

## *The Waste Land : Paraphrase*

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### (1) Burial of the Dead

April, the month of spring, is the cruelest month for the modern Waste Landers, for it reminds them of life and activity (of which they do not like to be reminded). Lilacs (lily flowers) grow out of the land which had remained dead, so to say, in the winter months. The month of April mixes up both memories and desires in their consciousness. Their dull souls are stirred up as the roots of trees and plants are stirred up into activity by spring rain.

Marie, a German Princess, remembers her love-experiences and sexual pleasures during the winter season which is now over. In the winter season the earth was covered with snow and there were no stirrings of life and so the need for action was forgotten. There was minimum of activity, and spiritually they were as dry and dead as dried tubers (roots). But they migrated to the South, where it was warm and pleasant (and where they could have their fill of sexual and sensual pleasures). When they were near the lake Starnbergersee in Germany, rain came so early in summer that they were taken by surprise and took shelter under a row of trees. When it was sunshine again they went to Hofgarten, a pleasure park in Munich, Germany. There they drank coffee and talked for an hour. The German Princess tells her companion and lover that she was not Russian at all. She came from Luthinia and she was a real German. When they were children, they lived with their cousin, the arch-Duke, once he took her out for a ride in a sledge (a small dog-driven cart). He drove fast, and she was frightened. The Duke asked her to hold him tightly. She did so, and down they went. In the mountains a person feels free (freely enjoys sex). She then tells her that she reads for a long time during the nights and then goes South in the winter season. (Marie is a typical Waste Lander, and such is life in the modern waste land).

The modern waste land is entirely desolate and the people are all spiritually dead and sterile. It is like a rocky barren land in which no trees can grow. There is no fertile soil but only stones and rubbish. In this waste land Man does not know what spiritual fertility means. In this waste land there are only heaps of broken images or idols (false spiritual values); it is scorched with the heat of the sun, the trees are dead and give no shelter, and the singing of the cricket provides no relief, and no life-giving water flows over the dry stones. The waste landers can protect themselves from the heat of the sun, only by taking shelter in the shadow of the red rock. This shade or protection of the red rock is entirely different from the shadow (of Death) which is behind them in the morning (early life) and which rises to meet them in the evening of life (old age), and of which they are so much afraid. Man is mortal, a mere handful of dust, and he lives in constant fear of death.

Then follow two extracts from a German opera of Wagner entitled *Tristram and Isolde*, and they enclose within them another episode of guilty love. The first four lines in German mean that fresh blows the wind, and the ocean is calm, but his beloved has not come. Where does she linger? The other extract of one line means, "empty and desolate the sea." The lover is hopeless. He is ill and will die soon. Guilty love results in spiritual deadness. This is also illustrated by the episode of the Hyacinth girl. The lover wept after illicit sex, he could not see or speak anything. He could not understand the truth.

There is spiritual degeneration all round in the modern waste land. Even the function of the Tarot pack of cards has degenerated. It is used for fortune-telling and thus cheating the credulous people. Madame Sorostises, the famous fortune-teller, is sick and suffers from cold. But she is considered to be the wisest woman in Europe, as she can foretell the future with a wicked pack of cards. Her clients stand round them, and she shows them, one by one, the cards which foretell their respective futures. On one of the cards there is a picture of a drowned Phoenician sailor, (whose eyes have been transformed into pearls by the re-generating power of water) but such regenerating is not possible in the modern age. On another card there is the picture of Belladonna, a hard-hearted lady, and so called 'the Lady of the Rocks', who is an expert in manipulating sex-intrigues. On another card there is the picture of a man with three staves (The man may be the legendary king Fisher with his *Trishul*, symbolising the three fold way to salvation). Next there is a card with the picture of a wheel on it (symbolising the ups and downs of life) Then there is the card with the picture of a one-eyed merchant on it (symbolising the degeneration of the Syrian merchants). Then there is a blank card, a card on which the fortune-teller sees no picture, but it is supposed to represent something which he, the Syrian merchant, carried on his back (it symbolises religion and the mystery of religious truths which the degenerate fortune-teller fails to see or understand). She does not

find the card with the picture of the Hanged Man (Christ) on it (because she is blind to spiritual truths). She advises one of her clients to fear death by water. Then she sees crowds of people walking in a ring (symbolising the dull routine of modern life). Then one of the clients pays to her, her fee, and she thanks him (or her). She also asks this client to tell Mrs. Equitone, if he happens to meet her, that she would herself bring her horoscope to her. Fortune telling is an illegal activity and so they have to be very careful.

