

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Both George Bernard Shaw, “a fruit of an unsuitable marriage”¹, and T.S. Eliot are great intellectuals, versatile genius and literary Titans of twentieth century. Their eminence as a thinker and author is universally acknowledged. B. Ifor Evans considers them the great figures in English drama in the twentieth century.

Woman has been a subject of intense and perennial interest in all times and climes. But the last century has witnessed striking changes in her character and conduct and in our attitude to her. The “New Woman” has emerged in life as also in literature. Such a momentous development could not have the penetrating insight of Bernard Shaw. In his plays Shaw has probed, analysed and depicted the “New Woman” with sympathy as well as with critical acumen. He has explored woman in her fascinating and apparently bewildering variety. In the opinion of Shaw, ‘women are all different. It is the men who are all alike.’ The woman occupies a pivotal role in his works as the Ideal Woman, woman as huntress, the Career Woman, the Saving Woman and the Self Sacrificing Woman.

There were various factors and formative influences that moulded Shaw’s conception of, and attitude to women. In the first instance, the life of Shaw’s mother influenced his attitude to women, a great deal. She was herself a “New Woman”, as she was independent, Self-reliant and disdainfully impervious to the frowns of the priggish and the orthodox. Shaw inherited the flight of imagination

from his mother, as she was a music instructor. Apart from his mother a few other women, too, profoundly influenced Shaw's portrayal of woman characters. Mrs. Jenny Patterson, a widow and a music student of his mother made him realise that he was important. She pursued him with all her might. And his early experience of Shaw indicates the source of his theory of Spider-woman. In 1885, he met Florence Farr, Career Woman, with life on the stage. His affairs with Florence did not last long as he was captivated by another woman Edith Nesbit, a member of Fabian Society. She was a "New Woman" of her day and was highly arrogant and aggressive at the meetings of the society. Besides these Shaw had many love affairs, ever being chased and trapped by women and too often the pursued became the pursuer.

His innate iconoclasm will not tolerate the Victorian slavery of women. This image breaker broke through the barriers of every contention regarding the superiority of man over woman. He asserted that women are the highest creation and the initial form of life. Besides this, his androgynous nature made an authentic contribution and formative influence towards the development of his ideas on women. He assiduously and regularly read Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* (in French) and orchestral score of Tristan that made a great impact on the formative views of young Shaw. In 1882, he became converted to Socialism. Ibsen made a profound effect on the mind of Bernard Shaw and went a long way in moulding his views on women. Ibsen's assertion that woman has an independent individuality besides her sexual role, profoundly influenced Shaw. Shaw's essay, *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* is concerned more with woman than with Ibsen. His first highly philosophic play *Man and Superman* was published in 1905. It was

followed by *John Bull's Other Island*, *Major Barbara*, *Doctor's Dilemma*, *Getting Married*, *Pygmalion* and *Heartbreak House*. He completed *Back to Methuselah* in 1820. Three years later his masterpiece, *Saint Joan* brought him dazzling success. The Victorian thought that a woman had no other purpose in life except marrying and building up a home and family. It was against this conception of womanhood that temper of Shaw's time was exhibiting a rapid change. The age of Shaw was the period of dissolving creeds and clashing theories. The people of the day permitted indulgence in sex but at the same time insisted that it should be restricted to the sphere of conjugal life. However, a vigorous propaganda for the emancipation of the woman was carried on by the intellectuals, humanitarians, philosophers and reformers of the day. Shaw read Ibsen and Marx and evolved his own theory of the Creative Evolution and assigned a superior place to woman in society. Shaw derived two main elements from the nineteenth century thought - The Doctrine of Evolution and Theory of Will.

The Feminist Movement was gathering momentum in Europe with many leaders pioneering the cause of women's emancipation. He became an active leader of the movement and desperately longed for the removal of their fetters. Authors like Webb, Ibsen, J.S. Mill advanced the cause of women's freedom from age-old thraldom. Shaw joined hands with the reformers in their crusade against injustice and cruelty done to women.

