CHAPTER II.

THE AMERICAN BACKGROUND OF INDIAN THOUGHT AND SENSIBILITY.
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T.S. Eliot is by now a well recognised champion of a European tradition in literature. The critics who have tried to seek for his roots have gone to locate it in Dante, Elizabebhan writers, Baudelaire, Laforgue and so many others of Greek and Latin antiquity. It has been a profitable excursion, but the recent scholarship is quite justified in tracing Eliot’s poetic descent from the native sources. Edmund Wilson’s assertion that “Eliot’s spiritual and intellectual roots are still more firmly fixed in New England”¹ is quite true. Eliot was born and brought up in America; and this champion of the European tradition cannot be expected not to have been indebted to his own literary and intellectual tradition that nourished his younger years at Boston and Harvard. The present chapter is to concern itself only with how Indian philosophy and religion had penetrated into the very fabric of American life resulting in the creation of a peculiar sensibility. For this purpose a very sketchy account of the influence of Indian thought and philosophy on the American thinkers and men of letters is given here.

American society in New England had to face a spiritual drought even during the early years of 19th century. As Theodore Parker has described:

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¹ Quoted by S. Musgrove in T.S. Eliot and Walt Whitman, University of Auckland, 1965, P.9
Commercial Boston where honour is weighed in the public scales and justice reckoned by dollars it brings, conservative Boston, the grave of the revolution, wallowing in its wealth, yet grovelling for more, seeking only money, careless of justice, stuffed with cotton, yet hungry for tariffs, sick with the greedy worm of avarice, loving money as the end of life ........ and amidst it all comes Emerson graceful as Phoebus-Apollo, fearless and tranquil as the sun.  

The description is really alarming in that it is that of a situation of spiritual sterility. The Unitarian movement, that started somewhere in the fourth quarter of the 18th century, had become the "corpse-cold unitarianism of Brattle street and Harvard College" as Emerson called it. By the time of the Concord authors, Emerson, Alcott and Thoreau, sufficient translation works from Indian scriptures and literature were available. The Concordians read the Indian scriptures avidly and found a way out of their problems in them. These writers were staunch orientalists and their literary output is vastly influenced by Indian thought and sensibility. The Oriental Transcendentalists in New England had a craving, as it were, for the light from the orient and they read The Bhagavad Gita and the Vedas even on breakfast table to cure their souls.

Emerson is the first major writer and thinker to find a world of wisdom and light in the Indian scriptures. On reading The Bhagavad Gita he felt as if an empire spake to him. Emerson

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had wholly imbibed the spirit of Hindu philosophy, especially Vedantic philosophy, and composed poems sometimes paraphrasing what had struck him as significant. To quote from Emerson:

If the red slayer think he slays,
Or if the slain think he is slain
They know not well the subtle ways
I keep and pass and turn again. ¹

Now we may compare it with Thomas' words in The Murder in The Cathedral:

Neither does the agent suffer
Nor the patient act, But both are fixed
In an eternal action, an eternal patience. ²

The implication of both the verses is almost the same. The eternal action in which both are fixed is determined by Brahma, the Lord of Creation. It is he who keeps and passes and turns again. The realization of this truth by the slayer and the slain can give them the wisdom of performing their acts with detachment and without expectation of the fruits of action.

There are striking similarities in the views expressed by Eliot and Emerson regarding the function of perception and sensibility in the poetic creation. According to Emerson the perception of symbol enables man to see both "the poetic construction of things" and "the primary relation of mind to matter", and this same perception normally creates "the whole apparatus of poetic expression." ³ For Eliot too all feelings

1. Quoted from Emerson's Brahma
and all knowledge are in perception. It makes for a "conscious formula of sensibility in the process of formation."

In the same book Eliot emphatically asserts that "the perceptions do not, in a really appreciative mind, accumulate in a mass, but form themselves as a structure; and criticism is the statement in language of this structure; it is the development of sensibility." Now it must be clear that for Eliot perception creates the instrument of sensibility for poetic comprehension. For Emerson too perception makes it possible to see "the poetical construction of things" and it creates the "whole apparatus of poetical expression". What Eliot calls sensibility is for Emerson the apparatus for creation. This striking similarity between the two does not appear to be accidental; or, if it is accidental, it does really testify to the fact that the impact of Indian sensibility and thought elicited from both an identical response, at least on theoretical level, in regard to their concept of poetry and the poet, Emphasising the importance of the historical sense in order to 'obtain' tradition Eliot comments:

"..... and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order." 3

1. T.S. Eliot, The Sacred Wood, P.44
2. Ibid, P.15
An identical view of the past is there in Emerson:

See how cunningly constructed are all things in such a manner as to make each being the centre of the Creation. You seem to be a point or focus upon which all objects, all ages concentrate their influence. Nothing past but affects you. Nothing remote but through some means reaches you.

