Preface

Right from the times of O’Neill, Pinter, Albee, Beckett and other playwrights of the West, dramatists have been lamenting the loss of human values, morals and other principles of life in their plays. In the wake of the growing unrest due to increasing materialism and urbanisation, American playwrights like David Mamet from Chicago and Sam Shepard from California are all the more perturbed about such crises that have proved detrimental to a life based on the glory and individuality attributed by the American Dream. America, the most powerful country in the world is facing setbacks in the face of violence and aggression disseminated for the nation’s own vested interests. But at home the basic institution of human life--the family--and social relationships seem to be battered by violent storms of negativity and degenerated values. This has prompted these playwrights to render fierce and scathing criticisms through their medium of writing plays.

Both playwrights are concerned basically with similar issues. While David Mamet is preoccupied with the lives of business associates and people who disown a family, Sam Shepard subtly renders fantastically realistic portraits of the members within and without the bounds of the family circle. But they have opted for distinctively different yet striking methods of presentation to critique and tackle the current problems confronted by the individual.

The study projects and compares the methods and preoccupations of the two playwrights on the evils of a materially prone life that affects the nation’s character at large. Deception, intrigue, cutthroat competitions, greed for power, money and status, violence, aggression on women, estrangement from kith and kin, all beguile the lives of these half maniac characters. They become symbols of the preys of modern democracy, gone astray. Their very speech and style of voicing profound emotions become symptomatic of the wider decay that has eaten into the core of American Dream.

MINI PARTHASARATHY