

MODERN MAN AS A SPIRIT-LESS CREATURE WITH REGARD TO THE POEM THE HOLLOW MAN BY T.S ELIOT

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ABSTRACT

The current study aims to explore the hollow nature of modern man with specific reference to T.S Eliot's poem "The Hollow Man". The paper has deeply explored the hollowness and spirit-less creature of modern man which the author has highlighted in the poem. The current study has explored the poem "The Hollow Men" which is a bleak and haunting exploration of the disillusionment and spiritual emptiness of the post-World War I era. It reflects Eliot's sense of the moral and cultural crisis of his time and his belief that humanity had lost its way. The poem's complex imagery and fragmented structure invite multiple interpretations, but at its core, it conveys a sense of despair and the search for meaning in a world that seems devoid of it. The study is qualitative in nature, based on the textual analysis of the poem. Through textual analysis and thematic analysis, the study will deepen one's understanding of poetic techniques and literary modernism and will also enrich the human understanding of emptiness, alienation, spiritual crisis, spiritual desolation, existential crisis, and hollowness of modern human beings.

Keywords: T.S. Eliot, Modern poetry, Hollow Man, spiritual emptiness, existentialism.

1. INTRODUCTION

T.S Eliot, experiencing the First World War, wrote this poem, "The Hollow Men." This poem is a clear, direct, and succinct description of the havoc cast upon the world by the World War. The after-effects and the influence of war upon the affected were the burning topics for the then-writers. The poem clearly pinpoints the miseries, destruction, gruesome effects of the war, and the psychological implications of the war upon the masses causing trauma for the affected. The war, however, influenced the psyche of the people and bore negative outcomes. Hopelessness, pessimism, blasphemy, revolt against the governmentally established law and order, and most importantly the spiritual decline were the by-products of this war. These all negative traits completely overlap the modern men. These negative elements that were prevalent in modern society forced Eliot to paint what he observed. The modern men had lost hope and were discontent about their lives. Therefore, Eliot determined to write about how

modern men lacked spiritual strength. And how they had become spiritually empty. Modern men differed from their anterior counterparts. Hollowness and spiritual decline remain, throughout the poem, the subject matter of the poem in the long run.

1.1 Background of the study

The poem, "The Hollow Men" was written around 1925 by the then-prominent modern critic T.S Eliot in response to the after-effects of World War I upon the society. This war put the Western culture on stake almost pushing it to death. The war started in 1914 and ended in 1918 respectively was a huge anti-humanist act in the history of humankind. Almost, every field of life was disturbed and suffered from its consequences. The war adversely affected the economy, education, infrastructure, and other public service institutions. Destruction, desolation, destituteness, and extreme psychological implications cast by war tempted the writers of the

time to write what the war brought to the world. World undepressed financial, educational, moral, ethical, religious, political, and institutional crises. Setbacks in all these foundational structures of a country posed serious challenges to the survival of its inhabitants. Besides that, the culture and civilization bore the consequences. The war proved a blow to the culture and civilization. Such a situation grabbed the attention of Eliot to portray the scenario that he perceived during his lifetime. These serene conditions and the suffrage that his countrymen were going through including Eliot induced him to write up for this poem.

1.2 Problem statement

T.S Eliot highlights the aftereffects of the havoc that resulted from the First World War. Moreover, his poem envisages social, political, cultural, and religious impacts that the war brought about inclusively technological disruption. This research is, however, intended to sort out the elements that were axiomatic in modern men in terms of their spiritual decline. Additionally the research pinpoints with utter transparency, the spiritual deficit of the modern men at the time.

1.3 Research Question

The current research is a textual analysis based on the question regarding the hollow nature of a modern man highlighted by T.S Eliot in his poem The Hollow Man. Concerning this poem, this study revolves around finding the answer to how the modern man is a spiritless being.

1.4 Research Objective

This research deepens one's understanding of poetic techniques and literary modernism will also enrich human understanding of emptiness, alienation, and spiritual crisis, spiritual desolation, existential crisis, and hollowness of modern human beings. The research is aimed at finding out the characteristics that characterize the modern man as a spiritless being.

