Chapter VI
Conclusion
The Inner Rainbow

Write the vision, make it plain upon tablets,
so he may run who reads it.

For still the vision awaits its time;
it hastens to the end – it will not lie
If it seems slow, wait for it, it will surely come,
it will not delay.

- Habakkuk

In his book Small is Beautiful, Schumacher imagines that when God created the world, He must have thought that if everything is made predictable, man will lose all motives to pursue anything in life as he will know that future is totally determined and cannot be influenced by human action. If on the other, everything is made unpredictable, man will discover that there is no rational basis in the scheme of things. Therefore God must have settled for a via media of making a few things predictable and the others unpredictable to provide dynamism to human life.¹

Man is exploring the predictable with his intelligence, logic and reasoning. He is in search of a fix for the unpredictable too, which is not amenable to any of his faculties. In this quest, he has had glimpses of the unpredictable through the rare faculty of visions, which like a slit
in the darkness, has thrown light on the unpredictable. Creative and constructive imagination is a prerequisite to receive and comprehend visions. It is the creative artists to whom God seems to have been partial in His creation. They see what others see not; hear the heavenly music when others hear not. Among them dramatists are the ones who translate the celestial vision into comprehensible form for the masses and prepare them to meet the challenges posed by the unpredictable future.

Anderson believes that the dramatist with his wide vision, guidance and creative energy should afford insights into future, to serve as spiritual guideposts and road maps. He postulates:

what the poets are always asking for, visioning, and projecting is man as he must and will be, man a step above and beyond his present, man as he may be glimpsed on some horizon of dream, a little nearer what he himself wishes to become.²

Anderson views the theatre as a sacred and potent institution, dealing in man’s beliefs and hopes, designed to articulate the aims and goals of mankind rather than to lay the immediate road to reach these goals. The theatre to him is, “a church without a creed.”³ No American playwright has so consistently affirmed a personal dramatic vision within
the confines of the commercial theatre and steadfastly refused to compromise his dramatic faith.

Anderson strongly advocates that the playwright should be equipped with strong moral principles. Whether these convictions are inherent or borrowed, they must find expression in the plays: "A play can't be written without them - or, at least, it can't be a success - because no audience is satisfied with a play which doesn't take an attitude toward the world." Anderson's dramatic theory also underscores the pivotal role of conflicts in his plays arising from the moral stand of his protagonists. He avers: "The story of a play must be a conflict, and specifically, a conflict between the forces of good and evil within a single person." As an avid explorer of various external forces affecting man, he was equally concerned with the internal conflicts produced by them.

A question was raised in the beginning of this study whether conflicts can be analysed and categorized for a profitable investigation. The plays explored present conflict as internal stress and the external combat faced by the protagonists. Within this twofold approach, Anderson has given masterly strokes of man's inner turmoil and external forces that buffet him. Edith Isaacs observes that Anderson's plays have interlocked conflicts:

They begin with an idea that in itself represents conflict: love, the conflict between human souls; war, the conflict
between nations; social injustice, the conflict of classes. They go on to the usual conflict in the story, then to conflicts in smaller range within the story, and again, almost always, to a conflict in the souls of the leading characters.\textsuperscript{6}

It is the conflict in the souls of the protagonists that render realism to Anderson's plays and bring even the historical plays close to his audience. In spite of all the human frailties and failures his protagonists are prone to, they come out authentic and fortified; it is a struggle that is well fought, though not always won.

Anderson's protagonists display wills of varying magnitude in responding to the conflicts. On the role of will in conflict, John Howard Lawson comments:

we are concerned not only with the consciousness of will, but with the strength of will. The exercise of will must be sufficiently vigorous to sustain and develop the conflict to a point of issue. A conflict which fails to reach a crisis is a conflict of weak wills.\textsuperscript{7}

The underlying pattern of conflict in the souls of the protagonists can be analysed in terms of strong and weak wills. The strong willed characters do not undergo discernable internal conflicts. In these characters, Anderson focuses more on the paradigms of conflict they
wage against the external forces. Characters with weak will on the other hand are exposed to conflicts both within and without and contrary to Laswon’s premise, they reach a crescendo bringing forth crisis of varying magnitude.

