Chapter I
Introduction
The Spectrum

Yes; not the pulpit, not the press: the play,
Loftier and broader than religious rites,
The mirror of an empire's pride, of man's
Imagination, from the past released,
Dowered with the freedom of the universe.

—John Davidson

General Perspectives

What Jonathan Swift had in mind is not known when he wrote about Gulliver washed ashore in Lilliput, tired and weak. But he has graphically portrayed the plight of man in Gulliver. Gulliver relates his own condition:

it was just day-light. I attempted to rise, but was not able to stir: for as I happened to lie on my back, I found my arms and legs were strongly fastened on each side to the ground; and my hair, which was long and thick, tied down in the same manner. I likewise felt several slender ligatures across my body, from my arm-pits to my thighs. I could only look upwards.¹
The strings were thin and weak, but Gulliver could not extricate himself from those bonds, as there were too many of them. In spite of his strength he was a prisoner of the Lilliputians. In the ups and downs of life, man becomes a Gulliver – a prisoner of the Lilliputians, fastened low to the ground by many strings of conflicts within and without. These conflicts gnawing at the roots of a may-have been personality of man, cripple and imprison his spirits. They can be likened to small leaden weights tied to a bird’s legs exerting downward pressure and rendering it ineffectual to soar high.

Conflict is as old as mankind. Every age has been an age of struggle, contention and crisis. Be it a period of primitive agrarian society or modern complex industrialised society, in every era and at every point of time, a direct correlation between man and conflict is explicitly been observed. In all phases of human civilization, it is universally factual and widely accepted that conflict and human evolution have always gone in tandem with each other.

Delving into the past, conflict can be seen as prehuman, primordial, and cosmic in origin. All major religions of the world concur and converge in attributing the creation of man to the aftermath of a gargantuan conflict between good and evil spirits. It appears that in annihilating evil, good had to find creative outlet in the manifestation of a world populated with sentient things with man as the crown of glory. Thus, there is something
very fundamental about conflict, without which there would have been no creation at all. This apart, the very basis for the continuation of the existence of the sentient beings in the world can be traced to it. Though evil was defeated the victory was only temporary. The pristine and innocent creations were soon corrupted by the evil forces and ever since a proxy war is being waged between the good and the evil with man as a hapless pawn. This forms the core theme of the dramatists of classical Greece that has sired several plays of enduring values.

Turning to the Bible, one finds that the pride of Satan originates from an unknown source and triggers a conflict of cosmic proportion which ultimately sees him ousted from the presence of the Omnipotent. The source and cause for Satan's pride which led him to question the unchallenged authority of God is enigmatic and obscure. How could such thought ever creep into his mind despite being in the holy presence of the Almighty? Why should it originate in Satan's mind and not in other celestial beings? Theologians have wrestled to explain the mystery of evil as a part of creation but have never adequately accounted for the paradox of how a benign God could be the creator of anything malevolent.

The belief in the precosmic origin of conflict finds a parallel in the old religions of the Middle East and in Oriental mythologies. In the light of these backgrounds, conflict can be viewed as the very part of Nature,
a cardinal element for existence without which there would only be a void. As the pull and counter pull of the celestial spheres revolving around the sun are essential to keep them in their places, conflicts are vital for the progress of life, for their absence would result in catastrophe and cessation of life itself. Williams opines that the material world is the product of tension or conflict:

Tension is coterminous with the universe itself. [...] the smallest molecular particle gets its dynamic movement from the fact that it consists of a negative and positive charge, with tension – and therefore movement – between them.²

Conflict is an inevitable part of life. At interpersonal levels conflicts could very often be horrid, harmful, disruptive of relationships and personal well-being. The dictionary definition of the word ‘conflict’ hints at this unpleasant connotation. It is derived from two Latin words – ‘con’ which means together and ‘fligere’ which means to strike. The Oxford English Dictionary defines conflict as:

a. to strike together, clash, fight, 2. to contend, strive, struggle with, 3. of interests, opinions, statements, feelings, to come into collision, to clash, to be at variance, be incompatible, 4. to engage in battle, to assault, 5. to buffet with adversity.³
The Readers Digest Oxford Wordfinder refers to conflict as:

1a. battle, combat, war: dispute, controversy, contention, disagreement, b. fight, engagement, struggle, fracas, affray, dispute, argument, 2. antagonism, opposition, disagreement, variance discord, clash, dispute, struggle.

Merriam Webster's Collegiate Thesaurus elucidates conflict as:

1. competition, rivalry, strife, striving, tug of war, warfare.
2. contest, competition, concours, meet, meeting, rencontre.
3. discord, contention, difference, disaccord, dissent, dissidence, disunity, strife, variance.

When man began his life in this planet, the conflict he encountered was at physical level. The instinct of self-preservation collided with the menacing factors of natural elements amidst which he was placed. The fight was to preserve life, to satisfy the urges of his physical instincts. Then came the social era when he recognized that social claims conflicted with individual passions and desires. This was followed by the recognition that progress was not limited by, not necessarily synonymous with social claims and traditions and that beyond the obvious antagonism of ego and herd demands, there often was and always should be a higher dilemma between regression and progress, between a childish reaction
and a mature response, between the coward and the hero in himself. Emerson's view of the physical and natural world in this context is apt:

Polarity, or action and reaction, we meet in every part of nature; in darkness and light; in heat and cold; in the ebb and flow of waters; in male and female; in the inspiration and expiration of plants and animals; in the equation of quantity and quality in the fluids of the animal body; in the systole and diastole of the heart; in the undulations of fluids and of sound; in the centrifugal and centripetal gravity; in electricity, in galvanism, and chemical affinity.  

