Chapter - I

Introduction
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Drama can be defined as a narrative in dramatic form, which is meant for the theatrical performance. Stage dramas are printed and widely read, and the only way that one can be familiar with most of them in the present state of the theatre is to read them. There is a vital difference between stage dramas and closet dramas; the former is meant for performing while the latter for the purpose of reading. It takes special training to read plays. Stage directions are often meagre, dry and technical, and to a fiction reader the dialogue seems bald and incomplete without the authorial comment and description that accompany in fiction. The novelist gives a great deal besides dialogue, through the analyses of the character’s state of mind, observations on the situation and transitional remarks which enable one’s mind to slip from one scene to another with hardly a jar or effort of the imagination. A typical novel is thus easy to read. But all these aids to the imagination are lacking from the script of a play, and what is left is like a skeleton without flesh and blood. On the stage this skeleton is vivified by the actor with the support of light, properties and background. An audience then, assimilates the narrative without conscious effort, just as a reader imbibes a popular novel.

The drama has a dual nature which differentiates it from fiction. For playgoers drama lives in the theatre, and for the lovers of books it abides in books. Nowadays the theatre workers – the actor, the drama producer, the designer, the director – tend to mull over the drama solely in terms of production. For the the theatre workers the playwright’s finished product is not a drama, but only a ‘script’. The student, on the other hand, tends to think of drama merely as ‘literature’. In the contemporary scenario, it is found that actors and directors are ignoring the literary and social values that enrich the taste of readers and are engaged merely with stage tricks and business.
The western dramatic tradition had its provenance in ancient Greece, and the main Greek dramatists were Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides. Though the Christian church did much to repress the performance of plays, paradoxically it was in the church where medieval drama originated. The early drama evolved out of the liturgy of the church and came to be called Mystery and Miracle plays. Morality plays were in a state of advancement during the reign of Henry VI and in them, the characters were allegorical, symbolical or abstract.

Drama in England grew under the prolific and versatile genius of Shakespeare in the Elizabethan age. He, of course, stands as the supreme dramatist, equally adept in writing tragedies, comedies, tragi-comedies and chronicles. The younger contemporaries of Shakespeare encompassed Ben Jonson, Francis Beaumont, Fletcher and others. The termination of the Elizabethan age marked an epoch in history which will be admired so long as English language shall exist. During the reign of King James I, the English drama dwindled until the closing of the theatres by the Puritans in 1642. This period was marked by sensationalism and rhetoric in tragedy, as in the works of John Webster and Thomas Middleton and polished wit in the comedy of Beaumont and Fletcher. The theatre remained closed for the next eighteen years.

Theatres re-opened with the return of Charles II from exile and the restoration of monarchy in England in 1660. John Dryden in his Essay of Dramatic Poesy (1666) defended the new English standards for drama but affirmed the strength of the French neoclassical idea. All for Love (1677) which is a re-working of Shakespeare’s Antony and Cleopatra was a hallmark of the Restoration stage. Ibsen sufficed as an aqueduct to twentieth century symbolism. The Master Builder (1892) is a symbolic play, marking a trend away from realism that was continued by August Strindberg’s dream plays. While this anti-realistic development took place on the continent, two playwrights made unique
contributions to English theatre. Oscar Wilde produced ‘Comedies of Manners’ that can be juxtaposed with the works of William Congreve and George Bernard Shaw who brought the play of ideas to fruition with penetrating intelligence and singular wit.

During the twentieth century especially after the World War I, western drama became more unified. Among the twentieth century playwrights, who wrote naturalistic dramas are Gerhart Hauptmann (German), John Galsworthy (English), J.M. Synge and Sean O’Casey (Irish) and Eugene O’Neill, Clifford Odets and William Hellmen (American). An important movement in the early twentieth century drama was expressionism. The expressionists tried to transmit the dehumanizing aspects of twentieth century technological society by portraying characters as types rather than individuals and by using devices such as minimal scenery, and telegraphic dialogues. The twentieth century also witnessed the attempted revival of drama, in verse by W.B.Yeats, W.H.Auden, T.S. Eliot, Christopher Fry and Maxwell Anderson.

The World War II and its horrors produced a widespread sense of utter meaninglessness of the human condition. This is explicated brilliantly in the body of plays collectively known as the ‘Theater of the Absurd.’ The most famous plays are Eugene Ionesco’s *The Bald Soprano* (1950) and Samuel Becket’s *Waiting for Godot* (1953). The pessimism and despair of the twentieth century also found expression in the existential dramas of Jean Paul Sartre and in the real and symbolic dramas of Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams and Jean Anouillh. Similar to the ‘Theatre of Absurd’ is the so called ‘Theatre of Cruelty’ procured from the ideas of Antonin Artaud. Elements of the ‘Theatre of Cruelty’ are found in the brilliant abusive language of John Osborne’s *Look Back in Anger* (1956), Edward Albee’s *Who is Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1962), Harold Pinter’s ‘Comedies of Menace’ and in the ritualistic aspects of some of Jean Genet’s plays.
The last decades of the twentieth century were also a time of considerable investigation and iconoclasm. Experimental dramas of the 1960’s and 1970’s by such groups as ‘Beck’s ‘Living Theatre’ and Jerzy Grotowski’s ‘Polish laboratory theatre’ were pursued by a mixing and merging of various kinds of media. The social upheavals of the 1960’s, 70’s and 80’s like the Civil Rights and Women’s Movement, Gay Liberation and the AIDS crisis, provided the impetus for new plays that reconnoitred the lives of minorities and women. Feminist and other women centred themes dramatized by contemporary female playwrights were copious in the 1970’s and protracted in the following decades. Relevant figures included Caryl Churchill and Marie Irene Fornes, and American realists like Beth Henley, Marshe Norman and Wendy Wasserstein. The most significant writers are still those who seek to redefine the basic premises of the art of drama.

The history of Indian literature is the history of the mental activity of at least 3000 years. In India, the traditional legend recounting the origin of drama and theatre is found in chapter one of the *Natyasastra* attributed to Bharatha. The *Natyasastra* (5 BC) reckoned as the fifth Veda is the earliest persisting text on theatre and drama. This is older than Aristotle’s *Poetics* (330 BC). India is a land of fairy tales and fables. The Indian assortment of fairy tales, fables and prose narratives played a relevant part in the history of the world literature. The study of fairy tales and fairy tale motifs and of their meanderings from people to people can be seen in the famous Indian book of fables – *The Panchatantra*. The pursuit for the existence of drama and theatre leads one to the vast body of literature – *The Mahabharata* and *The Ramayana*. These epics furnished the stimulation to the earliest Indian dramatists and they do it even today.