1.5 Delimitations

The data in this research is the by-product of the interpretation of the actual text of selected poem. It wholly interprets the text subjectively. Thus, the whole data has been extracted from the poem for analysis so far.

1.6 Significance of the study

The research is going to explore novel ideas and interpretations regarding the poem. An in-depth inspection of modern men's nature is solely aimed let alone the mere description of historical events and portrayal of the physical and economic loss cast by the war. In a sense, this research is highly representative of the social conditions of the masses after world war. Further, how and how much the affected suffered psychologically and personally is the central point for the discourse in concern. How human lifestyles and views about life and philosophy of life transformed exclusively just on account of the war, how humans' perspectives about their own lives changed. A few years back they valued life and optimism about the world but now the case has turned out to be otherwise. For now, they disvalued their own existence and compared themselves with dead soil. This research is, therefore, destined to flourish the transformation and change that the war brought with itself.

2 Literature review

The hollow men: a peek into the death of the European culture by Munia Islam. The research brings to light the cultural decline of Europe after the World War. It defamed, alongside cultural decline, the people of Europe who undepressed several fatal conditions. However, the research provides various references from the poem that define the cultural deficit of Europe. Therefore, the following lines best portray how modern men faced cultural setbacks.

Shape without form, shade without color

It reflects that the modern man has lost his identity. Moreover, the modern man had no predictable lifestyle. Therefore tradition could survive around this time. This identity crisis is found in this poem. So, it is proved that there was a cultural decline in Europe around this time. (Islam, 2021)

2.2 The thematic investigation into T.S Eliot's The Hollow Men concerning the textual approach by Mariwan Barzinji

This research defines what the theme of the poem was. The poem spotlights the aftereffects of the world and how these circumstances affected the people psychologically. (Hasan Barzinji, 2012)

2.3 In the shadow of man: the war for existence in T.S Eliot's the hollow men between the idea and the reality, between the motion and act by Brent Wiggins
This research paper characterizes the actual condition of modern men. What condition they

underwent and what type of suffrages they encountered at the time. It also shows the hopelessness, and poverty of modern man, life which was free of beauty in his poem, and the disability of the modern man to even uplift his hands for prayer. (Wiggins, 2017).

2.1 Theoretical framework

The research implies the theory of existentialism. It exclusively revolves around the idea that the modern man is aimlessly leading his life without being certain of his direction and actions. He knows not where to head. In this state of affairs, the modern man rolls on which leads him at length to the frustration and devaluation of his own life. But at a time he thinks of himself and feels pity for his condition. Moreover, owing to passing a life of sheer unawareness, he assumes himself at some point useless and devalued. This, when the situation intensifies over the course of time, creates a sense of underestimation within him for himself. This saddens him and realizes him a hollow creature. Thus, he detests his existence so far.

3. Research Methodology

The research formally applies the textual analysis of the material relevant to the topic. Being the literal topic, the conventional principles for applying methods for conducting such research bring into use the textual analysis method of investigation. This method is a way of interpreting the material subjectively. All the statements and arguments are interpreted by the observation and comprehension of the researchers of the topic by the researcher. The researcher supports his claim by providing favorable statements regarding his stance. Whatever the case is the researcher is independent in interpreting the text in accordance with his own perceptions and understanding in the long run.

3.1 Research Design

The procedure under which this research has been conducted is utterly qualitative. Therefore, the method entertains textual data and proceeds with textual analysis.

3.2 Data collection

The research is qualitative respectively. Therefore it collects data through the keen study of the poem. It thereby assesses the lines of the poem through the keen observation of the message that the poem

conveys. Rewardingly, the data is collected through the textual analysis.

3.3 Sampling

Hence this study is a textual analysis of a literary piece so the stanzas of the selected poem have been thematically analyzed. The stanzas have been plus modern men used as a sampling throughout the poem.

