0 1 2 3 4
Bus Stop

Bus stop presents to quote William Inge's own words "a composite picture of varying kinds of love ranging from the innocent to the depraved." The action of the play takes place in a street corner restaurant in a small Kansas city. The play opens in a stormy night. It opens with the conversation of two females Grace and Elma who are the workers of the restaurant. Grace is a middle aged woman while Elma is a young school girl. It is 1:00 AM of a stormy night. Will Masters, the sheriff enters the restaurant and tells about the arrival of a bus. The bus can not move towards its next station because the road is blocked by wind and snow. Grace informs Will that phones are cut. Meanwhile Cherie, an attractive young girl, runs in upset because she has been kidnapped by a young cowboy Bo Decker who wants to marry her. Bo and his budy Virgil are still asleep in the bus and she wants to get away
before they awake. After some moments Bo enters with Virgil and treats Cherie in very rude manner. At the same time Dr Lyman is also present there who is drunken. He is an important figure of the play who leads an isolated life without any companion. All the people tries to entertain by music, dance and acting to pass the night.

On the other hand the argument between Bo and Cherie also continues. He expresses his love for Cherie roughly, embraces her hardly and kisses her. She reacts to his proposal and opposes his behaviour.

Bo shouts. The sheriff warns him for his attitude Virgil apologizes and advises Bo not to treat a woman in such a way. Finally Bo realizes the fact that Cherie does not love him. Virgil also tries to assure Cherie that Bo does not want to create any harm to her. At the end of the play she decides to go with Bo for the journey of a new life but Bo’s friend Virgil is left alone.

Dr Lyman also emerges as a reformed character. Grace tries
to find her satisfaction in Carl the bus driver. Elma is also left alone but she is a young girl and she will get lots of opportunity for love.

(a) **Concept of love** :-

Bus stop is basically an anatomy of love. Inge has attempted to present different shades of love in it. The first main love conflict is between Cherie and Bo. Bo is the prototypical provincial twenty one year old young man. He is tall slim and good looking cowboy. He is an immatured man who does not know the philosophy of real love. He is crude and rough by his nature.

Bo first met Cherie in the Blue Dragon night club where “she completely captivated him by her rendition of “That Old Black Magic.” He fell in love with Cherie and spent the night with her. Bo himself admits: “...Yor about the cutest li'l piece I ever did see... when I...hear you singin' my favorite song, standin' before the orkester looking like a angel I told myself
then and there she's fer me. I ain't gonna leave this place with out her..."(172). After then Bo always insisted on her to marry him but Cherie did not like to marry him.——Early in the play Bo's love for Cherie seems one sided love He thinks that a boy's love for a girl is sufficient for a long happy marital life. He has no respect for a woman's likes and dislikes. He fully expect Cherie to marry him when he admits that he loves her. He can not believe that he may be disliked by a girl: "...a gal oughta like me. I kin read and write, I 'm kinda, tidy and I got good manners...I'm tal and strong.... I'm purty good 'lookin'" (186).

Financially Bo also considers himself a suitable fellow match for Cherie because he owns a ranch up in Timber Hill in Montana. He has six thousand dollars in the bank and he has "color television set with the twenty-four-inch screen" (193). Bo's over confidence on himself checks him to accept the reality that he may love someone who does not reciprocate his love: "I... I just never realized ...a gal might ...love me"
(178). The character of Bo has no artificiality. He grew old in a ranch in a free atmosphere. He is innocent and a provincial boy. There is no deception in his behavior when his friend Virgil suggests him to be more showy before Cherie, he refuses: "I ain't gonna pretend" (186). He is impatient and does not know how to put a marital proposal before a girl. Being a stubborn young man he tries to get a thing that he likes at any cost.

Bo is bold in admitting his love. To him it's no crime to show his love for his beloved even in public place. He grabs her in his arms in the restaurant and says: "...It's no crime to show a li'l affection, is it? specially when we're gonna git married" (172). In the last Act Will, the sheriff warns him not to take Cherie with him without her desire otherwise he can be sent to the penitentiary under the Mann act. But Bo does not fear. Even he looks more determined when he says "I loved her" (204). He has courage to face life's problems, When Virgil suggests him to have wine to relieve himself from tension and pain he rejects his advice and says confidently: "I never did drink and I ain't gonnia let no woman drive me to it" (182).

Bo has no family. He is alone in the world. Virgil has been looking after him when he was only ten years old. He has spent all his time in his ranch He does not know what love is.
considers woman as a curious thing: "...I'd lived all my life on a ranch... and I guess I din know much about women... 'cause they're different from men" (120). He had never known any woman so closely. Bo's experience with Cherie in the bedroom was a new experience and he considers it as his love affair with her. She was "the first gal I ever had anything to do with. ...you was so purty and ya seemed ... to kinda warm hearted and sweet I felt like I could love you..."(210). Cherie is the first and the last girl of his life. Actually Bo misunderstood her when he saw her in the night club. He watched her "singin' and you smiled at me while you was singin and winked at me ... no gal ever done that to me before so I thought you was singin' just fer me" (210). Like Inge's other characters in different plays Bo also suffers from the sense of insecurity and loneliness. His sense of loneliness pushes him to seek a companion who can share his happiness as well as sorrows: "...there's been times the last few months I been lonesome, I... I jest didn't know what t' do with m'self(183). The sense of loneliness sometimes weakens him. For him he can overcome his problem of loneliness through marriage. He has no other way through which he can come out from his troubles. His first experience with Cherie gives a hope for his better future. Being an average ordinary man Bo never wants to be defeated a woman: "...I never had to beg no woman to make love to me... I never had to
coax no woman to make love to me(172). In the beginning Bo offers Cherie a love that is dominating all demanding and which has no knowledge of humility. What Adler speaks about a preconceived idea of male dominance in a marriage is very much evident in Bo's attitude. He calls himself Cherie's husband several time while they are still unmarried. He also dislikes Cherie's idea of protection from him:

"Bo... what 'd ya need protection for... from a man that wants to marry ya? Cherie (shuddering)... 'cause...

Bo(Bellowing angrily) – 'cause why? I said I loved Ya din" (175).

He always tries to be victorious and superior before Cherie. After he loses the fight with Will, Bo doubts that Cherie would "have no respecte for me now, she saw me beat(206)."

His ego does not allow him to seem weak in front of others.

He also refuses Will's advice of being a humble man for getting his love by saying, "I ain't gonna get down on my knees and beg" (205).

Earlier Bo refuses to go to Cherie for apologizing
because of his ego problem. But when Virgil and Will master insists on him to do so, he apologizes because his desire for Cherie inspires him to evaluate himself. He does not want any substitute of her. He rejects Virgil's advice of finding lot of girls in place of Cherie who will love him passionately by saying: "I want Cherie" (208).

However, Bo's strong will of marrying Cherie shakes a little. When Cherie tells about her past he reevaluates his decision and says to Cherie that Virgil thinks, "I'm virgin enough for the two of us" and he adds I like ya like ya are Cherry. So I don’t care how ya get that way" (214).

In the beginning of the play Bo's love for Cherie is entirely based upon physical attraction or may be called a surface love. But at the end of the play his love is based upon realistic outlook. Bo apologizes and then, as Robert Brustein puts it "indicates his tamed domesticity by solicitously putting his leather jacket around her. Shoulders." showing his tenderness, Bo proves his point "A man's gotta right to the things he loves" (205). Through humility he succeeds in to achieve his love.
Cherie is, probably, a most important focus of the play. She is a saloon dancer in Kansas city. Her relationship with Bo begins from the Blue Dragon Club. She spends a night with Bo. After then Bo started insisting on her to marry him. But Cherie did not like to marry a cowboy like him.

Cherie's philosophy of love is entirely based upon materialistic outlook. She was the native of a little town in the Ozarks near River Gulch. She had a large family with parents, two brothers and five sisters. At the age of twelve she had to leave her school to stay at home and take care of her house when her older sister Violet had ran away from house. But now she has lost her family because three years ago a flood separated her and her young sister Nan from their family. She came to Joplin with Nan where Nan got a job as waitress while Cherie started working in a drugstore. Later she participated in an amateur contest in Joplin and won the second prize and got the job at the Blue Dragon. Recently she has already left her job. It is obvious she has been struggling for surviving and has seen the society very closely. That is why she is very practical in the question of love. She considers her first sex experience with Bo as a casual affair unlike Bo. She has a long experience of boys till the age of nineteen: “I dunno. I'm only nineteen, but
I been goin' with guys since I was fourteen" (187). So to Cherie there is nothing serious in her affair with Bo. She thinks that spending one night together doesn't "mean ya gotta marry me" (175). Earlier she does not believe in Bo's proposal. She thinks that he is joking. She realizes the seriousness of the proposal when he keeps on insisting on her stubbornly again and again. Cherie is confused in the situation because she is not psychologically prepared for marriage. She "honestly thought he was crazy" ( ). Cherie wants to resist his proposal but Bo does not give any opportunity to say something. Cherie feels uncomfortable because after spending first night with her Bo "...stayed by my side all day long like a shadow... If any other fella claimed t'have a date with me, Bo'd beat him up" (184).

