

CHAPTER - I

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Alienation is as old as human history. Man has always felt alienated from all that is outside him. In our own age alienation is all pervasive and total, for it has affected the lives of so many almost at all places. Several factors have created the sense of alienation in man in day-to-day life. It has become a part of our daily experience.

Man is a social animal. On the one hand he always desires for company but on the other hand he keeps himself separate from others, depending upon the situation at a certain moment. He has today come to feel totally isolated from all around him, and has developed a highly injurious tendency to self-centredness. The rise of scientific spirit and rationalism and the secular thought that came in their wake have taken man far away from God. Industrialization and urbanization have brought about several changes in man's individualism has segregated him not only from society but also from his own family. Man is alienated from his own self, too. Inter-dependent and inter-related problems among people

are the causes of alienation. Before we discuss causes of alienation in detail, it is essential to know what is alienation and what are the meanings of other synonymous terms.

Now-a-days words like "Loneliness", "Alienation", "Isolation" are synonymously used in our routine life, but they are, in fact, different from each other as they depict man's different mental reactions and physical conditions. Peter Townsend makes the difference between loneliness and isolation. He says, "to be socially isolated is to have few contacts with family and community; to be lonely is to have an unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. The one is objective, the other subjective"¹. Besides these two, the term "alienation" is greatly and widely used in our age in critical, scientific and philosophical discussions. It has indeed become a descriptive term for man's typical psychological and social conditions. The following comments of Eric and Mary Josephson bring out its wide extent and application in the world of today:

"To begin with, what does alienation mean? The word has an ancient history, being used in common discourse to identify feeling of estrangement, or of detachment from self and from others, and in law to describe the act of transferring property or ownership to another... In modern times, however,

alienation has been used by philosophers, psychologists, and sociologists to refer to an extraordinary variety of psycho-social disorders including loss of self, anxiety states, anomie, despair, depersonalization, rootlessness, apathy, social disorganization, loneliness, automization, powerlessness, meaninglessness, isolation, pessimism, and the loss of beliefs or values. Among the social groups who have been described as alienated in varying degree are women, industrial workers, white-collar workers, migrant workers, artists, suicides, the mentally disturbed, addicts, the aged, the young generation as a whole, juvenile delinquents in particular, voters, non-voters, consumers, the audiences of mass media, sex deviants, victims of prejudice and discrimination, the physically handicapped, immigrants, exiles, vagabonds and the recluses².

In short, loneliness is the feelings of being separated from others, isolation is an outcome of being lonely, and alienation is the very process of experience in the feeling of loneliness, an estrangement and emotional non-involvement.

Man's alienated condition in the present-day society has been seriously considered by various psychologists and philosophers and probed into its causes and serious and significant consequences. A cursory look at the scientific and technological developments, the harmful effects of urbanization and industrialization, the capitalistic structure of economy, the democratic set-up with its inordinate freedom allotted to the individual, will enable us to

realize that alienation is an outcome of these dominant forces and factors in our life. After a careful study of alienation one comes out with a system comprising of the five aspects of it: man's alienation caused by his estrangement from God, Nature, Society, Family and Self. We will discuss them briefly in the following sections.

I

Before the rise of the scientific spirit and rationalism, there was a strong faith in God who was then considered as the Parent of all beings, looking to the needs of every one, with great concern. He was the Destination, the Lord Supreme, the Resort. He was at a higher stage as their Saviour. For them, God was the beginning, the middle, as well as the end of the things. He was not only existence but also non-existence. All beings could station in him and He was in all beings. It was commonly believed that He pervaded the universe as a whole and He could rush to save and could provide the needs of those who undividedly meditated on Him. The intimacy between man and God was vital. Infact, for them, nothing could be nearer than Him. So, once the age was full of faith in God but now faith is on the decline because of material prosperity and secular attitudes.

The place of faith has been now taken by doubt, disbelief and scepticism. As a consequence, man has been looking for "development" everywhere and hoping to develop further. This rise of the scientific spirit and rationalism have led to the questioning of accepted social beliefs, conventions and traditions. In matters of religion, no doubt, there has been a lot of questioning and criticism of traditional beliefs. Instead of concerning himself with the nature of God, man has shown a keen interest in the study of the nature of man. God is either replaced or His power is minimised in the chain of being. Now man is at the centre of value judgements and moral concepts. The rise of humanism with its emphasis on man and his problems took man several miles away from God. As a result the generations of men and women have become Godless people. They have come to take pride in being atheists without any God to guide them, without any religion to shape their emotional, ethical and social life. Modern faithless people feel utterly lonely, insecure and helpless in the region deprived of any divine vision or visit. Without any serious regard for tradition and culture for fasts and prayers, modern people have become the inhabitants of the waste land (mental moral, social, cultural, religious)

where their lot is not much different from their literary prototypes such as Prufrock, Gerontion, Marie, Sweeney and the like. To them, God is an alien power standing over and against them.