While the world is thus dual, so is every one of its parts. Every particle represents the entire system of things. The same dualism underlies the nature and condition of man. Every excess causes a defect; every defect an excess. Every sweet hath its sour; every evil its good. Ever present are two contradictory elements in man. He is made of an inclination to good and a potent pull towards evil. These conflicting elements can spur one to perform a noble deed or make him a perpetrator of a heinous crime. The good propels him to soar above the mundane, while the evil chains him down. He is an amalgam of both light and darkness. Carlyle acknowledges this dualism:

A strange contradiction lay in me; and I as yet knew not the solution of it; knew not that spiritual music can spring
only from discords set in harmony; that but for Evil there were no Good, as victory is only possible by battle. 7

Even in the story of creation, a conflict between the Creator and the Creation is observed; it was essential for Adam to fight with God to establish individual identity and to confirm it. The ancient liturgy of Holy Saturday describes this as the necessary sin of Adam, and Adam of course, is in every man. The story of creation perhaps teaches the significance of conflict: “We can grow in the knowledge of God and become full and effective people only if we are prepared to accept this conflict between dependence and autonomy,” 8 views Williams.

Adam’s self-consciousness is the result of his conflict with God. Man is an ethical animal and this awareness of ethics came as a result of conflict. In the idyllic Garden of Eden, man had no choice over good or evil because he was unaware of the distinction between the two. It was a prerogative of God, the knowledge of which was to be denied to man. Only by his disobedience or rebellion could Adam be endowed with the ethical sense of making choice. 9 The myth of Prometheus presents conflict with the supernatural in a similar perspective. In stealing the heavenly fire, Prometheus challenges the exclusiveness of the gods and breaks the barrier between man and gods. A bridge is laid to affirm the fact that when there can be no exclusiveness about gods themselves, no man can claim greater privilege among his brethren.
Disharmony or clash or violent collision or fight for supremacy often overpowers man with the suddenness and force of a tornado. The challenge that faces him when dealing with conflict is to discover some answer to the important questions: How does one learn to respond to clashes and quarrels, disagreements and divisions in a constructive, positive and creative manner? Can conflicts be analysed and classified for a profitable study? Key to these questions lies in some of the plays of Maxwell Anderson, (1888–1959) the twentieth-century dramatist, who altered the world’s perception of the American drama.

If great literature is the expression of inner vision of illumined thought, then Maxwell Anderson can be categorised with the greatest makers of literature whose vision has been the widest and whose feeling the most intense. The famous words of Garrison when he started the movement which led to the abolition of slavery in America, “I am in earnest – I will not equivocate – I will not excuse – I will not retreat a single inch – and I will be heard,” echo the personal voice and strident convictions of Anderson and his commitment as a dramatist.

To Anderson who contributed an enormous output of prize calibre plays to the American stage, theatre was an exalted tribune from which he expounded a personal philosophy. The lines from Winterset, “I speak from a high place, far off, long ago, looking down” (WS 117), vibrate Anderson’s exalted mission as a dramatist. This prolific and
versatile writer of fine prose and poetry spoke from a pinnacle solidly buttressed by a Pulitzer Prize play, two New York Drama Critics Circle Award plays, the Brotherhood Award, and thirty three works for the stage and some twenty unpublished manuscripts.

During a career lasting over three decades, he exhibited a talent that was rich, varied and copious. At the height of his dramatic career, it was thought he would eclipse Eugene O’Neill. Among his contemporaries, Anderson was unusual in several respects. “He is a fast writer.” The Literary Digest records: “He can leave a rehearsal of one of his plays and return in half an hour with pages of new dialog.”

His concern with dramatic effect led him to concentrate on questions of dramatic structure and language. According to him, “prose is the language of information and poetry the language of emotion,” and he pronounced “his devotion to poetry as the glory of the dramatic stage.” Poetic tragedy became his highest ambition as a playwright. He was strongly attracted to the tragic muse and explored wide variation in form, style, and subject matter. Anderson was the only dramatist between the wars and within the Playwrights’ Company drawn by single-minded conviction of what he wanted to do and how he wanted to do it. Theatre Arts Monthly notes: “Every step he has taken has marked growth, in choice of material, breadth of handling, quality of characterization, or beauty of writing.” Nearly all his plays won high praise for the artistic
integrity which he added to the growing body of American drama. With considerable amount of daringness and distinctive success, he followed the muses of poetry, history, and tragedy. His plays still remain as products of studied ingenuity and interest.

Before introducing Anderson’s career and his dramatic contribution, it is essential to examine his convictions for the theatre and the integrity with which he wielded his rod. “Unless you and your play have a dream — or a conviction [...] — and unless you can defend that conviction against death and hell and the wiles of experienced tricksters, your play isn’t worth producing,”15 was his dictum. The opening sentence of Aristotle’s Nicomachean Ethics, “Every art and every inquiry, and similarly every action and pursuit, is thought to aim at some good; and for this reason the good has rightly been declared to be that at which all things aim,”16 provides the moral basis for an examination of the plays of Anderson.

Anderson must be recognized both as an ancestor and contemporary. As an ancestor, one sees in the unfolding themes of his plays, his ethnology and theory of the substance and transformation of human experience. His tragedies, comedies, and histories are a dramatic commentary on the forms in which human praxis reveal itself. As a contemporary, Anderson unveils the timeless edifice of social reality that transcends the particular culture and society of his day. He thus provides
a formal prism through which human conditions in the past and the present may be refracted in all their manifold experience and existence.