Anderson was acutely conscious of the fact that in the clash with the environment, the individual should exercise a strong will power that would endow his life with a purpose. The varying degrees of strength displayed by his protagonists focus on the need of the individual to face the antagonistic forces whether or not there is hope for victory or for fulfilment of his dreams in the end. Viewed from this framework, Nathaniel, Stephen Kumalo, Mio, Rudolph, McCloud, and Schoen fall into the category of weak willed protagonists with differing responses to the conflicts both within and without. Absalom, Macready, Capraro, Gregor, Socrates, Victor d’Alcala and Madeline are strong willed protagonists who do not experience any internal doubt or conflict in their struggle which is always against the external forces.

Nathaniel’s struggles against the puritan society are limited to buying its goodwill with money and parading his wife’s knowledge of the Bible and English to gain acceptance. Lacking strong will, he allows xenophobic forces to tear asunder his love for Oparre. However, this wavering will gains strength and in a moment of realization he goes
back to Oparre to affirm the ideals of love. Stephen Kumalo's profession of Christian ideals is subjected to test when he discovers that his son can escape the halter if he resorts to lying. In a moment of weakness, he entertains the unchristian idea of lying and to persuade his son to commit sin. A similar vacillation is noted in the character of Mio. Though he begins his journey with a strong conviction to establish the innocence of his father, he falters en route and is overcome by doubt whether or not there is meaning in his pursuit, particularly after his encounter with Judge Gaunt.

Rudolph is a classic example of will which is not strong enough to take decisive action. Torn between idealism and reality, he is in a state of inaction until circumstance spurs him into action. McCloud can be likened to St. Peter who denied his master despite earlier display of loyalty. Overcome by the instinct of self-preservation, McCloud falters twice before establishing his integrity. To come out of the moral quagmire, he requires the external aid of d'Alcala's philosophy and the revitalizing love of Alegre. Caught between the conflicting forces of Nazism and the basic ideals of love and commitment displayed by Madeline, Schoen is immobilized. Only after an intense internal conflict he is propelled to help Madeline.

Though weak willed of varying magnitudes these characters after their struggle within, emerge fortified in spirit, ready to encounter the
external forces heroically. There comes a time when the weak willed protagonists make the discovery that vacillation is no defence for keeping out the forces that combat them, and they take a decisive step forward with conviction and courage that show astonishing moral strength: "The leading character, [...] must make the discovery; it must affect him emotionally; and it must alter his direction in the play," declares Anderson.

The strong willed characters in contrast espouse a single-minded devotion to their ideals that shows no equivocation. Absalom's conversion is absolute and there is no turning back even at the face of death. The acquittal of his comrades in crime who resort to lies to secure freedom does not deter him from his resolution; there is not a moment of wavering in the prodigal son. Macready and Capraro display the same resoluteness of spirit. Instead of being cowed down by the unfair trial, they turn it into an opportunity to expose the social ills which corrupt the society.

Gregor courts death to prove that the ideals of freedom and justice cannot be sacrificed at the altar of exigency even if it is for establishing a rule of the proletariat. Strong will power in its ideal form is seen in Socrates who is so confident in himself and his values. Rather than compromising his ideals he accepts death not as a defeat but as a greater fulfilment of life. Victor d'Alcalá embodies the never dying optimism,
the faith in a better future built upon a clear understanding of all pervasive evil and pessimism. Madeline demonstrates that the wintry winds of failure cannot extinguish the power of love fortified by commitment. Her strong will strives to seek and find all avenues to realize its goal but never to yield to failure.

Analysing the nature of the external conflicts, both the strong willed and weak willed characters are presented as victims of socio-economic and political forces. The conflicts appraised in Chapters II, III and IV can best be understood in terms of tension or combat with these horrendous forces. Conflict in these plays arises out of the nebulous boundaries between man and the communal spheres of human activity. They offer revelatory insights into the social issues and into man who seeks to understand himself and society. In this attempt, sociological evaluation and psychological approach have concordance at several instances.

