

CHAPTER - I : INTRODUCTION

T. S. Eliot wrote *Murder in the Cathedral* at the suggestion and invitation of George Bell, the then dean of Canterbury Church, for performance during Canterbury Church festival in 1934. Before 1934, Alfred Lord Tennyson's *Becket* used to be performed as a part of the festival. Written in the style of Elizabethan tradition, Tennyson's *Becket* could not acquire enough interest among the audience as they had already felt distaste for Shakespearean blank verse and five act tragedies. Eliot had to be careful of these conditions before he sat to write the play. Eliot himself had not done much in the field of drama by that time. But his ability in *The Rock* showed that he had in him the ability to write a drama. Eliot himself was an advocate of poetic drama and critical of prose drama and dramatists. So, he started to write this drama in poetic convention hoping that his attempt would be sufficient enough for the revival of poetic drama.

The play is in two acts separated by an interlude as a sermon delivered by St. Thomas Becket on the occasion of Christian festival. The first part of the play deals with the arrival of Becket from France to Canterbury Church after seven years. Initially his arrival is not seen as a good sign by the Chorus because there was a conflict going on between Becket and Henry II, the king of England. After arriving there, he meets with four Tempters, the personified desires of Becket himself. All the four try to drag him towards their side; first three of them luring him for the possession of power and authority or trying him to drag to materialistic world and the fourth seeking martyrdom for personal glory. Becket rejects them all. During the sermon, Becket speaks to the mass about Christian festival, sacrifice and about martyrdom. Martyrdom according to him is not a design of man. It's a design of god. He also tells the mass that they are going to approach another martyrdom in a sooner

time. In Act II, Becket meets the Four Knights who plan to kill him. They charge him of being traitor to the king and country and give him a period of time for the correction of his misbehaviours. But finally, they come again and kill Becket in front of all people despite priests' attempt to save him. After the murder, the knights give speeches on their behalf and leave the stage. But this murder brings a new consciousness and perception to the people that this martyrdom was to purify the land. So, with this new consciousness, the play ends.

This play is seen in various ways by various critics. Most critics simply call this drama a classical one. They have compared it with the 13th century morality play *Everyman* as well as plays by great classical playwrights like Aristophanes etc. Nevill Coghill writes, "His choice was to fall on Aristophanes, Aeschylus, Euripides, and the unknown author of *Everyman*, but first on Aristophanes" (14). John Peter finds this drama something like a classical Greek tragedy and writes, "It is like a Greek tragedy (it is of course the classical rather than the Elizabethan tradition we are conscious of here) opens with a chorus that the women of Canterbury..." (91)

Despite these types of receptions of the play, some critics also talk about the presentness of the play which gives religious and psychological significance to the people of twentieth century. D. E. Jones writes, "... he has sought to portray the contemporary world and show the relationship of sainthood and martyrdom to the lives of the ordinary men and women of today" (58). Similarly, Katherine Worth in her essay "Eliot and the Living Theatre" writes, "Its contemporary political flavour, too, in the totalitarian apologetics of the knights, seems to point to the engaged drama of Auden and Isherwood..." (155)

On the basis of this, the present study tries to see the presentness of the play through general analysis of dialogue, setting and characters of the play. The play does not have twelfth-century Norman French language, it has twentieth century English. There is the use of both poetic and prosaic form of dialogue. The poetic dialogue helps audience go back to twelfth century and meet the dying Becket and the prosaic dialogue of the Sermon makes them understand the meaning of such a sacrifice. Dialogue is also not in Elizabethan blank verse. As the setting of the play, there is continuous rise of horror in the play. This can be seen as the rise of horror of the people living between the two world wars and the continuous war-games. And finally the characters are divided basically into two aspects: Chorus representing the present people and Becket representing sacrifice, the latter shows religious and psychological significance to the formers. This way, the play acquires the presentness though the original plot of the play that comes from twelfth century.

1.2 Eliot's views on Drama

Eliot had a life-long interest in drama, especially 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 a 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 fearlessness, and incidentally reminds us of the time of night in which the scene takes place. Only poet could do this; but it is a 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 dramas. He writes, "If poetic drama is to reconquer 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 writers 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 essay, "It seems to me that if we are to have a poetic drama, it is more likely to come from poets learning how to write plays than from skillful prose dramatists learning to write poetry." (86) In this sense, it seems that Eliot gave more importance to the poetic ability than stage arts.

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.

Eliot as a critic

Eliot had been editor of the Journal *The Literary Criterion* (1922-1939). An eminent historian of criticism Rene Wellek writes about Eliot in *The Sewanee Review* for July 1956 as:

T.S Eliot is by far the most important critic of the 20th century in the English-speaking world. His influence on contemporary taste in poetry is most conspicuous: he has done more than anybody else to promote the "shift of sensibility" away from the taste of the "Georgians" and to reevaluate the major figures and period in history of English poetry.

(56)

As a critic Eliot was involved in developing the theory of the three "Metaphysical Movements" in western poetry and the poetics of "unified sensibility" or union of thought and sense, which he saw underlying both in the poetry of Donne and that of Dante, Laforgue's and his own. He formulated this in an image which in a way appeared to him as convincing as an argument. This actually was not a new concept as it was hinted by Rev. Alexander B. Grosart in the 17th century. But Eliot brought this

idea to extreme consequences. Mario Praz writes about it in his essay, "T. S. Eliot as a Critic" as:

Even if Eliot's interpretation of unified sensibility should turn out to be a myth, this interpretation offers a positive basis for appreciation of the effects of the discovery of the metaphysical on the modern poetry and criticism. (265)

Eliot's criticism on *Hamlet* in which he talks about "Objective correlative" is not less important than Unified Sensibility. In the essay "Hamlet and his Problems," Eliot writes "the only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an Objective correlative" (766). He further writes in clarification of the term as:

A set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.(766).

And, according to him, "Objective correlative" is lacking in the play *Hamlet* because the emotions which Hamlet bears are not getting proper outlet.

Equally important to this is Eliot's concept of "poet critic." A poet-critic is who criticizes poetry in order to create poetry. So, according to him, creation of poetry is the ultimate aim of such a critic.

First published in 1917, Eliot's essay "Tradition and Individual talent" remains as a milestone in the development of T. S. Eliot as a critic. Here, Eliot defines the term "Tradition" that plays a vital importance in literature as:

Tradition involves, in the first place, the historical sense... and the historical sense

involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order.

(761)

In the same essay he defines poetry as “not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion” (763) and he also says, “Honest criticism...are directed not upon the poet but upon poetry.” (762)

Eliot’s criticism is meant to be an integration of scholarly criticism. His criticism is opposite of “etiolated creation” which is commonly known as, “creative criticism.” Eliot sees criticism as a means apt to improve his own craftsmanship as a poet.

