CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction
This chapter is largely devoted to the major findings of the present research. It takes review of the earlier chapters and provides pedagogical implications of the study. As the end to this chapter an attempt is made to suggest the scope for further research in the related area.

The present research critically studies the selected plays of John Galsworthy with a view to bring out his moral vision. The plays viz., The Silver Box, Strife, Justice and The Skin Game throw light on moral and ethical problems erupting out of social conventions and social injustice. An attempt is made in this research to throw light on social issues leading to moral and social degradation of the English society during Victorian and Edwardian era. As moral is the keynote of Galsworthy’s plays, they conspicuously portray social maladies prevailing in the English society of his period. The plays also reveal social changes resulting in the fall of upper middle class and gradual rise of middle class. They distinctly depict the problem of morality in the prevailing society and focus on pressing ethical and unethical issues and discuss the major causes.

The plays are considered keeping in mind social, economic, political and cultural background of the period that affects characters and their general behavior in the play. In his plays Galsworthy impartially focuses on the sores and evils in society but does not suggest any remedy. He believes that it is the duty of the artist to merely present an unbiased picture of society and retire. Galsworthy rather leaves the task of delivering a judgment to his readers.
Having trained as a barrister, Galsworthy impartially maintains a balance in dealing with his themes. In order to paint a true picture of the society Galsworthy writes about ordinary and mundane people hitherto ignored by other playwrights. As a common man cannot be a big hero his plays have few heroes and no villains, but his characters are not puppets. They are simple common place street people who we often meet us in our daily life.

Galsworthy’s themes include social decay, disintegration of values leading to chaos and loss of human life. He also concentrates on uneven class structure in society which leads to caste feeling, class consciousness and class hatred. This gives rise to an intense conflict between classes, society and the individual. The individual who is always weaker compared to powerful and strong social conventions he easily becomes a prey to such things leading to his ruin. Moreover, society which comprises corrupt and selfish people creates problems to all. This is a serious defect in society which finally smashes the individual. Therefore, Galsworthy condemns and mocks at such social situations and artificial social classifications that make life miserable, especially to downtrodden, outcaste and the oppressed.

5.2 Major Findings

1. Galsworthy took up to writing very late in his life and his literary journey from the novelist to dramatist was interesting one. The fact is that though he was trained as a barrister, he was never interested in judiciary and he started writing as his vocation. His experiences of childhood, family life and judiciary including his love affair leading to marriage influenced his writing both as a novelist and playwright. His satirical writing and criticism of his own upper middle class finds expression in his plays.

2. Galsworthy has made significant contribution to British drama with his realistic and naturalistic techniques and impartiality in dealing with his
themes of social importance. He dominated the English literary world in the last phase of the nineteenth century and started writing drama in the beginning of the twentieth century. He objectively handles his subject matters to present a true picture of the English society with its weakness and flaws through his subtle characterization. The characters are life size and he does not elevate them to towering personalities and make them noble ones. They are mostly prosaic, mundane and average people presented on the stage as he sees them in real life.

3. The plays The Silver Box and Strife reveal Galsworthy as a social dramatist dealing with social ills, evils resulting in social injustice. He is against the division of society on the basis of class and wealth. This is the major cause of social friction, tension and deterioration of social and ethical values in society. The researcher attempts to critically expose the social weakness and degradation of ethical and moral values of the Victorian and Edwardian society in The Silver Box. The discriminatory treatment meted out to the poor and the weak in society is shown in the study. An attempt is also made to show the sordid class conflict in the play Strife. The bitter struggle between capital and labour is exposed with the help of Galsworthy’s characterization in the play showing how a vulgar fight leads to devastating social and economic effects.

4. An attempt is also made in this research to critically analyze the plays viz. Justice and The Skin Game so far as moral vision is concerned. In writing these plays Galsworthy shows the same interest and lashes out at corrupt judiciary and the way justice is done to criminals. It is the strange way of justice which can be easily purchased if one has a long purse. This is what he shows in Justice. The title is ironically used to mean that justice is not really done to those who hope for it. The play is a critical study of the prevailing judiciary in England at his time. The Skin Game is yet another example of a bitter class hatred resulting in moral and social decay of two hostile families.
foolishly fighting over a piece of land in English countryside. Here, Galsworthy also shows the decline of upper middle class and rise of middle class. It is a conflict of interest between the English aristocratic family and the rising nouveau riche.

