CHAPTER IV.

PRUROCK AND OTHER OBSERVATIONS:
EMERGING PATTERN OF THOUGHT AND SENSIBILITY
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In the preface the purpose in analysing the poems has been clearly stated. The intention is not to offer a comprehensive explication or interpretation, but to confine attention to finding out such images and symbols as give some clue to the underlying pattern of sensibility and thought common to most of the poems. It has already been stressed that Eliot did move consciously and his poems exhibit a movement forward and upwards so that there is a formal development and exploration with regard to the levels and degrees of truth about human life in its metaphysical and existential contexts. While going to analyse these poems to find out if there be anything that lends itself to assimilation into a broader vision and formulation about human life that forms the ultimate basis for The Waste Land and Four Quartets, I must agree with F.R. Leavis who thinks:

The constituent things are in their concentration so completely what they are, the development so unforeseeable and yet so compelling in its logic, that the whole body of the poetry ..... affects us as one astonishing major work.  

An attempt will be made here to find out what makes it "so compelling in its logic" and determines the ultimate basis of development. The compelling logic of which Dr. Leavis speaks

1. F.R. Leavis, Lectures in America, Chatto & Windus, 1969, P.55
is to be located in Eliot's poetic self, his sensibility, because it is this sensibility — the instrument of poetic comprehension and creativity — that links the one poem with the other. On the level of art Eliot is always the same person not withstanding the fact of his conversion.¹

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock was begun in 1910 while Eliot was yet at Harvard and finished in 1911 during his visit to Paris. The title given to characterise the poems composed before Gerontion is significant. It is an 'observation' that Eliot offers through these poems. The epigraph, though not the integral part of the poem, is significant in Eliot's poems because it determines at least the mood and tone of the poems. The epigraph is an answer from Guido, who was being tormented for sin, in the 'Inferno' (XXVII, 61-62), to Dante about the former's identity. Guido's answer: "If I thought my answer were to one who ever could return to the world, this flame should shake no more; but since none ever did return alive from this depth, if what I hear be true, without fear of infancy I answer thee". Parallelisms between Guido and Prufrock cannot be stretched to include anything in Dantean sense. Of course Guido cannot reveal anything but his own sin that he committed in this world and his subsequent torture in the hell. A Prufrockian consciousness is also not conscious of everything; there is no revelation, it can only relate to Prufrock's immediate experience, his consciousness of himself as a degenerate

¹. This point is made by G. Wilson Knight, "T. S. Eliot: Some Early Impressions", in ed. Allen Tate, op. cit., p. 261
man caught in his present moment in a comic ambience. Hugh Kenner is quite right when he asserts that Prufrock is not a person but only a possible son of consciousness.

It is with this consciousness that the poem starts. Mr. Kenner could not show why this consciousness is divided into two parts: 'You' and 'I'. Obviously enough clue is there in the Indian philosophy and metaphysics when an emerging consciousness transcending the accidents of personality is attributed to the higher 'self'. The poem moves on the level of consciousness where no transcendence is possible but the lower self is faintly aware of an 'You' with which it fails to identify itself. The poem is conceived as a ritual exploration to find out the terms of reality that integrate man to himself and to God. The poem centres round an "overwhelming question" and Prufrock's failure to ask it is the failure of his quest which could be achieved only in The Waste Land.

The poem starts with an image of journey that the 'You' and the 'I' of the poem are to undertake. It has already been commented that the 'I' is the consciousness that emerges here only with an associated limitation. Prufrock is a 'tamasika' character and his awareness of any reality other than what is there in his immediate experience is like the consciousness of "a patient etherised upon a table". This image is significant in that it characterises and limits the nature of the emerging consciousness that, if completely liberated from personal accidents, might have offered a realisation of "the relationship of the subjective
self to the objective reality”¹ which in case of Prufrock is
distorted because the relationship is “multiplied by present mo-
ment in time”.² Prufrock’s consciousness is in time end of
the time; to transcend time is never possible on the level
to which he belongs. The images of the evening spread out aga-
inst the sky like an etherised patient, half-deserted streets
and the yellow fog forming the objective corollaries of Pru-
frock’s state of mind do not connote any redeeming element in
his consciousness. It is the characteristic feature of most
of the representative poems of this period that the internal
monologue is initiated in a consciousness similar to that of
Prufrock’s. The journey in Prufrock starts:

When the evening is spread out against the sky

Like a patient etherised upon a table.

And, in Portrait of a Lady again it is ”The smoke and fog of a
December afternoon” and:

And four wax candles in the darkened room,

Four rings of light upon the ceiling overhead,

An atmosphere of Juliet’s tomb

Prepared for all the things to be said, or left unsaid.

The “atmosphere of Juliet’s tomb” is exactly the same as the
“patient etherised upon a table”, Like a patient upon the ope-
ration table Juliet was only unconscious. And again in Rhapsody
on a Windy Night the consciousness of the poet-narrator is held
in a kind of “lunar synthesis” that dissolves the” floors

¹. The expression is from Stephen Spender, “The Modern as vision
². Ibid, P.56
of memory",

And all its clear relations,

Its divisions and precisions.

In Prufrock's case also there is dissolution of the clear relations and precisions in his consciousness and therefore everything throung in — the street, cups and spoons, fog and darkness, Lazarus, Hamlet and mermaids. He is trying too emerge out of his lower self and formulate the overwhelming question that he fails to properly define. Therefore, he asks his "Oh, do not; ask; 'what is it?' is the expression of his failure to grasp the true significance of the question in relation to his ownself. The failure is due to the fact that his journey is to be through the 'half deserted streets', "that follow like a tedious argument of insidious intent" and in the context of such dry and sterile social realities that constitute his soul, he cannot be one with his other self. The Prufrockian centre of consciousness consists in "a series of attempts at self-definition by time-bounded and unregenerate individual". Therefore the conversation in the room by women coming and going has merely a touch of implied absurdity and irony.

