

## Chapter One: Introduction

### Eliot and His Family Background

Thomas Stearns Eliot was born on 26<sup>th</sup> Sep. 1888 in St. Louis, Missouri, on the banks of that great river associated with *Huckleberry Finn* in American literature. He was the youngest of the seven children of a brick manufacturer, Henry Ware Eliot and his mother was Charlotte Stearns Eliot. He was descended from Puritan families of the early settlements in New England. 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*, in Somersetshire, England. Thus, Eliot's character was a blend of the New England and St. Louis influences.

Eliot's Grandfather William Greenleaf Eliot was a man of academic interests and in course of time became the founder of the Washington University at St. Louis and left behind him a number of religious writing. But unlike his grandfather, his father, Henry Eliot was a successful business man on brick-trade at St. Louis. However, Eliot's mother was an enthusiastic social worker as well as writer (of *Calibre*). Thus, it is clear that Eliot's grandfather and his mother contributed a lot to his development as a writer and Eliot's complex, many-sided personality was the outcome of a number of inherited factors.

The boy Eliot was first sent to school at St. Louis day school where he studied till 1905. Then he went to Harvard University from 1906 to 1910 where he pursued a wide ranging course of studied in language and literature; the classics, and German, French and English literature. Particularly keen was his interest in comparative literature.

Eliot graduated from Harvard in 1910, and prompted by his interest in the French symbols. He went to France and spent a year at the Sorbonne University at Paris, studying widely in many contemporary writers. In 1911 from Paris, Eliot went to Bavaria, Germany. But he returned to Harvard later in the year and studied philosophy specially Indian and Sanskrit literature and philosophy. Again he undertook another trip to Germany to continue his philosophical study there. 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 in 1914, and his introduction through him to the lively literary circles of the London of the time, and finally his marriage to an English girl, Vivienne Haign, in July 1915, led to his settling in London and making it his home. Thus, though born as American, Eliot came to be a naturalized citizen of England. His sense of being an alien in America was by no means unique. Ezra Pound used much the same terms to describe his 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. The consequence was that both Pound and Eliot sought for a tradition or order of their own. But they had to create it for themselves, going to sources as remote as Platonism, Buddhism or medieval literature, ‘work’ is of course, a relative term and Eliot was in any case a bookish child; books were his kingdom. Certainly he came to writing early; at the age of fourteen

## **Eliot and His Time**

Eliot once said that a great poet in writing of himself writes his ages and to none is this remark more applicable than to Eliot himself and to understand Eliot's literary work one must have good understanding of his age.

So far his age is concerned, rapid social changes can be noticed in every sphere of life and industrialization brought in their wake their own problems; problem of overcrowding, housing shortage, a significant increase in vice and crime, fall in standard of sexual morality, and a rapidly increasing ugliness. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century poetry and drama vividly reflects all these evil effects of industrialization and urbanization.

The rise of the scientific spirit and rationalism led to a questioning of accepted social beliefs, conventions and traditions and by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we find writers like Shaw, Wells and Galsworthy, criticizing the very basis of the existing social, economic and moral system.

The atmosphere of the perplexity, confusion and anxiety has been further accentuated by the long strides forward that the study of psychology has taken time of Freud and he emphasized the power of the unconscious to affect conduct. Human beings are not so rational as they are supposed to be; their conduct is not guided and controlled by the conscious, rather it is at the mercy of the forces lying buried deep within the unconscious. He traces the ills of present civilization to the loss of religious faith.

There is a break up of the old authoritarian pattern in family relationship; the assessment of the relative roles of the sexes has changed. The war of the generations, of the old and the young, has resulted in a re-orientation of parent-child relations. The

rootlessness has brought in its wake its own problems and frustrations. Eliot's poetry and plays reveal a harrowing consciousness of this phenomenon of 20<sup>th</sup> century city life.

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. The British order of Merit and the Nobel Prize for Literature were awarded to him in 1948 and other distinctions of international eminence have followed.

Vivienne Eliot died quite unexpectedly on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan 1947 at the age of fifty-eight. Her life had been full of pain and perplexity. But, towards the end of 1956, Eliot proposed to Valerie Fletcher, almost eight years after she had started working for him. Eliot's life, for the eight years still left to him, now took on a different pattern. He wrote at home in the morning and then, on free afternoon. In 1965, he died being relapsed into a coma again. Peter Ackroyd said, after his death, Valerie Eliot declared, "He felt he had paid too high a price to be a poet that he had suffered too much." (319)

On the memorial tablet to him in the church are the words, "remember Thomas Stearns Eliot, poet". His date of birth and death are added, together with two phrases, 'In my beginning is my end' and "in my end is my beginning". We can say now of Eliot what he once said of another poet, Edwin Muir, "We also understand the poetry better when we know more about the man".

## **A Brief Survey of Eliot's Works**

T. S. Eliot's period of active literary production covers over forty-five years. During this long period, he wrote poems, plays, literary and social essays, as well as worked as journalist and editor. Generally speaking, the modern writer is intensely conscious of his social milieu and doesn't fail to reflect it in his works and Eliot also was not different in that case as well. To what extent the new age is reflected in the works of the period.

Eliot, in his early life, began his career as a poet while still a school boy at Smith's Academy, St. Louis. 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 17<sup>th</sup> century metaphysical poets and Jacobean dramatists. Eliot began writing quite early in life. While still a school boy at Smith's Academy, St. Louis. But the poems of this period are immature, juvenile productions, mere school-boy exercises, yet showing signs of poetic talent. But, later on, in his poem, Eliot is frankly satirical of Boston society, and the love-theme when it appears, receives an ironic treatment.

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 short of past grandeur, struck a responsive chord in many readers.

In his poems and plays, the rottenness, the corruption and decadence of contemporary society is exposed with a rare poignancy. Some significant poems like *The Wasteland*, *The Hollow Man*, *A Cooking Egg*, *Rhapsody on a Windy Night* 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 Wasteland* 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 reduces man to mere physical existence.

In *The Wasteland*, Eliot employed a new voice. Up until this time, Eliot had used a poetic persona as the narrator, a loner who looked at society from outside, just as Eliot did himself. In *The Wasteland*, though, he used the "voices of society" as narrator, trying to combine all of the disconnected fragments of lives into a single vision. Deeply allusive and grounded in spirituality, *The Wasteland* is ripe with images of dissolution, sterility, and dryness and waste. It is a manifesto to a generation lost, a commentary on a modern society that has lost its community and spiritual axis. It is a haunting sermon and disturbing reminder of the decay of western civilization. Ultimately, *The Wasteland* declares that the society is unreal.

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, Augustine of Hippo, and 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 the Imagist.

The poet is to be regarded as a medium- a means of communicating emotions and feelings. To regard poetry as a self-expression by the poet is to place the poet instead of

his poetry at the centre of value. Thus, the process of poetic creation becomes the surrender of self and not the expression of self. His poetry cries out against the crimes of civilization which had reduced man to mere physical existence.

After long contribution in poetry, Eliot is today recognized as a great dramatic genius as well. He has brought back the poetic drama into English literature. He was influenced by the example of French dramatist, Claudel, but he went a step ahead of Claudel in that he did not overlook the needs of the theater. Eliot is a poet turned dramatist, who disciplines his poetry to the needs of the stage. He uses verse to heighten effects to produce an ordinary effect on a common place life as in his plays. His plays are modern and convey the sense of the dilemma of the modern man without moral values. His historical sense makes him realize that any art including drama is social at its grass roots.