4. ANALYSIS/ DISCUSSION

Analysis of the first stanza

Mistah Kurtz he dead

A penny for the old guy

The poem begins with an epigraph, or a written statement after the death of Mistah Kurtz, who was an ivory trader. The representation of Kurtz in the poem symbolizes his hollowness. He was a hollow man in the sense that he was immoral and influenced the character in the novel "Heart of Darkness" by Joseph Conrad.

The second epigraph is a representation of a guy namely "guy flawless" who was a catholic. He supported another catholic leader against the anti-Catholic legislation King Jams. In this regard, he plotted to blow up the parliament but was captured red-handed and sentenced to death. After all, the country celebrates its anniversary annually on 5th (Nov). The children knock on each door and ask for/request some pennies from the people to buy a scarecrow and burn it in the streets. The characters of both men represent hollowness and humanity, which is likely found in modern men too. Thus, Eliot resembles these modern men with those immoral and spiritually empty people of the past in the very prologue of the poem.

We are the hollow men

We are the stuffed men

The aforementioned lines describe that modern men are empty but stuffed men with useless things.

Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!

The very condition of modern men is reflected by comparing them with the scarecrows that are elected, while being filled with useless stuff, in the fields. These scarecrows reveal the laziness and inability to move and any action.

**We are the hollow men
We are the stuffed men
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas**

In the very start writer calls the modern men including himself hollow men and stuffed men. Hollow represents the inability and emptiness whereas stuffed reveals that the modern men are loaded with useless stuff that is unworthy.

The third line reveals that the minds of modern men are replete with bushes and straw. This is so pitiful that their intellectuality is no more. Why does the writer say that their minds are filled with straw? Just because the modern lacked wisdom and behaved foolishly.

**Our dried voices, when we whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
As wind in dry grass**

Or rats' feet over broken glass In our dry cellar
In these lines, the poet explains that the voices that modern men produce are dry and meaningless. Their voice is so slow. This is why that is unheard of. This shows that their voice is the voice of those who are ignored. These modern men are the most ignored ones. Furthermore, all is meaningless and worthless whatsoever they speak. However, their speech is worthless no more than the sound of the rats' feet which are produced when they walk into the cellar over the broken glass.

Dried voices represent once more lifelessness. Although modern men are walking they are dead walking. No matter all that they do, is of no use. Their activities are unproductive nothing, whatever comes out of their mouths, is appreciable and noteworthy. However, like the dry grass, they are dried souls, lacking the actual essence of being alive.

**Shape without form, shade without color,
Paralyzed force, gesture without motion;**

Having shape and yet being formless describes that they have no identity. And to label them with any identity would be an effort in vain because modern men were incapable of maintaining their identity for a long time. Their attitude is inconsistent and resembles the continual transformation of the shape of amoeba and gases. They do not have any identity of their own. They are rolling stones.
Shade without color:

After the world war, nothing seemed to be colorful in right. The land around, the homes, and the roads and streets all looked barren and colorless. As with war,

the case with the geography was with the inhabitants. They looked colorless. Dark were their expressions, and in darkness, they lived. Lacking the characteristics of happiness in their lives, they led a life stream of shadiness and narrowness.

Throughout the years they lived under depression, uncertainty, and ambiguity. And regarding, their words and whatever they articulated, seemed colorless. Their words like bodies were hollow, for their words scarcely gave any meanings, whatever the reason be, modern men, however, are victims of hopelessness and utter frustration which snatched from them the beauty of life and their importance on the planet.

**Shape without forms, shade without color,
Paralyzed force, gesture without emotion;**

The reference of the fathers or of things who have died accepted the death boldly. Even those dead would call us the dead men. It won't be wrong to call us dead, because we are already deadly aliens. We are directionless our soul is not vibrating therefore; it seems as if it is lifeless. Moreover, it is also certified that the souls of modern men are not violent souls which caused them to lag in terms of religious spectrum. Modern man is inclined explicitly towards materialistic things. They went on access and found materialistic pleasures. Spiritual actualization was the target of modern men. But running after physical and mundane pleasures became the order of the day. They indulged themselves in mundane activities so excessively that they felt not any pang in their hearts for their spiritual decline which was breathing its last breath.

