



EXPLORATION OF SPIRITUALITY AND EXISTENTIALISM IN T.S. ELIOT'S POETRY

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the complicated series of connections that exist between existentialism and spirituality in contemporary poetry. It focuses on T. S. Eliot's poetry, a key 20th-century modernist. Eliot's poetry is a reflection of the agony that a generation is experiencing as a result of being caught between the desire to pursue a new spirituality and the demise of their faith. This research aims to explore Eliot's early poetry, characterized by spiritual conflict and existential crisis. It reveals Eliot's representation of modern soul disintegration, despair, and alienation. After that, it looks into Eliot's attempts to bridge the gap between mystical and existential topics, analyzing how he weaves together Christian imagery, Eastern mysticism, and philosophical thought to resolve the tension between belief and doubt at the same time. In the conclusion, the study places a focus on Eliot's spirituality and his desire for healing as a response to the moral and emotional breakdown of modern society. This chapter ultimately results in a vision of redemption and transcendence. By following this progression, which encompasses crisis, reconciliation, and healing, the research shows Eliot's poetry journey as a mirror of humanity's perennial quest for purpose and spiritual renewal in the face of modernity's existential concerns. This goal is accomplished by following the progression of Eliot's poetry.

Keywords: T. S. Eliot, Modern Poetry, Spirituality, Existentialism, Existential Crisis, Spiritual Struggle, Mysticism, Modernism

INTRODUCTION

In the early 20th century, contemporary poetry emerged as a powerful creative response to religion, identity, and meaning crises that were brought on by industrialisation, war, and cultural failure. Wallace Stevens, Ezra Pound, William Butler Yeats, and T. S. Eliot were all active poets at this period. They abandoned traditional poetic frameworks in an attempt to express the disintegration and isolation of modern humans. As existentialist thought gained hold and religious certainty began to wane, poets grappled with profound questions about the purpose of life, the role that religion plays, and the causes of human suffering [1].

The Interplay of Spirituality and Existentialism

Modern poetry discusses the connected subjects of nihilism and spirituality. Philosophers such as Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger brought existentialist issues like human agency, existential dread, and the search for sincerity in the face of a ridiculous or indifferent world to the forefront of discussion [2]. On the other hand, spirituality refers to an interior desire for meaning and connection that extends beyond the

realm of tangible things. Poetry written by T. S. Eliot depicts the anguish of existential ambiguity as well as the possibility of spiritual redemption, two characteristics that often come into conflict with one another throughout his work [3].

T. S. Eliot and the Modern Spiritual-Existential Crisis

For example, in his works such as "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915), "The Waste Land" (1922), and "Four Quartets" (1943), Eliot captures the modern contradiction that exists between pessimism and faith. His early poetry indicates a significant existential crisis, which is characterized by a lack of agency, disgust with the current society, and feelings of isolation from other people [4]. As Eliot's creative vision developed, he gravitated towards a combination of existential awareness and spiritual awakening. He sought regeneration via the mystical and Christian traditions that he encountered. This new development highlights the multi-purpose character of modern poetry, which serves not only as an aesthetic function but also as a medium for intellectual and spiritual investigation.

OBJECTIVES

1. To investigate how, within the framework of modernist theory, the interaction between existentialism and spirituality is reflected in T. S. Eliot's poetry.
2. To examine how Eliot's poetic vision changed over time, moving from existential crisis and spiritual struggle to spiritual healing and reconciliation.

SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE AND EXISTENTIAL CRISIS IN T. S. ELIOT'S POETRY

The existential crisis and the search for enlightenment are both topics that T. S. Eliot explores in enormous depth within his poetry. He creates a picture of a society in which individuals "waste their time" on things that have no significance, which causes them to be disconnected, aimless, and lonely. "That which does the hearing cannot be heard, and that which does the thinking cannot be thought." Adding a metaphysical dimension to his criticism, Eliot expresses his regret at the gap that exists between mankind and the deeper self. This is comparable to the existential self in that it cannot be materialized or researched in any way; rather, it can only be achieved via awareness, which is comparable to the Buddhist concept of Dharmakaya, which is said to be the ultimate truth or pure consciousness [5].

