CHAPTER VIII

FOUR QUARTETS: THE WORLD BEYOND POETRY
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Four Quartets: The World Beyond Poetry

*Four Quartets* offers a glimpse into the world that lies beyond the world of mere poetical actuality. We have already noted Eliot's concern with writing a kind of poetry which is rendered so transparent that we are not to see the poetry but that which we are intended to see through it. What we are intended to see is the spiritual world of a still luminosity beyond the world of poetical crystallisation. In the *Quartets*, Eliot has structured a complex poetical world, as much philosophic and metaphysical as it is poetical, by using old concepts and mystical insights, and very often by creating new concepts in the form of a poetical vision. At points the *Quartets* touch upon theological contexts but the main context should be taken as the poem itself. Perhaps, after the *Divine Comedy*, *Four Quartets* is the only poem where the most spiritual marriage between poetry and philosophy finds consummation. Eliot emulates the world of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the Vedas where the world of poetry, philosophy and religion are so intensely fused together that it becomes the very breath of Eternity. There one finds the highest poetry and the highest philosophy. It is this concept of poetry, that Sri Aurobindo emphasises in *The Future Poetry*, first published as a series of essays in the *Arva* from 1917 to 1920. As Sri Aurobindo observes, "all art worth the name must go beyond the visible, must reveal, must show us something that is hidden,
and in its total affect not reproduce but create." ¹ About the future course poetry might choose for itself he predicts:

The possibility is the discovery of a closer approximation to what we might call the mantra in poetry, that rhythmic speech which, as the Veda puts it, rises at once from the heart of the seer and from the distant home of the Truth, — the discovery of the word, the divine movement, the form of thought proper to the reality ... ²

The Quartets aspire towards such a realization as Sri Aurobindo conceives of. It is difficult to resolve the complexity of the Quartets on a rational basis and any attempt to analyze the poem is bound to eliminate much that can only be felt and not rationally presented as a fact in experience. I, therefore, propose to isolate some of the main concepts used by the poet and examine them with regard to their philosophical and religious bearing on the ultimate vision presented as a truth glimpsed into.

The central concept of the "stillpoint" round which other concepts in the Quartets move is a poetic creation of Eliot. For an examination of its genesis and derivation from other sources it may be convenient to start with the epigraph that Eliot borrows from Heraclitus, the only philosopher in the West (with the possible exception of Bergson) who has gone deeper in the direction of accepting the full reality

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² Ibid, P.11
of impermanence and change and who comes closest to the spirit
of Buddhism. The fragments from Hiraolitus supply the epigraph to Burnt Norton, the first of the Quartets, but the epigraph
might be taken as applicable to the Quartets as a whole because the unity of vision that is glimpsed is the result of each
of the Quartets being an integral part in the pattern of the whole. Translated the fragments from Hiraolitus stand as fol­
lows:

Although the Law of Reason (logos) is common, the major­
ity of people live as though they had an understand­
ing (wisdom) of their own.

The way upward and downward are one and the same.

The first of the fragments according to Raymond Preston attrac­
ted Eliot for its "poetic suggestiveness." Analogues to Hira­
olitean fragments are found in the Hindu scriptures also. As an
analogue to the first fragment Hinduism offers: "akam Sat bip­
rah bahudha badanti" which may be translated as "Truth or
logos is one, scholars interpret it variously." The concept of
truth as being one and indivisible is the very corner-stone of
the whole metaphysical search in Hinduism. This truth (set or
logos) is Brahman who is spoken of variously according to the
degrees of personal realisation by different seers. The second
fragment purporting that the way up and the way down are the

1. For a fuller discussion on this point please see "T.S.Eliot
and Buddhism" by Harold B. McCarthy, P.42.

2. G.Williamson, op.cit.,P.208

Ward , 1946, P.VIII.
same is suggestive of the mystical disciplines that, (though different in approaches), arrive at the same truth. They refer to Hiraolitean concept of four elements vis; fire, air, water, and earth characterising the flux that Hiraolitus calls 'war' or 'strife'. All the four elements form a cyclic movement. The concept of fire, air, water, and earth forming the flux of 'Sam­ear' are very frequently found in Hindu scriptures. Commenting upon the second fragment, Elisabeth Crow 1 says that Hiraolitus had no concept of a "still point" at which the flux is resolved into "neither arrest nor movement." Grover Smith in his attempt to locate a "still point" argues that the second epigraph is closely related to the first, and it supposedly refers to "the transmutation of the elements, the cycle of earth, water, air, and fire, for which later philosophers cited Hiraolitus as an authority." Mr. Smith further argues that the way up is from earth to fire, the way down from fire to earth; the cycle proceeds everlastingly as fire is the primary substance and it motivates the cycle. He further asserts that in Hiraolitus the logos is, practically speaking, an equivalence with the flux itself. According to him, it was for Aristotle to introduce the concept of unmoved mover that is placed outside the flux. Thus what Eliot did in the Quartets "was to invoke the logos of Hiraolitus as if it were this mover, in his own

2. Grover Smith, op.cit. P.256
imagery, the centre, round which the wheel of flux revolves forever but which 'gathers' the movement into stillness" ¹

Mr. Smith's point is quite elucidative; it is not unlikely that Eliot might have had some notion of Aristotle's 'unmoved mover' in his concept formations. But for Aristotle, "since time is the measure of motion, it will be the measure of rest too indirectly. For all rest is in time."² Aristotle's considerations on time have a scientific validity where as the sense in which Eliot forms his concepts regarding time and its relation to the still point relates to a mystically realised metaphysical vision. It seems that Plotinus in his consideration on "Time and Eternity"³ is more immediate to our purpose. Plotinus projects a mystic vision through a process related to a mystical discipline through which we might transcend time and reach the still point. Plotinus' concept of outgoing life of the soul along the life-course accords more with Eliot's concept of the reality in time past, present and future. Plotinus envisages a process of the soul's withdrawing itself from this flux, self-created by the soul, to a still point. This is Vedic concept where Vishnu creates this world of flux which ever revolves in time, past, present and future and when He withdraws into Himself the 'Maya' ceases to exist. Liberation of human self into its primal light where the Atman achieves unity with Brahman is conceived to be a process of withdrawal

¹ Ibid. P.4 256
² Aristotle, "Time", in ed. Richard M.Gale, op.cit., P.17
³ Vide the quotation from Plotinus on P.8 of the present work.
in Hindu metaphysics. This is the still point. This brings one to a consideration of some of the Indian concepts that might have influenced Eliot's own formulations. In Buddhism the concept of the still point is very explicitly stated:

Monks, there exists that condition wherein is neither earth nor water nor fire nor air; wherein is neither the sphere of infinite space nor of infinite consciousness nor of nothingness nor of neither-consciousness nor unconsciousness; where there is neither this world nor a world beyond nor both together nor moon and sun. Thence, monks, I declare is no coming to birth; thither is no going (from life); therein is no duration; thence is no falling; there is no arising. It is not something fixed, it moves not, it is not based on anything. That indeed is the end of ITI. 1

We have already noted that the Heraclitan concept of flux is nearer to the Buddhist philosophy of time. In Heraclitus also we have four elements fire, air, water and earth whose death is a necessary prerequisite for the realisation of the still point, and the death of these elements is envisioned in Little Gidding. In the lines quoted above we find that all the four elements finally disappear in the stillness of the realisation. Therefore, it seems that in the context of the second epigraph from Heraclitus, the Buddhist concept of stillness is more central to Eliot's purpose. Further the symbol of 'wheel' so often

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1. Quoted by Harold E. MacCarthy in, "T.S. Eliot and Buddhism", P. 47
used by Eliot, though it is not exclusively a Hindu one, stands both for flux and rest. The concept of rest is implied in the Buddhist concept of 'Law', the 'dhamma Chakra' that transcends the flux and brings the stillness of 'Nirvan'. Moreover, the symbol of wheel in itself implies a point in the axle that does not revolve. So the Buddhist philosophy, having an analogue to Heraclitean concept, has a direct bearing on Eliot's symbol of the still point.

In the Indian metaphysical and philosophical speculations there are other concepts that form parallels to Eliot's notion of the still point. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, which is a major source of Eliot's thought and sensibility, has the followings:

Just as all the spokes are fixed in the nave and the felloe of a chariot-wheel, so are all beings, all gods, all organs and all these (individual) selves fixed in this Self.¹

The realisation of this 'Self' is like reaching the point where there is all stillness and rest. In Hindu scriptures the Brahman is spoken of as "Skambha", the cosmic pillar. Further, he is called "dhruva", the motionless and eternal. Eliot's projection of the still point, as the analysis of the poem would show, is quite in the spirit of the dance of Natraj where all motion is arrested at a point of cosmic stillness. The concept of a still point is a realized metaphysical vision in the Gita:

¹Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, (II, V, 15) Trans. by Swami Madhavananda P. 391
Arjuna, the Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, who are mounted on the automation of this body, causing them by His illusive power to revolve (according to their actions).  

It is, perhaps, only because of such a concept of the still point that Eliot puts so much of emphasis on the concept of the right action for realizing it. The flux that always revolves is Maya which in its potential state of unmanifestation is called Prakriti. It is only by transcending the flux that one realizes that which is eternal silence and stillness.

A consideration of the concept of still point in the proper context of the poem itself will throw more light on its implied conceptual allusions. Eliot's poetic realization of this symbol is made actual in the context of the recurring pattern of his considerations about time and its relation to eternity. However the still point consists in the realization of a condition which is somehow other than what characterizes change and suffering. It is a point "At the still point of the turning world, to be realized by apprehending "The point of intersection of the timeless/With time"; it is a present where both past and future are "gathered". It is a state or a condition of spiritual peace, a freedom from desire, suffering and binding action — a condition of evenness of mind and spiritual poise and equanimity. Such a concept of the still point, which could be achieved through mystic discipline that leads to a condition where the illusion of reality in time ceases, is related more to the concepts that Eliot

uses in the Quartets deriving them from Indian sources.

Eliot's concern with projecting the reality at the still point brings him to the theological concepts like Annunciation and Incarnation in The Dry Salvages. In the context of these two concepts, the introduction of the Krishna episode has received adverse comments from some admirable critics. Validity of such comments will be examined in the treatment of the poem; here a consideration about how far the concepts of Annunciation and Incarnation should pass exclusively for Christian theological context seems to be in order. In this context Dr. Leavis appears to be very perceptive:

For the reader who comes charged with doctrine and acceptance the term "Incarnation" thus introduced will of course have a greater potency than for another. But in that, as I have suggested at the beginning of this review, he will not, for the appreciation of the poetry and of the genius of the poet, be altogether at an advantage ... these are, no doubt, statements, to be taken as such; but though they imply a theological context, their actual context is the poem.

