Where Waste Land Blooms

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The month of April is passing by. It has found literary distinction by being the first word of a much loved poem The Waste Land by T S Eliot. English poetry lovers would readily give in to its poetical enchantment - *'APRIL is the cruellest month, breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing /Memory and desire, stirring / Dull roots with spring rain. / Winter kept us warm, covering / Earth in forgetful snow, feeding / A little life with dead tubers. / Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee / With a shower of rain, we stopped in the colonnade, / And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten, / And drank coffee, and talked for an hour'.*

In two years from now, the literary world will observe the 50th death anniversary of T S Eliot. He was born on September 26, 1888 in St Louis, Missouri, USA. He was very proud of the ancestry of being born near the river Mississippi and recalled, " It is self-evident that St Louis affected me more deeply than any other environment has ever done. I feel that there is something in having passed one's childhood near the great river." He, however, moved to England and settled there permanently.

T S Eliot is among the greatest poets of English language. He has a special place for being in the forefront of the Modernist movement in English poetry. It is the poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock (1915)* that brought him fame. 'Prufrock' was T S Eliot's first publication outside of school and university. The poem focuses on the struggles that go on inside a mind caught in anguish.

The Waste Land (1922), widely admired as a masterpiece in English language poetry, made him a celebrity. A five part poem (I. The Burial of the Dead, II. A Game of Chess, III. The Fire Sermon, IV. Death by Water, V. What the Thunder Said), The Waste Land created a sensation among poetry lovers, particularly among the young readers. A combination of familiarity with western languages, Greek, Latin, German and French, his innate gift of mellifluous expression and his inimitable style of composition made *The Waste Land* a fascinating reading of lasting appeal. James Joyce's magnum opus *Ulysses* T S Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Albert Einstein's theories of Physics were lauded as the incomparable triad of the time.



T S Eliot

The Waste Land is a period poem. Europe, after the acrimonious attrition of World War I, was in gloom and in a state of decline. Ireland was fighting for independence. There was bitter recrimination in Germany about the sudden surrender and the humiliating terms of the armistice. Russia was caught in the bloodletting of Bolshevik Revolution. Greece was making steady gains with the fall of Ottoman Empire. Anti-Jewish rage was rising in Germany and Central Europe. It was a depressing time for Europe and the idealistic notion of Europe on the march lacked believers.

Eliot's personal life too was in trouble; particu-