CHAPTER VI

THE WASTE LAND: A SEARCH FOR THE ULTIMATE GROUNDS.
Chapter VI


Even after more than half a century of its publication The Waste Land continues to elude the grasp of critical understanding. With the publication of The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript edited by Valerie Eliot in 1971 so much of the mystery about it has ceased to exist. Critics of The Waste Land are now almost unanimous that Pound's excisions of the original draft have really given it an improved artistic finish and coherence. But sadly enough Valerie Eliot's valuable and illuminating introduction and explanatory notes have deluded even so many good critics into shifting the emphasis from the poem to the poet — the kind of critical procedure against which Eliot as a critic has taken care to warn the critics. Of course, the kind of personal feeling and emotion, or the so-called personality, from which Eliot escaped into The Waste Land, is very clear from the introduction to the facsimile edition. What personal and physical or mental conditions led the poet to the composition of The Waste Land is in itself very important and of autobiographical significance but to read the poem as a study in Eliot’s personality will be like concentrating on the history of the poet instead of reading the poem as a poem. Even Eliot's admission that:

Various critics have done me the honour to interpret the poem in terms of criticism of contemporary world, have considered it, indeed, as an important bit of social criticism. To me it was only the relief of a personal
and wholly insignificant grouse against life: it is just a piece of rhythmic grumbling.¹ should not make any difference in our approach to the poem because it was just characteristic of Eliot to make disarming statements when asked about his poems. One might try to make much of "a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life" or of "rhythmic grumbling" by way of asserting that the poem reflects a personal disorder and its appeal and value as a metaphysical poem are merely accidental and of little consequence. Valerie Eliot's introduction to facsimile edition presents a clear insight into poet's mental condition and nobody can deny that it was really a period of mental and social crisis for the poet as a person but how far the person makes the poet is a question which is better left undecided especially in case of Eliot for whom the man who suffers is not the same as the poet who creates. Nobody can deny that The Waste Land is really a great poetic creation. Eliot's own remark regarding the Part V of The Waste Land can be taken to be the general truth about the whole:

... it is a commonplace that some forms of illness are extremely favourable, not only to religious illumination, but to artistic and literary composition. A piece of writing meditated, apparently without progress for months or years, may suddenly take shape and word; and in this state long passages may be produced which require little or no retouch.²

² Quoted in The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript, P.129
In the lines quoted above from Eliot he was describing his own experience in writing the Part V of *The Waste Land*. It is, therefore, very much in order to note that Eliot's mental condition at the time of writing *The Waste Land* was very much conducive to a spiritual grasp resulting from a religious as well as poetic illumination. What he calls a personal grouse against life was something that transformed his personal suffering into a myth of cosmic and universal significance. The so-called "rhythmical grumbling" is a consequence of his realization of universal suffering and impermanence as the Buddha had realized it. It was a grouse against the life of burning desire and moral degeneration as the poet saw it in the society.

The critical response to *The Waste Land* has been very noisy and immediate but the complete literary value of the poem has not yet been fully realized. It is so because the role of Indian thought and sensibility has not been honestly assessed. The intellectual and conceptual thread which is unmistakably there in its full poetic actuality and metaphysical perceptiveness has proved baffling to the critics. "The most formidable", writes I.A. Richards, "is the unobtrusiveness, in some cases the absence, of any coherent intellectual thread upon which the items of the poem are strung". It is certain that no attempt to find out "any coherent intellectual thread" can meet with success if the conceptual

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framework, which is cast in the form of throbbing myths, and the peculiar sensibility that adjusts and controls the lenses of poetic perception and comprehension are not duly recognised and given proper place and significance. What units as the different threads that result in a coherent vision in the form of the cosmic voice of the thunder is really the sensibility in the poem. This sensibility is a whole and of a definite metaphysical orientation and if one misses it one is sure to meet a heap of broken images. The poem is very much there and any failure on our part to realise it should be attributed to our prejudices. Mr. C. K. Stead is quite right in asserting: "It is fortyfive years since The Waste Land appeared, and in some ways we are still helpless before it. It is unmistakably there; but we have evolved no adequate language for discussing it." To say with Karl Shapiro that "The Waste Land, because of its great critical reputation, not because of any inherent worth it might have, is one of the curiosities of English literature" is contradiction in itself because the 'critical reputation' the poem enjoys cannot be without its inherent worth. That Eliot ridiculed the view that The Waste Land is a disillusionment of a whole generation is well known. The following judgment passed by Dr. Leavis shows, I think, his failure to grasp the very entelechy of the poem:

But for all the use of Frazer and of fertility-ritual allusions, the treatment of the theme of dried-up springs and the failure of life has not the breadth of significance claimed and asserted by the title and the apparatus of notes. The distinctive attitude towards, the feeling about, the relation between men and women that predominates in the poem is the highly personal one we know so well from the earlier poems; the symbolic Waste Land makes itself felt too much as Thomas Stearns Eliot's.  

Dr. Leavis is a great and admirable critic but his judgments on The Waste Land have never been perceptive. It is only because he has always failed to appreciate the Buddhist sensibility and its operative thread that make for coherence and objectivity in the vision of the poet surveying "the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history". The so-called "a brilliant and kaleidoscopic confusion" which Conrad Aiken thinks to be the nature of The Waste Land could be, contrary to his intention, accepted as a meaningful metaphysical perception if we allow due consideration to the Buddhist sensibility in the poem. Impermanence and flux constitute the basic mundane reality in Buddhist theory of perception. It is not a conjecture that Buddhism had influenced Eliot's poetic perception and power of comprehension; it is, rather, a well known fact that Buddhism was at its hi-
-ghost ascendancy in his sensibility when he was writing the poem. A reconsideration of the Indian allusions in the poem is very necessary for the real assessment of its poetic value.

The very obvious example of the indifference shown to the Indian tags in the poem is the remark made by Conrad Aiken: "We could dispense with the French, Italian, Latin, and Hindu phrases -- they are irritating." 1 He further comments with all the possible impatience:

Why, again, Dutta, Dayadhvam, Danyata? Or Shanth? Do they not say a good deal less for us than 'Give: sympathise: control' or 'Peace'? ... Unfortunately, we have none of us this memory, nor can he give it to us; and in the upshot he gives us only a series of agreeable sounds which might as well have been nonsense. What we get is, end I think it is important, is that in none of these particular cases does the reference, the allusion, justify itself intrinsically, make itself felt. 2

This is an example of the reading of the poem that shows a critic and poet of a good standing, as Mr. Aiken is, at his most imperceptive and naive moments of subjectivity. This summary dismissal of 'Hindu phrases' and upanishadic words misses the main current of thought and sensibility that hold together the different tags in the poem into a meaningful centre. Lack of proper concern for and appreciation of the Indian allusions has deluded many critics of repute. There are many who find

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2. Ibid, PP.95-96
the ending of the poem ironical. Irritability and sarcasm of F.L.Lucas is unmistakably conspicuous when he comments: "Shantih' is equivalent to the 'Peace that passeth understanding' — which in this case it certainly does".  

Professor Narasinhaiah is quite right in reacting: "Lucas was a learned man but his very erudition must have blunted his sensibility". Not only the subsequent critics but even Ezra Pound, the 'better craftsman' whom Eliot did not oblige when he suggested to drop the last three words, could not quite see the inevitability of the last three words when he wrote to Eliot on 24 December, 1921: "One test is whether anything would be lacking if the last three were omitted. I don't think it would". To which Eliot wrote back in January, 1922: "Criticism accepted so far as understood, with thanks". Eliot's non-acceptance of Pound's suggestion is a clear indication that he did not rely on the latter's judgment regarding the structural unity of the poem. Eliot had accepted Pound's suggestion about not using the Conrad quote as epigraph and Gerontion as prelude, though about Conrad Pound had expressed only a slight doubt: "I doubt if Conrad is weighty enough to stand the citation". Eliot yielded though he had thought the Conrad quote to be "much the most appropriate I can find, and somewhat elucidative". Eliot's own views regarding the poetic and structural importance of Part V


of *The Waste Land*, in relation to the whole, is very clear from his letter to Bertrand Russell written on 15, October, 1923:

> It gives me very great pleasure to know that you like *The Waste Land*, and especially Part V which in my opinion is not only the best part, but the only part that justifies the whole, at all.¹

One going through the facsimile edition of the poem can never miss the fact that Part V is the only part which is not revised by Eliot or excised by Pound. On 27 May, 1948 Eliot had written back to Mr. Peter Russell:

> While I made some revisions and chiefly a great many excisions as a result of Pound’s criticism of this draft, the final section of the poem remained exactly as I first wrote it.²

The facsimile edition of *The Waste Land* shows that Pound’s excisions have removed three long passages: the first in "The Burial of the Dead" dealing with the night life of London; the second in "The Fire Sermon" describing a fashionable lady in imitation of Pope; and the third in "Death by Water" dealing with the voyage and shipwreck echoing Dante’s and Tennyson’s Ulysses. There are other small poems that form the part of the original draft. A small poem "I am the Resurrection" which was included in the original draft is almost a translation from the *Bhagavad Gita*. Whatever might be the case, it is that Eliot’s mind was full of Buddhism and the *Gita* and Upanishads.

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¹ *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript*. P. 129
² Ibid, P. 129
during the time he was writing *The Waste Land*. Of course, his mind was never without these during all the subsequent years of his literary creativity.

During the recent years there has been, perhaps, a conscious attempt by the critics to interpret *The Waste Land* as a Christian poem. Cleanth Brooks' opinion that "The Christian material is at the centre, but the poet never deals with it directly", has become a starting point for this sort of attempt. There is, of course, a centre in the poem but Mr. Brooks could not show what forms the 'centre' of it. Basing his views on Brooks' Mr. M.M. Bhalla suggests that *The Waste Land* "is a series of movements held into a meaningful centre by the Christian judgment". Against such attempts at reading *The Waste Land* as Christian sermon in disguise I should quote a wise warning given by no less perceptive a critic than Frank Kermode:

Eliot ridiculed the critics who found in *The Waste Land* an image of the age's despair, but he might equally have rejected the mere recent Christian interpretations.3

(*italics mine*).

My own objective in dealing with this poem is only to define and ascertain the role of Indian thought and sensibility. It is, therefore, necessary for me to work within the

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limitations imposed on me by my own approach of inquiry. Critics in general might find it difficult to agree with the opinion, which I think is not wholly unfounded, contained in the judgment on the poem by Raymond Tschumi who thinks that "more than a disguise of Eliot's convictions as a Christian, the allusions to the Indian rituals are the whole foundation of the poem". Professor Narasimhaiah is not in agreement with this view and he claims "no more than a contributory role for the Indian element — but a role without which .... the poem would have been much different in its tone and the final impression it leaves on the reader". However, Professor Narasimhaiah thinks that the poem contains things more than the allusions to Indian rituals — it contains conceptual thinking which becomes more pronounced in the Four Quartets. After reading such comments one is left guessing what conceptual thinking Prof. Narasimhaiah refers to and if it is related to the Indian allusions. The kind of sensibility that operates in The Waste Land is really the result of "an intellectual tension (that) lies back of The Waste Land, as back of Gerontion. More than personal poems or social poems, these are philosophical poems". It is a complex poem and much of its complexity is resolvable, at least, on a conceptual level, if not on the level of poetic evocativeness, by a careful examination of the role of the Indian thought and sensibility in it.