In historical time in India, there mainly existed six dramatists namely Bhasa, Kalidasa, Bavabhuti, Shudraka, Bhatta Narayana, Vishakadutta and Harsha. Mahakavi
Bhasa, perceived as the first playwright of ancient Sanskrit literature, virtually composed thirteen plays based on *The Ramayana, The Mahabharata, The Puranas* and *The Lok Kathas*. The age of Kalidasa and Shudraka, often alluded as the ‘Golden age of Sanskrit drama’, reminds one of the Golden age of Shakespearean drama. The inimitable accomplishment of Indian drama is in Kalidasa who is acclaimed as the ‘Shakespeare of India’. His *Abhijnana Shakuntala* is said to be the richest and the most completely satisfying romantic drama. After the fifteenth century, Indian dramatic activity desisted due to the foreign invasions of India. Though Sanskrit drama ceased to be acted, people needed relaxation and entertainment. Due to this reason, in several states innovative dramas like the *Jatras* of Bengal, the *Therukoothu* of Tamil Nadu, the *Yakshagana* of Karnataka and Andhra, *Kathakali* of Kerala and so on, took their birth.

Indian English Drama embarked when Krishna Mohan Banerji wrote *The Persecuted* in 1837. The palpable jaunt of Indian English drama initiated with Michael Madhusudhan Dutt’s *Is this called Civilization?*, which surfaced in the literary horizon in 1871. During the pre-independence era in the hands of the famous trio-Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo and Harindranath Chattopadhyaya – the Indian English Drama took a precise contour and got an apparent individuality. Tagore is the first major playwright who invested Indian drama in English with lyrical excellence, symbolic overtones and allegorical significance. In the post independence era, Indian English drama, unlike poetry and fiction, did not make any noteworthy presence. Much popularity was gained by the dramas of Asif Currimbhoy, Pratap Sharma and Gurucharan Das due to their originality.

Contemporary Indian drama, deviating from Classical and European models, is experimental and innovative in terms of thematic and technical calibers. It is not an offspring of any specific tradition and it laid the foundation of a distinctive convention in
the history of world drama by investigating history, legend, myth, religion and folklore with reference to contemporary social-political issues. Accumulative theatrical lore evolved by Mohan Rakesh, Badal Sircar, Vijay Tendulkar and Girish Karnad prepared the background of contemporary Indian English theatre. ‘Woman’s theatre’ coalesced with ‘The Street Theatre Movement’ and revived the traditional myths of Sita and Savitri and tried to re-interpret epics from a woman’s point of view. The dramatic work of Usha Ganguli and Mahesweta Devi can be placed in this category.

Any survey of American literature needs to be started by pointing at the literature of the native Indians. They played a great part in the initial stages of the formation of American Literature. These natives had an oral tradition, and their history was shielded in tales and songs. From the very little recorded literature that remains, it is said that these Indians cogitated ardently about life and death, and life after death. There were two important groups who arrived to the New world from Europe at first and who succored to establish the place called ‘America’. The first group of Europeans, to come to America, were the business minded people. They anticipated establishing companies in the New World that would dispatch food and wood products back to Europe. In 1606, three ships which were sponsored by the London Company, left England and approached Chesapeake Bay, at the mouth of a river in April 1607. They named the river, James and it led to the establishment of Jamestown, the first English settlement in the New World.

Several years later, the second group of settlers turned up in the New World. They were called Puritans, who wanted to start a new world governed by The Bible. The description of their journey to the new world is found in the History of Plymouth Plantation by William Bradford. The language used is the Puritans’ plain style of writing, which was later endorsed by Emily Dickenson, Mark Twain, Earnest Hemingway and others in their works. Between these two groups, a third group of settlers also began to
emerge. The manifestation of these three groups is found in today’s America – as efficacy in education in the North, agriculture in the south and commerce in the middle states.

Drama is a part of a country’s literature and American literature, for a couple of centuries, did not amplify a uniqueness of its own. American drama began in the American colonies in the seventeenth century and continues to the present. Due to the settlement and living conditions in the American colonies, little theatrical activity took place in the mid-eighteenth century. The first known English language play, from the colonies, *Ye Bare and Ye Cubb* (1665) is lost. The play’s existence is discerned because of the controversy it surfaced in the Virginia colony. During the American Revolution (1775-1783), the most professional actors of the American company advanced to Jamaica. Satirical plays were composed as propagandas during the war. The play, *The Battle of Brooklyn* (1776) by an anonymous writer, proffered rebel generals, encompassing George Washington, as drunkards, lechers and cowards. Mercy Otis Warren remained the strongest American dramatic voice of the revolution and championed the rebel cause in *The Group* (1775) a play which describes Britain as Blunder land.

In 1820’s, an African American acting troupe called the African theatre was codified in New York by the dramatist, William Henry Brown. The troupe presented the plays of Shakespeare as well as African American plays comprising *The Drama of King Shot Away* (1823) of Brown. One of the features of the American stage was that the actor acquired pre-eminence. Players and plays enriched American life since the mid-eighteenth century and players more than plays drew audiences to the playhouse. Among the late nineteenth century, playwrights whose compositions marked the gradual move towards realism were Steel Mackage and William Deans Howells. The credit for the exquisite elation in realistic stage management went to David Belasco.
European developments in modern drama arrived on the American stage in force with the World War I. Since then, Britain’s impact on American drama became much less. One of the first groups to upgrade new American drama was the Provincetown Players founded in 1915 in Provincetown, Massachusetts. The play *Trifles* (1916) by Susan Glaspell was among its first production. The company was headed by Glaspell’s husband George Cram Crook but its star was Eugene O’Neill. The audience saw inspiring American drama throughout the 1920’s and early 1930’s. During this period, O’Neill accomplished his greatness with his vast five hours plays.

In the mid 1980’s and the beginnings of the twenty-first century, revivals of older plays and blockbuster musicals predominated new commercial theatre in the United States. As the twenty-first century began, the course of American drama prompted perturbing questions. Plays with single setting and not more than two or three characters cropped up. Theatres were vetoing much large-scale play as too risky and unlikely to cover production expenses.

Many playwrights agonize that American theatre has become too orthodox in its mainstream work. A major issue going forward is whether the theatre of the twenty-first century will provide opportunity for original work and strong new dramatic voices. In spite of the onslaught of dynamic and technology-based medias such as cinema, television and radio, drama validates to have divergent targets and standpoints, which make it cogent and expressive. Besides furnishing amusement to the masses, drama in the twentieth century has taken the role of a social communicator effectively. Most of the villages have small drama groups who gather in the local library premises to talk and discuss about the functions of the theatre. These small groups besides promulgating an awareness of theatre, have discharged another responsibility namely keeping the jobless, discontented youth fruitfully employed and intellectually occupied.
The optimum way of survival for theatre in a world of technology-based art forms such as film, television and radio is to acclimatize itself to the technological extensions without squandering their basic integrity and uniqueness. Stylization, contact with the audience, spectator’s participation, retention and integration of time honoured rituals and management of mass media to publicize are some expedients, which theatre can utilize efficaciously to retain its identity and carve its own niche. It is imperative to correlate the literatures of various countries for fruitful repercussions. The unsurpassed technique to perceive whether the twenty-first century theatre has its own congruence is to juxtapose it with the theatre developments of the erstwhile years.