The poet next addresses the 'unreal city' which may be any city in the modern waste land—London, Paris or any other—for there is the same spiritual desolation everywhere. The poet observes it from a distance covered with the brown fog of the winter morning. He sees a crowd of people flowing over the London bridge, and he had never imagined that there were so many dead people (spiritually dead). They sighed frequently, as if they were in great suffering. Each of them walked with his eyes fixed on his feet. They were all unhappy and dissatisfied with downcast eyes. They went up the hill, and then went down to King William Street, a street in which a number of banks and offices are located, and in which these spiritually dead people work. There stands the church of Saint Mary Woolnoth, and the sound of its clock striking the hour nine is a deadly sound to them, for it is the time when they must commence their daily work (which is hateful and tiresome to them). The poet (or Tiresias) recognises one of them and stops him by calling loudly his name "Stetson". They were together in the same ship at Mylae (a great naval battle in the ancient Punic war between Rome and Carthage). Last year Stetson had planted a corpse in his garden, and now his friend asks him, if it has begun to sprout and will it bear flowers this year, (Corpse here symbolises spiritual deadness) and its sprouting symbolises spiritual regeneration, or has it been completely deadened by sudden unexpected frost. He advises Stetson to keep away at a distance the dog, who is a friend to man, and who would dig out the corpse with its nails, and so prevent it from sprouting (Dog symbolises human conscience which reminds man of the need of spiritual regeneration, but such effort is disliked by the spiritually degenerate modern man and hence he likes to keep the dog far away). The passage concludes with the words, "you hypocrite you are like me. You are my brother." In other words, all are equally dead spiritually in the modern waste land.

## (2) A Game of Chess

The poet begins by describing the bedroom and dressing table of a rich and fashionable lady, belonging to the highest sections of society. She sat in a chair which shone brightly like a throne studded with jewels. In its bright light her marble dressing table also 'glowed' or shone brightly. Her looking-glass was held up by wooden pillars on which were carved vine creepers with grapes, from which small cupids, the love-god, peeped out (and another cupid was shown as hiding his eyes behind his wings). Her looking-glass and glowing

table reflected back the bright light falling on them from a branched candle-stand holding seven candles, and in this way the brightness of the light was doubled. Jewels taken out of satin cases were scattered on the table in rich abundance. They glittered in the bright light, and their glitter further intensified the brightness of the light falling upon them from above.

There were also small bottles made of ivory or coloured glass. They were full of artificial scents purchased from foreign, unknown countries. Some of these artificial perfumes were in the form of pastes, like ointments, others were in the form of liquids or powders. As the bottles were opened, rich perfumes came out and overwhelmed the senses with their strong odour and troubled and confused those who inhaled such strong odours. These synthetic, artificial odours were carried up to the ceiling by the fresh air that came through the window. The fresh air loaded with these perfumes reached the ceiling and fretted the light of the candles, so that the smoke of the candles reached the well-decorated ceiling of the room. The ceiling was decorated with sunken panels, and these decorative patterns were now fretted by air and smoke.

