notable thing is, she is eighty-six and on the verge of death.

Martha and Nick of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* are the epitomes of incest and infidelity. Martha openly invites Nick for sex in front of her husband, George, to tease him. Nick, too, has expressed his willingness to satisfy the desire of the wives of influential persons to climb up the ladder of success and power. Tobias of *The Delicate Balance* is not faithful to his wife, Agnes which is clear from the reference by Claire, to his affair with another woman. There are hints about his unnatural interest in his friend Harry. She, of *Counting The Ways*, is not literally unfaithful to him. But she enjoys the memory of a boy from her school days which she thinks had fallen in love with her, but had never expressed it. The characters of *All Over* are all entangled with each other. Husband has been living with his mistress; Wife has established close relationship with Husband’s Best Friend. Thus Best Friend, too, turns disloyal to his wife. The minor character, Nurse, had also been a mistress of a famous doctor.

In *The Vultures*, Manik is pregnant by the prince. Ramakant suspects Rama’s pregnancy being the outcome of her incestuous relationship with his half brother, Rajaninath. Benare’s pregnancy in *Silence! The court is in Session*, is an outcome of incest on her part and infidelity on Damale’s part. Damale is married, still he gets involved with another woman. Mathura of *Shrimanta* is also pregnant without marriage. As her marriage with the lover is not possible, it must also be a case of infidelity on his part.

In *Wada Chirebandi*, Ranju is involved in such a relationship with her teacher. In *Yatanaghar*, Baby wishes to indulge in sexual relationship with her brother, which is not possible due to her invalid state. But her companion, Kamala has enjoyed sex with him many times which Baby tries to enjoy through imagination. Similar kind of incest in the world of fantasy also takes place in case of Padma of *Raktapushpa*. The relationship between Hemakanta and Lalita of *Vasanakanda* is purely incestuous, being a relationship between the siblings. Sona of *Party* is an unwedded mother. Her lover who belongs to
glamour world is known for his depravation. Mohini is staying with Barve without marriage. The conflict of *Atmakatha* emerges out of incest between Rajadhyaksha and his much younger sister-in-law, Vasanti. It involves Rajadhyaksha’s infidelity to his wife Uttara.

**Impotence, infertility, childlessness and indifferent or hostile attitude towards children**

Another related theme is impotence, infertility, childlessness and indifferent or hostile attitude towards children. In almost all the plays by these four playwrights the plot lacks any reference to children. If it is there, the relationship between parents and children is tense, sometimes even hostile. The relationship between Tom and Amanda of *The Glass Menagerie* remains strained. Though Amanda is sympathetic towards Laura, she is not exactly happy or proud of her. Brick and Margaret of *The Cat On a Hot Tin Roof* are childless. Of course the reason is neither impotence nor barrenness. It is due to Brick’s refusal to establish marital relations with her. Same is the case of the couple, Baby Doll and Archie Lee of *Baby Doll*. Only the roles are reversed in this case. Here, Baby Doll has been avoiding the conjugal relationship over the flimsy excuses. In *Sweet Bird of Youth*, Heavenly has to undergo hysterectomy as a result of a venereal disease thereby losing her fertility. Her lover, Chance Wayne gets castrated by Heavenly’s brother, Tom, leaving him impotent. Flora Goforth of *The Milktrain Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore* has only one daughter despite the number of marriages and affairs. There is only cursory reference to her daughter which throws light upon the hostile relationship between the two.

The relationship between Father and his daughter, The Nurse of *The Death of Bessie Smith* is strained and bitter. The daughters of both the plays, *The Sandbox* and *The American Dream* are very callous to their respective mothers- Grandmas. One leaves her mother to die her death, on a sea beach and the other, constantly threatens her mother of calling the van-men to send her away. These Grandmas, too, are highly critical of their daughters. In *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* both the couples are childless. The couple
of George and Martha is unable to produce any children. In the case of Nick and Honey, no such problem is there. But Honey is scared of labour pains, that is why she secretly gets the foetuses aborted. George and Martha create a son in their world of fantasy which is killed by George in a cold-blooded manner. Moreover, there is reference to George’s killing his parents accidentally, as a young boy.

In *A Delicate Balance*, the relationship between Julia and her parents, Agnes and Tobias lack cordiality. Though Agnes is of highly understanding kind and patient towards Julia, Julia is not at all grateful towards her. She joins hands with her aunt, Claire to tease, annoy and accuse Agnes. She is accusative towards her father, too. The couple had borne a son. But he, too, dies as an infant. In *All Over*, too, the relations between Wife (mother) and Daughter are highly strained, so much so that Daughter accuses her mother of not taking her husband’s imminent death seriously and slaps her. Mother, too, has no pride or affection for the grown up son as she finds him too incompetent as compared to his father. She ridicules him for his weaknesses in front of others.

In *Kamala*, the couple, Jaysing and Sarita is childless. In *The Vultures*, the relationship between the father, Pappa and his children is too hostile. The children torture him to squeeze information about his secret account from him. The brothers Ramakant and Umakant bring about miscarriage of Manik’s foetus. Manik does the same thing with pregnant Rama, with the help of black magic. Ramakant’s excessive alcoholism has turned him almost impotent. That is why Rama has to suffer with the miscarriages, which she disgustingly refers to as ‘rotten seed’! In *Silence! The Court Is In Session*, the Kashikar couple is childless. Leela Benare, who is pregnant through illicit relationship, will have to terminate her pregnancy under social pressure. The relationship between Jyoti and her parents, gets strained due to her uncouth husband and her refusal to seek any sort of support from them against her suffering at his hands. Anu’s relationship with her parents, especially her mother Akka remains strained due to her wrong choice of Madhav as a life-partner who is not ready to lead the socially accepted routine life-style and has passion for the untrodden and uncertain path of being an actor in *Mee Jinklo! Mee Harlo!* In *Chimanicha Ghar Hota Menacha!*, Malak is an orphan, Muni has a
stepmother, with whom his relationship is very painful and has created hatred in his mind. In case of the young couple, Govinda and Kamal, they are eagerly waiting for their first child which is on the way. But they have to suffer the loss of unborn child. Not only this, the possibility of bearing a child comes to an end for Kamal along with the miscarriage. In the beginning, Malak has put a condition for them not to bear any children as he doesn’t want an increase in the family members of his tenants.

In *Wada Chirebandi*, there is a reference to the tension between Prabha and her father, Tatyaji who had blocked her path of progress by barring her from further education owing to the false notions of family prestige. In the next generation, tension is observed between Bhaskar and his children, especially Parag. Bhaskar keeps on taunting and insulting Parag for his depravation and lack of sharp intellect as compared to Sudhir’s son, Abhay. Ranju, his daughter, betrays him and the whole family by eloping with a cheat, her teacher, who robs her of the jewellery, she has stolen away from Bhaskar’s custody.

In *Yatanaghar*, Baby turns hostile to her parents as she comes to know that her invalidity is a result of her parents’ attempt to abort her as they were unable to afford another child in those days. Her brother, Ramesh, too dies childless. In *Raktapushpa*, Padma and Bhau suffer from the loss of their son, Shashi. The relations between Padma and her daughter are strained owing to their common interest, the young boy, Raja who is staying with them as a paying-guest. In *Wasanakanda*, Hemakanta’s relations with his father remain strained and hostile as the father is very strict and dominating who doesn’t approve Hemakanta’s passion for art. Hemakanta and Lalita’s illegitimate child is still-born. In *Party*, too, the relations between Damayanti, the mother and Sona, the daughter are strained and hostile. Sona, who has given birth to an illegitimate child, lacks any sort of special attachment with it. The Rajadhyksha couple of *Atmakatha* is childless. In fact, Vasanti, his sister-in-law is a mother of Rajadhyaksha’s son. But she deliberately keeps him away from the truth, so that he can never enjoy the pride and pleasure of fatherhood.
Thus the strained and hostile relationship between one or both parents and the children is found to be a common theme of the plays by all the four playwrights. If not so, the couples are found to be childless owing to inability, infertility of one or both the parents. In still other cases they bear children, but suffer from the loss of them. There is hardly any instance of the healthy and affectionate relationship between parents and children. The very theme of *Raktapushpa* is the agony and the insecurity of a woman passing through the menopausal phase which comes with the realization of losing the power of fertility.

**Appearance and reality/ Illusion and reality**

The next common theme is either appearance and reality or illusion and reality. The characters either keep up the appearances despite the reality which is very different or they live in their world of illusion to escape from the reality which is unbearable to them. All the four characters of *The Glass Menagerie* escape in their respective worlds of illusion; for various reasons. Amanda, every now and then, turns nostalgic of the world of the past glory where she had been a Southern belle, the center of attraction for all young gentlemen. Any reference to the past or Southern culture makes her switch over to her past. She repeatedly refers to a certain Sunday evening when there were seventeen gentlemen callers. During Jim’s visit, she has put on her old dress with which she literally gets switched over to her past. She re-lives her past, her youth, temporarily. Laura considers herself unfit to live in the world of reality which is full of struggle, pain and despair. She has created her own world of glass animals. She talks to them. She believes that she understands their feelings. To escape from the harsh realities of life, she confines herself to the world of glass menagerie and the old gramophone records.

Tom, too, is unhappy about the mechanical routine and his job as a clerk at a Shoe Company. He spends as much time as possible, away from home. He tries to escape from the reality and takes refuge in the celluloid world. He goes to movies to experience the romance and adventures of the Hollywood heroes. He himself wants to live adventurous life without any strings of family responsibility, which he does later on. Jim,
who is most ‘down-to-earth’ character, also has his dreams. He had been a hero, the most successful person in every field during his high-school days. He dreams of regaining the same glory, climbing up the ladder of success but is leading a dreary life as a clerk in the same Shoe Company.

Blanche Dubois of *The Streetcar Named Desire* has also created her own world of illusion. The devices she uses for that are paper lanterns, frequent bathing to soothe her nerves, display of her own sophistication, boasting about a highly wealthy gentlemen being interested in her and derision of lack of refinement in others, especially her brother-in-law, Stanley Kowalski. She resorts even to lies to keep up the appearances. Until the end she never admits that she had been fired from her teacher’s job for trying to seduce one of her students or the life of depravity she had been leading so far to maintain her luxurious life style.

Almost all the characters of *Cat On a Hot Tin Roof* are indulged in the illusion or appearances. Big Daddy is a patient of cancer. But all the family members keep it a secret. He is happy with the illusion that there is nothing serious about his ailment whereas his cancer is in a terminal phase. Big Mamma thinks that Big Daddy loves her. In fact, he has lost interest in her. He rather detests her. She, too, is blissfully ignorant about the gravity of Big Daddy’s illness. The elder son, Gooper and his wife, Mea, pretend to be highly concerned about Big Daddy’s well-being. But it is only the appearance adapted, out of sheer selfish motive to take charge of Big Daddy’s enormous property.

The marital relationship between Brick and Margaret is highly strained. Brick has drowned himself into liquor to avoid her. But she tries to keep up the appearance of a happily married couple. Brick’s alcoholism has arisen out of the guilt complex of being responsible for the suicide of his best friend. He also holds Margaret responsible for driving Skipper to take that dire step. That is why, he makes her suffer by denying her conjugal relationship and motherhood. In this situation, there is a least possibility of Margaret’s pregnancy. But she announces it providing Big Daddy some solace before his
death and also to blast Gooper’s evil designs against Brick, as he is trying to emphasize Brick’s incapability to be Big daddy’s successor.

In *Baby Doll*, the two rivals- Archie Lee and Silva Vacarro are playing the game of ‘hide and seek’ through the contrast between appearance and reality. Though Archie Lee is responsible for burning down Vacarro’s gin, he pretends to be innocent and offers to help him out as a good neighbour by accepting the responsibility of ginning the cotton in his factory. Vacarro, too, pretends to trust him. But he successfully extracts the truth from Baby Doll and her written testimony about Archie Lee’s involvement in the criminal act of burning down his gin. At cultural level, too, Archie Lee who is proud of his superior status as a Southern gentleman, is proved to be a savage on all fronts. Baby Doll, who pretends to detest the conjugal relationship and doesn’t allow her husband, Archie Lee even to touch her, gets easily attracted to the noble personality of Silva Vacarro and stops objecting to the physical intimacy with him. Towards the end, she leaves with Vacarro. All this transformation takes place without Vacarro’s effort or provocation for the change in her attitude.

In *Suddenly Last Summer* Sebastian’s mother, Mrs. Venable tries to prove Catherine, mentally derailed as she doesn’t want her to speak the painful and disgracing truth about Sebastian’s gory death. The nurse also treats her, as if, she is insane. Only the doctor displays some strength of character by showing willingness to trust her account. Alexandra Del Lago, the Hollywood actress of *Sweet Bird of Youth* is under the false impression that her career as an actress is over and her role in her latest film is a complete failure. So she tries to escape the said reality and resorts to drugs. Soon, she comes to know the truth and tries to come out of the world of illusion.

Flora Goforth of *The Milktrain Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore* denies accepting the truth about her health condition even to herself. She is not ready to accept that she has grown quite old. Same is the case of her friend, Marquessa Ridgeway. Both have extremely affluent background. But their desire for life and especially for sex is not still satiated. Both are under the illusion that they can enjoy sex with a young man like Chris.
Both these friends appear to be highly concerned about each other’s health and well being. But both continue with their veiled and biting verbal attacks upon each other.

Illusion is the life-support for Martha of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf*? Martha and George have created the illusion of their son to overcome the grief and frustration of childlessness. On the other hand the basis of Honey-Nick relationship is appearance or illusion of Honey’s pregnancy due to which they have got married hurriedly. Later on it is proved to be a hoax. Secondly, the couple of George and Martha appear to be constantly fighting with each other, attacking each other callously. But towards the end, they are found to have complete faith in each other.

On the contrary, Nick and Honey’s couple appear to be deeply in love with each other. Nick’s image is that of a caring husband. But slowly the myth starts dissolving. Both keep on deceiving each other. Nick is not faithful to Honey. Honey, being scared of labour-pain resorts to abortions secretly or avoids sex. This shows that reality of their lives is quite different from their appearances. Another example of false appearances is about the fathers of both the female characters. Both the fathers belong to the noble occupation of teaching and preaching. But both are indulged in corruption deep up to their necks.