Cherie, does not like Bo's aggressive and possessive behaviour. She is not so much sentimental as Bo. The club is the place where lots of boys come daily and she has to face them. She cannot take seriously all the boys. For Cherie Bo is also one of them. Her profession is not a respectable profession. So she cannot expect a man to love her and marry her. Moreover Bo's rude and rough behavior creates unknown fear in her. In the first Act of the play Cherie enters the restaurant to hide because Bo is chasing her. She came out stealthily from the bus while Bo and his friend Virgil are asleep. She is so
much scared of him that she asks the sheriff Will to provide protection: I... I need protection. There's a man after me. He's a cowboy" (158). She also makes clear that she is being abducted by him to get married. She can not trust a man who "grabs ahold of a woman and kisses her...like he was Napolean" (201). Cherie dislikes his style of showing love for her. When he embraces her forcibly in the restaurant she tries to get rid off his embrace and says, "Bo...there's people here... they're lookin'..."(172). She does not like his rough and uncivilized approach to love. When Bo approaches her with humility and tenderness, she seems willing and eager to go to Montana and marry him.

Though Cherie rejects his marital proposal again and again yet there is something in Bo's personality which attracts her. In their first meeting at the night club Cherie also liked him. Cherie tells that during her song "he jumped up on a chair and yelled like an Indian and put his fingers in his mouth and whistled like a steam engine. Natur'ly it made me feel good" (183) because other customers were too drunk to pay any attention to her songs. She repeats the same song The Old Black Magic in the mock night club performance instigated by Elma, to cast her spell over Bo again later she admits the fact
that "I was attracted right from the start" (184). Cherie always saw the cowboys in movies. She has never seen a cowboy like Bo who is darn? and healthy in real life. To her "he was awful cute" (183). But further she adds that it was only a sexual attraction not love in real sense. She can not believe that a man can love her so passionately because he has spent a single night with her. She considers him a man who wants "a girl to thro his arms around and hug and kiss, that's all. The resta the time, he don't even know I exist" (183). Cherie wants respect and regard from her lover. She wants a man who can care for her likes and dislikes. But Bo's image is quite opposite from Cherie's imagination of her dream boy. His furious and indisciplined behaviour doubts her whether he would treat her in right way after getting married. She wants "a guy I can look up to and respect, but don't want one that 'll browbeat me, And I want a guy who can be sweet to me but I don't wanta be treated like a ball. I just gotta feel that whoever I marry has some real regard for me, apart from all the lovin' and sex" (187). Cherie like Madge in Picnic is in search of true love. She is much in need of someone who will love her for she has never in her past life know what is to be wanted. Cherie discloses an important fact in a conversation with Elima that at the age of fourteen she
attempted to marry her cousin Malcom. Obviously it was immaturity decision by her so her father disapproved her choice and predicted that he would not be a suitable husband for her. The prediction turned into truth so now she is glad that she never married her cousin. Since Malcom Bo is the first boy who wants to marry her.

The second time Cherie seems more alert in taking the decision of marriage. Being an ordinary girl she has also the dream to get married and raise a family. She is still waiting for a perfect man. A sudden encounter with Bo does not give her sufficient time to take the important decision of marriage. Before marriage she wants to fall in love with her match: "I dunno why I keep expectin' m'self to fall in love with someone, but I do" (187). She is not sure whether she is in love with Bo or not. She expresses her own thoughts regarding love when she says, "...Mebbe I don't know what love is Mebbe I'm expectin't'be something it ain't. I just feel that regardless how crazy ya are 'bout some guy, ya gotta feel..." (187). But the most important factor of Cherie's life is financial. She is an adrift. She is jobless and seems to have a lack luster future before her. Financially her condition is not good. When Elma tells her that there is a little hotel down the street where she might hide herself from Bo
she answers. What ya take me for? A millionaire? (158). She checks her money before she orders for doughnuts. Cherie has not a bright future because she has to search another job for her while Bo is financially established man. She knows her destiny: "... after a while I'll prob'ly marry some guy, whether I think I love him or not. Whom I to keep insistin' I should fall in love. You hear all about love when yor a kid and jest take it for granted that such a thing really exists. May be have to find out for yourself it don't" (188). The dialogue shows Cherie's realistic outlook. In the whole play Cherie does not deny her intimacy with Bo but she is merely shocked and surprised that he has taken seriously such a casual affair. In the end of the play when Bo tries to be tender, Cherie's attitude towards him begins to change. Besides, she seems grateful to Bo when Virgil tells her that she is the first girl of his life; "...I sure ain't never had that honor before"(202).

At the end of the play she forgives him and ready to "go anywhere in the world with ya now, Bo. Any where at all" (215).

In addition Inge has attempted to throw light on the fact that honesty in love is an unavoidable element Cherie seems the lost honest person when she reveals her past before Bo:
"...I figured since ya found me at the Blue Dragon ya just look it fer granted I'd had other boy friends 'fore you" (209).

Apparently she does not consider herself a suitable girl for him because she has led a life of a prostitute. She feels guilty when she says, "... Bo it's kinda personal and kind embarrassin', too, but... I ain't the kinda gal you thought I was" (209).

The information is really shocking for Bo because he has to reconsider his desire to marry her. But despite of Cherie's bad past Bo decided to marry her. It is apparent that it is a great honor for Cherie in itself .Bo is, to quote Shuman's words, "an excellent catch for someone in her position."

Virgil Blessing is another important character of the play. Inge has presented a different form of love through him. His name Virgil Blessing suggests purity. He has been looking after twenty one year old Bo for last eleven years. He provides parental love to Bo. His love is "based on charity rather than an eroticism." The Greeks identify this form of love as 'aoathe'. Virgil is a true friend of Bo who always suggests him rightly Virgil is also an isolated person who has no one except Bo in the world. Once he was also in love with a girl. He recalls his past
days and his love. His love story became unsuccessful or it could not be converted into marriage. The main reason of the failure was, as he tells to Bo, a gap between he and his beloved: "... I was allus kinda uncomfortable around this gal 'cause she was sweet and kinda refined. I was allus scared I'd say or do something wrong" (185). Apparently Virgil did not consider himself a suitable match of her because of this fear. So he did not propose her. On the other hand he was a homeless fellow and used to spend most of the time with his friends. He was leading a free life without any bounding. He dared not to propose her and "... every time I'd get back from courtin' her and come back to the bunkhouse where my buddies was sitting around talkin' or playin' cards or listenin' to music I'd jest relax and feel m' self so much at home, I din wanta give it up" (185).

Now he considers the decision as a great mistake. He feels ashamed. He has realized that a fellow can't live his whole life depending on buddies. Now he is repenting and facing a life of loneliness. He has turned back on conventional love by saying; "A long time ago I gave up romancin' and decided I was just gonna take being lonesome for granted" (183).
Virgil's role in Bo's life is like a guardian. He is the soul of genuine unostentatious sacrifice. He attempts honestly to make settlement between Bo and Cherie. He does not want to let Bo suffer the same disaster as he has been suffering. His devotion to Bo is sincere and ingenious as he has already left the chance to have a home and family. Virgil is too late to marry his beloved. He has turned his attention towards Bo to settle down him properly. In the climax of the play when Bo and Cherie are ready to get married, and set up their home, Virgil steps out of Bo's life. He reacts as his work is now over. Virgil is a man of experience and matured sensitivity. He shares his experience regarding love with Bo and suggests him how to treat a girl when he is in love with her. He discusses his weaknesses and asks him to be more gallant with girl. He also introduces a fact that the girls attract towards tender things or behaviour; "Yah Bo! Girls like things t'be tender" (191). Virgil tries hard to expose the tender side of Bo's nature "I'm just tryin, to show ya that you got a tender side to your nature same as anyone else" (192). To Virgil a girl has also feelings, emotions, likes and dislikes so an man "can't force a gal to marry ya" (182).

