Chapter-II: Murder in the Cathedral

Max Weber, the German Philosopher, pointed out that the modernism began with the evolution of Protestantism. He sought to show that Protestantism developed a particular type of character that valued frugality, hard work and promoted a work ethic. Protestant considered work, and all occupation, as a religious vocation. 'Work was to be pursued with a fitting seriousness and order. Such an attitude was admirably suited to the development of industrialism'.¹ These elements manifest in the life of Becket.

Modern people are agnostic, devoid of god and are in blind pursuit of materialistic life. Chorus in the play represents such people.

It is also believed that assertion of cultural values opposed to modernity will be general characteristic of late industrialization. This may take the form of a revival of ethnicity, a claim for a culture and way of life that often

harks back to older communal traditions. Protests against rationality and uniformity are seen in the successive waves of youth cultures and religious revivals that have marked late industrial society. In this way *Murder in the Cathedral* represents modern values. Charles F Kettering, genius in the department of general motors a research laboratory says that:

> We don't understand the mysteries of our bodies or electricity or a gas engine; it does not stop us from using and enjoying them. The fact he does not understand the mysteries of prayer and religion it no longer keeps him from enjoying the richer and happier life that religion brings. He has realised the wisdom of Santayana's words 'Man is not made to understand life, but to live it'.

He confesses that religion brings him spiritual values as William James put it 'a new jest for life... more life a larger, richer more satisfying life'. P193. Religion gives him faith, hope and courage. It banishes tensions, anxieties, fears and worries. 'It gives purpose and direction to his life; vastly improves his happiness, abounding health and helps to create an Oasis of peace amidst the whirling sand of life'.

Eliot's play *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) is based on the story of 12th century English Saint Thomas a Becket; it defines the condition of his mind, his suffering and his martyrdom.

The use of a chorus of poor women in *The Murder in the Cathedral* resembles the chorus of Theban elders in *Oedipus the king*, who are distressed by ravishing famine and blight in the city. But the play is most modernist, because religion and virtues of Becket are his conscious choice, exercised by his free will that has nothing to do with destiny, though it appears to be so. Eliot treats chorus as a part of dramatic personae, more as a group of individuals gripped by common

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2 Ibid.
emotions; the sole purpose of the play is their spiritual elevation, imparting in them sense of responsibility and making them ready for impending changes.

The Cathedral, in Canterbury, is regarded as a holy place, dedicated to God, within which nobody could be harmed. The irony is that the murder of Becket takes place well within it. In Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*; Theban elders come to the palace of Oedipus as supplicants to seek deliverance from the famine and pestilence. But the palace itself is the source of their miseries. ‘And the land became Brown sharp points of death in a waste of water and mud’. The imagery of winter shows the sterility of humanity. Cleansing and fertility are represented by water and mud.

‘While the labourer kicks of a muddy boot and stretches out his hand to the fire’. (MITC. p.5)

When Jesus Christ was arrested and taken to head priest’s Palace, Peter was sitting out side it and stretching his hands to the fire. The king’s soldiers asked Peter if he knew Jesus; he denied that he ever knew him. The question, ‘who will deny his master’? (Mark. 14: 54), is directed to common men who have no spiritual life, without caring for God, live their life as hollow men, and have no courage or will to attempt to do anything more than survival. Chorus represent the common men.

‘Seven years and the summer is over, Seven years since Archbishop left us. (MITC 4)

The word ‘seven’ years triggers an allusion to Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* where, Agamemnon, the king of Argos, was killed by his wife Clytemnestra. Seven years later his son Orestes returned to Argos and kills his mother to avenge his father’s murder. So Chorus thinks of a murder to avenge something. ‘Winter shall bring death from sea.’(MITC. P, 4). These lines

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indicate four knights, sent by King Henry, who landed on England. The imagery of season is repeatedly used. Usually New Year is a time of optimism. ‘The new year waits; the destiny waits’. (MITC. p. 4) The coming of Christmas is usually associated with the coming of the Christ. The word ‘destiny’ reminds us of the misfortune of Oedipus’ fall from the status of a mighty king to that of a blind beggar.

Chorus addresses Christ as ‘son of man’ and asks if, Jesus will be born again in the litter of scorn. The manger is a humble stable where Christ was born. The joy of birth is linked to the bitterness of death by suggesting the scorn; it is a sign of enactment of Christ’s crucifixion.

The Chorus gives us a good deal of the scene; we are told that Thomas was always kind to his people but that it would be well if he should return to France. Chorus knows that the present is perilous and a change for the better is hardly possible. At this juncture priests enter and join the chorus and silence them.

The first priest reminds the audience of futile negotiations and reconciliation between king and Archbishop; the danger threatens Thomas. The chorus is present merely as onlookers; and they are compelled to witness what is to happen. They praise the kindness and closeness of Becket towards ordinary people. This great simplicity and love towards common men is comparable to compassion of Oedipus, in his address to the chorus, in the Greek classic, Sophocles’ Oedipus the king:

My children, latest born to Cadmus, who was of old...tell me, then, with what dread ... I will gladly give all aid.\(^6\)

Chorus realise that Becket’s quarrel with King Henry has been very bitter, violent and reconciliation is most unlikely. So was the fate of Oedipus who had incurred a curse of gods to kill his own father, marry his mother; both are bound to suffer in their fall of fortunes.

A messenger enters to announce the arrival of Archbishop Thomas and he also speaks of his pride and isolation. He reveals that the relation between the king and the Becket is like between the anvil and the hammer that can only damage each other. Becket returns with an implicit love for Catholic ways assorting himself ‘in the power of Rome’. Henry is governed by pride. Becket is proud of his authority as head of the church, of his own integrity, and of the righteousness of the cause. Oedipus also was very proud man for he had solved the riddles of the sphinx and delivered Thebes from her. Both characters are morally strong persons, uncompromising in what is expected of their profession, even if it is meant harm to them and chance of loosing their high positions. Such a strong determination and devotion to profession is a good example for modern world with innumerable problems. Such men are required to solve them. Communism, socialism, secularism or social responsibility can not create such persons; only those who think that the service to common men as service to God, and pious belief in God, and in His prayer can only create such persons. Infact, the purposes modern science and secular education are to make money, hold power and struggle to keep it.

The messenger depicts the hilarious welcome that Englishmen gave to the returning archbishop. They receive him with scenes of frenzied enthusiasm, lining the road and throwing down their capes. This description sets our intellect to The Bible where Christ triumphantly makes his last entry into Jerusalem, mounting on a male donkey:
Many spread their garments in the way, and others cut down the branches off the trees and strewed them on the way.\(^7\)

The messenger reveals to the priests that there was no reconciliation between the king and the Archbishop. He quotes the words that Becket uttered while departing from the king:

"My Lord", he said I leave you as a man, whom in this life I shall not see again (MITC.P.7)

Those words became fatal and prophetic. Becket never saw the king again in England. This incident is comparable to Oedipus myth from several angles. Oedipus cursed the killer of Lauis, without knowing that it was himself who had killed Lauis:

... The murderer shall walk out this land ... but all ban him from their homes.\(^8\)

Oedipus bore the misfortune on himself by uttering the curse. He had committed patricide and incest by marrying his own mother unknowingly. The plight of Oedipus was explained by Euripides plainly thus, in his prologue to Antigone:

A happy man was Oedipus at first. Then he became the wretchest of men.\(^9\)

The poor women of Canterbury are drawn to Cathedral and 'forced to bear the witness'; they are the counterparts of the devoted women who followed Christ, during crucifixion. The priests are like ignorant and frightened Disciples of Christ. The messenger and the second priest talk of sudden prosperity of Becket, from low life of a Cheapside boy to the highest spiritual position of Archbishop. This also reminds us of sudden good fortune that Oedipus enjoyed by answering the

\(^7\) Mark, Asha Marga.: Gospel According to St. Mark, (Bangalore : The Bible Society of India,)II:8:10


riddles of the Sphinx, becoming king of Thebes and the husband of Queen Jocusta.

The first priest describes that Becket’s pride breeds from sudden prosperity. He has his adversaries in the court that flatter the King; he is liked or feared by courtiers; he is despising and despised. Becket is always lonely and always insecure. His pride is due to his virtues: impartiality, and generosity. Archbishop loathed worldly power. He wishes subjugation only from God. The second priest answers that he will be secure when archbishop returns. ‘We can lean on a Rock’ (MITC p. 8) Christ called Saint Peter as rock on which he would build his church.

