CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

What emerges from this analysis is that the main concern of William Inge is the significance of love and sex in common people's lives in 20th century America. The prominent element that runs through all these plays is the need of love and sex in the lives of lower middle class people to maintain their family.

The history of American drama shows that in the beginning the playwrights were interested in fancy stories but by the end of 19th century they began to write about real life. O'Neill and Elmer Rice produced various good and successful plays in American theatre and followed the stream of Realism, Naturalism and Expressionism. They exposed the problems of common American people. Broadway plays, a new form of American drama became popular in the first half of the 20th century because the plays show, the struggle, anxieties and dreams of ordinary people. Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller are the important playwright of Broadway theatre and William Inge continued the tradition of these two popular playwrights. The plays of these playwrights deal with Broadway's prevailing belief that love conquers all. "1
Since his childhood days Inge was fond of theatre. He studied drama in college and did a research on David Belasco's plays. He was greatly influenced by Williams even he joined theatre after he met 'him'. Hence he got inspiration from Williams but his story and characters are based on his own close observation. He grew old in a small Midwestern town so his characters are also small town people with small town mentality. His characters struggle to survive. These ordinary people have a thirst for money and luxurious life. They always sought for sexual pleasure. They suffer from physical and spiritual isolation as well as sexual frustration. Inge has tried to show what love means in modern American society. His four major plays show that his characters are always in search of physical love. The thirst for sex is so powerful in them that they can go against the so called moral values to fulfil their desire. In Bus Stop the sexual relationship between Grace and Carl is disapproved by Inge when Grace herself comments, "... Do you think you can overlook it and not think bad of me"( ). Here 'it' indicates towards her relationship with Carl.

Inge seems in favour of the institution of family because all his plays end "in marriage and reconciliation." Marie, Madge,
Rosemary and Cherie go with their partners to settle their lives at the end of the plays. On the other hand Lola and Cora realize their faults and turn back to their husbands with some changes. Probably their lives will be better and happier than now. When all these plays begin, all the characters seem in trouble. The crisis in the lives of these people comes to an end when plays end. Inge seems very optimistic in the end. All the couples that Inge has created – Doc and Lola, Madge and Hal, Rosemary and Howard, Bo and Cherie and Rubin and Cora – pass their “period of adjustment” and emerge out of it successfully.

Inge’s plays move around a particular family except Bus Stop. In these family worlds the lack of understanding creates discord. Lola and Doc and Cora and Rubin started their partnership on wrong foundation but the crises in their lives taught them the great truth – just as we need other, we have also a need to be needed in return. To Adler it is "selfishness that corrodes a relationship." The case of Flo Owens in Picnic is also similar to the case of Lola. Flo becomes unmarried mother and she had to marry. Later her husband left her with two children to face the stark realities of life lonely while Doc has never left his wife despite of her shortcomings. But their relationship is very formal. There is no intimacy and warmth in their relationship. On the other hand the relationship between
Hal and Madge in Picnic has not a satisfactory beginning. It may be a relationship like the relationship between Doc and Lola or between Rubin and Cora in future which has no warmth of love.

The relationship between these partners is very formal. They do not feel love for others. They are bound with necessity. The success of each relationship lies in the “willingness and unwillingness of the partners to sacrifice their selves to love.” His plays show the tendency of “capturing.” In other words, instead of the “give and take” all complain against their partners or blame other people for their destiny but they themselves do not want to change. Inge’s couples begin their love with physical relationship which later emerges out as short term love. Lola and Doc, Flo and her husband Madge and Hal, Cherie and Bo and Cora and Rubin make physical relationship before getting married but later they come to realize that they have done the blunder mistakes of their lives. Lola, Flo and Cora had to marry their partners because of their undesired pregnancies.

These couples face a great responsibility to bear a family while psychologically they are not prepared for it. Moreover except Bo
they do not have financial security. Consequently their marital
life becomes full of troubles and ‘Love’ becomes a secondary
thing for them.