Shaw gave a new Ideal of womanhood. It is interesting to note the importance given to women in the titles of some of his important plays, e.g. *Candida*, *Major Barbara*, *The Millionairess*, *Mrs. Warren's Profession* and *Saint*

Joan. Woman becomes a mouthpiece for the universe in *Getting Married*, manages Captain Brassbound's conversion and serves a link between *Man and Superman*. Shaw remarks that a woman exists as an individual quite apart from her sexual role. The Ideal Shavian Woman is emancipated and self-assertive. She is domineering, wilful, clever and 'selfish'. Shaw's 'selfishness' is not self-seeking, but self-respecting, not egoism but egotism. 'Be as selfish as you can' is the essence of Shaw's marriage. Shavian selfishness is a virtue because to be selfish is to be duty-bound. One, who cannot fulfil his duty towards oneself, cannot fulfil his duty towards others. Shaw's Ideal Woman, by virtue of her intellectual superiority, domineering personality and individualistic tendency occupies a superior position in man-woman relationship. Shaw is 'a first class ladies tailor' and the job of the ladies tailor is to clothe her suitably. Hamon gives the word 'La triomphatrice (the wining woman) for the Ideal Shavian Woman.

The portrait of Ideal Shavian Woman has been criticised from two points of view, the lady's and the Sensualist's. Constance Barnicoate regards them as "utterly, hopelessly, weakly, compatible types of woman."² Sensualist critics, like Frank Harris, regard them as "distinctly unpleasant and practically unsexed woman."³

In fact, Shavian women are not 'sexless dolls' but they combine intellectual agility and cleverness with sexual attractiveness and feminine charm and grace. To call Shaw's woman as 'unwomanly' and 'sexless', is to misconstrue his genius. His women, no doubt, are 'unwomanly' and 'sexless dolls' in the sense they are free from cowardice, timidity and prudery, typical with conventional

women. They are feminine in the sense and endowed with a capacity to attract man. In *You Never Can Tell* Gloria is highly passionate girl of twenty with an abounding sex appeal. She is at the same time an embodiment of self-assertion and haughty high-mindedness. Mrs. Warren in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* is domineering, imperious and imposing. Shaw's Ideal Woman is really winning and victorious, never repentant and suppliant to anybody's wish. Major Barbara is an Ideal Woman who is self-respecting and assertive.

Shaw, in the first instance, depicts a strong instinctive impulse in women which he calls 'hunting' or 'chasing'. This is the characteristic of all his women with the exception of Major Barbara and St. Joan. Shaw reversed the prevailing belief that man hunts woman and holds that woman is the hunter and man the hunted. He regards woman as the instrument of the Life-Force or Creative-Evolution. Shaw depicts remarkable examples of this anti-Victorian love-chase in *The Philanderer*, *Man and Superman*, *Misalliance*, *Village Wooing* and *The Millionairess*. Shaw holds the view that the life force takes possession of a woman's mind and she works as, 'Nature's Contrivance' for perpetuating its achievement. In this case man has to work as 'Woman's contrivance' for fulfilling Nature's behest so that the Superman should be born to supplant the present man who is merely 'feverish' and 'selfish clod of ailments and grievances'.

Bernard Shaw dramatizes the spider-fly relationship in his plays. Ann Whitefield in *Man and Superman*, Blanche Sartorius in *Widower's House*, Julia Craven in *The Philanderer*, Gloria Clandon in *You Never Can Tell*, Hypatia Tarelton in *Misalliance* etc. are such huntress women who capture men and

pursue them in order to be wooed. Ann Whitefield, as Everywoman, represents the “evolutionary appetite”. She cannot resist the urges of Life-Force in order to give birth to a Superman. She is convinced that Tanner is the fittest man to hunt for Superman’s father. She chases and wins over. Without making her cold and prudish, Shaw has thus tried to represent that his huntress is, like Diana, chaste and fair. But it is remarkable to note that Lady Cicely in *Captain Brassbound’s Conversion* is an interesting variant of the Shavian huntress. She does not like Ann Whitefield entrap the man but avoids it.

The Victorian ideal of womanhood as enunciated by Lord Tennyson in his dictum, ‘Man for the field, woman for the hearth’, was condemned by Shaw as illogical and outdated. As a Fabian Socialist, Shaw pleaded for the liberation of woman from the four walls of the ‘prison homes’ and struggled to give them a life of economic freedom. There is no salvation for her unless she makes her self-dependent. That is why he emphasizes upon the importance of bread winning job for her in order to liberate her from the economic thraldom of her husband and father in the interest of her self-esteem. The Shavian Career Woman is not an ordinary sort of woman. She is many things nested in one. B. B. Watson has remarked thus:

This Shavian Career Woman is a criticism of society, is an embodiment of the divine spark, is a Bernard Shaw, is a dominant protective mother is a vestal virgin to whom sex is given for safe keeping.⁴

Shaw’s career women are bold and imposing. They do not need the help of men in their careers and they are always represented as bosses and not

subordinates. The career women in Shaw's plays may be queen of Egypt, Empress of Russia, Power Mistress General, Salvation Army Major, Saint or Boss. All these humbly urge women's right to work and succeed in liberating them from the age old clutches of slavery of men.