What follows Prufrock's proposed visit, "Let us go and make our visit", is the image of the "yellow fog" and "yellow smoke" during "soft October night" mussling on the window-panes. The fog image is again connotative of the

unreality and of a consciousness that moves in its 'tamasik'
circle. This image of fog in *The Waste Land*:

Unreal city,
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.

also conveys the same connotations. This fogginess must be trans-
scended to achieve grace and enlightenment as the song of the
woodthrush does in *Marina*: "And woodthrush calling through the
gog /My daughter". Or again as in *Little Gidding*: "With frost
and fire/The brief sun flames the ice". Only the fire of know-
ledge can burn the ignorance in which Prufrock is caught."Bet-
ween melting and freezing/The soul's sap quivers", 1 but Pruf-
rockien consciousness is only frozen and it is very much of the
common light of the day. Moreover, the image of fog or smoke
licking its tongue and finally falling asleep in the manner of
a cat connotes that the consciousness is caught in the conge-
rise of desires, lust, and greed that a time bound creature must
reject in order to have a perception of a higher reality. Pruf-
rock is denied this perception. Like Gerontion he has no ghosts.
What follows is a frightening consciousness of time. The repea-
ted images of time and their evocativeness cannot be paralleled
except with those of fire in the 'Fire Sermon' of Buddha where
the word fire is repeated more than thirty times to intensify
the burning of the senses. Prufrock's consciousness tries to

find an escape into time — "There will be time" in its repetitions suggests Prufrock's concern for future with a view to escaping into a false hope that he ignorantly feels future might offer him. But at his level of consciousness he does not know that a future can be built only on a past and that true liberation is a liberation both from past and future. Such consciousness as Prufrock has ends only in "a hundred indecisions" and "revision". Prufrock does not have the courage to accept the reality; he must prepare his "face to meet the faces" but what the mirror reflects is his craving and the unreality of his existence which he is now conscious of having measured "with coffee spoons". His consciousness falls back upon himself and his question: "Do I dare?" is a part of the "decision and revision which a minute will reverse". He is sadly conscious of his growing impotency and physical incompetence yet he never accepts frustration and disillusionment and despair which might have been the corner stone for a leap into the darkness that restores faith in spiritual values and in God. He is as assured as is his necktie asserted by a pin. Prufrock is a child of time that Eliot defines in Animula:

Issues from the hand of time the simple soul
Irresolute and selfish, misshapen, lame,
Unable to fare forward or retreat

Fearing the warm reality, the offered good, ...

Prufrock is this soul; his memory is the memory of a down-to-earth reality. He shares his experience with the animal world:

And I have known the eyes already known them all
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin ...

This Prufrockian dilemma springs from his sharing only the animal instinct on the most bestial level. This is the level which determines the consciousness of 'tamasik' characteristics in Sanskrit literature. Prufrock now cannot presume and lead his other half to the overwhelming question. Here it is not only the propping of the question that is the main issue; it is more than that, it is the metaphysical question of defining the terms of reality to reconcile the opposites of existence. Prufrock's mock-heroic gesture of cosmic defiance with his "Do I dare/Disturb the universe" throws him down to:

I should have been a pair of rugged claws
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas.

The image suggested by "rugged claws" is associated with the animal existence under water - especially the visual action of 'scuttling' denotes a sideways progress of a crab. But here his wish to escape to the "floors of silent seas" is no progress. He is still very much of his own milieu. In Rhapsody on a Windy Night we find:

And a crab one afternoon in a pool,
An old crab with barnacles on his back,
Gripped the end of a stick which I held him.¹

Prufrock likewise grips the images of sordidness and his

¹. The Complete Poems & Plays of T.S. Eliot, "Rhapsody on a Windy Night", P.25
passive sensibility is a "part of the specifications of (his) failure". ¹

The next movement again takes up the image of fog and of evening that sleeps. But it is stretched helplessly and it "malingers". He could not work himself out into that awareness which could "force the moment to its crisis". His life is as flat and dull as it had been from the very beginning. He has no light; he is no prophet like John the Baptist. Even the greatest moments in his life have been in the nature of flickering light. The image presented by 'flicker' recurs in other poems with the same connotation of a momentary insight which could be woven into "a crowned knot of fire"² only in the Four Quartets. He is afraid of the eternal Footman — Death — holding his coat and snickering; the Death is snickering because Prufrock is caught in his most gross moments of existence quite unprepared to meet death. Therefore his consciousness rises up to explore the might-have-been which it cannot do because to do that, to understand the real nature of might-have-beens, is a matter for a consciousness on a higher level:

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

¹ B. Rajan, "The Overwhelming Question", in edt. Allen Tate, op.cit., P. 369

² The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S.Eliot, P. 198
Point to one end, which is always present

Prufrock is very much in his world of speculation—indiscisions and revisions—; and he is caught in the present moment of metaphysical groping in the darkness of his own personality and craving. Now he cannot squeeze "The universe into a bell/to roll it towards some overwhelming question". Even his grasp over the question is loosened as "an overwhelming question" because becomes "some overwhelming question". But Prufrock even in his etherised state which really does allow of some consciousness is faintly aware of a relation between the 'You' of his divided self and the universe. In the beginning it was the 'You' that was to be led to the overwhelming question. Now it is the universe that is to be squeezed into a ball to be rolled towards some overwhelming question. This established identity between the 'You' and the universe is of great metaphysical consequence which the Prufrock fails to consciously formulate into a metaphysical vision. But it is not given to Prufrock because his emerging perception of reality ends only in a flicker. His 'You' and 'I' that had undertaken the journey have failed in their questing mission and to show the pattern of this failure forms the entelechy of the poem. Squeezing the universe into a ball and rolling it towards an overwhelming question is realised in The Waste Land where the individual consciousness — even the consciousness of a race — finds expression through the supra-rational power of perception of

endowed on Tiresias and again through the expansion of this power into the cosmic voice of the thunder that answers the questions at the end of the quest.

