Chapter I

JAMES C. COLEMAN'S THEORY OF ABNORMAL PSYCHOLOGY

Eugene O’Neill observed the social, political and economic conditions of the world after first World War and felt restless due to the stresses that people faced after 1918. A lot of people found themselves helpless as they lost the earning member of the family. Numberless widows and orphans cursed the authorities that were responsible for the war. Nobody thought of its bitter consequences earlier. Many people became the patients of neuroses, dementia, depression, drug abuse, sociopathic disorders, schizophrenia, transient situational disorders etc. The economic depression added fuel to fire as their means of income were meagre now. A lot of factories had been closed due to lack of resources and the labourers were jobless for many years. There was economic uncertainty in the world and the merchants were not prepared to take the risk. A lot of vices prospered due to lack of money and helpless women had no option but to sell their body for bread. Nobody thought of giving a new shape to education these days. As a realist Eugene O’Neill minutely noticed the growing tensions of the people and presented the same on the stage. He accepted that war was responsible for growing
violence and racial discrimination in the society. He felt bewildered when he found mass madness in society. He tried his best to analyze the causes of prejudices and discrimination and presented them in *All God's Chillun Got Wings*. In *The Hairy Ape* and *The Emperor Jones* he expressed his hatred against exploitation of man by man. He asks himself — Why does man strive to kill other members of his own society? Why does he not follow the dictates of his conscience? How does he come in clash with his environment? What are the new causes of his frustration, stress, pressure and conflicts? How does he behave in times of stress? In *Strange Interlude* he describes the conflict between father and daughter, husband and wife, mother and son, lover and beloved etc. Here he expressed his faith in God so as to seek solace and relief from tensions. After all positive action has got to be taken for mental health and a healthy world.

In *Abnormal Psychology And Modern Life* James C. Coleman describes the causes of abnormal behaviour today. Here he refers to various psychological viewpoints to confirm his theory. It is true that 18th century is regarded the Age of Reason. Unfortunately 20th century is accepted as Age of Anxiety as people have faced a lot of social unrest and grief due to many wars, racial prejudices,
unhappy marriages, cut-throat competition, pollution, technological advances, impersonal bureaucracy etc. It is true that the modern people have invented new means of communication and transportation and yet they lead a life of tension. Inspite of the growth of knowledge, they fail to understand the meaning of human existence. At times they fail to accept the traditional God, The Bible, the church, the temples, etc. and question the existing values regarding religion, education, sex, marriage, socialism, secularism, democratic set up etc. The result is catastrophe. They have discovered new theories regarding atom, gene, nuclear energy and yet fail to enjoy meaningful life. They fail to develop a positive approach to life as they have no answers to contemporary problems. The number of heart attacks has increased and the cases of crimes are reported almost everyday in the court. As the system of dehumanization continues, artists like Arthur Miller and Eugene O'Neill make efforts to create the interest of people in human life. James C. Coleman pathetically says:

Despite the stress of modern life, most people still manage to ‘muddle through’, worrying along and solving their problems after a fashion. But for many people, the stress proves too
great. It is startling to note that emotional disturbances incapacitate more people than other health problems combined. (5)

Due to growing emotional conflicts and tensions, abnormal behaviour is regarded the biggest problem of society. People have no concept of intimate personal relationships. They fail to adjust with other members of family, society and the state and the result is agony. Few people of Athens failed to accept the theory of virtue as given by Socrates. Many soldiers of Greece didn’t admire the adventures of Alexander the Great. The personal conduct of Jean Jacques Rousseau was disgusting and some of his biographers called him a ‘monster’. Abraham Lincoln appeared abnormal to the Americans who supported slavery. James C. Coleman quotes the examples of Schopenhauer, J.S. Mill, Rabelias, Samuel Butler, Burns, Poe etc. as they had days of depression in life. King Lear appeared to be an abnormal person to Goneril and Regan. Lady Macbeth lost her sense of reason after the murder of King Duncan. James C. Coleman says:

Literature yields valuable information about personality dynamics, about mental disorders prevalent during a
particular historical periods and about
the inner experiences of those who
have undergone such disorders. (8)