In the fire-place there burnt huge logs of sea-wood which were pushed into the fire-place by rods of copper. The fire acquired a greenish orange colour, because the fire-place was framed by coloured stones. The figure of a dolphin was also carved on the fire-place, and it seemed to be swimming in this coloured light. On the old mantle-piece there was carved a scene through which one could see, as it were, a wood or a garden. The scene depicted the story of Philomela who was raped by the barbarous king Tarus, her own brother-in-law, but was later transformed into a nightingale, the bird with a golden throat. She was raped by the use of force, but was transformed into the bird with a golden throat, and since then deserts and forests have echoed with her sweet song. Maidens are still raped as Philomela was raped, but while in the past, as a result of suffering, she was transformed into the bird with a golden throat, no such transformation is possible in the modern age. Nightingales still sing out their painful story, but it is mere senseless "Jug, Jug" to the dirty ears of the modern waste landers. They fail to understand the real significance of the nightingale's song. Women are still raped, they are still pursued and force is still used against them, but in the past, there was transformation through suffering.

Some other figures were also carved on the mantle-piece, which seemed to lean out as if trying to listen to some sound in that closed and silent room. Soon there was heard the shuffling sound of the footsteps of some one climbing up the stairs. The lady knew that it was her lover, and she was emotionally excited. Her excitement was so great that her hair which she was combing and which was spread out in the dazzling light of the room, seemed to have 'fiery points', and they glowed as if they would speak out. But they remained still in a

sinister, savage manner (but still they conveyed the intensity of the lady's excitement).

After sometime (in which the lady and her lover must have indulged in sex), the lady said to her lover that her nerves were bad that night. Yes they were very bad, and she wanted him to stay with her that night and speak to her. She asked him why did he never speak to her. He must speak to her. Next she asked him what he was thinking of when the lover still remained silent, she repeated her question, "what are you thinking of?" and told him rather impatiently, "I never know what you are thinking". "You always keep thinking and never talk to me." The lover merely replied that he was thinking that they lived in a lane infested with rats, so many that they could eat away even the bones of a dead man.

At this point there is some sound or noise and the nervous, frightened lady asked what that noise was. The lover replied that it was the wind under the door. The noise was heard again, and the lady asked as to what the wind was doing there (under the door). The lover merely replied that it was nothing, that it meant nothing. The nervous lady then impatiently asked, if he knew nothing, if he saw nothing, and did he remember nothing. The lover replied that he remembered a line from Shakespeare *The Tempest*: "those are pearls that were his eyes." At this the lady angrily asked him if he were alive or not, and was there nothing in his head except that meaningless line of Shakespeare. The lover replied that the line he remembered was so elegant and so intelligent. (It was not mere meaningless nonsense). The lady was entirely dissatisfied as is evident from her repeated question, "What shall I do now? What shall I do?" If he did not talk to her, she would rush out into the street, half-dressed as she was, and would walk the street with her hair stretched out. Then she asked what they would do to-morrow. She did not know what they would ever do. The lover simply reminded her of the daily routine of their lives. They would have a hot bath at ten, and if it rained they would go out at four in a closed car. They will play a game of chess as usual and wait eagerly with wide open eyes for a knock upon the door (indicating the arrival of some guest or some lover of the lady).

Next the poet (or Tiresias) narrates another episode, this time from middle class life. The speaker is a friend of Lil, and she is talking to some friends seated in a restaurant. When after the war Lil's husband was retrenched, she herself told Lil frankly and clearly without mincing any words—at this point a voice is heard asking them to hurry up, for it was time to close the restaurant—that as her husband Albert was now coming back home, she should try to make herself a bit more smart. He would certainly ask her what she did with the money he gave her to get a nice set of teeth for herself. He swore that he could not bear to look at her, and she (the friend of Lil) told her that she herself also could not bear to look at her (her

teeth made her look so repulsive). She should think of poor Albert. He has been in the army for four years, and now on his return home, he wants to have a good time and enjoy himself. If he could not get that enjoyment in the company of Lil, there are others who will give him that enjoyment. Lil asked angrily if there were others who would give him a good time and the friend (the narrator of the episode) replied that there were certainly such other women. Lil replied that in that case she would know whom to thank for it (She meant that in that case she would know that her friend was the person concerned) and then looked angrily at her friend. At this point there is again a call to them to hurry up, for it was the time to close the restaurant.

