CHAPTER III

MORAL VISION IN THE SILVER BOX AND STRIFE

3.1 Preliminaries

Galsworthy made debut on the English stage with his first play The Silver Box (1906) that marked his explicit theatrical development in his creative world of drama. In his plays Galsworthy is concerned with the presentation of social problems, especially witnessed by the common man of his time. The present play under consideration does not end happily. The effect of social realities makes the playwright aware of grim side of human life. The play revolves around the central issue of unjust treatment meted out to the poor in society. The playwright believes that unequal distribution of wealth is at the centre of the disaster of Jones and his wife who are the product of society.

Galsworthy is of the opinion that justice can be delivered impartially if social contexts are changed. If this is achieved with a sense of balance then the tragedy of the poor can be averted. Galsworthy, however, feels that justice is delivered in favour of rich at the cost of poor which is evidently seen in this play. Both Jack Barthwick, the son of Member of Parliament and the poor Jim Jones commit theft on the same evening but it is the money that diverts the course of justice. Though Jones is poor and wretched he is not afraid in the court to make a bold assertion that Jack also committed theft, but he is scot free. What sort of justice? He questions the magistrate.

The plays of Galsworthy express many of literary, social, economic and political transformation that occurred during his times. These changes have been
recorded by different writers of the period categorized as the Age of Transition viz. 1880-1920. The major literary device used by the writers of the period was realism. Galsworthy also employed this technique in his plays as it is the propensity to face the facts of life and record the people and things as they really are.

*The Silver Box* (1906) as a social tragedy focuses on faith, ideas and forces of modern life. This play was composed when he was correcting the manuscript of his famous novel *The Man of Property*. The play focuses on class power that diverts justice exposing analogous offense committed by wealthy and deprived resulting in different upshot when the rich influence judiciary to their benefit.

The setting of the play is the first decade of the twentieth century England. Its specific purpose is to present the truth concerning his period. Thus, the detail critical assessment of this play reveals the real picture of English society of his time. Galsworthy draws our attention to the ruthless machinery of law which instead of giving justice to the poor in the society mercilessly crushes him. Just like in traditional tragedy the mighty forces of law take place of tyrant or villain that grinds the poor. In the present play real culprits and villain is society and legal system. The play assumes immense social significance in the sense that it is not confined to a problem of the individual or a single character. Galsworthy wants to show the power of ruthless law. Thus the social issue handled in the present play opens our eyes and our sympathy and understanding lies with the miserable Jones who become helpless before the biased legal system that yields to the mighty and the rich politician. There is obvious injustice done to the poor Jones which neither society nor its limited system can control. Here Galsworthy is preoccupied with social themes and problems of contemporary life of the English society.
The play *Strife* (1909) reveals the caste feeling of capital caused to fight against the caste feeling of labour. It also focuses on exploitation of the working class by monopoly of management in a factory. It deals with long standing discontent and unrest in the working class in Trenartha Tin Plate Works, on the boarders of England and Wales. The strife has continued for over five months without any sign of settlement. The egoistic predisposition of the chairman of the industrial unit John Anthony and the leader of the labour union David Roberts are responsible for unreasonably procrastinating strike. Robert Anthony is unyielding, autocratic and obdurate and does not want to make even the smallest compromise although the strike has continued for pretty long time. His counterpart the leader of the workers’ union David Roberts is equally adamant and uncompromising revolutionist. Both are dominant figures and symbolize contradictory poles, the poles hostile to each other, poles segregated by a dreadful space that can by no means be linked. The workers are caught between the two ambitious figures. But the workers are left to whims and mercy of their leaders and are almost reduced to slaves of uneven circumstances who can no longer afford the idealism of David Roberts. The company directors are no less than villains who are least bothered about the starving workers. They are indifferent to the death of Mrs. Roberts, the wife of the workers’ leader David Roberts. Here Galsworthy focuses on the injustice done to suffering workers and their families. The play intensely reveals the conflict between the capital and labour and utter wastage of human resources in the meaningless caste feeling.

The two principal protagonists Anthony and Roberts have their individual motives in long lasting strife. The former is concerned with his daughter’s comfort while the later is charged with fiscal issues in the company. Anthony takes a stand in favour of the capital while Roberts is worried about the fate of the workers. Thus both suffer from class consciousness. The problem of caste
feeling is brought forth with utmost fairness and impartiality of Galsworthy. The play appears to point out that the real industrial clashes are more among the leaders than among the workers. The play is something more than mere revelation of the conflict of capital and labour. It is the pride, egoism, hostility and fanaticism stretched too far on the fighting factions leaving aside the real problem. The play raises the problem of enormous social significance viz. the relation between capital and labour which requires an objective remedy.

In the strife both the share-holders, directors and the starving workers are suffering. The prices are soaring, shareholders are upset over dividends and the workers are facing utter hardship through cold and starvation.

3.2 Moral Vision in *The Silver Box*

“Jones: [Stopping and twisting round] “Call this justice? What about ’im? ‘E got drunk! ‘E took the purse----’e took the purse but it’s ’is money got ’im off-Justice!”

(SB, Act III p.62)

The quotation reveals how social justice is denied to the poor and wretched Jones in the court of law. Jones vehemently asserts that though Jack Barthwick was also drunk and found guilty of the theft is scot-free merely because of his wealth. The magistrate who awards sentence of one month hard labour to Jones prefers to adjourn the court for lunch as he has no courage to face the open charges of bribe made the culprit, Jones. The court is in a stir at the words of Jones. Neither the magistrate nor the worst Barthwick has time and sentiments to listen to the humble words of Mrs. Jones who tries to make a plea. The arrogant Jack, who should have been equally sentenced like Jones, throws up his head and walks with a swagger to the corridor, followed by his father Barthwick. Jack’s lack of consideration for others and disrespect for judiciary is unequivocally stressed by Galsworthy in the following expression:
Jack: “We’re all equal before the law-tha’s rot, tha’s silly”.

(SB Act I, Scene I, p.4)

Though Jack is released without any charges, he is guilty in the eyes of Galsworthy and the audiences. The sort of justice that is delivered in the court of law is more stirring to Galsworthy and the readers of the play, too. The amoral pressure of money plays a vital role in deciding judgment especially in the case of the poor and the downtrodden.

The play was first presented on September 25, 1906 at the Royal Court Theatre, London where Granville-Barker was managing director. Galsworthy acknowledged gratitude to Granville-Barker by dedicating him the book including his earliest plays. Being an English Galsworthy has association with the upper class British community, the objectivity he received from his well off social situation, his tender nature, and genuineness to his art as a result of his education invariably reflects in his plays. At the time of actual production Galsworthy used to direct the performance with casting and other minute details needed for the rehearsal. The play was a grand success and it was appreciated by Shaw and H G Wells.

Thus, the play is discussed in the light of moral vision of Galsworthy and how social injustice is meted out to the poor in society. This first play of Galsworthy marked a turning point in his dramatic career. An enormous triumph of the play made Galsworthy entirely and seriously dedicate to writing of drama following stupendous achievement as a novelist. *The Silver Box* was followed by a series of immense theatrical works in rapid succession. Galsworthy’s reputation as a leading playwright of modern British theatrical tradition was soon established with his play.

The play *The Silver Box* opens an innovative chapter in the history of modern British theatrical world. Galsworthy began writing the play during his holidays
in Devon. With the publication of the play Galsworthy turned out to be the most talked about and controversial dramatist in England. It proved to be a remarkable development in the British theatrical world and the picture of entire life transformed completely. It is considered as a classical example of realistic tradition of Ibsen. It is with this play that Galsworthy achieved an immense success in creating an illusion of real life presented on the stage. Galsworthy’s aim in bringing out the play was to give importance to real life situations and social contexts. He abandoned the artificial way of romantic life. By adopting a new method of writing plays in realistic tradition he criticized and revolted against the romantic artificial life and fancies.

Thus, he dramatizes the familiar, ordinary aspects of modern life. Galsworthy emphatically stresses the inadequacy of modern English social institutions where the people who manage the whole mechanism of society become more obvious victims of the entire organization than the real miserable lot. Here he presents the picture of the society as he sees it, nothing distorted, nothing modified to suit for his dramatic purpose but with an additional sympathetic consideration for the losers and the downtrodden. No other playwright of his time painted to this degree so balanced, so objective and absolute picture of English society. He portrays the picture of English society with such subtlety and sensitivity that its value is not confined to a particular age or period. Rather, it goes further than time and place by which it is conditioned.

In the play, Galsworthy places the poor and miserable Jones family against the powerful social organization such as judiciary where their fight predictably ends up in catastrophe. The fact is that Jones is a pompous out of work, with weak wits and weaker principles. Galsworthy brings Jones in picture only by setting him in contrast with Jack likewise useless and wayward youth good for nothing whose guilt is overlooked because of his dominant and rich father. Mrs. Jones invites pity from the reader because of her submissive and helpless nature. The
Joneses is the destitute family who by their nature is not as much of challenging. Galsworthy very aptly and effectively uses this material for his dramatic purpose. Galsworthy’s satire on the upper middle class family where Mrs. Jones works as a charwoman is poignant and harsher than sharp. In the concluding phase of the play Galsworthy points out that what is more pathetic is unbearable sense of disparity of modern life and inadequacies of social organization to give justice to destitute it has produced. What the miserable lot in the society necessarily requires is just treatment more than mere sympathy.

The play portrays disparity between the rich and the poor and latter’s helplessness in the court of the law. After the play was staged in England one of the critics observed that:

“it is not a cheerful play, but if you neglect to see it you will probably miss seeing a play which will continually be quoted when the new school of dramatists has been established. If prophecy upon stage matters were not such an idle form of amusement I would indulge in wild imaginings concerning the effect of The Silver Box is likely to have upon the theatre of the future.”

(As quoted in MOP, p. 141)

Another critic maintains:

“Probably not thinking about the matter at all, Mr. Galsworthy has evolved a method of his own for presenting life on the stage that is completely successful.... When its author wrote it he was thinking of life, not of the theatre, and though he never forgot that he was writing for performance, he never allowed himself to sacrifice truth to mere stage effect or to shirk the situation as it would happen in life for the situation that the old-fashioned playwright had found to be effective on the stage. Hence the extraordinary success of his play”.

77
Jack Barthwick, the immoral, wayward son of a wealthy Member of Parliament comes home inebriated late in the evening with an equally drunk unemployed husband of a charwoman who works with the Barthwicks. Jack in a pique steals the woman’s reticule containing crimson purse. This miserable creature Jones burning with resentment at the hardship into which the world has forced him, takes out of spite, rather than steals the silver box. He has said so before the magistrate in the court, and he has repeatedly stated before Snow, a detective that he took the article and did not steal it. However, the next day when the silver box is found to be missing it is his wife Mrs. Jones who has cleaned the house is suspected to have stolen it. The police arrest both Jim Jones and his wife when the article is found in their tenement room. The incident makes it clear to senior Barthwick, pretentiousness Liberal Member of Parliament and also to his equally prejudiced wife; it may open the scandal of a dissolute Jack’s deportment towards the prostitute. It also makes it clear posturing to the Barthwicks that they can no longer level charges of theft against Mrs. Jones.

In the concluding Act Galsworthy takes his readers to London police court, where the influence of wealth and power of opportunity with which the magistrate without doubt displays consideration to Jack and decides to penalize the miserable Jones and sends him to jail leaving his wife with three children in impoverishment. It is unfortunate that the magistrate takes adequate care that Jack, the son of the wealthy, is not exposed but cautiously protected. Here the unkind magistrate is unsympathetic to Jones who mercilessly leaves Mrs. Jones in distress. Galsworthy castigates that whatever is done here is with precision of cruelty, double standards and cynicism. Barthwick and his ‘yes men’ take utmost care that nothing appears in the newspaper. Barthwick’s solicitor Roper in silence discusses the issue with the reporter in the press box perhaps about the fact that no news is leaked to the press. Barthwick who has neither time nor
compassion to listen to the modest words of Mrs. Jones beats a hasty retreat from the court.

Throughout the play Galsworthy reveals Barthwick’s cowardly hypocrisy and especially it is poignantly disclosed:

“Barthwick: [Flustered] I---I’m upset. From beginning to end, the whole thing has been utterly against my principles.

Mrs. Barthwick: Rubbish! You haven’t any! Your principles are nothing in the world but sheer---fright

Barthwick: [Walking to the window] I’ve never been frightened in my life. You heard what Roper said. It’s enough to upset anyone when a thing like this happens. Everything one says and does seem to turn in one’s mouth---it’s --- it’s uncanny. It’s not the sort of thing I’ve been accustomed to”.

(SB Act II, Scene II p. 45)

Thus, Galsworthy attempts to realistically depict the serious problem of social injustice without the help of heroic melodrama. He is cautious in the selection of theme and maintaining a balance.

After the missing article is found in Mrs. Jones’s house by the detective, Mrs. Jones is being taken into custody, her husband Jones comes forward and admits the guilt. In fact Jones assaults Snow for wrongfully laying hand on his wife. The case is brought before the police magistrate. Jack’s influential father Barthwick does everything to hush up the case against his son and his connection with the affair as he is terribly anxious to keep his name out of newspaper.

“Barthwick: [In a whisper] “The purse--- the purse must be kept out of it, Roper. Whatever happens you must keep that out of the papers”.

79
He employs a solicitor Roper to plead the case and his interests. Finally, the case ends with the magistrate passing over the theft of Jack and Jones is condemned to one month hard labour.