Eliot's persistent concern for religion gradually led him to the field of drama. He used the drama as an instrument of socio-religious communication. Thus, his plays have restored the lost link between religion and drama. In fact he has made the drama an integral part of the contemporary tradition in art and literature. He believed that the literary symptoms of decline are the result of a "deeper demoralization of society." Hence he tried to recreate the drama to uphold moral and spiritual values. So he says that drama provides necessary trainings to the poets to be more useful society.

It was his belief that man's present predicament was the outcome of gradual spiritual devaluation. In this religion he had to play a significant role and Eliot had an abiding faith in religion as a means of redeeming man. His plays are religious though they do not teach religion as a dogma. They are only excursions into spiritual awareness. Therefore, he regards religion as the essential sources of suitable emotions for drama. D.

E. Jones, in his book *The Plays of T. S. Eliot*, says that his plays are “the subtle demonstration of the relevance of religion to all the spheres of human activity” (55). He looks upon the mass as the consummation of the drama, the perfect and ideal drama.

In his plays, he evolved a poetry which is exalted by the passionate evocativeness and ability to suggest austerity of mood and style. The evolution of Eliot has been from the spokesman of a disillusioned generation to the poet of Christian Baptism. He was in influence just like Milton, whom he had described as having had a bad influence on English poetry in which he diverted the attention from the Metaphysical.

Eliot has brought back the poetic drama into English literature. Fredrick Lunley had once said that Eliot is a poet-turned dramatist, who “disciplines his poetry to the needs of the stage” (27). The tradition of the poetic drama in the Western World goes back to the very beginnings of the drama in Ancient Greece. Wherever drama has evolved, its basic origin is the same-it arises from religious ritual. In Greece the dramatic performances were held to honor the god of vegetation and wine-Dionysus. Originally these performances involved simply a dialogue between leader and chorus, but in time actors and a stage were added.

Following the Golden Age of Greece we hear little of the drama until the time of morality and mystery plays which were popular during the Middle Ages. Again drama grew out of religious ritual. This time the dramatizations were made a part of religious observances on certain important days in the Church calendar. The playlets usually involved scenes from the life of Christ and the Saints or allegories of good and evil. According to the passage of time, the significant development in literature can be seen in 20<sup>th</sup> century with the revival of poetic drama. Despite the efforts of the major Victorian



poets, there was no tradition of poetic drama at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By 1920, there were signs of a rebirth, but the atmosphere in which realistic, prose drama thrived was uncongenial to a play in verse. At the Abbey Theatre Dublin, W. B. Yeats attempted to revive poetry on the stage, but he lacked the essential qualities of the dramatist. Stephen Phillips is a more important figure in the history of poetic drama. He wrote a number of blank verse plays, including *Hero*, *Ulysses*, *The Son of David* and *Negro*. The true poetic drama was that of J. M. Synge, which, though not in verse, had all the qualities which others lacked. Then, T. S. Eliot provided a powerful stimulus to English poetic drama and Christopher Fry to it the, “Theatre of Words”, and the “Comedy of Moods”.

Eliot remarked that there are things that can be said in music that cannot be said in speech even as there are things that can be said in poetic drama that cannot be said in either music or ordinary speech. Again we see that the poet must use the means of communication best suited to him and his purpose. In a letter to Ezra Pound, Eliot wrote, “If you write a play in verse, then the verse ought to be the medium to look through and not a pretty decoration to look at” (150). Again we see his concern with the intimate relationship between form and substance, between mold and matter.

*Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) brought him much fame and it is considered to be his best play though Eliot himself thought it had only a “negative value” and was a “dead end.” 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.

*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*, published in 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* 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 this, 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* (1957), *To Criticize the Critic* (1965) and as such.

*Tradition and Individual Talent, Poetry and Drama, the Function of Christianity,* etc are among his most popular essay in literary criticism. The value of Eliot's criticism arises from 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**

F. O. Matthiessen, in his book *The Achievement of T. S. Eliot*, has said that "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. It is said that human nature seldom changes and the denizens of Eliot's Inferno are basically similar to their predecessors in the realm of poetry. But in giving them vitality and individuality, Eliot has evolved a new pattern in poetic and dramatic technique and achieved a remarkable position in the history of poetic and dramatic innovation.

While acknowledging Eliot's debts to tradition, we can judge his modernity by the extent to which he broke with tradition. Eliot was very much conscious of his age which was a war like, various 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 to become aware of the mind of Europe, a mind which learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind.

George Williamson says that “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 20<sup>th</sup> century, the mind and its infinite powers has become a very interesting topic for study and Eliot’s poetry, as well as drama reflect the obsessions of an age.

In his return to the consolation of religion and faith in a spiritual rebirth, Eliot is again reflecting a tendency of the age. All movements in nature confirm to a cyclic process of birth, growth, degeneration or decay and rebirth. In a world pre-occupied with materialism and a general lowering of discipline and spiritual awakening, ‘In the beginning is the End’, also, Eliot’s later spiritual rebirth in unequivocal terms.

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 to *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.

### **The Spiritual Quest in Eliot’s Poetry and Plays**

The major theme in the writings of Eliot 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. It is equally allied to the rationalistic

idea of science that nothing material is subject to utter destruction. Everything undergoes a transformation under the influence of time. Eliot saw the illustration of this idea even in the 'vegetation rituals' and 'fertility rites' of primitive cultures and the religions of the ancient world from which early Christianity absorbed so much of its own ritual and symbolism. The primitive imagination conceived of the cycle of the seasons as the life of a god who controlled the energies of nature, and never had to submit to the power of death. But the death is not permanent; it was followed by a 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.

In *The Wasteland*, Eliot is intensely aware that the possibilities of rebirth cannot be dismissed as an historical anachronism: that the truth of the experience is eternally present and that the living of it plunges the whole man into a process of disintegration and conflict. The central theme in *The Wasteland* and the general truth behind it is the presence of sterile degeneration and the necessity of regeneration and change. Among the human emotions involved in *The Wasteland* is love: love which can be seen as a source of life, or alternately, as leading only to death.

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. Subhas Sarkar, in his book *T. S. Eliot, the Dramatist*, has said that

Eliot has his view that a poetic drama should bring about a fusion of two planes of reality, the physical and spiritual reality. The spiritual reality is illustrated by certain characters who would move about and act like

familiar figures of life, and the spiritual reality is illustrated by one or two characters who by virtue of their superior command of sensibility, would admit their action, make us aware of a spiritual plane of existence only dimly described. (34-35)

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.

### **Critics on T. S. Eliot and *The Cocktail Party***

Since its publication in 1949, many critics have commented on it from different perspectives such as psychological, existential, Christianity and transcendentalism.

Commenting on this drama, a critic, D. E. Jones has described the central theme of this play as “the role of spiritually elect in society, the fructification of communal life by the example of the saint and the saintly” (50). Here he means to say that the drama depicts the social aspects of Christianity and salvation.

Similarly, Roger Kojecky claims that the whole play is designed to emphasize the “spiritual success is founded on worldly defeat, life is through death, redemption through sacrifice” (109). Here Kojecky too views that the drama carries the theme of Christianity.