Mrs. Warren's Profession is a dramatisation of the economic woman. What is really shocking in *Mrs. Warren's Profession* is the sexual exploitation of women who are not prostitutes because she understands the reality of life. She knows it is easier to be an arm-chair philosopher than to be a realist. She condemns respectability as a shame and sheer hypocrisy. She tried her best to maintain the so-called respectability but poverty led her to wretchedness. Her own daughter, who initially detests her mother, realizes the stark reality of life. She compliments her mother thus: "My dear mother! You are a wonderful woman: You are stronger than all England." Shaw locates the roots of sexual prostitution in the defective social system in which poverty, squalor, arising from underpaid labour or enforced employment leads women to sell their affections and sexual services. Shaw's Mrs. Warren chooses the life of a prostitute not out of weakness but through the strength of her mind.

Another important Shavian Career Woman is Major Barbara, a Major in the Salvation Army. She is opposed to any kind of tainted money being used for salvation purpose. Shaw has presented the full picture of this great Career Woman in a highly artistic manner. She comes to realise in Act III: "That there are larger loves and divine dreams than the fireside ones."⁵ Barbara, a true Christian is hurt

to find that money governs firing, rent, taxes, respectability and children cannot be washed by anything but money. Money is the greatest saviour.

Luna in *Misalliance* is an independent and triumphant Career Woman. She is truly Shavian Career Woman who is on the top of her profession. Shaw is interested in a successful and dominating woman and not in a drudge. She takes pleasure in risking her life once a day, praying to remind herself that she has a soul, shunning marriage as a degrading slavery. She has strength of her mind and such undaunted spirit of unconventionality as in another career might qualify her for sainthood.

Career Woman, in wider sense, include the female protagonist in *Caesar and Cleopatra* (a Queen), *Great Catherine* (an Empress), *The Apple Cart* (Power mistress General), *Saint Joan* (a saint), and in *Misalliance* (a boss). In *Caesar and Cleopatra* Shaw has portrayed Cleopatra in her younger years unlike Shakespeare and Dryden. She is only sixteen years of age, yet she likes all other career women, is confident and commanding, successful and domineering. In *The Apple Cart* Lysistrata, the Powermistress General is a career mother who is competent and dedicated civil servant with the manners of a school mistress. St. Joan is a career girl who has agencies for managing people and has an unbounded energy that will not admit defeat. She is not without innate feminine feelings, humility and tenderness. She makes a bold departure from the beaten track of accepted conventions. Epifania, in *The Millionairess*, is as dominant as St. Joan, St. Clara, St. Teresa. She is highly assertive and dominating woman of business. She, being

a ‘boss’, a Career Woman of Shaw is fully sensitive to her dignity and can handle and manage everything.

Shaw has given a new interpretation to the meaning of Saving Women. Earlier the Saving Woman was supposed to have such virtues as were unattainable by the real woman. She was a paragon, an ideal and artificial dreamlike entity. Shaw condemned the unrealistic models of the Victorian Saving Women and introduced a new kind of Saving Woman – woman who could really protect erring man going astray in course of life. The Shavian Saving Woman is required to save the society, to save the world, the mankind as a whole. Shaw appeared to have hoped that women, the eternal mother of baby men was most competent of divine creations to save the human race. Candida, Major Barbara, St. Joan, Lady Cicely, Catherine even the wild millionairess and also the soothing wives and mistresses, in the later plays of Shaw, all indicate essence that women have some resources that men do not possess. The process of introducing new type of Saving Women, true to Shaw’s ideas begins with Candida. She is a clever and sincere housewife who manages the house efficiently. Unlike Ibsen’s Nora, Candida does her best to make her marriage a happy one. In fact she is an adorable motherly woman. Her attitude to Eugene shows her saving instinct. She saves him from fall a prey to morbidity. She is Shaw’s first Saving Woman with deep-rooted maternal instincts. Candida is followed by Lady Cicely of *Captain Brassbound’s Conversion*. She converts Captain Brassbound ‘filebuster adventurer’ saving both his soul and skill. She is highly adventurous, fearless and manages the men for their own good and becomes the mistress of their own good and the mistress of every situation. She has ideal nature to save. She opens the eyes of Brassbound to reality and strips