The cases of Jack and Jones are almost parallel. Both are badly under the influence liquor when they steal woman’s reticule and the silver box, respectively. Both disown the theft and show no moral sentiments for what they have done. Both admit to have taken the objects out of spite or abrupt resentment. The major difference lies between the two is that Jones presents a true account of the incident before the magistrate while Jack prompted by the solicitor resorts to convenient loss of memory and lying. Jack is acquitted and protected by money power and by his father who is politically and socially influential.

Galsworthy shows how the power of money diverts the course of justice at a court of law. Jack is found guilty of stealing a woman’s reticule with a crimson purse containing seven pounds. He is also guilty of writing a cheque of forty pounds which does not meet on presentation at the bank. He is liable to be prosecuted. Barthwick is really disturbed at his son’s dirty business. It is evident from his words on receiving a letter from the bank with a cheque:

“Barthwick. [He opens a letter] he says, “This is that affair of Master Jack’s again. [Staring at the cheque]. A pretty business altogether! The boy ought to have been prosecuted”.”

(SB Act I, Scene III, p. 11)

Mrs. Barthwick, however, tries to conceal the guilt of her son and obviously defends Jack saying:
“Mrs. Barthwick Come, John, you know Jack didn’t mean anything; he only thought he was overdraying. I still think bank ought to have cashed that cheque. They must know your position”.

(ibid. p.11)

Barthwick, unhappy with his son’s behavior warns and rebukes him of unpleasant business.

“Barthwick: “If you hadn’t had me to come to, where would have been? It’s the nearest accident---suppose you had been the son of a poor man or a clerk. Obtaining money with a cheque you knew your bank could not meet. It might have ruined you for life. I can’t see what’s to become of you if these are your principles. I never did anything of the sort myself”.

(Ibid p.12)

Barthwick is worried again of the shameful behaviour of his wayward son when a woman comes to his home demanding the stolen reticule with seven pounds which she needs to remit the rent of her house. The nuisance caused to Barthwick is serious and Jack unfortunately does not feel much about the crimes he commits. It is obvious that Jack has gone to the extent of committing crime after crime perhaps as his mother ignores his every act. Moreover, Jack is well aware of the fact that he is the son of a rich and influential political leader who can save him in any difficulty. The magistrate also uses the same words to Jones while passing the judgment:

“The Magistrate. ….you, are ----are--- a nuisance to the community.

Jack: [Leaning from his seat] Dad! that’s what you said to me?”

(SB Act III, p. 62)
“Barthwick: So this the way the forty pound gone! One thing after another! Once more I should like to know where you’d been if it hadn’t been for me! You don’t seem to have any principles. You---you’re one of those who are a nuisance to society; you---you’re dangerous! What your mother say I don’t know. Your conduct, as far as I can see, is absolutely unjustifiable. It’s----its criminal. Why, a poor man who behaved as you’ve done.....d’you think he’d have any mercy shown him? What you want is a good lesson. You and your sort are ---- [he speaks with feeling] ----a nuisance to the community. Don’t ask to help me next time. You’re not fit to be helped”.  

(Act I, Scene III, p. 18)  

The magistrate tells Jones and his wife that drunkenness is no excuse. The magistrate’s disloyalty is to the profession is revealed by Galsworthy when he smiles as Jack divulges that he had too much of champagne at supper. The police constable does not intervene when Jack intermittently speaks while the case in being heard, however, it is the same police who repeatedly suppresses and tries to stop Jones from explaining things to the magistrate. After Jones is sent to jail Mrs. Jones loses her job and is left in destitution with her three children. On most of the occasions the man is depicted as the distressed protagonist and the women folk face hardship due to the suffering of the male characters.

During a sort of cross examination of Mrs. Jones by Barthwick after the silver box was found missing and she is suspected to have stolen, many startling revelations are made of the life that Mrs. Jones leads. That she is living in the most miserable and helpless condition and that her children are undernourished, the husband is cruel at times, and assaults her when he finds himself in distress
and out of work. The socially established Barthwick does not come forward to help the poor family.

According to R H Coats (1926):

“The worst character is John Barthwick, M. P., who loves fine phrases and loudly professes Liberal principles, in the tone of a man making speeches to his constituents, but who promptly turns cad the moment his interests are threatened or his name is likely to be associated with public scandal”.

(JGDA 1926, p. 70)

At the closing stage of the play an entreating plea of Mrs., Jones to Barthwick is really poignant. Here Galsworthy exposes Barthwick’s hypocrisy and callousness:

“Mrs. Jones: [Turning to him with a humble gesture] “Oh, sir!”—[Barthwick hesitates, then yielding to his nerves, he makes a shamefaced gesture of refusal, and hurries out of Court. Mrs. Jones stands looking after him].”

(SB Act III, p. 62)

In the play Galsworthy has depicted Mrs. Jones as the most rational and reasonable character. Despite being advised to leave her husband she does not do so. However, in the parallel case Mrs. Livens in the same play deserts her husband but her children have a home provided. Despite his worst treatment and occasional beating Mrs. Jones always remains faithful and loyal to her husband. The way Jones treats his wife is obvious from the following account that she shares with her employer, Barthwick:
“Mrs. Jones: Of course it’s very wearing to me; I don’t get my sleep at nights. And it’s not as if I were getting help from him, because I have to do for the children and all out us. And he throws such dreadful things up at me, talks of my having men to follow me about. Such a thing never happens; no man ever speaks to me. And of course it’s just the other way. It’s what he does that’s wrong and makes me so unhappy. And then he’s always threatenin’ to cut my trot If I leave him. It’s all the drink, and things preying on him mind; but he is not a bad man really. Sometimes he’ll speak quite kind to me, but I’ve stood so much from him, I don’t feel it in me to speak kind back, but just keep myself to myself. And he’s all right with the children too, except when he’s not himself”.

(SB Act I, Scene II P.6)

Mrs. Jones does not want to abandon her husband though he comes home drunk and is not loyal to her. She always stands by his side supporting and focusing the healthier side of his personality:

“Mrs. Jones.-- ---I think there’s a great deal of good in him; though he does treat me very bad sometimes. And of course I don’t want to leave him, but I thing I ought to, because really I hardly know how to stay with him. He often raises his hand to me. Not long ago he gave me a blow here [touches her breast] and I can feel it now….”

(SB ACT, Scene III, p. 23)

The hardship Mrs. Jones has to undergo is extremely moving and Galsworthy realistically paints the picture of her miserable destitution. Jones is good for nothing moreover; he is more a trouble to the family than help. Though Jones is thirty years old youth in a position to do any work to support his family but he takes pleasure in drinking and merrymaking. He hardly cares whether his wife and children ate or not. In the words of Mrs. Jones her husband is good only
when he works otherwise he is the worst creature who brutally treats his loyal wife. The words of Mrs. Jones reveal the truth of her miserable life:

“No, sir; of course he’s not in work just now….Three children; but of course they don’t eat very much, sir….I’m not always able to give them anything; sometimes I have to send them without; but my husband is very good about the children when he’s in work. But when he’s not in work of course he’s a very difficult man.”

(Ibid, p. 21)

Jones tells the magistrate:

“I’m always pressed for money...

(SB, Act III p. 59)

Jones feels that he is wrongly penalized and the rich Jack is scot free. He wants the magistrate should also punish the rich Jack for stealing woman’s purse. However, prejudiced magistrate works under the pressure of money and passes sentence to Jones who does not admit that he stole the silver box, rather he took it. The magistrate declares him a nuisance to society; the same words were used by Barthwick for his son.

Galsworthy clearly shows that there are two laws one for the rich the other for the poor and the machinery of law is ruthless and unfair. It punishes the weak and the powerless. Mrs. Jones and her innocent children are rendered victims of gross injustice. The real culprit is unsympathetic society and corrupt judicial system. The play introduces the tragic sight of the mechanism of law that brutally pulverizes the innocent in the world.

The play realistically presents the cruelty and injustice of social and economic order. Galsworthy fervently brings out financial and legal disparity which takes
toll of the poor in society. A large number of people in society have fallen prey to unjust social order. Had Jack been poor and Jones rich the picture would have been altogether different. Or otherwise had Jones been equally powerful and politically dominant like Barthwick he would have been undoubtedly dragged the wayward and dissolute Jack to punish in the court of law. Moreover, the magistrate would never have thought to pass a biased judgment and favour a particular party. Rather he would have passed the verdict on the merit of the case.

Thus, a true justice would have been delivered by applying magistrate’s logical and reasonable power, leaving no room for doubt and criticism. Moreover, had the magistrate been loyal to his profession and not fraudulent he would have positively punished the wrong despite his riches, social and political standing. This is the tragedy of our modern society and judiciary that Galsworthy criticizes. But the justice can be purchased with the power money; the downtrodden and outcaste, for no fault of theirs becomes victim of social apathy and indifference. In a modern society the weaker section of the society really needs our sympathy and understanding. Galsworthy feels that the society at large in responsible for their degradation and the plight which they are facing. The rich in the society have contemptuous approach towards the poor who in fact needs imaginative sympathy. Thus, Galsworthy condemns cruelty and denial of social justice which is detrimental for the cultural growth of society.

The words of Mrs. Barthwick sufficiently and appropriately prove politics is not the answer to the problems as politicians are one and the same in their outlook. She is even against imparting education to lower classes. Moreover her attitude towards the poor in general and the Jones in particular is skillfully brought froth by the playwright. The following quotations from the play adequately throw light on her personality. Moreover, she talks about morality of others forgetting
or rather protecting immoral temperament of her son who roams around with a disreputable woman--prostitute.

“Mrs. Barthwick. You Liberals and Conservatives, you’re all alike; you don’t see an inch before your noses”.

(SB Act I, sc. II P.10)

“Mrs. Barthwick: Education is simply ruining the lower classes. It unsettles them, and that’s the worst thing for all”.

(Ibid. p.11)

“Mrs. Barthwick: Mr. Roper, don’t you think the magistrate out to be told what sort of people these Jones are; I mean about their immorality before they were married. I don’t know if John told you”.

(SB Act II, sc. II, p. 44)

All are equal before law appears a mere philosophical and a theory in faction. The code of equality is mere practical joke. Justice delivered in the court of law is reduced to a class justice.

Galsworthy calls this play a social comedy; however, there is a harsh undercurrent of tragic sense in the play. It is tragedy of the poor Mrs. Jones and her three children who suffer because of the treatment they receive from both Jones and society. The family suffers because of lazy Jones and his stupid behavior and merry-making at the cost of his family. He is not worried of his unemployment, nor does he have any of responsibility towards the family. He does not care if his children are properly fed or go to school without food. He leaves everything to his wife. On the contrary, he creates problems for her by stealing the silver box from the house where she works as charwoman. His irresponsible behaviour cost her job, but Jones has nothing to do with it.
Galsworthy might have described the play a comedy perhaps because in the end of the play we are left to have a wry smile at the inequality of judiciary. Thus, it has all the characteristics of social tragedy as it deals with all the ill forces of modern society and life. Thus, he deals with the fundamental social issues and problems created by one individual to another and by society to the individual. The way justice is delivered in the play it appears that it is the rich and influential people in the society who run the business of the court and interpret the law and not judges and magistrates. Thus the play presents the tragic manifestation of the misery and chaos wrought by the unkind system of judiciary. The role of God in the Greek dramas is taken in this play by the social forces. The machinery of law should be for delivering justice to those who hope for it and it should not be decided by whims and mercy of someone because he has a long purse and is able to purchase the system. This is what transpires in The Silver Box; hence it has great social significance. It is not concerned with a problem of the individual life or character, because what happens with Jones may happen with anyone else. Galsworthy assigns a principle role to the judiciary, which is biased and makes distinction between the poor and the rich.

Against this background the play can be described as a social tragedy which has neither heroes nor villains. There are no towering personalities in the play but just ordinary human beings that we meet in our everyday life. Galsworthy focuses more on the problem instead of giving great heroic persons. His characters are generally dull-witted and unimaginative ones. He introduces the victims of social injustice just like Jones. Mrs. Jones and Livens are the victims of cruel social order and system and stand helplessly before mighty social machinery. They are pathetic figures and worn out by social inequality and inadequacy of our system. They fall prey to socio-economic and cruel social order and are completely ruined inflicting incalculable misery.
*The Silver Box* is perhaps the worst example of modern system of crime and punishment. It appears that Galsworthy’s training as a barrister helped him carve this play more cautiously using his dramaturgy. He makes the best of his legal knowledge in this play and it serves equally well for Galsworthy’s dramatic skill and social responsibility. Ten plays of Galsworthy directly or indirectly are concerned with the themes of justice and six others cover criminal cases. The characters including police, pleaders, interpreting the law as it suits to them, judges and magistrate, punishing the destitute is something sarcastic powerlessness is invariably present in his plays. We feel that the adversity of Jones and his wife is an indispensable product of the society where uneven distribution of wealth is the common order. Galsworthy implies in the play the corrective nature of evil and there is everything that is clear about the problem and also indirect remedy. He feels that social situations can be corrected by sound sense of justice and balanced application of mind and the tragedy of inopportune people could be averted. However, the equilibrium of interest is jeopardized by an implied importance attached to the eradication of suffering.