1.3 An introduction to *Murder in the cathedral*: A Review of Literature.

This Play is compared with *Everyman* by an Anonymous writer as well as Aristophanes as Nevill Coghill writes, “His choice was to fall on Aristophanes” (14).

On the other hand, some critics talk about the presentness of the play. Eliot had never been aloof of this tradition or theme and is particularly prominent in the play.

So Roger Kojecky writes, “Social dimension perhaps is particularly prominent in *Murder in the Cathedral*” (105). He further writes:

The chorus of women of Canterbury who stand as, ‘type of the common man’ evince a change of attitude in the course of play. They begin ‘living and partly living’ engrossed in the 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).

He also says, "Eliot believed like his Thomas Becket that society should be controlled by the will or law of god." (106)

Jewel Spears calls this drama a liturgical drama and writes, "Eliot wanted in his liturgical play to concentrate on the death and martyrdom" (171). This way, Eliot attempted on sanctifying the blood of Becket. Eliot had to make clear the design of God through this play for which he provides Interlude as sermon. The play has to be given presentness and people had to be made aware of martyrdom to sanctify Becket's blood. Eliot met this as Brooker Whites further:

Thomas is to be killed, and the women are to witness his murder; martyr then is a word that conjoins the murdered one and the witness to his murder. As it happens to note that witness to note that witness encompasses and fulfills martyr is to note the central fact of Eliot's play. (171/75).

He concludes the play in broadly human, rather than religious way.

David E. Jones talks about the presentness of the Chorus in the as, "Each chorus has an emotional shape determined by its place in the dramatic development" (48). The same appears in *The Listener* as it writes, "It mediates between the action and the audience; it intensifies the action by projecting its emotional consequences, so that we as a audience see it doubly, by seeing its effect on other people" (51). D. E. Jones further writes in criticism of Eliot "...he has sought to portray the contemporary world and show the relationship of sainthood and martyrdom to the lives of ordinary men and women of today... to show this relationship was one of his chief aims in drama" (59). Jones says about the murder,

“The murder is to be presented as a part of that design and not just as an historical event” (61). This way, Eliot had tried to build a presentness of past.

Thus, Eliot treats with the timeless, archetypal sacrifice of Saint Thomas Becket. The diction, dramatic style and the characters presented here are sufficient in suggesting presentness to the play. Eliot also treats history in different way than the actual history as he provides speeches to the Four Tempters who killed Becket in his own Cathedral Church in front of the people of the Canterbury. These speeches, though presented against Becket could not make the people believe in them rather these speeches shock the audience and intensify the sacrifice of Becket. The people understand it as a kind of martyrdom and they also understand that Becket died for them which sanctifies the blood poured on the wasteland. The play has the aim to recast and reassert it in the context of present world.

CHAPTER - II: THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

2.1 Significance of Poetic Technique

The use of poetic convention in drama goes far back to the ancient age. The classical writers or poets like Homer and Dante had written dramatic poetry which Eliot admires a lot. This trend of using poetry in drama was during medieval age and also during the Elizabethan age. Shakespeare had written his dramas in the poetic language. He had employed in his dramas the use of Elizabethan blank verse. But after Elizabethan Period not only poetic technique suffered in English literature but the genre itself. During this period of decline, the theme of incest made the play impossible for the stage, though it cannot be attributed to any single cause.

After two centuries, drama started appearing in prose. Great playwrights like G. B. Shaw (1856-1950), Lady Gregory (1852-1932), J. M. Synge (1871-1909) and many others came up with prose dramas. Their contributions in the field of drama took prose drama to a new height, which created a challengeable environment for the revival of poetic plays in the twentieth-century.

But this does not mean that no attempts were made for the revival of poetic plays. In the early years of this twentieth-century, Stephen Phillis (1868-1915) produced a number of blank verse plays. These were largely historical dramas such as *Herod*, *Nero* and *Ulysses*. Despite the over-claiming of these dramas, they have been underrated because Stephen was a second rate poet though he had stage knowledge. They contained little true poetry. His plays, though moderately successful, could not produce a public demand for the revival of poetic drama. But of course, this play encouraged other writers to experiment with poetic technique and also those plays showed the limitation of blank verse of Elizabethan time and encouraged the authors to find an appropriate medium for the expression.

After Stephen Phillis, John Drinkwater (1882-1937) and John Masefield (1878-1967) were two other writers interested in the revival of poetic drama. Unlike Phillis, Drinkwater avoided the Shakespearean technique of blank verse and five acts. He wrote four verse plays which were short and lyrical. But later, he turned to prose to find the expression of poetry. Like Drinkwater, Masefield experimented with various ways such as historical subjects, lyrical metres, rhymed couplet etc. and he too ended in prose to find poetic expression.

W. B. Yeats (1865-1939) deserves special mention in connection with the revival of poetic drama. He was the leading figure among the dramatists of the Irish Literary Theatre Movement. Two of his poetic dramas *The Countess Cathleen* (1892) and *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894) became widely known, but their popularity depended more upon poetic charm and strangeness than upon dramatic power. So, there was need to maintain the balance between poetry, action and characterization. His plays were defective in organic construction and could not create dramatic allusion.

Another important name in the revival of poetic drama is that of James Elory Flecker (1884-1915). His play *Hassan* achieved considerable success commercially. Flecker had won a considerable reputation as a poet with the public and as a wit among his friends. The play is written in highly coloured prose, but is definitely the work of a poet throughout. It suffers from a certain lack of unity and moves from comedy to tragedy.

Eliot who had interest in poetic plays begins by writing dramatic fragments "Sweeney Agonizers" (1932) and a set of choruses *The Rock* (1934). These fragments prepared him to write a poetic play *Murder in the Cathedral*. To write a successful play in verse on the Christian theme of the death of Thomas Becket was an

achievement for Eliot and he felt still more attracted towards poetic drama. Eliot wrote other four plays after writing *Murder in the Cathedral*.

W. H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood and Christopher Fry also wrote plays in verse. Auden's plays were performed mainly for special audiences. They confirmed the ideas of Auden's non-dramatic verse, but they made no major impact. Auden had written plays in collaboration with Isherwood. Fry achieved some success with verse drama which captured London audience. At the height of his popularity, Fry was compared with the Elizabethan dramatists for the brilliance of imagery and felicity of language.

This way various creative writers have involved themselves in writing dramas by using poetic technique. It was taken as a mission, which despite great attempts remains as a failure. Despite these writers, there are other critics who talk and advocate about the use of poetic techniques in drama in the present time. D.E. Jones in the essay "Poetry in the Theatre" published in *The Plays of T.S. Eliot* writes in favour of poetic convention as, "Of the conventions of language far and away the most important is poetry. This is the subtlest means of transcending the limitations of drama, and the one which leads to greatest enrichment" (3). The similar view appears in Ronald Peacock's book *The Art of Drama* as he writes.

