

## I. INTRODUCTION

### **The Seminal Background (Religious and Political) of the Play**

This research entitled “Unveiling Religious and Political Paradoxes: A New Historical Reading of T.S. Eliot’s *Murder in the Cathedral*,” focuses on a play, which deals with the assassination of Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury, during reign of King Henry II who ascended to the English throne in 1154. The king wasn’t an Englishman; he belonged to the city of Anjou in France. His ascension to the English throne came about as a result of certain political conditions and circumstances. Thomas Becket from London was able, by his abilities, to win King Henry’s favour. Soon the two men became intimate friends, and Henry then appointed Becket to the high office of the Chancellor. After sometime, the king appointed Becket to the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury also, hoping that in this way he should be able to gain control of the English Churches in addition to exercising his secular power over the country in general. But soon after being appointed the Archbishop of Canterbury, Becket resigned his Chancellorship and began to devote himself wholly to the affairs of the Church. In course of time, Becket found that it was not easy to reconcile the claims and privileges of the church with the absolute powers which Henry claimed as the monarch. A conflict between Becket and King Henry began. This conflict eventually led to the murder of the Archbishop by the four knights who took their step in order to please the king even though the king had not specifically asked these men to murder the Archbishop.

Specifically there are two types of ideologies which have been foregrounded by the playwright. The ideologies are political and religious. And, here the religious ideology has been suppressed down by the political ideology. In other words, King Henry has dominated Thomas Becket in one way or the other.

The central character, the Archbishop Thomas Becket has been depicted as a rigid person, totally guided by religion and other character, King Henry as a political and royalist person. The king has tried his level best to bring Thomas in his favour by any means of ideology. But, as Thomas is obstinate in his unshakable faith in terms of religion, he becomes stagnant rather than going in the vicious circle of the king in spite of different persuasions offered by the knights of the king. Consequently, he was murdered by the knights. Therefore, here, what the questions arise are concerned with power relation, ideologies and discourse as well.

During the Chancellorship, Thomas Becket had very close relationship with the king Henry. But soon after being appointed the Archbishop of Canterbury, Becket resigned his Chancellorship and began to devote himself to the affairs of the Church. Hence, the conflict between Thomas Becket and King Henry began to increase. Because of the king's selfishness, he orders his knight to persuade Thomas Becket for his own advantage. Finally, they happened to kill Thomas Becket. He simply gives his life to the law of God which is above the law of man by rejecting the king's order. So, there is victory of politics over religion which is the underlying and hidden ideology in relation to politics of the playwright.

T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* has been variously interpreted by so many critics right from the beginning of the publication of this play. Here, some of the most relevant interpretation has been mentioned in relation to the topic of this project. Regarding this one of the critics Roger Kojecky in his criticism i.e. *T.S. Eliot's Social Criticism* writes:

Social dimension perhaps is particularly prominent in *Murder in the Cathedral*. The chorus of woman of Canterbury who stands as type of the common man evince a change rhythm of the seasons, and scarcely

looking beyond them for life's significance. The preoccupation of their lives begins to crystallize around the person of Becket. The martyrdom has brought home the redemptive meaning of the death of Christ. (106)

Similarly, on the other hand, his play is compared with *Everyman* by an Anonymous writer as well as Aristophanes as Neville Coghill writes, "His Choice was to fall on Aristophanes, Aeschylus, Euripides and the unknown author of *Everyman*; but first on Aristophanes (14).

The critic F.O Matthiessen in his criticism *The Achievement of T.S. Eliot and An Essay on the Nature of Poetry* writes:

*Murder in the Cathedral*, like many of the morality plays, is a drama of temptation but Becket as the Archbishop prove superior to his tempters. One of the most conspicuous technical triumphs in all Eliot's poetry is in the Choruses that were designed to be spoken by the working woman of Canterbury. Here he carried further his experiments in findings verse forms suitable for ritualistic drama (162).

Regarding the conflict and action of this play, Dr. B.N. Chaturvedi in T.S. Eliot's criticism says:

*Murder in the Cathedral* does not have action in the traditional sense of the word and the conflict is also centered within the mind of the protagonist. The temptations which Thomas has to undergo are the temptations to avoid martyrdom altogether and them to accept it in one wrong spirit, "to do the right deed for the wrong reason". The Tempters are in fact only the projections of Thomas's mind and the conflict is more on the level of ritual then on that of strictly dramatic actions. (69)

He also asserts by adding that:-

Eliot's first triumph in the realm of poetic drama was *Murder in the cathedral* and it is a triumph of the ritualistic manner. It is in the tradition of the great morality plays, with its theme of the temptation of Thomas Becket; it has its affiliations with Church liturgy and in its use of Choruses its affinity with Greek drama. Eliot was well aware that it was futile to produce a mere imitation of Greek drama in the modern times in the same way as an imitation of Shakespearean drama would lead into a blind alley.(69)

Some critics claim that *Murder in the Cathedral* has closer affiliation with Greek plays for Eliot's use of characters like Gods, Kings and Heroes walking the tragic stage. The use of Chorus and their grief also shows that this play is closer to Greek dram. R.G. Tanner in *The Dramas of T.S. Eliot and Their Greek Models* says:

There was a Greek basis also for *Murder in the Cathedral*. This play begins with the Chorus of women of Canterbury awaiting the return of their Archbishop from Rome. The Choruses have expressed their grief over the land. The messenger arrives to announce the impending return. Thomas firmly rejects four Tempters. Knights appear and kill him. Such is outline of the plot, and none will deny that both the use of Chorus and verse dialogue and likewise the sense of fate and inescapable destiny are all entirely Greek features. (131)

In connection to technical aspect of *Murder in the Cathedral* Sheila Sullivan in the criticism of T.S. Eliot's says:-

"I do not think Eliot had any illusions about the danger of a drop in emotional temperature at this point, for it seems to be deliberately that

he introduces several technical developments in the central and later sections of the play. One feels that these are diversionary, designed to hold an interest which might otherwise begin to flag. It is only at the end, when a richer and less explicit significance returns to the action.

That the *ars* in once more *celare artem*...(91)

So far as the secondary materials about the interpretation of the play *Murder in the Cathedral* is concerned, there are ample of secondary materials which provides the interpretation of this drama but none of them has brought the issue of Unveiling Religious and Political Paradoxes: A New Historical Reading of T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, which is unconcealed in this very drama if it is scrutinized by the microscope of our mind. What this project does is that it bridges the same critical gap.

#### **Eliot's views on Drama**

T. S. Eliot, an American by birth but an Englishman by descent, was a prolific writer. He has contributed greatly in the field of literature by writing different genres like poems, plays as well as criticisms. It is worth mentioning that he was awarded the Order of the Merit, and the Nobel prize for literature in 1948. Since he went to Harvard in 1933 for short visit to lecture there as a visiting professor, his dramatic instincts were stimulated because the Harvard of that time was very enthusiastic about drama. He is known for reviving poetic drama in English literature. His famous dramas are: *The Rock, a Pageant ,play (1934)*, *Murder in the Cathedral (1835)*, *The family Reunion (1939)*, *The Cocktail Party(1950)*, *The Confidential Clerk(1954)* and *The Edder Statesman(1959)*.

As a dramatist, his range is narrower than that of his poetry. The theme of most of his plays belongs to the religion while the setting is contemporary and social.

So is the play *Murder in the Cathedral* which reflect the state of Eliot's thinking and feeling about the religion he had adopted.

In the field of criticism, too; he stands in the long line of poetic- critics beginning with Ben Johnson and including such names as Dryden, Coleridge and Arnold. His rare gift 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 (Tilak, 1978).

