



## Symphonic Invocation of Past and Present in the Wasteland

DR. Meenu Dubey

E-mail: meenu.dubey5@gmail.com

Received- 25.08.2021, Revised- 29.08.2021, Accepted - 02.09.2021

**Abstract:** *This paper aims to explore the final belief of T. S. Eliot that "all great poetry can communicate before it is understood." This is the power of the 'unheard melody' as Keats sings "Heard melodies are sweet but those unheard are sweeter". In view point of Eliot auditory imagination is that which explore the feeling for syllable and rhythm penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling every invigorating word. As a matter of fact Eliot gave a new channel, direction and versification of English poetry. Poem became a literary land-mark in history of 20th century poetry as it has reflected the mood of spiritual decline and frustration after the First World War. Eliot here uses a new effective technique in style and versification both. Conversational rhythm sings the tale of people of waste land, through this paper it shall be analysed that how Eliot creates a "Classical Symphony" by the creation of words producing music. All the five movements of the poem The Wasteland suggest musical analogy. Music is produced through the repetitions of words, ideas and tones. Every word of the poem is evocative of rich musical effect. In this attempt concentration shall also be made upon how Eliot tried to get beyond poetry just as "Beethoven in his later work tried to get beyond music." The final section of The Waste Land produces in his memory the sound of the "Water dripping song" of the hermit thrush- "If there were the sound of water only Not the cicada And dry grass singing But sound of water over a rock Where the hermit thrush sings in the pine trees Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop drop But there is no water"*

**Key words-** Music of language, Revitalization, Oratorical Rhetorical.

This paper aims to explore the final belief of T. S. Eliot that "all great poetry can communicate before it is understood." This is the power of the 'unheard melody' as Keats sings "Heard melodies are sweet but those unheard are sweeter". In view point of Eliot "auditory imagination" is that which explore the feeling for syllable and rhythm penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling every invigorating word. As a matter of fact Eliot gave a new channel, direction and versification of English poetry. The Waste Land became a literary land-mark in history of 20th century

Associate Professor- Dept. Of English Raja Mohan Girls P.G. College  
Faizabad (UP) India

Corresponding Author/Joint Authors

poetry as it has reflected the mood of spiritual decline and frustration after the First World War. Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot both were always preoccupied with the problems of correct poetic diction and language. Eliot's chief and primary concern belonged to the function of words in a poetic discourse. He was highly anxious to search for precision and austerity. His belief was in "a remarkable and original sense of language and the music of language (Eliot P. 322) As a maker of poetic language (Wrenn I) he had shown his sense of responsibility for the selection of words, which can be modified and extended into the subtlest literary association. He was a staunch believer in the fact that criticism of poetry creates poetry. Eliot laid emphasis on the kind and quality of words necessary for poetic purpose chiefly because of the fact that he experienced that the existence of poetry springs from the inter-relationships of words, images, phrases and symbols. "Eliot believed that the aim of the poet should be to make an object out of words a poem which was itself part of a large whole; the tradition of poetry in the language. (Spender p.12). In 1917 when Eliot started his poetic career as a poet critic he stated "in criticizing poetry we are right if we begin with what sensibility and what knowledge of other poetry we possess with poetry as excellent words in excellent arrangement and excellent meter. (Eliot p ix) Eliot's final advance in making poetry is towards a state of mind in which words reach into Silence. Following utterance of Eliot can better describe his declaration regarding the poetic language and its deliverance -

**Words more, Music moves**

**Only in time but that which is only living,**

**Can only die. Words, after speech reach**

**Into the silence. Only by the form, the**

**pattern Can words or music reach,**

**The Stillness.**

**(Burnt Norton V 1936)**

For him poetry is an escape from emotion and it is an escape from personality. In this saga Eliot uses a new effective technique



in style and versification both. His ideal poetic diction finds expression in Little Gidding -