It extends the range of expression over that available to prose for a subtle instrument follows the subtleties of nature, revealing more of persons their motives, thoughts and situations than blunter tools could achieve. But everything in art being a matter of mutual assimilation, the expression of meanings through increased poetic power reacts on the dramatic quality, if verse or poetry, makes the expression of the drama more complete, it makes it more dramatic. For all these reasons

we find confirmation in the fact, always assumed but rarely stated that although verse is not indispensable to find dramatic art, the greatest plays have nevertheless all been in verse (225).

D.E. Jones is critical of those who used prose in writing plays. He goes back to trace the history of poetic convention used in dramas in ancient time and says in the previously mentioned book as, "Great poetic drama is an extension of sensibility" (4). He also says "Towering passion can be best realized in the medium of poetry" (6). So, Jones believes that the permanent part of a play is the words and words are highest power are in poetry.

Eliot's Passion for poetic convention in a play had been immense. It is he who saw no difference between the genres: poetry and drama rather both of these as a single one because he believes that poetry tends towards drama and drama towards poetry. Eliot in his essay "Poetry and Drama" published in *On Poetry and Poets* writes about the poetic technique along with his comment on poetic dramatist as:

The writer of poetic drama isn't merely a man skilled in two arts and skilful to weave them together; he is not a writer who can decorate a play with poetic language and metre. His task is different from that of 'dramatists' or that of the 'poet', for his pattern is more complex and dimensional ... The genuine poetic drama must at its best observe all the regulations of the plain drama, but will weave them organically (to mix a metaphor and to borrow for a occasion a modern word) into a much richer design. (84)

But Eliot is quite well aware that the use of poetic convention in drama is also mostly affected by the subject matter. In other words subject - matter also determines the

significance of poetic technique in the present modern times. So, he writes about the suitable subject matter for the poetic convention in the same essay as:

Verse plays, it has been generally held, should either take their subject matter from mythology or else should be about some remote historical period, far enough away from the present for the characters not to need to be recognizable as human beings, and therefore for them to be licensed to talk in verse (79).

And he further says that this was actually matched while writing about *Murder in the Cathedral*. So, this way poetic convention gets significance to the present times.

2.2 Religious Significance

Though religion has no clear definition, it is generally defined as an organized system of beliefs, ceremonies, practices and worships that centre on one supreme God, or the Deity.

Some people follow many gods, others follow few gods, and some even do not follow any gods and some other follow personally. But the people believe about religion that a divine power has created the world and influences people's lives.

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

Among the major religions are Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. These religions teach a doctrine of salvation. They stress that salvation is the highest

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

Eliot had great interest in religion especially in Roman Catholicism that's why he turned himself to associate with Anglican Church in 1927. Eliot also wanted Irving Babbitt to have attitude towards Catholicism as Roger Kojecky writes in the essay "Christianity and Criticism" as, "Eliot wished that his friend would not only admit the dependence of philosophy upon religion, but also admit the necessity of Catholicism." (72/73) He further writes in another essay, "Towards Christian society" about Eliot's involvement in churches as, "He was also making radio broadcasts, such as 'The Church's Message to the Word' in 1937 and 'Towards a Christian Britain in 1941'(126) Eliot had defined religion in his own words which Roger Kojecky cites in the essay "Christianity and Criticism" from *The Criterion*.

... can only examine the idea involved, and their implications, their consequences and their relations to the general problem of civilization; but at the point where intellectual analysis stops and emotional conviction begins our commission ends. (86)

Kojecky writes about Eliot's similar view in another essay "Towards Christian Society" as;

Eliot assumes with hearers that morality rests upon religious sanction, and that the social organization of the world rests upon moral sanction; and that we can only judge of temporal values in the light of

eternal values. He speaks confidently and comprehensively: a Christian world order is ultimately the only one which, from any points of view will work. (127)

Eliot had his own view on the church which Kojecky writes the way Elliot defined as:

The church is not merely for the elect, in other words, those whose temperament brings them to that belief and that behaviour...It wants everybody, and it wants each individual as a whole. It must therefore struggle for a condition of society which will give the maximum of opportunity for us to lead wholly Christian lives, and the maximum of opportunity for others to become Christians. (129)

And he further writes about Eliot's conception of Church's necessity in the same essay as, "Eliot believed that Christianity necessarily required expression in social institutions" (130).

Eliot's first play *Murder in the Cathedral*, a religious play is devoted in proving the significance of religion to the life of modern people. The play initially written for the festival of Canterbury Church remains as a strong play of religion. It brings the necessary elements that make a play a religious play. Some critics even believe that the play would work as a model for those who want to write a religious play as

Katharine Worth writes in the essay, "Eliot and Living Theatre" as:

And there will, no doubt, always be some for whom *Murder in the Cathedral* has no need to abide our questions; of the greatness of *Murder in the Cathedral* there can be no doubt it may even be the greatest religious play ever written and the other plays will survive only as a parts of the unity of which it is the finest element. (149)

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

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

2.3 Psychological Significance

Psychology is scientific study of mental process and behaviour. This observes and records how people and other animals related to one another and to the environment. They look for patterns that will help them to understand and predict behaviour and they use scientific methods to test their ideas. Psychology is related to the social sciences of an anthropology and sociology which deal with people in society. Like, anthropologist, psychologists investigate the attitudes and relationship of human beings in social setting. These three academic disciplines often study the same kind of problems from different perspectives. However, psychologists, concentrate on individual behaviour. They are especially interested in the beliefs and feelings that influence a person's action. Psychological theory has also influence in literature. It is said that a writer's mind is revealed through his/her portrayal of

characters. And through such characters, the intention of the writer can be understood in a piece of writing.

Psychological development of characters deserves a study in the play *Murder in the Cathedral* which has its own significance. This is seen particularly in the case of the main character of the play Thomas Becket and in the Chorus. The way these characters begin in the play and go up to the end of the play is basically a matter of psychological development of characters.

After returning back from France, Becket meets with tempters- three of them expected and the fourth one unexpected – who show the psychological development of character, Becket. These Four Tempters are not persons individually with some motives but they are the personified symbols of Becket's own consciousness. With them Becket revolves round various possibilities that are open in front of him. The First Tempter tries to lure Becket by the memory of old pleasures and the Second and Third Tempters try to lead Becket towards them by talking about powers or about possible alliance with Barons making the king lone and weaker in economic sense. So, this part of Becket's psyche tries him to drag Becket back once again to his material past

But Eliot had designed Becket to leave an impression to the people around him. He does not allow himself to be tempted by this part of psyche. Then comes to meet with him the fourth Tempter who comes with the proposal of false glory of being martyr. Becket rejects the Fourth Tempter as well. But this Fourth Tempter also plays an important role in the play for the psychological development of character Becket as F. O. Matthiessen in the essay "The Plays" writes as:

The Fourth and the Last Tempter is at the top of a rising scale. For a while the resumption of the role of Chancellor lay as almost as remark

from Becket's present desires as did worldly pleasure, and while a coalition with the Barons could stir him momentarily, The Fourth Tempter alone is unexpected by Becket and tempts him by his own deepest thoughts.(163)

So, the Fourth Tempter makes him ready for the sacrifice. It is this Tempter that helps him to come out of the material world and seek way in the will of god. This marks a change in psyche of Becket .So, at last he becomes as Matthiessen writes again in the same essay, "His Becket after revisiting the tempters, is a sanctified being such as Eliot described in the epigraph of this chapter" (171) as Eliot had written in epigraph as:

It may allow the characters to behave in consistently, but only with respect to a deeper consistency. It may use any device to show their real feelings and volitions instead of just what, in actual life, they would normally profess or be conscious of, it must reveal, underneath the vacillating or infirm character, the indomitable unconscious will (155)

This way, the play has psychological significance.