What Dr. Leavis means to suggest is that one should not take the theological contexts very seriously because the actual context is the poem. Further, it may be noted here that the concepts of grace and incarnation are as central to Hinduism

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as they are to Christianity. In his announcement of the 'bhakti-
marg', the way of devotion and renunciation, Lord Krishna advi-
ses Arjuna to follow the path of complete self-surrender in or-
der to win His grace:

Surrendering all duties to Me, seek refuge in Me alone.
I shall absolve you of all sins; grieve not.  

And further:

Seek refuge in Him also with all your being, Arjuna. Thru-
ough His grace you shall obtain supreme peace and etern-
al abode.

The message of grace that "one Annunciation" conveys is as much
suggestive for a Hindu as it is for a Christian. The same can
be said of the concept of Incarnation. Lord Krishna Himself is
the Incarnation of Brahman, the impersonal Absolute. In the
Gita Krishna declares this truth in no uncertain terms:

For the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction
of evil-doers, and for establishing Dharma (righteousness)
on a firm footing, I incarnate Myself from age to age.

It is very plain that the concept of Incarnation which the Gita
embodies is (in the context of the Quartets) in no way diffe-
rent from what it is in Christianity. And therefore:

The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is
Incarnation.

1. The Bhagavad Gita, (XVIII-66), The Gita Press, Gorakhpur,
P.364.
2. Ibid, (XVIII-62), P.362-63
3. Ibid, (IV-8), P.106-7
Here the impossible union
Of spheres of existence is actual,
Here the past and future
Are conquered, and reconciled,
— these lines occur not only in a specifically Christian theological context but also in a poetic context related to the concept of the still point. Incarnation is a concept that projects the actual reality of the still point where time is conquered and a timeless reality discovered.

1. **BURNT NORTON**

We have already seen that fragments from Heraclitus establish a philosophical context. Burnt Norton appropriately starts with a particular consideration of time as divided into past, present, and future in our general consciousness. The tone of emphatic statement is unmistakable and, therefore, only a deep consideration about the metaphysical and philosophical context that the opening lines make can make it clear how pregnantly these statements bear on the movements of the *Quartets* as a whole. The poem opens with such clear statements:

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future
> And time future contained in time past.
> If all time is eternally present
> All time is unredeemable.

Nobody can fail to grasp that the first three lines point to a cyclical order of time which is opposed to the Christian concept
where time runs in a straight line, beginning with the first chapter of Genesis and ending with the eschatological perspectives of the Apocalypse.¹ Mr. Puoch on the same page has commented that according to Christian thinking time runs in a "straight line, finite at its two extremes, having a beginning and an end." So the opening lines establish a context that goes beyond Christianity to the Greek or Hindu view of time. The use of the word 'perhaps' should not be taken to be introducing an element of tentativeness; it is a poetic device to put the comments at a level of detached elevation for the sake of giving a tone of objectivity. The first three lines make it clear that the three time-variation, in a way, are present together, and hence, they might be taken as "eternally present" and, if so, they are "unredeemable." But such a concept of time is against the very philosophical and metaphysical tenet that the Quartets illustrate. The use of "if" in the forth line shows that inspite of the truth contained in the first three lines there is a concept according to which the general truth of all time being eternally present (because past, present and future co-exist) stands qualified and it all becomes redeemable. The concept of time that qualifies the assertion of the first three lines owes its origin to The Yoga-System of Patanjali which had cast the spell of "enlightened mystification" on Eliot:

The (individual) phenomenalised (form) of a thing itself belongs to the present time-form only. This cannot be for the past and the future time-forms. And while the one time-form is present, the two (other) time-forms are of course inherent in the substance. Hence the three time-forms do not come into a state-of-existence after having-been-in-a-state-of-non-existence. 

The lines quoted above make it clear that the three time-forms are always present because they are inherent in a thing and they are never non-existent. And this is what is contained in the first three lines of Burnt Norton. The expression "all time" in the fourth line quite understandably refers only to time, past, present, and future which, though always present inherently according to their pre-established harmony, cannot be taken to be actively present simultaneously because "it is not possible for the three time-variations to belong simultaneously to one and the same (individual) phenomenalised form." The future comes first containing the inherent potentialities of present and past; and it is followed, with regard to active phenomenalised form, by present and past. The circle is repeated because according to the doctrine of 'Karma' it is the past action "which shall fructify in the lives of others." According to Indian metaphysical and religious thought such a concept of time forms the ever present flux of time which is called

1. James Haughton Woods, op.cit., P.316
2. Ibid, P.215
3. The Dry Salvages, (third movement).
"samsar". In a way samsar is "all time eternally present" but it is so only for those caught in the wheel which eternally moves them from birth to birth. It is time to recall that according to Eliot Burnt Norton is a by-product of "lines and fragments" that were discarded in the course of the production of Murder in the Cathedral.¹ So in order to be clear about the question and concept of 'redeeming' time as implied in Burnt Norton we may well remember Thomas' predicament and the way he secured redemption. I have already touched upon this point in chapter III. The concept of redemption implied in the Quartets puts emphasis on the individual effort for personal redemption. The past, present and future will have to be accepted as a fact so far as our unredeemed existence is concerned but the redemption can be earned only by performing the right action: "And right action is freedom from past and future also."²

The opening lines of Burnt Norton have proved puzzling for the western critics who have never looked deeper into such concepts in the context of their metaphysical perspectives that form the main theme of the Quartets. So Grover Smith comments: "Time is unredeemable because it is redeemed already"³ in God. Again to quote Russell Kirk:

If Burnt Norton stood alone, it would be the most puzzling

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2. The Dry Salvages, (Section V).
3. Grover Smith, op.cit., P.259
poem in the English language. What could the reader make of this, from a poet who would redeem the time?

If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.

But this, Eliot makes clear later, is only the apparent nature of time.¹

Mr. Kirk further comments that in "truth only to God is all time eternally present."² Mr. Kirk's mistake lies in his equating "all time" with eternity. Eliot is not suggesting any "apparent nature of time"; time has one and only real nature as its own reality makes for it; its real nature is not eternity because eternity is not time. Even Grover Smith's contention that time is unredeemable because it is already redeemed is untenable in view of Eliot's repeated call to redeem the time. The unquestionable truth that all time was redeemed in God in His Incarnation is, perhaps, not very much reassuring for the poet:

Then it seemed as if men must proceed from light to light, in the light of the Word,
Through the Passion and Sacrifice saved in spite of their negative being;

The Quartets make it very clear, even for a Christian, that one cannot be saved "in spite of (one's) negative being." The time

1. Russell Kirk, (P.294) op.cit., P.294
2. Ibid, P.294
3. Chorus VII, from Choruses from 'The Rock!"
has to be redeemed by cultivating an attitude of non-attachment to the fruits of action. Thus one can attain liberation from past, present and future.

The first five lines thus establish the context that gets extended through the next five lines that really complete it:

What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.

"What might have been" is rejected as it is only an abstraction which a speculative mind holds out foolishly as a perpetual possibility. This rejection implies a sense of determinism because the present is already determined by what has been and any speculation about what might have been does not change the present. This is so because what might have been cannot be made real on the plane of existence where one has not realised liberation through right action. Any speculation about what might have been is in the nature of expecting the fruits of action. Therefore both "what might have been" and "what has been" involve one in that "which is always present", the ever-revolving wheel of 'samsar' in its three time-variations of past, present and future. Such an interpretation accords with Hiraclitean concept of flux contained in the epigraph. For Hiraclitus also past and future are not different experiences from the present. Eliot echoing Hiraclitus comments in parenthesis in the Krishna
episode in *The Dry Salvages* that "the time of death is every moment." This ever presence of future in the present where the experience of death which is to occur in future becomes an experience of the present moment is not only a Hiraclitean concept, Lord Krishna had also explained to Arjuna that the heroes whom Arjuna was to kill were already killed, and that he was only to kill those who were already dead. About this aspect of the present, when past and future are an experience of the present, there is a fine exposition in *The Yoga System of Patanjali*:

But those moments which are past and future are to be explained as inherent in the mutations. Accordingly the whole world passes through a mutation in any single moment. So all those external-aspects of the world are relative to this present moment.

According to the Yoga-System one has to achieve an intuitive knowledge proceeding from the power of discrimination which the comes from the lamp of the Yoga. Thus the opening lines of *Burnt Norton* establish the context where the circle of time is conceived as a bondage, an ever-turning on the wheel, the release from which is to be secured by a spiritual discipline. The *Quartets* do not deal with sin and redemption; man is not conceived to be a finite and limited creature to be saved and liberated by the blood of the lamb. Eliot in his conscious moments of Christian thoughts could write:

However you disguise it, this thing does not change:

The perpetual struggle of Good and Evil.  

1. J.H. Woods, op.cit., P.288  
2. Chorus I, Choruses from "The Rock".
But the Quartets do not emphasize this aspect of Christian thought; rather they project the picture of universal agony which is a condition of our existence here.

After establishing the metaphysical context the poem moves towards a reality which is projected as mere echo coming from the "rose-garden" which we never entered. This "rose-garden" symbolizes a condition of reality which is beyond time; one might feel suggested that it symbolizes "the lost paradisal Eden of humanity's unfallen condition." The fact is that in this movement Eliot has created a world of intense poetic realization where the conceptual thread has been transformed into the throbbing echoes that transmute the hints and guesses offered into something that gives a feel of the reality but eludes any formulated grasp. The poet himself feels the tentativeness of what he seeks to bodily forth:

My words echo

Thus, in your mind.

But to what purpose

Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves

I do not know.

The garden has "other echoes", besides the echo of the "foot falls" and even the words spoken have the reality of mere echoes. So the words spoken can merely "disturb" the "dust" which is a familiar symbol of ignorance (avidya) in Hindu scriptures. Hence the bird that points to "our first world" is dismissed.

as deception because of our "avidya". In this movement the poem moves on two levels: the first level is that of the reality sought to be created by the echoes including the call of the bird; and the second level is that of the reality suggested by "our first world", "The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery", and the roses that had "the look of flowers." The first level is suggestive of the reality belonging to the level of time past, present and future. The second hints at the level of timeless and pure existence. The common link between the two worlds is the power of perception allowed to the bird, though the bird is a creature of flesh and blood belonging to the first level, because the call of the bird is only in response (again a mere echo) to the "unheard music hidden in the shrubbery", and hence different from the "unheard music". The two different worlds are reconciled, not in the sense that one is made identical with the other but only "in a formal pattern" where:

So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,

Along the empty alley into the box circle,

To look down into the drained pool.

"we" and "they" are still different but both are set "in a formal pattern." The point to be noted is that the verb "moved" is related only to "we"; "they", did not move, but our movement formed a pattern with them and this pattern is a spiritual progress as "Only by form, the pattern,/Can word or music reach/The stillness", 1 and "The detail of the pattern is movement/As in

1. Burnt Norton, Section V.
the figure of the ten stairs. This movement takes us to have a glimpse into our primal being foreshadowing the whole process of creation — a formal movement from the unmoved and unmanifest into the manifest — by use of a familiar Hindu symbol of "lotus":

And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,
And the lotus rose quietly, quietly,
The surface glittered out of heart of light,
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.