His name Virgil Blessing is in itself suggestive of the
purity. His love for Bo is genuine and beyond selfishness. At the end of the play when Bo and Cherie leave him he blesses their marriage. He also promises to visit them in Montana. Though he finds difficult to control over his emotions, he tries hard to control his feelings "No... No... iemme be, Bo" (216). When Bo insists on him not to leave him, Virgil says laughing "In a couple weeks ya'll never miss me" (217).

The end of Bus stop is not hopeful for Virgil. He is entirely in the grip of isolation. He is left just alone in the restaurant and has nowhere to go. When Grace says that she is sorry because he is left out in the cold Virgil replies, "Well ... that's what happens to some people(219)."

The tragedy seems inevitable in Virgil's life. Probably he has already prepared himself for this end earlier. So he does not waste a single moment after their decision of marrying each other. She immediate decision of leaving Bo does not give him the opportunity to select the place where he would get settled down. In the climax of the play, though Virgil is alone, yet he is ready to face the stark realities of life without a companion. He is quite bold to accept the reality. The portrait
of Virgil supports the theme that life without love is lonely. William Inge leaves a solution of Virgil’s problem i.e. he can go to Grace’s apartment and can share the warmth of her love as Carl the bus driver does.

The character of Dr. Lyman is also a man without love. He is Doctor philosophy. He has medium height. He is a man of “about fifty with a ruddy boyish face that smilingly defies the acts of his rather scholarly glasses and iron grey hair” (159). Dr Lyman’s tragedy is that “I never had the generosity to love to give my own most private self to another for I was weak. I thought the gift would somehow lessen me. Me! (200)

Like Virgil Blessing Dr Lyman also represents polarity. He is professor in a college. He married three women but all of them have already left him. He failed to provide all that they desire. But he tries to show his honestly by saying, “Don’t shame me. I loved them all... passion(188). He has been living an isolated life for a long period because his “third and last wife deserted me several years ago... for a ballplayer” (164). She was very beautiful and wanted “to find new marital bliss with her ballplayer” (164). So she left her. Dr. Lyman regarded her a kind lady because he never had to pay her alimony
His second wife was also a pretty lady. He fell in love with her when he was teaching at an eastern university and she was his student there. She was discontented of Lyman's lifestyle. So she sued me for divorce on the grounds that I was incontinent and always drunk" (165).

Lyman recalls his honeymoon with his first wife in Bermuda. He calls her the loveliest of them all" (173). She sued him for divorce on the grounds of mental cruelty. After Dr Lyman she has not married any another man. So he is still paying alimony to her.

Thus Dr Lyman is entirely lonely soul, Dr tries to rationalize his isolation by equating it with freedom; "I have no missus sir. I am free. I can travel the universe with no one to await my arrival anywhere" (164). Unlike Doc and Lola in Come Back Little Sheba Dr Lyman and his wives do not change their way of life Doc and Lola accept each other despite their weaknesses. Even they try to change their habit because their separation would only give them loneliness. In contrast Dr. Lyman and his wives are not successful to make their marriage stable. Apparently in above cases there is lack of love between the couples. Lyman's three attempts have failed. He is now
hopeless; "... Getting married is a careless habit. I've fallen into sometimes really, I must give it all up..." (164).

He is entirely in the grip of loneliness. Alcohol has been his comfort and he spends most of his time on buses, sidling between towns; "... I travel around from one town to another just to prove myself that I'm free" (161).

Obviously Dr Lyman has huger for love. So he attempts to make love with the young employee of the restaurant Elma. He is attracted towards her because she is young and beautiful. Over all she takes interest in him. He attempts to arrange a meeting with Elma in Topeka; "You can take me to the library than perhaps we could have dinner together and perhaps you would permit me to take you to the symphony" (181).

But Dr Lyman does not seem honest when he urges Elma not to tell anyone about the trip. He is afraid of society that would not regard it rightly. He is also aware of his weaknesses as he has been married for three times and he is older than her. During the attempt he seems very alert regarding his affair when he says; "... I have been married and l
am somewhat older than you though perhaps not quite as old as you might take me to be... anyway people might not understand" (181). His approach to Elma creates doubts about his character. Later in the play Carl, the bus driver, discloses the fact before Grace that the Doctor had been in trouble several times, for getting involved with young girls. His over praising Elma and very informal behavior suspect others that he is attempting to flirt with her.

Unlike Virgil Dr. Lyman is a self centered person. He is unable to change. He has adopted wine and traveling as the substitute of marriage to get away from isolation while Virgil decides to face his problem boldly. He tried to find a solution in young and fresh Elma. He himself selects the character of Romeo to act with her in the Balcony Scene from Romeo and Juliet. His performance emerges him as a selfish performer when he reads all his speeches as grand soliloquies regarding his Juliet as prop.

His self centeredness and selfishness made him unsuccessful in love. He finds himself weak to be loved when he says, "It takes strong men and women to love... People strong
enough inside themselves to love... without humiliation” (200).

He also agrees with the fact that love brings a change in human life. It increases responsibility and a responsible person can only be successful in love. He has to be generous for his beloved; “People big enough to grow with their love and live inside a whole wide new dimension. People brave enough to bear the responsibility of being loved and no fear as burden” (200).

Dr Lyman fails to be generous. He has realized his weakness in the play but it is too late to admit his fault. Now he is an old man. When Elma says she likes him he replies.

I am flattered my dear and pleased but you’re young. In a few years, you will turn... from a girl into a woman. A kind thoughtful loving intelligent woman who could only pity me. For I’m a child adrunked. Unruly child and I’ve nothing in my heart for a true woman” (200).

His philosophy of love is very clear in his statements. To him love needs sacrifice so “two people really in love must give something of themselves” (189).
In the beginning of the play Lyman appears as a drunk and a desperate character who is unable to change himself but at the end of the play he becomes a reformed character. He accepts the reality that he is too old to make love with a young girl like Elma. He drops the idea of going to Topeka and says:

"...Dear girl let us give up our little spree, shall we? You don't want to go traisping over the streets of the states capital with an old reprobate like me" (212).

The lack of love in his life causes mental disturbance. He himself discloses the fact that his friends have always been hinting him to go Topeka and should get psychoanalyzed. But he does not intend to go anywhere when he says:

"...I don't think I care to be psychoanalyzed. I rather cherish myself as I am" (213).

Lyman considers himself an unintelligent fellow in love. When Elma appreciates him as the smartest man she has ever met, he states; "...I'm terribly smart. Wouldn't it have been nice... to be intelligent" (213).
Apparently Lyman has realized his shortcomings but simultaneously he seems unwilling to change his life style. In the climax of the play he has emerged as a reformed character who will probably face the stark realities of life without love.

Elma, a big-eyed girl, is still in school. According to Shuman, Elma "is a sincere innocent sort of creature who enjoys talking and is easy to talk with." The character of Elma represents purity. She is not mature enough to understand the philosophy of love deeply. She is "the young waitress more observer than participant in the adult world she is about to join." Elma is as bright in *Bus Stop* as Millie is in *Picnic*. She is just coming in touch with the term love. When Grace tells her the problems of her marital life, Elma tries to understand and gives an example of her own parents who are really in love with each other; "I guess my folks get along pretty well. I mean they really seem to like each other" (155).

In further discussion we come to know that she is unpopular among the boys but she is good in studies. Elma looks curious to get popularity among boys when she puts a question to Grace; "What should I do? Flunk my courses" (155). Elma accepts Dr Lyman's offer to go Topeka without knowing
his real intention behind it. She simply considers it as enjoyment. For her he is an old man who is very friendly with her because generally older people do not involve the younger one in their matters: "...Usually older people are too busy to take notice of kids. I'd just love to" (181).

In the climax of the play Grace advises her not to meet Dr Lyman in Topeka. Elma's ignorance regarding Lyman's intention is apparent when she says: "Do you think he wanted to make love to me?" (218). She considers herself stupid because she could not understand the real sense of his talking. Simultaneously she seems excited with the thought that Dr Lyman wanted to make love with her. She looks at her image in the mirror pleasingly, hand says, "Just think he wanted to make love to me" (218). On Grace's advice she is ready to wait till she gets to college for making love with cute boys. Thus Elma is not entirely ignorant from the term love. She has learnt a little and she has to learn a lot. In several places she tries to show herself a mature lady. When Grace tells that she does not like Will to talk with Elma regarding the relationship between herself and Carl, Elma tries to prove Grace wrong and says; "I don't see I shouldn't know Grace I don't wanta be a baby forever" (218). Grace, a middle aged lady, is a worker of the restaurant.
She is a hungry soul for love because her husband has gone away. She has to face loneliness because of her husband’s absence. Her loneliness is expressed by her in an early speech:

"...sometimes at night after I empty the garbage and lock the doors and turn out the lights. I get kind of sick feeling ‘cause I sure don’t look forward to walkin’ up those stairs and lettin’ myself into an empty apartment” (155).