Literatures of diverse nations, nationalities and countries of the world do not survive in seclusion from each other. Dissimilar segments of humanity have already been in touch with each other in the field of culture. The approach of this interaction has become an ingredient of continuous and universal impact for the last one and a half or two centuries, which led Goethe, to the famous formulation of World Literature in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The process of this universalisation of literatures tangled the panoramic scene of literary criticism. The appraisal in isolation of contrasting works, writers, literary trends or schools could not yield adequate upshots. Thus, the power of working out a suitable methodology for recounting and demarcating the phenomena of international contexts and contacts exonerated crucial proportions and dimensions. From then the Comparative Studies of literature was crystallized.

Towards the early nineteenth century, humankind witnessed an unprecedented phenomenon of fast strides made by the comparative studies towards the confluence of human minds and intellects, which found its eloquent expression in the formulation of Karl Marx and Engels:
“In the place of the old, local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, there is an intercourse in every direction, even in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of the individual nations became common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness became more and more impossible and from amongst the numerous national and local literatures, there arises the World Literature.” (112)

At the initial stages of the progress of the theory and practice of comparative study of literature, many researchers were overwhelmed by the colossal data and material about inter-literary contacts. “They got as if submerged in the ocean of information about the inter-literary links, contacts, similarities and reactions which were taking place in the whole world. Such a practice is responsible for the birth of the, ‘theory of influence’, ‘theory of impacts’ and ‘theory of borrowing’.” ¹ In the early phases of the comparative study of literature, these theories, which were too Eurocentric in their character, held sway for a considerably long span of time. However, the initial contribution of these theories and practices is indisputable.

Certain misapprehensions essentially emanated from an inherent belief that a certain set of literatures were destined to exert influence on other literatures and that too almost on an immutable footing. In practice, it amounted to the perpetuation of a highly offensive and objectionable notion, that the literatures of a certain set of nations are advanced while those of others to be backward and hence always at the receiving end. This led to the propagation of the cults of the superiority of some literatures and inferiority of others. The situation was further compounded because the propagandists of the theory of impact did not delve into the circumstances owing to which a particular literature influences other literature. They merely recorded and promulgated one type of literature as being ‘active’, while the others as ‘passive’. Due to this, the comparative
study of literature got curtailed to an exertion in hoarding ‘facts’ and even ‘figures’ about the similarities and dissimilarities of literary elements in the works of distinct nations. Hence, it became a highly superficial exercise, bestowing little or nothing, specifically to the evaluation of the concept of World Literature.

‘The Theory of Impact’ was sought to be amended by the way of rechristening it as ‘The Theory of Borrowing’. The theory of ‘impact’ and that of ‘borrowing’ did not differ much, as in their character they implied a one way current from the direction of the so called ‘developed’ literatures towards the developing or underdeveloped ones. Thus, these theories became retrograde and hence stumbling blocks in the evolution of the comparative study of literature and the concept of World Literature.

It needs however, to emphasize that to negate the role of influences and borrowings in the evolution of interlinear crosscurrents is inconceivable. Just as people master from each other in life in assorted methods, diverse literatures also get immensely boosted from the experiences of their counterparts elsewhere. Influence or impact should not be a stigma. P.N.Berkov says in his *Problems of Historical Study of Literature*, that “It is only one of the forms of development of a literary personality or literary process” (42). It becomes shameful only when a writer or a literature does not utilize “influence” as an instrument for revealing and evolving their own originality and confine themselves to mere imitation and dependence because they either do not or cannot surmount alien influence. ² A. N. Vesylovsky had pointed out that the borrowing of any literary elements from any literature has adequate conducive conditions for the ingredients being obtained. Unless there is a reciprocal and a congenial riposte from the receiving literature, no borrowing or impact is credible. He says, “Borrowing does not take place in a vacuum, it requires reciprocal current, identical mode of thought and analogous imagery.”³
Vesyolovsky’s ideas were further expanded by V. Zhirmunsky and he propounded that the reception of an impact or borrowing of a literary element is not a passive absorption but an active remoulding, which indeed leads to the engendering of an indigenous art. Zhirmunsky was adept to institute that Vesylovsky’s theory of ‘migratory plots’ was rather unsound as the similarity of plots in divergent literatures was more an outcome of analogous socio-economic influence in these countries which caused identical plots. Migration of plots was a rare phenomenon and most discernible in folklore. Consequently, in his view,

“we can and must compare the analogous literary phenomenon which appears under identical socio-historical processes irrespective of the possibility of direct mutual impact among this phenomenon. From here, it followed that comparison must serve as a method for establishing the laws of literary phenomena which corresponds to some definite stages of social development.”

Comparative Literature is a literary discipline and ought to be recognized as a vital academic activity of the modern age. For the meaning of Comparative Literature, one should analyse the nomenclature of the word. Etymologically the term means any kind of literary work that compares. Such a correspondence should be in terms of structure, style or philosophic vision. Analogy can and should bring out the distinctness of two authors of the literature concerned. Rene Welleck views that, “we need both national and general literature, we need both literary history and national and general literature, we need both literary history and criticism and we need the wide perspective which only comparative literature can give.” T. S. Eliot, also in his seminal essay, Tradition and Individual Talent, stresses the importance of comparison, “no poet, no
artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone… you cannot value him alone: you must set him for contrast and comparison, among the dead. 

Although highly fascinating, comparative literature as a distinct body of humanities is of recent origin. Literary comparison as a critical exercise has been in use for more than 2000 years in Europe. In his comedy, *Phormo* written in 161 B.C., Terence contrasts ancient and modern tendencies in literature. Matthew Arnold, translating Ampere’s use of ‘historic-comparative’ was apparently the first to employ the term in English in 1848. He spoke not of a discipline but of a plurality of Comparative Literature, specified, as being of England and the continent. The primary idea of Comparative Literature is to widen one’s perspective by discovering certain dominant trends in literature and culture and to comprehend precise relations between two or more literatures. Comparison, is not the sole property of Comparative Literature alone, even a single literature course may be illuminated by comparative insights. Certain percipiences become all the more beneficial not because they are repeated but because they are rediscovered in a new context and if authors taking divergent roads, arrive at the same truths they become universals.

Subramanian Srinivasan and Balakrishnan in *Introduction to the Study of Comparative Literature*, discuss several schools of comparative literature that have developed over the years. In France, comparative literature is a restatement of the French literary history, relating the World literary experience to the French literary response. The French comparativists reckon their literature to be the backbone of the universal literary system. They dissect the external sources and influences of works. Therefore, comparative literature in France is an ancillary discipline to the French literary history. The American Comparativists on the other hand, accuse the French approach of studying only the impact which according to them is unconscious imitation. In Russia,
Comparative Literature is rooted in the philosophy of communism. The Russian comparativists assume that literature is a social property meant for social welfare. The creative writers are surmised to confer a realistic record of social encounters. The comparativists assess the variety of social reasons embedded in their literature.