Anderson's success as a distinguished playwright is attested by the remarkable pageant of his plays **Elizabeth the Queen** (1930), **Mary of Scotland** (1933), **Anne of the Thousand Days** (1948), **Key Largo** (1939), **Barefoot in Athens** (1951) and the list goes on. His concern includes corrupting influence of power and wealth, especially in politics; the disillusionment of men caught up in war; and the individual's need for action in defence of justice and freedom. His humorous prize-winning satire, **Both Your Houses** (1933) was an attack on venality in the U.S. Congress. **High Tor** (1937), a romantic comedy in verse expressed the playwright's displeasure with modern materialism. His verse play, **Winterset** (1935) inspired by the 1920's murder trial of two anarchists popularly known as the Sacco - Vanzetti case won the Drama Critics Circle Award in 1936 and is considered a masterpiece. He wrote domestic plays like **Saturday's Children** (1927) and **Bad Seed** (1954) as well as the librettos for several musicals including **Knickerbocker Holiday** (1938) and **Lost in the Stars** (1949).

Anderson's mission as a playwright of high purpose set him apart from his time. Vincent Wall opines: "In an age of increasing collectivism this voice could be heard praising individualism, independence, and the frontier spirit." His zeal was not of an ecclesiastical kind, yet his plays
breathed religious fervour and sought to accelerate his profound faith in individuals. The theatre was "a religious institution devoted entirely to the exaltation of the spirit of man." To him, drama was a vehicle for lofty purpose and not mere entertainment and the rich experience in play writing enabled him formulate rules for the theatre which he believed governed both tragedy and tragicomedy. The rules underscore the basic moral principles which he enunciated as the heart of any play:

Excellence on the stage is always moral excellence. A struggle on the part of a hero to better his material circumstances is of no interest in a play unless his character is somehow tried in the fire, and unless he comes out of his trial a better man. The moral atmosphere of a play must be healthy. An audience will not endure the triumph of evil on the stage.

Anderson envisioned a prophetic role for the theatre. It is apt to quote Halline: "this theory conceives of drama as having a high destiny, not only in its obligation to reflect a moral universe, but also in its function as inspirer of man’s faith and as prophet of his future." In him, the theorist and the playwright vie with each other for excellence. It will not be an overstatement to declare that his theory of drama alone would have earned him a permanent place among the twentieth century American dramatists. **Off Broadway** and **The Essence of Tragedy**
are the manifestoes of his dramatic theory. He attributed to art a secular goal of giving concrete and knowable forms to social and political ideas and conceived his function more priestly in kind:

In brief, I have found my religion in the theater, where I least expected to find it, and where few will credit that it exists. But it is there, and any man among you who tries to write plays will find himself serving it, if only because he can succeed in no other way.  

As a theorist, Anderson drew on many multiple sources. Elements of his concept of language can be traced to Walt Whitman and to the writers of the American Renaissance. Esther Jackson writes: "Anderson echoed Whitman when he assigned to art the power to transvalue raw experience in usable symbolic forms." Anderson’s notion of the moral function of art can be traced to the influence of Friedrich Schiller, who in his essay, The Stage Considered as a Moral Institution assigned to drama the responsibility of accelerating moral evolution of humanity. "With Goethe he is convinced dramatic poetry is man’s greatest achievement so far; with Shaw, that the theatre is essentially a cathedral of the spirit."  

According to Donald Heiney, Anderson is “an anomaly in twentieth-century literature, a Romanticist whose chief contribution to the theatre has been in the virtually obsolete form of verse drama.”
overwhelmingly laudatory about Anderson’s serious works. Abernethy and Pience talk of Anderson in *Winterset* in comparison to Shakespeare and Job in the *Bible*. Eric Bentley acknowledges him as the “king of the Broadway intelligentsia.” John Mason Brown declares that Anderson excelled all contemporaries in his understanding of “the exaltation of the tragic pattern.” Anderson’s theoretical writing’s *The Essence of Tragedy*, and *Off Broadway* are the favourite tools of his scholars. Critics like Carl Carmer and Joseph Wood Krutch are admirers of his high principles.

The playwright’s lofty aim and profound theories and language exercise a strong spell upon readers and scholars who come within the ambit of his plays. But it cannot be denied that! Anderson’s scholars and theatre-goers are assailed by a few doubts. Why have the plays of Anderson rich in winged utterance and held aloft by solid theories failed to set lively discussion in modern drama? Why has this literary craftsman of high calibre become an alien voice today? Why is this high priest of poetic tragedy caught in the bog of ignorance and negligence?

Before the searchlight is turned on these questions, it is essential to take a close look at the scenario of the twenties when Anderson came to the centre stage. It is also imperative to mark the contours of Anderson’s life, times, and career as a dramatist. John Gassner chronicles the European theatre of 1920’s thus:
Except for the isolated phenomena of a Shaw in England and an O'Casey in Ireland, we see in postwar [...] Europe, England's theatre bogged in polite sentiment, the French stage still largely devoted to adultery, and Russia as poor for the time being in drama as its theatre is rich in acting, production, technique, and organization. The Spanish stage was tepid even before the present civil war, Italian drama was at best only cerebral until fascism destroyed and intellectual integrity of Pirandello, and the German theatre was far richer in experimental forms than in solid accomplishment.27

In contrast, the American stage was filled with a host of playwrights like Eugene O'Neill, Maxwell Anderson, Sidney Howard, Marc Connelly, George S. Kaufman, Paul Green, George Kelly, Laurence Stallings, Elmer Rice, Philip Barry, Behrman, and Robert Sherwood. The dramatic output was rich and gorgeous and the stage provided experimentation with techniques and diverse shades of opinion. Two major events clearly marked the twenties in American Literature: the First World War on one side of the chronological spectrum and the Depression on the other. A new drama commensurate with the fearless valour of the American mind was inaugurated and widely appreciated. The dramatists and the audience were sensitive to the virtues and virtuosity of the emerging theatre.
Although the American playwrights of this period were diverse in their points of view, many of them reflected the disillusionment that followed the World War I. Plays of this decade sought to imitate either realistic or expressionistic fashion.