him of all illusions. *Major Barbara* comes next. In her, the managing skill is of the greatest importance because it is the part of a talent for government. She wants to give eyes, new values and spiritual ways of life to the multitude of people. Serving under Undershafts and Bodgers, she wants to mother them aright so that out of them a new world of Superman might be created. St. Joan is the ultimate Saving Woman in the line of public personage. She saves a nation and does so in the light of highest religious principles. She undertakes to refine the obviously base section of mankind. She saves her country from confusion yet claims nothing for herself. Hesione Hushabye in *Heartbreak House* saves her husband from the people of the world. She acts as a shield for her husband who is a philanderer and can make love to more than one woman at a time. She is self appointed patroness in the play. Queen Catherine in *Good King Charles Golden Days* is a highly devoted and tolerant and protective wife to her husband. She acts with self-respect and responsibility. Jamima, in the *Apple Cart*, is a remarkable Shavian Saving Woman. She is a model of tenderness, sympathy and respect. All the Shavian Saving Women like Candida build castles of comfort and indulgence and love for their husbands and stand sentinels always to keep their vulgar cares out.

Shaw also gives the portrayal of self-sacrificing nature of mother woman. Mrs. Collins the conventional mother in *Getting Married* is supposed to be an intolerably narrow-minded mother. She is a self-sacrificing mother. As a matter of fact she is sorry contrast to her mystical and philandering sister in law. Mrs. Collins rightly says of her: "She is never known men but me; and she cannot properly know me." Thus Mrs. Collins who keeps her children under her wings is an epitome of the conventional as opposed to the instinctive mother.

Shaw's views on marriage are based on his positive theory of Creative Evolution and his faith in Woman's part therein. Don Juan in *Man and Superman* acts as the mouthpiece of Shaw. The Life-Force respects marriage only because marriage is a contrivance of its own to secure the greatest number of children and the closest care of them. Shaw is interested in perpetuating and bettering the human race. For him, marriage is the most healthy and indispensable institution. Marriage according to Bernard Shaw is the only relationship which assures healthy and respectable growth of the next generation. The greatest benefit of a marriage is shared by mothers and children who, but for its economic safety would be condemned to most deplorable conditions. Marriage aims at a scientific, systematic and pure growth of children in order to make people happy. Women, it is seen with all their talk of liberation and emancipation are even keen to cling to marriage, particularly because it offers them a comfortable security. Shaw does not hesitate to suggest divorce when the marriage does not provide happiness and conjugal harmony and facilitate the arrival of Superman. *Getting Married* is a significant indictment of the existing laws and conventions of marriage because of its sex-slavery, sentimentalism, its romance and its amorism. As a matter of fact it is not mere sex that allures a woman to marry but it is purely an intellectual understanding between the two that ultimately matures into matrimony.

There are different kinds of wives portrayed in his plays. Mrs. Clandon, like Candida, is incompatible with her husband. The plays like *You Never Can Tell*, *Major Barbara*, *Overruled* are distinctive for their searching and penetrating commentary upon wife-husband relationship. The plays depict philandering and unsuccessful unions. For Shaw, philandering is quite legitimate activity. Marriage

for the Shavian women has no basis of love or morality. Lesbia in *Getting Married* wants to have children without the tyranny of a husband. He advocates an unqualified to sexual union. He condemns the slavery of ethics and morals in matter of breeding. Shavian wives are not romantic and sentimental girls. They are rather the voice of experience, devotion, solicitude, maternal self-effacement, fierce protectiveness and unlimited indulgence are qualities of a typical Shavian wife. Mrs. Collins, Mrs. Bridgenorth and Leo are typical Shavian wives. Shaw refutes the sentimental fallacy that marriage is a happy ending. *The Devil's Disciple* is typical of Shaw's plays without marriage. He criticises the cruelties of the marriage laws and customs but at the same time also depicts married couples bound in harmony of affections owing to the unconsciousness working of Life-Force.

Shaw began as a relentless crusader against the cant of romantic love. In the first place, he is an anti-romantic in treatment of love in his plays. In *Arms and the Man*, he mocks at the romantic 'high love' through Louka. Even Raina, in the later stages, is disillusioned and prefers love of her chocolate-cream soldier. Sergius, the romantically handsome, brave and heroic officer has love for Raina in the tradition of knights and their lady love. Her conversation with Bluntschli, the mercenary soldier, exposes the hollowness and irrationality of romantic love. Towards the end of the play we find that Louka, the maid servant, with Sergius, Raina with Bluntschli are married.