In *A Passage To India* E.M. Forster describes
the abnormal behaviour of Adela Quested after she
has visited the dark caves. Many patients pause as
Napoleon, Bismarck, Hitler, Lenin etc. as they are
not fully conscious of their surroundings. Many
Nazis and Fascists behaved in abnormal manner
during the Second World War as they exploited
power for selfish purposes. Eugene O'Neill makes
sincere efforts to study the thought process of
people to understand the source of their abnormal
behaviour. James C. Coleman asserts that there is
minor difference between normal and abnormal
people. He says:

There was not ‘normal’ people on the
one hand and ‘abnormal’ people on the
other — two different and distinct
kinds of beings ... Most people are
moderately well adjusted, with minor
maladaptive patterns; a few at one
extreme enter mental hospitals or
clinics; and a few at the other
extremes lead unusually satisfying and
effective lives. (11)
He does not accept that the people are incurable if their conduct is abnormal. Why to regard all of them as ‘unstable and possibly dangerous’? At times patients respond well to treatment and then lead a healthy life in family and society. Eugene O’Neill deals with such people — their conduct is abnormal at times and yet they are not a threat to society. For the scientists too, the abnormal means ‘away from the normal’. In some cases people feel excessive stress due to long sickness, loss of job, frustration in love, etc. and the situation may create some sort of confusion and disagreement. For example, in A Touch of The Poet Con Melody is not prepared to accept his present poverty and survives in his grand past. At times he stands before the mirror and recites lines from Byron’s Child Harold. He recollects:

It’s a far cry from this dunghill on which I rot that glorious day when the Duke of Wellington — Lord Welsey, then — does me the honour before the army to commend my bravery. (30)

He leads a life of illusion as present appears disgusting to him. Actually the real major is dead and yet he pretends to keep the past glory and forces his wife Nora and daughter Sara to lead a wretched life. Due to his abnormal behaviour he does not
bother for the poverty of the family and keeps a costly mare to satisfy his ego. The result is that there is wide gap between husband and wife and also between father and daughter. All of them suffer due to loneliness and fail to share each other’s sufferings. In *The Iceman Cometh* he describes the sufferings of the people who have mistaken conceptions and perceptions regarding permanent realities. They fail to understand the social, political and economic problems of society and hence possess false apprehensions of happiness. They have no mindfulness of the world that is governed by the theory of cause and effect.

For Hitler people were normal if they sacrificed themselves for the state. The same people were called abnormal if they followed the fundamentals of democracy and wanted liberty of expression. Same policy was adopted by Mussolini and Stalin. To confirm his theory of abnormal behaviour James C. Coleman judges man in relation to his family, community and the nation. People behave in abnormal manner when they are drug addicts. Due to schizophrenia and drug intoxication they may behave in abnormal manner. Due to fear of undesirable consequences of their action they may be victims of maladaptive behaviour. Racial prejudices and unethical business practices may force a person to
act in abnormal manner. There may be serious
disturbance in normal functioning due to several
reasons. A few people may feel emotional
disturbance due to personal distress and Abbie can
be cited as the best example for this. A few thinkers
blame faulty learning for ‘behaviour disorder’.
Mental illness is little different from severe
personality disorganization. Insanity indicates
mental incompetence for managing one’s affairs and
Eugene O’Neill describes the history of insanity in
the family of Evans. Due to a curse in the family he
does not have the potency to produce a healthy child.
So, James C. Coleman has classified the categories
of abnormal behaviour. Eugene O’Neill depicts
different people on the stage as representatives of
various shades of abnormal behaviour.

Like Freud, Alfred Adler, C.G. Jung, Karl
Menninger etc., Eugene O’Neill analyzes the causes
of people’s anxiety, depression and personal
distress. He feels that it is essential to understand
the causes of abnormal behaviour. After having
assessed these causes it becomes easier to prescribe
the treatment for each victim of abnormal behaviour.
Psychiatry is the science meant for such treatment
and a lot of patients are leading normal life after
going proper advice from psychiatrists. Psychologists like Alfred Adler studied the materials
of art, history, religion, parapsychology etc. to reach some conclusion. After all the victims of abnormal behaviour also want to lead a life of dignity and integrity and have definite goals to achieve. They too want to be happy in personal life.

