CHAPTER IV
MORAL VISION IN JUSTICE AND THE SKIN GAME

4.1 Preliminaries

Galsworthy, a prolific writer of the twentieth century composed plays in a realistic manner. He uses drama as a medium of expression of social cruelties and follies and evils prevailing in the English society of his times. In almost all his plays he lashes out at social malady and other problems concerning social values and morality. Justice (1909) severely condemns evils in the management of prisons. Galsworthy’s legal studies helped him understand prison cells as dehumanizing organization, especially procedure of solitary confinement. Here he stresses on the human cost of social injustice.

As a result of this play British government of his time brought about certain reformation in prison legislations. The play deals with the theme of crime and inconsistent punishment. Galsworthy observes that a major defect in the prison system is that the inmates are ill-treated and consequently suffer from mental and physical problems. This is largely due to solitary confinement. Thus, the play assumes greater significance with respect to the subject of crime and punishment prevailing in England in Galsworthy’s time. Justice was greatly successful on the stage and brought some major changes in prison system.

The play reveals that there is no justice in our legal system and those who really hope to be having it are denied by the cruel system, which works like a mere machine. It is blind and smashes the innocent and helpless in the society. Moreover, it shows no consideration for basically feeble individual. This idea is brought forth by Galsworthy through the punishment and death of an innocent
twenty-three year old Falder. His temporary insanity forces him to commit an offence like forgery. In fact he needs money not for himself but for the safety of his beloved Ruth. Moreover, he has no intention to cheat his employer, as he is prepared to pay back the amount forged. He is not a habitual criminal to commit crime. What Galsworthy wants to show here is that if the society and we as members of it look at Falder from imaginative sympathy the problems can to be resolved without any trouble. Unfortunately justice does not prevail in society and its legal institution. Galsworthy feels that this needs to be improved for our peaceful and harmonious existence. Galsworthy had assiduously and fervently prepared to engrave and introduce awful scenes in Justice. He had interviewed inmates by personally visiting different prisons in England such as Dart moor, Pentonville, Chelmsford, and Lewes Gaols. (Hatcher 1941:73)

Most of Galsworthy’s plays some or the other way deal with caste feeling. The Skin Game (1919) deals with a sordid struggle between the English nobility and the nouveau riche manufacturer. The play reveals hostilities and animosities that persist and gradually reach to a height of sordid conflict between Hillcrist and Hornblower families in the English countryside. The caste feeling fostered by these two families is stretched to such an extent that it ends in the suicide attempt of a young woman, Chloe. Galsworthy focuses on extreme enmity between the wasted nobility and the growing bourgeois and consequent pathetic end of the play. The self-conscious squire Hillcrist signifies waning upper class whereas Hornblower does not want to see the old-fashioned patrician clan get them into such a chaos again.

The approach of Hillcrist and his wife Amy are Victorian in nature. Possibly Galsworthy calculatingly makes them so to suit Victorian and Edwardian social standards and aristocratic airs of the period. Moreover, Hornblower’s rise from the working class to a rich businessman reveals social changes and how the lower class is getting powerful to challenge aristocratic life style and their social
status. By presenting Jill, a young and beautiful daughter of Hillcrist, the playwright tries to give a message of social change from Victorian aristocratic set up to modern with freedom and liberty. The twentieth century is regarded as the age of modern flapper and the ultimate rejection of Victorian and Edwardian formalities and impractical values and conventions. This is also the age of considerable emergence of the middle class which is characterized by Hillcrist’s property agent Dawker and comic auctioneer in the auction scene in the play.

*The Skin Game* and an epic novel *The Forsyte Saga* was completed at the same time. Both deal with the same subject matter of social transformation and disintegration of conservative class structure of the English society at the time of Galsworthy. With Galsworthy’s attempt to make his prominent characters in this play as intentional caricatures we can come to a definite conclusion that he presents them impartially without taking any side in the conflict. The younger generation in the play namely Jill and Rolf are the most balanced characters who do not take part in the irrational and sordid conflict of their biased parents.

The bone of contention is a piece of land to which both the parties in question claim for their personal gain leading to take revenge against each other. Finally, the matter comes to individual level and damaging social image and reputation of each other. In the play neither of the party really wins. The Hillcrist's by their utmost vulgarity and the Hornblowers lose in suicidal attempt of young Chloe. Here Galsworthy presents characters opposed to the interests of each other leading to sordid conflict in which both sides are losers. Thus the play is the finest example of tragi-comedy as described by the playwright. Galsworthy examines that if sympathetic understanding and compassion is displayed towards the weak we can solve the problems otherwise likely take a deadly turn.

In his earlier plays as well he stresses social problems and suffering of the individual. For example, Mrs. Jones in *The Silver Box*, Annie Roberts in *Strife,*
and Ruth Honeywill in *Justice* play vital role. All these characters react to changing social circumstances and finally fall prey to social injustice inflicted on them for no fault of theirs.

### 4.2 Moral Vision in *Justice*

With regards to *Justice*, (1910) Galsworthy had showed interest to write about prison problems for pretty long time. In September 1907 he visited Durham prison and wrote in detail the sufferings of the prisoners in two phases: *The House of Silence* and *Order* (collected in *A Commentary*, (As quoted in Choudhuri 1961: 68)

He wrote a letter to Home Secretary, the Right Hon. Herbert John Gladstone at the beginning of 1909. He quoted from Sir Edmund Du Cane’s book *The Punishment and Prevention of Crime*) displaying the worst effect of solitary confinement on prisoners. (As quoted in Choudhuri, 1961: 69)

This supplies details of miserable condition of a young woman prisoner who is kept in solitary confinement for long time.

“It is like nothing else in the world---it is impossible to describe it; no words can paint its miseries, nothing that I can say would give any idea of the horrors of solitary confinement-----it maddens one even to think of it. No one who has not been through it can conceive the awful anguish one endures when shut up in a living tomb, thrown back on yourself.....The overpowering sensations is one of suffocation. You feel you must and can smash the walls, burst open the door, kill yourself!”

(AS 1917, p. 99)

In the same letter Galsworthy presents facts given by Colonel Baker of Salvation Army, before the Departmental Committee of 1895.
“As to convicts on discharge, I should like to say that we find a great number of them incapable of pursuing any ordinary occupation. They are mentally weak and wasted, requiring careful treatment for months after they have been received by us. In several cases they are men who are only fit to be sent off home or a hospital”. 

(AS 1917, p. 100)

The play received remarkable admiration from all quarters when it was first produced at the Duke of York’s Theatre in February 1910. After the performance of the play, the audience stayed in the theatre and shouted for the playwright to come before them. They refused to leave the theatre without seeing Galsworthy. The theatre administration did everything to vacate the place even by switching off the lights, but the audience clamoured that they would wait even till midnight for Galsworthy to come on the stage. It was Granville-Barker had to convince them to go away. (As quoted in MOP 1963:151)

Such was an astonishing success that Justice achieved. John Masefield described it as a powerful piece of facts. Moreover, it would influence the national approach towards crime, Masefield said. (As quoted in MOP 1963:150)

The play created an atmosphere of change in the prison administration when the then Home Secretary, Winston Churchill introduced reforms in prison system, especially solitary confinement. Galsworthy appreciated the efforts taken by Churchill and Sir Evelyn Ruggles-Brise, the chief of the Prison Commission. Winston Churchill affectionately replied to one of the letters of Galsworthy:

“The whole process of punishment is an ugly business at the best. The prisoners are unhappy, and are meant to be much less happy than other outside in this not too happy world. The conditions in jail must necessarily be squalid, the cost of maintenance narrowly scrutinized, since it is raised from the taxation drawn, in part, from the poorest of the
poor, and the process of meting out measure for measure according to human standards must be crude, imperfect, and full of harsh discordances.”

(As quoted MOP, p. 152)

The play’s overwhelming admiration placed Galsworthy in the list of foremost reformers in prison administration in England at his time.

The problem of crime and punishment has been discussed all over the world by different writers, and legal experts that the penal servitude has to a large extent proved to be derisory in the present situation. Though something has been done in the direction to improve the situation prevailing in the prisons, much of the work of correcting prison system needs to be immediately attended. Galsworthy’s Justice definitely brought about some positive change in the attitude towards our approach to crime, criminals, convicts and punishment.

The present chapter critically examines Justice keeping place in mind moral vision of Galsworthy. It focuses on the issue of social injustice and social deterioration and its causes. Galsworthy maintains that in most cases criminals are made out of wrong and disrespectful treatment meted out to the individual by rigid social order and its impractical conventions.

Justice is a powerful tragedy. The action of the play takes in the office of James How and Sons, Solicitors, on the morning of July 7. Falder is a twenty-three years old jumpy youth with pale features. He lacks will power and possesses chivalrous nature which later brings him into trouble. Falder is courteous and wants to help Ruth Honeywill who is harassed by her brutal husband. Ruth’s situation is very much like Mrs. Jones in The Silver Box, whose husband tries to cut her throat. Falder is well aware of the miserable life of Ruth Honeywill, therefore does everything to assist her. Accordingly, Ruth goes to Falder’s office where he is a junior clerk. Initially she is denied meeting with Falder but
after some hesitation the managing clerk Robert Cokeson allows them to have a dialogue.

Falder and Ruth love each other and plan to elope to South America with Ruth’s two children, but they are short of money to execute the plan. Ruth is under severe tension as her atrocious husband ill-treats and beats her. He also tries to kill her. As Falder does not have money to elope with Ruth, an idea occurs to him to forge a cheque in his office. He thinks that by just a little alteration the things would work. Therefore, making ninety out of nine by just adding a zero in the empty space in the cheque and also making a necessary alteration in the counterfoil by adding a suffix –ty to the word nine it would make it ninety. Thus the problem of money would be solved and he is free and ready to make arrangement. He also thinks to return the money afterwards. He completes alteration in just four minutes and “those mad four minutes” prove him fatal in the end which shatters his dream to elope with Ruth. He cleverly believes that the forgery would fall on the head of Davis who has just left for Australia and he would safely come out of the misdeed. However, his guilt is detected in the process of regular checking of the pass-book. The bank cashier Cowley identifies Falder to have encashed the cheque. Walter, son of James appeals his father to put himself in the place of Falder and help him come out of the trouble. But James is obstinate and takes things seriously, particularly when he discovers that there is a married woman related to the whole matter. Thus Falder is prosecuted for felony.

Falder admits that he committed crime to help Ruth Honeywill to escape from the brutal clutches of her cruel husband. James How plainly refuses to accept any appeal made by Falder and reports to Scotland Yard. Finally, Falder is arrested and taken away by the detective Wister.
The Act II opens with a scene in the Court of Justice where the counsel for
defence Hector Frome presents a case for Falder. He argues before the court that
Falder committed forgery in a spate of insanity. He should be treated as a
mental patient and not a criminal. Cokeson’s opinion is supported by the
statement of the defence lawyer as well. Cokeson says that Falder was rather
jumpy and was walking in the room like an animal caged in the Zoological
Garden. Ruth Honeywill also supports Cokeson’s argument. Ruth tells that
Falder is disturbed with the treatment given to her by her brutal husband and
whatever Falder has done to help her is not at all bad. During his cross-
examination Falder also explains to the court that he was perturbed the way
Ruth was tortured by her husband and due this pressure he did not understand
what he was doing when he forged the cheque and the counterfoil.

Frome puts forth before the court that he forged the cheque in an abnormal state
that amounted to his mental breakdown. Thus, he should not be hold responsible
of criminal act. The case may be treated as abnormal and not a regular crime.
Hence Falder should be protected from being crushed by the rolling machine of
law, Frome tells the court. But the Harold Cleaver, counsel for the Crown
opposes the argument of Falder’s counsel that he was not insane for just four
minutes time. Falder’s entanglement and pushing the blame of forgery rather
passing the bucket to Davis are also brought to the notice of the court. Hearing
both the sides Falder is held guilty of the crime and punished to three years
rigorous imprisonment. The observation of the judge about the crime and
sentence is:

“The Judge. .......The law is what it is---a majestic edifice, sheltering all
of us, each stone of which rests on another. I am concerned only with its
administration. The crime you have committed is very serious one. I
cannot feel it in accordance of my duty to society to exercise the powers I
have in your favour. You will go to penal servitude for three years.”

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In the Act III Galsworthy focuses on the plight of prisoners. The Governor is compassionate and sympathetic towards the miserable state of prisoners. Instead of taking stand against the prisoners for violating the law he kindly treats them. A saw made by one of the prisoners does not disturb him rather he says it should be added to the museum of collections of many other tools made by prisoners to escape from prison. The prisoners banging on the doors to communicate to each other are ironically presented by Galsworthy to show that they cannot express themselves. Falder is also a part of this act like other prisoners.

In the Act IV Galsworthy takes us to Cokeson’s office where Ruth urges him to give a job to Falder who is released on ticket-of-leave after serving two and half years of imprisonment. She makes survival by making shirts and is also forced to yield to approaches of her employer just to arrange living. This indicates the plight and agonies that Ruth undergoes. The following admission of Ruth speaks volumes:

“Ruth. Tried the same as when I left him before.... making shirts ---cheap things. It was the best I could get, but I never made more than ten shillings a week, buying my own cotton and working all day; I hardly ever got to bed till past twelve. I kept at it for nine months. Well I’m not fit for that; I wasn’t made for it. I’d rather die.... It was starvation for my children too----after what they’d always had...... My employer happened then.... he’s happened ever since.”

