PREFACE

The aim of this dissertation is to attempt a comparative study of the concept of culture held by Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot as revealed mainly in their prose works.

It is very interesting to observe in the study of literature the changes of outlook which govern the human mind from time to time. Among the early 20th Century writers, the Victorian idea of permanence of institutions was displaced by a sense of universal mutability. There was a spiritual vacuum. Western Europe became morally and mentally frustrated.

The concept of culture became important to the tradition of social criticism. Artistic imagination was represented as a moral force in society by this criticism. It became important as a fundamental mechanism for social change. The history of the concept of culture is complex. The complexities of culture became an important tool of analysis in the hands of the social scientists of the 20th
In the 19th century, the concept of culture was largely the province of literary intellectuals who used it as a central feature of the tradition of protest and discontent. The concept of culture was a commentary on social organization.

Matthew Arnold gave to the notion of culture its most clear and forceful expression in the mid-Victorian period in England. He defined culture as "a pursuit of total perfection". It consisted in "getting to know, on matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world". An attempt has been made to study the progress of Arnold's mental and spiritual development through a study of his concept of perfection.

Matthew Arnold sought to establish an ideal pattern of harmonious perfection for the individual and for the whole society in his writings. Culture begins as a substitute for faith in religion and ends by providing a framework for all activities of life.

Culture has come to be defined as the conscious, strenuous and prolonged effort to attain the ideal nature of the human being. This sense of culture invokes the classical ideal of the Renaissance humanism. It stresses
the ideal of an end which takes us beyond individual perfection to the creation of a society of perfected individuals.

T.S. Eliot was a Platonist in as much as he felt that social justice involved class stability, together with an acceptance of religious, cultural values as valuable in themselves. Eliot views culture as an incarnation of the religion of the people. Eliot's fundamentally conservative conclusion leads him substantially to what now obtains in society. This makes him condemn the pressure for a classless society and for a national educational system. His concern for intellectual values in a stable society demonstrates the changes that have been taking place in England from 1900 to 1948. Eliot's theory of elite is only a refinement of social laissez-faire. Eliot adopted an aggressive stance on his claim that our traditional culture should be confined to the members of a class-based elites.

He emphasized the sense in which culture may be a "whole way of life". Raymond Williams severely attacks this position saying that it is an attempt to rationalise two major value-positions which dominate increasingly Eliot's outlook on life: conservatism and Anglo-Catholicism. This
concept of culture as a whole way of life has gained prominence in 20th century anthropology and sociology. Eliot recognised that culture cannot be transmitted merely through a formal system of education. Eliot speaks of 'minority' culture and recognises the vital relationship in the English society between the minority culture and the social institutions of the family and the educational system. The cultural domination of the ruling classes is thus provided a sanction by Eliot. His basic objection to the spreading of the minority culture throughout the general population was that it would lower the standards and degrade the quality of that culture.

Eliot presses for a return to a Christian society. Any real measure of political democracy is rejected. The animating power of religion is dominant in Eliot's society. The family is the main channel of primary socialization and medium for the transmission of culture.

An attempt has been made in this study to bring out Arnold's abiding influence on Eliot's way of thinking as also the influence of Anglo-Catholicism which led Eliot to a position which has not been properly understood.
The history of the concept of culture is a record of the relations in thought and feeling, to the changed conditions of common life. We continually live in a transitional society and the idea of culture, too often, has been identified with one or other of the forces which mark the transition.

The dissertation tries to interpret the above concepts of culture from an oriental point of view. Two aspects stand out prominently in this regard. First, Matthew Arnold's insistence on the "best self" reminds us of the Indian concept of the higher self stressed by Hinduism. This higher self is identified with the Divine element existing as a spark in every man. It is the best self of the individuals that must be entrusted with the task of governing the country. The action of this best self is characterized by 'disinterestedness'. Secondly, Eliot's treatment of the elites and the importance of the family as the only proper medium for the transmission of culture leads one to the concept of 'Swadharma' as directed by 'Swabhava' in Hinduism.

Both Arnold and Eliot refer to the "Song-celestial" while talking of the importance of disinterestedness which a very few highly civilized individuals can achieve. The concept of "the best that has been thought and said"
emphasized by both the writers, leads one to think of the aim of life, as stressed by Hinduism, namely self realization, or, in other words, the attainment of the state of "Stitha Pragna".