Though Galsworthy has successfully set the distinct characters and contradictory ideas in the play, the implied pressure on the kind of solution deprives it of the dramatic balance which is the very spirit of tragedy. Though the tone of this play presupposes the technical structure of tragedy, it is not in tragic spirit. Almost all naturalistic social plays suffer from this structural deficiency. It is true that if undue importance is given to positive or negative analysis of the problem then it would evidently upset synchronization of the general point of view. As Shaw is aware of this inadequacy of social dramas his entire social plays include some sort comic essence and the method of organizing the play. The quintessence of the comic art is in the amplification and prominence given to particular characters, social evils and shortcomings.
The Silver Box is the best example of naturalistic play. The naturalistic school believes that play should be a faithful mirror of society. Ibsen is the prominent exponent of naturalistic tradition. The naturalistic tradition which tries to project the world as it eliminates what is not ordinary or daily experience. In naturalism there is no place for soliloquies and asides in the play as they are regarded as opposite to daily life and hence thrust aside. Therefore, Ibsen introduced such situations in his plays that played a role of soliloquies and asides to disclose the succession of previous episodes.

In Act I Scene III Galsworthy has effectively employed this device where Barthwick summons Mrs. Jones suspecting her to have stolen the silver box. She relates all the details to Barthwick exposing her helpless state, thus fulfilling the rationale of soliloquy and an aside by Mrs. Jones in the play. However, it is found that the opening utterance of the play assumes the nature of soliloquy. The conversation between Jack and Jones at the beginning of the play reveals to us as to what would be development in the following sections of the play. Jack’s statement made in the drunken state is an apt elucidation of the essential notion of the play; it also makes us ready to recognize the further progression of events.

“We're all equal before the law tha's rot, tha's silly.”

(SB Act I, Scene I, p.4)

Regarding justice and law Galsworthy brings out some important things before us. For example, Jones is so poor that he cannot afford to engage a lawyer to plead his case and interests. He is stranger to the legal system and cannot present his case forcefully; as a result he faces the consequences of the situation. Jones is treated as an outcaste. On the other hand, Roper the solicitor of Barthwick is well-versed with police, court and knows the tricks to manage the affair in favour in his client.
Galsworthy is a master of dramaturgy and weaves his plays so dexterously that he leaves no flaws in the construction of the play. He gives details of his plots in a natural and persuasive way. He presents a logical progression of events and easily maintains interest and suspense in the play. He understands every action and uses every minute detail of incidents with most effective and meaningful manner. In this play Galsworthy effectively maintains unity of action. The play is a complete master piece and there is no sign of weakness of any sort. Every word or gesture is important and propels action further. Every action in the play contributes to the theme. It has a remarkable unity of theme and action.

It has a perfect opening as it stimulates our curiosity. At the beginning of the play Galsworthy places Jack and Jones stealing the objects and at the end facing the consequences of their guilt. The only difference is that Jack is acquitted while Jones is sentenced to one month hard labour. The parallel actions are skillfully handled by the playwright. Galsworthy does not take help of clumsy and artificial devices for his dramatic expressions, rather uses realistic and naturalistic techniques to present his theme and action. Moreover, he does not employ long and informative speeches but tries to be as brief and as succinct as possible. For he thinks long speeches are needless to introduce serious dramatic action. He prefers to adopt natural and persuasive method during the course of conversation in the play and acquaints us to the main situations and character with perfect simplicity. Precision and restraint are the essential features of his dramatic dexterity. Galsworthy makes the law to play a major role since it is the real protagonist of the dramatic action.

There are instances of irony and humour in this play. Galsworthy is a serious critic of life of English society. He deals with serious social problem but is charged that his world is grey and there is want of bright side and romance in his plays. However, there are some examples of humour in this play. Jack’s
illogical speeches create humour. For instance Jack is “drunk as a lord” is quite amusing. Mrs. Barthwick also supplies us with funny and illogical expressions:

“Education is simply ruining the lower classes”

(SB Act I, Scene III p.11)

Mrs. Barthwick’s self-righteousness and hypocrisy is revealed in her expression:

“Mrs. Barthwick. We want you to speak the truth and say you never let this low man into the house”.

(SB Act II Sc. II P.43)

This is funny and amusing in the sense that Mrs. Barthwick and truth cannot go together. She forgets the fact that she allows a lower class Mrs. Jones to work as a charwoman and wants to shut the doors of her house for Jones.

Irony prevails in the play as it is one aspect of Galsworthy’s dramatic art. Law is meant for dispensing justice, but here it punishes the destitute Jones under the influence of money. Though the play is called a comedy, it creates ironic effects. At the end of the play we come across with the real mockery of law and justice when Jack equally guilty like Jones is acquitted and the poor creature who cannot afford to employ a lawyer is sent to jail. The irony of situation lies in the fact that the Jones family is left to suffering and starvation by pseudo-justice delivered in the court. This is emphatically revealed in the shouting of Jones after he is awarded punishment by the magistrate.

“Jones. [Stopping and twisting round] Call this justice?, What about 'im? 'E got drunk! 'E took the purse---- ’e took the purse but [in a muffled shout] it’s ’s money got him off---Justice!”

(SB Act III, p. 62)
This is a remarkable illustration of verbal irony. Galsworthy feels that even after employing evenhandedness and unprejudiced in the play there is apparent entwining in things which cannot be considered or overlooked.

The main theme of the play is the process of law, the way it affects the poor and the rich. There are two piercingly contrasting factions juxtaposed by the playwright, the affluent Barthwick and his dissolute and wayward son Jack who takes all care that their social image and standing is not disturbed and damaged. They do everything to shield it by any means and go to the extent of anything that money can do to achieve. On the other side is the wretched and destitute Jones’s whose hardship is the product of cruel social and legal system.

Galsworthy has introduced the rich and the poor and commonplace characters in the play and their parallelism heightens the dramatic effect. Whatever transpires in the place is because of the characters, and they possess both good and bad traits. However, Galsworthy is cautious enough not to highlight the bad qualities of comparatively better characters. Each of the character has individuality of his own in the sense that they are not types but individuals. Galsworthy shows Jones as a social rebel but does not present him like other rebel characters in the society. Even if he is habitual and worst drunkard, he has some good qualities, too. For example, he does not allow anyone to dishonor his wife. Thus, the play is full of interesting characters of different natures and social background. He proves himself the best character-drawer.

3.2.1 The Major Characters

There are some major and minor characters in the play including women and younger ones. Like in other plays Galsworthy does not give a hero or villain in this play. John Barthwick is the Member of Parliament, Mrs. Barthwick and Jack their wayward son who creates problems to his father are the prominent figures in the play. Then we have another main character of Mrs. Jones, a
devoted mother and faithful wife. Her fidelity is unquestionable to her alcoholic husband though he occasionally beats her and threatens to kill. The Joneses is a weak and destitute family. Then Galsworthy presents on the stage a typically Victorian corrupt and vindictive magistrate. The rich Barthwicks mercilessly inflict cruel injustice on the wretched Jones.

**John Barthwick**

John Barthwick is an interesting but the worst character given to hypocrisy and pomposity. He is a Liberal Member of Parliament and socially established character. He is a prosperous and an elderly in appearance possibly between fifty and sixty and possesses bald head. He takes pride in his social and political status and respectability, but he is pompous and hypocritical. He pretends to show compassion and sympathy for the lower class. He is feeble and pusillanimous and lacks courage and imaginative sympathy, though he professes to possess it. He also professes to be liberal but unfortunately he does not have any of the qualities of a liberal human being. He parades his so-called principles of life in all ways and manners, but he is afraid lest deceitful ways of his family come to light publicly. His sympathy for the poor is superficial. Under the guise of humanity and kind heart for the downtrodden he pushes them into miserable condition. Since he lacks imaginative sympathy towards the poor and the victim of social mechanism and social order he forgets to see that they are the product of society.

Galsworthy exposes Barthwick whenever he gets opportunity and tears his mask of humanity and liberalism. His sympathy towards the Joneses is mere pretence; rather he is scared that Jones would spoil his social image and reputation. He trembles at the prospect of public disgrace and thinks Jones would make anything out of the purse episode. He also asks Roper to take care that the news of the case against his son Jack does not appear in the newspaper.
But he is unhappy with his son’s disgraceful behaviour and a series of scandals one after another. He severely reprimands his son and calls him “a nuisance to society”. He is greatly disturbed when the cheque issued by Jack does not meet in the bank on presentation and that he is liable to be prosecuted. Mrs. Barthwick mocks at his so-called courage when she says that his principle of life is nothing less that sheer fright.

**Mrs. Barthwick**

Mrs. Barthwick is a typical Victorian lady about fifty and has grayish hair and good features. She has strong confidence like her husband Barthwick. She is proud of her status and the respect she enjoys. She is narrow-minded but her nature and general behavior fails to impress the reader. Her snobbery and selfishness is exposed in her every speech and action. On the contrary, she behaves in such conceited manner that she invites hatred rather than love from the audience. She feels that Liberals and Conservatives are alike and do not see an inch before their noses. She does not believe in their social policies of progress and reforms.

> “Mrs. Barthwick. I’ve no patience with your talk of reform-----all that nonsense about social policy. We know perfectly well what it is they want; they want things for themselves. Those Socialists and Labour men are an absolutely selfish set of people. They have no sense of patriotism, like the upper classes, they simply want what we’ve got”.

(SB Act I, Scene III, p. 10)

She foolishly wishes that Liberal and Conservative parties to unit in the larger interest to defeat the Labour Party.

She bears grudge for the lower classes and her attitude towards downtrodden is contemptuous. She has no sympathy for the destitute and miserable lot in
society but hypocritically craves for their rights. She feels that education has ruined the lower classes. She is worried that lower classes have started showing importance and acting superior and have been claiming more liberty and license. They can never be trusted, and she has no sympathy for the poor Jones’s. She regards Jones as a ruffian and wants that he is severely punished. The class and clan cruelty that she bears deep is exposed as she wants that his illicit relations with Mrs. Jones before their marriage be brought forth in the court so that the case against him becomes stronger to award him maximum punishment. She never regards them as the product of society. She has critical ideas about the poor committing crime but takes enough care to protect her son who commits equal theft just like the poor Jones.

She is self-righteous and prudish. She regards Mrs. Jones shameless woman only because she confessed the fact before Mr. Barthwick that she had illicit relations with Jones before their marriage. She thinks that she has moral principles and she is virtuous and prudish.

As a mother she is fond of her son and is so highly devoted to him that she overlooks his faults and crimes. Perhaps due to excess of blind devotion to her son he has become unruly and ventures to commit crime after crime. This makes her a sort of foolish and irresponsible mother. She is horrified when Jack related his disgraceful behaviour with a woman of disrepute. She is so foolish that she hides her son’s lapses and asks him to indulge in lies in the court.

**Jack Barthwick**

Jack Barthwick is vagabond, irresponsible and dissolute son of a rich and powerful Member of Parliament. He is badly addicted to alcohol and like a son of any wealthy person he is given to all sorts of bad habits. He drinks too much, is heavily indebted, and argues with his father for money. He is spoiled perhaps due to too much indolence of his mother. Mr. Barthwick’s attitude towards him
is double standard as he admonishes him when his misconduct is discovered but 
tries to protect him in the court of law. It is because of this he becomes more 
irresponsible and arrogant and dares to comment on law and legal system. He is 
reckless and spendthrift and spends money lavishly to seek pleasure. He is 
found guilty of serious misconduct but scot free due to influential father. He is 
morally unscrupulous and takes pleasure in stealing a velvet reticule and 
arrogantly tells that he just wanted to score off with the woman. He shamelessly 
pretends lying in the court and resorts to forgetting as directed by father and 
prompted by his solicitor, Roper. On the whole, he is not a rational character in 
the play and behaves just like any boy coming from a rich family. He has easy-
going and pleasure-seeking temperament and is least concerned with the crimes 
that he commits. Despite all these facts, he assumes great deal of significance in 
the play to the dramatic effect and value.

**Jones**

Jones is about a thirty year old, haggard looking loafer out of work is one of the 
main characters in the play. He is rather sullen and has been unemployed for 
quite long time. He is neither a hero nor a villain but assumes significant 
position in the play for dramatic development and effect. He is a combination of 
different personality traits such as good and evil, vices and virtues. He has many 
faults and failings. Though he treats his wife badly and occasionally beats her, 
she finds some good qualities in him.

Like Jack he is given to drinking and whenever he is under the influence of 
liquor he misbehaves and maltreats his wife. He also accuses her of infidelity 
and threatens to cut her throat and often drives her out of house at night. He 
goes after other woman. He had illicit relations with Mrs. Jones even before 
marriage and it is because of this he was terminated from his earlier job by his 
previous employer. In a drunken state he steals the silver box from Mr.
Bartwick’s house and for this Mrs. Jones is arrested, loses her work with the Barthwicks. When he is sentenced to one month hard labour his wife and three children are left to face hardship. Mrs. Jones suffers in her life mostly because of reckless behaviour of Jones. Like Jack he has no feeling of moral responsibility. He disowns to have stolen the silver box, and tells the magistrate that he just took object out of spite. He fails to convince the magistrate who hardly believes in his statement. He loses all courtesy and respect of the magistrate who finally passes a judgment against him.

He blames society for his miserable state and it is because of unjust social mechanism that he is condemned in the society. Jones is ready to work but does not find the job for the reason best known to him. It is true that he a victim of social injustice. It is the present social system and economic order that is responsible for his moral deterioration and miserable condition. Thus, Jones is a victim of social apathy and indifference. He is discarded by the society as a criminal and does not offer him any opportunity for improvement and establish himself as a respectable citizen.