Eliot had a life-long interest in drama, especially in poetic drama. He had been a great admirer of Dante's "Divine Comedy" and other poetic dramas of the classical period and after. He was equally critical of prose dramatists. For him, prose drama is always inferior to poetic drama. According to him, a prose drama lacks the ability of expression that a poetic drama has. And also he says that prose drama is merely a slight by-product of verse drama. In his essay, "poetry and drama" he talks about the plays of Shakespeare and writes:-

The line of Othello expresses irony, dignity, and fearless, and incidentally reminds us of the time of night in which the scene takes place. Only poet would do this; but it is dramatic poetry; that is, it does not interrupt but intensifies the dramatic situation. (83)

So for him, a dramatic poetry is always better than prose drama. He says so because the tendency of prose drama is to emphasize the ephemeral and superficial. He further says, "If we want to get at the permanent and universal, we must tend to express ourselves in verse" (84).

He is critical of great prose dramatists and believes that they would have become really great if they had written dramas in poetic form. In the same essay he further writes:

There are great prose dramatists such as Shaw and Chekhov who have at times done things of which I would not otherwise have supposed prose to be capable, but who seem to me have been hampered in expression by writing in prose. (86-87)

Because “[ t] his peculiar range of sensibility can be expressed by dramatic poetry, at its moments of greatest intensity, (87) he had been very fond of poems like Robert Browning’s “My last Duchess”.

But Eliot at the same time was well aware that poetic drama was in the situation of competition. He feared that the place poetic drama was trying to cover may be overlapped by prose drama for this, he says, poetic drama is to be written in such a way that it would be able to compete with prose drama. He writes, “If poetic drama is to recognize its place it must, in my opinion, enter into over competition with prose drama” (81).

Eliot knew well that poetic drama in the modern period was not without troubles. Such troubles are created by the lack of social and moral conventions. Poetic plays in the modern times are being failure because of the poets writing plays without the knowledge of stage and writes writing poetic plays without the proper command over poetic language. But he has his own solution to this problem. Which he writes in the same way, “It seems to me that if we are to have a poetic drama, it is more likely to come from poets learning how to write plays than from skillful prose dramatists learning to write poetry” (86).

In this sense, it seems that Eliot gave more importance to the poetic ability than stage acts.

Eliot, thus, had committed himself to the revival of poetic drama in the modern time. Of course, the campaign that Eliot started could not achieve its goal but what Eliot himself did remains as something of great importance.

This research concentrates on the play *Murder in the Cathedral* by T.S. Eliot. It attempts to analyze Eliot's interest in the tussle of ideologies viz. political as well as religious and its dominant religiosity. Eliot takes the incident of the murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket in December 1170 by the King Henry's agents, knights. We can see the dominance of the marginalized voice that is monarchical power which dismisses the single truth created by the medieval world view. The truth was that the Church was superior over politics. The medieval world view would always highlight the hierarchical power system. The God and Christianity were kept at the central position. The political power was at the marginalized position. Its focus remains on the subversion of such a hierarchical system and reconstructing the history.

In this context, New Historicism is applicable in the text *Murder in the Cathedral*. Foucauldian concepts of history problematize history as chronologically systematic and linear. This is an attempt to see not the events in their chronology but to see the gaps in it and to see it in a zigzagged course. Each officially documented history, he holds, is influenced by the perspectives of the powerful persons and its writing is controlled by the power relations of the time it was written. If viewed from the perspective of those suppressed and marginalized in the course of writing of history, Foucault seems to be suggesting that history loses its singularity and appears to be histories in history. In this context, in the reading of the drama *Murder in the Cathedral* that takes the event of 1170, medieval time and gives space to the buried



truth that was distorted by the historians of the medieval era. The political power was at highlighted position rather than religious power position which was ignored by medieval world view.

New Historicism which was developed in 1980, in a literary approach to literary criticism and theory, based on the premise that a literary work should be considered a product of the time, place and circumstances of its composition rather than an isolated creation. It emphasizes on the historical nature of literary texts and at the same time the textual nature of history as a part of a wider reaction which goes against New Criticism and Deconstruction. It is led by Stephen Greenblatt. This theory establishes connections between literary and non-literary texts, breaking down the familiar distinctions between a text and its historical background as conceived in established historical form of criticism. The history of New Historicism dates back to the use of the term by Stephen Greenblatt in an issue of the Journal *Genre* devoted to the Renaissance both Greenblatt and other subsequent critics associated with it; reject it to call theory or a specific doctrine. Rather it is inclusive of various concerns and approaches like the dismissal of formalist notion of aesthetic autonomy and of the text's situatedness in a broader cultural background.

There are differences between practitioners of traditional historians and new historians. The first difference is that the New Historicists regard literature being embedded within history. In other words, the New Historicists give equal weight to literary and non-literary materials; where as traditional historians are much more preoccupied with the separate identity of various genres like literature, history, science, and so on. The traditional critics view literature as a reflection of the worldview characteristic of a period. They take social and intellectual history as background against which they set a work of literature as an independent and

autonomous entity. Unlike it, New Historicists receive literary text based on the institutions, social practices, and discourses that can statue the overall cultural energies and codes. Similarly, they search for interpretations of the historical events and happenings, where as the traditional historicists want to know alone fact and events.

The older form of historical criticism insists that a literary work should be read with a sense of the time and space of its creation. This is necessary because every literary work is a product of its time and its world and reflects the fervor of the time and the space. So, understanding its background is necessary for New Historicists.

Like earlier historical approaches, a more contemporary approach is identified as New Historicism. It considers historical context functioning as an essential role for understanding them. A significant difference between earlier historical criticism and New Historicism is an emphasis on overlying historical documents with the same intensity and security. One common strategy of New Historical criticism is to compare and contrast the language of contemporary documents and literature to reveal the hidden assumptions, biases and cultural attitude that relate the two kinds of texts, literary and documentary. It usually demonstrates how literary work shares the cultural assumption of the document.

Adopted in 1982 by Stephen Greenblatt in a special issue of *Genre* to describe a new kind of historically based criticism in New Historicism. It highlights the 'historical' nature of literary text and at the same time the 'textual' nature of 'histories' instead of regarding to text as 'self sufficient entity' and "autonomous body", and viewing it in isolation from its social-cultural context as formalist and New Critics did. New Historicists primarily emphasize the historical and cultural conditions of its production and also of its later critical interpretation and evaluations.

New Historicism has turned towards history, culture, society, politics, institutions, the social context, and so on in interpreting any given text.

New Historicists aim simultaneously to understand the work through its historical context and to understand cultural and intellectual history through literature which documents the new discipline of the history of ideas. They are inspired by Michel Foucault's concept of discourse and power. They attempt to show how literary works are implicated in power relations of their time, not as an active participant but in the continual remaking of meanings. The most prominent New Historicist critic Louis Montrose believes:

The New Historicism dates back to Stephen Greenblatt's use of the term in 1982 in an introduction to an issue of the journal *Genre* devoted to the Renaissance [...] He stressed that this contextualization of literature involves a reexamination of an authors position within a linguistics system. He also points out that New Historicism variously recognizes the ability to challenge social and political authority. (762)

Nonetheless, this critical school and those scholars who commonly associate with the school have been hugely influential on scholarship of the last decade. So it is important to come to grips with some of the general trends and common practices of this critical approach.