Inge’s characters consciously or unconsciously avoid their partners, gradually a large gap comes between them. In the case of Lola and Doc in Come Back Little Sheba Doc is busy in work at hospital while Lola is too busy in her dreams to take care of her husband and her home. Her incapability to bear a children also pushes her to be in the world of dreams. But in the climax of the play they realize that they can lead a better and happier life if they change themselves a little. Apparently “if true companionship has not brought them together at least suffering has made them tolerant and needful of a friendly relationship, which they quickly establish.”

The character of Marie represents a modern girl with practical point of view. There is no place for love in her life. She enjoys sex with Turk while plans to marry Bruce a rich and reputed man. She “likes Turk but he’s not the marrying kind.” Perhaps as a lover he is perfect but as a husband he lacks the characteristics of Bruce.
In *Picnic* Hal and Madge do the same mistake as Lola and Flo did in their youth. In the end Madge leaves her home to live with Hal despite his uncertain future because she loves him. Marie and Madge are the characters with different outlooks. Marie selects a rich boy to marry him while she shares her emotions with a young muscle man Turk. On the other hand Madge is eager to leave a rich boy Alan because she has no passion for him; Hal who is an ordinary boy attracts her. In Hal she find all that she misses in Alan. So she selects him to live with despite his financial insecurity. It is obvious Madge’s “deepest emotional needs have been answered by Hal ... Hal too has found compassion and tenderness for the first time.”

The case of unmarried Howard and Rosemary is entirely different. They know each other for a long time. They go for dating to remove their loneliness and frustration. They are middle aged so they think it is too late to marry. But the entry of Hal compels Rosemary to marry Howard. The play shows that their relationship survives without the essence of love. In the end both of them are united to escape loneliness and sexual frustration. It can be hoped that love would develop between them after getting married.
In *Bus Stop* Bo Cherie conflict is used to explore the theme of love broadly. The play ends with a hope of a better and happier marital life because Bo and Cherie are suitable for each other. Bo a handsome and financially well established boy is in need of a wife while Cherie, a beautiful girl is in need of a husband who can provide her financial security as well as love beyond sex. Grace represent the people for whom sexual pleasure is more important than anything else in the world. She makes sexual relation with Carl a bus driver in the absence of her husband to escape sexual frustration and isolation: '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." She remains alone in the end of the play as Carl provides her only temporary love.

Dr. Lyman is one of those people who are not ready to change themselves for the sake of love: "It takes strong men and women to love.... People strong enough inside themselves to love... without humiliation" (200). That is why he is alone in spite of marrying three times. To him "...Getting married is a careless habit(155). Thus he owes his unhappiness and his perversity (he molest young girls) to his inability to subordinate himself to love."
Elma is a character of young girl who is new in the world of love and romance even she has not gone in dating till now. But she likes romantic talk of Dr. Lyman as she is not too young to understand the subject.

Virgil's love for Bo is a pure love beyond any selfishness. As a responsible guardian Virgil always checks Bo from behaving wrongly. Thus he provides him parental love.

However Bus Stop presents a group of people "whose attitudes towards love suggest the scope that this emotion holds for mankind."  But The Dark at the Top of the Stairs presents 'a psychological study of the need for love and understanding within a family and among several people ...." 6

It opens when the life of Cora and Rubin is out of romance. Cora is so busy in her children that she is unable to pay attention to her husband Rubin. Rubin, like Doc was also forced to marry Cora because of her undesired pregnancy. Rubin's financial uncertainty makes him unable to provide all that his family needs. So conflicts and quarrels take place between them and love disappears. The play ends with the reconciliation of the couple after they realize their faults.
Sammy the Jewish cadet kills himself because Reenie "wasn't around to help him when he needed comfort." "

Inge's all plays, therefore show that 'love' can be the solution of the problems of the modern people in daily life. Inge has found that mankind "might be the object of pity or of anger but should be treated mainly with love." "Life without love is lonely" is the main theme of Inge's plays. The end of every play is the plays is hopeful. Regarding the significance of love in ordinary people's lives, Bus Stop is a "composite picture of varying kinds of love." The play shows an assorted group of people and their attitudes towards love. Earlier Inge's people are not ready to sacrifice but later their sufferings make them flexible and they compromise. Will Master's (the sheriff in Bus Stop) statement shows Inge's own opinion when he says, "A man don't deserve the things he loves unless he kin be a little humble about gettin' 'em...being ' humble ain't the same thing as bein' wretched"( ). The characters of Bo and Hal are hungry for love because they don't have a family who can love them. Love is the only thing which can vitalize and give meaning to their lives. In The Dark at the Top of the Stairs Sammy has mother but she is too busy in her work to love him. "My mother doesn't have a
place for me, where she lives. She... just dosent know what else to do with me"(271).