While studying the history of abnormal behaviour James C. Coleman studied the writings of many Chinese, Egyptian, Greek and French thinkers. Hippocrates classified the varieties of mental disorder and asserted the importance of clinical observations and brain pathology. Chinese thinker Tseng studied the cases of mental disorders and suggested medical treatment. People were often burnt alive and called heretics as they failed to obey the traditional social and political rules. Quite often it was accepted that the victims of abnormal conduct were controlled by the ghosts and witches. In France Joan of Arc opposed the authority of bishops and feudal lords and was consequently burnt alive as a heretic in 1431. But Paracelsus (1490-1541) and Johann Weyer (1515-1588) analyzed various scenes of imprisonment, torture and burning of persons that were accused of witchcraft. They suggested that most of these people were really mentally sick and not witches or heretics. After French Revolution Pinel made a few experiments and treated mentally sick people with kindness and consideration. An English
Quaker established York Retreat for such people and got tremendous success. So the need of humanitarian treatment was felt to cure mental disorders and Moral Therapy was minutely studied and practised. Efforts were made to educate the people to reduce the general fear of insanity and abnormal conduct. Such revolutionary views changed socio-cultural approach to human behaviour. Five theories became popular to analyze psychological processes — the psychoanalytic, the behaviouristic, humanistic, existential and interpersonal.

The advocates of psychoanalytic model asserted the concept of id, ego and superego and the individual behaviour is judged with the interaction of these three key systems. It is regarded as the source of instinctual drives — constructive drives and destructive drives. Constructive drives constitute basic energy of life whereas the destructive drives lead to aggression, destruction and eventual death. The id is fully selfish and generally concerned with ‘immediate gratification’ of instinctive needs. It ignores realities and ethical considerations. Eben’s sexual affair with Abbie confirms it. But ego creates a link between the demands of id and the realities of the external world. Here the survival of the individual seems important. It is said that ego operates with reality principle.
Freud gave the concept of superego known as conscience also. It is basically concerned with right and wrong. Eugene O’Neill follows this theory of id, ego and superego while analyzing the tendencies of his characters. Generally he relates the action with the ego and superego of his people. When Abbie kills her son to prove her love for Eben, her destructive drives dominate her.

Freud gave the concept of personality development and defined oral stage, anal stage, phallic stage, latency stage and genital stage. For him gratification during each stage is important. Then he gave the concept of interpretation of dreams as all dreams are not absurd and insignificant. His concepts of the development of psychoanalytical techniques and the demonstration of abnormal mental phenomena have been analyzed by later psychologists. He accepts the role of unconscious memories and feels the importance of inner-self experiences. But Alfred Adler gave emphasis to social rather than inherited determinants of behaviour. He was the first thinker to assert the importance of ‘active, creative and conscious self.’

Many psychologists attached due importance to the concepts such as — self as a unifying theme, values and personal growth, positive view of human
nature and potential, active participation in life, self-regulation, self-direction etc.

Heidegger, Jaspers, Kierkegaard and Jean Paul Sartre gave the theory of existentialism. It may not be a systematic theory and yet it is connected with ‘the ultimate challenge of human existence’. These thinkers have the intention to build a ‘meaningful and social constructive life as they find relation between existence and essence. They attach importance to choice, freedom and courage. For them, each individual is a free agent to select his own goals. They feel that all people generally learn to live constructively with themselves and others. Some of these thinkers illustrate the ‘existential anxiety’ and the ‘encounter with nothingness.’ They know that death is inevitable. James C. Coleman says:

Existentialists are very much concerned with the social predicament of modern human beings. They emphasize the weakening of traditional values and the crisis of faith; the depersonalization of the individual in our bureaucratic mass society; and the loss of meaning in human existence. (72)
Some psychologists assert that a few people behave in abnormal manner as they fail to make progress for personal development. Quite often they become the victims of social and political pressures. Yet Thibault and Kelley assert the importance of 'social-exchange' i.e. the need to form relationships with others for satisfying our needs. Ruth Benedict (1934) aptly said:

What is considered abnormal in one society may be considered normal in another. (78) As great social changes have taken place in society, interdisciplinary approach has been followed by psychologists to reach some conclusions. Yet they accept that accidents, deficiencies and diseases may erode the system's potentials for effective action. (82)

At times the physical environment may affect the psychology of people as Eugene O’Neill describes through Jim and Ella. Apart from heredity, environment is an important factor in development of personality. O’Neill’s Brutus Jones attaches importance to ‘me’, ‘I’ and ‘self’. Of course, the gap between the ideal and the real can’t be denied. While
illustrating general principles of development James C. Coleman says:

The pathway from infancy to maturity involves increasing differentiation, integration and complexity of structure and behaviour. On a psychological level, this is evidenced in the progression from dependence to self-direction. (83)