The more matured third priest says, ‘For good or evil, let the wheel turn’. This complex image of wheel recurs in Eliot’s plays. In the medieval times, the phases of human fortune were believed to have fixed to a wheel. Some men rose to the high of fortune and some inevitably tumbled off as the wheel plunged down:

Mortals are at the rim, and the point of initiation of movement is God as the centre of the universe.¹⁰

A cycle of four seasons depicted in disastrous terms, disastrous summer, and ruinous spring, winter shall bring death from seas and autumn fires etc., (MITC. P, 4) are seen as a vicious circle, of birth and death; which is symbol of the wheel from which Buddhists seek release: The unchanging stillness at the centre is God, which is the initiating point of all action (the wheel). Eliot uses the wheel to interpret man’s relationship to God:

The knights, the temptations and the meaningless motion of the world are the moving rim; while its

immobile epicentre is the God himself. The whole play is an extended metaphor.\textsuperscript{11}

Becket, the Chancellor and the Archbishop of England, suddenly earned the wrath of king and he had to run away to France to save his life. Becket returned to England to surrender himself to the will of God – to martyrdom. In the same way Oedipus ran away from Corinth to escape an oracle, which foretold that he would kill his father and marry his mother. But he returned to Thebes after fulfilling it. On his way he had killed his father in a petty quarrel. He answered the riddle of the Sphinx only to fulfil another oracle– to marry his mother, Jocusta. Bawra explains it thus:

His fated son encountered Lauis and slew him fulfilling the oracle.\textsuperscript{12}

Oedipus’ suffering was due to a curse on the house of Lauis. Delphic oracle had forbidden Lauis and Jocusta, to beget a son. If they did so, the son would kill his father and marry his own mother. Disregarding this oracle Lauis begot a son and incurred the curse. All human efforts failed to prevent the fulfilment of the oracle. Becket’s case is different. All Christian saints invariably became martyrs. It is the will of God to make Becket a saint, so it was done. Moreover Becket was proud; pride is a cardinal sin. It is worthwhile to elaborate some of the sayings of Jesus Christ, about the persecution of all who embraced Christianity:

Then you will be handed over to be tortured and will be hated by all nations, because of my name.... But one who endures to the end will be saved.

(Mathew.24:9:14.)

Chorus appeals Thomas to return to France; Priests silence them. Thomas enters, reproaches priests and makes an ambiguous comment:

They know and do not know, what is to act or suffer. They know and do not know that action is suffering and suffering is action. (MITC. P, 12)

It is an important statement because it describes a central objective for all those participating in the action. Chorus patiently suffer, priests mix action and patience by avoiding real challenge, knights actively intrude; all are trying remove disturbance from their lives. Here to act is to perform some action. Suffering is to bear the outcome of outside action on us. When reaction to action is passive suffering, suffering also becomes an action:

Neither does the agent suffer Nor the patient act. But both are fixed in an eternal action, an eternal patience. (MITC. P, 12)

The agent is one who carries out an action, his duty is to act; he need not suffer; it is not his duty. The patient is one who passively receives the outcome of the action. It is not his duty to act; he has to suffer. Both the agent and the patient are destined to do their part. Here both action and suffering are divine duties and are on the same plane as explained by Becket in the next lines.

To which all may consent, that it may willed. And which all must suffer that they may will it... the wheel may turn and still be forever still. (MITC: 12)

To understand the implications of above verse we have to recourse to the Bhagavad-Gita (The Divine song) and doctrine of karma: a law of action and inaction. Living beings are bound to the cycle of birth and death. Good actions have good results (grace) and bad actions have bad results (sin). In the Shwethashwatha Upanishad (5:11:12) these determine the condition of the soul at re-birth. The only release from this
bondage from karma is to make work a free, willing sacrifice: suffering- in Thomas’ sense. Such a sacrifice is regarded as grace. Samsara, or the cycle of birth and death will continue unendingly unless the spirit is liberated from its round altogether:

Those who know not these two ways, become crawling and flying insects that bite.13

A human soul attached to desires and memories takes up another birth. Here the chorus, which represents the consciousness of those who are on the level of ritual observance and works, lacking the deeper insight of wisdom, speaks of the experience in the ocean of Samsara:

I have lain on the floor of the sea. ------ To the horror of the Ape. (MITC P-41)

Becket tells them that the action of the play depends on the God’s will. He foretells the entries of shadows to come, and the strife with shadows. He meant tempters whom he believes are ghosts of the past. Temptation is the repetition of the act, which, Jesus Christ faced soon after he was baptised by John, the Baptist. When Jesus came out of water, he was led up by the spirit into the wilderness. He fasted for forty days and forty nights and he was famished. Then the devil asked him to command the stones to become loaves of bread. Jesus answered that one would not live by bread alone, but, by every word that would come from the mouth of the God. Then the devil took him on the pinnacle of the temple and asked to throw him down. If he was the son of God, the God does not allow Jesus to die. Jesus said again not to put the Lord, to test. Devil took Jesus to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, their splendour, and said:

13 Swami Adidevananda, Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (Mysore: Sri Ramakrishna Ashram, 1959), p, 40.
'All these kingdoms, I will give you, if you fall down and worship me'. (Mathew 4:1:11)

Jesus asked the devil to go away, for, it is written that 'worship only the Lord'.

Becket has been through a spiritual crisis during his exile; now he undergoes temptations. Eliot here uses a technique of allegory or objectification of that which is close to altos of Cauldron. 'The audience are shown by action what characters think'. 14 The first Tempter suggests that Becket must patch up differences with King and regain more enjoyable days. But Becket is no longer tempted by the physical need of appetites and ease. Becket's scornful reply is:

Leave alone, the spring time fancy, ---Voices under the sleep, waking a dead world, so that mind may not be whole in the present. (MITC p, 63-64.)

Sage Patanjala explains that memories and desires are linked and, can stir-up desire and activate them into mind waves... dictating karma or action and reaction, sometimes across many life times. Patanjala sutras Say:

The latent deposit of karma has its roots in the hindrances ... there will be fruition from it (that is) birth (and) length of life (And) kind of experience.15

This point is more explicit in, Murder in the Cathedral. First Tempter, whose temptation is precisely an appeal to mixing of memories and desires, makes a seductive promise that 'spring has come in winter'. (MITC-p. 14) That is why 'April is the cruellest month' in The Waste Land.

The Second Tempter offers Becket the Chancellorship; thus he will have Church authority to achieve his worldly ends. Such

power can be used for good. King commands; chancellor rules. But Becket realises that in order to regain this worldly power, he must dilute his spiritual authority. The pattern of dialogue resembles Arthur Conan Doyle’s The Musgrave ritual; the lines which carry hints of secret power by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In this story, each member of the British royal family has to repeat an apparently meaning less chant when he comes of age; its rhythms are strongly masked:

Who was it? He, who is gone, who shall have it? He who shall come. ... Where was the shadow? Under the elm. (MITC. P, 18)

This mythic ritual symbolises that the Archbishop is going to inherit, some thing or has come to age. ‘Perhaps it is a symbol of initiation to sainthood, ‘which carry hints of secret rewards’\textsuperscript{16}. Thomas finds it easy to reject. But the words; ‘I who keep the keys of heaven and hell, supreme alone in England, to condemn kings, not serve among their servants’ (MITC. pp. 19-20) portray spiritual pride in Becket. This reminds the temptation of Christ by second devil to throw himself down to get worldly power. The Upanishads emphasise the need for the withdrawal from sensual (pleasures) life in order to realise oneness with Brahman.\textsuperscript{17} (Salvation) Second tempters allurement is very grave because they deceptively provoke both body and soul:

Rule for the good of the better cause, dispensing justice make all even, is to thrive on earth, and perhaps in heaven (MITC-17)

Now a day’s young minds have been a prey to this allurement. Terrorists have taken to terror because fanatic clergy has convinced them that, acts of terrorism give worldly pleasures, huge money, and preach that “warriors of God” will be sent, if dead, directly to heaven; they need not wait in


\textsuperscript{17} Op cit, p,37
their graves till Judgement. Worldly order if not controlled by strong spiritual sense, will breed fatal disease; sterility, degrade every thing that is exalt in worldly order. But this worldly order must be controlled by the order of the God. After Becket became an Archbishop, the chancellorship is only degradation. It shows the full intellectual and spiritual development of Becket.

Oedipus came to know that he was really, the murderer of his father, incestuous husband to his mother, he blinded himself and asked Creon, the next heir to the kingdom, to exile him as early as possible, so that pollution caused by him might be removed and famine and pestilence might be withdrawn by Gods.

The Third Tempter is the allegorical representative of the devil who attempts to tempt Christ with all the kingdoms of the world and their splendour. He is a country Baron, who was once Thomas’s enemy; he proposes an alliance between Barons and Archbishop- religious power of Thomas’s position against the king; as an alliance for England and for Rome. It is an ugly motive of rebellion against the king. Thomas realises it and rejects it as a true patriot. The third tempter offers Thomas both revenge upon the king and domination for the Pope if he will side with English barons: ‘Church and people have good cause against throne’ Becket rejects this offer also. Because, ‘Samson in Gaza did no more, but if I break, I must break myself’ (MITC: 24). This shows he will never work against the king or nation which may result in destruction of both him and the king; as it happened so in case of Samson of Gaza. If he takes this action it will be an action of vengeance and willing action of evil. Here is a message for religious clerics in various countries belonging to many religions. There is not a single incident, where violence or terror has succeeded in winning a country or a goal. It is always peaceful negotiation that has solved
problems of people. Becket shows mindless violence and vengeance as futile and cites the myth of Samson of Gaza. Samson was the divine and mighty son of Monooh. Samson loved a philistine woman called Delilah. She learned that the secret of his strength is in his locks. When Samson was asleep on her laps she called a man to cut Samson's hair. Philistines seized him, gouged out his eyes and bound him in bronze shackles. He ground the mill in the jail. Philistines offered a great sacrifice to their God. They ordered Samson to perform, to entertain the guests. Samson pulled the huge pillars of the house in which three thousand philistines were dining, the house collapsed and all Philistines in it along with the Samson were killed. (Judges: 231-235)

Becket's choice is in accordance with Ten Commandments which prescribe:

> Thou shall love the Lord, thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and with all thy strength. (Mathew: 22: 37-38.)