But they continued to talk without heeding the call. Lil's friend frankly told Lil that if she did not like her advice and did not care to make herself more smart, then she was free to do what she liked. There were other women who could pick and choose and if any one of them eloped with him, then she must not complain that she was not warned at the right time (she, her friend, has herself warned her). She should be ashamed of herself to look so old (while, in reality she was so young, only thirty-one years of age). Lil replied with a sad face that she could not help it. She took certain pills to bring about an abortion, and the pills damaged her health. They already had five children, and she nearly died when her sixth child George was born. The chemist had told her that it would be alright but she has never been the same, after taking the pills. Lil's friend told her that she was a great fool, and if Albert does not leave her alone (*i.e.* has sexual intercourse with her), then she must bear the consequences. Why did they marry, if they did not want children?

There is again the call asking them to hurry, for it was time for the restaurant to be closed up, but they continue to talk. The friend of Lil further tells them that on that Sunday Albert returned home. They had a hot pig for dinner, and they invited her to enjoy it hot.

Now the call to hurry up is impatiently repeated twice, and they have to put an end to their conversation. They bid good night or say "ta ta" to each other, and then leave in a hurry.

### (3) The Fire Sermon

The section begins with the poet (or Tiresias) pointing out that the tent, formed over the river Thames by the trees on the opposite bank meeting at the top in the spring season, is now broken because, with the coming of autumn, the trees have shed their leaves. The last few leaves that look like fingers clutching each other, are also gradually falling on the wet banks of the river. The wind is blowing over the land covered with brown leaves, but there is none to listen to it. The river banks are desolate, for the ladies who had thronged them in the spring are no longer there. They have departed. The poet (or Tiresias) remembers the lines from Spenser's *Epithalamium*, and

asks the river Thames to flow on gently till he ends his song. The river no longer carries on its surface empty bottles, sandwich papers, silk handkerchiefs, card-boxes, cigarette ends, and other such evidence of picnics that were held on its banks in the summer season. The ladies have all departed, and so also have departed their friends and lovers, the good-for-nothing heirs of rich directors of business concerns in the city of London. They have gone away even without leaving their addresses (with the ladies whose company they had enjoyed). It is all animal-like copulation and at this degeneration Tiresias weeps again, as he once wept long ago when he sat by the lake Lemon. He asks the sweet river to flow on till he ends his song, and he promises that his song would neither be long, nor shall it be sung loudly. He would soon end his song, for when a cold gust of wind blows behind him he hears the rattling of bones, and a chuckle so loud that it seems to come from a mouth open wide from ear to ear (and the sounds terrify him).

Once long ago on a cold winter evening, Tiresias, the all-knowing, was fishing in the dull canal behind the gashouse. He heard the sound of a rat's creeping softly through the vegetation, it dragged its dirty, slime-covered belly with great difficulty along the banks of the river. As he sat fishing, he thought of his brother, king Fisher, who had become a cripple and also of the death of his father before him. Next, he saw in his imagination white bodies lying naked on the low damp ground, and of bones lying in a little low dry garret, rattled by the rats' feet year after year (all these are images of ugliness, squalor and spiritual barrenness). But he could hear behind him, from time to time, the sound of horns and motors, carrying Sweney (a lustful person) to Mrs. Porter (a woman of loose character). The moon shone brightly on Mrs. Porter and her daughter who wash their feet in soda-water to make them look fairer still and so attract more customers. Tiresias is reminded of a line from Paul Verlaine's opera *Parsifal*, "Oh, these children voices singing in the choir," suggesting the degeneration of the modern waste landers whose lust is aroused even by children.

The next passage of four lines refers to the rape of Philomel and her transformation into a nightingale, the bird with the golden throat. She was rudely raped by her brother-in-law, King Taru, but suffering transformed her into the nightingale. But her song is mere meaningless "Twit, twit, twit", or 'Jug, Jug' for the modern waste landers. They fail to understand its real significance.