The prison administration also tried to give Falder some job but his colleagues looked askance at him as an ex-prisoner. James How on request of his son Walter How agrees to re-employ Falder on the condition that he desert Ruth.
Honeywill. He also tells her that everything is in her hand. James is very harsh to Falder that is explicit from his expression:

“James: Now look here, Falder. My son and I want to give you another chance; but there are two things I must say to you. In the first place: It’s no good coming here as a victim, if you’ve any notion that you’ve been unjustly treated—get rid of it. You can’t play fast and loose with morality and hope to scot-free. If society didn’t take care of itself, nobody would – the sooner you realize that better…..”

(Justice, pp. Act IV, 71, 72)

“James. The best you can take care of him will be go give him up…. His future is in your hands”.

(ibid. p. 75)

Meanwhile, the detective Wister enters the room saying that he has come to arrest Falder on the charges of not reporting after the ticket-of-leave and forging letters of references to seek employment. However, when Falder is being taken away to custody by the detective he jumps down the stone staircase and commits suicide. The play concludes with Cokeson’s expression and Ruth’s weeping over Falder's dead body.

“Cokeson: No one’ll touch him now! Never again! He’s safe with gentle Jesus!”

(ibid p. 79)

The play moved the British government and brought about certain changes in the time spent by the prisoners in solitary confinement. It created a significant voice in favour of penal reform. Though, Galsworthy is not a criminologist his interest in the improvement of prison conditions and thus creating a platform for
open debate is widely admired and acknowledged world over. The prison issue was discussed among the men of letters, literary critics, sociologists, legal experts, general public and the government, too.

Galsworthy’s efforts and achievement towards the improvement of prison situation must be studied in the light of some earlier efforts in this direction. Previous attempts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century also account for penal reforms. Since 1877 under the chairmanship of Sir Edmund du Cane, the chairman of the recently constituted Prison Commission that brought about strict discipline in prison administration. During Sir Edmund Due Cane’s period the prisoner spent first nine months of their punishment in solitary cells. Under the silent law they were prohibited from talking to other inmates. In case of charges of mental harm caused by solitary confinement, the prison medical officers and chaplains rejected them. (BJC, 1996)

Like his other plays, in Justice Galsworthy is on the side of his vulnerable characters that have fallen prey to social order and unreasonable social convention. In Justice his sympathy is with Falder, victim of social injustice. Galsworthy tries to be as fair as possible to the individual but does not spare the social system that makes criminals out of otherwise better citizens. The playwright wishes to suggest that too much of chivalrous temperament is also dangerous for the individual if it is not supported with practical outlook. It might jeopardize his position just Falder does in Justice. Here Falder suffers both before committing the crime and even after his release from the prison on ticket-of-leave. There is no end to his suffering and those associated with him, in this case Ruth Honeywill and her children. Galsworthy juxtaposes Falder’s case with Jones in The Silver Box who is sentenced to one month hard labour.

Galsworthy makes us consider family background of Falder as he belongs to the consumptive family and is mentally weak from the beginning. Financially
Falder is basically poor and lives in destitute state. This is proved by the fact that he does not have enough money to elope with Ruth. He has to take a foolish decision like forging a cheque in his office. Falder takes this rash decision due to his nature and nurture since childhood. Moreover, Ruth Honeywill also suffers from financial problems forcing him to do odd job and meekly accept approaches of her employer.

Thus, Justice focuses on the social and economic side of the problem. As usual Galsworthy defends the case of the weak and suffering characters. In Falder’s case Walter How and Cokeson come for his rescue and defend his case before James. Walter wants his father to place in Falder’s place to realize his agonies and misery. James who takes the case of Falder to police does not understand him compassionately and sympathetically. James fails to plead Falder’s case on humanitarian ground. Finally, Falder prefers to commit suicide by throwing from the stone case. The end is tragic, but ironically it is admissible to Galsworthy in the sense that he is afraid to go to prison again.

Galsworthy points out that the case of Falder would have been dealt with more sympathetically as there are always extenuating circumstances. However, the case is handled in a perfect professional manner and fully applying legal and penal procedures without any consideration to human aspect. In Falder’s case and even in Jones in The Silver Box, their adversaries immediately follow legal provision and report to police without giving any chance for improvement. Galsworthy makes it clear from merciless words of James:

“James. [Grimly] Bring him round here. And ring up Scotland Yard.....A nasty business!..... The idea of dishonesty about this office—it hits me hard, Cokeson.”

(Justice Act I, pp.10, 11)
The playwright feels that James should have acted more sympathetically with generosity to alleviate the situation instead of presently summoning police as it is his first offence. James acts very technically and merely follows legal course of action without giving first preference to humanitarian aspect. Falder is meted out harsh treatment in prison which affects his brain and body. What Ruth says about health of Falder is sufficient to prove how badly he is being treated in the prison:

“Ruth. He can’t get anything to do. It’s dreadful to see him. He’s just skin and bone”.

(Justice Act IV, p. 63)

Galsworthy had made careful study of the prison conditions by personally visiting several prisons in the country. He interviewed sixty prisoners and published many articles and wrote letters on the prisoners and the treatment they received during their confinement. Thus, he made it public that the solitary confinement is harmful to physical and mental health of inmates. Moreover, these sorts of inhuman treatment given to the convicts serve no purpose to bring about positive changes in prisoners. Undoubtedly the playwright’s condemnation of human justice is harsh, and it is still bitter when an individual behaves inhumanly with another individual. When the criminal is released after serving sentence in prison he is hardly welcomed in the society. He faces hatred and condemnation from all quarters of society. He is always looked as an ex-convict and finds difficult to get job. There is no end to his suffering. Falder explains this state:

“Falder. I’ve slept in the Park three nights this week.....I believe that. Mr. Cokeson. Nobody wishes, but they down you all the same. This feeling.... It’s crushing me.”

(ibid. pp. 68, 69)
Galsworthy points out that social exclusion is worse for convicts than the actual sentence he undergoes. This attitude is more serious and damaging in real life for the ex-convict. The society needs to be more sympathetic to such individual and help them settle in life. Furthermore, such people should be treated like other ordinary human beings irrespective of their background. Unfortunately this does not happen and society becomes harsh to them. Here society plays a role of the villain which is more criminal than the offence committed.

Galsworthy feels that society should not interfere in the private affairs of the individual and it should rather allow him to have his individual liberty. Besides, the society should not to punish the individual by way of condemning and isolating him from the others. On the contrary, the individual should be treated with imaginative sympathy. In Justice Galsworthy does not make any exercise to present characteristics of modern society like Ibsen. Falder in Justice and Jones in The Silver Box are unhappy characters but they cannot be called as typical examples. As a result they cannot engage our sympathetic consideration. Falder is like any other commonplace and inconsequential individual whom we meet in daily life, but Galsworthy elevates him to the height of suffering. No doubt he is a criminal but Galsworthy wants us to show sympathy towards him.

In addition, the dramatist gives undue importance to Falder’s bad luck and holds society responsible for it. Such unjustified sympathy to the criminals like Falder and Jones pushes away Galsworthy as realistic artist. Undoubtedly Galsworthy violets his own theory of realism making us show sympathy to Falder. The dramatist’s pity, emotion and humanitarian outlook vanishes with Folder’s suicide in the last act. This scene and situation touches Galsworthy to such an extent that he forgets that he is giving concession to his art. It may be because of his profound but unclear humanitarian outlook.
Galsworthy thinks that the reader should also show sympathy to Falder like him. That is why with this intention that he makes Falder’s counsel Frome to make long but boring argument in defence of Falder. However, it fails to create any effect and impress the jury who announces that Falder is guilty. In the Scene III of Act III, Galsworthy presents speechless soliloquy where Falder does not speak at all. It is through this indicative action that pity and pathos of the situation is revealed. The play lacks theoretical growth that is made evident from the fact that as the action revolves around Falder’s miserable state our sympathy and attention is engaged only by this single issue. The characters such as Cokeson, Ruth Honeywill, Falder and the Governor arouse our pity towards the wretched characters in the play. In the case of Falder’s suicide and consequent sense of pity, Galsworthy had already prepared readers for such a tragic incident. By creating this pathetic scene of Falder’s suicide, the dramatist successfully tries to achieve dramatic harmony. Ruth’s mental state further reveals this fact:

“Ruth. (In a whisper) What is it? He is no breathing. (She crouches over him) My dear! My pretty! (In the outer house doorway the figure of men are seen standing).

Ruth. (Leading to her feet) No. no! No, no! He’s dead!”

(ibid. p. 79)

The imagery of dog employed by Cokeson to explain his point of view is very sharp and conveys everything about the biased opinion about convicts. It is a resounding slap to an insensitive chaplain in the play:

“Cokeson.[Looking at him in a tone of sudden dogged hostility] I keep dogs.....Ye- es ...And I say this: I wouldn’t shut one of them up all by himself, week after week, not if he’d bit me all over. ....It’s the same with
dogs. If you treat’em with kindness they’ll do anything for you; but to shut’em up alone, it only makes’em savage.”

(Justice Act III, Scene I, p. 50)

Galsworthy is not primarily a reformer but effectively uses his dramatic skill to poignantly present social maladies with earnest zeal of the moralist and the humanist. He observes social problems, studies them by collecting evidences in support of his argument and then cautiously presents them through his plays. This is what he does in Justice. It is believed that after going through the documents and papers related to prison problems prevailing in England, he was contemplating on the character of Falder.

Thus, Galsworthy’s spirit of a researcher and an advocate is seen throughout this play. His experience as a lawyer is also evident in presenting the case of Falder before the court. He puts forth his argument with judicious and compassionate manner.

Thus, Justice proves as one of the most successful social tragedy of Galsworthy that deals with prison issue at the time of Galsworthy’s England. The play throws light on the defects of prison administration. Galsworthy attacks the English law being blind and emotionless; it is equally true with judiciary of the country. The law does not understand human sentiments and feelings and mercilessly crushes those come under it. The deliverance of justice is merely mechanical and technical process and there is no room for human element in it. It works like a machine. Galsworthy argues that the law is just like the wheels of chariot that keep revolving crushing those coming in the way.

The title of the play is ironically used as it speaks more of injustice than justice. As a matter of fact here we have more prejudice than balance. The play is a propaganda and the real culprit is our civilized society its conventions and impractical social order. The play not only created sensation in England it also
brought about certain changes in the penal procedure. It is here that the success of the play rests. An immense dramatic effect of the play puts Galsworthy in the line of Charles Dickens, Brieux and other men of letters who employed their literary skills for social and moral purpose. The playwright’s purpose of writing the play is evident from actions and situations employed in the play.

In the play Galsworthy does not provide a noble hero unreasonably locked up. Just like other characters William Falder is neither a hero nor a villain. He is just a spineless victim of weakness. His crime is nothing but forging a cheque to help a married woman, Ruth in distress. How generous is Falder? His chivalry is at the cost of his office job and his life. And Galsworthy wants us to support him. Isn’t it strange? And we the civilized society wish that Falder had succeeded in his attempt to elope with Ruth. How outlandish really! Can’t it be put the other way round? Falder’s real problem is that he did not succeed in running away with Ruth after the forgery. He rather allows himself to be caught and suffer anguishing state in solitary confinement. However, his weak personality and lack of courage lands him in this trouble. He is not bold enough to face the situation created by him. He should have arranged for the money from other sources. But he so stupid to defraud his own people who gave him job. A close observation shows that during his imprisonment he becomes mentally so weak that he has no courage to face the real world outside the prison. He is terribly scared of the conditions in the prison, too. Therefore, he prefers to commit suicide than to go to jail again. Rather he does not possess enough strength to bear the burden of social disgrace he himself placed on his head.

The real criminal in the play is absent; he does not appear before us. He is the brutal husband of Ruth. He can be described a true villain who does everything and supplies all the material needed for this social tragedy. He is the worst character that Galsworthy prefers to keep behind the scene. Nor is his
appearance so significant on the stage. This drunken husband of Ruth beats and also badly treats her and children. It is the impractical and inadequate English law that does not allow Ruth to escape from his monstrous clutches. She wants to desert him once and for all, and start a fresh but cannot do so as the divorce law is the major hindrance.

Galsworthy is unhappy that this brutal husband of Ruth’s escapes unhurt from legal system. Nothing happens to him. The real miserable creatures are Ruth and her innocent children. The law is too practical and cold that it also snatches Ruth from her only hope that is Falder. We as civilized human beings are also unjust towards suffering people in the society. For example, when Falder approaches his employer James, he tells Ruth to give up Falder as it is good for her. James is so blind and deaf that he does not see the worst conditions that they are passing through in the society. The other characters in the play are a blend of good and evil traits and all of them give the impression to possess fine purpose. Where they fail is they do not have imaginative sympathy and understanding towards the miserable lots in the society.