The myth of happily married couple is also found to be shattered in *A Delicate Balance, Counting the Ways* and *Seascape*. In the beginning, the relationship between each couple appears to be normal. But soon it comes to light that Tobias is not faithful to Agnes and Agnes suspects of his having an affair with her sister, Claire. Both feel uneasy and awkward when they had to share the same bedroom on one night. Tobias prefers to spend the night in the drawing-room. In *Counting the Ways*, both husband and wife are doubtful about each other’s love. The couple, Nancy and Charlie has spent a major part of life together. Still they lack harmony in their relationship. In *All Over*, the family members have gathered there to be present during the last moments of the head of the family, to keep up the appearances for the sake of society. But actually, everyone of the family is prejudiced and sometimes even hostile to each other. The dying man’s mistress
and wife are expected to show enmity and hostility with each other. But they display an excellent understanding.

Same is true about the couple, Sarita and Jaisingh. Sarita’s disillusionment about her happy married life begins with Kamala’s innocent questioning. She realizes her status being merely as a slave and then she decides to get free from the slavery. She gets transformed from the state of complete submission to a hardcore rebellion. At another level disillusionment also takes place in Jaisingh’s case. Whatever appears to be a grand victory as a journalist for him after presenting Kamala, whom he has bought from the human flesh trade, turns into a disaster. When he is expecting accolades, he is punished with a dismissal, in addition to the risk of a criminal case for buying a human being in violation of the law.

_Silence! The Court is in Session_ is a classic instance of appearance and reality and the fine blending between the two, so that, neither the characters nor the audience can make out the line of demarcation between the two. The main action of the play begins as a mock-trial. Before the characters realize, they start pouring out their spleen against the accused, Leela Benare. As the charges against her so perfectly match her real life situation that she, too, forgets it being a mock-trial and takes everything seriously. In the process, she gets completely shattered. For the characters, too, their appearance or the mask of a civilized person is removed and the brute behind the mask is revealed with the contribution of each of them in tormenting and cornering the lone prey, Leela Benare.

In _Kanyadan_, the socialist couple Nath and Seva gets disillusioned about their ideology of equality and upliftment of the downtrodden. The disillusionment takes place more directly and painfully with Jyoti who accepts the reality and is determined to put up with it. In _Mee Jinklo! Mee Harlo!_ too, the protagonist Madhav is found to be torn between idealism/romanticism and realism. He has to set aside his idealism and agree to continue with his clerical job to fulfill the needs of real life. Afterwards he has to compromise with his idealism related to the type of acting career. Instead of following
classical and serious type of acting, he has to accept the roles of a comedian against his wish.

In *Shrimanta*, the Wagale family has to compromise to keep up the appearance of family name and prestige by accepting the relation of a rogue, Shridhar for their daughter, Mathura, to give the legitimate name of a father to her unborn child. The title *Shrimanta* suggests aristocracy and nobility which seemingly fit to the Wagale family. In the course of action, it is proved that not the wealthy family of Wagales is rich and noble in real sense when the nobility of attitude is concerned. The commoner Shridhar deserves the title in real sense who accepts their proposal for Mathura without any monetary gains in return. He deliberately behaves in an unacceptable manner to tease the snobbish Wagales. But it is only an outward appearance. His love and attachment for the baby, despite being fully aware of its paternity, is genuine. Mathura, too, realizes it towards the end and decides to stand by him. She prepares to leave her parents’ house to accompany him along with her baby.

Appearance and reality is an overwhelming theme of *Chimanicha Ghar Hota Menacha!* At first, the couple, Govinda and Kamal has to keep up the appearance of being sad and unhappy to fulfill the condition of the landlord, though they are really extremely happy with each other. Afterwards when they are really suffering due to the loss of their unborn baby, they have to keep up the appearance of being cheerful and gay. All of them pretend to celebrate the birth of the child and busy themselves in the preparation of the naming ceremony of the baby. The landlord, too, is an enthusiastic partner of this game of pretence. This illusion or appearance is not only restricted to the couple and other members of the extended family, but the agent, Muni also cherishes the illusion with respect to the toy-baby. He finds his stepmother in the toy. As his relationship with her had remained strained and bitter, he wants to take revenge against her by destroying the toy. Thus illusions are observed with both, Kamal and Muni, but they are exactly of opposite kind. The landlord, too, had cherished another kind of illusion. He thinks that he could never find life happy or interesting as he had known only suffering and bitterness. But with the experience of genuinely deep grief related to
Kamal’s unfulfilled love-affair and shattering of the vase, which is its souvenir, he comes out of the illusion of his own suffering, being the worst. Then he submits to another illusion of happiness.

In *Wada Chirebandi*, too, the prestigious landlord Deshpande family has to keep up the appearances of their former glory though the reality is quite different. Most of the farm-land is already mortgaged with the moneylender. They don’t have enough cash amount to spend over the last rites and feeding the entire village after the death of Tatyaji, the head of the family. At another level there are appearances of love, respect and responsibility towards Tatyaji, the family and its status. In reality, both the sons shy away from these responsibilities. Same is true about their concern for each other. Bhaskar, the eldest brother claims to be carrying out the burden of the family responsibilities. In reality he is planning to grab the family jewellery and keep it for himself by cheating other siblings. His daughter Ranju pretends to study English. But she is engaged secretly in planning for her elopement along with the jewellery. Of course at that critical moment, Sudhir, her uncle takes the responsibility of tracking her down and bringing her back, thus saving the family’s prestige, at least, for the sake of appearances.

In *Raktapushpa*, Padma, the mother is the victim of illusion. She is under the illusion of suffering from deep grief due to the loss of her young son. In fact, she is suffering from the sense of insecurity as she is passing through the menopausal phase which means the loss of fertility. Out of this insecurity, she tries desperately to catch the attention of the men in the house, especially the young boy, Raja, who is staying as a paying guest with them. The myth of her grief is destroyed by two things. One is her wearing the wedding brocade saree to seek appreciation from Raja while she has harshly criticized her own young daughter, Lilu for talking about her wedding saris. Second is, her love letters written to her imaginary lover.

Hemkanta of *Wasanakanda* has an illusion that he is much superior to Lalita in all respects. That is why he dominates her and forces her to bow to his wishes, including her physical submission to his lust. Lalita, too, has the illusion that he really loves her.
Both get disillusioned in the course of action. At first, Lalita realises of being used only as a model for his sculptures; without any love or affection for her. Then she grows emotionally and spiritually through the sense of guilt, being a sinner who has indulged in illicit relationship. She undergoes penance to absolve herself of the sins. Hemkanta has to admit to her superiority. So towards the end, he seeks emotional support from her.

Hemkanta’s another illusion is being a great artist. Here, too, he has to accept defeat. Lalita points out that he is not able to reach at the core of either her heart or to his art, his creations. His level of experience has always remained limited to the periphery. That is why he has failed to put life in his art. He has not even come forward to defend his art, his creations which underscore the shallowness of his concern for his art.

In *Party*, Elkunchwar has portrayed that slice of society where appearances matter than reality. Majority of characters are hypocrites and snobs. Everyone carries his or her own mask. Vrinda calls herself an ardent follower of communist, socialist ideology. She even refuses to accompany the wealthy writer, Agashe in his car as he is a capitalist as per her notions. Within few hours, she expresses her willingness to marry the same capitalist fellow. This removes another of her mask, of being a confirmed spinster. In spite of her socialist background, she has avoided to accompany Amrut who is engaged in genuinely meaningful social work of fighting for the rights of the poor tribals. Damayanti carries the mask of connoisseur of classic art and literature. But instead of encouraging and supporting the truly original and promising young writers like Amrut and Bharat, she places her weight behind Barve for her personal interest in him. Barve, who claims to be tackling with the real and burning issues, is quite ignorant about the current issue of the tribals and government’s stand about it. Mohini lives with the illusion that Barve really loves her, though she is quite aware of the reality of his indifference towards her. She has another illusion of being a great actress and having sacrificed her glorious acting career for the sake of her love for Barve. In reality, her acting and her love, both lack depth. Appearance and reality is also related to government policies and action. Government’s proclaimed policy is that of a welfare state, social justice and upliftment of the downtrodden. In practice, government machinery and the
decision makers stand firmly behind the capitalists and industrialists to exploit the tribals and rob them of their rights.

Rajadhyaksha of *Atmakatha* is also a snob just like Barve. He calls himself an idealist, a freedom fighter. But he avoids raising his voice against the unjust, unlawful Emergency declared by the then Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi. In spite of his image as an idealist, he betrays his wife. He is not truthful even to himself. That is why, he creates false images of himself and other persons related to him in his autobiographical novel. He is not prepared to accept his guilt even indirectly, in his fiction. He puts the blame upon Urmila, the character parallel to his wife, portraying her as a nagging wife who creates scenes. He also avoids acknowledging the worth of another young writer, Devdatta, in real life as well as in his fiction. This shows that he leads the life of appearances in his personal, professional as well as social area. Due to his guilt complex he finds his characters Urmila and her sister Vasudha approaching him to ask explanation for their false depiction.

**Psychological complexes and disorders**

All the four playwrights have tried to probe the psyche of their characters, which has remained a common feature of modern literature. Characters suffering from psychological complexes and disorders are found frequently in their plays. The theme, illusion and reality, is also associated with psychological problems. Apart from that, the other related issues are the psychological complexes like Oedipus complex, Electra complex, Superiority and inferiority complex, COB, death-wish or nihilism, retrogression, sex-envy, sibling rivalry, phobias etc. Laura of *The Glass Menagerie* has become a victim of an inferiority complex for various reasons. One of the reasons is her crippledness due to which she has to use braces. It makes her impossible to keep pace with others. She is always the last one to enter the class. She becomes extremely conscious of the noise made by her braces on the wooden floor. She feels that everybody got disturbed due to that noise which is not at all true. She is reluctant to mix up and open up with others.
She feels secure only with the family members or the animals or the non-living things. That is why when she joins the shorthand and typing class on her mother, Amanda’s insistence, she is not able to complete the course. She is also afraid of the tests and examinations. When she has to appear for the first test she feels sick and throws out in the class. It is the combination of the feeling of insecurity, fear and shame which keeps her away from the class. Similar effect is observed when Jim visits them on their invitation. She feels so weak and sick that she is unable to stand by herself. She sheds her inhibitions after Jim’s skilful tackling with the situation and his counseling for her inferiority complex. She opens up with him, shares her secrets, her joys and anxieties with him. She even dances with him which she has never done in her life. Jim, while talking to her informally, analyses her problem, applies the treatment and helps her overcoming the problem.

Illusion is a common way of escapism found in all the four characters, which is also observed in Blanche Dubois’ case of *The Streetcar Named Desire*. In addition to that, Blanche is the case of superiority complex also which is a common problem with all Southerners with respect to Blacks and even the Whites with different nationalities, especially Italians and Poles.

In *Orpheus Descending*, Sheriff’s wife is found to be suffering from a psychological problem, which has been arisen probably due to her childlessness. She tries to compensate for that with another kind of creativity, her paintings. She says that visions come to her. These visions are mainly related with Jesus, the savior. She gets confused between the savior of her visions and Val Xavier. The eyes of Jesus she has seen in her vision are exactly like Val Xavier’s eyes according to her account. Otherwise her vision is impaired. She could see only those mystic visions clearly. In a way, she considers Val Xavier to be her savior, supposed to free her from her tormenting situation. Coincidentally his name also matches with her image of him.
Brick, in *Cat On a Hot Tin Roof* is a victim of guilt complex. He considers himself and indirectly his wife, Margaret to be responsible for the death or suicide of his friend, Skipper. He has resorted to alcohol to forget the agony of losing his best friend. According to his account, Margaret has provoked him, challenged him to prove his manliness in bed as she suspects the friendship between Brick and Skipper being abnormal. Skipper has accepted the challenge but had failed to prove Margaret wrong. After the fiasco, Skipper had called Brick and confessed to his abnormal attraction for Brick. Brick is unable to digest the truth. So he resorts to an escape route of alcoholism. He wants to finish himself just like Skipper. Death-wish or nihilism has also been an instance of psychological abnormality, which is observed in case of Brick.

Archie Lee of *Baby Doll* suffers from superiority complex, being a Southerner. He also suffers from frustration as he finds everything slipping out of his hands. He is legally married, but his wife, Baby Doll has not allowed him the conjugal bliss so far. She has put the condition of clearing the installments for the furniture sets bought by her, which depends upon his sound financial position. The chances of recovering his business are growing dim day by day after the launch of another efficient ginning factory. In a desperate attempt to save his possessions, he resorts to crime and burns down the rival gin. Despite such a dire step, he is unable to put a brake to his downfall. As he faces a complete defeat at the hands of his arch rival, he really loses his mental balance. In this utterly frustrated state, he openly flaunts his gun to hunt down his faithful wife and his rival, Vacarro. Baby Doll’s aunt Rose Comfort has obsession for chocolates. She grabs every opportunity to enjoy it by visiting her old acquaintances lying almost on the death-beds in the hospitals. She can treat herself with the chocolates brought by visitors for the patients. Perhaps this obsession has arisen out of her old age and the lack of sweetmeats at home due to Archie Lee’s tight financial condition.

The mother, Mrs. Venable of *Suddenly Last Summer* is too possessive of her son, Sebastian. She goes out with him every summer. She is so possessive of him that when she learns about her husband being on the death-bed, she refuses to leave her son alone. She repeatedly describes her influence over him. She proudly tells that other tourists
considered them a couple. One more perversity is observed in her character and according to her, in Sebastian’s character, too. It is their abnormal interest in morbid, gore, cruel, found in nature.

She turns hostile towards Catherine whom Sebastian has substituted for her. In fact, Catherine has no part in Sebastian’s death. But she holds Catherine responsible for robbing him away from her. Her behavior and her way of thinking reveal a sadist streak in her. She wants to guard the secret related to Sebastian’s death. She uses the pressure tactics to prohibit Catherine from telling the truth. When Catherine insists on sticking to the truth, she puts pressure on the doctor to perform an operation called lobotomy upon Catherine to wipe out memory from her brain. Because of perverse whims, she is ready to ruin the life of innocent persons.

Flora Goforth of *The Milktrain Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore* suffers from superiority complex due to her extra-ordinary charm, huge wealth and her power to dominate everyone else. She is not ready to acknowledge the existence of death due to it. She has abnormal and insatiable desire which she wants to be satisfied even when she is on the verge of death. She indulges into the memories of her glory when she was in her prime youth. This is her way of overcoming the fear of death. Though she tries to evade the topic, the fear of death emerges to the surface which is deep situated at the bottom of her subconscious mind, under the influence of sedatives and painkillers. It is even seen when she re-lives the last moments of her first husband. She experiences the same horror. The illusion is so powerful to her that she starts running away from the scene, without being aware of her present status. Her secretary, Blackie, has to save her and bring her back to the present.