This is most important among Ten Commandments. Carol Smith comments on Becket:

> In his resolute character of Becket we find the courage to make greatest sacrifice for ones faith ... Eliot's conception of complete new man.18

The entry of fourth tempter surprises Becket. He was the embodied soul of the Becket who cherished the path of martyrdom to become a saint. The fourth Tempter terms each of the three previous tempters as morsels attached to a hook, leading only to damnation. Since Becket is the greater enemy, the king will crush him first. All other paths are closed; hence Becket must choose the way that he has already chosen: martyrdom. Time will consume all worldly power; destiny will tumble all fortune:

War, plague, revolution, new conspiracies, broken pacts, to be master or servant within an hour. (MITC. p, 26)

The description of temporal power is an appropriate comparison to the fortune of Oedipus who was a king, suddenly, became a blind beggar and servant of fate, begging for the safety of his daughters. The fourth tempter makes a point of reference to Original Sin, 'Man oppressed by sin, since Adam fell'... Adam disobeyed God and ate the forbidden fruit, so God cursed and drove him with his wife out of the Garden of Eden. To sin is the inherent compulsion in man. Both the king and Becket are equally sinners. The fourth Tempter indirectly points at the insolent pride in Becket. Oedipus was also proud of his wisdom, who tried to use it to evade the oracle of Apollo; he fled from Corinth to avoid it. But it became only instrumental to realise it. Even his sons despised and chased him out of his kingdom. This fact is explicit as below:

    The Old king shall know it, when at last breathe, No sons, no empire, he bites broken teeth. (MITC. p, 26)

    The glimpses of future, though an anachronism, are vividly explained, which are ambiguous, and applicable to both Becket and Oedipus.

    When king is dead, there is another king. King is forgotten, when another shall come, Saints and martyrs rule from the tomb. (MITC. p, 27)

    After Oedipus left the throne, Creon became the King. Later Oedipus’ son Etiocles chased his elder brother out and occupied the throne. Meanwhile old Oedipus was purified by suffering and penance, had once again became the favourite of gods. A new oracle was prophesied, that his tomb would bring prosperity to the land where it laid. Thebes and Athens vied for his body. Eliot betrays these facts in the above lines, especially in the third one. It is also true that Becket was murdered, became a martyr, there were miracles at his tomb and he was canonised to sainthood by the Pope. Canterbury and his
tomb became a pilgrimage centre. These are historic facts, turned out, as sugar coated prophesy by fourth tempter:

"Think of pilgrims. Standing in line, before the glittering jewelled shrine, From generation to generation, bending ... supplication. (MITC.p, 27)"

It is also a historical fact that, after Becket’s murder, King Henry visited Canterbury in sacks and ashes, took 200 lashes as atonement. But it also reminds the visits of Creon and Polynieces For his blessings and to request him to return to Thebes which Oedipus refused. It also reminds us of the suicide of Judas by hanging, who had betrayed Jesus.

Fourth Tempter prophesises that, in future all the gold of the Becket’s tomb will be looted and bejewelled tomb will be confiscated. In Oedipus myth, sons of Oedipus died warring themselves, his daughter Antigone committed suicide. Thus the progeny of Oedipus was entirely erased. In case of Becket, he lost all his holiness and mystery and is now regarded only as a mere character in history.

Becket astonishes the audience and readers with a question:

"... What is left to be done? Is their no enduring crown to be won?’ (MITC p, 28.)."

It betrays his greed and a deliberate decision to become a martyr. Fourth Tempter betrays Becket’s own mind: to attain the glory of the saints, to dwell forever to enjoy the riches of heaven in presence of God, and to seek revenge against his oppressors. In order to achieve these objectives, Fourth Tempter advises Becket to seek martyrdom. He proceeds further:

"And see far off below you ... your prosecutors in timeless torment ... beyond expiation. (MITC. P.28)"

Now it is the turn of Becket to be shocked. He realises his wicked intentions; he wanted to be a martyr whether it is the will of god or not, and to enjoy the torment of his enemies, who will be far below his place in heaven. His
abstinence, arrogance and pride are directed at these irreligious motives. These are the dreams of damnation. Becket now repents that his soul is sick with sin, which will only lead to damnation. Vanity deserves torment in hell. Even if he drives out the sinful pride, aspiration for martyrdom is more sinful. He is in the state of dilemma. In this state of mind he can not respond to the present situation, by willing action or to remain passive to suffer without sin.

Becket's aspiration to renounce his life, with a sick soul, becomes almost equal to suicide, provided it is not the will of God. Christian doctrine condemns suicide:

...death should not be sought even to avoid sin. He denies that there are just causes and he concludes 'it is wicked to kill oneself.'

Thus a martyr not only faces death but also faces eternal damnation in the ordinary thought. This is the dilemma of Becket. There were not any actual tempters in Oedipus' life. But four fatal incidences which caused his fall worked like Tempters. Oedipus ran away from Corinth and his foster parents, in the prime of his youth, after hearing his fatal oracle. At a place where three highways meet, a herald and the driver of a chariot pushed him rudely. This is his first temptation. Oedipus in his violent anger killed four persons. Second temptation was to answer the riddle of the sphinx for relieving Thebans from her clutches. The third temptation was accepting kingship offered by Thebans. Fourth was marriage with Jocusta. King Oedipus faced similar dilemma. When he discovered that he had murdered his father, married his own mother and committed incest, he became miserable. Jocusta hangs herself. Oedipus faced dilemma whether to live or not to live. If he lived he could not see the sunlight and pollute it. Moreover Oedipus did show his sin ridden face to

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others. So he blinded himself to cut off himself from the living and the dead.

Wiseman among Pharisees called a meeting on the council and said. This man (Jesus) is performing many signs. If we let him go on like this every body would believe him and Roman would come and destroy both our holy place and our nation. Then Caiphas who was high priest said that, it was better to have one man die for the people than to have one whole nation killed. He also prophesied that Jesus was about to die to gather dispersed children of the god into one nation, (John 11: 45) Jesus prayed God many times at Gethsemane prior to his arrest:

Father, if this cannot pass from me unless I drink it, your will be done. So without any resistance he yielded to crucifixion. (Mathew: 26: 46.)

William James in Gifford in his lecture tells that:

There are two prominent religious minded men. Once born and twice born. Once born are Healthy minded and the other are the sick soul, who are deeply conscious of their own sinfulness and of the sinfulness of the world about them. They tend to prefer punishment to forgiveness, justice to mercy, righteousness to pleasure, Catholicism to Protestantism, Puritanism to either. They believe that there is wrong in this world, it must be squarely met and overcome and cleansed away by suffering.\textsuperscript{20}

Further N.J. Williams in, \textit{The Ideas of fall and Original sin} continues:

The sick soul, blessed or cursed, with mysterious heritage whose passions have been transformed, whose communion with God and peace of mind have been won through paroxysm of instantaneous conversion... by no effort or volition of his own\textsuperscript{21}

Becket wanted to avenge those who tormented him, and wished to see them from above the gulf. Thinking wicked is

\textsuperscript{20}Neville Coghill, \textit{The Family Reunion} (London: Faber & Faber Ltd. 1969) p. 52.

\textsuperscript{21}Ibid, p.53
equally sin as doing wicked. This alludes to the myth of Lazarus and dives. Dives was a rich man who feasted sumptuously everyday. A poor man Lazarus lied at his gate covered with sores, who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from rich man’s table. Lazarus died. Angel carried him to be with Abraham. The rich man also died, and he was tormented in hell. He looked up and asked Abraham to send Lazarus to him to dip his finger in water and cool his tongue.

Becket has no option left. Either he has to act for fruitful ends or suffer and be damned. In both the cases he will be the loser. He will neither get temporal power nor spiritual salvation. So he is perplexed. He does not know what to do. His intellect ceased to work. His condition is similar to that of Arjuna, in Bhagavad-Gita, who was also perplexed. He could not choose between fighting his cousins or to renounce worldly life. Becket with all his humiliation asks fourth tempter: ‘can I neither act nor suffer without perdition’? (MITC- p.29)

In the Bhagavad-Gita, Arjuna surrenders himself to Krishna to get a wise counsel. The fourth tempter, who is nothing but objective correlative of Thomas’ own thoughts advises him in the same words that Thomas said to priests soon after his entry into the dramatic scene.’ You know and do not know. What is to act or suffer?’ While performing an action of ones own duty, the will of the individual has to be absorbed within the objective will, which is the love of God, with such perfection, that action becomes passive suffering, subjectively motiveless. This is the answer of the tempter to Becket’s question. Selfless service, without aspiring for the fruit of action, done as a service to God, if it is his own duty, even action undertaken becomes inaction. For the similar reason suffering becomes action. This shows that poetic transformation of Indic thoughts is reflected in the late works of Eliot.
Eliot’s allusion to *The Bhagavad-Gita* becomes an affirmation of Christian faith, but in a comparative mode.\(^{22}\)

The fourth tempter, like Tierasius in *Oedipus the King* exposes sin. But Becket in the *Murder in the Cathedral* confesses his sickness of soul and pride. After The fourth tempter’s speech Chorus begins to sing:

> There is no rest in the house; there is no rest in the street I hear restless movement of feet.
> (MITC.p, 29)

In *The King Oedipus*, soon after Tierasius is gone, chorus chants about unrest in the royal palace. There was no rest on the street because of pestilence. Restless movements of feet are those of blind Oedipus’ own groping for path in darkness in future. Four Tempters together utter a chorus that:

> Man’s life is a cheat and a disappointment. All things are unreal...... Man passes from grim unreality to unreality’ (MITC.p, 50).