Galsworthy observes that the characters including James How, the detective Wister, counsel for the Crown, Harold Cleaver, Jury and Edward Clements, the prison doctor should have displayed some sympathy to Falder. Unfortunately they cannot place themselves in the position of Falder to really understand him and the hardship that he is suffering. The conventional political and financial system may consider that Falder’s suicide is a good thing for them as they need not worry about him now and in future. They are not required to be anxious about him now. The only problem remains is that of Ruth and her two children. After Falder’s suicide Ruth and her children are exposed to all sorts of worst sufferings, troubles and problems that we cannot imagine. Nobody has time and compassion to stop and see their adversities and misery. In a heartless society of ours they have to stand with all the problems, of course, not created by them.
Galsworthy says that James who lost a trifle amount by way of Falder’s forgery is in a position to sustain the loss, but he is in so hurry that his uncompromising outlook takes his toll. Judiciary is no better either. In a minute’s time it ruthlessly destroys four persons viz, Falder, Ruth and her two innocent, little children. What is our offence in the entire case? How can we be punished as civilized citizens? “Falder is convicted of forgery. We are convicted of murder”. (Phelps, 1921:124)

This is the most critical situation that arises out of our too much adherence to social conventions, our far stretched and impractical principle and a professional way of looking and implementing law. Galsworthy’s question is that is it not possible for us to be more considerate to the wretched in the society? He feels that a little consideration towards Falder’s guilt could have saved his life. We are real criminals, Galsworthy feels.

Like in Strife, Galsworthy takes us to the centre of the storm; likewise he takes us to the prison and makes us have a dialogue with the prisoners. Galsworthy successfully makes use of this dramatic technique in Justice. In the prison office we as the readers listen to the problems and sufferings that convicts undergo in the prison. We patiently listen to the prisoners, prison authorities and the medical officer without thinking to do anything to protect the prisoner for their sorry state. After witnessing mentally and physically weak prisoners we ourselves feel imprisoned in the situation. Thus, Galsworthy points out that the process of legislation is as mechanical as its implementation. We feel it is cruel and barbaric but of course not tragic. The whole process stirs up irritation and pity, but not inspiration to improve the situation. Falder does not fight like a noble hero; hence his end is not like a giant hero. Like other characters of Galsworthy Falder is distinctive but not distinguished.
Galsworthy shows that the measures taken by the administration to deliver justice prove to be the instruments of injustice, especially concerning the weak and the downtrodden in the society. James How of solicitors firm in *Justice* can be compared to John Anthony, chairman of the company in *Strife*. Both are cruel and possess no sympathy for the miserable lots in the society. Both are heads of reputed companies and responsible personalities. Their contribution to the business and companies is great but if we observe them from other angels it is discovered that they lack imaginative sympathy.

James is miserably insensitive. He comes to the conclusion that it is the empty space left in the cheque that prompted Falder to commit forgery. Moreover, he tells the office staff that even there had been no empty space left in the cheque he would have embezzled money some or other way to help miserable Ruth. He makes a suggestion to the office men that no empty space is left in the cheque. James does not realize Falder’s love and liking for Ruth and that he wants to help her as she is in great distress. On the contrary, Falder’s entanglement with a married woman annoys James and he tries to separate Ruth from Falder under the pretext of giving job in his office. It is through James that Galsworthy may be focusing on the question of adultery in Victorian and Edwardian English society.

What Galsworthy wants to say about the court is made clear through the character of Hector Frome, the counsel for defence. He points out that law functions more technically and theoretically and does not consider human emotions and the true grounds of the crime. In most cases legal provisions are implemented blindly without looking at the problem sympathetically. Galsworthy calls law a rolling machine which rolls down without anyone to control it and ultimately innocent people in the society are ground under it. He argues:
“Frome. Once this cheque was altered and presented, the work of four minutes...four mad minutes---the rest has been silence----Gentlemen, men like the prisoner are destroyed daily under our law for want of that human insight ....Gentlemen, Justice is a machine that, when someone has once given it the starting push, rolls on itself. Is this young man to be ground to the pieces under this machine for an act which the worst was one on of weakness? Is he to become a member of the luckless crews that man those dark ill-stared ships called prisons?.....I urge you gentlemen, do not ruin this young man!.......he can be saved now. Imprison him as a criminal, and I affirm to you that the will be lost....The rolling of the chariot-wheels of Justice over this boy began when it was decided to prosecute him.”

(Justice Act III, pp 37, 38)

It is true that the court does not treat Falder as a mental patient but a criminal. Actually he needs mental treatment and not punishment. Galsworthy wants that mentally weak convicts require sympathetic consideration and not harsh punishment as putting them in a solitary confinement so that they are ruined in the end. It is dangerous to both the convict and society. The real inadequacy of the penal system is that the convicts are inhumanly treated in the prison. It is believed that Galsworthy wrote this play to expose the malady prevailing in prison system of his time. Falder is confined to a solitary cell and is prohibited from being seen and spoken to by anyone. Rehabilitation of prisoners is more important than mere prosecution. It is discovered that convicts are viewed suspiciously. The do not get references required to get job, as a result they are succumbed to dereliction, obviously because of the treatment they receive as ex-convict. Falder tries to come out from this situation, but more he tries the more he is pulled in the cruel net of his fate.
As a sensitive humanitarian, Galsworthy is discouraged the way the court of justice operates crushing weak and innocent. The judge in real life is far a cry from the dramatist’s model of an objective and impartial judge. The judge in this play often stops Ruth from speaking as he has his likes and dislikes. Moreover, this indicates his attitude towards women in the Victorian society. Galsworthy also tries to show that when judges are biased justice cannot be had moreover; it amounts to mere injustice and cannot be called justice. This is what happens in the case of Falder.

Another point that needs to elucidated about the prevailing rigid divorce law of which Galsworthy himself had to suffer. It became extremely difficult for his beloved Ada to get divorce from her husband and marry Galsworthy. Thus his personal agonies are manifested in the play in the triangle of Ruth, Honeywill and Falder. Though Ruth’s husband is drunkard and beats her repeatedly, according to the prevailing divorce law, she cannot be given divorce on mere ground of husband’s alcoholism. How strange it is that for getting divorce she has to wait for some other serious crimes to be committed by her husband. Had the divorce law been trouble-free, Ruth could have been easily married to Falder and lived tension free life. In addition, Falder would have been saved from forging a cheque in his office and further complications would have been stopped. One more point Galsworthy tries to reveal here is that Falder and Ruth are tired of the society in which they are living and they do not feel safe to live in England as man and wife. It is for this very reason they found South America as a safe destination to avoid prying eyes. Galsworthy and Ada had to leave London when their love affair became public.

Galsworthy writes using realistic technique so as to bring out fact of human life and social conditions of his age. In Justice he uses his favourite device of parallelism to bring about dramatic effect and forcefully put forth his ideas. He places the contrasting characters with strong and weak personalities to heighten
the result. James How and his son Walter How are two personalities with contrasting characteristics and polar opposites are brought on the stage in the Act I. James is monstrous, feigns honesty but in real life behaves differently. He utterly lacks humanitarian outlook and imaginative sympathy towards to poor and suffering members of the society. On the contrary, Walter is altogether a different human being with good qualities, compassionate and high quality of understanding. He understands the situation of Falder and appeals to his father that he should be pardoned as it is his first offence. He also urges his father to put himself in his place to understand miserable condition of Falder. He knows that there are extenuating circumstances to reduce the gravity of the problem if looked from humanitarian point of view. Thus the characters possessing different personality traits are placed side by side so that we can understand human attitude towards the poor and the outcaste.

Similarly in the Act II, Hector Frome, the counsel for defence and Harold Cleaver, the counsel for the Crown, are two opposite characters juxtaposed by the playwright. Cleaver, being a true professional goes too technically to punish Falder. Cleaver’s views are supported by the judge as well who wants the criminal should be treated with iron-hand. The judge describes the court as a majestic edifice and protects all people in the society. In the Act III we have a prison governor Captain Danson, V.C. and the prison chaplain, Reverend Hugh Miller. The former is humanitarian while the later lacks mercy and sympathy for the prisoners. Galsworthy presents these opposite characters of different attitudes to show that there are two sides to everything. These characters fight for and against Falder.

Galsworthy also employs a typical dramatic skill of not presenting the horrible characters on the stage. For example, Ruth Honeywill’s drunkard husband who treats her in the most inhuman manner is kept away by Galsworthy. Similarly Falder’s brother-in-law who helps him to send away and Ruth’s dishonest and
characterless employer who makes advances at her are deliberately kept away by the playwright. Ruth’s employer exemplifies a person given to Edwardian masculine sport—prostitution. As he is the worst person Galsworthy does not present him directly on the stage like his other characters.

By using this technique Galsworthy might have thought that the presence of such characters is not required on the stage or it might disturb the dramatic action and effect of the play, or perhaps it would distract attentions of the audience from the main characters.

One of the best techniques that Galsworthy uses is to avoid extensive and perplexing dialogues through his plays focus on different social problems and issues. He uses minimum dialogues and there is no dialogue at all in the Scene III, Act III. There is just chaos where convicts vent out their grievances and suppressed energies by banging the prison doors. The absence of language shows that the convicts are unable to present their cases and they are completely broken down. It also indicates that their voice is totally bottled up and there is lack of dialogue between the inmates and the prison authorities.

Galsworthy makes use of imagery very effectively. His plays abound in animal imagery to point out animal qualities in his characters. In the Act I Falder facing the cashier vulnerably is shown as a rabbit caught by a snake. Falder’s weak qualities are brought to surface by comparing him to the rabbit. Similarly relentless behaviour of the convicts is compared to wild horses afraid of lightening and running helter-skelter. This imagery expresses unreasonable worries and anxieties of the convicts. Falder is again shown as caught in a mesh; the more he tries to escape, the more he is ensnarled. This manifests that he is caught in an unending vicious circle and prisoner’s impossibility of coming out of their problems. And there are least chances of their becoming normal again. Galsworthy’s comparison of law as a giant machine running
without a driver shows that law is blind and cruel. A stony-heart of the detective Wister is exposed by presenting the stone staircase from which Falder jumps and commits suicide.

4.2.1 Irony in Justice

The use of irony in literary work reveals a contrast between reality and pretense. The ironical disclosure in Justice adds to the dramatic effect and action. The convicts put in solitary cells are treated inhumanly like animals in a cage. According to Christian ideology, man does not live on food alone but he is a social animal and must have company of other human beings to live harmonious and peaceful existence. The human growth and development, spiritual and material, depends on love and affection, without which man’s life is no less than animal. Doctor Clement in the prison claims that there is physically nothing wrong with the convicts. He explains to the governor:

“The Doctor…..Conscientiously, sir, I don’t know to differentiate him. He hasn’t lost weight. Nothing wrong with his eyes. His pulse is good. Talks all right. It’s only another week before he goes.”

(Justice Act III, Scene II, p.59, 60)

The prison warder and his men are shown busy in decoration on the Chrisman eve. This simply indicates that they are busy in making a show externally and there is nothing of human spirit in them. In yet another instance Galsworthy focuses his attention on the scene at the Court of Justice. Instead of allowing Ruth to speak in the court the judge tries to stop her every time. Walter’s suggestion to arrange a divorce of Ruth in the court speaks volume of corrupt judiciary. There is irony of marriage system where Ruth’s marriage does not exist on emotional background; rather it exists technically and legally. Falder is more governed by emotion than reason as a result ventures to commits crime of forging the cheque. The irony of situation is very strongly put forth by
Galsworthy where a crime is committed in a solicitor’s office by their very clerk. In the concluding Act Ruth appeals to James How the head of solicitors firm, to save Falder by giving him job. But Falder’s fate does not allow this to happen and the tragedy for Falder comes disguised in the form a detective Wister.

Galsworthy’s dramatic dexterity is evident from the fact that he carefully makes use of human names to convey effective meaning by way ironic expression. Some of the names used in this play reveal difference between reality and sham. The doctor Clement is contrary to his name.

Galsworthy’s chief aim to compose this play was to acquaint the complacent Victorian society and its deep rooted evils. He attempts to deal with the problem of penal system bore some good fruits as the English government brought about some basic changes in the prison administration. His attempt to throw light on this particular issue aroused public conscience. The plot construction is a meticulous exercise of the playwright as each character and scene is carefully chosen and presented. They serve a specific purpose and offer definite subject matter. The plot is woven in a simple manner and it is straightforward. It has four acts and the action takes place in the office of solicitor’s firm, moves to the court, then to the prison and to the lawyer’s office. This circular motion of the action shows the chariot-wheel of justice in which Falder is trapped making him impossible to come out. Both Justice and Strife are about social and economic issues.

According to Sheila Kaye-Smith (1916):

“the play is not quite so well constructed as Strife. The first and the second acts cover mostly the same ground, and the action is not so compact or the climax so inevitable. On the other hand, there are some fine scenes, and some particularly arresting characters. Cokeson, the
little kind-hearted, humble-minded clerk, is a lovable person, and the relations between Falder and Ruth Honeywill are studied with exquisite delicacy and pathos. The scene of Falder’s arrest, of his trail, and that terrible silent scene, in which not a word is spoken, but in which we are shown far more powerfully than by any words, the horror, the misery, and madness, of solitary confinement --are all memorable, and make us forgive a certain scrappiness in their succession. The play ends on a fine note of tragedy, when Falder is re-arrested for obtaining employment by a forged character, throws himself down-stairs rather than go back to gaol”

(SKS pp. 24, 25)

4.2.2 The Major Characters

Galsworthy brings on the stage some prominent and minor characters from ordinary life to bring his point home as to how injustice prevails in the English judiciary. These characters are typical Victorian in their background and reveal life style, social class structure of the time. The interaction of the characters with each other and their general behaviour in society discloses the attitude towards life and also brings out their philosophy of life. William Falder suffers utter isolation in the solitary confinement which renders him mad. We as human beings and society are responsible for his state. Ruth Honeywill who leads a miserable and wretched unhappy marriage is subjected to regular beating by her drunkard husband. He is so worse that Galsworthy does not bring him on the stage. The other characters like James How is equally unkind and vindictive like magistrate takes interest in penalizing Falder. Walter How his son is comparatively humanitarian in temperament and constantly appeals his father to display sympathy to Falder as forging of cheque is his first offence. Robert
Cokeson, a managing clerk is also a considerate human being like the Governor. These principle characters decide action and progression of the play.