The psychological significance can be seen in the development of Chorus as well. The Chorus begin as Roger Kojecky writes, "They begin 'living and partly living' engrossed in the rhythm of the seasons ..." (106). They were living in a state of spiritual poverty. They could not understand Becket at first and so they reject his arrival at first. But with the development of play, their psyche gets changed and finally, they become involved in the play and understand that Becket had died for them. So, the change in psyche has its psychological significance.

2.4 Martyrdom:

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. A 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 them back to his ways.(67). It is the theme of Martyrdom that Eliot wanted to present through his play *Murder in the Cathedral*. So, D.E. Jones writes in the same essay, "And he began with a full scale study of Martyrdom." (50) So, the play is not just about the murder of man called Becket rather it is about the Martyrdom of great Saint Becket. The play is the dramatisation of Martyrdom. So that the people will understand the significance of it to their lives.

The Martyrdom which Eliot wanted to present through his play is not other but the Christian Martyrdom. Christian Martyrdom has its more significance during Christmas days because most of the Christian martyrs had got Martyrdom during Christmas period. The Martyrdom, this play deals with dates on the twenty-ninth of December. Christ himself was crucified during this time. Saint Stephen is regarded as the first Martyr in Christianity. He got his Martyrdom on the twenty-sixth of December and similarly Herod had given order for the massacre of children in twenty-eighth of December during the birth of Jesus Christ. The children who were killed at that time are also regarded as Christian Martyrs.

In the play Becket himself talks about Martyrdom when he is provided with a speech in the Interlude as sermon to the attended mass. He also warns during the same time that a next martyr is going to be made. This way he makes the audience know about the significance of Martyrdom. But he defines, the term Martyrdom in a specific way as:

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

(57)

And he concludes his sermon warning that a new martyr is going to be made.

The chorus in the play could not understand the meaning of Martyrdom. Christians always look at Martyrdom as something better act. The Chorus initially think that the murder will be an act of defilement but finally they do understand that Martyrdom has significance in their lives as Jones writes in the same essays:

As the moment of Martyrdom approaches, the chorus has a vision of horror beyond all horrors that life can bring, the ultimate horror of separation from God at the Day of Judgment, the horror of void (72).

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

2.5 Sacrifice:

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 scared 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 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 is founded 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 have 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 to 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 rests not in the individual destiny, of the man who must live this sacrifice, but in the 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 the life. (155)

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

Even now, in sordid particulars

The eternal design may appear. (64)

Thus for the martyr,

It is not in time that my death shall be known;

It is out of time that my decision is taken.

If you call that decision

To which my whole being gives entire consent

I give my life

To the law of God above the law of Man (79)

The centre of the play is the consciousness of the martyr, but the action is the making over this consciousness in to an element of the eternal design.

an eternal action, an eternal patience

To which all must consent that it may be willed.

And which all must suffer that they may will it,

That the pattern may subsist ... (65)

Thus, Becket's life is sacrifice, his independent will to life conquered by the particular ritual enacts:

is blood given to buy my life

My blood given to pay for his death.

My death for His death. (80/81)

So, the murder of Becket is not murder in its historical sense but a Sacrifice.

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

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

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

Redemption is a consciousness of this natural order, and of the place of sacrifice in it, for this is a consciousness of God. The natural order,

without the sacrifice, is merely bestial. It is the act of blood, and the receiving of the blood, which creates consciousness, and, separates man from the beasts. Through the Chorus, the drive of the play is towards the general acceptance of the blood of the sacrifice. (161)

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

Anyway the play deals with the sacrifice, which is said to have been taken place during the twelfth – century but it is recast and reasserted to the people of twentieth - century as D. E. Jones writes, "for us, therefore, the play is not over; the effect of Thomas's sacrifice continuous " (62).

CHAPTER - III : TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

3.1 Dialogue

Eliot had employed a variety of dialogue so that he could get the attention of the then people in the play *Murder in the Cathedral*. His use of variety is not limited within the variety of metrical patterns but also he uses the alteration between the poetic and prosaic language. Eliot, a poet with the knowledge of variety of language has his own view that a dramatist writing for the theatre should always be conscious of the language he/she is writing for the audience which appears in his essay "Poetry and Drama" published in *On Poetry and Poets* as:

The poet can not afford to write his play merely for his admirers, those who know his non-dramatic work and are prepared to receive favourably any thing he puts his name to. He must write with an audience in view which knows nothing and cares nothing, about any previous success he may have had before he ventured into the theatre. Hence, one finds out that many of the things one likes to do, and knows how to do are out of place, and that every line must be judged by a new, that of dramatic relevance. (79).

So, with this view Eliot began to write the play *Murder in the Cathedral*. And, soon he came to know that the Shakespearean Elizabethan verse has become somehow outdated and could not get the attention of the audience. Before, Eliot had written this play, A.L. Tennyson had written a play named *Becket* on the same subject-matter and which used to be presented as a part of Canterbury festival until 1933. Unlike Eliot, he had used the Shakespearean Elizabethan blank verse and five act technique. There are some critics who say that this was the lack with Tennyson because of which his

play *Becket* could not get success as Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* has got. John Peter writes in his essay, "Murder in the Cathedral" as:

To anyone who has studied even the best plays by these poets (Blake, Keats etc.) this is at once a cause for some misgivings. Recollecting the constricting bonds of precedent which crippled his predecessors, the stiffness and awkwardness of their plots and their all but shameless verbal reminiscences from Shakespeare, it is somewhat warily and without undue expectation that we approach Tennyson's play. (358)

So, the avoidance of the Shakespearean verse and five act technique was very much important for anyone wishing to write a play in the twentieth-century. It created another problem because the creative writers now have to find out something different so that it could replace the Shakespearean convention and also could catch the attention of twentieth-century audience. Commenting on the same problem D. E. Jones writes in the essay "Murder in the Cathedral" with reference to Eliot as:

The problem of creating a dramatic form capable of embodying the kind of design Eliot had in mind was paramount. One thing was clear; the example of Shakespeare must be eschewed even if he had provided a suitable example, it would have been a danger one to follow. Eliot perceived that. (50/51)