Her tragedy is similar to Dr Lyman’s whose marriage has proved a failure. But she has not done the mistake of marrying again as Dr Lyman says "...Getting married is a careless habit” (155). She has taken help of an extra marital affair with the bus driver Carl. Having an unsuccessful marital status she faces the problem of loneliness in both condition i.e. in the presence as well as in the absence of her husband. He could not be a good companion with whom she could share her feelings, "...Cause I got just as lonesome when he was here. He wasn’t much company, ‘cept when we were makin’ love. ...The resta time me and Barton were usually fightin’ (155). Grace’s life is without direction. She has a dark future. She has noone who can respect and share her feeling sand sentiments. She knows her
end when she says; "...I'll probably die in the little town and they'll bury me out by the backhouse" (155). She has not any permanent relations with others. Daily lots of people visit her restaurant so she has replaced the tenderness and warmth in her heart with the defensive mechanisms to protect herself from being hurt. Carl is the bus driver who visits her restaurant for three times in a week. Grace and Carl get only twenty minutes to fulfill their desire. They don't have much time to be familiar with each other. At the night when the action of the play takes place Carl is happy because he can stay with Grace more than twenty minutes because of the storm. He requests her to give "a chance to become kinda acquainted" (203). But Grace is not curious regarding his request. Sometimes Carl wants to go beyond their casual affair but Grace does not seem interested to be settled with him. Carl wishes for an apartment where he can sit with her, talk to her and listen to radio. He questions; "Do you have an apartment like that Grace?" Grace answers; "Yes, I do, But I never told you about it" (163). Here it is apparent Grace is satisfied with her sexual relationship with Carl. She uses him as a means to satisfy herself. She doesn't consider him the right person with whom she can share her matters; "...Ya needn't go blabbing anything to the other drivers I know how you men talk when ya get together. Worse'n women" (203). Even she does not believe him that he is an
unmarried persc:. 

On the other hand Grace wants only Carl to satisfy his need. She does not want to share her identity with other persons: "I certainly don't want the other drivers on this route some of 'em especially gettin' the idea I'm gonna serve 'em any more 'n what they order over the counter" (204).

At the very end of the play she can invite Virgil to her apartment for love but she does not do so because Carl has already satisfied her need. She also accepts that she likes Carl's hand and when Carl asks; "Ya ...ya kinda liked me...dinya Grace.

she answers; May be I did" (204). Her answer does not show surity but possibility in some level. Besides Grace is very conscious regarding her reputation. She doesn't want Elma to know about her affair; "...you're a kid, and I don't wanna set no examples or anything, do you think you can overlook it and not think bad of me" (218).
Hence she knows that his affair with Carl cannot be accepted rightly in moral sense. But her sexual frustration and loneliness push her to find a man like Carl who is able to satisfy her needs: "'cause I'm a restless sort of woman and every once in a while I gotta have me a man just to keep m'self from gettin' grouchy" (218).

Grace is also an experienced lady who guides Elma regarding love affair with boys when she says that she may have more boyfriends if she "didn't make such good grades. Boys feel kind of embarrassed if they feel girl is smarter than they are" (218). Here Grace is to Elma as Virgil is to Bo. She provides her some kind of maternal affection and guidance when she asks Elma not to meet Dr Lyman again. She also tells her to share her problem with her Aunt Grace.

Grace's outlook regarding love moves around sexual contentment. She wants sexual pleasure so that she can escape the feeling of loneliness and sexual frustration. She is not eager to be involved in spiritual love. Her life is a
deserted life.

Thus in Bus stop the hope for a happy marital. Life is more convincing than that offered by *Come Back little Sheba* and *Picnic* Bo and Cherie are suitable for each other because. Bo is financially independent man who represents a lovable and touching spirit. Cherie is also a beautiful girl and attracted by Bo. Though she had a very miserable childhood which ended up in her becoming a night club dancer and prostitute. She finds happiness with Bo who is ready to respect and cherish her. Bo is capable to provide all that Cherie needs. At the end of the play their lives seems more hopeful than any other couple's life presented by Inge. The theme of the play is a search for love. Inge's characters suffer from the sense of loneliness and in security. At the end of the play they cure their sickness of isolation by love Robert Burstein has pointed out that "the man finds his salvation from fear need an security only through fulfillment of domestic love."³

Obviously Inge has used Bo Cherie conflict so that he
can write broadly about the question of love. The conflict "paid seduced dividends as it went along." Bus stop is an attempt to explore the question of love widely and philosophically. Other characters also contribute to the exploration. The character of Dr Lyman talks about love in modern references. He says that love is destroyed by the inability to give enough of ourselves. He feels that we have passed that stage of evolution wherein love is possible. Modern man is plagued by anxiety for mere survival. This anxiety shakes the very foundation of many marriages in our society. Walters J. Meserve aptly describes that the "play presented an assorted group of people whose attitude towards love suggest the scope that this emotion holds for mankind." 

In Bus Stop Inge has done "much more than a trio of not very starting sketches they all deal with the conflict between security produced by selfishness and true love." His characters are ready to compromise for their love. Inge's concept of love and sexuality is clearly related with each other. Love can be felt through sex. Grace gives priority to sexual pleasure while Cherie expects some more beyond sexuality from her lover. Virgil's love is genuine. His love deserves purity. Elma, being a young girl, is incapable to understand love and sexuality deeply. Carl and Will Master are minor
characters. Carl is being used by Grace. He is also happy with his casual affair with Grace. Will has no affair but he introduces an important fact that a humble man deserves the right to achieve his love; "A man don’t deserve the things he loves, unless he kind be a little humble about gettin’ ‘em" (205).

(b) Emphasis upon Sex:

Life without love is lonely is main theme of Inge’s plays. His characters always escape the reality and loneliness in search of love. Inge always insists on sexual love. Bus stop has many sex starved figures. In the play Inge begins with "a homo-sexual atmosphere which develops the basic theme by means of allusions that counterpoint the dialogue."12

The relationships of Grace and Carl, Bo and Cherie, Elma and Dr Lyman, Virgil and his lost love provide variety in the play. Grace, a victim of a broken marriage settles only for temporary relationship. She has learned the art of separating her emotional life from her physical one. The relationship of Bo
and Cherie also begins with sexual relationship initially, both of the relationships are not much different from each other. But one crucial element separates them i.e. Bo’s love and passion is only for Cherie and it touches her who is already in need of someone to love her. Moreover Cherie has no financial security while Bo’s financial condition can provide her all that she requires. They can also satisfy each other by their sexuality. Thus their balanced relationship has the stability. In contrast Grace Carl relationship is entirely based on sexual relationship. They do not seem to convey their relationship for a long period. Their love begins in an apartment and also ends in it. If they want a stable relation they can marry but they have no intent to do so. They do not seem to care other aspects of each other’s personality as well as life. Grace finds impossible to escape loneliness. The casual affair between her and Carl helps her to escape the reality. She finds relief from her sexual frustration. At the end of the play she tells Elma that she is a restless woman who needs a man to keep her from getting grouchy. Here it is also noticeable that Grace does not look to share her identity with ...other person. because in the climax of the play when Virgil is left alone in the restaurant she may
invite him to her apartment but she doesn't do so as Carl has already satisfied her needs for that evening.

Therefore, Inge was aware of "the illusiveness of human experience." And his characters escape loneliness through sex. The relationship between Elma and Dr Lyman is not really based on sexual aspects. Their relationship begins and ends in the restaurant itself. Elma is not a matured girl in the term of sex but Dr Lyman is entirely a sexual frustrated man. His nympholepsy reinforces the depth of his self centeredness. His three marriages have failed. He could not provide the love and sexual pleasure to his wives as they desired. Now he is alone. His hunger for sex inspires to flirt Elma. He tries to clasp her hand during conversation; he fixes a meeting in Topeka with her and asks her not to tell anybody about the trip. His frustration can also been seen in his performance as Romeo in the Balcony Scene from *Romeo and Juliet*. In the last act of the play Carl tells Grace that the Dr has been caught several times for getting involved with young girls. Probably it was the result of sexual frustration. Unlike Grace he considers traveling and alcohol for escaping from his problem in place of sex.
Therefore Inge’s characters in Bus Stop run towards sexual love in place of spiritual love. Even they are ready to overlook their parents’ other aspects for sexual pleasure. Their eagerness for sexual pleasure drive towards destruction but soon they reconsider their faults and emerged as reformed characters. The end of the Bus Stop bring hope for better life for each character except Virgil. But Virgil’s selection of life is his own decision.