*The Wingless Victory* and *Lost in the Stars* reflect a society afflicted by colour discrimination. Racial prejudice governs the interpersonal relationship in *The Wingless Victory*. The picture of discrimination portrayed with accuracy of detail gives contemporary significance to the still inflammatory racial animosity. Racial conflict in *Lost in the Stars* proves, "One man is good, mankind is predeterminedly evil; hence, the endurance contest." The conflict
which originates in racial discrimination brings out the nobility of man. In general, the play strongly advocates learning to live together, and drink from one another's wells of culture and tradition, and promises an exciting future. A failure to do so portends a scenario of growing racial polarization resulting in bitter conflicts. **Gods of the Lightning** and **Winterset** expose the underlying conflicts arising out of economic exploitation, social deprivation and prejudice which are portrayed in the manifestation of social injustice.

Another facet of Anderson's treatment of external conflict is the idealistic resistance of the individual to assert his personal ideals against repressive political forces. Anderson examines the individual's positive and personal standard of conduct in a hostile environment, although his role in the society is determined by socio-economic climate. Anderson's plays are replete with ideas for individuals and governments. Not an anarchist, his zeal on the issues of autonomy, freedom, and self-determination for the individual is no less. He envisions the individual's protest against ingrained attitudes that are inimical to these core human values.

**The Masque of Kings, Second Overture** and **Barefoot in Athens** modulate Anderson's concept of autonomy and freedom. These protest plays record outstanding rebellion against forms of oppressive authority, and dramatize the value and cost of freedom in society. Prince
Rudolph, though a limb of the established order, militates against sovereignty expressed as curtailment of individual freedom. Franz Joseph, the old Emperor represents the oppressive forces who in maintaining the status quo is under the delusive notion that freedom and democracy are incompatible with the larger interests of the society. Gregor finds that defeating the oppressive Czarist regime has resulted in a new graveyard, where individual freedom and justice are buried. In the contention between dictatorship and defective democracy, Socrates casts his conclusive vote in favour of democracy as it proffers a relatively free atmosphere for the individual. Anderson depicts the malevolent influence of power on individuals underlying the need for eternal vigilance. Franz Joseph was once a liberal but later turned reactionary having no qualms to enforce his authority by murder, treachery or subordination. Likewise, Charash was also a revolutionary with ideals ablaze. The betrayal of ideals by these two characters proves the axiom that power corrupts people.

Yet another dimension of Anderson's handling of conflicts is that the individual's response should align with basic moral values. In this way, he differs from the leading socio-economic schools which seek to find the causative factor for human predicament in socio-economic forces alone and justify even amoral response. Gregor spurns his friend's offer to spare his life as a protest and to register the fact that these
ideals cannot be made subservient to any ideology. **Key Largo** exemplifies man's obligation to make a positive choice even if he falters initially. The play affirms renewal of faith and the necessity of moral values in fractionalized society. Anderson's positive concept of man who is constantly striving upward though he fails at times is portrayed in King McCloud. The integrity of the individual is also emphasized in the delineation of the protagonist. Unflinching commitment to tough and demanding ideals is yet another determinant of self-positive individual response which is brought out through Madeline. Her role in **Candle in the Wind** is also an affirmation of the invigorating and benign influence of basic values on individuals seeped in materialistic and ethnocentric philosophy.

These plays portray conflict between the individual and the environment assuming the shape of socio-economic and political forces. Herbert Ellsworth deduces: "the conflict lies always, between the hero and the circumstances. Sometimes the hero is opposed, sometimes reinforced by a secondary hero [...]. But always the conflict is one of circumstance."¹⁰ The essence of Anderson's philosophy of the drama arises from his philosophy of life which keeps man in the centre.

Anderson's attitude towards man centres around his place in the universe and in man's relation to his fellowmen. For a meaningful life, he must profess a cause for which he should be willing to die. This
cause is the ultimate conviction, the basic principle which cannot be sacrificed if the individual is to retain his integrity. Anderson holds that the cornerstone of all freedom and progress is the individual's mind. It is true that though in his historical verse plays he uses history to state at times, "that the rats inherit the earth," in most of his plays this belief is tempered by the playwright's faith in man and by man's belief in his own destiny. Anderson believes that man is capable of facing his destiny with dignity.