In *Candida* Shaw tries to rationalize love as far as possible. Candida's love is motherly. She develops a warm corner for Eugene Marchbanks in her heart not

because a grand romantic passion has possessed her. She is rather perfectly cool and unsentimental when the moment comes for her to make a choice between her solid husband and her fragile poet lover, she shows herself thoroughly unromantic and practical. She is a rational thinker in the matter of love.

An intellectual and literary figure ingredient three principles in his nature simultaneously, religious, commercial and literary from his family is none other than T. S. Eliot. Eliot's literary interest, was stimulated by his mother, charlotte C. Eliot, who herself was a distinguished poetess. She was an advocate of woman's rights. She was an Ideal Lady of high moral character and strove to establish the identity of a woman in society. His emphasis on regeneration and his skill for dramatization show his mother's influences on him.

William James, George Santayana, Irving Babbitt and Josiah Royce were the great source of inspiration in his school days. The study of *Divine Comedy* established his relation with Dante. He was awarded a travelling fellowship. Eliot began to read Latin at twelve, Greek a year after in the Smith Academy in St. Louis. He received a Gold Medal for the best knowledge of Latin.

Eliot in his theory of impersonality in poetry is clearly influenced by Bergson. In 1914, Eliot migrated to London and met Ezra Pound, the most perceptive figure in the English literary circle. The significance of Pound in making of Eliot is well commented by Wyndham Lewis:

It is no secret that Ezra Pound exercised a very powerful influence upon Mr. Eliot.... 'Genntion'

1920 is a close relative of ‘Pruferock’, certain matters filtered through an aged mark at both cases, but ‘Gerontion’ technically is “School of Ezra.⁶

In 1934, there was a marked change in Eliot’s attitude. He took up the poetic drama during the later years of his life. His first work in this direction was *The Rock*, 1934. This was followed by *Murder in the Cathedral* in 1935. In 1939 *The Family Reunion* came and it was a failure but it did not deter Eliot. During 1940-42 appeared *East Coker*, *The Dry Salvages*, and *Little Gidding*. These three and *Burnt Norton* were combined together to form *Four Quartets* in 1943. In 1948, he wrote *Notes towards the Definition of Culture*. By now he was honoured by his literary associates as Charles Eliot Norton, Professor of Poetry at Harvard in 1932-33, President Classical Association, Nobel Prize for Literature in 1948 and Order of Merit in the same year. He Wrote *The Cocktail Party* in 1950, *The Confidential Clerk* in 1955 and *The Elder Statesman* in 1959.

Broadly speaking, the contemporary feminist movement worked for female equality as the earlier nineteenth century feminism had done. But the movement differs significantly in the basic arguments regarding the nature of the biological differences between the sexes. The nineteenth century feminists were convinced that women’s biological inheritance included many feminine characteristics and their natural instincts suited them primarily for homemaking and childcare. Today, feminists argue that in a society with real equality women would be in a position comparable to that of man who at the present time are able to combine occupational and other roles with those of husband and father.

The feminism of the 19th and 20th centuries focussed on the acquisition of a few basic political rights and liberty for women, such as the right of married women to own property and enter into contracts, the right of defendants to have women on Juries and the crucial right to Vote. Mary Wollstonecraft, one of the earliest crusaders for the emancipation of women knew through bitter experience the hardships women were exposed to simply by virtue of their sex. Her *A Vindication of the Right of Women* anticipated virtually all the demands of the women's movement- education, legal representation, the right to vote, the right to property and admission to professions. John Stuart Mill held the view that women's position is not natural but the result of political oppression by men. He maintained that the masculine domination of the family has a corrupting influence making boys selfish and girls object. John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* emphasises the 'equality of opportunity'. The liberal believes an individual liberty for women.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton elaborates her vision of women's freedom in her last speech, "the Solitude of Self" delivered in 1893:

The point I wish plainly to bring before you on this occasion is the individuality of each human soul, our protestant idea, the right of individual conscience and judgement; our republican idea, individual citizenship. In discussing the right of women, we are to consider, first what belongs to her as an individual, in a world of her own, the arbiter of her own destiny.⁸

The same vision was very much expressed by Jane Austen, Maria Edgeworth, Bronte's and George Eliot, Elizabeth Barret Browning in which "All creatures glad and safe, I deem no guns nor springes in my dream."⁹