The exhortation to prayer that Eliot makes in *Burnt Norton* (1936)—"Quick, now, here, always"—inspires a sense of spiritual urgency and attentiveness in the reader. His lament, which he calls "sad waste of time stretching before and after," emblemizes a life entangled in many perceptions of time and location. The poet's worldview is in harmony with both the existential and Vedantic perspectives because it acknowledges the ever-changing character of what it means to live. It is essential to Eliot's way of thinking that he acknowledges the void that exists in human affairs, which encompasses the disharmony, meaninglessness, and futility that exist in the modern world [6]. A scientific explanation was not available to him until he had experienced this emptiness; it could only be "understood or endured by means of larger faith." Because of this, his poetry explores eternal issues such as existence, salvation, and time as a spiritual route through doubt that leads to atonement.

Eliot, in his work titled *Four Quartets*, transcends the tangible distinctions that exist between things such as birth and death, change and stasis, the individual and the universal, and the eternal and the ever-present. As they go forward in their quest for the Absolute, the poems move closer and closer to a Vedantic world that is devoid of division. The "still point of the turning world" was a spot of spiritual tranquility in the middle of the chaos that is life, and Eliot used it as a metaphor to represent the eternal in motion. "Words, after speech, reach into the silence" suggests that language can touch the unfathomable at this point of silence.

In Eliot's view, language had the potential to be a way of salvation. In the Indian philosophical traditions, people believe that sound has an inherent spiritual force, and Eliot's concept of the "auditory imagination" strikes a chord [7]. Each and every word has its own distinct vibration, which, when tuned into, reveals the actuality of the word. The contemplative practice of resting one's mind upon sound is a reflection of the discipline of meditation, which has its origins in the mysticism of India. When it comes to this religion, the first sound, "OM," represents the unity that exists among all things. Hindu and Buddhist mysticism, particularly the idea that emptiness and fullness (ontological plenitude and ontological vacuum) are equivalent, influenced Eliot's growing philosophical perspective. These conceptions indicate how these two ideologies had an effect on Eliot's philosophical development.

Using the Fisher King as a metaphor, Eliot successfully conveys the human state of spiritual stagnation and meaninglessness in his work *"The Waste Land"*, which was published in 1922. The parched and barren kingdom, controlled by a decaying authority figure unable to revive it, reflects the spiritual void that current civilization has become. It is implied in the poem that regeneration is possible through the Buddhist triad of "Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata" (which translates to "give, sympathize, and control"), and the story of the Fisher King becomes a metaphor for humanity as a whole, which is a culture that is spiritually weak and in need of restoration through empathy and understanding [8]. The culmination of these moral precepts, which leads to the ceremonial benediction "Shantih shantih shantih" (peace, peace, peace), expresses a synthesis of Eastern wisdom and Western modernist pessimism.

Twenty years after *The Waste Land*, Eliot's first of his *Four Quartets*, *Burnt Norton*, revisits similar themes over the course of the work. At the beginning of the poem, an epigraph from Heraclitus is included, which serves to emphasize Eliot's fascination with the repetition of events and the passage of time. The poem's five movements resemble a Buddhist chant in form. It is designed to induce a state of contemplation via the use of rhythm and repetition. Through lines such as "Time present and time past / Are both perhaps present in time future," Eliot explores the concept that all epochs of time live in a single eternal now [9]. His work is done when he is contemplating the metaphysical unity of time. In this concept, which is consistent with both Eastern mysticism and Western existentialist thought, the poet's desire to create harmony between faith and reason, and time and eternity, is expressed. This notion is compatible with both of these traditions.

Readers are lulled into a contemplative state of mind by the hypnotic rhythm of Eliot's poetry, which suggests that poetry may function as a channel for enlightenment via its introspective quality. This philosophical connection is evident in the manner in which he deals with time and action [10]. Eliot views history not as a singular event, but rather as an ongoing process where the eternal imprints itself at every step. Eliot raises poetry to the level of a spiritual discipline by using language that establishes a connection between existential fear and heavenly comprehension.

The incorporation of Christian faith, Vedic self-realisation, and Buddhist distance in modern poetry is Eliot's way of reimagining contemporary poetry as a place for enlightenment. As his artwork covers the range from the misery of alienation to the calm of acceptance, it encompasses everything from existential emptiness to spiritual wealth. As Eliot's perspective develops from *The Waste Land* to *Four Quartets*, it is possible to see all of these things: from disintegration to wholeness, from doubt to faith, and from the absurdity of existence to the tranquillity of transcendence.