Though Tempters deliver this dialogue, the meaning, in contrast, is the attitude of Thomas to their earlier temptations. These words reflect Charles William’s abnegation of everything created and also reflect that the pure love for God only ensures salvation. Temptations, in Thomas’s opinion, are only illusions; which are unreal and dubious; they astray the spiritual goal of salvation. Only God is real. This thought takes us back to Indian Advaita philosopher Shankara’s preaching that the world is unreal while God is only real (*Brahma sathya jaganmithya*). The mood of the tempters reflects this sentiment as a chorus. Further lines of the chorus are still more interesting, pregnant with multiple meaning-denouncing together Becket, Oedipus, and modern men in pursuit of sensual pleasure:

This man is obstinate, blind, intent, passing from on to self destruction, deception to deception, from grandeur to grandeur to final illusion, lost in the wonder of his own greatness, the enemy of society, enemy of himself.' (MITC. P, 50)

The tone of these lines is as in The Waste Land: sterility, and this forms the core of the themes of Eliot’s later plays. Let us examine the first target of the chorus, Thomas. Four tempters one after another failed to lure him to their temptations. So he is obstinate. He does not take the benefit of their temptations, so he is blind. This attitude of Becket seems to be a deceptive to tempters because Thomas enjoyed these temptations earlier; he cherished pleasures of youth, political power, subjugated warring barons, and enjoyed vengeance against them. He had acted in vengeance unknowingly against bishops; and on those he did not like; he secretly cherished sainthood by willing martyrdom. Now by rejecting them he wanted to show grandeur. Now he is in the final illusion of attaining sainthood by wilful martyrdom which he will not achieve, because martyrdom is the will of God. He thinks himself above the king, barons, and worldly pleasures. That is why he is lost, in the wonder of his own greatness.

Lastly by taking stand against the king and allegiance to the pope of Rome, he has become enemy of British society. This act of treason will be punished by death; hence he is his own enemy. Its allusion can be found in Oedipus myth. Oedipus brought his misfortune on himself. He realised the oracle, professing his doom, by obstinately trying to avoid it. His flight from Corinth was to refute the oracle that presaged that he would kill his father. But he realised it by killing old Lauis where three roads meet. He answered the riddle of sphinx, delivered Thebans from her clutches, became the king of Thebes and married his own mother Jocusta. Oedipus’ achievements actually lead him to his doom. So he progressed from deception to deception, and finally to his own
destruction. Oedipus was very proud of his wisdom, achievement—grandiose one after the other. He was lost in his own wonder of greatness that ended in his doom. Pestilence to Thebes was brought by this sin of killing Lauis; thus he became the enemy of his society. Though Tierasius and Jocusta tried to prevent Oedipus from probing his birth, yet he obstinately pursued it and became the enemy of himself, where he discovered his true self as a patricide and as an incestuous husband. They also represent the mood of the Jewish leaders to hand over Jesus to Governor Pilate accusing him of blasphemy and to crucify him there on. It seems they accuse modern man in his mad rush to acquire modern gadgets to appease his sensual pleasures to stray the spiritual path, forget God, give himself to Satan, greed, violence, power and has become prey to stress and strain. He has now become an enemy to self and to society. Men in 'The Rock' lament: 'Where is our life that we have lost in living?' This is itself the voice of modernity.

The chorus of priests request Thomas not to yield to temptation in haste but to take his own time to think and decide. The chorus priests, chorus and tempters ask themselves alternatively, Chorus asks if the arrival of tempters is a signal for the greater danger. The priests worry about the safety of Archbishop; while the future of Thomas is depending on his own choice. They anticipate the attack from outside, while the enemy is inside Thomas, as ego, pride and ambition. All are concerned about the inevitability of death. The final temptation has been understood, but not overcome:

The drama is about to produce its peripatia—the turning point; when the action appearing to move in one direction takes another.  

23 Selected Poems (London: Faber and Faber, 1972) p. 107
Tempters are concerned if the mastiff prowls at the gate which is an allusion to the act of God. God threw out Adam and Eve, from the Garden of Eden. He kept a four headed dog and a rotating sword to prevent the re-entry of man. Wilful martyrdom of Becket will not avail heaven. The women of chorus sense the atmosphere of evil in the presence of the Tempters. They realise the futility of mundane life and show their dismay at the desire of Becket for self glory which will come after wilful martyrdom. Despair comes to the women, for if Becket destroys himself to fourth temptation; their last hope of salvation is gone:

O Thomas Archbishop, save us, save us. Save yourself that we may be saved; destroy yourself and we are destroyed. (MITC. p. 32)

Now Becket can see his way clearly that his motives and actions both must be right before the deed. Wilful martyrdom is sinful. But if it comes to him, as the will of God, without his acting to cause it, it can not be misconstrued. He declares:

Now my way clear, now is the meaning plain;
Temptation shall not come in this kind again.
(MITC.p, 32)

He decides not to take any action to avoid his death; but gives himself up totally to the will of God- his spiritual struggle is over and he has made his decision. And he confirms it thus:

Now I no longer act or suffer, to the sword’s end now my good angel, whom God appoints to be my guardian, hover over the sword’s points. (MITC. P, 33)

This scene is close to Christ’s prayer prior to his arrest and crucifixion. The chorus’ fears reflect the doubts of disciples, but the triumph of the tempters and Thomas’ silence are both temporary. Thomas’ decision is parallel to that of Christ on mount Gethsemane, ‘my father, if this can
not pass unless I drink it, your will be done'. Thomas surrendered his will to the will of God. But he knew that he had committed sin and sacrilege, so he offered himself for punishment: it might be suffering a cruel death. He exhorted his guardian angel to hover over the sword points. In Christian doctrine each man has a guardian angel who nudges spiritually strayed, back into their right path. Mysteriously Oedipus also had an angel whom Greek called daemon, who prompted him to blind himself. He went to the room in which Jocusta hanged herself unguided. He saw Jocusta hanging from the roof, strangled to death, he tore from her raiment the gold brooches, lifted them and smote full on his own eyeballs rendering himself blind. He suffered lamentation, ruin, shame and all earthly ills that can be named. The leader of the chorus asks Oedipus:

Who is the unearthly foe, which, with a bound of more than mortal range, hath made thine ill-starred life his prey? (CGD, Oates, p,

'The fourth tempter acts both as a tempter to misguide Becket and also as a guardian angel to help him to achieve gradual enlightenment, sudden resolution and simplification of his spiritual difficulties'. Martyrdom, in the way suggested by fourth tempter, according to Christian doctrine is abomination. He virtually advises to face voluntary death, which is forbidden by scriptures. Did Thomas make blunder not to act or suffer at swords' end? 'The dramatisation of Becket's agony through the Tempters is of high water mark of dramatic achievement in the entire history British Drama' Let us examine the case of Prophet Abraham the prophet of The Old Testament. God ordered him to offer his only son Isaac as a burnt offering. Abraham dragged a knife to kill his son.

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The angel from heaven ordered Abraham not to harm the boy. God was pleased with Abraham because he did not withhold his son from him. God blessed Abraham for he obeyed Him. Thus Abraham set aside the law of ethics:

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\text{Thou shall not kill; to obey the law of faith.}
\]

([Metzger] (Heb. 11.17-19. Genesis 22.3-4 pp 17-18)

Because it is a direct command from God; in the same way Becket made his will perfect to surrender to the will of God, to die, if it was will of God to make him a martyr.

Interlude is Becket’s last sermon at Canterbury in the early December to, Christmas morning 1170. It is the proximity of St. Stephens’s day, the recollection of another martyr of Canterbury, the Arch bishop Elphage, and it prepares the congregation for Thomas’ own fate, and to confirm that he has overcome the fourth temptation.