2. Ibid, P. 76
3. Russell Kirk, op. cit., P. 72
Before starting directly with the main text and elucidating the role of Indian elements in the progress and organization of the poem, I propose to define the Buddhist sensibility that appears to me to be most central point in the conceptual appeal of the poem. Such an assertion goes against the opinion of Dr. Leavis who thinks that the allusion to Buddhism does not make it actively present inside the poem. What Dr. Leavis understands by a presence inside the poem is, perhaps, the treatment in detail of a certain idea derived from such disciplines by way of a clear statement. He, unfortunately, misses the essentials of a Buddhist sensibility which forms the core of a positive value judgment which is necessary to judge the assortment of unrelated facts in perception. Without this sensibility being there operative in the perceptive apparatus, that is, the power of poetic comprehension, Eliot would have really been exposed to such unwarranted charge as made by Yvor Winters that "Eliot suffers from the delusion that he is judging it when he is merely exhibiting it".\(^1\) It was his failure to realize the concept-sensibility complex in Eliot's early verse up to *The Waste Land* that led Dr. Leavis to level the charge of "exhibitionistic sophistication" which he attributes to Eliot's 'attitudinizing' and 'confused intellectuality' and 'inner insecurity'.\(^2\) Without the Buddhist sensibility which forms the nucleus of

\(^1\) Yvor Winters, "On Modern Poets", in *edt. C.B. Cox and A.P. Hinchliffe*, op.cit. P. 61

\(^2\) F.R. Leavis, *Lectures in America*, op.cit., P.40,
impermanence-transitoriness complex in the sensibility bound to be reoriented towards a metaphysical vision. The Waste Land would have been only a collection of Jessie Weston and Fraser with an assortment of Elizabethan dramatists with certain Greek, Italian, French, and Hindu phrases. Or, at its very best, it would have been a poem about London; and this is the impression some critics have from the facsimile edition of the poem. That it is fortunately not so is mainly due to the kind of sensibility that brings the heterogeneous facts, juxtaposed through surface contrasts and parallelisms, to be held in judgment by a presiding deity that ultimately bursts forth in the cosmic voice of the thunder underlining and bringing to bear on the assortment of facts the age-old wisdom of the true springs of a culture essentially Aryan.

The Buddhist philosophy finds its primary impulse in a kind of key intuition that the reality such as it is in this world is impermanent, and that existence is all suffering. So impermanence and suffering are the first essentials of a realisation consequent upon Buddhist way of looking at the things. But the question that the suffering is the consequence of the realisation of impermanence cannot be admitted. The real Buddhist sensibility is an impermanence-suffering complex. This sensibility creates an attitude of indifference on an intellectual level and of pessimism on the level of feeling and emotion. But what saves it from degenerating into a felt and well considered pessimism is a realized sense of the need for complete cessation from suffering whose roots are struck deep in human desires that continually multiply
and are fed by the life of the senses. So in the ultimate analysis it is the senses that keep us bound to the wheel of life because human desire is the root cause of repeated rounds of birth and death. This conclusion is found voiced in almost all the religious and philosophical disciplines of India including Patanjali's Yoga System that had cast the spell of 'enlightened mystification' on Eliot. This point about Buddhist impact on Eliot's sensibility and metaphysical viewpoint is made so poignantly by Harold E. McCarthy that a long quotation from him is justified here:

However, for both Buddhism and Eliot the otherwise side of impermanence is suffering; and the theme of human and cosmic suffering it, if anything, almost more central to Eliot's poetry than the theme of flux. In the earlier poems, before the publication of The Waste Land, suffering takes the form of the recognition of human loneliness, frustration, and impotence, of the emptiness and futility of life amidst the smoke and fog of December afternoons. With The Waste Land, the vision spreads and deepens, and suffering seems to become a universal characteristic, enacted again, whether in the lives of primitive peoples, in the lives of heroes and saints of antiquity, or in the twentieth-century flats of tired typists.

So the allusion to the Buddha's "Fire Sermon" in Part III of

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1. H.E. McCarthy, op.cit., P.43
the poem is not to be rejected as a mere pointer to something outside the poem, rather it is this sensibility that is the most central focal point in the perceptive apparatus of the poet. It is this sensibility that forms the value-norm for holding together the apparently unrelated facts in "what Tiresias sees in the poem". So the Buddhist sensibility is not only an organising principle, it is also the most vital principle of judging the presented flux of life.

To avoid any misunderstanding regarding the true nature of Buddhist sensibility I may add that it is never born of a vision of the negation of life nor of nihilism, nor even of pessimism. The most essential impulse aroused by this sensibility tends to seek liberation as does any other sensibility born of Hinduism or Christianity. But there is a fundamental difference between Buddhism and Christianity. "It is to be noticed further", writes Mr. Hookings, "that Buddha and Christ were not asking precisely the same questions, and hence their answers cannot be directly compared. Christ was not concerned with the cure of suffering; he tried to get men to face the certainty of 'tribulation' with joy. Buddha was not concerned with the category of sin..."¹ In *The Waste Land* the operative sensibility is, found focussing on the aspect of reality that is suffering, and there is no call for the acceptance of the 'tribulation' with joy. The sense of disillusionment we have in the Part I, II and III of the poem is only an impulse towards rejection of the reality as it is. "But the Catholic philosophy of disillusion" writes Kristian Smidt, "is connected, of course, 

course, with the doctrine of sin". In The Waste Land we have no sense of sin. Buddhist sensibility, of course, operates through causing a sense of indifference or non-attachment to the reality of the world but it never tends towards the gospel of a total rejection and ultimate passivity and pessimism. It is only through this Buddhist sensibility that the perceptive faculty moves inevitably towards the Upanishadic message in the cosmic voice of the thunder transforming the fragments 'shored' into a vision of living truth through and by which we have existed. The voice of the thunder is a call for the need for Karuna (compassion), the quality which is the centre — the rock-bed of reality — where the protagonist in the poem stands and surveys the whole panorama of futility. The protagonist is not the poet nor is The Waste Land a Waste Land of Thomas Stearn Eliot's. Sean Lucy is very explicit about this aspect of Eliot's poetry:

Yet there is a paradox here, for his (Eliot's) poetry is the poetry of isolation of the single soul, and very rarely do personal human relationships figure in it. It is a poetry which is almost always remote from the mere ordinary human emotions, and such emotions, when they are treated of, are viewed by someone standing apart from the action and viewing it coolly ...

This perceptive reading of Eliot's poems is more true of The Waste Land. This point will be taken up again for examination

1. Kristian Smidt, op.cit., P.193
2. Sean Lucy, op.cit. P.143.
in my comment on Tiresias. Our consideration about the Buddhist sensibility and its inevitable link with the Upanishadic vision is a very crucial one because it offers an insight into the poem about a long back look that crosses the frontiers of Christian and Hellenic culture and searches the Buddhist, Upanishadic and Vedio grounds of the Absolute Reality. It is this journey which takes the form of an exploration, as it were, and its ultimate achievements are overlooked by the critics in general. But this single fact is what makes for conceptual coherence and imposes an order on the flux of reality x-rayed in the poem. Not the Christian but the Upanishadic ground is the centre from where the protagonist looks forward and finds only the flux and impermanence. The look forward is cast through all the literary and religious allusions and mythic apparatus forming a contracted focal point of life and metaphysical stirrings that x-ray the existential plight and the life of evil and moral degeneration, which are viewed not so much as sin but as cosmic suffering. The Buddhist and Upanishadic grounds form a point of view that high-lights the life of sterile sex and uncontrolled desires, that are viewed not as a legacy from Adam's curse but as an outcome of a way of life caught in the whirl-pool. The sense of pessimism or disillusionment that the poem impresses on a reader is the mark of its success because without such an impression the essential point of Buddhist thought and sensibility and the wisdom of the
Part V of the poem could not be appreciated. I think Mr. Bhalla is quite to the point when he holds the view that Eliot tried to seek through the European tradition the supra-historical realm of absolute values. This, according to him heightened the significance of Eliot's excursion into the Upanishadic vision. This is the essential point with which the critics have never seriously felt concerned.

The next important thing, apart from a recognition of the guiding and most determining sensibility, is the concept that has gone into the making of what Tiresias is. "Tiresias, though a mere spectator and not indeed a 'character', is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest..... what Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem." Eliot has created Tiresias to be a mythological catch-all. Hugh Kenner refers to three principal stories about the possible sources of the origin of Tiresias, all of them relevant. These three sources are Oedipus Rex, Odyssey and Ovid's Metamorphoses. Eliot in his notes on The Waste Land refers to the third source where Tiresias underwent a change of sex and thus had the experiences of both the sexes. He was bestowed by Jove the power of prophetic insight into past, present and future. This source of the origin of Tiresias is significant but Hugh Kenner misunderstands the whole implication of this most important personage in the poem as is evident from his following remark:

Tiresias is he who has lost the sense of other people as inviolably other, and who is capable neither of pity nor terror but only of a fascination spuriously related to compassion, which is merely the twentieth-century's special mutation of indifference.  

It is plain from the above quoted remark that Hugh Kenner expects a passionate reaction from Tiresias to what he 'sees', but the very expectation exposes the misunderstanding about the kind of sensibility that is operative through Tiresias. He is an impassioned observer and the assortment of facts so juxtaposed in his perception stand assessed and evaluated even if he does not betray any personal concern. On the level of poetic art and craftsmanship the assemblage of facts in Tiresias' perception come to us through a new art-emotion which has no referent in the single human experience or situation and which "arises from multidimensional, timeless vision of myth, arrested in a single instant of art". We are not to feel any 'pity' or 'terror' which Hugh Kenner feels could have given the poem the genuineness of a tragic vision; even 'compassion', whether genuine or spurious, is not the thing the poem aims at.

The power of perception that Tiresias embodies shows a sense of detachment and healthy indifference. The experience that interprets the sensory impressions finds the facts

2. Gertrude Patterson, op.cit., P.168
of existence, including its sexual perversity, not so much abhorrent or sinful as meaningless and in the nature of unending suffering. A purely Christian sensibility could have really given the reaction in terms of 'pity' and 'terror' that Hugh Kenner finds lacking in Tiresias. But this should not be interpreted to mean that the emotions of pity and terror have their roots only in a Christian feeling. They depend much upon the immediacy and intensity of emotional concern of the individual being with the presented fact; but when the perceptions are philosophically and metaphysically detached, the resultant response is not emotional but meaning-oriented and placed on spiritual level. Stuart Holroyd catches hold of the essential point when he says:

The sustained vision of the spiritual desolation of the modern world that went into The Waste Land could only have proceeded from the mind of a man who felt himself to be, in a way, not involved in the scene that he observed.¹

What Tiresias sees is what St. Augustine and the Buddha had seen. Tiresias sees the meaninglessness and futility of the mad pursuit after the life of senses. Mr.G. Nageswar Rao shows a better understanding of the conception that resulted in the creation of Tiresias. Whatever Tiresias may owe for his origin and nomenclature to Ovid and other sources in Greek antiquity, it is certain that:

¹ Stuart Holroyd, Emergence From Chaos, London, Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1959, P.199
The technique that Eliot adopts to organize his experience into an artistic whole is similar to the one employed in the Upanishads. Tiresias is like the Drastra (Seer) in the Upanishads.¹

What Tiresias sees gets evaluated in its very act of being perceived and the final value-judgment, ultimately, bursts forth in the cosmic voice of the thunder in the Part V. It may be said that Tiresias is like Prajapati in whom both the sexes meet. What the thunder speaks is what Prajapati had seen and experienced and that is exactly what the meaning of what Tiresias perceives amounts to. That is why Eliot, in the notes, says that "what Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance the poem". The critics of The Waste Land have generally found the poem chaotic and unrelated and "as a brilliant and kaleidoscopic confusion". It was mainly because they paid much attention to the assortment of mythical and symbolic facts, apparently unrelated and not all of a piece, and failed to see the entelechy of the poem. No wonder that I.A. Richards found the absence of "any coherent intellectual thread upon which the items of the poem are strung". If one, by a stretch of the imagination, should place oneself in Tiresias' position, one is sure to find out an "intellectual thread" that is woven by the poem by becoming what it really is — a vision of the timeless reality that might ensure social as well as individual regeneration.

