

## Post-War Society in T.S. Eliot's Poetry

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### Abstract

Eliot's poetry is not philosophy, rather it is the reality, the reality of a society that was collapsing in every aspects. The members of the society though they were superficially modern but they are like Beckett's Vladimir and Estragon. They are purposelessly modern. They are in emotional as well as spiritual crisis. Political unrest, loss of faith in ethics, purposeless relationships, mass anxiety, and hollow sexual desires are deeply rooted in Eliot's Wasteland. Eliot's is more propagandist than a poet like Arnold and both of them serve the same purpose. His poems are the genuine picture of Post- War trauma. T.S. Eliot is no doubt the typical representative poet of Modern literature but he is one of the finest psychologist. His Wasteland is a land of psychological clash- the clash is between self and self.

**Keywords:** Emotional imbalance, Future upset, Trauma, Spiritual crisis, hollowness, future shock etc.

### Introduction:

Eliot's poetry was always concern with the modern mindset of Postwar European society. He Was like Arnold totally dissatisfied by the values of his own age and there for turn towards old classical masters e.g. Greeks. We observed a straight boredom in his poetry against the hollow men in modern world. The meaninglessness of human relationships , emotionless sexuality and discrepancy in human morality in modern wasteland hurts him the most. Like G.B. Shaw Eliot also an iconoclast because he found the originality of ideas in his age and therefore wanted to established his according to his own ideas followed by the Greeks. Prufrock - the mouthpiece

of Eliot represent the shallowness and fake fragmentation of modern so called man, far from reality and busy with fake fertility. The contemporary society are also in same kind of problems , hollow men are far away from harsh reality and self centeredness makes the society robotic and feeling less. Justice, Law and orders are in melting pot . Reaction is needed .

In the year 2023, our core and mighty Indian civilization and culture are in state of dismay. The so called Americanization creating a wasteland in India. The celebrity culture, the restaurant culture, artistic taste , sense of ethics and elimination of religion among young strata serving a pessimistic impression. 5000 years old civilization are going to face a great future upset.

### Discussions On Eliot's Poetic Philosophy

Eliot was not influenced by the philosophy that 'God is dead' rather he was in misery that moderns far away from God . He found solutions in Christian values. But in the same time he realized that Christian values were in melting pot. He was in some sort of anger that the very existence of God is in crisis. He found solace in classics like Arnold. Somewhere he agrees that 'all our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance.'"(quotefancy.com). This expression marks Eliot's mistrust on the process of earning knowledge. He defined the difference between- knowledge/ wisdom and information, this was the reason Eliot rooted his faith in classics. He could observe that society is going to have a great future shock. He was not hostile to romantic past rather he was in disarray that Post-War Europe has lost his authentic mindset. Eliot's poetry represents Post –War mindset. The age considered information as wisdom. Politics is turmoil, values are shattered, where war is an art , poetry is pseudo art. We are living in an era of mass depression. Society is technologically upwards but morally downwards. There is philosophy 'elimination of religion' regulating us. Reduction of religion and expansion of materialism is considered as the art of living. Eliot was against materialistic emotions and tendencies either it was subjective or objective. He want an escape spiritual death. Less morality, no spiritual upliftment and unhealthy sexual urge defines a modern man. Eliot like Wordsworth not lamenting that " what man has made of man" rather he established his iconoclastic vision. Like Wordsworth he was disturbed by Industrialization but he expressed his disturbance with rude – realistic voice.

T.S. Eliot's '**The Waste Land**' not basically a poem about Europe but it is a poem about wounded civilization. It is not comprehensible that whether war is a business or it as a fair to demolish the humanity. But every aspect of war is mutilating our

mindset. While commenting on the post-war European society, Eliot is very much concerned and interested in the people around him. He observed the futility of human existence. 'The Waste Land' is organically a poem about the mindset, a mindset that collapsed our root human civilization. It questioned the very idea of human existence.