Eliot himself writes the same view in his essay, "Poetry and Drama" as, "I was only aware at this stage that the essential was to avoid any echo of Shakespeare". (80)

It is because of this, we do not find the blank verse and five act convention in this play. That play is divided only into two acts separated by an Interlude as a sermon which Becket delivered to the mass of Christmas festival before he achieved his

martyrdom. Eliot was doing this because, as he writes in the same essay, "I wanted to bring home to the audience the contemporary relevance of the situation". (80)

After Eliot's decision to avoid the Elizabethan blank verse he had now come to a challenge of finding a different type of dialogue matching the situation. It is of course, he knew, the twelfth-century language from where the plot comes but such a use could have no appeal for the audience of twentieth-century. He writes in the same essay as, "I did not have to write it in the idiom, even if I knew Norman French and Anglo-Saxon would have been unintelligible" (80). So, instead of going to the idiom of particular time in the past, Eliot employed a variety of metrical patterns and words like the variety of people living in the twentieth-century. Sometimes, he even goes for the old English verse, yet he is aware of the twentieth-century audience.

In employing the variety of language, Eliot has used the metrical pattern suitable according to the scene. He has used rhyming patterns like doggerels, four stressed rhyming, three stressed unrhymed etc and so on. In addition to this, Eliot has used quite different prose forms- one for the Christmas as sermon and the other for the speeches of the Knights. The former is proper with selection of words to give a better impression to audience while the latter is not.

The use of Daniel Jazz is another example of his use of variety of dialogue. This Daniel Jazz was developed during the first-quarter of twentieth-century or just before the play was written. This Jazz turned to be religious Jazz. This is also pointed by Jones in the same essay as:

...bawling, come down 'Daniel to the Lion's den' in the manner of Lindsay's 'Daniel jazz' they make a jocular acknowledgement of the martyrs triumph, even while degrading themselves to beasts.(76)

This takes place in the play when the Knights finally come armed with weapons deciding to kill Becket. Similarly the dispute between the Knights and Thomas Becket is in doggerel which matches the scene. And similarly Chorus sing *Dies Irae* in distance when the Knights drag Becket for Murder. This way Eliot uses a variety of metrical patterns, choice of words in the dialogue according to the scene. This makes the play impressive for the twentieth-century audience.

Despite this Eliot has depended himself on the proper balance between the uses of poetic and prosaic forms of dialogue. Though Eliot is not in favour of mixing poetic and prosaic language in a play but he finds a new significance in case of this play. What he believes about such a mix appears in his essay "Poetry and Drama" in which he writes especially focusing on his use of prosaic language:

A sermon cast in verse is too unusual and an experience for even the most regular churchgoers; nobody could have responded to it as a sermon at all. And in the speeches of the knights, who are quiet aware that they are addressing an audience of the people living eight hundred years after they themselves are dead, the use of platform prose is intended of course to have special effect; to shock the audience out of their complacency.(81)

So, with the poetic dialogues, Eliot could take his modern audience back to the twelfth-century, a time in which people were generally allowed to talk in poetry and with the prosaic dialogue the audience could come back to their own time and in this process they could understand the significance of the twelfth-century event in the twentieth-century. Thus, both kinds of dialogues worked as a balance in taking the audience back as well in bringing them to the present. This way Eliot tries to show the

significance of the play to the audience of twentieth-century. The speeches of the knights tease them and try to prove the double significance

The sermon which is in the prosaic language is the most important part of the play. It is because this part clearly deals with Eliot's attention. The sermon which is in the proper choice of words is spent in proving the significance of martyrdom, sacrifice and the importance of religions mass. It is in the sermon Becket makes the audience conscious about the Christian martyrdom. Not only this, he has also hinted that a new martyr is approaching soon. He says that he would or might not be there to deliver the next sermon and this sermon may be his last one. Firstly, Becket concentrates on the theme of sacrifice as he says in the sermon:

For whenever mass is said, we reenact the passion and Death of our Lord; and on this Christmas day we do this in celebration of his Birth .So that at the same moment we rejoice in his coming for the salvation of men and offer again to God his holy body and blood in sacrifice...(55)

Then Becket goes to talk about the meaning and important concept "peace". His view here is that no peace could be achieved when people do not have respect for the sacrifice and without any contribution to sacrifice. He clarifies the meaning of the word "peace" as used by Angels and Christ. By the word peace they mean the peace of inner soul.

He talks about the "martyrdom" which he says takes place for the salvation of men. But at the same time he says that martyrdom is never the design of man. He says:

A martyrdom is always the design of God, for His love of men, to warm them and to lead them to bring them back to His ways. It is

never the design of man; for the true martyr is he who has become the instrument of God; who has lost his will in the will of God and who no longer desires anything for himself, not even the glory of being a martyr.(57)

This way, through the sermon of the Becket, Eliot tells his audience about the significance of the then event.

The speeches of the Knights do not have as much quality as the sermon has. By making a contrast between the speech of Becket and the speeches of Knights, Eliot is mocking them in one hand and on the other making the audience more conscious. But Eliot does not present all of these Knights as fools. Some of the Knight are provided with proper speech while some of them stand as simply fools and could not put their arguments. This way Eliot's deal with language makes the play an effective one for the audience to understand the significance of this play and the significance of the events of this play remains as one of the example of Eliot's creative talency also because of its dialogue.

3.2 Characters:

The characters in the play are of variety like the dialogue. Some of them represent the time of twentieth-century and bring the meaning of sacrifice of the then time while other characters represent the time of twentieth-century and finally come to realize and accept the significance of sacrifice shown by other characters. This combination of characters seems as if that they have got their own mission within the play .But they do have proper relationship in between and among them.

The main character of the play Thomas Becket is characterized in naturalistic way. The play even deals in deep with the psychological aspect of his mind and desires as well with the tempters. This too has significance because the audience come

to realize through this that Becket had in him the pure will and had also united with the will of god, which is also the necessity of being a martyr yet martyrdom is not a personal desire rather it is the design of god. It is he who had to offer a Christian sermon and make the audience feel about the necessity of Religion. Though he usually speaks in poetic language, he is also made conscious by the writer that the audience could not get anything out of the sermon if it is to be delivered in poetic dialogue. With poetic dialogue, he goes to resemble the twelfth-century Becket and with the prosaic sermon he comes back to twentieth-century to deliver the message about religious mass observed in Christianity. This way Becket is involved in proving the significance of sacrifice to the modern audience.

Next to him are the chorus who are ‘the poor women of Canterbury’ (23). They represent the then people living in the wasteland with various problems and the ongoing environment. This is further proved through their action that they were also living in spiritual poverty. They were living in spiritual poverty because of this, they could not welcome the arrival of Becket who was going to sacrifice his life for the sake of the Canterbury people and universal Church. But they are aware that they are living in among different troubles. Sometimes they used to get rains and other times drought, a year used to a year of corn while the next without corn as they say:

Disastrous summer burn up the beds of our streams.