As no man is an island, it is imperative to know the outline of Anderson's life to diagnose some of the habits and influences that guided his works. Shy and in principle opposed to biographical publicity in connection with his plays, Anderson shielded his life from public view throughout his career. Admitting the charge of contributing niggardly about himself, Anderson justified his stand in one of his letters thus: “This modern craze for biographical information leaves me cold for many reasons. For one thing it's always inaccurate; for another it's never possible to be sure that it's relevant.”

Anderson started his career with no predecessor. Alfred Shivers' anecdote illustrates Anderson's ladder of success. Queen Anne favoured one of England's greatest Generals, John Churchill and made him the Duke of Marlborough; some members of the established aristocracy could not accept the newcomer because of his humble parentage and taunted him whenever opportunity arose. On one such occasion, an aristocrat asked him mockingly, "Tell me, whose descendant are you?" To which the new Duke replied: "Sir, I am not a descendant, I am an ancestor." This repartee could as well apply to Anderson's career as a dramatist.
There was no illustrious ancestor whose mantle he could don; with his brilliant intellect he was destined to be a trail-setter.

James Maxwell Anderson was born on December 15, 1888, in Atlantic Pennsylvania as the second son of William Lincoln Anderson and Perrimela Anderson, into a small family of ordinary means. His first three years were spent with his grandmother in Atlantic. His family moved to Andover, Ohio where his father worked as a railroad fireman and aspired to become a minister. Applying himself diligently to the study of Scripture, Lincoln Anderson with his gifted memory learnt the Bible from the Genesis to the Revelation and turned out to be a successful preacher. An excellent storyteller, he breathed life into old biblical stories and moved the congregation with persuasiveness and charm. This skill was inherited by Maxwell Anderson and displayed in writing excellent dialogues in his later years. Save this, there appears to be no profound positive impact that the itinerant preacher-father had on his son.

Lincoln’s dichotomy between what he preached as an evangelist and what he practiced as the head of the family created in Anderson a negative example, eradicating formal religion from his consciousness, and the son declared himself an atheist. Though rebellious and non-conformist of the established religion, he remained a thorough going idealist with profound faith in the human spirit:
I make my spiritual code out of my limited knowledge of great music, great poetry, and great plastic and graphic arts, including with these, not above them, such wisdom as the Sermon on the Mount and the last chapter of Ecclesiastes.\(^{30}\)

Nevertheless, it is to the credit of Lincoln that he provided the essential ambience to the curious intellect of Anderson. From his childhood Anderson was a voracious reader of good books. His father bought a second-hand library, a veritable treasure which contained a set of Charles Dickens novels, Histories of France and England and some "odds and ends of novels."\(^{31}\) Anderson devoured them all. He modestly confesses: "Before I finished the eighth grade I had discovered and read most of the well-known novelists, Dickens, Stevenson, Scott, Dumas, Cooper, and a vast sampling of others."\(^{32}\) Keats along with Shakespeare was always his favourite par excellence and the very title of his play *The Eve of St. Mark* suggests a Keatsian influence. For Anderson, "Shakespeare was Merlin, wizard of language; all other world dramatists were mere players at magic."\(^{33}\) He developed a fondness for the poetry of Mathew Arnold whose classical restraint and melancholy skepticism were very much in keeping with his temperament. His interest travelled beyond literature to the realms of music too and this is exhibited in the songs that adorn his plays.
At the age of nineteen, Anderson entered the University of North Dakota. He immersed himself in Greek philosophy and despaired the iconoclasm of Thorestan's vibrant attack on modern society. His first verse play *The Masque of Pedagogues* written during this period satirized the college life and the faculty. After securing his M.A. at Stanford University with a thesis titled 'Immortality in the Plays and Sonnets of Shakespeare', he worked in the Department of English, Whitter College. His year in the school coincided with America's participation in World War I and he opposed America's involvement. In class and elsewhere, he voiced his pacifist views and was declared persona non grata by the institution.

The termination of Anderson's career as a teacher thrust him into journalism. He worked for the *Chronicle* and *Bulletin* in San Francisco, and began to serialize his amazing crusades against corruption, injustice, and other social evils which came in for deeper scrutiny later in his plays. In 1918, he moved to New York and served as the editor of *New Republic*, *The New York Evening Globe* and *The New York World*. *White Desert* (1923), his first attempt at playwriting was a theatrical failure. But *What Price Glory* (1924) written in collaboration with Lawrence Stallings was a box office bonanza which earned critical acclaim and launched Anderson as a promising playwright of America. The play was a powerful crystallization of the disillusionment associated with
postwar world. Its impact on the audience in 1920's was strong and carried a lasting significance, promising a bright conventional career.

**What Price Glory** had a run of more than four hundred and thirty performances and marked the turning point of his life. This success propelled Anderson to write more and broaden his technique to create plays on topical and universal themes. In 1930's he turned to the writing of verse plays. In fact, his first play was in verse and he was partial to this genre: "I was weary of the plays in prose that never lifted from the ground." The failure of his verse plays led him to abandon further efforts until he came to the conclusion: "Poetic tragedy has never been successfully written about in its own place and time." The result was **Elizabeth the Queen** (1930). His success came in 1935 when his verse tragedy **Winterset** won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award. In this play, he combined realism, a serious social theme, and elevated language to produce memorable effect. He won the same award again in 1937 for **High Tor**, an ingenious fantasy play.

Anderson's versatility and uniqueness are displayed in skilful characterization of varied personalities. He celebrated England's two greatest queens in historical plays of rich flavour. He dipped his pen to salute the rugged heroes of Valley Forge and treated such passing figures as faithless wives, victims of social injustice, doomed murderers, and men of the World War. His knowledge of world literature was profound
which enabled him to write about characters in varied range of time, place, and nationality— from Socrates, Joan of Arc, Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, Mary Stuart to George Washington. The foundation of the influence he wielded over the American theatre rests on the diversity of his plays.