Modern cities, like Paris, London or any other, which even at noon are covered with a brown fog are hot beds of corruption and sexual perversion. Syrian merchants, like Mr. Eugenides, come to these cities with their pockets full of currants, and with documents showing that cartage and Insurance is free on goods brought by them if payment is made at sight. They are degenerate and shabby, homosexuals. They speak vulgar French, and once Tiresias himself wa

invited by one of them to have lunch with him at Cannon Street Hotel, and then pass the week end with him at the Metropole (Both these places were much frequented by homosexuals and other such perverts).

Next, Tiresias narrates an episode from lower middle class life. The typist works all day in her office, and at dusk her eyes and back turn upwards from her desk, *i.e.* she looks up as the office time is drawing to a close. She is compared to a human engine, throbbing and waiting like a taxi. Says Tiresias that now he may have grown old and blind but in his life he has seen and experienced all. He has had experiences both as a man and a woman. Now he is an old man, but he has also the wrinkled breasts of an old woman. The time of dusk is the time when all return to their homes, it is the time when even the sailors return home from the sea. At this time the typist also returns home. He sees her in her home. First she removes the breakfast plates etc., from the table, next she lights her stove to prepare her evening meal, and serves her food in empty tin boxes. She then takes out her clothes spread out on the windows so that they may be dried up by sun and heaps them up on the divan which is also her bed for the night. Her stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays are all placed on the divan. Tiresias, the old man with wrinkled breasts, sees the scene, and can easily foretell the rest, for he himself had waited as the typist was then waiting for the arrival of her lover.

The guest soon arrived. He was a youngman with a red face. He was a small house-agents clerk, and he had a bold stare. He was one of those mean and vulgar people, who try to look self-confident but who are as awkward in their movements as a Bradford millionaire with his silk hat on his head. He at once guessed that the time (for sexual advances) was favourable, the meal had ended, and the typist was bored and tired. He tried to engage her in love-making, she did not rebuke him, but remained indifferent to his love-making, thus indicating that she did not desire it. He was drunk and determined, and at once proceeded to have sexual-intercourse with her. His hands explored her body so to say, and she did not stop him. This was sufficient for him, for he was not vain, and did not wait for any response from her side. She was indifferent, and he welcomed her indifference (Tiresias comments that he himself has had such experiences on similar divans or beds, he who has sat below the walls of Thebes and walked among the lowest of the dead) Having had his fill of sex, the youngman kissed her for the last time in a patronising manner and groped his way down the dark stairs.

The typist turned and looked for a moment in her mirror. She was hardly conscious of the fact that her lover had gone away. Only one half-formed thought passed through her mind, "well now that is done, and I am glad that it is all over." She was a lovely woman and she had stooped to folly. But now she walked up and down the room, smoothed her hair automatically and unconsciously, and then



put a record on the gramophone (so that its music may make her forget it all).

The music of the gramophone remains Tiresias of the music which he once heard as he walked on the banks of the river Thames. He went along the Strand, the London street which leads to the locality where the poorer people live. He heard it as he went down the Queen Victoria Street, close to the river Thames. London is a degenerate city. There he has sometimes heard in lower Thames Street the pleasant, but plaintive music of a mandoline coming out of a public-bar mixed up with the sound of clatter of vessels, the chatter of fishermen dining and resting there, at noon. There is situated the well-known church of Magnus Martyr with its walls splendidly decorated with silver and gold, but nobody cares to visit the church. (Rather, it is suggested that the church be demolished).

In the modern-age, the river Thames has been made dirty by oil and tar which is carried by ship sailing on it. But there was a time (in the age of Queen Elizabeth) when well-decorated barges sailed on it. They were driven by the tides of water or by the wind which filled their beautiful red sails. They sailed in the direction in which the wind blew. But now the ship carry along with them logs of wood, drifting on the river, towards the Greenwich lake or pool of water, opposite to which is situated the Isle of Dogs (The river has been completely commercialised and polluted).