**William Falder**

William Falder is the most important character in the play around whom the story of the play revolves. He is a suffering protagonist like Jones in *The Silver Box*. Falder is a twenty-three year old nervous looking weak-willed young man with pale face. He is three years younger than his beloved Ruth Honeywill. He works as a junior clerk in the office solicitors firm, a reputed company. He is more governed by emotions than reason and that is the reason every time he lands in the trouble on his own. He is given to sentimental nature and his chivalrous temperament is the major source of his problems. He is more prone to creating problems than solving them. He is mentally so weak that he cannot take any right decision about himself and those related to him. This is the prime cause of his tragedy.

Falder is neither a hero nor a villain but an ordinary person carried away by emotions. He is not like a traditional hero with strong mental force to win a beloved by fighting all odds. Rather he is so weak that he cannot face any trial and misfortunes of life but prefers to commit suicide to escape from all problems created by him. Thus, he lacks all heroic qualities and proves a coward. Still he helps Ruth who is in trouble by forging a cheque in his office. This reveals that he is prepared to do anything for Ruth, but he is ignorant of dire consequences. In this way he stands distinctly from Ruth’s employer who makes advances at her taking disadvantage of her miserable condition.

The idea of eloping with Ruth to South America to escape from this tormenting society creates all problems for him from which he simply fails to come out. It is this idea that takes his toll. As a matter of fact Falder would have been more sensible to help Ruth temporarily instead of taking any rash decisions creating
problems to him. Thus, Galsworthy shows him very ordinary human being so mediocre that he cannot take right decisions. This is the worst quality of Falder that sees his tragic end. He is so foolish that he has courage to cheat his own master without thinking any consequences of such grave crime like forging a cheque.

The worst part of the story is that he acted upon himself to help Ruth as she had never asked him to raise money by committing crime that too where he is working. Ruth is more reasonable and rational than Falder, might be because she is three years older than Falder and faces more odds in life than Falder. One of the appreciable qualities of Falder is open-mindedness. It is with just one or to questions he admits his guilt and is prepared to pay back the money and hopes to be forgiven. This is nothing but a child like behaviour of Falder. His counsel Hector Frome is well aware of Falder’s childish behavior and that is why tells the court that he is not inclined to deep-rooted guilt or wickedness and should be pardoned by the court. Frome puts before the court:

“Frome….. He has not a strong face; but neither has he a vicious face. He is just the sort of man who would easily become the prey of his emotions. You have heard the description of his eyes.”

(Justice Act II, P. 36)

He committed forgery under the pressure of Ruth’s miserable condition, in a moment of madness, in those “four mad minutes”. This mental state of Falder is revealed during his confinement in a solitary cell. The man who had planned to leave for a safer destination with his beloved is now unable to see and speak to of course, derails him mentally. He does not find a way out of this embarrassing situation. He passes time in the prison cell banging his head on the door, which is a sign of his propensity to commit suicide. When he is released from the prison after serving two and half years sentence on the ticket-of-leave he is
looked upon askance as an ex-convict. Falder’s situation moves from bad to worse as nobody is ready to give him references for job. He is reduced to a vagabond and sleeps in parks. His meeting with Ruth brings him back to the normal life and makes a fresh start. He approaches his former employer James seeking re-employment. He agrees to give him job but he should give up Ruth. This again adds trouble to his woes. He is almost finished. Meanwhile, a detective Wister approaches, he is re-arrested. He is already scared of imprisonment, throws down from the stone staircase and commits suicide. But Wister argues that Falder tried to escape from his hands. In fact, Falder wanted to get away from life itself as it had reduced to prison for him. At Falder's death Ruth is fossilized with grief, Cokeson comforts himself that Falder is safe with Jesus.

**Ruth Honeywill**

Ruth Honeywill is another important character in the play. She is twenty-six years old, a tall woman with black hair and eyes and an ivory-white, clear-cut face. She possesses natural dignity of face and gesture. She is three years older than William Falder. This has a reference to personal life of Galsworthy and Ada as she was twenty-six and three years older than Galsworthy. Ruth is tall and married and has two children. She is relentless fighter and she is not a type of character to run away from the battle field. Ruth is stronger and courageous than Falder and cannot easily give up efforts to achieve her objective. She appears weak only because of poor financial condition and her drunkard husband who beats her and children. But has strong determination and takes every initiative to remain with Falder leaving her husband. She is subject is to regular harassment and ill-treatment from her husband who remains absent from the stage. However, his misdeeds are so horrible that he appears to be present among us in the theatre. Ruth’s life is miserable and she has to undergo unpleasant living due to her barbaric husband. She is tired of living with him.
though he treated her badly and tried to strangulate her under the influence of alcohol.

What she replies to Frome’s questions in the court reveals the sort of life she is leading with her husband who happens to be a traveler:

“Frome. And what was the nature of your married life?

Ruth. [Shaking her head]. It don’t bear talking about.

Frome. Did he ill-treat or, what?

Ruth. Ever since my first was born.

Frome. In what way?

Ruth. I’d rather not say. All sorts of ways...My husband nearly strangulated me that morning.”

(Justice Act II, pp. 27, 28)

She is bold enough to confess in the court that Falder is the only hope for her. It is Ruth who persuades him to leave England and to go to South America; she has strong will power and is more active than Falder, who is passive in every sense. Ruth suffers on two counts. First she leads very miserable life with two children and has to face all sorts of torture and humiliation. In order to escape from the crude clutches of her drunkard husband she deserts him with her two children and seeks support of Falder. He proves so inactive and foolish that instead of supporting Ruth she has to support him in every respect. Instead of thinking of his beloved Ruth he tries to escape from responsibility by committing suicide. However, Ruth puts up with all sorts of adversities merely on the support of her will power.

Ruth is a strong and resolute woman, who cannot be easily defeated, howsoever, worst circumstances may befall. For instance, during two and half
years of Falder’s imprisonment, she boldly faced the challenges raised before her by the society. During this period, both Ruth and her children were left unprotected, but she is not deterred even by an inch. Now her situation is worst and pitiable as she has already left her husband for good. This creates a problem of her survival; the problem is how to feed children and her. As she is a lady with strength of mind and starts making shirts to support themselves. When all these means are inadequate she submissively yields to the advances of her employer. There is no other option than to make compromise with her principles of life. However, she is still honest to Falder and meets him immediately after he is discharged from the prison on ticket-of-leave. She wants to help Falder in his adverse time. When James is ready to re-employ Falder on the condition that he must leave Ruth, she agrees to that condition. For her Falder is life and death. Here Galsworthy shows a supreme sacrifice of Ruth. She is deeply grieved over suicide of Falder. The rest of life is tragic and miserable for her. She will have to sell her again to live.

**James How**

James How is a head of solicitors firm a well reputed organization in England. He is a monstrous creation of Galsworthy who can be compared with John Anthony in *Strife*. The playwright carefully assigns him the duty as an inhuman monster devoid of imaginative sympathy and understanding for the poor and the outcaste. He deals with Falder with iron-hand which Galsworthy himself does not like. Despite all the facts he has some good qualities as well. He is devoted to his firm and works hard to give it good reputation. He is strict and disciplined in his profession and does not allow anything wrong that would damage the image of the firm:

“James. [Hesitating] I don’t see how it’s possible to spare him. Out of the question to keep him in this office—honesty’s the sine qua non...
Same thing. He’s gone to work in the most cold-blooded way to defraud his employers, and cast the blame on an innocent man.”

(Justice Act I, P. 17)

He is well aware of the fact that it is solicitors’ firm and anyone spoiling the name is dealt with iron-hand. He takes keen and deep interest in his profession. He carefully and personally watches minute details in the office. It is because of this nature that he could easily perceive Falder’s forgery at a glance. He quickly notices that counterfoil has been altered. The speed of his work is so high that he rapidly moves things on detecting the forgery. On detecting the culprit, he calls police and sees that Falder is immediately arrested. No amount of appeal by his son and Cokeson move him.

James does not show any sympathy to Falder. As he is very strict and disciplined he does not entertain appeal of Falder when police come to arrest him. It should be noted here that the detective Wister arrests Falder at a signal from James How:

“James. Come here, Mr. Falder. [As Falder comes shrinking out, the detective, in obedience to a sign from James slips his hand out and grasps his arm.]

Falder. [Recoiling] Oh! No —oh! nNo!

Wister. Come, come, there’s a good lad.

James. I charge him with felony.

Falder. Oh, sir! There’s someone—I did it for her. Let me be till to-morrow.”

(Justice Act I, p. 18)
He takes so much care of his reputation that he wants the detective to conceal his name. It might be that he does not want that society should come to know about such a nasty character works in his firm. This shows that he wants to protect the image of his company and should not gain bad name. When Falder commits suicide he is obviously disturbed and he sends for the doctor to attend Falder. This indicates that he is not as cruel as he seems to be.

Galsworthy shows certain differences of opinion between James and his son Walter. They differ as regards to their principle and philosophy of life. When Walter urges James to display some sympathy to Falder he denies it saying that Falder is a deliberate cheat. The whole matter of forgery shows Falder’s planning and deliberate trick. In the last Act Galsworthy puts father and son in conflicting situation. Falder is solely responsible for his misfortune to which Walter counter-attacks that mere principle of accountability does not hold nowadays. What Walter means is that when different people are responsible for wrongs in the society, then is it possible to punish all of them?

**Robert Cokeson**

Robert Cokeson is a sixty year old managing clerk in James Howe’s solicitors firm. He wears spectacles; rather short, with a bald head, and honest, pug-dog face. He is equally strict and disciplined like James How. He is in the habit of using funny language which gives relief from the tension. He is strangely hesitant about men and matters. Ruth’s arrival in the office with her children to see a junior clerk annoys him as such strange occurrences are not admissible to him. He also warns that this sort of thing never happens in future. Cokeson tells Ruth:

“Cokeson. We don’t allow private callers here. Will you leave a message? .....But this is lawyer’s office. Go to his private address .....It’s no affair of the office."
Cokeson. You mustn’t take up his time in office hours; we’re a clerk short as it is.”

(Justice, act I, pp.4, 5)

After some hesitation and appeal from Ruth he allows having a brief dialogue with Falder. A married woman with children coming to meet an unmarried is unbearable to him. She tells Cokeson that it is matter of life and death and she wants to speak to Falder as it is the most critical time she is passing through. Galsworthy’s Cokeson is considerate human being and not rigid and unyielding like James. Cokeson looks at things more sympathetically and people in trouble and wants to help them on the humanitarian ground. He always comes forward to help the erring people. For example, Walter who is taken to merry-making and spends most of his time in cinema halls, Cokeson tells him to come out of such things and take care of his father’s legal firm. Cokeson feels disturbed when the suspicion falls on Davis who is away in Australia with his wife. When the real culprit is detected, Cokeson is deeply pained at Falder’s foolish and insane misdeed. When James is decided to prosecute Falder, Cokeson tries to look at thing from human angle and give one chance to Falder. Here Cokeson is seriously concerned with both Falder and Ruth and thinks that if the former is arrested and sentenced to imprisonment the later will definitely be pushed into unbearable hardship and misery. Then there will be no end to her suffering. Cokeson is aware of all these facts and this is the reason he wants to help Falder. When James is firm on his decision, Cokeson keeps quiet and supports James in his resolution. This incident reveals Cokeson's confused personality and he is not firm with his decision and is carried away by the opinion of others. Of course, it might be because he is an employee with James and has a little or no say at all. Cokeson has his own limitations. Moreover, how can we expect a clerk to dictate terms to his boss? Unquestionably, Cokeson is a true humanitarian and takes keen interest to help people is distress.
During a trial in the Court of Justice, Cokeson gives evidence in defence of Falder so that if acquitted he can take care of Ruth. Here in the court his behavior is somewhat comic, first he tells the court that what Ruth told him confidentially is inappropriate to disclose publicly but after some pressure he reveals everything. He also makes use of colloquial terminology and is accordingly reprimanded by the counsel for the Crown. Thus, Cokeson brings about some relief. He always thinks in terms of betterment and relief of Falder. It is with this motive that he meets prison authorities and appeals them to allow Ruth to meet Falder. Cokeson’s ambivalent temperament is again revealed when he is stunned at Ruth’s relations with her employer, but at the same time he wants James to bring about reunion between Falder and Ruth. On Falder’s suicide, his expressions are philosophical; no one will touch him now and Falder is safe with Jesus.

The Governor

The Governor, Captain Danson, V.C, is a prison governor. He is a neat, grave-looking man, with a trim, fair moustache. He has the eyes of a theorist, and grizzled hair receding from the temple. He plays important role in Act III. He is a kind-hearted gentleman, who looks at all human problems with deep emotions and sympathetic consideration. He is compassionate like Cokeson and Walter who tries to understand problems very sympathetically. He feels that all problems should be solved by studying their background. He is of the opinion that it is unfair to take hasty decision about criminal without considering all the facts forcing the criminal to commit crime.