RECONCILING MYSTICAL AND EXISTENTIAL ELEMENTS IN THE POETRY OF T. S. Eliot

Existentialists began in France. Among the famous existentialists are Kierkegaard, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Albert Camus. Among existentialists, Jean-Paul Sartre's anti-foundational remark "existence precedes essence" is most often linked. Humanity produces its own essence, according to this saying. Existentialists strongly dispute past frameworks that gave human experience meaning. Atheistic existentialists devalued divine artesian because they rejected God. They believe logic and reason are verbal tricks that deceive people. Existentialists believe men are unbound. They believe subjectivity and freedom make a person more susceptible to existential worries, which lead to a crisis. Death, suffering, meaninglessness, and identity crises torture man, causing existential crises. Henry Miller depicts modern civilisation as bleak:

"Either we have all died, or we are all dying soon" (46).

William Shakespeare, the Elizabethan literary icon, vividly depicts life and man's folly and futility in *Macbeth*. "Out, out, brief candle!" [11]—life is like a lousy musician who struts and frets for an hour on stage and then departs; it is an idiot's story full of noise and fury but pointless. Eliot, a modernist poet, highlighted contemporary man's futility, alienation, and identity loss, as well as the tragic results of two world wars that have reduced him to insignificance. Eliot investigated modernity's lack of stability and relevance, as well as the meaninglessness of existence in connection to death and pain. He explores existential topics like anxiety, emptiness, urban apathy, loneliness, and death in his writing, like Kierkegaard and Sartre.

To begin, read *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, a work of narrative poetry by Eliot. Modern man's frightening trip inside his own psyche is symbolised in the poem. The poem's narrator, Prufrock, stays neurotic and moves from position to situation to avoid damnation. The poem seems to be a conversation but is really the protagonist's inner turmoil and divided awareness, showing how decay lurks behind contemporary life's glitter. Prufrock faces an existential crisis. The intensity of his existential abyss prevents him from connecting to the outside world. He represents the broken personality of a contemporary guy struggling in this meaningless society. Prufrock's thinking illustrates a patient etherised on a table, a paralysed intellectual trapped in an inaccessible Hell [12]. In his poem "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," J. Alfred Prufrock examines the damaged mentality of the modern man, whose existence is so meaningless that it leads him to go through a breakdown. He feels dehumanised by schizoidness and talks in disintegration:

"I should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the silent seas" (73-74). The crab's claws and 'scuttling' symbolise Prufrock's fragmented personality. The sounds surrounding him represent life, yet he remains uncertain. Prufrock, a real existentialist, views life subjectively. His character defect was

subjectifying whatever he saw, which led to fear. He avoids the outside world by creating self-debating questions, which reveal his existential suffering. Dare I disturb the universe? (45-46), "How should" (54) are the secrets of humanity's fateful and useless existence. Prufrock's meaningless existence is full of boring rituals. His lack of free choice in this world shocks and torments him with solitude and sadness. Humans deny their existence due to mortality. He is like Vladimir and Estragon in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, who blindly pursue pointless activities to escape their meaningless lives.

Time has squeezed Prufrock, who cannot escape or deny it. He symbolises contemporary man's misery and indifference due to time. Prufrock obsesses about existence's purpose. Modern men cannot find refuge in social masks during existential crises. Prufrock cannot accept his unfortunate fate. Fear of death and meaninglessness breaks him. He becomes alienated from the world and himself due to this predicament. *The Waste Land* best symbolises existential pain and futility. The Poem begins with Petronius' *Satyricon* epigraph, which Eliot read as a Harvard student. Preface depicts a dying Sibyl in Cumae, who is seen hanging from a bottle. Even Sibyl's existential delight cannot outweigh death. He symbolises the decrepitude of contemporary man, who must bear a vacuous existence; therefore, the poet begins with the theme: 'life without significance is death'. *The Waste Land* residents are in an existential crisis.