Some critics objected Inge’s over-emphasis on sex in Bus Stop. To Eric Bentley “Inge might love formed down the play’s sexual preoccupation.” On the other hand Richard Walts justified Inge’s sex – based t6heme and said that he “is not writing about sex as a cheap, cross thing. He is using it rather to highlight the loneliness people experience the searching they have to endure to find love and understanding.”

In summing up, Hatch’s appreciation is more positive when he writes that Bus Stop is “a delicate work, the night club girl who is vulgar but not cheap; the cowboy who is absurd but not ridiculous; the professor who is pitiable but not maudlin; the restaurant owner who is touch but not callous.”
The play, therefore, is study of emotionally impoverished lower middle class people who are willing to fulfill their sexual desire and to gain love. Ultimately they desire to settle for less than an ideal life.

Ultimately I wish to conclude the analysis after discussion the main theme of love and sex in Bus Stop. To R. Baird Shuman it "might have been subtitles 'An Anatomy of love' because Inge has attempted to explore the different shades of love in the play.

First of all what Inge has always emphasized is physical love. In the play the characters of Grace and Bo are hungry for sexual love. Bo meets Cherie in a club and is attracted by her beauty. The Grace – Carl relationship is also purely based Cherie is a beautiful girl while Bo is a young and attractive boy who has the quality to attract women. Dr. Lyman's third wife left him for a ball – player because she was sexually unsatisfied with him.

The characters of Cherie and Grace represent those women for whom the sex and love are entirely different subjects. In the absence of her husband Grace enjoys sex with Carl. They are not eager to marry each other while both of them are already married persons. There is no loyalty in their relationship even Carl tries to hide relationship even Carl tries to hide the fact about his marriage. Grace knows the fact and says, "he still
never said whether he was married." For Grace the affair is merely time pass as she says, "...every once in a while I gotta have me a man. Just to keep m'self from gettin' grouchy." Thus they are bound with necessity not with love.

For Cherie Bo is like other customers who meets her. Firstly she entertains him by providing sexual pleasure. She does not consider him as her would be husband. Apparently Inge has succeeded to separate love and sex as independent matter in some cases. Simultaneously Inge has condemned the extra marital affair. Grace’s affair with Carl is not rationalized because she herself tries to hide the relationship from Elma and says, "...I don't wanta set no examples or anything. Do you think you overlook it and not think bad of me?"

The play also shows that economic condition plays an important role settle a marriage. The twentieth century American society was becoming more materialistic. Financial condition is an important factor to settle a marriage. At first Cherie does not accept Bo's proposal of marriage but at the end she goes with him. Perhaps she is now sure that he would be able to provide her financial security. Marital life is not merely based on emotion or love. It needs money to run a home.

Inge has presented three kinds of women through introducing Dr. Lyman's three wives. His first wife was greedy who took divorce on the ground of Lyman's mental cruelty. She
claimed from him a high alimony and never married again to get it. His second wife sued him for divorce on the grounds that Lyman was incontinent and always drunk. She did not give a chance to change him. His third and the last wife left him for a ball player even she did not claim for alimony after divorce perhaps she was sexually unsatisfied with the doctor. So all the three women did not want to compromise to settle their marriage.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

3. Page reference to Bus Stop will be to the version in 4 Plays By William Inge, Random House New York 1958
7. Ibid.
12. Henry Hews; Saturday Review 19 March 1955 P.24
The Dark at the Top of the stairs

To Shuman "The Dark at the Top of the Stairs has been referred to as patch work."\(^1\) In the play Ingé was probably at his "experimental best".\(^2\)

The setting of the play is at the home of Rubin Flood in small Oklahoma town close to Oklahoma City. The play is an attempt to probe the psychology of the characters like Cora and Rubin Flood, ten years old Sonny and sixteen years old Reenie. Cora is a middle aged woman who is not happy with her marital life. The complete break down in the communication between Cora and her husband is obvious early in the play. She is worried to settle her daughter Reenie in her marital life. So she fixes her date with Sammy who has come all the way from California. Reenie hesitates because she knows nothing about him. Her younger brother Sonny is very fond of collecting pictures of film stars. He is very close to his mother and has no attachment with his father. He is afraid to go upstairs to bed alone because there is no light.

Newly rich Ralstons arranges a party in the town club. Reenie attends the party with Sammy but feels uncomfortable there so she runs away from the party.
without informing trim. In the climax of the play the audience comes to know that Sammy committed suicide because of Reenie's behaviour. At the end of the play the whole Flood family decides to change itself for a good life.

(a) **concept of love** :-

The play mainly presents the conflict between husband and wife which takes place due to the lack of love between them. The marriage of Cora and Rubin is based on the wrong foundation in youth they got married due to the physical attraction. Once Cora and her sister Lottie were going to buy lace. They saw Rubin Flood riding down the street on a shiny horse. He looked at Cora and smiled. He again went to her house that night and wanted to meet her. Her parents were confused and didn't know what to do. They allowed Cora to go on riding with him. She became pregnant after their first meeting. And six weeks later Cora and Rubin got married. Cora was then only seventeen years old. Her parents did not want her to marry Rubin as he belongs to a family of ranchers. They thought they were uncivilized people. But Cora did not want any other
match in place of Rubin. When Lottie calls him the wickedest man and blames him for Cora's undesired pregnancy she defends him and says.

"I never blamed Rubin for that, I was crazy in love with him. He just swept me off my feet and made all my objections seem kinda silly. He even made Mama and Papa seem silly" (280).

Thus Cora's decision of marriage was based on physical attraction. An unexpected pregnancy forces them to take a serious decision like marriage immediately. Cora and Rubin had not much time to understand each other because Rubin has a traveling job of salesman while Cora is busy in her children. Cora always talk about the problems of her children as well as herself. She never seems to be concerned with her husband's problems. Her marital life lasted for seventeen years but she is unhappy with it. There is no romance in her life. The long absence of her husband makes her feel like widow: "I envy women who have their husband with them all the time. I never have anyone to me any place. I live like a widow" (227).

Cora is now unable to bear her husband's long absences. So she suggests him to leave the job of selling harness and to begin the business of selling groceries or a filling station or garage. But Rubin refuses
to change his job as well as himself and advises her to look for a new man. Cora get hurt. She clarifies that she does not want to leave Rubin but needs his affection and concentration for her and her children: “I don’t want a new man” (229).

In the first act of the play Cora-Rubin conflict reaches the highest point when Rubin quarrels with Cora because of Reenie’s new dress. Gradually the subject of quarrel diverts into their personal problems. She blames that he is neglecting his duties of a husband as well as a father. He does not take care of his family. Rubin has no interest in her. She suspects probably he should have some women in different towns. So “you want to get out of town to go frisking over the country like a young stallion” (229). Cora gets angry and objects Rubin is relationship with Marvis Pruitt. She does not like her “… I know what kind of woman she is…. She had her eye on you ever since I can remember” (245).

Cora also says that Rubin did not want to marry her. He took the decision of marriage in pressure. He should marry with a ‘squaw’ who would make you rich now too, would she? And you wouldn’t have to pay any attention to her at all”(229). Cora has been habitual of the long absences of her husband. She does all household works herself. When Rubin warns her that he will leave
the house and never come back she says: “Go on. You’re only home half the time as it is. We can get along without you the rest of the time” (247).

Rubin’s constant neglecting forces Cora to look for other means to keep her busy., So she has involved herself with her children:

“If I kept the kids too close to me, its only because you weren’t there, and I had to have someone close to me. I had to have someone” (228). She is always busy in her children’s affairs. Her elder daughter Reenie is very shy in nature. Cora is very much worried for her future. She wants her to settle in her marital life. So she fixes her date with Sammy and sends her in the party arranged by Ralstons. She purchases a costly dress for her without letting Rubin know about it. It causes a quarrel between them. But she prepares her daughter mentally to attend the party and enjoy it.

“Now, you have a nice date to the party and a lovely new dress to wear. You can be sure you’ll have a good time” (239). Reenie is not interested in marriage. Cora explains to her that marriage is very necessary for everyone because it creates family and “you need some after you grow up. You need someone” (287). She also adds that when a person stars getting older, he or she
needs someone "who'll hear you if you get side and cry out in the night, and someone to give love and let you give your love back to him in return" (287). She also convinces her that she is a beautiful girl. She tries to remove Reenie's inferiority complex. "...You're pretty. You're every bit as pretty as Flirt or Mary Jane. Half a woman's beauty is in her confidence" (285). Cora tries to remove Reenie's fear about love. She tells her that a boy begins his love with kissing: "It's perfectly natural if a boy wants to kiss you and you let him. It's all right if you like the boy" (286). But if the boy does flirt with other girls, the girl has the right to leave the boy.