The resemblance between English literature and Indian literature tends to be richer than that between two western literatures because of cultural differences. Arnold’s view is that, every critic should try and possess one great literature besides his own and the more unlike his own, the better. Different literatures will correct one’s attitude and judgment. Though, India was under the British rule for centuries, Indian and British cultures are diverse owing to the differences in religion, languages, climate and food habits. So a juxtaposition of English literature and any one of the native literatures poses more problems than solutions. Such contrastive studies unearth a treasure of information unequalled in its amplitude by analogistic research.

At present, in our country the term ‘comparative literature’ is gaining much importance. It was Prof. Buddhadeva Bose, the noted Bengali writer, who first instigated comparative literature at the Jadavpur University, Calcutta amidst intellectual sceptism. It was practically an unknown subject in India, though it could bring together the regional literatures of our country and shed parochialism. The Fulbright/Smith programmes operated by the Government of United States through the U.S. Educational Foundation in India [USEFI] developed this branch of study in our country. Comparative literature, has now taken its roots in Madurai Kamaraj University where it is recognized as an academic discipline by both the faculties of English and Tamil.

As an independent literary discipline, Comparative literature follows its own methodology. Significant similarities and diversities are investigated to balance one literature against the other in order to understand the cultural implications. So the ultimate
object of comparative study is to reconcile all the basic concepts of single literature and to evolve a uniform concept of literature balancing the basic aesthetic differences of literatures. For this purpose, writers use various tools in their work and one among them is the application of psychology.

The impact of psychology upon creative literature was strengthened by the contributions of Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung, Alfred Adler and others. In the beginning, many critics employed the tool of psychology injudiciously. Some had only a superficial comprehension of psychology and implemented it indiscriminately to seek out the erotic motive and connotation behind the work of art. In general, the application of psychological knowledge in art can generate three kinds of meaning:

1. The new field affords a more precise language with which the creative process could be examined.

2. The second function is the study of the lives of authors as a mode of interpreting their art. The essay in Wilson’s *The Wound and the Bow* exemplifies how effectively the approach can be used to understand not only the personal problems of the writers but also the underlying enigma of their writings.

3. Psychology can further be employed to expound fictitious characters. The critic who recruits this in fiction becomes a psychoanalyst pursuing the subconscious patterns, which motivate a character. The classic example is Ernest Jones’s *Study of Hamlet*.

In general, Freud perceived himself as an empirical scientist and Jung underlined on the visionary, religious and even magical traditions. In *Psychology and Literature*, Jung views that there are two kinds of writers – psychological and visionary. The psychological writers’ analyse materials drawn from the realm of human consciousness. The prominence is on the conscious life of man and his feelings. Novels exploring love, family, crime and society, and dramas dealing with both tragic and comic belong to this
group. The psychological writer procures his material from the vast realm of conscious human experiences of life. The experiences as well as their artistic expressions are understandable to the readers. The basic know-how has nothing quaint about them, but it is what has been known from the beginning of time including passions and its outcome, man’s subjection to the turns of destiny and nature with its beauty and horror. But this is not the case with the visionary writer. The psychological writer winds up at a certain level, but the visionary writer goes beyond. The former dispenses with the problems of his age, that is, about the present, but the latter examines the present, goes to the past and has a vision of what is going to happen in the future.

In the works of a visionary writer, the experience is no longer habitual. It is atypical that it derives its existence from the hinterland of man’s experience. The visionary encounter is a primordial experience, which surpasses man’s perception, and it arises from timeless depths. It is grotesque, demonic and many-sided. They afford a glimpse into the unfathomed abyss of what has not yet come. It may be the mirage of the other worlds or the obscuration of the spirit or the beginnings of things. A number of questions arise while examining the work of a visionary writer and this is not so in the psychological writer. It may make one confused, astonished, taken aback or even disgusted. The readers are further reminded of dreams, fears and dark recesses of the mind. The personal experience of the writer underlies this grotesque darkness.

The visionary writer investigates the pathologies and neurotic art and his writings display the fantasies of the insane. He is perturbed with the ‘primordial vision’, which cannot be acceded by the conscious outlook. He transports the readers from the psychological study and transcends them to a spiritual level. The experience is quite apart from the knowledge of an ordinary man and for this reason there is an impediment in
assuming that it is concrete. It is a true symbolic expression – an expression existent in its own right, but imperfectly known.

Man is not wholly unfamiliar with the nocturnal world. Due to fear of superstition and metaphysics, man has repudiated the nocturnal world and for this he has constructed a conscious world that is safe and manageable. Yet, the writers even at present deal with the spirits and demons in their works. Through this, they perceive something of the psychic world that strikes terror. The writer then looks to mythology to give his experience the most fitting expression. He does not work with the material received at the second hand. The primordial experience is the source of his creativeness and therefore entails mythological effigy to give it a form. The writer resorts to an image that is difficult to handle and is full of contradictions in order to express the weird paradox of his vision. This is seen in the works of Dante, Goethe, Wagner, Nietzsche and others.

A visionary is someone who has the perspicacity to devise through the art of seeing the invisible. All visionaries possess the faculty of a magnificent ingenuity, a talent for an artistic medium through which they divulge their visions. They have unspecified calibers that amass power to turn the tides towards modulation. A visionary writer utilizes the power of words to share the vision by telling stories and essays that dare to express the unimaginable. These words stimulate dreams and inspire actions.

The visionary writers possess a quality that cannot be denied – a magical attractiveness that is charged with the marvellous passion for something greater in life. Such words have a life of their own, for they insist on being shared in order to take their place in forming part of a future wholeness that one dares to embrace. They share a vision of tomorrow by painting with words. Some of the visionary writers in literature include Homer, Shakespeare, T. S. Eliot, Christopher Frye, Walt Whitman, and Herman Melville. Homer’s epic *Iliad and Odyssey* examine the spiritual quest of man. Shakespeare is
deemed to be the greatest visionary writer. He assumed that there is a cosmic harmony ruling over the universe, and the salvation and challenge of man is to participate in it and not to violate it. He acquired his skill of writing drama by sheer observation. He saw, observed, felt, experienced and communicated. While reading Christopher Marlow’s *Dr. Faustus*, one feels sympathy for the character, on the other hand there is an empathetic feeling while exploring the characters like Macbeth, Lady Macbeth and King Lear. The reader or viewers place himself in the position of these immortal characters and feels that if he had been in their position he too would have done the same thing.

Shakespeare infact had a cosmic vision and this vision is apparent in the works of Frye, Eliot, Hardy, and Dickens.