The Waste Land shows human existential insecurity via genre mixing. There are crises and no purpose in this broken world. This poem says, "He who was living is now dead / We who were living are now dying" (328-29). Eliot reflects contemporary humanity. Modern man has lost his mind. He is dead because he cannot escape his horrible life and has no goals. The German princess, Madame Sosostriis, Belladonna, the merchant with one eye, and the crowd crossing London Bridge are all overcome with "death in life existence" and bury their existential melancholy in pointless pursuits. The boredom and anguish that a guy in this disgusting world experiences as a result of leading a worthless existence hides under the surface of their life's pomp and circumstance. The numerous queries and "fragments" of dialogue between the woman and her boyfriend demonstrate that contemporary males are unable to come up with any standards to follow. She continues to inquire of her companion, but he remains silent. His thoughts are being probed by the lady.

A bizarre and astounding revelation sums up human existence as useless, and he responds late. When stuck in a hole, people act similarly to rats. In their haste, they go back to their nests. Death, like life, is meaningless to them. The meaning of dying is given by life. When living is pointless, dying becomes pointless as well. With "nothingness" permeating every corner, what's on your mind? What exactly are you considering? Excuse me? Not a single thing. Have you no knowledge? Are you oblivious? I have no idea what you're thinking. Think. Here we are, in rat alley, where the bones of the deceased have been scattered (113-16). Poems written by the *Hollow Men* convey gloom, despair, and a lack of optimism. The poem explores sadness and meaninglessness. *The Hollow Men* describes the same suffering that becomes trauma. They confront the same problem as *The Waste Land* residents. Their small fruitless existence paralyses them: "Shape without form, Shade without colour, / Paralysed force, gesture without motion" (11-12).

The poem shows their full detachment and surreal view of contemporary life. They feel alienated and unable to communicate with one another and themselves. Hollow within, they cannot face time as they are thrust into complete helplessness. They find life burdensome and death unsettling. 'We are the hollow

men, the stuffed ones, leaning together with straw headpieces.' This line encapsulates modern society's lack of direction and significance. What a tragedy! (1-4) The lyrics "cactus land" (38) and "fading star" (42) represent the meaninglessness of modern existence as it deteriorates. Not with a bang, but a whimper, this is how the world comes to an end (97–98). By reflecting the modern mind's objective counterpart, Eliot provides a window into the defining moments that, via mystical insight, elevate man to a reality beyond this world.

In a moment of immense change, Eliot's poetry stands out for its mystical sensitivity and modernist intelligence. The invisible is accessible via mystical consciousness. This supra-sensible experience links us to realities and situations we can't fathom. Mystical experiences blend with the universal soul's deeper secrets, organically developing man's transcendental awareness. William James said, "In mystic states we both become one with the absolute, and we be." Eliot, the intellectual saint, demonstrated to the broken modern world that a man might find purpose in life via spiritual serenity, which can overcome suffering and emptiness. His poetry backs this idea in works like *Four Quartets* and *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*. He reconciles experience's opposites by making God awareness the still point rather than an abstraction. He felt, "All human faculties are ultimately grounded in mysticism" [13]. He passionately defends transcendence. His poetry uses paradoxes to show the intricacy of opposing views. He uses modernist paradoxes and insists on holding apparently opposing viewpoints or binaries. He explores several philosophical themes in his poems. His interest in mysticism is not an escape from contemporary misery but a search for greater truth.

In the everlasting realm of 'still centre', the binary opposites are reconciled. The poet creates an immortal moment that bridges time and timelessness. Love, redemption, and genuine history interact with time and timelessness in *Four Quartets*. Poetry shows how time is overcome and redeemed. By presenting a mystical synthesis of *The Waste Land* and *Love Song of J*, this poem endeavors to transcend nihilism in an effort to mend the shattered and disorganized modern world. The reanimated magical realm of "still center" in *Four Quartets* by Alfred Prufrock transcends and erases the boundaries between the everlasting and the ever-changing, the living and the dead, the light and the dark. The opening poem of *Four Quartets*, "Burnt Norton," is titled after a manor house in Gloucestershire that the author visited. Eliot drew inspiration from the rose garden and used it metaphorically in this quartet.

