Chapter IV

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'Self' at the Crossroads has to make choices regarding the path to follow: All the protagonists of Eliot are confronted with choices. The choice lies between two kinds of actions choosing either the way of the Saint or the second best way of acceptance. A brief discussion of Eliot's plays proves that surrender of the very self to the Highest God is a psychological necessity, a life necessity as well as a religious and spiritual necessity. There is therapeutic value of self-surrender. The characters in surrendering to God and co-operating with Him and His laws, align themselves with supreme power, love and wisdom by surrender. Their surrender to God helps them in setting up a close human relationship. Self keeps problems and issues from piling up and making them tensed and burdened. It is a continual catharsis.

Self-surrender not only takes away loneliness, it takes away fear of death. Their self has been crucified with Christ: according to the verse "I am crucified with Christ" (Gal 2:20). They become new persons with new resources, new direction, a new attitude, a new faith, not in themselves but in Him. They regain faith and see the "dead end" disappear from their pathway. They regain love for their fellow men and see joy in giving their lives in service to others. They regain love for God and watch the doubts
and speculations vanish when they move from self to surrender. The Introduction is the first chapter which introduces and explains the title of the dissertation. It further deals with the life and works of T.S. Eliot and gives the scope of the thesis.

Chapter II entitled ‘Sinner to Sainthood’ deals with Murder in the Cathedral, Cocktail party and Family reunion. Eliot dramatises the way of the Saint in these plays. Murder in the Cathedral revolves around Becket’s apprehending the truth that the true martyr is the one who has become the instrument of God, and who has lost his will in the will of God. It is a play about England’s most famous Saint. It is a heroic study of Martyrdom. What happens through him is important rather than what happens to him.

The first part of the play depicts the inward conflict and the second the outward. Eliot has portrayed the most subtle and scrupulous self analysis which enables Becket to overcome the spiritual pride that lurks deep within his personality. His pride always feeds upon his own virtues, drawing sustenance from impartiality, from generosity, loathing power given by temporal devolution, and wishing subjection to God alone. After his return from France Becket confronts temptations which serve to revive the past. This confrontation with the Tempters crystallizes the self within Becket. Standing alone Becket launches on a moral quest which can be seen as ‘the spiritual conflict’. His sensitivity and sensibility to the ineffable truths lead him to understand the essence of true martyrdom which is the
annihilation of his will and his yielding to the will of God. By doing it he attains perfect freedom. He yields to God’s mastering of the soul.

In the beginning of the play The Family Reunion Harry is isolated from the rest of the family because of his sense of guilt. Mary helps him to recognize his guilt, and Agatha acts as the spiritual agent enabling him to accept the guilt and thereby attain a sense of liberation. Harry is the modern man who experiences a sense of loneliness, guilt and disgust. The play is built around his discovery of spiritual election. Harry’s search for identity is mainly his search for the real past. He returns to Wishwood to seek his real self, but he only meets his own deceptive self. This sense of not belonging and hence of having no significance and no security, makes life inwardly disrupted and outwardly disruptive.

Aunt Agatha suggests that he should divert himself from the call of the world and choose the way which is taken by those who seek to unite their wills with the will of God. She reiterates that the pursuit of austerity by self-denial and service to others, is a puritan road, as it may seem to some as a long, dark, night of the soul. There is no promise of joy held out by her, only the surrender of the will, and in that surrender, peace. He chooses the ascetic life, submitting to the call of greater love. It is the way of dispossession, of detachment, of divesting oneself of the love of created beings. Harry goes away to become a missionary. The most sensible moment of his life and the most sensible thing he ever does is the moment
when he says yes to God, and surrenders to Him. His self-surrender leads him to a blessed deliverance and transformation.

In *Cocktail Party Celia* the heroine chooses the way of the Saint like Harry and Becket. Celia is in ‘love’ with Edward, and is ‘loved’ by Peter. For both Celia and Peter love does not mean marriage and settlement; it means, on the other hand, a life of personal emotion that has nothing to do with the outer life of material concern. She feels humiliated to find that Edward, with whom she thought she has shared something wonderful, has taken her only as a passing diversion. He confesses that he has never been in love with anyone but Celia, and yet he cannot make it as permanent. She rejects a world of corruption and compromise. Like Harry she has also found that something is wrong with the world in which she lives. So she also decides to leave her country and people in order to devote herself to a religious cause. She immolates herself on the ant-hill in Kinkanja. This has been possible because, on recognition of her true-self she is prepared to realize the tougher self in her and make the right decision.