5. Moral is the keynote of Galsworthy’s plays which is vital for peaceful and harmonious existence of society and the individual. Accordingly, he forcefully brings out ethical and unethical issues in the selected plays of the present research. The significant characteristic of Galsworthy’s plays is the portrayal of these aspects of modern British life of his period which makes readers to ponder upon. The obvious absence of ethical values in society notably results in social and cultural defiance of the individual who ventures to turn out to be an insurgent against social order and humankind. It is this general restlessness and complexity of Galsworthy’s dramatic world that we come across while carefully reading and critically studying the plays. Galsworthy vehemently exposes social and moral evils, sores and maladies in social life, cruelties and follies leading to wreckage of society and the individual. This is the result of selfish and unchecked economic liberty of the individual who are least concerned for the others in society.

6. Galsworthy brings out the issues of social injustice mainly caused by too much adherence to impractical social conventions and lack of imaginative sympathy for the oppressed, weak, outcaste, and downtrodden in society. The social conventions are such that it becomes intolerable for the individual to follow or practice them. Since he cannot change them, he wages war against them and consequently faces loss in a bitter fight with society. Sometimes society acts cruel to the individual than the fellow members in society. Instead of protecting the individual society inflicts misery on him to such an extent that life becomes unbearable for him.

7. Lack of communal consciousness, compassion for others gives rise to factions and groups fighting for their selfish ends. The acquisitive tendency
in general creates tension in society. Galsworthy feels that we as an individual need to develop social and moral consciousness by becoming more accountable to the sufferer on the lowest step of on the social ladder.

8. It is to be noted here that a vulgar competition and materialist approach prevalent in society forces us to violet rules and regulations of society. Then there are devastating legal, moral and economic consequences which finally ruins those involved in this process. It is the power of wealth that weighs down the scale of justice at the court. It is the riches that determine the right and wrong in the court and the money that separates the sheep from the goats. The oppressed and sufferers are heavily punished only because they are destitute and cannot afford to purchase justice. Galsworthy brings out that justice is settled by financial considerations.

9. In such cases the individual suffers as he unnecessarily fights against the mighty forces where he is bound to be mashed. The clash between society and the individual disturbs Galsworthy as such sorry occurrences are detrimental to peaceful and harmonious existence of a civilized society and its members. In such happenings it is the weaker who suffers the most and Galsworthy’s sympathy undoubtedly is for the oppressed. The humanitarian disposition of Galsworthy intensely makes him conscious of the deplorable state of the individual as placed against the prevailing social institutions and practices.

10. Galsworthy’s play divulge turbulent crisis leading to radical changes mostly affecting human life and society. Modern age with it transformative characteristics like anxiety, doubt, confusion and frustration find expression in his plays. Galsworthy depicts all these social and political changes in his drama making drama as a medium of venting social and all other problems faced by society and the individual.

11. His plays also reveal reinforcement of democracy in England with signs of decline of upper middle class with its formalities and life-style and the rise
of the middle class. This brought about different social changes in Victorian and Edwardian society. The upper middle class and aristocratic principles and standards were challenged by growing middle class and ordinary people. For example, in *The Skin Game*, nouveau riche businessman, formerly workers class, challenges the aristocratic airs over a piece of land in rural England leading to sordid quarrel. This also indicates rapid industrial growth and development.

12. The work of art flourishes in social context and drama is no exception. In his plays Galsworthy gives us a real picture of society of his time portraying society as it is. The romantic analysis of life was based on mere imagination and artists took interest in writing something romantic which had no relevance to real-life situation. Therefore, Galsworthy’s dramatic art exclusively deals with a true picture of his time. Thus his drama is a revolt against romantic flight and its literary principles. His dramas are developed in social context dealing with problems faced by the individual. Therefore, he is called a social dramatist. According to him, an eruption of problem in society is mainly due to wrongs which are left unheeded.

13. The modern dramatic world witnessed rapid literary and social evolution. The growth of drama dominated the panorama with intense influence of science and psychology. The social contexts were modified and crucial issues and themes shaped English drama. The drama of realism interrogated Victorian and Edwardian society and emphasized on social problems. The playwrights of the period came under the influence of Henrik Ibsen’s realism and naturalism. With a view to depicting English society of his time, Galsworthy used the realistic technique in his drama. He realistically reveals the issues of social significance very cautiously and effectively.

14. The plays selected for the present study focus on community and its problems. They show an inexorable and diverse periphery of Galsworthy’s dramatic world. The different social issues, social struggle, conflict, chaos
and confusion in society find space in his dramas. Thus, his total focus is on community at large and the weaker section facing diverse problems.

15. Galsworthy is archetypal humanitarian and has profound admiration for all life. However, his extreme sensitiveness is rather carried too far that his objective and impartial way of dealing with dramatic art is somewhat frustrated. Sometimes he is carried away from his principle of impartial and unbiased writing and it sometimes distorts his own ideas. For example, his sympathy for the downtrodden and the underdog cannot be said impartial and objective way of looking at his dramatic art.

