

Tiresias: A Voice Of Unification And Juxtaposition



Sajad Ahmed

Subject Specific Teacher(English)

Punch, J&K India

Abstract

The role of Tiresias is highly significant and commendable especially in unifying the fragmentary structure of the poem THE WASTE LAND. He serves various purposes in the poem and proves to be dynamic voice .We know there are various voices in the poem but Tiresias is of the unfathomable importance . Tiresias is an immortal prophet who is endowed with the precious saintly gift of prophesying. He serves key role in the poem. He is a link between present , past and thus remains spectator of the various waste lands over the time.

Key word: Juxtaposition, Lamentation, Decadence, Perversion of values, Prophecy, visionary, waste land, Regeneration, Degeneration and Modern society

The waste land the magnum opus of T.S. Eliot abounds in voices, and incorporation of these numerous voices provides the writer with an ample opportunity to equate past and present and what made the land waste in antiquity and what makes it barren now and to draw a conclusion by commenting on it. **The waste land** a classic of 20th century excavates various degenerations ,decaying, hollowness and perversion of value in modern waste land that is modern society.. Man lives in a confused and absurd world devoid of morality, spirituality and culture. Traditional values have been dilapidated. Tiresias 's role and its significance is indispensable. He is link

between past and present. Eliot himself acknowledges the significant role of Tiresias when he exclaimed “what Tiresias sees is the substance of poem,” It will be pertinent to say but for Tiresias the poem would not have gained classical repute.

- Tiresias through the Annals of History.** Tiresias is a prophet of Apollo in Thebes, later endowed with the power of clairvoyance and prophesying. He also lived transformed life for seven years as woman. Entire this course of action has made him most experienced person ever lived. There are various illusions about Tiresias. It is said once he disturbed a pair of copulate snakes with a stick, that infuriated Hera. She transformed him into a woman for seven years. Having being served seven years of transformed life, once again he came across a pair of snakes but he left them undisturbed. There is another myth that he trampled over them upon that he was cursed to regain masculinity. He was once drawn into argument between Hera and Zeus and the argument was, who enjoys and seeks more pleasure during sex? Hera was of the view that man but Zeus claimed woman. But Tiresias having being experienced both claimed woman enjoys nine parts and man part out of ten parts. This infuriated Hera he was struck blind because of his impiety and profanity. Zeus was resource-less to save from the curse but he bestows him with the power of farseeing and life span of seven generations. He understands languages of birds and animals etc. The maiden use of Tiresias can be witnessed in **Odyssey** book xi. Tiresias was a common title for seer or prophet during earlier years. This is how the Tiresias was elevated to the level of an oracle. He serves the function of an oracle in **The Waste Land**

Purpose of Tiresias and mythical technique

Mythical method is one of the most significant methods of modernist literature. The method is used to draw a vivid analogy for the present in the past. The same mythical method was mostly used by contemporaries like James Joyce and Lawrence etc.. It is a method which helps to draw parallel between stable system and dilapidated system. Thus to draw the conclusion and remedial in the light of past. Eliot himself affirmed that to Have been highly influenced by myths. Tiresias is the unifying link between the various fragments of poems as demonstrated by various critics. This myth usage enables poet to comment and communicate meaning. Tiresias who is blind but visionary. He is a blind seer. He is enlightened that he has been used as a voice to comment and witnessed as the past waste lands and the non viewing and watching, desolation and infertility of the present cities of London and Paris. Tiresias is a character, he is a bud voice of enormous significance. Tiresias is a blind seer. He essentially works as a mirror. He fuses past and present. Thus the poet gills ample opportunity to elucidate the golden era of antiquity followed by decay and degeneration. Now he is eye witnessing the present waste land and contemplating its remedial. Among various voices Tiresias is sole aware and enlightened voice. Tiresias is the

same seer who exorcised the malady of the waste land of king Oedipus . Where because of incestary the land turned into infertile, barren and un productive land.Tiresias in fact, illuminates entrapment of the people in the drag of the culture and moral decline. It also exhibits how they are becoming accustomed to bear and live in that drab and mundane circumstances which is retribution of their deeds.The idea has been conveyed in the follow lines of **The Waste Land**.