Jones feels that all are equal before law is not more than philosophy and it is a fiction. He remarks that justice at the court of law is mere mockery and money can purchase law. The machinery of law is ruthless and mercilessly grinds the unfair and the poor who hope for justice. His expression on passing of judgment is very critical and brings to the notice of the corrupt magistrate that Jack is equally guilty of the crime. He stole a woman’s purse but it the money that got him free. What sort of a justice is this? He demands answer from the biased Victorian archetypical magistrate who passes a verdict against the poor creature like Jones.

Jones’s is neither a habitual offender nor dangerous ruffian as described by Mrs. Barthwick. He is also not altogether a nuisance to the community as stated by
the magistrate, but he has certain grievances against civilized society. Jones deserves sympathy and understanding. Mrs. Jones says he has a great deal of good in him. Like Jack he is not a lair nor does he pretend forgetfulness before the magistrate but plainly recounts everything related to his crime. He defends his wife from unwarranted allegation and goes to an extent of assaulting the police officer Snow. He admits to have taken the silver box and reiterates that he took it out of spite and did not steal it. Unfortunately police and magistrate are not in a state to listen to his honest confession, but mercilessly punished. He is not a hardcore criminal or villain in the true sense of the term. He only wanted to score off, possibly Jack. In his case there are certain extenuating circumstances. He is a miserable poor creature; pressed by financial constrains to support his wife and three children.

What is needed in the case of Jones is sympathy and understanding and the society is responsible for his sorry state. Despite all good and bad qualities in Jones, Galsworthy refuses to give him a status of a hero or a villain in the play, he is simply a suffering protagonist. However, Galsworthy makes a good and powerful play out of mundane and commonplace people in the society.

Mrs. Jones

Mrs. Jones is also one of the principal characters in the play. She is slim, and has dark eyes and long hair. She has oval-shaped face and her voice is soft and even. She is a typical woman of the late Victorian and early Edwardian proletarian class who earns her livelihood by doing odd jobs. She has been suffering long throughout the play from the beginning to its end. She is the most sympathetic character in the play and her manner is tolerant and her way of talking is quite impersonal. She always prefers to remain calm and gentle. She is meek and modest and undergoes suffering without complaining anyone even her husband who treats her badly. She does not blame anyone for her destitute
circumstances but patiently suffers. She is stoical even when she is required to express her situation and hardship. These adversities do not discourage her nor do they demoralize her. Even in the worst condition and adverse situations she does not lose her temper and good manners of talking and addressing people. Thus, she stands out as the most rational character in the play. She does not make issue of her sorrows and suffering rather tolerates it without any grievances.

Mrs. Jones patiently tolerates bad treatment meted out by her husband. She is a good and faithful wife. She does not oppose her husband by any verbal reaction even when he calls her unfaithful and men follow her. She is a loyal wife and does not want to disturb her already disturbed house by picking up quarrels with her distressed and unemployed husband. The sense of pity is one of the essential elements on which the emotional organization of the play and spirit of the present play is based. The character of Mrs. Jones is envisaged in pity. She is one such enduring creature who cannot communicate her feelings. When Wheeler, a maidservant at Barthwick asks Mrs. Jones to register a complaint with the police against her brutal husband, she meaningfully refuses to do so.

Despite Jones ill-treats her she cannot take decision to desert him just like Livens does in the same play. She links her husband’s violent behaviour to his regular drinking and unemployment. She assures Barthwick that there is a great deal of good in him.

In the next scene when Barthwick suspects of the silver box, and enquires with her if she has seen the thing. She tries to maintain the same expressionless nature.

“Mrs. Jones. No, sir, I haven’t seen it--- of course if I’d seen it I should have noticed it------- I have not seen it, and of course I don’t know where it is.”
She is completely innocent and the thought of theft and misconduct cannot touch her. She suffers with her children due to glaring injustice done to her. They are entirely left destitute and to starve. She is triply punished by the judgment of the court: her husband is in the jail, she loses her job, and she is thrown out of her rented house. Galsworthy shows here that how one wrong and biased verdict of the magistrate spoils the entire family for no faults of theirs. At the end of the play her humble appeal to Barthwick to help her falls on deaf ears. The machinery of law brutally crushes the innocent family which is the victim of monstrous legal system. She is not a sort of a person to tell lies or cheat anyone for her selfish interests. When she finds the silver box in her husband’s pocket she insists to return it. On the contrary, she is very disturbed and worried about everything at the incident. Mrs. Jones’s innocence is apparent from her expression:

“Mrs. Jones [Twisting her apron strings] It’s Mr. Barthwick’s! You’ve taken away my reputation. Oh, Jem, whatever made you?.....It’s the bread out of our mouths!....... I will take it back and tell all about it”

Her innocence, simplicity and calm resignation are some of the outstanding qualities of her personality which win our appreciation and admiration. Her outlook to life is to admit all submissively and not to react to the situation though they work against her and her family. She is caring and loving mother and faithful wife and always tries to keep the family united and give necessary love. She willingly accepts odd jobs and does not question about the hardships and adversities that she suffers. The significant feature of her character is her humble approach towards the established social order, which she by no means
interrogates. She suffers and is always prepared to undergo the consequences of poverty of the working class.

In a true sense of the term, despite being destitute she is really a cultivated and civilized woman and knows her limitations. Her poverty does not become an obstacle for her to be a responsible human being. In fact she is caught in conservative beliefs of the social composition of England.

Finally, Mrs. Jones does not do much in the last act but her verbal expressions and actions expose the characteristics of the people at the hearing of the case. She is a product of Galsworthy’s portrayal of the ordinary characters. However, there is no happy conclusion to her. She is the victim of social and economic system and culture of the early twentieth century English society.

3.3 Moral Vision in *Strife*

In this section, a critical study of the moral aspect of Galsworthy’s dramatic world is discussed with special reference to a great and powerful social tragedy *Strife* (1909). It was presented by Charles Frohman at The Duke of York’s Theatre in 1909. With this Galsworthy’s reputation as one of the leading dramatists of England was established. His critics also appreciated the initial theatrical performances of this play describing it as a supreme stage endeavour. It attained universal admiration as a remarkable play even from his critics who had criticized Galsworthy’s too much indulgence in impartiality in his plays. Slowly but steadily the play was acclaimed worldwide including its staging in London, New York and later in Vienna in 1913.

Galsworthy composed *Strife* at times when rights of the working class were just started to be emphasized in England. The play portrays a picture of two fighting groups in the same dramatic vein of Galsworthy’s impartial and realistic tradition of modern times. The growth and development of workers movements in the early twentieth century provided theme to Galsworthy’s play. The play
demonstrates that Galsworthy deeply understands social issues and social perception. The problems of working class and the disputes between capital and labour were assuming great significance in England when Galsworthy designed this play.

With the introduction of machine in most industrial units the production rapidly increased and companies started making higher profits compared to earlier days. The wages did not increase with proportion to the increased profit. The profits were soaring higher than the prices. In some cases profits increased to 29.5 percent but the average wages were at 12 percent. This difference between profit and actual wages that the workers earned created a feeling among the working class that they were becoming poorer and their employers were getting richer. As discontent gradually increased and spread amongst the men atmosphere in companies was disturbed.

One time peaceful and harmonious relations between the employer and workers began to wane. The labour unions came into being to safeguard the interests of workers and also to revolt against monopoly, the tyranny and autocracy of the employer – the capitalists. Slowly workers began to realize their rights. A feeling to revolt and resentment was gearing up in the rank and file. Long standing discontent and unrest began to take shape of movement in the form of strike. England had never experienced it that demanded immediate attention. Demand for minimum wages and reduction in the working hours began to surface.

At the beginning of 1905, England witnessed a strike of the miners of South Wales. Like a contagious disease strike after strike erupted in England including the strike of railway men, cotton mills, engineers and the miners elsewhere in the country. Even today the matters of economic unrest and social transformation assume immense significance and have become more
multifarious and confusing than in the times Galsworthy’s England. These developments in the industrial world provided theme and enough material for Galsworthy to dwell upon in this play. Thus, the play proved as the most stunning and brilliant piece of work.

The theme of the play is caste feeling between capital and labour prevailing at the time of Galsworthy. According to him, the action of Strife “takes place on February 7th between the hours of noon and six in the afternoon, close to the Trenartha Tin Plate Works, on the boarder of England and Wales, where a strike has been in progress throughout the winter”.

Strife is one of the greatest work of art of Galsworthy where the principle protagonists are not factions but persons, Anthony and Roberts. They are interesting characters because of their intrinsic strong personalities and as they symbolize emergence social forces of enormous scale.

The strike at the Trenartha Tin Plate Works has continued for five months which commenced in October. The representation of the working men had come to London to have a dialogue with the company directors in last February. But nothing transpired there. Galsworthy asserts that if the issue had been diplomatically and meticulously handled compromise might have been reached. But John Anthony, the chairman of the company insulted David Roberts saying that he was foolish and uneducated and did know what he was talking about. He also said that Roberts did not know what the workers are asking and what their demands are. Thus, enraged and egoistic Roberts intensifies the strike and compels the company directors after more than two months to travel to Wales to fathom the possibilities of compromise. One of the directors F H Wilder is very upset and perturbed by the news which is evident from his enraged reaction:

“Edgar. [Holding out his paper] There’s great distress amongst them, according to the Trenartha News
[Reading] If the Board of worthy gentlemen who control the Trenartha Tin Plate Works from their armchairs in London, would condescend to come and see for themselves the conditions prevailing amongst their work-people during this strike...

Wilder. Oh, that rag! Give it to Wanklin, Suit his Radical views. They call us monsters, I suppose. The editor of that rubbish ought to be shot.

Wilder. Ruffian! I remember that fellow who he hadn’t a penny to his name; little snivel of chap that’s made his way by blackguarding everybody who takes a different view to himself.”

(Strife Act I, P. 2)

This might be the result of the newspaper comments on the strike and company directors’ adamant stand to reach compromise. Neither the director had come to personally see and study the situation and take initiatives toward the end of the stalemate.

The efforts of the Trade Union official, Simon Harness who had lived in America in five years is versatile in such matters as strike and who acts as a mediator, also fails in his attempt to end the strike. Since nobody is ready to listen to him. He cautions them that they had better come to settlement sooner the better. The fighting factions are so obdurate that nobody feels it significant to take the warning of Harness seriously.

“Harness...... We are forced to withhold our support from your men because some of their demands are excess of current rates. I expect to make them withdraw those demands t-day:......Can’t we have done with this old-fashioned tug-of-war business? . [Dryly] Am I to understand then, gentlemen, tat your Board is going to make no concession?

Anthony. None.---- Then let them be just
Harness. [Icily]. The men have no use for your pity, sir. What they want is justice.”

(Strife Act I, pp.12, 14)

“Roberts. [Venomously] Justice from London? What are you talking about, Henry Thomas? Have gone silly? We know very well what we are - discontented dogs-never satisfied. What did the Chairman tell me up in London? That I didn’t know what I was talking about. I was a foolish, uneducated man, that knew nothing of the wants of the men I spoke for.”

“Anthony. There can be only one master, Roberts.

Roberts. Then, be Gad, it’ll be us.” (ibid. p. 17)

The fact remains that Galsworthy does not make it clear the actual demands and bone of contention between the directors and the men. Harness desires that men withdraw some of the unreasonable demands and end the old-fashioned tug-of-war. He also thinks that the board if directors may make concession. But Anthony is not prepared to make any compromise. Harness also clarifies the workers’ stand saying that the workers did not expect them to display pity but they are fighting for their justice. What does the chairman of the company Anthony wishes to have is a total dominance and there should be the only one master. But Roberts opposes his stand arguing that if that be the case men be masters. Moreover, he does not want any solutions to the conflict from London but it should be done at Wales. Having experienced bad treatment at the London meeting he does not think next meeting be arranged in London. He tells his opinion is the same as it was in London.

In the Act II, Scene I of the play Galsworthy takes his readers to Roberts’s cottage at half past three, where Mrs. Annie Roberts is ailing. Enid, the daughter of the chairman goes to meet her. It is here that the playwright reveals the real
human element of the strike when the younger women-folk come in the picture. Our interest is intensified as to how it would affect the strike with the participation of Enid, daughter of the company chairman Anthony and her one time friend Mrs. Roberts, now wife of the union leader Roberts. Galsworthy makes the play more interesting and by creating suspense and projecting these two women on the stage.

The conversation between the women in Robert’s cottage throws light on the hardship of the workers due to long continued strike. The workers have no money to buy coal and they are miserably starving. The situation of Mrs. Roberts is equally worse. In fact, they have nothing do with the strike as it is the business of Anthony and Roberts and their supporters. It is clear that by presenting them on the stage Galsworthy wishes to give human and emotional touch to the action to intensify the effect. Mrs. Roberts does not take any interest in the affairs of Roberts, like Enid does in the case of her father, Anthony. Mrs. Roberts tries to be as non-aligned as possible, rather keeps her at safe distance from the issue. However, she is confident that Roberts would not take a stand contrary to the interest and the fate of workers.

Mrs. Roberts was working as Enid’s maid in the past. Enid has good rapport with her and thinking that if she conveyed her opinion on the on-going strike Mrs. Roberts would interfere in the entire affair and would be able to persuade her husband Roberts to come to compromise. Enid displays her friendship with Mrs. Roberts by sending her some jelly, food and comforts. They are presently rejected by Mrs. Roberts even she is seriously ill. How would Roberts allow his wife such gifts from Anthony, his enemy, an old robber? It is pathetic to see Enid trying to be kind to Mrs. Roberts who is seriously ill and her attempt to explain to her how it would be fair if the conflict is settled for sake of workers. Galsworthy states that obvious class consciousness proves detrimental in understanding between them. Enid explains that Anthony, her father is getting
old and how the old people are. She also clarifies that if the workers stop drinking and gambling they need not worry about anything. But since the workers are facing so much of hardship they must have some pleasure. Mrs. Roberts tells Enid that this is the opinion of Roberts.