From a hesitant start in 1923 with White Desert, Anderson expanded his domain of popularity with the audience and critics alike. At the zenith of his career during 1936–37, he had three plays running simultaneously. It is remarkable that nine of his plays are in verse, a form that some of his critics find amenable for artistic expression in the contemporary times but for many others is more praiseworthy for the attempt than for the entertainment. As a poet, Anderson is rightly credited with providing impetus to rehabilitate the splendour of verse drama back to its legitimate place. It is the third voice which T.S. Eliot identified:

The first is the voice of the poet talking to himself— or to nobody. The second is the voice of the poet addressing an audience, whether large or small. The third is the voice of the poet when he attempts to create a dramatic character speaking in verse; when he is saying, not what he would say in his own person, but only what he can say within the limits of one imaginary character addressing another imaginary character.36
Anderson's plays do all the public speaking. They articulate a wide variety of styles, many great themes, and always with stimulating independence. *Night Over Taos* (1932) studies the wrenching of the south-west from the influence of old world Spain. *The Wingless Victory* (1936) is an exploration of racial prejudice. European history plays also find masterly treatment in the hands of Anderson as a study of evolution of democracy. *The Masque of Kings* (1937) presents a vision of dying Hapsburg Empire; *Second Overture* (1933) is an interpretation of the early days of Russian Revolution. Anderson's modernization of Schiller's *Joan of Lorraine* (1946) treats the legendary maid and a contemporary person in the same historic moment and *Barefoot in Athens* (1951) presents a modern view of the problems of fifth century Greece. "He imposes his liberal democratic humanism on the historical materials," and clothes traditional characters, events and issues in contemporary textures, thus rendering history more accessible to modern audience. The most popular of Anderson's history plays are those works grouped by Bailey as Tudor Trilogy: *Elizabeth the Queen*, *Mary of Scotland* and *Anne of the Thousand Days*.

*White Desert* concerns the fortunes of a couple. *What Price Glory* is a robust comedy exposing the grime of modern warfare. *The Buccaneer* (1925) revived the career of pirate Henry Morgan. *Outside Looking In* (1925) is a dramatization of Jim Tully's *Beggars of Life*.
Saturday's Children (1927) is a saga of white collar marriage on forty dollars a week. Gods of the Lightning and Winterset are based on Sacco – Vanzetti case. The Wingless Victory is a tragic story of a Malay princess. The Masque of Kings is about the double suicide of Prince Rudolph and Mary Vetsera. High Tor skilfully mingles fact and fancy, emphasizing conservation. The Star Wagon is an imaginative play on domestic life. The Feast of Ortalons and Second Overture are one act plays. Key Largo is a study of rehabilitation of a young man who deserts his friends in war. Candle in the Wind is a play set in World War II. Journey to Jerusalem dramatizes the visit of boy Christ to Jerusalem and draws a parallel between Herod and Hitler.

It is suffice to end the roll-call of his achievements here for in the words of Pericles, "Praise of other people is tolerable only up to a certain point." Before concluding his biographical sketch, mention must be made of his organising talents. Along with Elmer Rice, Robert Sherwood, and others, he started the Playwrights' Company as a co-operative venture to enable its members to produce plays. He married thrice and was for many years a resident of New York. At the age of seventy he died in Stamford, Connecticut after a stroke on February 28, 1959. New York Times chronicles the contemporary opinion of Anderson's rich contribution to the American theatre: "Mr. Anderson is a craftsman as well as a prophet." "His is one of the richest minds in the theatre."
The Playwrights’ Company paid a glowing tribute to Anderson the person thus: “He was a hardy man, a humble man and, dear God, what a good one.”

The survey made so far projects Anderson as a liberal humanist, whose plays reflect an affirmative philosophy of life, an optimist who celebrates human greatness and dignity. The testament of his work has been a ceaseless attempt to define the boundary between man’s acknowledgement of the immutability of social evils and his faith in the ability to confront or transcend it. His plays are inextricably bound with the problem of man in conflict with social and political forces. They unfold multiplex of conflicts – battles fought for the dignity of man.

**Hypothesis**

The object of this thesis is to explore the paradigm of conflicts in the inner world of the protagonists and the outer world of social reality and to establish the hypothesis that individuals’ positive response to the conflicts is based on moral precepts.

Anderson as an artist imposes order and form upon the raw materials of experience. Every character is carefully moulded to fit an intellectual conception in which the play in its totality is designed to embody. His plays taken for study are an attempt to answer the great problem of man’s relation to the forces in the world. Every new facet of conflict illuminates in terms of human experience. Anderson approaches the conflicts in life from several angles resulting in diversity of his plays.
Bernard Shaw in his Preface to *Arms and the Man* makes a seminal observation: “unity, however desirable in political agitation, is fatal to drama; for every drama must present a conflict. The end may be reconciliation or destruction; or, as in life itself, there may be no end; but the conflict is indispensable: no conflict, no drama.” By conflict, Shaw means the technique of building a play. Lawson holds that, “while every play may be a conflict, every conflict is not a play.” Very often playwrights who treat histories and comedies silhouette their theme against the tempests of discord or division. To Anderson, conflict becomes the very heart of the organism. The recurrent theme of conflict predominates the centre of action – exactly and minutely expressing the different facets of this one theme in a series of plays. Discord is so perfectly embodied in the plot that its significance is pristine clear. According to Butcher:

> In every drama there is a collision of forces. Man is imprisoned within the limits of the actual. Outside him is a necessity which restricts his freedom, a superior power with which his will frequently collides. Again there is the inward discord of his own divided will; and further, the struggle with other human wills which obstruct his own.