Like major psychologists, Eugene O'Neil attaches due importance to trends of maturity, self-control, ignorance, knowledge, competence, incompetence, sexuality, moral, immoral and other principles of development of personality. He accepts that human personality is complex at times and the behaviour of people is not stable on so many occasions. Learning plays a crucial role in the orderly progression of personality development. As stimulation, security and avoidance of pain are essential, the biological needs shape human personality. While judging the psychological requirements James C. Coleman accepts the importance of curiosity, order, understanding, predictability, adequacy, competence, love, belonging, approval, hope, ethical values, strivings etc. While analyzing motivation and behaviour he
follows the concept of needs and strivings so as to point out the differences among various people. Like Alfred Adler, Eugene O’Neill accepts that the two brothers or two friends have different motives and hence strive for their aims in different manner. Like Sigmund Freud, he follows the concept of conscious, subconscious and unconscious aspects of motivation and *Strange Interlude* confirms this fact.

Like Shakespeare, Henrik Ibsen, Arthur Miller, G.B. Shaw, Galsworthy etc., he decided to be a creator of a new world. His tragedies confirm his interest in the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Petrarch, Seneca, Shakespeare etc. He revived the Greek tragedies in 20\(^{th}\) century and at the same time compromised with contemporary social and political needs of the people. A few plays of Ibsen’s such as *The League of Youths*, *A Doll’s House*, *The Lady From The Sea*, *John Gabriel Borkman*, etc. affected him much. *A Doll’s House* awakened women and made them conscious of their equal rights. Egil Tornqvist accepts the influence of Ibsen upon the tragedies of Eugene O’Neill and says:

Ibsen’s impact on O’Neill ironically reaches an apogee in the play that was hailed in Europe as a sign that
America was at last living up to its New World reputation in the field of drama. The play is Anna Christie. Engel notes in passing that like Ibsen’s Ellida, in The Lady From The Sea. Anna Christie longs for the open sea. As a matter of fact there is a close affinity not only between the two heroines but also between the plots of the two plays. This appears not least from Shaw’s synopsis of Ibsen’s drama in Quintessence. But whereas Ellida abstains from her seaman, Anna decides to marry hers. (25)

Like major playwrights of 20th century, O’Neill notices conflicts between man and society, between son and father, between husband and wife, between master and servant, between brothers etc. and he never felt the need of long poetic plays as the socio-ethical ideas were important to him.

The theory of Naturalistic realism as given by Zola, Flaubert and Balzac influenced O’Neill as he was not prepared to fly on the mere wings of imagination. Like other American dramatists, he depicts various political and economic problems on the stage in true colours. It is true that a few
theatres were established in New York after first World War and the people enjoyed watching them. In these new plays man was presented in relation to his changing social and political scenario.

Now new technology gave new machines and new power to the capitalists. Consequently society was divided between Haves and Have-Nots. Like Bernard Shaw and Arthur Miller, Eugene O’Neill describes the gap between the capitalists and the labourers in *The Hairy Ape*. Under the influence of Karl Marx he raised his voice against exploitation of man by man.

He observed that the labourers enjoyed no individual freedom in the age of industrialization. The labourers led the life of slaves. At times they had no money to buy medicines, clothes, food etc. for their family. Like G.B. Shaw and Galsworthy, Eugene O’Neill raises his voice against the American traders as people like Yank were humiliated due to inhuman policies. He observed the affect of first World War upon the Americans as they were badly hit with the economic depression and unemployment. Now the merchants were not prepared to start any unit for production. There was uncertainty in the world market. Now there was no demand for weapons. The hopes of American soldiers were not
fulfilled due to lack of resources. The government of many nations had no money to pay the salaries of soldiers as their treasury was empty. Consequently soldiers were badly disappointed and had to starve. They were badly disillusioned due to economic factors. The German soldiers had to face a lot of disaster in the country. Now the British and American authorities were cruel towards Germany and planned to take revenge from Germany people. Due to depression, a lot of shops were closed in America. Many people became jobless. Many people planned to travel in another parts of country to get jobs and Eugene O’Neill mentions this fact in Desire Under The Elms. Cabot’s elder sons Simeon and Peter leave him for attractive jobs in California. Unemployed women felt forced to sell their body as mentioned in Desire Under The Elms and The Great God Brown.