**And every phrase**

**And sentence that is right (where every word is at home)**

**Taking its place to support the others.**

**The word "neither difficult nor ostentatious.**

**An easy Commerce of the old and the new.**

**The Common word exact without vulgarity.**

**The complete consort dancing together.)**

**Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,**

**Every poem an Epitaph (Little Gidding Sec. 5).**

It is an undenying fact that poetry speaks of a general universal language. Eliot fought a "big Campaign" for the revitalization of English poetry. We also agree with this thought that "the modern world came into focus for the first time" (Nicholson p. 234) Eliot also propounded the view "there is one law of nature more powerful than any of these varying currents or influences from abroad or from the past; the law that poetry must not stray too far from the ordinary every day language which we use to hear. Whether the poetry is accentual or syllabic, rhymed or rhymeless, formal or free, it cannot afford to lose its contact with the changing language of common intercourse (Eliot p. 29) Eliot emphasized the use of common idiom in poetry because he was in favour of direct speech. He never advocated "Oratorical" and "Rhetorical." As we all are acquainted with the fact that Eliot is a developing artist. A living literature is always in the process of change. He gave the final concept that standard of correct poetic diction should be neither too "identical with nor too remote from current speech. (Eliot p. 185) Throughout his poetic career Eliot continues to struggle for objectivity in poetic expression and also for the preservation of quality of feeling and emotion. Eliot's consideration of words moves to music of words created through the intersection and Juxtaposition of the words or cluster of words which find their place in a poetic composition. He announced that the ideal poetic diction is that which consists of words which possess not only verbal beauty but also semantic richness and contextual elegance. He asserts, "Words are perhaps the hardest of all materials of art for they must be used express both visual beauty and the beauty of sound as well as communicating a grammatical statement. (Eliot p. 171)

Eliot creates a 'Classical Symphony' by the creation of words producing music. Music is here produced through the repetitions of words ideas and tones. Every word of the poem The Waste Land is evocative of rich musical effect. His "poetic development shows a struggle towards the conditions of drama on the one hand and music on the other" (Smidt p. 97) In view

point of Eliot, the poet should search for the exploration of the musical possibilities of the language that he used. Eliot took the poetic music as total network of interrelated poetic elements producing total effects on the mind through meanings in sound, rhythm, morphology, syntax and vocabulary. Content and structure both must be enlivened with music-poetry, for this purpose he coined a new phrase that is "auditory imagination"- is the feeling for syllable and rhythm penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought. A poet is a man and all men have a natural appetite for music and sweetness. Eliot agreed with Wordsworth in this aspect and declared that all human beings have a natural desire for an occasional feast of drums and cymbals. There is a strong relation between rhythm and music and rhythm and diction. Both cannot be imagined separately. Eliot also responded with Edgar Allen Poe that the rhythm is the very soul of poetry and he felt a rhythm before he conceived of any words. He stated in this connection - "The music of word is, so to speak at a point of intersection: it arises from its relation first to the words immediately preceding and following it, and indefinitely to the rest of its context and from another relation that of its greater or less wealth of association" (Eliot 32-33) and a musical poem, is a poem which has a musical pattern of sound and a musical pattern of the secondary meanings of the words which compose it and that these two patterns are indissoluble and one. (Eliot 33). Thus the music of poetry is the total wealth of poetic beauty.

Eliot very clearly discriminated between the "sound" of the word and "music" of the words. Music of words for him "an arrangements and choice of words which has a sound value and the same time a coherent comprehensible meaning (Eliot p. 325) The subtleties of poetic music are produced by the variation of accent and speed in ordinary speech." Eliot already begun to put into practice the theory of verse-making which he



was afterwords to develop and extend into poetic drama namely that poetry should confirm to the rhythms of natural speech and avoid the artifices of literary language (Hudson p. 296) The Waste Land by T. S. Eliot is one of the most celebrated and narrative poems which was composed in 1921 and published in The Criterion 1922. This poem has been categorised into five sections - The Burial of the Dead, The Game of the Chess, The Fire Sermon, Death by Water" and What The Thunder Said. The structure and metre of this poem is suitable and is in harmony with the theme. It is capable to provide the sense of fragmentariness:

**" Here is no water but only rock  
Rock and no water and the sandy road  
The Road winding above among the  
Which are mountains of rock mountains, without water.  
If there were water we would stop and drink"**

Thus without any denial these lines read like some fragment of rhetorical drama : A Game of Chess surprises us by its sensual romantic mood and Death by Water transports reader to the Greek anthology. The fragments of this section suggest that they are parts of something larger than their surroundings the blank verse or free verse meters have been made the basis of the separate parts of the poem. This free verse "stretches, contracts and distorts" the verse line of the poem. The Waste Land is a "Symphonic invocation of Landon, past and present, of a stricken Europe, of the human situation. Music creeps by upon the water, different kind of music; the song of Rhine - Maidens who are also the Thames daughters; the story of Tristan ; the music that we heard in the pulsating life of Landon day by day, where the dead sound of a Church Clock mingles with the pleasant whinnying of a mandoline. One of the most musical stanza -