The White Nurse of *The Death of Bessie Smith*, as well as her father, suffers from superiority complex. She gets caught between the ideal and the practical. Ideally she should seek a life partner suitable to her Southerner’s status. Practically it is difficult to find one with a sound financial condition. That explains her love-hate relationship with
both, the White Intern and The Orderly with mixed blood is that of ‘love-hate’. She turns hostile to both due to her frustration. In general her attitude is bitter and cynic.

Both the females, Martha and Honey of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* are the victims of psychological problems. Martha is frustrated due to various reasons; especially from her husband, George, his lack of ambition to rise high in the university department like her father and his failure to give her a child. It is not clear that who is responsible for their childlessness. But it seems that she holds him responsible for it. That is why she resorts to alcoholism to cope up with her frustration. She keeps on insulting, deriding and thus tormenting him. She had devised one more way to compensate for her barrenness. She has invented a fantasy child. She behaves and makes George behave, as if, they really have a son. George participates in her game to a certain extent. When he finds it going out of hands, he decides to bring an end to the myth. Just like Mrs. Goforth, Martha’s lust is also insatiable. Her excessive indulgence in alcohol and sex might be her escape routes to forget her frustration of childlessness.

She also shows signs of Electra-complex. She is too proud of her father as a person and as an achiever. She constantly compares George with him and points out that George is nowhere near him. George, too, is not free from complexes. He must have been suffering from a guilt complex for causing death of both of his parents. He has tried to confess it through a novel which Martha’s father writes off. Honey has a phobia for sex; as she dreads pregnancy and labour pain. Instead of sex, she prefers to lie on the bathroom floors after she is dead drunk. She confesses about her guilt of murdering the foetuses without Nick’s knowledge and thereby depriving Nick of fatherhood. Martha and Honey, both are perverse, though the genesis of their perversity is different.

Perversity is observed in many other characters of Albee. Mommy of *The American Dream* is more perverse than the Mommy of *The Sandbox*. Mommy of *The Sandbox* is callous and wants tender feelings, and therefore leaves her mother to die her death on a sea-beach and watches coolly until her death. But Mommy of *The American Dream* exceeds the limit of callousness. They have adopted a child. Whenever she gets
dissatisfied with any of the aspects of his development she employs perversely cruel ways to punish the child. Because the child shows more attachment with Daddy, his eyes are gouged out. The account of subsequent punishments to a small child for other reasons is horrifying. Grandma reveals it to Mommy’s friend Mrs. Barker.

Grandma : ---------- But *then*, it began to develop an interest in its you—know—what.
Mrs. Barker: ---------- Well! I hope they cut its hands off at the wrists.
Grandma : Well, yes, they did that eventually. But first they cut off its you-know-what.

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Grandma : ---------- But after they cut-off its you—know—what, it *still* put its hands under the covers, *looking* for its you—know—what. So finally they *had* to cut off his hands at the wrists. (P.47)

In this way, they go on finding faults with the child as it grows, like: it didn’t have a head on his shoulders, it had no guts, it was spineless, its feet were made of clay etc. No wonder that the child ultimately dies. But the perversity doesn’t end here. They want their money back as they were not satisfied with the product!

Claire from *A Delicate Balance*, is another example of perversity. She enjoys teasing everyone by referring to the delicate issues. Though she is not drunk, she pretends so in front of Agnes to irritate her. She asks Tobias awkward questions about his affair with another woman, with whom his best friend Harry, too had an affair. She asks Julia insulting questions about her place in her parents’ house after her failed marriages. In the same vain she makes fun of the people at the Alcoholic Anonymous and confuses a saleswoman by asking for a topless swimming suit.

In *Seascape*, Charlie and his wife Nancy talk of his obsession with water, his feeling ‘at home’ at the bottom of the sea. His habit of spending as much time as possible at the bottom of the sea by holding heavy stones in his hands and controlling his breath.
Daughter and Son of *All Over*, suffer from psychological complexes. Son is shadowed by his rich, famous and powerful father. He suffers from inferiority complex. Daughter suffers from various complexes. She suffers from Electra-complex and therefore feels jealous of both, her mother and her father’s mistress. She is hostile to both of them which is seen from her stance towards both of them. She bars Mistress from attending her father’s funeral, as the family member and also accuses her of managing deaths of her husbands one by one. She slaps her mother in front of others as she thinks that her mother doesn’t feel the sorrow so deeply. Her perversity is also observed in her relation with her brother. She asks him to massage her neck. She gets irritated when he stops massaging. At the age of forty-five, she is still unmarried, as she lacks the ability to make friends and also feminine attraction.

Perversity and complexes are also found in Tendulkar’s characters. Almost all the characters of *The Vultures* are perverse. They cross the limit of avarice and cruelty. Only two characters do not fit into this lot. Out of them Rama has come from other family as Ramakant’s wife and Rajaninath is an illegitimate child of Pappa who has not taken after him. The characters behave more like vultures or even worse. They exhibit no signs of humanity. Whereas Pappa robs his own brother, his children torture him to grab his wealth deposited in a secret account. Then the children employ similar tactics against each other. Umakanth robs Ramakant’s peace of mind and feeling of pride for his expected fatherhood by sowing the seed of suspicion in his mind for the child’s legitimacy. Manik, his own sister, employs black magic to bring about his wife, Rama’s abortion. There is complete lack of trust, attachment and affection for each other in the family. Their excessive alcoholism is another sign of perversity.

The protagonist of *A Friend’s Story*, Sumitra Dev is sexually perverse. She is a lesbian. Coincidently, she gets another girl, Namita in her trap. She exhibits utter unscrupulousness to keep Namita under her thumb. In the present times one may not agree to call lesbianism as perversity. However, the means employed not to let her go, are certainly the signs of perversity. Sumitra forces Namita to keep dates with her. She doesn’t allow Namita to see her boyfriend, Manya Dalvi. She tries to bring about a rift in
their relationship by writing false and filthy letters to Manya, those, too in the handwriting of her trusted well-wisher, Bapu.

When on one occasion, Manya catches them red-handed, she resorts to vandalism and makes a mess of Bapu’s room in her frustration. She threatens Namita of dire consequences in case, she attempts to get rid of her. She doesn’t allow Namita even to refer to her marriage. When ‘ultimately the cat is out of the bag’, Sumitra reveals another aspect of her perversity. She is already a smoker. She also resorts to drinking. She is thrown out by her parents. Just like Blanche of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, she reduces herself to prostitution and begins to entertain the armymen in return for free drinks.

She is gradually leading a path of self-destruction which ends with her suicide. She has made one more attempt earlier when her homosexuality is confirmed to herself and her family members are pressurizing her for a marriage with a highly eligible suitor. She is unable to reveal the truth and therefore employs the escape route of suicide. However, she is not successful in her first attempt. But her suicidal and self-destructive instinct is revealed through it.

The characters of *Silence! The Court is in Session* are otherwise seemingly normal middleclass people. But almost everyone of them grabs the opportunity to bare their fangs with the smell of blood. All of them share a secret understanding like a pack of wolves to hunt down the weak prey, Leela Benare under the guise of a mock trial. They are ready to violate the norms of civilized behavior as well as the formalities and decorum of the court proceedings. They distort the facts, sometimes invent them through their imagination and employ falsity and above all utter callousness. All of them satisfy the evil, hidden deep in their minds.

To some extent, the self-destructive and suicidal tendency is observed in Leela Benare, too. She seems to be obsessive about the love-affairs which are taboos. Her first love-affair takes place with her maternal uncle who is much elder to her and who deserts her in the moment of crisis. Just like Sumitra in *A Friend’s Story*, Leela Benare too, has
the precedence of suicidal attempt. At that time she had attempted to jump to her death, unsuccessfully. This time she carries a bottle of Tik-20, a deadly poison; which clears her intention of suicide. This time she is entangled in another taboo relationship with an already married person. Just like her uncle, her present lover, Prof. Damle, too, refuses to stand by her when she really needs him. Leela Benare invites all the trouble from almost everyone around her owing to her superiority complex. No doubt, she is superior to others in many respects. She considers it to be her privilege to taunt, deride and humiliate others. But she forgets that she cannot afford to throw stones at others while she is living in a glass house.

Madhav, the protagonist of *Mee Jinklo! Mee Harlo!* is torn between the practical and the romantic aspects of life just like Tom of *The Glass Menagerie*. Madhav too, is an artist like Tom. He wants to act in classical and musical plays with which he can’t earn enough money to carry out his responsibilities towards his family. He, too, is continuing with his clerical job very reluctantly. He tries to rebel and follow his heart’s voice. But he has to compromise with his acting talent by accepting the roles of a comedian which makes him rich but leaves unhappy.

The characters of *Chimanicha Ghar Hota Menacha*, also suffer from complexes and perversity. Malak puts perverse conditions to his tenants. He expects them to look unhappy and frustrated all the time. He cannot stand the sight of happy and contented people at all; as he has never experienced happiness in his life. Muni has the complex of revenge and wrath against his stepmother who has made life impossible for him in his childhood. He wishes to project it upon the toy-baby which Kamal and Govind treat as their own baby. The game of illusion played by all others to treat the toy-baby as a real one is also an instance of psychological disorder.

Characters with complexes and perversity are also found in Elkunchwar’s plays. In *Holi* there are two characters, Anand and Lalu with feminine streak. Ranjit, a macho man wishes to establish a gay relationship with Lalu. But Lalu resists the pressure. On the other hand, Anand is keen on maintaining such a relationship with Shrivastav. Another
girl, who is called by a nick-name ‘Mummy’ for her lack of good looks and good figure, has accepted the fact of lacking charm from men’s point of view. That is why she pretends to be excessively free with boys. She tries to overcome the feeling of inferiority by taking it sportingly. Another boy who is called Taimur for his crippledness, also pretends to take it lightly. But his wall of defense crumbles down after witnessing the dire consequences of excessive ridicule in the form of Anand’s suicide after his utter humiliation for his drawback of being impotent and feminine. He hurls his crutch at Gopal for calling him ‘Taimur’ and driving Anand to commit suicide by his excesses in deriding him.

Baby of Yatanaghar is extremely perverse. Her perversity has arisen out of her invalidity. This complex gets intensified when she realizes, by chance, that her parents’ attempt to abort her in the womb has resulted into her invalidity. To seek her revenge, she deliberately displays her lifeless legs to the guests. The result of her invalidity is her inability to enjoy sex which she desperately desires. Her marriage or proximity with any other man is out of question. The only male within her scope is her brother, Ramesh. She tries to spend as much time as possible with him. She substitutes his belongings like his lighter, to enjoy the pleasure of his company. Her perversity is worsened after his marriage. She considers his wife to be her rival and tries to keep them apart which is not possible in normal circumstances. To achieve her goal, she encourages his smoking so that she could bring about a permanent separation between them on the background of his tuberculosis.

She is not only jealous of Ramesh’s wife but she is jealous of her companion, Kamal also who in spite of her ugly looks is capable of enjoying sex, unlike herself. There are signs of lesbian attraction between the two. Kamal loves to caress Baby’s rich, black and shining hair and also loves to make-up Baby’s beautiful face. As Baby is aware of Kamal’s obsession, she torments her by barring her from touching the hair. She keeps on lashing Kamal with her sharp tongue, makes her realize her position merely as a servant and her unattractive ugly looks.
Finally, Kamal, too, seeks revenge against Baby by revealing the secret that she had slept with Ramesh which Baby could never achieve. Baby’s heart certainly burns with jealousy. But she insists that Kamal should narrate the experience to her. Her obsession with darkness or fear of bright and clear light is also one more sign of her psychological complex. She fears bright light as it reveals truth. In this respect she resembles Blanche of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Padma, the mother in *Raktapushpa* also suffers from psychological problem. It is, in fact, the realization of loss of fertile, productive phase of life which is combined with the loss of her young son in real life. This fact facilitates her feigning sadness, loss of interest in material pleasures and overall bitterness in her personality. The myth of her grief gets exposed soon, with her actions which do not suit her so called mood; such as her flirting with the young boy, Raja, her desperate attempts to draw his attention to her attractive looks, her wearing a rich brocade saree on the very day of her son’s death anniversary, her love-letters not addressed to anyone in particular, but seemingly written to Raja, her futile attempt to have sex with her husband and her expression of her wish of having one more child etc. In her frustration and her desperate effort to retain her feminine power of attraction, she turns hostile even to her own daughter. She reveals her sex-envy with another female which happens to be her own daughter.

The conjugal relationship between the siblings of *Wasanakanda*, Hemakanata and Lalita, is a classic instance of perversity. Lalita, at first, tries to resist it despite her temptation. But Hemakanta pressurises her and takes undue advantage of her adoration for him. His perversity is further manifested in his indifferent attitude to her and their baby in Lalita’s womb. Even afterwards, when the baby is still-born, Lalita’s tender sentiments pose a contrast with Hemakanta’s indifferent attitude towards the last rites of the baby. He is devoted or attached with none, not even with his art, his sculptures.

Deceitful behavior is commonly observed in almost all the characters of *Party*. However none of these can be called psychological disorder except Mohini and to some extent Vrinda’s characters. Just like Padma of *Raktapushpa*, Mohini, too feels insecure as she is scared of losing her feminine charm and power to keep Barve tied to her. Due to
her frustration and feeling of insecurity, she resorts to alcoholism as an escape route. Her fears are not baseless, is proved through Barve’s attitude to her and the mutual interest between Barve and Damayanti.

Vrinda’s problem is the discrepancy between her words and actions. She talks ideology, but behaves in purely practical point of view. She talks of her communist orientation but doesn’t follow Amrut’s path of true service to the downtrodden. She resents accepting lift in Agashe’s car, who is a capitalist as per her norms. But soon afterwards she expresses her willingness to accept Agashe’s marriage proposal, if he makes one! While returning from the party, she joins Agashe in his car.

If self deception of Vrinda is to be considered a psychological disorder, then Barve and Damayanti also suffer from it. Barve feigns indifference over his inclusion in the delegation to be sent abroad. But when he finds Damayanti alone, he suggests her to recommend his name for it. He is acclaimed for his handling of fundamental issues in his writings. But he is completely ignorant of the ongoing burning issue in the tribal area where Amrut is risking his life and has already sacrificed his career as a writer. Damayanti, too, talks of being tired of parties and socialization. But she still organizes parties regularly. She talks of being impartial, but puts her weight behind Barve for the delegation. She is not ready to admit even to herself that she made her husband’s life impossible by her behavior.