The first part of sermon deals with paradox: mourning and rejoicing on the Christmas day. The second part deals with the nature of martyrdom, demanding human affirmation: martyrs are created as a part of divine design. Christ’s sermon on mount follows immediately after temptations (Mathew). So the Christmas sermon of Thomas follows his temptations, making complete the enactment of Christ’s martyrdom. On the Christmas night a multitude of the heavenly hosts appeared before the Shepherds at Bethlehem. Becket begins his mass with exact words that angels used to address Shepherds:

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\text{Glory to God, in the highest, and on earth, peace to men of good will. (Mathew: II: 14.)}
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Peace has two aspects, the desire for quiet life and peace of identity with God. (Paul p 24) Lord Jesus said to his disciples. ‘Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you’. It is not the peace that world knows: Worldly peace. They went to journey afar, by land and sea, to suffer, know torture, imprisonment, disappointment, and to suffer death by martyrdom. It is the peace of identity with God.
In Christmas, Christians mourn for the sin of the world that has martyred Jesus; they rejoice that the Jesus offered his body and Blood to God in oblation and satisfaction of the God for the salvation of mankind. All Christian mass is the enactment of the Lord’s last supper ‘the Eucharist’. Jesus sat with his disciples for supper on the night of pass over, before he was arrested; he distributed pieces of bread and wine and asked them to eat it as his flesh and drink wine:

For, this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured for many, for the forgiveness of their sins. (Mathew: 26:30)

The martyrdom of Christ is itself a most modern, step considering his contemporary attitude of the society: ‘Tooth for the tooth; and nail for the nail’. Dying for those who kill him is unheard of. This denotes that Christ bears the sin of the world and suffers for it. His devotee will lead a faithful life compassionately thinking that if he sins again, Jesus will be hanged again. This act is enacted in Christian Mass. The bread and wine represent flesh and Blood of Jesus and are distributed by priest to all the attendees of mass. They symbolically become purified of their sins. It is an acknowledgement of forgiveness of sin by Jesus represented by the priest. The blood and body of Jesus becomes one with a Christian; this process is called ‘Holy communion’. The devotee confesses his sin before the priest in privacy as an act of repentance and performs some devotional penance prescribed by the priest. The priest condones the sins of the devotee, as a representative of Jesus. Thus a devotee becomes purged of the sin and the feeling of guilt and lives the life with a new vigour. Modern thinkers like Norman Vincent Peley feel:

We can cure the diseases of modernity like stress anxiety frustration despair, and others by prayer and faith. He preaches to love every one, hate none and prey God for every one. By this act we will feel strong. ( The Power of positive Thinking )
That is what exactly Becket in his sermon remembers Christ’s words:

Peace, I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you, as the world gives. (John: 14:27.)

Jesus had told his disciples what under similar circumstances Becket had also thought: Rise! Let us on our way. (John. 14:30-31.) Becket moves on the way, the way Christ treaded: to martyrdom.

The next day after Christmas we celebrate the martyrdom of his first martyr, the blessed Stephen. (MITC: 56.)

Thomas in his sermon preached these words which show the similarity in Stephen’s martyrdom with Jesus. ‘Stephen was full of grace and power. He did great wonders and signs among the people. Then some of those belonged to synagogue secretly instigated some men to say, “We have heard Stephen speaking blasphemous words against God and Moses”, before the council of elders’. (Acts: 56-60). Stephen boldly refuted the charges and made a long speech denouncing their act of persecuting prophets ‘Which of the prophets did your ancestors not persecute’? (Acts; 56-60) He saw the vision of Jesus standing to the right of God. While people stoned him to death he prayed: ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against these’ (Acts: 126.) The very name of Stephen attributes his qualities in Becket also- uncompromising faith in God, dauntless courage to express it even at the cost of his death, and his love for mankind, including his own killers, which is the new commandment of Jesus. Thomas elaborates that the martyr’s day is celebrated both as a mourning and rejoicing occasion. Mourning is for the sin of the world that has martyred them; rejoicing is for the fact that another soul is numbered among the saints in the heaven, for the glory of the God and for the salvation of mankind. Martyrdom is always the God’s design,
for the love of men, to warn them, to lead them and to bring them back to His ways. True martyr is 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 becoming a martyr. These lines prove that Becket has conquered all temptations and he is saved as Jesus said: ... 'And those who lose their life for my sake and for the sake of gospel will save it'. Becket concludes his sermon in the name of trinity, the father, the son and the Holy Ghost. The lost word Amen is ironic, as it terms equal to 'be it so'. It is to be taken as a prayer to God and God’s willingness to it. This is the sign post to the next phase of the drama.

The second part of the play opens with a lyric presentation of the passing of seasons which builds up dramatic tension of waiting. One year is ending and a new one is about to start. Symbol of fertility dominates; the chorus yearns for rebirth and renewal. The theme of death bringing renewal is emphasised liturgically in introits on saints and martyrs. They are objective correlatives of Thomas’ last sermon, which is one of the recurring themes of Eliot’s works: The world is cleansed by death in winter before rebirth in spring (Journey of the Magi). Eliot repeatedly indicates his prefers spiritual life than mundane in the following lines:

There is no permanent peace in this world, unless men keep peace with God. And war among men defiles this world, but death in the Lord renews it. (MITC, p.41)

The chorus explains the trivial nature of mundane world and is impatient over the long waiting for something tragic to turn up. 'There is growing understanding in the chorus that renewal comes through God and stresses the preparation for the

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renewal of life out of death'\textsuperscript{28}. The introits are part of Anglican service: a psalm or hymn sung as the minister enters the church at the beginning of the Anglican service of Holy Communion. They are used by Eliot to place English drama from where it began: Church. Their use brings analogy of similar situation in the myth of St. Stephen's martyrdom. Stephen was falsely accused by the temporal powers and was stoned to death. He forgave those who condemned him to death: a response relevant to Thomas' own position. 'Princes moreover did sit and did witness falsely against me' (MITC, p, 42) is in first introit, sung in background as if Stephen himself is complaining before God, but this is immediately followed by his kneeling down, and prayer crying with a loud voice: 'Lord lay not this sin to their charge' (MITC, p, 42) shows Eliot's passion towards Stephen. Eliot gives these parallels as if to build strong evidence, the way of the martyr has to tread and to be fearless of death and full of passion to mankind. They not only elevate Becket to high esteem but also justify his canonisation to sainthood. A repetition of "princes moreover did sit" as musical background suggests repetition of this act being continued in the life of Becket, and on some more to follow in future. (Psalm 119:23. Mark 15:56.). The introits of St. John, Holy Innocents make heart melting memory. "Out of the mouths of very babes, O God" (MITC, p, 43) the tune sets off the myth of Holy Innocents. When Jesus was born, some wise men from the East followed a bright star to meet infant Jesus. King Herod secretly called these wise men and asked them to inform him when they find Jesus. The wise men found Jesus paid their respect to him and left in another route without informing Herod. Jesus' worldly father, Jacob, took him and Mary to Egypt according to Lord's command. When Herod knew wise men cheated him, he ordered his soldiers to kill all children below two years in and around Jerusalem.

\textsuperscript{28}Ibid, p. 26
Knights are not mere persons, but are forces representing political powers to suppress the church. Tempters are actually knights in disguise; when their allurement failed, they come again to make false charges and threaten Becket to kill if he does not compromise. We see for the first time political and spiritual powers come face to face on the stage. The real action of the play begins from here onwards.

Whenever religious themes come before the audience, Eliot uses wide verities of biblical myths. Whenever temporal themes appear, a mere suggestion of Oedipus myth is hinted in dialogue or incidents. Direct reference to Oedipus is rarely found, except the use of chorus, use of poetry and form of Greek tragedy. But the resemblances are ample, vivid and extremely suggestive. Before the arrival of knights, the third priest delivers his cryptic dialogue 'the crucial moment ... The eternal design may appear' (MITC, p, 44). The eternal design fuses death of martyr and fall of Oedipus into one.

The temporal scene begins with the arrival of knights. They refuse the hospitality of the Cathedral, and rudely ask the senior priest to summon the archbishop immediately. When Becket arrives they start accusing him as a traitor speaking against the King Henry, and praising the king of France and the Pope. Even though king had pardoned Becket, the archbishop had excommunicated the bishops who coronated the prince, thus annulling the coronation itself. They communicate the king’s command to Becket to leave England. Becket counters the allegations as false and boldly refuses to leave England. Knights leave Cathedral reminding the priests that they will return soon.

In *Oedipus the King*, similar scene begins with the arrival of Tierasius. The vicinity of Oedipus makes him to realise that the central cause of pestilence and draught in Thebes, is no one but Oedipus himself. He conveys this message in riddles. But Oedipus does not understand him; he alleges
that Creon and Tierasius are conspiring against him to steal his thrown. Enraged Tierasius leaves the palace. Thus the scene is an eternal pattern of persecuting religious persons on false accusations. Jesus was also crucified in the same manner. Religious persons should not lose their heart on account of such ordeals. They should hold on to their ground firmly and face the situation with courage, for the history of mankind has shown that ‘truth alone triumphs not the untruth’, (‘Sathyameva jayathe na anrutham’).

Three Knights in chorus, make a series of accusations against Becket. These accusations ring as if Tierasius is accusing Oedipus:

You are the Archbishop in revolt against the king. In rebellion to the king and the law of the land. (MITC, p.46)

You Oedipus, in revolt, rose against king; you killed the guards of king as a rebellion and killed Lauis against the law of the Thebes. The knights accuse Becket:

You are the Archbishop made by the king, whom He set in your place to carry out his command. (MITC, p, 46)

When the Lauis had died, his son succeeded him as king. Lauis had handed over his newborn son to Shepherd to expose him to perish. ‘You are his servant, his tool and his jack’. This is to remind Oedipus that a son will always remain inferior in hierarchy to the father, his own vassal and offspring. ‘You wore his favour on your back’. When Oedipus was born against the prophecy, Lauis did not kill him, but handed over the infant to royal Shepherd. So Oedipus must be grateful to Lauis.