**The Modern Wasteland:** We are recycling ideas, we have endless urges for new experiments. Folks are creating their own demigods. Endless information in our minds but we are still misinformed. We have freedom of speech, but still silence surrounds us. Madness is entertainment, but calmness is disorder. We have large dictionaries but have no sense of using words. General knowledge is everywhere, commonsense is nowhere. We are facing an ignorant darkness. An illusion of knowledge leads us to infinite darkness. Civilization is on dead bed but still we have an absurd lustful desire to live a pseudo peaceful materialistic life. We are physically fit but mentally unstable. Club going is an art of living but going to church is a primitive idea. Education is information rather ideas are humdrum. Society is promoting humanity but enjoying war coverage on television. Prufrock's problem is mine – searching for absurd satisfaction on modern wasteland.

Eliot declares that "**London-the unreal city**", it is the city of lust, emotionally unstable and fraudster goes freely. London after the war "under the brown fog of a winter dawn/ a crowd following over London bridge". The image of London after world war is very much gloomy and full of guilt. For example: "**Burial of the Dead**" the speakers observe London after the great war as broken, dry and barren place full of dead bodies. London, a city marked by progress advancement has become nothing more than unreal city. It has lost its cultural and social vitality. As Eliot argues that, modern waste-land is surrounded by obscurity, chaos disillusionment and alienation. In a world void of meaning and fulfillment, the modern man is in despair at the futility of life and relationship. 'The Waste Land' is greatest metaphor of mind set and disabled condition of modern Europe.

Eliot's Hollow Men is the most vulnerable personality, Create his belief about future of the men of his dead land, wasteland. T.S. Eliot, the mouthpiece of modern age, strident personal life. "**The Hollow Men**" written in five parts focusing on madness, guilt, remorse and breakdown of humanity. This poetry is about the decaying value system of post-war generation. It is all for general disbelief in the course of human creation. We like to live but don't welcome death because we fear to be answerable, for our deeds on this universe. We create our selves against our creator and become --

**"Shape without form, shade without color.**

**Paralyzed force, gesture without motion.” (The Hollow Men)**

Eliot’s characters are so impressive and their gross selfish, like Prufrock, Sweeny, Gerontion, they are representative of corrupt, rotten and money grabbing materialistic civilization. No doubt Eliot has an universal appeal in his poetry, by expressing the dominant anxieties and feelings of his age .

We all know that plight of Gerontion, who reflects the corruption of his surroundings. The most important cause of his miserable plight is the loss of faith. People who are influenced by science have adopted a rational outlook towards Christianity. Nobody wants to develop their spiritual potentiality , they need a peaceful mind , before they can understand the message of Christ and its relevance today. As A.G. George remarks “ **when intellectual scrutiny brings, the terror itself vanishes, and the debasement of faith is complete**”. Gerontion feel sorry for the loss of faith in Christianity. But he feels that the doctrines have been adulterated and can not therefore provide consolation and relief .Gerontion is an embodiment of the popular discontent caused by the first world war and wave of disillusionment which swept Europe. Modern civilization has reached a breaking point , the process of disintegration and dissolution set in . It is therefore impossible to prevent the collapse of civilization. All plan to savage it are like the spider’s web which will snap at ant moment. Eliot’s strong belief is that civilization can be saved if it revives the Christian faith and follows the moral values of church.

Sweeny represent an anti-attitude of T.S.Eliot 19<sup>th</sup> century – man is pessimistic rather than optimistic , cynical rather than idealistic.

Sweeny has an abnormally high animal spirit . He is a strong in sex like ape. His life has been devoted to all fun of sexual function for variety and pleasure. He is an example of modern sexually degraded and uprooted urban person. He represents the emotionless and hollow relationship symbol of post war society, who is spiritually barren and dehumanized vagabond of modernsociety.

The pessimism and despair produced by the great world war made thinkers look for a set of values which could point the way for improvement and reform. Nationalism and imperialism received a great jolt. The new philosophy which become popular , was that of socialism and internationalism. It was realized that relation between nation should be based upon qualities , dignity and mutual respect and co- operation , instead of commercial and trading interest.

Man was no longer seen as a rational being as far as his behavior is concern .Family relationship underwent a change. The assessment of relative role of man and woman changed. The younger generation and older generation feels a great gap between their values and system, resulting a change between the relations of parents and Childs. The result is ruthlessness in modern Waste Land.

