

T.S Eliot's "Hippopotamus" : A Satire on the Religious Institute in the Modern Times

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Abstract:

The purpose of the article is to determine the mockery of religious aspects, especially in churches of contemporary times. The poetry is the comparison amidst the church and the hippopotamus and both of them are cumbersome, however, in different ways. Hippopotamus is literally heavy and the church is theologically weighty. The author has acquired the motivation of writing the article by looking somewhat different in the writing of TS Eliot. Eliot has made the comparison of the Church with a heavy animal as the first is corrupt and later is innocent. This unique comparison has motivated the author to conduct this study and to find the issues within religious institutes of modern times. The main problem is that religious institution including Church is corrupted in the current scenario. The church takes donation and has made up the doctrine of its own and is subscribed to viewpoints of doctrine. TS Eliot has used the method of traditional ballads for writing the poem and the theory of New Criticism has been applied. The results are found by the author after using New Criticism Theory has mentioned the corrupted persons within the Church. This study has highlighted the urgency of eradicating the issue of corruption present in the Church. It has been concluded that a requirement for further studies is there for initiating the adverse impact of a corrupted church on people and an emergency of alleviating it as a whole.

Keywords: Church, Corruption, Doctrine, Mockery, Greedy

Introduction:

T.S .Eliot has written the poem, "The Hippopotamus" for poking fun at the religious aspects of Christianity in the current scenario and he depicts his feelings about the religion. The poetry written by Eliot, specifically contains comparisons, interlinks and contrasts. Symbolism is used in Eliot's poetry and his association is more with romanticism and

modernism. The poet generally uses mockery in his poems to depict the crude reality of several things. The concept of the readers about the thing regarding which Eliot has written has been changed after delving into his poetic world. Different themes have been present in other poetry of TS Eliot and they include Alienation, Mortality, Tranquillity, Time and Regeneration. One of the remarkable works of Eliot is “*The Waste Land*” and in this, alienation is used by him skilfully. Eliot has sought to convey inescapable alienation possessed by humans within the contemporary period.

The core intention of the researcher to study T.S Eliot’s “*Hippopotamus*” : A Satire on the Religious Institute in the Modern Times is to analyse the manner of the utilization of mockery by the poet in the poem and the reason for it. The researcher aims to study the main themes included in the poetry with the help of the understanding of different aspects of the practices of Christianity.

There is a comparison of the bulkiness of Hippopotamus and Christian Religion in the poem . The poet has stated that both of them are weight in different senses. It has been depicted that the Hippo has risen to heaven, whereas Church rests on Earth. Corruption is present within the Church for meeting its own necessities while innocence exists within Hippopotamus who is devoid of such corruption. The laziness of this creature is pointed out by Eliot; however, its existence is much simple.

The broad-backed hippopotamus

Rests on his belly in the mud;

Although he seems so firm to us

He is merely flesh and blood.

Flesh-and-blood is weak and frail,

Susceptible to nervous shock;

While the True Church can never fail

For it is based upon a rock (1-8)