Taking the side of Roberts, Annie says that for him workers’ life is a gamble.

“Enid. You don’t have to pay rates and taxes, and a hundred other things to do that they do. If the men didn’t spend such a lot in drink and betting they’d be quite well off!

Mrs. Roberts. [A little resentful] Roberts never touches a drop; and he’s never had a bet in his life.....Roberts says a working man’s life is all a gamble, from the time ’e’s born to the time ’e dies. He says, M’m, that when a working man’s baby it is toss-up breath to breath whether it ever drawn another”.

(Strife Act I, Scene I, pp.36, 37)

Mrs. Roberts tells that her husband’s condition is no better than striking workers. The financial condition of Roberts is worst but is always worried of the strike and the men. It is explicit from the following expressions of Mrs. Roberts:

“Mrs. Roberts.[On the defensive] All Roberts’s savin’s have gone. He’s always looked forward to this strike. He says he’s no right to a farthing when the others are suffering.....It’s life and death for him....”

(ibid p. 38)

Mrs. Roberts does not want that Enid should see her husband as he may not like it, rather he would get wild. Enid promises to be calm with him.
Enid also meets Roberts at his cottage with an appeal to end the strike. Roberts is equally unyielding like her father. He misinterprets the appeal of Enid and suspects if she has approached with some design. Roberts goes to the extent of calling Anthony, a tyrant. This makes Enid angry and Mrs. Roberts tries to calm both. Enid calls Roberts mad and he tries to clear the hardship and agony that the workers and passing through. She says her father possess some definite principles of life.

Enid appeals Roberts to settle the conflict for the sake of his wife, for the sake of everybody. As the conversation progresses, Enid opens the issue as to why he hates their family so much. Roberts says that Anthony symbolizes tyranny. Upon this Enid says Roberts is nonsense, coward, and mad. Roberts does not stand with such unexpected words and charges that she was doing all this for the sake of his father. The following part of their conversation reveals the facts:

“Enid. Mr. Roberts..... I came to appeal to you. Please try to come to some compromise; give way a little, it’s only for our own sakes.....for everybody’s sake; for your wife’s sake.

Roberts. For my wife’s sake, for everybody’s sake----for the sake of Mr. Anthony.

Enid. Why are you so bitter against my father? He has never done anything to you.

Roberts. Mr. Anthony stands for tyranny! That’s why!

Enid. Nonsense..... I believe you ----are mad.

Roberts. The house of madman then is not the fit place for a lady.

Enid. I’m not afraid of you.....
Roberts. I would not expect the daughter of Mr. Anthony to be afraid. Mr. Anthony is not a coward like the rest of them.

Enid. I suppose you think it brave, then, to go on with this struggle.

Roberts. Does Mr. Anthony think it brave to fight against women and children? Mr. Anthony is a rich man, I believe; does he think it brave to fight against those who haven’t a penny? Does he think it brave to set children crying with hunger, an’ women shivering with cold? (ibid. p. 40)

Enid. My father is acting on his principles, and you know it!

Roberts. And so am I!

Enid. You hate us; and you can’t bear to be beaten-----I make one more appeal to you, Mr. Roberts, for the sake of your wife.

Roberts [With polite malice] If I might advise ye! Ma’am ----make it for the sake of your husband and your father....He goes it, my girl? Feeling better, are you”.

(Strife Act I, Sc I pp. 39-42)

Anthony does not want to surrender and make any sort of compromise, and Roberts does not want to finish the conflict.

In the Scene II of Act II the meeting of workers is organized. It is half past four. The meeting witnesses some shilly-shally of loyalty. Harness wants the union to reduce its demands to the practical degree so that something could be done towards the compromise. He is angry with the way things are handled as he cannot afford to attend the meeting of the union again. He is not sort of a person that speaks random, as the workers ought to know by this time. He also wants the workers to be strongly united otherwise the things would be worse. He tells the workers that the directors remain one that is the reason they are powerful.
Harness also seeks support of the men to make the capitalist yield. At the height of his voice he address the workers are not thieves and traitors.

“Harness. Out your demands to right pattern, and we’ll see you through; reduce, and don’t expect me to waste my time coming here again……Hands together, and victory-or-the starvation you’ve got now?……. It’s hands together that’s made them strong……but the whole is greater than part, and you are only the part. Stand by us, and we will stand by you ....the Union are neither thieves not traitors.”

(Strife Act II, Scene II, pp, 48, 49, 50)

Rous of the workmen’s committee strongly supports the views expressed by Harness and blames that it is because workers that the union cannot achieve its goals and target. He says:

“Rous. ’E said fair. “Stand by us,” ’e said, “and we’ll stand by you.” That’s where we’ve been makin’ our mistakes this long time past; and who’s to blame for’t? [He points at Roberts] That man there! “No”, ’e said, “fight the robbers.” ......I’m not orator, mates, it’s the flesh and blood in me that’s speakin’, it’s the heart o’ me.... What are we without the Union----handful o’ parched leaves----a puff---o’ smoke...... Sooner than go on starving the women and the children”.

(Strife Act II, Scene II, pp. 54, 55)

Roberts’s, with his fiery speech fires missiles of his verbal attack at the capital and finally he is successful in wining hearts of his supports. With his violent tirade against the capitalists he is able to turn a tide of workers in his direction. It is the best speech of Roberts as a union leader. His confidence and forceful words and commitment to the workers are expressed in the speech. However,
the sad news of Mrs. Roberts’s death reaches while he is addressing the workers:

“Roberts. You don’t want to hear me, then? -----You love their feet on your necks, don’t you? -----Am I a liar, a coward, a traitor? ....his principles are but his belly.....You’ve felt the pinch o’t in your bellies. You’ve forgotten what that fight ’as been; many times I have told you; I will tell you now this once again. The fight o’ the country’s body and blood against a blood-sucker. The fight of those that spend themselves with every blow they strike and every breath they draw, against a thing that fattens on them, and grows and grows by the law of merciful Nature.

’Tis not for this little moment of tine we’re fighting not for ourselves, our own little bodies, and their wants......If we have not the hearts of men to stand against it breast to breast, and eye to eye, and force it backward till it cry for mercy, it will go on sucking life; and we shall stay for ever what we are, less than the very dogs”.

(ibid, pp. 55 - 59)

In the same evening the adjourned meeting of the directors is arranged where the news of Mrs. Roberts’s death is made out. It is Edgar; son of Anthony says that it was the result of a prolonged strike. When the directors plan to overthrow Anthony he makes a strong defence of his position and tells the directors how he has worked for the growth and prosperity of the company and successfully fought four strikes. His national pride is also revealed when he says that he is doing this for the country and is worried of the future of the country. It becomes clear from his speech;

“Anthony. I am seventy-six years old. I have been Chairman of this Company since its inception two-and-thirty years ago. I have seen it pass through the good and evil report. My connection with it began in the year
that this young man was born. I have had to do with ‘men’ for fifty years; I’ve always stood up to them; I have never been beaten yet. I have fought the men for four times I have beaten them-----I am man enough to stand to my guns....The men have fare wages, we have been always ready to listen to complaints. It has been said that masters and men are equal! Cant! ‘There can only be one master in a house!----It has been said that Capital and Labour have the same interests. Cant.-----There is only one way of treating “men”----with the iron hand-----This middle-class sentiment, or socialism, whatever it may be, is rotten. Masters are Masters, men are men! Yield one demand, and they will it six. ---- I have been accused of being a domineering tyrant, thinking only of my pride----I am thinking of the future of this country, threatened with the black waters of confusion, threatened with mob government, threatened with what I cannot see."

(Act III, pp. 79, 80)

Anthony also hates Roberts to such a degree that he does not name Mrs. Roberts in his speech. He just mentions her as a woman and resigns as a chairman of the company. Harness is also dissatisfied the way strike is being handled by the company directors and a great loss to the company with the ouster of Anthony and Roberts.

“Anthony. A woman has died. I am told that her blood is on my hand; I am told that my hands in the starvation and the suffering of other women and children.”

(ibid, p. 81)

“Anthony. …..I resign my position on this board.”

(ibid, p. 83)
“Harness. A woman is dead; and the two best men both broken!”

(Strife Act III, p. 88)

John Anthony who has hold the post of chairman of the company for thirty years has long experience to dilute the tension of the strike and boasts that he has seen four strikes in his chairmanship. Due to his obstinate nature and perhaps he is holding the post for pretty longer period that he has developed a sort arrogance that the chair of power brings with it. He even does not give any response to his directors, too. His principles seem to be something strange and as he does not believe in the words of his son Edgar that strike has gone too far. On the contrary, he expresses that everything would be according to his principles and what he sees it as fit. This may be his overconfidence which might ruin him in the end. His views are on the strike explicitly brings it out. Edgar his son wants that a settlement be reached as the workers are terribly suffering and it is cruel to make them face such adversities. Edgar’s sympathies are with the suffering men, and wants that the strike must end as workers’ families and children are badly suffering.

Even another director Wanklin thinks that unwanted principles of the chairman would sink their ship, yet confident Anthony tells such a thing would not happen. But adamant Anthony is not prepared to come to compromise. Wanklin again asks Anthony if he really wants to fight to finish and cautions him to take care and one should know where to stop. Enid, Anthony’s daughter also appeals her father to settle the matters since the men are in distress but he is not ready to listen to her, too. They’re all suffering and want to stop the conflict for his sake, but there is no change in Anthony. The secretary of the company Henry Tench becomes so desperate at the overall obstinate temperament of Anthony that he warns him that one day the directors would oust him from his position.

“Anthony. No surrender!------ No compromise!”
Edgar.[Rather ashamedly] I think we ought to consider the men….I’m not thinking of our feelings. I’m thinking of the men’s…..There is no necessity for pushing things so far in the face of all this sufferings—it’s cruel

Wanklin. [Suavely] Seriously, Chairman, are you going to let the ship slink under you, for the sake of -------a principle?

Anthony. She won’t sink…. I’ve always fought them; I’ve never been beaten yet..... Better go to the devil than give in.

Edgar. I don’t see how we can get over it that to go on like this mans starvation to the men’s wives and families.”

(Strife Act I pp. 7-10)

“Enid. I do hope it’s settled, Father!......We all see the distress.

Anthony. No!”

(ibid. p. 23),

“Waklin. Do you really mean to fight to a finish, Chairman?.....Take care! The essence of things is to know when to stop.”

(ibid. p. 23)

“Enid. There’re all suffering. Father! Do stop it, f or my sake!...You don’t know the state the men are in...You don’t, Father if you did, you wouldn’t “.

(ibid. p. 24)

“Tench. [After a pause, desperately bolting it out] I think the Directors are going to throw you over, sir.”
Edgar has always been with the side of strikers and does not bear the situation and misery that their families are starving and suffering from privation. He tries to persuade his father to see the situation which is going out of hand.

The situation worsens due to protracted strike. The company has already incurred a heavy loss of fifty thousand pounds. Prices are soaring, agreements which were reached earlier required to be executed incurring further loss. The contracts which might have come to this company are being diverted to other companies. As the shares have jumped down, and company is in heavy loss the dividend is not paid. There is resentment and unrest among the shareholders of the company. The workers are not paid their wages, there is shortage of food. The women and children are suffering from privation and hardships due to harsh winter and hunger.

Both the chairman of the industrial unit and the leader of the workers are uncompromising. The collision of class consciousness of capital with labour in the early twentieth century is brought forth by the playwright. The workers at Trenartha Tin Plate Works on the boarder of Wales revolt against the capitalist forces. The chairman of the industry John Antony sticks up to his impractical principles and falls short to realize the situation caused by the prolonged strike. He is adamant, unyielding and despotic and uncompromising and is reluctant to make the smallest amount of conciliation. David Roberts under whose leadership the strike has continued for five months and has caused immense torture and suffering to the men. He is equally adamant revolutionary who fails in the end to keep his flock of men together apparently due to his too stretched egoism. Unfortunately, it is the workers who are mercilessly caught between two giants and meekly from suffer from hunger and lack food due to overstretched strife. Both the leaders are not ready to see agonies and adversities
of the workers. The men worn and weary with the dreadful conflict are compelled and anguished at the appalling picture of privation of their wives and children.

Galsworthy gravely shows the torture of the workers by presenting the character of Annie Roberts, wife of the union leader David Roberts. She is ailing from the heart problem and her health is gradually deteriorating for want of warmth and good diet. Mrs. Rous is also facing starvation and she feels that her present destitution is not so hard as compared with her wretched entire life. In short, there is no end to the utter suffering and privation of the striking faction. Surprisingly enough, barring Edgar, son of the chairman, neither of the directors of the company, is concerned with the sorry state of striking men. Nor even Roberts, workers obstinate chief and Anthony.

The strength and significance of the play lies in the fact that it is not embedded in the predicament of a definite situation but in a conflict of resolutions and ego between clearly classified, influential and convincing characters. The apparent struggle in the play appears between the directors of the company and their revolting men, but as the play progresses, it becomes clear that the dispute in reality is between the egoistic John Anthony, the chairman of the company and David Roberts, the leader of the men.