16. Galsworthy’s characters are flat and they do not develop with the progress of the play. He has no villains and few heroes. They are not puppets or remarkably intelligent and peculiar persons but they are just ordinary and mundane street people that we come across in daily life. He has chosen this type of characters for his plays because his themes are taken from ordinary life and social situations. For example, Jones in The Silver Box steals a silver box and Falder in Justice forges a cheque for a paltry sum. These are commonplace issues that he gives preference in the plays and presents a drunkard on the stage which hardly happened in the history of modern drama. His characters are not great heroes who fight against mighty forces like God or kings like in Greek tragedies. Thus, his ordinary and average characters are suitable for the ordinary themes. He does not introduce villain on the stage but he is present among us in the theatre itself. Many a time circumstances play a role of a villain in his plays.

17. Galsworthy is a writer of social tragedy which deals with social problems faced by ordinary people in society. In social tragedy there is no place for external fate and there is no hero and no character of wonderful qualities. Presenting drama with outstanding characters of noble qualities would be deviating from the realistic theory which is the very base of his dramatic art. In his social tragedies he focuses more on the victim of social justice who
miserably fights against circumstances and social forces stronger than him. His characters are too weak to oppose their mighty and powerful antagonists.

18. His weak and oppressed characters are passive and meek. They are either weak or have no power to resist or fight against their powerful rivals. They are silent sufferers, perhaps made so by the situation they face. But there is one such a character like Chloe in *The Skin Game* who musters strength to counterattack her antagonists. The oppressed lots of Galsworthy are Mrs. Jones in *The Silver Box*, Ruth Honeywill in *Justice* and Annie Roberts in *Strife* who choose to maintain to be quiet even when they are supposed to vent their grievances and sufferings.

19. Galsworthy’s younger characters, except one or two, do fairly well. They are rational and reasonable in their behaviour and attitude towards the victim and the weak. They show considerable strength of spirit and possess imaginative sympathy. For example, in *Justice* Walter How son of James is considerate towards Falder and wants his father to show some sympathy and urges him not report the case to police and appeals him to re-employ him. Similarly, Edgar and his sister Enid in *Strife*, appeal their adamant father, the company chairman John Anthony to make compromise and end the strike so that privation, hunger and suffering of workers, their families and children could be stopped. There is, however, one case where Galsworthy shows young Jack Barthwick in *The Silver Box*, son Member of Parliament, as a drunkard and wayward with all bad qualities in him.

20. The victim of socially wrong are rendered helpless, who cannot fight against powerful. They become pathetic rather than heroic figures. When the poor and destitute are not given opportunity to improve their life becomes more miserable. For example, Falder in *Justice* commits suicide as he finds it difficult to get references for his job application. Moreover, he is afraid of being imprisoned again.

21. In Galsworthy’s plays the poor are badly punished only because they
cannot afford to defend their cases. The social institutions are seen going against such people. These institutions leave them in distress and push back to such a desperate situation that they do not become normal again. The only option before them is to either languish in the worst and miserable situation or end their lives.

22. According to Galsworthy, unbalanced individual egotism and self-centeredness, worldly approach and desire to exercise power on others give rise to social discrimination. Such circumstances dominate the scene making the weak and powerless people a victim of the system. The complex social and economic order which we have created is also responsible for social nuisance.

23. Galsworthy clarifies that chivalrous or philanthropic outlook cannot be become medication for social evils. Those who act philanthropic either do not get satisfactory results of their help or they themselves suffer in the process. For example, Falder’s charity towards the wretched woman Ruth Honeywill in Justice lands him in trouble. This becomes a cause of his death in the end. In order to help miserable Ruth he forges a cheque in the office, this does not solve the problem but adds to his woes.

24. Galsworthy is not a missionary reformer nor does he want to preach anything through his plays. Though he has something to teach and preach he does it indirectly. He merely brings out social wrongs to display that how unchecked ambition, dominant financial forces, hypocrisy, social influence create problems challenging the very moral fibre and foundation of society.

25. The real source of nuisance of modern life is that we suffer from extreme egoistic disposition, and shut up ourselves in cocoons. We are not prepared to look beyond our own interests. We do not look at things objectively, and compassionately. Galsworthy thinks that if we put in the place of miserable in society, many of the man-made problems could be solved. Unfortunately this does not happen in the modern society like ours.
26. Galsworthy underscores the problem of adultery in his plays. For example, in *The Silver Box* we come across Jones and Mrs. Jones who had illicit relations before their marriage. In *Justice* Ruth Honeywill is married, has two children, deserts her husband and now she is planning to marry Falder. Meanwhile, during Falder’s imprisonment she easily yields to approaches of her employer. In yet another instance, Chloe, daughter-in-law of Hornblower, in *The Skin Game*, before her marriage used to go hotels with people seeking divorce in arranged cases.