By comparing the basic concepts in the lines quoted above from Eliot and Emerson one may feel convinced that both are talking from the same angle of vision. Of course, in Emerson, the implied metaphysical point of view is more explicit than in Eliot. But if one tries to look for the sources of their views, one is obliged to go to Indian roots in their thoughts and sensibilities. Even a slight acquaintance with the technique adopted by the writers of Upanishads will show how the key lines from the Vedas embodying the eternal truth have been referred to and commented upon in the Upanishads giving the sense of an unbroken continuity and order. In Emerson's lines "a point ... reaches you" we find an assertion of the fact that the poet is a mere structural principle for creating a vision of reality. In his conception of objectivity of poetry and the impersonality of the poet, Eliot seems to show some likenesses with Emersonian concept.

In Emerson's conception mind is not a substance; it is a behaviour. It is not the function of the mind that is the

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essential point for Emerson: "it is by no means action, which is the essential point, but some middle quality indifferent both to poet and to actor, and which we call reality." According to Emerson a poet is merely a "faculty of reporting." By comparing Eliot's concept that the man who suffers is different from the mind that creates and that "the artist(is) as an EYE curiously patiently watching himself as a man" with Emerson's "that the poet is merely "faculty of reporting" the unmistakable conclusion can be drawn that both think that the man, the personality of the poet, is merely a medium, 'Nimitta' and on a purely mental (man-nah) level no creation is possible. When Eliot says that it is the 'mind' that creates, obviously he could not be supposed to mean that poetic activity is a mental activity. Mind for Eliot is merely a 'reservoir' where impressions are stored and they form themselves into new wholes. I shall show Eliot's affinity with Patanjali in this respect in the third chapter. So the mind for Eliot could be taken at the level of the intellect whose apprehension of reality is not purely sensuous; that is, not of desires, likes and dislikes, emotional attachments to the object or revulsion from it. It should be remembered that it is the mental contact with the external objects that gives the sense of personality. So Eliot's

3. Quoted by Eric Thompson, op. cit., foot-note 1. P. 162
concept of mind is really in keeping with the Hindu concept of (Buddhih ) intellect which is a critical faculty capable of an ethical apprehension of reality. Sensuous and emotional apprehensions are to be subordinated and related to the ethical function in its structuring and ordering of reality:

It is ultimately the function of art, in imposing a credible order upon ordinary reality, and thereby eliciting some perception of order in reality, to bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness, and reconciliation; and then leave us, as Virgil left Dante, to proceed towards a region where that guide can avail us no farther.¹

The region where art can avail us no farther is the ultimate level of apprehension, that of the higher self. But even the level of ethical apprehension, during the moments of mystical break—through, glimpses the perceptions of the higher self, and, therefore, the poetic creativity is a kind of release enjoyed by the poet. Hence according to the Indian poetics the poet's write for 'Swantah Sukhaya', that is, for 'ananda'; and it is no wonder that Eliot confesses to have written The Waste Land for disburdening himself. Emerson very emphatically declares that "man is a method, a progressing arrangement, a selecting principle." This peculiar similarity between Eliot and Emerson is not there by accident. Even if the point of view that Eliot might have borrowed something from Emerson be rejected as improbable one thing is clear that the similarities between the two are due to the impact of Indian thought on both of them. Both of them

¹ T.S. Eliot, "Poetry and Drama," Selected Prose, P.81
are inevitably led to have a metaphysical view concerning the personality and poetic faculty. What distinguishes Eliot from Emerson, is, in fact, only the distance in terms of time which separates them.