And the poor shall wait for another decaying October

Why should the summer bring consolation

For autumn fires and winter fogs? (24)

At the beginning of the play, the chorus show passivity towards the action of the play. They wish to remain uninvolved as they say “to wait and to witness” (25) because “there is no action” (25) for them. In this sense, they come closer to the

modern people who show their passivity towards religious importance. But they cannot remain passive all the time because it is they who had to understand the meaning of sacrifice. And they do it well as Roger Kojecky writes in the essay “The Poet Dramatist” as:

The chorus of Women of Canterbury who stand as type of the common man evince a change of attitude in the course of the play. They begin ‘living and partly living’ engrossed in the rhythm of seasons, and scarcely looking beyond them for life’s significance ... They become involved in what happens to their Archbishop. (105)

Despite such role of chorus in the play, the way the choruses are presented in the play is also a significant one. The use of chorus is an ancient convention, which is mostly avoided by the modern dramatists. This could make the play an ancient one but Eliot has presented them not the way chorus were presented in the ancient Greek time rather in a different way as D.E. Jones writes in the essay “Murder in the Cathedral” as:

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

So, the chorus does not represent the ancient Greek time rather they are in modern convention. Eliot has enlarged the function of chorus so that they become a link between ritual and believers. The chorus also become the choir or the articulate voice of the body of worshipers. And finally, it is Chorus who give much emphasis over the

sacrifice of Becket than any other characters. They understand that Becket had died for them and they pray Becket to pray for them as:

That the sin of the word is upon our heads; that the blood of martyrs
and the agonies of the saints.

Is upon our heads.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Christ, have mercy upon us.

Lord, have mercy upon us.

Blessed Thomas, pray for us. (91/92)

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

Now in the sight of god

Conjoined with all the saints and martyrs gone before you,

Remember us. (89/90)

And the Third Priest takes the murder as the victory of universal church and thanks God as he says;

Let our thanks ascend

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

So finally they put their emphasis over the sacrifice and also something about the significance.

The Tempters put their emphasis over the sacrifice, as they show the pure will of Becket on the one hand while on the other they show the fight and lure of materialistic world which had fooled the then people and forced them to live in degraded situation. The First Tempter comes with a proposal to lure Becket back to the friendship to the king and get the power once Becket was enjoying advising him to get the post of chancellorship so that he could enjoy power. And the Third Tempter advises Becket to establish an ally with the Barons and reduce the power of king. But it is the Fourth Tempter, though unexpected talks something about martyrdom and thus about Becket's own personal desire. Even then he is tempting Becket towards wrong direction because martyrdom can not be achieved on the basis of personal desire it can only be achieved on the desire of God. So, he also comes with a proposal of false glory. But it is he along with others who help Becket to unite his will with the will of God and prepares him fit for martyrdom. This way, the Tempters show the fight with materialistic world and also prove that whoever could win this could get redemption and everlasting life. And who can not win over this can not also understand the significance of sacrifice.

The Knights who killed Becket had their own name in the historical event. But the play does not provide any personal name to them. This makes these characters in the play timeless. They murder Becket and deliver speeches representing themselves as the people of twentieth-century. D.E. Jones writes in the essay "Murder in the Cathedral" as :

Similarly, after the murder, the knights step clean out of the twelfth-century setting to justify their action to the twentieth-century audience, and ram home the relevance of the action to the modern situation, ... this is recognized as a basic factor in the play's performance. (57/58)

But the speech, they deliver is not to keep the audience in their favour of them rather to make them understand the significance in double.

Despite the characters on the stage, King Henry II also plays a very important part. It is the dispute between the king and Becket that determines the entire action of the play. Some of the critics have seen him as a symbol of fascism as he is acting (out of the stage) to bring everything within the power of state or within the influence of government. But the play through Becket seems to be an attack over fascist rule of the then time. This rule of fascism had been a matter of headache for many people living in twentieth-century and more especially to Eliot himself. So, Henry II, though out of the stage, remains as one of the important character in the play to show the significance of sacrifice.

3.3 Setting:

Setting refers to the time and place in which the action occurs. It also refers to the scenery, the physical elements that appear onstage to vivify the author's stage directions. There is not specific stage directions provided by the author to the director apart from in few cases but the subject matter, the tension in the play and the play itself reveals its setting. Raymond Williams in the essay "T.S. Eliot" writes about the setting of the play as:

The formal scenes or Cathedral and Hall, and the conventional costumes of Archbishop, Priests and Knights, assure an integral visual pattern which harmonies with the verse and experience of the play.

The chorus within this setting is completely acceptable, and its brilliant writing for movement controls the action perfectly. (244)

This way, Williams talks about the appropriateness of the setting that matches with characters and action of the play.

One of the important aspects of setting is seen in the action of Chorus. This is seen in their sense of rising horror. The Chorus begins with a sense of horror which they feel that had dragged them to the Cathedral as they say:

Here let us stand, closely the cathedral. Hence, let us wait.

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

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

shame that they are consented to the humiliation of Becket, in which they seek the Archbishop's forgiveness. And the third is the imagery of horror. The chorus here now speak about the dark shapes in the dark air, the puss-purr of Leopard, the footfall of padding Bear, the palm-pat of the nodding Ape and the Hyena waiting for laughter as:

Sweet and cloying through the dark air
 Falls the stifling scent of despair;
 The forms take shape in the dark air:
 Puss-purr of Leopard, foot fall of padding bear.
 Palm-pat of nodding ape, Square hyaena waiting
 For laughter, laughter, laughter ... (52)

This way the sense of horror is rising in the play. This sense of rising horror as the environmental setting of the play is seen as the rising horror of the 1930s, a time the play was written intending the then people. The time of 1930s was also similar to the rising horror of the play. It was a war-between time. People had not forgotten the bloodsheds of first world war and the aches of the same war were not cured, they have got a sense of forthcoming second world war as Robert Sencourt writes in the essay.

“The First Plays” as:

In the year in which he was completing *Murder in the Cathedral*,
 Mussolini had come out with the prophecy that if the nations of Europe
 persisted in their current mentalities, there would be a general war by
 1939. (173)

This way, the people had disgusting memory of the first world war in one side while on the other they had the horror of coming war. So the setting of the Chorus are put in

such an action that resembles the people of the then time. It is because of this, the play could have an appropriate appeal for the then people.

Chorus also bring another aspect of setting which they reveal at the opening speech as they say for themselves “the poor, the poor women of Canterbury” (23). This poor has two layers of implication. In one aspect it stands for the spiritual poverty, because of this they could not welcome the arrival of Thomas Becket from their heart. In this respect, they resemble the people living during 1930s. The people living at that time had almost lost the sense of religion. They were engaged in quarrels and war-games. They had lost the sense of sacrifice and believed that property, land should be amassed by the war games. Eliot, a writer of the play at that time had to teach a lesson to them. So, he took this setting.