Celia is willing to abnegate her will, and embrace a nobler calling, surrender and align her will to an Almighty will, and begin to do things she can’t do, to accomplish the unaccomplishable. She chooses agape, divine love in preference to eros, human love. She dies as a missionary nurse in a heathen country. Her death cannot be considered as a horrible death; but actually a spiritual triumph. Sir, Henry affirming the triumph of her death...
asks, "And if that is not a happy death, what death is happy?" In the case of Becket, Harry and Celia divine love holds sway at the point of making the choice. Divine love precedes life. Sacrificial death precedes human considerations. Becket embraces the death of the martyr. Harry's choice leads him away to an unknown future, which also kills his mother. Celia chooses death instead of life. They move from a life of a sinner to a saint.

'Illusion to illumination' is the third chapter which focuses on Eliot's *The Confidential Clerk* and *the Elder Statesman*. The Confidential Clerk centers on Colby's search for identity. At first, he has no doubt that he is a bastard child of Sir Claude who supplies him with money in secret to bring him up and has now accepted him as his confidential clerk without disclosing the fact even to his wife, Lady Elizabeth. He feels uneasy about Sir Claude's deceptive behavior, and also with his own job. His inability to choose a career, to which his whole soul responds, increases his inner conflict. His conversation with Lucasta, whom he still does not know to be Sir Claude's natural daughter, reveals his spiritual crisis. Colby's suffering acquires a fresh intensity when Lady Elizabeth claims him to be her lost child.

Colby Simpkins, the hero the exceptional person among the rest of the characters comes to terms with his own identity as to who he is and what his mission in life is. He is not following the way of the cross culminating in death. Yet he is a New Testament saint who chooses the way
of holiness preferring God’s service to worldly prosperity. His apprehension of the ineffable truth of the divine makes him a man with a mission. His quest for identity enables him to discover his Christian identity through Eggerson who can be called as a sort of spiritual agent like Agatha in *The Family Reunion*. The theme of this play is a continuation of the theme taken up in the earlier ones. Self-realization of the individuals leads them to an act of choice.

In *The Elder statesman* there is a reflection of divine love, through human love. The action of the play is Lord Calverton’s attaining of selfhood. He stumbles from crisis to crisis but when there is an answer he goes from cure to cure. He is being pursued by some ghosts as he has a strong sense of sin owing to some accidents in his youth. Once as a young man he runs over a person and does not stop. Another secret incident of his life is that years ago he had an affair with an actress who has sued him for breach of promise. This is settled out of court, but by now late in life, she appears with his letters to blackmail him. Calverton has to face each on close terms and his suffering continues as long as he fears to face the reality. He admits the truth of his past only in the last act.

Like Harry and Celia Lord Claverton realizes the need to face the past and not run away from it. In his youth he had used others merely as toys. Self-surrender delivers him from self-preoccupation. In him unsurrendered ego is always boastful, always longing for attention and
recounting its greatness. He could give up all self-boasting and self-choosing. He is free to rise above everything and be conqueror in everything. Like Colby he also has to make the difficult choice of giving up human love for divine love. According to Eliot, Lord Calverton recognizes not the physical place, but the spiritual stance and the death implies the death of pretentious self. He has to recognize all dimensions about his real past so that his resting place may be secure. Calverton's crisis may be interpreted as man's universal dilemma.

Eliot deals with the marginal ideas of fears, worries, anxieties, resentments, which are all rooted in the un-surrendered self. 'Love' becomes an important element in the process of achieving self-knowledge. As Lord Claverton confesses his guilt, he achieves self-knowledge. He has spent all his life in the selfish exploitation of others. The visitation by the ghosts of his guilty past cures him of the malady of his personality.