The climax of the elusive world, symbolized by the echoed presence of "they", reaches its perceptible point in the imagery of the pool filled by water out of sunlight and the lotus rising quietly, quietly. According to Hindu mythology when the Lord of Creation, Vishnu, withdraws into Himself, the created world, His "maya" disappears, and what remains is the undifferentiated fluid in its potential form. When another phase of creation is resumed, the Lord puts forth from His cosmic body a single lotus with Brahma seated in the centre of the flower. It is Brahma who initiates the creation. So the lotus symbolises the point of intersection of the timeless with time, a state of pure existence which "they" in the poem represent.

There is one more connotation possible and this may be taken to be more central to the call for observing a spiritual discipline in the Quartets. It is related to the mystic way of reaching the same point of merging in the unmanifest after the

1. Burnt Norton, Section V.
final liberation from time. Even a consciousness that we are ultimately a part of the reality of the unmanifest is a liberation here and now because it puts us in a formal relation only with that towards which we are to move. The point is that according to mystical physiology of the Yoga there are seven centres of spiritual consciousness in our spinal column. At the base of the column there is a vast reservoir of spiritual energy that the Yogins are to elevate through the higher columns. All the centres of consciousness are in the form of the lotus, the seventh, of course, having a thousand petals. When the energy is raised to the seventh by a slow and silent process, (quietly, quietly), the Yogi achieves the highest knowledge and becomes one with the Brahman. The empty pools of his spinal columns are filled with spiritual waters.

In this movement of the poem where we have found the two worlds reconciled in a formal pattern, for the first time the "we " of the poem catches a reflection of the "they" but still it is only a reflection, a kind of echo. So the world created by echoes still forms a contrast; and whether or not the "they" of the poem are Adam and Eve or Hindu incarnations is not a question to be settled. The real point of interest with regard to thought and sensibility is that the echoes from "they" have been momentarily rendered tangible metaphysically by a mode of mythic apprehension through the use of Hindu symbol. It is certain that the oriental image of lotus is not "superficially incongruous in its context;" 1 rather it helps

1. Kristian Smidt, op.cit., P.182
establish the real context of the reality of pure existence. The full reality of the "they" world is not projected because "human kind/Cannot bear very much reality" — a reference, perhaps, to Lord Krishna's revelation of His cosmic reality to Arjuna. After reflecting the 'they' in the poem the pool was again empty but we are not alone; we are again in our common world of time whose creation we have just found reflected. We are among the children. But the children should not be taken as connoting anything other than world of innocence. So by the end of the section I we are again in the world of the agony of death and birth. The circle is complete because the key lines from the opening movement are repeated. Thus the section I has established the context in its two different levels of reality, where the level of the reality of past, present and future — the flux — if properly explored and eliminated might lead to the reality on the second level. It is through time that time is conquered.

Section II is a dialectical offshoot from the section I. The exploratory thinking about why we fail to achieve full reality symbolised by "they" in the Section I starts:

Garlic and sapphires in the mud

Clot the bedded axle-tree.

Harry Blemires rightly thinks that "garlic and sapphires the rank plant and the precious stones, may be said to symbolise the paradoxically combined crudity and charm, earthliness and sparkle, of the human flesh in which the tree of life is temporally grounded."¹ The images produced by 'garlic','sapphires',

¹. Harry Blemires, op.cit., P.16
'clot', and especially,'bedded' have sexual connotations, or, at least, they suggest a condition where latent predispositions, inclinations and passions stifle and benumb the power of spiritual apprehension. They symbolise a condition where one is caught in the 'Vasanas', the blinding energy of our lower nature, and rendered quite incapable of spiritual perception and realisation of Atman-Brahman unity. "The bedded axle-tree", further, evokes the image of a chariot wheel caught and sunk in the mud, representing the predicament of Arjuna in The Bhagavad Gita. All the philosophical and metaphysical disciplines in Hinduism emphasise the need for eradication of all the hindrances in order to reach the stage where the self passes out of "the relation with the aspects(guna), and, (is) enlightened by himself."¹ "The trilling wire in the blood" and "The dance along the artery" suggest the human wire and blood that grossly involve one in the reality of mere past, present, and future. The process that takes place in human body is similar to the cosmic process and, therefore, they "Are figured in the drift of stars." This movement suggests three kinds of dances vis; the dance along the artery, the drift of the stars and the dance of the "boerhound and bear" ; all these dances make the flux of the time, past, present and future. They characterise a kind of reality that clots the way toward mystical apprehension of reality. Contrasted with this world of "Birth, and co- pulation and death" there stands the world of the "still point" defined in terms of negatives because such a reality cannot be

¹ J.H.Woods, op.cit., P.170
described in terms of any reality of this world. The mundane reality must be dis-realised in order to reach the positivity of the still point. In Hinduism God's reality is described by rejecting the positive attributes of this world by saying "neti; neti", that is, He is not that, He is not that. The description of the still point in terms of "Neither flesh nor fleshless" connotes a theological context with regard to the concept of Incarnation. We have already seen that the concept of incarnation is related to Eliot's concept of the still point. The Greek conception of the Word or logos is believed by the Christians to have become flesh which "was subject to the tension of life in time."¹ The Word was made flesh in Christ who was subject to the tension of life in time. But Eliot's concept of the still point consists in an incarnation that is flesh without belonging to it and without suffering the limitations of it. I think Eliot was more drawn towards the concept of incarnation which is neither flesh nor fleshless:

I am the birthless, the deathless,
Lord of all that breathes.
I seem to be born;
It is only seeming,
Only my Maya.
I am still master
Of my Prakriti,
The power that makes me.²

¹ Helen Gardner, op.cit., P.63
² The Bhagavad Gita, (IV-6), translated by Prabhavananda Isherwood.
Except for this point there "would be no dance, and there is only the dance." Unless we achieve this point which in this world restores poise and equanimity of mind, "there is only the dance" along the wheel of life. In the first section of the poem we had temporarily gone near this point which is recalled here:

I can only say, there we have been; but I cannot say where.

And I cannot say how long, for that is to place it in time. Eliot's description of the still point accords with the Hindu concept of stillness of spiritual centre of the unmoved reality that is Brahman. The next nine lines that follow describe the condition of an existence that enjoys the release of a liberated man have and now. The terms of this liberated existence, the existence of a "Jivan mukta", have a clear tone and accent of the concepts derived from the Gita. Such an existence in which there is:

The inner freedom from the practical desire,
The release from action and suffering, release from the inner

And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded

By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving.

is a condition where the flux of the world — the condition of "We" in the section I — and the still point are reconciled and the existence becomes meaningful because it is "surrounded/By a grace of sense". The "grace" here is not God's grace, it is a "grace of sense", the enlightenment wherein "both a new world/And the old" are made explicit. But such a condition can
give only the "partial ecstasy" and there is the resolution only of the "partial horror." The complete liberation and final merging with the Absolute is possible only after death. One can see for oneself that there is nothing specially Christian about such concepts. The concept of a liberated existence hinted at here is relative, and not absolute, because the "enchainment of past and future" is "woven in the weakness of the changing body." The "changing body" is weak because while it lasts it can endure neither the full reality of heaven nor the full horrors of damnation. So it is offered protection by the enchainment of past and future in the sense that we in our physical existence cannot have the full reality. The "changing body" is to mean not only the physical changes in terms of youth and age, but also the changed bodies which we have in successive births. Thus the concept of the "enchainment of past and future" has very little that is Christian about it because it is related to the doctrine of Karma which makes us suffer the "weakness of the changing body." It is this concept of liberation that finds a clear exposition in the Krishna episode of The Dry Salvages which has baffled many critics. So long as we are bound by the "enchainment of past and future" we cannot have full consciousness of the still point. Therefore,

Time past and time future

Allow but a little consciousness.

because to "be conscious is not to be in time". But only in time we can remember certain moments that point to a point of transcendence realised by others. To remember "the moment in
rose-garden" and the "moment in the draughty church at smoke-
fall" is not liberation; it is certainly not conquering
time. It is only conquering time through time in the sense
that the memory, when extended into a historical dimension,
brings the religious consciousness of time conquered in and
through Incarnation. But this consciousness is not deemed as
a state of liberation; it is still "involved with past and
future."

Section III of the poem develops the reality of
the "here" in contrast to that of the "there" which is the
reality echoed by "they" in Section I and which is the same
as the still point. The "here" points to the reality of this
earth with "Time before and time after", the reality of the
ceaseless flux. Here there is neither "daylight" to invest
the form with "lucid stillness" nor "darkness to purify the
soul." There is:

Only a flicker
Over the strained time-ridden faces
Distracted from distraction by distraction
Filled with fancies and empty of meaning
Tumid apathy with no concentration
Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind
That blows before and after time,
Wind in and out of unwholesome lungs
Time before and time after.
The lines quoted above show a complete anatomy of human rea-
reality as one lives in time present, past and future. Man is "time-ridden", not sin-ridden as a specifically Christian sensibility might have conceived; he is as meaningless and empty as a bit of paper because he is distracted by distraction. Such a self-searching scrutiny into human reality is the work of a Buddhist sensibility. Christian mystics have also found human existence empty and meaningless if not lived under the grace of God, but here there is a downright denunciation and rejection of what man is in time. Man is "with no concentrations" and his breathing is mere "Wind in and out of unwhole-some lungs". The idea that through breath control (as we find it in Buddhism and Patanjal's Yoga-system prescribed as an exercise for spiritual discipline and concentration) we can have a different level of reality in life is implicit here. And, therefore, there is an explicit call to follow the mystic way:

Descend lower, descend only
Into the world of perpetual solitude,
World not world, but that which is not world,
Internal darkness, deprivation
And destitution of all property,
Desiccation of the world of sense,
Evacuation of the world of fancy,
Inoperancy of the world of spirit;

The mystic way as we find described in these lines has, no doubt, a certain relevance to the negative way of St. John of the Cross. It is known as the Dark Night of the soul. We
have already seen the difference between mysticism East and West with regard not so much to the content but to the way the mystical realisation is expressed. St. John of the Cross is lyrical throughout but here in Eliot the intuition does not enjoy a lyric abandonment; it is rather intellectually and ethically controlled. In the Bhagavad Gita we have the same concept of the symbol of darkness:

That which is night to all beings, in that state (of Divine Knowledge and Supreme Bliss) the God-realised Yogi keeps awake. And that (the ever-changing, transient worldly happiness) in which all beings keep awake is night to the seer.²

In the lines quoted above from Burnt Norton the hint given about the mystic way is more in the nature of Buddhist concept of Void (Shunya). The world glimpsed is not like our world; it is not world at all. It is desiccation of all property — name, form, and colour. Even the world of spirit is not operative there. Such a state in itself is pure luminosity, coming out of nothing and going toward nothing. In Buddhism it is called the Light of the Void. Such a realisation is pure enlightenment because it is brought about by a process of inward withdrawal of all the faculties of mind and senses. This is the state of a pure Yogi. This is one way of reaching the still point. The other is also the same because that is to be brought

1. Please see Chapter v. of the present work.
about by "abstention from movement" through non-attachment to the fruits of action. The first way hinted at here is not practicable for everybody because it needs complete isolation from the social milieu but the second way has a broad social application as it needs only an attitude of detachment from what one must do as a part of one's personal duty. It is a way that makes it possible to have liberation from past, present and future even while living here and now because "right action is freedom from past and future also."