Moreover, violent souls mean the souls that are lively and bear the features of momentum but the modern men's souls bore no momentum. It was utterly stagnant and their souls have gotten rusted gravely. Bodily they were stuffed/materialistically they were stuffed but when it came to spirit, they were hollow to a considerable extent.

Stanza, this is the dead land, this is the cactus land, here the stone images are raised, and here they receive The supplication of a dead man's hand.

Under a twinkle of fading star.

This stanza exposes the negative/destabilized features of the land and its residents. Many people worshiped. These deadly men worshipped. Who needs the supplication of such deadly persons? They themselves deserve mercy. They are in disgraceful

condition. And their situation is pitiful. Moreover, they erect statues of whom they bent before and worshiped. Do these stone-made statues receive the prayers of these dead men, these soulless men what they truly deserve to be called, worship that own raised stone images while letting the candle which temporarily enlighten them and then fades away after all? Here the poet may be indicating the temporary /ad hoc lifelessness of their spirit which dies away after a short period. They turn to pray but sooner they turn towards worldly actions. Their relationship with god is crippling. They could not stay connected to god for so long. Their relationship with their god is very likely to be the fading star in nature. This transient attitude symbolizes their weakness to stay persistent in other activities of life. They are not reliable owing to their changing behavior. These lines reveal their attitude that do not take any task solely and serenely no matter whether those activities are worldly or spiritual.

Stanza: the eyes are not here

There are no eyes here

In this valley of dying stars

In this hollow valley

This broken jaw of one lost kingdom.

This stanza conveys the message that modern men are blind. This valley means our land has lost enlightenment in its totality. In the absence of light, no one can see anything. Inclusively the inhabitant is blind. Then it would be effort in vain to perceive anything. And the kingdom has fallen victim to complete havoc. Destruction all around, but nothing remains attractive to glance at. Star detests to visit such an ugly land. This valley of blind people attracts no one. Dying stars represent the death of the souls of modern men. There is no more spiritual enlightenment not even the chances of spiritual upheaval seem to be in sight at length.

Every land earns a fame owing to its unique characteristics and its countrymen. Unfortunately, the kingdom of modern men was destabilized alongside its countrymen. Regarding, the lands earn the name "The Hollow Land, and its inhabitants as hollow men". They were spiritually powerless. Thus they remained in the pit of extreme darkness. Apart from this the poet also relates these modern men with those who are already dead. When he describes them as powerless. Hopeless, breathless, spiritless/soul-less, emotionless, lifeless,

impassionate, unenthusiastic and frustrated, and directionless.

These all negative characteristics represent the adverse and inactive conditions of modern men.

They though visibly living on the surface of the earth seem to be living unearthly and underground lives. Similarly, their narrowness and frustration give additional information regarding their inner and defects and low lawlessness. How they, inwardly, are shattered, that how, innately, they are distorted, that how, internally, they are dysfunctional, and how, spiritually, they are hollow and faithless. Doubtlessly, hereby it is proved to a greater extent that the modern men had become soulless, they were living deeds, they had just anatomy but not the spirit, and they were aimless and they were ineffective and non-productive. They declined in each humanistic feature. They were leading lives more likely to animals. No action of them reflected sagacity.

Conclusion

The research mirrored the life of the modern man. It penetrated every aspect of modern man deeply. Furthermore, the research assessed the character of the modern. It penned down several aspects of the life of the modern man. How the modern man declined in terms of his spiritual strength specifically is the central theme of this research. Therefore it concentrated upon the factors that influenced the spiritual aspect of the modern man. Besides that, the research also reflected the aftereffects of the world war that left grave implications for the people of Europe. The war naturally introduced some psychological along with physical, educational, economic, social, religious, and institutional conundrums for the modern man. This eventually led the modern man to a state of anxiety, skepticism, depression, and anti-religion. After all, these problems including the advancement in science and technological disruption turned modern man into a spiritless creature. These things affected their souls fiercely.

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