Anderson’s protagonists are indeed imprisoned within the limits of the actual, yet make every effort to break the mould. His plays dissect
the turmoil of their minds bequeathed in this process by the hostile forces around them. Human mind is an active and potent force. In its quest for freedom, its voice becomes strident at the discovery of chaos. Chaos and conflict are rampant in life. Where there is chaos, there is confrontation of opinions, oppositions, contentions and disorder. Often it is inward and spiritual and most fully experienced by the protagonist. Its true nature and manifestations have expansively illumined great works of literature in symbols and imagery. To Donne for instance, the sphere is an emblem of personality where two primary forces – the positive and negative elements work in opposite directions:

Let man's soul be a sphere, and then, in this,
The intelligence that moves, devotion is,
And as the other spheres, by being grown
Subject to foreign motions, lose their own.

John Milton equates passions to the unruly sea and typhoon in

**Samson Agonistes**:

I see thou art implacable, more deaf
To prayers, than winds and seas; yet winds to seas
Are reconciled at length, and sea to shore:
Thy anger, unappeasable, still rages,
Eternal tempest never to be calmed.
Drama through the ages has steadily progressed more and more from the circumstances of men into their minds and hearts. Euripides exhibits more internal storm and stress than Aeschylus; Shakespeare combines mental and moral struggles in equal proportion. Modern tragedy necessarily places larger emphasis on desire, propensity, will, and such human apparatus. Psychological depths are probed in search of tragic clashes. The quality of the conflict is also to be measured by its intensity or degree: It must be fierce and boiling because it has to do with a matter of life and death, of the utmost significance. It may be noisy as in Agamemnon, Macbeth or Strife, or silently corroding as in Phaedra, or subtle as in Cherry Orchard and Waiting for Godot.

There are many roads to the study of conflict. The subject being vast in magnitude, the exploration inevitably carries far beyond the consideration of purely dramatic action and delves into the realms of philosophy, psychology, and sociology. Even an attempt to have cursory knowledge of these fields would entail a task of immense magnitude and digression from the present goal of study. Nonetheless, it would be profitable to mention a few schools of thought.

A remarkable name that springs up in the context of sociological and political conflict is Karl Marx. Marx contended that the capitalistic motive to derive surplus value is the foundation of conflict which he termed as class struggle – an irrevocable clash of interest between workers
and capitalist. This view of Marx received far more attention and led many to hold him as the high priest of material philosophy. To Erich Fromm however, Marxian philosophy is one of protest. It is a protest imbued with faith in man’s capacity to liberate himself and to realize his potential. This whole philosophy has been eclipsed by Marx’s preoccupation with economic determination which he believed dictated the irrational self-awareness and perverted the need-drives of men. Thus in Marx, conflict rises out of man’s inner potentialities being shackled by the economic factors of his milieu. 

Freud the psychoanalyst took a diametrically opposite road and emphasized the internal aspect of conflict: “man was the battlefield on which two equally powerful forces meet: the drive to live and the drive to die.” These forces which Freud considered as biological are found in all organisms including man. If the drive to die was focused on outside objects, it manifested itself as an urge to destroy; if it remained within the organism, it aimed at self-destruction. From the time man makes his uncharted entry into the world, “until death ends the conflict within his soul – when finally Eros, his life-instinct, has been crushed by irresistible Thanatos, his desire for death – there is no peace.” Freud saw a perpetual conflict within man: “At best there can only be an armed truce between the Ego and the Id, a truce which threatens to break out into war within us whenever the Id or the Ego feels well enough armed to tackle its inveterate enemy.”
Psychological and sociological analyses seem to make these battles understandable in terms of fact. A foray into the realms of philosophy reveals that thoughts seek to grasp the essential nature of the tragic not in picture but in concepts. In all discussions of tragedy one note is always struck that tragedy includes or reconciles or preserves contraries in tensions. Without a stern collision of persons, purposes and principles there can be no tragedy. Conflict is wedded to the plot, closely entwined and expanding its significance throughout the drama. In great tragedies, conflicts are bodied forth in plays whose close texture and metaphysical profundity are addressed in minute analysis of disorders in all its form.

Aristotle holds that the distinctive tragic emotions are pity and fear and that both must be present to secure the tragic effect. Hegel's concept is that tragedy "comes from the dynamic conflict between two almost equally powerful laws or other principles of conduct." He found in tragic action a self-contradiction of the Absolute. Hegel's views are the source of many conflict theories. Unnamuno, the Spanish philosopher, traces the origin of tragedy in the contradiction of man's nature. Man's heart craves for personal immortality while his reason tells him he must die. To Kierkegaard, human existence is possible only in tension. He sees in contradiction the very essence of life on which both the comic and the tragic are based.
Like the fable of the six blind men of Indostan who took hold of an elephant at different places and concluded from their experience and examination what sort of an animal this wondrous elephant was, conflict has been differently defined by varied specialised schools of thought. Each school is accurate and logical within its sphere of exploration, yet it may not capture the whole truth. Since conflict consists of overlapping and diverse forces operating simultaneously, the subject of conflict in this study is not approached from any particular sociological or psychological or economic theory, as it would narrow down the scope of investigation leading to distortion of fact. To approach Anderson through the lens of a specific school of thought would be injustice and distortion of the wide canvas he has painted.

The stage history of conflict has revealed its power as the soul of drama. To search in the drama of the past for an embryonic pattern of conflict and trace the continuity in the dramatic tradition for such seeds to grow and develop, examples of the manifestation of conflicts in diverse hues in the hands of a few dramatists down the ages are projected in the ensuing discussion. Tragic world always contains evidence of struggles. But is the conflict tragic in and for itself? or if not, what makes it tragic? To answer these questions, an exploration into the dramatists' world and their conception of conflict becomes imperative.
The ancient Greeks desiderated 'agon'; Hegel and other moderns paraphrase it as 'conflict'. A high point in a Greek play was “the contest or agon in which two characters representing opposite views or interests contended until one of them downed his rival, generally with a torrent of argument or vituperation.” The play was brought to a conclusion with a representation of the consequences entailed by the agon.