The Section IV in its final movement invokes the still point. The beginning of the section evokes certain images that feel like offering some Christian suggestion:

Time and the bell have buried the day,
The black cloud carries the sun away.
Will the sunflower turn to us, will the clematis
Stray down, bend to us; tendril and spray
Clutch and cling?
Chill
Fingers of yew be curled
Down on us?

The first two lines in the quotation above suggest the reality in time hiding the still point. The "black cloud" might be taken to suggest the darkness at the Crucifixion. One might find an equivocation born of punning on the word "sun" as a cloud carried away the Son at the Ascension. This refers the first two lines to "The moment in the draughty church at smokefall"
in the last part of the section II. Kristian Smidt thinks that the "sunflower and the clematis suggest Christ and Virgin, and perhaps even the Father may be hinted at in the image of the yew." But elsewhere in the *Quartets* the image of yew stands for death. However, a possibility of spiritual rebirth through death is only tentatively hinted at because the possibility is posed as an interrogation and not as a held belief. Moreover, "tendril and spray/Clutch and clinging" suggest the same clutching as we find in "what are the roots that clutch?" in *The Waste Land*. The final result of "Clutch and clinging" is "Chill". One might read "Chill/Fingers of yew" to associate "Chill" with "Fingers" but "Chill" very certainly forms a sound pattern with "Clutch and clinging" making the whole as a single unit. Therefore, it may be safely concluded that, inspite of the images relating possibly to Christ and Virgin, the lines in the beginning movement of this section fade into the light of the common day, and form a contrast with:

> After the kingfisher's wing
> Has answered light to light, and is silent, the light is still
> At the still point of the turning world.

Section V, though apparently concerned with poetry and music and the use of words, is concerned also with stillness and the pattern. The image of the Chinese jar evokes e

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1. Kristian Smidt, op.cit., P.216
kind of perpetual movement that is stillness in itself. Poetry for Eliot is in itself an act of incarnating the meaning which is embodied in the formal pattern and design. In a sudden shift of level, which is quite consistent with the concern with the use of words and the difficulty in putting them in a formal pattern incarnating the meaning, the poet "in what is a kind of parenthesis he speaks of 'the Word in the desert', and takes us to the first chapter of the Gospel of St. John and to the Synoptic narratives of the Temptation in the Wilderness."¹

The final movement again alludes to St. John of the Cross in "the figure of the ten steirs." Mr. Stephenson has referred to a private conversation with Eliot on November 24, 1943 in which the poet explained that the figure of ten steirs meant the soul as bride in its upward ascent to God and the ladder or steps signified Divine Love and Faith.² There is no point in denying what Eliot himself asserts but one may still maintain that the mystical vein in Eliot is never that of bride-mysticism. In a bride-mysticism, both Eastern and Western, sex imagery predominates; but in Eliot the mystical vein is dry and intellectually refined. The steps of the ladder signify Divine Love only in the sense that the ascent brings one nearer to spiritual awakening and enlightenment.

¹ Helen Gardner, op. cit., P.63
² Mr. K.N. Sinha refers to it in his, On Four Quartets of T.S. Eliot, Arthur H. Stockwell Ltd., Ilfracombe Devon, PP. 69-70
Love in itself is unmoving; it is God, "The cause and end of movement". It is a kind of love that is "timeless and undesiring". But when such a love is caught "in the aspect of time", it ceases to be a state of liberation and a spiritually realised unity with God. Love for Eliot is a means of liberation from past and future:

For liberation — not less of love but expanding

Of love beyond desire, and so liberation

From the future as well as the past.¹

The concept of "undesiring" love is related to the concept of detachment from the fruits of action. A desiring love is bondage whether its object is worldly profit or God. Expanding of love beyond desire is a liberation from desire itself; and it is the desire, a movement in time and of time, that ties us down to the wheel of 'samsar'. So long as we are caught "Between un-being and being", which is an "aspect of time", we cannot enjoy the state of a "Jivan mukta". The Buddha has also said that "Neither as Being nor as non-Being/Nirvan therefore is conceived."² The poem, therefore, ends offering a glimpse into the rose-garden reality in "Sudden in a shaft of sunlight" in contrast with "Not here the darkness, in this twittering world". But inspite of the momentary apprehensions of the supreme reality hinted at, the world revolves as before, though this time the realisation of a higher level of reality, apart

¹. Little Gidding, (Section III).
². E.A.Burtt, edt., op.cit, P.173
from our time-bound existence, renders the reality of time ridiculous:

Ridiculous the waste and time
Stretching before and after.

The realization that time is "ridiculous" is in itself a positive gain. But Kristian Smidt thinks that "there is a pessimistic note in the very last two lines of Burnt Norton which would have damaged the poem if it had not been followed by other Quartets."¹ But such a reading misses the whole suggestive import of the poem. The exploration of past, present and future is complete because in view of the highest bliss of a liberated state the reality in time has been found "ridiculous". The point of optimism is there in the success of the exploration; the realization is no doubt, of something that is to be rejected but the implication is positive.

II. FAST OOKER

The poem starts with the reversal of Mary Stuart's "In my end is my beginning" but ends with the same motto. The beginning and end theme as it stands examined here, puts emphasis upon circularity of time in its trifold aspects of past, present and future. Ridiculousness of "waste and time/Stretching before and after" is again taken up for scrutiny and further evaluation. Commenting upon this Mr. Bartholomew has

¹. Kristian Smidt. op.cit., P.216
offered a suggestive insight into the philosophical import the poem embodies:

The second paradox: In my beginning is my end, in my end is my beginning, is a general base. This, we must remember, is the general acceptance of the life theme, Give, Sympathise, Control. Whether we like it or not, this is not Christian sensibility only; it can be also Vedantic or Buddhistic. The beginning and end thesis finds a parallel exposition in the first and the last verses of *Dhammapada*.¹

Mr. Bartholomew very rightly relates the beginning and end thesis to the metaphysical concepts about the life theme but this does not lead towards the acceptance of the beginning and end thesis on the level at which it is put at this point in the movement of the poem. Rather, *E. Coker* clearly rejects it as a mere round of agony and pain of repeated births. The beginning which has the germs of its own end and the end which has the seeds of a new beginning point to the futile end and beginning in time. Such a beginning and such an end have the potential elements of determinism because such beginning and end alternate on such a level of reality as in the *Burnt Norton* is realised to be ridiculous. The rejection of the beginning and end thesis on this level leads towards the perception of it on a spiritual level where both the beginning and

the end are perceived to have a co-existence in the unmanifest reality; and this leads towards the acceptance of the life theme.

The first movement in section I points to a kind of succession in time every moment of which experiences an end of a beginning. Commenting on these opening lines Mr. MacCarthy observes that the "theme of impermanence as it characterises the natural world is given profound poetical expression in the opening lines of East Coker." It is a question of feeling the sensibility that works through the opening lines and very clearly it tends towards a Buddhist orientation.

The second movement of this section also continues the same reflection on the worldly reality whose beginning foreshadows the end of it. The third movement again takes up the same pattern showing the succession of changes in time. But whereas the first two movements refer to the flux with regard to the successive changes occurring in social aspect of inanimate objects, the third movement relates to the reality of human life and existence caught in the aspect of time:

On a summer night, you can hear the music
Of the weak pipe and the little drum
And see them dancing around the bonfire
The association of man and woman
In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie —
A dignified and commodious sacrament.

1. Harold E. MacCarthy, op.cit., P.42
Keeping the rhythm in their dancing
As in their living in the living seasons
The time of the season and the constellations
The time of milking and the time of harvest
The time of the coupling of man and woman
And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling.
Eating and drinking, Dung and death.

The lines quoted above from the third movement of section I clearly present the end which was inherent in such a beginning. Grover Smith thinks that East Coker throws into sharp relief "man's relation to history". But such a view does not seem to be tenable. East Coker is concerned also with projecting the dance, a futile movement, which is no less than a cosmic pattern of change and flux fully consonant with Buddhist concept of the mundane reality. The theme of the dance of man and woman that draws upon Sir Thomas Elyot in The Governour, "signifying matrimonie" — "A dignified and commodious sacrament" — ultimately turns into "The time of coupling of man and woman/And that of beasts? The dance that apparently signifies a pattern of reconciliation is mere "Feet rising and falling." This level of existence is equated with that of the animal world. So all is "Dung and death". Mr. MacCarthy appears to be quite perceptive in his assertion that Buddhist sensibility is quite a dominant determining force.

1. Grover Smith, op.cit., P.268
in the conceptual movements of the Quartets. No Christian sensibility, which has not undergone a transformation and reorientation, can reduce the whole show of human life to "Dung and death." The terminal lines of the first section again point to the same reality. "I am here/Or there, or elsewhere" and it does make no difference because all places are the same; the futility of existence projected is universal and cosmic, it is all beginning which has its sad, ridiculous end. To say with Harry Blamires that "for Sir Thomas dancing is not just a symbol of marriage and social harmony: it is a symbol of universal harmony"¹ is acceptable only so far as this concept concerns Sir Thomas only, but, as the poem recapitulates it, it becomes only a part of the flux signifying dung and death.

The first movement of section II is again a parallel, with the last movement of the section I. The only difference is that here the dance is raised to the cosmic level including the whirling motion of the constellations, Sun, Moon, Comets and Leonids. It is quite in keeping with Hirschitean concept of the strife of elements but the visual impression such a dance makes has a more relevant affinity with the imagery and rhythm we find in Krishna's revelation of his cosmic body to Arjuna. This section starts with late November and the disturbance of the spring. It has been shown in the treatment of The Waste Land that the image of spring relates only to the level of clutching and of dull roots of existence.²

¹ Harry Blamires, op. cit., P.44
² Vide the treatment of The Waste Land, "Burial of the Dead", Chapter VI.
From this vegetative rhythm the movement is raised to include cosmic whirlwind:

Thunder rolled by the rolling stars
Simulates triumphal cars
Deployed in constellated wars
Scorpion fights against the Sun
Until the Sun and Moon go down
Comets weep and Leonids fly
Hunt the heavens and the plains
Whirled in a vortex that shall bring
The world to that destructive fire
Which burns before the ice-cap reigns.