I propose to deal with the poem after making a general comment on the function and the nature of the mythic apparatus used by Eliot as a structural scaffold to the poem. Much of the confusion and misunderstanding among the critics regarding the question of the conceptual coherence in the poem is due to their failure to comprehend the true function of the myth. Eliot himself has owned his indebtedness to Miss Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* and Frazer's *The Golden Bow*. In his notes on *The Waste Land* he confirms that "Miss Weston's book will elucidate the difficulties of the poem much better than my notes can do". From *The Golden Bow* he has especially used the two volumes *Adonis, Attis, Osiris*. But the use he made of such vegetation ceremonies and of the Grail legend from Miss Weston is not only for the framework of references, it has a definite metaphysical awareness to convey as it is evident from his comment on *The Golden Bow*:

In art there should be interpretation and metamorphosis. Even *The Golden Bow* can be read in two ways: as a collection of entertaining myths, or as a revelation of that vanished mind of which our mind is a continuation. Eliot's interest in anthropology was inspired by his ontological leanings.

Myth is a participation, a communal throbbing together. It is symbolic of an educated and informed unconscious that penetrates deeper inside the surface of the merely ritualistic

1. Vide, Notes on *The Waste Land*
level to capture the first undefined metaphysical urge that is there from the first beginning of human life. "The truth of myth", writes David Bidney, "is then a function of the interpretation of myth. If one accepts the truth of the original intuition of the solidarity of life and the dramatic character of its underlying forces then myth symbolizes allegorically a fundamental metaphysical and religious truth". ¹

The critics who deny any metaphysical insight Eliot might have had and who affirm that The Waste Land can never be metaphysically examined fail to appreciate the conceptual thread the myths embody in the poem. Susane Langer affirms that myth is the first "primitive phase of metaphysical thought, the first embodiment of general ideas". ² A mythical thought aims at solidarity and affirms the unbroken unity and continuity of life. The critics who find no metaphysical perspective held forth in the poem subscribe only to the ritual view of myth. But there is no contradiction between the ritual view and the "cognitionist idea that myths derive from a quest for knowledge." ³ Cassirer also finds no contradiction in following simultaneously the metaphysical and sociological approach. "According to his ( Cassirer's) metaphysical approach", writes David Bidney, "myth is based on a primitive


² Quoted by Gertrude Patterson, op. cit., P. 166

³ Stanley Edgar Hyman, "The Ritual View of Myth and Mythic", in edt. Thomas A. Sebeok, op. cit., P. 90
intuition of the cosmic solidarity of life and hence he affirms that myth is potential religion." 4 Myth in The Waste Land is as much a principle of structure as it is conceptually related to the theme. The poetic structure has transformed the mythic material into a sort of metaphysical formulation held forth as a belief. Myths mediate in the contradiction between animalism and culture; they impose a form on the chaotic human experience. Myth is a hold on the imagination and it enacts experience. It is both a form of thought and structural control. The mythic material used in a poem makes for a kind of discovery which is never without a metaphysical bias. Eliot's use of Fraser and Miss Weston, though primarily satisfied structural and technical needs was, ultimately, promoted by his need to show what might sustain and liberate us in our Waste Land. How the need of a deep thinking and metaphysical formulation leads one to use mythic thought is made clear by Robert Tucker in his comment on Marx:

Indeed, he had gone beyond philosophy into that out of which philosophy, ages ago, originated — myth. For this is the decisive characteristic of the mythic thought, that something by nature interior is apprehended as exterior, that the drama of the inner life of man is experienced and depicted as taking place in the outer world.

Eliot's mythic apparatus in the poem alludes, at least, to three different waste lands that were the results of the

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common causes, and the similarity in this respect suggests the need of the same remedy. This makes for a linear progress that ultimately reaches the absolute grounds of the Upanishads and the Vedas. The critics who find the poem structureless and showing no progress fail to comprehend the metaphysical function of the myths, apart from their power of poetic evocativeness and ritualistic connotations of participation. In his introduction to *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* Charles W. Hendel writes:

Thus in every case 'Symbolic Form' is a condition either of the knowledge of meaning or of the human expression of meaning.¹

The symbolic form of *The Waste Land* is really both a knowledge and expression of meaning. To say with F.R. Leavis that the poem registers no progress and that it ends where it begins is to overlook the human expression of meaning that the cosmic voice of the thunder embodies. Lillian Feder makes this point very clear in the comment on the mythical experience depicted in the poem:

Actually, it can be shown that the mythical experience depicted in *The Waste Land* is similar to the Jungian plunge into archetypical consciousness because it leads not to self-knowledge or the resolution of personal conflict, but to a transformation of uncertainty into faith, of human weakness into reliance on supernatural omnipotence. Such a transformation may provide 'integration' but

only through a belief that the self can merge with a

divine principle.  

Myths offer an integration as well as interpretation. They ap-

peal to our even hazy and diffuse intellectual grasp of the
timeless patterns that could be finally resolved into a sys-
tem. "What gives the myth", observes Levi-Strauss, "an opера-
tional value is that the specific pattern described is time-
less; it explains the present and the past as well as the
future". It is because of this operational value that the
mythic structure of The Waste Land makes it an intellectual-
ly patterned exploration presented as taking place in all
the three time-variations at the same moment. The early cri-
tics who found the poem structurally chaotic failed to see
how the technique of narrative in a mythic structure makes
the symbols effective. To quote Levi-Strauss again:

The technique of the narrative thus aims at recreating

a real experience in which the myth merely shifts the
protagonists.

Eliot's narrative technique does this shifting of the prota-
gonists by merging them ultimately in the voice of the thun-
der. Eliot in his Notes on The Waste Land makes this aspect
of his technique clear:

1. Lillian Feder, op.cit., P.130
3. Ibid, P.194
The Hanged Man .... fits my purpose in two ways: because he is associated in my mind with the Hanged God of Frazer, and because I associate him with the hooded figure in the passage of the disciples of Emmaus in Part V ...

... The man with Three Staves .... I associate, quite arbitrarily, with Fisher King himself.¹

It may be recalled here that chapter III (P.32-13) of this work contains some remarks as to how different gods in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad merge in Prajapati or Hiranyakarbhha. It was, further, suggested that in The Waste Land also the Fisher King merges in the figure of the Buddha fishing on the shore. And ultimately all these merge in the cosmic body of Prajapati whose realisation of the meaning of life finally bursts forth in the cosmic voice of the thunder.

There is one more serious point to be taken note of, which redeems the poem against a serious charge levelled against it by I.A. Richards. Mr. Richards in 1926 thought that it was a poetry "served from all beliefs". Here it may be added that neither Mr. Richards nor the recent critic "who using hindsight sees The Waste Land almost as a Christian poem"² is correct. A myth implies belief in the efficacy of its social practices. Levi-Strauss stresses the need of three important elements that constitute a definite emotional orientation amounting to a belief in the mythic evolution of a certain social

¹ Vide, Notes on The Waste Land.
² Stephan Spender, "Remembering Eliot", in ed. Allen Tate, op.cit.,P.40
practice. "That the mythology of the Shaman", he writes, "does not correspond to an objective reality does not matter. The sick woman believes in the myth and belongs to a society which believes in it".¹ It is true that the Buddhist sensibility does not allow the implied faith to emerge so as to have an emotional appeal, yet the intellectual assent to what happens in the poem cannot be withheld if we allow the poem to do its work. For an individual faith it is a believing society that makes for what Levi-Strauss calls a "gravitational field" with "which the relationship between sorcerer and the bewitched is located and defined".² The poem embodies a belief in the ultimate human values that are to be a way of life if we obey the commands of the thunder. Our failure to respond emotionally to a belief (which, of course, is not a belief in any religion) embodied in the poem is due only to the lack of 'gravitational field' which our unbelieving society does not provide. A Christian sensibility should work out a belief in a saviour God and his grace which are certainly not there in the poem. But a Buddhist sensibility, working along with the Upanishadic sensibility which inevitably fosters a spirit of enquiry, calls for a belief in and an intellectual assent to a discipline of life that ensures a spiritual release from the rounds of unredeemed birth and death. This call is unmistakably there in the poem.

¹ Claude Levi-Strauss, op.cit., P.197
² Ibid, P.168
It has been pointed out that the Conrad epigraph that Eliot also thought to be "much the most appropriate" and "somewhat elucidative" was more suited to the poem than the Sibyl one. Without going into the details of their comparative merit one can only say that the Sibyl epigraph given to the poem is more related to the sensibility operative in the poem. When asked what she wanted the Sibyl hung in a jar, responded to the children: "I wish to die". Sibyl was tired of her life as her long years had made her physical existence a great burden. Her death-wish is related to the Nirvan-wish that forms the very core of a Buddhist sensibility. It is to be noted here that it was this Sibyl that "led Aeneas to the underworld, where his spirit was restored and his dedication to his mission renewed". It needs no emphasis to say that the epigraph is quite an integral part of the poem because Sibyl represents a Nirvan-wish on the one hand, and the spirit of a Grail-motif on the other. The poet-narrator in The Waste Land leads us through the modern underworld and finally exhorts us to renew our dedication to a regenerate and spiritual life. Like Aeneas we are to be restored to the true human spirit that comes through the exercise of the triple virtues: Dutta, Dayadhvam, Dama. What has already been said about the poem in general points to the fact that any conscious attempt to put a Christian interpretation on the poem will lead us only a half-way towards a clear conceptual grasp of an otherwise very complex poetic achievement of the twentieth-century.

1. Lillian Feder, op.cit., P.130
We cannot be very sure of Eliot's intentions in this regard. There is a question asked by an interviewer about the poem which is related to its composition and to Eliot's conscious intentions:

In Thoughts after Lambeth you denied the allegation of critics who said that you expressed 'the disillusionment of a generation' in *The Waste Land*, or you denied that it was your intention. Now P.R. Leavis, I believe, has said that the poem exhibits no progression; yet on the other hand more recent critics, writing after your later poetry, found *The Waste Land* Christian. I wonder if this was part of your intention.¹

To this question Eliot answered:

No, it wasn't part of my conscious intention. I think that in 'Thoughts after Lambeth' I was speaking of intentions more in a negative than in a positive sense, to say what was not my intention.²

However, it should be admitted that a poet's conscious intention does not count for much; but it is certain that Eliot did not consciously set out to make *The Waste Land* a Christian sermon in disguise. There is a memoir written by Robert Sennett where he recollects a revealing point regarding what played a major compelling role in the composition of the poem:

In after years, vehemently rejecting the idea that *The Waste Land* expresses the disillusionment of an age, he

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². Ibid, P.26
maintained that there was no such thing as the disillusionment of an age and that, in any case, the subtleties, enigmas and allusions of The Waste Land were written in obedience to a plain command given in the voice of thunder and coming from the ancient wisdom of India.

