

## ABSTRACT

Eliot's conversion to Anglicanism in 1929 influenced his theory of art greatly. Hitherto, he had conspicuously expressed the hope that the study and critical reception of early modern verse drama carried enough potential to shape contemporary literature, especially the modernist verse drama. Yet, with the kind of stability he sought after converting to Anglican Church, Eliot preferred to keep at arm's length the early modern or Elizabethan dramatic poets like Shakespeare, the echoes of whom he believed necessary to avoid. In fact, it was the horrid alienation of twentieth century that made Eliot feel a repulsion towards the very spirit of modernism. Modern Western thought had replaced the Christian religion with a combination of capitalism, material progress, and the emergence of natural science and positivist philosophy. This was the critical juncture of his literary career when he became keenly aware of the challenges of writing both verse drama and poetry in an era of growing modernization.

With this conversion, one witnesses a conspicuous change in Eliot's theory of Art. He rapidly develops a profound interest in the spirit of both classical and medieval ages. His critical works theorize about this transition. The post-conversion period of Eliot's literary career shows the convergence of his animus against modernity and liberalism. Eliot develops an exclusive liking for spiritual community and communal organization, arguably the latent qualities of both the classical and medieval age. Culture, according to Eliot, began in these societies as a unified entity that expanded and specialized subsequently.

Eliot drew a connection between religion and culture because he lived in a time in when he saw people wandering aimlessly in search of the meaning of life, and because he himself was finally able to find this meaning through Anglicanism. Eliot's love for the Christian values specifically alludes to his romantic nostalgia for the medieval and classical ages in contrast to decay, disintegration and anarchism of the Elizabethan and Modern periods. Religion, to him, is instrumental in creating a state of ideal homogeneity and harmony. From this, Eliot formulated the most basic tenet of his cultural theory, that religion and culture are essentially connected to each other. In fact, Eliot argued that, "No culture has appeared or developed except together with a religion: according to the point of view of the observer, the culture appears to be the product of religion, or the religion the product of the culture." In Eliot's view in fact, they might be taken as different aspects of the same thing: a culture is "the incarnation of the religion of a people."

In this thesis, I bring into lime light Eliot's classicist and medievalist tendencies in producing works of both poetry and drama. For this, I will be drawing considerable support from his critical works that work as his theory of art. Tentatively, the chapterization of this thesis will be done keeping in view the following points:

- In the first place, I will shed light on Eliot's inspiration from the prevalent cult of symbolism. This includes his personal endeavours for the search of meaning and identity by exploring the philosophy of Henri Bergson, Bradley and Josiah Royce to explain and repair the fragmentation of culture. I will also be giving attention to the works he produced under this paranoia.

- Next comes the influences that he accepts for the Jacobean and Elizabethan. It would certainly be
- something interesting to figure out why Eliot turned so bitterly against the time of the Elizabethans
- which, paradoxically enough, is still considered to be the time of the restoration of order, refinement and parliamentary democracy.
- The main objective of this thesis would be the study of all those literary practices of Eliot which show his affinity with the Classicist and Medievalists. It will also involve a study of the most probable reasons for this shift from the Elizabethan viewpoint back to the classicist-medievalist ways of thinking.
- Separate chapters may be devoted to all the three medium of Eliot's writing i.e poetry, drama and prose. His critical work will help me theorize on my own stance. In terms of religious drama, I will be tracing all the factors that compelled him choose medieval drama as a model for the contemporary secular drama.
- This naturally entails a study of how Eliot's philosophy also accommodate his modernist tendencies of writing since his poetry is believed to have had probably the most lasting influence on modern poetry, at least up to the present. Another important issue to be considered in this context is the stylistic and linguistic experiment he carried out, since one can safely assume that a peculiar combination of the ancient and modernist tendencies of Eliot would have given birth to something novel along these lines, as indeed it did.