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

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

So, there was a sense of despair, uncertainty and doubts in the life of 1930s which is reflected in the speeches of Chorus. It determines the setting of the play and takes the

play in the time of 1930s though the main conflict or the plot comes from twelfth-century.

The setting of the play has got influence from the environment in which Eliot himself was living. Eliot was in full distress in the time when he received the proposal to write the play as Robert Sencourt writes in the same essay as:

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

But Eliot never thought that his religion may fail to establish coherence in society. Rather, he believed that coherence could be maintained if people could be made conscious about the various martyrs who had contributed to the religion. Eliot might have this conception while writing the play as this conception also appears in his one of the most famous poem “The Wasteland” (1922) where he opines that if we could understand the meaning of sacrifice there can be regeneration again in the world. The wasteland may be filled with water and hence again can be filled with greenery, though he sees only a very small a ray like possibility.

When Eliot was writing this play, the political development of the then time had also influenced him as F.O. Matthiessen writes in the essay “The Plays” as:

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

On this basis we can see the political implication of the play which determines the setting of the play though Eliot had always denied to see the political flavour in his play. Critics see Henry II, who does not appear in the play, as the leader of fascism who like the fascist wanted to bring everything within the control of the state. This tendency also reflects another political development of time: totalitarianism. It is a form of government that theoretically permits no individual freedom and that seeks to subordinate all aspects of individual's life to the authority of government. The term was coined by the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini to describe the new fascist state of Italy. On this basis the main action of the play is set. There are two forces: one resembling Henry II as a totalitarian and the other resembling Thomas Becket who seeks freedom and redemption.

While setting the play, Eliot has treated in a different way than the actual history. In actual history, the knights ran away after murdering Becket, but in this play Eliot provides speeches to them. They realise the futility of their speeches and understand the significance of sacrifice in double. This way, Eliot has given a flavour and a colour of 1930s to the setting of the play and because of this the audience could understand the significance and purpose of the play.

CHAPTER - IV :CONCLUSION

Eliot in his writings looks conscious about the audience or readers. In his most famous poem “The Wasteland”, he dramatises the contemporary behaviours of the then people because the world has turned out to be a wasteland. In the poem, instead of telling the story of a particular character, he goes for the collection of different patches of human behaviour in the modern world. This way he brings the general problem of the then time such as lack of proper relationship even between husband and wife, the obsession of people for the sex; the gossips of the night clubs in Europe and all these people living without any concept of moral behaviour; lack of social conduct; no concept to god and without any concept of sacrifice. So, the poem is dramatisation of the selfish world where no bounds works, where there is no proper relation. The society has become a disordered, torn and wounded like the poem itself where no germination can take place. To show, these things, he sometimes goes back even to the Periods of Greek mythology and sometime even to the past Shakespeare. Not only this, he travels to the other various religions as well such as Hinduism and Buddhism. But his main concern is to dramatise the contemporary society and its people living on the wasteland.

This was also his intention when he began to write his first play *Murder in the Cathedral*. Though, the play takes its subject matter from the twelfth-century, but Eliot brings this subject matter as in “The Wasteland” to dramatise the contemporary situation. It also brings the people living both in economic poverty and spiritual poverty. They have lost the concept of moral behaviour and even could not welcome the arrival of Archbishop Saint Thomas Becket. They could not understand the

meaning of martyrdom and the meaning of sacrifice. This was the message that Eliot wanted to teach to such people. For that, he went back to the distant past in search of an appropriate subject-matter and when he got it, he gave it a good shape so that play could bring a certain change in society. To do this he has used his various creative talency.

Eliot's use of poetic technique is one of his admirable efforts in the play. Poetic technique in the twentieth-century seems a lost interest. But despite this the poetic technique in this play has its own significance. People, who come to watch a religious play, would not have taken the play seriously if they had to watch the distant characters speaking in verse. The spectators could travel to the past subject-matter of the play, not only through its subject-matter but they needed and appropriate means of language too which could take them to the past. This purpose is best served in the play because of Eliot's use of poetic language. Eliot has not simply done this much, he has also given the poetic language according to the characters. The way the Chorus speak and the way Becket speaks is different. Similarly, the quality of verse the Knights speak is not good as that of Becket and the Chorus. This way the poetic convention used in the play gets the attention of the twentieth-century people.

Not only this, the main part of the play through which the message of the play is to be delivered is in prosaic language. It was important to do this so that the people from twentieth-century could understand what they were intended to be taught. It is in this part, Becket talks about the significance of sacrifice and martyrdom, even providing brief histories from the past, but in prosaic language. It was important to do this so that the people from twentieth-century could understand what they were intended to be taught. It is in this part, Becket talks about the significance of sacrifice and martyrdom, even providing brief histories from the past, but in prosaic language.

So people get the significance of the poetic technique and understand what Eliot wanted to assert them and the play becomes an instrument of society.

So, the poetic technique as well does not make the play something as outdated but certainly something for the consciousness of the present people. This way, the drama gets its intended message.

Religion plays an important role for the significance of the play to the twentieth-century people. Eliot believed that religion works as uniting coherence in a society. He saw that the present society was degraded because of its lack of moral conventions.

The main subject matter of the play is religion. The conflict of the play also is within the area of religion. The play is set in a Cathedral Church and the characters are associated with Church. Thus, the play is strikingly religious. This religious play has to leave its significance so the play makes the Chorus aware about it. Through the Chorus, the play leaves its message to the spectators and the people of twentieth-century. For all these attempts, Church would be the better means to deliver the message through.

This way religion and church can be the organizing factor of a society. Twentieth-century was in a disordered state and Eliot thought that the concept of religion could bring coherence in society. So, while writing, this play *Murder in the Cathedral*, Eliot turned immediately to what was to be the central theme of almost all of his plays. The role of the spirituality elect in society, the fructification of communal life by the example of the saint and saintly. So, this way, this religious play acquires its significance, even in twentieth-century which has almost lost the concept of religion.

The psychological dimension of the play is also an important one. The

characters of the play especially the Chorus begin with a kind of psychology. This psychology is close to the general psychology of the twentieth-century people. Because, both of the parties lack the spiritual quality. They not only understand the one who has come to sacrifice for their sake but also they understand the significance. They were busy in counting the number of apples and weighing the weight of corns from their fields. They had not wanted to be involved in others sorrows and agonies rather they wanted to remain uninvolved. In this sense, they lack the quality of helping hand and hence, they all are selfish creatures like the beasts in forests. It is because of this quality, the world has turned to be a wasteland.

Now what was needed was the change in their established psychology. To do this, they had to be taught about the sacrifice and martyrdoms of the past generations. By just listening to such stories their psychology might not have got changed. So that, they have to be made witness of the actions and sacrifices of the play. It is through the action that their psychology gets changed.