There are a number of similarities between this school and Marxism; especially a British group of critics making up a school usually refer to as cultural materialism. Both New Historicists and Culture Materialists are interested in recovering lost histories and in exploring mechanisms of repression and subjugation .The major difference is that [...] New Historicists tend to draw on the disciplines of political science and

anthropology given their interest in government, institutions, and culture, while culture materialists tend to rely on economics and sociology given their interest in class, economics, and modification.

(Habib 663)

Here, New Historicists capture an overall scenario of history whereas Marxists are associated with class struggle.

New Historicists capture Materialists, interested in the questions of circulation, negotiation, profit and exchange. They support to be above the market (including literature) and informed by the value of that market. However, they take this position further by then claiming that all culture activities are considered as equally important texts for historical analysis. New Historicism is more specifically concerned with the questions of power and culture. It contains the messy comings of the social and the culture practices. It opposes the autonomous self and the cultural political institutions that produce that self.

New Historicists tended, then, to view literature as one discourse among many cultural discourse, insisting on engaging with this entire complex and a localized manner, refusing to engage in categorical generalization or to commit to any define political stance. Indeed, New Historicists have been criticized for accepting uncritically. Foucault somewhat disembodied an abstract notion of power which applies free political and economic agency. They are also accused of arbitrariness entire ways in which they related literary text to other culture discourses. (Habib 762)

In these percepts, New Historicists tend to follow the post-Lacanian and post-Marxist view of ideology; rather than see ideology as false consciousness, as

something that is obscuring one's perception of the truth. New Historicists argue that to recognize an ideology is to embed on the historical process since it is so much a part of the way one perceives the world and its reality.

While appropriating some of the methods of Formalists and Deconstructive critics, New Historicists differ from them in a number of important ways. Most importantly, unlike critics who limit their analysis of a literary work to its language and structure, New Historicists play non-literary text from the same time in which the literary text was written. New Historicists play the close reading strategies of formalists and deconstructive, but their goal is not, like the formalists, to show how the text undermines and contradicts itself, an emphasis of deconstructive prospective.

Instead, New Historicists analyze the cultural context embedded in the literary text and explain its relationship with the network of the assumptions and beliefs of that period when the literary text was written. Similarly, emphasizing the idea of New Historicism, Diyanii argues:

History does not provide more background against which to study literary works, but is, rather, an equally important text, one that is ultimately inseparable from the literary work, which inevitably reveals the conflicting power relations that underlie all human interaction, from the small-scale interactions with families to the larger- scale interaction of social institutions. (283)

Literary texts are embedded with the social, political and economic circumstances in which they are produced and consumed. But what is important for New Historicist is that all these circumstances are not stable in them and are susceptible to being rewritten and transformed. From this perspective, it influences on a particular culture and ideology.

Since literary texts, as New Historicists argue, are situated within a particular social, cultural, political and economic situations since the writer operates within the horizon of her/his own world view. The task of New Historicists is to explore “the historicity of texts and textuality” (Louis Montrose 410). Therefore, while analyzing a piece of history, they question like “is this account accurate? Or what does this event tell us about the spirit of the age? What happened? And what does the event tell us about the history?” (Tyson 278) are of less important.

Louis Tyson further argues “New Historicists ask ‘how has the event been interpreted?’ and what do the interpretations tell us about the interpreters?” (278). Hence, the job of New Historicists is to read a given piece in relation to other discursive practices in which it occurred. To put it differently, since the meaning of a literary text is situated in the complex web of discursive formation, the project of New Historicists is to “analyze the interplay of culture specific discursive practice” (Montrose 415). It attempts to explore how the given piece of literature or history or anything else first within the complex web of competing ideologies and conflicting social, political, and cultural agendas of the time and place in which it took place. Stephen Greenblatt’s brilliant studies of the Renaissance texts have established him as a major figure commonly associated with New Historicism. Indeed, his influence means that New Historicism first gained popularity among Renaissance scholars, many of whom are directly inspired by Greenblatt’s ideas and anecdotal approach. The mode of writing attempts to encourage the readers to reconsider the “valid” interpretation of history which functions as a kind of writing constructed by ideological discourses in a certain period. In the same vein, Louis Montrose in his essay “New Historicisms” argues:

Integral to any genuinely New Historicists project however, must be a realization and acknowledgements that our analyses necessarily proceed from our own historically, socially, and institutionally shaped vantage points and that the pasts we reconstruct are, at the same time, the textual constructs of critics who are, ourselves, historical subjects.

(415)

At the same time, through the self-reflexive techniques, it stirs us to question our own credibility of interpretation of the history from a particular socio-political context. Michel Foucault's interest lies on the issues of power, epistemology, subjectivity, and ideology that influence critics not only in literary studies but also in other disciplines like political science, history, and anthropology. His willingness to analyze and discuss disparate disciplines (Medicine, Criminal Science, Philosophy, The History of Sexuality, Government, Literature, etc.) as well as his questioning of the very principle of disciplinary and specialization has inspired a lot of subsequent critics to explore interdisciplinary connections between areas that have rarely been examined together. Thus, changing the way, critics addressed such pervasive issues as "power", "discourse", "discipline", "subjectivity", "sexuality" and "government".

Michel Foucault is the most influential critics of New Historicism. His interest in issues of power, epistemology, subjectivity, and ideology has influenced critics not only in literary studies but also in political science, history, and anthropology:

The New Historicism argued that analysis of literary text could not be restricted to these texts themselves or to their author's psychology and background; rather, larger contexts and culture conventions in which text were produced need to be considered. Subsequently, Foucault offered extended critiques respectively of the institutions of

the prison and of sexuality in *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison* (1975) and *The History of Sexuality*. (176)

Of course, there have always been intellectual trends in the methods in the natural science. But the current predominance of New Historicist assumptions and procedure is noteworthy. For Foucault, then, history assumes an important role in the definition of what it means to be an intellectual.

In his work, Foucault argues that power is not merely physical force but pervasive human dynamic determining our relationships to others: “A way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action” (220). Although, this term seems as if it should be self explanatory, it has in fact been inflected by its re-definition in the work of an important precursor for New Historicist Michel Foucault. Power is also not necessarily repressive since it can also be productive. We could also say that power is essential to adjust in the society. All people exert a certain power over us in so far as we defer to their needs and desires. The moment we cease to acknowledge this power as other has over us, and then we deny others humanity. As Foucault puts it, “Slavery is not a power relationship when it is in chains” (221). However, power also refers to the often surreptitious ways in which a dominant group exerts its influence over others. Though, this hegemonic power may rely on the threat of punishment, it does not necessarily rely on actual physical enforcement on a day-to-day basis.

Foucault opines in his well-celebrated essay “Truth and power” that the truth as a product of discourse is changeable:

Now I believe that the problem does not consist in drawing the line between that in a discourse which fall under the category of science or truth and that which comes under some other category but in seeing



historically how effects of truth are produced within discourse which in themselves are neither true nor false. (1139)

Foucault views that we can never possess objective knowledge of history because discourses are known as product of power struggle. In every sphere of society such as science, politics, art, and religion, discourse influences power because power is achieved through discourse.

In this sense, New Historicism undermines the concepts of transcendental truth and erases the boundary between history and literature.

Keshab Timsina in his thesis “Subversions of Ideologies in Manjushree Thapa’s *Tilled Earth*”, has subverted the ideologies with the implementation of New Historicism. He has proved that the ideologies and discourses of the era, i.e., 1940s, and 1950s, have been falsified by foregrounding the oppressed voices. By raising the voice of marginalized and subalterns like Dalit, dream deferred, women, drivers, and servants, the dominant voices of the powerful class has been subverted.