II

Alienation from Nature is the later stage. The primitive man depended on Nature. He used to love and worship her as a goddess. At times, he was also struck with her fury. He was convinced of Nature's glory at every step in his practical life in proximity with her. Fuel or firewood was provided by her. He used to live in the cave and was all the while in her company. The houses were made up of wood, bamboo sticks a mass of leaves. Fruits, honey, grain, medicine and other essential needs were provided by her. He enjoyed good mental and physical health. In spite of this nature remained a mystery to him. He bowed to her when struck with awe and wonder. In times of doubts, difficulties and calamities he performed some rituals to calm down destructive natural forces. In due course, man began to apply his practical knowledge to solve the mysteries of Nature and he succeeded in this.

The growth and spread of the scientific movement has made man doubtful and curious. His concept of Nature has undergone several modifications. He has come to think that nature is cruel, devastating and disappointing. Now endeavour gave him courage and confidence which further created in him a sense of competition with Nature. The process of competition with nature was expedited by the scientific discoveries and inventions which began to change the face of the earth. The sea-voyages undertaken for the discoveries of new lands and for gold(en) opportunities started the process of human encroachment, on land, either empty or occupied. At a recent stage of the growth of civilization the Industrial revolution stood witness to the rivalry, antagonism between man and Nature. The forces of new life under an industrial set compelled man to uproot himself from his rural centre, which was close to nature, in search of jobs and opportunities which were available in big cities. Industrialization, mechanization and urbanization now stood in a hostile relationship to Nature which had no alternative but to recede and retreat. Literature did not lag behind to notice and record this strange, new phenomenon. Rousseau's call 'Return to Nature' (which itself speaks

of the severance between man and Nature) and the Romantic eulogy and idealization and identification with her proved more philosophical and poetic than practical in the face of the forces of life generated by science, technology and industrialization. Even Wordsworth, that sage of Nature, was aware of this fact when he wrote:

"The world is too much with us".
Getting and spending we lay our powers waste
Little we see in nature that is ours"³.

Matthew Arnold has rightly said that Nature and man can never be fast friends, because "Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends."⁴.

In the scientific civilization of today Nature is looked upon as assets to be utilized for human progress and prosperity .All are rushing to her secret wealth! Besides, man today has developed a very harmful tendency of capturing,controlling and conquering her, the acts which have created in him a sense of enmity with her. Nature, in turn, has also started behaving in a paradoxical way:seasons are either long or short, rains sometimes disappear, it is either too hot or too cold, the cycle of seasons is often just odd and adverse. To the protagonist of The Waste Land, "April is the crullest month breeding/ Lilacs in the dead land"⁵.

This cruelty of April and the deadness of land caused by man put a permanent stamp on man's alienation from Nature.

III

Man's alienation from society has a history as old as the ancient times. The primitive man lived a nomadic life in small groups which promised security and order. Natural calamities and enemies had to be faced together. This necessitated a strong unity among the people. The need for unity made the primitive man recognize the worth and value of the other person. This helped him develop a sense of fellow-feeling. Even in that errant life he must have felt the sense of alienation from other groups, particularly when his group assaulted and was assaulted by other groups. But as tribal life changed into national life, man's intelligence began to show separatist tendency, especially when he knew that the political system was strong enough to take care of him and even protect him. The philosophical thoughts of the Greek period, with its emphasis on eternal human values, scientific and rational attitude created a homogeneous society whose major quest was knowledge, and major means for its attainment was reason. Yet even the Greeks, in their analytical methods, came to see

the gulf between the individual and society. In the Medieval Christian period man's religious sensibility kept him tied to the other members of society. Great religious gatherings, religious rituals, communal prayers and worship created a sense of solidarity among the people. But with the growing schisms among the Christians, the seeds of alienation were sown, and over the centuries they bore terrible fruits. In the Renaissance reason played a dominant role in man's life. The impact of the Greek philosophical thought opened up the new gates to knowledge without bounds, its emphasis on freedom obviously highlighted the individual who now became aware of the antagonism between itself and society. A scientist engaged in his scientific research, a humanist engaged in thinking of various problems and predicaments of man, a voyager who left his home to discover the unknown distant lands were all, along with others in society, alienated from their society. The life of solidarity gave way to the life of solitariness which, in the successive centuries, became the lot of humanity. In the period of the Industrial Revolution, various small communities of labourers, officials and of capitalists were created. Trade unions, formed to protect and safeguard the interests of

workers, gave sanction to one community's alienation from another .In addition, people who ran to the cities in search of jobs or business opportunities were uprooted and alienated from their local centres. The moral degradation of the exploiter and the exploited created a huge gap,at times enmity,between them. The money became the dividing factor,and the poor who were pushed into their hellish life of routine of just "getting and spending" felt severed from the rich who, they thought, lived on their sweat and labour.