Christopher Frye’s plays are rooted in the moral dilemmas. He asserted the presence of mystery in the universe. His work is also concerned with the spiritual values. Eliot revived the poetic drama and gave it a modern significance. Walt Whitman attends to the psychic journey in his poem ‘When Lilacs Last In The Dooryard Bloomed’. The fourteenth stanza of the poem promises a new life to death. He views that life is a war and all people are the living sufferers. In the second part of the poem, there is a vision of an ideal world of peace. Hardy’s vision of the modern world is tragic and creates a moving spectacle of human suffering. Like these writers, there are a few visionary writers in India and to name two of them are Rabindranath Tagore and Kalidasa.

The supreme achievement of Indian Drama is undoubtedly in Kalidasa, who has given the world a profound spiritual vision of life. His play *Abhijnana Shakuntala* reveals the poet’s maturity of mind, an acute understanding of human life and some of the deepest values in it. Sages like Valmiki and Vatsayana had unfathomable spiritual visions of life. *The Mahabharatha* is an epic of being, because it gives a soul - experience and a soul-vision. Sri Aurobindo, though was so intensely rooted in the past does not ‘repeat the
past’ in his works but instead goes beyond that is, the future. Aurobindo’s theory of poetry is equivalent to T.S. Eliot’s theory in *Traditional and Individual Talent*. Tagore chose ancient Indian legends for his themes and symbols but gave them a subjective turn. He made them vehicles of the vision of his own age added with his personal imagination.

Indian writers like Anitha Desai and Arun Joshi sort out the psychological elements in their works. They are not visionary writers as they conclude their works at a certain level of experience or narration. They do not go beyond that practice, and that is why they are known as psychological writers. Unlike these psychological writers, the visionary writers have a gift of clarity that sees beyond the social horizon and this is visible in the works of O’Neill and Karnad.

The father of modern American drama who has composed more than sixty plays and regarded as the American Shakespeare, Eugene O’Neill epitomized virtually everything that is fundamentally modern about the American theatre. His composition is sufficient to place him in the forefront of the twentieth century dramatists. He employed current issue vital to the set up of the society in his plays. Part of O’Neill’s early childhood was spent on tours with his father, the famous romantic actor, James O’Neill. The young Eugene had neither perpetual home nor a confidante. On the one hand there was his family background which made him morbid and on the other there was his own constant ill-health which engrossed his tragic sense. In 1912, O’Neill entered the Gaylord Farm Sanatorium at Wallingford for the therapy of tuberculosis. It was during this time that the urge to write first came to him and he emerged as a tragic dramatist with a burning desire to expound how much he agonized in his life. His chronic infirmity also engendered in him a kind of longing for death. That is why most of his characters are found lamenting over their birth. Along with this, O’Neill’s understanding of Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and psychoanalysts like Freud, Jung and Adler, brought a psychological
touch and a metaphysical turn to his plays which the theatre before him had not comprehended. O’Neill’s deep study of human psychology is very profoundly illustrated in the plays like *DUE*, *SI* and *MBE*.

In O’Neill, the man and the artist are complementary to each other; for the man has suffered and the artist has given a shape to the tribulation. In order to reconnoitre his tragic vision, an investigation of the ‘real’ O’Neill – the man who suffered and the mind that created– become inevitable. His tragic vision transcends time and space. In delineating the misery of modern man O’Neill projects the picture of a man who has eternally tolerated, not because of his pride but because of his failure to realize his ideal to fulfil his dream, and to live life as he wants to live it.

The question of racial discrimination and its effect in determining character, is figured prominently in his plays. O’Neill did not rely on fantasy or farfetched effects. His passionate search for the meaning of life, which had been utterly ignored, placed him among the most outstanding writers of the twentieth century. The quest for identity for the understanding of man is a subject that is found in the great tragedies of the world and is as gripping today as it was in the times of the Greek playwrights or the Elizabethans. That is what makes O’Neill a visionary writer rather than a psychological writer.

Chillun Got Wings, Desire Under the Elms, Marco Millions, The Great God Brown, Lazarus Laughed and Strange Interlude were composed during 1921-27. Plays like Dynamo, Mourning Becomes Electra, Ah, Wilderness!, Days Without End, A Touch of the Poet, More Stately Mansions, Long Day’s Journey into Night, Hughie and Moon for the Misbegotten were written during 1928-43. They were plays of immense consequence not only to the author but also to the American theatre as a whole.

THA is an expressionistic play which considers the strain of a mighty stoker named Yank. The struggle is with himself, his own past and his attempt to belong. DUE is a modern version of an ancient story of Hippolytis. It portrays the affairs of a stepmother with her stepson. In TGGB, O’Neill has sought to exhibit man’s aspirations in a vibrant lyrical style. The device of wearing a mask is central to the action. There is the opposition of the mask and the face in the play. In Lazarus Laughed, O’Neill is concerned with the idea than the characters. It is an exposition of the philosophy of life and death. SI focuses on the emotional crisis of four characters during the long span of twenty-seven years. MBE is a retelling of the tragic fable of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, Orestes and Electra. It is almost a contemporary re-arrangement of the first two parts of the Aeschylean trilogy. O’Neill does not study the religious problem but rather the modern biological and psychological doctrines of the cause and effect. The Iceman Cometh discusses the life of men who live on illusions.

Besides most of his fellow American playwrights, O’Neill was uncommonly gifted, original and prolific. The most competent of them lacked his stature, his intensity, his power, and his grandeur. In Tennessee Williams, one can detect several influences that had turned him to be a playwright. His major preoccupation with the character’s personality conflict derived its inspiration from his own life experiences. The Southern order is represented in A Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Sweet Bird of Youth, and Battle of
Angels. These plays carry with them the southern manner and language. All the plays of Arthur Miller are branded as ‘plays of ideas’. He locates individual within political or social contexts. In his plays, family becomes an important icon. This is the reason, why both these writers are known as psychological writers. O’Neill on the other hand, imparted an awareness of the enigmas – psychological, philosophical and religious – which the commercial theatre had never dared to stage.

O’Neill’s plays attempt to illuminate as well as reflect the condition and predicament of man, revealing the areas of darkness and tension in modern man’s consciousness. He believes that man suffers from a sense of alienation in this world; he finds himself completely isolated in a spiritually sterile universe, and therefore he cannot have a sense of harmony. In his search for identity and his need to belong, an individual feels his ‘lostness’ intensely. O’Neill’s works reveal a keen sense of loss of connection – with God, nature, society and family. It is the turmoil of a whole generation that finds the artistic presentation in his plays. O’Neill’s plays are the embodiments of a cosmic anguish. He studied man not in relation to man but in relation to God. Living in an impersonal, mechanical, urbanized and industrialized social environment, man today is alienated from God, traditions and religions of the past, nature and his fellow beings. He undergoes loss of identity, inner emptiness, isolation, normlessness, powerlessness and a sense of insecurity. This segregation and loneliness, man’s disorientation or bewilderment from within and without are the major themes in the plays of O’Neill.

