

Chapter One

Introduction: Eliot as a Modernist Writer

Eliot and his Time

Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888-1965) was born at St. Louis, Missouri, an industrial city in the centre of the USA. His ancestors on the father's side had migrated to America in 1668 from East Coker, the name given to the second poem in his *Four Quartets* (1936-1940), in Somersetshire, England. He was the youngest of the seven children of a brick manufacturer, Henry Eliot and his mother was Charlotte Stearns Eliot descended from Puritan families of the early settlements in New England. Thus, Eliot's character was a blend of the New England and St. Louis influences.

With the outbreak of the First World War, Eliot had to leave Germany. He came to England and continued his studies at Oxford till 1915 and his financial difficulties compelled him to take up the job of a school teacher as well. The outbreak of the First World War, his meeting with Ezra Pound in London and his introduction through him to the lively literary circles of London and finally his meeting to an English girl, Vivienne Haigh, led to his setting in London, and making it his home. Eliot, a great force in modern English literature, had a complex and many-sided personality. He was a classicist and traditionalist, a great innovator, a critic, a social thinker and a philosopher. He was born in America, toured through Europe, and accepted British citizenship early in life. Ezra Pound used much the same terms to describe Eliot's own position in the United States – he was, he said, “Brought up in a place with which his forebears had no connection” (150). They grew up in a time of great ethical and social confusion. Both Pound and Eliot researched the sources like Platonism, Buddhism and Medieval literary works to present the better work of art. Eliot's poetry and drama cannot be understood without an understanding of his age.

So far as his age is concerned, it ushered in an era of rapid social change, and this change is to be noticed in every sphere of life. It meant the end of rural England and the increasing urbanization of the country. Due to industrialization and urbanization there have risen problems like the problem of over-crowding, housing shortage, a significant increase in vice and crime, fall in the standards of sexual morality, and a rapidly increasing ugliness. Early twentieth century poetry vividly reflects all these evil effects of industrialization. The century ushered in an era of moral perplexity and uncertainty. By the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of twentieth century, we find writers like Shaw, Wells and Galsworthy, criticizing the very basis of the existing social, economic and moral system.

The idea of Sigmund Freud is also appropriate to discuss here for the reason of confusion and anxiety of the age. Before Freud, people had ideal picture about man. Man was supposed to be rational creature. Freud developed the concept of unconscious and emphasized the power of the unconscious to affect the conduct of every man. The conduct of human beings is not guided and controlled by the conscious, rather it is at the mercy of the forces lying buried deep within the unconscious.

In the play *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) Eliot presents the situation which shows the desire lies in the unconscious mind of human beings. In the play, The Fourth Tempter offers the central character Thomas a Becket to have personal glory through martyrdom but what is offered by the Fourth Tempter has so far remained in the unconscious mind of Becket. This offer is quite tempting to Becket and he is lost in thought for a few minutes. Becket now finds himself on the horns of dilemma. However, he is able to solve the problem as he realizes that to seek martyrdom deliberately for the sake of personal glory means committing the sin of pride, and pride is one of the deadly sins. So when man cannot handle the wrong desire arising from the unconscious with

proper realization then terrible problems come forth which we can find in the modern world too as the modern people involve in immoral activities due to the evil forces incorporating in their unconscious.

The First World War further strained the authoritarian pattern of family relationship and increased tensions and frustrations. Economic depression, unemployment, over population, acute shortage, etc, have increased the hardship of life and caused stress and strains and nervous breakdown. So there was an atmosphere of moral unease and uncertainty, a collapse of the faith in the accepted patterns of social relationship and a search for new patterns. Eliot's poetry and plays reveal a harrowing consciousness of this phenomenon of twentieth century city life. Reflecting the core of the writing of the age David Daiches points out:

The poet was no longer the sweet singer whose function was to render in mellifluous verse and an imagery drawn with great selectivity from the world of nature a self-indulged and personal emotion; he was the explorer of experience who used language in order to build up rich patterns of meaning which, however impressive their immediate impact, required repeated close examination before they communicated themselves fully to the reader. (1123)

In this sense the modern poet, actually aware of the complexities and contradictions of the civilization in which he lives. The poet simply is not the sweet singer who just collects the ideas from nature and personal emotions but is the representative of the age who writes from the point of view of time and surrounding situations. He examines his language before he communicates with the reader.

Eliot endeavored to project a complete view of civilization of human history and human failure, and of the perennial quest for salvation. Due to his valuable contribution in

literature he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1948. Quoting Valerie Eliot Peter Ackroyd says, after his death, “Eliot felt he had paid too high a price to be a poet that he had suffered too much” (319). Eliot strived continuously in the literary field and gave remarkable works for the generation to come.

A Brief Survey of Eliot’s Works

T. S. Eliot studied Sanskrit and Oriental philosophy which influenced his poetry. Like Pound he went to England early and became a towering figure in the literary world there. He also wrote influential essays and dramas and championed the importance of literary and social tradition for the modern poet. Generally speaking, the modern writer is intensely conscious of his social milieu and does not fail to reflect it in his works and Eliot also was not different in that case as well.

Eliot began writing quite early in life while still a school boy at Smith’s Academy, St. Louis. The poems of this period are immature, juvenile productions, mere school boy exercises, yet showing signs of poetic talent. As a young poet Eliot found inspiration in French Symbolist poetry, particularly the ironic, self-deprecating verse of Jules Laforgue, and in the flexible, colloquial blank verse of the 17th century metaphysical poets and Jacobean dramatists. Later, the rottenness, the corruption and decadence of contemporary society is exposed with a rare poignancy. Eliot was not a prolific poet, but his small output soon gained respectful attention from readers of modern poetry on both sides of the Atlantic. During the postwar years his prevailing sense of despair and sour irony, and his conviction that contemporary civilization falls establish a great interest in many readers.

Some significant poems like *The Waste Land* (1922), *The Hollow Man* (1925), *Ash Wednesday* (1939), *Rhapsody on a Windy Night* (1916) etc. reveal a deepening of poet’s distress at the corruption and decay of contemporary European civilization. *The Waste Land*, specially, is fragmented in effect, lacking in cohesion, thus symbolizing the

breakdown of beliefs and values in the cultural life of the west. The appearance of *The Waste Land* made the contemporaries shocked and wrote that it was the justification of the movement of our modern experiment since 1900. His poetry carried out against the crimes of civilization which had reduced man to mere physical existence. Eliot's *The Waste Land* is the most powerful poem of the decade and summation of both its war-weary spirit and recent poetic developments in English Language. Eliot's poem owes a great deal to Pound. It uses imagist methods. It is a long, highly complex poem with a group of characters such as a modern typist and a blind priest of ancient Greece who can see the future. Much of the picture of human unhappiness in the poem comes from the fact that people today cannot bring together the different areas of their experiences to make a complete healthy whole. So, *The Waste Land* is ripe with images of dissolution, sterility, dryness and waste.

The giants of western literature like Dante, Shakespeare, Ovid and Milton influenced Eliot. The other influences on him were the ageless mystics of the world like Lord Buddha, the author of the Upanishads and the scribes of the Holy Writ. Finally, he was also influenced by his contemporaries like Ezra Pound, T. E. Hulme and other imagist writers. After long contribution in poetry, Eliot is today recognized as a great dramatic genius as well. His plays have received international recognition, and have brought a radical innovation in European drama.

Eliot had been a great admirer of poetic dramas of the classical period and after. He was equally critical of prose dramatists. For him prose drama is always inferior to poetic drama. According to him a prose drama lacks the ability of expression that a poetic drama has. And also he says that a prose drama is merely a slight by-product of verse drama. So for him a dramatic poetry is always better than prose drama. In his essay, "Poetry and Drama" he writes, "If we want to get at the permanent and universal, we must tend to express ourselves in verse" ("Poetry" 84). He believes that the prose writers would

have become really great if they had written dramas in poetic form. In the same essay he further writes, “There are great prose dramatists such as Shaw and Chekhov- who have at time done things of which I would not otherwise have supposed prose to be capable, but who seem to me have been hampered in expression by writing in prose” (“Poetry” 86-87). So this peculiar range of sensibility can be expressed by dramatic poetry, at its moments of greatest intensity. Eliot at the same time was well aware that poetic drama was in the situation of competition. He feared that the place poetic drama was trying to cover may be overlapped by prose drama. So, he believes poetic drama is to be written in such a way that it would be able to compete with prose dramas. He writes in the same essay “If poetic drama is to re-conquer its place it must in my opinion, enter into over competition with prose drama” (“Poetry” 81).

Poetic plays in the modern times are being failure because of the poets writing plays without the proper command over poetic language. But he has his own solution to this problem, which he writes in the same essay, “It seems to me that if we are to have a poetic drama, it is more likely to come from poets learning how to write plays than from skillful prose dramatists learning to write poetry” (“Poetry” 86). In this sense, it seems that Eliot gave more importance to the poetic ability than stage arts.

His dramas mark the beginning of a movement towards poetic drama and an experiment in a new dramatic form. The play *Murder in the Cathedral* is a landmark in English dramatic history because it proved that English verse drama could still succeed. His use of poetic technique in the twentieth century seems a lost interest. But despite this the poetic technique in his plays has its own significance. He is careful in using the appropriate means of language since it plays a vital role to take interest of the people, who come to watch the play. To serve this purpose in the play *Murder in the Cathedral* he has given the poetic language according to the characters. The way the chorus speaks and the

way Becket speaks is different. Similarly, the quality of verse the knights speak is not good as that of Becket and the chorus. This way the poetic convention used in the play gets the attention of the twentieth century people.

Eliot's plays have restored the lost link between religion and drama. In fact, he has made the drama integral part of the contemporary tradition in art and literature. It was his belief that man's present predicament was the outcome of gradual spiritual devaluation and he had an abiding faith in religion as a means of redeeming man. His plays are religious though they do not teach religion as a drama. They are only excursions into spiritual awareness. Therefore, he regards religion as the essential sources of suitable emotions for drama. D. E. Jones says that his plays are "the subtle demonstration of the relevance of religion to all the spheres of human activity" (22). The main subject matter of the play *Murder in the Cathedral* is religion. The conflict of the play also is within the area of religion. The play is set in a Cathedral Church and the characters are associated with church. Through the chorus, the play leaves its message to the spectators and the people of twentieth century. For all these attempts, church would be the better means to deliver the message through.

Murder in the Cathedral brought him much fame and it is considered to be his best play. The play is held together not by its plot but by its theme the temptation and martyrdom of Thomas and the awakening of the people of Canterbury. The great success of *Murder in the Cathedral* induced him to write another play *The Family Reunion* (1939) with contemporary language and contemporary setting. It deals with sin and expiation. Though *Murder in the Cathedral* goes back to twelfth century, it is quite significant in case of twentieth century. The play does not have twelfth-century Norman French language, it has twentieth century English. There is the use of both poetic and prosaic form of dialogue. The poetic dialogue helps audience go back to twelfth century and meet the

dying Becket and the prosaic dialogue of the sermon makes them understand the meaning of such a sacrifice. The dialogue is also not in Elizabethan blank verse. So far as the setting of the play is concerned, there is continuous rise of horror of the play. This can be seen as the rise of the horror of the people living between the two world wars and the continuous war-games. And finally the characters are divided basically into two aspects: chorus representing the present people and Becket representing sacrifice, the latter shows religious and psychological significance to the formers. This way, the play acquires the recentness though the original plot of the play that comes from twelfth century.