From his plays one can deduce that man has a spark of divinity within him which lifts him above the common clay from which he comes. Anderson sees man as constantly progressing upward, striving, climbing out of the mud as he states in Key Largo, falling down again, yet keeping within himself a faith and hope in his destiny. This faith in man is not a platitude professed by an artist naive to the harsh realities of life. Even a pragmatic personality like President Kennedy believed that, "one man can make a difference and that every man should try." Anderson's conviction is that man's greatest asset is his free mind: "Every other freedom in this world is restricted, but the individual mind is free according to its strength and desire." The corollary of a free mind is personal integrity which he strongly advocated.

Anderson's plays postulate an ideal man to maintain personal integrity in the face of rejection, loss, external insult, internal tempest
even in death. The biblical echo of this message can be traced in God's words to Cain: "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."\(^{14}\) Anderson reiterates that man has within him the capacity to conquer circumstances and attain mastery over weaker self no matter how formidable the forces afflicting him are. He firmly asserts that a nation without faith will fail for the national conscience is the sum of personal conscience: "We must have a personal, a national, and racial faith, or we are dry bones in a death valley, waiting for the word that will bring us life."\(^{15}\) He has celebrated the eternal verities of truth, beauty and justice in his work. In the prayer of Socrates, Anderson envisions the portrait of an ideal man:

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give\text{me beauty in the inward soul, [...] May I reckon the wise to be wealthy and those who need least to be most like the gods. [...] Make me content with what I have, but not self-satisfied. Let me give more than I get, love more than I hate, and think more of living than having lived (BA 69).\]

Anderson's "dream of the race" is that it "may make itself better or wiser than it is."\(^{16}\) His plays echo the theme of eventual progress towards an eternal dream of racial betterment regardless of setbacks in the present. The underlying facets of conflict in the plays explored, help
comprehend the full spectrum of Anderson's vision of life which exudes moral values.

Incidentally, it is argued that Anderson's heroes are not only idealists but also defeatists doomed to die in this world. To answer the question whether Anderson is a pessimist in the portrayal of his characters, it should be realized and that his protagonist are not doomed by frustration and desperation but suffer and die with composure and strong conviction. The dying declaration of a few of his idealists is a challenge to the conventional wisdom that death ends everything. Their defiant call is a proof that in their death is the victory for the ideals they stand for:

**Gregor.** Better to lose.

Than lose your Faith *(SO 17)*

**Rudolph.** I've learned [...] How to keep faith with the little faith

I have quite beyond time or change. *(MK 136)*

**Socrates.** It is better for a man to die than
to do what his soul believes to be wrong *(BA 34)*

**McCloud.** A man must die for what he believes. *(KL 118)*

There is no hopeless entanglement, no dark disillusionment in these words. What his protagonists seek is not to set in motion any kind of historical movement but rather the reaffirmation of personal integrity despite physical annihilation. According to Laura Schlessinger:
Death. Uncertainty. Loss. Tragedy. Threat. Conflict. Aloneness. Rejection. Those, to use a mathematical term, are 'givens' in life. When one or more of them 'happens' it's not a punishment or a curse or bad luck. You haven't been cosmically selected - it's simply that you're experiencing one of the many components of life; in the way rotted organic material is a part of the soil in which plants grow and flourish.¹⁷

However, instead of being cosmic incident that happens at random, death is actively sought by Anderson's protagonists which reinforces their convictions. His idealists become nobler in the wake of defeat, disaster and death. The spirit of man is not subjugated by defeat and physical death. There is victory in defeat and life in death. Anderson celebrates the exaltation of the spirit in man's conquest of himself in the face of annihilation.

Anderson has been faulted on many grounds that he is a user of prolific words, his characters shallow, more melodramatic, prototype, and lacking psychological depth. He is accused of being ambitious in attempting themes and characters too big for his genius and that he has deliberately placed himself in the company of titans like Shakespeare and Shaw. These adverse criticisms necessarily place his works in poor light in comparison with great masters.
In defence, it must be stated that Anderson is not a miniature artist who is satisfied with a small piece of canvas but regards the whole gamut of great forces affecting man as his dominion. With lofty purpose and with the whole world as his canvas, he has portrayed characters from the past and present. The long and grand parade of personalities in his plays shows the depth and width of his interest. To appreciate the forcible and penetrating analysis of life he has made, one has to stand at the right distance from the canvas. A microscopic examination would expose only the broad strokes with its rugged outlines; a look from the right perspective will reveal the nuances of his works.