The protagonists of The Confidential Clerk and The Elder Statesman move from illusion to illumination. The plays as a whole are directed towards the illumination of the spiritual life. The sense of isolation on the part of the individual, the need to face the past and strip oneself of false identities, accepting the past, coming to terms with the idea of sin and redemption leave them to move from self to surrender. The surrender of Colby and Calverton is a happy yielding of oneself to the love and goodness of God, to God himself. To surrender to that kind of love, is to surrender to
Eliot's leaning towards the inner reality is the revelation of the self in its various stages. His preoccupation is with the various stages of the self leading to the ultimate nature of reality. Many of his characters easily fall a prey to the temptation of the flesh. In his works, the theme of sin is connected intimately with the theme of the deep seated corruption of the inner nature. The consciousness of sin is one of the most striking features of his characters, a consciousness which never abandons them even in the most violent passion. His characters, despite their awareness of evil, cannot desist the longing for God's grace, or for a lost deal or for the peace of mind. They typify the eternal struggle that goes on in human mind, between the forces of light and of darkness, for the possession of the soul.

A brief discussion of Eliot's plays makes it clear that the concept of reality varies from one category of people to another. But all are required to face their unmasked selves. In Murder in the Cathedral 'reality' comprises of revelations of the saint's hidden motives which enable him to be a real saint. In the next three plays, Harry, Celia and Colby are characters with acute consciousness and, are saintly persons, if not saints. In The Elder Statesman, for the first time, reality is not transcendental. It is enough for the protagonist to confess the truth to one person, and the soul is safe. The plays emphasize the view that "It is not difficult to respond with admiration to the mystic's search for union and the martyr's absolute rejection of what
Eliot proves that surrender of the very self to the Highest, to God, is a psychological necessity, a life necessity as well as a religious and spiritual necessity. Becket, Celia, Harry and Colby, in obedience surrendering to God and co-operating with Him and His laws align themselves with supreme power and love and wisdom. Paul calls this offering of the very selves “a living sacrifice,” and “reasonable service.” They arrive at their highest level of rationality when they surrender themselves to God. The characters though they are not worthy, they are willing to surrender. The characters in surrendering to God and co-operating with Him and His laws align themselves with supreme power, love and wisdom by surrender. Their surrender to God helps them in setting up a close human relationship. This kind of surrender keeps problems and issues from piling up and making them tensed and burdened. It is a continual catharsis.

Thus in dealing with the highly spiritual themes, Eliot has achieved a great success in all his plays. “Eliot has dealt with the important theme of self-awareness and self-identity. It has been one of the major issues of contemporary thoughts. He has considered as his important goal to be the poet of our time; to incorporate the climate of opinion of our age” (Jones 210) He sees this theme as a part of a cosmic framework. All the chief characters ultimately come to a state of awareness that they belong to the creator. Without a sense of belonging there can be no self-identity. All the
characters long for a sense of freedom. So they try to find freedom by doing what they like; others try to find freedom by doing what they ought. Only those who take the latter way find true freedom. They only way to freedom is to obey the will of God in other words, surrender.

Eliot chooses to focus on the world of religious and ethical values. His plays are based on plots which demonstrate a progress towards those values. The plays centre on the moment of crisis in which the recurrence of the past in the present amounts to participation of the ideal and the real. This moment of tension marks the final stage of the self in which an exceptional free act is done. The human and divine are intermingled, and yet the human is not lost in the divine and the divine not merged with the human. Each is separate and both are one. The end is communion, not identity, the most intimate communion possible or imaginable. Yet the communion is not sentimentality; it is a communion that has self-giving love for one another and for all.

To surrender to that kind of creative love, embodied in a person, is to surrender to the highest in this universe. Becket, Harry Celia have excellent capacity for self realization are a contrast to Colby and Claverton who may not be saintly but can apprehend sainthood and who are also aware of their limitations.

The characters in Eliot's plays fall into these three
categories and the saintly ones are in the centre. Through the reflections of these central figures as they embark on internal journey towards self realization leading to act of choice, Eliot seeks to clarify what exactly he means by reality to be exposed in poetic plays. Further, the individual's act of free choice which is also conceived as the highest moral act forms the climax in each of the plays. (Haldar 129).

“In his plays Eliot highlights the moral evil: he opposes moral nihilism in society”, (132) Haider remarks. A delusive ritual of appearances has been depicted in the plays. The essential struggle that is focused deals is the liberation of the authentic self. He has found a new moral approach to character by identifying the religious concepts such as contrition and purgation and many dimensions of self. He deserves credit for his analysis of character and motive, and for his careful exploration of the inner world of their characters.

