Objectives

The present study is an attempt to analyze the theme of Nature Versus Degenerated Morals in The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock and The Waste Land. The problems raised in the poems are eternal questions pertaining to the clash between evil and good, between belief and disbelief and thus, it has a universal appeal. In the words of Eliot:

“The real conflict is not between one set of moral prejudices and another, but between the theistic and the atheistic faith; and it is all for the best that the division should be sharply drawn.”

Degeneration means one’s passing into a worse physical, mental or moral state than one, which is considered normal or desirable on the part of human beings. This sort of chaotic transformation on the part of modern materialistic and mechanical human beings can be seen in abundance in The Waste Land. In today’s scientific and materialistic world man is degenerating day-by-day. In a blind materialistic pursuit, he is forgetting all his moral and spiritual grandeur. In fact, the entire moral, spiritual, intellectual and physical traits, which are essential for a human to be humane, are vanishing day-by-day leaving him behind like a waste land where there is only barrenness that can never nourish the goodly tree of human being to survive or flourish in the poisonous environment of the modern social set up. He is on the verge of extinction because he has got completely degenerated.
Here with this research we want to extract the lack of spiritual feeling is central to the modern wasteland, which is conveyed through the reflection of the mythical wasteland devoid of water, the source of life. However, since the poem appeared in 1922, there have been contradictory reactions to it. Some have dismissed it as a joke against academic critics and have seen Eliot’s notes as his final trick. Some have assessed it as the finest example of modernist art, reflecting in its own difficulties the complexity of the modern world. Some have heard in the poem a whimper of despair. Some have sensed that behind the cleverness of the poem a tortured lover was seeking to justify himself. The theories, interpretations and assessments are amazingly diverse and this fact has led some critics to admire the poem that can stimulate so many reactions.

T.S. Eliot’s approach to poetry was new and revolutionary. The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock (1917) declares its departure from the romantic tradition of love-poetry and introduces a poet who is profoundly conscious of his age. Here is a poet who felt that all creativeness lies in the realm of the spirit, that it arises from a state of mental suffering caused by spiritual stagnation and psychic sterility. He sees the choice for civilized man as between the pain of spiritual stagnation or the willing surrender to purgation, to the heavy toil of spiritual rebirth. The poet differs from others in the same environment in his awareness of the plight of modern man. Eliot established his reputation as the greatest force in English poetry with the publication of The Waste Land.