The hippopotamus has rested upon the mud seems fixed; however, is actually nervous animal of blood and flesh. Contrastingly, it has been depicted that the church that is the religious institution has rested on the rock that never can seen the failure. It has been understood from these lines that the animal in spite of its heavy weight, has made efforts to survive on the Earth. On the other hand, the church has not made any attempt in the current scenario for feeding itself. These lines demonstrate the hollowness of the Church even after being a religious institution (Faber & Faber, 600). The poet, by portraying the Hippopotamus as weak has determined to portray the weakness of the power that is possessed by it. The Hippopotamus has been sculpted as a people who are living their life simply by earning as per their potential. The depiction of the religious institution is different from that of the normal people as the base of those institutions is strong (Dale et al. 1215). The rock, in the above stanza, has mentioned the factor of rigidity of the power and strength of the religious institution including the church (Beasley et al. 2000). Hippopotamus resembles people who are innocent enough and have experienced failure in their case. Failure is generally observed in the lives of those people who have no source by which they can gain their earnings. They are under immense pressure and have to work hard to satisfy their quench. The poet has wisely illustrated the matter of innocent people who feel helpless during their struggle times. The words “*weak*” and “*frail*” have been used sarcastically in the poem by the poet and have delineated the fact that the people, while making efforts for earning their bread, become nervous. It is quite tough for common citizens to obtain money and other fundamental things required for their survival. Continuous efforts and struggle have been done by them to fetch themselves. Hippopotamus has been sketched as the people who are not wise in nature and who believe in honesty. It has been understood that there has been a requirement for enough endeavour to get the aspirations fulfilled and to reach the level of satisfaction. On the contrast, nothing has to be done by the church for the satisfaction of their thirst. The position of that they possess have been taken into consideration as firm and fixed by Eliot. This has been illustrated by him as they get things without any struggle and effort. They have not seen the face of obstacles and are capable of satisfying their lust by making innocent people fool.

The poem reflects the Irony in the functions of Hippopotamus and the Church. It has been depicted that Hippo has made efforts in feeding itself when it has not slept. Eliot has highlighted the functions of the Church and has opined that it can feed itself even during sleep. The poet has presented the functions of the church satirically as the church accepts

food along with donations from others (Everyman's Library, 955). It has been implied by Eliot that nothing has been done by the Church for deserving such donations.

The hippo's feeble steps

...

To gather in its dividends.

.....

The 'potamusover sea“

The Church, at being one with God.(9-20)

The motive of the poet is to direct the attention of readers to similarities amidst the hippopotamus and the church. The poet has depicted the commonalities in a different way and this is one of the greatest features of this poetry that bounds the readers to delve into the poetry. The repeated outcome of comparison within each matter refers to cater to the attention to distinctions in the middle of both of them. It has been understood by delving deeply into the lines that the power of the Religious Institution is more from the power of the Hippopotamus. The animal has feeble steps and this has been presented ironically in the poem. It has been believed that the Religious Institution comprising Church has the power as Lord Jesus has been worshipped. It has been evaluated from the above lines that the church does not have to do hard work to earn anything. It has been capable of gathering all its dividends with the help of the offerings of people. The dark side of this religious institution has been depicted by the poet within these lines (Faber & Faber, 600). It has been mentioned by Eliot clearly that the church dwells only with the help of the hard work done by common people. However, the creature has earned its means of survival from the gatherings that it has from the nature present on Earth. These lines entail the innocence of the creature along with the corruption within the religious institution within modern society (Everyman's Library, 925). The people who are corrupted are able to get their means by betraying people highly. They acquire their earning by disloyal means and thus, they live a lavish life by resting all the time. It has been analyzed from the lines of this specific stanza that the religious institutions have fulfilled their specific needs by being self-centred. There has been a requirement for the increase in greed of the religious institutions and the church has used the unfair means for doing this. The poet has elucidated the bitter truth of the church and has mentioned the reality of the church authority. They influence people in the name of the holy book, Bible and has

preached disciples of Lord Jesus they have to pay for their sins after death. The Holy book of any religion never teaches people that the rage of God can increase in the absence of offerings and donations. However, this has been preached by the Father of the church who has been the core member within the authority in the church. The people can wash their sins by making the God happy and calm. According to the authority of the church, the God can only be contended by offerings and donations. It has been evaluated that they have collected their bread in the name of God. It has been evaluated from the above lines that there has been a requirement for additional support for Hippopotamus for reaching the mango tree. It has been indicated by the author that it is next impossible even after making several attempts. Spiritual truth has been symbolized by mango within the poem and the creature has to be gone through constant quest to reach the mango tree for getting the mango. Spiritual truth refers to God and to get the grace of God, individuals who have chosen the path of loyalty, have to do a lot of struggle. The poet has skilfully utilized the fruits, peach and pomegranate in the poetry for symbolizing the new believers. They buy the concept of the religion that has been structured by the presence of the authority within the church.