The cosmic dance depicted in the lines quoted above hunts the "heaven and the plains", that is, the earth and all other manifested realities are caught in the same rhythm and "whirled" in the same vortex which shall bring everything to "destructive fire". Such a concept of everything being blasted to ashes is shown in Krishna's revelation of this reality to Arjuna:

* Swift as many rivers streaming to the ocean,
  Rush the heroes to your fiery gullet:
* Mothlike, to meet the flame of their destruction,
  Headlong these plunge into you, and perish. 1

The image of "ice-cap reigns" may be taken to connote universal deluge after every created reality is reduced to ashes.

The "ice-cap reigns" suggests the equilibrium and a state of unmanifold poise and balance in its inherent primal energy and power to reign. Such a state is the still point because such a state comes into existence after God withdraws His manifestation into Himself. Thus the first movement of section II. balances and completes the dance of life in the last movement of Section I.

The second movement in section II starts with a comment on "a worn-out poetical fashion" which the poet has employed in the first movement. Perhaps the worn-out poetical fashion refers to the attempt to have an allegorical construct of meaning. But the "poetry does not matter"; what really matters is, perhaps, the created transparency that lets the reality emerge as a perceived vision. In this movement that the poet "has established the irrelevance of the familiar humanistic reading of life in terms of progress and positive temporal development,"¹ and therefore:

There is, it seems to us,

At best, only a limited value

In the knowledge derived from experience.

It is because "We had the experience but missed the meaning." Experience handed down to us from "quiet voiced elders" is merely a presented idea, "a receit for deceit." Our way here is "menaced by monsters, fancy lights, / Risking enchantment".

¹. Harry Blamires, op.cit., P.55
². The Dry Salvages, Section II.
The two lines starting with "In the middle" allude to Dante's "In the middle of the journey of our life I came to myself in a dark wood where the straight way was lost. Ah, how hard a thing it is to tell you what a wild and rough, and stubborn wood this was, which in my thought renews the fear."\(^1\) The Dante allusion extends the awareness of the worldly reality, where any knowledge derived from experience lends us only in the middle of the way into the dark wood. Therefore:

The only wisdom we can hope to acquire

Is the wisdom of humility; humility is endless. But humility is not extolled as the highest wisdom. It is the level of "only wisdom" which we can hope to acquire. It is still only an attitude of mind which makes it possible to move towards higher realization. Whatever may be the case, humility is not only a Christian concept; in the Bhagavad Gita too we find it to be a necessary qualification for God's grace to operate. The last two lines of section II complete the circle which had started with the first movement of section I.

Section III significantly opens with the images of darkness which is the darkness of time past, present and future. What we have seen in the first two sections is recapitulated and given a violent cosmic jolt taking everything into the darkness. The word "dark" repeated thrice without punctuation marks may not be only an echo of Samson's in Milton's play, it may well be the darkness of total existence.

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\(^1\) Dante, *The Divine Comedy*, New York, 1950, P. 11
both human and intereteller that is magnified here. So far as the concept and the use of fast flowing rhythm are concerned the movement may find and an echo and the only parallel in The Bhaga-vad Gita. Compare the opening lines with lines in the Gita:

Now with frightful tusks your mouths are gnashing,
Flaring like the Fires of Doomsday morning —
North, south, east and west seem all confounded —
Lord of devas, world's abode, have mercy
Dhritaraashta's offspring, many a monarch.
Bhima, Drona, and son of Karna.
There they go — with our own warriors also —
Harrvng to your jaws, wide-fanged and hideous —
See where mangled heads lie crushed between them
Swift as many rivers streaming to the ocean,
Rush the heroes to your fiery gullets:
Mothlike, to meet the flame of their destruction,
Headlong these plunge into you, and perish.
Liking with your burning tongues, devouring
All the worlds, you probe the heights of heaven
With intolerable beams, 0 Vishnu. 1

The opening lines of section III up to "there is no one to bury" show the headlong plunge of the mundane reality into the destructive darkness of nothingness or void, signifying the whirlwind into which all are sought. The contrast with the lines quoted from the Gita is extreme in terms of darkness and lights. But the concept of the whole creation going headlong into something

1. The Bhagavad Gita (XI-25-30), Prabhavanand & Ishwerwood.
destructive is common to both. It is not unlikely that Eliot recalled the whole rhythmic movement of the lines in the Gita. The darkness is not conceived to be the ultimate goal but it is the ultimate goal of the things of this world because they and in their beginning. Whatever begins must end and must end in nothingness. Only the beginningless can be endless and the state of beginninglessness is Ishwar. Beginning in itself is a movement and like all movements it is a part of the flux opposed to the concept of the still point. Therefore it is, in a way, better to be still:

I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you

Which shall be the darkness of God.

These lines point to the negative way of the St. John of the Cross. This passive waiting for God's darkness is a kind of self-surrender in devotion and humility which are as much Hindu concepts as they are Christian. The three extended similies that follow again point to the same end. The changing of a scene in a theatre, the empty silence in a tube train that stops too long between the stations, and the condition of the mind suspended under ether --- a Prufrockian consciousness --- all these three similies extend the exhortation to wait without hope and love, because hope and love might be for the wrong things. Of course, one is to wait with "faith" but:

But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.

This negative waiting implies a consciousness that all in the world is flux and all moves into the darkness. This in itself
is a sufficient spiritual light; and therefore, "the darkness shall be the light." But in this world everything points to "the agony/Of death and birth."

The last movement of this section is a gnomic summary of the negative way in _The Ascent of Mt. Carmel_ by St. John of the Cross and the "tenor of St. John's lines is, of course, that the way to full knowledge, possession, and joy is utter denial of self." Such a tenor is not unrelated to the Buddhist concept of 'anitta'. To arrive at the truth through the way of dispossessing is a basic tenet in the Indian religion too, and it finds expression especially in _Kena Upanishad_.

Section IV of the poem is again an anatomy of our existential reality. The metaphors of hospital and disease are aptly used to characterize the reality of earth and human life. "The whole earth is our hospital" and what we think to be our "substantial flesh and blood" is mere disease. Both Mr. Preston and Mr. Grover Smith think that the "wounded surgeon" and the "dying nurse" are respectively Christ and the Church. The "ruined millionaire" is taken to be Adam who endowed this hospital through his transgression. Helen Gardner does not accept this view. I think no identification of the allusions, if any, is necessary for comprehending the "restatement of the cost of salvation" that this movement makes.

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1. Grover Smith, op.cit., P.273
2. Helen Gardner, op.cit., P.65
But such a concept of the medicine man is more explicit in Buddhism:

Accordingly, as he was born with medicine in his hand, as they gave him the name of Oudhâ-Deraka (Medicine-Child) ....... Thus he received the name of Mahasodha (Great Medicine-Man).¹

So the concept that the whole world is sick is more in keeping with Buddhist thought. This sickness is not due to sin inherited from "Adam's curse" ; rather it is a condition of our existence. Helen Gardner does not put such store by the phrase "Adam's curse" which according to her, though an "explicitly theological phrase" is "after all a phrase in common use."²

The images contained in the lines like "That questions the disstempered part", "Resolving the enigma of the fever chart", and:

The chill ascends from feet to knees,

The fever sings in mental wires.

---- are not specifically related to the Christian way of looking at the human reality. The specific Christian sensibility consists in a positive faith in the diagnosis given once and for all that sin, "Adam's curse", is the root cause of our sickness. Such a probing into the flesh, "the disstempered part", and the enigma of human suffering and agony of existence was done by the Buddha who was born with medicine in his hands. The two lines quoted above relate the whole problem to a metaphysical context where according to Patanjali the self in contact

1. H.C. Warren, op.cit., P.65
2. Helen Gardner, op.cit., P.66
with the mind-stuff is blinded of its true reality and is caught in, what might be called, the fever and fret of the existence. So in the ultimate analysis the "fever sings" so long as we are in the condition of metaphysical blindness where the ultimate end of all is to rush into the darkness. Looked at from this point of view the section IV is found to be conceptually related to what precedes it.

Section V starts with a consideration of the art of using the words. On a conceptual level the first movement of this section opposes the concept of the negative way of passive waiting:

But perhaps neither gain nor loss.

For us there is only the trying. The rest is not our business.

The lines just quoted are almost the substantials from The Bhagavad Gita.¹ The concept of "only the trying" without consideration of "neither gain nor loss" is not incompatible with the lesson of humility because the actions so performed are all surrendered to Ishwara. The same concept we find in The Dry Salvages:

And do not think of the fruit of action

Fare forward.

¹ The Bhagavad Gita, (II -38 & 47) : (38) Treating alike pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, get ready for the fight; then, fighting thus you will not incur sin; and (47) Your right is to work only, but never to the fruit of action be your object, nor let your attachment be to in-action.
And further:

Not fare well,

But fare forward, voyagers.

This unmistakable call for faring forward is an important metaphysical concept putting all emphasis on human efforts to achieve liberation. But the action is to be performed as a worship to God and, therefore,

The rest is not our business.

It appears that the concept of going on trying is opposed to the concept of waiting for God's darkness. Kristian Smidt raised this question:

Eliot seems to stop half-way from either point of view, or even to contradict himself. He believes strongly in human effort, and yet he denies its efficacy. .... The apparent opposition between human passivity and human activity can be reconciled. But it is harder to reconcile the reliance on divine grace with the reliance on human effort .... The result is that the Oriental view of spiritual discipline has been given great prominence and is juxtaposed with the Christian view of grace. There is an unresolved conflict in these ideas, which we can only feel as a conflict in the poetry, though it does not necessarily impair the value of poetry.

It is true that the oriental view of spiritual discipline has been given great prominence in Eliot but the above quoted

1. Kristian Smidt, op.cit., P.189
view regarding an unresolved contradiction between human effort and Christian view of grace in not acceptable. We have already seen in this chapter that the concept of grace is as much of Indian thought as that of Christian. Moreover Eliot's drawing upon St. John of the Cross where the human soul is to follow a negative way of passive waiting for the operation of God's darkness so that "the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing" is in itself conceived as a process of the cleansing of the soul, the purification of motive. It is related to the concept of humility and thus the concept of grace in itself is not unrelated to the gospel of human action which is a necessary condition having a broader application to our social life. Therefore the last movement of section V of *East Coker* calls for further exploration, a theme that links it with *The Dry Salvages*. The question of a conflict between human effort and operation of grace stands well reconciled in Hindu concept of action which is performed not to please the ego but to be dedicated to God in devotion. The strains and counter-strains in the conceptual frame-work of the *Quartets* form "a unified outlook, but in any case it is an outlook which comprehends more than the Christian view, and which at the same time is refined almost beyond Christianity."¹

The Section V clearly ends with an exhortation to explore and move further:

Old men ought to be explorers
Here and there does not matter

¹. Ibid. P.213
We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion
Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,
The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters
Of the petrel and the porpoise. In my end is my beginning.