Prufrock's attempt at self-identification with Lazarus is again an exercise in self-irony. Like Lazarus Prufrock is dead with all his social milieu in which he lives, but the irony of fate is that like Lazarus he cannot rise from the dead and tell all about his experiences. His death is irrevocable because it is death-in-life, a spiritual death. His consciousness surveys his passivity and inaction and the lines that follow without any verbs to denote actions name only the objects that connote lifelessness and useless existence among trifles of:

After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets,

After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts

that trail along the floor —

And this and so much more? —

It is impossible to say just what I mean

But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns

on a screen!

The lines quoted show Prufrock's concern with trivialities of life: this is as much his personal self as the self of the society to which he sadly belongs. Prufrock's tragedy is that he is a part of the lifeless existence which his sensibility epitomises but he is unable to extricate himself from his social surroundings. The pattern that forms so-called life
for him is constituted by such objects. His magic lantern cannot reflect any thing spiritual. He is yet to realise the level where we might become lamps to ourselves — the Buddha's exhortation, "Atma deepo bhava". The image of the magic lantern seems to be a derivation from 'atma deepo bhava' which was ingrained on Eliot's spiritual sensibility. Here just by way of comment it may be mentioned that the operative sensibility in Prufrock's consciousness shows the dissociation by exposing the incongruity in Prufrock's romantic longings and his sense of the insufficiency of the senses to constitute real life.

The last movement in the poem cuts short the troubled cogitations of Prufrock. He realises his unheroic, rather mock-heroic, stature inspite of his most heroic gestures. He is not Prince Hamlet; he is rather "The Fool" in the drama of life. The peculiar feature of Prufrockian consciousness is that he sees himself acting and his other self, at certain moments, stands apart and looks at the acting fool that Prufrock is. Now this acting cannot stop, so he can take refuge only in heroic gestures, or a sort of sartorial rebellion by rolling up the bottom of his trousers and parting his hair, perhaps, to cover his baldness. He might walk upon the beach but the mermaids cannot sing to him. The images of the sea and of the mermaids singing connote his wish for escape into the world of make-believe. The 'You' and 'I' of Prufrock had lingered long in the chambers of the sea. There is a slight hint that in Prufrock's consciousness there is achieved a unity of 'I' and 'You' which is suggested by his use of the
pronoun 'We' that had lingered by the sea-girls but Prufrock had undergone no sea-change. The human voices woke the 'us' he had temporarily achieved but this waking is the drawing of his 'We' and he again is only his social self that he has been. Gertrude Patterson thinks that "Prufrock 'drowns' in his social surrounding not in those of his imagination. The 'We' and 'us' of the last line fuse the bisected self into unity". This reading is simply not acceptable. It is true that the pronouns 'We' and 'us' of the last line mark the unity of his bisected self but this unity is drowned and Prufrock emerges as his social self.

The critics who have found only a romantic yearning in Prufrock and who attribute his failure to his cowardice in declaring himself to a lady have failed to appreciate the real implication of his overwhelming question. "His tragedy", says Grover Smith, "remains that of man for whom love is beyond achievement but still within desire". Reading the poem in these terms catches up only the most obvious level which is suggested in the texture of the poem by Prufrock's way of mixing memory and desire. The whole poem builds itself round a tension which is suggested by the overwhelming question but the tension is by no means created by his romantic desire for wish-fulfilment. Prufrock does not entertain any romantic illusion about the women; he had "known them, all". He had experienced the worst like an animal "wriggling on the wall" when fixed by the eyes.

1. Gertrude Patterson, op.cit. P.17
2. Grover Smith, op.cit. P.17
of the women and "formulated, sprawling on a pin". After such experience:

Then how should I begin
To spit out the butt-ends of my days and ways.

Prufrock's experiences with women are bitter. He knows, perhaps, the bones behind "White and bare" arms. His ambivalence towards beauty and sex is a case in point; and to read the poem as a love song, which is never sung, is to misread it. Eliot calls it a love song which on the surface level of the poem implies an irony. But on the deeper level it might be taken to imply the yearning of the soul to unite with God. Such love songs are very common in what is called bride-mysticism both eastern and western. The sensibility in the poet that directs Prufrock's observations is the product of a critical awareness that ordinary human love, which at its most ordinary is mere copulation of beasts, — and no better was expected from the sterile social milieu of which Prufrock is a part — does not lead towards a metaphysical vision of one's own reality. The real question before Prufrock is a proper metaphysical definition of his being. He is at a point where the real question gripping him is whether or not love for a woman on the level of his experience is desirable. The impossibility of achievement of love of which Grover Smith speaks is not a question before Prufrock in his social context; it is impossible of achievement only in a Dantean sense where love song must be sung to Beatrice.