The Cocktail Party (1949) is a simple play with very little use of imagery and symbolism. It is described as a comedy or presented in comedy of manner. It is the most depressing play, concerning with the breakdown of the sick society and an individual's inability to seek a way out of the super-civilized maze without calling on the assistance of the nearest psychiatrist.

The Confidential Clerk (1953) is another pessimistic play of T. S. Eliot. It does not have imposing theme. It deals with the choice of one's career. This is the most autobiographical of Eliot's plays. Like the character of the play Eliot too had to make a choice between entering his father's brick manufacturing business and that of the literary ambition. His final play *The Elder Statesman (1959)* describes a statesman in his retired life. The play is the study in the contrast between a man's private world and the public life s/he leads.

Besides these Eliot stands in the long line of poet-critics beginning with Ben Jonson and including such name as Dryden, Coleridge and Mathew Arnold. Eliot's critical pronouncements, first published largely in the form of articles and essays, in numerous periodicals and journals of the day, have now been collected in books like *The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism (1933)*, *The Idea of Christian Society (1939)*, *Notes*

Towards a Definition of Culture (1948), *Selected Essays, Third Edition (1951)*, *On Poetry and Poets (1948)*, *To Criticize the Critic (1965)*, “Tradition and Individual Talent”, “Poetry and Drama”, “The Function of Christianity” etc. are among his most popular essays in literary criticism. The value of Eliot’s criticism arises from the fact that he speaks with authority and conviction, and his prose style is also precise and memorable as his poetry. He has been largely responsible for the revival of interest in the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century. His rare gift of crystallizing his thought in striking, trenchant phrases, has gained for him wide popularity and appeal. Phrases like, “Dissociation of Sensibility”, “Objective Correlative”, “Unified Sensibility” etc. have gained wide currency.

Eliot as a Modern Poet and Dramatist

T. S. Eliot believed that the true basis of poetry lies in the organized labour of intellect, rather than in the accidents of inspiration and intuition. It is now commonly recognized that a note of anxiety is the most common characteristic of the modern age as self-complacency was that of the Victorian age. The atmosphere is charged with a spirit of depression, gloom, frustration and foreboding. Various reasons are assigned for the tragic pessimism of the age. The major reasons are social crises such as economic depression, unemployment, political upheavals, rapid increase of population, over-crowding, shortages of the necessities of life, sexual inhibitions and frustrations showing the possibility of total annihilation of mankind. Eliot was very much conscious of his age which was a war like and tragic one. He emerged from the state of mere loyalty to his age to evolve an independent poetic and dramatic creed, to re-establish a vital connection between the individual and the race and to become aware of the mind of Europe.

F.O. Matthiessen says, “T. S. Eliot has been described as the first one holding the key of modern poetry and drama in his open hand and then unlocking its door” (27). As he opens the door, we enter a strange world of people who have as if just escaped from the

broader and vaster life outside, and found a retreat into this new Inferno. As a same way George Williamson says “Eliot is a modern poet not because of the novelty of his themes and by a keen awareness of his time, but chiefly because his poetry evolves a new method of poetic communication” (19-20). He saw the deep significance of the relationship between poetry, and the rhythm and idiom of ordinary speech. In the 20th century, the mind and its infinite powers have become a very interesting topic for study and Eliot’s poetry, as well as drama reflect the continual distress of the age.

In the play *Murder in the Cathedral*, with the poetic dialogues, Eliot could take his modern audience back to the twelfth century, a time in which people were generally allowed to talk in poetry and with the prosaic dialogue the audience could come back to their own time and in this process they could understand the significance of the twelfth century event in the twentieth century. Thus, both kinds of dialogues worked as a balance in taking the audience back as well in bringing them to the present. It is in the sermon Becket makes the twentieth century audience conscious about the Christian Martyrdom.

Eliot is modern, not only in his imagery and method of communication, but also in his language and metrical devices. He was greatly influenced by the verse *Libra of La Forge* and so acknowledges his debt *La Forge* and the later Elizabethans. With free verse, poets got a new instrument that was capable of reflecting the rapidly shifting vision. Eliot’s amazing genius lies in the use of words and rhythms and his extraordinary fertility in style of writing. In his return to the consolation of religion and faith in a spiritual rebirth, Eliot is again reflecting a tendency of the age. His first play *Murder in the Cathedral*, a religious play is devoted in proving the significance of religion to the life of modern people. The play, initially written for the festival of Canterbury Church remains as a strong play of religion. The play is based on the murder of Saint Thomas a Becket of the twelfth century who died for the sake of religion and for the sake of people. In the sermon

Becket presents the true realization of the nature of true martyrdom as it is never an act of conscious will but it results from a complete submission to the will of God. It is the measure of his spiritual progression.

Eliot is also recognized as a renowned critic. Eliot's essay "Tradition and Individual Talent" remains a milestone in the development of criticism. Here, Eliot defines the term "tradition" that plays a vital importance in literature as, "Tradition involves, in the first place, the historical sense . . . and the historical sense involves whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order" ("Tradition" 761). In the same essay he defines poetry as "not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape away from emotion" ("Tradition" 763). And he also says, "Honest criticisms . . . are directed not upon the poet but upon poetry" ("Tradition" 762). Eliot's criticism is meant to be an integration of scholarly criticism. His criticism is opposite to the criticism which is commonly known as, 'creative criticism'. Eliot sees criticism as a means apt to improve his own craftsmanship as a poet.

Significance of Spirituality in Eliot's Poetry and Plays

T. S. Eliot's erudition was profound; he was familiar with many philosophies. European literature right from Homer down to his own day, the Hindu and the Buddhist, and the other oriental philosophies and literatures, ancient and primitive myths and legends, Biblical mythology and legend, all furnish him with allusions and quotations. As we go through the writings of Eliot his major theme is 'Redemption of Time and the Possibility of Spiritual Rebirth'. It is not different from the Christian conception of sin, atonement, redemption and spiritual resurrection. World is dedicated by an order of birth, growth, decay and also the promise of a spiritual metamorphosis. All religions accept this cardinal law of nature when they accept the immortality of the human soul as the central tenets of religious belief.

The Waste Land incorporates numerous mythical allusions, lyrical and fragmented language and quotations. It develops a series of abruptly changing formats in which disillusionment, spiritual ennui and casual sexuality are projected as representative elements of a post-World War I European sensibility. The meaning of the poem is a subject of much debate but scholars generally agree that it presents a metaphorical portrait of the modern world spiritually dry and desolate and of humanity as emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually empty. The main themes of the poem are death and rebirth, time, servility, and the failures of sexuality.

Eliot in his plays has developed the theme of redemption to its fullest possibilities, and so, the wider scope of the dramatic medium makes it more convincing. He always gets success in relating the philosophic theme in everyday human life. It illustrates the responsibility of sin, redemption, martyrdom and sainthood even in the life of ordinary people. There is a great significance of spirituality in his plays. Spiritual awakening is the core of the play *Murder in the Cathedral*. In the play the central character Thomas a Becket in his first speech expresses the idea that human being can only find peace in the will of God who is still at the centre of the wheel. Human beings neither act nor suffer for their own advantage but should unite with the will of God in order to sustain God's design and God's pattern of perfection. As he says:

Neither does the agent suffer

Nor the patient act. But both are fixed

In an eternal action, an eternal patience. (*Murder* 82)

Thus, this idea shows Becket's perfect faith in God and his complete reliance on God. He redeems all mankind offering his own blood. As the play closes the women of the chorus express the idea which shows they seem to have undergone a spiritual regeneration and

renewal. They feel thankful to God for His mercies of blood and for their redemption by blood.

Critics on *Murder in the Cathedral*

Since its publication, many critics have reviewed this play from different perspectives. However, only about a dozen of them who have given their views suitable to this research have been included in this review. As this study focuses on voyage from chaos to order, it will cover those critics, who comment upon the play with proper emphasis upon its characters and mainly protagonist's act of martyrdom for the salvation of modern men.

Commenting on this drama, Helen Gardner describes the central theme of this play is concerned with martyrdom in which Eliot has considerably toned down the secular features of Becket's character. The estimate of his behavior in the play given by Helen Gardner is only a slight exaggeration of an essential truth:

The attempt to present in Thomas the martyr in will and deed, with and heart purified to be made the instrument of the divine purpose, is a bold one. Success is hardly to be expected. There is more than a trace in the Archbishop of the 'classic prig' who disconcerts us so deeply in Milton's presentation of the tempted Christ in *Paradise Regained*. There is a taint of professionalism about his sanctity; the note of complacency is always creeping into his self-conscious presentation of himself. (135)

From the sense of modern chaos and disorder, Louis Martz points "The agony of the women here, as the sexual imagery shows, comes from recognizing the degradation of humanity into the animal, and the echo of Shakespeare's 'the expense of spirit in a waste of shame' extends the horror" (21). This comment highlights that Eliot has stressed the community of sin. So far we attach ourselves to materialistic expectations and temporal pleasure we are making impious our spirit which is the main cause of modern disorder.

Likewise, Nevill Coghill says, “*Murder in the Cathedral* points the way out of suffocating wildernesses of the intellectual and material world, into the purifying wilderness of the spirit, where overwhelming answers are to be found. It is a way of denial and detachment that is a way of assertion and union the way of the saint” (14). Here, he means to say that the drama depicts the twentieth century materialistic world and Christian salvation.

D. E. S. Maxwell argues about the chorus of this play as “Their rejection of the return of life with the spring is inked with their repugnance to spiritual rebirth and to the return of the Archbishop” (188). The critic explains that it is a matter of securing the divinely ordained order of nature.

Another critic E. Martin Brown points out from the sense of forms and style of the play to each kind of scene:

The most superficial level, that of the quarrels between Becket and the knights, is rhymed doggerel. . . . More subtle and sometimes rather crabbed, is a four-stress rhyming verse for the Tempters who dramatize the tortuous progress of Becket’s inner struggle. . . . There is an easy, near-blank-verse for dialogue with the priests and women. . . . And for the chorus, a very varied series of forms, from the three-stress lines of the women’s domestic talk. . . . to the long complexes of pleading or of praise.
(199-200)

The creation of a verse form capable of enclosing within itself all the modes and characters of the play, nevertheless it yielded magnificent results for the play. In fact they are perhaps the greatest thing in a great play in which it seems that we have to go back to Greek tragedy to find choral writing.

Similarly, Katharine Worth says:

Anticipation of, and preparation for, an act of violence generates the greatest dramatic excitement felt anywhere in the piece. Becket is most fully realized as a human character when he is involved with the idea of death, in the preparatory clearing of conscience with the Four Tempters and in the murder scene itself, where the intimacy of his relationship with his murderers, usually stressed in production by the doubling of Tempters and knights roles, goes for beyond the degree of intimacy he achieves with anyone else in the play. (157)

Here, Worth explains about the spiritual success which can be founded only through worldly defeat, life is through death and redemption through sacrifice.

On the way on commenting on this drama, D. E. Jones maintains, “The benefit we acknowledge is spiritual rather than political and it comes from Thomas’s suffering rather than their action. For us therefore, the play is not over; the effect of Thomas’s sacrifice continues. The priests enter and help us to recover the mood of the martyrdom in a chastened form” (62). Here, D. E. Jones describes about the act of obedience to the will of God is not made once and for always, though the discovery of what it means to submit wholly and without reserve is a decisive step. It must be renewed from moment to moment.

Again to talk about the structure of the play to relate the theme of salvation, the departure from ordinary speech rhythms and idioms were made possible not only by the historical subject but also by the ritualistic overtones. In *Murder in the Cathedral*, as Ronald Peacock points out, “Ritual belongs both to the innate structure of direct links at various points with his audience the poet has made his work into a continuous invitation to

celebrate in religious fellowship the spiritual triumph of a saint. . . . The drama becomes again an instrument of community” (4).