According to Nevill Coghill, the vision of reality that Eliot wished to show was a Christian vision, as his whole development as a poet and thinker proves; yet he also wished to avoid the direct mention of Christianity, its explicit teaching and familiar symbols. ... the religious vision of guilt and expiation, man’s involvement, through a family curse, with the forces of

Good and Evil, and a spiritual way out of a cycle of murder, by the discovery of a supernatural dimension and the intervening of the gods. All this, with a little juggling could be set in a Christian key. (Coghill12)

From the sense of existential choice in this drama, Father McLaughlin points out:

In the volitional order, just as no one can sin except by an exercise of his free will, so no one can desire the fulfillment of his capacity save by a personal choice. To ensure such a free and personal decision, Reilly eliminated all outside influence over Edward by suggesting arguments for the opposite choice, a permanent separation from his wife, which, though suasive, were nevertheless sophistic and served, as Reilly had hoped, only to educe from Edward the deeply personal conviction to reunite him to her. (McLaughlin21)

This comment highlights timidity and indecisiveness of Edward's character.

Likewise, another critic, William Arrowsmith suggests that it is a society which, dramatically, is being made before our eyes. The Christian conspiracy begins at the Chamberlaynes' but as the play ends, Alex and Julia and Reilly are off "to the Gunnings". And so the society comes to include those who, like Edward, may not consciously hold Christian beliefs. (Arrowsmith420)

The critic explains that Eliot wants to demonstrate the idea of choice which is socially significant as it fertilizes and animates the lives of ordinary men and women in which Edward may not be the mouthpiece of Eliot.

John T. Mayer, in his book *T. S. Eliot's Silent Voices*, says that T. S. Eliot is

finally engaged by human suffering and entrapment;

his own need of meaning in life, the idea of responsibility enshrined in the family code, and his inherited moral sense all urge involvement. And so the potential prophet is released in the poet, and Eliot tests a new voice, the voice crying in the desert of Metropolis. (70)

Again, focusing on nihilism, Walter Stein argues that “*The Cocktail Party* presents us with a kind of nihilism; since a nihilistic vision of life remains none the less nihilistic for being pinned to a universe of transcendental affirmation incarcerated in eternity” (105). Here, Stein views this drama from the perspective of nihilism.

In the development of poetry and drama, it is revealed that the bent towards classicism as at once an aesthetic doctrine and a rule of life is with T. S. Eliot. It is Eliot, who declared that his general point of view has become “classicist in literature, royalist in politics and Anglo Catholic in religion” (89). His creations began to be embroiled with his changed feelings. His writings urged a program of the classical, the traditional, and the impersonal. This kind of view, influence and the feeling were seen even when he produced his dramas which is poignantly romantic, strikingly modernists and intensely impersonal.



## Chapter Two: Modernism and Christianity

### Moral Values and Aims

Moral values are qualities that are accorded with standards of right or good conducts. They comprise the traditional socio-cultural standards, which encourage and expect human beings to behave responsibly for the smooth and sustained functioning of the society. These are the codes of conduct which aim at establishing social order and achieving the ideal of society.

Moral values create a system of principles and judgments based on cultural, religious and philosophical concepts and beliefs, by which human beings whether given actions are right or wrong. Diana Trilling, in *Esquire*, 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 a society where people adhere to religious values, they conduct themselves responsibly toward each other since they go in fear of god. They never design to be dishonest or insincere, and certainly never push things to such extremes as to make life difficult for others. Moral values become the basis of all acts and conducts. The most important thing to enroute the moral values is character, Plato believes that “character is that which reveals moral purpose, showing what kind of things a man chooses or avoids” (33).

Likewise, Sarah Yunus also says “The Qur’an makes it clear that people who adhere to moral values of the age of ignorant suffer for doing so: Indeed, god will not deal unjustly with man in any way. It is man who wrongs his own soul” (44).

Regarding moral values St. Augustine undoubtedly starts with a desire for happiness; he indeed describes ideal happiness, the development of all man's faculties to their highest perfection the best that man in his essence and subjectivity can receive. But above his gratification of the 'ego' there is God, in His fullness of life and truth. To St. Augustine, 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. God is so absolutely the foundation, source and substance of the happiness of heaven that all selfish considerations are eliminated from the will and nothing is left but pure love of what is good. St. Augustine in *On Christian Doctrine* 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" (108-113).

People talk a great deal nowadays of the eternal value of morality, but nowhere is this made as clear as in the Catholic theory of merit as concluding to salvation. With exercise of moral standards, the existence of human beings becomes meaningful. The life of modern man has become meaningless and spiritually sterile due to the want of belief itself. T. S. Eliot in *The Wasteland* finds the objective correlative for the meaninglessness of modern life that has eluded him in *Gerontion*. He finds as well, however, with the intrusion of time into the poem, the meaninglessness of his own future death, for though the point by his creative act may stand outside the chaos. He describes (the ascription of meaninglessness is, after all, as ascription of a sort of meaning) he can't stand outside death:

There is shadow under his bed rock,

(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),  
 And I will show you something different from either  
 Your shadow at morning striding behind you  
 Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;  
 I will show you fear in a handful of dust. (Eliot 347)

It is no secret, Himmelfarb writes, that a lack of moral authority pervades contemporary modern life. The modern people consistently tell Pollsters 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 in *The American Morality* (1928) 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)

### **Moral Crisis and Sin**

Moral crisis is a philosophical thought that postulates the modern man is living amidst the disillusionment and meaninglessness existence. The sincere reflection of reality is considered only one of the modes of representation of reality in modern art and literature. Modern dramas and their study generally don’t 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 said, “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).

The modern dramas have emphasized much on essential condition of modern man. And since these plays present the world in which we find, as we experience, human beings struggling with the irrationality of experience, they themselves “lack a formal logic and conventional structure so that both form and content support the representation of what may be called the absurd predicament”(Cuddon 968).

Leading American novelist and short story writer, Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-64), is a careful measurer of the historical, religious, literary and emotional distance. There has always been evil nature in human beings due to which they lose their ultimate goal in life. “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 (Evil, 390).

An important term that should be discussed is ‘sin’, since it supports the existence of evil in mankind. The Bible teaches us that sin entered the world as the result of the 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 simply because God had forbidden it. It clearly showed that

man was not willing to subject his will unconditionally to the will of God, and comprised several elements. In the intellect it revealed itself as unbelief and pride, in the will as the desire to be like God, and in the affections an unholy satisfaction in eating of the forbidden fruit. 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.

According to *Longman dictionary*, 'sin' is an offence against God or religious law or something that is regarded as wrong or shameful (Sin, 623). The actual sin is that which a person commits of his own free will and for which he is personally responsible. Not only does sin involve total loss of grace but also it is held to be innate in mankind as the descendants of Adam and Eve. According to Gardiner, in his book *Norms for the Novel*, '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 "For 'sin' is an offense 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 road blocks of knowledge of moralities are many, but most can be removed by the total moral truth. 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 in the majesty, righteousness and sovereignty of God. They saw God as omniscient and omnipotent. They believe that God has predestined some of these fallen creatures for the gift of salvation. Rummel, in his work *Puritanism in Nathaniel Hawthorne's Short Stories*, writes:

The puritans took the scripture, the sacraments and the sermons as God's own words, which they interpreted following the works of French Peter Rummns, 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).