You had your honour all from his hand, him you had: The power, the seal and the ring’. (MITC, p, 46)

Oedipus killed his father in a street brawl and entered Thebes answered the sphinx, and inherited Lauis’ kingdom. To the elders of Thebes Oedipus was only a stranger but his
wisdom of answering the sphinx made him deserve the kingdom. Becket was only a tradesman’s son his brilliant mind and ability and loyalty won his post. ‘This is the man who was tradesman’s son: The backstairs brat who was born in Cheapside’. This refers to Oedipus’ secret childhood as son of Merope and Corinth’s king, who was probably less noble than Lauis’ of Cadmus stock.

‘This is the creature that crawled up on the king; swollen with blood and swollen with pride’. (MITC, p, 46) Oedipus is now disgusting as a creature since he has committed patricide, incest, and living like an animal with his mother. Oedipus was also proud of his wisdom.

‘Creeping out of London dirt, crawling up like a louse on your shirt’. (MITC, p, 46) Oedipus, a sinner in Cadmus lineage, is now like a worm, louse on a shirt which will be shaken and made fall down soon, as an outcaste.

‘The man, who cheated, swindled, lied, broke out his oath and betrayed his king’. (MITC, p, 47) Oedipus ran away from Corinth without telling his parents, thus he cheated his parents. He did not disclose his true identity to Thebans, nor confessed his crime before them. A son was supposed to be loyal to his parents. He broke this unsworn oath by killing his father and marrying his own mother, thus betraying king Lauis and king of Corinth.

Knights’ accusation resembles the trial of Jesus before King Herod. But the difference is that the Knights become the accusers, prosecutors, and executers all in one. Accusing Christians of treason, blasphemy and their persecution is an eternal pattern begun from Judea-Christian tradition. Jesus and Stephen were accused of blasphemy while Becket is accused of treason, rebellion, cheating, and his murder completes the enactment of Christ’s crucifixion. Becket denies all charges with resolution and tries to pacify the knights. But they insist Becket to absolve bishops or to flea England, which he
refuses. Thus Becket’s fate is sealed to death. This is a conflict between the State seeking supremacy over the church. In the case of Oedipus it is the conflict between the will of gods and human will. Jocusta, Laui and Oedipus tried to prevent the Delphic oracle being fulfilled. But everybody become instrument in its realisation. And those who tried to prevent it are taxed with great suffering.

Knights accuse Becket of causing strife abroad, and rising up false opinion on King Henry II. Oedipus with his patricide and incest caused strife between gods and Thebans; gods sent blight and pestilence to Thebes. Now turning towards Jesus’ own statement:

Do you think I come to earth to bring peace? But I tell you (to bring) rather division. From now on five in a house will be divided two against three. Father against son ... (Luke. 12: 50)

Knights mock at Becket by calling him by names of insult, such as tradesman’s son, Cheapside brat.... This act of knights has a parallel in Jesus’ trial. The men who were holding Jesus, blind folded him, began to beat, and kept asking him ‘prophesy! Who is that struck you’? They kept heaping insults on him. In the same way the elders of Jerusalem accuse Jesus before the Pilate thus:

We found this man ... forbidding us to pay taxes to the emperor, saying that he is himself messiah, a king. (Luke: 23)

Knights accuse Becket of running away from England to create strife between King Henry and King of France and revile king to the Pope. Actually Becket exiled himself due to the fear of death sentence. This has also a parallel to the life of Oedipus. He ran away from Corinth not to kill Laui but to escape from the sin of patricide as predicted by an oracle from Delphi. Becket’s running away created ill will between him and Henry while the same act proved fatal to Oedipus.
Knights accuse Becket of ungratefulness towards King Henry. The king had granted clemency to Becket, restored his calling, honour and possession. Becket was ungrateful. He deliberately excommunicated Bishops who coronated the prince in his absence. This act of Becket is like annulment of the coronation, and as an act of ingratitude to the king. In response to the grave charges especially that of denying to the prince his crown, Becket defends himself that it was not his wish to uncrown the King’s son. He does not stay the excommunication of bishops who coronated them, their act is annulled till they are absolved. Becket states that the coronation of the prince was the prerogative of archbishop. Bishops have done it out of greed and breached the tradition of the church. They have committed contempt of archbishop and, church and the Pope. So excommunication was ordered by pope; for this act he was not technically responsible, hence bishops must seek absolution from Pope.

This too has a parallel in Oedipus myth. The elders of Thebes unknowingly made Oedipus their king, married Jocusta with Oedipus. Oedipus hid his identity and his crime. Gods became angry with Thebans and sent pestilence and drought. That is what Oedipus gave them in return. In the same way Oedipus’ sin of patricide is pardonable according to the law of Dracon (unintentional murder in self defence), but not of incest, for which he must be exiled. Precisely that is what the king Henry intended to do with Becket, but Becket refused to obey. Becket’s fall was imminent because of his own fateful words; he spoke to the king before his exile:

My Lord, he said, I leave you as a man whom in this life I shall never see again. (MITC, p.7)

So by his own prediction his death was preordained. He has violated the command of the king, who according to Tudor myth is divine. It was the tradition of the church to die, if necessary to uphold the glory of the God represented by
church. Lastly it was the will of God. So also, the fate of Oedipus was imminent. He, as a King of Thebes and of the stock of Cadmus had cursed the slayer of Lauis, to be exiled. Oedipus himself was the slayer of Lauis, the former king of Thebes. He was a patricide and had also committed incest and beyond all it was the will of Zeus, prophesied through Apollo.

Becket refused to absolve the bishops, whom he had excommunicated; knights convey the king’s command to him to leave the country along with his servants. He had once left his country like a coward, spent miserable and painful life of a beggar on foreign charity for seven years. He could never live like it again. The only way left to him is to surrender his will to the will of God and face whatever that may come.

Never again, shall the sea run between the Shepherd and his fold. (MITC. 51)

Oedipus could not live in Thebes; if he did, the pestilence and draught would not end. He could not die because there in the Hades, (the abode of dead) he had to face the souls of his parents who would hate him. He could not live and tolerate the looks of men towards a sinner of unspeakable sin. So he pricked his eyes and asked Creon to exile him to Citheron Mountain. Both Oedipus and Becket suffered. Suffering brought wisdom. Submitting one’s will to the will of God is the greatest wisdom.

Knights warn that Becket is insulting king’s majesty and justice and brand him as insolent and mad man bent on curtailing king’s servants and ministers. Becket boldly says that he is not insulting the king as Becket from Cheapside. But it is Becket, the Archbishop, the law of the Christ’s church and Judgement of Rome doing so. One must appreciate Becket’s sense of duty and dedication to profession. Such persons are not for sale for money or threat from enemy. This sense of duty, courage during periods of crisis is derived from mythical heroes like Oedipus. Oedipus was angry with
Tierasius, he persisted him to reveal his identity, to deliver Thebes, what ever that would happen to himself; he would not care for that, such was the intensity of his love for his subjects. Leaders of democracy should develop this attitude towards their duty. It may not be realistic, but this is an example to place before the people to show what makes a good leader. The knowledge of suffering of these two people will belittle our trifle difficulties and of prepare us to face gravest of situations. Thus says Dale Carnegie:

Think over your problem, imagine the worst form of Outcome; that saves us from of most serious problems.

Knights threaten Becket with possible outcomes of his stubbornness:

Priest, you have spoken in peril of life; Priest, you have spoken in danger of the life; Priest, you have spoken treachery and treason. (MITC, p.52)

Becket declares his final decision in briefest words and exits:

I submit my cause to the judgement of the Rome But if you kill me, I shall rise from my tomb to submit my cause before God's throne. (MITC, p. 52)

Oedipus on the other hand, did not have any body to judge on him, he was the victim of his own curse and his preordained fate of doom by Gods. However he requested Creon, to send him to Citheron. The horror is the result of patterns and acts laid down in the deep places of the self, unredeemed as yet by spiritual insight or wisdom. But the decision of Becket awakens them from uttermost death of spirit, from final ecstasy of waste and shame. Chorus is now enlightened. It confesses:

O Lord Archbishop O Thomas archbishop, forgive us for give us, prey for us that we may pray for you out of our shame. (MITC, p. 52)
The awareness of God's design will come in the moment of understanding, at the still point, brought about by the death of a martyr. A parallel to this moment can be traced in the Christ's crucifixion. The soldiers led Jesus to skull (mountain) in place called Golgotha. A great number of the people followed him and among them were women who were beating their breasts and wailing for him. But Jesus turned to them and said: 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not cry for me but cry for yourself and for your children'. (Luke: 26.) For a moment chorus are disgusted with their physical lives and are prepared for their vision of the greater spiritual reality. Thomas arrives and consoles them that, time will dull the memory of their pain and makes a significant comment:

...But know that another shall pierce you with sudden painful joy when the figure God's purpose is made complete. (MITC.p, 55)

Sudden painful joy is a paradox. Soon Thomas is going to be killed is painful fact; but birth of a martyr and saint who can pray for the sins of the world is joy. We can see this parallel in the myth of Oedipus also. Messenger from Corinth delivers the death of Polybus thus:

From Corinth: and at the message... thou rejoice-doubtless: yet haply grieve.29

Both Jocusta and Oedipus were on the verge of becoming irreligious. Jocusta dismisses oracles as mere fumbling of priestess. When she heard from messenger of Corinth of the fact that Polybus, whom Oedipus said was his father, was dead of old age, her joy reached no bound. She exclaimed:

Ye oracles of the gods, where stand ye now... lest he should slay him (his father), has died in course of destiny, not by his hand.30

30 Ibid.p.397
At that time Oedipus also makes a derogatory statement: 'But the oracles, they are worth naught'. But this attitude was against the Greek sentiment. Chorus think the other way:

The old prophecies concerning Laus is fading... the worship of Gods is perishing.31

It is a defeat of their gods and Greek tradition. If the oracle about Laus is found false though it brings joy to Oedipus, it is painful to Greek sentiment. When they are proved true though it was painful to Oedipus, Greek sentiment will rejoice for the fact that their God Apollo is not false: oracles are not fitful utterances of a prophetess.

