

UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION  
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**Minor Research Project**  
**Executive Summary**

**“A Study of Modern Life in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot”**

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The Principal Investigator Dr. Ashalata M. V. P. Raman has done study on the topic, “A Study of Modern Life in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot”. The progress of the work has been going on steadily. Relevant books and journals have been purchased. Various libraries have been visited to study the poetry of T. S. Eliot with special reference to the delineation of the modern life in his poetry. Use of internet and online journals was also done.

**Introduction to T. S. Eliot as writer of the modern era:**

T. S. Eliot, (Thomas Stearns Eliot), 1888–1965, was an American-British poet and critic. One of the most distinguished literary figures of the 20th century; T. S. Eliot won the 1948 Nobel Prize in Literature. He studied at Harvard, the Sorbonne, and Oxford.

Eliot's early poetical works— *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917), *Poems* (1920), and *The Waste Land* (1922)—express the anguish and the

barrenness of modern life and the isolation of the individual, particularly as reflected in the failure of love.

### **The Prufrock and Other Observations:**

The poetry is of urban streets, and houses and people, not of woods and fields and flowers. Eliot is frankly satirical of Boston society, and the love theme, when it appears receives an ironic treatment. The rottenness, the corruption and decadence of contemporary society is exposed with the rare poignancy. The hero in the poem 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' is a member of the cultured society of a modern city which may be London, Boston or any other city. The title is ironic, for it makes the readers expect some love making, but the protagonist is entirely 'unheroic', a bundle of hesitations and indecisions, a neurotic, one who has not even the courage enough to approach his lady and propose to her. The poem portrays his hesitancy and indecision as also brings out the triviality, the hypocrisy, the emptiness, etc of the contemporary urban life. Modern man in the urban life is engrossed with all his other day to day works but the emptiness in him is creating a vacuum which ultimately causes rootlessness.

### **The Waste Land**

The Waste Land caused a sensation when it was published in 1922. It is today the most widely translated and studied English-language poem of the twentieth century. This is perhaps surprising given the poem's length and its difficulty, but Eliot's vision of modern life as plagued by sordid impulses, widespread apathy, and pervasive soullessness packed a punch when readers first encountered it.

Of course, "The Waste Land" is not quite the poem Eliot originally drafted. Eliot's close friend and colleague, Ezra Pound, significantly revised the poem, suggesting major cuts and compressions. Devoid of a single speaker's voice, the poem ceaselessly shifts its tone and form, instead grafting together numerous allusive voices from Eliot's substantial poetic repertoire; Dante shares the stage with nonsense sounds (a technique that also showcases Eliot's dry wit). Believing this style best represented the fragmentation of the modern world, Eliot focused on the sterility of modern culture and its lack of tradition and ritual. Despite this pessimistic viewpoint, many find its mythical, religious ending hopeful about humanity's chance for renewal.

Since the human level is an extension of the societal level, the basic themes are the same for both. The main theme is "modern life as a waste land." Eliot supports the theme by showing what was wrong with society in the early twentieth century. These shortcomings include lack of faith, lack of

communication, fear of life and death, corruption of the life-water symbol, and corruption of sex. A modern reader is often confused if he follows the critics' opinions. After a close reading alone he can understand its meaning, he can solve the problem of its theme.

### **Study of the Psychological problems faced by the modern man:-**

The modern man is facing lots of psychological problems due to rapid urbanization, industrialization and pollution. Randomly 50 people of urban areas were selected and interviews were held with them to study the psychological problems faced by the modern man with special reference to the delineation of similar problems faced by modern man in Eliot's poetry.

### **Visit to eminent psychiatrists:-**

Eminent psychiatrists of Akola city and Mumbai city were consulted regarding the psychological problems faced by the modern man. Dr. Deepak Kelkar, eminent psychiatrists of Akola city and Dr. Bhave of Mumbai were consulted. The causes leading to the Isolation and alienation of the modern man were studied through personal interviews and consultations with eminent psychiatrists.

### **Social Problems faced by the Modern Man:-**

Eliot's poetry mirrors the modern man and modern civilization. A civilization which is more complex and intricate than the previous one and the intricacy of his poetry is but reflection of the social problems and conditions of

modern society. With reference to the social problems faced by the modern man in Eliot's poetry, a study was conducted to study the social problems of today's urban man. Problems causing lack of adjustment and tolerance were studied. Interviews were conducted with lower strata of the society. Marital problems, Incest, Rape, Child Abuse, Economic problems were studied with special reference to delineation of the deracinated samples of metropolitan life depicted in the poetry of T. S. Eliot.

**Environmental Problems:-**

The impact of the polluted air, water and other serious environmental problems were studied with special reference to the poetry of T. S. Eliot and its impact on the modern man. The effect of pollution of Thames on T. S. Eliot's mind was studied with special reference to the impact of the pollution of the rivers and seas, on the mind of today's modern man. Rivers of Maharashtra and the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea were visited. In this context visit was conducted to Mumbai and Trivandrum (Kerala), to study the impact of the polluted Thames on the mind of T. S. Eliot.

**Other problems of modern man:-**

Internet was used to study other problems related to modern life like environmental pollution, depression, isolation, loneliness and mental illness.

**SIGNATURE OF THE PRINCIPAL  
INVESTIGATOR**

**PRINCIPAL**