He has his own views about the convicts being ill-treated in prison and does not depend upon the reports of prison authorities. He is keen in personally visiting and speaking to prisoners to understand their real problems. He also personally inquires as to what forced convicts to try to escape from the prison. In this way
he tries to give confidence to the prisoners and tries to reduce the gap between
the administration and the inmates. The convicts open their hearts and explain
the truth without any hesitation. One of the convicts Moaney’s act of making a
saw to escape from the prison is no doubt is serious crime, but the Governor
reduces its gravity by taking him into confidence. Thereupon, Moaney freely
tells everything to the Governor. No doubt he takes action against Moaney but it
is very moderate one.

The Governor talks to the inmates gently and tries to understand them
sympathetically. He feels that convicts have to be treated with a kind heart
rather than using legal provisions. He also treats Falder kindly and asks the
prison doctor Clement to take care of Falder. Thus, the Governor’s work is
missionary and encouraged by love and consideration. He understands
frustration and agonies of prisoners with love and compassion.

4.3 Moral Vision in The Skin Game

In The Skin Game (1920) the two rich and powerful rival families fight over a
piece of land in the English countryside, in which none really wins but morally
lose battle besmirching their moral and social ideals. Galsworthy borrowed the
phrase “skin game” during his visit to the United States. However, he does not
use it in the American sense in it is generally believed, as there is no indication
of fraud in the social brawl in which two foes viz. Hillcrist and Hornblower
battle to the inconsiderate and disastrous end. The term precisely means “an
unscrupulous tricky piece of conduct”. Indisputably the title of the play is
remarkable and communicative and achieves outstanding success of the play.
Thus in The Skin Game Galsworthy provides us an imposing title and a good
subject of a bitter feud between a southern county Hillcrist and an aggressive
northern manufacturer Hornblower resulting in their moral and social
degradation. In the end a self-assertive Hornblower is defeated in the worst
fought class battle by the aristocratic Hillcrist at the cost of every standard of consideration and decorum. Apart from emphasizing a class conflict the play focuses on the urbanization of the countryside.

*The Skin Game* is a social drama that deals with a sordid conflict of interest between the English nobility and the growing manufacturer. It is a vulgar quarrel fought for social recognition between an affluent and well known upper class Hillcrist and the commercially and politically ambitious nouveau riche, previously working class, Hornblower. According to Galsworthy, aristocratic Hillcrist symbolizes the land-owning gentry, with old English conventions, while Hornblower stands for a typical English of Victorian time who belongs to an aggressive and wicked vigorous business category. It is undoubtedly the animating vigour behind the forceful commercial success by Galsworthy; which displays that social hatred is an ethically bruising quarrel. Galsworthy’s followers maintain that he recovered from his earlier literary influence after placing this play on the London boards in 1920. The play was first staged on Broadway in 1920 on the background of World War I. Alfred Hitchcock made a feature film on *The Skin Game* which was produced by British International Pictures in 1931.

It is a fascinating, and clearly appealing play that echoes with Galsworthy’s harsh social conscience. It does not preach anything, but practically accomplishes something as an excellent story well told. As the play progresses, a warfare between the two about-to-be-wrecked families takes a horrible turn as the things go out of control of the fighting groups. As a result the families themselves fall prey to their own follies arising out of deep-rooted aristocratic sentiments and uncivilized dominance of nouveau riche. But the scorching heat of the boorish inferno of clan hatred engulfs the innocent supporters taking sides in the squalid squabble.
The tragedy of two families lies in the fact that the Hillcrists make filthy compromise with their moral and ethical standing, while the hatred of Hornblowers is further infuriated. This is made apparent by the concluding words of Hornblower:

“Hornblower. ....Hillcrist ye’ve got me beaten and disgraced hereabouts, ye’ve destroyed my son’s married life, ye’ve killed my grandchild. I’m not staying in this cursed spot, but if ever I can do you or yours a hurt, I will...Ye hypocrites.”

(SG Act III, Scene II, p. 79)

Squire Hillcrist possesses over two hundred acres of land at a beautiful picturesque Centry. It is a pretty and loveliest piece of land in all Deepwater. The Hillcrist have been squires for many years and lived there for thirty years. Hillcrist calls Hornblower a self-assertive person without any concern for others. Though he is a gentleman he has never tried to develop the land. The beautiful meadows, trees are seen from the windows of his manor house. On the other hand, Hornblower is a newly rich prosperous businessman and has earned good money from his pottery business. Having discovered good clay on Hillcrist’s land Hornblower has purchased a part of it called Longmeadow and the cottages. Hornblower hates Hillcrist and does not follow rules of social conventions and just believes in money and aggression. There are some workers staying in the cottages on the land for thirty years. As he wants cottages for his workers, he plans to evict the old Jakmans viz. workers. Hillcrist signs an agreement with Hornblower that the Jackmans to stay on the land without disturbance. Hornblower, an insensitive, rough and crooked manufacturer displays no concern for the agreement and for the Jackmans prospect, sans any scruple shows his contempt for Hillcrist and all that he epitomizes. Bedsides he issues notices to the Jackmans to vacate the place.
Moreover, Hornblower is planning to buy the adjoining land called Centry to erect more chimneys there, which will barricade Hillcrist’s sight of the ancestral meadows and lovely tress. Having learned Hornblower’s plans to buy the land, the aristocratic Hillcrist is upset over the entire affair and makes every effort to preserve the land. He swears to fight the battle and never believes that the Hornblower family is equivalent to his family.

Therefore, Hillcrist does not want that the land should go to Hornblower and is determined to have the possession of the Centry and would not see that Hornblower’s plan to purchase the land succeeds. Hillcrist believes that:

“Hillcrist. Well, Jill, all life’s struggle between people at different stages of development, in different positions, with different amounts of social influences and property. And the only thing is to have rules of the game and keep them. New people like the Hornblowers haven’t learnt those rules; their only rule is to get all they can…..Well, when I sold Hornblower Longmeadow and the cottages, I certainly found him all right. All the same, he’s got the cloven hoof. [Warming up] His influence in Deepwater is thoroughly bad; those potteries of his are demoralizing--the whole atmosphere of the place in changing. It was a thousand pities he ever came here and discovered that clay. He’s brought in the modern cut-throat spirit.”

(SG Act I, p.6)

Hornblower has already planned to pay ten pounds for the eviction of Jackmans from the place. Hillcrist brings to the notice of Hornblower that he had promised him not to change the tenancies. However, Hornblower’s arrogance obviously caused by his money is seen in his every action and calls him a person who does not believe in the past but only future and goes to the extent of calling Hillcrist as aristocrat hard under their good manners and etiquettes. But
Hornblower is resolute to purchase Centry and his political ambitions are revealed in his own expression. Moreover, he does not forget to tell that he can be a good friend or the worst enemy.

“Hornblower. Look here, Hillcrist, ye’ve not had occasion to understand men like me. I’ve got the guts and I’ve got the money, and I don’t sit still on it. I’m going ahead because I believe in meself. I’ve no use for sentiments and that sort of thing. Forty or your Jackmans aren’t worth me little finger---- Ye want the village your old-fashioned way, and want it to run mine.

Hillcrist. If that isn’t a skin game, Mr. Hornblower, I don’t know what it is.

Hillcrist. It’s all hypocrisy. You country folk are fair awful hypocrites.

Hornblower. ...Now I want to be the movin’ spirit here. I’m full of plans. I’m going to stand for Parliament; I’m goin’ to make this a prosperous place. I’m good-natured man if you’ll treat me as such.... Now, don’t get on the high horse. You and me could be good friends; but I can be a very nasty enemy.”

(SG Act I, pp. 15-17, 19)

Hillcrist and especially Mrs. Hillcrist bears grudge against Hornblower and calls him pushy and belligerent. The later is equally vindictive and is dogged to teach the former a good lesson. Hornblower also hates Dawker, an agent of Hillcrist and calls him dog. Mrs. Hillcrist is annoyed at Chloe’s visit and presently throws her out of her house saying that so far as ladies are concerned that is her house. As Chloe is insulted this way her husband Charles questions Hillcrist for his imprudent behavior. Thereupon, Hillcrist who respects woman tenders his
apology before Charles. Hornblower does not want that women folk be a part of this conflict and it should be confined to men.


Hillcrist. I apologize, I regret extremely. There is no reason why the ladies of you family or of mine should be involved in our quarrel. For Heaven’s sake, let’s fight like gentlemen.

Hornblower. Catchwords—sneers! No, we’ll play what ye call a skin game, Hillcrist, without gloves on; we won’t spare each other.”

(SG Act I, pp. 23, 24)

Hillcrist is utterly disturbed by Hornblower’s plan to buy the Centry and is determined to stop the ruffian. The very picture of the proposed development of the site by Hornblower upsets him with chimneys, smoke, and those old trees mercilessly chopped, heaps and pots and every kind of outrage. Hillcrist is emotionally too much attached to Centry meadows but some part was sold when money was short. He explains this in the following words:

“Hillcrist……I was born here, and my father, and his, and his and his. They loved those fields, and those old trees. And this barbarian, with his ‘improvement’ schemes, forsooth! I learned to ride in the Centry meadows—prettiest spring meadows in the world; I’ve climbed every tree thre. Why my father ever sold------! But who could have imagined this? And come at a bad moment, when money’s scarce.”

(SG Act I, p. 26)

Thus, the disgusting social fight aggravates both sides are prepared for a foul play to have the coveted two hundred acres of Centry meadows. Hornblower is
prepared to pay any cost, and use all the means and tricks to have the possession
of the land while Hillcrist will pay every penny to buy the property to save the
sight of the lovely meadows from his drawing room windows. He also wants to
stop Hornblower from erecting pottery factory. Hornblower does not have any
doubts about the consequences of his new smoke-vomiting factories erecting in
the neighborhood. His fresh goal is to outwit Hillcrist in a bid and acquire an
adjoining land.

While badly humiliated and bewildered by Hornblower’s forceful strategies,
Hillcrist’s dominant and aggressive wife Amy is quietly mobilizing for the
battle. In fact this is against her husband. It is a skin game ruthlessly played by
both Hillcrist and Hornblower families and their vulgar supporters. In this case
Dawker on the side of the Hillcrists and the representative of Hornblower’s
neighbor the Duke.

The battle is not for preserving moral principles but to take vulgar revenge
against each other. Galsworthy objectively observes the happenings; he does not
take side of the either party. It is interesting to note that the younger ones are
non-aligned in the conflict. Jill, nineteen years old daughter of Hillcrist and
Rolf, about twenty, the son of Hornblower alleviate the feud and prefer to
continue their love in harmony.

Galsworthy devotes Act II, Scene I for auction of the property and consequent
fight between rival families of Hillcrist and Hornblower. In this scene social
image of both the antagonists is maligned by their immoral and selfish
temperament. In their foolish attempt to have the Centry they have plainly
forgotten social consequences due to their possessive nature.

The auction takes place at a billiard room in a provincial hotel, where things are
bought and sold. It is late September and the auction takes place at 3’o clock in
the afternoon. Mrs. Hillcrist has given necessary instructions to their property
agent Dawker about the auction and asks him to be very careful as “any mistake would be fatal”. They take care especially when the Duke’s agent is present at the auction. Dawker decides to settle the matter for six thousand but Mrs. Hillcrist thinks it too much but he gives her confidence that there is nothing to fear when they have a case of Mrs. Chloe in their hand to outwit the Hornblowers. Hillcrist tells his daughter Jill that it is impossible for him to purchase the land for more than six thousand as he will be forced to raise money by way of mortgage and moreover, the actual cost of the property is less than that. Here Galsworthy shows economic fall of the upper middle class and aristocracy.

Meanwhile, Chloe who is present at the auction meets Mrs. Hillcrist and opens the subject of her throwing out of the house. Chloe tells her that she never did anything wrong and she loves her husband most. She also wants that Mrs. Hillcrist treat her like human being. Galsworthy brings out anger of the younger generation at the opposite parties and their people. Rolf abhors Dawker and Jill calls Hornblower an “old brute”.

Now, begins the auction which goes up and down as the parties interested in purchasing. They slowly raise their bid to defeat their adversaries by financial power. Each gets an opportunity to make a show of fiscal strength. The property finally goes to Hornblower for nine thousand and five hundred pounds. He plays a foul trick to place the Duke’s agent Mr. Smalley to forward higher bid to defeat Hillcrist. However, Hillcrist thinks that he is a representative of the neighbouring Duke. But clever and cunning Mrs. Hillcrist smells a rat in the whole affair. Hillcrist expresses happiness that the property has gone to a gentleman like the Duke and that he saved his nine thousand pounds. After winning the bid and getting the possession of the Centry, Hornblower begins his innings against Hillcrist and openly informs him that the Centry has gone to him.
“Hillcrist. Oh! It was my nine thousand the Duke capped. Thank God, the Centry’s gone to a gentleman!

Hornblower. The Duke [He laughs.] No, the Centry’s not gone to a gentleman, nor to a fool. It’s gone to me.

Hillcrist. What!

Hornblower. I’m sorry for ye; ye’re not fit to manage these things. Well, it’s a monstrous price, and I’ve had to pay it because of your obstinacy. I shan’t forget what when I come to build.

Hillcrist. D’you means to say that bid was for you?

Hornblower. Of course, I do. I told ye I was a bad man to be up against. Perhaps ye’ll believe me now.

Hillcrist. A dastardly trick!

