Abstract
ABSTRACT

This doctoral thesis aspires to correlate the archetypal existentialist traits in the major and minor male and female characters in the select plays of Eugene O’Neill and Girish Karnad. Though these writers are from two diverse social milieus, the enigmas they mete out in their plays are quite analogous. They make use of myths, psychoanalysis, archetypes and the theories of existentialism, to portray how their characters are victims of situations and fall prey to the hands of fate.

The first chapter, ‘Introduction’, briefs the origin of drama in general, and the origin and development of American and Indian drama in particular. The chapter deals with the significance of comparative studies and psychological theories of Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung and Alfred Adler. This assists to specify the hallmarks of the psychological writers and helps to distinguish them from the visionary writers. The chapter also highlights the salient features of mythical and archetypal approaches and existential philosophy.

The second chapter titled, ‘Unravelling of the Self: The Male Archetypes’, concentrates on the major and minor male characters in the plays of O’Neill and Karnad. The main objective of the chapter would be to seek out how these individuals become archetypal characters. For this, various myths related to the plays are also studied. The archetypal existential traits in the minor male characters are also examined. Though they are designated as secondary characters, they turn out to be the essential catalyst in most of the plays and they have certain combination archetypes in them.

The third chapter, ‘Entrapment and Estrangement: The Female Archetypes’, draws attention on the archetypal existential attributes in the major and minor female
characters. Most of the women characters in O’Neill and Karnad are wantons, wives, beloveds, prostitutes, mistresses and sexual delinquents. Their female protagonists pass through a voyage having realised the oddities of life but remain unshaken, unbroken, and unmoved and ultimately reach the goal. On their way, they are tossed by the social inhibitions, moral turpitudes and taboos, yet their expedition continues until they gain self-identification. One of the common aspects of their aspiration is to attain motherhood, what they call ‘completeness’.

The fourth chapter, ‘The Dynamic Synthesis of Symbolic Devices and Dramatic Action’, analyses the techniques exploited by O’Neill and Karnad. The chapter focuses on the use of clipped and credible speeches, interior monologues, modified monologues, colloquial language, thought asides, stage directions, device of the chorus, use of masks, sound effects, costumes, and device of puppetry as the theatre techniques employed by both the writers.

The final chapter, ‘Conclusion’, scrutinizes the findings, the similarities and differences of the various themes in portraying the major and minor characters of the two different authors taken for study. Suggestions for further research in the same field are also discussed. The last pages include the works cited.