In the climax of the play Reenie becomes a refined character due to Sammy's unexpected death and Cora's teachings. Sonny is Cora's only son and Reenie's younger brother. He is now ten years old but still sleeps with his mother. Cora pays attention to him more than Reenie. He hates his father. Cora loves him more than anything else in the world" Cora fails to get the love of her husband. There is an emptiness in her life which makes her feel insecure. The insecurity turns her towards her son to fill up the emptiness when she asks: "...come to me Sonny! Do you love me boy? Do you love your old mom?"
In the beginning of the play Cora fights with Rubin. She seems willing to settle with Lottie. She requests Lottie to keep her and her children with her at her home but Lottie refuses. Hearing Lottie’s problems Cola realizes that her marital life is better than her sister’s marriage. Lottie also persuades her to evaluate herself. She admits her own faults. Now she is able to understand the fact that she would have a happier life if she changes her attitudes. She should try to be a devoted wife as well as devoted mother. Her overprotective attitude towards her children is also harmful for them.

Though Core loves Rubin but she has no time for showing it. She is always concerned with her own needs but never tries to know what her husband needs. Lottie’s refusal to help her and her long discussion regarding the relationship between husband and wife open her eyes. She comes to know that “the people we love aren’t always perfect, are they? But if we love them, we have to take them as they are. After all, I guess I’m not perfect, either”. (204). Earlier Cora tries to change Rubin according to her needs but the above statement shows Cora’s new attitude towards life. She is ready to accept Rubin as he is. She also realizes that “there are all kinds of people in the world. And you have to live with them all.”
God never promised us any different. The had people you don't hate. You're only sorry they have to be" (294).

In the last act a long discussion between Cora and Rubin removes her misunderstanding. She tries to understand his problems. She comes to know of Rubin's fear regarding his job and his financial crisis. When Rubin tells her that he got angry in Reenie's new dress because he had a little money, Cora says:

"Rubin, if I'd known that, I wouldn't have thought of buying the dress. You should have told me Rubin" (299).

Now she is ready to share all his problems as well as happiness. She admits her fault. She imagines that Rubin might have some fear. And she has never tried to know about it. When Rubin tells her that he has been always disturbed because of his job she says: "I never supposed you had it in you to fear" (298). She is also ready not to interfere in his freedom. She is not going to impose her own expectations on him. She accepts Rubin's request not to rearrange him like her home and says. "I'll remember. When you have fear about things please tell me" (299).

Now she is liberal to show her love for him. She wants her marital life in better condition. Her admission of love indicates towards her desire: "I love you And I couldn't get along with out you another day" (299).
In the climax Cora sends her children out of home to get privacy for her and her husband. It shows that Cora is now determined to get rid off from the life without love. She has learnt that her husband also needs her love like her children. She is an important link between her husband and her children so she should make balance of love between her children and her husband.

Rubin, Cora’s husband, is a salesman who sells harness. That is why he is unable to give enough time to his family. He is very much conscious regarding his look and personality. His uncertain job makes him fearful about his dark future.

He is a very handsome man. In his youth he was an Oklahoma pioneer who fought Indians and buffalo. He was first seen by his wife “riding down the street on a shiny black horse like a picture of Sin.” He had sexual appeal and he made her pregnant her before they were married. Now he is a middle aged man and father of two children but he is not willing to accept the reality. He does not want to come out of his fantasy of youth. Cora comments watching him primp before the mirror: “You like being out on the road, don’t you? You like to pretend you’re still a young cowboy” (228).

He puts up the reason behind it that he has to attend customers so he must be good looking.
His behaviour is rude because he grew up in ranch. He uses rough and uncivilized language with his wife. Early in the play in a conversation he compares his wife with a mare who never wanted to give up her colts. Similarly Cora does not want to leave her children. She always pampers them and never attempts to provide any opportunity to her husband to be familiar with his children. He complains to her: "God almighty, when those kids was born you huggd'em so close to ya, ya made me think they was your own personal property, and I din have nothin' to do with'em at all" (228). He attacks Cora for her overprotective attitude towards their children, which has raised distance between father and children. They never need to go to their father for the solution of their problem because "ya pampered 'em so much and coddled 'em, they thought I was just bein' mean if I tried to drill some sense into their heads" (228).

Sometimes Rubin feels himself a stranger to his family. He expects Cora's attention towards him whenever he returns his home but Cora is busy with her children as usual. Rubin feels jealous of Cora's special love for Sonny. His objection is obvious when he says: "You're always kissin' and makin' over the boy untill I sometimes wonder who's top man around here" (228). Rubbin's children are also scared of him. The situation
becomes unbearable for him so he seeks pleasure out of home.

Rubin is rough in his behaviour. Cora doesn't like his talking. She objects on his language but he roughly says: "Well...I got my own way of sayin' things and it's pretty hard to change" (228). In youth Cora's parents were not willing to let her Marry-Rubin because his family where ranchers. They thought they were wild. But Cora loves him and determined to go with him. So they permitted her for marriage. Now Cora asks him to change his way of life. He protests against her advice when he says: "...We been married seventeen years now. It seems t' me you be rady t' accept me the way I am or start lookin' for new man" (229).

Rubin, like Sonny is afraid of the dark because it represents the uncertain future that stretches before him. He feels insecure regarding his job of salesman. The use of harness is now decreasing while the people are buying automobiles. But he is incapable to accept and face the reality. Early in the play when Cora asks him to change his profession he strictly refuses to change it: "...I was raised on a ranch and thought I'd spend my life on it. Sellin' harness is about all I'm prepared for as long as there's any harness to sell" (227).
At the end of the play Rubin tells Cora that he has lost his job. He also says that the uncertainty of job always forced him to be out of the home. He has been suffering from the shortage of money. That is why he objects to Cora’s purchasing of new dress for Reenie. When Cora says that he should have told her about his problem he replies “I din wanta make you worry too” (299).

In the third act of the play, the character of Rubin emerges as a man of better understanding. His fear for dark future arises frustration and enforces him to keep a distance from his family though he loves it. He never wants to be a weak man before his wife. His ego checks him to share his problem with Cora because “it’s hard for a man to admit his fears, even to his self ... He’s always afraid of endin’ up like ... like your brother in law Morris” (299). Apparently Rubin does not want to be a shadow of his wife. He wants his independent existence. He also hints Cora not to try taming him: “Just don’t get the idea you can rearrange me like ya do the house whenever ya wanta put it in order” (299). He criticizes Cora’s dominating attitude towards him. She should not impose her expectations on him. She never “really admitted to yourself what kina man I am. No, ya keep talkin’ to me
like I was the kinda man you think I oughta be ... Don’t you know who I am?” (297).

In the beginning of the play Rubin seems uninterested to care Cora’s feelings and sentiments. When Cora asks him to leave his traveling job he comments on her rudely: “What do you want me to do? Give up my job and stay home here to pleasure you every day? ya talk like a man had nothing else to do but stay home and entertain you” (227). But in the last act Rubin shares all his problems with Cora and tries to understand her problems too. He also apologizes for fighting with her: “I wanna apologize. I’m sorry I hit ya, core I’m awful sorry ... It wasn’t manly” (298-299). Now Rubin seems interested in removing all misunderstandings between him and his wife. He wants a happier and better marital life. Even he expresses all his fears before Cora. Cora offers her support whenever he would have problems or fear. His changed attitude is apparent when he says: “...I din wanta track up your nice clear house. Now wasn’t that thoughtful of me?” (295)

Rubin has accepted the reality that he can find love and peace inside his home. He should try to be a better husband as well as a better father. He is ready to compromise for his peaceful life. He has learnt that
nobody is perfect and he should try to avoid shortcomings of the people around him. But he should look their qualities. He appreciates his wife who is "clean and dainty. Give a man a feeling of decency and order, and respect" (299).

He also expresses his feelings for Cora. He admits his love for her by saying "I love ya. You're a good woman and I couldn't git along without you" (299). Earlier Rubin wants to be a free man. He does not want to be like henpecked brother in-law. Morris but when Rubin returns to Cora, it is apparent that he will be tamed in much the same way as Morris has been.