Although the people have been very strict in religious way, on the other hand they could be quite tolerant. The level of tolerance was dependent on the extent of appropriateness. Another important writer Mark Twain is certainly telling us that we shouldn't blindly accept society's conventions as ultimate truth. We should trust our 'gut' or follow our compassion. Twain in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* 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 model. 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)

Perversion of moral values was also prevalent in religion. Many of the new religious movements blurred the lines between movement, sect and cult. Christianity

joined in the numerous experiments in communal living that sprang up in modernism and post-modernism. Modern religions responded to the rise of the counter-culture and baby boomers in myriad ways, but in no way could they ignore them. 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.

### **Modern World and Absurdity**

Man is placed between two poles of time and eternity. Eliot's vision of human life is tragic in consonance with the serious contemplation of saints and sages. The world ends not with a bang but a whimper. We are roaming about in a valley of dying stars. We are the hollow men. 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 movement of pain, the drifting wreckage, and the voiceless wailing. His pain is so deep. That it is painless and motionless. Raymond M. Olderman, in his book *Beyond the Wasteland*, 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)

This picture includes the characteristics of the modern world which have entered into our consciousness and manifested themselves in our daily thinking and discussion. The myth of the Eliot's wasteland briefly stated, revolves around the wounded figure of the Fisher King. He is the ruler of a land whose fertility and well-being is dependent on his health. A grail knight, a messiah figure, either by choice or by chance, seeks the Holy Grail and after a series of ordeals and temptations, culminating in a night vigil in the mad upside down Chapel Perilous, heals the Fisher king and brings rebirth to the land. To be successful the Grail Knight has to learn *to give, to sympathize, and to control*. Success is symbolized by the falling of the rain. The fish is identified with the Grail and is a symbol of "life giving potency", just as the overall quest is an initiation into the mysterious of life and fertility.

It is a hero's task to give to others and to sympathize with them because the fabulous facts of experience make it so difficult for man to gain control even over his own life and to maintain a sane balance between pain, fear and indifference.

"The modern world as Conspiracy"-the force that rules us ceases to be symbolized by anything concrete; it becomes 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 do battle with; its power seems everywhere and nowhere, and so the heroes of the modern



world are passive. If they become Grail Knights it is only by accident. There is no single authority figure to offer concrete opposition to the hero and help define the poles of dilemma. The difference between symbolizing the mysterious powers that rule us by a Conspiracy measures the growing sense of helplessness.

What is Absurdity? 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 use the word “absurd” to show that human situation is purposeless and absurd. 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.

Now, the modern man is in search of a way other than those followed so far and is confronting a world which has been left without what was once its centre, meaning and existing purpose. Nietzsche is an epoch making irrationalist triumvirate to discuss subjects of 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 painted the true picture of man who is left alone, helpless, and powerless, confronting a dark, bleak, hopeless and godless world. His anti-Christian philosophy that there is no Messiah above us to save the weak and the weak shall perish- has been commented to have given support to totalitarian ideas. Thus, with Nietzsche and after the great world wars, mankind has been taught a lesson- that the Dark Age began where man's self-affirmation takes place against the background of a Godless and Absurd world whose law is the law of eternal recurrence.

For modern man, this world where he has been living all his life, at times of self-awareness, becomes suddenly divested of illusions and habituations. He suddenly finds himself in an awkward, foreign and ununderstandable land. Then, at such a situation, every object around him which he had been so much familiar with for so long becomes mysterious. Then all these things lose their meanings, the values we had attached them. They become foreign, strange and irreducible to us. Camus argues that this strangeness of the world is the 'Absurd'.

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". What man keeps himself busy with all his life<sup>3</sup>, his actions, and ideas, his friends and families, everything is clear.

Man has been attaching meaning and values to all the things, judging them and rationalizing their potentialities in view of his own perspective. Man is left alone in this world. 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.

For the absurd thinkers, there is no aim of existence; Man has no end-in-view. John Macquairre, in his book *Existentialism*, claims “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, in his book *The Owl and the Nightingale*, 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.

### **Dominant Human Type in Modern Culture**

The location of scientific knowledge increases the efficiency as purely technical knowledge on how to achieve material or physical interests constructs a world-view in which the individual is conceived of simply as a means to material ends. The increasing domination of rational discipline over social life and, thereby, transforms the world in a direction even more subject to a scientific prediction and control. In this point David Owen, in his book *Maturity and Modernity*, views “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). Thus the possibility of enabling the emergence of the autonomous individual as the dominant human type of modern culture can be addressed.

Similarly, Max Weber says:

Certainly all historical experience confirms the truth- that man would not have attained the possible unless time and again he had reached out for 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’s cultural science is structured around the concern to evaluate modernity with respect to the possibility of the autonomous individual becoming the dominant human type in modern culture. On one hand, the construction of a human type with the capacity for reflexively constituting inner distance and the logic of secularization initiated by the

protestant ethic create the possibility of individual autonomy. On the other hand, the chances of realizing this possibility are increasingly undermined by the lack of a cultural ground of value and the 'dialectic of domination' which attends the reduction of science and politics to a concern with material interests. The concepts of disenchantment and rational discipline signal the fulfillment of negative moment of this enterprise of evaluation.

In this context, it is apparent that, for Weber, while modern culture raises the possibility of individual autonomy, it also undermines this possibility through facilitating a human type defined entirely in terms of material and physical interests.

Modern man, for Baudelaire, is not the man who goes off to discover himself, his secrets and his hidden truth; he is the man who tries to invent himself. This modernity does not 'liberate man in his own being'; it compels him to face the task of producing himself.

### **Religion**

The Bible informs us that man was created in the image of God. When he fell in sin, he did not entirely cease to be the image-bearer of the Most High. The seed of religion is still present in all men, though their sinful nature constantly reacts against it. Missionaries testify to the presence of religion in some form or other among all the nations and tribes of the earth. It is one of the greatest blessings of mankind, though many denounce it as a curse. Not only does it touch the deepest springs of man's life, but it also controls his thoughts, feelings and desires.

But just what is religion? It is only by the study of the Word of God that we can learn to know the nature of true religion. The word 'religion' is derived from the Latin and

not from any word that is found in the original Hebrew or Greek of the Bible. The Old Testament defines religion as the fear of the Lord. This fear is not a feeling of dread, but of reverent regard for God akin to awe, but coupled with love and confidence. It is the response of the Old Testament believers to the revelation of the law. In the New Testament religion is a response to the gospel rather than to the law, and assumes the form of faith and godliness.

In the light of Scripture we learn to understand that 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.

There are several wrong views respecting the seat of religion in man. Some think of religion primarily as a sort of knowledge, and locate it in the intellect. Others regard it as a kind of immediate feeling of God, and find its seat in the feelings. And still others hold that it consists most of all in moral activity, and refer it to the will. However, all these views are one-sided and contrary to Scripture, which teaches us that religion is a matter of the heart. Out of it are all the issues of life, thoughts, feelings, and desires. Religion involves the whole man, his intellectual, his emotional, and his moral life. This is the only view that does justice to the nature of religion.