Similar kind of self deception is found in case of Rajadhyksha of Atmakatha. He has created his image as an idealist and retained it successfully until a research scholar, Pradnya meets him. She points out the flaws in his theory and his real self. The same deception is also observed in his autobiographical novel where he very cleverly disguises the facts, creates or maintains his own image as an idealist and puts blame unnecessarily upon the character parallel to his wife, Uttara. During his last moments and due to Pradnya’s frank remarks and her cross questioning, his conscience is awakened and he confesses of having done injustice to his wife, his sister-in-law and his contemporary, young and talented writer Devdatta.
Myth and Religion

There are recurring allusions to myths and religion mainly in the plays by T. Williams and Elkunchwar. The prominent examples from Williams’ plays are *Orpheus Descending* and *The Milktrain Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore*. Among Elkunchwar’s plays this theme is mainly found in *Wada Chirebandi, Ek Osad Gaon, Eka Mhataryacha Khoon, Yatanaghar, Vasanakanda* etc. Apart from them religious overtones are found in the names of characters or the use of significant days from the religious point of view.

The title, *Orpheus Descending* itself makes use of mythical character of Orpheus who is known for his enchanting music. With the help of it he could retrieve his wife Eurydice from Hades, the underworld, after her death. Here, Val Xavier stands for Orpheus. His guitar suggests the magic of music. The town he arrives at, represents Hades. He is expected to resurrect Lady Torrance, who stands for Eurydice. She is to be freed from the clutches of The Lord of Death, Jabe Torrance. Apart from Lady, two other Eurydices need his help. One is Vee Talbott, the Sheriff’s wife and the other is Carol Cutrere, who is an outcast.

Val’s name is also closely associated with religious figures like Valentine and Xavier. The first name is the saint’s name that helps the lovers and Xavier is a savior, Jesus, who sacrificed his life for the sake of mankind. There are also other interpretations of Val’s character. Val is also similar to the Greek god Dionysus, the god of fertility and rebirth. There is also the idea of soul’s purification through purgation in the underworld. Val has led a corrupt life so far and therefore he longs for purification and purgation of his soul which he is going to attain in Hades, the town where he arrives.

At the end of the play, he is burned alive, thereby helping him attain the purification of his soul. The purified soul is passed into his snakeskin jacket which stands for rebirth. The jacket passes to Carol Cutrere, symbolizing the immortality of soul which is probably going to help her thereafter. The events in the third act take place during the
Saturday night preceding Easter Sunday, which symbolizes the journey through crucifixion and resurrection.

There is one more myth associated with Val which is that of a legless bird who must keep on flying until death. That bird touches the earth only once in its life time and that is when it is to die. Val, too, is a wanderer. He tries to settle in the town, though reluctantly. Here his destiny is sealed to meet his death in the town.

The second Eurydice, Vee Talbott, the Sheriff’s wife also looks at Val as a savior. Vee is a sexually frustrated woman. She has sublimated her sexual desires into religious paintings. She paints from vision. Just before the tragedy with Val and Lady, Vee has had such a powerful vision that it has almost blinded her. This is the vision of resurrected Christ. She has come in an exalted state to tell about it to Val. When she looks into Val’s eyes, she becomes ecstatic to find that they are the same eyes she has seen in her vision. She knells down before Val. At this moment, the Sheriff enters there and accuses Val of trying to seduce his wife and takes Vee forcibly away.

The third Eurydice, Carol Cutrere, too, expects Val’s company. She has aristocratic roots, but has defied all the norms of aristocracy. She is provided with enough money by her brother in return for staying out of the town. She makes repeated offers to Val to accompany her. But Val turns them down. She has sensed some conspiracy being brewed against him. She tries to warn him and offers to take him out of the town safely. He, too, wants to leave the town before sunset. But he stays there on Lady’s insistence until the opening of her confectionary and meets a saintly death as he is lynched by the mob on false charges by Jabe Torrance and the Sheriff.

Chris Flaunders of *The Milktrain Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore*, also performs the role of a savior for the dying old people. He refers to his chance encounter with a Hindu Swami who had assigned him his mission for the life. He had to help a man who wanted to die. In return, the man hands over a big amount from his pocket to him just before dying. After that he meets the old Hindu swami and narrates the experience to him. The
Swami tells him that he has found his vocation that is to give company to dying souls, prepare them for accepting death and make their last moments peaceful etc. The Swami’s touch had suddenly made Chris feel peaceful. Chris has taken it up as a holy mission since then. He has arrived at Mrs. Goforth’s castle for the same reason as he has realized her death to be very close. His very name is suggestive of Christ.

Jim of The Glass Menagerie also plays the role of a savior, especially for Laura and helps her come out of her inferiority complex. The play itself begins with saying grace before taking food. During Amanda’s conversation with Jim, she refers to Moses, though in a light vein. When she sends Jim to give Laura company who is feeling sick, she gives an old candelabrum in his hand. According to her, it was used on the altar at the church of the Heavenly Rest. She also refers to the church being struck by lightning. The reason according to the priest was the loss of faith observed among the Episcopalians. The names of Catherine Holly and Sebastian, both are associated with the saints.

In Elkunchwar’s Wada Chirebandi, there are repeated references to devghar, the place of worship where Hindus don’t enter during the mourning period of two weeks after death in the family. But Bhaskar hides the family jewellery there with the intention of grabbing it. Tatyaji collapses immediately after performing the (daily) holy ritual of Sandhya. The play ends with the recitation of the hymns, the mantras are, which are related to the rituals for the peace of the departed soul and its salvation. There is one more mystic incidence. Bhaskar who is tempted to grab the family jewellery, asks his wife to put on all the ornaments. But she asks Bhaskar to keep the jewellery box in devghar and distribute them among its legitimate successors. At the same time, Bhaskar’s grandmother, Dadi who has lost contact with the present and is unable to move by herself, is mysteriously found to be sitting by the tractor in the front-yard. She is not aware of her son’s death. She is talking to him, complaining about the disorders in the Wada. She has sensed that something is going wrong in the house. Bhaskar’s mother realizes that Dadi has seen and talked to her son Tatyaji. The returning of the departed
soul is not a good sign. It is taken as a ghost. So Aai asks for forgiveness and requests the soul not to torment his own children.

The myth of Yamadoota, the messenger of the God of Death has been used in Eka Mhataryacha Khoon. The three persons, two men and a woman, are the prisoners and the old man is taking them to an unending tormenting journey. They try to get rid of him by murdering him. They can neither get rid of the old man as their hands are tied with his and nor of death. Their inevitable death is waiting for them in the darkness of night, in the form of the pack of wolves.

The myth of Holi, the ceremonial holy fire has been used as a backdrop in Holi. When the fire goes berserk, it takes into its lap everything in its path like the forest fire. Thus the Holi lighted as a gesture of students’ protest, takes in turn, the careers of young students in its lap. In Yatanaghar, Keshav arrives towards the end as a savior to lead Baby from her sinful path to the path of enlightenment, self knowledge, absolution of sins and salvation of the soul, thus bringing about her resurrection. In Vasanakanda, the myth of sexual attraction between the siblings, Yama, the God of Death and Yami, his sister has been used without its direct reference. The fact that the result of such an illicit relationship is a total disaster has been reiterated. Lalita realizes it and therefore undergoes continual penance by tormenting her body and soul. Same is true about Stree and Tapasi of Ek Osad Gaon. Both are doing penance in their own way. Both keep away from material pleasures and inflict loneliness upon themselves.

Woes of Glamour and Affluence

One of the recurring themes found in the plays by the American playwrights is the problem of the people having roots in the Southern aristocratic families. Most of them have lost their former glory and affluence. But due to their upbringing in the aristocratic manner, their pride of being associated with prestigious family names, makes it very difficult and painful for them to cope up with the changed and changing circumstances.
There are a number of such characters, especially in T. Williams’ plays. The prominent among them are Amanda Wingfield of *The Glass Menagerie*, Blanche Dubois of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Archie Lee of *Baby Doll* and the Finleys of *Sweet Bird of Youth* etc. The Nurse and Father of *The Death of Bessie Smith* also belong to this set of characters. Elkunchwar deals with this theme in *Wada Chirebandi*, with respect to the members of the former Landlord family of Deshpandes.

There is another set of families emerging newly among the rich and affluent. They don’t have their roots necessarily associated with the prestigious family names. But they have attained powerful positions with the help of their wealth. Some of them possess both, wealth as well as family names, such as Jabe Torrance and other characters of *Orpheus Descending*, Violet Venable of *Suddenly Last Summer*, Alexandra Del Lago of *Sweet Bird of Youth* and almost all characters of *All Over*. Ultimately it seems that the financial power matters, with or without prestigious family names. The characters like Big Daddy and his family members of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Flora Goforth of *The Milktrain Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore* belongs to the group where they have attained richness on their own, but they don’t belong to prestigious families of the South. Richness may be of any kind, but it brings various problems along with it.

Jabe Torrance has got name and wealth, both. In his arrogance, he has punished Lady’s father with his business and his life. He has also bought his beautiful daughter, Lady. But he always remains suspicious of her fidelity to him. His suspicions and fears worsen as he has realized that he is going to die soon with cancer. Thus in spite of his wealth, he cannot experience the peace of mind. Cutrere family also is rich and famous. But no member of his family is happy. David Cutrere has passionately loved Lady. But he deserts her after she is reduced to a penniless state as her father’s business, bar and orchard is set on fire along with him. He marries another girl from a rich and prestigious family. But he is not happy with her and most probably is childless. Ironically, Lady had been pregnant when he deserted her, but she had to abort the baby. Carol Cutrere, too, possesses everything. She is also young and attractive. But the Southern hypocrites don’t approve her social work, her devotion to the cause of upliftment of Negroes. So she
rebels against her family and society and deliberately adapts the lifestyle of a vagabond. Vee Talbot is another example of this set. She, too, is frustrated due to her barrenness. She finds solace in Val Xavier’s company. But her sheriff husband is too suspicious to allow her talking to him. He accuses him of trying to seduce his wife and asks him to leave the town immediately.

Big Daddy of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* has earned a huge property and prestige through hard work. He is unaware that he is going to die of cancer. More important is the fact that he is not happy with the ways of both of his sons. He has a special attachment with his younger son, Brick. He wants to make him successor to his property. But he behaves, as if, he wants to destroy himself. Secondly, he is expecting a grandson by Brick. But there is no sign of it. He suspects that Brick’s relation with his wife is not normal. Therefore he is restless to know the real problem. But Brick resists all his father’s attempts to open his heart to him. His elder son, Gooper is educated and a well settled lawyer. But he is too greedy. He tries to prove Brick’s incapability to take the responsibility of the huge estate. Many other people like a local priest pester him for donations. His wife is devoted to him. But he has no interest in her. The truth about the status of his health has been purposely kept away from him, to spare him from the anxiety which Brick unwittingly and unexpectedly reveals in his rage and excitement.

There are two different types of affluent characters in *Sweet Bird of Youth*. One is the high born Princess Alexandra Del Lago who also happens to be a highly successful Hollywood actress. She has highly prestigious family name, huge wealth and the glamour of Hollywood behind her. She is under the impression that her latest movie is a flop and her acting career is fading out. She resorts to drugs to escape her despair. She even takes the risk of smuggling drugs to satisfy her need. She has to allow a commoner like Chance Wayne to be her companion. She also tries to make use of sex as an escape route. But Chance doesn’t submit to her pressure for that.

On the other hand there are the members of the Finley family. Boss Finley is a businessman with the political power. He is an unscrupulous fellow and doesn’t bother
about the means to achieve his ends. Same is true about his son, Tom. He is not genuinely interested in studies. He manages to pass the examinations through cheating and by using the money power and his father’s influence. Being occupied with his business and politics, he fails to provide emotional support to his daughter. In her loneliness she falls in love with Chance Wayne. The vast class difference doesn’t bother her. But she is pressurized to sever ties with him. She keeps on meeting him secretly as she experiences true love in his company. She is forced to bring an end to that relationship for one more unfortunate cause. Chance Wayne has transmitted a venereal disease to her during their conjugal relationship. She has to undergo a surgery of hysterectomy to save her life, bringing an end to the possibility of bearing children. Thereafter, her life according to her is like a living corpse. She just obeys the orders of her father. She has to accompany her father and stand by his side to prove the rumours related to her character false. She has to accept her marriage forced by her father with the same doctor who has performed the surgery, to keep up the appearances for the sake of her father’s position. She knows that Chance Wayne is in town. But she cannot see him though she wishes it earnestly. Her mother, too, had suffered due to her father’s infidelity. Though he claimed to love her deeply, he already had an extra-marital affair before her death.

Flora Goforth and her peer Marquessa Ridgeway of *The Milktrain Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore*, are rolling in money. But both are not happy and contented. Both are aged and suffer from various ailments. But they refuse to admit it. In spite of enjoying all the pleasures of life fully, both remain unsatiated, especially when sexual desire is concerned. The females of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia woolf?* remain frustrated and unhappy despite their excellent financial position. In *All Over*, too, no one is happy and satisfied. The characters suffer from distrust, infidelity, jealousy, frustration and many other ills.

Same is true about the characters of *The Vultures*. In Tendulkar’s *Shrimanta* (Aristocrats), the couple Dada and Malini, suffer from disgrace and dissatisfaction by both the children. The daughter, Mathura, brings the disgrace, first by being pregnant without marriage and then by making them accept a relationship with a man who is
nowhere close to them in social status and culture. They have to put up with the insults inflicted by him. Their son, Bhau is a worthless fellow. He is neither educated nor capable of sharing the responsibility of his father’s business. Afterwards his depravity is also exposed by the son-in-law, Shridhar with the help of the doctor who also happens to be a family friend.

Elkunchwar deals with this theme mainly in Party and Atmakatha. Almost all the characters of Party belong to the world of glamour as well as affluence. But the overwhelming presence of treachery, jealousy, suspicion, distrust, frustration and despair is observed in the atmosphere. They only put on the masks of happiness and pretend to enjoy life through such parties. But everyone is carrying a burden of woes with them.