Likewise, Dipak Giri, in his thesis “Reconstruction of text book American History reading in E.L. *Doctrow’s Ragtime*” and includes personal histories of characters from the marginalized groups such as Blacks, Jews, immigrants and women and thus it subverts the notion of objectivity of history and presents different versions of the history of the *Ragtime* period which are the reconstructed versions of the history. *Ragtime* thus reconstructs the textbook American history.

In the same way, this thesis, “*Unveiling Religious and Political Paradoxes: a New Historical reading of T.S. Eliot’s Murder in the Cathedral*” shows the tussle of two sorts of ideologies i.e. political and religious and it has subverted the medieval ideological constructions by bringing fore the buried voice of political power. The ideology of that would expose the dominance of religious power disregarding other

powers like of monarchy. But this thesis with the implementation of New Historicism looks at the buried voice that was kingly power who ruled over religious people like Becket and subverts the dominance of religious power only.

To sum up, history is never final and conclusive. A discourse would then, be whatever contains but also enables writing, speaking, talking and thinking within such specific historical limits. So, contextualize can't be conclusive; context to the text is an insurmountable problem and context of any text is thus indefinite. New Historicism sees the loopholes within context. So context should be reinterpreted. This study has attempted to see the inherent power discourses within the limit of context. Hence, the present researcher applies New Historicism to T.S. Eliot's play *Murder in the Cathedral* which will play a remarkable role to study the text linking with its context to represent those different aspects of medieval society reflected in the novel. This project reframes the ideas of history by exploring the issue of conflict related to ideology represented in the play.

This study makes significant contribution on bringing the marginalized and oppressed people in center like Thomas Becket in the play *Murder in the Cathedral*. Similarly, this research makes a significant theoretical connection between the political and religious persons. Moreover, it assists to understand the political conspiracy of politician so that people became alert from politicians.

## **II. The Inner and Outer Conflict in T.S Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*.**

Conflict is the essence of drama. In other words, no drama can be written without the element of conflict in it. Now conflict is of two types-inner and outer. An inner conflict takes place in the mind of a character, while an outer conflict occurs between a character and circumstances, between the character and his opponents or enemies, between a character and society as a whole, and so on.

It is true to say that in part I of this play the conflict is between Becket and Shadows. The Shadows here are the four Tempters who are aspects of Becket himself; they are personified facets of Becket's own consciousness. Thus, the conflict is given a visible form by Becket's hidden or subconscious desires being personified as the four Tempters.

It is not quite correct to say that there is no conflict in part II at all. In part II the conflict is an outer one, and it is a real, highly dramatic conflict, like the earlier conflict. This conflict takes place between Becket and the four Knights (who are the King's men. This is a political-cum-religious conflict, and it produces a lot of suspense (even though we know before-hand, from our knowledge of history, that Becket will be murdered). There is also a brief conflict in part II between Becket and the priests who try, against Becket's will, to save Becket's life by dragging him away to a room and closing the doors.

The play *Murder in the Cathedral* is in two acts separated by an interlude as a sermon delivered by St. Thomas Becket on the occasion of Christian festival. This play deals with hierarchical power. The power sometimes goes to the politics viz. to the King and sometimes to the religion. To put it another way, there is loss and gain of power. Although both the power religious and political are creative. Undoubtedly there is suffering, violence however, these are creative.

Religion which has been treated as obsession neurosis by psychoanalysts and opium by Marxists is one of the oldest psychics creations of human kind. Politics has evolved much later. Both are pervasion as these two effect not only the life of an individual and society but also of a nation, where as politics affects a nation first and then the society and individuals.

A political leader can be religious but his politics cannot. Being religious, he can behave in accordance with his faith in quite different way than the conduct of others having faith in an other religion. But if he makes his religion as the foundation of his politics, he cannot be supposed to represent others having different faiths. Hence, many countries, being multi-religious and multi-cultural, have opted for secular character of the state to avoid conflict between the religious groups. Md. Iqbal, the great Indian Urdu poet and Philosopher. Who shifted to Pakistan, before partition, once wrote, "Religion does not teach eternity with one another", could see the partition of India some countries too have been divided on religious lines. After all, what is there in a religion, which makes one religious mercilessly people including children and women belonging to another group? They do not even hesitate in killing belonging to another sect of the same religion.

*Murder in the Cathedral* deals with the assassination of Thomas Becket, the Archbishop of Canterbury, during the reign of king Henry II who ascended to the English throne in 1154. Henry II was not an Englishman; he belonged to the city of Anjou in France. His ascension to the English throne came about as a result of a political stance. Thomas Becket, who was born in Cheapside (a locality of London), was able, by his abilities, to win King Henry's favour. Soon the two men became close friends, and Henry then appointed Becket to the office of the Chancellor. After some time, the King appointed Becket to the office of the Archbishop of Canterbury also hoping that

in this way he could be able to gain control of the English Church in addition to exercising his secular power over the country in general. But soon after being appointed the Archbishop of Canterbury, Becket resigned his Chancellorship and began to devote himself wholly to the affairs of the Church. In course time, Becket found that it was not easy to reconcile the claims and privileges of the Church with the absolute powers which King Henry claimed as the monarch. A conflict between Becket and King Henry then began. This conflict eventually led to the murder of the Archbishop by the four Knights who took this step in order to please the King, even though the King had not specifically asked these men to murder the Archbishop.

Eliot's text subverts the ideologies prevailing in medieval society. Ideology is the belief, values and way of thinking and feeling in a particular context, different ideologies, which harmonies the mind of the people and shape their understanding, are found to be working in the society. It kills their critical attitude and developed a false consciousness in them. The ideology is controlled by the powerful people and suppresses those who are powerless and marginalized. The false ideologies created by medieval world was hindering the peoples' awareness about the position of politic and its power and its power. It had always emphasized religious power. It would always subsided those who are other than religious. Therefore, Eliot in his text "*Murder in the Cathedral*" seems to include the voice of marginalized, subverting the ideology of the society.

New Historicisms focuses on subversion of the ideologies prevailing in the society. The word "subversion" means 'turning over'. When a thing is subverted, the other hidden side of the thing comes to the fore. Eliot attempts to speak from the side of marginalized. The marginalized are those who are subsided from history. It aims to deal the existence of those who are neglected, forgotten. The so-called history of

medieval world did not give proper place to political power and always highlighted religion. The religious always highlighted religion. The religious powerful people did not want to take the name of politics away with them in canonical history. They even did not pronounce the name 'political power' and subsided it. After studying the cultural artifact *Murder in the Cathedral* we realize that political power was more dominant power than religion itself. The buried part of history is brought to the fore.

Regarding the context of the *Murder in the Cathedral*, it was the Medieval England but the playwright T.S Eliot is from Modern Age. He has revisited that world where political power had ruled over religious power. His text provides us the opportunity to look at the marginalized voice that was political power. Though there was high power in the hand of political people that aspect was not clear to the reader for modern time. This New Historicist reading of the text attempts to foreground the political voice within the religion dominated society.

In the drama, King Henry had handled the political power which was at the highlighted position. King Henry had ruled England of 1170. He would always believe in compromise between two powers, political and religious. The administration of political power of King Henry and religious power of Thomas Becket would rule the land. The political power was above religious power. King and Chancellor had made the state ideal. The second knight at the last part of play says:-

Had Becket concurred with the king's wishes we should have had an almost ideal state: a union of spiritual temporal administration, under the central government. I knew Becket well, in various official relations: and I may say that I have never known a man so well qualified for the highest rank of the civil service. And what happened? The moment that Becket, at the King's instance, had been made

Archbishop he resigned the office of Chancellor, he become more priestly than priests. (86)

King Henry though does not seem at the stage, his power handling almost ideal state but the tussle between him and Becket ultimately resulted in murder. Thomas Becket's belief in God is made to be challenged by King Henry. As Becket does not believe in the position of king and politics in nation and believes that there is central force God above him and king, His tussle with King initiates. He says "It is not I who insult the King, and there is higher than I or King" (72). Becket's belief in God is ignored by King. The Kingly agents always hesitate Becket's.

