Poem:

Standing upon the shore of all we know

We linger for a moment doubtfully,

Then with a song upon our lips, sail we

Across the harbor bar--no chart to show

No light to warn of rocks which lie below,

But let us yet put forth courageously,

Although the path be tortuous and slow,

Although it bristles with a thousand fears,

To hopeful eye of youth it still appears

A lane by which the rose and hawthorn grow

We hope it may be, would that we might know;

Would we might look into the future years.

Great duties call--the twentieth century

More grandly dowered than those which came before,

Summons--who knows what time may hold in store

Or what great deed the distant years may see,

What conquest over pain and misery,

What heroes greater than were ever of yore.

But if this century is to be most great

Than those before, her sons must make her so

And we are of her sons, and we must go

With eager hearts to help mould well her fate,

And see that she shall gain such proud estate

And shall on future centuries bestow.

A legacy of benefits--may we

In future years be found with those who try

To labour for the good until they die,

And ask no other question than to know

That they have helped the cause to victory,

That with their aid the flag is raised in high.

Sometimes in distant years when we are grown

Gray--haired and old, whatever be our lot,

We shall desire to see again the spot

Which whatsoever we have been or done

Or to what distant lands we may have gone,

Through all the years will never have been forget

T. S. Eliot

Anglo-American poet; born St Louis, Missouri 26 September 1888, died London 4 January 1965.

Thomas Stearns Elliot was educated at Harvard, the Sorbonne and Oxford. In London he taught for a while in Highgate School, then worked in Lloyd's Bank. Prufrock and Other Observations (1917) established him as an important poet with an ironic tone and a gift for urban images. The Waste Land (1922) is one -- of the greatest triumphs of the modernist movement-erudite, allusive, thematically profound in its concept of culture. As a publisher, critic and poet, Eliot--who became a naturalised British subject--had an enormous impact on modern literature. In East Coker, from Four Quartets (1943), He evoked: 'a lifetime burning in every movement, further claimed: 'In my beginning is my end.' This line is inscribed on T.S. Eliot's grave-stone.

Idea of Poem:

The most remarkable quality of Eliot's this early poem is his faith in idealism and optimism coupled with courage and fortitude which inspires us to accept the most formidable of the challenges of life. Eliot urges us to set high goals and strive undauntedly, guided bu our vision and sublime ideals. Nations and individuals wither away and perish without vision. Planning before, performance after, one's departure,--struggle to make this world a better place according to our lights is rewarding in itself. 'whatsoever' whosoever and howsoever we have been or have done.

Word Meaning

Tortuous full of twists and turns-circuitous

Dowered gifted

Reference:

These lines have been taken from the poem Departure and Arrival written by T. S. Eliot.

Context:

The poet in this poem says that man should keep in view his departure right at his arrival in the world. He should determine objects of his life and work for them. Man should leave a better world before his departure to the next world. As sons of the twentieth century we should set good examples for the coming generation, so that we may be remembered forever. We must struggle to make the future better, before we start for our destination. The poem shows Eliot?s faith in idealism and optimism.

Explanation:

Stanza: 1

In these lines the poet has compared life to a sea. He says that while standing upon the shore of the sea of life, we delay for a few moments and ponder over the situation for sometime, doubtfully. This we do for what we know about the previous life of our forefathers. After that we take heart and cheerfully sail across the harbour by crossing its limits. Then we have no guide map to show us of the dangers of rocks that lie below water. Even then, we start our journey very courageously. The sea of life is full of dangers and threats but we start our life even if we do not know about them.

Stanza: 2

In the given lines the poet says that although the path of life is slow, troublesome and zigzag, although it is full of countless fears, yet it appears to the hopeful eye of our young generation, very colourful. It is like a street, on both sides of which hawthorn flowers and roses have grown and the street is red and beautiful. We hope it may be so. But it never happens that life is always colourful. Would that we might know about the future life, but we cannot predict the nature of our future life. We do not have certain knowledge of the future years.

Stanza: 3

Many great duties devolve upon the 20th century. These duties are even more important than those granted to the previous age. These duties call upon us to be more responsible, because no body knows what has been written in our fate. So no body knows what we can give to the future life in terms of good and great deeds. No body knows whether, we will overcome the pains and miseries of our future life. Also no body knows whether 20th century will create heroes greater and better than those of the olden times (19th century). But we hope that the future years will bring us better conditions and heroes.

Stanza: 4

In the given lines the poet assures that if they (people of twentieth century) have to make the 20th century greater than the past ones, its inhabitants will have to work hard with eager and willing hearts to help make its destiny shining. They should work hard for the better future of their own century and see that this century achieves proud estate and then, this century should bequeath its best estate to the future centuries.

Stanza: 5

The 20th century should produce a legacy of advantages and benefits and bestow it upon the coming century. So that the sons of this century are counted among those who have been trying and labouring hard for good of their century till their death. And that the people of the coming century may not ask any other question than to know that people of 20th century have helped making their future glorious. And they have raised their flag and of the coming century, to height.

Stanza: 6

In these lines the poet says that some time in future years when the people of 20th century have gone grey and have become old, by then, they will desire to see that place again which they have left behind. They will like to see what-ever changes they have brought or whatever has been done for the betterment of the coming century by them shall be recommended. This makes no difference even if people of 20th century live no more and have gone to the unknown places (have died) they will like not to be forgotten in any age because of their good deeds for the future generation.