Eliot has made a very fine psychological study of religious consciousness and religious behaviour in his works. He show great familiarity with the concepts of modern psychology regarding the workings of the religious mind. It is due to conflict between desire and faith, or due to a sense of guilt which is the outcome of breaking the commandments of God.
Eliot never loses sight of the facts discovered by modern psychology. Like the modern psychological writers, Eliot describes the intricate workings of the human mind with its noble and base motives, and lays bare the human heart in a new and effective way. This blending of religion and psychology is their significant contribution to modern English literature. In his plays he deals with the nature of sin, guilt, and the nature of the authority that might redeem or absolve man from it. His plays arouse a profound sympathy for the bewildered victim or the suffering seeker.

Eliot is not content to give merely a picture of the frustration and restlessness of modern man. He emphasizes in his specifically religious plays that religion alone can give man relief from his increasing dissatisfaction and despair and help him to defend himself against the dehumanizing collectiveness, and restore his true personality. Only religious faith can help him to feel at home in the universe and challenge the whole dehumanizing, depersonalizing process of the modern age. At the same time he never loses sight of the facts discovered by modern psychology.

The nature of the versatility of Eliot as a great writer has stimulated a study of their development based on an exploration of inter-relationships between various themes. They have taken up contemporary situations in their works and used them in their characteristic manner to expound their basic themes. They attempt to depict life in its fullness. They are concerned
with basic human situations that have a perennial significance, yet their
treatment is remarkably new and original.

The preoccupation with the theme of evil and good, rather than the
problem of right and wrong is recurrent in Eliot works. He seems inclined
to the belief that in the ultimate analysis it is God's justice that is
predominant over the vague concept of man's justice. The problem of evil
and suffering is at the centre of the human tragedy. According to him, the
action of the characters is a part of the total pattern of the plot that slowly
unfolds itself the whole motif being complex and almost bordering on the
incomprehensible to the rational mind.

Eliot successfully renews the sense of good and evil in an audience
in the midst of a secular society, apathetic to religious ideas. The situation
of the characters in search of identities itself becomes dramatic. Eliot's
plays present sin and eventual redemption as actual experience of life. He
reiterates the view that God is loving and merciful and that unless He
sanctifies the sinful, there cannot be any redemption. The eventual salvation
that succeeds will not precede suffering and repentance. To him, sin is
identifiable with moral evil and becomes reprehensible when it is done
consciously in deliberate disobedience to one's conscience. The plays prove
to be the finest literary commentators on religious, cultural and political
tensions in the twentieth century. They offer searching analyses of the
tensions between the religious and the secular outlooks, and between
political commitment and political skepticism.

Many of his characters easily fall prey to the temptation of the flesh. In his works, the theme of sin is connected intimately with the theme of the corruption of human nature. The consciousness of sin is one of the most striking features of his characters, a consciousness which never abandons them even in the most violent passion. His characters, despite their awareness of evil long for God’s grace and peace of mind. They typify the eternal struggle that goes on in the human mind, between the forces of light and of darkness, for the possession of the soul.

Eliot has dealt with the important theme of self-awareness and self-identity. It has been one of the major issues of contemporary thoughts. Eliot considered as his important goal to be the poet of our time; to incorporate the climate of opinion of our age (Jones 210) He sees this theme as a part of a cosmic framework. All the heroes of the plays have reached the awareness that they belong to the creator. Without a sense of belonging there can be no self-identity. All the characters long for a sense of freedom. So they try to find freedom by doing what they like; others try to find freedom by doing what they ought. Only those who take the latter way find true freedom. They only way to freedom is to obey the will of God.

What has distinguished his heroes in the past has been their capacity and willingness to suffer in the hope of finding the elusive
meaning of their existence. Stripped of their masks, and vulnerable before their fate, they have accepted the ultimate consequence: renunciation of their social being and ordinary human relationships.”

(Grant 716) The plays as a whole are directed towards the illumination of the spiritual life. “The central figures are people with special insight who take journeys through this world, the purpose of which may not be clear to other mortals; but they are a part of the eternal scheme of things. They focus on the way in which the self-sacrifice of the spiritually elect fertilizes the lives of ordinary people and makes possible a fruitful communal life. (Pearce 45)

The sense of isolation on the part of the individual, the need to face the past and strip oneself of false identities, accepting the past, coming to terms with the idea of Sin and redemption are found in all the plays. In spite of similar ideas running through all the plays, each play has its own distinctive quality. Eliot deals with the marginal ideas of fears, worries, anxieties, resentments, and ultimately of self-surrender. These fears, worries, anxieties, resentments are all rooted in the un-surrendered self.