“I who have sat by Thebes

Below the wall

And walked among the lowest of the dead”

Tiresias like a mute spectator objectively noticing the lost voices portrayed in the poem.He notices the perversion of values. Tiresias had witness waste land of Oedipus and fisher king.As I mentioned above Tiresias has experienced both sexes male and female. Significance of Tiresias is immense because, one person possessing both female and male sexes.Sex which has got high purpose since ages is of no significance for modern man. There is utter futility in the affairs of man. Tiresias has undergone through the experience of both male and female which enable Eliot to through light on perversion of all sort of values. There is purposelessness and absurdity. Not to speak of life even death is insignificant procreation and reproduction which are the high purposes of life and physical relation.Tiresias throws ample light on such aspects of the failed life of the people. In the modern waste land sex is merely confined to carnal pleasure.

“What you get married for if you don’t want children”.

Tiresias calls London city unreal city covered by brown fog . The London bridge falls which symbolizes the deterioration and crumbling of values. People want to remain in utter darkness of ignorance. People are walking circularly this symbolizes the aimlessness of the denizens of waste land. Tiresias used to sit on the bank of river Thames and enjoyed its solitude but now he is sitting but there is topsy-turvy of values. There is huge difference between the two. The world once used to be spiritual hub now is devoid of spirituality. People escape from regeneration. When Thebes s faced same barrenness, Tiresias cured the land and reluctantly divulged the causes of it. He juxtaposes present and past and Tiresias is well informed who throws ample light on emptiness of human relationship. There prevails communication gap, worthlessness of human relation.

”I Tiresias through blind, throbbing between two lives.

One man, with wrinkled female breast , can see”

The waste land

Once there was solitude and serenity everywhere, but now that has become old wives tales.
 Thames once replete with fresh and pure water now it is impure, as Eliot says,

“The river sweats oil and tar”. **The waste land**

The symbolic significance of Tiresias is of unfathomable worth . As I mentioned earlier, he was blind, he was bisexual and he possessed the precious gift of prophesying and immortality. He helps Eliot juxtaposing the waste land of Oedipus and king Fisher which symbolizes past and present. He is apt symbol of human conscious. He accumulated the experience and knowledge of mankind through ages, both rise and fall of generations

Tiresias unifies the poem. It is Tiresias who generates meaning in the poem. Though Eliot was highly influenced by myths and anthropology. He could have used Fisher king or Arthur like illustrious and virtuous characters. But he deliberately opted Tiresias. Though those are also unsurpassed characters yet they lack what Tiresias abounds in. Tiresias is the commentator on the waste land ,of which Eliot is talking about. What used to be he has witnessed and what will be he foretells. He is timeless character. He has lived through ages because he has granted eternity.

Thus, Tiresias role is of immeasurably significant from both thematic and structural point of view. Eliot was right when he vaingloriously claimed that what Tiresias sees is the substance of the poem. The incorporation of his role has simplified and ceased the obscurity of T.S Eliot. It is Tiresias who gives **The Waste Land** a boundless significance and primal importance. It is through him[Tiresias] Eliot holds mirror on the contemporaneous societal breakdown , perversion of values, sterility ,barrenness and infertility .It is a society sans spirituality and values .It is Tiresias who becomes Eliot’s mouthpiece. It is Tiresias who enables Eliot to visit the annals of history of the value and society and its decadence .Tiresias unifies the poem and serves the true purpose and role in poem.

Works cited

- 1 The Waste Land by Eliot T. S
- 2 A Students Guide to the Selected Poems of T.S.Eliot by B.C Southam
- 3 A Critical History of English Literature vol. ii by Daiches David
- 4 www.gradesaver.com
- 5 Beginning Theory by Berry Peter