In our own age, greatly dominated by science and technology, human relations have become not only artificial but also superficial. The springs of real life seem to be dry today. Our smiles and greetings intended to establish social contact have become just 'rituals': A tendency to "Prepare a face to meet the faces that we meet". Today man,in his growing selfishness, has come to feel that he can live entirely without others,the mass media have provided him with facilities that push him into his aloneness and aloofness. The formation of mass society, secularism, materialism, the politicalization of the individual, the distance between the leader and the led, fear, deception

everywhere, corruption which is getting m(oral) sanction-all these have made modern people only watchers, waiters and wanderers--insensitive and insensible, aware only of their rights and evasive of their duties. The apartment culture of today has created water-tight compartments where latching and locking of doors have made us dumb and deaf members of society where one is fond and proud of having no relation with others. The fear of a stranger is understandable ; the fear of a neighbour is a reflection of our perverted behaviour. After such fear what forgiveness? Such a fear in some cases is the cause, in others, the consequence, of social alienation. Under such circumstances words like conversation, communication, dialogue have become rarities and not the daily social realities.

IV

Family is a small, significant social group where the individual life is properly organised. It is here where social interactions take place, culture is transmitted, morals and discipline are inculcated or imposed and the individual's mental and intellectual energy is properly channelized .The major function of the family is procreation and the continuation of human

race. In the past the members of the family, with the parental hold, lived together in love and peace. Economic cooperation between members of the same family was a matter of security. Husband and wife collaborated with each other. Children often gave them a helping hand. The females generally depended upon males.

Now the things are changed altogether. Industrialization has affected not only the size and shape of the family but also its significance as a social unit. Modern men, in their search of jobs, have forsaken several family pleasures to be able to live a more luxurious and more comfortable life. As a result members of one family are forced to live away in utter isolation from each other. Earning women enjoying unprecedented economic freedom came to be guided by their individual voices and choices. Simultaneously they also challenged male domination. The feminist movements all over the world have created tremendous awakening among women regarding their identity and social position. Their demand for equal status with men in all walks of life has given rise to competition which saps away their physical and mental energies. Such women find it difficult to cope up with the demands made by the family. This state of affairs sometimes ends in the

separation between the members of the family, particularly between husband and wife. Though divorce promises freedom and escape from each other, it is later on followed by disappointment and repentance. It alienates children from parents, and husband from wife. Under such circumstances the very basis of family is shaken and threatened.

Old age is another serious problem today. The pressures of life are so heavy today that children don't want to stay with their parents who demand respect and obedience from them. As young people have their own ways of life and personal ambitions to be fulfilled, they just cannot look after their old helpless parents; the latter feel absolutely lonely and alienated.

Today the structure of the family is undergoing a serious change; the joint family has become out-moded; husband and wife prefer one child or even not to have any child. Many young men and women, prefer to marry late or not at all. Our society is now full of divorced men and women, unmarried men and women, women deserted by their husbands, orphans, illegitimate children, homeless beggars who are all the instances of man's alienation from family.

V

Man's alienation from his own Self has also a long history. While the use and application of the term 'alienation' is a recent one, the concept is a much older one. The primitive man bewildered amidst the mysterious forces of life found life a severe test or trial. His efforts to appease the furious gods and wild natural forces in times of natural calamities and the rituals arranged by him speak for his self-alienation, the mental condition in which he realised his helplessness and powerlessness. The primitive man's worship of gods created by him in his own image was itself an emblem of his self-alienation. He thought of himself to be subordinate to the gods who enjoyed superiority and supremacy over him. As his own creation stood above and against him, he must have felt the severe pangs of alienation, though he could not express or record them.

As reason, in the later ages, began to play a significant role in man's daily pursuits, he developed objective, analytical and scientific attitude towards life. In his analytical search of knowledge and truth he realised the duality of objects and several opposites.

As an intellectual need, he was forced to take sides, to choose between the two alternatives. In such cases, choosing one thing was losing another. The double nature of things which has been voiced by the witches in the opening scene of Macbeth that "Fair is foul and foul is fair" or by Hamlet's "There's nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so," speaks for man's self-alienation.