There was a time when Queen Elizabeth and her favourite Earl of Leicester used to sail on the river in their beautiful barge. Its front was golden, and it was all coloured red and gold. It sailed briskly as the South-west wind filled the sails and there was swift current in the water. As they sailed down the river, they could hear the sound of bells coming out of the white towers of the prison situated nearby.

Now all this is changed. The London streets close to the banks of the river have dusty trees and trams run there with their smoke and ugly noises. The speaker, the first of the three girls, who live near the river, says that she was ruined in the two river-side holiday picnic spots called Richmond and Kew. There she was raped in a narrow boat. She was forced to lie flat there, and raise her feet. The second Thames daughter says that she was ruined in Moorgate locality in the eastern part of London, where poor people live. She felt much humiliated. After the event, the person concerned wept. He promised a new start, that he would change his ways, but the poor girl made no comments on what he had done or what he said. She is so poor and insignificant that it is futile for her to resent anything (The absolute helplessness of the poor is thus stressed). The third Thames daughter says that she was ruined on Margate sands, a picnic spot on the Thames. She does not remembering anything, she was so dazed and bewildered. Her life, and the life of the humble people, who are her parents, friends or relatives, is as worthless and insignificant as broken

finger-nails. They are entirely helpless, and expect nothing (but suffering and exploitation).

The poet is reminded of the words of St. Augustine in his *Confessions* : "To Carthage them I came, where a cauldron of unholy loves sang all about my ears." The entire modern waste land is burning in the fire of lust. Only God can pluck them out of this fire of lust and save their souls. As it is, they are all burning in this fire. To whatever section or strata of society they may belong, they are equally lustful and degenerate. They are all burning.

#### (4) Death by Water

Phlebas was a Phoenician sailor who were famous in ancient times for their skill in navigation. Now he has been dead for a fortnight. Now he no longer remembers the cry of gulls which he used to hear during his voyages. Now he has also forgotten all about the rise and fall of the waves of the deep sea. His materialistic activity *i.e.* his pursuit of wealth has also come to an end. His bones were caught by a current of water under the sea, and were carried away with a slow, whispering sound. As his body rose and fell with the current, he passed (in the reverse order) the various stages of a man's life from youth to old age. At last his body was caught in a whirlpool and was seen no more. Thus ended his earthly existence.

We should learn a lesson from his tragic death. Whether we are believers or non-believers, we should not seek to control our destiny and drive ourselves the boat of our life. If we do so we shall meet the tragic fate of Phlebas, who was once as tall and handsome as we are. We should have faith in God, and leave our destiny in His hands.

#### (5) What the Thunder Said

The section begins with an account of the arrest of Christ at the hand of his enemies. They came in search of him with torches in their hands. Their faces were dirty with sweat and red with anger. He was arrested in a garden and there was frosty (death-like) silence after his arrest. He suffered great agony in palaces and prisons made of stone. Then the mobs shouted angrily as it was rumoured that Christ was about to be released. Prison and palaces resounded with their shouts. Then at last Christ was crucified. But at the very moment of his crucifixion there was thunder over the distant mountains indicating that soon there will be rain (rain is the symbol of regeneration) The poet adds that Christ did not die when he was crucified. He lived on in the hearts of the devout but now he is dead because we the modern waste landers have forgotten him and his teachings. We who were living when Christ was crucified, are now dead. We are now dead spiritually and we make no efforts for our spiritual salvation or regeneration. We are passive and inactive so far as spiritual matters are concerned.