Thus the changes in Rubin can provide him a better marital life. He is ready to give love to his wife and children though he is not ready to leave traveling job and to settle into the sort of job that would enable him to have a close relationship with his wife or children. That is why it is doubtful that his future life will be much different from the life at present.

However the play ends when Rubin and Cora are ready to make love. Rubbin seems very impatient and calls Cora upstairs again and again. Apparently he has learnt the importance of love for a better life.

Reenie, daughter of Cora and Rubin is a sixteen years old girl. She is very shy by her nature. She suffers
from lack of confidence because she has some physical imperfection. Her front teeth has broken. Moreover she has been overprotected by her mother. Being very sensitive girl, she becomes every upset from the fight between her parents. That is why she never wants to marry and tells her mother. “I don’t think I ever want to get married I don’t want to fight with anyone, like you and Daddy” (281). She doesn’t want to marry and depend on her husband. There is no place for love in her life. To her love makes a person dependant on others. She wants to be self. dependant in her life: “I don’t want to need anyone ever in my life. It’s horrible feeling to need someone” (287). She is willing to join a school or an office for spending her life. Here her point of view is very unrealistic. She feels happy when she is alone practicing at the piano or studying in the library.

She feels very nervous to go in parties. She is afraid when Cora asks her to attend Ralston’s party with Sammy. Sammy is Reenie’s blind date? about whom she doesn’t know anything. “Mom I feel sort of scared to go out with someone so different” (239). She doesn’t want to go to party with Sammy as his date because she thinks she can not be liked by someone. Even she doubts her friend flirt who helps her in attending the party: “The only
reason she likes me is because I help her with her studies" (240).

Reenie suspect that probably Sammy would not be a good boy. According to her in the town blind dates are always given to those girls who are rejected: "They give blind dates to all the girls in town that nobody else wants to take" (241). Reenie is very much scared to go with Sammy and dance with him because her experience in dancing is not good. She never enjoys dance with boys.

"I never have a good time at those dances anyway. No one ever dances with me" (241).

Sammy is a Jewish boy. Reenie is confused that she is not familiar with Jewish persons. She does not know Sonny's likes and dislikes. She leaves him in the middle of the party because of humiliation. She thinks Sammy is probably bearing her instead of enjoying her company. When her mother asks her that why Sammy did not take her out to the car for making love at intermission time like other couples she answers: "He wouldn't have like me that way I'm just not hot stuff like the other girls" (285). Her answer shows her inferiority complex.

Reenie is a teenager. She has also the feeling of love like other young girls. She is big enough to understand the terms like love and marriage. But her shy
nature checks her to get involved with boys. Cora's overprotective behaviour towards her children makes them weak. Therefore Reenie is unable to face the reality of life as well as to take the right decision. She herself admits before her mother that she likes Sammy's "Yes I ...liked him ...very much" (286). Even she permits him to kiss her in their first date though she feels embarrassed. She shares her first experience with her mother and says: "...he took my hand. ...And then he put an arm around me and said... ‘May I kiss you Reenie?’ And I was so surprised, I said yes before I knew what I was saying" (286).

But Reenie fears to admit her love before him thinking Sammy would reject her. Sammy commits suicide because of humiliation when Reenie leaves him in midparty without informing him: "...Sammy and I started dancing. ...I got to feeling so humiliated I didn't know what to do I Just couldn't bear for Sammy to think that no one liked me" (293). After Sammy's death Cora criticizes her fault and says her shyness and sensitivity are only her selfishness. Reenie realizes her mistake and bemoans Sammy's death. If she admitted her love before Sammy, his life would be saved. There was no one with him when he needed a friend who could speak two kind words. Reenie's presence in the party and her
admission of love could save him. Sammy's suicide changer her attitude towards life and she says:

"He asked for me ...for me The only time anyone ever wanted me or needed me, in my entire life. And I wasn't there. I didn't stop once to think of ...Sammy I've always thought I was the only person in the world who had any feeling at all" (294).

Lottie, Cora's sister represents the qualities like "vulgarity, Victorian prudery biogotry and self righteousness." Lottie is an unfulfilled character. She is not happy with her marital life. She has dominating personality. The character of Morris, her husband is entirely overshadowed by her. She herself admits that she is always bossy with him: "...I can boss Morris because he just isn't there any more to fight back. He doesn't care any more if I boss him or not" (279). She also thinks that Morris likes her bossy attitude and never says anything against her. But she is not happy with it. She wants her husband of dominant personality. He should have a strong character. Sometimes he should go against her like Rubin because a person has the right to fight or quarrel with his wife whom he loves; "...I wish to God someone loved me enough to hit me. ...I'd like a good fight. Anything'd be better than this nothing" (279).
The marital life of Lottie seems quite peaceful but internally she is the most disturbed wife. When Cora says that she should have perfect marriage because Lottie and Morris are devoted to each other, she comments. "Oh, we're still devoted, still call each other "honey" just like we did on our honeymoon" (278). Lottie and her husband are very formalin talking. There is artificiality in their behaviour. She tells Cora that "Morris and I go around always being so sweet to each other, but sometimes I wonder may be he'd like to kill me" (279).

Lottie is a sexually frustrated character like Inge's other characters in different plays. She has never been satisfied sexually since her marriage. His sexual frustration is apparent when she tells about her first night after marriage:

"That first night Morris and I were together, right after we were married, when we were in bed together for the first time, after it was all over, and he had fallen asleep, I lay there in bed wondering what in the world all the cautioning had been about. Nothing had happened to me at all..."(280). She also discloses the fact that Morris has not touched her for three years.

Therefore Lottie's hunger for love pushes her to live in fantasies. She enjoys her fantasies of other men.
She admits her attraction towards the famous Hollywood star Rudolph Valentino and she has watched him in 'The Sheik' four times. But she hides her feelings before Morris and others. She is also an unfulfilled woman in the sense that she has no children. Cora reminds her that she never wanted children and Lottie clears that she had said so because she and Morris can not have children.

It is obvious that the character of Lottie is very much similar to the character Lola in *Come Back little Sheba*. Lottie and Morris are passing their life instead enjoying it. Sometimes she considers her marriage "May be it was as much my fault as Morris" (280). The lack of love in her life enforces her to get other means of enjoyment. She has a lot of cats to get rid off from loneliness. She enjoys vulgar talk to remove her sexual frustration. Probably if fulfills her sexual desires to some extent. He frustration can be observed when Cora suggests her not to talk so vulgarly and she says "Well, that's all it is. It's only talk. Talk, talk, talk" (277). To Lottie she talks dirty "to convince myself that I'm alive. And I stuff myself with victuals just to feel I've got something inside me. And I'm full of all kinds of crazy curiosity about...all the things in life? I seem to have missed out on" (280).
However the life of Lottie and Morris is entirely based on compromise. They do not interfere in each other's matter. Unluckily Lottie has missed spiritual love as well as physical love. Morris is always lost in his thoughts. He is not concerned with Lottie's happiness or sorrows. He doesn't show her feelings, likes and dislikes so that Lottie can refine her personality to get his affection Lottie suggests Cora to request Rubin to come back to home if she loves him:

"Call up Rubin and ask him to come back. Beg him to come back, if you have to get down on your knees" (276).

She explains to Cora that love needs faith. If she loves Rubin she should not believe on other's gossips against him:

"Cora I don’t think you should listen to the stories those old Werpel sisters tell you" (276).

According to her Rubin is a better husband than Morris who can fulfil all his wife’s needs. She also expresses her inability to keep Cora and her children in her own house because it would break her marriage. Although she loves her sister yet she does not want to take risk. She insists on Cora to be more flexible before her husband.
The character of Sammy suggests the Oedipus problem. He is a military school cadet. In his longer speech he tells the audience about his former life. His father died before he was born. His mother is very busy actress of films in San Francisco. After his father's death she "has been married ...a few times since then. But I never met any of her husbands ...although they were all very fine gentlemen" (265). Apparently he is entirely cut off from his mother. He is suffering from loneliness and frustration. He has never been loved. Being a man without family he has spent his whole life in military academy. His mother can not keep him with her because of her profession. Sammy's pain of homelessness is apparent in the answer of Lottie's question about his home. He says, "well I ...I guess I don't really have a home—Mrs. Lacey" (265).

His Mother is so busy in her acting profession that she "doesn't have a place for me where she lives she ...she just doesn't know what else to do with me" (271). Later when Sammy commits suicide in a hotel in Oklahoma city, she doesn't come to see her son. Even she requests the people of the hotel to arrange funeral without her presence and she will pay all the expenses. She also asks them not to disclose the fact that Sammy was her son because she has already proposed herself
as a childless woman everywhere due to her professional purpose. Obviously for Sammy's mother her status and money is more important than her son. Sammy is very unlucky in the sense that he has never felt the warmth of love of his father as well as his mother.