Particular attention was devoted during the last fifty years to the problem of the origin of religion. Repeated attempts were made to give a natural explanation of it, but without success. Some spoke of it as an invention of cunning and deceptive priests, it as

an easy source of revenue; but this explanation is entirely discredited now. Others held that it began with the worship of lifeless objects (fetishes), or with the worship of spirits, possibly the spirits of forefathers. But this is no explanation, since the question remains, how did people ever hit upon the idea of worshiping lifeless or living objects? Still others were of the opinion that religion originated in nature-worship, that is, the worship of the marvels and powers of nature, or in the widespread practice of magic. But these theories do not explain any more than the others how non-religious man ever became religious. They all start out with a man who is already religious.

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 and 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.

Atheists and Agnostics, of course, do not believe in revelation. Pantheists sometimes speak of it, though there is really no place for it in their system of thought.

And Deists admit the revelation of God in nature, but deny the necessity, the reality, and even the possibility of any special revelation such as we have in Scripture.

### **Martyrdom and sacrifice**

Martyr is a person who defends a principle even though it means sacrificing many things, perhaps even his/her life. R. P. Blackmur, in the essay "T. S. Eliot", writes 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 to god on the part of martyr, so also it requires the right attitude on the part of the great mass of men. Martyrdom is not efficacious unless it is accepted by them as 'the design of god'; for his love of men to warn them and to lead they back to his ways. (67)

The Martyrdom which Eliot wanted to present through his plays is not other but the Christian Martyrdom. Christian Martyrdom has its more significance during Christmas days because most of the Christian martyrs had got Martyrdom during Christmas period. Christ himself was crucified during this time. Saint Stephen is regarded as the first Martyr in Christianity. He got his martyrdom on the 26<sup>th</sup> of December and similarly Herod had given order for the massacre of children in 28<sup>th</sup> of December during the birth of Jesus Christ. The children who were killed at that time are also regarded as Christian Martyrs.

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 believed that it had 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 about the significance of sacrifice in the essay "The Poet and Dramatist" as, "Spiritual success are found on worldly defeat, life is through death, redemption through sacrifice" (109). The Holy Bible is also based on the theme of sacrifice as the introduction says, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but everlasting life" (5).

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 in the essay, "Tragic Resignation and 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 the rhythm of sacrifice. It is said that the rituals of sacrifice were the ways through which tragedy developed. Raymond Williams has further written about this type of connection of sacrifice and tragedy in the same essay as “Tragedy rest 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 center of the play is the consciousness of the martyr, but the action is the making over this consciousness into an element of the eternal design. Thus, Celia’s life is sacrifice, her independent will to life conquered by the particular ritual. So, the murder of Celia is not the murder in its historical sense but a sacrifice.

Finally, it is said that sacrifice brings redemption in life as Raymond William has written in the same essay as:

Redemption is a consciousness of this natural order and of the place of 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, which creates consciousness, and, separates man from beasts.  
(161)

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 Celia’s

sacrifice continuous” (62). Hence, the choice of Celia is important, because it indicates a higher spiritual level, and it has the power to influence the lives of ordinary men and women.

**Chapter Three: Free Will, Dependency and Salvation in Eliot's *The Wasteland* and  
*The Cocktail Party***

Eliot's poetry and plays are defective as a criticism of life because he is too deeply occupied with horror and boredom. He shares very little of Baudelaire's 'moral passion' or 'the human sympathy' of Gerard Manley Hopkins. But his greatness as a poet and a dramatist lies in his striving to grasp a metaphysical reality- to maintain a detachment resembling that of the mystics against the pressure of his own skepticism. Here, more completely than anywhere else in his writing, the resolution of tension the experience of achieving detachment, takes place within the plays and poetry itself.

His dramatic impulse, inadequate to the action of the play, finds a natural outlet in the poetic monologue, focused on the awareness of shifting and irreconcilable values within the state of mind. Eliot breaks down habits of sentiment, moral or literary breaks down the comforting sensation that minds and feelings are resting on something solid, and exposes himself to a profoundly dismaying experience of disintegration.

In *The Cocktail Party*, as in Eliot's early poems and plays, he proceeds by indirection; he ensnares his audience. To speak of his work in these terms is to point again to the conditions which govern communication between the contemporary artist and the society. The characteristic situation of the modern artist, which- despite boredom and natural misgivings- we continue to describe as "alienation", is particularly relevant to an important problem in modern drama. Professor Fergusson has observed that as theatre poetry was freed from the limitations of modern realism it lost its public status as a mirror of human nature. Eliot moves his drama into a position between the audience and the cave-wall, hoping to entice them into drama, into consciousness, and perhaps even into

spirituality by offering them something which from a distance looks familiar. The trap is prepared with great subtlety. The surface of the play exhibits all the features of a comedy of manner; the silly party, the urban setting, the trivial chatter etc. but it has got many implied meanings attacking the modern society. Gilbert Seldes, in his "Early Reviews", writes:

A series of sardonic portraits- of people, places, things- each the distillation of a refined emotion, make up Mr. Eliot's 'Poems and Plays'. The deceptive simplicity of these works in form and style is exactly at the opposite extreme from false naïveté; they are unpretentiously sophisticated, wicked, malicious, humorous, and with the distillation of emotion has gone a condensation of expression. (40)

In *The Wasteland* and *The Cocktail Party*, the seriousness of the theme is matched with an intensity of expression in which all the earlier qualities are sublimated.

### **Moral Degeneration**

*The Wasteland* and *The Cocktail Party* are about fragmentation, degeneration and loss of values in the West, to put its complex theme in most simple terms. 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 forget, stay in, talk about nothing, and just think; they cultivate an aversion to fertility, creativity, activity, wholeness, harmony, progress, regularity, and so on. Reluctance and bewilderment as between sleep and waking, are given, for example, in the very rhythm of the first lines of *The Wasteland*, with their dragging participial endings suggesting life and immortality together:

April is the cruelest month, breeding  
 Lilacs out of dead land, mixing  
 Memory and desire, stirring  
 Dull roots with spring rain. (346)

This in-between state, neither spring nor winter, neither dull nor alert, but straining between the two, provides the model of every- thing that follows. The same sort of expression is also found in the very first lines of the play *The Cocktail Party* when the characters are gathered for the cocktail party which Lavinia has organized but she herself is absent in the party:

ALEX: You've missed the point completely, Julia:

There were no tigers. That was the point.

JULIA: Then what were you doing, up in a tree:

You and the Maharaja?

ALEX: My dear Julia!

It's perfectly hopeless. You haven't been listening. (*Act I Scene 1*, 15)

The trivial nature of the conversation indicates the superficialities of such cocktail parties. The dramatist seems to stress the fact that people concentrates on appearances rather than essential things. The half told stories highlight this feature.

Modern wastelanders are existing for no reason. They have been suffering the state of 'aimlessness', 'hopelessness' and 'directionlessness'. To this point, Paul Murray, in his *T. S. Eliot and Mysticism*, writes:

As we grow older  
 The world becomes stranger

the pattern more complicated of dead and living.

Not the intense moment

Isolated a life time burning in every moment

And a life time of man only. (113)

Man is placed between two poles of time and eternity. Eliot's vision of human life is tragic in consonance with the serious contemplation of saints and sages. The world ends not with a bang but a whimper. We are roaming about in a valley of dying stars. We are the hollow men. 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 movement of pain, the drifting wreckage, and the voiceless wailing. His pain is so deep, that it is painless and motionless.

In *The Cocktail Party*, as in *The wasteland*, Eliot makes history the means of understanding the realities of the unreal city, even as the cultural allusions are used to suggest the modes of transcending history, whereas 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.