At this juncture Becket speaks another significant statement, which relates to making of historical myths out of a general event:

They will seem unreal. Human kind can not bear very much reality. (MITC, p. 55)

When the stories of historical persons like Becket, Jesus, and Buddha are retold, with a little bit of fiction added in each generation, a stage comes to believe that they were not human beings. They will think the events attributed to them as unreal. Later Becket's tomb became a holy place of pilgrimage and the stories of miracles were heard; Becket was canonised to sainthood. Thus Becket was deified. Oedipus also in his old age assumed some divinity. This happened in case of Jesus also that the message spread that Jesus' body was not found where it was buried. So also it is mentioned in Eliot's The Waste Land:

When I count, there are only you and I together... but who is that on the other side of you.32

'Human kind can not bear reality' this statement's reality was immediately discovered. When the knights returned

31 Ibid. 397.
to Cathedral, Priests were terrified. Priests urge Becket to move to the altar immediately. Priests knew that Becket will be killed. Becket had already told them that he will be killed. Though drunken knights had come with swords, he was not at all disturbed at this reality, because he was already deified. Priests were only 'human kind' could not bear the same reality. Becket had made perfect his will while priest and chorus did not because they were still Humans. When Tierasius told Oedipus 'you are the one whom you are seeking' he did not believe his words, because he too was on human plane only. Jesus very much knew that he would be put to cross, that was the divine design; he knew it. He was born to die and to prove the glory of God. When he was put on cross he shouted before dying, 'my God, my God, why have you forsaken me'? This puzzles the readers. Did Christ anticipate intervention of God to save him? Acharya Rajneesh, known as Osho later, interprets that Jesus was enlightened, made his will perfect, only after his last cry. Jesus on human plane could not bear the reality of being crucified.

Knights re-enter armed with swords, priests panic; they urge Becket to go to the altar. 'To the altar, to the altar', (MITC, p.55) they asked Becket. Altar is a place where priests perform rites. In pre-Christian days, animals were sacrificed for God on altars. It is the religious belief that a person who goes to the altars actually seeking protection from God. Such persons will not be killed either by humans or by the evil spirits, because then the act becomes human sacrifice which is prohibited by all religions. Greeks also respected this sentiment. So priests urged Becket to take refuge at the altar; he refused to do so. Priests feared that otherwise knights will kill him. Then Becket said:

No life is here sought for but mine, and I am not in danger; only near to death. (MITC, p.56)

Thus said Jesus Christ:
For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. (the Bible)

What danger could affect Becket? The real danger to mortals is damnation to perpetual hell of fire, by denying Christ. Then priests urge him to go with them to vesper in the cathedral. Vesper is a place in the Cathedral where evening prayers are said. Becket asks priests to remember him in their vespers while he would remain in the church. Thus the lives of priests would be saved while he is already enjoying the ‘tremor of bliss, a wink of heaven; a whisper’. Stephen also had a wink of heaven before he had been stoned to death.

Priests’ worldly fear, thus makes obstructions to Becket’s spiritual attainment of martyrdom; which death to physical world. In the case of Oedipus, obstructions do appear to know the slayer of Lauis: himself. Priests forcefully drag Becket to cathedral. Chorus laments over the possible violence by knights on Becket:

Numb the hand, and dry the eyelids, still the horror, but more the horror, than tearing the belly... than when splitting the skull. (MITC-p.57)

This is an allusion to the act of a soldier who pierced the lance though the Jesus to confirm the death. The word ‘tearing the belly’ also alludes to mindless violence that Argos army let lose on Troy, which is foretold by prophet Calchas as ‘two eagles tear opened a pregnant hare and ate the still born womb in it’. And it also refers to the mindless violence perpetrated on mankind during First World War.

The agents of hell disappear, the human, they shrink and dissolve into dust on the wind, forgotten, unmemorable. (MITC, p.57)

The chorus curse the knights as agents of hell. They will shrink and dissolve into dust on the wind. And they will be properly punished in the hell after judgements. What the chorus cursing is the evil in man- the cruelty perpetuated on the innocent humanity during the First World War, pitying
women, widows and old men who were left behind the dead soldiers. The chorus represent such poor women. The technique of, the play within play' represents it. The chorus also represent common mankind who fear the hell that all are bound to reach after death where their will be unending suffering for sins committed during their life. Chorus fears that who would help them there? Who will plead for them? 'We fear, we fear, who shall plead for me? Who intercede for me, in my most need'? (MITC- p. 58)

Chorus finds a solution. It is the Jesus, who died on cross, which died for the sin of the mankind, can really help them:

Dead upon the tree, my saviour, let not be in vain thy labour; help me, my Lord... (MITC- p. 58)

This is the stage where men elevate themselves from banal to spiritual. When men begin to think about God his spiritual journey begins. So they seek the protection of Jesus from damnation.

In the next scene inside the Cathedral priest bar the doors from inside so that knights can not enter it. And they feel safe and secure, because: They dare not break in... (MITC- P.58)

It is by conventionally accepted that no soldiers with weapons should enter the house of the Lord, the church, or a Cathedral and capture even criminals, who has sought asylum there, because, they are sanctuaries. Even church authorities can not drive them out unless they go out voluntarily. This is a convention even among Greeks Orestes in Eumenides; Creusa in Ion took refuge behind the altars of Apollo. Every religion forbids violence and bloodshed in the house of God.

But Becket orders the priests to unbar the Cathedral doors and opens them in accordance to tenets of Christianity. The house of Lord should be open to all even to its enemies. Becket is not afraid of knights because he was ready to die:
'I give my life, to the law of God, above the law of man'.
/MITC, p.59/ 
These lines refer to Oedipus' insisting Tierasius to tell the truth about the slayer of Lauis, unmindful of what ever may happen to him. 'Nay, if I deliver this town, I care not'. Becket makes one more statement which is true of all time.

It is not in time that my death shall be known it is out of time that my decision is taken .... To which my whole being gives entire consent. (MITC-59)

The conflict between Henry and Becket is only a pattern. In fact it is the conflict between evil and good; ultimately the triumph will be of good only. It is true of the case of Jesus and head priests, of Oedipus and Delphic oracle. So this conflict may not be seen within a fixed period of time. Such conflicts recur again and again:

...conquer beast now, by suffering. This is easier victory. (MICT- 59)

Knights are soldiers. They only know how to fight worldly wars and win with weapons. But Becket and priests are servants of God; love, non-violence and compassions are their weapons. They can conquer only by the changing the heart of their foes. For this purpose they have to suffer. Suffering brings final victory: the victory of the weak over strong. This is the way Buddha and Christ preached and practised. This victory by non-violence is not only a dogma, Indians achieved this victory over mighty English, under the leadership of Gandhi; South African coloured persons did it with Mandela as their leader. Thus non violence and suffering is the strongest weapon of the weakest: still relevant in this violence ridden world.

'Open the door'. (MICT-59) Becket orders as an authority. The doors are opened; drunken knights enter the

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holy Cathedral with swords, and begin to taunt Becket singing jazz song.

Where is the Becket, the traitor to the king? ... Come down Daniel to the Lion's den. Come down Daniel... (MITC: 69)

They again repeat the former allegation of treachery and meddling in administration. He did not support Henry with Clarendine laws. So there is punishment, as Daniel was punished for not worshiping the emperor Darius. When Darius ruled the whole of Persia, Daniel was one of the presidents of the empire who was very dear to him. Jealous courtiers, satraps and presidents compelled Darius to sign an ordinance that makes any one that worships any God other than emperor will be pushed down to lions den. Daniel used to kneel down and pray his God three times a day. Daniel was caught while kneeling in prayer and was thrown into lions' den; the den was shut with a stone. King sealed it with his own signet and the signet of the lords after the break of day, Daniel came out of den unhurt. Knights make this reference because armed knights are about to kill Becket. This they indicate by another important phrase:

'Come down Daniel for the mark of the beast'. (MITC, p.60)

Before the arrival of the kingdom of God, before doom, a second beast was created. It advocated the worship of the First beast. Those who declined to do so were killed. It marked everybody who worshipped the beast on the right hand or on the fore head. After this an angel coming out of heaven, captured the beast and a false prophet, and they were thrown into the lake of fire. The angel, who raided the horse, killed all those who had the mark of the beast. References to these two Biblical myths show that in either way Becket's death is inevitable. Beasts are king and knights. If Becket makes a compromise, he will be marked for the beast and the angel riding the horse will kill him; if he does not compromise and
come before the knights, courageously like Daniel, they will kill him. Death is a necessity as represented in Greek sentiment.