From the point of view of poetic technique critics have found it Laforguean. Laforgue's method, as defined by Yvor Winters, consists in a "Progression by Double Mood". It is an
ironical construction whereby the poet builds up a grand mood in one passage only to demolish it in the other by a ridiculous anticlimax. The Double Mood introduces a dramatic element in the texture of the poem by playing upon a dialectic of conflicting attitudes that make it possible for the poet to reach a conclusion without stating it. Obviously enough Eliot makes use of this structural method. But the conception of a witness 'self', standing apart from the context in which the lower self is caught acting, and looking at it with an ironic smile is derived from Indian sensibility. The sense of irony and humour is implied in Eliot's point of view and the Laforguean technique suits his purpose. Moreover, apart from Laforguean technique, there is much in the texture and rhythm of the verse that is essentially an echo of Vedic technique if not exactly an imitation of it. It has already been noted how the writers in the Vedic hymns adopted the methods of repetitions of certain words, phrases, and even lines; sometimes reversing the order of lines for rhetorical effects. Borrowings from other writers have been incorporated by the writers in new contexts, sometimes for elucidation but very often for forcing the language into a new meaning and vision. In Prufrock Eliot's literary echoes from other writers are really an extension of the sensibility of the speaker in the poem. Much of the hypnotic effects created by the haunting repetitions like "there will be time" or "would it have been" may have been modelled on Rig-Vedic hymns. The feeling out of which the poem appears to have been created is born of a sense of disaffection with
the social reality including the speaker's. The key images from this poem vis a vis the images of light, fog and mirror and their extension through other poems and their ultimate creative assimilation in the *Four Quartets* is what links Prufrock with other poems as an important beginning — a beginning that looks forward to an end.

*Portrait of a Lady* that preceded *Prufrock* by nearly a year is a poetic treatment of the problem of establishing a personal relation, because the relation that is less than personal is mere abstraction depending on and partaking of the impersonal order of the society where the spirit is lost in "money in furs". ¹ Eliot felt what others had felt in St. Louis and Boston — a spiritual vacuum amidst the sickening and frightening futility and anarchy that is contemporary history. The problem of communication either on an emotional or a spiritual level is the main concern of Eliot from the very beginning. It is never without deeper and far reaching implications.

If a man be all the time on the run from facing the reality, either of a personal relation or of a spiritual dimension, he can never explore the possibilities of transcending his limitation through love that ultimately moves to a higher communion. It was not for nothing that Eliot tries to probe into the basic question of personal commitment in a society worn out with commercialism. If one all the time withholds commitment and falls back upon one's own passivity, one is doomed and one becomes a means of perpetrating doom on others. Eliot

¹ *The Complete Poems & Plays of T.S. Eliot*, p. 41
had caught the essential point in the modern sensibility vis-
a ring of insensibility that withholding our commitment on a
purely personal level resulting, on a deeper level, in scepti-
coism born of dry intellectuality with regard to religious faith.
The poem is a pathological probing, from essentially a social
point of view, into the problems of modern etiolated boredom.
Portrait of a Lady might owe its title to Henry James' novel;
it's sources might be said to lie in the personal experiences of
the poet through his acquaintance with any lady, but one thing
seems to be certain that, it is not so much a portrait of the lady
of the poem as that of the man who is a younger Prufrock, not
younger only by one year but by so much of time in the experi-
ence that determines the intensity and level of poetic realisa-
tion. The level reached here is not tragic as it seems to be in
Prufrock. In spite of the epigraph, the poem has nothing in it
to show that the man had committed fornication, if it be not
understood only on a psychological level because the man had
really penetrated into the privacy of thoughts and feelings of
the lady.

The structural scaffold of the poem is patterned on
the round of changing seasons during the year. The movement of
the images in which the changing emotional tone and feelings
inhere is borrowed from the rhythm of nature in its cyclic move-
ment. The emotions and feelings also take on their changing co-
colour and tone from seasonal movement in nature. The apparatus
of musical analogy to which the mental wires of the speakers
are attuned forms a parallel pattern of the rhythm of "buried
life" of the lady and of the young men's reaction to it only
to intensify the gap between an integrated life and rhythm of nature and dried up springs of genuine emotions and feelings. Structuring of the changing human emotions and feelings on the pattern of the images drawn from the objects of recurring pattern of changing seasons is significant; and Eliot might have drawn upon the examples from Indian classics where love is very often described as taking on colours from the changing seasons. The 'buried life' to which the lady refers feels the rhythm and change in nature at its most natural.

The poem starts, as does Prufrock, with fog image of December afternoon with all its associated darkness and dullness, the atmosphere being like that of "Juliet's tomb". The similarity between the image of 'Juliet's tomb' and the 'patient etherized upon a table' has already been referred to. What such images connote is that no clear perception of the reality is possible and one must be prepared "for all the things to be said, or left unsaid". The lady in the poem is to fail in her mission as Prufrock failed in asking the overwhelming question. By a reference to Chopin the lady tentatively holds on to the possibility of 'resurrection' of her own 'buried life' but the faintness of realization is suggested by the passive action of the verb "be resurrected". She tries to impress upon the man that without the emotions being properly related to him in friendship the life becomes a "cauchemar". But it all merely creates a 'false-note' in the mental wires of the man, the hammered 'prelude' in his own mind is a mere "capricious monotone". There is nothing to correlate their minds and feelings. The
prison house of his subjectivity is a bit too strong for the man and no mutual communication is possible. In this poem or in any of the early poems we don't find a lyrical expression of love without irony in the tone or context. The mental pictures of the young man are reflected by the images evoked by such verbs as 'admires', 'discuss', 'correct' and 'sit'; they connote no action and suggest no possibility of movement towards responding to the desires of the lady. On the superficial social level, that implies death-in-life, and where people correct their "watches by the public clock" no genuine human relation is possible. The young man is a queer product of the sensibility of the commercial Boston and spiritually dried up New England. A private time-dimension that opens a deeper perspective into a spiritual aspect of love is necessary to realize the needs for roots that go deeper into the life of the spirit in man.

