Eugene O'Neill is one of the most famous and most notable trios of the American Playwrights who imparted new dimensions and impetus to American dramas and thereby claimed international attention and acclamation. Eugene O'Neill along with Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller was instrumental in portraying the repression of individual in tormenting surroundings and the struggle between the inner and the outer worlds. Although it is noticed that all the three playwrights mentioned above differ as far as their themes, style and forms are concerned, one can find a common thread running through them which is the conflict between individual aspiration and social imposition. O'Neill is more symbolic and expressionistic. Moreover, in O'Neill naturalistic strands are discernible and they dominate the setting, the form, the style and the tone of the plays. His deep compassion with troubled individuals, his apathy for the dry materialistic world and his concern for the highly sensitive and introvert people offered him a vantage point from which to look at the world. His intensely lyrical style, subtler realization of emotional twists and depiction of the antithesis between individual passion and besetting conditions give a special eminence to hose work. Therefore a study of O'Neill's plays becomes essentially a study into human emotional world and it's frustration and thus, by and large, a study into human predicament. O'Neill also was essentially an autobiographical playwright. Many of his protagonists are recognizable. All of his experiences found their way on the stage from the sea going life depicted in early one act plays like Bound East For Cardiff to his Stindbergian view of marital relations in Wedded. He could not regard theatre as a collaborative activity. Time and again he lamented the process of staging his plays, complaining that the ideal
play he had seen in his head never existed in production. Whereas playwrights generally welcome the new life that actors and directors bring to their work. O'Neill saw it as betrayal. So straggly did he feel so that he virtually never went to any production of his plays, only attending rehearsals in order to advise and edit the plays if necessary.

The researcher studied Eugene O'Neill's four selected plays. Beyond the Horizon (1918), Desire under the Elms (1924), Mourning becomes Electra (1929-31), Long day's journey into Night (1939-41) from the point of view of human predicament. The researcher is interested in studying the theme of human predicament in selected plays of Eugene O'Neill. Broadly speaking the selected plays depict the plight of human life in different situations and in different human relationships. The Researcher thinks that these plays depict the theme of human predicament more vitally and prominently. These plays poignantly present the pattern of the conflict between reality and illusion. The pattern unfolds the human predicament as embodied by his characters through the use of various symbols and situations. They emerge as the lonely misfits in an artificial society; their attempts to escape swing them to face painful situations. They live under the illusions and try to escape by resorting to other alternatives like alcohol, sex, etc, but drives them to their plight. It is the theme of human predicament effectively dealt with by Eugene O'Neill. By the term "human predicament" the researcher intends the painful, unredeemable and desolate condition of human life. Eugene O'Neill has been studied by many scholars from various perspectives, but the point of view that the researcher has in mind is quite new. In O'Neill the human Predicament is the result of the situation and the character and not so much as given state of existence.
The researcher has decided the thesis in seven chapters.

The first chapter is introduction which deals with the historical perspective of American Drama. This background of American Drama has helped the researcher to place Eugene O'Neill in the proper historical perspective. Eugene O'Neill is one of those few dramatists, who have adopted tragedy as a medium for the expression of their sensibility. When we read his plays a little carefully, we find that certain viewpoints emerge from his dramatic practice and certain views and opinions are expressed in his essays, prefaces, to the plays. Drama in the United State of America was always incapable of keeping pace with the progress in other branches of literature. Although by the 19th century, the Puritan prejudice against theatre had completely vanished and a great many plays had been produced, they were not worth consideration. The majority of the plays seldom crossed mediocrity. A more realistic view of the world is seen in the post-war dramatic writings dominated by Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller. Most of the plays in 1950s concerned themselves with the problems of adjustment and acceptance. In general, the contemporary American playwright has been engaged in the exploration of domestic relations relying on psychological casebooks for his situation and naturalism for his techniques.

The second chapter deals with life and works of Eugene O'Neill. It mainly focuses on the great contribution of the playwright. Eugene O'Neill (1888-1953), born to the respected and accomplished actor James O'Neill and his wife Ella was to find his family an overwhelming force in his life and to make it the
recurrent subject of his plays. Life was not so easy for the O'Neill’s and their two young children. Ella, a convent educated girl, loved her husband but felt she had married beneath her standard. She never took to James's theatrical life or his theatrical friends. She was never fascinated by his performances. However, the couple could not bear to be parted and Ella, with great reluctance, frequently left her children in the care of her mother to join her husband on dramatic tours. This family history might in case of other writers seem irrelevant but it is crucial for an understanding of Eugene O'Neill and his works.