The medieval world view is based on Christian doctrine. According to it, God is one and only, omniscient and almighty. All men should obey the Christianity hold the central belief that one cannot plan and pursue the worthy ends because sin is inherent and proper to human nature. It believes that man's achievements are not because of his own wisdom but by the God's grace.

Christian history based on Christian principle, calls itself universal or canonical history. According to it, God was in central position. Under the God, there were Churches and Popes. The political power remained under the Churches and Popes. This research on *The Murder in the Cathedral* gradually goes against such ranking system. King is at superior position. When, Becket does not come in agreement and becomes more priestly than priests, resigning from the post of Chancellorship, Kingly agents Knights kill him. Here by King seems to oppose such Christian doctrine.

There are different characters in the play. Thomas Becket is central character upon whom whole play revolves. Another main character is King Henry of England who seems off stage. His agents like knights, Tempters are involved in action. There

are religious people like Choruses and Priests. The Choruses are the poor women who believe in religion. They lament on the coming disaster on Church that is the murder of Becket. The priests are also religious people who are worried about the forthcoming danger, danger based on the death of Becket.

The play *Murder in the Cathedral* is a tragedy into two parts with an interlude in a form of sermons of the Archbishop in between. The scene of the action is the cathedral at Canterbury. The exposition of the concentrates on the forthcoming dangers on cathedral. The danger is created by the rumour of the arrival of Thomas Becket from France to England after seven years. The speeches of the Chorus, the priests and Herald, serve mainly to reveal what is happening at the moment. So, the first part of drama is based on Thomas's return from France for which, Priests, and Chorus are worried. They fear on his return from France because he may face death. They say that while he was Chancellor he was flattered by the king but after resigning from the post of Chancellor, he was in secured and isolated. The priests and Chorus wish for Archbishop not to come there but Archbishop comes for his dignity. The fear of the priests and Chorus shows the fear in the Christian religious world which is going to be fallen with the King's power. King punishes Becket through his agents for not coming in previous position and becoming more priestly and spiritual.

The conflict in the play is between worldly values and spiritual values. The worldly values handled by King Henry of England and the spiritual values led by Becket, the Archbishop. This conflict first becomes clear to the audience in Becket's first speech. Although Becket's utterances seem rather bries,, when we first hear them, they convey that he is acting on the basic values other than the worldly ones accepted at this point by all the other characters, with the possible exception of the third priest.



Regarding the crisis of the play, if we concentrate on Becket himself, the crisis would seem to be the visit of the fourth Tempter. The fourth Tempter is a kingly agent who frequently asserts that Becket should come to his previous position and previous relation with king. The interlude in the mid part of drama centers around the significance of Christianity. Thomas's desire to be martyr in the name of God ultimately leads to the victory of king. The victory of the king becomes the cause of the downfall of the medieval world view.

The principal complications, leading up to the crisis, are the encounters with the Tempters, the first encounter with the Knights. The priest's attempts to defend Becket, and the second encounter with the Knights, which leads to the Becket's death—the crisis of the play. The play ends with Becket's death and the priests and Chorus's mourning. The martyrdom is the central theme of the play. The New Historical reading of the text shows the martyrdom in the name of God by Thomas Becket has proven the downfall of medieval religious belief. If the man is considered to be a sinful creature by Christian doctrine, why to be martyr. It is the victory of man to challenge such concept and to fight for living. Becket rather gives his life. But actually he has lost something that is religious superiority. He cannot handle by king and ultimately is murdered by kingly agents. His death is leading towards the victory of political over religion. Eliot's inclusion of the event of murder of religious person is proving that he is digging up the buried history. By taking such event, we can subvert the traditional medieval ideology and reconstruct it by exposing the dominant politics and political power within it.

The role of Knights in second part of the play has greater significance. They are political agents who are infuriated with Thomas Becket. There are four Knights; Reginald Fitz Urse, Sir Huger de Morville, De Traci and Richard Brito, The Knights at

second part, burst suddenly in the cathedral, refuse rudely the hospitality offered by the priests and insist on seeing the Archbishop at once and alone. The Knights go back to past and remembered the quiet state in agreement between king and Archbishop. The state was ideal. They finally call him as “traitor to the king”, “meddling priest” “Cheapside brat”. They ultimately killed him; Archbishop dies in the name of God Christ.

This research by looking at the cultural artifact *Murder in the Cathedral*, exposes the voice of marginalized which was monarchical power, such power was dominant in the period but was ignored by the old historians. The ideology provided by other texts of such period always highlighted the religion but this thesis *The Tussle of ideologies in Murder in the Cathedral* foregrounds the buried voice and thus subverts the dominant ideology of the then period.

This present work has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter presents a brief outline of *Murder in the Cathedral*. It gives the birds eyes view of the entire work and explains briefly the theoretical modality that will be applied in this research. It discusses, New Historicism to reconstruct the medieval world view and history. The second chapter will analyze the text at a considerable length on the basis of theoretical modality. It will take out some extracts from the text as evidence to prove the hypothesis of the study. The third chapter is the conclusion of this research on the basis of textual analysis in chapter two. It will conclude the arguments put forward in the preceding chapter and show how it reconstructs the medieval England and medieval religious by implementing New Historicism.

The dissertation on Eliot’s *Murder in the Cathedral* challenges the general medieval belief that Churches were superior over politics. By exposing the real incident the murder of the Canterbury Saint, Archbishop, Thomas Becket, occurred in

1170 by King Henry, it highlights political power over religious orthodoxy. Eliot has written actual history of medieval period. It was cultural artifact. By taking it, we can reconstruct the medieval religiosity and world view of the then period.

The time period from 1056 A.D. to 1440 A.D. is generally called by Medieval or Middle Age. It was dominated by religiosity, Christianity. According to Christian doctrine, God is omniscient and almighty, everyone must obey the God. The Christianity advanced its basic doctrine of human insufficiency and dependence on God. Christian doctrine held that human action is blind and that man cannot plan and pursue the worthy ends because sin is inherent and proper to human nature. The Christianity follows that the man's achievements are not due to his own forces of will and intellect but by the God's grace.

The history written on Christian principle is bound to be universal history or the history of the world, going back to the origin of man the book of genesis. According to it, man is a product of sin and thus to be redeemed, s/he should dedicate the life for the purpose of God. The Christian history attached a central importance to the historical life of Christ. It treated earlier event as leading up to it or preparing for it and subsequent events as developing its consequences. It therefore divided the history into two parts, the first part leading up to the birth of Christ has a forward looking character consisting in being preparation for an event not yet recalled, the second part has a backward looking character depending on the fact that the revelation has been made.

Anyway, the Christian attitude was based on universality of God that makes all men equal in the sight of God; there is no chosen people, no privileged race of class, no other community whose fortunes are more important than those of another. All persons and all peoples are involved in the evolution of God's purpose, and the

historical process is everywhere and always of the same kind, and every part of it is the part of the somewhere.

What Christianity claims to be universal and historical fulfillment were pivotal and those claims derived from Judaism. The Judaco-Christian God was not one tribal or polis deity among many, but was one of the supreme Gods-the maker of the universe the lord of history, the omnipotent and omniscient king of kings whose unequalled reality and power justly commanded the allegiance of all nations and all mankind.