The poet depicts the differences in ways of earnings of Hippopotamus and the Church. Eliot portray the character of Hippopotamus as a hard-working creature who survives on the Earth by earning its food on its own. In contrast, showers of necessary things have been there in the church even after being still in one place. The methods of earning in the case of Hippopotamus are justifiable; however, it is unfair in the matter of the Church (Kear et al. 700). It plays with the feelings of people and earns a huge gathering in an unjustifiable way.

At mating time....

...

.....The Church can sleep.....

.....at once.(17-25)

The tone of the Hippopotamus has been represented as harsh and it is full of oddity at the time of mating. This can only occur in the case of individuals when they have been suffered from utter stress. It is quite natural that the people who earn their bread by doing hard work have undergone tremendous stress. They have to think twice before disbursing their money

and generally, led a stressful life. Their life is full of struggle and their basic amenities have been fulfilled without any sort of support. They have to combat with oddities present in their life and they cannot get anything by skipping the hindrances. Obstacles in the life of hard-working people come in all the phases while they think of getting their desired thing. They are capable of acquiring the thing only with the help of their determination and enthusiasm. The matter of the religious institutions comprising church is somewhat different from that of common innocent individuals. The desired things have been achieved by them by scaring people about the punishments that they can get after their death from the God according to the religious institutions. This is due to the fact that the church is one of the biggest religious institutions (Dale et al. 1215). Several people exist in the world who is the devotee of the Lord Jesus and some have the habitual action of visiting the church on a regular basis. People of different religions visit the church as well to offer their prayers to the Almighty. In the lines where the matter of the mango tree has been portrayed, the author has tried to depict the crude reality. These are symbols used within the poem to pen the collection that has occurred within the church and has been done by its authority. The dark reality has been shown in this modernized poem with the help of the instances of the fruits. This depicts the fact that the hippo has to make several attempts to gather things for its survival that are found nearby and that are easy to acquire. On the contrary, the survival of the religious institutions including the church has occurred easily and in a simple way. The Lines, “*But fruits of pomegranate and peach Refresh the Church from over sea*” (15-16) , has depicted the fact that gathering things is much simple in the matter of the institutions that are religious in nature. The poet has portrayed the miserable conditions of the creature including the Hippopotamus in the lines, “*At mating time the hippo's voice Betrays inflexions hoarse and odd,*”(17-18), It has been understood from these lines that contentedness is not present within the lives of Hippopotamus even after having a partner. The hoarse inflexions of the Hippopotamus depicted the loneliness in the matter of the innocent creature. This hinders the cruel fact that when there has been an existence of innocence within any creature, aspirations of those can be met hardly. However, rejoicing has been heard within the Church per week even after having just one God. This is because the church is full of corruption and the people within the authority of the church are the corrupt ones. It has been understood that there has been a presence of joy in the lives of the corrupted people. They acquire more victory as compared to the people who are innocent and hence, the poet has made an analysis of the characteristics of a hippopotamus to express the innocent people. The nudity of the church has been expressed by the poet with the help of the triumph of the church over the innocent heart of the