By the time of his early success, O'Neill's personal life had undergone considerable change. In 1909, he secretly married Cathleen Jenkins of New York and a son was born in the following year. But Cathleen's parents never accepted this marriage and consequently the marriage culminated in a divorce in 1912. Married for a second time to the writer Agnes Bolton, Eugene O'Neill became a father again with the birth of Shane in 1919 and his last child Oona who later married Charlie Chaplin was born in 1925. This chapter takes the entire contribution of Eugene O'Neill into consideration. Despite some critical effort to debunk him, O'Neill was established as the leading American dramatist. He had his triumphs; he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Beyond the Horizon, Anna Christie, Strange Interlude and Long day's Journey into Night. He received the highest international recognition in the award of the Noble Prize for literature. From the Third chapter onwards the analytical study of Eugene O'Neill plays begins. The Third Chapter analyses Beyond the horizon (1918). It is Eugene O'Neill's first full length play. It fetched him the Pulitzer Prize. It unfolds the tragedy of young armer Robert Mayo. He has a romantic mind and a
frail body. He longs for the open sea and his destined for a wanderer's life. But cruel fate has confined him to enclosed farm. He decides to take a voyage around the world, but the night before he is to set sail for a three years voyage, he falls in love with his neighbor's daughter. Lost in the love, he forgets all about the voyage and plans to settle on the farm. This girl first was meant to be his brother Andrew's beloved; but then the heart-broken Andrew decides to go on the voyage instead of his brother Robert Mayo. This play is written in the tradition of realism, because it not only deals grimly with the life of a farmer, but ends on a note of a complete frustration. In this play Eugene O'Neill shows that the human predicament is surely decided by destiny and is beyond the reach of a human being.

The Fourth Chapter deals with Desire under the Elms (1924). It is an important play. It marks the highest point of O'Neill's development as a tragic writer. In this play O'Neill attempts to place plot element and the themes of Greek tragedy in a rural New England setting. It is a much subtler work. It is a tragedy according to the strict definition of the word and it has the cathartic effect that Aristotle associated with tragedy. Ephraim, the father and the owner of the farm, is a tragic figure, bringing his downfall by his own pride; yet expressing in himself the permanent values for which he stands. Against him are set the young and passionate lovers, whose love is bound up with the land-hunger which motivates Ephraim, but are finally released from it. The play is firmly constructed and unified within a multiple set showing the whole of the house, which is the symbol of possession. The Fifth chapter analyses Mourning becomes Electra (1929-31). This play is considered to be the greatest play by O'Neill. It was produced by Theatre Guild in 1931.
It is a trilogy. The three parts are called 1. Home Coming. 2. The Hunted. 3. The Haunted. The three parts comprise a total of thirteen acts. It is a reinterpretation of the old Greek story of the Agamemnon, Clytemnestra, Orestes, and Electra in modern American 20th century expressionism. It echoes the Greek classical tragic dramatic theme which has been so effectively handled by great poets like Homer, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and others and correspondingly has the sense of fate, sense of doomed house, looming large upon the scenes. The title of the play suggests the analogy with the Greek drama.

The Sixth Chapter deals with Long Day's Journey into Night (1939-41). This play is essentially autobiographical. In the Dedicatory Note, he says, that it is a play of old sorrow written in tears and blood. This play was posthumously produced and published in 1956. The gist of the story runs like this: Recently released from an institution as cured of her drug addiction, Mary Tyrone, a handsome nervous women, is in August 1912, once again at her summer home with her husband James... a hard drinking cynical Broadway hanger on, and Edmund, a sickly morbid intellectual. Mary's appearance and her conversation soon make clear that she is not cured and as the men drink heavily to escape reality, she nostalgically revives past dreams of becoming a nun or a concert pianist and seems an innocent girl again. But she also reveals that her addiction began when her miserly husband chose a quack doctor who treated her with morphine after her sickness, in giving birth to Edmund. Like his mother, Edmund wants to be alone in another world where life can hide form itself.
In this play, every character suffers, rather bleeds. Each character experiences the various predicaments in the play which ultimately turns into a pure tragedy.

The Seventh Chapter is conclusion. The conclusion is tentative. It will pick up the loose thread of the arguments and offer an assessment of Eugene O'Neill as a playwright, dealing with the theme of human predicament. He is, no doubt, one of the greatest dramatists of America, the creator of serious American drama. The bulk of his output is fairly large, sufficiently large to place him securely in the forefront of twentieth - century dramatists. He has left behind him masterpieces like: Desire Under the Elms, Mourning Becomes Electra and Long Day's Journey into Night, and there are many more which would stand high in any long list of plays of our time. His plays are translated, acted and read out in most European countries. He is acknowledged to be the most distinguished of the group of dramatists who shaped American drama and saved it from vulgarity.

He was a tireless experimenter who handled a variety of dramatic forms successfully. O'Neill displays a strong sense of from, both, in his realistic and non-realistic plays. His plays are strictly patterned. The pattern of action, even the shaping of the dialogue, always follows a strict design. In characterization too, he prefers to follow a pattern. His characters are not necessarily stereotypes.

O'Neill's vision of life is essentially tragic. The human predicament is the theme of plays, which are, tragedies. He is a great tragic artist but with a difference. His tragedies demonstrate as a human predicament, that any kind of escape from the reality of life is self-destroying: they assert at every step, the beauty and joy of life which must be accepted with all its limitations. He talks about the basic
human predicament which results from the human tendency to forget the ultimate truth of life in the pursuit of some cherished illusions.