27. There are certain references to personal life of Galsworthy in his plays. For example, the triangle of Falder, Ruth Honeywill and her husband, is related to Galsworthy, Ada and her husband Arthur Galsworthy whom she divorced to marry Galsworthy. Ruth is twenty-six years old and Falder is twenty three, just like Ada who was twenty-six and three years older than Galsworthy. After clandestine love affair of Galsworthy and Ada became public they left London to escape from the prying eyes. One of the plays of Galsworthy *Escape* (1926) is based on it. Falder and Ruth also try to escape from London to South America. Ruth finds it difficult to get divorce so she cannot marry Falder, the case is similar to Ada who had difficulties in getting divorce to marry Galsworthy, thus criticizing the rigid divorce law of the time. Such parallel incidents that Galsworthy introduces in his plays to indirectly prove that the plays have something to do with his autobiographical inclination. Yet in another case in *Strife* the Roberts do not have children and Mrs. Roberts suffers from cardiac ailment. The Galsworthy’s also did not have children possibly for the ill health of Ada.

28. Galsworthy is not a socialist, philosopher, politician painting a rosy picture of society. He is simply a playwright and an artist with inventive ideas. Moreover, Galsworthy is not a pessimistic dramatist; rather he is optimistic in the sense that he is basically a writer, keen observer, and lover of human race. He believes that art has the power to ameliorate social ills and wrongs.
and make society a better place to live. He also thinks that a piece of literary work, is not confined to the artist alone, the art is not merely for amusement or joy but it is also for society and means for general improvement. Galsworthy’s *Justice* has proved this thesis when British government introduced definite prison reforms in England after *Justice* was staged successfully.

### 5.3 Pedagogical Implications

The present research is analytical in nature. It critically evaluates Galsworthy’s selected plays from moral point of view. The four plays viz. *The Silver Box*, *Strife*, *Justice* and *The Skin Game* under study reveal that social and moral problems leading to conflict between society and the individual. It is the unreasonable social conventions and social institutions that inflict misery and injustice on the individual. The present research and its findings are useful academically and it has decisive pedagogical implications.

This analytical study is useful for the students of literature, teachers and research scholars who wish to prosecute their research in similar discipline. The present research unfolds various historical aspects pertaining to the history of British drama from earliest period to the present time. It also covers different issues influencing Galsworthy as a man and the playwright. Galsworthy also dwells upon social themes in order to bring out Victorian and Edwardian lifestyle and their formalities. The study also reveals that Galsworthy’s plays underscore rapid decline of the upper middle class and steady rise of middle class in England at his time. This is one of the significant aspects to understand background and history of English drama and social structure at the time of Galsworthy. The claims and observations made in this research may be used for academic purpose, examination and for advanced studies in drama.
If the plays of Galsworthy are studied in the light of morality prevailed at the time when the plays were being written one can comprehend and interpret the social economic, political and cultural situations. Teaching the plays of Galsworthy is a challenging task before the teachers of English. But if the teachers are made aware of the then existing values they will be able to teach the plays of Galsworthy in an effective manner.

5.4 Scope for Further Research

The present study focuses on degradation of moral values in society and how Galsworthy looks at these changes in his selected plays. The researcher believes that there are different issues that can be tapped for further research on Galsworthy as a dramatist. The research can be conducted independently by selecting different characters in the plays under study. For instance, women characters, generation gap between old and young characters leading to friction within family and amongst the groups of the same age are best topics for research. Besides, Galsworthy’s skill of characterization focusing on common and ordinary people as characters from everyday life can make study interesting and remarkable. The social situations resulting in social injustice and social conventions inflicting misery on the individual can be critically evaluated.

Research may be undertaken on Galsworthy as a social dramatist, the problem of adultery in Victoriana and Edwardian English society depicted in his plays. The techniques of parallelism, realism and naturalism, irony of situation and characters, animal imagery used in the plays may be considered for further research. In addition, comparative study of Galsworthy and Ibsen, Galsworthy and Shaw and Granville-Barker may be challenging task of research.

As Galsworthy belongs to the realistic school of Norwegian playwright Henrik Ibsen, the subject matter of realism and naturalism in his plays can be selected for additional research. Moreover, the plays can be analyzed considering new
theories and principles in language studies, particularly in sociolinguistics and pragmatics. Austin and Searle’s typology of speech acts may be applied to the plays of Galsworthy and can be critically examined against soci-economic and cultural background.