The second movement, the change of season and the lady ("Slowly twisting the lilac stalks"), does ironically destroy her hope of life though she tries to warn the young man of slipping opportunities. The "April sunsets" revive her "buried life"—— a reference to Matthew Arnold's poem The Buried Life—— and she feels "wonderful and youthful" but her voice is "out-of-tune" for the man. His reference to comics and 'sporting pages' and sensational news items like murder and confession of bank defaulters are attempts at escaping into trivialities and commonplaces. These are the features of the press that contrast sharply with "the appetites of life". The images

1. The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot, P.28
of 'song' and 'hyacinths' evoke an awareness when the young man becomes conscious of the stirrings in the lives of other people that desires had created in them. It is merely a memory of the past experience of other people, but it is not the memory of his past; it is only a borrowed memory-substitute of the feelings of love that is only on the level of desire, hence not desireable in itself. Hyacinth is a symbol of love in Eliot's poetry. The speaker himself is not moved by any inner stirring of feelings; he is still on the level of rationalising his reaction. Hence his question: "Are these ideas right or wrong".

The Part III of the poem begins with the coming of the October night——"returning as before". The man had never responded emotionally, to the changing pattern of the seasons, as the lady had done. It is for the first time that he had "a slight sensation of being ill at ease". The images of "stair" and "door" suggest on the part of the man a kind of perception that is quite unusual for him. But the offered consciousness is not of any higher reality; it is only the movement of the animal that he feels within him:

I mount the stairs and turn the handle of the door
And I feel as if I had mounted on my hands and knees.

The offered opportunity of his going abroad is an escape for him from this embarrassing situation. He regains his mood of indifference to and unconcern for what the lady is monotonously pressing on. Judging from her own feelings the lady does not understand why they should not have developed into friends.

In a cumulative whole the lady and her feelings, the music and
the pattern of seasons form the real context in which the man finds himself reflected. The 'glass' image with a ring of ambiguity reflects the conscious actor in the man. That is why his "self-possession gutters". But the image of mirror in Eliot does not imply any spiritual dimension in the object reflected. Here as in Prufrock the reflections from the mirror connote a self-consciousness that comes when one finds that one is acting. It is likely that Eliot drew the images of mirror, having in mind the precise notion of their evocativeness, from Upanishadic sources. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad that had indelibly impressed Eliot contains an interview between Sakalya and Yajnavalkya where in the course of questions and answers Yajnavalkya answers, "I do know that being of whom you speak who is the ultimate resort of the entire body and organs. It is the very being who is in the looking glass". The question asked by Sakalya was misconceived as to the proper nature of the Brahman, hence the irony implied in the answer. The being reflected in the mirror is not Brahman. There is another story in the Chandogya Upanishad where Indra, the god, and Virochana, the devil (asura) decide individually to go to Prajapati for learning about the Brahman. Indra was really inspired by a genuine interest but Virochana was only moved by a selfish-desire to have the supernatural powers to gratify his devilish motives. They approached Prajapati who said to them:

"What do you see when you look into another persons eyes, that is the Atman, immortal beyond fear, that is Brahman".

"And who is he whom we see when we look in water or in a

Mirror? they asked.

"The same is seen in all" he answered.

After they left him Prajapati said, "Anyone who holds their belief, be he god or devil, shall perish". The image of mirror reflects the illusion created by our subjectivity. Again in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad we find an interview between Ajatasatru and Gargya: "Gargya said: There is a spirit in the mirror, and that spirit, I adore as Brahman".

"I only consider mirror, said Ajatasatru, as something brilliant"

These illustrations about the origin of the image of mirror are significant because this image of mirror is one of awareness within subjective limits unless transformed as in Burnt Norton:

After the King Fisher's wing

Has answered light to light, and is silent ....

The young man's behaviour has been and is unexpected judging from general social standards. Though the lady resigns herself to fate yet she romantically entertains the hope:

You will write at any rate

Perhaps it is not too late.

This time the man feels completely disconcerted. There is a consciousness in him at a deeper level where the man he is and the beast he acts stand apart. His inner spirit holds the mirror up

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1. Chandogya Upanishad, (8, 7 - 12)
2. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (2. 1-9)
3. The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot, P.175
to his reality on the level of his social intercourse with the lady in whom he had created the illusion of her falling in love with a man with whom she might relate her feelings. In his own eyes the man stands condemned, not because he is essentially bad but because only on a gross level of animal existence can he project himself into the lady. His borrowed expressions from "a parrot" and "chatter of an ape" and his dumb physical rhythm like the dance of a "dancing bear" are his mental pictures of himself on the level on which he can relate his feelings to her. His emotions are translated into a state of mind, the language has become a way of thought. By withholding the human in himself and projecting the animal in a relation that is sought purely on the level of love and friendship, the young man really commits fornication on an emotional and moral level. He is, from spiritual point of view, a hollow man. He tries to relieve himself of his emotions by pretending to have a different kind of consciousness that follows taking "the air in a tobacco trance". His thought shifts, in a gush of emotion suggested by "well" in the next movement, to imagining her death. There is no resolve in him; he, at this moment, does not know how he would feel at her (imagined) death. The music returns with a "dying fall" and it is successful because by now the man has regained some self-possession. The expression the "dying fall" is from the opening speech of Duke Orsino who longs for more music because it is the food of love and sickness the 'appetite' and kills it. The appetite in the young man arose temporarily by the lady is dead with the 'dying fall' and he can again smile ironically at the situation.
The root-cause of young man's delinquency is his divided personality. The poem reflects him at his most gross level of human behaviour with regard to a social relation that demands a genuine feeling and responsibility. But like Prufrock this poem does not appear to have any grail-motif. The young man's intended journey where he "will find so much to learn" might suggest a grail-motif. The journey is necessary for his enlightenment and moral improvement. Agatha's realisation in *The Family Reunion* that Harry has a "long journey" to undertake and that Mary's love would not help him is in the nature of the same problem as we find here. This young man is totally in the dark. He is as unconsolable of the flux of time as of the timeless spirit because the consciousness of the flux implies the consciousness of the immutable. The flux of time in the poem is represented by the changing seasons and the music is the symbol of the timeless. There is the essential difference between the dance of the bear and:

