



THE PHILOSOPHY OF ONENESS AS REFLECTED IN T.S. ELIOT'S 'FOUR QUARTERS'

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ABSTRACT:

Eliot's writings stand the test of time because Eliot deals with the things past and things present and its relationships with the future. His literature, particularly his poetry has proved to be the guiding star for the generations to come. His poetry dominantly voices forth the oriental philosophy of Non duality or oneness. It also reflects the Hindu Philosophy of 'dwait' and 'adwait'. Eliot's Long poem 'Four Quarters' is an epitome of his philosophy of oneness. Non-Duality, according to Eliot, is a mature state of consciousness and the awareness that there is no duality in life. In 'Four Quarters', Eliot talks elaborately on Universal Consciousness and Individual consciousness. Eliot takes timelessness as the foundation belief.

Key words: Non-Duality, Timelessness, Oneness, Individual Consciousness, Cosmic Consciousness, Present, Past, Redemption. Dwait, Adwait Vedanta, Christianity. Logos, Point.

Thomas Stearns Eliot, one of the foremost among the modern poet, is widely known for his realistic poetry, lucid and mystic dramas, and robust and trend setting criticism. He paved new paths in the arena of literature and criticism putting his own stamp upon the pages of time. Eliot is mostly known for his oriental philosophy, his Non-duality or the principle of oneness. Non-duality, according to Eliot, is a mature state of consciousness and the awareness that there is no duality in life. This state of awareness is present in many religious beliefs like Hinduism, Adwait Vedanta, from where the term is derived, Buddhism, Sufism and Christianity as well.

The structure of the poem Four quarters is enormously complex. As The Title goes the poem is divided into four quarters. Some Critics view a reflection of Dante's divine comedy in this poem. It also maintains literal, allegorical, moral and mystical levels.

Apparently, we live in a world divided by dualities. One observes different human beings living in this world amongst millions of others. It seems that the world today is undergoing terrible violence owing to this duality. We need to live under the umbrella of commonality that we are humans first irrespective of our view points.

This principle of oneness is more lucidly described in Eliot's big poem 'Four Quarters'. 'Four Quarters' begins with an epigraph which serves as the initial commentary on time and starts the poem's tone and its basic themes. The Epigraph is composed of two parts in Greek quoted from Heraclitus. The translation is like this: "Although logos (Universal consciousness) is

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common to all, most live as they possess some special wisdom (Individual consciousness) of their own". This introduces the primary concern of 'Four Quarters'. Smith's liberally translated the Heraclitan fragment, "Although there is but one centre, most men live in centers of their own." Heraclitus says that there is only one logos or centre of intelligence similar to the foundation field of existence, which Maharishi calls pure consciousness or pure intelligence that underlies all the individual intelligences that make the phenomenal world. An example from Modern physics well describes this non-dual individual and logos relationship. What Heraclitus means that a 'logos common to all.' (Heraclitus: The Cosmic Fragment, 63). The second Heraclitus describes 'The way upward and way downward are the same.'

Eliot articulates throughout 'Four Quarters' that timelessness the realm of God - undergirds all of time. Timelessness becomes a foundation belief for him as he says in Four Quarters:

'Time present and Time past

Are both perhaps present in time future And time future contained in time past If all time is eternally present.'

Thus, the time undivided and indivisible 'one' is the original and immaculate condition of time. The grant subject of 'Four Quarters' is the redemption of time. Eliot's visit to Burnt Norton, East Coker and Little Giddings are acts of redeeming time. All references to undreamed time in 'Four Quarters' occur as a naming of time in terms of its sundered parts. 'Here is a place of disaffection/ Time before and Time after.' (Burnt Norton, III-17). "What might have been and what has been?" (Line 9) is a sample of the manifold dualities/ opposites that mar life in time. Point to one end, is always present." (Line 10) Point here stands for direction, stillness and 'end' means cessation or purpose. "Point" is the keyword in the vocabulary of 'Four Quarters'. Eliot uses the word 'point' (not movement and "assert"/ Burnt Norton-II) for the non-duality of time and "nowhere" (not "here" and "there") for the non-duality of space. Lines 9 to 10 articulate the distilled wisdom of highest art of living in contemplative tradition of east and west, Medieval Christian mysticism, Advaita Vedanta, Buddhism and Sufism. This 'supreme doctrine' (Hubert Benoit) of the world's contemplative traditions is that without the death of dualities and "movement" we don't truly live. "You can't live without dying". (J. Krishnamurthy / Freedom from the known, 1959) or "In my end is my beginning." (East Coker V) or "Time must have stop." (Shakespeare's Henry IV Part-I). Thus, paradoxically speaking like Eliot, time seems motionless but moving around the axis of being, around the endless end.

Football echo in the memory

Down the passage which we did not take Towards the door we never opened

Into the rose-garden. (13)

The picture created in the above lines shows the rose garden of Burnt Norton. The entrance to this garden is 'our first gate'. (That in the last stanza of Four Quarters Eliot fondly recalls as "the unknown remembered gate." Making the textual memory of his poem live forever.

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Conclusion: There are ample references in the poem 'Four Quarters' regarding the principle of oneness or non-duality. T.S. Eliot seems to have unified the philosophies of all religions of the world in one thread. Eliot is, without any doubt, the pilgrim of oneness what he calls as the principle of Non-duality. Eliot weaves a relationship between time, eternity and immortality. According to Eliot, "It is only through Time time is conquered."

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