Those who think that an allusion to Hindu classics are irritating fail to appreciate the dominant role played by Indian thought and sensibility in the poem. The whole movement of the poem from 'April' to 'Shantih' is determined by an obedience to the ancient wisdom of India. To say with Matthiessen that no reading of the Buddha and Augustine or Miss Weston's book or the Upanishads is necessary in order to understand the poem is a notion derived from what might be called a spiritual laziness on the part of the critic.

The very title of the poem is highly significant. The basic symbol of the waste land is said to have been taken from Miss Weston's From Ritual to Romance. Elliot in his notes makes it clear that not only the title, but the plan and a good deal of incidental symbolism of the poem also were suggested by Miss Weston's book on the Grail legend. The land was blighted by curse and the Fisher King was rendered impotent by maiming or sickness. Miss Weston traces the symbolism of the Grail legend to the Vedas. Even the fertility cults go back to the very beginning of the Aryan culture and are recorded in Sanskrit legends. The Rig-Veda has a reference to a Waste Land where seven rivers — Sapta-Sindhu — were

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lying looked up. It was a panicky situation and the gods themselves turned to Dodhichi, a mendicant sage, for a gift of his backbone which, because of his ascetic life, had the strength of a club of diamonds — a Vajrayudha. Indra, the god of gods, beat the black cloud called Ahi or Vritta who had looked up the divine waters. Indra slew the demon (Vritta) and freed the divine waters. This legend is quite elucidative and gives a clue to the fact that Eliot's reference to sunken Ganges in the Part V of the poem is related to the title. Search for water comes to symbolise a metaphysical search.

There is a possibility that ascendency of a Buddhist sensibility in Eliot when he was writing *The Waste Land* might have led him to find a source of the title of the poem and much of its organising principle in the Buddhist text, the *Dhammapada*. It is profitable to read a Thai Buddhist monk's translation of the *Dhammapada* under the title, "Growing the Bodhi Tree in the Garden of the Heart" in which the verses from the *Dhammapada* are arranged in the order of Buddhist way of training. He arranges the text in ten sections with a Prologue which is called "The Waste Land". It is in order to note here that Irving Babbitt himself was very much inte-

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1. This suggestion about the possibility that the title of the poem with regard to its source might have something to owe to *Dhammapada* is made by Prof. Harshimhaiah in his article "An Indian Footnote to T.S. Eliot Scholarship on *The Waste Land*," in *The Literary Criterion*, Vol.I No.2, Summer, 1972.

2. It is by Bhikkhu Khantpalo published for free distribution by Buddhist Association of Thailand, 1966.
rested in the *Dhammapada* and his translations of the verses from it have been published by Oxford University Press. No wonder that his disciple Eliot turned to this text not only for the title but also for the imagery of tree and roots. *The Waste Land* symbolizes a condition of spiritual sterility. *The Waste Land* of the Fisher King or any other Waste Land either of the *Rig-Veda* or of the *Dhammapada*, all are symbolically relevant but the religious sensibility that operates through its metaphysical and ontological perspective is finally made explicit only in terms of the wisdom derived from the absolute ground of the Vedas and the Upanishads.

Part I of *The Waste Land* is very significantly named "The Burial of the Dead" which according to Grover Smith derives from Anglican service for the burial of the dead. A theme of resurrection is implied but the voice alluding to the possibility of its realization shows a mocking scepticism:

"That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?

The Part I starts with a possibility that "April" might offer an opportunity for sprouting and blossoming but it turns to be the "cruellest month":

April is the cruellest month, breeding Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing Memory and desire, stirring Dull roots with spring rain."
The concept of desire expressing itself in terms of the image of spring, which is also an image of pain, appears several times in Eliot's poetry:

The cold spring now is the time
For the aconite in the moving root
The slow flow throbbing the trunk
The pain of the breaking bud.
These are the ones that suffer least
The aconite under the snow
And the snowdrop crying for a moment in the wood.¹

The image of spring, then, is the image connoting desire and pain and it has a direct reference to Buddhist notion of 'tanha'. McCarthy refers very pointedly to this:

Desire for Eliot, than, is (as in Buddhism) something more than human desire just as suffering is something more than human suffering. Suffering, as well as the desire which is the cause of suffering, is a cosmic trait of the total process of nature.²

It is to be noted that 'breeding', 'mixing', and 'stirring' do not suggest any action, but very certainly there is a kind of breeding mixing and stirring in spite of the blight as suggested by the basic symbol of the Grail legend. Cleanth Brooks observes that the "shift in meaning from physical to spiritual sterility is easily made, and was, as a matter of fact,

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². Harold E. McCarthy, op. cit., P.46
made in certain of the legends". The Grail symbol makes it perfectly clear that the land of the Fisher King was completely blighted, and, therefore, the activity of breeding lilies and stirring dull roots in The Waste Land is quite incompatible on a physical level of reality. Therefore, the poem from the very beginning takes off symbolically to a spiritually elevated metaphysical plane where from the protagonist (Tiresias), after perceiving the futility of journey through Starnbergersee and 'south in the winter', puts the relevant question:

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish?
The question relates to stirring of the dull roots with the spring rain on the one hand, and, on the other, in its spiritual implication, to a metaphysical question like the one raised in the Rig-Veda:

What was the wood and what the tree from which they fashioned forth the earth and heaven.?

To the question raised in the Rig-Veda the following answer is given later on in a Brahmana:

Brahman was the wood, Brahman was the tree out of which they carved heaven and earth.

3. Quoted Ibid, P.20
But Tiresias in *The Waste Land* does not expect his question to be answered by the spiritually blighted people:

Son of man,

You cannot say, or guess, for you know only

A heap of broken images .......

The roots that the 'son of man' is not supposed to know are our spiritual roots. He can only see the clutching of the roots of desire. In the *Gita* also Krishna says: "O Arjuna, I am the divine seed of all beings".¹ The difference between the clutching of the dull roots, that must be weeded out from the heart of man in order to let the Bodhi tree of Enlightenment grow there, and the spiritual roots of the Brahman cannot be realized, or even guessed at, by the son of man in the Waste Land. The 'April' with which the poem starts merely perpetuates a dull existence devoid of spiritual rains that are necessary for regeneration. The image of spring suggests two levels: "Spring is an issue of blood",² and it is also a "season of sacrifice".³ It is such a conception of 'April' that links the beginning of *The Waste Land* with the triple virtues embodied in the cosmic voice of the thunder because the picture of dullness and spiritual sterility expressed through the image of spring shows a Buddhist way of looking at the mundane reality. Those, who hear in "April is the cruellest month" only an echo of the reversal of Chaucer's

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2. *The Family Reunion*, (Part I - Scene II)
3. Ibid, (Part I - Scene II).
opening to the *General Prologue to The Canterbury Tales*, which is energetic and cheerful in accordance with the traditional treatment of spring, miss the real metaphysical and spiritual implications. Literary sensibility in Eliot should be transcended and extended into spiritual sensibility. He himself has expressed this view:

The artistic sensibility is impoverished by its divorce from the religious sensibility, and the religious by its separation from the artistic.¹

Or, again, to quote from the same book:

Aesthetic sensibility must be extended into spiritual perception, and spiritual perception must be extended into aesthetic sensibility and disciplined taste before we are qualified to pass judgement upon decadence or diabolism or nihilism in art.²

The movement of the poem from "April" to the "Son of man" picks up metaphysically and the emotions move towards "intellectual formulations". The world of *The Waste Land* is like the one we find in Homer or Dante:

When we enter into the world of Homer or Sophocles, or Virgil or Dante, or Shakespeare, we incline to believe that we are apprehending something that can be expressed intellectually; for every precise emotion tends towards intellectual formulation.³

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1. T.S.Eliot, *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*, P.26
2. Ibid, P.50
The clutching of roots and growing of branches are possible in a completely blighted land only in a sense that extends the implications to include the clutching and growing of the desires that, metaphysically speaking, are the root-cause of a blight in spiritual terms. It is only from a symbolic height of a metaphysical consciousness that Tiresias, the all-inclusive embodiment of awareness, finds the modern life merely as clutching of roots in the mire of personality which is nothing but mixing memory and desire to perpetuate the dull roots of mundane existence. A disciplined literary power of discernment can very well perceive the implied sense of sacrifice in the image of spring which is made explicit in *The Family Reunion*:

> Spring is an issue of blood
> A season of sacrifice
> And the wail of the new full tide
> Returning the ghosts of the dead
> Those whom the winter drowned
> Do not the ghosts of the drowned
> Return to the land in the spring?

So the cruellest 'April' in *The Waste Land* implies sacrifice and that is why it feels cruellest for the 'ghosts' living in *The Waste Land*.

Eliot's note refers us to Ezekiel ii, 1, where God addresses his prophet, 'Son of man, stand upon thy feet and I will speak unto thee'. Again the "heap of broken images" refers

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1. *The Family Reunion*, (Part I-Scene II)
to Eszekiel VI, 6 "and your image shall be broken". From Eliot's notes it is certain that he is alluding to Christian sources. One may question why in the Eszekiel allusion the 'Son of man' should fail to say or guess what the roots that clutch were because in that allusion the 'Son of man' happens to be a prophet. It is, perhaps, so because in the poem the question is really addressed to the people living in the Waste Land and the Eszekiel allusion is meant to extend our awareness about contrast between the son of man living in the Waste Land and the 'Son of man', the prophet, who was so close to God. The son of man in the poem, then, is not a prophet; but the comprehending sensibility embodied in the protagonist, who surveys the flux and the human reality in it, is given a prophetic insight. In spite of the Christian allusion, to Eszekiel the point of view from which the sensibility is focussing the torch of observation may be said to be Buddhist. Moreover, there is a possibility that Eliot might have had a notion of an allusion to Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (and this point is more central and functional because it is linked up with the Prajapati episode in Part V of the poem) where we are told how the first born came to be our father. In the Sanskrit Reader Lanman comments:

The word 'Manu' originally means simply 'man', as we speak of human beings as the 'children of men' so the Rig-Veda speaks of the them as the 'off-spring of men' (Manu); and in this way arose the conception of a personal Manu, the father of mankind. He is, in fact, the hero eponymous of
the human race ..... In the Vedas he appears as 'Father Manu, Child of the Sun' as a holy seer, the originator of prayer, praise and sacrifice, and as the object of the special favour of the gods.¹

It should be recalled here that Eliot had read the Sanskrit Reader as a text book. The 'son of man' that we all are has forgotten his spiritual father and hence his spiritual ancestry. The meaning sought to be evoked is that spiritually we are the sons of the "holy seer, the originator of prayer, praise and sacrifice" but the forgetfulness of our spiritual ancestry has made us so rootless and miserable: the condition of sterility and blight which can only be redeemed by living a way of life which demands the exercise of the triple virtues of Datta, Dayadhvan and Danyata as our father, a man, (Manu or Prajapati) had realized. This interpretation shows the inevitability of the link between the beginning and the end of the poem and makes untenable the view about the allusion to the Prajapati episode in Part V that : "Here he goes back to the very beginning of Aryan culture, and tells the rest of the story of the rain's coming, not in terms of the setting already developed but in its earliest form".¹ It is plain that the Dharmapada and the other Indian sources of Eliot's symbolism and the title of the poem form the texture of the setting from the very beginning of the poem.