So, the violence brings a change in perception or the psychology of chorus. After this, the chorus come to understand the meaning of religion, sacrifice and martyrdom. They also come to feel that they are involved in what happens to the action of the play. And they also understand that the blood poured on the wasteland would bring not defilement rather a new germination and redemption-redemption from the parched soil of wasteland and day to day activities. So now they are with a new concept and a new psychology which gives significance to the play. The change in psychology is the intended change in psychology of the twentieth-century people through this play.

Martyrdom could be the best theme through which the consciousness of twentieth-century people may get awareness. Martyrdom in itself is a grand in which

one dies for the sake of other people but without any expectation-even without the expectation of the glory of being a martyr. A martyr is one who even becomes ready for the sacrifice of his/her own life. But the martyrdom that this play is centered is not something like political martyrdom but a religious and especially a Christian martyrdom. The play also provides brief histories of various martyrs who have already sacrificed their lives for the betterment of other people.

And now the martyrdom shown through the play has to be understood by the people out of the stage, the audience and also by the characters themselves. The Chorus and the priest understand the significance of martyrdom but Priest's understanding of martyrdom is limited within the premises of Church. Eliot shows this but his main focus is with the Chorus because they are few women of the Canterbury and also the representative of the then people. So, Eliot mostly focuses on the Chorus about the significance of the martyrdom than the Priests. This way Chorus understand the meaning of sacrifice and through them the contemporary people understand it and the play gets its significance.

But this act of martyrdom is certainly an act of sacrifice. Sacrifice is a word that itself presupposes that it involves an act for the betterment of other people. The play with the martyrdom of Thomas Becket revolves round the sacrifice made by him. It is believed that an act of sacrifice helps people to come out of their selfish nature and do something for society. It is also believed that the act of sacrifice refreshes the land hence giving good crops for the people living. So, in ancient time, there have been various ways of sacrifice to achieve the above goals. The form of sacrifice could sometimes be in the form of animal sacrifice and something human beings.

The full understanding of sacrifice comes only towards the end of the play

when the Chorus say:

We thank Thee for Thy Mercies of blood, for Thy redemption by
blood. For the blood of Thy martyrs and saints.
shall enrich the earth, shall create the holy places (86).

And they also understand that the sacrifice was made on their behalf as they say:

We acknowledge our trespass, our weaknesses
our faults, we acknowledge
That the sin of the world is upon our heads that the
blood of the martyrs and the agony of the saints. (88)

This way, the sacrifice of the play acquires meaning and through the Chorus the meaning also reaches to the contemporary people.

To do these all, an appropriate and proper dialogue was essential so that the play could achieve presentness. Dialogue of the play *Murder in the Cathedral* has variety. The play uses both prosaic and poetic language. The poetic dialogue helps the audience to believe in the characters that they resemble to the past. And the quality of their poetic dialogue helps the audience in distinguishing the characters in proper order of hierarchy. With such a dialogue, the audience could travel back to the twentieth-century to understand the meaning of sacrifice and martyrdom. But the actual message of the play had to be delivered into prosaic language other wise the people would not be able to grasp what they had to. This type of perfect balance can be seen in the play *Murder in the Cathedral*.

On the other hand, the poetic dialogue too is not in the language of twelfth-century such as Norman French. It has various flavours of twentieth-century. Eliot

deliberately avoided the Elizabethan blank verse which had lost its taste with the twentieth-century people and it had also been one of the reasons for the failure of drama written after Shakespeare. In doing so, Eliot had come to the real challenge, the challenge of finding proper way which could be implicated in the dialogue of the play. So, he came with variety. He even employed the then popular Jazz so that audience may find interest and understand what the play intends to. This way the dialogued of the play is a significant one.

The characters are also provided with significant role in the play. Becket, the main actor of the play through whom the play acquires the meaning of sacrifice and martyrdom is important. He is presented without any will and is also shown that he has united his will with the will or law of god. This comes to the audience, through his struggle with various tempters. These tempters are also a part of play's significance. Because, it is through them the audience understand that one who is without any worldly will can only achieve redemption. They also make them conscious that they (audience) are suppressed by the worldly wills. And now its their turn to be free of such wills and be helpful and helped.

The chorus which is an ancient convention is not based in ancient way as they were used in plays. They are here with a new convention, suited to twentieth-century. They become an integral part of the play itself. It is they who had to understand the meaning of sacrifice and martyrdom and make the contemporary audience understand it. They do this very well. Though like the then people, they begin with spiritual poverty but finally they come to understand that Becket died for them. Not only this, they also understand that the sacrifice would bring regeneration and redemption on the parched soil of the wasteland.

The Priests are next to understand the meaning of sacrifice. They take it as a

victory of universal church. And the Knights who come to murder Becket are important because, it is through them that the act of sacrifice takes place. They also give speech the inversely to prove the significance of sacrifice. So, this way the characters of the play are put in such an appropriate way that all of them contribute to bring the theme of sacrifice and martyrdom. They also make through their role, an appeal for the modern people who know almost nothing about religion, sacrifice and martyrdom. This way, the characters try to bring coherence in the life of people living in twentieth-century.

And finally, the setting of the play which had to make the audience that the action is taking place again in between and among them, though the plot line comes from past, is also an effective one. The direction for its setting is not there, except few times. But from the play we understand a lot of thing that makes the play taking place at present. Eliot was always conscious of this. This is why he avoided the five-act setting of Elizabethan time which was not an appropriate in the present.

Despite this, the setting of the play is known through, the action of the play. There is constant rise of horror in the speeches of chorus which is similar to war-between time. And the poverty of which the Chorus women of Canterbury talk about is similar to the poverty of the then people who were facing the great Depression of late 1920s that destroyed almost the whole of Europe.

The historical event that the play takes as its subject matter is also dealt differently. Unlike the original history, the play provided speeches to the knights who come to murder Becket and this intensifies the theme of the play. The play has contemporary setting implicitly of the time. This way, the setting of the play makes the play significant for the contemporary people.

Thus, the play is reasserting the significance of sacrifice in a modern

wasteland. The time when the play was written was as wasteland because of its lack of moral, religious and social convention. People had no respect for one another. They were living with the memory of first world war with in fear of the approaching second world war. They were living in economic and spiritual poverty both because of the great Depression and also because of their lack of moral convention. Eliot himself was going through this as he was leading a disordered and painful life.

In such a case what could be a better solution except making the then people aware about the great stories of sacrifice? There was no other way. So, Eliot took the subject-matter from the twelfth-century and wished to assert its significance in the form of play as a ritual.

To do this a style of twentieth-century was needed. as the same essay writes further as, "Eliot's work is nearer the stylization of the Byzantine. Yet it has also a functional simplicity which is particularly twentieth- century "(54). And by doing this Eliot achieved what he intended.

So, the play is reasserting the significance of sacrifice in a modern wasteland

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