Hornblower. [With venom] What did ye call it--- a skin game? Remember we’re playin’ a skin game, Hillcrist.”

(SG Act II, Scene I, p. 40)

Now, the worst fight between the Hillcrists and the Hornblowers begins. Both Hillcrist and Mrs. Hillcrist are distressed over the deal. Mrs. Hillcrist who is the worst character like Hornblower plans to do everything to have back the property and takes help of their dutiful but unscrupulous property agent Dawker. Hillcrist also tells that Hornblower got the property by a foul play and will never allow him to take any benefit of the property. Besides he threatens to take Hornblower to the court for justice and stop him from damaging his property. The arrogant and over-confident Hornblower tells them to be quiet as he has got them in his nastiest noose. Mrs. Hillcrist also threatens to pay him in
the same coin as he did and appeals him to make some compromise. But her husband does not like such language to be used and no nasty business to be played for the property. In addition, both Hillcrist and Hornblower do not like ladies from their respective families to take part in the property deal and only men should handle the matter.

“Mrs. Hillcrist. [Suddenly] Mr. Hornblower, as you fight foul—so shall we.

Hillcrist. Amy!

Chloe. Can’t you come to an arrangement?

Mrs. Hillcrist. Quite seriously, Mr. Hornblower, you had better come to an arrangement.

Hornblower. Mrs. Hillcrist, ladies should keep to their own business.

Hillcrist. Amy, do leave it to us men.”

(SG Act II, Scene I, pp. 41, 42)

Hornblower superciliously illustrates his future plans and what he wants to do about the property. He goes on telling him that in a period of six months the chimneys of the factory will be set up and trucks will ply symbolizing the prosperity of the business here in the Centry. Mrs. Hillcrist’s gun of vengeance is loaded now. She has discovered some awfully insalubrious facts about the past life of Chloe. She cruelly intimidates to publically circulate the facts of Chloe if Hornblower does not sell back the said land to Hillcrist for four thousand and five hundred pounds. This means a heavy financial loss to Hornblower, social disgrace and defeat in the skin game by which he had wagered the whole thing. How can such terms be acceptable to egotistical and belligerent Hornblower, who immediately rejects the terms? Mrs. Hillcrist is
implacable and unscrupulous like Hornblower and a lady who cannot digest any social humiliation at least at the hands of Hornblower. Finally she decides to blackmail Hornblower and play a skin game in the true sense of the term. But Hillcrist strongly opposes the idea and says:

“Hillcrist. I say no, Amy. I won’t have it. It’s dirty weapon. Who touches pitch shall be defiled...[A little more doubtfully] To use a piece of knowledge about a woman---it’s repugnant. I--- I won’t do it----I can’t bear brining a woman into it.---- It’s scandal to have a woman like that in the neighborhood.... We use her secret as a lever.”

(SG Act II, Scene I, pp 44, 45)

Hillcrist warns Dawker and the Strangers that an allegations like that amount for criminal action. Apart from this he is not used to such sort of behaviour and was not brought up to harm the feelings of women in this manner. He also says that he would never think like a gentleman in future. Mrs. Hillcrist believes that they are better than the Hornblowers takes a decision to write a letter to Hornblower to toss him to her toes. Dawker as well desires to settle scores against him, informs Mrs. Hillcrist that he will send telegrams and call them as witness, the Strangers, against Chloe. He wants to see that this old rhinoceros, the Hornblowers resell the land for reasonable price.

In the Scene II of Act II, Hornblower receives a letter from Mrs. Hillcrist in which she warns to disclose the truth of his daughter-in-law Chloe. Hornblower calls it presumptuous and lunatic act. He tries to know the facts from Chloe who says it cannot be other than the matter of her father’s bankruptcy and charges that Mrs. Hillcrist is a lady to invent unfounded things. She desires that he does not reveal anything to her husband Charles and appeals him to settle the issue of and stop the quarrel. Hornblower tells her that has struggled a lot to make
money and get the position that he is enjoying now. An obstinate and arrogant
Hornblower decides not to meet Mrs. Hillcrist and sends a note to that effect.

Now Galsworthy takes us to a secret meeting between Chloe and Dawker in
Chloe’s boudoir where heated arguments take place between them. She openly
warns him that he is playing a game with her. Dawker tells her that he is a
faithful employer of Hillcrist and hates the Hornblowers. This is stated in their
following heated conversation:

“Chloe. You’re making a mistake, you know.

Dawker. [With a broad grim] No. I’ve got a memory for faces.

Chloe...[With a faint smile] You’re playing a game with me. Aren’t you
ashamed? What harm have I done you? Do you call this cricket?

Dawker. No, my girl—business.

Chloe. [Bitterly] What have I to do with this quarrel? I couldn’t help
their falling out.

Dawker. That’s your misfortune.

Chloe. [Clasping her hands] You’re a cruel fellow if you can spoil a
woman’s life who never did you an ounce of harm.

Dawker. ....Now, look here... I serve my employer. But I’m flesh and
blood too, and I always give as good as I get. I hate this family of yours.
There’s no name too bad for ’em to call me this last month....[With a
grim].There’s no good Hornblower but a dead Hornblower.....”

(SG Act II, Scene II, p 53)
A crooked Dawker makes it clear to her that she is just a pawn in the game and he will use her to realize his purpose. As her husband enters the boudoir, Dawker slips out of a window. She tells him if he thinks her to be a good wife, he should tell father to stop the quarrel and requests him not to stop loving her. She is in deep distress and worried about her future and married life as Charles persists to know the matter that has disturbed her so much.

In the Scene I of the concluding Act III, Galsworthy makes us witness the climax of the action where the two strangers are brought on the stage in the presence of Chloe, Mrs. Hillcrist and Dawker. Hornblower is also summoned to personally hear the truth from the Strangers with whom Chloe visited the hotels to help them seek divorce. The Strangers plainly explain to Dawker that they will not spoil life of a married woman. Mrs. Hillcrist tells Dawker that she has sent Hornblower a second letter asking him come at eleven. Hornblower questions as to what made her write such letters. She tries to explain the reasons:

“Mrs. Hillcrist. [Calmly] Are you familiar with the law of divorce, Mr. Hornblower?.....Well, you know that misconduct is required. And I suppose you’ve heard that cases are arranged.....When cases are arranged, Mr. Hornblower, the man who is to be divorced often visits an hotel with a strange woman. I am extremely sorry to say that your daughter-in-law, before her marriage, was in the habit of being employed as such a woman.

Hornblower. Ye dreadful creature!

Dawker. [Quickly] All proved up to the hilt.
Hornblower. I don’t believe a word of it. Ye’re lyin’ to save you skins. How dare ye tell me such monstrosities? Dawker I’ll have ye in a criminal court.

Dawker. Rats! You saw a gent with me yesterday? Well, he’s employed her.”

(SG Act III, Scene I, P. 63)

Hornblower calls it a foul disgrace and a lying slander. Thereupon Mrs. Hillcrist asks him to fetch Chloe who denies all the facts disclosed to her. Finally, the two Strangers who used to accompany her to hotels present the entries made in the hotel register and they try to tell her that they do not want to hurt her. Chloe wants that Hornblower should not divulge all this to Charles, her husband. Hornblower also gets irritated and calls it a sheer skin game. She tells Hornblower that she is going to be mother his grand-child. In this way his foes the Hillcrists have defeated Hornblower with their feet on his neck. He calls it a mere act of blackmail and is prepared to agree to their demands if his antagonists swear not to reveal the things to anyone. Mrs. Hillcrist takes a small copy of the Bible and both Mrs. Hillcrist and Dawker together swear that they will not disclose the secrets concerning Chloe to any living being until Hornblower does any harm to them. The papers are signed by both the parties. Thus, after sheer blackmailing Hornblower the Centry goes back to Hillcrist. It shatters political and social ambitions of Hornblower.

In the Scene II of Act III Hillcrist feels that Chloe committed a crime by not disclosing the facts to her husband before marriage. Chloe wants that he should tell her husband something else as he is very suspicious person and tells Jill that she is going to be mother. An utterly doubtful Charles tells that he will rather have no child from such a woman. He also tells her that Dawker told him
everything and Hillcrist expresses an apology for the sorry quarrel. He evidently reveals the truth:

“Hillcrist.... Who knows where things end when they once begin? “

(SG Act III, Scene II, p. 77)

Mrs. Hillcrist does not like that Dawker should have told everything to Charles even after their promise. But Dawker says that as Charles abused him in the most vulgar language, he told him everything out of anger. But the disclosure distressed Hillcrist most. At the end of the play as Dawker and Hornblower are trying to grip at each other’s throats suddenly Chloe is seen jumped in the lily pond in front of Hillcrist’s house. Charles and Hillcrist hold Chloe’s motionless body on their arms. Jill’s expressions are pathetic;

“Jill. Rolf! All of you! Stop! Look! [...] All turn to the window, outside which in the moonlight Hillcrist and Charles Hornblower have Chloe’s motionless body in their arms] In the gravel pit. She’s just breathing; that all.”

(SG Act III, Scene II, p. 79.

Both Hillcrist and Hornblower are besmirched in the sordid quarrel. Mrs. Hillcrist plays the wicked game and her husband also becomes an accomplice in the offence against morality and social ideals. Chloe’s husband suffers the most in the squalid conflict and the future of his married life.

“Hillcrist..... What’s blinding evil! Begin as you may, it ends in this-- skin game! Skin game.... When we began this fight, we had clean hands--- are they clean now? What’s gentility worth it can’t stand fire?”

(SG Act III, Scene II, p. 80)
The most remarkable feature of this play is Galsworthy’s equality in focusing on the good qualities and flaws of both parties during the noxious fight. He impartially brings out degradation and moral defeat of both the Hillcrist and Hornblowers. Galsworthy’s realistic principle in dealing with his dramatic art is found throughout the play. Like in other plays he does not take side of the either parties which are morally and socially tainted.

We experience vulgarity of selfish characters from the opening act to the end of the play. In such worst kind of struggle both the fighting factions are decisive to win a battle in which they are prone to wield any despicable or shameful weapon. For example, Hornblower, an unwavering businessman plays a spiteful trick to plant the Duke’s agent in the auction to buy a piece of land for him. And there comes a counter-attack from the vindictive Mrs. Hillcrist and Dawker to socially crush Hornblower. Both sides forget their social positions which are at stake due to their spiteful tricks. When each party suffers serious moral and social setback sympathy of Galsworthy is on the side of the younger people who are no party to the mean feud.

Besides class hatred between two hostile families there is something more significant about the play, viz. an allegory of the World War I. The play was written in the direct repercussions of the Great War. Galsworthy condemned the dreadful misery of the war and did everything to assuage it by way of generous donations to charity and looking after the wounded soldiers and innocent people when he himself was injured in the war as a masseur.

The play obviously makes more sense to distinguish it as an appropriate and self-expressive portrayal of the English class structure. Galsworthy makes us experience extremely distressing instances that a bare-knuckle conflict is converted into “a skin game” by mockery of morality and taking shelter of contemptible weapon on both sides.
In *The Skin Game*, Galsworthy attaches significance to the dramatic element of action. The significance of the plot begins from the opening scene and is carried further through different episodes to the conclusion of the play. The intrigue, of course occurs due to characters, which are brilliantly realized and carefully selected to demonstrate the central theme of the play. The plot is well admired and in principle it is dexterous. The play was Galsworthy’s first commercial achievement on the stage. It emphatically and realistically portrays both social problem and individual psychology and issues related to it. The character of Chloe as a miserable prey of the disgusting family warfare is drawn painstakingly and in complete sincerity as the social question itself. Chloe’s pathetic and deplorable suicide attempt is portrayed in the end against the background of deadly dispute between two antagonistic families.

In the play Galsworthy appears to have been equally engaged by the individual as by the fundamental problem. Moreover, both the individual and the social problems are closely linked. According to Galsworthy, individual and social issues have diverse characteristics of social realism which correspond to each other. In the earlier plays as well, directly or indirectly he gives importance to the individual coming from the lower strata of the society. Though, Galsworthy attaches greater significance to social questions he gives the same importance to the individuals what we call as outcaste, downtrodden and the oppressed. For example, Mrs. Jones in *The Silver Box*, Annie Roberts in *Strife*, Falder and Ruth Honeywill in *Justice* play a vital role.

The struggle steadily takes a serious shape focusing more on individual grudge that results in the tragedy of Chloe, the woman with a past. There are some excellent theatrical events in the play. For instance, the auction Scene in Act II, Scene I, a clandestine meeting between Chloe and Dawker in Act II, Scene II, and an unfortunate meeting of Chloe with two Strangers in divorce cases in Act III, Scene I. Galsworthy makes these things technically sound and puts distinct
feelings side by side. For example, Mrs. Hillcrist’s offering her smelling salt handkerchief to Chloe just before an interesting auctions scene and a gradual increase of suspense about the meeting between Chloe and Dawker. Besides, the breathtaking disclosure of a meeting between Chloe and two Strangers creates dramatic effect. In addition, Galsworthy’s setting for Hillcrist’s study, Chloe’s boudoir and the auction rooms are implemented efficiently with the smallest amount of excitement, gay and elegant costume.

Galsworthy spares the Scene I of the Act II of the play for auction which is very lively, comic and interesting. It provides an amusement and one of the best carefully written pleasant piece to ease tension caused by murky occurrences which dominate the play. The character of an auctioneer is skillfully drawn, a stand-up comedian by Galsworthy. Like Dawker he symbolizes rising middle class of Victorian and Edwardian English society.