¹. C.R. Lanman, op. cit., P.340
The four lines that follow are intensely poetic rendering of the condition of blight both physical and spiritual. The only imaginable relief is under the shadow of the red rock. We have already seen that the image of the red rock and its shadow, which is different from our shadow in that it can offer some relief and show us "fear in a handful of dust" is an extension here from the poem The Death of Saint Narcissus. Understood in that context the red rock symbolises the sacrifice made in terms of the life of the senses which is the only way to cast off the shadow in order to realise the substance. Mr. Williamson thinks that:

Here Ecclesiastes 12 blends images from Isaiah 32 and Duke 23: latent in the "dead tree" and the "red rock"—the color of "The Fire Sermon"—is the burial of Christ, which involves the preserver of the Grail (Joseph of Arimathaea) and brings the journey to Emmaus in Part V.¹ Whatever might be the source of the symbol of rock, it is certain that its redness connotes sacrifice which is directly connected with the demand of the thunder in Part V. The truth that the protagonist has realised is the truth about human reality. The "fear in a handful of dust" is a general truth to be found both in Christianity and Hinduism. I feel that Mr. Southam is quite suggestive in his observation that "Eliot may also be referring obliquely to the Sibyl's fateful request for so many years of life as there are grains of sand in her grasp".² The

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1. George Williamson, op.cit., P.131
Sibyl had very well realized the 'fear' in a handful of dust and her death-wish now is the result of it. The important thing to be noted is that the symbols and images do not evoke feelings that might be related to a faith; rather there is only the evocation of a metaphysical point of view which is related to the reality of human existence in general. The need of a metaphysical orientation in our conception of human life and its reality is sought to be suggested because the human being as he is today in the waste land of ours is a miserable shadow hiding the substance because he is ignorant of the fears that lie in his way.

The consciousness in the protagonist shifts back and through literary and mythical allusions seeks to see if the human problem of facing the contradiction between the physical and the spiritual could be resolved through love on a personal level. The shift is made possible by association of the ideas in a stream of consciousness, without sacrificing the context which the movement of the ideas has already established. An allusion is made to the love story of Tristan und Isolde where the question: "My Irish maid where liest thou" finds the answer: "desolate and empty the sea", which shows that the Tristan and Isolde episode is meant to form a parallel with the waste land reality. Even the symbol of the hyacinth girl marks only a stage in the pattern of failure. I shall quote a long passage from Cleanth Brooks whose observations are perceptive:

To take an even clearer case of this paradoxical use
of symbols, consider the lines which occur in the hyacinth girl passage. The vision gives obviously a sense of the richness and beauty of life. It is a moment of ecstasy (the basic imagery is obviously sexual); but the moment in its ecstasy is like death. The protagonist looks in that moment into the 'heart of light, the silence', and so looks into — not richness — but blankness: he is neither 'living nor dead'.

Such love as expects the ecstasy of receiving must fail. What succeeds is the love transformed into 'karuna' and the love that is an awful experience:

Datta: what have we given?
My friend, blood shaking my heart
The awful daring of a moment's surrender
Which an age of prudence can never retract
By this, and this only, we have existed

The quester fails to find any answer in the kind of love depicted in Tristan und Isolde or in the image of the hyacinth girl. The "heart of light", which is human love on a purely personal level, is "the silence". The lines quoted above from the Part V of the poem show that the love that sustains us comes the hard way. The symbol of "wet hair" in the hyacinth girl passage, though a symbol of regeneration as Miss Weston has shown, fails to make a spiritual context and suggests only erotism implied there. Some critics have interpreted the hya-

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-cinth episode as forming the peak of a realised moment of spiritual reality in the territory of The Waste Land, but in no way the episode convincingly lends itself to this sort of interpretation. The hyacinth girl is an image of lost love and:

The episode in the hyacinth garden had been like the trance of those who sought the Grail but were unworthy. The hyacinth is withered now, and the girl vanished, amid stony rubbish.¹

The next passage in which Madame Sosostris appears has a reference to Miss Weston's book. According to Miss Weston the Tarot cards were originally used to predict the rise of the waters. But now the fortune-telling of Madame Sosostris shows the degree of degeneration and vulgarity to which we have fallen. The Tarot pack of cards is symbolically significant as it introduces all the threads of references that have conceptual bearing on the principle of organization as well as the implications of regeneration in the poem. Madame Sosostris cannot see the Hanged Man because of her spiritual blindness. Like Madame Sosostris the people in The Waste Land cannot be conscious of the spiritual possibilities of regeneration, and hence they are advised to "fear death by water". The crowds of people whom Madame Sosostris sees are "turning on the Wheel, the Wheel of Fortune in the Tarot, broadly interpretable as a symbol of life in the world, like the great Wheel of Buddhism."²

The two symbols in this passage vis: the 'Wheel' and the 'ring'

¹. Russell Kirk, op.cit., P.84
². Grover Smith, op.cit., P.78
are typically Indian. Their Buddhist association is well known but they frequently appear in the pages of the Gita also. The 'wheel' is such as spares none except the liberated ones. That Eliot has used Hindu symbols most effectively and with comprehensive implications here in this passage is important in itself; but the most significant thing is that the association of Hindu symbols in the context of the fertility gods and Christ (Eliot’s notes make it certain) makes the Hindu symbols more significant because the modern ills from which the people in the Waste Land suffer have been diagnosed from Hindu point of view. To say that we are doomed to suffer because we are tied to the wheel is hardly a Christian way of looking at the predicament of human existence. No concept of 'Sin' and 'Redemption' in a Christian sense is implied here. That in the line: "I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring", Eliot really does refer to Buddhist 'Wheel' can be made sure by taking note of some other lines which were deleted by Pound from "The Fire Sermon":

London, the swarming life you kill and breed,
Huddled between the concrete and the sky,
Responsive to the momentary need,
Vibrates unconscious in its formal destiny,
Knowing neither how to think, or how to feel,
But lives in the awareness of the observing eye.
London, your people is bound upon the wheel
Phantasmal gnomes, burrowing in brick and stone and steel.
Some minds, aberrant from the normal equipoise

(London, your people is bound upon the wheel.)

It seems certain that 'London, your people is bound upon the wheel' refers to a Hindu way of epitomising the condition and reality of man in this world. A ruthless depreciation of what Madame Sosostris stands for with her debased fortune-telling and 'thee' horoscope" is also in keeping with the Buddhist sensibility. Mr. G. F. Allen has quoted from "The Quick Way" to show that the Buddha himself had deprecated such practices:

Let him not work the spells of the Atharva-Veda, nor interpret dreams and omens, nor practise astrology; let not my dear disciple make predications from the cries of birds, cure barrenness, nor practise medicine. 2

Eliot's depreciation of such practices as the Buddha disapproves of appears more poignantly in The Dry Salvages:

To communicate with Mars, converse with spirits,
To report the behaviour of the sea monster,
Describe the horoscope, haruspicate or sory,
Observe disease in signatures, evoke
Biography from the wrinkles of the palm
And tragedy from fingers:

To explore the womb, or tomb, or dreams all these are usual

Pastimes and drugs, and features of the press: 3

1. The Waste Land : A Facsimile and Transcript. P. 43
2. Quoted by G. F. Allen tr. and ed. The Buddha's Philosophy, (1959, P. 52), New York : Macmillan, 1959, P. 52
2. The Complete Poems and Plays P. 189.
Eliot's reading in the Indian sources was very perceptive and the presence of the Indian tags in his poems requires a good deal of comprehension to define it.

The last movement of "The Burial of the Dead" extends the awareness about the present unreality by a reference to third and fourth cantos of Dante's 'Inferno'. But a reference to Dante is by no means to be taken as a Christian reference; it is only an exercise in the poetic technique of parallelism to suggest that the modern waste land is as horrible as Dante's 'Inferno' and, perhaps, further that a progress towards 'Paradise' is possible only when we cross the 'Purgatorio'. The Christian references do suggest the possibility of regeneration but the terms of defining the possible way is explicit only in the Part V. Further, the protagonist addresses Stetson, who is any man in London streets, and the inquiries made to him about the sprouting of the corpse allude to the fertility rituals. Cleanth Brooks rightly suggests that the question: "That corpse you planted last year in your garden, / Has it begun to sprout?" should be linked with an earlier passage — "What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow" etc. He further observes, "the burial of the dead is now a sterile planting — without hope".1 There are a number of confused comments on the 'Dog' in the Webster reference. Cleanth Brooks takes Dog to mean Humanitarianism. D.E.S. Maxwell thinks: "The Dog may be spiritual awareness or conscience, which Stetson makes no attempt to arouse in

the fear that it might force him to recognise his spiritual failings, to attempt to redeem himself — "this none of the people in the waste land wishes to do for it requires effort and positive action". Whatever may be the possible reason for Eliot's capitalisation of Dog and his change of Webster's wolf into dog, one thing is certain from the context that the Dog symbolises fertility spirit. Lillian Feder is quite elucidative regarding this symbol:

The warning to stetson is a plea that the Dog be regarded in its ancient role of fertility spirit (hence the capitalisation), not given the liberty of its modern urban one of 'friend to men' for as such it is a destroyer of ceremony.  

Part II, 'A Game of Chess' derives its title from Middleton's play, Women Beware Women where the game of chess is used as a device to keep the widow occupied while her daughter-in-law is being seduced. Part II deals with our social realities which Eliot poetically projects by a cluster of literary allusions to Middleton, Shakespeare, Milton and some others. This section opens with the most poetic description and the chamber described is first mistaken for Cleopatra's but it is really the apartment of a modern woman, rich, bored and neurotic. The philomel symbol, though showing the possibility of a regeneration, connotes only the sterile sex and seduction. The important thing to be noted here is that the

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2. Lillian Feder, op. cit., P. 223.
treatment of sex — especially the sterile sex having no religious sanction and sanctity of producing children, the posterity that might redeem the present generation of spiritually dead people as Bhagiratha had done to liberate his forefathers by bringing the Ganga — is a bit too ruthless and uncompromising to emerge as a Christian point of view. The symbolism of the Grail legend is related to the sex but the quester in *The Waste Land* fails to find an answer to his mission in it; he fails here also as he failed in the hyacinth garden. Elisabeth-Leisester allusion as well as the Philomel symbol inspite of her transformation into a nightingale, form only the parallels with the waste land reality. What had been once a symbol of culture had come to be only a "withered stumps of time". To the quester any possibility of regeneration in the modern waste land seems remote because the Philomel symbol has become meaningless — "'Jug Jug' to dirty ears" — and therefore:

And still she cried and still the world pursues,
The passage of time from 'cried' to 'pursues' is significant because the world is still repeating the acts of seduction and barbarous rape.

The lady that was mistaken for Cleopatra stands for the modern reality of a bored indulgence in lust and burning of a lustful physical appetite:

Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair
Spread out in fiery points
Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.

The image of a lady with the hair blown over the shoulders, assuming almost symbolic dimension and implication, is very important in Eliot's poetry. Even the hyacinth girl appears like
this. Hair, according to Miss Weston is a symbol of regeneration. But the sense in which Eliot conceives it in *The Waste Land* appears to have its source in Buddhism in Translations:

For when it is known that after the lapse of a hundred thousand years the cycle is to be renewed, the gods called Loka-bhayas, inhabitants of a heaven of sensual pleasures, wander about through the world, with hair let down and flying in the wind, weeping and wiping away their tears with their hands, and with their clothes red and in great disorder.¹

The hair of the woman "spread out in fiery points" symbolises lust and burning in lust. This relates the theme of the burning lust and sterility to Part III of the poem. The dramatic intensity of the four lines that follow forms a parallel with the scene in the hyacinth garden in Part I. The answer given by the man addressed by the woman is significant:

I think we are in rats' alley
Where the dead men lost their bones.