The question of conflict between passive waiting and active exploring as raised by Kristian Smidt is resolved here. "We must be still" refers to being still at a lower level of attainment from where we are to move further for deeper communion. "Through the dark cold and empty desolation" echoes the previous theme of flux and the images of wave, petrel and porpoise anticipate The Dry Salvages. Further, the "wave" and "vast water" project a vision of the vast ocean of eternity into which the river of life must flow and merge. Such an end of this life shall be a new beginning of the life of eternal stillness in the Absolute.

III. THE DRY SALVAGES

The poem starts with the image of the river tentatively personified as "a strong brown god — sullen, untamed and intractable." But "the brown god is almost forgotten/By the dwellers in cities" who look on the river from scientific and commercial point of view. We are the "worshippers of the machine" and give no supernatural significance to that "brown god! Thus the first movement builds a mood which recalls much of Eliot's childhood impressions but it is a movement where the
implied suggestions, though at first move on the level of feeling, finally crystallise in a metaphysical awareness in the first line of the second movement:

The river is within us, the sea is all about us

Here the river symbolises human life which, ultimately, dissolves in the timeless ocean of being. The image of sea is a traditional Vedantic vocabulary: "Ocean is one seer without any duality," declares the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad.* Grover Smith rightly observes:

Together the river and the sea allude to the Hindu parable of the life cycle — the drop of water lifted as vapor from the sea, & deposited as rain upon the Himalaya, and carried again seaward by the Ganges.  

The parable of the life cycle Mr. Smith alludes to is a metaphysical vision realised by the Hindu seers. The sea is conceived in its timeless dimension: "Its hints of earlier and other creation", and "The sea has many voices, Many gods and many voices." Throughout the second and the third movements of this section the image of sea is developed. It is conceived in its two-fold aspect:

The sea howl

And the sea yelp, are different voices

Often together heard: the whine in the rigging,

The menace and caress of wave that breaks on water,

1. *The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad,* (IV, 3,32)
2. Grover Smith, *op.cit.*, p.278
The "different voices" and "The menace and caress" are not meant for ambivalence; they are the two aspects present together. The image of sea evokes the meeting point of the life-in-death and the spiritual rebirth-in-eternity:

The tolling bell
Measures time not our time, rung by the unhurried
Ground swell, a time
Older than the time of chronometers,

The "tolling bell" is rung by "Ground swell" and this is one voice of the sea implying death of "the past and the future" that the "worried women" are trying to "unweave, unwind, unravel", and ultimately the past is found to be "all deception" and the future "futureless? Therefore:

And the ground swell, that is and was from the beginning,

Clangs
The bell.

On the one hand, the "ground swell" tolls the bell and, on the other, it clangs the bell. Clanging of the bell evokes an image of the Church, and hence it is a reminder of God and eternity. The Section I, therefore, ultimately, is concerned with projecting a vision of the ultimate grounds of reality, the Absolute without duality, through its rather pantheistic movement towards it.

The Section II starts with a consideration of the reality in time. Mr. MacCarthy has quoted the beginning lines as an illustration of the Buddhist sensibility operative here.

"Where is there an end of it?" is an overwhelming question and it touches the whole pattern of "the soundless wailing" both in human life and its cosmic aspect. The "calamitous annunciation" does not allude to the "Fall", though Kristian Smidt thinks so. The lines before "calamitous annunciation" echo the same reality in time as we find in the first movement of the section I of East Coker. The question receives a negative answer: "There is no end"; there is no end on our level of reality where we live with time before and time after. There is only the addition. This implies that there is no sequence, but only the succession. The concept of time whose movement is not a sequence but only the addition of one moment to the preceding one is Hiraolitean and Buddhist, not Christian. And such a concept renders the Christian concept of history meaningless.

"There is the final addition" of failure and old age and of the awareness of being one for whom tolls "the bell of the last annunciation." ¹ Further the image of "fishermen sailing", quite different from the explorers of section III, leads to the same awareness that the future like the past has no destination. This whole flux of cosmic wailing and the "movement of pain" brings us to:

The bone's prayer to Death its God. Only the hardly, barely prayable

Prayer of the one Annunciation.

The question raised in the beginning of this section has no positive answer. "The bone's prayer" does not lead any further.

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¹ Grover Smith, op.cit., P.279
beyond death. Then there comes the message of "one Annunciation." The critics have, perhaps, taken it to be an answer. In the beginning of this chapter we have noted that the message of grace should not pass for only a Christian concept. I have already quoted Dr. Leavis who thinks that though "one Annunciation" makes a theological context, the real context is the poem itself. So it is better to see clearly, without any pre-conceived notion and without falling too willingly under the evocative spell of the word "Annunciation", if in the context of the poem too the word is evocatively put for a theological context implying Christian faith. Of course, the expression "Only the hardly, barely prayable/Prayer of the one Annunciation" does not form the part of the wreckage which the movement of the poem has been concerned with to express. But the halting rhythms in this line shows the lack of lyrical enthusiasm and abandonment. There is an element of tentativeness as the affect and suggestiveness are neutralized in the absence of an assertive verb. The whole line is without a verb and is put there not so much as an answer. The tone is not that of an assertive statement.

The next movement is a reflection on the past and the experiences that occurred in it. The searching of experience is done with a view to relating the past experience to a "meaning" that leads to "the sudden illumination." The reflection implies that we cannot disown our past:

We had the experience but missed the meaning,

And approach to the meaning restores the experience
In a different form, beyond any meaning

We can assign to happiness.

An approach to the meaning gives a different meaning to our experience. We do experience certain "moments of happiness" but what we call the moment of happiness is not really the moment of happiness; it is simply a misnomer to call it happiness because the meaning of happiness itself changes when the true significance of the experience is realized. The experience when seen in its meaningful aspect brings this realization: "People change, and smile: but the agony abides." And Eliot is not talking of our individual experience only, it is the experience "of many generations" that can restore our experience in "a different form beyond any meaning/We can assign to happiness" in our sense. Such an experience of many generations reorienting our experience towards a new meaning discovers "that the moments of agony . . . . . . are likewise permanent/With such permanence as time has". The poet makes it very clear in his parenthetical comment that he does not talk about agony that results from our misunderstanding, or "Having hopes for the wrong things or dreaded the wrong things"; rather it is an agony which is a condition of human existence. It is permanent, though only as permanent as time is. There is no agony beyond time. It is peculiarly a Buddhist or Vedantic realization and that is what the whole flux in time past, present and future surveyed right from Burnt Norton to this point in The Dry Salvages leads to. In order to have such an understanding of the reality of the world we are to participate in "the torment of others" through emptyxxand
empathy. And the inevitable conclusion is:

People change, and smile: but the agony abides.

Time the destroyer is time the preserver

Eliot's choice of the word "agony" is significant. It does not have any area of Christian suggestion. The Buddhist overtones of this word are unmistakable. Moreover this conclusion is put in a clear Hindu context. "The Dry Salvages reminds us in section II of Vishnu and Shiva of the Hindu trinity by the notion that 'Time the destroyer is time the preserver.' The "agony abides" so long as we are in time tied to the wheel of samsar revolving between birth and death. Our life is like the river with its ebb and flow of agony. Of course, at this point, when searching of the experience of the ages has brought the poet to a meaningful Hindu conclusion, a Christian concept of sin is applied to show a parallel conclusion: "The bitter apple and the bite in the apple." The image of the "ragged rock in the restless waters", appears simply signify something which is eternally present, the concept available in any religious thinking. To extend its suggestion to mean Christ is, by no means, the only connotation.

Section third starts with a clear reference to Lord Krishna's words in the Gita and the whole section is an echo of that. The controversies and adverse criticisms to which this section has given occasion will be referred to and examined after I have dealt with this section. There are critics who have found an element of tentativeness in the opening line:

1 Kristian Smidt, op.cit., P.183
I sometimes wonder if that is what Krishna meant —

Among other things — or one way of putting the same thing:
The expression "if that is what" reads like tentative statement
but it is really not so. It, rather, puts the concepts referred
to at a detached level. Moreover, the way the pronoun "that" is
used suggests that Eliot, apart from concepts alluded to in this
section, refers to certain other dominant concepts derived from
the Gita and used in the Quartets. The considerations about the
reality of future clearly allude to the Gita. The future is at
par with the past in that it is only like a faded song. Eliot
appropriately uses the image of a "book" that has never been op-
ened. The comparison of future with a book is significantly
evocative. Whether we read the book or not, the future is already
written and pressed between the yellow leaves. Thus the theme of
Burnt Norton about the co-presence of past and future in the
present is echoed here. Such a concept as Krishna taught Arjuna
calls for a non-attached action in the present. "The time is no
healer: the patient is no longer here", and, therefore, any con-
sideration of past and future is mere deception. Therefore:

Fare forward travellers not escaping from the past
Into different lives, or into any future;
There is no reason why one should wish to escape from the past.
Any attempt to escape from the past into a different life or
into any future is like escaping from one unreality into an oth-
er. "The murmuring shell of time" might be taken to allude to
the sound of oonch in the battlefield of Kurukshetra. The images
of journey used by Eliot ultimately describe the journey that
leads one from here to the farther shore:

Here between the hither and the farther shore
While time is withdrawn, consider the future
And the past with an equal mind.

The two shores — "the hither end the farther shore" — are this world and the Nirvan. This refers to the Buddhist concept. The Buddha himself has said: "For whom there is neither this nor that shore, nor both, him, the fearless and unshackled, I call indeed a Brahmana."¹ For such a Brahmana the "time is withdrawn" and he is free from the illusions of time past and future. Again Eliot refers to the Hindu concept of rebirth:

"On whatever sphere of being

The mind of man may be intent
At the time of death"

The lines just quoted are a translation from the Gita — (XIII-9). The well-known principle of metempsychosis found both in Brahmanism and Buddhism is based on such a concept. To this concept from the Gita Eliot in parenthesis applies another concept derived from Heraclitus, the concept of momentary change and succession. So he comments:

And the time of death is every moment.

Critics are almost unanimous that the Eliot's comment is made from Heraclitean point of view. But the same concept is very clearly stated in Buddhism too. To requote a passage from Buddhism in Translations:

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¹ Dhammapada, Verse 385
Just as a chariot-wheel in rolling rolls only at one point of the tyre, and in resting rests only at one point; in exactly the same way, the life of a living being lasts only for the period of one thought. As soon as that thought has ceased the being is said to have ceased.

The implied suggestion in Eliot's comment is not a negation of the concept from the Gita; it is rather an emphatic assertion that, if the time of death is every moment of life, one is to be absorbed every moment in the thought of that sphere of being which one wants to attain to. This is a kind of action which shall "fructify in the lives of ther." Therefore, as Lord Krishna has taught, in order to achieve liberation one is not to think of the fruits of action; one is only to "fare forward", "Not fare well, / But fare forward, voyagers".