Hinduism brought about a renaissance in American thought and literature. America with its only concern with money and 'numbers' had become intellectually and spiritually a barren land. The history of the cultural discovery of India by the Americans is the history of search for values which could infuse into life a sense of direction and purpose. Indian theological and metaphysical thoughts captured the attention of the Concord authors. The psychology of the witness self offered a rational basis for the attainment of the Absolute. It was this rational basis of Hindu mysticism that appealed both to Emerson and Eliot. The psychology of a witness self, over and above the lower self, that is, the working life, is the key conception in metaphysical approach of the man for liberation and eternal peace. The metaphysical perception of a higher reality that the Four Quartets offer is through 'hints and guesses' is seldom realised through Christian mystical apprehension. Eliot never claimed that poetry could realise in its process of crystallisation of the perceived truth a condition of the attainment of the perfect truth. It can only be so transparent that we could perceive not the poetry but that which we are intended to perceive through poetry. The mystical vein in Eliot is not of Christian mysticism; the poet never expresses the perceived truth in terms of his emotions and feelings; or what Buber calls 'pure relation' is never established between the poet and the poetic realisation of the reality on a mystical level.
dialogue with the self," comments Mr. G. S. Amur, "did not attain the Biblical fullness because it did not adequately involve him with his neighbours or with God."  

Eliot's poetry stops at the frontier of consciousness verging on the unconscious, or to describe it in Indian terminology it goes as far as there is something to be perceived by the intellect, that is, as long as the duality of perceiver and the perceived is there; but the condition of complete identification of perceiver and perceived is beyond poetic expression. But in the Christian mysticism a step beyond this stage is possible because the Christian mystic does not believe in advait and his moments of supreme mystical realization do not feel like merging in God; rather, they have a vision of the 'grace' that can be embodied in the poetry. But Eliot never projects this grace and he is always on the side of the Hindu mystic who sees the way and receives an enlightenment experience. "The aim of the poet", as Eliot believes, "is to state a vision, and no vision of life can be complete which does not include the articulate formulation of life which human minds make? Eliot was much concerned with "articulate formulation of life" and that is there in the Quartets. American writers especially Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman had revolted against the eighteenth century rationalism. The sensationalist psychology of Locke and Hume was not satisfying. They wanted, as any sensitive and thinking man in a society, spiritually as worm-eaten and dry as ours wants, something that could satisfy their intellectuality as well as emotional longing for the superhuman and extra-rationalistic

order. Perhaps they had the acute sense of estrangement from God and society: the sense that has its roots in what Eliot calls "dissociation of sensibility." In *The American Mind*, Henry Steele Commager has pointed out:

> The dominant note in literature (has been) critical .... all but unanimous repudiation or protest and revolt has been dominant in American literature since Emerson and Thoreau .... Rarely in the literature of any country have the major writers been so shapely estranged from the society which nourishes them.¹

To such people came the message of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Thoreau shows his amazement and unqualified admiration for the *Gita* for its 'pure intellectuality': "The reader is nowhere raised into and sustained in a higher, purer, or rarer region of thought than in the *Bhagavad Gita*."² About the impact of the Vedas he had no less praise: "the Vedas I have read fall on me like light of a higher and purer luminary ...."³ Thoreau, no less than Emerson and Whitman, had imbued the central concern of the Indian scriptures with the witness self or the higher self that looks with detachment on the trammeled human existence tied to the rounds of birth, decay and death. He says:

> I am sensible of a certain doubleness by which I can stand as remote from myself as from another. However, intense my

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3. Quoted, 1844, P.96
experience, I am conscious of the presence and criticism
of a part of me which, as it were, is not a part of me but
a spectator, sharing no experience but taking note of it,
and that is no more I than it is you.¹

Thoreau's understanding is clear. And the metaphysical psycho-
ology that he learnt from Indian sources creates an attitude of
indifference to and detachment from the passionately intense
and feverish involvement of human beings in the worldly events
in which one must participate. This understanding has become a
cure for the modern problem of hectic activity without mental
peace. Whitman is very near Thoreau in his poem Song of Myself:

Battles, war, passing events, changes in mood "are not the Me
Myself"

Apart from the pulling and hauling stands what I am,
Stands amused, complacent, compassionate, idle, unitary,
Both in an out of the game and watching and wondering at it.