Eliot points even amidst the inter-linked details of triviality and debasement to the values which the wastelanders have refused or failed to accept and its poetic actuality creates a logical place for the imperative need of a suggested ideality.

Another thing we noticed is that Eliot expresses his philosophic concern about the differences between appearance and reality through Celia in the play *The Cocktail party*.

She had thought that her love was real but she soon realizes that it was only a dream.

Thus she says:

Where time was meaningless, a private world of ours,

Where the word 'happiness' had a different meaning

Or so it seemed. ...

Perhaps the dream was better. It seemed the real reality,

And if this is reality, it is very like a dream. (65)

It shows the crisis of love and marriage with their unending proliferation is prevalent in the heart of the wastelanders. Celia's love is like the work of Sisyphus. Even in love and copulation they are in problem though they dare to encounter all the worldly events. Life for the modern wastelanders has thus, been the eternal conflict of 'Eros', the myth of love.

### **Unconscious Human Interests: Free Will and Fall of Man**

Man is a many-leveled being as we can see it from the characters of this very drama. He may identify himself with his animal nature consciously, physically and physiologically. The sub-rational vital aims, however, indispensable and valuable in their own place, cannot without disaster take control of being who after all is not and cannot be a mere animal. In the thought and life of the modern man, self conscious intellect, with its clear analysis and limited aims, takes the highest place and suicidal skepticism is the result; for while it rejects as spurious and subjective, the deeper intuitions to which discursive reason must take for granted. The wastelanders have arisen a greater



appreciation of the multidimensional nature of reality, the many-sidedness of the human spirit and the multivalent, symbolically mediated nature of human knowledge and experience. Regarding the life of the modern wastelanders, S. Radhakrishnan, in *Eastern Religion and Western Thought*, writes:

Life today, in spite of our material possession and intellectual acquisitions, in spite of our moral codes and religious doctrines, has not given us happiness. If we know the deepest thoughts of men-to-day, we should find that there millions who are dissatisfied with themselves and the pursuits that absorb their energies. They have lost the radiance and gladness of life; they have no hopes to inspire, no ambitions to realize, no happiness to which they can look forward, no faith to live by. Their minds are distracted and so their actions are fragmentary and futile. (25)

The same thinking and behaviors can be seen in most of the characters of the play *The Cocktail Party* and the poem *The Wasteland*. We are introduced to guilty episodes of guilty love which most of the characters are involved in. In *The Cocktail Party*, there are triangular guilty love stories such as Edward and Celia loves each other, Lavinia, the wife of Edward, loves Peter and Peter loves Celia. But none of the story is success. But it leads to their own destruction. Likewise, in *The Wasteland* also, Tristram and Isolde enclose them within the episode of guilty love. The lovers are all hopeless. They are ill and will die soon. Guilty love results in spiritual deadness. The lovers wept after illicit sex, they could not see or speak anything. They could not understand the truth.

There is spiritual degeneration all around in the modern wasteland. The modern man is unhappy so long as he does not succeed in his attempt at reaching an organic

wholeness of life. There is always mental and moral ferment in him, a tension between what he is and what he wishes to become, between the matter which offers the possibility of existence and the spirit which moulds it into significant being.

The present crisis in human affairs is due to a profound crisis in human consciousness, a lapse from the organic wholeness of life. Modern wastelanders live on the surface and are afraid of thinking because it is all so confused and disordered; they suffer from conflicts. Through technology, men have created the possibility for external happiness, but that is not enough. Millions of hearts are broken daily, as men and women grope desperately for lasting inner joy.

It should be observed, first of all, that the choice of total ends although totally free is not necessarily nor even frequently made in joy. We must not confuse our necessity of choosing with the will to power. The choice can be affected in resignation or uneasiness; it can be realized in bad faith. We can choose ourselves as fleeing. We can even choose not to choose ourselves. In these various instances ends are posited beyond a factual situation, and the responsibility for these ends fall upon us. Whatever our being may be, it is a choice; and it depends on us to choose ourselves as 'great' or 'noble' or 'base' and 'humiliated'.

If we have chosen humiliation as the very stuff of our being, we shall realize ourselves as humiliated, embittered, inferior, etc. we are not dealing here with *givens* with no further meaning. But the man who realizes himself as humiliated thereby constitutes himself as a means of attaining certain ends: the humiliation chosen can be, for example identified like masochism with a instrument designed to free us from existence-for-itself; it can be a project of getting rid of our anguishing freedom to the

advantage of others; our project can be to cause our being-for-itself to be entirely absorbed by our being-for-others.

We have established that for-itself is free. But this does not mean that, it is its own foundation. If to be free means to be its own foundation, it would be necessary that freedom should decide the existence of its being. And this necessity can be understood in two ways. First it would be necessary that freedom should decide its being-free; that is not only that it should be a choice of an end, but that it should be a choice of itself as freedom. This would suppose, therefore, that the possibility of being-free and the possibility of not-being-free exist equally before the free choice of freedom. But since then a previous freedom would be necessary which would choose to be what it is already- we should be referred to infinity; for there would be need of another prior freedom which chooses, but we do not choose to be free. We are condemned to freedom and thrown into freedom, or Heidegger said 'abandoned'.

### **Life Negations, Absurdity and Hegelian Contradiction**

The sterility of the modern world arises from degeneration, vulgarization and commercialism of sex. *The Wasteland* and *The Cocktail Party* are built upon the contrast of repeated and varying symbols of drought and rain; much of its unified effect depends upon the frequent return of the theme of the unreal city. The lack of water in the poem shows lack of morality in which the modern man is heading towards sterility:

If there were water

And also water

And water

A pool among the rock

If there were the sound of water only

Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop

But there is no water (354)

The wastelanders would not have suffered so much if there were water and no rocks, or even if there were rocks, but also water. If only there were a spring of water or a pool of water among the rocks, they would have drunk from it. Even if they had heard the sound of water, it would have given them some hope. But the only sound they could hear was the singing of Cicada, an insect, or the whispering sound made by the wind as it passed through dry grass. They heard the sound of water falling over a rock, but alas! It was only the hermit-thrush whose song sounds very much like the falling of water-singing in the pine trees. Its song, 'Drip, drop, drip' etc, sounds very much like the sound produced by the falling of the drops of water, but in reality there was no water at all.

Likewise, in *The Cocktail Party* also the image of water is repeated again and again between the dialogues of Edward and Unidentified Guest:

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: Gin

EDWARD: Anything in it?

UNIDENTIFIED GUEST: A drop of water. (*Act I Scene 1*, 35)

But, in considering Eliot's relatively narrow stock of repeated images and dialogues, it is gradually discovered that what enables them to embrace a wide range of experience than would first appear is the fact that they release markedly different shades of feeling according to their contexts.

Modern wastelanders are existing for no reason. They have been suffering the state of directionless, aimlessness and hopelessness. The life of the wastelanders is

completely a desolate, sterile and futile. 'Hope' for the modern wastelanders has been an 'antithesis'. The existence of wastelanders is meaningless.

All consciousness is the consciousness of something. This definition of consciousness can be taken in two very distinct senses. Either we understand by this fact that consciousness is constitutive of its object, or it means that consciousness in its inmost nature is a relation to a transcendent being. But the first interpretation of the formula destroys itself: to be conscious of something is to be confronted with a concrete and full presence which is not consciousness.