Knights sing another reference regarding the myth of Daniel:

> Are you washed in the blood of the lamb? ... Mark of the beast? Come down Daniel to the lions’ den. ...join the feast. (MITC-p. 60)

Daniel was companion to the king Cyrus who had killed a dragon whom Babylonians worshipped as God. So they demanded their king to push Daniel into lions’ den. Their king did so. After seven days the den was opened. Daniel was safe. 'Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb'? (MITC-p.60) this is another taunt of drunken knights. Revelation in New Testament refers the Christ as the Lamb. He has a list of one hundred forty four thousand names whose souls will be saved from the torment of the hell. 'The blood of the Lamb', refers to the blood, shed by Christ, in atonement for the sin of the mankind. One who dies to the name of Christ and the church is supposed to have been washed away by the blood of the lamb and they are separated and sent to heaven. Thus God reconcile with Becket by giving him sainthood. Knights further question:

> Where is Becket the Cheapside brat? Where is the Becket, faithless priest? (MITC. p. 60)

Becket was a merchant’s son in Cheapside, knights point out this to show Becket’s humble birth. Faithless, in their sense, Becket has no faith in their king. In Oedipus the King, Oedipus and Jocusta had made fun of Delphic oracle and reduced them to nothing, and about to become faithless. Now faithless really becomes faithful; in the same way 'the spring time fancy' of Becket matured into dedicated faith in God.

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Now armed and drunken knights look for Becket. They challenge him to come before them. He boldly faces them and answers. First he calls them and reveals his place. He says he is as bold as a lion because he is just, that is how a just person must be. He is not afraid because he was not an ordinary person. He is a Christian priest saved from damnation by the blood of the Christ. In return he is ready to suffer with his own blood:

This is the sign of the church always. The sign of blood, Blood for blood. (MITC, p.60)

This non violent offering of life for others is alien to the Greek tradition. “Blood for blood” phrase is used usually used to avenge the murder with another murder: in a sense it is the retribution. In *Murder in the Cathedral* killing is both an act and a ritual. It is an act of murder for knights; a ritual—a sacrifice for Becket. It is a ritual because Christianity believes crucifixion as a ritual of self sacrifice by Christ so that other Christians may live:

- His (Christ’s) blood given to buy my life
- My blood given to pay for his death
- My death for his death. (MITC, p, 60-61)

Every Christian owes his blood to the blood of Christ. Only the sincere and the devoted to the cause of Christ will offer his death for Christ’s death. This act is an evolution over *The Old Testament*’s way of life: an eye for an eye and a tooth for tooth. This is the way of the gay Tom; the Cheapside brat, who elevated himself to a level of holy Thomas.

Relentlessly knights make four demands to let Thomas alive:

- Absolve all those you have excommunicated, resign the powers you have arrogated.... Restore the king the monies you appropriated. Renew the obedience you have violated. (MITC. p, 61)

These are all impossible tasks; if accepted to obey the king simply means accepting king’s law above the law of God.
If these commands are not obeyed knights will kill him. Becket is ready to die:

For my Lord, I am ready to die, that his church may have peace and liberty Do with me as you will, to your hurt and shame. (MITC, p.61)

Becket preferred to die, so that conflict between church and state may end. He prepares all the documents ready and signs them. Thus he does not neglect his temporal duty as well. And he takes care of priests and others who worked for him, by ordering knights not to harm anybody other than himself:

But none of my people... shall you touch. This I forbid. (MITC.p, 61)

The three knights, in chorus, accuse Becket as a traitor to the king, a rebel against the law of the land, a cheat, Swindler, and liar, who broke his oath and betrayed the King, in the same way characters in Oedipus the King bring out the sinner in Oedipus as the knights also bring out vices of Becket.

Just as Becket becomes ready to die, Oedipus voluntarily inflicts blindness on himself, asks Creon to look after his daughters, and to expel him to Citheron Mountain, where Lauis wanted to expose him.

But for me--- never let this city of my sire to be condemned to have me dwelling there in , while I live on, suffer me to abide on the hills...........35

So that Thebes will get rid of pestilence and drought. Becket dispassionately takes death as a divine design,—will of God. We can see similar sentiment expressed by Oedipus, who brought down himself, such a severe condition that chorus considers death would have been better for Oedipus. Knights

in chorus charge Becket three times, ‘Traitor! Traitor! Traitor!’ (MITC. P, 61)

Their intention was to point out three aspects of Becket which King Henry thinks as treasons. They are non-co-operation towards Clarendine bill, stirring up strife between the king and the Pope and ex-communication of bishops who coronated the prince.

Oedipus accepts his three deadly sins; accursed in birth: Lauis was forbidden by an oracle to beget a son; accursed in wedlock, by marrying his own mother committed incest; accursed in shedding the blood of his father—he had committed patricide.

Becket is alleged to have appropriated money, suspended clergy who was supporting the king, annulled coronation of prince, for these reasons he was called a renegade. Becket is unwilling to accept the commands of the king or else leave England; death is what the knights owed to Becket.

While knights approach Becket to kill him he invokes the names of almighty God, the blessed Mary, Apostles, saints and martyrs. He also utters that he is dying to the cause of the church. Invoking the name of God during the time of distress and at the time of death is devotion, and a ritual that brings grace ensures salvation. All religions believe so. It is the foremost of all the commandments in the commandments:

You shall love the Lord your God, with all your, heart, with all your soul, with your entire mind.
(Mathew: 22: 37-38.)

There are many myths about invoking the name of the God at the time of death. It will attain one to heaven. Ajamila was wicked person. There was not a sin that he did not commit. At the time of his death he called his son by his name ‘Narayana’ which was equal to invoke the name of God; he was sent to heaven. The Bhagavad-Gita says:
And whoever, at the end of his life, quits his life, quits his body remembering me alone, at once attains my nature.  

Jesus invoked the name of God thus just before death and was resurrected: 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Mathew) Oedipus in his old age at Colonus in Athens was almost deified in death. He sought asylum and protection from Theseus, King of Athens. He told his children: 'The winged thunder of Zeus will lead me anon to Hades'. He showed where he was to be buried and died. Athens would be guarded by his spirit so that she would not face any calamity or draught.

The deification of Becket begins with the following words of the priest:

--- From what far off place
Do you look down upon us. (MITC, P. 68)

The inherent meaning triggers again the myth of Lazarus and Dives. He believes that Becket will secure a place in heaven. Similarly long after the suffering Oedipus became acceptable to gods. Priests also predict that the church lies be rifted; Eliot, the modernist, also finds a world bereft of God:

Alone, desecrated, desolated, and the heathens shall build on the ruins their world without gods I see it, I see it. (MITC, p.68)

The priest gives a hint on modern world's political ideologies which are against godliness like communism, socialism and secularism. Suddenly he becomes optimistic, faith restored, he now believes that:

The church is stronger for this action, triumphant in adversity. It is fortified by persecution: supreme as long as men will die for it. (MITC, p.69)

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Christ fortified Christianity, by dying for sinners; it thrived as more and more martyrs offered their blood. The chorus feels soiled by a mysterious sense of blood everywhere and prays to be cleansed which refers to seals and wrath unleashed by God before doom in the New Testament, Revelation. 'A land of barren boughs................. (MITC, p.72) In Dante's, *The Divine Comedy*, there is a description of a forest of trees whose boughs bleed when they are broken. The repeated imagery of blood suggests that the whole world is foul; it needs cleansing.

Knights address the audience to justify their act of violence in order to disgrace Becket before them. They put forward a series of arguments. First, Becket betrayed the king by opposing reforms, related to bring peace to the land. By eliminating Becket they served the cause of democracy: the rights of civil power over that of the church. They conclude their speech by declaring that Becket provoked them to kill him. Hence English people must consider him as insane and his death, as an act of suicide.

The priests lament their loss of their guide and protector and ultimately realise that Becket's death will bring a new strength to church. This attitude fits for the modern world also. Even this spirit was inherent in Greeks, as Euripides reveals in *Alcestis*:

Pleasures of youth, nobility, and heroic death are befitting answer, to the invincibility of death.

Although knights try to misguide the audience, none comes under their influence. Instead the martyrdom of Becket fertilises the lives of the common mankind represented by chorus. They beg to be forgiven for their cowardice and blindness. They realise that they too are responsible for the blood of the martyr and agony of the saints. The sense of

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collective responsibility is most modern concept which is very much necessary in the contemporary World which is facing many problems like Globalisation, Liberalisation and Terrorism. These are the problem of world communities which can be solved not by legislation alone but by participation of ordinary men in public affairs realising their responsibilities and exercising their will by conscious choice. Finally the chorus begs, for the blessings of Thomas:

Lord, have mercy upon us,
Christ, have mercy upon us,
Lord, have mercy upon us,
Blessed Thomas, pray for us. (MITC, p.72)

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