This was the realization that Arjuna had after he was admonished
by Krishna. The 'Song of Myself' depicts the state of bliss and
release after the trammels of the world have completely been sha-
ken off. But between Whitman and Eliot there is the difference
in sensibility. In Whitman there is total identification; but in
Eliot there is objective apprehension. Dr. V. Rama Murthy comments
on the differences of the influence, The Bhagavad Gita both on
Whitman and Eliot:

For instance, in their (Whitman and Eliot) poetry the same
Bhagavad Gita appears in two different garbs .... Eliot,

1. Quoted, Ibid, P.39
the sceptic, chooses the role of an onlooker (more appropriately that of Arjuna); and Whitman unhesitatingly ... chooses for himself the identity of the Virat. He speaks in a tone which even the highest realised Indian Yogi cannot dare to adopt for himself.  

Eliot chooses the role of a detached contemplator of the message of the Gita. Eliot's perception moves on the ethical level and the value one might attach to it is poetic rather than mystical. The crystallisation of perception in terms of sensibility is deliberately kept on the level of mere concept formation and it can never be defined in terms of beliefs either Hindu or Christian. Even this fact of the lack of proper emotional belief in Eliot's poetry is consequent upon the schism in his personality. After reading Indian scriptures he felt that he might forget to think and feel like a Christian, and so he stopped reading it or entering into the so-called mazes of Patanjali's metaphysics. But the enlightenment he had gained forms the very basis of his metaphysical vision. To quote K.S. Narayan Rao who had made the same point so lucidly:

This statement explains, partly at least, a kind of dissociation which exists in Eliot's approach to Indian thought — an intellectual identification combined with an emotional detachment. Eliot sits on the inner walls of the outer structure of a spiritual thermos-flask separated by an almost complete emotional vacuum from the inner philo-

- phic contents his intellect surveys. Or to change the figure he —like Matthew Arnold—gazes at the 'high, white star of truth' of the Indian philosophic sky. The star is bright but cold. Indian philosophic thought, which inextricably mixed up with Indian religious thought, is to him an intellectual creed rather than an emotional faith." ¹

Mr. Narayan Rao's comment on the effect of Indian thought and philosophy on T.S. Eliot is quite penetrating and revealing. I too hold that Eliot as a man was always Christian. But as a poet he was led by his sensibility and the poems are a progressive illustration of his commitment to Indian philosophy and metaphysics on the level of intension. Stephen Spender's remark that: "A different evolution of Eliot's ideas was possible, and if it had happened would have made Richard right" ² cannot be accepted on the poetic level. I.A. Richards in 1926 had found The Waste Land — "Severed from all beliefs". Mr. Spender thinks that after The Waste Land the poetry of T.S. Eliot had a different kind of evolution. But he is wide of the mark when he tries to read Eliot's poetry in the light of his conversion to Anglo-Catholicism. This is an uncrirical method of not reading poetry as poetry but as the expression of the avowed personality of the poet. Eliot was himself not satisfied with the kind of explication that was being written on his poetry during his lifetime:

Sometimes it occurs to me that the people when they think that they are writing about my poetry, are really writing

² Stephen Spender "Remembering Eliot", in ed. Allen Tate, op. cit,
about the kind of poetry, they would have wished to write.¹

That Eliot's poetry has its roots in the intellectual formulation about human predicament is quite obvious. Eliot wanted to offer a cure to our problems of religious dilemma and existential plight in terms of cultivating an inner attitude of detachment and evenness. The whole of his poetic output should be taken as one poem. The *Four Quartets* mark an end to his beginning of the poetic exploration of the possibilities of liberated existence here and now. No wonder that he frankly confessed as Bonamy Dobree reports: "He was abandoning the writing of poems because, he once told me, he did not want to repeat himself."²

It is never convincing to say that Eliot took to writing of the plays because he had exhausted his poetic energy.³ Eliot had really started his poetic career rather consciously and deliberately, writing in small units pruning and re-arranging with a view to fitting it to a greater design and movement that finally results in a perfect pattern leading to *Four Quartets*. We shall be justified not only in following the entelechy of one individual poem but the entelechy of the whole poetic output because, apart from their individual life and self-realised perfection, each of the individual poems forms only a unit in the total design of Eliot's carpet; and this design is the movement. Those who try to find an explanation other than philosophical and