T.S. Eliot like Norman Mailer believes biology to be a limiting factor and thinks that women should not transgress the definitive limits. He is with the male chauvinist in thinking that the woman is always subservient to the male. We never find Mailer portraying woman as a serious partner as bread winner. T.S. Eliot's women named as Chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral* are leaderless women of Canterbury. They are depicted as the passive spectators. He does not give the full liberty to women but shaped them as subordinate figures to men. Summing up the general male attitude towards women Karen Horney writes:

Men have certain fixed ideologies concerning the nature of woman is innately weak, emotional enjoys dependence, is limited in capacities for work-even that woman is masochistic by nature.¹⁰

D. H. Lawrence has provided his heroines with individual dignity. Mailer's women remain subservient beings. Lawrence in *Women in Love* says: "The man has pure freedom, the women hers."¹¹ Lawrence believed in the superiority of female that he was considered a female in the disguise of a male.

As far as T.S. Eliot's views are concerned about woman, she has been regarded as inferior, yet somehow meant to be man's spiritual guide, half divine, intermediary between God and man, but looked as temptress, sinner, as well. The Chorus in *Murder in the Cathedral* consists of the poor women of Canterbury. They are the puppets in the hands of society. They represent common humanity immersed in the petty concerns of everyday life, and cannot bear too much reality. They are the wistful, leaderless women of Canterbury calling for spiritual

guidance in their half-lived lives. A passionate warning is given by the Priest that the homecoming of the Archbishop would be ominous for himself, his church and his flock. Safety lies in his going back to France:

O late late late, late is the time, late too late, and
rotten the years;
Evil the wind, and bitter the sea, and grey the sky,
grey, grey, grey.

O Thomas return, Archbishop; return, return to
France . . . You come with the applause, you
come with rejoicing, but you come bringing death
into Canterbury;
A doom on the house, a doom on yourself, a doom
on the world.¹²

The Chorus of humble women cannot endure this doom. For seven years they have lived secure in their obscurity, feeding their little life and mean aspirations. The women who were subordinate to man, rebuked by Second Priest for striking a rude, discordant and whining note in the midst of the general rejoicing in honour of homecoming of their Archbishop. Thomas appears at this juncture and reprimands the ignorant Priest for his harshness toward the pious women who, in their exaltation, are uttering truths, they do not know and which he cannot understand:

They know and do not know, what it is to act or
suffer.
They know and do not know, that action is
suffering and suffering is action. Neither does the
agent suffer,
Nor the patient act, but both are fixed
In an eternal action, an eternal patience
To which all must consent that it may be willed
And which all must suffer that they may will it,
That the pattern may subsist, for the pattern is the
action
And the suffering, that the wheel may turn and still
Be forever still.¹³

The Chorus offers the second part with comments that the days are becoming longer. The bird is singing but not of the spring in the South; it is driven inland by the fury of storm on the sea. The air is still suffocating. The owl repeats its hollow note of death in the woods. The wind is poised in the fast to usher in a bitter spring. It is the season of the Saviour's birth but there is no peace on earth, no good-will among men. Men wage war and defile the earth, but the martyrdom of the saint, his sacrifice for the love of God, purges its saints and renews life on this earth, but it is not too early to happen; "we wait and the time is short, but waiting is long."¹⁴

The death bringers have come to murder the man of God. They are the agents of the 'subtle' animal, the great serpent, Satan, the enemy of God. Chorus have passively submitted to their brute force, like women raped and humiliated by their unwilling participation in the lustful act. The agony of women here, as the sexual imagery shows comes from reorganising the degradation of humanity into the animal. The Chorus pours out a horror and agony of soul intenser than the worst physical and mental torture known to him. They are paralysed by the victim of doomsday; ultimately the Four Knights murder him at the holy altar of the Cathedral. We hear a piercing cry of lamentation of the women of Canterbury:

Clear the air! Clean the sky! Wash the wind! Take
stone from stone and wash them,
The land is foul, the water is foul, our beasts and
ourselves defiled with blood.
We are soiled by a fifth that we can not clean,
united to supernatural vermin.¹⁵

Thomas dies willingly, and accepts the fact of his death which means the complete submission to the will of God.

T.S. Eliot's women are Anti-Feminists in nature. They are not superior and powerful ladies of society. They are dependent and incomplete characters in male dominated world, so is with Lavinia. In the play, *The Cocktail Party* Lavinia is too conscious of her own inadequacy. She is a hardworking society hostess who takes a lot of pain to be popular. She views her personality as a bundle of complexes, flavourless, uninteresting and unsavoury. Unlike the liberated and "New Women" of Shaw, T.S. Eliot's women are others' men-centred and inferior and eager to get the love of men. They are the ordinary social ladies who depend on men to complete their wishes and desires.