As we have seen its original function is enlarged in the light of the Christian liturgy, it represents the common people and mediates between theme and the action as in Greek drama, but also “chorus is choir”, as Raymond Williams, “the articulate voice of body of worshippers” (228).

Likewise, Miss Patricia Adair says, “The satisfaction we receive from this final pattern and resolution of the dominant images. . . . is surely akin to our perception of a similar process in music” (93). She explains the ramification of meaning on all the planes of awareness that man is capable of intellectual, sensuous and spiritual.

Thus, in modern times literature has been employed for social purposes particularly for reforming the sores, malaise and maladies of the contemporary society. In modern literature the novel has become the dominant literary form and has been used to deal with the modern social problems. On the other hand drama has once again witnessed a remarkable revival after an age-old slumber and obscurity into which it had fallen after the eighteenth century. T. S. Eliot brought back poetic drama and his *Murder in the Cathedral* became the prominent one. When we examine the criticism made by different critics the theme of religiosity, martyrdom and sacrifice are the crux of the play. It is Eliot who tries to bring order in society through his works making whole humanity enlightened spiritually.

Chapter Two

Modernism and Christianity

Human Virtues and Aspirations

A person having good deeds is respected and warmly welcomed in any society. Such behaviors remain permanently though the individual passes away. When we all become conscious regarding our conducts then only an ideal society can be imagined. Moreover, only moral behavior counts in the eyes of God and these are the code of conducts which aim at establishing social order and achieving the ideal of society.

Concerning moral values St. Augustine talks about faith and in this world, this faith is manifested, above all in Christ. He says above the man's gratification of the 'ego' there is God, in his fullness of life and truth. God is so absolutely the foundation, source and substance of the happiness of heaven that all selfish considerations are eliminated from the will of human beings and nothing is left but pure love what is good. To St. Augustine, the alone is the centre of morals, this alone is the objective good to which we aim and from which the powers of our mind receive their intensification, fullness and satisfaction. St. Augustine says, "Man can attain salvation only by the means whereby he becomes good by loving the highest good and by valuing God above everything 'for His own sake' and 'with no thought of reward'" (qtd. in Adams 108-13).

Moral values create a system of principles and judgments based on cultural, religious and philosophical concepts and beliefs, which determine whether the given actions of human beings are right or wrong. Diana Trilling says, "Modern life is a pattern of meaningless violence alternated with emptiness and that the modern individual has been

stripped of everything which once described his humanity, left with only his raw nerves and naked skin” (83).

Moral values are devastated by the pursuit of the happiness. In the eyes of death all are equal and it leaves no one. The moral dimension is that evil has no place in heaven. If we want to get salvation from the deadly sins we have to confess our guilt. We have to give up all the worldly pleasures and comforts and should dedicate ourselves only in good deeds. We all have to give an account ourselves to God and only our virtues are rewarded by the God whereas vices lead us towards damnation. Moral values become the basis of all acts and conducts. The most important thing to en route the moral values is characters, Plato believes, “character is that which reveals moral purpose, showing what kind of things a man chooses or avoids”(qtd. in Adams 33). T. S. Eliot in his plays presents the significance of moral values. In the very play *Murder in the Cathedral* the central figure Thomas a Becket is the icon of virtues. Becket stands against the king’s autocracy and becomes ready to give up his power and pleasure. Not only has this but he also accepted Christian martyrdom which is always the design of God for the redemption of whole humanity.

The life of modern man has become meaningless and spiritually sterile. T. S. Eliot presents a scene in *The Waste Land* of the modern civilization. The old civilization with its values and conventions is dead and gone, leaving only a heap of broken images. Nothing seems to grow out of its stony waste land. There is an old tree lying on the ground. It represents the good individual who once functioned like a shady tree and proved beneficial to others, but is no more. The barren land is full of crickets but their music gives no satisfaction. As he says:

Son of man,

You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
 A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
 And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
 And the dry stone no sound of water. (20-24)

It is no secret, Himmelfrab writes, that a lack of moral authority pervades contemporary modern life. The modern people consistently tell that “moral decay” or “moral decline” is one of the world’s severest problems and it is a belief that has grown more pronounced over time. Himmelfarb writes:

It is not only conservatives . . . who now deplore the breakdown of family; liberals do as well. No liberal or conservative seriously disputes the prevalence of violence, vulgarity and promiscuity in videos and rap music, or denies their degrading effects. . . . Nor do many people today seriously doubt the inadequacy of education at all levels, or the fragility of communalities, or the ‘defining down’ of morality, public and private. It is no mean achievement to have reached at least this point of consensus. (72)

So the corruption and sexual degeneration at all levels is torturing the modern man. A vision of dissolution and spiritual and emotional sterility of modern people is the outcome of degeneration, vulgarization and commercialization of sex. When the sex is exercised for the sake of procreation and when it is an expression of love, it becomes the source of life and vitality. But modern people exercise sex for the sake of momentary pleasure. So the values of the contemporary world have become distorted.

Moral Degradation

The modern west is entirely desolate and the people are all spiritually dead and sterile. The modern dramas have emphasized much on essential condition of modern man. Since these plays present the world in which we find, human being struggling with the

irrationality of experience as Cuddon says, “lack a formal logic and conventional structure so that both form and content support the representation of what may be called the absurd predicament” (968).

The modern man is suffering from a dearth of love and faith. Moral degradation is a philosophical thought that postulates the modern man is living amidst the disillusionment and meaninglessness existence. Modern dramas and their study generally do not present any plain mirror-image of the world. The realization of crisis in the identity of human beings has largely been emphasized and intensified by the great existentialist thinker Jean Paul Sartre. Sartre says, “Man is condemned to be free . . . condemned because he has not created himself and is nevertheless free. Because having once been hurled into the world, he is responsible for everything he does” (73).

Regarding moral degradation the discussion of the terms ‘sin’, ‘evil’ and ‘temptation’ seems essential on the light of Christian doctrine. According to *Longman Dictionary*, ‘sin’ is an offence against God or religious law or something that is regarded as wrong or shameful (623). The actual sin is that which a person commits of his own free will and for which he is personally responsible. According to Gardiner “‘sin’ that is portrayed in a story should be recognized, then there is no difference between good and evil, then there is no conflict possible in the story.’ Sin’ is an offence against God, a loss of His friendship. ‘Sin’ is attractive since it follows a theological basis. If it is not, no sin would ever be committed because it is sinful, but because it is always under the appearance of good” (57).

The Bible teaches us that sin entered in the world as the result of transgression of Adam and Eve in paradise. The first sin was occasioned by the temptation of Satan in the form of a serpent, who sowed in man’s heart the seeds of distrust and unbelief. Scripture clearly indicates that the serpent, which appears as the tempter in the story of the fall, was

but an instrument of Satan. The first sin consisted in man's eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This eating was sinful because God had forbidden it. As a result of it man lost the image of God in the restrict sense, became guilty and utterly corrupt, and fell under the sway of death.

Nevertheless, because of its unlikeness to God, sin is always equally sinful and condemnable whether it is committed by the saved or the unsaved; nor is there provided in either case for its cure other than the efficacy of the all-sufficient blood of Christ; that is, the blood has been shed and it's saving, transforming application awaits faith's appropriation. Over against this it is written of the Christian that if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ his son cleans us from all sin.

There has always been evil nature in human beings due to which they lose their ultimate goal in life. Leading American novelist and short story writer, Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-64), is a careful measurer of the historical, religious, literary and emotional distance. Such distance occurs due to the same evil nature of human beings. "Evil" means not good morally, wicked and harmful. *Oxford Dictionary* defines "'Evil' as the reverse of good, physically or morally, whatever is censurable, painful, disastrous or undesirable" (390). Biblically speaking, evil is defined as any act with Gods, as if God can be manipulated. This in effect serves as a barrier between humanity and God.

From the perspective of Christians who also believed in God's revelation in the Old Testament, evil depends on man's freedom, on his responsibility and his conscious breaking of God's law. So the first cause of evil is sin. *The Encyclopedia Americana* defines, "'Evil' is opposed to the divine order of the universe; the nothing is therefore strictly meaningless except to a believer in God'. In a moral sense, "evil is contrasted with God". If an orderly, rational universe is postulated, and particularly if it is assumed that

there is an omnipotent and beneficent creator, evil disrupts the order and results in sorrow, distress or calamity” (731). It makes clear that the main cause of distress is the evil nature of human beings. Daily prayer of Christians is a call to merciful God to deliver us from evil and Satan’s designs. Like Jesus every Christian is subject to temptation as well as daily attacks and systematic persecutions of the Dragon from the Apocalypse, the beast that came out of the sea, from dark abyss of evil, and has absolute political authority. Christian must pray with all their strength, ‘Lord, deliver us from evil!’ in order not to be devoured by this greedy and evil ‘Moloch’.

Evil desires become the cause of temptation. There are various meanings for the word ‘temptation’. Temptation has many synonyms in English. It can mean test, proof, experiment, trial, enticement. Usually, according to Christian Doctrine, it means either an enticement to sin or a test or trial. It begins with an evil thought and becomes sin when we dwell on the thought and allow it to become an action. People who live for God sometimes wonder why they still have temptations. Does God tempt them? No. God tests people but he does not tempt them by trying to seduce them into sin. But God does allow Satan to tempt people in order to refine their faith and help them grow in their dependence on Christ. Adam and Eve faced a test of obedience, and disobeyed and fell. Christ, in order to redeem men, faced testing, and came out victorious.

There arises a question, was Christ tempted in the same way as Eve and Adam? Since Jesus was God in spirit and man in flesh, he was not really tempted. The fact that Jesus died in the flesh is proof that he had a body subject to corruption, though God did not permit the body to corrupt in the grave but raised him from the dead. So the word ‘temptation’ in the case of Jesus is only used in the sense of test. Like Adam, Christ endured temptation. But unlike Adam, he withstood the assaults of the ‘Tempter’ on all

points, thereby providing his mystical members a perfect model of resistance to their spiritual enemy and permanent sources of victorious help.

Like Jesus every person is subject to temptation as well as daily attacks and systematic persecutions of the Dragon from the Apocalypse, the beast that came out of the sea, from dark abyss of evil, and has absolute political authority. Jesus is our example of how to overcome temptation. When we are faced with temptation we must make our choice. The Bible says that when we are tempted God will give us a way to escape. God gives us the freedom to choose how we will respond. We can give in to temptation and sin, or we can ask God to help us overcome the temptation.

In the play *Murder in the Cathedral* Eliot presents the vivid pictures related to sinful evil nature of human beings. The offstage character King Henry II is the real icon having evil nature as he always tries to impose his autocratic will over all citizens. At the end of the play, the women thank Becket for the redemption from sinful life, which shows that each individual's life in the modern world is not away from the sinful act. Evil desires originate in our mind and start to tempt us for sinful act. In the very play Eliot presents the Four Tempters; the personified symbols of the central character Thomas a Becket. They tempt Becket urging him for committing sinful acts but Becket realizes the will of God and handles the situation in a right way.