1. Quoted, Ibid, P.51

2. Bonamy Dobree "T.S.Eliot : A Personal Reminiscence", in edt. Allen Tate, op.cit., P.83

3. "Discussion : Eliot's Plays " in edt. M.M. Bhalla, op. cit, P. 31. This point was made by Mr. Vinod Sena.
metaphysical for the movement and design of Eliot's poetry fail to appreciate the point that the coherence in his poetic world is because of the coherence in his metaphysical vision. Eliot himself had given a hint of his being conscious of his progress when he admits of this assembling method to an interviewer who asked him about his method in *Ash Wednesday*:

Yes, like *The Hollow Men*, it originated out of separate poems .... then gradually I came to see it as a sequence. That's one way in which my mind does seem to have worked throughout the years poetically - doing things separately and then seeing the possibility of fusing them together, altering them, and making a kind of whole of them.¹

This conscious attempt at linking and fusing the separate poems to form an integrated development in Eliot's poetic career could have never been possible without a metaphysical basis. He is very much in the line of Emerson, Thoreau and other American Hindus, at least, with regard to the common heritage they received from Indian sources.

The Concordians had no conscious theological or metaphysical objective. Their approach was that of the poet and mystic. But there was a deep relation between the Concord point of view and the Transcendental mind-cure that had spread throughout New England. Concordian sensibility had bred indifference to the hard facts of American life. The discontentment with the materialism was on the increase. It was in the context of such

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¹ Quoted by Gertrude Patterson, *T.S.Eliot: Poems in the Making*, New York, Berness and Noble, 1971, P.95
social conditions that Buddhism found a popular reception for the light it brought to the Occident. The period from 1860 to 1900 in America witnessed an increasing interest in Buddhism. The Boston Museum of Fine Arts established in 1889 is the proof of interest in Buddhist art and culture that entered America through Japan. This Boston Museum created an atmosphere in which people were ready to welcome Buddhism in America. Edwin Arnold's book *The Light of Asia* was published in 1879 and it went into eighty editions in America. It was a kind of invasion by Buddhist thought and sensibility on the American temperament and mood. It was a message of resignation that appealed to the tired minds of the later New England. Eliot seems to have predisposed to Buddhism since his boyhood. As a boy he had come across *The Light of Asia* and he read it with gusto: "I must have had a latent sympathy for the subject-matter, for I read it through with gusto, and more than once."¹ We have already noted that Unitarian faith had become corpse-cold. There was no help in Christianity. "One solution was," comments Mr. Rodrigues, "a return to the Orient, a turning to Buddhism, for an answer to man's existential plight."² Life in Boston had grown complex and tedious. Mr. V.W. Brooks offers a critical picture of the Boston mind:

The optimism which John Fiske and William James maintained in Cambridge was foreign to their mood and offended their


taste. It justified the restless striving that had lost all meaning for them. They longed for quiet, solace and escape. Sad and fatalistic, feeling that life was empty, they found a natural haven in the teachings of Buddha. Blessed for them was Nirvan, where illusion ceased, where the trials, the expiations and the whirlwind of life were calmed and silenced and ended in absolute truth."

This quotation is justified because its precise depiction of Boston sensibility is what Eliot shared with his predecessors and contemporaries. Brooks in the same essay holds that Eliot saw the 'Waste Land' first in Boston before he ever described it in terms of London. Even Eliot's interest in Dante and Donne was not new. Concord authors, Emerson, Alcott and Thoreau often referred to Donne wherever in their writings. In the nineties Donne became a fashionable poet in Boston. During the same period the peculiar impact of the Concordians and the Transcendentalists resulted in the creation of a kind of sensibility that was exactly what suited the crave for Buddhism and Indian way of thought. To quote Brooks again:

Litany or otherwise, they indulged in a savage contempt for America, which though they hardly felt it, included themselves.

Much of the ironic self-mockery in Eliot's poetry is the result of the Buddhist sensibility which he imbibed from his American


2. Ibid, P. 473
background. In the winter of 1895–96 there appeared a Magazine with a significant name 'The Lotos' in whose editorial Penodosa wrote, the East "had come to stay."¹ In 1894 a newspaper correspondent stated firmly that Buddha was a name "to conjure with."² So great was the growing popularity and impact of Buddhism that Lafcadio Hearn commenting on a new edition of The Light of Asia wrote: "After all, Buddhism in some esoteric form may prove the religion of the future ..."³ America had so many Buddhist converts. No wonder that at the time of writing The Waste Land Eliot seriously considered becoming a Buddhist and it was not unusual for a man like Eliot after what he had learnt, thought and felt about Buddhism. The echo of Buddhist message is heard in the letters written by eminent people to their friends and relatives.