The spiritual adventures of these characters that attain self-knowledge have visions of the ineffable truths. This ineffable truth is the moment of death synonymous with the moment of living its "the implication that the essential quality of the moment of death is also the essential quality of the individual in all his living. The picture of the chorus
speaking of death, which is un-redeemable in *Murder in the Cathedral* can be cited as an example. The chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral* suggests the mood of apprehending death:

The horror of the effortless journey,

To the empty land Which is no land, only emptiness,

Absence, the void. (44)

Amy, Harry’s Aunt in *The Family Reunion* tells Harry’s uncles and aunts:

You none of you understand
How old you are And death will come to you
As a mild surprise
A momentary shudder in a
Vacant room. (59)

Eliot means that when an individual lives his personal life, he is at the same time living the life of his epoch. Thomas Mann’s words would clarify Eliot’s views: “A man lives not only his personal life as an individual but also consciously or unconsciously, the life of his epoch and his contemporaries” (The Magic Mountain; 32). In Eliot’s work the outer objective world often intrudes, though the focus falls almost exclusively on the subjective self.” (Haldar 127)
Eliot chooses to focus on the world of religious and ethical values. His plays are based on plots which demonstrate a progress towards those values. The plays centre on the moment of crisis in which the recurrence of the past in the present amounts to participation of the ideal and the real. This moment of tension marks the final stage of the self in which an exceptional free act is done.

Thomas speaks identical lines to the women of Canterbury when they have had a glimpse of that 'one moment' of their vision of horror, expressed in their speech:

I have smelt them, the death-bringer

Now is too late For action, too soon for contrition. (41)

I have consented, lord Archbishop have consented.

Am torn away, subdued, violated,

United to the spiritual flesh of nature. (42)

These are the words of the Archbishop to them:

Peace and be at peace with your thoughts and visions

These things had to come to you and you to accept them,

This is your share of the eternal burden,

The perpetual glory (43)

This is one moment he says which will pierce them with sudden joy and the moment may seem unreal and he concludes his speech saying,
"Human kind cannot bear very much reality." (43) Finally he has had a vision of glory "a tremor of bliss, a wink of heaven, a whisper" (16) this vision gets fulfilled in martyrdom when he is murdered. The women say:

- Every horror had its definition
- Every sorrow had a kind of end;
- In life there is not time to grieve long.
- But this, this is out of life, this is Out of time,
- An instant eternity of evil and wrong. (48)

Harry in *The Family Reunion* is obsessed with the ineffable. He tells his family having had the vision of the horror:

- You will understand less after
- I have explained it. All that I could hope to make
- You understand is only events; not
- what has happened. (65)

This refers to the ineffable meaning that is hidden beneath the surface of external happenings. Harry also tells them:

- You are all people To whom nothing has happened
- At most a continual impact
- Of external events. You have gone
- Through life in a sleep. Never woken to the nightmare.
- I Tell your life would be unbearable
If you were wide awake. You do not know
That is what matters, but it is unspeakable,
Untranslatable: I talk in general terms
Because the particular has no language. (65-66)

Finally after having been reconciled to his vision of horror and having chosen the long journey Harry feels that he is unable to explain to his family and just before parting from his family he says:

I would explain, but you would
None of you believe it. If you believed it, still you
Would not understand. You can't know why I'm going
You have not seen
What I have seen. (65)

Unlike Harry who is alienated from a world of people, the characters in The Cocktail Party and The Confidential Clerk who are all isolated are making an effort to understand themselves and each other. Hence the idea of the ineffable becomes softened. Celia Coplestone has been able to have a vision of the types of hell she had been in and consequently chooses the extraordinary. The characters other than Celia in The Cocktail Party are able to take the ordinary way. In The Confidential Clerk there is no unbearable reality that is suggested. The two aspects of reality are integrated and reconciled there. In The Family Reunion "The two worlds or two realities are opposed and in The Cocktail Party they are alternatives and
in *The Confidential Clerk* they are complementary" (Unger 1956: 137). In his last play *The Elder Statesman* there may not be found any spectacular reckoning of ineffable truths by Lord Claverton. But he does have a glimpse into the ineffable meaning of God's love which makes him a recipient of the peace of God that passeth understanding.