people who visit it on a daily basis. The authority of the church plays with the mind of innocent people by serving incorrect messages (Jones et al. 1600). They make the devotee of the Lord Jesus understand that there has been a need for offerings to get their desire to be fulfilled. This can only be possible with the help of providing offerings to the God that has been wanted by Him. They make people believe that God can only help those people who are efficient enough in offering the things that the God is fond of. The church spread false information about Lord Jesus and a misconception is being prepared by them with regard to God in the mind of innocent people. The features of the Hippopotamus have been depicted again in the poem by saying “*The hippopotamus's day..... at night he hunts*” (22). This means that it rests during the day and hunts for a living at night for earning some food for its survival. The poet has clarified the fact that there has been a requirement for hunting in the case of the Hippopotamus as it will die without hunting. However, the mystery is present in the method of works of God and without any effort, the survival of God has happened. The poetic device that has been used by the poet, in this case, is imagery. The image of the Hippopotamus has portrayed the efforts of human beings who work hard to earn their bread and think a hundred times, about investing their pennies (Wallace et al. 1823). On the other hand, the image of the church has been represented as those corrupted people, who earn a huge amount of money without any sort of effort. They earn money by making people fool and in this, the authorities of the church have been considered as experts in doing this. The disparity superficially appears to favour religious institution, the church; however, the in-depth meaning within the poem reveals the characteristics ascribed to this particular religious institution. The religious institutions in the modern times have not believed to walk in the way of truth and honesty. They know that they cannot lead a lavish life by staying in the correct path. Therefore, they have selected the path of corruption and have been determined to be in this particular path. This is due to the fact that they have discovered that great living can only be achieved by being in the way of corruption. In order to make their quench fulfilled and satisfied, the authorities within the church have tried all the means to make the disciples of Lord Jesus fool. One of the biggest sins that they are consistently doing is that they preach individuals in an incorrect way without having fear of God. The Bible has been taught within the church and has been taught wrong to the innocent citizens. They have got the incorrect preaching from the people present within the church with power.

There is a difference in the ending of Innocent and Greedy People. The poet has depicted that despite having a luxurious life, the ending of the greedy people is worst. In the

last concluding stanzas of the poem, the poet depicts that the place of Hippopotamus is high in heaven (Beasley et al. 700). It has been surrounded by angels and God showers blessings on it for its good deeds and hard work on Earth. Innocent people are devoid of any sort of cruelty and hence, they get immense blessings from the Lord (Cooper et al. 6202). They get a special place in Heaven and are able to get the position only due to their loyalty while they are alive. Those people, who have lived their lives lavishly by betraying innocent individuals on the Earth, cannot acquire the blessings of God due to their corrupted means (Sarker et al. 1215). Eliot mentions that the life of greedy and selfish people has ended cruelly as there has been a scarcity of support for their near and dear ones. *“While the True Church remains Wrapt in the old miasmal mist”* (36) has depicted the crude actuality of the life of those people who are present within the religious institutions and ditches innocent disciples of Christianity by different means. The ending days of the lives of the church authority have become worse. This has occurred due to their sins that they have committed when they have power in their hands. They have to suffer a lot as God punishes them for their blunders. They have forced people to pay and have made the innocent humans understand that the donations and offerings can reduce their sufferings. They have shown a huge concern with regards to the people who come to church for their well-being. This has been done by them for the acquisition of trust of the people. This is one of the greatest means to get a huge amount of donations from them. However, the Almighty never spare the culprits and thus, their lives become miserable when they are in the verge of death.

Conclusion:

A conclusion has been drawn from the poem that religious institutions have been highly corrupted nowadays. They preach to people to donate more and the individuals who are members of the authority of the church live their whole life depending on the offerings of innocent people. It has been understood with the help of the above discussions that the life of innocent people is difficult and miserable. They earn their bread by simple means and spend their pennies in a loyal way. It is much simple to gather earnings by the church as they acquire donations in the name of the Lord Jesus. The cruelty of the church has been depicted in this case and mango and pomegranates along with peach are used as symbols. It has been delineated within the entire poem that there has been the requirement for enough courage. This has been necessary to preach incorrect things to people in the name of God. The authority in the church possesses lots of courage in doing this and the teachings present

within the Bible. It is the natural instinct of all human beings that they are afraid of any sort of worse incident in their lives. In addition to that, they have love for God, and hence, offer a lot of things. These offerings have become the means of survival for the people present in the authority of the church. However, in the concluding lines, the poet has depicted the misery of the religious institutions. Innocent people who have done good deeds and have lived their life honestly acquire a good position in Heaven. God showers love on them and they obtain the reward for their loyalty and simple living.

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