All these occasions exemplify the dramatist’s skill in creating powerful theatrical effect. The facts mentioned above do not reveal anything new about human psychology; they merely underscore and highlight common and ordinary facts of human psyche. The character-sketch and actions are straightforward and inflexible e. g. the broken woman Chloe is different from Mrs. Jones in The Silver Box, or Annie Roberts in Strife and more than Ruth Honeywill in Justice, retaliates to the changing circumstances. This is in fact a feeling of development of the idea of this character. The way Chloe reacts to Dawker exemplifies that she is a strong woman and is mentally prepared to forcefully deal with the attacks of Dawker during their secret meeting:

“Dawker. [Decisively] .....You’re a pawn in the game, and I’m going to use you.
Chloe. [Despairingly] What is it to you? [With a sudden touch of the tigress] Look here! Don’t you make an enemy of me. I haven’t dragged through hell for nothing. Women like me can bite, I tell you.

Dawker. You mistake you man, missis. I’m a plan dog, if you like, but I’m faithful and I hold fast. Don’t try those games on me.

Chloe. [Losing control] You’re a beast!---a beast! a cruel, cowardly beast! And how you dare you bribe that woman here to spy on me?...What d’ you call it---to dog a woman down like this, just because you happen to have a quarrel with a man?”

(SG Act II, Scene II, p. 54)

The subject matter of the play is not just a paltry quarrel over a piece of land that guzzles and in due course wrecks the lives of two rival families, the Hillcrist and Hornblowers, but is somewhat the folly of World War I. In this play Galsworthy unquestionably focuses on painful memories of the violence and chaos as a result of the Great War. He suggests that war should never take place as there are no winners, only losers, just like extreme inconsiderate, the Hillcrists and the Hornblowers. Though Galsworthy’s allegorical assessment of the consequences of war is penetratingly and evidently presented, mainly the nerve-racking auction and Chloe’s collapsing scene, it by no means gives a free hand to theatrical perspective of the subject matter.

4.3.1 The Major Characters

The characters of Galsworthy in this play are both major and minor including younger ones who are more rational and act reasonable in the play. They are more considerate than the older ones. The play depicts the picture of a vulgar battle between two hostile families of Hillcrist and Hornblower over a piece of land in English countryside. The aristocratic Hillcrist’s hypocrisy is exposed
lowering the social morals of his upper middle class pride of Victorian England. The nouveau riche Hornblower, adamant, made proud by riches comes from working class and challenges the aristocratic pride of Hillcrist. His wife Mrs. Hillcrist is an aggressive and vindictive typical upper middle class woman. She plays a dirty game to make public the scandal involving Hornblower’s young married daughter-in-law Chloe to make Hornblower eat a humble pie and re-sell the land. Chloe unnecessarily suffers in a miserable struggle erupts out of social recognition. Dawker, the property agent is cruel and plays the trickiest skin game to outwit the arrogant Hornblowers. There are some minor characters that do not significantly influence actions in the play.

**Hillcrist**

Hillcrist, a country gentleman, is one of the major characters in the play. He is one of the protagonists, but neither a hero nor a villain. He is a slender, shrunken gentleman of about fifty-five, with quite sophisticated, somewhat sympathetic, and to certain extent cantankerous face. He is suffering from gout as a result his left foot is sheathed. His wife is Amy, dominant, aggressive and vindictive woman and nineteen year daughter Jill who is in love with Hornblower’s younger son Rolf.

Hillcrist is badly involved in a vulgar fight with his foe Hornblower over a piece of two hundred acres of land called Centry at Deepwater. Despite being a big land-owner Hillcrist’s financial position is shaky therefore he sells a part of his land to Hornblower. An aristocrat squire Hillcrist comes from Southern county and represents land-owning upper class. He is emotionally attached to this ancestral property with pretty and loveliest trees and scenery. He is a compassionate property owner but does not take interest to develop it. There are some cottages on the land with beautiful meadows. He is an old-fashioned country gentleman who is deep rooted in the English tradition of Victorian era.
His etiquettes and manners and way of general interaction with other people are typical Victorian in nature. A perfect English gentleman, Hillcrist is proud of being an aristocrat in flesh and blood. He always feels that his rival family the Hornblowers can never match and equal with his social standing. Hillcrist is a man of principle but snobbish. As the play progresses his aristocratic position and interests are challenged by one time worker but now a rich businessman Hornblower, who exposes Hillcrist’s hypocrisy.

Though he is not really a henpecked husband, his wife Amy dominates him to such an extent that he is forced to follow her decisions in family and business matters. He bears grudge against his opponent Hornblower and calls him cad meaning that is self-assertive and is least concerned with other people. He has his own philosophy of life and does not forget to preach his daughter Jill that it takes generations to find out how to live and let live. He does not accept and allow anyone to challenge him and slander his family, therefore, he is always ready to play any game and pay in the same coin. Hillcrist believes that all life is a struggle involving people at various phases of development and in different points with social pressure and assets. Any game has to be played according its rules, which Hornblower does not know.

Hornblower’s influence in Deepwater is not acceptable to Hillcrist who thinks that his potteries will change the atmosphere. Moreover, he alleges that Hornblower fostered a ruthless spirit in the region. Hillcrist is upset over Hornblower’s plan to buy Centry and eviction of Jackmans who are living there for thirty years. There is a long discussion between Hillcrist and his wife Amy who advises him that he should have realized long back what sort of a person Hornblower is and taken down everything in writing through Dawker. The major points of discussion reveal the facts:
“Hillcrist.[Suddenly] The Jackmans talk of his having bought the Centry to put up more chimneys.

Mrs. Hillcrist. Never. [At the window, looking out.] Impossible! It would ruin the utterly, besides cutting us off from the Duke’s. Oh, no! Miss Mullins would never sell behind our backs.

Hillcrist. I must stop his turning these people out.

Mrs. Hillcrist. [With a little smile, almost contemptuous] You might have known he’d do something of the sort. You will imagine people are like yourself, Jack. You always ought to make Dawker have things in black and white.

Hillcrist. I said quite distinctly: “Of course you won’t want to disturb the tenancies; there’s a great shortage of cottages.” Hornblower told me as distinctly that he wouldn’t. What more do you want?.....My father would turn in his grave.

Mrs. Hillcrist. It would have been more useful if he’d not dipped the estate, and sold the Centry. This Hornblower hates us; he thinks we turn up our noses at him.”

(SG Act I, p. 11)

The conflict between Hillcrist and Hornblower is over a piece of land disturbs him and irritates him, especially Hornblower’s tricks and foul play to have the possession of the Centry. He thinks that it is showy and insensitive on the part of Hornblower to purchase the land, evict the tenants by issuing notices to them and erecting smoke emitting huge chimneys for his potteries. Hillcrist comes to conclusion that the idea of making the old tenants to vacate the place is a sheer breach of an agreement by Hornblower. Apparently insulted and flummoxed by dirty tricks, Hillcrist is prepared to fight the skin game being played
Hornblower. Due to his good breeding and gentlemanliness he wants to counter-attack within the limits of common decency and decorum.

When his wife Amy and ethically challenged Dawker, his agent is planning to fight against Hornblower by making public the dark secrets of his beautiful daughter-in-law Chloe, he strongly opposes it. Hillcrist does want to diminish Hornblower’s social credibility but does not come in the way of his wife to execute her plan with the help of their property agent Dawker. He thinks that the battle should be fought in a gentlemanly manner and not by blackmailing him, particularly dragging a woman in a dirty game. He has great reverence for woman folk, as it is seen from his act of tendering apology to Chloe’s husband when Mrs. Hillcrist throws Chloe out of their house. He also thinks that women folk should be kept away from this sordid quarrel and it should remain a business of men. He calls it a dirty weapon to use a woman’s secret this way moreover, it might be a ground for criminal action and he does not stand with bringing Chloe in the picture. He also explains to his wife that he is not brought up to harm a woman and he cannot do it. In addition, he thinks that he will never feel like a gentleman in future.

When Hillcrist learns that Hornblower purchased a property in the auction, by planting the neighbouring Duke’s agent as a buyer, he gets very wild and calls it dastardly trick and his opponent won the game by a foul play. He challenges Hornblower that he will see that he cannot take advantage of the property and also threatens to go to court to stop the property being destroyed. Even after heated arguments between Hillcrist and Hornblower, he is still a gentleman in his manners. He does not like Mrs. Hillcrist should threaten Hornblower to play the same foul play as he did to get back the land. He also advises her to leave the affair to men.
After Chloe’s secret is revealed to Hornblower in her very presence, in the evening she approaches Hillcrist appealing him not to disclose her secrets to Charles, her husband, he assures her nothing like that will happen. He also agrees with Chloe to tell Charles something that he believes and everything is right. This shows his deep consideration for woman folk; however he does not realize that damage has already been done. He even does not understand that in a disgusting conflict he compromises his moral and ethical bearing like that of boorish nouveau riche manufacturer Hornblower.

When Chloe tries to commit suicide Hillcrist with the help of Charles takes out Chloe’s motionless body out of water. This incident opens his eyes and wakes him from his deep slumber and immediately tenders his apology. On the contrary, what he realizes at the concluding of the play is too late. Hillcrist’s following expression is enough to prove his moral and social defeat:

“. When we began this fight, we had clean hands--- are they clan now? What’s gentility worth if it can’t stand fire? “

(SG Act III, Scene II, p. 80)

**Hornblower**

Hornblower is another prominent character in the play. Like Hillcrist he is also a protagonist but neither a hero nor a villain. Galsworthy presents him on the stage in Hillcrest’s study in the Act I of the play. He is a man of average stature, scrupulously broaden, blown out, perhaps by a great success he has recently achieved. He has thick, coarse black hair, simply grayish, very thick eyebrows, and a wide mouth. He puts on rather ordinary attire. Hornblower is in the habit of wearing a rose in his buttonhole and carries a Homburg hat creating an impression that it is too small for his head. He is a widower and has two sons Charles and Rolf. The elder son Charles is married to beautiful Chloe and the younger one Rolf is in love with Hillcrist’s a nineteen year daughter Jill.
Hornblower is a rich, prosperous and ambitious but boorish businessman. It is through his behaviour that he promotes class hatred and caste feeling.

He is an arrogant, aggressive and least concerned with other people. He is a newly rich businessman who comes from the northern county of England; as a result he challenges his rival Hillcrist’s privileged life-style and aristocratic airs and principles of life. Rather he hates the aristocratic way of life of Hillcrists who calls Hornblower as fortunate:

“Hillcrist. You’re lucky.

Hornblower. I wonder if Mrs. Hillcrist thinks that! Am I lucky to have no past, ma’am? Just the future?

Mrs. Hillcrist. You’re sure you have the future, Mr. Hornblower?

Hornblower. [With a laugh] That’s your aristocratic rapier-thrust. You aristocrats are very hard people underneath your manners. Ye love to lay a body out. But I’ve got the future all right.“

(SG Act I, p. 13)

Having noticed good clay for his pottery factory he has already purchased a part of land from Hillcrist containing cottages of working people and plans to erect huge smoke belching chimneys for his potteries. Now he intends to purchase another piece of two hundred acres of land, the Centry at Deepwater. His rival Hillcrist does not like it and strongly opposes him as huge and towering chimneys would block a view of his beautiful meadows from the windows of his manor house. This is the bone of contention between two families, the Hillcrists and the Hornblowers.

Galsworthy makes Hornblower a right enemy for hypocritical Hillcrist who is proud of his aristocratic stature, moral and social standing. It is this mask of so-
called morality and high social strata of Hillcrist that Hornblower is determined to tear and brings out reality before the world. Perhaps, this must be Galsworthy’s idea behind creating such type of character like Hornblower. His appearance on the stage shows pseudo morality of bourgeois Englishman of Victorian and Edwardian society. At the same time Galsworthy focuses on the rising middle class who were active in political affairs of England at his time. By introducing Hornblower, a representative of the rising manufacturer from an ordinary worker to rich businessman, Galsworthy shows him a politically ambitious person where he expresses his desire to contest parliamentary election. Moreover, he articulates his plans to turn Deepwater into a prosperous place, showing his ambition to make the place an urban centre.

Hornblower is a sort of person who can play any sort of foul and dirty game to win an auction. He has already managed to trap Hillcrist in a bid by placing the Duke’s agent Mr. Smalley to deal the bid. Thus, a fierce and vulgar struggle between Hornblower and Hillcrist emerges and intensifies over a piece of land. Hornblower is prepared to pay any price to have the possession of the land and brings to an end the aristocratic influence of Hillcrist in Deepwater. It is here a skin game begins between the two rival families. As the auction bid goes up and down the dale, it is Hornblower who succeeds in “the skin game” by quoting the highest price for the land. He charges Hillcrist that he made him pay much higher a price for the land which is not worth half of it.