From wrong to wrong the exasperated spirit
Proceeds, unless restored by that refining fire
When you must move in measure like a dancer.¹

There are critics who find that the young man in the *Portrait* is the self-portrait of younger Eliot. Such speculations result from a misconceived notion that writers write only from the personal experience. Limiting the experience to the personal

¹ *The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S.Eliot;* "Little Gidding", P.195
experience of the writer only is to limit the scope of experience itself. Eliot in a personal letter written to Bonamy Dobree says:

This leads me to think she (Mrs. Dobree) could invent and imagine objectively outside of what might be called her own experience. This sticking to one's own experience by novelists seems to me to narrow the field of experience itself.¹

There is an answer given by Mrs. Eliot to Stephen Spender when he asked her if Prufrock and other 'I'-characters in the early poems were self-portraits:

Oh, no they were not him. They were characters in a scene which he thought presented what life was like. Prufrock and 'the young man caruncular' who seduces the typist, with her dying combinations touched by the sun's last rays were vignettes of what he thought real people to be. They were not his own life, not at all.²

Both the young man and Prufrock are caught in the subjective illusion of their own being. Even the early poetic world of Eliot moves towards removing the illusions that make all the difference between 'seem' and 'is' on a metaphysical plane of human reality with which the Indian seers all the time were preoccupied. Sensibility that is operative on the poetic plane is born of the dissatisfaction a person has with the social

¹. Bonamy Dobree, "A Personal Reminiscence", in edt. Allen Tate, op. cit., P.71
². Stephen Spender, "Remembering Eliot", edtd. Allen Tate, op. cit., P.58
reality and his life which is caught in the perpetual process of estrangement, not so much with God as with itself, bringing upon itself the doom of metaphysical blindness.

The other poems composed before Gerontion have the same concern with the 'self' and the degrees of awareness. Preludes belongs to the Prufrock era. The images used by Eliot evoke the sense of boredom, meaninglessness and ugliness of existence. The flickering consciousness that the lady in the III Prelude catches is of the 'thousand sordid images' that constitute her soul. The detailed analysis of the poem is not called for: what is significant is that the degree of consciousness or the awareness that the poem glimpses is on two levels. On the purely mental level the consciousness consists in the memory-pictures of the unredeemed and gross life that one really lives in our society. But the image evoked by 'flicker' allows of an intuitive grasp of a reality that momentarily constitutes a vision in contrast with the 'street's consciousness of itself. The identification of the people walking in the street with the street itself is an ironical comment that what lives in us is mere death without even a tinge of spiritual life in it. On this level of our existence people have:

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
Man and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind
That blows before and after time,¹
And, therefore, "the street hardly understands" its own reality

The images that follow connote passive inactivity and lifelessness. One might object to Eliot's allowing the woman a 'vision' of life. But the image of flickering light, as in Prufrock, "I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker", or as in The Hollow Men, "Sunlight on a broken column", is the image of awareness beyond mental level or the level of depraved subjectivity. The contrasted consciousness of two different kinds of reality vis-à-vis the reality of "a blackened street" and the reality of a perception of "some infinitely gentle/Infinitely suffering thing" is in consonant with the perception of a 'vision'. But the poem, by no means, glimpses a real vision of a higher reality. It presents only a "notion" of a presence released from the rounds of time. What the images, that organize the perception, in the poem evoke is not a sense of guilt or sin but a sense of the agony(dukh) of existence. Grover Smith has tried to show that the poem is Bergsonian in its spirit but he happily concedes that:

Eliot's poem, however, holds up to view a set of images so disagreeable, or at any rate so empty of charm, that an optimism like Bergson's must appear implausible."²

The woman's soul that is constituted by the "thousand sordid

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¹ The Complete Poems and Plays, of T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton", P.174
² Grover Smith, op.cit., P.23
images" is not of Christian conception, the diagnosis of human malady and existential plight is Buddhism-oriented: in Buddhism the so-called self or soul is merely an aggregate of mental-substances. Even in the other branches of Indian philosophy and metaphysics we find that when the higher 'self' comes in contact with the mental reality through ignorance(avidya), it partakes of the life of the mind under the illusion of being one with it. Both the presences in the poem, 'he' and 'you' "mirror the degraded nature of their conscious selves". The last three lines of the poem are significant in that they dismiss the "notion of something infinitely gentle" as something sentimental and a cynical attitude is expressed in "Wipe your hands across your mouth, and laugh". The "ancient women/gathering fuel in vacant "lots" while the worlds revolve symbolise the useless and utterly meaningless rotation of the wheel of 'Samsara':

While the world moves
In appetency, on its metalled ways
Of time past and time future. 2

The poet uses the plural form of the word 'world' which means the triple world of past, present, and future. There is one more sense in which this word is used in the plural form: the worlds of earth, air and fire form the flux of 'samsara' which revolves for ever. On this level of human existence there is perfect determinism; that is why "gather fuel in vacant lots". The evolving cause which is the human 'Karma',

1. Ibid, P.22
is the revolving cause of the triple worlds. The last two lines express Eliot's concern with the wheel symbol that he was to fully develop later on, especially in The Murder in the Cathedral. The freedom from the kind of cynicism and determinism can be attained only by 'chitta vritti nirodha' which is the process of cessation through wisdom, and by 'sattava suddhi', that is, cleansing of the heart. It is only through 'chitta vritti nirodha' that one can get rid of the "thousand sordid images". The sensibility that is operative here is more akin to Indian sensibility. The utter meaninglessness of human existence caught in the process of ever turning wheel is an Indian conception. The release from this is to be earned by going the way of ceaseless contemplation. These early poems have metaphysical orientation. One is perfectly mistaken in finding only "the element of exhibitionistic sophistication" in them.