Religion may be the bedrock foundation of morality as we know it – but ethics can and will learn a new understanding of this old school of thought. Puritans' life and ideology are important things order to understand and follow good morality in human beings. They believe that God has predestined some of these fallen creatures for the guilt of salvation. Rummel writes:

The puritans took the scripture, sacraments and the sermons as God's own words, which they interpreted following the works of Peter Rumns, in the

most accurate way, and expected all puritans to live strictly following these parameters. But that did not mean that sinners could save themselves, but the elect could improve their souls. (3)

Although the people believed in pre determination they did not await their God-given fate. They spent their whole life trying to find out their destiny whether it might be heaven or hell. Rummel writes, “Work even if did not guarantee salvation, was their way to express their faith and to show their hope for heaven. Morality and a good life were interpreted to be a sign of God’s will” (4-5).

Focusing on the level of tolerance which was dependent on the extent of appropriateness another important writer Mark Twain is certainly telling us that we should not blindly accept society’s conventions as ultimate truth. We should trust our ‘gut’ or follow our compassion. He writes:

We have all presumably been corrupted by society. Since Huck’s morality just flows naturally and doesn’t have to be worded at, he is of limited value to us as a mode. In fact, Huck is not even particularly desirable as a model of life in a real world, since he suffers from meekness, passivity and excessive humility. As a result, Huck’s moral instincts do not always translate into moral action. (4)

Turning away from right behaviors or moral values is also prevalent in religions. Modern religions respond to the rise of the counter – culture and baby boomers in myriad ways, but in no way could they ignore them. Many of the new religious movements blurred the lines between movement, sect and cult. Mainstream religious groups sought to capture the energy of young people who seemed to be leading the country in new selections. Many spiritual seekers such as Protestants, Catholic and Jewish religions expressions altogether turning their spiritual quest to Eastern thought, meditation etc.

Spiritual seekers sought access to heightened status of awareness to what many of them called a new expanded consciousness.

Absurdity in the Modern World

Absurdity is the state of permanent contradiction and continual struggle. It means no sense, no reason, and no aim. An absurdist reflects neither on the past nor on the future; absurd is neither nostalgic nor optimistic. Absurdity is a kind of frenzy. It stands on divorce between man and life. According to Martin Esslin, “Absurd is that which is devoid of purpose . . . cut off from his religious, metaphysical and transcendental roots, man is lost; all his actions become senseless, absurd, useless” (23). It is Albert Camus, who in his *Myth of Sisyphus* (1942), for the first time uses the word “absurd” to show that human situation is purposeless and absurd. Sisyphus personifies the real qualities of absurdity. He continues life despite his meaningless monotonous life. Like him, absurdist lives in the world of continual experience and loneliness. The absurdist sees human life as condemned life. But total rejection is not possible so we can't free ourselves from this meaninglessness like Prometheus. Absurdist embody an attitude that the experience of life in present is important.

Though this absurd movement is not a formal movement, it seeks to speculate man struggling in vain to attach a meaning and purpose to life, situation and the existence as a whole. Camus shows how the word “absurd” is born when the man's needs confront the unreasonable silence of the world. Camus further argues that absurd is not in “man” nor in the “world” but in their presence together. It is F. Nietzsche who is responsible to put an end to the assumptions and values man had been living with for centuries. Now with his revolutionary *Zarathustra*, published in 1883 with the message that “God is Dead”, man is left fatherless, alone and a stranger not only to the objects or all in relation to him but even to himself.

Nietzsche talks about existential crisis like guilt, alienation, good and evil, self-contempt, resentment, despair, boredom and death. He tried to prove human life as something dark, hidden, deep, and obscure. Nietzsche pointed the true picture of man who is left alone, helpless and powerless, confronting a dark, bleak, hopeless and godless world. Modern man suddenly finds himself in an awkward, foreign and non-understandable land. The world he has been living all his life, at time of self-awareness becomes suddenly divested of illusions and habituations. Then all these things lose their meanings, the values we had attached them. They become foreign, strange and irreducible to us. At such a situation, every object around him which he had been so much familiar with for so long becomes mysterious. Camus argues that this strangeness of the world is the 'Absurd'.

Man is left alone in this world. He has been attaching meaning and values to all the things, judging them and rationalizing their potentialities in view of his own perspective. And what man is and what world is are questions synonymous as well as mysterious. The question is always left unanswered. In this sense, biological concept of human life does not prove the final truth of human existence but only a perspective to examine life. Man finally encounters himself his own body, his own consciousness and senses; his own 'self' and his own existence and finally concludes "It is Absurd".

Eliot's vision of human life is tragic in consonance with the serious contemplation of saints and sages. Man is placed between two poles of time and eternity. The world ends not with a bang but a whimper. We are roaming about in a valley of dying stars. We are the hollow man. In the fragments, we find sparkling insights that form a view of life. 'Birth' is bitter agony because man is in dark, in ignorance. 'Tiredness' is revealing a sense of tragedy. It signifies presence of knowledge which occasions dissatisfaction and disgust. No end to the withering withered flowers, the moment of pain, the drifting

wreckage, and the voiceless wailing. His pain is so deep, that it is painless and motionless.

Including the characteristics of the modern world which have entered into our consciousness and manifested themselves in our daily thinking and discussion Raymond

M. Olderman writes:

Modern people are characterized by enervating and neurotic pettiness, physical and spiritual sterility and debilitation, an inability to love, yearning and fear-ridden desires. They are sexually inadequate, divided by guilt, alienated, aimless, bored and rootless; they long for escape and for death. They are immersed in mercantilism and materialism; their lives are vain, artificial and pointless. Close to being inert, they are helpless in the face of a total disintegration of values. Life constantly leads to a reduction of all human dignity; the wastelanders become idealess and hopeless as he falls prey to false prophets. (11-12)

The modern world as conspiracy is too vague, too ominous, and too enormous to be contained, and so it is called conspiracy. This kind of abstract threat is more difficult to battle with; its power seems everywhere and nowhere, and so the heroes of the modern world are passive. For the absurd thinkers, there is no aim of existence; man has no end-in-view. John Macquairre says, "Nietzsche, Sartre and Camus see human existence transcending into the "Nothing". There is no God, so man is entirely abandoned to fixing his own norms and determining his values and what he will become" (72). A powerful undercurrent of existential quest is found in almost all the works of music, art, prose and poetry of the modern age but it got a vivid and a broadly touching expression on the stage.

Walter Kaufmann points out:

Godless existentialism is pictured as the philosophy of our age; the modern poet is not offered the fine edifice of Thomism, as Dante was; he is

confronted, we are told, by a bleak doctrine that proclaims that man is not at home in the world but thrown into it, that he has no divine father and is abandoned to a life of care, anxiety and failure that will end in death, with nothing after that. Poor modern man. (2)

And when man finds meaning nowhere, then a sudden realization of the awkwardness of existence comes up. Kaufmann again says that “There is nothing that gives our lives meaning and viewed from the outside, life which ends in death, is senseless” (218).

The validity of everything is again and again threatened and rejected. The existentialists open the way of awareness but their discussions have no any final solution. Anyway, the aim is to present the disillusionment of the modern man about the meaninglessness of his own existence.

T. S. Eliot portrays the absurdity of modern man in his plays. In the play *The Cocktail Party* the characters remain miserable till they find their real identity. It shows the modern men’s whole tension, anguish and anxiety. As a same way, Eliot depicts clear picture of absurdity of modern world in the play *Murder in the Cathedral* as the Chorus says:

We do not wish anything to happen.

Seven years we have lived quietly.

Succeeded in avoiding notice,

Living and partly living. (*Murder* 29)

Here, the ordinary women express the tiredness of life. They have lived for seven years quietly though they have faced enormous sufferings as they have lived not to the full but restricted and incomplete lives in the absence of their compassionate Archbishop. Even they have suffered but still they are not willing to have anything better because they do not have any certainty of brighter life. It is exactly the situation of modern world as the

modern men are also living the divorced life which is full of incompleteness, frustration and anxiety without the wish of a complete departure from such miserable conditions.

Domination over Individual Autonomy

Every individual requires personal freedom to live a prosperous and meaningful life. Individual autonomy brings the real possibilities of novel creations. Here freedom means each individual being mentally and physically away from domination. Every individual possesses various kinds of potentialities and many achievements can be obtained by materializing such potentialities as still unlimited achievements are yet to be obtained. In this point Max Weber says, “Certainly all historical experience conforms the truth-that man would not have attained the possible unless time and again he had reached out of the impossible. But to do that a man must be a leader, and not only a leader but a hero as well, in a very sober sense of the word” (123). Weber talks about the enthusiasm of human beings to translate impossible into possible but he still sees the vitality of increasing amount of courage and endeavors.

In the modern context we can see the scientific progress as the great achievement obtained by the people and for this achievement individual autonomy plays the vital role. It is interesting to discuss that the same scientific progress is dominating the autonomy of modern people reducing them in a robot like object as David Owen points out, “While the modern individual possesses the capacity for autonomy, the possibility of realizing this capacity is being progressively undermined by a process whose *telos* is the reduction of the individual to a ‘cheerful robot’” (122).

It is apparent that we see the hierarchy among the people on the basis of cultural status and the duties and responsibilities that are designated to them. In this sense domination occurs over juniors by the seniors. The major thing is the domination always should be healthy, positive and limited respecting the dignity of every people. It always

should be the helpful tool for the betterment of individual and whole society. Different kinds of problems come up one starts to squeeze the total autonomy of other people as in the modern world different sorts of conflicts based on culture, religions and political issues arise due to the unhealthy dominations. The devastating world wars are the striking example of chaotic situation that happened due to the unnecessary dominations imposed by one country to others.

Eliot in his play *Murder in the Cathedral* gives the light on the issue of unhealthy domination. In the play the offstage character King Henry II always tries to impose his will without caring the freedom of others though individual freedom is their right too. The ordinary people in compulsion live their life facing different sorts of sufferings. The harmonious relationship between king and citizens that is the most one for the ideal state remains in the broken condition due to the act of the king. It shows the relationship among the modern people which is completely void in the absence of co-operation and respect. It is due to the act of the King the central character Thomas a Becket stands against him as the King forces him to apply his sayings and act accordingly though Becket himself deserves certain autonomy as an Archbishop. The conflict further develops but Becket solves all problems as the play ends. This depiction of domination over individual autonomy reflects one of the major problem of modern world as it is one striking cause for the modern maladies.

Adaptation of Religion for Salvation

Religion is generally defined as an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, practices and worships that centre on one supreme God, or the Deity. In other words, religion is a relation in which man stands to God, a relation in which man is conscious of the absolute majesty and infinite power of God and of his own utter insignificance and absolute helplessness. It may be defined as a conscious and voluntary relationship to God,

which expresses itself in grateful worship and loving service. The manner of this religious worship and service is not left to the arbitrary will of man, but is determined by God.

Religion is important because it gives the people a sense of security and promises salvation, happenings or change towards better life before and after the death. It brings a sense of individual fulfillment and gives meaning to life. It gives answer to many questions like life, destiny, morality etc. It has been one of the most powerful forces in history. The teaching of religion has shaped the lives of people since pre-historic time. It has been a supreme source of inspiration in the arts. Greatest buildings, paintings and music are associated with religion.

The Bible gives the only reliable account of the origin of religion. It informs us of the existence of God, the only object worthy of religious worship. Moreover, it comes to us with the assurance that God, whom man could never discover with his natural powers, revealed Himself in nature and, more especially, in His divine word, demands the worship and service of man, and also determines the worship and service that is well-pleasing to Him. And, finally, it teaches us that God created man in His own image, and thus endowed him with a capacity to understand, and to respond to, this revelation, and engendered in him a natural urge to seek communion with God to glorify Him. The discussion of religion naturally leads on to that of revelation as its origin. If God had not revealed Himself, religion would have been impossible. Man could not possibly have had any knowledge of God, if God had not made Himself known. Left to himself, he would never have discovered God. We distinguish between God's revelation in nature and His revelation in Scripture.

Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism are regarded as the major religions. These religions teach a doctrine of salvation. They stress that salvation is the highest goal of achievement and all followers should try to achieve. But the achievement of salvation is

based on the beliefs that individuals are in some danger from which they must be saved. Christianity and several other major religions teach that the danger is spiritual and is centered in each person's soul. The danger to the soul pertains mainly to life after death. If a person is saved the soul enters a state of eternal happiness, often called heaven otherwise the soul may reach to hell.

Eliot had great interest in religion especially in Roman Catholic that's why he turned himself to associate with Anglican Church in 1927. Eliot also wanted Irving Babbit to have attitude towards Catholicism as Roger Kojecky writes, "Eliot wished that his friend would not only admit the dependence of philosophy upon religion, but also admit the necessity of Catholicism" (72-73). He further writes about Eliot's involvement in churches as, "He was also making radio broadcasts, such as 'The Church's message to the World' in 1937 and 'Towards a Christian Britain in 1941' (126). Eliot had defined religion in his own words which Roger Kojecky cites, ". . . can only examine the idea involved , and their implications, their consequences and their relations to the general problem of civilization; but at the point where intellectual analysis stops and emotional conviction begins our commission ends" (86).

Kojecky writes about Eliot's similar view as:

Eliot assumes with hearers that morality rests upon religions sanction, and that the social organization of the world rests upon moral sanction; and that we can only judge of temporal values in the light of eternal values. He speaks confidently and comprehensively: a Christian world order is ultimately the only one which, from any points of view will work. (127)

Eliot's first play *Murder in the Cathedral*, a religious play is devoted in proving the significance of religion to the life of modern people. The play initially written for the festival of Canterbury Church remains as a strong play of religion. It brings the necessary

elements that make a play a religious play. Some critics even believe that the play would work as a model for those who want to write a religious play as Katharine Worth writes:

And there will, no doubt, always be some for whom *Murder in the Cathedral* has no need to abide our questions; of the greatness of *Murder in the Cathedral* there can be no doubt it may even written and the other plays will survive only as a part of the unity of which it is the finest element.

(149)

The play is based on the murder of Saint Thomas a Becket of the Twelfth century who died for the sake of religion and for the sake of people. Thus, the murder has an archetypal significance of whose importance people may not understand now. Eliot had in him the purpose of providing the significance to the lives of modern people living in twentieth century war between periods almost like a waste-land.

The play brings two sets of character: one with religious importance and the other with only the care of day to day activities. And finally Eliot makes the latter to understand the significance of the former who died for them. Thus, Eliot brings a conception of religion to the latter characters. He makes them aware through the former character that religion can bring salvation to the soul and betterment in life and finally redemption from the worldly materialistic temptations and regeneration in the soil of wasteland. This way Eliot shows through his play the significance of religion to the lives of modern people.

Martyrdom and Sacrifice

The martyrdom which Eliot wanted to present through his play is not other but the Christian Martyrdom. Christian Martyrdom has its more significance during Christmas days because most of the Christian martyr had got martyrdom during Christmas period. The martyrdom, this play deals with dates on the twenty-ninth of December. Christ himself was crucified during this time. Saint Stephen is regarded as the first martyr in

Christianity. He got his martyrdom on the twenty-sixth of December and similarly Herod had given order for the massacre of children in twenty-eight of December during the birth of Jesus Christ. The children who were killed at that time are also regarded as Christian martyrs.

Martyr is a person who defends a principle even though it means sacrificing many things, perhaps even his/her life. R. P. Blackmur writes about martyrdom as, “. . . a supreme form of human greatness, its expense for the martyr himself and for those less great but bound with it” (188). Martyrdom also does require some of the qualities as D. E. Jones writes in the essay “Murder in the Cathedral” as, “Martyrdom requires the right attitude on the part of the great mass of men. Martyrdom is not efficacious unless it accepted by them as ‘the design of god’; for his love of men to warn them and to lead them back to his ways” (67).

It is the theme of martyrdom that Eliot wanted to present through his play *Murder in the Cathedral*. So, D. E. Jones writes in the same essay, “And he began with a full scale study of Martyrdom” (50). So, the play is not just about the murder of man called Becket rather it is about the martyrdom of great Saint Becket. The play is the dramatization of martyrdom. So the people will understand the significance of it to their lives.

Becket after purifying his will with a struggle against Tempters becomes a pure man without any will. By then he comes to the state where he had submitted his will to the will of God. In a way, he had come to be one with the will of god and gets martyrdom. And other characters also do understand the significance of martyrdom as Roger Kojecky writes, “The Martyrdom has brought home the redemptive meaning of the death of Christ” (106).

Sacrifice is a religious ceremony in which something is given to god or the gods, thus becoming ‘holy’. The word comes from two Latin terms meaning to make holy.

People offering the sacrifice often expect to receive some physical or spiritual good, and to achieve a proper relationship with the sacred power. Sacrifices have included food, animals and even human beings.

There are many theories about the origin of sacrifice. Some people claim that it is divinely instituted. Others believe that it developed from people's inner conflicts, uncertainties or feeling of guilty and remorse. Still, others believe that the sacrificed object occupies a middle space between humanity and sacred beings and thus connecting them. Roger Kojecky writes showing the significance of sacrifice as, "Spiritual success is found on worldly defeat, life is through death, redemption through sacrifice" (109).

Sacrifice acquires its meaning according to the particular contexts. In ancient times, there had been the ritual of sacrifice which involved the scattering of the body for fertility or sharing of the blood of the man who died. Raymond Williams writes about sacrifice as, "The simplest form of sacrifice, in which a man is killed so that the body of men may live or live more fully, we have almost wholly abandoned. We know the idea, from other cultures and periods, but it retains emotional significance in one case only at the centre of Christian belief" (156).

So, in religion and especially in Christian belief martyrs can be seen in the rhythm of sacrifice. And such a rhythm of sacrifice is always dependent on context. A sacrifice is judged by its cause and effects it may leave after the sacrifice. But sacrifice that comes associated with martyrdom gets a different emotional respect in the society.

Tragedy, as a genre of literature is said to have developed out of sacrifice were the ways through which tragedy developed. Raymond Williams has further written about this type of connection of sacrifice and tragedy as, "Tragedy rests not in the individual destiny, of the man who must live this sacrifice, but in general condition of a people reducing or

destroying itself because it is not conscious of its true condition, The tragedy is not in the death, but in life” (155).

The action of *Murder in the Cathedral* is based on a sacrifice of historical martyrdom, but it is taken out of that particular context and is made a part of an eternal design.

THIRD PRIEST. Even now, in sordid particulars

The eternal design may appear. (*Murder* 64)

Becket’s life is sacrifice, his independent will to life conquered by the particular ritual enacts. So, the murder of Becket is not murder in its historical sense but a sacrifice.

This sacrifice of Becket brings a renewed consciousness to the play. Not only has this it had impression on the audience as well, D. E. Jones writes in the essay “Murder in the Cathedral” as:

With and through chorus, we of the audience are invited to participate in the celebration of the act of martyrdom and to accept the sacrifice of Thomas Becket as made in our behalf. Before, we can do this however, we, like Thomas Becket must undergo temptation, in our case the temptation to deny the efficacy of his sacrifice and its relevance to us. (62)

Finally, it is said that sacrifice brings redemption in life as Raymond William writes:

Redemption is a consciousness of this natural order and of the place of sacrifice in it, for this is a consciousness of God. The natural order, without the sacrifice, is merely bestial. It is the act of blood, and the receiving of the blood. This creates consciousness, and, separates man from the beasts. Through the chorus, the drive of the play is towards the general acceptance of the blood of the sacrifice. (161)

But it is Raymond Williams himself who says that sacrifice should not only be taken as a way for redemption as he points out, “The sacrifice is not only redemption, but conversion. It is this particular rhythm that the sacrificial victim becomes the redeemer or the martyr” (162).

Anyway the play deals with the sacrifice, which is said to have been taken place during the twelfth-century but it is recast and reasserted to the people of twentieth-century as D. E. Jones writes, “for us, therefore, the play is not over; the effect of Thomas’ sacrifice continuous” (62). Thus Becket’s sacrifice is an act of atonement for the inadequacies of the world. He is a type of Christ who sees that for him to die is more important in the eternal dimension than to accept the reasonable arguments both of his tempters and the priest. Becket’s sacrifice is an action out of time, an action which has its full significance in a timeless dimension, where every deed is seen to have eternal significance or eternal insignificance.

Thus, in modern society the new inventions and discoveries have brought about a transformation in the old romantic values of life. The rapid growth of science and technology and deification of machine have brought about a commercialization of art, literature and music, and the modern age is rightly branded as the commercial age of the world. In the modern world religion and spiritualism are on the wane and everywhere materialism is in the ascendancy. Many poets, novelists and playwrights have felt disgusted with the growing cult of materialism, and their works are marked with a note of revolt against this advancing tide of the modern times and Eliot is the prominent writer who has attacked the modern craze for materialism and machinery through his works. His play *Murder in the Cathedral* also can be examined on the light of above mentioned modern issues and vitality of religiosity and can be taken as a journey from the state of confusion and disorder to settled and pious realm.

Chapter Three

Voyage from Chaos to Order in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*

'Voyage' refers to trip or journey which the human beings make for different purposes. It has certain beginning from where one moves ahead towards the destination which has been set up. Here, the term implies a kind of journey which is a bit different from our plain understanding which refers to place to place trip. In T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, voyage of life starts from chaos then it moves ahead and settles in the state of order. It is important to discuss about the terms 'Chaos' and 'Order' in brief.

The turmoil situation which is full of confusion and disorder is a chaos. We have negative impression when we talk about chaos since peace is handicapped. This kind of situation can have different reasons mainly various kinds of conflicts like political, economic, religious and unholy competitions. Such situations can be noticed or seen properly. But sometimes chaotic situation arises within any individual too. When an individual suffers by unsettled temptations within him/her then a kind of psychic chaos comes forth. The life of any individual hurts tremendously when chaos is there. But on the other hand 'Order' refers to the well-settled situation. The surrounding atmosphere can be found free from any types of conflicts. The life of any individual moves ahead for further prosperity peacefully. As a same way if the individual can maintain psychic order then his/her life becomes progressive since he/she can achieve one after another success in every steps of life.

If we examine the modern age, we find tremendous changes in the society since human beings achieved amazing success in science and technology. On the other hand people had already experienced devastating world war which brought destruction and havoc in the society and people's psyche was shaped by the fear of the another world war. The sense of humanity, morality and religiosity had gone from the society and thus chaotic

situation rooted strongly since people died spiritually. So, the bringing order became the inevitable necessity. Eliot through his works suggests modern people that the peaceful order occurs when spiritual awareness is settled in human soul and mind.

In the play *Murder in the Cathedral*, T. S. Eliot presents a journey from chaos to order through the different characters. Though it has twelfth century setting and characters but his aim is to awaken the modern people who are spiritually dry. Eliot shows the life of modern people is full of evil nature, absurdity, sense of horror and spiritual dryness which are the causes of modern chaos. He sees the immense possibility of a pacific realm by purifying the polluted human soul and mind awakening them spiritually. In the play Eliot shows the journey of a chaotic life in the absence of spirituality through characters like the Chorus, a group of ordinary women, Priests, Tempters, the personified characters and so on. The journey of the chaotic life is ultimately settles in an ordered state when the central character of the play Thomas a Becket attempts a Christian martyrdom and awakens all of them spiritually. All of them realize that the attempt of Becket is for redeeming the whole humanity. Eliot wants to demonstrate his drama as socially significant so as it fertilizes and animates the lives of all people who live in modern maladies.