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The second passage refers to the journey of the Questers (Sir Perceival and others) in search of the holy Grail. They reach the Kingdom of King Fisher and climb the mountain on the top of which, it was believed, the holy Grail was kept in a chapel called the chapel Perilous. It was a difficult journey for there was no water and they were all thirsty. There were only rocks all around them. It was a sandy road that went up the mountains in a winding, zag-zag manner. They were rocky mountains without any water. If only there were some water, they would have stopped to drink it. They would have stopped to drink it, they were so thirsty. But among the rocks none can stop and think. Sweat was dry on their faces, and their feet were covered with sand. The repetition of, "If there were only water among the rocks," conveys their intense thirst and longing for water. The caves of the mountains were horrible, like wide-open mouths full of rotten teeth. In these dead mountain-mouths there was no water at all. They were absolutely dry and could not even spit. The questers could find no comfort in those mountains—they could neither stand, nor sit, nor lie down to rest. They had to go on climbing constantly. There was not even silence in the mountains. They could hear the sound of thunder, at a distance, but it was a thunder without any rain. It was sterile or barren thunder bringing with it no life-giving or regenerating rain. There was not even solitude in the mountains. They were not alone there, but were surrounded by red, angry faces that seemed to sneer and snarl at them. They could see such faces through the doors of houses whose mud-plaster was cracked. Such sights horrified them and added to their suffering. They would not have suffered so much if there were water and no rocks, or even if there were rocks, but also water. If only there were a spring of water or a pool of water among the rocks, they would have drunk from it. Even if they had heard the sound of water, it would have given them some hope. But the only sounds they could hear was the singing of Cicada (an insect) or the whispering sound made by the wind as it passed through dry grass. They heard the sound of water falling over a rock, but alas! it was only the hermit-thrush—whose song sounds very much like the falling of water—singing in the pine trees. Its song, "Drip, drop, drip" etc, sounds very much like the sound produced by the falling of the drops of water, but in reality there was no water at all.

The third passage describes the journey of two of the disciples of Christ who are going to the Biblical waste Land of Emmaus. One of them asks his companion as to who was the third person walking by his side. When he counted there were only two, he and his companion. But when he looked ahead towards the white road, he always saw a third person walking by the side of his companion. This figure was well-wrapped in a brown cloak, and had a hood over its head, so that he could not say whether it was a man or a woman. So he asks his companion once again to tell him who it was that walked by his side.

The fourth passage describes the aimless journey of the modern waste landers, uprooted from their hearths and homes. A murmuring

sound of lamentation is heard in the air, as if some women were mourning and crying. There are huge crowds of people wandering over endless plains. The earth is cracked at places, and they stumble and fall. The plains on which they wander are spread out as far as the horizon. They are ringed only by the horizon. A city is seen over the mountains, which cracks, is broken, but again assumes a particular shape, and then bursts again, in the air at the time of dusk. The towers of churches or other big buildings of that city seem to be falling down. The city may be any of the unreal cities in the modern waste land. It may be Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, Vienna, London or any other city in the modern waste land. All are equally unreal and equally in ruins so far as religion and spiritual values are concerned.

These uprooted people of the modern waste land suffer from neurosis and hysteria. This becomes clear from the behaviour of a woman in the crowd who tightly draws out her long black hair and plays upon them as upon the strings of a fiddle, a musical instrument (She seems to have gone mad). Horrible sights are to be seen. In the dim light, at the time of dusk, one can see bats with baby faces who whistle, beat their wings, crawl, lean downward, down a blackened wall. There are towers upside down. They are towers of churches far from them still comes out the sound of bells reminding the people that it was the time for them to go to the church and say their prayers, but nobody heeds them. To the modern humanity they indicate merely the passing of time (and carry no spiritual significance) Voices are also heard singing out of empty cisterns and empty wells (symbolic of spiritual dryness). There is spiritual sterility all around.

In the next passage, the poet reminds the readers of the grail-legend, and the journey of the questers. They have climbed the mountain, despite all difficulties and horrors, and are now close to chapel Perilous where the grail is kept. About the chapel, it is a scene of desolation. The graves are open, and the wind blows through the dry grass with a song-like sound. The chapel is empty, there is nobody in it except the wind. It has no windows, and its doors swing as the wind blows. The bones of the dead can be seen in the open graves. These dry bones can harm no one, but it is an ugly, horrible sound. But a cock stood on the roof tree and crowed loudly. Its crowing signifies regeneration and spiritual re-birth of the questers (as well as of King Fisher and his kingdom) for they were now close to the chapel Perilous, and their quest was about to end successfully. Soon there is a flash of lightning and a damp gust of wind bringing rain, symbolising the dawn of spiritual regeneration.