A few political theories became popular in America when Eugene O’Neill wrote plays. In Das Capital Karl Marx asserted that all means of production should be controlled by the proletariats. The Utilitarians advocated the theory of ‘greatest good of the greatest number’. J.S. Mill asserted the theory of human liberty. The Anarchists like Bakunin and Proudhaon called state an evil and regarded it the symbol of tyranny. The Individualists said that
‘state is a necessary evil’ and minor functions are to be performed by the state. On the contrary Hegel wanted to give all the rights to the state. For him citizens are insignificant. As a thinker O’Neill ignores these political theories and asserts the need of wisdom and prudence for a pleasant world.

Like Sigmund Freud and Alfred Adler, O’Neill analyzes the conscious, sub-conscious and unconscious mind of his people. As a thinker he raises various questions such as — Why does Robert fail to satisfy Ruth? Why does he fail to work hard on the farm? Why does he not fulfil his promise to wife and daughter? Why does Andrew fail to enjoy a life of adventures out of America? Does Andrew bring back a fund of knowledge? Does he feel rewarded in life?

Then he asks a few questions such as — What are the problems and tensions of Abbie? Why does she feel insecure in life? Does Eben satisfy his lust with Abbie? How does his lust convert into love? Does Abbie really love Eben later on? What are the problems of various jobless people as pointed out in The Iceman Cometh? Why do the Whites hate the Blacks? Why does the creative artist Charles Marsden suffer in Strange Interlude? Is it possible to retain patience for such a long time? In Strange
In *Interlude* the artist describes the conscious and subconscious mind of his people and his experiment succeeds even on the stage.

Eugene O'Neill became popular among the people with the first performance of *Beyond The Horizon* (1920). Here he followed the methods of the theatre and the American audiences admired this sublime tragedy. Many reviews appeared in the magazines and it is still regarded a lofty attempt of the artist. His *Anarchistic* also succeeded on the stage as a work of art. Then *The Emperor Jones* succeeded on the stage and he created the atmosphere of fear with the help of tom-tom. He exposed the tyranny of Negro Jones as he exploited other Blacks on the Island. Normally his father proved to be the best source of inspiration for him. Yet he felt sad as he lost his family within a short time. For some time he could not concentrate on his art and then wrote plays on the themes of death. Stephen A. Black admires O'Neill's *Desire Under The Elms, Strange Interlude* and *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. Generally life was tough for him due to bitter memories of the past. Still he tried his best to gather his mental courage to face the dead past. Quite often he felt highly disturbed. Despite all tensions he could understand value of positive approach to life. He never lost interest in present and future. He had
observed real passionate people like Abbie, Eben. Dr. Darrel, Marsden, etc. In his leisure hours he enjoyed reading the sublime works of Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, Wilde, Whitman, Swinburne, Baudelaire, Fitzgerald, etc. Soon he learnt the technique of writing long scenes so as to follow the technique of drama.

During the illness of mother his brother Jamie raised dispute regarding the family property of Glindale. Actually Jamie wanted to possess the entire property. But his mother Ella did not submit before this pressure and Jamie felt frustrated. Later on this property was passed on to Eugene. With the death of his mother Eugene felt mentally hurt. As Jamie died soon, Eugene could not tolerate this agony. At times he analyzed his personal conduct. As a mystic he thought on the issues of death, soul, God etc. as Stephen A. Black remarks:

While at Princeton O'Neill was greatly affected by Nietzsche and over the years an impulse toward what might be called scientific mysticism had become increasingly prominent. As he stopped drinking and tried to accept his deeds, his plays show him turning increasingly toward a view of the
world influenced by Nietzsche, psychoanalysis and the ancient Greeks. (12)

When he got the Nobel Prize (1936) he felt certain as the audience accepted his theatrical skills. The tragedies *A Touch Of The Poet* and *The Iceman Cometh* appealed the audiences as he had analyzed the unconscious mind of his people. Stephen A. Black remarks:

In a certain sense, allowing for the condensations and distortions of the unconscious and the poetic mind, the fates of Parritt and Hickey reflect O'Neill's understanding of the reaction of himself and Jamie to their mother's life and death. The most important biographical meaning of Iceman is this: understanding allows O'Neill to go beyond the distorted and unconscious to write his next play in a style and manner that, compared to Iceman, seems in its private meanings clear and undisguised. (14)
There is no denying the fact that *Strange Interlude*, *Long Day’s Journey Into Night* and *Desire Under The Elms* got wonderful success in America and the audiences admired his approach to fundamental questions. Actually O’Neill never wants to run from basic problems of life and writes on death and loss. Many critics praise him for creating hope in the hearts of people. With different situations he inspires people for reconciliation. After all O’Neill has a desire to tolerate every phase of life. Stephen A. Black admires his positive vision and says:

As before in the past two decades, O’Neill’s subject is mourning, but in both plays, there is hope that one may recover from grief and return to life somehow enlarged and more coherent as a result of the experience. In *Hughie*, in the space of an hour, O’Neill shows the gambler Erie Smith mourning his friends Hughie and passing beyond mourning and tragedy to that strange sort of dramas written after a lifetime ... (15)

O’Neill was fed up with gloomy and complex life of contemporary people. So he tried to pacify
them. Like Nietzsche, he asked them to 'be hard'. Regarding the influence of Greek tragedies upon his plays, Egil Tornqvist remarks:

Like Nietzsche, O'Neill considered Greek tragedy the unsurpassed example of art and religion. Enacted in theatres that were also temples, it had a religious spirit that O'Neill found 'completely lacking in modern life' to recreate the Greek spirit was the goal he set for himself. The mystical Dionysian experience of being part of the Life Force that Nietzsche found communicated in the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles, O'Neill hoped to impart, through his plays, to a modern audience. ... (19)

O'Neill tells people that there is no death for soul, God, good and The Bible. There is no wisdom in having a negative approach to life. Nobody can solve problems with mere lamentation and suicide. He felt interested in the books of Freud and Jung and wrote to Martha Caroly Sparrow:
There is no conscious use of psychoanalytical material in any of my plays. All of them could easily have been written by a dramatist who had never heard of the Freudian theory and was simply guided by an intuitive psychological insight into human beings and their life-impulsions that is as old as Greek dramatists. I have only read two books of Freud's *Totem And Taboo* and *Beyond The Pleasure Principle*. The book that interested me the most of all those of the Freudian school is Jung's *Psychology Of The Unconscious* which I read many years ago. If I have been influenced unconsciously it must have been by this book more than any other psychological work. (22)

In *Strange Interlude* and *The Great God Brown* he answers mysterious questions regarding the force of God. How can people survive in a world devoid of divine blessings?

People adopt foul means to earn money and blame God for their sufferings. This is foolish approach to life. In *Strange Interlude* O'Neill asks
people to trust the ways of God. It is true that he
takes inspiration from his predecessors and yet felt
the needs of new theatre. So, he joins the new
dramatic movement. Joseph Wood Krutch remarks:

About nineteen hundred and fifteen, however, a new dramatic movement began. A well-defined group of playwrights consciously revolted against the timid artificialities of our stage and began to compose works intended for the theatre but written with the sincerity and passion which had hitherto been found only in other literary forms. As a result, the American drama became, almost over night, something with which every student of contemporary literature had
to reckon. (XI)

J.W. Krutch admires the technique and content of O'Neill's plays and says:

His is the first name to be mentioned in any discussion of the American theatre of today, and he is the only one of our playwrights who has a wide
international fame. Moreover, there are, as we shall see, certain respects in which his aims and his methods differ sharply from those of his fellows, and because of that fact he is not only the outstanding member of a group but also, and in an important way, unique.

(XI)

In many plays he reveals the major incidents of his life. It is absolutely true that he never deviates from the path of probability. Joseph Wood Krutch confirms:

... the story of O’Neill’s life has been largely the story of many plays, almost all written with a passionate and absorbing faith in the importance of the task their author had set himself. A good many of these plays were discarded, few of them failed in production; but, on the whole, the history of O’Neill’s progress is to be told largely in series of plays which made him step by step, the most arresting of the young experimentalists, the most distinguished of American dramatists,
and, finally, a playwright of international fame. (XIII-XIV)

Like other Americans, O’Neill was conscious of growing restlessness of the war-hit people. His wives failed to understand his emotional needs. But Carlotter Monterey made him feel relaxed. His tragedies confirm his voice against injustice and cruel society. He aspired for a world devoid of social and political evils. Joseph Wood Krutch confirms:

Nevertheless, the O’Neill of today is primarily the dramatist and the poet whose intensest life is an international one. Gentle of voice and preternaturally shy, he is unhappy in the presence of more than two or three people and his work absorbs him almost completely, though it is obvious enough that for him writing is not only an all-engrossing but also an almost frenziedly existing task. In a word, all the striving, the protest and the passion of his nature have found a clear, adequate channel in his art. (XIV)
Many critics accept that Eugene O’Neill admired major poems of A.C. Swinburne and took inspiration from them. While writing Long Day’s Journey Into Night he had popular lines of Swinburne’s Before The Beginning of Years, A Leave-Taking, Eroton etc. in his mind. In Eroton Swinburne describe the gulf between two lovers:

Who love not as I love thee though I die;
And though thy lips, once mine, be oftener prest
To many another brow and balmier breast,
And sweeter arms, or sweeter to thy mind.
Lust thee or lure, more found thou will not find. (40-44)

In A Leave-Taking A.C. Swinburne mentions the futility of love:

Let us go hence, go hence; she will not see,
Sing all once more together; surely she,
Sing too, remembering days and words that were,
Will turn a little towards us, sighing;
but we,
We are hence, we are gone, as though we had not been there
Nay, and though all men seeing had pity on me,
She would not see. (37-44)

While writing *The Iceman Cometh* (1939) Eugene O'Neill was conscious of the growing political tensions in the world at large. Russian farmers and labourers became happy with the positive results of Bolshevik revolution of 1917. After ten years they were shocked with the dictatorship of Stalin. After the death of Lenin, their fundamental rights were suspended. Stalin captured all political powers in the name of economic growth and the labourers had to work harder than before. In *The Iceman Cometh* he refers to the hopes of Hugo who expects much with the events of revolution. There was a general feeling that the revolutionaries fail to achieve their noble aims. Political situation is manipulated by a dictator as had happened in France (1792). Napoleon Bonaparte didn’t care for the slogans of equality, liberty and fraternity. In this
tragedy nobody cares for the hopes of Hugo as he survives in the utopian world.

Eugene O’Neill studied the views of Proudhaon. But the Anarchists had no faith in the administration of state and regarded political powers as the source of corruption and tyranny. A few anarchists left the movement as they could not achieve the desired result. In The Iceman Cometh Larry loses his faith in the political movement of anarchists though his beloved Rosa Parritt continues to support it. Due to his impractical approach Larry forgets his past and even hates the truth. He admits:

To hell with truth! ... the truth has no bearing on anything. It’s irrelevant and immaterial ... The lie of a pipe dream is what gives life to whole misbegotten mad lot of us, drunk or sober. (623)

In The Iceman Cometh Eugene O’Neill describes the tensions of common people as they are badly hit with the production of weapons. Actually he is conscious of the ugliness of life. Larry, Don Perritt, Hickey etc. fail to lead a pleasant life. As an artist Eugene O’Neill is conscious of the unity between
sublime thoughts and majestic expression. His biographers believe that he felt restless at heart after having written nearly eight tragedies. Quite often he used to argue with himself on the questions of life and death. Still he didn't give up his hope for brave new world. Of course, he did not admire the people who became a victim of self-contempt. How could he admire women like Rosa Perritt who lived like whores? How could they pretend to be free women? At times the actors wanted certain changes in the lines of script. But alas! He was not prepared for any change to please the actors. How can they be the judge of creativity?

At times he met revolutionaries like Larry and Don Perritt. Such people had no idea of state-administration and social-reconstruction. Men like Joe Mott disgusted him as they want to make money with gambling houses. Such people had no noble ambitions in life and made him angry. He failed to appreciate their utopian approach to life. Regarding the content and expression of The Iceman Cometh Rosamond Gilder remarks:

*The Iceman Cometh* is made of good theatre substance — meatry material for actors, racy dialogue, variety of character, suspense and passion — all
within the straitjacket of a rigid pattern. It is also primarily an allegory of man's pitiful estate, a parable of his search for redemption. (203)