Knowledge of Greek drama is essential to understand modern drama for the root of any play goes back to the Greeks. The characters in the Greek tragedy are in perpetual conflict with the inexorable Destiny. Sophocles' Antigone faces the dilemma of either disobeying the King or disregarding a religious obligation to bring back peace to her brother's spirit. The play illustrates with a wealth of details, the conflict of universal interest: the edicts of the state versus individual conscience. Antigone is the first protester in literature. The irreconcilable conflict between the divine law and the man made law was presented for the first time by Sophocles. Antigone surmounts this conflict with a firm determination:

But I shall bury him
And if I have to die for this pure crime
I am content, for I shall rest beside
His love will answer mine him.

In Antigone, Sophocles retains impartiality. He neither favours the dictates of the state nor that of the individual conscience. However,
the audience — especially the moderns, lend their sympathy and moral support to Antigone.

The Elizabethan age was a period of crisis when the winds—old and the new were blowing. The recurrent theme of a great part of Elizabethan literature is the conflict between the demonstrative individualism and the traditional sense of moral order which the new thought sought to upset. The warfare in Dr. Faustus is between human limitation and ambition, with ambition manifesting itself in the protagonist’s greed for power. The despair in God and trust in Beelzebub are examples of his oscillating will. The self-division and the inner struggle in Faustus are externalised in good and bad angels. He fluctuates in renewing the choice between awesome alternatives. His vacillating mind sees greater heights of exaltation one moment and depths of greater terror at another:

Ay and Faustus will turn to God again
To God? He loves thee not.
The God thou serv’st is thine own appetite
Wherein is fixed the love of Beelzebub.

Conflict both external and internal is the burden of Shakespearean tragedy. Bradley terms its manifestation as spiritual force: “This will mean whatever forces act in the human spirit, whether good or evil, whether personal passion or impersonal principle; doubts, desires, scruples, ideas — whatever can animate, shake, possess, and drive a
man’s soul." In *Macbeth*, the external conflict is between Macduff and Macbeth while the inner conflict is between the usurper’s vaulting ambition and his conscience. The protagonist is involved in multiple conflicts: he is at war with men, society, humanity, and self. Hamlet, Othello, and Lear are torn asunder over the choice of alternatives making the heart of the hero a battleground. In these plays, the soul of the protagonist is at war with itself. Brutus in *Julius Caesar* is subjected to conflict between the democratic ideals and personal loyalty to his friend. Antony in *Antony and Cleopatra* is torn between Egypt and Rome, between love and duty.

A new impetus to modern drama started with Henrik Ibsen wherein the battle of the opposites is shown in a new light. Greek and Elizabethan drama ended disastrously for the protagonist where he always died. Modern drama recognized that persons who endured great suffering could continue to live and be the victims of just as tragic a fate as death. According to Ibsen, men are pulled by the ‘trolls’ inside them. They contract high-vaulting ideals and perpetrate mistakes, giving rise to a pack of troubles. *A Doll’s House* traces the conflict between husband and wife and the conventions of the society. The main conflict in *Ghosts* is Mrs. Alving’s choice of disillusioning her son Oswald about his father, which would relieve his mind of his own responsibility for the disease, though it might lead to other serious consequences, or of continuing to
retain the truth hidden. More acute is her dilemma at the end, when she has to decide whether or not to administer morphine tablets to Oswald.

To Strindberg, men and women are inordinately selfish and cruelly despotic. The result is constant war between the sexes, between trader and consumer, between master and apprentice, between parents and children, and even between friends. Life is in tangle never to be unraveled in Strindberg’s world. Miss Julie is no exception to this point of view. Julie, the protagonist who is the daughter of a Count allows herself to be seduced by Jean, her father’s valet. Unable to confront the situation, she causes her own tragic end. The play projects the Darwinian battle between the sexes with social struggle and love-hate bond looming in the background.

Anton Chekhov is an explorer of the inner space of social and psychological turbulence – midway between poles of the tragic and the comic. His plays suggest that man lives in the midst of so many forces – both within and without and the only way life can be given form in art is in comedy. In The Seagull, Treplev the young and aspiring dramatist fights against odds on all sides. He struggles for money, literary reputation, freedom to express himself, and above all he struggles to be himself. When he meets failure in his career and realizes that his beloved Nina has transferred her love to the successful writer Trigorin, he shoots himself. Nina’s struggle is with her father, stepmother, and the vanity they
represent. Her conflict stems from infatuation and the failure to understand true love. In all these conflicts, the protagonists are unsuccessful and grope in the valley of despair.

Bertolt Brecht's *Mother Courage And Her Children*, an antiwar play analyses the evils of war and its pernicious impact on individuals. Anne Fierling, the tragic protagonist popularly known as Mother Courage exhibits extraordinary fortitude. The play is an excellent example of ideological contradiction which transforms the protagonist into a highly complex figure. The external war between the armies symbolizes the war within the family in their effort to earn a livelihood and depicts the colossal waste of precious human lives.

Though Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* does not have conflict in the traditional sense of the word, there is conflict of human spirit centred within the mind of Thomas Becket. The conflict which Becket encounters is the temptation to avoid martyrdom altogether or to accept it in a wrong spirit – to do the right deed for the wrong reason. The tempters serve as the projections of Becket's mind. The conflict he undergoes can be characterised as a contention between the right and the wrong, the good and the evil, the spirit and the flesh.