The whole technique aims at such simplification and intensification as will give appropriate weight to the issues which are discussed: is the persistent conflict between the values of the world and those of the spirit, and the idea of the redemption of sin through the death of a martyr. "In his plays, the sufferers face spiritual agony owing to their heightened consciousness and their ability to find out the fundamental causes of suffering through self dissection demands an agonizing process. The worst possible moral condition for an individual is conceived by Eliot as an inability to suffer much". (Haldar 128)

Eliot is a serious artist in the sense that he is committed to portray reality. He has insisted that his works are weapons directed against targets in the contemporary world. The works prove that the mere opening of moral conflicts to another person is often sufficient to prevent them from becoming the source of morbid obsessions. Eliot's genius is essentially dramatic and there is a strong element of drama even in his poetry. With the passing of time, the dramatic of his genius led him to concentrate all his attention on poetic drama. A study of his works reveals his dynamism and
the inexhaustible powers of a competent craftsman whose plots are cleverly but conditionally unfolded.

A study of the plays in terms of an important aspect of Eliot's dramatic style, levels of meaning, reveals how the characteristic feature of the realistic drama are not structural limitations in the dramatic format but part of a pattern showing an under-pattern, a figure in the carpet, which reveals itself gradually through the imagery of religious import and psychological colouration. Eliot's use of the persona and his handling of the dramatic interior monologue in his early poetry reveal his instinct for and urge towards drama, and these, together with his meditations on dramatic interior monologue in his early poetry reveal his instinct for and urge towards drama, and these, together with his meditations on dramatic forms, language and conventions, show how he has been steadily moving in his practice from the dramatic in poetry to poetic drama as a form of literature in the twentieth century.

The use of verse has a heightening effect in variety of ways. According to Raymond Williams, In The Cocktail Party, the verse is verse of the surface, although not superficial. "It is a very remarkable achievement, for it is both eminently speakable and also the instrument of complete precision in the expression of feeling." (213) Eliot deserves credit for his analysis of character and motive, and for his careful exploration of the inner world of their characters. He is certainly one of the genuine voices
of the age, proclaiming its disgust and despair, its guilt and ‘angst’ and its struggle to find faith. He not only focus on the Christian religion, but also present man’s sense of guilt and his importance, to prevent a repetition of the sinful act with great psychological insight.

The poetic plays of Eliot examine his dramatic achievement in terms of his life-long quest for the poetic drama in the twentieth century, which is, in effect, an attempt to bring about, or, more precisely, to recover, the interrelatedness of dramatic art and religious feeling and idea. Eliot’s later plays have religious themes but the setting has been moved from the historical and religious to the contemporary setting. They are concerned to show people being aware of their responsibility for their actions, or infant. being simply made aware.

Eliot’s poetry challenges us to define what poetry it pictures. The images give mental and visual clarity. And the technique developed into one incorporating conceptual clarity also. His technique is that of film-making. It creates a unique impression by combining series of pictures or images. He does not describe nature in the fashion of the romantics. His poems are concerned within human nature, interested in the race. Eliot being a master creating objective correlative makes recurrent images of the wasteland, animals seasons, everyday routine and the beloved of Christ that brings about redemption to mankind dovetails into the fabric of the play.
pattern and leitmotifs. All the images fall into place and reiterate the eternal plan and providence of God.

Eliot is concerned with creating concepts through the use of imagery. Certain images occur in most of the works. The image of the stairs, the images of smell and sensations are common. They occur often in speeches of chorus in Murder in the Cathedral. These images of self-awareness make the audience or the readers partake of the experience make the audience or the readers partake of the experience described. Eliot uses the image of the ‘garden’ to emphasize “the transitory and even illusory quality of remembered bliss”. (Smith 196)

Eliot uses the images of the garden as early as in The Wasteland to represent the escape into ecstasy. Later it appears in “Ash Wednesday” and “Burnt Norton”. Harry’s happy childhood is spoken in terms of the rose garden in The Family Reunion and the magic forest in The Cocktail Party stands for Celia’s illusory love affair. In the last play The Elder Statesman the sanatorium’s garden of memory is where the hero Lord Claverton achieves mastery over the past.