In the history of the people, it is real, that God had entered decisively into the world, spoken his word through the prophets and called forth humanity to its divine destiny: what would be born of it real would have world-historical significance. To the quickly growing numbers of Christians who now proclaimed their message far and wide in Roman Empire, what was born of it real was Christianity.

The Church was God's representative on earth, a sacred institution whose continuing tradition would serve as the exclusive interpreter of God's revelation to humanity. With the church's gradual emergence as the dominant structure and influence in the early Christian religions the writings that now constitute the new testament added to the Hebrew Bible, were established the canonical basis for the Christian tradition, and these effectively determine the parameters of evolving Christian world view. The Christian world view believes in truth of Christianity and universality of it. As Richard Tarnas says:

What the Christian west believed to be true about the world and the human being's place in it is our specific interest, and that world view was grounded in the canonical revelation and gradually modified, developed, and extended by various subsequent factors largely under

the authoritative guidance of Church tradition. That it was the Church that established the divine authority of the scriptural canon, and the scriptural canon that established the divine authority of Church, may appear circuitous, but symbiotic mutual endorsement, affirmed in faith by the continuing Church community. (Tarnas 93)

Medieval world view was based on Christianity which supposed to be canonical and universal. The Churches were considered to be supreme force of the medieval era.

The kings also were in dominated position. That was created by the religion. But as we study cultural artifact like *Murder in the Cathedral*, we see the supremacy of politics over religion. The King has reigned over Thomas Becket. This is truth that with the implementation of New Historicism, the medieval world view is revolutionized in the text and history is reconstructed with the inclusion of political power.

The clash between the two major characters Thomas Becket, a religious representative and King Henry, a political representative is the clash between spirituality and religion and politics. The king seems to be threatened by religious Churches and Archbishop and sees security of his own position. The all pervasive power is in conflict, ultimately religion is overshadowed politics. Though, Thomas Becket does not seem to be interested in any form of temporal power.

Archbishop must have his religious assertion, he tries to impose his power over power of Henry, ultimately he refutes King's request whose assertion is tragedy. His bowing to power politics of Henry is the victory of Kings over Popes Churches that is against the general belief of medieval age, which is the burden of this thesis. The God was considered to be the universal and in the same position as the religion

was. The domination of Church was unbearable to the people of the then society. The general opposition between the human beings and the God shows that medieval belief itself is suffered from power politics. The Christian historiography though, called universal, providential or salvation historiography, has some weaknesses.

Shreedharan writes:

There is medieval historical thought of complete opposition between the objective purpose of God and the subjective purpose of man. God's purpose appears to be an imposition of a certain objective plan upon history quite irrespective of man's subjective purposes. (Shreedharan, 62)

Each and every text is located in certain context. The political, religious, economical and economic circumstances which surrounds their composition or which they evoke. It is in the light, this present dissertation attempts to see T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* as a representation of the historical, social and religious context around the medieval era of England.

Traditionally, history has been viewed as fact/ objective truth and singly existed in text has been put under question in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. The traditionally written history of medieval era has been challenged in the play by making the readers of history to relook, re-think reassess and reconsider the past, reconstructs the medieval history by exposing buried truth.

It is a new concept that history is available to us through the texts. Thus, the history is textualized; therefore, it is a kind of human Fabrication. The historians interpret the past and make them available to the readers. So, history is always subjective and guided by ideology. The suppositions of historians as the neutrality of the language and absence of domineering and idealized narrating voice are contested by New Historians, which takes the present process and limitation of writing of the

past into accent. New Historicists stress on the impossibility of an embarrassing and totalizing account of the past. The history cannot represent the pure form of events for it always is relative to the narrator's prejudices and pre-occupations. So, the proclamation of universal truth in history can no longer sustain.

Though, many texts of medieval period have not presented such incident but in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*, we notice that he has brought fore the hidden truth within history. Many readers of the modern time still believe that medieval era was dominated by religion not by politics. But after the new historical study of the text, we notice that his text has exposed the dominant political power within religion and over religion. Eliot has presented the cultural artifact of medieval era and the New Historical study of the text has revisited it. After the revisiting, the medieval history is reconstructed with the subversion of dominant ideology.

The ideology is the belief or concept in a particular context. It gives human beings a specific perception that they use to judge and explain what is taken to be reality. So, it is a system of thought and reasoning and ultimately creating a truth. The truth, thus, remains subjective. The truth generated by the texts which are written discourses. The need of deep devotion in the name of God and God's pervasiveness were the oral and written discourses. The concept that man should not go beyond the limitation of God, had ruled the land. Human being's death in the name of God was given the priority in medieval England.

The New Historicist study of the text shows the subversion of ideology within medieval religious England. The King Henry himself seems to challenge the Godly rule and regulation. He murders Archbishop Thomas Becket for being priestlier than priests and more religious. The political power did not obey the ideology of religiocentric medieval world. Though, Eliot seems to be writing actual history but we

obviously can see the histories within history, subversion of ideology within medieval era.

The official historical discourses have been viewed as an absolute, authentic, unseated and final version of history. The official history always supports ideology. The ideology created by medieval world was religiocentric. It would believe that man is product of sin and thus to be redeemed, s/he should dedicated the life for the purpose of God. The human beings should remain under the Church's command. The Churches were the mediator between human beings and God. The popes and Archbishops the godly agents through Churches. There was ranking system in the state situating the God at the central position. Under the God, there were Popes and Archbishops. Whatever, the truth and knowledge generated by the Christianity was universal? The rules and regulations were directed by the Churches. The Christianity bequeathed to its members a personal God's direct interest in human affairs and vital concern for every human soul, no matter what level of intelligence or culture was brought to the spiritual enterprise, and without the regard to physical strength or beauty or society status. Regarding the truth created by Christianity and Church, Richard Tarnas, in *The Passion of Western Mind* says:

The truth so firmly established, Philosophical inquiry was seen by early Church as less vital to spiritual development and intellectual freedom, basically irrelevant, was carefully circumscribed. True freedom was found not in unlimited intellectual speculation but in Christ's saving grace. (101)

The Christianity treated human beings as only living beings for the devotion of God not with the unlimited intellectuality. It had the diplomatic governing policy by which the ignorant medieval people were made victims. In "Interlude" of the play



“*Murder in the Cathedral*” Becket has clarified that martyrdom of him was the design of God. The religious people, like Thomas Becket are becoming victims.

But counter history attempts to see the loopholes within official history. Though the medieval world believes in all pervasiveness of God. King Henry of England discards all these things and uses his humanly power, and human intellectuality. He wants to rule the nation not in the name of God but in the name of people. To bring peace in the state, he crossed the boundary of religious ranking system and punished Archbishop to death. By his superior position, single religious power position is challenged. Rather than remaining under Popes and Archbishop’s command he punished them for not coming under his command.

The two powers, religious and political had under gone smoothly. The ignored political power was at superior position and under that power, religion is ruled. But as the power of Becket seems to threaten King, King punishes him. The fourth knight at later part says:

While the late Archbishop’s was Chancellor, no one under the King, did more to wield the country together to give it the unity, the stability, order and tranquility and justice that badly needed from the moment he become Archbishop he completely reversed his policy. He showed himself to be utterly indifferent to the fate of the country, to be in fact, a monster of egotism. (87)

We can know from these lines that there is no only one sided judgement and one sided power in Church, there is another kind of power which is political power. The drama is divided into two parts. In the middle of the part two, there is a short interlude. The first part is mainly concerned with the Archbishop Thomas Becket’s return from France to England and twenty seven days before his murder by four

knights of King Henry II though Henry is offstage. This event had occurred in December 2, 1170. Due to the feud with the King in part over the degree to which the Church would assert its power in British government, Becket has been exiled to foreign shores and has been seeking supports for his ideas in Catholic France. The priests who are the medieval people, concerned with Christianity see the possibility of the “Fear for the Church”.