For the first time he feels that someone wants him or needs him in his entire life when he meets Reenie. But he commits suicides because Reenie has left the party without informing him and he becomes disappointed. Sammy is weak in the comparison of Bo and Hal because he is unable to find his love while Bo gets Cherie at the end. Bo's point is strong that "A man's gotta right to the things he loves"( ). Though Hal departs without Madge, he is followed by her after his departure. She leaves her home to go Tulsa because she has the address of Hal. Hal also agrees with Bo when he says:

"A guy's gotta claim the things in life that're his." It is not necessary that a person whom we love is a perfect human being. In this condition compromise is inevitable to maintain the relationship for a long time Inge supports the concept of compromise in each relationship through the character of Cora when she says, "The people we love aren't perfect ...But if we love them, we have to take them as they are"( ). True love needs sacrifice and compromise. A person can change a little himself or herself according to the need of his or her companion so that the life can be more peaceful and happier.
Besides, as it is evident Inge has always emphasized upon sex in his major dramas. His "basic plot line revolves around a heroine threatened either with violence or sexual aggression by a rainbunctious male." Lola, Marie, Flo, Madge, Rosemary, Cherie and Cora — all are attracted by the males whom Herbert Gold has called the "male impersonator." Inge's hero is "equipped with bulging biceps and enormous sexual potency." He shows his manhood by exaggerated physical characteristics. Turk of Come Back Little Sheba, Hal of Picnic, Bo Decker of Bus Stop and Rubin Flood of The Dark at the Top of the Stairs have athletic and erotic prowess. All have the power to draw attention of females towards them. Bruce in Come Back Little Sheba and Alan in Picnic are defeated by the maleness of Turk and Hal. Turk and Hal succeed to get their heroines easily. In Bus Stop Dr. Lyman's last wife also leaves him for a ball player. The love between Inge's hero and heroine is the result of physical attraction. Doc and Lola, Flo and her husband, Hal and Madge, Bo and Cherie and Rubin and Cora make sexual relationship in their very first meeting. Unfortunately Lola, Flo and Cora become pregnant. As a result they have to marry their partner without being self dependent financially. This bring a lot of problems in their marital life and the gap between husbands and wives enlarges. So Doc makes himself busy in his work of hospital, Flo and children are left by
her husband in their own fate and Rubin is always out of his home, avoids his duties and busy in fighting with Cora.

Inge has also presented the problem of sexual frustration in the lives of contemporary American people. Lola, Rosemary, Grace, Dr. Lyman and Lottie are the sexually frustrated people. Lola finds pleasure in watching the young couple's (Marie and Turk) love making. It soothes her heart because her own marital life is out of sex she misses her youth when she says; "...Little Sheba should have stayed young forever." Here the little dog Sheba is the symbolic representation of her youth. Her sexual Frustration becomes unbearable when she watches Marie's love making with Turk: “Little Sheba . . . Come Back . . . Come Back Little Sheba. Come Back. Rosemary's sexual frustration becomes out of control when she watches half naked Hal and later his dance with Madge. Grace's sexual need pushes her to take shelter under the arms of an ordinary bus driver Cart even though she admits it is not the right way to fulfill her desires. Dr. Lyman’s sexual frustration has made him drunk. His all three wives have left him. His dialogues when he performs the character of Romeo in the restaurant shows his frustration. He attempts to steal some moments of pleasure by intimate talk with the young girl Elma. Lottie, Cora's sister, is a sex starved character who 'has the simultaneous desire to master and to be
mastered" by her husband. Sexually she is unsatisfied as she remarks "It's been over three years since he (Morris) even touched me"( ). It is obvious that she also enjoys her fantasies of other men but she never admits the psychological overtones of these fantasies.