The characters of Atmakatha, too, suffer from irreparable losses, in spite of affluence and glamour. Because of their privileged position, their woes also become public. Uttara severs all the ties with Rajadhyaksha, her famous writer husband after his act of treachery. He keeps on sending letters to her. But she never responds. Rajadhyksha tries to defend himself through his autobiographical novel. Uttara is quite aware of the falsity which is used as facts in the novel. So she publishes his letters to expose him. Thus the issue which should have remained within the four walls becomes public. Ironically, this public battle takes place despite their deep concern for each other.

**Attitude towards death**

Overwhelming presence of death is found in the plays by all these four playwrights. However, they differ in their attitude towards death and treatment of death. In most of the plays, death has been treated either as a central theme or there is an unmistakable shadow of death looming large in the atmosphere. This theme is conspicuously observed in Williams’ Orpheus Descending, Cat On a Hot Tin Roof,
Suddenly Last Summer, Sweet Bird of Youth and The Milktain Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore. In other plays, there is a cursory or sometimes a comic reference to death. Albee’s plays dealing with this theme are The Death of Bessie Smith, The Sand Box, Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, A Delicate Balance and All Over. Though not as a major theme, Tendulkar, too, deals with this theme in The Vultures, A Friend’s Story, Silence! The Court is in Session! and Chimancha Ghar Hota Menacha. On the contrary, Elkunchwar seems to be obsessed with this theme which becomes a major theme in almost all his plays like Wada Chirebandi, Eka Mhataryacha Khoon, Holi, Yatanaghar, Raktapushpa, Wasanakanda, Party and Atmakatha.

The title Orpheus Descending itself is associated with death and the Hades, the world of dead. Another myth associated with Val Xavier’s life-style is related to a legless bird that touches earth only once, at the time of its death, is also closely associated with Val’s death. Val’s death takes place. But apart from Val’s death the plot deals with many other deaths. There is an unmistakable shadow of death right from the beginning. They are preparing to welcome Jabe Torrance who is arriving home from hospital after his treatment for the critical case of cancer. His death is approaching very fast. He, as well as, others know the truth.

In the course of the action, reference has been made to many other deaths which are not natural deaths. Jabe and his gang has burned Lady’s father alive along with his orchard to punish him for the crime of serving liquor to Negroes in his bar. This disaster turns Lady a destitute. Her lover, David Cutrere loses interest in her and marries another wealthy girl. Lady is pregnant. She has to kill the unborn baby in that situation.

Jabe Torrance has always been suspicious about Lady’s fidelity. He suspects about the relationship between Lady and Val. He gathers all his strength and begins to come down to kill Val, his rival. Lady, in her attempt to protect Val, gets shot fatally. Jabe, through his evil design, puts the blame upon Val for attempting robbery. The Sheriff, too, is jealous of Val due to his wife’s interest in him. He, along with others grabs the opportunity to kill Val mercilessly. Val, too, is burnt alive just like Lady’s father. Lady is
pregnant by Val. It means that once again unborn baby has got killed. On the background, the noise of howling of dogs, chasing the fugitive Negro slaves or convicts is heard. Thus throughout the play, the overwhelming presence of callous deaths is felt.

The shadow of death is also felt in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. Big Daddy’s condition is similar to that of Jabe Torrance. Everyone is aware of that except Big Daddy himself and his simple wife, Big Mamma. Brick, his younger and favourite son seems to be haunted by death-wish. This death-wish has also arisen out of another death, his buddy, Skipper’s suicide. During the heated debate between Big Daddy and Brick, Brick unwittingly refers to the former’s critical condition, thus making Big Daddy aware of the footsteps of death.

Sebastian and his mother, Mrs. Violet Venable of *Suddenly Last Summer* display a perverse fascination for death and cruelty in nature. The play itself begins on the backdrop of Sebastian’s unnatural death in a horrifying manner. The atmosphere of death and cruelty is very conspicuous in this play. Sebastian has grown the insectivorous plants like a Venus Fly Trap in his green-house. Mrs. Venable relishes describing the fruit flies being fed to the plant. With the same relish, she describes her visit to certain islands to watch the savagery in nature, where the carnivorous birds would crowd in the sky to feast upon the just hatched turtles, scrambling down towards the sea and the turtles would try “to escape the flesh-eating birds that made the sky almost as black as beach!” Sebastian’s death has also taken place in a similar way. The gang of famished native boys have chased him uphill. By the time Catherine who was accompanying him, would bring some help, the boys have hunted down their prey and devoured his flesh. Mrs. Venable refuses to accept the truth and wants to shut Catherine’s mouth who was the witness to the gory episode. She is determined to give her a living death, by leaving her incapable of retaining any trace of memory in her brain.

Heavenly of *Sweet Bird of Youth* also describes herself as a living corpse; after she has undergone the surgery of hysterectomy to save her life from the infection of venereal disease. It is not only the surgery, but her father has barred her from seeing her lover, Chance Wayne and fixed her marriage with the young doctor, Scudder against her
wish. Heavenly’s death is symbolic in one way which deprives her of her life-support and her fertility. Her lover, Chance Wayne meets his symbolic death, also by losing his fertility, his sex organ at the hands of Heavenly’s brother, Tom and his gang. They punish Chance by castrating him for the crime of falling in love with a girl much above his level.

*The Milktrain Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore* begins with the suggestion of Flora Goforth’s death closing in, again, due to cancer and ends with her death finally. In the meanwhile a lot of deliberations on death take place between Flora and Chris Flaunders who is known as an angel of death. It is a sort of battle of wits between proud mortals like Flora Goforth who are not ready to acknowledge the existence of death and inevitability of death represented by Chris Flaunders, the angel of death. Flora is not ready to admit either her ageing or the seriousness of her health condition even to herself. She refuses to accept that she is suffering from serious chest abscess though the pain is unbearable and she has to live literally on medicines, sedatives or pain-killers and liquor. Her vision is fading.

Though she tries to turn blind to the reality while she is in her senses, the hidden fears are exposed when she is under the influence of sedatives. On one such occasion, her fears emerge on the surface and she vividly recalls the last moments of her first husband, when she had seen the terror of death in his eyes and his desperate efforts to escape it. She re-lives his death through that memory and unconsciously confesses, “I’m lost, blind, dying!” (P.177) When Blackie, her secretary, rushes there to compose her, she begs her not to leave her alone! She needs someone’s support to escape death.

Chris intuitively arrives there to provide her company and support and also to prepare her to face the inevitable. But she is not ready to accept it. He continues with his mission. He tries to convince her how even animals need each other’s support when they feel insecure, especially at night. He tries to drive home the point with the help of the metaphor of the puppies bought as pets after separating them from their mother. He says, “They pretend being happy during daytime, but are frightened at night before they slip into sleep and- rest for the next day’s- play time ----- and the next day’s mysteries.”
(P.190) using the metaphor of day-night-darkness and slipping into sleep for next day’s mysteries echoes the Indian philosophy of death and rebirth which is very natural for Chris who is influenced by the Hindu Swami. Flora’s health is fast deteriorating. She has to gasp for breath. She admits now that she is not immortal but persists that she never thinks of death. She gets excited after a heated argument with her secretary, Blackie, who is tired of her whims and wants to quit the job. Flora is shouting at Blackie. It causes her a fit of cough. She is suffering with a great pain. The fit of cough has resulted into a haemorrhage. She hurriedly starts going inside to hide the fact from others which they have already noticed. All her strength is drained by this time. Still, she tries to convince them that there is nothing serious and it has happened just due to excessive work pressure. She describes the burning of her body as a house on fire. Chris picks up the clue to make her admit the truth.

Chris: Yes, we all live in house on fire, no fire-department 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)

Chris continues with his attempts to prepare her to accept death. He hints at his mission where some other lady is waiting for his support. He tells her about how he started his mission as per Hindu Swami’s directions and his thoughts about life, death and acceptance of the moment until one stops existing. He also refers to his experiences with some other people whom he had accompanied during their last moments. She still remains defiant. She is still worried about her jewels and her pride. She asks him to go to his next destination. She is exhausted and frustrated. Chris wants to put her to bed. His words really scare her. Even during these last moments she wants to make fun of death. She comments, “You’ve been tipped off that old Flora Goforth is about to go forth this summer.”

By this time, she is mentally prepared. But she boasts that she can face it alone and he should not expect her heart to melt or she being in need of his company. Once again, she asks him to go away and work his magic upon others, the softer targets. She
again vomits blood due to the exertion. The tissue paper is red with blood. She calls it ‘a paper rose’. By this time her energy is completely drained out. Finally, she asks him to take her to bed, but still keeps on boasting about her invaluable possessions. When he puts her on the bed, unconsciously she begs him, “Don’t leave me alone till----”, but avoids mentioning death. On the contrary, she asks him to be there when she would ‘wake up’. Thus she keeps on fighting with the concept of death until her last moment, keeping her sense of humour, her pride and her desire for life, alive. This is a very unusual character and unusual way of handling the theme of death.

Whatever is observed in case of Williams is also applicable to Albee’s plays. Death plays an important role in his plays, too. Either there is a cloud of death in the atmosphere or death leads to some crisis or conflict. Sometimes death has been used as a backdrop, or only a virtual death takes place. In some plays death has been treated in a comic way turning it into a black comedy. Coming to the individual plays, in *The Death of Bessie Smith*, Bessie Smith does die which is not portrayed on the stage. In fact, Basssie never takes part in the action. Everything about her has been referred by others, mainly Jack, her Negro friend and a well-wisher. The main theme in this play is racial discrimination and apathy, callousness arising out of it. Bessie Smith is a victim of this apathy.

*The Sandbox* is a black comedy with the shades of fantasy. Here the callous daughter, Mommy, takes her aged mother, Grandma to die on a sea-beach. Grandma is supposed to bury herself. That is why she has been placed in a sandbox with a toy spade. She has to put the sand upon her with the help of the toy-spade. A handsome young man is also present on the beach. He is busy with physical exercises. He is an angel of death who will step forward at the right moment. Mommy is coolly sitting and watching the last moments before Grandma dies. She dutifully sheds tears over her mother’s death.

*The American Dream* is like a sequel to *The Sandbox*, Mommy, Daddy and Grandma being the common characters. In addition to them there are two visitors. One is the president of local women’s club. Another is an extremely good looking and handsome
young man. Here, too, Albee has blended reality and fantasy very skillfully. He has also blended the characters of the president and the representative of a Bye-Bye Adoption Service into one. The readers come to know through Grandma’s account how Mommy and Daddy had adopted a child from the Adoption Service, how they faced disappointments by the child, how they punished the child severely and how it resulted into the child’s death etc.

Albee wants to portray the utter indifference and the callousness of the parents when their children fail to fulfill their expectations. They can go to the extreme of killing them. No actual death takes place during the action of *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* But George executes the plan of killing the son of their fantasy world. It has been done highly dramatically; sustaining the suspense and making the audience feel it to be genuine. There is also a reference to George’s having killed both his parents accidentally. Honey who is scared of labour pains gets the foetuses aborted which George refers to as ‘the secret little murders’.

The root cause behind the psychological problems of all the three members of the family in *A Delicate Balance* is the death of the baby boy in the family. Julia suffers doubly due to the death. When her baby-brother is born, she feels being ignored as a result of sibling rivalry. She is jealous of him. When the baby dies, she suffers from guilt complex. There is a third angle also. She compares her partners with her late brother which makes it difficult for her to adjust with each of them. The death of the child has distanced the couple, Agnes and Tobias, and caused tension in their relationship. He fails to understand her need of his emotional support and his company.

*All Over* has a backdrop of death. The family members and friends have gathered to attend the last moments of a dying man. Their strains, prejudices, sorrows etc. have been portrayed on this background. The play ends with the doctor’s proclaiming the death with the words, “All Over”. There is a furious debate between Wife and Mistress over the way, the last rites are to be performed- burial in Christian tradition or cremation as the patient has wished, according to Mistress. There are references to other deaths, such as,
deaths of Mistress’ husbands. Daughter blames her of killing them for the sake of their wealth.

Tendulkar doesn’t use death as a major theme, nor he ponders over death or attempts to explore it, philosophise it like Williams. However, death is a part of his plays also. Too many natural and unnatural deaths take place in The Vultures, Death of Uncle due to poverty, Pappa’s death after his torture by his children and Princess’ sudden death by heart-attack etc. In addition to that Manik’s abortion takes place as a result of callous plot of her brothers. Rama’s abortion brought about by Manik with the help of black-magic. There is Sumitra’s suicide by the end of A Friend’s story and Benare’s probable abortion in Silence! The Court is in Session. Similarly there is a reference to the untimely death of Kamal’s lover due to T.B. and the death of her unborn child; in Chimanicha Ghar Hota Menacha.

Just like Williams and Albee, unmistakable presence of death is found also in Elkunchwar’s plays. It is not only related to the occurrence of death, but he deals with it in the light of Indian philosophy and beliefs related to death. The prominent examples are Wada Chirebandi, Eka Mhataryacha Khoon, Yatanaghar and Wasanakanda. Presence of death is observed in his other plays, too. The action of Wada Chirebandi opens on the background of Tatyaji’s death and ends on the background of the recitation of hymns related to the death related rites by the end of the mourning period. Secondly, Elkunchwar doesn’t deal only with the death of the head of the family and its aftereffects upon the family members. He uses this death as a metaphor in a much larger sense. It is the last nail in the coffin of feudal system, the last phase of the joint family culture, the old value system and the predominant social structure.

The title, Eka Mhatarycha Khoon refers to the murder of an old man. The whole play is an allegory over the last phase of man’s journey, the agony and tediousness of the unending journey, ups and downs of man’s life and his attempts to adjust with the stark realities of life. The old warden, Mhatara symbolizes the Yamadoot, the messenger of the Death-God, Yama as per Hindu mythology. Nobody can escape death. Everybody has to
take the long, tormenting journey. Man has been trying for ages to defy, to evade death which is represented through the three prisoners Man 1, Man 2 and Woman, suggestive of the perpetual love triangle. In their desperate attempt to conquer death, they plan to murder the old warden. They do so successfully. Still, they are unable to escape death which is hidden in the darkness in the guise of the pack of wolves. It is also symbolic of ‘completing one’s measure of sins before death. They complete it by murdering the old warden which is the right moment of their deaths.

