INTRODUCTION

There is a unity of thought in T.S. Eliot's literary and social writings. Primarily Eliot is a poet, a literary critic, a playwright and an artist who happens to propound some political and social ideas as thoughtful reactions to the prevailing social and political conditions. But the unity of his thought in his literary, social and political writings is characterised by certain recurring themes i.e. tradition, religion, culture, Christianity etc. The basic concepts of these terms originated in his early writings and were developed later unchanged. Most of his social ideas are consistent with his religious ideas and his political ideas are also influenced by his deep-rooted Christian notions of life. Eliot's literary ideas are also interwoven with his social ideas and they are inseparable because, central to his ideas about the creation of ideal social condition is his unflinching belief that an enlightened moral standard is a precondition for healthy culture, healthy politics, good life and healthy society. The author at the present work is not concerned with the literary works of T.S. Eliot. But the thesis will try to consider systematically and as a coherent whole Eliot's social and political ideas. Such an understanding will ultimately help us understand his literary works better but it is no part of the present work to consider the application of his ideas in his literary works.

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In a literary work an intellectual idea may generate all kinds of emotional reactions including some that are unconsciously hostile to these ideas. In this work the investigator will not be concerned with these complexities. One of the problems involved with literary criticism seems to be that, first many a writer does not favour the direct involvement of political, economic and social action in art and secondly, some hold the opposite views that writers should propagate and stimulate social changes. This problem of purposes of literature is outside the scope of the present work.

In the present thesis I propose to consider the social and political ideas of Eliot against a historical background. We shall try to trace the immediate political and ideological background—the decline of liberal democracy, followed by the ideological decline of Fascism and Communism, the contemporary popularity of different kinds of rightist ideologies etc. Here we shall relate incidentally Eliot's views to those of certain European thinkers who opposed liberalism and democracy and formed a kind of tradition.
In this connection we propose to examine Eliot's writings on politics, culture, education and religion. Though "Notes towards the Definition of Culture" and The Idea of a Christian Society are comprehensive statements of his social ideas; the Commentaries in the Criterion, his correspondences with different persons, scattered in different books and journals, his pamphlets and small essays published by different magazines contain plenty of ideas consistent with his social views.

Though such materials are scarce in India, the researcher will endeavour to cover as many of them as he can locate in centres of leaning accessible to him.

There are certain problems that we have to face in this connection. Eliot seems to be much more concerned with culture and religion than with politics and society in the orthodox sense of the term. But I hope to show that his views on culture and religion have a profound bearing on his social-political views.

Eliot finds many weaknesses in contemporary political ideologies. He thinks that the problem of mankind lies between material progress- ("values realisable in time and on earth"\(^1\)) and spiritual progress - ("values realisable only out of time"\(^2\)). He believes that a man may be changed, improved by social and economic organisations, "but he will still be only the natural man, at an infinite remove from perfection."\(^3\) And therefore to

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redeem the "Old Adam" from his "original sin" some sound "permanent principles" about human nature, human destiny and "social aspect of the Good-Life" are needed. Neither democracy nor socialism/communism is guided by any permanent principles of life and therefore, according to T.S. Eliot these political ideologies are incompetent to lead society perpetually and continually.

Eliot finds in the "Scientific authority of Ethics" the future course of mankind. He believes that religion forms the major part of human culture and therefore the superior source of ethics is religion which supplies the ethical standard to a society or culture.

One of the major problems in examining Eliot's political, religious and cultural ideas is that different critics discuss them in contrasted ways. Terry Eagleton in "Eliot and a Common Culture" says that "Eliot's version of Culture is thoroughly political", and he talks about "politics while seeming only to be talking about Culture". He charges Eliot with inclusion of politics in Culture. Albert Mordell in "T.S. Eliot's Deficiencies As a Social Critic" Condemns Eliot as an incompetent and reactionary social critic; and Raymond Williams in "Culture and Society" considers Eliot's social views to be fragmentary. It is true that Eliot has a rightist orientation as far as his politics is concerned and it is equally true that the alternative he prescribes to the political and social chaos may be controversial; but he succeeds in stimulating us against the inadequacies of the liberal democracy and Communism.
In the course of discussion the present researcher seeks to detect some of the genuine influences on his thought and some connections with some of the writers like Professor Irving Babbitt, Jacques Maritain, Charles Maurras, Ezra Pound and Karl Mannheim. Inspite of his own severe limitations as a scholar the present author seeks to focus attention at the major features of their thought and particular connections among and between them.

Secondly Eliot's way of thinking itself seems to be an alternative approach different from conventional academic point of view. His is an integral spiritual outlook which covers all aspects of life. It is thus different from the compartmental and partial method of conventional thinking. From this standpoint Eliot appears to be seeking a sound philosophical foundation for his social ideas - a foundation he thinks is lacking in contemporary ideologies.

I hope to show to the best of my ability both the strengths and limitations of his outlook and philosophy. The work is not claimed to be a definitive one, but it is hoped that it will throw some light on an aspect of Eliot's genius and work.
NOTES AND REFERENCES

2. ibid. p. 68
3. ibid. Vol. XII No. 46 (1932) p. 78
4. ibid. Vol. XIII No. 51 (1934) p. 296
5. ibid. Vol. X (1930-31) p. 483
8. ibid. p. 291
9. ibid. p. 292