Rhapsody on a Windy Night is again an observation on the memory pictures under a particular kind of consciousness which is "held in lunar synthesis" dissolving the "floors of memory". The rationale of the poem is only the memory consciousness — a consciousness of time and in time. The clock-time structure of consciousness is mere subjective time and the memory under lunar synthesis is not released from it. Hence the perception offered through memory, or the perception of the objects in the street forming the consciousness and feelings of the observer, is not of any higher reality. The "street lamp" which is an image of awareness "beats like a fatalistic

It is quite natural because real awareness on a spiritual level is the outcome not of a 'synthesis' in memory but of a complete cessation from memory. Memory, whose floors are dissolved and which offers a consciousness without "divisions and precisions, is yet not without the evolving causes that are fatalistic as they are deterministic. The symbol of moon, as shown by the critics, is borrowed by Eliot from Laforgue. But there is a possibility that he might have had some notion of this symbol as we find in Buddhism. In Buddhism, moon with its hare mark is the symbol of sacrifice. Buddha himself is called the Wise Hare. There is a story that a hare made a great sacrifice and as a token of its sacrifice it was placed on the moon. In this poem "The moon has lost her memory". Therefore, the lunar synthesis cannot offer the kind of spiritual consciousness that comes through sacrifice. The street lamp measures time as well as space. So the memory in its lunar synthesis is not released from space and time. The memory follows a sequence measured by a clock-time progression from midnight until four O'clock. It is only shaken violently as "a mad man shakes a dead geranium". Geranium is dead because it has suffered neglect.

However, the image of the violent shaking of the dead geranium connotes the nature of the memory of dead or lifeless objects that offer themselves to the observer's perception.

The first memory-picture of the woman, "her dress ... torn and stained with sand", is suggestive of the lust and utter
degradation. In the third fragment the memory throws up a crowd of twisted objects: a "twisted branch, "broken spring" — a set of dry and useless objects characterizing dry and sterile human existence. Again in the next movement a sense of nausea and etiolated boredom, resulting from meaningless activity are suggested by "cat which flattens itself in the gutter","rencid butter", automatic movement of the hands of the child, and the old crab's gripping the end of a stick held to it. The next movement in the consciousness is again of ugliness and lust suggested by the image of moon that has "lost her memory", and her face, instead of having hare-mark, has cracks of smallpox. The images of 'paper rose' and 'smell' are again suggestive of a futile living. The memory of the past is as sordid — it is of "a thousand sordid images" — as is the consciousness of the immediate experience given to the second, third and fourth movements.

The lost lamp offers a little consciousness through the interaction of past and present. The 'door' image in Eliot is a significant one. It offers an awareness of a different level and degree of reality. The image of 'door' juxtaposed with the image of "stair" is suggestive of a glimpse into a higher reality. But we don't know it from this poem. We infer it only from the use made by Eliot of such images in later poems. "Memory/You have the key", is significant because the "memory" here is not the memory under "lunar synthesis"; the memory is addressed by a consciousness which is beyond memory. Memory has a key but the memory in itself is not the means. One must mount the stair — the rungs of the spiritual ladder. But the irony of the memory in lunar synthesis is that the key offered by it opens the door
into the bed-room where the tooth brush hangs. On this level of our existential plight the life ahead has little potential. The injunction: "Put your shoes at the door, sleep, prepare for life" expresses cynicism but such an attitude is ironical because it approves of the rounds of meaningless activities. The wound from which we suffer and which is to result in more agonies by "the twist of the knife" is caused not by any sin committed by us or by the sin of Adam's curse but by pursuing a life that has no spiritual purpose and meaning. It is the Buddhist sensibility that crystallises into such a fine poetic expression in The Dry Salvages:

People change and smile: but the agony abides.

The other poems of Prufrock group like Morning at the Window, The Boston Evening Transcript, Aunt Helen, Cousin Nancy, Mr. Apollinax and Hysteria are gibes at Boston state of mind. The sensibility approves of nothing and holds the surface reality, that constituted life for the majority of the Americans, in contempt. The "damp souls of housemaids/Sprouting despondently at area gates" in Morning at Window is not a reflection only on a particular section of the society; it is the general state of affairs common to all. "Twisted faces" and "aimless smiles" characterise the whole gamut of unredeemed, purposeless living. The 'evening', quickening "the appetites of life in some" in The Boston Evening Transcript, is merely stirring the memory and desire. Aunt Helen's death is nothing more serious than the death of a parrot. "Dresden clock continued tickling on the mantelpiece", with other usual features of surface life — birth, and copulation and death. The death
of Aunt Helen is as insignificant as life which is life—in-death. Even the submarine laughter of Mr. Appollinaire is tinged with irony because the "worried bodies of drowned men drift down in the green silence" with no hope of resurrection. Another poem *Conversation Galante*, modelled on Laforgue, contains a remarkable comment from the man in the poem:

You, madam, are the eternal humorist,
The eternal enemy of the absolute,
Giving our vagrant moods the slightest twist

The man calls the lady the eternal humorist because she has failed to understand the significance of his fancy images in the first stanza. By her literalness she confutes his mad poetries. She, therefore, is the enemy of the absolute because the ultimate ground of art is in the 'Absolute'. She, being the eternal humorist, represents the mutable. Whether or not Eliot consciously draws on the Indian concept of Prakriti and Purus is a matter of speculation. But the lady in her aspect of being eternal humorist is the ground of *trikā 'līla'* (the joy of manifestation) for the Eternal according to Indian metaphysical thought. Prakriti does not oppose the Absolute but she creates an illusion of reality which is herself and hides the Eternal that is only the ultimate ground of our being. The poetic activity can be called madness—Plato really did it—by the literal minded but if poetry is to reach its ultimate ground of presenting a vision into the ultimate reality it must transcend the ever changing appearances of reality.