The concept of alienation, of self-alienation was popularized by Hegel and Marx who pointed out that man, the creator, has no control over his creations; man, the consumer, has no clear and real knowledge of what he consumes; man, the personality, becomes a marketable commodity. Man, in short, does not remain at the centre of what he thinks, feels and does. The following comments of Erich Fromm merit attention in this context:

"The central issue of the effects of capitalism on personality [is] the phenomenon of alienation... By alienation is meant a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien. He has become, one might say, estranged from himself. He does not experience himself as the centre of his world, as the creator of his own acts --- but his acts and their consequences have become his masters, whom he obeys, or whom he may even worship. The alienated person is out of touch with himself as he is out of touch with any other person. He, like the others, is experienced as things are experienced; with the senses and with common sense, but at the same time without being related to himself and to the world outside productively"⁶.

In our own society today the paper identity, the coupon systems and identity cards used for commercial, bureaucratic and administrative purposes have all created impersonal and objective relationships and reduced living human persons to nothingness. A widespread trend towards suicides, countless cases of mental disorders and insanity, perversions of body and mind, the fear of mortality, diffidence, the feeling of being a misfit --- all these typical recent phenomena are indicative of man's self-alienation. The modern man out off from culture, traditions, God, legends, myths and society is a restless wanderer whose body and mind are out of tune with each other. His high ambitions and aspirations, when they cannot find vent in reality, leave him with the self divided against itself. The knowledge of the difference between his real self and the ideal one and his inability to attain the ideal self shake and break his human personality and eventually turn him into a self-alienated person.

VI

In the light of the foregoing comments we will now discuss the theme of alienation in relation to Eliot's life and literature in general. As we study his

ancestry, we come across the fact that his ancestors were socially isolated in that they had shifted in 1668 from East coker, England to a more congenial land of America. As for the poet himself, we can as well say that he was, at times, severed from the land of his birth and breeding by his academic trips to Paris, Germany, etc. After the outbreak of World War I, his alienation from the American soil and society and from his own family was almost completed by his decision to settle in England, the alienation which was bridged very rarely by his brief visits to the U.S.A. The choice of an English girl, Vivien Haighwood for marriage in 1915 and his acceptance of the British citizenship in place of the American one in 1916 had taken him several steps away from his own society and family, both mentally and physically. There in England, too, he suffered the pangs of family alienation on account of his wife's weak physical condition and his own soul -sickness. His wife's death in 1947 must have left him a lonely and alienated man in the evening of his life. His second marriage with his private secretary miss Valerie Fletcher in 1957 is indicative of his endeavour to solidify himself emotionally. As for the place of religion in his life, he lived for some years the life

of an atheist, whose world view is expressed in the early phase of his poetry. Though his conversion in 1927 related him to the Anglican wing of Christianity, he did not feel emotionally and spiritually secure, as is expressed in his religious poems such as "Journey of the Magi", "Song for Solomon" and "Ash-Wednesday".

T.S. Eliot was a versatile personality -- indeed an enormous force in modern literature. His career as poet, dramatist, editor and critic is just impressive. As poet, he is among other things, the poet of loneliness. When he was declining as a poet he took to play-writing around 1939, but there also he did not give up the poetic medium as he wrote the poetic dramas. So he could continue to use poetry for more effective purposes. His contribution to poetic drama in both theory and practice is considerable. He reminded his contemporaries that the verse in play is only a medium to look through and not a pretty decoration to look at. He gave poetic drama new dimensions, new medium, new themes, and new settings. His plays are nothing but an extended metaphor by means of which the original vision is projected in forms which correspond roughly to reality. They are the perfect fusion of poetry and drama. Eliot has depicted in them the modern man's

predicament, his psychic processes, his social and secular position and so on. The characters in his plays are mostly drawn from upper-class life, some of them have dark past and secrets. Many times it happens that they talk to each other but say nothing. Eliot has exposed this modern humanity in its isolation, loneliness and alienation.

The present study mainly focuses on three facets of alienation -- man's alienation from Society, Family and Self -- as reflected in Eliot's three plays: The Family Reunion (1939), The Cocktail party (1950), The Confidential Clerk (1954). This study will certainly throw a flood of light on Eliot's concern with modern humanity stumbling and groping in the darkness created by itself. It will also enable us to realise, through the vast gallery of characters in his plays, the general and eternal human problems. The next three Chapters, which form the major body of this thesis, will help us to understand Eliot's view and vision of modern life, the essential trait of which is alienation.

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