

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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BACKGROUND :

In the Victorian age the old values were being replaced by the new values. Scientific theory of Darwin changed the attitude and approach to life. Ideals of this particular period were challenged. The same occurred in the area of criticism.

New schools of criticism were coming into existence. The school of expressionism, Marxism, psychological criticism and analytical criticism were becoming dominant. The chief of the school of analytical criticism was T.S.Eliot. There is novelty and variety in twentieth century literary criticism in England. New critical theories and trends emerged and became active. Psychology, Anthropology, Sociology and Economics played the major role to bring revolution in critical methods. New discoveries in them started to modify the structure of critical methods. As a result it is seen that modern criticism seems quite different from criticism in the 19th century. Critics like I.A.Richards, T.S.Eliot, F.R. Leavis and William

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Empson gave their new interpretations of old writers in an entirely new light. English Literary Criticism in the twentieth century is a combination of the old and the new. Much that is traditional persists alongwith what is new and experimental.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH :

Born in America in the year 1888, on September 26th Thomas Stearn Eliot achieves unique position among the pioneering critics of our century. He was very much influenced by Arnold. He is not only critic of literature but also a critic of social and cultural aspects of life. The poetic sensibility of the first quarter of this century was revolutionised by his essay. 'Traditional and Individual Talent.'

As a poet he has composed 'Portrait of a Lady' (1909-10), 'Prufrock' (1910-11), 'The Waste Land' (1922), 'Ariel Poems' (1927-30) and 'Four Quartets' (1930). His contribution as a dramatist is note-worthy. 'Murder in the Cathedral' (1935), 'The Family Reunion' (1943), 'The Cocktail Party' (1950), and 'The Confidential Clerk' (1955) are his famous plays.

As a critic T.S.Eliot had a sustained influence of Arnold, T.E.Hulme, Croce and Psychologists

like Freud, Jung and Bergson. His major critical works are 'The Sacred Wood' (1921), 'Homage to John Dryden' (1924), 'For Lancelot Andrews' (1928), 'The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism' (1933), 'Elizabethan Essays' (1934), 'Essays Ancient and Modern' (1936). In spite of these works he also wrote a number of other essays on poets, dramatists and other writers. He died in the early days of 1965 with his desire to be buried in the family tomb of the Eliots.

T.S. ELIOT AS A CRITIC:

A speciality of English literature is that it has produced great critics who were great creative writers. T.S.Eliot was one of them who believed that the creative writer only can be a good critic. He belongs to the tradition of Aristotle, Dryden and Dr. Johnson, the tradition that has tried to preserve and restore the classical norms of order and discipline in thought and expression. Neither his followers nor his contemporaries have had an idea of tradition and its organic relation with the individual talent.

A key concept in the criticism of Eliot is the use of tradition as a basis for comparison and analysis of literature. He has emphasised upon the preservation

of good tradition by critics as a part of their job. For him the term 'tradition' means the 'classic' as opposed to the 'Romantic' since the classic is complete, perfect and ordered while the romantic is fragmentary, imperfect and chaotic. He reacted against subjectivism and individualistic talent. He thinks that it is a duty of critic to see literature steadily and as a whole and also to see the best work of twenty-five hundred years with the same eyes. He concentrates on the point that literature of every age should be revalued in comparison with the literature of the past according to its own standards. In order to be traditional and historical the critic has to be objective, universal and collective.

Eliot called himself a classicist but there is a lot of difference between his classicism of the classical and neo-classical writers. He accepts the tradition of the past. His stress is laid on scientific method, objectivity and disinterestedness to make criticism truly impartial and scientific. The sense and importance of tradition make him impersonal in art. He thinks that the main objective of criticism is his attempt to obtain true judgement without personal prejudices and biases. He suggests an objective base for both critic and poet. But Eliot's 'tradition' has perhaps one fault that it is rather exclusive. His

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concept of tradition is rather different. His concept of tradition is an awareness of past and present together.

Eliot attempted to bring active collaboration with traditional values. He believes that the function of criticism is the analysis of the art and the correction of taste by true judgement. Comparison and analysis are the tools of critic and the end of criticism is to create 'a tradition' a sense of the continuity between present literature and the past. According to Eliot, past does not die, it remains alive in the present. The influence of past must be very deep on any work of literature.

Criticism is the disinterested endeavour of critical faculty and intelligence to Eliot. His critical works may be grouped under the following classifications :

- 1) Theoretical Criticism,
- 2) Descriptive Criticism,
- 3) Theological Criticism.

Theoretical criticism deals with the principles of poetic, dramatic and critical literature. The well-known essays and books in this group are 'Tradition and

Individual Talent' 'Rhetoric and Dramatic Poetry'. 'The Function of Criticism, 'The Use of Poetry and The Use of Criticism', 'After Strange Gods', 'Religion and Literature', 'What is Classic?' 'Poetry and Drama', 'The Three Voices of Poetry' and 'The Frontiers of Criticism.'

Descriptive criticism and practical criticism deal with the works of individual writers and evaluate their achievements. His well-known essays, in this group, are 'The Metaphysical Poets', 'Andrew Marvell', 'Homage to John Dryden' and his other essays on Dante, writers of the seventeenth century, Yeats, Kipling and Ezra Pound.

Theological Essays deal with religion, culture and human values and include well-known works 'Lancelot Andrews', The Idea of a Christian Society', and 'Notes Towards the Definition of Culture'.

The Objective of Dissertation :

This dissertation aims to concentrate upon T.S.Eliot's critical theory, the theory of classicism, of depersonalisation, of objective correlative. The sense of impersonal art dominates his writings. It is in his critical essays I attempt to find out the idea

of tradition. The major attention is paid on analysing and discussing the essays. This work plans to ~~propose~~ that the criticism of T.S.Eliot is based upon tradition as a major factor. This dissertation has four chapters:

- 1) Introduction
- 2)) The Concept of Tradition
- 3) The Concept of Tradition in T.S.Eliot's Criticism
- 4) Conclusion

The second chapter deals with the definition of the term 'tradition' its different meanings and its possible meaning in the specific context of Eliot's criticism. This same chapter includes the elaboration of the nature and scope of tradition. The third chapter discusses T.S.Eliot's selected essays. It analyses these essays in order to find out the place of tradition paying the major attention to his celebrated essay 'Tradition and Individual Talent'. The last chapter conclusion deals with the summing up of entire discussion of the chapter I , II and III .