Hornblower plays dirty tricks and Hillcrist, especially Mrs. Hillcrist is ready to play still dirtier against him by threatening to make public the scandal involving Hornblower’s daughter-in-law Chloe, a woman with past. Mrs. Hillcrist sends two letters to Hornblower to that effect. This terribly disturbs Hornblower but being arrogant and adamant; instead of paying a visit to Mrs. Hillcrist he replies that he will not see her as suggested by her.
Hornblower replies to Mrs. Hillcrist’s letter which he shows to Chloe:

“Hornblower. Madam—You can tell me nothing of my daughter-in-law which can affect the happiness of my family. I regard your note as impertinence, and I shall not be with you at eleven o’clock to-marrow morning”

(SG Act II, Scene II p. 52)

But when the mysterious past of Chloe is revealed as a woman with past, who helped people seeking divorce, he is extremely perturbed. He gets angry with Chloe and tells her that she has crushed everything:

“Hornblower....So that’s your manner of life! So that’s what ye got out of by marryin’ into may family! Shame on ye, ye Godless thing!.

It’s horrible. Poor Charlie!.....And that’s all ye say for the wreck ye’ve wrought. My family, my works, my future! How dare ye!.... [String at her revealed in a new light] Ay; ye look a strange, wild woman, as I see ye. And we thought the world of ye!......Me enemies put their heels upon me head!”

(SG Act III, Scene I, p. 66)

Afraid to diminish his public credibility; Hornblower is ready to resell the land at half the price of bid and save his reputation and social standing.

Terribly annoyed over the entire matter, he admonishes Chloe for having spoiled his ambition and reputation and his future plans. In order to hush up the case, he gets documents ready and makes both Mrs. Hillcrist and Dawker to swear and sign the papers with effect that they will never disclose anything about Chloe in future.
“Hornblower. [Venomously] By heaven, ye’re a clever woman. Will ye swear by Almighty God that you and your family, and that agent of yours, won’t breathe a word of this shockin’ thing to mortal soul.....I swear by Almighty God never to breathe a word of what I know concerning Chloe Hornblower to any living soul....”So long as the Hornblower family do us no harm”.

(SG Act III, Scene I, pp. 67, 68)

But when Chloe’s secret is divulged to Charles by Dawker during their quarrel, Hornblower threatens Mrs. Hillcrist to ruin her place and throttle Dawker. Literary, a fight takes place between Hornblower and Dawker where both try to grip throats of each other. It is with this the land conflict takes a dirtiest shape and Chloe tries to drown herself in the lily pond.

After Chloe’s motionless body is recovered from a lily pond of Hillcrist’s house, Hornblower blames Hillcrist to have destroyed his sons married life and killed his grandchild. He also intimidates that he will take revenge on them by making harm in future. Thus, he brings out hypocrisy of Hillcrist by lowering his own ideals and encourages caste feeling and plays a dirty “skin game” in the worst manner.

Mrs. Hillcrist

Mrs. Hillcrist is the third prominent and important character in the play. She is a well-dressed woman, with a firm, clear-cut countenance. From the first to the last act her presence on the stage is significantly felt. Throughout the play Galsworthy shows her as a woman more with the negative qualities than positive. Her dark side of personality is witnessed in her every action in all acts and the scenes of the play. She is proud of her aristocratic airs and all through the play she shows these typical Victorian characteristics.
Mrs. Hillcrist is very aggressive and dominating woman and gives fitting answer to Hornblower. She equals with Hornblower in hostility and playing tricks to defeat the opponent. If Hornblower plays dirty, she is still dirtier in her tricks to outwit and corner the rival. Though she directly does not show dominance over her husband her actions indirectly control and dominate her. It is because of her dominant nature that the Hillcrist could outsmart, pushy and belligerent Hornblower. She is smart and clever woman in the sense that she makes use of Hornblower’s weakness to toe Hillcrist’s line.

She hates Hornblower and other members of his family. When Jackmans inform Hillcrist that Hornblower has bought the Centry to build more chimneys for his pottery factory, Mrs. Hillcrist is terribly annoyed and disturbed says that it is not only impossible but it is never possible. This is sheer indication of her strong determination that Hornblower never comes in the area dominated by aristocrats like the Hillcrists. Moreover, she feels that it would utterly ruin the place, as he is the man who always thinks of shortcuts to his own way. She tells her husband that Hornblower has no traditions and he is so possessive that he thinks nothing more than money. She tells Dawker, their agent that Hornblower wants to buy the Centry out of spite. When Hornblower tells her that he has no past, but only future, she sarcastically enquires him if he really has future. She does not tolerate Hornblower’s idea to buy the land; moreover, it is insulting to evict the old workers from the place. Her aristocratic airs are seen when she throws out Chloe from her house.

She is very methodical and cautious in her dealing with things and business. She takes interest in the auction and tells Dawker to be very careful as a slightest mistake would be fatal. She also makes it clear to settle the price of bid and not to exceed the price they have already decided. During the auction when the bid goes up and down the dale she tells her husband not to raise the price as there is limit for where to stop. She is very suspicious lady and thinks that it must be the
Duke again participating in the bid. Once the property is gone to Hornblower she warns him that when he fought the foul so will she and advises him to come to some settlement. In order to completely smash Hornblower she writes two different letters to Hornblower threatening him to make public the dark and mysterious secretes of his daughter-in-law Chloe, of course against the will of Hillcrist.

Finally, Hornblower is ready to sell back the land to Hillcrist on the condition that both Mrs. Hillcrist and Dawker swear and sign the papers with effect that they will never open Chloe’s secret. She is so eager to have the land back that she immediately takes a small copy of the Bible from her pocket and putting hands on it she swears as suggested by Hornblower. However, when the secrets of Chloe is disclosed to her husband by Dawker she tells that it is very serious that he should have opened the matter after making a promise and the thing has disturbed Hillcrist. It is true that in the entire land case Mrs. Hillcrist proves herself vulgar, greedy and morally and socially degraded woman.

Chloe

Chloe is daughter-in-law of Hornblower and wife of his elder son Charles. She is quite a beautiful woman, with dark eyes, full red lips. She is going to be mother of Hornblower’s grandchild. She is one of the focal point at the centre of the storm and is an innocent victim caught between two rival families fighting for their social status. She suffers due to her mysterious past. Though she is oppressed like other women characters of Galsworthy she is not a woman to shut her eyes, seal her lips and tolerate passively the mud-slinging against her. She is very strong and bold but due to weak financial condition before marriage she had to earn a living by playing the professional “other woman” in managed divorce cases. It is on the basis of her dark secret and salacious past life that the Hillcrists rout the Hornblowers in the ugly battle over a piece of land.
Towards the end of the play Chloe’s humiliation and isolation is pathetic and creates pathos. We feel sorry when she collapses externally and internally and attempts suicide by drowning into a lily pond. She is forced to resort to this extreme step discovering that she is alone in this world and neither her husband nor father-in-law support her in her tragedy. Thus she is unnecessarily dragged in the bitter class conscience where the rival Hillcrist and Hornblowers play “a skin game”. Galsworthy depicts the character of Chloe as meticulously and sincerely as the social problems he handles in his plays.

There are various instances in the play where we come across that Chloe is insulted some of the other way. She is asked to quiet the house by Mrs. Hillcrist when she was called to the place for the first time by Jill, Hillcrist’s young daughter. It is from here that a series of public insult and humiliation begins in her life. She tolerates insult and disgrace on different occasions. She is badly insulted from time to time by different people on different occasions. For example, Hillcrist, his wife Amy, and the property agent Dawker make her life miserable. Chloe’s father-in-law Hornblower, husband Charles leave her in the lurch especially when she needs their moral and psychological support. Like a criminal she is forced to stand in a witness box by Mrs. Hillcrist and morally challenged Dawker.

Just like in a court of justice she is crossed-examined by these morally bankrupt persons producing two witnesses, the Strangers, to vouch against her. Thus, she is tortured to such an extent that she loses interest in life. Even her maid servant Anna spies on her at the instance of Dawker. At the auction time she happens to meet Mrs. Hillcrist whom she urges that she should be treated as a human being and requests her to come to compromise over the land issue. When Hornblower informs her that he received letters from Mrs. Hillcrist quoting her name, she denies to have done anything wrong and entreats him not to tell these things to Charles.
After the secret of her scandal is revealed she approaches the Hillcrist family and appeals them not to tell the truth to her husband as he is very clever and jealous and he is aware that there is something going on about her. She wants Hillcrist to tell him something positive which would save her married life. Chloe’s situation is extremely desperate and her appeal is just like the one that Mrs. Jones makes to Barthwick in *The Silver Box*, or Ruth Honeywill’s crying over the dead body Falder in *Justice*.

“Chloe...Thank you. And don’t say I’ve been here, will you? He’s very suspicious. You see, he knows that his father has re-sold that land to you; that’s what he can’t make out----that, any my coming here this morning; he knows something’s being kept from him; and he noticed that man with Dawker yesterday. And my maid’s been spying on me. It’s the air. He puts two and two together. But I’ve told him there’s nothing he need worry about; nothing that’s true......I’m a true wife to him.....[Eagerly] When I deceived him, I’d have deceived God. Himself---I was so desperate. You’ve been right down in the mud. You can’t understand what I’ve been through.”

(SG Act III, Scene II pp. 74, 75),

An intense quarrel takes place in her secret meeting with Dawker which takes place in her boudoir. Here her real nature as a strong woman comes to surface. She abuses Dawker for spoiling woman’s life and she would bite him and does not care in the least for Dawker who has spoiled her life. Charles is also unhappy and tells her that she told him all lies and would not want a child by such a woman like Chloe. As all these things are intolerable to her she tries to commit suicide by drowning in a lily pond in front of Hillcrist’s house. But luckily she survives.
Dawker

Dawker is an agent of Hillcrist and a property dealer. He is short, somewhat red-faced terrier of a man, in riding outfits and gaiters. He is cunning, cruel and lacks sympathy for other people. He is always busy with hatching plots against his enemies to completely rout them in the battle for existence. He is also aggressive and does not care to manhandle his foe if it is required. In the last act during his quarrel with Hornblower he tries to grip Hornblower’s throat to teach him a lesson once and for all:

“Dawker. [Seeing red] Now, look ’ere, ‘Ornblower, I stood a deal from your son, and I’ll stand no more.

Hornblower. [To Mrs. Hillcrist] I’ll ruin your place yet! [To Dawker] Ye give me that deed, or I’ll throttle you. [He closes on Dawker, and makes a snatch at the deed. Dawker springs at him, and the two stand swaying, trying for a grip at each other throats....]”

(SG Act III, Scene II, p. 79)

He is morally very weak and exceedingly unprincipled man who despite promise and swearing on the papers and with the Bible in his hand discloses the dirty scandal of Chloe to her husband. In order to collect more information and to totally trounce the Hornblowers he bribes Chloe’s maid servant Anna to spy on her. Moreover, he unearths the dark secret of Chloe and how she used to accompany men to hotels seeking divorce in arranged cases. By presenting Dawker on the stage in such most rude and cruel manner Galsworthy exposes the rise of ambitious middle class during Victorian and Edwardian English society. Dawker’s character also provides us information of social change and collapse of the conventional English class composition in Galsworthy’s time.
Dawker is a dedicated but unscrupulous property agent who is ready to go to any extent and play any dirty game to corner his opponent Hornblower family which he hates like anything. He is determined to have back the land from Hornblower and tells so to Mrs. Hillcrist. Both Dawker and Mrs. Hillcrist want to make public the secrets of Hornblower’s daughter-in-law Chloe so that demoralized and scared of his social credibility Hornblower sells back the land for whatever the price that these two ruffians quote. Accordingly they summon both the Strangers with whom Chloe visited hotels to help people seeking divorce. Dawker speaks to these two Strangers and presents them before Hornblower and Chloe with the hotel register showing the entries of the visit. By following such mean tricks he just presents himself as the worst kind of human being who is not at all concerned with woman folk.

Finally, he wins the skin game making Hornblower accept defeat and resell the land to Hillcrist. By revealing the past of Chloe to her husband he does not think in the least that he is psychologically torturing and ruining her married life. During their secret meeting Dawker uses the most vulgar and indecent language that any man of high social stature would not use in an ordinary course. In his frenzy and the worst type of hatred for Hillcrist he forgets that he is talking to a woman and taking revenge not against Hornblower but against a woman who is not all concerned with the sordid land struggle.

It is true that had Dawker not taken any wrong steps of divulging Chloe’s mysterious past to her husband, Charles that matter would have ended there only without any social and damage to both the rival families. Dawker does everything deliberately to socially ruin the Hornblowers.

4.4 Conclusion

The present chapter focuses on Galsworthy’s moral vision in two plays viz. Justice and The Skin Game. A critical assessment of these plays makes clear
Galsworthy’s idea of morality and ethical values and how they change and affect society and the individual. Trapped in a vicious circle the individual is harassed and finds it difficult to cope with the changing world and its moral and social values. In *Justice* is the victim of corrupt social and legal practices commits suicide when the things prove intolerable to him. The law is a rolling machine that crushes the weak in society. The solitary confinement endangers life of the convict. This is what Galsworthy forcefully objects to and criticizes in *Justice*. The play made British government bring about certain reformation in prison administration when Winston Churchill had taken over as home secretary. In *Justice* Falder’s beloved Ruth Honeywill finds isolated in this world with two children to feed when she is facing very bad days.

*The Skin Game* deals with caste feeling when two rival families fight vulgar and dirty game to defeat each other at the cost of their moral and social ideals. Galsworthy reveals bitter social hatred and class consciousness, a real skin game in which none of the hostile families win but lose the battle degrading their standard. The characters of *The Skin Game* represent Victorian and Edwardian English society facing threat to upper middle class and consequent growth of the middle class that challenges the narcissism and hypocrisy of the aristocratic airs.