Pat MC Cloin, Ed Mosher, Hugo, Hickey, Captain Lewis, Larry, Willie Oban, Joe Mott, Parritt etc. visit Harry Hope's Saloon and drink a lot of wine here to forget the problems of life. Some of them recollect their pleasant dead past and often hope for delightful future. But they are fed up with their present. Willie Oban hopes to be a successful lawyer soon. Jimmy hopes to join as a press reporter. Don Perritt wishes to change the political system though his mother is a regular cause of his worry. Larry leads the life of illusion and tries to ignore the present realities. Being thoughtful by nature Hugo thinks of hard realities and analyzes the causes of his failure. Captain Lewis plans to return to England. Even Ed Mosher feels that he is sure to get back his job the day he wants. Through such people Eugene O'Neill satirizes the utopian approach of contemporary people. Soon Hickey joins them and illustrates his plans to reform the social structure. However he is tense as he has killed his wife Evelyn out of hatred. Eugene O'Neill could paint such people in real colours as he had met such people in various bars of New York. Often these people
recollected their past deeds and drank wine. At times they drink wine to forget their tensions. Sometimes they become unconscious due to excessive drinking. The artist asserts that such people have no relation with truth and wisdom. However, Eugene O’Neill does not have obscure thoughts. He remains the follower of detachment and liberation. Through Don Perritt and his mother he satirizes the immoral activities of people as they are responsible for their own tensions.

Through different dialogues he proves that drunkenness is the real source of disaster. These drunkards forget the merits of life and escape from their real self. It is aptly said that he had suffered all these tensions himself. The sinners fail to get rid of their sins with the help of drinks. Still they fail to forget their terrible desires and inhibitions. They don’t know that alcohol increases their nostalgia. How can wine cure their loneliness. They are depressed when they enter the bar and remain depressed even the next day. Wine fails to stimulate them for noble deeds. So the artist is a supporter of delight, love, fortitude, endurance and hope and condemns a wretched life. Brooks Atkinson remarks:

But beneath them there is nothing more substantial then devoid of blackness.
These are creatures that once were men — very pungent and picturesque creatures, too, for O'Neill was a good deal of a romantic ... Life is bearable, it seems to say, only when men contrive not to look at the truth. (213)

Such people fail to prove supporters of their family. Life is never bearable to them as they hope to solve problems with suicide. As a thinker Eugene O'Neill accepts the need of redemption. He does not approve the approach of Harry Hope as the latter does not go out of the bar after the death of his wife. He has forgotten the realities of outer life in these twenty years. Such people betray themselves.

Hickey's behaviour is abnormal towards wife. His irrational approach towards family creates tension for him. Basically he is fed up with his loneliness and hence flirts with prostitutes. However, husband and wife are devoted to each other and he generally shares his experiences with her. As a devoted wife she does not feel annoyed with his absurd conduct. When she gets venereal disease from him, she takes it easy. Hickey suffers agony due to his sense of guilt as he asks himself — Why does he torture his wife every time? As a lover he feels disillusioned and says:
... I loved her so, but I began to hate that pipe dream! I began to be afraid I was going ... forgive her for forgiving me ... and it made me hate myself all the more ... I'd get so damned lonely ... (746)

John Gassner deplores O'Neill's pessimism and says:

O'Neill's outlook on life was not less subject to praise and blame. He was insufficiently spiritual for religious critics and too metaphysical and passive for Marxists and while both could deplore his pessimism, others had no difficulty in approving his huge despair as salutary defiance of facile American optimism or as existentialist truth. (5)

In his tragedies he makes serious efforts to confirm the importance of ethical values such as success, honour, glory, truth, reality, detachment, righteousness, non-possessiveness, peace, contentment, stimulation and dedicated work. For O'Neill truth is one of the fundamentals of life. As
an artist he inspires people to make efforts regularly to get success. Let them lead a life of honour and contentment. Death is inevitable and yet life must be lived. He accepts that every revolution does not succeed. He just admires the Anarchists and their movement against state powers. As a realist he raises his voice to bring changes in the political system. He wants to establish a real world with due emphasis on ethical values. This is the reason that he presented purposeful tragedies on the stage.

Thus, Eugene O'Neill probes into the subconscious and unconscious mind of his people. Secondly, he makes sincere efforts to analyze the causes of tensions of modern people. Thirdly, he studied the plays of Greek dramatists to understand the fundamentals of tragedy. Fourthly, he imitated the plays of Ibsen, G.B. Shaw, Arthur Miller etc. to present the people in real colours. As a follower of Karl Marx, he supported the rights of Have-NotS. However, he didn’t accept the political theories of Anarchists and Individualists as he supported the concept of a welfare state. Like William Shakespeare, he depicted the fundamentals of human nature on the stage. Like G.B. Shaw, he believed in ‘creative reading and creative writing’.
WORKS CITED