Girish Raghunath Karnad, one of the foremost dramatists in India, did his education at Sirsi and Dharwad. Later he studied in Oxford, where he went as a Rhodes Scholar during 1960-63 and received a Master’s degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics. He found his interest shifting from science to literature. Although initially he
had an ambition of becoming a poet in English, he later discovered his real aptitude for drama.

On returning to India from England, he worked with Oxford University Press at Chennai. He left the job in 1970 to become a full time writer. Karnad discovered that Parsi theatre with its gorgeous scenes, music, drop curtains and proscenium stage had a profound influence on the regional professional form called Company Nataka, but was rather antique in its mode of presentation. He, therefore, thought of presenting truly Indian themes in a modernist style by borrowing relevant aspects of Western theatre as well as Sanskrit and folk theatre. When Indian amateur drama was at its lowest ebb especially in Karnataka, he gave a new fillip to the Kannada theatre through translation of the plays in Indian languages and English.

Karnad writes his plays first in Kannada and then translates it into English. His debut play *Yayati* (1961) is about *The Mahabharatha* legend on responsibility. Body as a force to reckon with, is recognized in the first play of Karnad. It became a dominant metaphor in the later plays like *Hayavadana* (1971) and *Nagamandala* (1986). *Tuqllaq* (1964) is an allegory of the Nehruvian era. It is a tale of dreams and aspirations of an over ambitious, yet virtuous king.

*HAY* took its leitmotif from an ancient tale in Sanskrit, *Vetalapanchavimsatika* retold by Thomas Mann in *The Transposed Heads*. This is the dichotomy between mind and body and the problem of complexity using folk elements such as masks and the supernatural. *Anjumallige (Fearing Jasmine)* in 1977, has a foreign setting and deals with incest. *Hittina Hunja (Dough Cock)* in 1982, describes Queen Amritamati’s sexual attraction for an ugly mahout, the theme borrowed from Janne’s *Yashodhara Charite*, a Jain poem. In *NAG*, Karnad gave a Freudian interpretation to a folktale about a woman’s love for a cobra that impersonates her husband. *Tale Danda* (1990) retells an episode of
the life of the twelfth century Lingayath saint and founder of the movement, Basava. It is retold to emphasize the meaningless horrors caused by the caste system. Agni Mattu Malle (The Fire and the Rain) in 1994 depicts the story of Yavakuta. A Heap of Broken Images (2005) has a contemporary theme. It is about a writer who is unsuccessful in her own language but achieved national and international fame, when she switched on to writing in English. The Wedding Album (2009), his recent play portrays South Indian marriage and family, caste, class and age-related behaviour and attitude, selfishness and sacrifice, chastity and commerce, obedience and authority that are all integral to modern Hindu marriage.

As a theatre person, Karnad is a genius and uses the theatre as a venue for an encounter between the spectator and the performer in analysing the problems reminding the readers, the plays of Bertolt Brecht. He received several awards and honours for his plays and among them, a few are mentioned. His YAY brought him the Mysore State Award in 1962. In 1971, HAY fetched him the Natya Sangh Award for the best play. He was awarded B.M. Sridhar Award in 1992. In the same year he was conferred Padmabhushan and was awarded the prestigious Jnanpith Award in 1999. Besides writing plays, he made his presence felt in Indian cinema as well. Karnad made his name as a lead actor in Kannada art films like Samskara and Vamsha Vriksha. He scripted and directed the critically acclaimed Kannada film Kaadu in 1973 and Ondanondu Kaladalli in 1978. Some other films are Utsav in 1984, based on Sudraka’s Mricechakatika and Bhasa’s Deridra Charudattda and Cheluvi in 1992. A much-lauded public figure, Karnad served the Film and Television Institute of India, Pune as its director during 1974-75, and the Sangeet Natak Akademi as its Chairman during 1988-93. Commissioned by B.B.C Radio, he wrote his first original script in English, The Dreams of Tipu Sultan (1997)
presenting the gap between Tipu’s dreams of liberty and the reality of colonial bondage. He reworked it into Kannada in 1998.

Contemporary Indian drama in English made bold innovations and fruitful experiments in terms of both the thematic concerns and technical virtuosities by turning to history, legend, myth, and folklore. The 1960’s saw the rise of four titans in the horizon of Indian drama, Karnad in Karnataka and his contemporaries Tendulkar in Marathi, Sircar in Bengali and Mohan Rakesh in Hindi. Greatly influenced by Marxism, Rakesh wages a relentless fight against the traditional strange hold of Hindi drama. His plays dramatize the sufferings of men and women who fall victim to socio-economic hierarchy and cultural hegemony. While Rakesh uses historical characters to project the breakdown of communication in contemporary life, Sircar employs contemporary situations to project the existential attitude of modern life. Leading the vanguard of the avant-garde Marathi Theatre, Tendulkar symbolizes the attempts of the Indian dramatists of the last quarter of the century to depict the agonies, suffocations and cries of man, focusing on the middle class society. In all his plays, he harps upon the theme of isolation of the individual and his confrontation with the hostile surroundings.

Unlike Sircar and Tendulkar who delve into the problems of the middle class society, Karnad goes back to the myths and legends with a view to making them a vehicle of a new vision. By availing the various myths, he shows the absurdity of modern life with all its elemental passions and conflicts, and man’s eternal struggle to achieve perfection. In his plays \textit{YAY, NAG, TUG, HAY} and \textit{Tale-danda}, he tries to evolve a symbolic form of a tension between the archetypal and mythical experiences. In the creative reworking of myths, Karnad is akin to his predecessors T.P. Kailasam, Rangacharya and Tagore. Karnad succeeded in showing that the past and present can coalesce to give present day existence a meaning and to theatre activity, a direction. He is
not content with re-narrating the forgotten tales in the form of costume plays. In Eliot’s sense of tradition, Karnad’s plays never detach from the past. Contemporary lurks through the veils of antiquity.

Issues of the present world find their parallel in the myths, fables and legends of the past which lend new meanings and insights through analogy reinforcing the theme. Myths that are part of the collective consciousness of the people are invoked to show how the modern man’s predicament is foreshadowed in the archetypal myth. Eliot recognized the power of myth to manipulate a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity. He breathed a new life into the moribund plays by going back to the ancient Greek myths.

The rapid advancement of modern anthropology since the end of the nineteenth century has been the most vital single impact on the growth of myth criticism. Shortly after the turn of the century, this influence was revealed in a series of important studies published by the Cambridge Hellenists, a group of British scholars who applied recent anthropological discoveries to the understanding of Greek Classics in terms of mythic and ritualistic origins. The most significant member of the British school was Sir. James G. Frazer whose work, *The Golden Bough* exerted an enormous influence on twentieth century. His main contribution was to demonstrate the essential similarity of man’s chief wants everywhere and at all times.