The image of "rats' alley" is significantly evocative as it sums up the whole reality of our waste land. The image of lost 'bones' connects Part II with Part I where the burial of the dead amounts to "dead men" losing their bones. Further, the bone image relates it to Part III, IV and V. In order to elucidate this point a reference to a possible source of bone imagery in Eliot's poetry might be made here. There is a possibility that Eliot associates the idea of lost bones with a

¹ H.O. Warren, op.cit. P.322
reference to bones in Buddhism in Translations where it was not lost.

Then the future Buddha turned his back to the trunk of the Bo-tree and faced the east. And making the mighty resolution, 'Let my skin and sinews, and bones become dry, and welcome and let all the flesh and blood in my body dry up but never from this seat will I stir, until I have attained the supreme and absolute wisdom.'

There under the Bo-tree the bones were not lost. If this allusion be taken as convincing, it is clear that the Buddhist sensibility is operative. The second possible source of this bone image lies in Dadhichi episode indirectly alluded to in Part V of the poem. A reference to 'Ganga' in Part V certainly refers to King Sagar whose 60,000 sons were to lose their bones that were finally resurrected by the Ganga. But 'Ganga' is a generic name for water and this relates it to the legend in the Rig-Veda where the back-bone of Dadhichi was used to release looked up waters.

The protagonist in Part II, while perceiving the rats' alley and the bones lost in it, is hinting at the idea that there is a way of death where the bones are not lost. This implied sense relates it to the asceticism of Part III. The bone image further connects it with "picked his bones in whispers" in Part IV. This is an idea of resurrection which is a Christian concept though the drowning of Phlebas does not connote resurrection. Now through all the literary allusions to Webster and Shakespeare

1. H.C.Warren, op.cit., P.76
the modern predicament is expressed epitomizing all its senseless thinking and etiolated boredom. The life as it is really being lived has lost all meaning; and there is no answer to the question: "What shall we ever do?" In the next movement of this part there is a realistic picture of sordidness and sterility in family life. The scene in the pub depicts the ugliness of sterile sex, because, when the vital principle of life and marriage is reduced to the level of mere drug-addiction for abortive purposes, the social and family life loses its meaning and mental harmony. It is clear that the point raised is not against the institution of marriage as such; it is only against married life that does not want children. However, we cannot set store by the line, "What you get married for if you don't want children?", because this line was inserted by Vivien Eliot and Mr. Eliot accepted it. But, if we connect it with the Viswamitra and Menaka episode subtly implied in,

The awful daring of a moment's surrender

Which an age of prudence can never retract

we can find a meaning in having a son, because from the awful surrender of Viswamitra to Menaka was born Bharat, the mythical founder of Bharathavarsha, the country that was the first to see the light of divinity. The Part II dramatically ends with an echo of Ophelia's 'goodnight' to ladies and shows the madness of the society and the horrible plight of the innocent in it.

Part III derives its title from "Fire Sermon" of the Buddha which occurs in the "Maha Vagga" (1-21). "The Fire

Sermon" in *The Waste Land* occupies a key place in the poem. The drift of the poetic sensibility and thought right from Part I and Part II is related to a depreciation of gross desires and sterile sex and it continues through Part III. Grover Smith rightly comments:

"The Fire Sermon" is the cardinal turning point of the poem. Up to Eliot's "collocation" of St. Augustine and the Buddha, the quest to be reconciled through love and the fusion of body and spirit has reached nothing except disappointment.¹

The quester fails because the Grail has become unholy. "The Grail", comments Mr. Smith, "should not be unholy, but so it is in 'The Fire Sermon'."² Eliot's treatment of love and sex is significant because the treatment is hardly oriented from Christian point of view. The treatment is meant to evoke a feeling of abhorrence towards sex and love placed purely on a physical level. "The whole poem", said Geoffrey Tandy in 1938, is .... fiercely anaphrodisiac ... Anything more savagely moral (in the contemporary and limited sense) than *The Waste Land* I have yet to read".³ It is "savagely moral" only for a Christian but to a Hindu the treatment of love and sex does not give a feeling of its being savage. Inspite of the collocation of St. Augustine with the Buddha, the religious or metaphysical view point from which the sensibility is operating is essentially Indian. A point made in this respect by Kristian Smith

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1. Grover Smith, *op.cit.* P.91  
2. Ibid, P.91  
3. Quoted by H. Howarth, *op.cit.*, P.240
is quoted below:

Apart from the doctrine of original sin, which perhaps has a special application to sex, there is no such teaching in the theology to which Eliot subscribes. Catholic dogma, despite the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, does not regard sexual intercourse as in itself tainted or sinful. Anglican theology, as expounded in *Doctrines in the Church of England*, emphatically does not. And I do not think Eliot very often had sinfulness in mind when he wrote about or alluded to the abuse of sex. If a philosophy is required to explain this preoccupation, it will sooner be found in the Oriental ideas of desire as suffering and as distraction from the path of holiness.¹

St. Augustine had also realised that sex is a distraction from the path of holiness. Therefore his collocation with the Buddha is not incompatible and stresses the importance of asceticism as a discipline for spiritual awakening.

The first movement in "The Fire Sermon" shows the nakedness and ugliness of sex; "the loitering heirs of city directors" have left the banks of the Thames without leaving their addresses because they did not want to "assume responsibility for any untoward pregnancies".² The waters of the Thames are associated with those of Leman symbolising Babylonian Captivity which is the result of abuse of sex. "While I was fishing in the dull canal" extends and relates the modern ugliness and

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1. Kristian Smidt, op.cit., P.195 (Italics mine) P.195
sordidness to the Grail legend where the Fisher King who, as Miss Weston has shown, is often described as fishing, his castle being located on the bank of a river or on the sea shore. But fishing in the dull canal shows no possibility of regeneration. This fishing in the dull canal forms a contrast with the act of fishing in Part V — "I sat upon the shore/ Fishing" — where a reference is made not only to the Fisher King but also to the Buddha who, as Miss Weston shows, is sometimes pictured as "the Fisherman who draws fish from the ocean of Samsar to the light of Salvation".\(^1\) I shall deal in detail with this point in Part V but here it is in order to note that reference to the Buddha's "Fire Sermon" in Part III of the poem is not a pointer to something outside the poem as Dr. Leavis thinks. According to Eliot the "collocation" of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism is "not an accident".\(^2\) St. Augustine merely realises the 'burning'; he depends too much on God's grace: "I entangle my steps with these outward beauties, but Thou plucks me out, O Lord, Thou plucks me out".\(^3\) Only the ascetic way of the Buddha is related to the wisdom of the cosmic voice of the thunder in Part V. Therefore this Part III is appropriately named "The Fire Sermon".

The structural and conceptual coherence that Buddhist sensibility in the poem makes for is important to be noted

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1. Quoted by Grover Smith, op. cit., P.91
2. Vide, the Notes on The Waste Land.
here. Sex is conceived only as breeding memory and desire; and hence it is a direct extension of the concept of desire and suffering that we noted in the treatment of the first movement of the Part I of the poem. It is further connected with the Part I and II as it is associated with the "wheel" symbol. It is to be recalled here that the Grail symbolises sex and so the failure of the quester in Chapel Perilous is conceptually connected with the Part III. But the quest does not end there (and this is the point which is sadly missed by the critics so far); it further extends to the Prajapati episode. This shows that both structurally and conceptually the poem shows a unity and progress and the other allusions and references are appropriated to it only for the extension of our awareness about the likenesses and parallels that might appeal to the readers at different levels of literary taste. Two more symbols, that is, of fire and water should be considered here. I shall merely summarise the comments of Professor Narsimhaiah in this respect.¹

There is an equivocation in both the symbols of Fire and water. Fire symbolises burning lust as water symbolises Sansar and its unredeemed lust and greed. But the fire also symbolises spiritual purification, the cleansing of the heart, as water symbolises the possibility of regeneration. Cleanth Brooks finds a contrast between the symbols of fire and water but really there is no such thing. There is a myth that Sun and Earth (Purusha and Prakriti) had a union and the sperm fell into the

waters from which it flowered forth as lotus from whose womb was born Brahma whose consort is Saraswati, Knowledge. Thus Professor Narsimhaiah concludes:

Far from being the 'contrasting' symbol of fire, water, like fire, thus symbolises Knowledge.¹

Thus "The Fire Sermon" forms the heart of The Waste Land and it connects itself conceptually and metaphysically with all other parts of the poem, especially with Part IV and V where the symbol of water is made so important.

In the second movement of "The Fire Sermon" the protagonist hears "The sound of horns and motors" heralding the prediction that Sweeny would visit Mrs. Porter in the spring. It is to be noted that the "entrance of Sweeny propels into The Waste Land another symbol of the rebellious flesh".² It may be observed that the 'spring' in this context is the same as in that of the cruellest 'April'. Mrs. Porter, Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant, and the typist girl, all stand for the debasement of sex and its meaninglessness in the present society.

Tiresias, who perceives the present plight, had "foresuffered all". A reference to Rhine-daughters towards the last part of this section extends the awareness that there are parallels where people in the blindness of lust and its burning could connect "nothing with nothing", a condition of complete moral and metaphysical blindness. Such naked and ugly sex as Tiresias perceives brings him to another perception of a realization which

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1. Ibid, P.84
2. Grover Smith, op.cit., P.85
is sought to be conveyed by a deliberate collocation of the representatives of Eastern and Western asceticism. Eliot's "The Fire Sermon" burns with lust and sex as does the "Fire Sermon" of the Buddha with fire where the word fire occurs more than thirty times and the "central image of burning envelops the entire Sermon like a flame". The whole movement in Part III inevitably forces itself into the conclusion that a way out of the present impasse lies only in an ascetic way that the Buddha found most necessary for liberation from the wheel of Sansar.

Part IV of the poem is significantly related to "The Burial of the Dead" because the very title "Death by water" forms a contrast with sterile burial in Part I; but there is a point of irony implied here as the warning given by Madame Sosostris — "Fear death by Water" — has no fear at all for the people of The Waste Land because the death of Phlebas in "Death by water" does not connote resurrection, it rather "writes the epitaph to the experience by which the quester has failed in the garden". The drowning of Phlebas may be taken to be a commitment to the waves of an ancient fertility god but his death shows no sacrifice, no regeneration. He is merely a transformation of "the one-eyed merchant" in Part I and Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant, in Part III because his commercial links are very clear as he:

Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
And the profit and loss.