At its outset, the poem presents a paradox: the past and the present may coexist in the future, and the future is contained within the past. Time is irredeemable if it is endless. Eliot breaks the tradition of present, past, and future to create an endless instant. Under mystical and philosophical influences, the poet perceives endless, cyclical time, transcending linear time. Time flows without divides. Such an endless moment is formed in spirituality since spiritual time is eternal. Helen Gardner assessed *Burnt Norton's* period. He says, "It is an experience for which theology provides an explanation and on which religion builds a discipline, the immediate apprehension of a timeless reality, felt in time and remembered in time, the sudden revelation of 'the one end, which is always present.'" (63) An experience of pure joy in the present moment may be had in a rose garden. "Down the untaken paths" is what Eliot writes. In the direction of the rose garden, where we never dared to step. You hear my words in your thoughts (11–15). Earthly and mythical echoes, both universal and personal, from the present and internal recollections, said Paul Kramer, who claims that the rose garden represents all of this.

The poem is infused with excitement. As birdsong fills the rose garden, they entice the poet to embrace the pleasure and peril of a parallel world (36). Even Eliot's seemingly pointless scenes in *The Waste Land* take a wonderful turn in the rose garden. The rose brings together inert and useless symbols. The last scenes of "Burnt Norton" highlight ephemeral moments, as the universe is changed by a glimpse of unexpected light. This was the realization that came to Eliot when he wrote: "There arises the secret laughing" in a shaft of sunshine, even as the dust moved. With kids playing in the leaves In the blink of an eye, in the here and now, in the hereafter—how absurd is the squandering of somber time? (172-78). "East Cooker" referenced T's ancestral home. S. Eliot. The poet contemplates his life's journey. The opening sentence, "In my beginning is my end" (1), shows life's transience and change. Eliot emphasises creation and destruction in this quartet. History shows this periodic shift.

The musical rhythm shows that history is cyclical and ends in death (Eliot, n.d.). The daunsynge symbolises the dignified and pleasant union of man and wife in marriage. By holding hands or arms, two persons signify togetherness and "round and round the fire" or "joined in circles" (31-37).

As the villagers dance at the wedding, freedom, joy, and communion reign. The peasant experiences delight and transcends time briefly. "East Cooker" symbolises life on Earth, including people and animals. Eliot shows the triviality of existence absorbed in nature's rhythms, where humans get involved in temporal cyclic activities that don't lead to timelessness.

Life cycles via change and end with death. Eliot says, "The only wisdom we can hope to acquire / Is the wisdom of humility" (101-2), which leads to everlasting life. Humility is crucial to spiritual progress. To imagine oneness with the divine, man must learn humility in the material world. As previously said, this euphoric condition ensures a profound spiritual awareness, heralding the arrival of the new order: The unknown wild strawberry and thyme, Ecstasy resounded around the lawn as laughing reverberated. Rather than being lost, it is necessary, and it points to the pain of birth and death (132–36). St. John of the Cross and other saints have a mystic path that Eliot believes could lead to paradise. Poetically, the poet portrays the dark night of the soul via Christian self-denial and Eastern emptiness. In a strange twist of fate, a spirit mired in obscurity and ignorance tends to become more timeless.

Eliot's character emphasizes trying without thinking. "We only try," he says. The remainder is not our concern (193). Even if inner anguish and ordeals slow one down, striving should continue. As Krishna tells Arjuna in *The Gita*, action is more essential than fruit. Eliot sees life as a trip from home. Everything is changing on this trip. "His recollections of this persisted. Eliot was fascinated by this region and exploited its images (Reibetanz 99). The river represents earthly existence, while the sea represents eternity. Urbanites, "the worshippers of the machine" (10), have lost touch with the river's divine force. Because we are all mortal, the river keeps the "seasons and rages" (8) and "The river is within us" (15) alive. Reaching timelessness requires temporal time. Because it leads to the ultimate, Eliot does not advocate renouncing the temporal.

According to Santwana Haldar, "The 'river' is 'within us'; it is time we experience, as suggested by the four seasons." The water that is 'all around us' may represent time in its entirety. Rivers merging into sea (110). Eliot says, "Time the destroyer is time the preserver" (115). Time may be cruel and inflict anguish and misery, creating an eternity inside time. "The bitter apple and the bite in the apple" (117) evokes Eden. The Bhagavad-Gita appears in "The Dry Salvages" section three. Eliot queries "what Krishna

meant" (124). The poet describes Krishna's astute teachings to Arjuna. "The future is a faded song, Royal rose or a lavender spray" (128). "Wistful regret for those who are not yet here to regret" (129). Time is always changing and cannot be captured. The future becomes the present; the present becomes the past, and then silence. Thus, every instant is fresh, and the body changes. Mystics prioritise the now above the past and future. He emphasizes Krishna's advice to Arjuna: "do not think of the fruits of action / Fare forward" (163-64). The statement is about progressing.