The central motif, Frazer analyses is the archetype of crucifixation and resurrection, specifically the myths describing the killing of the divine king. Among many primitive people, it was believed that the ruler was a divine or semi-divine being whose life was identified with the life cycle in nature and human existence. Due to this identification, the safety of the people and even of the world was felt to depend upon the life of the God-king. In some places, the kings were put to death at regular intervals to
ensure the welfare of the tribe, later however ‘substitute figures’ were killed in place of the kings themselves, or the sacrifices became purely symbolic rather than literal. Corollary to the rite of sacrifice was the scapegoat archetype. The motif centered in the belief that by transferring the corruptions of the tribe to a sacred animal or person and by killing it, the tribe could achieve the cleansing and atonement which was necessary for the natural and spiritual rebirth. The insights of Frazer and the Cambridge Hellenists have been extremely helpful in the myth criticism, especially in the mythological approach to drama. Many scholars theorize that tragedy originated from the primitive rites. The tragedies of Sophocles and Aeschylus, for example, were written to be played during the festival of Dionysus.

The second major influence in mythological criticism is the work of Jung, the great psychologist, philosopher and student of Freud. Jung’s primary contribution to the myth criticism is his theory of racial memory and archetypes. In developing this concept Jung expanded Freud’s theory of the personal unconscious asserting that beneath this is a primeval collective unconscious shared in the psychic inheritance of all the members of the human family. Just as certain instincts are bequeathed by the lower animals, complex psychic predispositions are inherited by human beings. Jung believed that the mind has its pre-established individual definiteness. They manifest in the ever recurring patterns of psychic functioning. Therefore, what Jung called myth-forming structural elements are ever present in the unconscious psyche. He refers to the appearance of these elements as motifs, primordial images or archetypes. Criticism that emphasizes myth and archetype is referred to as ‘myth poetics’.

In Classical Greek, myths signified any story or plot whether true or false. In its central modern significance a myth is one story in a mythology – a system of hereditary stories which were once accepted to be true by a particular cultural group and which
served to explain why the world is as it is and why things happen as they do. Most myths involve rituals in prescribed forms of sacred animals, but social anthropologies disagree as to whether rituals generated myths or myths generated rituals.

Having established the relevance of myth, it is obligatory to apprehend its relationship to the archetypes and archetypal patterns. Although myths take their unique shapes from the cultural environment in which they develop, myth in general sense is universal. Similar motifs or themes may be found among many diverse mythologies and certain insights that recur in the myths of the people widely separated in time and place tend to have a common meaning. They elicit comparable psychological responses and serve similar cultural functions. Such motifs and images are called archetypes. Archetypes are universal symbols.

The term archetype is derived from the Greek words ‘Arch’ and ‘typos’ which mean ‘primitive’ and ‘form’ respectively. The phrase employed by Jung has been in the New Criticism since 1930s. The voyage in “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” is an archetype of the spiritual journey which all men experience; the Ancient Mariner himself is an archetype of the man who offends God. The word ‘archetype’ has been employed in literary criticism especially since the appearance of Maud Bodkin’s Archetypal patterns in poetry (1934). In criticism archetype is applied to narrative designs, character types or images that are said to be identifiable in a wide variety of works of literature as well as in myths, dreams and even ritualized modes of social behaviour. Similarities within these diverse phenomena are held to reflect a set of universal, primitive and elemental patterns whose effective embodiment in a literary work evokes a profound response from the reader.

Among the prominent practitioners of various forms of archetypal criticism, in addition to Maud Bodkins are G.Wilson Knight, Robert Graves, Philip Wheelwright,
Richard Chase and Joseph Campbell. Archetypal criticism is usually associated with myth criticism. The death-rebirth theme is held to be grounded in the cycle of seasons and the organic cycle of human life.

Frye, in his apocalyptic essay *Myth, Fiction and Displacement*, divides literary works broadly into two categories – the fictional and the thematic and resolves to concentrate only upon the former one. He agrees with Aristotle in his concept of plot and its importance and redefines it in a larger perspective by asserting that in a play or novel or any work of art, one usually tend to trace the continuity of theme and the steady progression of events in a particular direction. “The smaller units that come together to make a story plausible and give it a form which will finally reach its end are called archetypes which he defined as a word which has been connected since Plato’s time with the sense of a pattern or model used in the creation” (253). Frye tries to prove that the archetypes too by the application of uninhibited imagination, function as the formal ground to build a pattern which is the end of any work of art. These patterns or arrangements, Frye views, already exist in the myths and therefore myth criticism allows the critic to make an attempt to place the work of art in a large universe. Hence myths are born out of the collective unconscious and are therefore made up of archetypes. They are the instruments to discover and utilize archetypes. By transcending the limits of time and space, myths provide flashes of insight into life and its mystery. These myths mirror the contemporary reality of existentialist society.

Despite its claims to be new and unprecedented, existentialism represents a long tradition in the history of philosophy in the West, extending back at least to Socrates (469-399 BC). This is the practice of philosophy as ‘care of the self’. The focus is on the proper way of acting rather than on an abstract set of the theoretical truths. This concept of philosophy flourished among the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers of the Hellenistic
period. Their attention was focused primarily on ethical questions and discerning the
proper way to live one’s life. Philosophy, as the pursuit of basic truths about human
nature and the universe, was also widespread among the ancient Greeks. It was this
theoretical approach that led to the rise of science and came to dominate the teaching of
philosophy in the medieval and modern periods.

In the distinction between two forms of philosophy, there are two different uses of
truth, the scientific and the moral. The former is cognitive and theoretical, the latter is
more self-formative and practical. Whereas the former made no demands on the kind of
person one should become in order to know the truth, the latter kind of truth, required a
certain self discipline, a set of practices for the self such as attention to diet, control of
one’s speech and regular meditation, in order to be able to access it. It is a matter of
becoming a certain kind of person.

It is not surprising that both Soren Kierkegaard (1813-55) and Friedrich Nietzsche
(1844-1900), the nineteenth century fathers of existentialism, had ambivalent attitudes
towards the philosophy of Socrates. Each philosopher realized that life does not follow
the continuous flow of logical argument, and that one often has to take risk moving
beyond the limits of the rational in order to live life to the fullest. As Kierkegaard
remarked, many people have offered proofs for the immortality of the soul, but Socrates
after hypothesizing that the soul might be immortal, risked his life with that possibility in
mind. Kierkegaard in his *Stages on Life’s Way*, analysed the project of becoming an
individual, and for this he examined, three spheres of existence - the aesthetic, the ethical
and the religious. Each stage has its own model as befits a morality tale: Don Juan for the
aesthetic, Socrates for the ethical and Abraham for the religious sphere.

Frater Taciturnus, one of the characters in a letter to the readers of *Stages on Life’s
Way* summarizes the stages as follows:
There are three existence-spheres: the aesthetic, the ethical and the religious. The ethical sphere is only a transition sphere, and therefore its highest expression is repentance as a negative action. The aesthetic sphere is the sphere of immediacy, the ethical is the sphere of the requirement and the religious, the sphere of fulfilment. The person, who lives in the aesthetic stage, focused on the present and remains indifferent to the past. Kierkegaard seems to believe that most people live their entire lives in the aesthetic sphere. The aesthetic is incapable of the choice that enables him or her to be a self.

