CHAPTER VII
CONCLUSION

In the early twentieth century, perhaps, more than ever before, social implications are deeply entangled in the psychological make-up of the people. There is a torturing impact of such a life upon the lonely individual beneath all the slogans of Eliot's age --- scientific programmes, humanitarian movement etc. --- there lived the essential sickness and agony of the human heart and soul. The loss of valves led to the mood of disillusionment. As a result the modern man leads a broken life.

The very atmosphere during the early twentieth century was unpredictable. The industrialised European society became highly commercialised and highly competitive. There was Mammon worship everywhere and social status based on money was given much importance to the exclusion of moral and spiritual values. Human relationships were also not established on sound lines. As G.H. Bantock says:

The effect of this was to reduce man to the level of economic man, on whose psychological motivations were thought of largely in terms of self interest.¹

Human values have degenerated the human relationships. With this loss has come about a feeling of loss of a sense of identity and rootlessness. This in a way, led to a vortex of broken passions, lusts, hopes, fears and horrors. The effective portrait of the period is to be found in W.B. Yeats' poem, The Second Coming, particularly the following lines:

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed, tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity," (1-6)

Eliot concerns himself with the impact of this on man. His poems depict the loss of identity experienced by man who suffers from loneliness, frustration and despair. Particularly, the poems Preludes, The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, Portrait of a Lady, The Waste Land and The Hollow Men -- present man's loss of identity through powerful images which Eliot most sagaciously employs.

'Winter evening,' 'burnt-out ends,' 'broken blinds,'  
'griny scraps,' 'muddy feet,' 'faint smell of bear' suggest the theme of decay in urban life. The city dwellers seem to have

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been caught up in the dreary existence of mechanised and industrial culture. This is realised in Preludes.

The protagonist in The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock is a typical modern man. The imagery used by the poet in the monologue symbolises the mental state of the central figure. "A Patient etherised upon a table" symbolises Prufrock's state of mind -- death-in-life. The images like 'fog' and 'cat' suggest Prufrock's indecisiveness and laziness. The over-elaborated image of 'cat' suggests his search for comfort and his inability to face the unpleasant realities of life. "Measured out my life with coffee spoons" suggests the boredom, triviality and futility of modern life. Through various animal-imagery and sea-imagery like 'pair of ragged claws,' 'cat' and 'oyster shells' the poet suggests protagonist's helpless state and his desire to escape the harsh realities of life. There is no expression of love in the monologue but only meaningless and futile yearning for love. The images in the poem together show man's loss of identity.

In Portrait of a Lady, images of 'smoke' and 'fog' are used to express the theme of sterile emotions or loss of human identity of the central figures. The 'April Sunset', 'broken violen,' 'tobacco trance' suggest the theme of inner disharmony and the difficulty of establishing a happy relationship based on love. Therefore in modern life the human identity is invisible because all values which characterise that identity are either ignored or neglected.
The picture of 'Unreal City' with the intolerable burden of modern city life, its lack of purpose and direction, its lack of beliefs and values is presented in The Waste Land resulting in its "heap of broken images." The images of 'stony rubbish,' 'broken tent,' 'the departed nympha,' empty bottles, 'cigarette ends' suggest the theme of exhaustion.

In The Hollow Men, images like 'stuffed men,' 'dried voice,' 'wind in dry grass,' 'broken blinds,' 'dead land,' 'cactus,' 'broken jar,' convey the theme of impoverished life. Men are hollow and they have lost their religious and political identity. They have no faith in the higher values of life.

In all the poems chosen for special study, the protagonists are unable to take any concrete action. They indulge in reveries without any purpose. Love does not have any meaning in life. They cause the barrenness of the Waste land.

However dark and dismal is the picture of modern life that The Waste Land presents, the poem is not without a ray of hope. There are images of 'the red rock' and 'drowned phoenician sailor' which suggest a ray of hope. In "What the Thunder Said," the clouds of Himavath suggest through three-fold meaning of 'Da' an approaching relief from the torments and hence the possibility of recovering the lost heritage and harmony, descard and distress.
It is also important to note that Eliot has not glorified the past at the expense of the present. He rather exposed the 'resembling contrasts' between the past and the present. Especially his poem The Waste Land contains "all centuries and all ages." Anxiety and disillusion has always been there in every age, and the remedy has always been a restoration of faith. The evils of man's preoccupation with the material and the worldly, to the exclusion of the spiritual are exposed in Eliot's poems. All these evils resulted in man's loss of identity. Eliot says:

The world is trying the experiment of attempting to form a civilized but non-christian mentality. The experiment will fail, but we must be very patient in awaiting its collapse ... the faith may be preserved alive through the dark ages before us; to renew and rebuild civilization, and save the world from suicide.  

Eliot has related contemporary experiences to the universal experiences of man. In this way, universality is imparted to the modern and the topical.

The poet presents the method of juxtaposing the real and the imagined. The poet wants us to open our eyes, to see the inner reality of things. This is how the modern civilization symbolised by the barren waste land can be redeemed and the hollow men can regain their fullness of life and recover their distinct identity.

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