**Scope for Study**

Paucity of critical materials and scholarly examination prove that there are plenty of areas to be explored in Anderson: Characterization and concept of man; verse, structure and plot; moral philosophy and religious undertones, the techniques of writing, character portrayal, political and social concerns, treatment of history, treatment of justice, his attitude towards women, tragic vision, dramatic theories, poetic tragedies, war plays, protest plays and literary criticism, to name a few.

To revert to the basic issue of conflict, it illuminates man's dignity and lends purpose to his existence. Heraclitus, a philosopher of ancient Greece believed that growth arose out of opposites. "This original idea led him to argue that "strife is justice" and that struggle is necessary for
progress.” Interestingly “the Chinese character for conflict is made up of two different symbols superimposed: one indicates danger, while the other signifies opportunity.” The opportunities afforded by conflict if approached positively advance human potentialities, for conflict has been an important segment of human life since the beginning and will continue to be. Conflicts can be creative to bring forth growth, and betterment of human race.

Conflicts exert forces that tear people away from each other bringing in new patterns of relatedness. Out of new relationship come new conflicts offering the choice for creativity and life. It is the choice that man makes in his response to conflict that determines the quality of his life. He must create new values or ensure confluence of old values. What will provide new dream of how mankind is to live? What will knit together the wisdom of the past with the exigencies of today? How can one come to understand and act on the process of opposition and accommodation?

New visions are essential to equip man to confront the challenges thrown by the cycle of conflicts. Visions connect to the past and point towards the future, making the present significant. Anderson’s vision of mankind, as seen in the plays analysed can be likened to the arc of light formed in the sky, born of the shower and coloured by the refraction and dispensation of sunlight. The central image of the rainbow with
prismatic colours is the unifying force linking his plays, diverse in themes, treatment and ideas. His plays celebrate a wide range of subjects which pivot around many characters, a whirl of times and places. Like rainbow, the plays of Anderson span over various places like America, Africa, Spain, Athens, Russia, France and Austria, connecting diverse cultures, societies and time. It is the fusion of diversified elements into a common image which bestows the plays of Anderson with captivating hues.

Mythologies present rainbow as a bridge linking Heaven to Earth. In Hopi and other Pueblo Indian myths, the coloured people of the sun and the earth used rainbow as a means of communicating with each other. In Genesis rainbow appears in the sky after the flood as a sign of God’s covenant with man and the promise of a new world order. It often appears after rain as an arc of colours against a backdrop of clouds, symbolizing hope, promise, divine presence, reconciliation and rebirth.

Similarly, an inner rainbow appears within Anderson’s protagonists after the conflicts experienced by them, symbolizing the eternal values that could bridge the sacred and the secular. It stands for the human power that opens up the possibility and promise for ideals that guide in finding meaning and depth in life. The bow appearing in the mist and midst of conflicts also marks the values that emerge, multileveled and multicoloured. Maxwell Anderson’s Notes on a Dream speaks of one such rainbow rich in hues and meaning:
When I have seen the world’s great bridges span […]
Longest of any ever built by man […] then I think of you
And of the rainbow bridge between you and me
Built in a night of spider-web and dust […]
How frail it seems, how prone to accident, […]
Yet […] find it firm all the long range
From me to you, from you to me, and filled
With richer freight than bridges that men build.\textsuperscript{20}