In the poem's context, this remark means to transcend desire and encounter eternity. Krishna advises shedding transitory wants. In the concluding part of "The Dry Salvages", Eliot shows that all attempts to understand ultimate truth are worthless and deceptive. Psychoanalysis, magic, tarot cards, and other methods may surface reality but not spiritual vision. He emphasizes, "To understand the timeless-Time junction is" It should please all. Saints and mystics should leave their charmed sanctuaries to serve mankind so spiritual regeneration might spread. In the concluding quartet, "Little Gidding", the poet reconciles eternity with the present. According to him, purgatory is vital to reach divine union and absolves one of love-harming impulses. The narrator then describes attachment and detachment, which must be sacrificed for religious synthesis. The hedgerow supports self-attachment, separation from others, and religious synthesis.

History may be slavery, but history may be liberation when connection turns to detachment, as the poet said. Witness the passing of beloved places and faces as they undergo rebirth and metamorphosis (165-68). Consequently, keeping to the phenomenal self makes history a prison, whereas letting go of the phenomenal self brings release [14]. Living in this state brings stability and peace as one views the pattern of the past as having divine origin. The narrator seems to have triumphed over his evil ways and is now content. He believes in Julian of Norwich's tradition that everything will be fine and the puzzle and shame of life will end. He is optimistic: "Sin is behovely, but / All shall be well, and / All manners of things shall be well" (173-75). Bradley contributed to this optimism.

The saint Julian of Norwich is its major source. Good and evil, sin and virtue are meaningless without a pure motivation. Thus, the purified motivation matters long-term. With this, the soul's dark night comes to an end, purifying humanity from sin [15]. Enjoy the "refining fire" as you let go of your ego. A dove-like fall of the Holy Spirit onto the Apostle fills the air with a palpable sense of foreboding as the languages proclaim the deliverance of the one who has been set free from sin and error. Aside from giving up hope altogether, the only other option is to be saved by fire. According to Fjordbotten (203-09), the dove represents the Holy Spirit as He descends to earth, shattering the air. After being filled with the Holy Spirit, people have a choice: continue to live in sin and face judgment, or embrace the fire of the Spirit, which is both a light and a purifier, and be set free from sin and death. These sentences reflect the purification of motivations mentioned in the previous section (290). The poet reconciles at "Little Gidding"'s conclusion. Another reminder of cyclical time [16].

To "make a beginning is to create an end," as the narrator puts it, "the beginning is frequently the end." From the very end, we start (217-19). The words of Eliot are "transfigured" into a pattern of atemporal calm, free from pressure and failure. Finding the circular dance pattern and escaping secular time both need a descent into darkness in search of divine light. He considers the past to be God's plan, which he describes as "a pattern of timeless moments" (237-38). The poet encourages us to seek for a more profound union

with the everlasting by saying: We will not give up investigating until we return to our starting point and identify the exact location.

The protagonist uses the tree's "ascent" path to reach their goal. Now that the narrator's spirit has arrived to "Shantih," a place of reconciliation between birth and death, beauty and pain, time and eternity, seeking and arriving, he or she may rest easy. When fire and rose become one, and flames wrap themselves around the crowned knot of fire, then all will be good (260-63). By looking forward, waiting without expectation, and engaging in spiritual journey, a man may attain spirituality and atonement from time [18–19]. Time, in the eyes of mystics, is ever-changing. Once the soul is released from the body, it may breathe in heavenly light, turning the "death in life" dilemma into a flourishing existence. Timelessness is achieved via Eliot's work.

Upon completion of the crowned trinity knot, when all opposites are reconciled and the fire of love and rose of desire are one, the last three lines may imply that "all shall be well" (259) when the "tongues of flame" (260), a metaphor for man under God's rule, are joined. The poem concludes with a profound declaration of non-duality, the foundation of mysticism. One interpretation of Four Quartets is as a revision of earlier poems. In The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, Prufrock faces an enormous questioning quandary, but the poem's final synthesis resolves it. Eliot's poetry is characterized by a sense of longing and exploration.