Thus, Galsworthy shows us that Strife is not so much about class consciousness between capital and labour, it is more about relations between leaders and supporters. What separate the two leaders are their egoism, unyielding and uncompressing nature, pride, audacious impracticality and self-destructive devotion. This is the unfortunate end of the leaders. Finally, utterly upset directors and weary workers come closure and end the strike amicably keeping away their leaders away. In the end Galsworthy sees John Anthony and David Roberts are forced to leave their respective positions. Thus, the long standing
restlessness and turmoil comes to an end with one person dead. The final result is neither of the leaders wins the game. Both lose their position. At the end of the play Galsworthy brings out pity showing the leaders together still unbending, steady and defiant.

The play is one of the remarkable social tragedies of modern time it has immense social implications. It is extraordinary for the reason that it has two powerful and forceful characters viz John Anthony, the chairman of the board of directors of the company Trenartha Tin Plate Works and David Roberts, a revolutionary leader of workers union. The men have been on the strike for over five months and there is no sign of settlement. There is mounting pressure from both the sides to come to compromise. But the adamant leaders of both sides are not ready to end the conflict. The directors of the company and so also the workers are worried about the fate of the strike and where it would end.

Galsworthy’s fundamental context lies in the moral and social issues at the foundation of the play. It is by situations that Galsworthy puts forth his propaganda. It is because of this aspect that his plays are placed on the upper step of the dramatic ladder compared to other missionary playwrights. He does not depend on a dialogue to establish his theories. Galsworthy fundamentally relies on his characters and their action to put into effect his moral, and it is to this end that he is indebted to his dramatic deliverance. After selection of his situations, he ensues to maintain equilibrium by juxtaposing contrasting factions of various categories with different approaches. Galsworthy’s characters are mostly types and they are more forceful on the stage than the individuals. In this way Strife can be called as the best example of his dramatic technique. Galsworthy successfully presents the central context, contrasting characters and their groups and amalgamation of types.
Galsworthy successfully employs the parallelism device in the play by placing the contrasting characters side by side which heightens the dramatic effect. For instance, the characters such as Anthony and Roberts, Enid and Annie, Edgar and Thomas and finally directors and workers are placed for the action in the play. The parallelism particularly becomes more remarkable with the arguments of the two protagonists. Both have some definite private motive. Roberts has some financial complaints due to swindling charges against him. The company chairman is worried about his daughter’s comfort. Both the leaders foster class consciousness as Anthony takes side of capitalists while Robert fights for the working class. Anthony says that he is worried about the future of the country and Roberts says that he does not fight for himself. Thus, Galsworthy shows their patriotic feelings. Anthony expresses his patriotic feeling in the following hypocritical manner:

“Anthony. I have been accused of being a domineering tyrant, thinking only of my pride-I am thinking of the future of the country, threatened with the black waters of confusion, threatened with mob government, threatened with what I cannot see. If by any conduct of mine I help to bring this on us, I shall be ashamed to look my fellows in the face.”

(Strike Act III, pp. 80, 81)

Galsworthy makes Mrs. Roberts to reject the food and comforts sent by her one time friend but now the daughter of the chairman and her husband’s foe. How can she accept the food coming from the enemy’s home? By making Mrs. Roberts not to accept Enid’s gifts, Galsworthy poignantly brings out the class consciousness and caste feeling between the two individuals as leaders but the classes represented by them-Capital and Labour. As a matter fact, the women-folk have nothing to do with affairs of the company and the strike in general. Moreover, the matters were being handled at higher level than these two
women; they should rather stick up to their true friendship and discuss their personal life instead of strike and other matters not concerning them. Enid should not have opened the topic of strike and expressed her desire to see Roberts and make him an appeal to settle the issue making and showing sympathy for the sake of his wife and workers.

In fact Roberts as a union leader knows his business well and does not expect anyone from Anthony’s family to come forward to explain his duties. That is the reason he frankly and boldly tells that Enid’s father epitomized tyranny. He even does not like the way Enid talked to him using the words like nonsense, mad and coward. Mrs. Roberts is polite in her manners and her expression. Though she is sick and not working with Enid she respects her as a good human being. Mrs. Roberts’s loyalty to her husband is admirable when she is suffering from cardiac problem and suffering from cold and hunger. She is so bold and courageous and true to philosophy and principles of her life that despite being hungry she refuses food that comes from her husband’s enemy. The contrasts that Galsworthy focuses here by depicting the characters of Enid and Mrs. Roberts is remarkable in the sense that Enid is happy in her life with children and riches, whereas Annie has nothing like this. She always wanted children and all that but her husband refuses to bring children into this miserable world where the children of the poor people have no openings. Mrs. Roberts tells Enid:

“Mrs. Roberts. He says that without a man very near, and pinches and stints ’imself and ’is children to save, there can’t be neither surplus nor security. That’s why he wouldn’t have no children not though I wanted them.”

(Stride Act II, Scene. I P.37)
It is clear that industrial disputes are more at the level of leaders rather than among the workers. As the play progresses it becomes evident from the fact that the conflict is more between the leaders.

“Anthony. You,---don’t --->believe---in---barriers---between the classes?”

(Strife Act I, p. 25)

Galsworthy shows that there are good men on both the sides who want that the matter be settled amicably and at the earliest and halt privation and hardship of the working class. But the leaders show that they have their own principles in life, which makes them adamant and arrogant on excessive scale. The two leaders do not understand and realize that they can meet and end up the conflict. Moreover, it is in their hands to reach a solution but their extreme caste feelings and class consciousness do not allow them to come together and settle the matter once and for all. Anthony boasts that he has been chairman of the company for thirty years and has seen four strikes and he was never defeated. He refuses to listen to his son Edgar who tells him that the situation of the workers is worse and is getting miserable. Anthony’s impractical principles make him blind to see a heavy loss of fifty thousand pounds. And the strike has been going on for over five months. One of the directors William Scantlebury says that he never liked a fight, still Anthony adamantly says there is no question of surrender or compromise.

No doubt the play is great and the equality and objectivity of the playwright is seen throughout the play. The feud between the two factions Capital and Labour is expressively put forth by Galsworthy. It is still difficult to say on which side Galsworthy stands and his sympathy is. What Enid says is very true as the workers are not underpaid, but what is needed is they should stop drinking and betting. Here Galsworthy is absolutely fair in his dramatic art.
The topicality of the problem attains great success for the playwright. However, the impartiality of Galsworthy is just not in the structure of the play but it is more evident he goes further than topicality of the issue. The social struggle is resolved in the sense that it is lifted to the universal level from the topicality. The two dominant leaders Anthony and Roberts symbolize certain classes and their towering personalities are still made remarkable in the concluding act. The conflict between the Capital and Labour assumes the universal human significance.

The last act distinctly stimulates the sense of fear and awe which cannot be divided from the tragic temper. The dramatic flow rests in the achievement of the play. For instance, the play raises a problem of enormous social significance of Capital and Labour which calls for an objective remedy. Instead of giving us solution Galsworthy puts before us much greater problem to think very seriously and carefully. The underlined spirit of all social tragedies is that their implication of improvement of social conditions. The social tragedies always portray some social problems and as such passionate enlightening force notifies them.

The techniques employed in the play are perfect as the dramatic dexterity is scrupulously handled. The consistency of texture is achieved by closely connected events and characters with the help of effective images. The first line of the play characteristically suggests something that possesses the practical outcome of a condensed imagery.

Another incident is very effective when the strikers are silently considering settlement at the height of endurance and miserable state. At the height of Roberts speech at this time hangs in balance when one of the women named Madge brings news of Mrs. Roberts’s death. This scene has the firmness and propinquity of imagery. Here Galsworthy has created highly ironical situation.
The impression of irony rests in the idea and the construction of the play, parallel to that we come across in *The Silver Box*. It is as much as controlling and calculating idea exemplified in successive progress in the occurrences. Galsworthy’s effective use of irony is apparent in the concluding lines of the play:

“Tench. [Staring at Harness-suddenly excited] D’you know, sir-these terms, they’re the very same we drew up together, you and I, and put to both sides before the fight began? All this-all this-and—and what for?

Harness. [In a slow grim voice] That’s where the fun comes in!”

(Stride Act III, P.88)

In this play there is one particular technical aspect that needs to be considered. Galsworthy gives us two speeches in Act II Scene II of the play. Both Roberts and Gorge Rous, a member of the workman’s committee deliver speeches for the striking workers, especially when the men are tired of prolonged strife. Rous is not a versatile orator as he declares it. Roberts is a fiery and forceful orator. In the concluding act Anthony also makes a strong and long speech before the directors in his defence and tells how he devoted his life for the company and also took care of the men.

Regarding dialogue, the initial few pages of the play give evidence of Galsworthy’s dramatic dexterity. He supplies all the necessary information required to understand the play. He also allows the readers to fathom the minds of characters. The momentum of the dialogues is greater than *The Silver Box* and typical pronunciations of old Thomas is something specific to this play.

Galsworthy’s friend Joseph Conrad made the following observation of the play after he saw the performance:
“If your personality is to loom large in the mental and emotional history of time—-as I believe it must—the notion of a play dealing with the dramatically intimate side of the country’s domestic life suggests itself to complete a trilogy of which, the first two expressions are The Silver Box and Strife. Thus the three great divisions of the social aspect of our days would be indicated. That party parliamentarism contains in its qualities and imperfections a drama of conscience capable of being expressed by poignant and interesting action, I have no doubt. The intellectual honesty, the great and simple method are yours. Then why not try?”

(LLJG 1935, p. 243)

Galsworthy’s social realism is brought forth in this play. A large number of social problems arise in society due to interaction among people and they find expression in literary works. Being a humanitarian at heart the human problems are of deep concern for Galsworthy and his sympathy is always with the losers, outcaste and downtrodden in the society. Galsworthy does not like ill-treatment given by one person to another on the basis of class and economic status. Injustice caused in industrial sector to the workers their low salaries and working conditions are attacked by Galsworthy in his writings. He forcefully exposes the worst conditions of the working class and how they are totally dependent on their employers. The capitalists do not see the starvation and privation of the workers due to adamant nature of the company leader like Anthony. Many a times the union leaders are too egoistic to make timely settlement and stop the wreck of the men at factory. The financial loss and loss of human resources is also seriously dealt with by the playwright. The company directors are merely concerned with their dividend and the profit of the company. Edgar rightly expresses his opinion about the shareholders and his sympathies are always with the workers.
“Edgar. I don’t see how we can get over it that to go on like this means starvation to the men’s wives and families......It won’t kill the shareholder to miss a dividend or two; I don’t see that that’s reason enough for knuckling under”.

(Strife Act I, p. 10)

Galsworthy is successful in bringing out artistic pity by depicting a bad situation of the starving workers. The selfish directors are villains in the entire case and they are least concerned with the sorrows and miseries of the workers. They are aware that it is the workers who will suffer out of such a strike and it will not cause any heavy loss to them but directly it causes injustice to working men. The workers are also tired of the long continued strike, their morale is collapsing. They are now appealing their leaders Roberts and Thomas to make some compromise. But the principle of their life and interests of both leaders are the same which do not allow them to end the strike. Wilder rightly points out the same in his expression, Roberts also reiterates that the demands of workers are just.

“Wilder. Come, Harness, you’re a clever man, you didn’t believe all the Socialistic claptrap that’s talked nowadays. There’s no real difference between their interests and ours.”

(ibid. p.13)

“Roberts. I have this to say--and first as to their condition. .....Ye can’t squeeze them any more. Every man of us is well-nigh starving....Every man of us is going short. We can’t be no worse off than we’ve been these weeks past....We’ll die first, the whole lot of us...... All those demands are fair. We have not asked anything that we are not entitled to ask. What I said up in London. I say again now... Ye best whether ye can afford
your tyranny….. If ye think the men will give way the least part of an inch, ye’re making the worst mistake ye ever made.”

(ibid, p. 19, 20)

George Rous and Henry Thomas the members of workmen’s committee express their harsh views on the way the strike is being handled, especially when the men are suffering from cold and hunger. They are in mood to oppose and part from the on-going strike and almost opposing their union leader Roberts. They blame that it is because of Roberts’s adamant nature this situation has occurred. The following expressions reveal their stand on the strike. Henry Rous expresses his views on the death of Mrs. Roberts and what is Roberts’s condition now after this. Moreover he says that Roberts is blind not to see the situation, and how long she would suffer?

“Rous. It’s not us that’s blind, it’s Roberts. How long will ye put up with ’im!

Henry Rous. He’s finished!”

(Stride Act II, Scene II p. 61)

“Thomas. Shame on your strife!”

(ibid, p. 62)

Enid’s sympathetic nature to help the workers and Mrs. Roberts is revealed by Galsworthy. Wanklin tells Edgar that nobody opposes compromise except his father. Anthony does not change his attitude towards striking men even after the death of Mrs. Roberts. Edgar says that the directors are responsible for this. Anthony is still not moved and from his earlier stands. He says:

“Edgar. I say that we are responsible.

Anthony.. War is war.

Edgar Not on women!
Wanklin. It not infrequently happens that women are the greatest suffers.

Edgar. If we knew that, all the more responsibility rests on us.

Anthony. This is no matter for amateurs.

Edgar. Call me what you like; sir. It’s sickened me. We had no right to carry things to such a length.

Scantlebury. But I protest against this.....

Edgar. Protest you like, Mr. Scantlebury, it won’t alter facts.”

(Strife Act III, p. 75)

“Wanklin. None of us are opposed to a settlement, except your father.”