The passage which follows refers to the condition of utter draught and famine which once prevailed in India. The water level in the holy river Ganges was low. The leaves were hanging down in a lifeless manner, dry and withered. All waited anxiously for rain. There were black clouds over the distant Himalyas, but there was

no rain. The beasts of the jungle suffered from intense thirst, and sat helplessly. All men and beast alike sat crowded together in complete silence. They prayed to God (Prajapati) and the God replied to them in a loud thundering voice.

First, God spoke the word 'DA' that is to say that if they wanted His blessings, they should give themselves over to some noble cause. But the modern waste landers are not devoted to any noble cause and hence their spiritual degeneration. Devotion or surrender to some noble cause is possible only in moments of intense emotional excitement. Only in such moments does man have the awful courage of giving himself over absolutely to some noble cause so that he cannot retrace his steps when he thinks over the matter more prudently (in a worldly sense). It is only through such devotion to some noble cause, that humanity has survived spiritually and culturally. Such people have suffered martyrdom, but the account of their suffering and martyrdom is not to be found in the obituaries (accounts of life and death that are daily published in the newspapers) It is not to be found in the accounts of their life and death carved on tomb stones, which are covered by spiders with their cobwebs. Neither is it to be found in their wills, the seals of which are broken by lean lawyers, after they are dead, and their rooms are empty.

The thunder spoke to them a second time, and repeated the word 'DA'. It means sympathise God commanded them to come out of the prison of self and enter imaginatively into the sorrow and suffering of others. It is only rarely, once in a life time, that one turns the key of the prison of self, and comes out of it. Otherwise, the key to the prison of self keeps it closed, and the more they close it and shut themselves in their own respective prisons the more isolated they grow. It is only at night, and that, too, rarely when the conscious self is asleep, that the voice of God speaks to the soul, and one forgets for the time being his own ego and pride. It is only in such rare moments that the Coriolanus in each of us is regenerated and we forget, for the time being, our own self-centredness, come out of the prison of self, and sympathise with others. Such sympathy is essential for spiritual re-generation.

The thunder spoke to the people a third time also, and the same word *DA* was repeated. The *DA* spoken now means *Damyata*, that is to say self-control, control over one's own passions and desires. It is only such self-control that makes the journey of life easy and comfortable. Life may be likened to a boat. Just as a boat sails easily and smoothly, almost gaily, when the pilot is well-trained and skilful, so also the journey of life becomes smooth and happy when we have acquired self-control. Then the sea becomes calm, there are no storms, our hearts respond joyfully to the calm sea, and the boat of life goes ahead gaily as it is controlled by skilled hands. Such self-control is essential for a successful and happy life.

Once the poet (or Tiresias) sat fishing on the banks of a river with a dry and desolate land behind him. He was fishing so that, at least, he may set his own land in order *i.e.* work out his own spiritual regeneration. In the modern waste land London Bridge is falling down and it keeps falling down constantly, *i.e.* spiritual values are decaying and disintegrating, particularly in large cities like London, Paris or any other. The poet is reminded of a line of Dante, "Please remember my pains." It is only through suffering that regeneration takes place. He also refers to the story of Procene, who suffered and was transformed into a swallow. The story also implies that spiritual regeneration can take place only through suffering. The lines from a French sonnet, "the Prince of Aquitace" of the ruined tower also convey the same lesson. Such are the lessons which the poet has learned for his own salvation, to repair his own spiritual ruin. As Heironymo, the mad father in Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, tells the actors that he can provide them with a good play which they should enact, so also the poet has 'fitted' his readers with the way in which they can work out their own spiritual salvation. If they give themselves over to some noble cause, if they learn to sympathise, if they also acquire self-control, and if they remember that suffering alone leads to spiritual salvation, they would acquire spiritual calm and tranquillity. Then there would be nothing but "Shanthi, Shanthi, Shanthi" in their lives.