In Galsworthy's plays, the conflict is between social forces, between the individual and social institutions. In this unequal fight, the puny man
is easily overwhelmed by the powerful social forces. In *The Silver Box*, the judicial system is the villain. *Strife* is based on the hostility between capital and labour. In *Skin Game*, the conflict involves the landed aristocracy and the manufacturing classes. *Loyalties* as the name suggests depicts clash of loyalties.

*Sacrifice* is a time study of a character and its inner conflicts. The practice of sacrificing animals to the idol of Kali, the Goddess of power and destruction forms the theme of the play. Tagore introduces the conflict at the right moment – when King Govinda is moved at the sacrifice of a goat belonging to a beggar girl. The conflict of Jaisingh whether to save the king or the idol ends in his death. To Raghupati, deep-rooted tradition is an impregnable bastion. In the outburst of his feelings when he sees Jaisingh dead, the mental agony brought forth by the conflict is graphically captured:

> Our bitterest cries wander in emptiness, – the emptiness that we vainly try to fill with these stony images of delusion.
> Away with them! Away with these our impotent dreams, that harden into stones, burdening our world!  

Arthur Miller portrays his protagonist's struggle against the laws of the society, family, and self-hood. Within the dramatic framework of *Death of a Salesman*, he blends the themes of social and personal tragedies. The play deals with conflicts arising out of the yearnings,
desires, aspirations, hopes and dreams of an American commoner who frantically pursues the mirage of success. Willy Lomon, the protagonist smothers his own sons and oppresses them with his exaggerated dreams for their success. The play is representative of the struggle of an average man with every day reality of American dream. The protagonist finds himself in the vortex of the conflict between illusion and reality.

The foray into the theatre of the past made hitherto amplifies a cardinal fact: "The essential character of drama is conflict: persons against other persons, or individuals against groups, or groups against other groups, or individuals or groups against social or natural forces." Anderson's plays take a powerful voice in articulating this truth and reflect the inter-play of conflicting elements which shaped them. Seeking expression, he gives them a 'local habitation and a name' in one form or another, be it historical or contemporary theme. Power versus passion is embodied in Elizabeth the Queen, Mary of Scotland, and Anne of the Thousand Days; collision of autonomy and authority in Valley Forge, High Tor, Joan of Lorraine, Night Over Taos, The Feast of Ortolans, The Masque of Kings and Key Largo; battle between militarism and pacifism in Storm Operation, Candle in the Wind, Eve of St. Mark and Key Largo. Each play lionizes in meaningful dramatic expression, the social and political problems of the contemporary life.
In these pretentious days anything can be reason enough for conflict: religion, race, sex, caste, language, political affiliation, economic dissatisfaction, social tensions, power, and relationship. Any element of life can become a cause for conflict. Anderson's protagonists react with extreme sensitivity to all these tensions and debilitating forces of contemporary life. His dramatic picture is the microcosm of an individual confronted by forces too gigantic for him.

Conflicts are inevitable and can be obliterated only in an evil free world; but evil is not an abstract moral element. It takes concrete forms as discrimination, injustice, oppression, individual and collective selfishness, deception, domination and exploitation. The manifestation of such forms can be seen at various levels – in interpersonal relationships, politics, society, commerce, religion, and cultural structures. Battered and tossed by these tempestuous waves, the same groping questions thunder everywhere from every race: In what can we put our trust? In what knowledge or values or government or men? The bewildered mind halts at the frontiers of perplexed state, the rational mind reasons. In such a scenario, what is the role of an individual? How does the individual respond to diverse hues of conflicting elements? This study proposes to answer these queries by analysing nine plays of Anderson in the light of the above parameters.
Review of Literature

The basic tools utilised in this quest are Anderson’s works. Paucity of materials has restricted the reference to a few books sought often. Alfred Shivers’ *Maxwell Anderson: Annotated Bibliography* provides the source material for Anderson’s plays; his *The Life of Maxwell Anderson* and *Maxwell Anderson* gather together all available biographical information. These two books have been relied upon for biographical reference. Bailey’s *Maxwell Anderson – The Playwright as Prophet*, has been profitably employed to gain insight into his plays. A few unpublished materials have also been included to illumine the discussion. Laurence Avery’s *A Catalogue of the Maxwell Anderson Collection at the University of Texas* has been referred for unpublished works. The dramatic theories formulated by Anderson in *Off Broadway* and *Essence of Tragedy* have been reckoned to illustrate his modes of thought and comprehend the purport of this analysis. Anderson’s other works consulted include his letters, materials from newspapers, and prefaces to some of his plays. Sources cited also comprise of reviews, critical articles in journals, and books which add perspectives to the analysis.

The plays selected for comprehensive investigation are: *The Wingless Victory, Lost in the Stars, Gods of the Lightning, Winterset, The Masque of Kings, Second Overture, Barefoot in Athens, Key Largo* and *Candle in the Wind*. These plays highlight
the dramatist's concern for the dormant and universal tensions that confront man. The struggle of man against the debilitating forces of the world is poignantly reflected. Though Anderson has to his credit a wide range of plays and varying themes reflecting universal concerns, only those plays that fit into the aforesaid thematic analysis have been taken for examination. The individual's response in these plays is the unifying force in experience linking ideas, events and impressions behind the diversity of conflicts and tensions.

The chapters are categorized under the broad band of conflicts arising out of racial prejudice, social injustice, political domination, and moral integrity. Chapters II, III and IV capture the struggle between the individual and social institutions. Chapter V is devoted to the moral crisis confronting man. The concluding Chapter VI sums up the evaluation of the validity and the relevance of the playwright's views. The detailed discussion of each play is confined to the scrutiny of facets of conflicts, both internal and external. The method of approach is descriptive and analytical.