(ibid. p. 77)

In the concluding Act III Enid charges the men and their leader for fostering caste feeling. She has changed her opinion after her heated dialogue with Roberts at his cottage in the presence of her one time friend Annie, Roberts’s wife. She clarifies that it is unfortunate that Mrs. Roberts supports her even in this critical circumstances. Enid’s attitude towards Roberts is changed now and she has no sympathy for him. However, Edgar’s sympathy is still with the men, but Enid wants him to support the father in the strike. She expresses fear that if the things went against father he will be completely broken and for this reason she wants her brother Edgar to back father. But Edgar calls it a game as one moment she wants father to give some concession and the other moment she seeks Edgar’s support to father against the men. Madge blames Anthony and Enid to have killed Mrs. Roberts. But Enid gets angry with Madge and refuses the charges. Madge is ironical as the news of Mrs. Roberts’s death would make Enid feel better. The company director Wanklin is straightforward in telling Edgar that none other than his father who opposes a compromise. Enid expresses”
“Enid. I don’t feel half so sympathetic with them as I did before I went. They just set up a caste feeling against you. Poor Annie was looking dreadfully bad-----fire going out, and nothing fit her to eat. But she would stand up for Roberts. When you see all this wretchedness going on and feel you can do nothing, you do nothing, you have to shut your eyes to the whole thing”.

(Strife Act III, pp. 63, 64)

“Edgar. My sympathies in this strike are all on the side of the men.

Enid. He’s been chairman for more than thirty years! He made the whole thing! And think of he bad times they’ve had, it’s always been he who pulled them through.....”.

(ibid, pp. 64, 65)

“Anthony. You think with your gloved hands you can cure the trouble of the century.

Enid. Oh! Father, don’t give them a chance. You’re not well------- But they’ll outvote you”.

(ibid, p. 66)

The workers level serious charges against Anthony that he is solely responsible for the death of Mrs. Roberts for unnecessarily making the strike an issue, which went out of control of the leaders leading to starvation and death of one innocent woman. The following remark is enough to prove it:

“Madge [Balefully] You’ve killed her, for all your soft words, you and your father.

Enid. [With raged and emotion]. That’s wicked! My father is suffering himself through this wretched strike.

Madge. Then tell him Mrs. Roberts is dead! That’ll make him better”.

(ibid, p. 71)
Despite the fact Enid’s sympathy for the sufferings of the workers is fervently revealed by Galsworthy. Edgar’s sense of social justice is beautifully portrayed by the playwright. The callous and selfish temperament of the directors on one side and patient suffering of the workers on the other enhances the dramatic effect in the play. This contrast is remarkable as it brings out poignancy of the whole conflict, the seriousness of the problem and the injustice inflicted on the mute workers.

The play is appealing on different levels. It is a play about the struggle between Capital and Labour, caste feeling and extreme class consciousness, conflict of egoism, the generation gap between Anthony and his children Edgar and Enid, lack of co-ordination between leaders and their followers, the conflict of uncompromising temperaments, inability to cope with time and pace, lack of understanding and consideration for others, inability of the leaders to understand the situation and hardships of their supporters and taking the followers for granted. These factors are skillfully handled by the playwright with appropriate cohesion of characters and their actions. Both Anthony and Roberts fight for themselves for the classes they represent. No doubt Galsworthy is realistic and handles the issue in the play impartially by giving enough liberty of language, dialogue, speech and action to his characters viz Anthony and Roberts. But the fact remains that we the readers feel that the playwright’s sympathy is with Roberts.

Galsworthy holds his pair of scales objectively and the readers and audiences experience frantic emptiness of disastrous arrogance and chauvinism on both sides. Galsworthy annihilates the illusion of neutrality in an event at the climax of the play. He makes it clear that the death of Mrs. Roberts does not stand for a petition to human impulse of harmony and justice but is a plea to our compassionate attitude which basically has no bearing upon the real conflict of the play.
Like other plays of Galsworthy in this play there are no hero and villain. No towering figures but ordinary human beings act as characters. Both Anthony and Roberts are giant personalities but defeated by ego.

Both Anthony and Roberts do not control and govern incidents in the play. They possess very strong will power and determined to fight to finish but they are not projected as distinctive valiant expressions. Anthony’s strength lies in capitalist faith while Roberts relies on the trust of his revolutionaries. Anthony and Roberts as we meet on the stage is the creation of their respective capitalist and labour backgrounds. For Anthony his strong ground is his company and for Roberts the army of his workers is his real power which they do not want to lose. Hence they announce to fight the game to finish.

In Galsworthy’s social tragedies social forces are real heroes. Though his characters in the play are individualized they obviously typical and present ordinary human weakness and lapses. All the characters reveal their character flaw in every action of the struggle. The self-centered nature of the characters is exposed by Galsworthy showing the facts that the directors and workers desert their respective leaders when their support is actually required. Finally both the leaders are left alone, broken. Nothing is remarkable achieved by both sides when the agreement is the same as before the commencement of the strike. The only difference is that the agreement is reached in the absence of two leaders. Thus all sacrifices are futile and the strike itself is in vain. Why Galsworthy shows this situation is a wonder, perhaps he wants us to learn that very little or nothing can be achieved from our conflicts and struggles. He ironically states that what we gain is nothing but we try to satisfy our deeply rooted instinct to fight. The only difference is that the agreement is reached in the absence of the two leaders.
Thus, in *Strife* Galsworthy returns to the issue of social injustice on larger scale. In the play he brings one class in front of another and it is the strike that brings them together; otherwise both would have preferred to be at safe distance from the other class. Initially the struggle appears to protect the interests of the supporters of both sides but later it is revealed that the two leaders fight for their individual ambition and out of their class hatred and stand out from the remainders. The fact remains that Anthony and Roberts fail to drive their followers in their favour but in the end they are themselves driven away from the rest. It is here the readers feel pity over the fate of their leaders which is their own making.

Generally this is the rule of destiny in the case of leaders who suffer from egoism and pride. Despite these facts, Anthony is no doubt a great personality, firm and true to his men and principles. He does not bow to any pressure from any quarters including his son Edgar and daughter Enid and some low-principled directors of the company. Anthony is not deterred by any threats of outvoting him. It is because of his strong and dominant nature, able administration that the company prospered and he could rule it for thirty consecutive years. Moreover, he faced four such strikes but was never beaten. He does not yield to any threats to make compromise at the cost of his philosophy of life. He prefers exit what may come but does not prove coward like his fugitive directors and workers who leave their leaders in lurch.

Galsworthy’s Anthony is really a very strong and powerful person, even if he has some definite flaws. By placing equally tough and dominant foe, Roberts, the playwright tries to show us a strong fight. Roberts has his own ideas of running the union. He is not emotional but is as strong like his enemy Anthony. His devotion to the union is unquestionable which is seen throughout the play. His savings have gone; he does not eat food in time because he works day and night for the sake of workers and the union.
The playwright gives us an example of the worst aspect of human nature, you may be powerful and display the finest of spirit and solidarity to your people and do not allow to be used by discarding your won principles you are good for nothing to them. Moreover, you are shown a litter bin. This is what transpires in the case of Anthony and Roberts as they are abandoned by their cowardly followers. There is not a single director and union leader to be replaced by giant personalities of so high stature like Anthony and Roberts. Galsworthy without question has created very strong leaders who stand for our admiration even when they step down from their positions. Our respect for them does not diminish with their defeat; on the contrary, we feel pity for the cowards in the form of directors and workers.

Galsworthy does not answer the question as to how the business of the company will be run after expelling two stalwarts like Anthony and Roberts from the scene. Moreover, after pushing out Roberts from the union the working men will have to reconcile with the pressure from the company directors and they will have to resort to compromising situation. By creating such situations Galsworthy leaves the problem unresolved making his readers and audiences find remedy in such predicament. This gives an evidence of his dramatic ability of presenting characters and their actions in harmony with the situation. By creating wonderful and remarkable characters like Anthony and Roberts and occasional support and opposition from the lesser characters from both sides establishes the unity and progression of action in the play.

Thus, Galsworthy proves his commitment to social realism with keen observation of human nature. The dramatic realism that holds mirror up to society is clear from the characters and their actions. The background, setting and different imageries and events display social realistic adherence of Galsworthy. By introducing his realistic technique to develop the present play he does not relate stories or narrates account of the strike but he prefers to take
us to actual place where the workers are on the strike. Galsworthy also makes us attend the meeting of directors and wants to personally experience the running of the business of the meeting.

Thus, he wants us to play the role of chairman and directors of the company and also participate in the strike like working men and lead the union like Roberts. Galsworthy also takes us to his cottage so that we can see the actual condition of his miserable wife and her privation. He also makes us play the part of Enid and talk to Mrs. Roberts to understand her views on the strike and fathom the possibility of reaching a settlement. To be nearer to the truth Galsworthy himself visits Roberts’s cottage under the guise of Enid.

Galsworthy shows the leaders the ground reality by creating such an embarrassing situation from where they can neither go forward nor backward but to step down from their positions. The characters at the lower level suggest compromise, present sympathy, make efforts for settlement but the forces are too powerful to realize their proposal. However, Galsworthy brings upon compromise which might have been made before the beginning of the struggle and human and financial loss might have been averted. None of the hostile leaders wins the game and Galsworthy’s pair of scales remains firm.

Galsworthy does not spare the workers as well as he emphatically portrays their fickle minded nature which makes them change their positions with every new leader they meet. At one moment they appreciate the theory of God and religion put forth by an old Thomas, the next moment they are carried away by representative who appeals for the interest of the union which always takes care of the men and look forward for settlement. The workers are again moved by the spirit, determination and powerful speech of their leader Roberts. Galsworthy reveals that the tragedy of the working class is because they lack
courage and willpower and easily carried away just like sheep are showed the way to slaughter house.

It is rally a powerful and great play depicting not just hostilities between capital and labour but internal human impulse for fighting like greed and envy deep rooted in human instinct. Galsworthy observes that since it our own instinct we need to control it for better and harmonious living and dealing with the social issues. A strict observance of ethical and moral values will no doubt find amiable solutions to all our miseries and social problems. Since these problems are our own problems we should be accountable to them to make this society and world as a safe and peaceful place for human beings. Galsworthy maintains that we need to stop and check our criminal foolhardiness and condemn it as contrary to the existence of human society.

3.3.1 The Major Characters

Just like in his other plays Galsworthy does not give us any towering personalities in this play. The characters we come across in Strife are like any other men and women in daily life. We, as an ordinary human being see the company chairman, directors and workers in our everyday life. There are no heroes and villains in the play and they do not develop with the progress of the play. They remain static throughout the play.

John Anthony

John Anthony is a seventy-six year old chairman of Trenartha Tin Plate Works on the boarder of England and Wales. He is big, high-coloured, with thick white-hair, and thick dark eyebrows. His big eyes are very much alive. Edgar is his son and Enid, a daughter. Both of them are well placed. Edgar is one of the directors of the company and Enid is married to Francis Underwood, C. E., Manager of the company. Anthony is very rigid and dominating and adamant in nature. He has been the chairman of the company for over thirty years since it
was established and was never defeated even in the critical period of four strikes. Even at this time he does not show any sign of panic and faces the conflict very boldly and courageously.

Given to high principles of life, of course of his own, he does not show any sign of compromise to end the deadlock of the conflict. His philosophy of life is such that it does not allow him to make any concession to settle the strike when the wives and children are suffering from starvation and cold. He symbolizes opposite pole compared to Anthony--the poles opposed to each other. He stands for quintessence of old-fashioned ideas of iron techniques of treating the situations of extreme predicament arising out of strike. It is for this reason that he is blamed to promote caste feeling and class consciousness. Galsworthy makes him old-fashioned with his old ideas that he is not prepared to change with the changing time. Thus, Galsworthy focuses on the generation gap between Anthony and his young Edgar and Enid. He finds it difficult to adjust with his children. Many a times he considers the views of his kids impractical, though they are not so.

Anthony epitomizes the Capital forces of the twentieth century meant for ruling the men. His upper most position in the company affairs makes him blind as he does not see anything other than the interests of the directors. His pride, monopoly and snobbery are so excessive that a sense of dictating terms on others has immensely developed in his personality. He feels that the workers should be treated with iron rod as masters are masters, men are men. Galsworthy brings out the fact that this is the same egotism which pulls him to ground. It is clear that Galsworthy himself does not understand that his characters should be so worse not to consider the other human beings with humanity. Galsworthy wants that one individual should treat other individual on humanitarian ground irrespective of who is higher or lower on social and financial ladder.
Throughout the play right from the beginning to the concluding act Galsworthy shows Anthony as an extremely domineering character which his fellow-directors do not appreciate. Barring this strike he had been successful in handling, rather suppressing four strikes and pacifying discontent and unrest possibly by iron-hand. He believes more in suppressing devices in dealing with the strike rather than having a dialogue with the union. But this time the same old diplomacy of exaggeration of pressure diplomacy does not work, though he strongly believes in it.

We may not believe in his old ideas and discard them as impractical ones but still there is admirable courage and reliability in Anthony. He is very strong foe, who does not accept defeat so easily. He is so firm to his ideas and principles that he prefers to resign as a chairman of the company than to yield to any pressure to come to compromise. It is this impractical and unreasonable excess that sees his downfall.

He strongly points out that workers are paid fair wages and they are treated fairly. In his forceful speech at the meeting of the board of directors he explains that he does not accept the idea that masters and men are equal. He further states that there can be only one master in a house and he calls himself better man to rule, of course, the others are subordinate and lesser on social and financial scale. He does not believe in the middle class feeling and socialism and calls it putrid. Therefore, he is against making any concession to settle the strike, moreover, he thinks that if one demand is granted many more flow in. He reveals his patriotism saying that he is charged of being a domineering tyrant, thinking of his own pride but he clarifies that he always thinks of the future of the country.