SPIRITUALITY AND THE PURSUIT OF HEALING IN T. S. ELIOT'S MODERNIST POETRY

The deflating consequences of World War I, in conjunction with the tremendous industrialization and urbanization that occurred at the start of the twentieth century, were the spark that ignited the Modernist movement. Many collections of modernist poetry deal with existential dread and the quest for meaning in an unpredictable world. The parts that make it unique are disillusionment, investigation, and fragmentation. A modernist poet like T.S. Eliot sought to forego long-standing conventions in favor of exploring uncharted territory in her exploration of human emotion and experience [21]. The modernist movement included him among its pioneers. T.S. Eliot's poetry echoes the fuzziness and disintegration of our modern world via its persistent exploration of spirituality and the quest for transcendence. However, behind the turmoil, there is a persistent discovery of transcendence. Works such as "The Waste Land", "The Hollow Men", and "Ash Wednesday" are examples of works that devote a significant amount of attention to spiritual issues.

A century and two years ago, in 1922, "The Waste Land" was published as the very first book. At that time, the world was still dealing with the aftermath of a pandemic and war, a calamity that current mankind is all too acquainted with. Four years have passed since the end of World War I, often called the Great War. Roughly nine million men gave their lives in this conflict that raged from 1914 to 1918, and the globe was forever changed for the worse as a result [22]. Disillusionment, fragmentation, and the quest for meaning in a society that is spiritually devoid are some of the topics that are explored in depth throughout the poem, which depicts the existential crises and social changes that occurred in the early 20th century in a poignant manner. In the epigraph of the poem from Petronius's "Satyricon", which reads, "For I will consider my Cat Jeoffry," there is a stance that is reminiscent of a contemplative state associated with spirituality. In stark contrast to the other dark depictions in the poem, it implies a spiritual connection with the natural world and the mundane tasks of daily life. A desire for relaxation and renewal is hardwired into our being. Embedded inside this undertaking are often recurrent spiritual concepts and symbolism [23].

Part four, "Death by Water," represents the cycle of life and death via the figure of a drowned Phoenician sailor. Many religions and spiritual traditions use this sailor as a symbol of the resurrection. The use of literary and religious allusions within the poem serves to bolster the spiritual weaving that occurs throughout it. Take, for instance, the opening few words of the poem, which are these:

"April is the cruellest month, breeding

Lilacs out of the dead land," (Eliot, "The Waste Land" lines 12)

It evokes bleakness, irony, and seasonal regeneration and change. In Part I of "The Burial of the Dead," "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" signal a spiritual search for purpose in a collapsing world. Each segment of the poem adds to the human longing for enlightenment and repair with its own spiritual implications. Nicolas Tredell says "The Waste Land" awakens nihilism and despair amid a bleak, stone landscape drenched in sunlight. "I will show you fear in a handful of dust" (Eliot, 30) will be a nihilistic and terrifying sight. A "red rock" is the sole shade. While the poem depicts spiritual and physical dryness, images of rivers, rain, and the sea stand out. Poetry lacked spiritual and moral depth, and Christianity could not fill it [24]. Poetry may work for certain critics and readers, but it doesn't imply it's not a solution. The Waste Land isn't gloomy, yet it doesn't elicit a strong positive response. It confronts suffering but offers an uncertain and lovely promise for rehabilitation.

Finding meaning amid turmoil requires rebuilding, not reliving the past. "The Waste Land" and "The Hollow Men" include "broken images" or "stone images" that cannot connect the physical and immaterial worlds, giving them the impression of being "broken". Eliot must reinvent and recompense these characters. In 1925's "The Hollow Men", the author examines the spiritual state of "hollow men", who are utterly lost and require rebirth. In "The Hollow Men", Eliot depicts a civilization where spirituality has been reduced to meaningless rites and feeble gestures, exploring moral degradation and spiritual depravity via a variety of religious and mythical sources.

