Chapter VI

CONCLUSION

As a literary artist Eugene O’Neill regularly made efforts to know the meaning of life. Like Ibsen and G.B. Shaw, he thought of the economic factors that provide happiness to people. As a keen observer of social tendencies he observed the opportunities that people got to make progress in life. At times he analyzed the American pattern of education so as to understand the question — Does the U.S. education make people fit for life? Quite often he asked himself — Do the people lead a healthy life mentally and spiritually? Are the Blacks safe and secure as equal rights have been granted to them? Do the labourers have confidence in the financial system of the country? While writing *The Hairy Ape* he felt shocked as the gap was widening between the Haves and Have-Nots. How could Americans boast of the Declaration of Human Rights if labourers led a miserable life even in 20th century? It means that there was something wrong in the planning of the national economic structure. Who can call himself safe if the labourers are exploited in the name of trade and development? It means that many citizens failed to enjoy political freedom. While writing *All’s God Chillun Got Wings* he satirizes the Whites who hate the Blacks at every step every day. Why don’t
they love man as man? Why do they shatter the nerves of Blacks though equal opportunities have been granted to all by the American constitution? May be there is difference between theory and practice and authorities pretend to be lovers of mankind though they are not. It is possible that the Blacks fail to enjoy personal freedom. He wants to accept them as a part of economic and political system so that they also make progress with others. It is not possible for him to see half of the citizens as slaves in 20th century. O’Neill asserts that all the citizens must possess the rights of liberty, equality and fraternity in reality.

As a realist O’Neill does not want to escape from contemporary political and economic problems. He wishes to solve them in a rational manner so that the people may get happiness. It is important that the people enjoy the dignity of life and don’t feel forced to return to wild life. Let their life be purposeful. Let them pursue real happiness with right means. Let the people enjoy the fruits of liberty and there should no exploitation in the name of trade and discipline. The French philosophers advocated the slogans of liberty, equality and fraternity. Let the people know the real meaning of these slogans in America too. He supported the political system that may create peace in society.
Only good government could do so and hence there was every need to curb tyranny and exploitation. While writing *The Emperor Jones* he felt disgusted as Brutus attached no importance to law and order. He failed to accept the meaning of justice, equality and liberty. He exploited the Blacks for a long time and all his cunningness failed to defend him. Here the artist shows the fall of a greedy and cunning person. As he followed cunning means, he had to suffer due to general awakening of the people. The artist asserts the importance of justice, equality and universal brotherhood. Due to his greedy nature Brutus gathered a lot of wealth with foul means and hoped to enjoy the same in advanced countries. He never felt any sympathy for the miserable Negroes. How could he get any happiness with these foul means?

In the tragedy *The Iceman Cometh* he asks people to attach importance to a life of action. It is futile to be passive and inactive and no noble aim can be achieved with boastful nature. Wine can’t solve the real problems of people. Just they kill their instinct for work as they want to forget their present. Impractical means are adopted and even their revolutionary zeal fails to change society. Like saints, O’Neill asserts the need of detached action. These people don’t know the happiness of noble
deeds as they are not creative by nature. Due to their negative thinking they look at the gloomy side of life and ultimately achieve nothing. They fail to link life with action and happiness.

In *Strange Interlude* he analyzes the motives of Prof. Leeds, Marsden, Evans, Dr. Darrell, Nina Leeds etc. and peeps into their sub-conscious and unconscious mind. Prof. Leeds needs security in old age and hence does not allow Nina to get married with Gordon. Here people are afraid of the terrible results of war. Marsden, a creative artist, remains passive though he loves Nina from the depth of heart. Evans is helpless as he is a victim of the curse of insanity. He does not know that Nina possesses the child of Dr. Darrell. His happiness depends upon the false belief. Nina feels safe for some time when she possesses Marsden and Dr. Darrell as lovers and Evans as husband. She feels delighted when she gets a son from Dr. Darrell. However, she becomes tense when Gordon ignores her for his beloved Madeline. After all the young son has his own biological needs and mother Nina feels disillusioned with his departure. In this tragedy the artist describes the causes of frustration, conflicts and pressures as people fail to lead a planned life. Generally their strivings are thwarted and the result is mental agony. Due to several factors their stress becomes severe.
In Beyond The Horizon Robert, Andy and Ruth become conscious of conflicting forces. Robert wants to know the details of the world — What lies beyond the fields? What is time process? What is there beyond the stars and the sky? How do the people live in other continents? Unfortunately he takes the wrong decision and invites troubles for the whole family. The situation becomes severe and unbearable for husband and wife. After the departure of Andy, he has no choice left. Had he worked hard on the fields, he would have survived as a farmer. Again he fails to enjoy work. Unfortunately he fails to reconcile avocation and vocation and the result is catastrophe. Here the artist attaches importance to psychosomatic disorders as Ruth fails to adjust with Robert. Joseph says:

_Beyond The Horizon_ is even more clearly in the tradition of realism, for it not only deals grimly with the life of the farmer but ends on that note of complete and unrelieved frustration, so characteristic of the earlier classic of the modern drama, but so unlike the not of high tragedy to be found in O’Neill’s latest work, _Anna Christie_, a first version of which was the next of his important plays to be written, is
also predominantly realistic and even the highly imaginative and poetic ‘The Emperor Jones’. Like the later ‘All God’s Chillun Got Wings’, could be and was taken as O’Neill’s contribution to the study of ‘The Negro Problem’. (XV)

Like William Shakespeare, Arthur Miller and G.B. Shaw, Eugene O’Neill finds conflict between good and evil, God and Satan, lust and love, attachment and detachment etc. As a realist he follows the theory of literature as the mirror of life. The contemporary American materialism appears disgusting to him.

Many critics accept Eugene O’Neill a living force even today and regard him a legendary figure in drama. There is no denying the fact that he followed Aristotle’s conception of probability and his tragedies generally create Cathartic effect with feelings of pity and fear. It is equally true that he depicts the gloom, desolation, illusion, and ugliness that he noticed in the contemporary society. Once he made an attempt to kill himself and drank a lot of varnish. But he was saved in time and then he decided to be a creator in life. As an experimentalist he recreates situations that he observes in life. As a
positive thinker he points out the difference between love and lust, reason and folly, emotion and reason and creates the interest of people in life. In The Hairy Ape he establishes the fact that it is essential for man to feel affinity with nature. In Desire Under The Elms he asserts that it is essential to live within boundaries. Abbie crosses the limits of decency and enjoys sexual relations with Eben. As times passes, lust changes into love and the situation is unacceptable to Cabot. Had she survived in her own world, there would have been no problem. Abbie and Eben fail to control their passion and invite new tension for themselves. Their passionate relationship becomes the root cause of their catastrophe.

O’Neill knows well that each person’s life has ups and downs and much depends upon the way one struggles in life. At times a few friends and relations support him. A few others provide a helping hand for several days. People share familiarity with friends and exchange confidences. Quite often persons feel that they are being exploited either by economic forces or by friends and relations. In The Hairy Ape Yank and his friends feel confirmed that they are being exploited by the capitalists. As a result the former feel resentment against the latter and there is no limit to the mental tension of Yank as he is powerless against the
organized capitalists. On the contrary, Brutus Jones has exploited the Black citizens for more than two years and the reaction of subjects proved too heavy for him. As he possessed no integrity, he met his downfall and nobody sympathized with him. He never prepared the bridge of give and take and hence met his waterloo. Due to his greedy nature he had to suffer terrible agony in the forest. Since he had no friendly relations with the outside world, nobody came forward to help him. As he sows, so does he reap.

Due to his positive approach to life, he asserts the fact that there is infinite beyond the finite, love beyond hatred, truth beyond falsehood, righteousness beyond falsehood. Like P.B. Shelley, he asserts that there is no death for love, beauty and delight.

As a playwright he analyzes the causes for the failure of science and materialism. Let people find the meaning and purpose of life. In *The Great God Brown* he satirizes Dion for his impractical approach to life. How can life of brothers help to console him in tense days? How can a person get relief while acting under the mask? Similarly Brown suffers due to his excessive greed for materialistic things. In *Strange Interlude* he asserts the importance of faith in God. The modern people suffer due to tensions as
they have discarded God, Church and *The Bible*. As a realist and mystic he does not lose his faith in God. In other words, he hates scientific determinism. He is not rigid and orthodox and yet his faith in moral order is pretty strong. As a thinker he accepts eternal truths about time, nature, space and fate. Through his people he asks the audience to get rid of confusions and illusions. Man may have conflict with himself and yet must find out his way. Let him accept the utility of his past as it guides his present and future. For O’Neill past is not a dead clock ns it haunts everybody. As a matured person he does not ignore the future. Basically man belongs to society and hence he must be true to himself. Nobody should accept that ‘ends justify the means’. Through Nina Leeds he asserts man’s desire to find a satisfactory spiritual peace. For him man is more than a machine. He is not merely means to an end as his vigour and vitality give shape to life. In the play *The Fountain* he asserts that life is forever blooming and the fountain is a symbol of active life. In *The Great God Brown* he asserts the eternal relation of love with God and life:

All the world loves a lover, God loves us all and we love Him! Love is a word — a shameless ragged ghost of a word
— begging at all doors for life at any price. (316)

Then the artist repeats the words of The New Testament as people can get solace and consolation in the lap of Christ:

"Come unto the all ye who are laden and I will give you rest."

(Qtd. In GGB 320)

So, tense people can get spiritual peace and delight only when they have full faith in God.
WORKS CITED