Murder in the Cathedral, which has been adjudged by many critics as the best work of Eliot is the foundation of the modern poetic theatre. This poetic play was written to be performed in Canterbury Cathedral at the yearly Canterbury festival can best be appreciated if it is approached in a religious frame of mind. The play is regarded as Eliot's most assured dramatic success. So far as the subject is concerned, it is just another historical drama, telling of the assassination, at of Thomas a Becket, the Archbishop who had dared to oppose King Henry II at Canterbury's high altar. It is the theme of martyrdom that Eliot wanted to present through the play to as D. E. Jones writes:

Murder in the Cathedral is not just a dramatization of the death of Thomas Becket; it is a deep-searching study of the significance of martyrdom.

There is no attempt at naturalism or the creation of illusion. Historical detail is severely subordinated to the pattern or design of martyrdom which gives the play its shape as well as its meaning. (59)

Eliot has been preoccupied with the theme of spiritual election and has sought to show the relationship of sainthood and martyrdom to the lives of the ordinary men and women of today even though the twelfth century world has been presented in the play. Showing the out of time relevance with human society Allardyce Nicoll writes:

By reintroducing the use of the chorus Eliot has taught his companions what virtues this dramatic device can bring with it. A whole human background is provided by these old women of Canterbury for the figure of Thomas; the commonplace unanimity of the mass is; through them, set against the extraordinary stature of the hero. (872)

Therefore, through the Chorus, all the people are invited to participate in the celebration of the act of martyrdom and to accept the sacrifice of Thomas as made in our behalf. Apart from this the play portrays the different emotions of the people as R. P. Blackmur points out:

It is the drama of human emotions actualized in the light of spiritual drama. The spirit is there, the intellect and theology; but all these through actualized emotions of the experience of good and evil, of fraud and ambition, self-deceit and nobility, and the communal humility of the poor- which is humility beneath Christian humility. (183)

Thus, the play *Murder in the Cathedral* having the theme of martyrdom is also successful to portray the positive and negative emotions of the people. Eliot sees such nature of

modern people and depicts all of them through the characters of the play. Due to such combination of human emotions the play has got real social significance since it awakes the people through the light of religiosity.

Morality and Moral Crisis

Morality is human qualities which are accorded with good behaviors. We have to give up all the worldly pleasures and comforts and should dedicate ourselves only in good deeds. Pleasures and comforts that we obtain through sin initially look comfort will eventually cause the soul to weep. All men should make the journey up to the God's realm and only their good deeds will speak for them at God's final reckoning. Such sense of morality is found in the expression of Second Tempter as he says:

To set down the great, protect the poor,
Beneath the throne of God can man do more?
Disarm the ruffian, strengthen the laws,
Rule for the good of the better cause,
Dispensing justice make all even,
Is thrive on earth, and perhaps in heaven. (*Murder 37*)

Here, the Second Tempter urges Thomas to protect the interests of those who are poor. As a Chancellor he should prevent the wicked from doing evil, he should strengthen laws, should rule for the good of the better cause and also should dispense justice and remove injustice. To do all this would reward on this earth and perhaps also in heaven.

As in *The Wasteland*, *Murder in the Cathedral* also presents the vivid picture of fragmentation, degeneration and loss of values in the west. Eliot describes modern men who are unwilling to be creative, active, fertile and upright. In a world where everything is broken down, these people prefer to talk about nothing and just think; they cultivate an aversion to fertility, creativity, activity, wholeness, harmony, progress, regularity and so

on. Such sense of moral dryness, death, inactiveness in the expression of Chorus as the play opens as they say:

Since golden October declined into somber November

And the apples were gathered and stored, and the land became brown sharp
points of death in a waste of water and mud,

The New Year waits, breathes, waits, whispers in darkness.

While the labourer kicks off a muddy boot and stretches his hand to the
fire,

The New Year waits, destiny waits for the coming. (*Murder 23*)

October the month of the ripening of crops and fruits came to an end, giving way to the gloomy and solemn month of November. The image of November is showing the darkness of modern people. The land has become a wilderness of water and mud, with sharp, barren points jutting out of the earth symbolizing death. The New Year generally symbolizes novel activeness but here it is already breathing and whispering in the darkness. The dramatist shows the dull and inactive beginning of the life of modern people.

Eliot sees human life quite tragic and suffocating. Human beings are puzzling because the world where they are living is completely void in the absence of morality. Due to immense dissatisfaction they are assuming their birth as a bitter agony. The pain is so deep that the overcome from it seems quite difficult. Frustration, anxiety and bitterness are hovering around them. Such scenarios are the prominent issues in Eliot's works. In the play *Murder in the Cathedral* the visualizing imagination of the dramatist makes us see scene after scene, the vast panorama of moral degeneration, psychic emptiness and spiritual mortification; the varied aspect of a life-in-death in a civilization on the brink of disaster. Apart from this another thing we noticed is that Eliot expresses his philosophic concern about the differences between appearance and reality. The collective voice of The

Four Tempters responding Chorus vividly presents the real picture of modern people and their world.

CHORUS. What is the sickly smell, the vapour? The dark green light from
 a cloud on a withered tree? The earth is hearing to parturition of
 issue of hell. What is the sticky dew that forms on the back of my
 hand? (*Murder 50*)

THE FOUR TEMPTERS. Man's life is a cheat and a disappointment
 All things are unreal,
 Unreal or disappointing:
 The Catherine wheel, the pantomime cat,
 The prizes given at the children's party,
 The prize awarded for the English Essay,
 The scholar's degree, the statesman's decoration,
 All things become less real, man passes
 From unreality to unreality. (*Murder 50*)

It shows that the earth is laboring to give birth to some monstrous evil as the voice of Chorus shows horrible picture of disaster. It depicts the life of people in the in the modern world where only the birth of evil is possible due to their corrupt and immoral affairs. The expression of the Four Tempters shows the deceptive and unreal life of modern people as they say all things such as prize awarded to the student, degree which a scholar receives and so on are unreal. A human being just moves from one unreality to another unreality. Thus, life of the modern wastelanders is not more then an act of deception and disappointment.

Spiritual Poverty and Depression

Eliot presents the social milieu in his poetry and plays. The existing social, economic and moral aspects are the prime concern of his works. Economic depression, unemployment and overpopulation have increased the hardship of life, and caused nervous breakdowns. The works of T. S. Eliot depicts the twentieth century which under the impact of science and rationalism has witnessed a gradual weakening of religious faith. Moral and ethical values are no longer regarded as absolute which cause a great spiritual poverty. His *The Waste Land* has been called the epic of the modern age as it presents the futility and anarchy of contemporary civilization. His play *Family Reunion* presents the ennui and boredom of city life and its agonizing loneliness. The play *Murder in the Cathedral* though having twelfth century setting presents the panorama of modern world. Concerning the use of Chorus D. E. Jones points out:

But Eliot has not just copied Aeschylus, he has given the chorus a new significance in the light of the Christian dispensation. In Aeschylus, the chorus has a character of its own-it consists of elders of Argos . . . just is the author's mouthpiece. In *Murder in the Cathedral*, the chorus is much farther individualized; this is dueless perhaps to the influence of naturalism and the modern emphasis on individuality. . . . (53)

So, the use of chorus is an ancient convention, which is mostly avoided by the modern dramatists. This could make the play an ancient one but Eliot has presented the chorus different than the ancient Greek time. The chorus does not represent the Greek time rather they are in modern convention.

Eliot sees the modern world with an atmosphere of moral unease and uncertainty due to the absence of moral and ethical values. Spiritual poverty is the major problem of modern people which Eliot portrays in the play *Murder in the Cathedral*. The priests, three

in number are not with the similar beliefs. Some of them could easily understand the sacrifice of Becket while others could not and lament over the sacrifice itself. This way, they represent the modern priests who may even lack proper understanding of spiritual matters. They sometime even behave foolishly and try to save the God designed martyr just by keeping him within four walls and locked door. After the murder of Becket, the First Priest laments as he says:

O father, father, gone from us, lost to us,
 How shall we find you, from what far place
 Do you look down us? You now in Heaven,
 Who shall now guide us, protect us, direct us?
 After what journey through what further dread
 Shall we recover your presence? When inherit
 Your strength? The Church lies bereft,
 Alone, desecrated, desolated, and heathen shall build on the ruins,
 Their world without God. I see it. I see it. (*Murder 88*)

But Second Priest says about sainthood as he says:

Now in the sight of god
 Conjoined with all the saints and martyrs gone before you,
 Remember us. (*Murder 89-90*)

On the other hand, Chorus at the opening speech says for themselves “the poor, the poor women of Canterbury” (*Murder 23*). This poor has two layers of implication. In one aspect it stands for the spiritual poverty, because of this they could not welcome the arrival of Thomas Becket people living during 1330s. The people living at that time had almost lost the sense of religion. They were engaged in quarrels and war games. They had lost the

sense of sacrifice and believed that property; land should be amassed by the war games.

Eliot, through his play is trying to teach the lesson to the modern people.

This poverty also refers to the great depression of late 1920s. Economic depression of that time had devastated the life of people living at that time. They could not get work for themselves and so could not get food as well. Sometimes, they could get a little food to eat while other time they had to stay empty stomach as like the Chorus says in the play;

Sometime the corn has failed us,
 Sometimes the harvest is good,
 One year is a year of rain,
 Another a year of dryness,
 One year the apples are abundant,
 Another year the plums are lacking. (*Murder* 30)

So, there was a sense of despair, uncertainty and doubts in the life of 1930s which is reflected in the speeches of Chorus. It determines the setting of the play and takes the play in the time of 1930s though the main conflict or the plot comes from twelfth century.

The sense of distress and depression can be seen from the reference of Eliot's personal distress due to the environment in which he himself was living. He was in full distress in the time when he received the proposal to write the play as Robert Sencourt writes in the essay "The First Plays" as:

When Eliot was invited by the Bishop of Chichester to write his Canterbury drama, he was still living in a time of intense personal distress. His religion though leading to frequent and sincere worship and though completed by his living with his clerical friends, had not brought his life to a thoroughly peaceful integration. (173)

Though he was in full of distress, he was still optimistic towards his religion. When Eliot was writing this play, the political development of the then time had also influenced him as F. O. Matthiessen writes:

Eliot was also writing against the then rising menace of fascism, when violent men comparable to Reginald Fitz Urse took power into their own hands. Eliot bore out again there by what he asserted about Pound's translation that in possessing the past a poet could suggest the present.
(172)

On this basis we can see the political implication of the play. The play projects the political depression of the modern people. Critics see King Henry II, who does not appear in the play, as the leader of fascism who like the fascist wanted to bring everything within the control of state. This tendency also reflects another political development of time; totalitarianism. It is a form of government that theoretically permits no individual freedom and that seeks to subordinate all aspects of individual's life to the authority of government. The term was coined by the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini to describe the new fascist state of Italy. This rule of fascism had been a matter of headache for many people living in twentieth century. On this basis the main action of the play is set. So, King Henry II here represents a totalitarian. Thus, the modern wasteland is in the chaotic situation due to the multi layers of depressions and the absence of spiritual awareness.

Sense of Horror and Absurdity

Modern world was plunging in various kinds of problems like over-crowding, housing shortage, a significant increase in vices and crimes, fall in the standards of sexual morality and a rapidly increasing ugliness. The most intelligent, cultivated and sensitive modern people were deeply dissatisfied with the achievements of their vaunted civilization and the very dissatisfaction was playing the vital role for the immense increment of horror.