Inge's *Come Back Little Sheba* and *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* present importance of sex in marital life. The relationship between Doc and Lola is very formal. Doc calls his wife 'Baby' while Lola addresses him 'Daddy'. They live under one roof but there is a large gap between them.

Sex seems impossible between them. Both of them try to show themselves contented but they fail. Lola's interest in Marie - Turk affair and Doc's attraction towards Marie show the truth of their relationship. Moreover the drunk scene shows a telling insight into what Doc really feels. Obviously their marital life is not in satisfactory condition because there is no warmth of love and sex between them.

In the case of Cora and Rubin love and sex have also disappeared from their life. But in the climax they realize the importance of love and sex in the marital life. The play ends
when Cora and Rubin are ready to enjoy sexual pleasure once again. Rubin calls Cora and she replies "I'm coming Rubin I'm coming." Probably they have found the key of a happy life. Marriages, therefore, demands in return for its emotional consolations a sacrifice of the hero's image of maleness. Aggressiveness should be given up for soft virtues. Love and sex are closely related in marital life. Sex is the means to show love for husband or wife. Sex revives their relationship and brings a change in their lives sacrifices compromise are also necessary elements for a happy and successful marriage.

Inge also seems in favour of legal love and sex by providing the option of marriage. Marriage gives stability to the relationship while dating provides a short term relationship. Marriage provides a family to man and women with a purpose. It is necessary for everyone because "you need someone." Marriage can be the solution of the isolation because it provides a companion "who'll hear you if you get sick and cry out in the night and someone to give love and let you give your love back to him in return"(287). "Marriage thus becomes a crucial avenue of escape." Simultaneously Inge has attempted to show that financial factor plays an important role to settle a marriage. Rubin's poor financial condition causes tension in her family. While Bö's good financial condition inspires Cherie to accept his
proposal of Marriage. He has expressed what he experienced around him. He noticed that "...GIs had a totally different attitude or they had a brand new attitude. They weren't going to take any false values or false moral values anymore...at Washington University ... I taught one section... I noticed the way they reported on books, on the sexual happening, completely different, very casually and there was no shock or anything." Obviously the society was more liberal regarding the matter of sex in the contemporary period. Sex become an important factor of the people's lives and they did not hesitate to discuss it. Inge has made clear that illegal love i.e. extra marital affairs provides only short term pleasure. His plays have emphasized upon the importance of physical love and his characters have hunger for love and sex.

Besides other aspects Inge's plays have highlighted some important aspects of modern American life. Love and sex are not hidden matters among boys and girls. They enjoy sexual relationship before getting married. Though dating helps a boy and a girl to understand each other before marriage it is merely used to enjoy sex in modern age. Lola has enjoyed sex only with Doc and She feels "cheated at never having known any man other than her husband. She "never had any fun at all until I met Doc. The attraction between boys
and girls mainly takes place because of physical beauty and economic status. These factors have introduced and developed the relationship between Doc and Lola, Marie and Turk, Marie and Bruce, Hal and Madge, Alan and Madge, Bo and Cherie and Rubin and Cora. In America 'Dating has become a common practice in society'.

Therefore Inge has over emphasized upon sex in his plays. Some critics have criticized Inge for it but he has "managed to mingle sex and sentiment to good effect in the theatre and present lonely people whose problems for good or ill are resolved by love."

As far as the theme is concerned one can not always easily agree with Inge's suggestion that modern man's redemption is through sex. However some unlikely relationships are "perpetuated on a sexual basis and in many marriage sex appear to be the only common ground between two people." In marital life love and sex are supplement to each other.

Although Inge has exploited sex for theatrical effect, he is more interested in the redemptive power of conjugal or
romantic love. He 'visualizes the world as a mass of outstretched arms, blindly grouping for each other with every problem resolved in the marriage bed.' Apparently the main theme of Inge's work is that people find salvation from fear, need and insecurity only through the fulfillment of domestic love. It is true that, love is the panacea to all the difficulties.