Anthony’s hatred for Roberts is evident throughout the play. When the news of the death of Mrs. Roberts reaches him he does even take her name in his speech,
he refers Mrs. Roberts simply as a woman. He gets upset when he is being blamed to have Mrs. Roberts’s blood is on his hands and he is responsible for starvation and miserable state of women and children. He also disowns that he divides the workers from their wives and children. His opinion is that fair battle is fair, and the hostile factions should learn it before they start the struggle. He further gets distressed when his son Edgar accuses him for having inflicted injustice on the miserable workers.

**David Roberts**

David Roberts is a union leader at Trenartha Tin Plate Works where the strike has continued for five months and there is no sign of settlement. He is another important character like Anthony around whom the story of the play revolves. He is a lean, of middle height, with a slight stoop. He has a little rat-gnawn, brown-grey beard, moustache, high cheekbones, hollow cheeks and small fiery eyes. Mrs. Roberts always supports Roberts in his stand and defends his case. Roberts is a very strong and equally uncompromising leader like his antagonist Anthony. He possesses high quality of eloquence and is a fitting foe to the company chairman Anthony. His devotion to the working class and their interest is unquestionable. Due to his forceful oratory and his commitment to the men he is able to maintain solidarity of the workers. He is a revolutionary of highest scale and his cause of liberty and freedom for the working class in indisputable. Roberts is the only one who completely realizes the situation and the state under which the workers perform their duties. He is moved by the miserable condition, privation of women and children of the workers.

Roberts is so dedicated to the cause of the workers that he has offered his talents, heart, and blood and even sacrificed his wife for the cause of workers. It is with his fiery oratory that he maintains unity of his fickle-minded flocks, the workers who are easily carried away in any directions with different speakers.
He possesses all mental and moral qualities of his antagonist, linked with the spirit of rebellion and motivation of modern ideas. He is unswerving combatant and expects nothing for the workers short of total victory. However, capricious workers do not recognize the worth of Roberts has revolutionized the world to save them, from the clutches of “white-faced monsters with bloody lips”, as he describes the capitalists.

Roberts does not want that justice be given to workers from London. He is disturbed and angry that Anthony humiliated him calling him foolish, uneducated man who did not know the demands of workers. He says that Anthony symbolizes tyranny and that if the directors think that the workers will accept to anything the director’s offer then it is the worst mistake they are making. He has the courage to openly say to Anthony that he should be prepared for the worst as the workers are not as ignorant as he thinks. Roberts reminds Anthony that he has fought four times, but this is his last battle and it will be mistake of the company leader to think that the men will come on heels and make a compromise.

During his dialogue with Enid, daughter of Anthony he does not spare her at all when she makes an appeal to settle the conflict for the sake of ailing Mrs. Roberts. These words annoy him and he suspects that she wants compromise for the sake Anthony. On the contrary, he tells her that Anthony stands for tyranny. He also questions her if Anthony is brave to fight against starving women and children? Anthony is a rich man to fight against the miserable workers who have not a penny with them. He further questions that if her father thinks it brave to set children crying with hunger and women shivering in cold winter for want of coal? Roberts has the courage to finally advise Enid that why compromise be not made for the sake of her father, Anthony and husband, Francis Underwood.
Roberts’s sincerity the strike to the union is so high that he does take food in time and this is evident from his words when Mrs. Roberts asks him to have food. He says he cannot eat anything till those old sharks-company representatives- are out of town. Moreover, he is worried about the workers who starve and face adversities because of the strike. Mrs. Roberts tells Enid that for the sake of union and strike all his savings have gone and he always looks forward for the strike. Roberts tells his wife that he has not right to a single farthing when the workers are facing hardship. For Roberts the union, workers and strike is life and death. Galsworthy brings out that Roberts is always with the workers even his wife is suffering from the heart problem and does not have enough nourishment. Roberts is of the opinion that worker’s life is full of hazards from cradle to grave. Even though Mrs. Roberts wants children Roberts does not them for lack of security in society and want of openings to common people in the world.

Galsworthy makes Roberts to deliver extremely moving and eloquent speech while addressing the workers. Roberts’s patriotic feelings like his adversary Anthony are witnessed in his long and forceful speech. Roberts does not forget to tell the workers that he is equally worried about the suffering and privation that they are undergoing. Thus, he expresses confidence that with strong support from the workers that it will enable him to achieve what the union wants.

Galsworthy also sees the defeat of Roberts like Anthony, may be because of his not yielding, especially when the wives and children are suffering because of the delayed strike. He is also abandoned by his irresolute supporters. Roberts laughs like a true villain as if he has gone mad:

‘Roberts: Then you’re no longer Chairman of this Company! [Breaking into half-mad laughter] Ah! ha- ha, ha! They’ve thrown ye over –thrown
It is with the downfall of Roberts Galsworthy wants us to see another defeat of a giant personality. His fall lies in himself for the reason that he should have not prolonged the strike to an extent that the starving workers think to desert him. It is because of unyielding nature of Roberts that the workers leave him and agree to make a compromise without him, though it is the same as before the strike began. In fact, Galsworthy makes the reader sad over the collapse of such a great leader. Our sympathy does lie with him as he always thinks in terms of workers and their interest and tries to achieve what may come. It is not in his blood to accept defeat or surrender, but fight the battle like a valiant warrior, and defend the case of the workers like a versatile solicitor. Whatever it may be he offers yeoman service for the betterment of the workers without considering in the least of his wife, her health and his falling financial condition.

Mrs. Annie Roberts

Mrs. Roberts is a strong and supportive wife of the union leader David Roberts. She is thin and dark-haired woman about thirty-five years old with patient eyes. When the action takes place in her cottage she is unkempt, and hair tied back with a ribbon. This shows that she is worried and sick. She is strong and confident lady with clear convictions. Mrs. Roberts’s premature death is very touching and moves us. She is not the victim of the strike but the victim of our social structure and injustice inflicted on the miserable people in the society so also class and caste hatred.

She is well aware of the fact that she is the wife of a great and dominant leader. She possesses good manners and etiquettes and does not cross her limits of being a woman. She always supports Roberts and defends his stand about the
strike. He is open-minded and does not hide anything. She is very rational and reasonable in her thinking and outlook. She passively follows Roberts in his all decisions and endeavours. For example, when she always wanted children like Enid but Roberts declines to have any on the pretext that in this wretched world poor have no opportunities. In fact this is the severe injustice caused to a woman in a male dominated society. The fact remains that what right Roberts has got to deny his wife from becoming mother? Isn’t it true that a woman’s life is imperfect without her being mother?

Roberts’s refusal to have no children might have been out of his wide experience as a union leader and his close observation of this miserable world where the poor workers have no opportunities. Galsworthy presents Annie as one the most considerate characters with highly remarkable qualities. Galsworthy places her side by Enid, daughter of the chairman of the company, John Roberts.

Mrs. Roberts is loyal to her husband and supports him through all situations. She is a good friend of Enid, as she was her maid in the past. When Enid sends delicacies, jam and comforts to Mrs. Roberts when is suffering from heart problem and needs proper nourishment she simply rejects them. How can she accept the things coming from the house of her husband’s foe? We have tremendous respect for Mrs. Roberts for loving her husband and remaining true to her own class above all things. Mrs. Roberts is also proud of her husband that he a teetotaler. It is the same caste feeling that becomes an obstacle to understand each other when Enid meets her. Mrs. Roberts meekly suffers the hardship but does not bear any grudge for Roberts.

Mrs. Roberts is really worried about her health and it is made apparent by her expression in the presence of Enid who is also worried and wants to take Mrs. Roberts to her doctor. Her acceptance to see another doctor clarifies that she is
in need of dire medical assistance, which she might not be getting, perhaps for want of money.

“Enid: But you ought to have everything you want, and have nothing!

Mrs. Roberts. [Appealingly] They tell me I don’t look like a dying woman?

Enid. Of course you don’t: if you have proper---- Will you see my doctor if I send him to you? I’m sure he’d do you good.

Mrs. Roberts. [With faint questioning] Yes M’m.”

(Strife Act II, Scene I, pp. 35, 36)

At her house she does not want that Enid see Roberts lest it may annoy him.

**Enid**

Enid is a young daughter of the chairman of Trenartha Tin Plate Workers, John Anthony. She is married to Francis Underwood, C. E. Manager of the company. Her position is better than Mrs. Roberts with children and all. Enid is very sympathetic, rational, and compassionate and defends her father during the strike, but appeals him to make settlement for the sake of suffering workers. She has independent personality and is not a lady to be carried away by the views and outlooks of others. She does not like the workers waste money on drinking and betting and their life will be comfortable if they do not indulge in such vices. She is bold, resolute and straightforward which is seen during her meeting with Roberts at his cottage.

She has definite views on the strike and resolutely supports her father in the conflict but wants that he make some compromise to end the sufferings and adversities of the workers. She repeatedly submits her petition to father to that effect. She is down to earth lady and accepts the truth that her father is an old
man and we all know how the old people behave she tells this to Mr. Roberts. From the beginning she is on the side of compromise to reduce the miserable and hard time of the striking men. She tells her father all are suffering due to the strike and its hard result on those associated with company. She tries to explain to her father that her one time maid and friend Annie is suffering with weak heart and does not get enough nutritious food. She cannot stand with sufferings of women and children. It is with this intention that Enid sends Annie jam and jelly but she does not accept them and sends them back to her.

During her meeting with Mrs. Roberts at her cottage, she appeals her that she should persuade her husband, Roberts to make some sort of compromise to end the strike and make life of workers and his own wife comfortable. Roberts is not in the state of listening anything and is doubtful if Enid has approached him, under the guise of helping her father, Anthony. She tells him that her father is fighting for his principles. Enid wants to know from Roberts why he is so bitter against her father. Roberts replies that Anthony exemplifies tyranny. Upon this Enid calls Roberts nonsense and the heated argument takes place between them. She calls him mad and coward and warns Roberts that she in not afraid of him. She says that Roberts hates Anthony and is afraid of defeat and wants that he must have pity on his dying wife. After this Enid changes her attitude towards Roberts and workers and tells her brother Edgar that she does not feel half sympathetic to them. She calls them that they have very strong caste feeling. It is true that the caste feeling does not allow both Enid and Annie to understand feeling of each other and it proves a major barrier between the two to have a meaningful dialogue.

In the concluding act Enid wants that her father must be supported as he is suffering from life hazards and expresses fear that in case he is defeated he will be broken therefore wants her brother to take the things seriously. She says that her father’s life is precious and it is their duty to save him. She is afraid that the
disgruntled elements amongst the directors might outvote Anthony. It is for this reason that she wants her father to come to some concluding compromise. She has her own principles of life. She supports her father not as a chairman of the company and fighting against the workers but as a human being.

**Edgar**

Edgar is an earnest-looking young man of thirty years old and is one of the directors of Trenartha Tin Plate Works. He is a son of the company chairman, Anthony but is completely different in disposition and temperament than his father. He belongs to one of the best young generation characters of Galsworthy. He is not like Jack, a wayward son of John Barthwick, a Member of Parliament in *The Silver Box*. He is considerate like Walter How, the son of James How in *Justice*. He is humanitarian, considerate and possesses good characters. Due to his altogether different personality and sympathetic way of looking at things, there is a generation gap between father and son. His father is aggressive sort of tyrannical and adamant. Edgar does not like the old-fashioned ideas of his father. During the strike he is totally with the workers and wants that his father does not to stretch the strike too far.

Both Edgar and his sister Enid try to pressure their father to end the strike as they cannot bear the privation and miserable condition of the workers and their families. Edgar explains the worst and hard life of workers to the company director Oliver Wanklin that it is unnecessary and cruel to push things too far in the face of severe sufferings of the workers. And he hates this kind of affair and observes that things have gone far enough. He is worried how the matter would be settled to protect wives and children. Edgar detests that too much importance is ascribed to shareholders. He explains that if one or two dividends are missed it will not take life of the shareholders. Taking the side of the workers he argues
that much can be said in favour of the striking men. Edgar calls it foolish on the part of Enid to pay a visit to Roberts’s cottage.

Like his sister he expresses fear if the father would be overthrown as a chairman of the company and tells Enid that he is equally fond of father. He articulates that the company is responsible for the death of Mrs. Roberts and the thing like that is disgusting. Moreover, the company has no right to take things to that length. He further points out that it is criminal to overlook the facts that the situation of the workers is worst. He says if the directors had shown enough sympathetic imagination towards life of a starving woman had been saved. The truth is that many more must be starving. It is injustice caused to people Edgar tells his father.

Thus, Galsworthy presents the young character of Edgar as most matured and sympathetic considered to other men on the board of directors. The conflict is certainly because of generation gap. The father and son do not agree on the point of compromise due too much attachment of old Anthony to caste feeling.

3.4 Conclusion

The general purpose of the present chapter is to present the moral vision of Galsworthy as reflected in his two plays viz *The Silver Box* and *Strife*. Galsworthy states that social injustice is indiscriminately meted out to the weak and destitute in society. The chapter critically evaluates *The Silver Box* against the backdrop of the English society. Then efforts are taken to discuss at length *Strife*, dealing with the caste feeling and class odium. The ugly fight between labour and capital is discussed in the play with its social and financial devastating consequences.