This sense of horror can be seen in the action of Chorus mainly in their sense of rising horror. The Chorus begins with a sense of horror which they feel has dragged them to the Cathedral as they say:

Here let us stand, close by the cathedral. Here let us wait.

Are we drawn by danger? Is it the knowledge of safety that draws our feet towards the cathedral? (*Murder* 23)

But this sense of danger does not remain static rather it goes on rising and rising till the murder of Thomas Becket. Part II of the play opens with a speech by the chorus. There is a reference by the chorus to the sea-bird which has been driven in land by a strong wind as they say, “Only the sea-bird cries, driven inland by the storm” (*Murder* 61). The sea-bird is a useful symbol for the Chorus themselves, because they too have felt compelled to come out of their homes where they had always felt secure. Then there is the mention of a spring which is more like death than birth as they say, “A sour spring, a parched summer, an empty harvest” (*Murder* 61). There is an insistence on the naturalness of the season. The crow and the owl supply two quick contributory effects, and then the speech becomes more religious in tone as, “And war among men defiles the world, but death in the lord renews it” (*Murder* 61). We once again, have a note of anxiety and doubt when the chorus say, “Between Christmas and Easter what work shall be done?” (*Murder* 61). In this way their sense of horror goes on rising which forms the setting of the play.

Their sense of horror is also seen as imagery. This imagery can broadly be divided into three categories. First, there is the imagery of ordinary life depicting routine and common place events and happenings as for example, when the women of Chorus in their opening speech say that sometimes the corn has failed them, sometimes the harvest is good, that one year is year of rain and another year a year of dryness, and so on. Secondly, there is the poignant imagery which moves us to pity for the speakers, as in those lines

where the chorus women confer with a sense of shame that they are consented to the humiliation of Becket in which they seek the Archbishop's forgiveness. And the third is the imagery of horror. The Chorus here now speaks about the dark shapes in the dark air, the puss-purr of leopard, the footfall of padding bear, the palm-put of the nodding ape and the hyena waiting for laughter as:

Sweet and cloying through the dark air
 Falls the stifling scent of despair;
 The forms take shape in the dark air;
 Puss-purr of leopard, footfall of padding bear,
 Palm-pat of nodding ape, square hyaena waiting
 For laughter, laughter, laughter. . . (*Murder* 52)

This way the sense of horror is rising in the play. This sense of rising horror as the environmental setting of the play is seen as the rising horror of the 1930s, a time the play was written intending the then people. The time of 1930s was also similar to the rising horror of the play. It was a war-between time. People had not forgotten the bloodsheds of First World War and the aches of the same war were not cured, they have got a sense of forthcoming Second World War as Robert Sencourt writes in the essay "The First Plays" as, "In the year in which he was completing *Murder in the Cathedral*, Mussolini had come out with the prophecy that if the nations of Europe persisted in their current mentalities, there would be a general war by 1939" (173). In this way, the people had disgusting memory of the First World War in one side while on the other they had the horror of coming war. So, the settings of the Chorus are put in such an action that resembles the people of the then time. It is because of this reason the play could have an appropriate appeal for the then people.

As the life of modern people was full of ennui and boredom due to the hovering corruption, they were passing absurd life. As the absurdist continues his life despite his meaningless monotonous life same was the condition of modern people. Eliot presents such miserable picture in his play *Murder in the Cathedral* as the Chorus says:

Winter shall come bringing death from the sea

Ruinous spring shall beat at our doors,

Root and shoot shall eat our eyes and our ears,

Disastrous summer burn up the beds of our streams

And the poor shall wait for another decaying October. (*Murder* 24)

Here the ordinary women express the grievances of meaningless life. Winter has come bringing death from the sea which will followed by spring still it will bring nothing but ruin to their households. The new plants and the new branches of trees will wreck their sight and hearing. Again summer comes bringing misfortune as it will dry up stream flowing through their territory, and they will wait for the arrival of another October which will bring nothing but decay for them.

It shows that each and every span of time is just bringing emptiness and dryness. They have the fear of death and as for absurdist death is the only truth that we have. We are conscious of the truth that everybody must face this reality. It resembles the people living during 1930s as they had a fear of death since they were in the state of vices, crimes and conflicts. They were seeing the major possibility of another devastating war but still living trying to dig out some sorts of meaning of life.

Modern world was facing an increase in vulgarity, brutality and coarseness. Human relationships had been coarsened and cheapened; man had become incapable of finer and subtle emotional responses. So, they were passing their life with enormous restlessness. Everywhere they heard the restless movements of the people and the whole

earth became heavy for them as some disaster was going to befall them as the Chorus says:

There is no rest in the house. There is no rest in the street.

I hear restless movement of feet. And the air is heavy and thick.

Thick and heavy the sky. And the earth presses up against our feet. (*Murder*
49)

Thus, Eliot depicts chaotic life of modern people due to the rising horror and restlessness. The rising conflicts, corruptions, crimes and vices were weakening the life of the people. Modern people were in total broken state due to the lack of conformity of settled and peaceful society.

The Evils of Life

Life of the modern man is evil because the higher the organism the greater the suffering. As consciousness ascends, pain increases, and reaches its highest degree in man. And again the more distinctively a man knows that the more intelligent he is; the more pain he has. Life of modern wastelanders is war. Everywhere in world, we see strife, tussle and conflict, and a suicidal alteration of victory and defeat. The people are unhappy when alone, and unhappy in society. With reference to the characters of *Murder in the Cathedral*, a lingering evil scenario can be observed as the Chorus says:

Here is no continuing city, here is no abiding stay.

Ill the wind, ill the time, uncertain the profit, certain the danger.

O late late late, late is the time, late too late, and rotten the year;

Evil the wind, and bitter the sea, and grey the sky, grey grey grey. (*Murder*
29)

Here the ordinary women see their city is not an everlasting city. They feel certain that some danger is threatening them. They see the year is declining and dying. Eliot presents

the imagery of wind, sea and sky as all of them are full of evil, bitterness and gloomy sight. It is the picture of modern world as the world also decaying due to dreadful gloomy sight.

Eliot sees the evil psychology of modern wastelanders. He sees the mind of modern people is perpetually tempted by evil desires due to which they move ahead for immoral and corrupt act. He portrays the very psychological aspects through the characters especially the Four Tempters who tempt the central character Thomas a Becket for immoral acts. The First Tempter asks him to give up his ascetic way of life and return to the mirth and sportfulness of past. The Second one asks him to give up pretence of priestly power for the power and glory of the crown. The Third one suggests for misuse of power and The Fourth one even suggests differently leaving Becket in a dilemma as he offers Becket martyrdom for eternal glory. When Becket refuses all of them they express their dissatisfaction as they say:

This man is obstinate, blind, intent

On self-destruction. (*Murder* 50)

Thus, it shows that how strong evil settlement is dwelling in the human psyche and how difficult to handle it properly. It also shows there has always been evil nature in human beings which means not good morally, wicked and harmful due to which they lose their ultimate goal in life. The actual evil is that which a person commits of his own free will and for which he is personally responsible. Eliot sees modern people are perpetually failure to handle it and get involved in corrupt acts and vices lead the modern world towards a complete chaotic realm.

Order through Redemption of Mankind

The twentieth century is a great age of modernism, which brought tremendous changes in the society. Industrialization, urbanization, demographic explosion,

development of mass communication and an advanced state of science and technology have radically changed the attitude of human beings. The so-called tradition is sacked by different innovations. People have already experienced the devastating world war, which brought great destruction and havoc in the society. Due to the destructive activities; people's psyche is shaped by the fear of the other world wars. The sense of humanity, morality and religiosity has gone from the society. Eliot sees mores are now replaced by money; mere anarchy is loosened everywhere and people are fated to live the life amidst hostile and fearful environment created by the above mentioned modern maladies. Despite these maladies Eliot attempts to bring order and peace through the theme of religiosity and spiritual realization.

Common to all the plays, most obviously *Murder in the Cathedral* is pre-occupied with the nature of sainthood, and the ability of the Saints' sacrifice to fructify the lives of others. Though the subject is historical, the drama deals neither with the personal conflict between the King and the Archbishop, nor with the historical struggle between the Church and the state, a conflict which was of such great significance in the Middle Ages. The play is a record of Thomas a Becket's struggle to sainthood, and it is for this reason that the dramatist has cut out historical and political material to the minimum, and confined the action of the play to the last days of Becket's life, and his martyrdom as Raymond Williams points out, "But the centre of the is not particular death of Becket; the death serves as an expression of the permanent experience of martyrdom" (230-231).

Eliot deals with redemption of mankind through true martyrdom which is always a design of God. In the play the central character Thomas a Becket in his first speech shows his complete spiritual awakening as he goes on to say that God waits in the perpetual struggle of good and evil to which human beings are also committed and in which they

can only find their peace in the will of God who is at the still centre of the wheel as he says:

And which all must suffer that they may will it,
That the pattern may subsist, for the pattern is the action
And the suffering, that the wheel may turn and still
Be forever still. (*Murder 32*)

From the very beginning of the play a proper atmosphere is created for the martyrdom to take place. Later Thomas undergoes with expected and unexpected temptations like the temptations of the past revive of worldly prosperity, the lure of temporal power, the prospect of beating King Henry and even to become a martyr for the glory of being one. But he rejects all of them. Self-knowledge results in self-conquest. In losing his will in the will of God, Becket achieves the reconciliation of all irreconcilables as he says:

I shall no longer act or suffer, to the sword's end.
Now my good Angel, whom God appoints
To be my guardian, hover over the swords' points. (*Murder 53*)

Thomas is presented without any will and is also shown that he has united his will with the will or law of God. This comes to the audience, through his struggle with these various tempters. It is through them the contemporary modern audiences understand that one who is without any worldly wills can only achieve redemption. The tempters also make the audience conscious that they are suppressed by the worldly wills. And now it's their turn to be free of such wills and be helpful and helped. Each individual can act as Becket does since he is also like the contemporary people only more he experiences the change and becomes innovative whereas modern people remain static as Helen Gardner points out, "The hero experiences the change and makes the discovery; the chorus is static. The

central figure is not a saint or a hero, but a man, who is shown at the very moment of turning or conversion” (140).

Religion plays an important role for the significance of the play to the twentieth century people. Eliot believes that religion works as uniting coherence in a society. He sees that the present society is degraded because of its lack of moral conventions. The main subject matter of the play is religion. This religious play has to leave its significance so the play makes the Chorus aware about it. Through the Chorus, the play leaves its message to the spectators and the people of twentieth century.

This way religion and Church can be the organizing factor of a society. Modern world was in a disordered state and Eliot thought that the concept of religion could bring coherence in society. The role of the spirituality elects in society by the example of the saint and saintly. So, this way this religious play acquires its significance even in the twentieth century which has almost lost the concept of religion. The psychological dimension of the play is also an important one. The characters of the play especially the Chorus begin with a kind of psychology. This psychology is close to the general psychology of the modern people as both of them lack spiritual quality. They were busy in counting the number of apples and weighing the weight of corns from their fields. They had not wanted to be involved in others sorrows and agonies rather they wanted to remain uninvolved. In this sense, they lack the quality of helping hand and hence, they all are selfish creatures like the beasts in the forests. It is because of this quality, the modern world has turned to be a wasteland.