"We are the hollow men

We are the stuffed men

Leaning together

Headpiece filled with straw" (Eliot, "The Hollow Men" lines 14)

The spiritual chaos and emptiness evoked by these first lines of the poem are palpable. There is no spiritual substance, and the image of "stuffed men" and "headpiece[s] filled with straw" represents the existential challenges of those who are unable to reach spiritual happiness [26]. "The Hollow Men" is about spiritual torment and healing. The poem's refrain laments human futility and the quiet suffering of those who never discover inner peace.

"This is the way the world ends

Not with a bang but a whimper" (Eliot, "The Hollow Men" lines 97-98)

Holding its topic is its main purpose. The spiritually impoverished modern "men" society seems unsuitable for religious observances like "A penny for the Old Guy" and references to the Lord's Prayer ("For Thine is the Kingdom"). In his second 1930 poem, "Ash Wednesday", Eliot struggles with spiritual hunger and feeling shut off from the divine. The poetry explores spiritual regeneration and transcendence. While in Europe, Eliot immersed himself in the Anglican tradition and studied mystics like St John of the Cross, which deepened his spiritual search. This phase of investigation came to a close in 1927 when he committed to Anglicanism, which shaped his subsequent works, including this poem.

"Suffer me not to be separated

And let my cry come unto Thee." (Eliot, "Ash Wednesday" lines 97-98)

The introductory section of the poem sets the tone of spiritual regeneration and remorse. Anglican liturgy has a focus on soul purity, which he highlights. God has a significant role in "Ash Wednesday." His lyrically lovely and musically descriptive lines convey a profound yearning for heavenly favor and spiritual fulfillment. Looking for redemption after hardship. He researches the possibility that suffering and giving up some of one's comforts can bring to enlightenment. The poem explores the duality of human and heavenly life by contrasting the everlasting with the fleeting. Because Adam and Eve sinned, God symbolized Christ's atoning love in the Bible with ashes. Their transgression has caused God to say that paradise is no more, and that they and everyone else will endure pain. For you were lifted up from the earth; you are dust, and to dust you must return (Genesis 3:19), says God. Up until you plummet, your perspiration will keep you afloat. Ashes represent equality, regardless of wealth, according to Christians. The final result will be little more than ash. Keep in mind on this Ash Wednesday that in God's kingdom, there is equality for all people. Because God created us, loves us, and desires our gratitude, everyone of us is special in our own way. Divine justice is unwavering [27].

This universe of eternal cosmic life and this world of limited human existence are in conflict throughout the poem. In his spiritual explorations, Eliot seeks a greater connection between the fleeting and the eternal. The poem highlights his beliefs on tolerance and patience in the face of spiritual ambiguity and refers to a healing that surpasses earthly pleasure. "Ash Wednesday" shows Eliot's perspective and how others fit within it, not his own ideas. Great art and artists seek spiritual harmony. Eliot had established himself as the greatest poet of disintegration, conflict, and chaos. Finding a midway ground in his poetry is his current goal. This reading of "Ash Wednesday" helps the reader distinguish the poem's lyrical and biographical parts, showing how much the poem is a continuation of Eliot's long-running examination of the same themes and issues.

CONCLUSION

The modern human condition is exemplified by the profound intersection of philosophy and religion that can be found in T. S. Eliot's poetry. This is because the human condition is now struggling with existential anguish and the need for spiritual refreshing. He examines existential crisis, which is a situation in which human consciousness is marked by separation and ambiguity. Through this investigation, Eliot sheds light on the dissolution and pointlessness of modern life. But his poetry doesn't terminate on a sad note; on the contrary, it moves towards a mystical and existential reconciliation, weaving together the limited and the infinite via contemplation and belief. In his work "The Waste Land", he portrays the anguish of the modern

psyche, and in his work "Four Quartets", he creates a sublime vision in which the "still point of the turning world" combines time and eternity. As a result of his wide engagement with the Christian, Buddhist, and Vedantic traditions, it is evident that Eliot adopts a global perspective on the quest for meaning over the course of human history. Considering that he places a strong emphasis on interior consciousness, self-realisation, and the rehabilitative power of words, a poem becomes a spiritual act and a means of repairing the broken self. Since this is the case, modernism in Eliot's work is more than simply an artistic experiment; rather, it is a voyage of philosophy and spirituality that takes readers from existential emptiness to heavenly completeness, from chaos to contemplation.

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