_Yatanaghar_ is another allegory over material and mortal existence of human beings and transcending its limits, going beyond and attempting to merge into the cosmic spirit, the merging of _Atma_- a single flame into _Paramatma_- the Eternal Cosmic Flame. Man needs a _guru_, a guide to accomplish this journey. Though _Yatanaghar_ suggests a house, it can also be taken as the mortal body or flesh as Chris of _The Milktrain Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore_ philosophises. The soul has no escape route from the burning house, the body. In the absence of an able guide, soul remains embedded in the quagmire of earthly instincts. But a savior like Keshav of _Yatanaghar_ can lead the soul to the path of light, the path of salvation. Baby is a mortal soul, deeply embedded in the swamp of sins, trying to satisfy her revenge. She is so deeply buried in it that she is afraid of bright light. But Keshav who is beyond these earthly emotions doesn’t feel offended by her words or actions. On the contrary, he helps her to emerge out of the swamp and leads her to the path of light, her enlightenment.

_Raktapushpa_ has the background of the death of the young son, Shashi. The mother, Padma, claims to be in deep grief and having lost interest in all material pleasures due to it. In fact, the reason is quite different, with no connection to the death of the son. But she keeps on accusing her husband and daughter for not lamenting the death and not feeling the grief so intensely as her. Ultimately, when the truth is out, it brings an end to the tenderness and the attachment between the family relationships. Thus death of the family ties takes place.
In *Wasanakanda* there is recurring appearance of death from the beginning till the end. *Wasanakanda* begins on the backdrop of father’s death. When Hemakanta and Lalita arrive at the old mansion, Hemakanta refers to the curse on the family by the beggar-woman who was buried alive in the foundation along with her baby. Lalita’s baby is still-born. Both, Lalita and Hemakanta, are so severely tortured by the villagers as a punishment for the illicit relationship that they prefer death. In spite of her pathetic condition, Lalita has not lost her physical or mental strength. She comforts Hemakanta and sets the old mansion on fire. She faces death in a dignified manner as a penance for their sins.

It shows a close resemblance with *Orpheus Descending*, where both the lovers Lady Torrance and Val Xavier are brutally murdered. In case of Val Xavier, the local people burn him alive. In case of *Wasanakanda*, the local people only punish them, but the death punishment is self inflicted by Lalita. However, the cycle of sin, purgatory, burning and absolution is quite similar. In both cases, the relationship is illicit. It is an extra-marital relationship in case of Lady and Val whereas Hemakanta and Lalita’s relationship is a social taboo, being the relationship between the siblings. Hemakanta refers to the curse on the family where no child survives. The curse has been brought to an end by bringing an end to the family lineage forever.

Death occurs in *Holi*, *Party*, and also in *Atmakatha*. But that is not the central theme of the plays. In Holi, Anand commits suicide as the ragging exceeds the limit and his dark secret about homosexuality becomes public. The fact that the boy whom he adores is responsible for the disclosures; shocks and humiliates him more. In *Party* none of the characters actually taking part in the action dies. However, the absent character, Amrut is making his existence felt as almost each character of the *Party* refers to him frequently. His brutal murder is reported to Jogdand, a journalist who reports it to the members of the party. The mood of celebration in the beginning turns into deep grief by the end, symbolized through Sona’s devastation, expressed by a shrill cry after hearing the sad news.
In *Atmakatha*, too, Rajadhyaksha’s death has been suggested by the end of the play, because after trying to contact Uttara, without success, he disconnects the phone. Uttara tries once again, the bell keeps on ringing but Rajadhyaksha doesn’t respond. It hints at his death. The death, the end of the relationships had already taken place much earlier. The atmosphere for the last phase of his life has been created through his confession and the exchange between him and Pradnya, as if, he is presenting his account in the court of Chitragnita. It is in the tradition of both religions, Christian as well as Hindu.

**Cruelty and Violence**

One more related and commonly observed theme in the works of these playwrights is cruelty and violence. The violence is of both types, verbal as well as physical. In *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Williams, both types of violence is observed especially by Stanley Kowalski. He doesn’t belong to the refined or sophisticated class. He remains hostile to his sister-in-law, Blanche Dubois right from the beginning for valid reasons. He is fed up with her hypocrisy. In addition to that she tries to instigate her sister, Stella against Stanley. She enjoys all sort of favours at his cost, but behaves, as if, she is doing favours to them. He gets a solid evidence of her tainted reputation and her bankruptcy due to which he feels robbed of their share of Dubois property. Her falsity and snobbish behavior adds to his annoyance. All this pent up wrath gets expressed by him in the form of two cruel and violent acts. One is ruining her chances of getting married and settle in life with Stanley’s friend Mitchell and giving her the jolt on her birthday. Second is her rape in the absence of his wife and thereby driving her to lunacy. This is his revenge against her snobbery.

There are plenty of instances of violence and cruelty in *Orpheus Descending*. It may be described as a saga of violence. Here violent acts have been committed by the so called sophisticated Southerners. Their superiority complex strips them off humanity. They consider themselves the makers and executioners of law. Therefore, Jabe and his gang punishes Lady’s father for his crime of serving the Negroes liquor in his bar.
Though he is an Italian, a European, a white, they consider him a subordinate and that is why they think that they are privileged to punish him with his life and property. They burn him alive along with his orchard and his bar. Afterwards he kills Lady too. Actually, he wants to kill Val who too, is punished with his life as per the directions of the sheriff.

Similar instances of cruelty and violence by Southerners are found in other plays, too, for instance, Archie Lee of Baby Doll, Mrs. Violet Venable of Suddenly Last summer and the Finleys of Sweet Bird of Youth. Archie Lee treats the Italian Silva Vacarro the same way as Jabe Torrance. Cruelty is also found in the behavior of Silva Vacarro. But his motive is legitimate. He is seeking justice and he wants to have solid evidence in his possession to prove Archie Lee’s role in burning down his gin. He plays with Baby Doll’s emotions, scares her by telling her ghost stories, and frightens her to death when she hides herself in the dilapidated attic. But once he gets what he wants, the written statement signed by her revealing Archie Lee’s role in burning down his gin, he doesn’t employ even verbal cruelty to her. On the contrary, he provides her and her ageing aunt moral support. His cruelty is temporary and only to attain certain goal.

Cruelty of Mrs. Violet Venable is of a different kind. She and her son, Sebastian displays a perverse fascination for cruelty. They visit an island to witness the live drama of cruelty in nature where the just hatched turtles scramble towards sea and the black birds are feasting upon them. Sebastian has maintained a tropical forest where both enjoy witnessing the Venus Fly Trap devouring the flies fed by them. She is equally cruel to her poor relatives like Catherine Holly and her family members. Sebastian’s unnatural fascination for cruelty compels him to offer himself to the band of hungry urchins who charge upon him and gobble pieces of flesh from his body. When Catherine who is the witness to the horror episode, gives the account of Sebastian’s gory death, Mrs. Venable just refuses to accept it to be true. She tries to silence Catherine by hook or crook, to save Sebastian’s reputation. When she finds that Catherine is not ready to budge even after her long stay in a mental hospital, she puts pressure upon the surgeon to operate her for lobotomy to remove the centre of memory from her brain. She also threatens Catherine’s mother and brother of depriving them of the huge amount, Sebastian has left for them, in
case, Catherine doesn’t change her account about Sebastian’s death. Her mother and brother also share the cruelty by pressurizing her to change her statement. The nurse, too, treats her heartlessly, puts a lot of restrictions on her behavior. Only the doctor withstands the threats and enticements by Mrs. Venable and displays courage to believe Catherine’s account.

Boss and Tom Finley strongly object to Heavenly’s relationship with the person, Chance Wayne belonging to lower class. Therefore Boss Finley, the father allows Tom and his gang to teach Chance a lesson for trying to build up relations with Heavenly, a girl, from the aristocratic family. Being a political leader, Boss Finley is supposed to support government policies and the constitutional rights of Negroes. He pretends to support it. But his veiled support for the cruel acts of punishing the Negro youth with castration for his relationship with a White girl is not hidden. He uses a very roundabout way to comment on such gory reaction by White youths; though he himself has termed Tom’s club known as ‘Youth for Tom Finley’ as ‘the gangs of juvenile delinquents’. But in his speech on national T.V. network, he speaks about his mission, “I got a mission that I hold sacred to perform in the Southland ---- why? Because the Voice of God called me to execute this mission.---- And what is this mission? ----- To shield from pollution a blood that I think is not only sacred to me, but sacred to Him.----- Who is the coloured man’s best friend in the South? ----- It’s me, Tom Finley. So recognized by both races. ----- However – I can’t and will not accept, tolerate, condone this threat of blood-pollution.”

He tries to downplay the cruel act of castration of a Negro youth. He continues in his speech, “As you all know I had no part in a certain operation on a young black gentleman. I call that incidence a deplorable thing. ---- However, ---- I understand the passion to protect by this violent emotion something that we hold sacred. Our purity of our own blood.” His speech makes clear his ambivalent attitude and his hypocrisy towards the problem of cruelty to Negro youth. Obviously, he has no qualms for Tom’s (Jr.) plan to castrate Chance for polluting the Southern blood of Heavenly which is done eventually as Chance refuses to leave the town because of their threats.
Flora Goforth hails from a very humble background. But a stroke of luck and her extra-ordinary beauty with a flawless figure results into her meteoric rise among the elite circle. She had married an elderly millionaire who died soon after their marriage making her one of the wealthiest women. The success as a Hollywood star, the huge wealth and sustained good looks has turned her too proud, arrogant and heartless. She is too narcissistic. She can’t look beyond herself and never feels sympathy for others. That is why her heart doesn’t melt to witness Chris’ plight after being chased by dogs and badly bruised while attempting to climb up the castle to see her. She completely ignores his injuries, his starving for five days or his climbing the steep path without food. She treats him like a petty thief. She is more concerned about his trespassing than trying to know his purpose of taking all the trouble. Throughout his stay, she never offers him any food except black coffee. She enjoys tormenting him, as he refuses to satisfy her desire. She threatens him in a variety of ways like setting her cruel body-guard with his pack of dogs upon him, imprisoning him on the castle in a solitary confinement without food and leaves him to die there. She keeps on insulting him for his coming there uninvited. Especially after she comes to know about his reputation as an angel of death, she strongly resents the idea of welcoming him and allowing him to stay there. She could go to any extent to bar him from having good meals. When he is asleep after his strenuous journey, her secretary has kept a tray of sumptuous breakfast ready for him. But when Flora visits his room, she orders the tray to be removed. She provides him all the hospitality except food. She relieves her kitchen staff on some flimsy grounds, so that none will be there to prepare anything for him. Until she dies she keeps him starving. Finally, her secretary takes pity upon him and finds a bottle of milk for him.

Cruelty is observed in Albee’s plays too. It is hardly observed at physical level. However, the taunts and sarcasm is so sharp and biting that they are rightly described as verbal murders, not less lethal than physical violence. Sometimes the violence occurs in the form of inaction and apathy as in case of The Death of Bessie Smith. Moreover it is not only apartheid, but it is a general bitterness arising out of frustration, especially in case of White Nurse and Father who is a relic of former Southern glory. Bessie Smith
dies due to the apathy of Southern Whites whose hospitals are meant only for whites where the dark woman cannot be treated even if she is dying.

The Nurse and Father choose their words deliberately to hurt each other. She passes sharp comments for his vain attempt to be counted among other well-to-do Southerners and his smoking costly cigarettes with her earnings. He, too, taunts her in return for her affair and the liberties she has been enjoying at night with The Intern, in his car.

She is equally callous with The Intern. He really loves her. But she turns down his marriage proposal straightway pointing out his meager salary. She remarks, “You can’t afford marriage. At the most you can afford lust.” She further insults him by comparing his income with that of the Negro Orderly. Then he too retaliates by pointing out that their former glory has vanished long back. Moreover, her family never owned a huge estate like others to boast of.

Another instance of her callousness with him is her constant threats to him for his concern over the soldiers injured during the ongoing Spanish War. According to her, it is a treachery with the nation. She threatens him to convey it to the Mayor, so that he would be fired from his job. When towards the end, he displays sympathy and concern for the Negro person, Jack who has brought the fatally injured Bessie to the hospital, once again she turns hysteric over his disloyalty to the White race. She is determined to complain about his behavior. She enjoys seeing him suffer.

Her personality seems to be sadistic. She enjoys torturing everyone around. She keeps on insulting the Negro Orderly. She teasingly refers to his position where he is dangling between the Blacks and Whites, he being an offspring of mixed parentage. She teases him by pointing out that he is accepted neither by Blacks nor by Whites. She is not happy with verbal violence only. She exploits him financially also, taking undue advantage of her superior status. She orders him to fetch cigarettes for her, but never intends to pay for it. She plays with his emotions by suggesting that she is ready to marry
him which he dares not believe. The callousness towards Jack and Bessie by both the nurses due to the traditional racial discrimination needs no comments. As a lot of time is wasted, the seriously injured Bessie ultimately dies due to their apathy in treating a Black patient.

Both the Mommys of *The Sandbox* and *The American Dream* are the epitomes of callousness. Disposing off one’s own mother like the Mommy of *The Sandbox* or the other Mommy of *The American Dream*, constantly threatening the ageing mother to dispatch her off to Old People’s Home, is equally cruel. In both cases, the fantasy element is unmistakable. However, Albee wants to point out that old people are unwanted and they are disposed off indifferently in this manner. In case of *The American Dream*, there is an autobiographical element. Perhaps he feels that there is no attachment between a woman and an adopted child. The woman would consider such an adopted child like any other product bought from the market. If they are not satisfied they would try to get it replaced by another standard product. He is also trying to comment upon the unduly severe punishments the helpless children have to undergo if they do not conform to the parents’ or mother’s expectations.

Violence through words and actions is continuously observed in *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* especially by Martha who is frustrated in life. She enjoys ridiculing and insulting her husband, George who fails to conform to her expectations from him as a life partner. He is not dashing and resourceful like her father. His nature is submissive. Above all, he has failed to give her a child. On the contrary she has been a willful and spoilt girl at the time of their marriage. Her lust is insatiable. She is an alcoholic, perhaps, as a result of her frustration. She tries to compensate her frustration by hurting him deliberately. She defies all the norms of acceptable social behavior. She invites guests after midnight without even informing George. He has to put up with her whimsical behavior. She deliberately refers to his drawbacks in front of the guests. She is not happy with this. So she defiantly takes her guest, Nick to sleep with her to tease and hurt George. Her defiant behavior emboldens Nick, too, to insult his host.
George, too, prepares to retaliate. He has also found out some dark secrets about Nick’s marital relationship with Honey through the conversation with Nick as well as Honey. Nick’s failure to satisfy Martha boosts his morale. During his conversation with Honey in the absence of Martha and Nick, an idea clicks to him to take revenge upon Martha. It is related to the accidental death of their fantasy child, their son. He executes it with perfect planning like a cold blooded murder. Although the murder is that of the fictitious son, the effect of it proves disastrous for Martha. She gets completely vanquished, stripped off her arrogance, defiance and whimsicality. Thus some deaths are real as well as fictional as in case of George’s parents’ accidental deaths at the hands of George and his attempt of writing a novel based on the same theme. Their son’s death is also accidental, but it is fictional. By bringing about this death, George strips Martha of her life-support. It sounds like a game of cruelty played with the help of words and actions which is finally won by George.