In interlude, the Archbishop preaches in the Cathedral in Christmas morning, 1170. He asserts the significance of martyrdom. He wishes all to ponder on the significance of Christmas time when both the birth and death of Christ are celebrated. A time both of mourning and joy.

The second part is concerned with the murder of Archbishop. There are the characters Priests, Knights, Chorus and Becket. Archbishop Thomas Becket has returned from France. He had resigned from the post of Chancellor and followed the ascetic way of life. The Kingly agents four Tempters persuade Becket to come in previous position of Chancellor and to have well relation with King. They persuade that the union between two could handle the nation well. But Thomas frequently asserts religious superiority disregarding the politics rules and regulations. He disregarded the King’s ability to provide peace and order in the family of religion and politics. Ultimately, Knights came and bargained with Becket. Becket still showed his deep devotion to God. The Knights murdered him.

The play dismisses the idea of single truth, single history, the medieval belief during 1170 which has been questioned. The single truth provided by the Christian belief system and its ruling system is questioned. The Knights at the part II of the drama, challenge Thomas Becket calling him as a Cheap side brat and positioning him at the level of beast. They say, “Where is Becket the Cheap side brat? Where is the

Becket the faithless priest? (80). The medieval age always considers the Popes and Archbishop at the super position than the king. The Henry II, here has executed Thomas for resigning from the post of Chancellor and tries to impose the power over king by not giving the chance to crown the younger son of king. But by giving emphasis to crown the eldest son.

This play *Murder in the Cathedral* also dismisses the single power system. It then exposes multiple power systems operated in the medieval society. The Christian belief centers around the single power of God, the God's power should be obeyed. But this drama shows the political power. When the Archbishop does not come in consent with the king and resign from the post of Chancellorship. King commands him to death. He commands Thomas Becket to death because he becomes the exerciser of the power, he became true Archbishop. The true Archbishop tries to impose power over King.

We can realize the power of King over religion. By custom, the Archbishop of Canterbury alone had the power to appoint and crown a new English King. And this custom was supported by the papal mandate to protect Canterbury's right while Thomas was in power. But Henry, who has political power, remained impatient to have eldest surviving son crown as successor in his own lifetime. And then King Henry appointed and crowned his younger son which was decided by himself. That decision power was also hold by politics/monarchial power.

This single domination is challenged. Though the religious custom believes in crowing the eldest son of the king Henry II but this religious custom is opposed and Henry II crowned his young son as his successor. First Knight at part II of the play to Archbishop says, "suspending those who had crowned the young prince. Denying the

legality of his coronation" (70). The religious system is thus challenged and now systems of politics is reconstructed.

The Becket, Archbishop of the Canterbury is main character around whom the whole action revolves. The Archbishop and King Henry have the tussle Thomas Becket was once a chancellor made by the king, during the Chancellorship of Thomas Becket and Kingship of Henry II. The state was well run. The Tempters describe about their relationship in the first part of the play.

When the king and you and I were all friends together?, friendship should be most then biting time can saver. What, my lord, now that you recover favor with King shall we say that summer's over. (84)

From the beginning of the play we can sense the fear throughout the Cathedral and Church during the time of arrival of Archbishop of Cathedral, Thomas Becket. The fear in the Cathedral shows that monarchical power was also at the central position. The choruses are the group of the poor women, who also represent the medieval innocent people. They are fearful about the forth coming death of Thomas Becket due to the tussle between him and King Henry. Thomas Becket has returned from France after seven years. The Choruses embody their experience rather than the authors view of the action. Of course, they speak with his fullness of utterance not with the unlimited idiom of real scrubbers and sweepers. They are giving expression of communal feelings which are usually deeper than individual feelings.

The Choruses also act as foretellers of the future of the nation. They acquaint the audience with the coming events. They believe in destiny and God rather than in statesman's power. The statesman King Henry's power in 1170's was very high who goes against the orthodoxy a religion and has hold the power even to Archbishop.

Thus, the innocent people are fearful of his death. In the very beginning in the first speech they comment:

Destiny waits in the hand of God not in the hand of statesman who do some well, some ill, planning and guessing, having their aims which turn their hands in the pattern of times come happy December, who shall observe you, who shall preserve you? Shall the son of man be born again in the litter of scorn? (24)

The priests are the religious agents who don't like temporal power. For them temporal power was political power. They try to continue the religious superiority but still have the doubt. The third priest in the beginning of the play says, "King rules or baron rules" and that politicians "have but one land, to seize the power and keep it" (25).

These choruses are fearful on the issue of Thomas's return and the remour with his return. They guess that Thomas's return and the remour with his return. They guess that Thomas's return from France after seven years has brought death. He would not die if he had lived in France. His death will be the doom in the world and in the Cathedral; Choruses have the fear from the side of king. They say to Archbishop:

You come with applause, you come with rejoicing, but come bringing death into Canterbury. A doom on the house, a doom on yourself, a doom on the world. We do not wish anything to happen seven years we have lived quietly succeeded in avoiding notice, living and party living. (29)

The condition of the medieval religious belief and Church was same as Choruses. The doom on the world is the doom on medieval world. The existence of Church is loosen. The existence of Canterbury is down falling. The religious

orthodoxy is challenged. The perspective of medieval people towards it was going to be different. They would believe that religion would secure them but religion itself was in danger. The so-called medieval religious belief was challenged. Here, Choruses again are bewildered and confused and felt some harm on Cathedral. They say, "Since the golden October declined into somber November. And the apples were gathered and stored and the land became brown sharp points of death in the waste of water and mud" (29). This impending doom is the doom fallen in the Cathedral leads to the fallen system of medieval religion. Thomas Becket assumes his own kind of power but ultimately leads to the murder of himself by King's agent.

The Archbishop is in "pride and sorrow", "firm" in his claims and confident of the devotion of people who welcomed him with unbounded enthusiasm strewing flowers in his way and seeking some relief.

The kingly agent third tempter tells Archbishop that England is land of the Normans they are Normans while King was angelic why an Angevin rule should over the England. King Henry is fighting in Anjou in France and hence it was the time for them to form a coalition to get back Norman's liberty and the fight for the liberty, he continued Church favour would be an advantage and blessing of Pope a powerful protection. And if Thomas joins hand with barons it would mean the end of the tyrannous jurisdiction of King's court over Bishop's court and baron's court. Here Thomas questions: "Shall I who ruled like an eagle over doves know take the shape of a wolf among the wolves?" (35)

These words suggest that Archbishop does not give his hand to king. He asserts his own position of Archbishop. The Tempters are the agents of political power; who attempt to persuade Thomas Becket to come in previous position. Especially in relation with the King. The first temper reminds him of his previous

position, his happy life with King. He urges Thomas to give up his ascetic way of life and to return to the mirth and scornfulness of the past. But the idea of persuasion is different in the fourth Tempter. His idea is subtle; he says Becket should become a martyr for the sake of eternal glory. Fourth tempter says; “Think of miracles, by God’s grace and think of your enemies, in other place”. (47)

The drama *Murder in the Cathedral* has included interlude at the midst part of the drama which is mainly concerned with Thomas Becket’s explanation of the martyrdom. In actual sense, the martyrdom in the name of God has dismissed the subjective purpose of man. Becket brings the reference of Stephen’s day who was true Christian martyr. The man’s purpose to live has dismissed and the concept of dying for the sake of God’s has been more emphasized. By sacrificing himself, Becket has shown the defeat of political power. Becket tells his congregation that his sermon in this Christmas morning will be a short one. He wishes them to ponder over his significance of Christmas time when both the birth and death of Christ are celebrated a time of both joy and suffering. Here we can sense the systematic governing policy of Christianity as it encourages the human beings to die in the name of God. The human beings are made fool. Thomas Becket is the victim of such concept and believes that martyrdom is the design of God and hence he wants to be martyr. His martyrdom in the name of God Christ leads to the victory of monarchial power. Becket in the interlude specifies the meaning of true martyrdom and its truth:

Martyrdom is always the design of God for his love of men to warm them and to lead them, to bring them, and to bring them back to his ways. It is never the design of man, for the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God, who has lost his will in the will of God.

