

Prophecy in the Waste Land by T.S. Eliot

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Abstract:

First published in December 1922, *The Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot. It employs many allusions to the Western canon: Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, the *Legend of the Fisher King*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and even a contemporary popular song, "That Shakespearian Rag". The main purpose being the thrust of unification of the two binaries in the world, east and west in all aspects like, thoughts, culture, pursuits and history, even if the brutal pasts. In culture, Indian scriptures, life and knowledge India has been the centre of attraction and now time has come to quench our thirst of knowledge by acquaintance with the scriptures that originated in India. According to him peace prevails widespread rendering the inner peace. He places himself as the devotee of god for spreading the unity in diversity in the whole cosmos, actually he is enthralled by the gifts rendered by god to the humankind. He addresses the whole era to be unified which is very important today also, but our misfortune we are reluctant. Not only in religion, he says in our way of life there is much futility in every aspect of modernisation.

Keywords: east-west, unity in diversity, city.

"The Greek God Hermes, credited with the invention of both language and writing, lies somewhere at the origin of the word 'Hermeneutics'. As messenger of the gods, it was his task to communicate the divine word to mortals, thus mediating between Olympus and the sphere of human activity. The Greek verb *hermeneuein*, which means 'to say' or 'to explain', or 'to translate', and the noun *hermeneia*, 'explanation' or 'interpretation', already map out the field of meaning hermeneutics would later assume. Of central importance for the Greek and for the modern sense of the term is the bringing to understanding of something obscure or foreign."

In *The Waste Land* Eliot heralds, entirely as new messenger of the post-modern with total mastery, rejuvenated flow of literature, which transcends all grief, connects to the whole world—he delves to unite the two halves of the earth through intellect. As Hermes invented language and writing in the beginning of Greek religion, similarly Eliot devises himself as the conveyor of peace through his consciousness brought about by all conquering weapon—knowledge. He tries to accredit unity in duality, more extensively unity in diversity prevalent in India, that has become the way of life. He emerges as a universal teacher of humankind, yet keeping himself grounded by impersonality theory.

Eliot has evolved as the precursor, undoubtedly, what thought of his is delineated vividly in the whole of his work is founded to be a theory of English literature and language—Friedrich Schleiermacher's Hermeneutics. Concerned with New Testament Hermeneutics, is usually considered as the founder of hermeneutic tradition and conceives of hermeneutics as a general activity. "His theory of interpretation is tantamount to an epistemology of objects from historical and intellectual life. the theory consists of two levels. The first is grammatical and has to do with understanding the text as part of a linguistic universe. The second he called psychological or technical and entails the individual contribution of the author as

subject. In Schleiermacher's theory the linguistic understanding of the text does not stand opposed to the psychology of its author; rather both are part of an ongoing process of interpretation. It can be considered as combining a structural and a phenomenological aspect". Again, Hans-Georg Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (1960): "to highlight the hegemony of the natural scientific method, Gadamer devotes the first section of the book to a topic that would seem diametrically opposed to science: aesthetic consciousness. His point here is that art has been consistently and systematically excluded from truth, and that the aesthetic sphere has been reduced to a realm of mere appearance (Schein) by the dominant scientific method. Art and truth are dissociated as a result of an epistemological model that relegates all possibilities of cognition outside of those in accord with the new method to an arena of non-truth. Art thus constitutes a sphere that suffers a marked devaluation in the face of the privileged method". Amidst these T.S. Eliot stands out different. He is engrossed in impersonality theory. He merges science and aesthetics. In *The Waste Land* he definitely uses the binary opposition of eastern and western culture, winter-warm, summer-surprised, living-dead, water-dust, greenery-stone as in the first vignette: "April is the cruellest month, breeding lilacs out of the dead land, mixing memory and desire". There is utmost scarcity of food, there is the nullifying of consciousness 'forgetful snow'. According to him in the land which is barren from time immemorial a future desire exists along with mundane past memories, devoid of spiritual practice, sabotaging childhood joys.

The boundaries of femininity is described by the line "They called me the hyacinth girl", while men are glorified, girls do not have their own choices and are showpieces kept in the house and at last of everything resorts to silence.

Also, the point worthy of mention is that Eliot is celebrating woman power as the story is narrated by Marie, a woman and raises, till the end the necessity of women in society. Contrast between characters of different women is portrayed differing in society or tendencies in behaviour.

It also conveys the conflicting contrast between traditional treatment of death in middle English literature and the reality of innumerable sacrifice of youth since time immemorial and the present days. The futile, commonplace death of the youth has not been eradicated, they are buried under the garden, but people go to London bridge in the Unreal city.