It is time to refer to certain critical opinions regarding the section III of The Dry Salvages. Helen Gardner thinks:

It might be objected, and it is an objection I feel strongly myself, that to introduce Krishna at this point is an error and destroys the poem's imaginative harmony. There is an unbridgeable gap between a religion that despair of the material world and a religion that is built upon faith in an event by which the material world was not condemned but saved. It is in their views of

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history and time process that Christianity and Hinduism are most irreconcilably opposed. The incarnations of Vishnu give no significance to history as does the unique Incarnation of the Christian belief. 1

Miss Gardner’s view that Hinduism despairs of material world is bases on misunderstanding. A religion, where one wishes: javam saradah satam, puseym saradah satam (O God, let me live for a hundred years, let me see for a hundred years), cannot be called pessimistic. At least the Gita shows not tings of pessimism with its unmistakable call to "fare forward". Hinduism shows only the meaninglessness of this material world because it is a mere whirring round the wheel, a release from which, in order to attain to the fluxless Absolute, or to a condition of spiritual serenity and equanimity here, is to be earned by spiritual self-culture. As far as Eliot’s view of time process and history is concerned, the Quartets make it abundantly clear that Eliot’s philosophical and metaphysical insight conceives time in its Hindu concept of being circular and unreal. Miss Gardner further asserts that Incarnation in Hindu and Christian concept is not the same because the Christian concept of Incarnation gives special and unique significance to history. In the beginning of this chapter I have shown the similarity between Hindu and Christian concept of incarnation in the context of the Quartets because both are related to the concept of the still point. Professor B. Rajan also thinks that "Section three begins badly. Mr. Eliot is never happy in 'the mazes of oriental metaphysics' and his wanderings this time are uncomfortably

1 Helen Gardner, *Penguin New Writing*, No. 29, P. 138
uncomfortably sinuous."¹ What Dr. Rajan feels to be "uncomfortably sinuous" is not made clear, but, perhaps, his implication hints at the concept of metapsychosis.

The introduction of Krishna is in section III, preceded by the message of "one Annunciation in section II and followed by a brief Christian prayer in section IV. The concept of Incarnation occurs tentatively in section V. Miss Gardner herself feels that "without preparation, but with extraordinary force the single theological word (Incarnation) in all four poems occurs in the fifth movement."² The point to be noted here is that if the word "Incarnation" occurs "without preparation", which it really does; it in itself feels like that spoken in a dramatic aside referring to something that is not in the immediate context:

These are only hints and guesses, hints followed by guesses; and the rest is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action. The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.

The tentative definition offered here places it far removed from its purely Christian context and thus it loses much of the "extraordinary force" of which Miss Gardner speaks. Perhaps, her conception of "imaginative harmony" is not very much related to the movement of the poem as a whole; and

². Helen Gardner, op. cit. P. 64
even the immediate context that the fifteen preceding lines seek to establish in their conceptual framework is related not only to the Christian concept of liberation through Christ. Miss Gardner has an equally powerful exponent of this view who thinks that, "It (the Incarnation) is the central dynamic affirmation through which the solutions constituted by each of the poems are ordered and given significance."\(^1\) Dr. Rajan’s claim is too big and is hardly acceptable. Perhaps, Grover Smith sums up the objection raised by Miss Helen when he says that the "emphasis of this movement (Section III) of the poem directly reverses that of the movement preceding."\(^2\) Mr. Smith is perceptive but his remark does not take into consideration the emphasis put in the last movement of the section II. Eliot’s main concern is not the Annunciation or the Incarnation but the search for the still point in the midst of the flux. Eliot is "interested in Hiraclitus and the Bhagavad Gita in so far as they reveal to him different ways of putting the same thing."\(^3\) In a more recent study Russel T. Fowler has asserted that "the voice of Krishna that sounds in "Dry Salvages'never releases its particular hold on both the form and the symbolism of the Quartets."\(^4\) Krishna’s admonition to Arjuna is a

\(^{1}\) B. Rajan, "Unity of the Quartets", T. S. Eliot: A Study of His Writings by Several Hands, ed. B. Rajan, P. 79
\(^{2}\) Grover Smith, op. cit., P. 282
\(^{3}\) Remond Preston, Four Quartets Rehearsed, London, 1946, P. 44
call for accepting the material world in the spirit of a religious duty without attaching oneself passionately to it. This spirit of non-attachment gives this world its due meaning and brings one nearer to the still point.

The brief lyrical movement in section IV, though cast in the form of a Christian prayer, repeats and extends the images of journey used in Section III. The opening sixteen lines of section V are a bitter denunciation of any method, other than that of the spiritual self-culture, of knowing man's destiny. We have already seen that these lines embody the spirit of a Buddhist sensibility. To read the stars, to converse with the spirits, or to read horoscope or palms, or to take help of any psycho-analytical method, these are merely like searching past and future and clinging to that dimension. But to have a real perception of a timeless reality is a saint's occupation:

But to apprehend
The point of intersection of the timeless
With time, is an occupation for the saint —
No occupation either, but something given
And taken, in lifetime's death in love,
Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.

The concepts these lines embody can be found both in Christianity and Hinduism, though the expression "an occupation for the saint" was too concentrated for a Christian view. So the saint here is not only the saint according to the concepts found in Patanjali or Buddhism; -- the saint who realises the
"intersection" only through "occupation" — but he is also a saint in the sense in which the Bhagavad Gita or Christianity conceives of him: "something given/And taken", both a result of the spiritual self-discipline and the operation of God's grace. Eliot after offering the hints and guesses again comes to the teachings of the Bhagavad Gita:

And right action is freedom
From past and future also.

In the Gita Krishna clearly states:
Action rightly renounced brings freedom:
Action rightly performed brings freedom:
Both are better
Than mere shunning of action.  
But such an aim of attaining liberation is not to be easily realised by most of us. But we should go on trying — "are forward". We x can achieve this state of liberation from past and future "If our temporal reversion nourish". The expression "If our temporal reversion nourish" is a significant mental attitude towards the worldly life. It refers to the Buddhist discipline. Grover Smith refers to this aspect of a Buddhist attitude in his comment:

Though a Buddhist might read the closing lines of The Dry Salvages without feeling that they were strange to his beliefs, and though he might understand by "temporal reversion" something consistent with his habitual idea

of personal karma, this fact need not make *The Dry Salvages* heterodox for Christians ... ... Eliot in *Burnt Norton* and *The Dry Salvages* reached in poetry a level which without extravagance, one might call creative theology.¹

One cannot say whether it is "creative theology" or created theology where, as Kristian Smidt asserts, things stand "refined almost beyond Christianity", but one thing is certain that the end is in keeping with the entire movement of the poem.

IV. LITTLE GIDDING.

*Little Gidding*, the last poem of the *Quartets*, is a kind of recapitulation, rather a more tranquil recollection, of what Eliot has been concerned with in his metaphysics and religious thinking right from *Burnt Norton*. There are very brief but suggestive repetitions of the concepts already used and one can find concluding echoes from earlier poems of the *Quartets*. Much of the contemplative elements merge into such statements as suggest a tranquil understanding and realization because the poem drops the method of suggesting the presence of a third dimension of reality by bringing in the contradictions to be forced into a single context.

Section I of *Little Gidding* starts with a new image of "Midwinter spring". But the connotation offered on a conceptual level is not different from that suggested by a liberated

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¹ Grover Smith, op.cit., P.286
state here and now. This "Midwinter spring is its own season", it is not like our spring season; therefore it is "sempiternal". We have already seen the connotations offered by Eliot through the image of spring in The Waste Land. Here the spring suggests a state of liberation and enlightenment because:

Between melting and freezing

The soul's sap quivers. There is no earth smell
Or smell of living thing. This is the spring time
But not in time's covenant. Now the hedgerow
Is blanched for an hour with transitory blossom
Of snow, a bloom more sudden
Than that of summer, neither budding nor fading,
Not in the scheme of generation.

This midwinter spring is not a state of liberation after death. It is only a condition of equanimity and enlightenment: "Sempiternal though sudden towards sundown/Suspended in time": In this condition the refining process of both "frost and fire" is still operative. The cleansing of the soul of all its temporal affections still continues. The process that Eliot conceived of in East Coker (Section IV) for complete redemption from the fever that "sings in mental wires" is under way here:

If to be warmed, then I must freeze
And quake in frigid purgatorial fires

Therefore, "Between melting and freezing/The soul's sap quivers:
But the condition of existence achieved here is beyond anything the earth might offer: "There is no earth smell/Or smell of anything" because this reality is not "in time's covenant." Hedgerow

1 East Coker (section IV).
is blanched and the blossoms are purely unearthly, the blossoms of snow — "neither budding nor fading". It is a reality not "in the scheme of generation", yet it is not a state of pure liberation and of unity in the Absolute because still there is wish for the "Zero summer":

Where is the summer, the unimaginable
Zero summer?

The "Zero summer" is a new concept identical with that of the still point where all flux is stilled into a pure existence in the Absolute. "Zero summer" gestures toward "advait" philosophy which is hardly to be found in the Christian thinking.

Thus the very first movement of Little Gidding is placed on a level which is in a way above the whirlwind of the flux though not completely unattached to it.

The second movement offers a historical perspective in the image of the "broken king", the king Charles, to whom the place "revealed the consummation, the meaning of the journey." The movement makes it clear that for the realization of the meaning the particular time and place are not important. Unless the realization dawns nobody can be sure about the purpose and meaning because:

And what you thought you came for
Is only a shell, a husk of meaning
From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled
If at all.

1. Grover Smith, op.cit., P.287
The poet here is simply asserting the humility of Non-knowledge, which is a concept frequently found asserted in the Indian philosophy and metaphysics. The condition laid down for a true realization of the "purpose" and its meaning and fulfilment is that "you would have to put off sense and notion" because,

You are not here to verify,
Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
Or carry report.

Putting off "sense and notion" is in keeping with the Buddhist concept of the experience of the Void. The mental stuff and the senses are completely stopped in their flashings and what emerges is the state:

Which is no land, only emptiness, absence, the Void,
Where those who were men can no longer turn the mind
To distraction, delusion, escape into dream, pretence,
Where the soul is no longer deceived, for there are no objects, no tones,
No colours, no forms to distract, to divert the soul
From seeing itself, fully united forever, nothing with nothing,

Not what we call death, but what beyond death is not death.

The state of reality described in the lines is that stage of pure contemplation which in Buddhism is called the Light of the Void; it is a stage "where prayer is more":

Than an order of words, the conscious occupation
Of the praying mind or the sound of the voice praying.

Such a prayer brings one to "the intersection of the timeless moment."