In *A Delicate Balance*, almost all the characters depend upon Agnes for emotional support. Her patience gets tried and tested. But none is grateful or empathetic towards her. Her sister, Claire is ahead of others in the cruelty. She keeps on teasing and taunting her. She deliberately behaves queerly, pretends to be drunk to tease her. The daughter, Julia’s failed marriages is a sensitive issue. They try to underplay it. But Claire deliberately refers to it. She teases Julia also by posing a question about her rightful place at her age, husband’s house or father’s house! Julia is equally ungrateful, though Agnes maintains her poise during Julia’s tantrums. Julia is quite furious over the invasion of her room by the guests. She is so annoyed by it that she flaunts a revolver at the guests in her hysteric rage. She enrages Agnes by having drinks early in the morning with Clair despite being aware of Agnes’ resentment towards it. She compares Agnes with a dictator and turns a deaf ear towards her word of wisdom. Tobias also avoids to stand by her in the moment of crisis when their son dies as an infant and even afterwards. He lets her down when he is expected to take some firm decision in case of the uninvited guests who behave, as if, they have come to stay with them permanently. This apathy, ingratitude and baseless accusations hurt more than actual physical violence.
In *All Over* too, the situation is so awkward and tense that the biting attacks on each other is a quite expected thing. It is quite natural for Mistress and Wife to aim at each other, being the rivals in the love of the same man. But more surprising is the bitterness and hostility between Wife and Daughter, probably for a similar reason. Daughter accuses Wife of not loving Father so intensely as she should, because Wife recalls his cruelty with either of them which Daughter cannot tolerate. She screams at Wife and slaps her. Mistress being sympathetic towards Wife, goes and slaps Daughter in return. Son is not so aggressive. On the contrary, he is meek. His behavior doesn’t suit to be a son of such an outstanding person. Wife rebukes son for his display of emotions like women. She advises him to inculcate at least some of the qualities of his father. The impression in the beginning about the siblings is, of being close to each other. But it is clear that she is only exploiting his submissive nature. But she has no special attachment with him. Thus it is observed that even in the face of grave occasion the near and dear ones remain hostile to each other. They do not observe restraints even there. They display their animal instincts and cruelty to each other.

In *Kamala*, both, Sarita and Kakasaheb accuse Jaisingh of treating Kamala callously, especially during the Press Conference and after the purpose of exposing the illegal flesh-trade is served. Sarita finds his act of displaying a woman in tattered clothes, callous. Sarita suddenly becomes aware of his callousness to her, too, mainly due to two things. One is Kamala’s queries about her when she takes it for granted that she also has been bought like her. Secondly, Jaisingh’s colleague, Jain obliquely refers to her pathetic condition as Jaisingh’s wife and jokingly says ‘*hai*’ (alas!) to her. Then she suddenly realises being treated as a slave by Jaisingh who never cared for her likes, dislikes or willingness. In general, Tendulkar has thrown light upon Indian husbands’ apathetic attitude towards their wives as a tradition because Kakasheb, too, admits to have treated his wife in the same fashion.
Cruelty and violence seems to be in the blood of the family members of *The Vultures*. Violence and cruelty seems to be their way of life. The root cause of this cruelty is their avarice for wealth. There are plenty of examples of their extreme cruelty with each other. The three children torture their father to get the details of his secret account and grab the amount. The brothers cold bloodedly plan and execute an abortion of their sister. Sister, Manik does the same with Ramakant’s wife. Rajaninath, their half-brother, rightly calls them vultures.

In case of *A Friend’s story*, Sumitra’s cruelty with Namita, Dalvi and to some extent with Bapu arises out of selfish motives. She makes Namita behave like a slave to her perverse lust. She threatens her when she talks of her marriage, for not thinking of marriage without her permission, or else she would see to it that the marriage doesn’t take place. She tries to spoil Dalvi’s reputation through anonymous letters. Though Bapu is her well-wisher and confidante, she doesn’t spare him. She imitates Bapu’s handwriting for those anonymous letters and Bapu gets manhandled for it by Dalvi. Instead of regretting her act, she makes fun of Bapu for his being a scapegoat. When Dalvi catches her and Namita red-handed, she has to let Namita leave with him. She pours all her frustration on Bapu’s belongings and leaves Bapu’s room into ruins. Thus a streak of violence is observed in Sumitra’s character and to some extent in Dalvi’s character, too. When the scandal is exposed, Dalvi’s attitude remains revengeful and hostile towards her. He has vowed to see to it that she doesn’t get admission in any other college. He also enjoys her fast downhill journey to her end. He thinks that it served her right.

In *Silence! The Court is in Session*, there are verbal murders similar to Albee’s plays. The words and intentions of almost everyone in the amateur theatre group are venomous towards Leela Benare. If violence at physical level overpowers *The Vultures*, deadlier violence at verbal level is observed here. The characters like Kashikar, Ponkshe, Sukhatme, Karnik and even Balu Rokade behave like vultures. At first, they behave like a pack of wild dogs and vanquish her completely and then start notching her flesh. Everyone is hostile and revengeful towards her as a result of the insults and derision they have suffered at her hands earlier. Everyone of them keeps on taking strike at her with
true, half-true or even invented facts. Sometimes, Mrs. Kashikar turns overenthusiastic. She drags her to the box of the accused or forces her to take an oath.

In *Kanyadaan*, there are instances of physical as well as verbal violence related to Arun’s character. The instances of physical violence with Jyoti have been reported through Seva’s narration. Arun brutally beats and abuses Jyoti even with a small provocation. His verbal acts of violence and cruelty are equally lethal. He tortures Jyoti by accusing her parents’ with the invented scandals to malign their characters. He also hurts Nath and Seva with taunts and veiled threats and forces Nath to preside over the debate on his book and shower praise upon it against his wish.

*Chimanicha Ghar Hota Menacha!* is a combination of both types of extreme emotions - cruelty and affection. The first part deals with the cruelty of Malak. In the later part, there is a reference to Muni’s cruelty with Kamal and others, the cause of it arising from his stepmother’s cruelty to him. Malak has suffered endlessly due to the cruelty of fate. His suffering has turned him a cynic. He cannot stand a sight of anyone being happy. That is why he puts a condition for his tenants that they should not ever seem happy. They must keep on bickering, whining and wailing. The couple keeps up the appearance as per the condition though they are extremely happy. They have also defied the second condition of not increasing the family size. Malak turns furious by this deception and orders them to vacate the place immediately. During this scene, Malak unexpectedly comes to know about their genuine deep grief. It melts his heart and a transfer scene takes place in his attitude. He realizes that the couple’s grief is much deeper than his own. He shares their another loss, the loss of their child. He willingly participates in the game of pretending that the child is alive and joins the preparations for the naming ceremony very enthusiastically.

Here begins Muni’s role. He is determined to expose the myth of their child. He has another motive behind it which is related to his tormenting past. He sees his stepmother in the toy-baby which has been treated as Kamal’s baby. Muni wants to complete his revenge against his stepmother by means of the toy-baby. After his
purgation about his suppressed sorrows, he turns normal and is ready to share the game of illusion. Thus cruelty is certainly found in the characters of Malak and Muni. But there are legitimate reasons behind their cruelty. Once the reasons are removed, they behave normally. They are not cruel by nature like the characters of *The Vultures*.

Among Elkunchwar’s plays, cruelty and violence is observed in *Eka Mhataryacha Khoon, Holi, Yatanaghar, Raktapushpa, Wasanakanda, Party* and to some extent in *Atmakatha*. There is violence at physical, as well as, emotional level employed through words and actions. Subtle cruelty is observed in *Party* and to some extent in *Atmakatha*. In every play, Elkunchwar deals with a different variety of violence. For instance in *Eka Mhataryacha Khoon*, the suffering and tormenting is symbolic of the journey of life. The ropes tied to the prisoners and held by the old man indicate man’s destiny which is in the hands of the God, Almighty. They have no freedom to escape it. The murder of the old warden by the prisoners is also symbolic of man’s vain attempt to conquer death. The moment man feels to have overcome death, it catches him unawares. Seemingly, it is the cruelty of the warden who makes the prisoners tread the unending path through scorching hot sun. There is no respite. The thought of killing someone or even cursing someone amounts to cruelty and violence. In a way, the prisoners, too, are not free from cruelty. They actually murder the old warden, apart from cursing him who is just following the orders of his superiors. It indicates that the cruelty is all pervading.

In *Holi*, verbal cruelty is observed in the form of taunts and biting comments over the weaknesses of others. There are various issues such as Lalu’s frail feminine look, obesity of one of the girls, crippledness of another boy, their particular regionality, caste, scandals about their parents or their contacts with the right people etc. The Principal’s oppressive treatment to students without bothering for their psychology is a sort of violence. Students’ violent reaction takes place due to the oppressive acts by the Principal one after another, like denying a holiday on the festive occasion, arranging a talk and making it compulsory. Dismissing the students without offering them an opportunity to explain is the limit of oppression. Students also get involved in violent acts through their
jeering of the guest speaker, making fun of Anand and Lalu for their feminine traits, then punishing Anand callously for his treachery. Anand gets so scared by the forthcoming humiliation that he commits suicide. This play is an example of “Violence begets violence.”

The title, *Yatanaghar* itself stands for torture and torment. The protagonist Baby is frustrated due to her crippledness. Moreover, she comes to know, accidentally that her parents are responsible for it. This knowledge turns her hostile towards them. She starts seeking pleasure in tormenting others. She also torments those whom she needs or loves. Kamal is her companion. Life is impossible for her without Kamal. Still, she keeps on humiliating Kamal with her sharp tongue over her ugly looks, her dependency, her subordinate status etc. She bars her from the things she loves to do, such as brushing her long, thick and shiny hair. She loves Ramesh, her brother. But she tries to keep him away from the bliss of marital life. She is responsible for hastening his death due to her possessiveness. She behaves like a spoilt brat in his case. She won’t allow someone else like his wife to enjoy his company if it is not available to her.

Cruelty is observed in the character of Kamal also. Being a servant, she has to be submissive. But the powerful desire of retaliation must be there. Therefore, during the last phase, when Kamal is quite aware that there is no one to take care of the invalid Baby, she begins her revenge. She suggests Baby to commit suicide together. Baby agrees to it. She starts adorning Baby just like a bride, before death. She brings the sleeping tablets. She also wants to die with Baby as her life would be purposeless without Baby. In the meanwhile she has received a telegram conveying Keshav’s arrival the next day. She wants to finish everything before his arrival. So she doesn’t tell about it to Baby. However, Keshav arrives the same day. Kamal doesn’t want her plan to be thwarted. So she insists, almost forces Baby to swallow the tablets. Baby resists her unexpectedly. The door-bell rings. Kamal is furious to find her plan going waste. She is not willing to allow Keshav in. But before she could do anything, Keshav enters the house. He witnesses the scuffle between the two due to which the tablets get scattered. Baby complains of Kamal’s forcing her to take the sleeping tablets. Kamal slips out as there is no use of
staying there. Before leaving, she ravages the house. In the due course, Keshav enlightens her about the real goal of life, conveying the message, “the tormentor, too, gets tormented through the act. The real liberation of soul is found in the peace of mind achieved through helping others, those are in agony”. Keshav’s philosophy is a solution for the problem of violence and cruelty raised in Holi.

In Raktapushpa, verbal violence is mainly observed in the character of the protagonist, Padma. Being frustrated and suffering from anxiety due to her menopausal phase, she can’t stand a sight of anyone being happy, just as the Malak of Chimancha Ghar Hota Menacha! But the difference is, the Malak’s grief and sufferings are genuine whereas Padma’s are feigned. Padma is callous with her nearest and dearest ones, her husband and her only daughter. She keeps on accusing both of them with baseless charges. She treats her daughter Lilu as her rival in gaining attention from a young boy, Raja in the house. She hurts her husband with the barbed words for losing interest in her and the conjugal relationship. In fact, it is her wish to have a separate sleeping arrangement for them. The husband is trying his best to maintain his composure. But Lilu gets hold of a solid proof to expose Padma’s myth of grief for losing her young son.

When Padma scolds her for going to Raja’s room, she retaliates with the proof in her custody. She points out that Padma has perverse attraction for Raja. That is why she goes to his room like a beloved in a new saree. She also exposes her dark secret of writing love-letters to an imaginary lover. Thus Padma’s excesses in hurting Lilu force her to make a counter attack. However, Bhau who has observed restraint so far, loses balance and slaps Lilu for her impertinence in raising questions against Padma’s character and hurts Lilu permanently. Thus the vicious circle of violence continues in the family.

In Wasanakanda, cruelty is observed at two levels. First is Hemakanta’s indifference and callousness towards Lalita. Second is, the cruelty of the villagers in punishing Hemakanta and Lalita for their sinful relationship. There is a cruelty of their forefathers at the backdrop. Once again, Elkunchwar conveys the same message
“violence begets violence and brings about total destruction”, through this play. Even the authoritarian father’s detached and stern behavior is a sort of cruelty. He disowns his only son for the difference of opinions and for the sake of family reputation. Hemakanta has to lead a life of a destitute for fifteen long years. In the absence of any other family member, the father doesn’t provide any emotional support to young Lalita. He remains the same stern father for the child. Hemakanta takes Lalita to the old accursed mansion, which is founded on utter cruelty. A beggar-woman has been buried alive along with her baby as a sacrificial ritual for the mansion. They begin their conjugal relationship on the background of the curse that no child of the family will remain alive. The curse is proved to be true when Lalita gives birth to a still-born child. Hemakanta’s indifference in responding to Lalita’s indulgent and romantic mood also amounts to callousness. He loses interest in her, once he has conquered her. His lack of pride in her pregnancy or ignoring her need of emotional support during pregnancy and afterwards the devastating experience of having a still-born baby, are other instances of his cruelty. He is self-indulgent and too proud of his ability of creation. That is why he doesn’t find it necessary to care for the feelings of others, not even his younger sister who has trusted him and accompanied him to the unattractive, barren place.