Eliot’s great interest in the theatre has been in the creation of a proper idiom and form for a contemporary poetic drama. “All his plays are experimental and exploratory”. (Pearce 13) He believes that poetic drama works like music. It has two components, language and content. The
powerful speech of the Chorus after Becket's death in *Murder in the Cathedral* can be cited as an example. Eliot recognizes the efficacy of the language of illusion. He is anxious to make his audience unaware that they were listening to verse at the same time the effect of the rhythm has been maintained to appeal to the emotion. The audience of the twentieth century drama had been used to prose drama when Eliot came on the scene. He had impress on the audience to make them respond to poetic drama.

The artistic merit of the work lies in the subtlety with which the story-line coheres with the exploration of moral values expressed in a movement from belief to faith and accomplished through exposure of the protagonist to life's constraints. The experience creates questioning, self-consciousness and a search. Ideals of justice, freedom and responsibility as essential elements relate the spiritual quest to the tensions of modern living.

Eliot's use of the persona and his handling of the dramatic interior monologue in his early poetry reveal his instinct for and urge towards drama, and these, together with his meditations on dramatic interior monologue in his early poetry reveal his instinct for and urge towards drama, and these, together with his meditations on dramatic forms, language and conventions, show how he has been steadily moving in his practice from the dramatic in poetry to poetic drama as a form of literature in the twentieth century. The use of verse has a heightening effect in variety of ways.
It can be said that integration is the centre of all Eliot’s ideas of life and poetry. He has always been a poet of vision. The bulk of his work after *The Wasteland* is definitely an attempt to find meaning to the whole of his experience to include all that he has learnt. Since he has incorporated so much of innovative ideas of drama which he has taken from dramatic tradition and modified them, his dramatic work has undoubtedly found a permanent place in dramatic literature. Certainly he is one of the greatest dramatists of this generation and it is not unjustifiable to say that he can be ranked along with a great poet of western literature like Dante.

It is said of Shakespeare that none of his plays can be fully understood in isolation. Similarly Eliot’s plays can be understood only in relation to his prose and poetry. His work has its complete meaning in the larger context of the culture of the Western Europe and also to a lesser degree Eastern cultural traditions. Through his vast reading and knowledge of history his works have been acclaimed to be of a very high order. His contribution to modern poetry and criticism has been immense. His views on poetry and criticism gave shape to the new trends in literary techniques at the beginning of this century.

Eliot’s plays present sin and eventual redemption as actual experiences of life. He reiterates the view that God is loving and merciful and that unless He sanctifies the sinful, there cannot be any redemption. The eventual salvation that succeeds will not precede suffering and
repentance. To him, sin is identifiable with moral evil and becomes reprehensible when it is done consciously in deliberate disobedience to one’s conscience. The plays prove to be the finest literary commentators on religious, cultural and political tensions in the twentieth century. They offer searching analyses of the tensions between the religious and the secular outlooks, and between political commitment and political skepticism.

The plays of T.S. Eliot as a whole seem to suggest that life without faith in God is meaningless. They point out that man is a unique and special creation of God and that separation from God leads him to misery. They stress the fact that even a sordid life under the shadow of religion is infinitely better than an atheistic and purely materialistic life in a “Chromium world”. The plays raise the problem of sin, suffering, and the pain and misery of man, which are reconciled with the love of God.

The suffering of mental anguish is brought about by intense feeling of guilt, with great psychological insight. The sinner confronted with the moral choice between God’s will and what is not God’s will chooses to cut himself away from God. This sense of good and evil, leads the characters to a mental conflict between religious duty and desire. The plays deal not only with man in relation to society and to himself, but fundamentally with his relation to God. This aspect makes them universal in their appeal and most relevant to modern times.
Eliot's plays point out that the most important thing in life is man's relationship to God. Being not content to give merely a picture of the frustration and restlessness of modern man, he emphasizes in his specifically religious plays that religion alone can give man relief from his increasing dissatisfaction and despair and help him to defend himself against the dehumanizing collectiveness, and restore his true personality. Only religious faith can help him to feel at home in the universe and challenge the whole dehumanizing, depersonalizing process of the modern age.

Eliot is certainly one of the genuine voices of the age, proclaiming its disgust and despair, its guilt and 'angst' and its struggle to find faith. He not only focuses on the Christian religion, but also presents man's sense of guilt and his importance, to prevent a repetition of the sinful act with great psychological insight. He has given the meaning of martyrdom to the modern world and the place of the saint in it. Eliot's plays have earned for him an important and permanent place in the tradition of poetry and drama.