2. Grover Smith, op.cit., P.91
He is a member of Madame Sosostris' "wicked pack of cards". The "Whirlpool" which he entered is merely a transformation of the 'wheel' symbol and is related to the Hindu concept of being bound to the wheel. His drowning "certainly offers no hope of immortality, or of an escape from the wheel, but rather a lapse into hell or the endlessly recurring avatars of suffering in flesh". Death by water has no meaning unless the life lived here is ascetically oriented to accept and practise Datta, Dayadhvan and Danyata. The last three lines of "Death by Water" sound like a warning to both "Gentile or Jew", the non-believers who rejected God and the faithful believers, the Jews, because "for Phlebas the baptism is a descent followed by no emergence". Faith as such, may it be any faith, Christian or Hindu, is of no avail: one may have a faith or not but one may achieve liberation by leading an ascetic life in the spirit of Buddhism. "The wisdom of the East and the West comes to the same point", asserts Cleanth Brooks, but he misses the essential point because the Western asceticism of St. Augustine is not in itself the way to liberation, the operation of a personal God's grace is necessary to pluck one out of the "cauldron of unholy loves" and this, further, implies a faith; but the Buddha's way of asceticism is in itself a way to enlightenment. Inspite of the 'collocation' of Eastern and Western representatives of asceticism

1. Ibid, P.92
2. Ibid, P.92
the emphasis on asceticism is mainly due to the Buddhist sensibility.

Eliot in his notes on *The Waste Land* makes it clear that in Part V, three themes are employed: the journey to Emmaus, the approach to Chapel Perilous and the present decay of eastern Europe. The journey to Emmaus relates to the story told in Luke XXIV, 13-31 where two disciples travelling on the road to Emmaus on the day of Christ's resurrection fail to recognize his presence with them until he blesses their evening meal. The second theme employed in Part V is the final stage of the Grail quest where the questing Knight is tested by the illusion of horror and nothingness in Chapel Perilous. The third theme, that of the decay of the eastern Europe, is also significant as it presents the horrors of the modern world transformed into a vision of universal suffering. All the three themes are interwoven.

Eliot's own comments on Part V that it is "not only the best part, but the only part that justified the whole, at all" has already been noted. Before we proceed to deal with this part of the poem it is necessary to make some general observations on the themes employed. The main symbol of the Grail legend employed thematically relates to the waste on all the levels that the protagonist explores, and structurally makes it possible for the poem to move towards the conditions at Chapel Perilous. But the quest fails there as it has already failed to find any answer because the Chapel Perilous in the poem projects only the illusions of his own subjectivity;
and "though now he should understand that salvation can re­
und from nothing and no one trapped there with him, the strug­
gle not to desire, to accept and not to will, still imposes
agony". ¹ And Mr. Smith most perceptively comments further:

The ascetic way, pointed in 'The Fire Sermon', he has
not adopted. By a second initiation in this quest he
attempts to achieve peace by turning directly to reli-
gion; but, just as love has failed because he has not
affirmed it, religion fails because he does not make the
requisite denial — the denial of self permitting an
affirmation of self-discipline.²

Mr. Smith's reading is perceptive; the journey to Emmaus also
fails because the quester, in whom the two disciples merge, does
not realize the presence of the third, the resurrected Christ.
That part of the journey where it ends with the evening meal
to be blessed by Christ projecting the full reality of the re-
surrection is not present in the poem. So, ironically enough,
the journey to Emmaus ends in negation. The quester had already
turned away from the waters that drown in search of the waters
that save; but such waters he finds nowhere, either in the gar-
den of Gethsemane or near the Chapel Perilous, and hence he
moves forward, there is a linear progress implicit, and goes
to the waters of the Ganga. And, therefore, the "search of Part
V — for its parts make one journey — leads ultimately to

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¹ Grover Smith, op.cit. P.92
² Ibid, PP.92-93
the sacred river and its wisdom”. The depiction of the third theme, the decay of the eastern Europe, forms a parallel with the scene of horror and sterility near the Chapel Perilous. All the three themes form one single journey on the level of poetic vision. The decay of eastern Europe is conceived by Eliot as a consequence of the ascendancy of secular and communist forces. This malady of secularism for its cure is also to be related to the wisdom of ancient India. Therefore, Mr. Cleanth Brooks misses the conceptual thread in the poem when he asserts that the story related to the thunder and the rain’s coming is told "not in terms of the setting already developed but in its earliest forms".

The first movement of Part V alludes to the course of events from the betrayal and arrest of Christ, after the agonized prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, until his death:

He who was living is now dead
We who were living are now dying
With a little patience.

The death of the Saviour does not result in saving us. We too are now dying. The next movement alludes to the quester who in search of the sustaining waters experiences the most exoruing and exasperating sensations of physical thirst and mental agony. It is to be noted that the first movement contains "reverberation/Of thunder of spring over distant mountains", perhaps, the storm and earthquake at the time of Crucifixion; and

1. George Williamson, op.cit., P.148
the second one also contains:

There is not even silence in the mountains

But dry sterile thunder without rain

The setting established by the 'thunder' in these two movements extends and finally relates to the thunder that speaks alluding to the ancient wisdom of India. The journey to Chapel Perilous and the horrors attending upon it find a parallel in the communist onslaught on the culture and tradition of eastern Europe as it is the quester who sees the modern parallels to the realities at Chapel Perilous in :

There is not even solitude in the mountains

But red sullen faces sneer and snarl

From doors of mudcracked houses

It is significant that from the beginning of the first movement the parallelisms in the three themes are being forced into a unity and hence there comes a full-stop only after the line 384. The quester longs for even the illusion of dripping water but there is only the horror of sterility and waste. The talk between the disciples going on the journey to Emmaus centres around the presence of a third one, who (Eliot's notes make it clear) is Christ "wrept in brown mantle, hooded", not different from "those hooded hordes swarming", but their talks about the identity of the hooded presence finds an expression echoing a line — "I do not know whether a man or a woman" — from the answer of Maha-Tissa in Buddhism in Translations.¹ I have

¹ H.C. Warren, op. cit., P.97-98
already quoted Maha-Tissa's answer in another context to show Eliot's debt to it but here it should be recalled that realization of the ambiguity in the identity of the woman, whom Maha-Tissa describes as a 'mere set of bones', raised him to the saintship. But here there is no realization on the part of the protagonist and he fails to distinguish between Christ and the "hooded hordes swarming/Over endless plains". There is no answer here to his question; he hears only the lamentation, perhaps, consequent upon the Russian Revolution and other upheavals in Europe. The whole of the present culture and cultural heritage is disintegrating:

Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal

The next movement starting with "A woman drew her long black hair out tight" takes the protagonist to Chapel Perilous which is "only a wind's home". Mr. Cleanth Brooks relates the "long black hair" to other hair symbols in the poem because the "hair has been immemorially a symbol of fertility, and Miss Weston and Fraser mention sacrifices of hair in order to aid the fertility god".¹ There is no denying the fact that the hair has been a symbol of fertility; in India the practice of sacrificing human hair with this end in view is still prevalent. But, as shown earlier, the hair symbol in association with the image of a woman owes its origin to Buddhism in Translations

where it stands for sensuous pleasures. The woman with a long black hair here does not sacrifice it; rather in association with "fiddled whisper music on those strings" she recalls only the sterility brought about by sensuous indulgence. The most horrible illusions like "bats with baby faces" appear in the Chapel to test the questing Knight. According to Miss Weston a bell was rung at the Chapel Perilous to signify that the Knight has survived his ordeal but here:

And upside down in air were towers

Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours

The bells are only the "reminiscent bells" not the real ones, and the "towers" are not only the towers of Chapel Perilous but the towers of the Church as well, because the Chapel symbolizes the Church. The "towers" further refer to the "falling towers" of modern civilization. Every thing fails the quester, the Chapel Perilous as well as the Church. There are only the tumbled graves and dry bones. The Chapel is filled with the illusions of horror but is really empty. I do not call it the failure of the quest because the quester has endured all the ordeals and in the hope of an answer he extends his quest farther into the absolute ground of the Vedas and the Upanishads because the real origin of the Grail legend also lies there.

A cock crows and its "co co rico co co rico" is transformed into a flash of lightning. With the crowing of the cock we are instantaneously transported to the foothills of the Himavant. Miss Weston herself traces the symbolism of the Grail legend to the "freeing of the waters", the pristine object of
the fertility ritual in the Rig-Veda. The cock crows twice here and it might allude to Peter's shame and cowardice, and is to be taken as a part of a ritual preceding the death of Christ. However, the salvation here does not come in that vicarious way: we are here in the land of the "thunder" where "freeing of the waters" from Ahi, the demon, requires a 'Vajrayudha' to be made of the bones of Dachichi, a symbol of sacrifice and asceticism. Hugh Kenner thinks that with, "Then a damp gust/Bringing rain", "the activity of the protagonist ends".1 Such readings betray incomprehension and fail to appreciate the threads in the structural coherence of the poem that the Indian tags make for in the total organization of the poem.

Now the protagonist finds a parallel of the present waste land in the Rig-Veda where the waters were locked up by a demon called Ahi or Vritta who was ultimately killed by Indra, the god of gods and the waters were freed. The Rig-Vedic legend refers to the "Sapta-Sindhu", but 'Ganga' is a generic name for water and a reference to it certainly telescopes the Rig-Vedic legend. Apart from this, there is another Indian myth, that enacts the story of a severe spiritual drought and ascetic sacrifice (tapas); which is quite evocatively meaningful with reference to "Ganga". The story in short is that Sagara, the King of Ayodhya, had 60,000 sons born to him after a long prayer and sacrifice. To celebrate the occasion he arranged to perform a horse-sacrifice but the consecrated horse was stolen by a demon.

All the sons were sent to bring back the horse but it so happened that they were all burnt to ashes. The king, then, sent his grandson to look for them; and, in turn, was informed by Garuda, the king of eagles, that only the Ganga could leave the heap of ashes and liberate them. In course of time Bhagiratha came to be the king after nearly 30,000 years. It was a problem to bring the Ganga down from heaven. Bhagirath did 'tapas' for one thousand years, Brahmas was pleased and he granted his wish. Then Bhagirath worshipped Lord Shiva who was pleased to sustain the Ganga in his tangled locks. Thus the Ganga came down and laved the ashes and sent them to heaven.

How the lines from The Waste Land:

Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
Waited for rain, while the black clouds
Gathered far distant, over Himavant.
The jungle crouched, humped in silence.
The thunder

The use of the words 'Ganga' and 'Himavant' that Eliot prefers to their anglicised counterparts, Ganges and Himalayas, shows his insight into the culture of a whole people. Poetically, these two words have been rendered profoundly evocative by their implied allusion to both the Rig-Vedic legend and the Bhagiratha myth where the story of asceticism and sacrifice readily relates itself to the Prajapati episode in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. A great living tradition is telescoped here with all its occasional spiritual crises and achievements that came only through sacrifices. The cosmic voice of the thunder
implies an answer to the quester. "So the thunder", asserts Russell Kirk, "has answered the questions that were put in the Chapel Perilous. It was painful to seek for those answers: it will be agony to obey."¹ The Indian source to which the thunder alludes has to be made clear. The thunder peals thrice: Da Da Da. It alludes to a significant episode in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad where the three kinds of sons, gods, men and demons (devah, manusyah and asurah) approached Prajapati, their father-preceptor, for instructions after completing their formal education under him:

1. **PRAJAPATI** had three kinds of offspring: gods, men, and demons (asuras). They lived with Prajapati, practising the vows of brahmacharins. After finishing their term, the gods said to him: "Please instruct us, Sir." To them he uttered the syllable da (and asked): "Have you understood?" They replied: "We have. You said to us, 'Control yourselves (danyata).'" He said: "Yes, you have understood."

2. Then the men said to him: "Please instruct us, Sir." To them he uttered the same syllable da (and asked): "Have you understood?" They replied: "We have. You said to us, 'Give (datta).'" He said: "Yes, you have understood."