In the play, *The Cocktail Party* Reilly brings the broken hearted, Lavinia back. It is again he who tells Edward how futile it has been on his part to have concealed from Lavinia his secret relation with Celia. He also admonishes Lavinia for her detachment to Peter. Thus he pinpoints the basic similarity in their nature and temperament. The disharmony and sense of alienation between the husband-wife relationships is cured by psychoanalyst Reilly. The sense of isolation which plagues Lavinia and Edward need the healing balm and comfort of mutual love and fellowship which is the high watermark of wedded love.

The story of the Chamberlayne deals with the problem of discord in conjugal relations. The Chamberlayne's sense of desolation is as menacing and real as that of Celia. Her two symptoms are "an awareness of solitude" and "a sense of sin". Reilly tells Celia that there is a way out of desolation, leading first to loneliness and then to communion. 'The one who could not love any woman',

in the words of Lavinia, has utterly changed. The initial shock of realising that his wife has left him unnerves him completely. He is no more the same man. He is just “an object”, “a broken cup” or a “stalled engine”.

Edward himself is aware of his own state of mind. He confesses to Celia: “I don’t know what has happened or what is going to happen. / And try to understand it. / I want to be alone.”¹⁶ To Celia, Edward appears no better than an “unwrapped mummy.”¹⁷ T.S. Eliot goes on to make a careful distinction between the two distinct roles of Lavinia and Edward. Lavinia is, by and Large, a lifeless creation and a picture of mediocrity. She is designed as a female counterpart of Edward and her role is relatively unimportant in the action of the play. The crux of the comic situation is unreciprocated love – Lavinia in love with Peter, Peter in love with Celia, Celia in love with Edward and Edward in love with himself.

There is no feminist stance in the women of Canterbury. They are the emotional and fearful fellows of Canterbury. In the beginning they fear the possible consequences of Becket’s return from France. Rhetorically, they appeal Thomas to go back to his exile. The Chorus’ fear mounts when the tempters enter for a united attack on Becket.

An infantile sexuality is described in terms of sexual development in the first few years of a life of an infant. *The Family Reunion* explains the infantile sexuality in relation to sexual life of the adults i.e. Amy, Agatha and Marry. Amy is the main figure living in this Wishwood in the play *The Family Reunion*. Eliot himself has described her as “the only complete human being in the play.” She

lives in the world of seclusion, haunted by the fear of death. She is Anti-Feminist character of Eliot. When she was young, life seemed to arrange itself for her. Now when, she is old, she complains that the clocks can't be trusted. She fears that time will have a stop. Death is symbolised by the clock stopping in dark. She grumbles about her winter confinement and expresses her fear of approaching death; "Make up the fire. Will the spring come? I am cold."¹⁸

Amy is the representative of a corrupt spiritual principle which must die in order to renew itself. If she has been depicted as a "planning matriarch" even then she is unable to console the agitated heart of Harry, her eldest son, and she wants to dominate Harry and describes that Harry should marry Mary. Her determination to impose her plan on those around her reflects her wilfulness and pride. She is desperately envious to keep Wishwood alive.

She is fully aware of Agatha's acute perceptiveness. Agatha means, as a rule, a good deal more than she cares to betray. She can find meaning in death, but to Amy, it is just a matter of physical annihilation. Amy, a lady of self assertion and pride, has a banal mind. She accuses Agatha of having rapaciously taken away both her husband and her son from her. She blames Agatha. There is no sign of feminism in her speech rather she behaves like a helpless woman and a traditional mother when she herself confesses "an old woman alone in a damned house." Her heart rendering feeling is revealed in her own world when she calls herself a machine, which has now become weak and feeble: "The whole machine is weak And running down. Her heart's very feeble."¹⁹ She is a prototype of a parasite-mother, leaning on Harry in order to save herself, when Harry's decision

is at variance with hers. She has nothing to live by as the vital prop that sustained her so far is removed.