If then, we wish at any price to make the being of the phenomenon depend on consciousness, the object must be distinguished from consciousness not by its presence but by its absence, not by its plenitude, but by its nothingness. If being belongs to consciousness, the object is not consciousness, not to the extent that it is another being, but that it is non-being. To this existence Sartre argues:

We must further understand that the intentions aim at appearances which are never to be given at one time. It is impossibility on principle for the terms of an infinite series to exist all at the same time before consciousness, along with the real absence of all these terms except for the one which is the foundation of objectivity. (22)

The modern wastelanders live in a deep illusion, the illusion of hope of future, of tomorrow. As man is, man cannot exist without self-deceptions. Day and night, mind goes on moving from 'no-dream' to 'dream', then from 'dream' to 'no-dream' again. Not only that we continuously dream in life also we project 'hopes' into the future.

The present for the modern man is almost always a hell. One can prolong it only because of the hope that one has projected into the future. Men are living today because of tomorrow. But when tomorrow will come, it will not come as a tomorrow, it will come today.

Life of the modern wastelanders is more Hegelian than Aristotelian because it consists of the opposites. Without the 'opposites', existence is impossible such as day and night, life and death, summer and winter etc. Hegel says life moves from 'thesis' to 'antithesis', then the 'synthesis' becomes the 'thesis' again. Once the 'thesis' is there 'antithesis' is created again they start creating a new balance, a higher 'synthesis' arrives. That's how life moves. In each single movement, life moves through contradictions.

*The Cocktail Party* suggests an opposition between commonplace and heroically vital people. Of the four suffering characters, two are men and two are women. They are paired so that each has an opposite of his own sex, an opposite in temperament and in what is crucial to this play- the ability to love to be loved. By nature Edward and Lavinia are alike in being dispassionately conservative, their inertia triumphs over will and imagination. Celia and Peter are imaginative and religious. Celia, however, is converted to patience, a quality strangely akin to conservatism, and by sublimation of will, she is led to attain a nobler calling than is possible even to influence, still relies, at the end of the play, on his own forces of creative will.

Obviously, the modern man is living in a chaotic wasteland, where he tries to be 'somebody' because he feels that he is 'nobody', so empty, so meaningless, so faceless.

And people give them some identities, names, which are just masks, the false identities. These false masks make them believe that what they are not.

The characters in the play, *The Cocktail Party*, remain miserable till they find their real identity. The modern men's whole tension, anguish, anxiety consists only of a single thing: that they are trying to be somebody. Ordinarily, everybody is living as a personality, hence, their life are not authentic. They are not only cheating others, they are cheating themselves. They are deceiving others and they are deceiving themselves too.

In *The Wasteland*, also the lady Lil was advised to have a nice set of teeth in order to attract her husband. She was suggested to change her appearance. So, the modern man is living in a hallucinatory world. They are living in hope. But all hopes are false. To hope is to be in false. Hope comes out from our falsity of being. If we are real, there is no need for hope. Since we are unreal the future becomes very significant to us.

### **The Evils of Life**

According to Kant, if we regard- as we should, the objects of our perceptions as mere appearances, we thereby admit that at the bottom of appearances is a thing-in-itself, although we do not know its appearances, i.e. the manner in which our senses are affected by this unknown something. Hence our reason, by the very fact it accepts appearances, also admits the existence of things-in-themselves; and to that extent we can say that to entertain an idea of such entities which lie at the bottom of appearances, and consequently are but thought entities, is not only permissible but unavoidable. Regarding the entities of Kant, V. I. Lenin writes "The Kantian philosophy is a contradiction between entity and existence, thinking and being. Entity is left to the mind, existence to

the senses. Existence without entity is mere appearances- the sensible things- while 'entity' without 'existence' is mere thought" (235-36).

The life of the characters in the play *The Cocktail Party* is evil because pain is its basic stimulus and reality, and pleasure is merely negative cessation of pain. Even if the desire is attained, innumerable evils will be left, because some of them like strife- are essential to life; and if every evils are removed, and strife are altogether ended, boredom will become as intolerable as pain and ennui. The more successful we become, the more we are bored and frustrated with the worldly 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 then again, the more distinctively a man knows- the more intelligent he is- the more pain he has. Life of the modern wastelanders is war. Everywhere in world, we see strife, tussle and conflict, and a suicidal alteration of victory and defeat. With reference to the character of *The Cocktail Party*, the people are unhappy when alone, and unhappy in society: it is all funny. The life of Celia, when Edward declares to bring his wife back, the life of Edward, when his wife has left him, the life Peter, when he knows that Celia never has loved him etc, all these character are very much unhappy and when they get more intelligent than before from the advice of the Unidentified Guest, the more pain they have.

CELIA: But what has happened, Edward? What has happened?

EDWARD: Lavinia is coming back, I think.

CELIA: You think! Don't you know?

EDWARD: No, but I believe it. That man who was here-



CELIA: Yes, who was that man? I was rather afraid of him;

He has some sort of power. (*Act I Scene 2, 60*)

The life of every individual is really a perpetual tragedy. Everything lingers for the moment and ends at death. It is obvious that the walking is admittedly nothing but a constantly-prevented falling, so the life of the modern man is nothing but a constantly-prevented dying, an ever- postponed death.

Therefore, 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. 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'. What man keeps himself busy with all his life, his actions, and ideas, his friends and families, everything is clear.

### **Voyage from Chaos to Order: Martyrdom and Sacrifice**

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 being. The so-called tradition is sacked by different innovations in 20<sup>th</sup> century. People of 20<sup>th</sup> century have already experienced two devastating world wars, which brought great destruction and havoc in the society. Due to the destructive activities; people's psyche is shaped by the fear of the third world war. The sense of humanity, morality and religiosity has gone from the society. 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 of these maladies Eliot attempt to bring order and peace through the theme of religiosity and realization.

In the play *The Cocktail Party*, Celia, who has been Edward's mistress, chooses to destroy her illusions about herself and her way of life. Her first reaction is the realization that she has been living in an essentially unreal world- a dream, though it seemed real enough while it lasted. But her awakening has made her aware of the unreality of ordinary existence too: 'if this is reality, it is very like a dream' (55). Moreover, the emergence of the new Edward makes her understand that the unreality of their love was partly due to her having made him a substitute for a very different sort of lover. In a sense, she has created a god in man's image and real man could never have lived up to it:

I see you as a person whom I never saw before.

The man I saw before, he was only my projection-

I see that now-of something that I wanted-

No, not wanted-something I aspired to-

Something that I desperately wanted to exist.

It must happen somewhere- but what, and where is it?

Edward, I see that I was making use of you.

And I ask you to forgive me. (69-70)

The first symptom of her 'illness' is this 'awareness of solitude'. The second symptom is 'a sense of sin' which is strong in her, despite the fact that she has 'always been taught to disbelieve in sin'. But the sense of sin that oppresses her is not 'sin in the ordinary sense ... being immortal' (130); it goes deeper than the sense of personal wrong-doing.

Thinking 'over and over' about her affair with Edward, she has decided that it was all a mistake.