3. Then the demons said to him: "Please instruct us, Sir." To them he uttered the same syllable da (and asked): "Have you understood?" They replied: "We have. You said to us: 'Be compassionate (dayadhvam)." He said: "Yes, you have understood."

¹ Russel Kirk, op.cit., P.90
That very thing is repeated (even today) by the heavenly voice, in the form of thunder, as "Da," "Da," "Da," which means: "Control yourselves," "Give," and "have compassion." Therefore one should learn these three: self-control, giving, and mercy.¹

This is the translation of the episode in the **Brihaderanyaka Upanishad** (5,11- 3) that Eliot in his 'Notes on the poem refer to. It is plain to notice that Eliot changes the order of the words in which they occur in the **Brihaderanyaka Upanishad**.

Prof. Narsimhaiah comments:

Apart from the message part of it, the audition must be felicitous and as though the poet wished to avoid the least twisting of the tongue and, more, to underline his priorities changes the order of the words from Damyata, Datta, Dayadhvan, to Datta, Dayadhvan Damyata. 

Eliot telescopes the trio of Datta, Dayadhvan and Damyata as one message rendering its triple significance wholly human. There is a 'hint in one of the later Upanishads where this is reviewed and is translated thus:

Perchance it is hinted: Gods and demons yet
Their saving motto keep, but men forgot.²

"And the requirement of the immediate present," comments Prof. Narsimhaiah, "is the lesson of Datta: Give. And hence also the

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3. Quoted, Ibid, P.89
priority of 'Give' over others.\textsuperscript{1} The change of the order of the words is really significant as it seeks to imply that all these virtues are to be exercised by the men today because we have come to have all the failings that these virtues seek to correct.

Eliot's comments on the message of the thunder imply an acceptance of them:

\begin{quote}
The awful daring of a moment's surrender
Which an age of prudence can never retract
By this, and this only, we have existed
\end{quote}

These lines allude to Viswamitra episode. There is a legend that Viswamitra decided to take to a life of learning, austerity and meditation in order to achieve the knowledge of Brahman. When he was near to gaining miraculous powers, the gods grew jealous of him and sent a damsel called Menaka to divert his attention and foil his pursuit. Long years of meditation and 'tapas' were of no avail and the sage fell for her. In the context of this myth it becomes clear that lastingness of a race was made possible by the 'awful surrender' of the sage because a son called Bharatha was born, who eventually became the mythical founder of Bharathvarsha, the land of the thunder. This myth is in keeping with Miss Weston's treatment of the Grail legend. Miss Weston suggests that:

\begin{quote}
...... the Mystery ritual comprised a double initiation, the Lower, into the mysteries of generation, i.e., of physical Life; the Higher, into the spiritual Divine
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{1} Ibid, P.89
Life, where man is made one with God.¹

On the level of "physical Life" the "giving" means giving oneself away with a view to making a sacrifice. Only by such a giving which is an awful surrender of the personal 'self' we have existed. To exist means to have a real being, to outlive. The implied suggestion is that only by giving ourselves away we can outlive the doom which is shattering the very fabric of our real existence. The comment on 'Dayadhvam' extends the suggestion that sympathy means to move oneself out of one's limited self. Sympathy in this context implies 'Karuna', compassion for all the living beings. That was the way the Buddha showed in order to move out of the prison tower of what he denounced as 'soul'. The allusions made in the comment on 'Dayadhvam' clearly show that the 'self' is a prison house.

The first allusion is made to Dante's 'Inferno' XXXIII, 46, where the Duke Ugolino recalls how he, with his two sons and two grandsons, was locked in a tower, and the key thrown into the river, and starved to death. He heard the key turn only once because after the tower was locked the key was thrown and the door never opened again. The second allusion to Appearance and Reality from which Eliot quotes in the 'Notes' also is to the same purport. According to F.H. Bradley the individual is peculiarly imprisoned in his own self. It is only during the moments that transcend pride and selfishness that a 'broken' Coriolanus is revived in us. Otherwise we are all like Coriolanus, the title-hero of Shakespeare's play.

¹ Quoted by George Williamson, op. cit., P. 124
giving in the context of Prajapati episode is an act of self-transcendence which really feels 'awful'. It is a way to "Spiritual Divine life where man is made one with God." The concept of human existence as prison is also made very explicit in Buddhism in Translations. The Buddha had advised his disciples:

So likewise thou must every mode
Of being as prison view —
Renunciation be thy aim;
Thus from existence free thyself.¹

This implied allusion to Buddhism highlights the importance of a metaphysical re-orientation in our view of human personality. The ego-centred love must be transformed into 'Karuna'.

The third comment, that is, the comment on 'Damyata' stresses the necessity of an inner check against the drive of desires and emotions. The images employed here are, of course, recapitulated from Part I and IV of the poem. The would-have-occurred incident refers to the story of Tristan and Isolde where the love failed and the sea was desolate and empty and the wounded Tristan died as Isolde could not reach in time to heal him. Thus Datta, Dayadhvam and Damayata form together the highest discipline necessary for personal and social regeneration. One is only to remember how Mara sent his daughter to seduce Buddha and how his self-control saved him and brought him to Enlightenment. The imagery of the contending phases of sea and boat with its reference to would-have-occurred incident

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¹ H.C. Warren, op. cit., P.24
that has puzzled many critics, appears to have been drown from the Bhagavad Gita:

The mind that yields to the uncontrolled and wandering senses lets its wisdom float adrift as a boat on water is borne away by the wind.¹

Our hearts can beat obediently to the "controlling hands" only if we have achieved evenness of mind like Arjuna. Helen Gardner rightly thinks that:

At the close of The Waste Land the image of the open sea and a boat moving on it easily and gaily is used as an image of beatitude. It is a wonderful image of that inward peace and calm to which the great religions of the East aspire.²

The answers that the questioner has received have profoundly defined the terms of reality that might restore the suffering and blighted humanity to a meaningful quotidian existence with a possibility of final deliverance. How we see the Fisher King on the shore fishing:

I sat upon the shore
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order?

Commenting upon the lines quoted above Dr. Leavis says that "the poem ends where it began." There are critics who do not agree

1. Quoted by Philip Wheel Wright, "Eliot's Philosophical Themes" T.S.Eliot: A study of His Writings by Several Hands, ed. B.Rajan P.104
2. Helen Gardner, op.cit., P.126
with Dr. Leavis but for the reasons that in themselves betray lack of proper comprehension. So Oleanth Brooks thinks: "The comment upon what the thunder says would indicate, if other passages did not, that the poem does not 'end where it began." There is the comment of Hugh Kenner which is a bit elucidative but he does not care to substantiate his understanding of it: "The journey eastward across the desert is finished; though the King's lands are waste, he has arrived at the sea." It is of course, a great progress to have arrived at the sea. The Fisher King has still "the arid plain behind" him. A "damp gust" has brought some rain but it is not sufficient. But the Fisher King has become conscious of his personal obligation to set his lands in order. "Certainly", comments William T. Moynihan, "if, regardless of the irony, the Fisher King can set his lands in order, he is no longer impotent. And it seems relevant that he asks himself "Shall I." There is no question of "can I"; it is only a matter of will." W. T. Moynihan had suggested in the beginning of his essay that apart from the classical, and mythical (which includes the Grail) quest there is a mystical one. He asserts that, "The subsuming quest is the mystical." The emergence of this mystical level of the

4. Ibid, P. 139
quest is significantly determined by the Indian thought and sensibility in the poem. The Buddha also thought of setting his lands in order and after his enlightenment he started teaching the people how to do it. Moreover, the speaker is not only the Fisher King, he is the Buddha also who according to Miss Weston is sometimes pictured as a 'Fisherman' drawing the fish from the ocean of Sansara to the light of Salvation. From the cruellest 'April' the poem has moved to the light of salvation and nobody can miss the tremendous progress the poem makes. The Buddha had achieved all the three virtues and his image projects a true realization. The Fisher King is not important and maimed now; his figure, finally, merges in the image of the Enlightened Buddha. The London Bridge, the symbol of the lands in disorder is still falling down. This type of social disintegration can be prevented only if all of us are individually ready to commit ourselves to fulfil our social and individual obligations.

The bundle of quotations with which the poem moves towards "Shantih Shantih Shantih" are drawn from at least four different languages. For some critics they are a farrago of meaningless fragments. But a careful examination would show their artistic propriety. They have a definite relation to some of the major symbols used in the poem. The first refers to Arnaut Daniel in Dante's 'Purgatorio' where he dives into the refining fire. A Christian faith in the process of regeneration is suggested here. The second alludes to Pervigilium Veneris where the speaker wishes to be like a swallow and he
wants the spring to return to give him voice to sing. It has a relation with the Philomel symbol but the implication here is only of a regenerate life in a spring that suggests the regeneration only through sacrifice. The third one refers to the fact that the protagonist is disinherited. This on the part of the protagonist is positive realization about his own reality. These fragments show that the possibility of the regeneration is not lost for ever. And hence:

These fragments I have shored against my ruins

Why then I le fi t you. Hieronymo's mad again.

The verb 'shored' is significant here. The possibility of an intended ambiguity may not be completely ruled out. The protagonist has fished these fragments out of the sea and 'shored' them by his side against his ruins. Such a fishing and depending upon such fragments might be taken to be madness by the people in the modern waste land. Therefore Dr. A.G. George thinks that the poem ends on a note of "confusion, madness and despair." \(^1\) Such a reading betrays complete confusion of misunderstanding and misses the very connotation that an allusion to Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* seeks to extend. The inspiration that dawns on the poet-protagonist is like Hieronymo's feigned madness whereby he could catch the conscience of the murderers of his son, Horatio. The fragments offer an appeal to the conscience of the people to follow the commands of the thunder in order to kill the lust and greed. To see an irony implied in "Hieronymo's is mad again" is madness enough.

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\(^1\) A.G. George, op.cit., P.172
The poet-protagonist is under the spell of "enlightened mystification" which should not be mistaken for madness. And hence the recurrence of "Datta,Dayadhvam, Damyata." It is to be noted that Eliot wanted the Sanskrit words not simply to mean what their English counterparts do, but also to mean those things in the context of a Upanishad.\footnote{Conrad Aiken, "An Antony of Melancholy" in ed. Cox & Hinchliffe op.cit. p.95} Eliot's emphasis on the original context of the Sanskrit words highlights the significance of the Indian thought and sensibility in the poem. So the repetition of Datta,Dayadhvam,Damyata, emphatically implies an assertion that the fragments 'shored' do not have an independent validity; they could be shored against our ruins only when reinforced by these triple virtues. The poem rightly ends with 'Shantih Shantih Shantih' which is a conventional benediction at the end of any ceremony, and it restores to the poem the dominant note of "tranquillity, which is the 'pradhan rasa' of the Mahabharat where also we fear, as in The Waste Land, the world is disintegrating.\footnote{C.D. Narasimhaiah, The Literary Criterion, Vol.1, No.2, Summer, 1972 P.91} One can only regret that 'the better craftsman' and a man of oumen and critical sense, as Ezra Pound was, could not appreciate the inevitability of the triple Shantih. Any attempt to see irony implied here is erroneous. The poem has already formulated and defined the terms of a meaningful existence and the benediction will fructify only in \textit{Four Quartets}. After the mythic enactment of so much of horror and suffering, lust and frustration in terms of a cosmic trait of human reality it is but natural that by showering the Vedic-benediction the poem should remind us of our true grounds of reality.