(57)

A Christian religious belief always supports the martyrdom which loses the life of human beings like Thomas Becket. It considers the death in the name of God. We can see the power politics inside this sort of religion. Thomas Becket may have the aim of being Pope or to gain some superior position of the Church but he was obliged to die.

The Knights are the murders of Thomas Becket. The tussle between two forces King Henry and Thomas Becket ultimately leads to the death of Becket who is continuously asserting his religious superiority not fearing with death any more. King also believes that he is no more inferior of Pope and Archbishop. The undermining of religion and its system is the undermining of medieval world view. There is hierarchical system in Christianity. God is in superior position. After the God, there are Popes and Bishops related to Church orthodoxy. Lower than the position of the Popes and Bishops there is political power. The King should be ruled by the Popes and Bishops. But in the play *Murder in the Cathedral*, the kingly power has turned upside down the position of Popes and Archbishop. The King has exercised the power through his agents and the Knights. The Knights angrily says:

Where is Becket the traitor to the King? Where is the Becket the  
 meddling priest come down Denial for the mark of beast. Are you  
 washed in the blood of lamb? Are you marked with the mark of beast?  
 Come down Denial to the Lion's Den, come down Denial and join in  
 the feast. (80)

The Archbishop is kept in the beastly position. We can clearly see the hatred towards religious people by kingly agents. But Thomas Becket is bold in his belief. He is going to accept martyrdom easily in the name of God.



Thomas Becket asserts his religious power. “It is the just man who like bold lion should be without fear” (81). Opposite to this, the Knights directly charge him with being a rebel against the king and law of the land. It was the king who appointed him as an Archbishop. So, he is as the servant of the king and he must carry out the King’s order. The position of the Kingly power is highlighted. The king had raised Becket from the position of petty trader’s son to the rank of Chancellor and gave him the power, the seal and the ring.

Knights charge him of being ‘insolent’, ‘proud’, and ‘overambitious’. Ironically they offer to pray for him, implying in this way that his last moments have come and he must prepare himself for death. Thomas asks them to state their business at once without any further waste of time in “scolding and blaspheming”. The Knights now accuse Thomas Becket of stirring up troubles in the King’s French dominions and of turning the pope against Henry. Yet Henry was merciful and kind.

After this, Archbishop visits the priests, who are anxious to his death as disaster. But Bishop calls it as a fate. He is ready to accept. The fate in the medieval time was given the prior position. The knights hurl insults at Becket describing him as “traitor to the king” “meddling priest”, “Cheap side brat”. The Archbishop boldly visits, then he confronts Archbishop calls himself as a Christian saved by the blood of Christ. Then four Knights attack him and slay him where he stands. The Canterbury women, Choruses see then everywhere blood and pollution. They believe that the curse being placed on their land and their lives. They say: “Clean the air! Clean the sky! Wash the wind! Take stone from stone and wash them. A rain of blood has blinded by eyes where is Kent? Where is Canterbury” (82). Then Thomas Becket is dead. The God could not save him. It was only Christian politics which encourages human being to death. He could not challenge the monarchical power and face death.

From this point, we know that monarchical power remained in supreme position than Popes and Archbishop. Though religion was ruled by monarchical power. The medieval history was written as it was governed by religion.

### III. CONCLUSION

#### **Clarification of the Paradoxes and Subversion of Political Power**

It is crystal clear that this project has attempted to depict the tussle of two ideologies viz. the political and religious one. One of the most important character Thomas Becket around, whom the action of the entire play revolves is attached with religion and the other character King Henry, is guided by politics. Moreover, this research shows the play of power. Obviously, there is loss and gain of power. It has brought forth that there is neither defeat of religion nor politics.

This dissertation sees the problem with the ideologies prevailing in the society of medieval period 1170. It wants to foreground the voice of marginalized and suppressed people.

The New Historicist approach enables us to look into *Murder in the Cathedral* in such a way. Various conclusions can be derived from a research like this, which aims at studying and analyzing the historicity as represented in the text. In this context, Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* can be taken as represented text, which recreates a slice of the medieval history which basically covers the years from 1056 A.D. to 1400 A.D. As *Murder in the Cathedral* unfolds the historicity, the subject of this thesis covers the analysis of the major events of the era. And it attempts to problematize the existing ideologies of the then period.

The New Historicism is the critical practice that seeks to understand the text as a process but not as passive embodiment of historical condition in which the texts are produced. This approach evaluates the text in historicity and historicity in text. In other words, it assumes the text as an ongoing process. The meaning of the text goes on changing according to time and place. The same text refers to different things in different time and place. As there is possibility of applying multiple theories, there

remains the emergence of multiple meanings from the text. New Historicism brings the multiple conflicting voices to the fore. It tries to go deep into the cause of different incidents and tries to find out the politics of different ideologies and the networking of power relations in the society.

The medieval period from 1056 A.D. to 1400 A.D. was affected by Christianity. The available texts of that period provided the concept that Churches were superior over monarchial and other kind of power system. Eliot goes back to medieval period and brings the incident of murder of the Canterbury Saint Thomas Becket by Monarchial power of King Henry. As we look this even in the play *Murder in the Cathedral* we can clearly see that neither monarchial power has ruled over Christianity nor Christianity has ruled over monarchial or other power systems. The people's belief system in God is challenged by Christian rules and regulation. It becomes necessary to worship Archbishop but King Henry seems to be crossing the boundary of Christian ruled and punished religious agent Thomas Becket.

Conflict is the essence of the any play. Regarding this play, *Murder in the Cathedral* there is two types of conflict. One is internal and the next one is external which is the main issue of this research. The external conflict has taken place between the King Henry and the Archbishop Thomas Becket.

Analyzing these issues in the question, how our understanding of these situation is different from that of others and how this thesis has subverted them gradually. Testing the event of the text by the touch stone of the real historical and social events in medieval England and judging how far the representation are found to be true have constructed the texture of the study. The rhetoric of the text, Eliot's writing style are more or less brought into consideration.

Hence, this project has attempted to show the tussle between political ideologies which is represented by the King Henry and religious ideology which is represented by the Archbishop, Thomas Becket. Moreover, it has attempted to represent the historical reality of medieval England, the working of different ideologies and the voice of marginalized and suppressed people and finally has subverted the ideologies prevailing in the society in Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*.

There is no doubt that the both religion and politics are ideologies but when we analyze deeply then we can see that neither monarchical power has ruled over Christianity nor the Christianity ruled over monarchical or other power system. Both these ideologies remain in corresponding situation.

Thus, by exposing the buried voice of monarchical power, the dominant voice of religion has been subverted. The subversion not only supports the marginalized and suppressed but also challenges the manner of writing history in a traditional way.

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