An increasing awareness of human failure, deterioration of ethics in the present times precludes the unchallenged acceptance of man’s worth: “Consequently from being symbols of noble individualism contemporary protagonists have become symbols of pettiness, deceit, cynicism, lust, stupidity, and bestiality […]. The individual had prostituted himself to selfish interests.”\textsuperscript{21} Urgent and pressing question cries in the face of erosion of values and exaltation of violence: What forces move human beings into action? Values must be asserted in the eternal renewal of human aspiration by a constant search for awareness through experience. One resource for such renewal is vision offered by playwrights imbued with moral fervour, with the strands and hues of values long lost from view: “The drama must not merely reassert the dignity of man. It must revaluate, reassess. It must dig to the roots of man’s life and strive to recover the old dignity that the tragic protagonist once bore unself-consciously.”\textsuperscript{22}
Anderson’s vision of man helps his audience to seek some insight rising out of his plays. Some of the values gleaned from the plays analysed are: racial and religious tolerance in *The Wingless Victory*, brotherhood in *Lost in the Stars*, spirit of protest against injustice in *Gods of the Lightning*, love and forgiveness in *Winterset*, freedom of the individual in *The Masque of Kings*, altruism in *Second Overture*, intellectual integrity in *Barefoot in Athens*, moral integrity and love in *Key Largo*, and love, fidelity and commitment in *Candle in the Wind*.

These values are inter-related and constitute a continuum. The realization of the whole value-spectrum in the individual constitutes the vision of the inner rainbow, rich in possibilities and interest, suffused with hues, comfort and beauty. Nietzsche affirmed: “Not round the inventor of new noises, but round the inventor of new values doth the world revolve: inaudibly it revolveth.” Anderson did not invent new values. His vision of life is based on eternal values of personal virtues, ethical sensibilities and moral conduct of individuals. He has enriched modern life by pointing out the traditional values which are too precious to be lost. It is the individual’s humanistic approach to values which is the most important driving force behind the progress of the human spirit and human well-being in the modern age.

The essential components of this approach are: Recognition of the dignity, worth and value of the individual; emphasis on the essential
unity of mankind and allegiance to brotherhood; reliance on reason based, free and objective inquiry into the nature of human problems and human values. These values vest life with meaning and purpose and propound moral principles and codes for individual and social living, lessening the conflict between man and society.

Anderson strives to regain for man, his lost place in the scheme of life. The playwright consciously struggles to assert his faith and his own coherence over the desperate facts of existence. He enumerates his theme in twentieth-century terms, which recognizes certain strengths in tradition while acknowledging the need for fresh orientation and attempts to universalize man’s contemporary predicament with a positive approach.

Swift’s portrait of Gulliver ‘the prisoner’ enslaved by strings is a perfect analogy of modern man. The human spirit which is essentially ethereal and aspiring towards excellence is Gulliver, ‘the free man’. Gulliver’s words, “I could only look upwards” was not out of choice but by constraints. Anderson’s vision for man is that though pitted down by conflicts, man should look upwards not by constraints but by choice, for in him lie the indomitable spirit, potentiality and aspiration for moral excellence. “Force loses in the long run, and the spirit wins” (KL 23). Gulliver, the exalted spirit of man should rise up.
Though the external conflicts that assail man are manifold, Anderson’s protagonists in the plays taken for study are mainly exposed to racial, economical, political and moral conflicts, which vouch for his interest in the contemporary issues and fit into his conception of the theatre as an exalted forum to articulate the views of the dramatist. These conflicts bring about a mismatch between the inner world of the protagonists who are propelled by their conviction to transcend the confines of their times, milieu and ethos and the outer world of social reality. Depending on the intensity of the fervour and the strength of the individual will, their response varies. However, there is a commonality in the response in that it is positive with an affirmation of the basic moral percepts reflecting Anderson’s view of man as an ethical being who does not live by bread alone. The nature of the first three of the conflicts enumerated is primarily concerned with the materialistic existence of man. Anderson’s genius is that these conflicts coalesce into ethical conflict.

The efforts of his protagonists to travel beyond the social realities provoke conflicts and Anderson does not answer all the questions which confront man in this attempt. He only demonstrates how they can help shift an individual’s mental frame and spiritual sensibilities that would provide the foundation for a genuinely new social and moral experience indicated by the change of heart, transformation of thinking, and liberation of spirit. In keeping with his personal philosophy, Anderson’s
treatment of conflicts do not offer systematic solutions, but they point to practical directions. Together they are the signs of his prophetic vision - "Men are better than what they think they are." He views that while conflicts are immutable and have debilitating effect, man has within him the capacity to confront and transcend them. This potential is traceable to the ethical element inherent in the spirit of man which is equally immutable as the conflict it encounters. He advocates man to press ahead in spite of failures and his optimistic message breathes vibrancy into his plays.