Martyrdom could be the best theme through which the consciousness of modern people may get awareness. Martyrdom in itself is a grand in which one dies for the sake of other people but without any expectation even without the expectation of the glory of being a martyr. A martyr is one who even becomes ready for the sacrifice of his/her own

life. But the martyrdom that this play is centered is not something like political martyrdom but a religious and especially a Christian martyrdom. The play also provides brief histories of various martyrs who have already sacrificed their lives for the betterment of other people. The main part of the play through which the message of the play is to be delivered is in prosaic language. It was important to do this so that the people from twentieth century could understand what they were intended to be taught. It is in this part, Becket talks about the simultaneous rejoicing and mourning, real peace and the significance of sacrifice and martyrdom.

In the sermon, Becket talks about the meaning of the word 'peace'. The Angles announced peace whereas the world has constantly been afflicted by war and fear of war. Christ himself spoke of peace to his disciples that he lives with us and his peace gives unto us. Here Christ does not mean that the Kingdom of England would be peace and peace also does not mean satisfaction with the material state of things. Real peace is spiritual peace which lacks in modern people. Jesus sent forth disciples to suffer torture, imprisonment, and disappointment but at the same time, they experienced the inward peace which results from a sense of doing God's will as Becket says, "He gave to His disciples peace, but not peace as the world gives" (*Murder* 56). Becket talks about a strange paradox that is simultaneous rejoicing and mourning as he says:

By no means, just as we rejoice and mourn at once, in the Birth and in the Passion of Our Lord; so also, in a smaller figure, we both rejoice and mourn in the death of martyrs. We mourn, for the sins of the world that has martyred them; we rejoice that another soul is numbered among the Saints in Heaven, for the glory of God and for the salvation of men. (*Murder* 56)

So, people mourn because the sins of the world were responsible for their martyrdom and they rejoice for the glory of God and for the salvation of men. It teaches modern people

the significance of sacrifice for the redemption of whole mankind. Becket reflects the meaning of true martyrdom as he says:

A martyrdom is always the design of God, for His love of men, to warn them and to lead them to bring them back to his ways. It is never the design of man; for the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God, and who no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of being a martyr. (*Murder 57*)

He concludes by saying that he would most probably never preach to his people again and that in a short time there may be yet another martyrdom as he says, “I do not think I shall ever preach to you again; and because it is possible that in a short time you may have yet another martyr, and that one perhaps not the last” (*Murder 57*). Thus, he is keenly conscious of the end which is in store for him. Through this saying he teaches modern people the significance of spiritual awakening. Ultimately as he is ready to die he says the Knights that he is now ready to die so that the Church may have peace and freedom. He tells them that they can kill him but other all should have comfort as he says:

For my Lord I am now ready to die,
That his Church may have peace and liberty.
Do with me as you will, to your hurt and shame;
But non of my people, in God’s name,
Whether layman or clerk, shall you touch.
This I forbid. (*Murder 81*)

Here he accepts martyrdom for the sake of redemption of mankind according to the will of God. As he was killed by the Knights the Chorus expresses their shock as they still unable to understand the meaning of martyrdom made by Becket and think that everything including human beings has been polluted by the murder as they say:

Clear the air! Clean the sky! Wash the wind! Take stone from stone and wash them.

The land is foul, the water is foul, our beasts and ourselves defiled with blood. (*Murder 82*)

Eliot has not treated the death of Becket as a historical event, but the spiritual examination of the nature of martyrdom that set against the background not only of the twelfth century but also of the twentieth century as the Chorus are the representatives of ordinary humanity involving in the suffering and martyrdom of Becket. The expression made by them that the blood has polluted the whole humanity shows the spiritual poverty of modern wastelanders as it is very hard to awaken spiritually since their souls are completely defiled due to immoral acts and vices.

The play closes with a speech by the chorus. This speech is made by the women of the Chorus in an altogether different mood. These women seem to have undergone a spiritual regeneration and renewal. The mood of spiritual apathy or indifference has completely gone; now the same women speak in a mood of spiritual joy bordering on ecstasy. We now witness them and hear them speaking in a mode of spiritual exaltation. They begin this speech by offering their praise to God for all the things which exist on this earth as:

We praise Thee, O God, for Thy glory displayed in all creatures of the earth,

In the snow, in the rain, in the wind, in the storm;

In all of Thy creatures, both the hunters and the hunted. (*Murder 90*)

The women of the Chorus say that God's glory is revealed even through those things which seem to deny God's existence. The Chorus feels thankful to God for His mercies of blood and for his redemption by blood. Wherever the blood of a martyr is shed, that place

becomes holy and the holiness of that place can never depart even if armies trample upon it. They feel thankful to God for having allowed the blood of their Archbishop to be shed in Canterbury, because Canterbury has now become a sacred place. The Chorus then acknowledges their weaknesses and their faults, and they also acknowledge that the sin of the world is upon their heads and that the blood of the martyrs and the agony of the saints are upon their heads. This closing speech ends with an appeal to Lord Jesus Christ to have mercy upon them and an appeal to Thomas a Becket to pray for them in heaven.

Finally, there is inner purgation and reconciliation to the will of God. The Chorus has undergone the pain of spiritual rebirth, and has realized the significance of martyrdom, for them and for humanity at large as they say:

We thank Thee for Thy mercies of blood, for Thy redemption by blood. For the blood of Thy martyrs and saints shall enrich the earth, shall create the holy places. (*Murder 91*)

Thus, in them, as in Becket, a right attitude to martyrdom is developed. A Christ is crucified in every age, so that the mass of men may be roused out of their spiritual apathy and complacency. Same spiritual realization is also shown by the priest as the Third Priest takes the murder as the victory of universal church and thanks God as he says:

Let our thanks ascend

To God, who has given us another saint in Canterbury. (*Murder 90*)

Therefore, the life of the ordinary women, priests and other characters is the representation of the life of modern people. Eliot presents their life in the play as a voyage which begins and undergoes with a chaos since there is a huge presence of corruption and evil nature but ultimately they get spiritual regeneration through the sacrifice of Thomas a Becket. Eliot through the play reveals that the chaotic modern life can be settled in the state of order through spiritual regeneration.

A martyrdom is futile if it fails to remind ordinary men and women of God's love. It is with the blood of martyrs that spiritual fertility is restored to the spiritual wasteland. Hence, the relevance of Becket's death to the modern age as D. E. Jones points out, "Eliot's concern is not just with the Church, the body of believers; it is with the whole society, in which he diagnoses the sickness of the Waste Land" (80). Thus, Becket's martyrdom is an act of atonement for the inadequacies of the world. He is a type of Christ who sees that for him to die is more important in the eternal dimension than to accept the reasonable arguments both of his tempters and the priests. Eliot sees Becket's martyrdom as an action out of time, an action which has its full significance in a timeless dimension, where every deed is seen to have eternal significance or eternal insignificance.

Chapter Four

Conclusion: Spiritual Realization

T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* is one of the most widely recognized dramatic works with spiritual value and mores which for him are the true factors to save the entire humanity from the eternal damnation. The play takes its subject matter from the twelfth century, but brings this subject matter to dramatize the contemporary situation. It also brings the people living both in economic and spiritual poverty. They have lost the concept of moral behavior and even could not welcome the arrival of Archbishop Thomas a Becket. They could not understand the meaning of martyrdom and the meaning of sacrifice. This is the message that Eliot wants to teach the modern wastelanders. For that, he goes back to the distant past in search of an appropriate subject matter and when he gets it, he gives it a good shape so that the play could bring a certain change in society.

Eliot has used various creative talents to make the play significant for the people of twentieth century. His use of poetic technique is remarkable as he has given the poetic language according to the characters. It means the way the Chorus speak and Becket speaks is different. Not only this, the main part of the play, the sermon made by Thomas through which the message of the play is to be delivered is in prosaic language so that the people from twentieth century could understand what they were intended to be taught. Eliot sees the present society is degraded because of its lack of moral and spiritual values and he thinks that the concept of religion could bring coherence in society so he gives religion as the subject matter of the play. His presentation of characters and use of appropriate and proper dialogues are another significant work to deliver the intended message.

Apart from these the psychological dimension of the play is also an important aspect. The Chorus begins with a kind of psychology. This psychology is close to the

general psychology of the twentieth century people because both of the parties lack the spiritual and moral quality. Ultimately, the Chorus comes to understand the meaning of religion, sacrifice and martyrdom. They also understand that the blood poured on the wasteland would bring not defilement rather a new germination and redemption the parched soil of wasteland and day to day activities. So, now they are with a new concept and a new psychology which make the play significant to the twentieth century people as it can change their psychology too.

Eliot attempts to show that the debased desires of modern humanity have put the whole humanity at stake and caused its movement in the direction of indifference, fragmentation, chaos and decay. This has subsequently contaminated the whole of humanity. He also tries to make people aware that the polluted desires of the humanity activated by modern maladies should be replaced with the open-mouthed eternal bliss. In his play, *Murder in the Cathedral* he seems to valorize the sense of spirituality so as to get rid of from the modern pathological social make-up. Modern wastelanders are entirely indifferent to each other. The fountain of love is dry in their hearts, and they are being spiritually wretched and miserable. Eliot suggests that the cure for this spiritual and emotional dryness is spiritual love and love for all God's creatures so that they can have a beautiful world to live.

Spiritual deadness has overtaken humanity, and man makes no efforts to build the good city of God on earth. His will is paralyzed and there are corruption and death within him. Life goes on but there is complete spiritual inertia and deadness. Haunted by a sense of guilt man tries to escape the reality of his guilt in various ways. He dreams romantic dreams but all such dreams are more illusions, symptoms of corruption and disease in the human psyche. Order can be imposed upon the chaotic condition of contemporary civilization, only if man returns to Christ. Sinful and selfish desire must be replaced by

love for all in the Christian sense. Only then spiritual regeneration takes place. Thus, the theme of the play is religious, having for its various events connected with the crucifixion of Christ such as Becket's martyrdom is regarded here as Christian martyrdom. It reflects Eliot's preoccupation with Christian theology.

The martyrdom shown through the play has to be understood by the people out of the stage, the audience and also by the characters themselves. The Chorus and the priests understand the significance of martyrdom but the priests understand martyrdom as it is limited within the premises of church. Eliot shows this but his main focus is with the Chorus because they are few women of the Canterbury and also the major representative of the then people. So, Eliot mostly focuses on the Chorus about the significance of the martyrdom then the priests. This way Chorus understands the meaning of sacrifice and through them the contemporary people understand it and the play gets its significance.

But this act of martyrdom is certainly an act of sacrifice. Sacrifice is an act for the betterment of other people. The play with the martyrdom of Thomas a Becket revolves round the sacrifice made by him. It is believed that an act of sacrifice helps people to come out of their selfish nature and do something for society. It is also believed that the act of sacrifice refreshes the land hence giving good crops for the people living.

The play reflects the significance of sacrifice in the modern wasteland. It also asserts the spiritual realization is only the way to establish peaceful and ordered world transforming the ongoing chaotic situations. The time when the play was written was eternally polluted due to lack of moral, religious and social conventions. Therefore, Eliot thought the better solution making the then people aware through the great stories of sacrifice and took the subject matter from the past and wished to assert its significance in the form of play as a ritual. Thus, Eliot's play *Murder in the Cathedral* is a voyage from chaos to order since the poor women of Canterbury forming the Chorus, priests and other

characters who are also the depiction of modern people move from their initial fear and inertia to final acceptance of the meaning of Becket's martyrdom. They have ultimately understood the value of the exposition of martyrdom given by Thomas in his sermon shows a complete spiritual realization. Finally, they conclude that it is only the way through which they obtain peaceful, pious and ordered life.