Harry interviews Dr. Warburton in which he recapitulates the kiss his mother gave him when the news of his father's death was received. A kiss "that night, when she kissed me, I felt the trap close." Harry complains that others want to pretend that he is "another person," "A person that you have conspired to invent."²⁰

Agatha is indeed the spiritual mentor of, and guide to Mary. Harry is ignorant of the spiritual bond of love which exists between him and Agatha. He is hardly conscious of the true nature of his final decision. He is free from the bond of Amy's possessive love. From Agatha Harry receives the final massage:

.... Love compels cruelty to those who do not understand love. What you have wished to know, what you have learned, Mean the end of a relation, make it impossible you must go.²¹

The Elder Statesman was written after Eliot's second marriage, and is rightly dedicated to his new wife, who gave him the taste of real love. Like Sophoclean play, Eliot's play rests on the central core of father-daughter relationship. Eliot's Lord Cleverton, like Oedipus, is an old man with a shady past associated with his accidental killing of a man and treacherous union with a woman, the aging lady whom long ago Claverton reduced and paid off in order to avoid a breach of promise.

The play begins with a love-duet between Monika and Charles. The conversation between the lovers seems to introduce the play's more serious dilemma of love, the relationship between Monika and her father. Carol Smith points out: "The love-duet between Charles and Monica gives ample evidence that Eliot has learned to integrate his poetic and dramatic goals".²²

The conversation between Charles and Monika is an echo of Harry's experience with Mary in *The Family Reunion*, Eliot's first dramatic love-duet. The Love-duet in *The Elder Statesman* highlights the lover's discovery of a private world in the midst of public world. In reply to Charles question: "I am not the same person as a moment ago what do the words mean now – I and you?",²³ Monika replies: "In our private world – now we have our private world. The meanings are different".²⁴ Lord Claverton commends on his own predicament reflecting his horror of loneliness: "What I am waiting for / In a cold and empty room before an empty grate? / For no one. For nothing".²⁵

He is ready to confess his guilt and explains the nature of his guilty secrets. His confession to Monica is the only way for him to redeem himself from his spiritual deadness and unreality. Monica is the radiant figure for her father symbolizing a kind of love. Thus Lord Clevarton's spiritual disease is precisely anatomized by Monica.

In the chain of his poetic plays from *The Family Reunion* to *The Elder Statesman*, Eliot has tried to show women's adjustment in developing from the physical to the spiritual. Mary in *The Family Reunion* is undirected whether she stays in Wishwood or goes with Agatha. Celia is rectified on Mary, given with a

direction although outside domesticity; her course of life is full of hazards and Eliot resolves by making *The Confidential Clerk*, a comedy and not a tragedy. Monica in *The Elder Statesman*, is the real perfect woman character as is Amy, the perfect character in *The Family Reunion*, the Anti-Feminist representative of T.S. Eliot who seeks satisfaction through a social state of marriage and love and not liberty. Eliot considers woman as a creature more powerful and superior to man, at least in regard to her sacrificial attitude in undergoing all kinds of sufferings, particularly child's birth and rearing of family. A feminist of a radical kind is devoid of the sacrificial attitude and so damnable in Eliot's opinion.

Though both of them are outstanding intellectual giants and literary figures of the 20th Century, their attitude to women differs on many counts. The women liberation movement initiated by Mary Wollesoncraft had a great impact on intellectuals and writers in general and particularly in G.B. Shaw and T.S. Eliot. Among the writers of the 20th century, George Bernard Shaw and T.S. Eliot have given adequate place to the importance of women in their plays.

Shaw is completely an emancipated and liberal man. So he gives the full liberty to woman to work at work-places, to earn her livelihood, to choose her life partner to beget a Superman, even to divorce. His woman is "New Women". She is Ideal and Winning Woman whose wishes does not lie in the wishes of man but she hunts and persuades man to submit his wish into her own. She is confident, independent, and powerful lady who is competent enough to take the decisions of her life.

T.S. Eliot's women, on the other hand, in true spirit are not liberal. His women are helpless. They are the victims of poverty, exploitation, extortion, violence, destitution and disease. His view about the emancipation of women is confined to the will of men. T.S. Eliot, although, gives one of the fundamental rights i.e. right to speech to the women but not the right to rule, to dominate, to reign and to order. He reveals the nature of woman, as subordinate to the likes and dislikes of their men. The poor and paralysed women of Canterbury, for instance, are just to bear the sufferings and cannot do anything to save the life of Thomas Becket. Their apprehension of some coming misfortune is not noticed by others, in spite of the fact that they are rebuked by the Priests. They are the ordinary women who are speaking in alarming tone about some unknown misfortune in Canterbury. These women are talking, or more appropriately, whispering to each-other in streets. These women cannot convince coming catastrophe. Their main concern is about problems of everyday life.

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²⁴ *Ibid.*,

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 530.