Matthew Arnold and T.S.Eliot have been chosen for the study as they most clearly present a vision of society associated with and 'living' the values dictated by a comprehensive view of culture. They can be said to be typical representatives of Victorian and modern England. Attention is focussed on the concept of culture as employed only by the English literary intellectuals since the mid-nineteenth century and the two authors are selected as typical representatives of the period.

The plan of the dissertation is as follows:

The introductory chapter traces the progress and development through the ages of the concept of culture, the changes in the semantics of the term 'culture' and the contribution to this concept by the various writers down the ages. The Marxist theory of culture, in particular, has been dealt with in a detailed manner since the Marxists claim to be the torch-bearers of culture at the present time. Also, the ideological and political limitations of the literary tradition associated with the concept of culture have been discussed.
The second chapter presents, in detail, the social, political, economic and religious conditions in England in the Victorian Era which ultimately led to the composition of "Culture and Anarchy" by Matthew Arnold. Some of the important movements that characterized the age like Utilitarianism, Logical Positivism, the Oxford Movement and the various democratic experiments have also been dealt with in this chapter. The reaction to these movements on the part of the intellectuals like Cardinal Newman, Ruskin, Carlyle, and Charles Dickens has also been taken into account.

The third chapter describes the gradual development in the intellectual outlook of Matthew Arnold resulting in his final stand on culture. The impact the other intellectuals had on the outlook of Matthew Arnold, notably his father Dr. Thomas Arnold, Cardinal Newman, Ruskin, Carlyle, Mill and certain other European writers has also been discussed. Some of his major poems which show his conflict and mental growth have also been referred to, especially the way these poems indicate his notions of disinterestedness and detachment.

Matthew Arnold's major work in the field of social criticism "Culture and Anarchy" in which his concept of culture is elucidated, is the subject of the fourth chapter.
An attempt has been made to bring out his comprehensive vision. The progress of Matthew Arnold's mental and spiritual development was directed towards his concept of perfection. All efforts of Matthew Arnold are directed towards establishing an ideal pattern of harmonious and total perfection for the individual and for the whole society. This is the culmination of his struggle to find the meaning and significance of life.

The fifth chapter deals with the literary influences that worked on Eliot. Eliot's range of studies and frame of reference are very wide and diverse, cosmopolitan in space and universal in time. From the Bible to Irving Babbitt and Donne to Baudelaire, there is a wide range of references from each of which Eliot has derived some sort of inspiration. The whole culture of Europe from the Greaco-Roman origins to the evolving Christendom has been his sphere of work and interest.

The sixth chapter is devoted to a discussion of Eliot's concept of culture as disclosed in his "Notes towards the Definition of Culture". This follows the examination of Matthew Arnold's concept of culture in the fourth chapter. This discussion inevitably led to the tracing of the connection between "The Idea of a Christian Society" and "Notes
towards the Definition of Culture". The former has a close link with the latter as defining Eliot's views regarding a Christian society and its culture.

The penultimate chapter makes a comparative study of the concepts of culture held by Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot. It is worthwhile to study how the master minds of the 19th and 20th centuries approached the problem of culture in its various aspects. Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot exerted a decisive influence on the literary taste of their respective ages. They both had an unusual consciousness of their role as reformers and prophets of culture which they considered as their mission in life. This self-awareness is revealed in their poetry, literary and social criticism. Eliot's sharp awareness of Arnold as the spokesman for an age shaped his critical sensibility. Religion, politics, education, state, class and elite are considered by both the writers as various aspects of culture and the views of the two writers regarding these aspects are compared and contrasted. Finally, C.P. Snow's work in the field of culture is also touched upon.

The concluding chapter points out how Matthew Arnold and T.S. Eliot assimilated the Eastern influences. Both preached the value of disinterestedness which is of a more positive nature than the Greek ideal of stoicism.
The aim of both these writers was to have a current of fresh air, derived from a study of the best that is thought and written, blow away stock ideas and notions and thus lead to refinement and perfection. Action for the sake of the Divine and not for the sake of human 'fruit' is the essence of Hindu philosophy. Right from birth to death, a Hindu is steeped in this. His life is a quest to know the Real, the Absolute and bring it down and make it prevail.

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