Her choice therefore, is for the second way offered by Sir Henry, the way which  
leads towards possession

Of what you have sought for in the wrong place. (138)

Having distinguished as far as possible between the two ways, the ordinary man's way and the saint's way, Reilly offers Celia her choice, and in order not to influence that choice he insists that 'Neither way is better/ Both ways are necessary'. Between them, society is renewed physically and spiritually. Both ways are valid spiritually in that they avoid the final desolation

Of solitude in the phantasmal world

Of imagination, shuffling memories and desires. (139)

But the ordinary way is no longer possible for Celia:

I think it would really be dishonest

For me, now, to try to make a life with anybody!

I couldn't give anyone the kind of love-

I wish I could- which belongs to that life. (137-38)

So, she chooses the second way, which leads to a painful death. To this point, D. E.

Jones says:

The path chooses by Celia and the Chamberlaynes seem to be diverging widely, but in the third act their choices are seen to be different parts of a single pattern. Celia's choice we learn there, has led to crucifixion; the Chamberlaynes' choice has led to a party at which the news of her death

reaches them. One might almost call the news 'good news', a 'gospel'.

(141)

It a part of the design also in that it makes others identify themselves sympathetically with the sufferer and makes them keenly aware of her sacrifice. This final act shows us the repercussions of Celia's choice in the lives of others; in other words, it shows the power of the saint's sacrifice to fertilize and animates the lives of ordinary men and women.

*The Cocktail Party* seems to depicts a stage in the creation of such a new Christian culture- a society in which the natural end of man –virtue and well-being in community- is acknowledged for all, and supernatural end-beatitude- for those who have eyes to see it. The aim of Western psychiatry is to help the troubled individual to adjust himself to the society of less troubled individuals-individuals who are observed to be well adjusted to one another and the local institutions, but about whose adjustment to the fundamental 'Order of Things' no enquiry is made. But there is another kind of normality-a normality of perfect functioning. Even a man who is perfectly adjusted to a deranged society can prepare himself, if he so desires, to become adjusted to the 'Nature of Things'. It is to this other kind of normality that Celia really aspires, and she gives her life to help reconcile a 'deranged society' with the 'fundamental Order of Things'.

The Guardians who have helped Celia to 'Transhumanised', Reilly, Alex and Julia seem to be members of the select group which Eliot calls the Community of Christians. Even in a Christian society it is only from the much smaller number of conscious human beings, the Community of Christians, that one would expect a conscious Christian life on its highest social level.

Finally, Celia's choice is most significant. She chooses the way of martyrdom and sacrifice and is crucified like Christ, and her crucifixion is significant for it brings peace, harmony and unity in the life of the Chamberlaynes which represents the lives of the modern wastelanders. In every age, saints or Christ-figures must suffer martyrdom to atone for the sin of the average man and woman. However, its basic or central theme is the significance of choice, and how the choice of the exceptional individual or the saint is socially significant as it fertilizes and animates the lives of ordinary men and women.

### Chapter Four: Conclusion

T. S. Eliot's *The Cocktail Party* is saturated with spiritual value and mores that accordingly to Eliot are the true factors to save the entire humanity from the eternal damnation. The *Eros* of the humanity activated by modern maladies should be replaced with the open-mouthed eternal bliss. *Eros* refers to all those debased desires of modern humanity that has put the whole humanity at stake and caused its movement in the direction of callous indifference, fragmentation, chaos and decay. This has subsequently contaminated the whole of humanity. *Agape* in Auden's word which means open-mouthed comes to balance, or even redeem the humanity, from the evils of *Eros* and forms the spiritual basis of humanity addressing the drought of a meaningful metaphysical meaning felt by the modern world after the supposed death of the God. In his play *The Cocktail Party*, he seems to valorizing the sense of spirituality so as to get rid of from the modern pathological social make-up.

The modern wastelanders have to pay the full price in terms of suffering, for their moments of physical satisfaction, with the morning comes disillusionment, and all their vision of love and beauty come to an end. Hence fort, they will not like to waste one look, thought or kiss on each other. They will grow entirely indifferent to each other. The fountain of love will dry in their hearts, and they will become spiritually wretched and miserable. Eliot suggests only one cure for this spiritual and emotional dryness. No doubt their love for each other will come to an end but still they have a beautiful world to live in. they should accept it as a great blessing and thank for it. Then by providence by divine dispensation, foundation of love will flow out of their hearts for god who has

blessed them in this way. Just as Venus inspires for sexual love, so god will inspire them with spiritual love and with love for all God's creatures.

On the other hand, sinful man no longer follows the rules of the god nor does he remember that he died for his sake. He tries to restore order in his disordered world, but such an order can come about only by chance like a child's chance rhyming game, with will. This is so because man does not understand the implications of Christ's martyrdom, and that he is a sharer in the sin of those who betrayed him, the Son of God.

Spiritual deadness has overtaken humanity, and man makes no effort to build the good city the city of god on earth. His will is paralyzed and there are corruption and death within him. Life goes on as usual on the physical plane, 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 of impossible, quixotic achievement but all such dreams are more illusions, symptoms of corruption and disease in the human psyche they can be of no good whatever corruption, sin, sexuality are widespread and the human attempts at reform are unrealistic. Order can be imposed upon the chaotic condition of contemporary civilization, only if man returns to Christ, sinful and selfish desires 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 background the various events connected with the crucifixion of Christ such as Celia's Martyrdom is regarded here as Christian martyrdom. It reflects Eliot's preoccupation with Christian theology. In *The Idea of a Christian Society* Eliot said:

A society has not ceased to be Christian until it has become positively something else. It is my contention that we have to-day a culture which is mainly negative, but which, so far as it is positive, is still Christian. I do not think that it can remain negative, because a negative culture has ceased to be efficient in a world where economic as well as spiritual forces are proving the efficiency of cultures which, even when pagan, are positive; and I believe that the choice before us is between the formation of a new Christian culture, and the acceptance of a pagan one. (13)

At the end, Eliot prays to the supreme healer to make known to the world about his magic, which can cure the maladies brought out by the modern wastelanders. It is the same heavenly father who could destroy the decayed social order and could build up a new social order. He could also bring about change by heart by correcting the modern human beings who have developed in the maladies of modern civilization. Eliot envisages redemption of modern humanity saturated by malaise and maladies of modern wastelanders through the spiritual orientation.

The great dramas like Hamlet and Oedipus Rex are mythic in the sense that they present the existential crisis in everyone's life. We cannot escape believing in the assumption that myth and self-consciousness are to some degree synonymous. The deepest level of consciousness can be discovered only through myth and ritual. These entire dramatists gave focus on the spiritual awakening in their writings one way or other. But, the sorry thing is that none of these great dramatists had been successful in their attempts.

Lionel Trilling has rebuked Eliot for this failure. He argues:



No reference to the pain which is an essential and not an accidental part of the life of the common routine. There is no reference to the principles, the ethical discipline, by which the ordinary life is governed: all is habit ...

This failure to conceive the actuality of the life of common routine is typical, he maintains, of modern literature since Tolstoy. (146)

Eliot's representation of the two "ways" of life makes us imagine with nothing in between, the dull not-being of life and the intense not being of death; but we do not imagine Being, we do not imagine it can be a joy.

Finally, T. S. Eliot does scant justice to the virtues which make the routine life possible. But to remain too long with this idea is to run the risk of missing a related but much more crucial point. The real defect of *The Cocktail Party*, a defect of drama and rhetoric, is that it presents the life of the common routine and the way of beatitude as totally discrete. Thus the drama is a search story but no final reaching which is a teleological conclusion.

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