The cruelty by the villagers is the result of the violation of social norms and social ethics. They severely punish Lalita, Hemakanta and their child. Lalita is manhandled and left with a disgraceful tonsured head. Hemakanta is badly beaten and the child is barred from proper last rites. Lalita afterwards undergoes self-inflicted cruelty. She resorts to prostitution as a self punishment and returns finally to Hemakanta though she loathes his intimacy. This is her penance to get absolved from the sins. The limit of this penance is observed in her act of consigning herself and Hemakanta to the flames, thus bringing an end to the life full of torment. Thus the problem of violence is solved through the self inflicted violence.

In Party, cruelty is observed at two levels. Among the elite circle, it takes place mainly through words which are used as sharp-edged weapons. The means used are taunts, humiliating remarks or just ignoring the plus points of others. Vrinda uses the
means of taunts for Agashe and humiliating remarks for Bharat for his humble roots, his unrefined manners and poor English. Barve and Damayanti hurt his feelings by ignoring his talent and his achievements. Damayanti also uses her contacts with influential people against him, excluding him from the delegation of writers to be sent abroad.

Barve is callous and indifferent in personal life as well as social life. He is indifferent to Mohini’s dedication and love for him. He is actually fed up of her one-sided devotion. He wants to get rid of her. He is guilty of ignoring the talent in Amrut as well as Bharat. In public life he is known for his social awareness. But actually, he doesn’t display genuine concern for real social problems. When Jogdand refers to Amrut’s social work among the tribals and the woes of tribals, Barve seems to be blank about such burning issues. Damayanti hurts Bharat’s self-esteem by expecting him to do some errands like bringing cigarettes for Barve. Sona hurts her mother, Damayanti by passing bitter remarks about her friend-circle and also accusing her of making her father’s life miserable. She also accuses Damayanti of detesting her and her father for their lack of refinement and extra-ordinary qualities.

The physical violence of government has been reported by Jogdand. It includes setting the hutments of the tribals on fire and denying them medical help, trying to evict them from their traditional habitat to take their land in custody, implicating the tribals with false charges etc. The limit of their violence is observed in eliminating a sincere social worker like Amrut with utter callousness to shut the voice of resistance and protest, as he puts hurdles in achieving their selfish motives.

The three main characters of Atmakatha also suffer from cruelty towards each other. Uttara has been hurting her sister, Vasanti’s feelings unknowingly, by emphasizing her superiority in every respect and making Vasanti feel inferior and jealous. This situation sows the seeds of rivalry and revenge in Vasanti at subconscious level. In favourable circumstances, she gets an opportunity to fulfill her revenge.
According to Vasanti’s later account, she had seen invitation in Rajadhyaksha’s
eyes right from the beginning. Perhaps he might have a secret desire for another woman
which might have been boosted by Uttara’s failure to give him a child. In Uttara’s
absence and Vasanti’s continuous proximity, he gets tempted to establish conjugal
relationship with Vasanti, thereby seriously hurting Uttara’s feelings in three ways –
breach of trust as a husband, as a father figure to Vasanti and as a morally upright
idealist. It is humiliating to Uttara as a wife and also as his companion in social activities.

Vasanti hurts the feelings of both, her sister, as well as, her lover, Rajadhyksha.
Her complex gets satisfied by conquering the man, her sister trusted most. She wants to
leave the ruins for Uttara to rule the ruins. She insults Rajadhyaksha by seeking refuge
with his rival, Devdatta, despite the latter’s deteriorating financial and health conditions
and also by concealing the fact of his fatherhood. However, her last part of revenge could
not be attained as Uttara refuses to rule over the ruins. She prefers abstinence. She, too,
leaves Rajadhyaksha the same night, by allowing him to go ahead with Vasanti.

Thus, by thwarting Vasanti’s design, she has once again defeated Vasanti and
proved her superiority. She keeps on hurting Rajadhyaksha’s feelings. She doesn’t
respond to any of his letters asking for forgiveness. She publishes the letters and shatters
his image in public eye. She strictly refuses to respond to his personal queries. She
remarks adversely about his autobiography. She is aware of his roundabout style and lack
of his courage to admit the follies openly.

**Professional Rivalry**

A theme of professional rivalry has been dealt with by each of these four
playwrights at least in one of the plays. In case of *Baby Doll*, professional rivalry turns
into the crisis of existence, especially for Archie Lee. Therefore he takes desperate steps
to overcome the crisis. In addition to professional rivalry, there are also other shades
responsible for the hostility between Archie Lee and Silva Vacarro, such as, the conflict
between natives and outsiders, Southerners’ superiority complex and treating others as
inferior. It is a racial discrimination of different sort where Italians and Poles are sneered at. It is a conflict between old order and new order where the old outdated system has to make place for new efficient system. It has been symbolized mainly through machinery being used in the gins of Archie Lee and Silva Vacarro.

There is a cursory reference to this theme in Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, related to the rivalry among the people from the field of education. Martha refers to George’s lacking ambition to rise up the ladder of power. Nick who has recently joined the University department sneers at this attitude and expresses his intention of rising up, even without bothering for the means.

Tendulkar also refers to it in *Kamala* by pointing out Jaisingh’s strong objection to let his best friend and confidante, Jain, stay for dinner. He warns Sarita, his wife not to ask him for dinner in any circumstances though she finds it very unusual and awkward. He wants to guard the secret of his new sensational story about the human flesh-trade. He is not ready to trust even his closest friend in this regard.

Apart from these plays, Albee in *Fam And Yam* and Elkunchwar in *Party* as well as in *Atmakatha* deal with this theme in detail as a major theme. In all the three plays, the undercurrent of rivalry between the elderly established writers and the talented, upcoming, aspiring young writers has been dealt with. Albee has deliberately used seemingly strange name for the two writers belonging to the two groups. FAM stands for Famous American Playwright while YAM stands for Young American Playwright. In all the three plays, the famous and established playwrights avoid acknowledging the worth and talent of the young playwrights.

Barve of *Party* and Rajadhyaksha of *Atmakatha* represent the famous acclaimed writers whereas Amrut and Bharat of *Party* and Devdatta of *Atmakatha* represent the young writers. Albee, while referring to the list of famous writers includes Tennessee William’s name in it. Obviously, he himself is Yam. Similar kind of relationship is observed between Tendulkar and Elkunchwar where Barve’s character is believed to be taken after Tendulkar and Bharat’s character is the writer Elkunchwar himself, according
to a well-known Marathi scholar critic Kamalesh (Natakkar Mahesh Elkunchwar P.80). In *Fam And Yam*, Yam approaches Fam with a certain design under the pretence of seeking his interview. In the battle of wits between the two, Fam gets carried away due to the flattery by Yam, in addition to the influence of alcohol he is continuously consuming during the interview. He realizes only after Yam’s departure, followed by his phone call to thank him for the interview that he has been cleverly duped by Yam. Yam goes on expressing his views about the selfish motives of each component related to the theatre which he must have experienced himself. Fam, being unawares of Yam’s intention, goes on endorsing his views. Only afterwards he recognizes the design when it is too late. However, the young writers of Elkunchwar’s plays cannot achieve similar success as Yam. They can just express their impotent rage or get frustrated. Amrut changes his path altogether and decides to work among the tribals instead of writing about their problems. Bharat keeps waiting for the opportunity to prove himself as a talented writer.

Barve admits to his ambition of retaining the position at the top. He secretly wishes that nobody should reach that height though he knows that what he wishes amounts to meanness. When Damayanti hints at including Bharat’s name in the delegation of writers, he advises her not to give him a lift so early in his career. He remarks that it would bring complacency and self indulgence which would affect his quality of writing. He wants Bharat to get frustrated and hurt. He believes that the struggle to prove himself would help him grow. In a way it is true. However, there is reason to doubt the sincerity of Barve’s intentions in the light of his statements related to his top position as a writer.

This professional jealousy is found in the relationship between Barve and Agashe, too. This refers to the conflict between modern experimental theatre and the main stream or popular theatre which is represented by Barve and Agashe respectively. Agashe is always under-rated for being the writer of successful and popular plays and making good money out of it. He retorts by drawing attention to Barve’s commercial success and making money through royalty. He knows that his inclusion in the delegation will never be considered. Still, he casually suggests including his name. But his inner feelings, his jealousy for the new experimental writers is revealed when Bharat calls his plays
‘formula plays’. He retorts by attacking the undue use of filthy and obscene language and abusive words in the so called modern experimental theatre. He asserts that his qualities should not be undermined for his popularity. But he gets pleased when Bharat refers to the repetition in Barve’s plays, especially when style is concerned. He also observes that Barve cannot dissociate himself from his works. He expects the style to be modified according to characters and to be expanded with experience. Through this debate between the writers with different styles and backgrounds, Elkunchwar has thrown light upon the professional jealousy among writers.

In *Atmakatha*, Devdatta dies very young due to his smoking and alcoholism. But in a subtle way, he too, displays the signs of rivalry and jealousy. He never refers to Rajadhyaksha’s literary works. He praises Rajadhyaksha for his generosity, his financial aid, but never praises his writings. Rajadhyaksha once again gets defeated by Devdatta, when the researcher, Pradnya points out that a new interest has been developed among the readers and the scholars for Devdatta’s writings. It indicates that Rajadhyaksha will soon get forgotten whereas Devdatta still seems to be arousing fresh interest and will thus live longer as a litterateur. Thus it can be said that the theme initiated by Albee has been dealt with more deeply by Elkunchwar.

**Meaning of life and exploration of truth**

The philosophical theme of the meaning of life and exploration of truth has been mainly dealt with, both by Williams and Elkunchwar in their plays *Orpheus Descending*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *The Milktrain Doesn’t Stop Here Anymore* (Williams) and *Ek Osad Gaon, Eka Mhataryacha Khoon, Yatanaghar, Wasanakanda, Party* and *Atmakatha* (Elkunchwar.)
In *Orpheus Descending*, during the conversation between Lady and Val about knowing each other, Val reflects, “Nobody ever gets to know no body! We’re all of us sentenced to solitary confinement inside our own lonely skins for life! ------ I’m telling you it’s the truth, we got to face it, we’re under a life-long sentence to solitary confinement inside our lonely skins for as long as we live on this earth!” (P.284)

Big Daddy of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, during his conversation with Bricks, makes some remarks about man’s attitude towards life and death, after he feels relieved of the risk of death. He says, “--- The human animal is a beast that dies and if he got money he buys and buys---- and I think the reason he buys everything he can buy is that in the back of his mind he has the crazy hope that one of his purchases will be life ever-lasting!— which it never can be ------.” (P.62) Chris of *The Milktrain doesn’t Stop Here Anymore* deliberates on the acceptance of reality of life, death and existence in a dignified manner as per the message by the old Hindu Swami he confronts on the beach after he helps an old man to die. It has been already discussed with reference to the theme of death.

In *Yatanaghar*, Keshav establishes a dialogue with Baby who has lived a life with the strings of revenge till then. She believes that she would never rid herself from the ties of evil. She thinks that the bonds of love may not be that painful. Keshav tells her from his own experience that involvement of any kind is painful, because that is the only truth for the person. She wonders if one should try to escape from the truth. He explains that one should realize the limitations of that truth like the truth about the dreams. After waking up, one realizes the limitations of the truth about dreams. He further tells her that one must try to transcend the narrow personal walls and choose one’s dreams. One has to break the personal barriers and get to realize that the whole world is a dwelling which is full of pains and suffering. If one tries to lessen the sufferings of others, it provides the peace of mind. However, he warns her that the journey itself is full of trials and tribulations. Moreover, after the initial directions, one has to undertake the journey on his own. Thus Keshav widens her vision, leads her to the sublime path of light and nobility and frees her of her shackles of revenge.
In *Wasanakanda*, similar kind of reflections over the search for truth has been expressed by Lalita while pondering over it with Hemakanta. Towards the end, Hemakanta realizes that neither his sculptures nor the sculptor are true as he was not prepared to risk his life to save them from being ruined. He also admits his failure in creating what he intended to create. He finds them false. He compares it with Lalita’s grief after giving birth to a still-born baby and asks her why one has to suffer so much! She points out his involvement and failure related to the sculptures and repeats Keshav’s philosophy ‘involvement of any kind is painful.’ He can’t believe it as he has always tried to be detached. But Lalita points out that he only pretended to be indifferent. She calls it his defense mechanism as he didn’t want to take risk of pain and agony of involvement. He didn’t try to penetrate through the hard shell to reach the core, the brightness of truth. He was scared of being singed in the attempt to reach the blazing truth. Truth may be painful and bitter as poison. But one must be prepared to suck it even if one’s life is at stake. She further continues that one cannot deny life. One has to devote himself completely. He wanted to immortalize desire in the sculptures. But he avoided reaching the source of it, her heart. He should have shared her sorrows and agony. But he wanted to be safe on the shore. He wonders if he would have found truth by following her advice. Lalita cannot assure him. She assures that even she could not reach it despite her continuous search for the truth. She also knows that perhaps no one can ever reach it. But one cannot take liberty of denying it because they don’t find it. It may be the destiny to keep on wandering without rest. When Hemakanta seeks her help in the journey in search of truth, she expresses her inability to guide him as she too is still groping in the darkness of ignorance. She faces her destiny in the same dignified and stoic manner when the commotion of villagers heading towards them is heard from distance.

It is noteworthy that *Tapasi’s* philosophy about wandering in search of truth without any certainty of reaching the goal is very similar to Lalita’s philosophy of pursuing the goal of truth.

In *Party*, when Damayanti and Barve are alone with each other, both are in a confessional mood. He refers to his own falsity in his writings. Damayanti doesn’t agree. According to her he has certainly arrived at the truth. Over this he confesses, “I have been
pretending to have got hold of truth for the last twenty years. I confronted truth unexpectedly during my journey. My train suddenly stopped in a forest. It was raining heavily. Some poor women and their children were shivering in it. And then it dawned upon me. Those poor people had nothing to do with me, a famous writer, my contribution to the cultural heritage, my honours and awards. It meant nothing for many others like them. Then what is the significance of art and culture? There is no connection between their sorrows and sufferings and my words. Amrut realized it and that is why I’d feel restless in his company.”

Rajadhyaksha’s enlightenment about the futility of his achievements also echoes the essence of Barve’s confession about his achievements.

To conclude, it may be said that the observations regarding the convergence of themes after the detailed analysis of certain plays by the four playwrights positively support the original assumption of this study.