The section II starts and its lyrical movement envisions the death of the elements that form the flux. So the condition when the man moves beyond "hope and despair" is conceived as the death of air. This leads to the death of earth. This process is complete with the death of water and fire. At this stage the constraint is complete and the power of discrimination follows which brings in the spiritual awareness. The next movement points to the horrors of the air raid, covering the whole hallucinated scene with ghostly paleness of death in-life. This is the meeting point of the worlds both natural and supernatural. Under such a situation the poet catches:

The eyes of a familiar compound ghost
Both intimate and unidentifiable.
So I assumed a double part, and cried
And heard another's voice cry: 'What are you here?'
Although we were not. I was still the same,
Knowing myself yet being someone other —

It is very difficult to identify the "compound ghost." Though the hints offered in the poem suggest likenesses with Dante yet the line "When I left my body on a distant shore," that echoes the Buddhist phraseology, might be taken to be referring to the Buddha. However, the ghost is a "compound ghost" and he is an embodiment of well realised wisdom. The meeting is not an ordinary meeting; it takes place:
In concord at this intersection time
Of meeting nowhere, no before and after,
Therefore, in order to have such a meeting there is a need for assuming "a double part" where one being the same person knows himself "yet being someone other" Grover Smith thinks that "This double part forms the crux; everything depends on it. Unfortunately, there is little possibility of deciding what it means."\(^1\) It seems to me that the poem from the beginning moves on a plane of realisation where it is possible to have a perception of the higher 'Self' which "being someone other" may converse with the spiritual embodiments of liberated souls. Though the ghost is "the spirit unappeased" yet its compounded form suggests the realisation of many lives through the ages. So the words of wisdom coming from the ghost:

Let me disclose the gifts reserved for age
To set a crown upon your lifetime's effort.
First, the cold friction of expiring sense
Without enchantment, offering no promise
But bitter tastelessness of shadow fruit
As body and soul begin to fall asunder.

What a terrible picture of the physical reality! Such a ruthless scrutiny is the work of an Indian sensibility. Such a dry and intellectual rejection of senses and their tastelessness is rarely to be found in Christian mystics. The second and the last points in the experience of the ghost also refer

\(^1\) Grover Smith, op.cit., P.291
to the absurdity of our motives and actions "Which once you took for exercise of virtue." Actions done without the purification of motive sting and stain. Not only this, but such action, done in the spirit of attachment, (either as an exercise of virtue or as aimed at honour) ties the soul to the wheel:

From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit
Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire
Where you must move in measure, like a dancer.

Fire is a symbol of purification both in Hinduism and Christianity. The 'Karma' must be burnt in the fire of knowledge. The last line quoted above refers to a poised movement following the Yogic exercises. Thus disclosing "the gifts reserved" the ghost disappeared and "He left me, with a kind of valediction".

Section III very naturally follows from the gifts disclosed by the ghost. But the gift is the same as we find enshrined in The Bhagavad Gita. Eliot visualises three conditions which look alike but differ completely. These are:
"Attachment to self and to things and to persons; detachment/From self and from things and from persons; and growing between them, indifference." The "indifference" is rejected as "unflowering." Attachment where the love is not expanded beyond desire is a "servitude" because it gives a sense of history which is found to be "that action of little importance." And hence:
See, now they vanish,
The faces and places, with the self which, as it could,
loved them,
To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern.

So the attachment to self and to things and to persons vanishes with the self that loved them. The qualifying remark "as it could" is significant because the self through attachment could love only in a limited way; it could not expand its love beyond desire. Such a self forms the part of the flux; Patanjali's concept of the witness self is implicit in the rejection of the lower self as a part of the universal flux and suffering. The self that vanishes with the faces and places is not the self that we find in Harry's comment in *The Family Reunion*:

The degradation of being parted from my self,
From the self which persisted only as an eye, seeing.¹

Or again in the comments of Edward in *The Cocktail Party* we find the same echo of Patanjali's concept of the witness self that is not a part of the flux:

The self that can say 'I want this — or want that' —
The self that wills — he is a feeble creature;
He has to come to terms in the end
With the obstinate, the tougher self; who does not speak, who never talks, who cannot argue;

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And who in some men may be the guardian —

But in men like me, the dull, the implacable,
The indomitable spirit of mediocrity.
The willing self can contrive the disaster
Of this unwilling partnership — but can only flourish
In submission to the rule of the stronger partner.²

The love of such a self as says "I want this — or want that
---/The self that wills" is mere attachment. It is only through detachment even from such a self that the liberation from history and of history is to be conceived. Detachment from self and from things and from persons is not incompatible with the concept of expanding the love beyond desire because detachment brings in an impersonal order of love for all the created things like Buddhist 'Karuna' (compassion) for all.

The poet quotes the words of Dame Julian Norwich to give his benediction the authority of a maxim. A further movement in this section brings the memories of the past. Past is "a symbol: A symbol perfected in death." This symbol brings the realization that all our strife that divides us ultimately accepts "the constitution of silence." The poet repeats the benediction that all shall be well provided there is purification of motive. Actions rightly performed with detachment lead one towards this end. The poet well understands the psychological impossibility of performing an action without a motive. The motive behind an action should

1. Ibid, PP.381-2
be the purification of the motive itself; the cleansing of
the soul, as it were. Purification of motive consists in the
removal of all traces of 'rajas' and 'tamas'. Such a puri-
fication of motive makes an action identical with prayer
because all such actions are surrendered to God who is the
ultimate "ground of our beseeching", the eternal Absolute.
The way of prayer and devotion is the same as the way of
detached action.

The lyric fourth section is a kind of "fire sermon".
The descending dove is the raiding aircraft discharging us
from sin and error because destruction of life and property
brings in "the constitution of silence" and we become only
a symbol perfected in death. Further it might suggest "the
descent of the Holy Ghost." 1 It seems to me that an allusion
to the descent of the Holy Ghost is not intended here as the
first four lines of this section refer only to the despair
caused by madness of war and strife. There is only one hope
and else is despair:

The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre —
To be redeemed from fire by fire.

From what has gone before in this poem as well as in other
poems of the Quartets it is evident that Eliot puts more em-
phasis on detached action for liberation. The concept of the
operation of God's grace which is equally valid both in Hin-
duism and Christianity does not conflict with the concept of

1. Grover Smith op.cit., P.294
liberation through right action. The need for redemption from the fire of greed, infatuation and sensuous pleasures is equally a valid concept both in Christianity and Hinduism though Christianity never identifies it with the concept of sin. If we weigh the emphasis put on the concept of redemption from fire by fire it tilts in favour of Hinduism and Buddhism. It is not only the redemption from sin which is the real question, it is the redemption from, perhaps, the karma, the flux, the time that, in view of the total movement of the Quartets, is more important. And this redemption comes through the fire of knowledge. An allusion to the myth of Hercules who could not escape the treacherous Nessus—shirt points to the kind of love that is torment. Love that is "unfamiliar Name" is the redeeming love, it is "unfamiliar" because we have not realised it through the purification of motive. The love, "The intolerable shirt of flame/Which human power cannot remove", is the love not purified by fire. We can live a good life if we are consumed by refining fire.

The terminal section of Little Gidding makes use of all the leading symbols of the Quartets with their dominant themes. The opening lines state the metaphysical concept of beginning and end theme. "The end is where we start from" is a concept valid both in poetic composition and in metaphysical speculation regarding our journey to this earth from our ultimate "end", the Absolute. "And any action" is a beginning, "a step to the block, to the fire, down the seas throat/Or to an illegible stone; and that is where we start." So the begin—
ning is at two points: one the beginning of the downward movement towards earth, and the other the upward movement toward our ultimate source. An unredeemed beginning and end are merely a circular motion in time past, present and future. And therefore:

We die with the dying:

See, they depart, and we go with them.

We are born with the dead:

See, they return, and bring us with them.

The second line quoted above summarizes the whole vision projected in section III of *East Coker*. We are born with the dead" is an expression pointing to the concept of determinism recapitulating *The Dry Salvages* where the concept that the moment of death is every moment is projected as a reality about our life. We are all dead; that is the fact Lord Krishna taught Arjuna as he was to kill only those who were already dead. "We go with them" and "they return, and bring us with them". This circle continues till we are finally liberated and united with the real source where the beginning and the end meet at zero point, the still point or "Zero summer". In an unredeemed existence "The moment of the rose and the moment of the yew-tree/Are of equal duration". The rose symbolizes life and the yew-tree death; they co-exist because every moment of life is life-in-death till the final liberation. After a reflection on history the poem moves on to the most important conclusion:
With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling

The "Love" and the "Calling" both are equally important. By the "Love" and the "Calling" are suggested respectively devotion and action. Love of God that operates in the form of grace is also a call for a ceaseless exploration:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

Such a call for faring forward echoes Krishna's exhortation to Arjuna and it takes one ultimately to God. The place to be known "for the first time" is not any place here because here all places are the same; it is a place like the "rose garden" of *Burnt Norton* because we are entering it through the "re-membered gate." This process of exploring should continue till "the last of earth" is left to discover "that which was the beginning" of his life. The expression "the last of earth", that is, the last man on earth, makes it clear that the emphasis is put on the individual effort as in Hinduism and Buddhism.

And the beginning was:

At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree

The images from *Burnt Norton* and *The Dry Salvages* are repeated here with the same connotative value. Such a beginning was:
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.

The images of waves and sea are from The Dry Salvages. The two waves are the waves of time and eternity. I have already referred to the concept that sea according to the Upanishads is the symbol of a seer without duality. Further the symbol of sea here offers "the stillness" of the point of intersection of the time with the timeless. The "source of the longest river" lies in this timeless reality. The word "Quick" in the next line recalls the image of the bird in Burnt Norton. The bird calls for an active effort towards the realization of this timeless source of our life. But as a pre-condition we must have "A condition of complete simplicity" which costs not less than everything. This is the condition of complete humility. The poem ends with a vision of reality projected through the use of images drawn from Paradise, XXXIII, and The Clouds of Unknowing (Chapter 47). The expression "tongues of flame" appears to be alluding to an expression in Buddhism in Translations where it is recounted how the "foretime Buddhas" came and disappeared:

All these foretime Buddhas were,
Tranquil, from every passion free.
And like the sun, the many-rayed,
They chased away the darkness dense,
And having flamed like tongues of fire,
Became extinct with all their train.1

Or, again, the same image we find in the description of the highest reality in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad:

The form of that person (Brah-an) is .......... like a tongue of fire, or like a white lotus, or like a flash of lightning. He who knows this — his splendour is like a flash of lightning.2

In Little Gidding the same image appears significantly:

...... the communication

Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living.3

If the allusion to these Indian sources be accepted as probable then the expression "tongues of flame" bears significantly on the vision of the ultimate achievement presented in the last two lines of the poem. In order to realise "the crowned knot of fire" where "the fire and the rose are one", a Hindu orientation in the Christian approach is suggested.

1. H.C. Warren, op.cit., P.32 (Italics mine)
2. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, (II.III. 6), (Italics mine)
3. Little Gidding, Part I.