The last poem of this group *La Riglia Che Piange* is rightly given a terminal position in the first collected
volume of Eliot's poems. It is a much praised poem for its expression of the dramatic tension and intensity of the feelings. Dr. Leavis finds it to be a love poem that represents "something very important for Eliot, some vital node of experience - something felt as perhaps a possibility of transcending disgust, rejection and protest".¹ There are three personages in this poem: the girl and the poet in his double role of actor(lover) and director. The drama of leave-taking takes place in the mind of the poet-director. The epigraph and the origin of the poem do not seem to have any significant bearing. The opening lines with their imperative verbs mark the stage direction with the girl (in the poem a living girl) on it. Weaving the sunlight in the hair is an image, that does connote only the surface level of love without any suggestion of its spiritual implication. The moment of "pained surprise" at the parting and the throwing of the flowers to the ground "with a fugitive resentment in your eyes" are really very intense dramatic moments but they do not show the moment of a realised perception of true nature of love. In the next movement the director has captured the moment when the parting really should have taken place. The "Weeping girl" should have been left by her lover as "soul leaves the body torn and bruised", an echo of the Gita where Krishan says that the soul leaves the body as we change old clothes for the new. The soul leaving the body does not suggest any deception or faithlessness on the part of the soul, rather the body had the upper hand so long as it had the power to

¹ F.L. Leavis, Lectures in America, op.cit., P.43
imprison it. But the "mind" deserting the body it "has used" is connotative of some advantage taken of by the man. Therefore on both sides the parting is to be in the way that is "simple and faithless as a smile and shake of the hand". The poet-director understands this reality; that is why his direction to clasp the flowers "with a pained surprise" and turn away with a fugitive resentment in the eyes of the weeping girl. She is to show her "pained surprise" and "resentment" because the shaking of the hands and smiles at the parting are faithless. The portrait of the weeping girl has a sympathetic touch and loveliness. The poet-director visualises himself to be the lover-actor and feels that he would have never been able to maintain his 'gesture and pose', as the young man in The Portrait of a Lady had maintained. The girl's "hair over her arms and her arms full of flowers", that the director has to pay for by "cogitations" that "still amase" him, do not suggest any thing beyond the movement of love on physical level. The symbols of hair that occur in The Waste Land evoke only the sensuous associations. However, the poem is very much of the Prufrock group and the only difference from the Portrait that this poem makes consists in its intense dramatisation of emotions in human encounter. The entelechy of the poem does not body forth the "possibility of transcending disgust, rejection and protest". It shows the possibility of the wealth of emotions and feelings only on the level of the vital energy and the emotional conflict here, as elsewhere in early poems is viewed ironically.
If we analyse the frequently emerging pattern of sensibility and thought in the early poems, we find that it does not express a sense of romantic disillusionment of the poet or of the 'I'-characters in the poems. The recurring pattern of the images of sordidness and ugliness speaks of a power of perception that is the product of a peculiar sensibility in the poetic faculty. The sensibility essentially defines the point of view from which the poems offer a diagnosis of human suffering. This point of view is essentially metaphysical and of Indian orientation. Almost all the 'I'-characters are found engaged in a very searching self-analysis. They are caught in their social context and the facts in their perceptions are so selected as to evoke a deeper sense of boredom and ugliness. They feel the futility and the meaninglessness, and the sensibility creates a sense of disillusionment. The main concern is with the problem of communication both with one's own self and with others. In poem after poem there is recurring concern with the division in the emerging consciousness of the 'I'-characters. The images evoking the sense of ugliness and boredom recur and are not without a design and pattern. This raises a fundamental question as to what makes the pattern repeat itself. Why does the perception select what it does so persistently? The way the 'characters' think and feel is related to their perceptions because for Eliot all feeling and all knowledge are in perception. But the perception, especially poetic perception, is in itself a selective and eliminating process: perceptions.
of a man walking in the street differ from those of a man driving. The real question is not what offers itself to perception but what the perception as guided by the sensibility selects. This presupposes a point of view which in itself is determined by the sensibility in its formation and development. The sense of frustration which is the recurring pattern in the thematic and conceptual material in the poems of this period shows the way in which the thoughts develop and deepen. There is a constant endeavour to have a dialogue with the inner self which is projected as the only hope for this dying generation. The whole movement is a kind of introspection which is poetically projected by using the images of awareness. No love for the created things is made a sustaining principle. There is a sense of the rejection of all because the sensibility operates with ironical aloofness. The rejection of all that one is is suggested as the only possible way of release from boredom and tedium. The tension builds itself around the contradictions between what one really is and what one might have been. Though there is a certain romantic vein in becoming aware of the contradictions, yet, at times, there are flashings of deeper consciousness that show the futility of romantic longings. In the context of the American background of Indian thought and sensibility (discussed in the 2nd chapter of the work) that was fostered by Buddhism and other Hindu scriptures, we may better understand the mood and temper created by such sensibility in the sensitive predecessors of Eliot as these are not very different from what we find in the poems examined in this chapter. Though there is no apparent allusion to Indian sources, yet the presiding attitude seems to owe much to the Indian background of Eliot's readings.

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