In Kierkegaard’s view, the leap of faith constitutes an entrance into the religious sphere. The operative categories are neither pleasure nor pain, as in the aesthetic sphere, nor good and evil, as in the ethical, but sin and grace. The motives for the actions at the religious stage cannot be generalized, as the ethical requires. The religious individual is beyond good and evil in Nietzchean terms. Jean Paul Sartre in a famous set of essays, ‘What is literature?’ published in 1948, developed the concept of committed literature. His basic premise is that writing is a form of action for which responsibility must be taken, but that this accountability carries over into the content and not just the form of what is communicated.

Human reality is free because it is perpetually wrenched away from itself. It is also independent finally because its present being is itself nothingness in the form of the ‘reflection-reflecting’. In order to freely become what he wills, a man has to go beyond what has been, and this transcendence is possible only by negating the past. Sartre observes that consciousness continually experiences itself as the nihilation of its past being. This nihilation suggests the presence of nothingness. He views that freedom is, the human being putting his past out of play by secreting his own nothingness. This freedom
is not one of joy, but of dread, for Sartre adds that it is in anguish that man gets the consciousness of his freedom.

The term ‘nothingness’ in Hiedeggerian sense resists any concrete definition because nothingness is an ‘uncanny metaphysical phenomenon’. The sense of nothingness is revealed to an individual through certain experiences like dread, despair and nausea. Though as Heidegger points out, metaphysics has discussed ‘nothingness’ since ancient times; it is in existentialism that the concept is given a relevant place. He seems to suggest that ‘nothingness’ is already there in the world though not comprehended with everyday knowledge. He also puts forward that ‘nothingness’ is the very basis of human existence even if one is not aware of it, when he asserts that ‘Dasein’ (Hiedgger’s term for human existence) means being projected into nothing which alone enables ‘Dasein’ to relate to what is to have any existence.

There are five basic themes that the existentialist appropriates each in his own way. Rather than constituting a strict definition of ‘existentialist’ they depict more of a family resemblance among these philosophers.

1. Existence precedes essence – “What you are is the result of your choices rather than the reverse. Essence is not destiny.”(8)

2. Time is of the essence – “Human beings are fundamentally time-bound beings. Unlike measurable ‘clock-time’, ‘lived time’ is qualitative.”(8)

3. Humanism – “Existentialism is a person-centred philosophy. Though not anti-science, its focus is on the individual’s pursuit of identity and meaning amidst the social and economic pressures of mass society for superficiality and conformism.”( 8)

4. Freedom (responsibility) – “Existentialism is a philosophy of freedom. Its basis is the fact that one can stand back from one’s lives and reflect on what one has been doing. In these sense, human beings are always ‘more’ than themselves.”(8)
5. Ethical considerations are paramount – “Though each existentialist understands the ethical as with freedom in his or her own way, the underling concern is to invite one to examine the authenticity of one’s personal lives and of one’s society.” (8)

These points bring forth the idea that the concept of freedom is the root principle of existentialism. This sovereignty is grounded in the awareness of universal contingency and of man’s agonizing responsibility for choosing between complex alternatives concerning his existence. Born into the world without his choice, man faces hostility all around. His consciousness of death and his nothingness make him face the aggressive forces resolutely. In the process his sense of guilt, dread and certainty of death push him towards an existential solution.

Man is absolutely alienated and is an alien to God, to nature and to society; above all, he is alienated from his own self. The existential man feels alone in his dilemma, and he must find solace within himself. The characters often uncovers themselves as suffering lonely creatures. As victims, they are the outsiders, the fugitive kind, who through their own sense of guilt or illusion, become the spectacle of brutality and violence. Yet, their options are their own, and they are driven by a sense of the implacability of human existence. Lahen points out that “Existential man is often a stranger in a strange land…. He is the sum of what he does, his meanings follow from his actions…. He is man in motion.” (9)

The study probes into the similarities and the dissimilarities in the writings of O’Neill and Karnad. In writing the thematic contents, Karnad has been influenced by Albert Camus, Jean Paul Sartre, O’Neill and Bertolt Brecht in writing the thematic contents of his plays to a great extent. (10) The thesis confers about the significance of myths, archetypes and existentialism in the plays of both the writers. This backdrop has
been given to synthesize of how the playwrights have made use of psychology, archetypes and existentialism in their plays.

The research problem is to identify the archetypal existentialism in the characters of O’Neill and Karnad. This study has relevance in the present society. To establish they are visionary writers they take the story from the myths in which the characters are archetypal. These writers not only peep into the past time, but they move through the racial memory of Jung. They are contemporary as both are rooted to the twentieth century. The thesis propounds to establish that these two writers had an insight into the darkest aspects of human psyche which still bear the germ of the dateless distinct past, that is the racial memory. To prove this six plays of O’Neill and Karnad have been taken for the study which includes O’Neill’s *The Emperor Jones* (1920), *The Hairy Ape* (1922), *Desire under the Elms* (1924), *The Great God Brown* (1926), *Strange Interlude* (1926), and *Mourning Becomes Electra* (1933) and Karnad’s *Yayati* (1961), *Tughlaq* (1964), *Hayavadana* (1970), *Nagamandala* (1986), *Bali: The Sacrifice* (1982), and *The Fire and the Rain* (1994). These plays have the elements in a more pronounced way than the other plays written by these playwrights. They have not represented the psyche of their society but the psyche of the humankind as a whole. The secret of their novelty is their antiquity.

To validate the hypothesis, the male and female archetypes are analysed in depth and have delved deep into the various techniques used by these writers.

This study focuses on the realistic portrayals of male and female characters in both O’Neill and Karnad. It restricts itself to the examination of archetypal existential attributes in the characters taken. It limits itself to the turbulent strife that hangs on in the characters mental equilibrium and thereby identifying the struggle for existence. The First Chapter forms the introductory part of the work, which discusses the origin of drama in general and the origin and development of American drama and Indian drama in
particular. It also analyses the significance of Comparative studies, the psychological theories of Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung and Alfred Adler and the significance of archetypes, myths and existentialist philosophy. The Second Chapter and the third chapter focusses on major and minor male and female characters in the select plays of O’Neill and Karnad. It discusses how the characters become archetypal. Furthermore, it concentrates on the discussion of a character from the point of view of those who are on par with him, inferior and superior to him. The combination of archetypes in the characters is also focussed. The fourth chapter, scrutinizes the techniques employed by O’Neill and Karnad. The chapter highlights the techniques of language and theatre styles made use of both the writers. The final chapter forms the conclusion of the thesis, which analyses the findings, the similarities and differences of the various themes in portraying the major and minor characters of the two different authors taken for the study. It offers the scope of the study as well.
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