But Sammy never complains against her mother. He always appreciates and protects her. He does not seem to go against her in his speeches. He tries to hide her neglecting attitude towards him when he says: "But you mustn't misunderstand about my mother. She is really a very lovely person. I guess every boy thinks his mother is very beautiful, but my mother really is" (271). Sammy is satisfied with her letters of sympathy. He recalls of two idyllic days spent with his mother in "San Francisco once, and we were together for two whole days. She let me take her to dinner and to a show and to dance. Just like we were sweethearts. It was the most wonderful time I ever had" (271). But now his isolation has been unbearable. He explains himself that he attends the parties to remove the sense of insecurity and loneliness. Nobody has taken interest to care him. He never wants to miss parties because it helps him to escape loneliness: "...every time I go to one, I have to reason with myself to keep from feeling that the whole world's against me" (271). The parties give the sense
that there are some people who can notice him and talk
to him. He is not entirely a neglected person of the
society.

He is a very sensitive man. He likes Reenie and her
family. He enjoys the company of her brother Sonny.
Sammy has different ideas regarding Reenie before he
meets her because his friend told him that she is Flirt's
friend and Flirt is a very frank girl. In contrast Sammy
finds that Reenie is not like Flirt. He likes her in their first
meeting. "You certainly look nice" (270). He also adds.
"Gee! I didn't expect you to be...like you are...thought
you'd be...well kind of like Flirt is...But...you're very
nice too, in a different way" (270).

Sammy and Reenie attend Ralston's party.
Reenie leaves him during the party because of
humiliation. She also introduces him to Miss Marry
Ralston. Sammy begins to dance with her but Mrs.
Ralston doesn't like it and insults him. Sammy has to
leave the party. He commits suicide because of
frustration. He is unable to bear the fact that he is again a
lonely person. He also misunderstands Reenie's
shyness. He thinks he is again disliked by the people
around him. There is no one who can show sympathy
and love to him.
However, the play basically shows marital-life conflicts. But the main theme of the play is that love may be the panacea of all the problems of human life. The play can be considered as a "psychological study of the need for love and understanding within a family and among several people." Rubin has failed to grow in love, Cora pampered her children and overprotected them. It is her sister Lottie's refusal to help Cora which forces her to review her life and to grow up, to learn, to offer love not merely expect it. Reenie's eyes are opened through Sammy's suicide. She becomes able to believe Cora's statement that the people we love aren't always perfect are they? But if we love them, we have to take them as they are" (284). Reenie who had resented the need of love, now realizes that one needs others and has also a need to be needed in return. The condition of Lottie and Morris remains same. They have become habitual of the present pattern of life. They have accepted each other as they are. Their marital life, is bound with compromise instead of love.

Therefore the lack of love is responsible cause for the crisis in the given families. The final scene of The Dark at the Top of the Stairs when Reenie and Sonny have gone out of the home and Rubin and Cora are
going to upstairs so that they can make love " is not only an example of the love panacea ending, it is representative of a popular variation within the general type - the sex – as - salvation conclusion."\(^6\)

**(b) Emphasis upon sex :-**

Like his earlier plays in *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* the two aspects 'love and sex' are closely related. The sexual relationship between Cora and Rubin has not entirely collapsed but the warmth of love is absent in their relationship. Their relationship begins from physical attraction. They married not because they were an love but they had no other option to chose due to Cora's undesirable pregnancy. Marriage was inevitable for them. Moreover their tragedy is that they are unable to develop the love between them. Probably after some months of their marriage Cora is busy with her daughter while Rubin is struggling in his job for surviving. That is why gradually they begin to lose attraction for each other. In the climax of the play Cora and Rubbin realize their faults and try to renew their relationship. They wish to send their children out of the house so that they can make 'Love'. Cora "is able to go off with Rubin for a night of love that Inge suggests will lead to a solution of their
long standing problems." Obviously here love means the contentment of sexual desire.

Lottie is a sexually frustrated lady. Her husband Morris is unable to satisfy her sexual needs. She "is obviously sex-starved, and she has the simultaneous desire to master and to-bemastered." They have no children so she has kept cats as pets in her house and tries to divert her attention from pain and sexual frustration. She also seeks pleasure in vulgar talk. Lottie's character has the qualities like "Vulgarity. Victorian prudery, bigotry and self righteousness ...qualities often associated with severely sexually repressed people." There is no intimacy in their relationship as husband and wife. Even Lottie often addresses Morris as Daddy. Both of them are busy in their own matters. Lottie is busy in eating and playing with cats while Morris has his patients for treatment. Lottie herself tells that Morris has not touched her for three years. Lottie's sexual frustration can be observed in her speech with Cora. She "never did enjoy (sex) the way some women ...say they do" ( ). In the above sentence Lottie explains "the failure of her marriage, her own frigidity and the accompanying emasculation spiritual and sexual of her husband." She
also asks Cora to call Rubin back to home because he is a better husband who can provide her sexual satisfaction. The characters of Reenie and Sammy are not developed to make any sexual relationship. Their relationship breaks before a proper beginning.

Flirt, Reenie’s friend and her lover Punky Givens are supportive characters They enjoy dating. They do not hesitated in making love like Sammy and Reenie.

Thus in The Dark at the Top the Stairs, Inge has again used the term of love in surface level. There are conflicts in the lives of character because they are not sexually satisfied. They have hunger for sex and it ruins their lives though the main problem of all the major characters of the play is fear and isolation but the main reason of the disturbance in the lives of Rubin, Cora and Lottie is the lack of love or sexual love. In the climax of the play Rubin and Cora try to renew their relationship when they go upstairs for making love. Lottie’s situation does not change. She remains with Morris in spite of being unsatisfied. Consequently I wish to conclude the analysis with a short explanation based on Inge’s main theme of love and sex which is used in ‘The Dark at the Top of the Stairs’ in various sense.
Inge has attempted to highlight the serious problem of unsuccessful marriages in the contemporary American society. Probably the problem was because of wrong beginning. In the beginning Inge’s couples seem eager to make sexual relationship but they fail to develop spiritual love. They are forced to marry their partners after first sexual experience. Like Lola, Cora became pregnant before her marriage. Apparently Cora and Rubin married due to physical attraction. They did not try to find out other details. Their way of thinking is different because of their different family background.

When play opens the life of Cora and Rubin is out of romance like Doc and Lola in Come Back Little Sheba. After getting married they realized that their way of thinking are different because of their different family background. The theme of the play indicates that only love is not sufficient to run a life properly. Financial factor plays an important role to settle a marital life Cora has high dreams for her children while Rubin’s income in not enough to provide his family the needs they desire. Moreover Rubin does not change his business as he says, “I was raised on a ranch and thought I’d spend my life on it. Sellin’ harness is above all I’m prepared for... as long as there is any harness to sell.”

Rubin is always out of his home and considers Cora a caretaker to look after his home and children. As an ordinary wife Cora wants her husband’s attention towards her. Her inner
pain is apparent when she says, "I envy women who have their husband with them all the time..." She suspects her husband's character because he avoid her Cora's statement is very natural when she says to Rubin, "you want to get out of town to go frisking over the country like a young stallion."

In the play Inge has attempted to show the significance of love and sex between husband and wife. Love and sex are closely related while we talk about the husband-wife relationship. Sex is the means to show love for her husband or wife. Both of them have to sacrifice for love. Sex revives their relationship and brings a change in their lives Cora is too busy not her children to remember her duties as a wife. Rubin is always on tours and he wants privacy with Cora while is at home. But their son Sonny is always with his mother even he sleeps with Cora at the age of twelve. Gradually the circumstances increases distance between husband and wife even Rubin abuses and hits Cora. At the end they realizes their mistake and apologizes to each other. In the climax when the curtain falls Reenie and Sonny are going to watch movie so that Cora and Rubin can get privacy. Rubin is upstairs and calls Cora impatiently, "Cora I come on honey" and Cora says, "I'm coming, Rubin. I'm coming." Apparently they have realized the importance of love and sex in their lives. Now they are ready to perform the duties of parents as well as a life partner.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

2. Ibid.
3. All references to The Dark at the Top of the Stairs are to the version in 4 Plays By William Inge, Random House New York 1958
5. T. Bogard, Richard Moody & Walter J. Meserve; The Revels History of Drama in English P.283
10. Ibid.