**This music crept by me upon the Waters,  
And along the stand up Queen Victoria Street,  
O City, City, I can sometimes hear,  
Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,  
The pleasant whinnying of mandolin,  
And a clatter and a chatter from within,  
Where fishmen lounge at noon, where the walls  
Of Magnus Martyr's hold,  
Inexplicable splendor of Ionian white in gdd."**

Above lines clearly demonstrate the close connectivity of rhythm and music of poetry, with the sense and numerous interlocking elements moulded into unity by the esemplastic power of the poet. The opening two lines have sonorous effect of the Tempest of the enchanted islands where music stole upon the sense through thin air. Sudden modulation of third line again shift us back in twentieth century Landon. The sliding rhythm of first

line changes into the flat banality of the fourth which in its turn gives way to the onomatopoeic description of the noises coming from the public house in seventh and eighth lines which are preparing the way for the magnificent concluding line. In recitation of the poem a 'refrain' upon "hold" can provide the full effect of final line as it moves solemnly and shapes the total melody the contrasting 'I' and 'O' sound which alternate in this line may be taken to correspond with the white and gold which adorn the walls of Magnus Martyr. In the phrase - "inexplicable splendor" - also a vowel contrast is repeated thus. The aimless noise of London back- streets which has replaced the music of Prospero's Isle finally fields to the luminous peace of Magnus Martyr. In this poem, we not only find elaborate musical pattern but music is, also, created through the passages of a stark, bare and rocky directness of statement, here is an example of bare austere music:

**"April is the cruelest month, breeding  
Lilacs out of the dead, mixing  
Memory and desire stirring  
Dull roats with spring rain"**

The wisdom of the oracular utterance of Thunder provide rays of hope through the internal rhythm -

**Datta Dayadhvam Damyata  
(Give Sympathise Control)  
Whish is followed by the benediction:  
Shanih, Shantih, Shantih.**

Eliot, here, uses a new effective technique in style and versification both. Conversational rhythm sings the tale of people of Waste land.

Through this paper it had been analysed that how Eliot creates a "Classical Symphony" by the creation of words producing music. All the five movements of the poem The Waste land suggest musical analogy. Music is produced through the repetitions of words, ideas and tones. Every word of the poem is evocative of rich musical effect. In this attempt concentration also had



been made upon how Eliot tried to get beyond poetry just as  
"Beethoven in his later work tried to get beyond music. The final  
section of The Waste Land produces in his memory the sound of  
the "Water dripping song" of the hermit thrush -

**"If there were the sound of water only**

**Not the cicada**

**And dry grass singing**

**But sound of water over a rock**

**Where the hermit thrush sings in the pine trees**

**Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop**

**But there is no water"**

Thus the verse of the poem is free from any monotony  
and out of one of the chief attractions in The Waste Land is its  
Word music - a music that conveys the poets meaning ever before  
the words are understood - as poetry standing with its barebones".  
We can conclude with 'Sir Ifor Evans' assertion:

"The Waste Land has immense, no poet in his own life  
time, has been erected such a verbal monument of criticism over  
his work. The meaning has complex references often half concealed,  
which lead to commentary yet the poem is best read without the  
notes for the effect made on the imagination (P. 82)

**REFERENCES**

1. Eliot, T. S.: Selected Essays, Faber and Faber London  
1953, P. 322, P. 92, P. 185, p. 325.

2. Eliot, T. S.: Sacred wood Matheen  
and Co. Ltd. London 1928 P. ix.  
3. Eliot, T. S.: To Criticise The Critic,  
Faber and Faber London P. 171.  
4. Eliot, T. S.: On Poetry and Poets, Faber  
and Faber London 1961, 32-33, 33.  
5. Evans, Sir Ifor: A Short History of  
English Literature: The English  
Language Book Society Box 295  
Wimpole Street London W I p 82.  
6. Hudson W. H : An Outline of English  
Literature : Delhi AITBS Publishers  
and Distributors 2003 P. 296.  
7. Normans Nicholson: T. S. Eliot PL.  
Editions Poetry, London 1948 P. 234.  
8. Richard March and Symposium of T.  
S. Eliot PL Edition poetry Tambimuttu  
(eds.): London 1948.  
9. Smidt Kristioan : Poetry and Belief  
1966 P. 97.  
10. Spender, Stephen : T. S. Eliot Fontana  
and Collirs Glosgow 1976 P. 12.  
11. Wrenn C. L. : Work and Symbol  
Longmans London 1967 P. I.

\*\*\*\*\*