Henry Adam's letter written to Brooks in 1885 contains: "By all means work out your full destiny, but work it out alone."

In a way Paul Elmer More, Irving Babbitt and some others who were to be the foremost leaders of intellectual activity at Harvard were among the sensitive men who had come under the impact of Indian thought and sensibility. Paul Elmer More had a cabin by the road side with an inscription in Sanskrit over the door. He was one of the student's of Lenman. Another was Arthur W. Ryder, later professor of Sanskrit at the University of California. He is known for his admirable translation of Panchatantra, the Bhagavat Gita, the poems of Kalidas etc. His translation of

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¹ Quoted by Eusebio L. Rodrigues, "Out Season for Nirvan", in ed. Sujit Mukherjee & D. V. K. Raghavacharyulu, op. cit. P.181
² Quoted, Ibid, P.181
³ Quoted, Ibid, P.182
Sakuntala has been frequently produced on the stage. Though Neo-Humanism in America had an amorphous character, much of its stress, in the writings of Babbit and More, on the inner light and check, clearly shows their debt to the orient. Arthur Christy has concluded that much of the intellectual and cultural milieu in America has been coloured by the orient. There was craving for the esoteric knowledge and the St. Louis Movement "had explorers of orientalist theosophy among its members." The initial stages of the Movement encountered opposition. But it succeeded for its interest in the serious study of the subjects the movement had appropriated to itself. It was Lehman’s way to be carried forward by Paul Elmer More, Babbit, Arthur W. Ryder and T. S. Eliot. The movement "produced a culture, a circumsamblence favourable to the growth of genius." Herber Howarth concludes that "St. Louis Movement produced a master among critics and a master poet: Paul Elmer More and T. S. Eliot." Mr. Howarth quotes Eliot to show that Eliot was "very much satisfied with having been born in St. Louis" and that he was fortunate to have been born there," rather than in Boston, or New York, or London."

Madame H. P. Blavatsky arrived in New York in 1875 from Tibet where she had a long experience of her reading of the Buddhist and other Indian texts. The St. Louis Theosophical Society had its interest in varied matters but "the essence of Mme. Blavatsky’s system is a mixture of Buddhism and Hinduism, including reincarnation, Karma, and Nirvan." There was also a tinge of Yogas

1. Herbert Howarth, op. cit., P.200
2. Ibid, P.62
3. Ibid, P.63
in the theosophical method that tries to introduce human soul to Anima Mundi. D.H. Lawrence's essays written during his later years show a clear indebtedness to Indian sources. Lawrence read several of the Vedas. Coomaraswami's *Dance of Siva* had a definite bearing on Lawrence's sense of devotion to Siva. He was interested in Upanishads too. We can never forget Huxley's interest in Perennial Philosophy. He had a well devoted admiration for the Hindu ground of the Absolute. Isherwood's renunciation of literature and the movie and the world is a fact in point. He led the life of a hermit. Somerset Maugham's interest in Yoga and Hindu scriptures is well known. In all these writers we find a sensibility that detests materialism and turns towards Hinduism.

What I am trying to suggest is that the Indian thought and sensibility had a definite bearing in shaping the literary and religious sensibility in America right from the time of Emerson and Thoreau. The traditionlessness of American tradition was a major factor to make it convenient for the Indian thought and philosophy to penetrate into American thought and culture. What America needed from the early part of the nineteenth century was an Idealism that could satisfy the demands of the intellect as well as that of the inner spirit in the midst of hot economic activity and endless material pursuits. America had become a fertile ground for experiments in utopian and idealistic philosophies. There had been a utopian interest in and a half-informed or ill-informed response to Indian philosophy. Concordian or Transcendental response to Indian religion and metaphysics might be a bit immature or over-enthusiastic but the Indian sources were at their highest fecundity. The academic support given by
Norton to St. Louis Movement and the study of Sanskrit and Pali resulted in eliciting an intellectual and rational response from American thinkers towards Indian scriptures and philosophy. Eliot was lucky to approach the Indian sources through the originals. When we take into consideration the sensibility during pre-Eliot America, we find that it had an affinity with that of Hinduism and Buddhism. It was nothing new for Eliot; he had already imbued something of this sensibility which determined his own response to the social realities in which he sadly found himself.