The first World War proved that the individual was not good enough. There Were still enough irrational forces in the world which are always against rational forces. It bought a wave of cynicism and uncertainty in the society specially in the young generation.

The hopes for brave new world so firmly dissipated in 1918( because of the war) gave raise to disillusionment and despair which found expression in **The Hollow Men** . A new awareness of sociological factors enabled the writers of this period to perceive a disintegrating culture with no positive values to replace . There was need for new world , for a new outlook on life. It was an age of falsity and of experiment . But the necessity of new values , new patterns and stability was felt by Eliot.

After the World War , individual are not perfect therefore human emotions also not perfect. Prufrock was the mouthpiece of Eliot who represent the imperfect emotions of Post –War society and carried out an awkward mindset of so called modern people. **The Love Song Of J.Alfred Prufrock** is not a subjective but objective. The poet only described the mind of the protagonist . Similarly Eliot warites about the thoughts and feelings of Gerontion and Sweeney. **The Love Song** is a symbolic poem which gives the mood of modern city-dwellers . It expresses the barrenness , the mental tension , the frustration and the irresolution of the modernmen.

### **The Decaying Mindset Of Modern Europe**

T.S. Eliot's poetry were the finest depiction of the spiritual bareness of hollow modern men. The Great War had affected the philosophy of life, art of living and moral conscience .Europe and the whole world experienced the great shock. They could realize that human beings are the production if imperfections. They were trying escape in an artificial world. The rise of industrialization, science and technology, clubbing, dance bars, fashions, turned them towards a society where they could pretend to get solace. There were no divinity in love. Sex was only a biological . There were hopelessness in relationships. Europe and rest world rejected Wordsworth's philosophy of nature – rather they thought nature was barren, there was no sign of hope, there was no messenger, emotions, individuality had no price at all. This was the universal crisis. Eliot's poetry are the manuscripts of decaying Post-war society. Only the way of true Christianity could give them ultimate peace. The society were in the decease, the decease that each

individual inhaled by himself, the cure was almost impossible. Eliot never advocated the religious dogmas or bigotry. He tried to establish a society with the pure ideas of Christianity. He wanted a civilized society with a sense of morality and high cultural sense. He knew that the cure of this disease lies in the change of former mindset of the whole society. He advocated Greek culture, art and literature. He wanted to establish the very concept of Hellenism through literature. He was a moralist with realistic tone.

### **Eliot's Objective Correlative Is A 'Twig Of Emotional Imbalance' Of Modern Europe:**

Though Eliot suggested that 'Hamlet' is an 'Artistic Failure', I think, Prufrock, Sweeney and Gerontion these characters were also the showcase of emotional imbalance. They were mad like Hamlet, rather their madness was sophisticated. In the world of complete disarray they were trying to find comfort in foppish and dandified culture. Somehow they did it, but their conscience did not allow them to accept it. Eliot created them to represent the class of hollow men. They were always in a psychological turmoil about their attire, taste of music, club culture. But their readers could realize that they were in a wasteland, a wasteland that never produced spiritual peace. Eliot's characters themselves suggested that they were in emotional crisis, but they were unaware of it. Hamlet performed his madness in a systematic way. But Eliot's characters are a kind of mad which they even could not realize.

**Conclusion:** Eliot like Walt Whitman considered that technological advancement and mechanization in everyday life is the root of degradation of human dignity. His 'The Wasteland' was a sheer criticism of industrialization and urbanization. The society living in the wasteland were in a chaotic state of mind that to finding meaning in so-called modernization. My opinion says, the Romantics could be their guide to lead a purposeful life. Though Eliot rejected individuality but the ideas of Romantics were the ideas of life. Eliot was the follower of old Classical masters. Perhaps he had his own slogan that 'think like moderns, act like classics. Classics were the champions of ideas and morality, if we juxtapose classics and moderns then that would be the real cure. Complex literature, Wars, machinery and Political heresy were the prime cause of decaying mindset of Post-war society.

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