The most challenging part of describing *The Waste Land* is confusion of wherefrom to start, which reminisces my childhood faults of ignoring significant matters. T.S. Eliot emerged as the corrector of faults of his readers be it children or adults. The whole poem mirrors the complex compound realities but shows in fragmentation the hidden binaries of west and east through deconstruction. As we go deeper we find deconstruction between the language construction and meanings. Binary opposition being the fundamental and tool for showing path to the mankind. On the very beginning he makes binary opposition between memory and desire. The whole poem has these oppositions, as if finding peace through placing the thoughts, decisions and judgement within these oppositions. It is like the English language learning game 'Articulation'. In each of the lines he provides hints for a untoward and we are to guess the catastrophe. It will serve as a children's literature in the form of articulating game. There are countless happenings to suppose, such as—in the Game of Chess—the unfulfilled love of the husband and wife in an upper-class family provided with all types of luxuries—evident from their conversations—speak to me. Why do you never speak? And we are assigned to guess the situation, hence whole of the poem is game of articulation. At one part the hotel is calling it a day by the refrain—HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME—on the other hand a lady is telling to set up teeth to another known, all of which points to the craving for one-sided love, with false vows. He also alludes to Shakespeare—it's so elegant/so intelligent/what shall I do now?

What shall I do? He wants to state the blind persuasion of a writer instead of the Upanishads and the holy Gita.

This poem can be considered as the ‘last urge’ of T.S Eliot. He connects with every seasons, colours and aspects of the east—Buddhism—or the knowing of the self is emphasized. Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.—is the refrain used in this vignette. He also says the ‘loitering heirs of city directors’, the bourgeoisie, whatever they have done, they , at the end of the day they are guilty-- ‘But at my back in a cold blast I hear

The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.’

A rat crept softly through the vegetation

Dragging its slimy belly on the bank

While I was fishing in the dull canal

On a winter evening round behind the gashouse

Musing upon the king my brother’s wreck

And on the king my father’s death before him.

White bodies naked on the low damp ground

And bones cast in a little low dry garret,

Rattled by the rat’s foot only, year to year.

But at my back from time to time I hear

The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring

Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.

O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter

And on her daughter

They wash their feet in soda water

This is a contradiction between rural life and the urban life ‘unreal city’. Actually Eliot is placing as witness all the five elements: earth, water, fire, wind, and the sky in his five vignettes. While in the same country the fellow countrymen cultivates, but others immersed in luxury forget their duties toward society. His concept of objective correlative is his inference of intricate observation of the world in a greater sense and the discriminations and finally settling his mind towards symbolism and reciprocity.

Eliot merges Upanishad with Buddhism and Christianity, in relation with that the lacuna between feminism and masculinity is bridged by his theories and within the bridge is his temple of devotion which is risen beyond all adversities. The Light of Asia by Edwin Arnold gives a vivid description of the whole life of Buddha.

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,

Hardly aware of her departed lover;

Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:

‘Well now that’s done: and I’m glad it’s over.’

Unrestrained lust for bodily desires and destruction of female body becoming culture is significant point in the poem. Mention may be made of Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*(1949) where she says: “one is not born, but rather becomes a woman””

I think that the whole poem could come under eco-feminism, which worshipping nature along with all the deities and identifying the oneness is the main point of view here. Along with this amalgamation, it is also mention worthy that he prepared for his impersonal theory by this sense of experiencing thing and putting

them to ideas to write new pieces of work instead of losing the self in the problem and finding the self alive in the creation.

Eliot finds the surrealism in the collage of all the catastrophe and each and every thing is mention worthy. Edmund Husserl's Phenomenology is very prominent in the work. Phenomenology is usually used to designate a major movement in twentieth-century philosophy. The word itself stems from the Greek verb 'phaino' meaning 'to bring to light' or 'to make to appear', and has the literal meaning of 'science of appearances'. In Hegel's philosophy, which denies the Kantian division, phenomenology refers to different appearances of consciousness; the phenomenology of Mind(1807) describes the various stages of human consciousness as it comes to complete awareness of itself.

After the torchlight red on sweaty faces

After the frosty silence in the gardens

After the agony in stony places

The shouting and the crying

Prison and palace and reverberation

Of thunder of spring over distant mountains

He who was living is now dead

We who were living are now dying

With a little patience

The final urge comes in Eliot's mind from the colonialism practised by the white Britishers, the heinous sin they created could only be washed off by some divine means. Here he wants to come under the vast sky of diversification, leaving the four walls where there are only some man made rules and regulations dominating the world.

He wants to wipe the whole world with the water of the Ganges and bring on the fresh air of calmness, tranquility of truth.

Here is no water but only rock

Rock and no water and the sandy road

The road winding above among the mountains

Which are mountains of rock without water

If there were water we should stop and drink

Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think

Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand

If there were only water amongst the rock

Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit

Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit

There is not even silence in the mountains

But dry sterile thunder without rain

There is not even solitude in the mountains

But red sullen faces sneer and snarl

From doors of mudcracked houses

The concept of superiority by race and being the Son of Man in particular and how much is the reach of science and imitation is challenged by the poet. In these lines he gives the concept of rebirth is necessary and the flow of karma for the overall bliss of the whole world. Enlightenment and consciousness of the

inner self and mukti (freedom) is the basic and ultimate goal of human existence, which is only possible by the Upanishads, Gita and unification of the single unit named world.

DATTA, DAYADHAM, DAMYATA—are the Sanskrit terms from Brihadaranyaka Upanishad(5.2.3) meaning “Give, Sympathize and Control where Datta is addressing to gods(Devas), one who is the benevolent and ever merciful, urging them to overcome greed and share with others. Dayadhvam (addressed to demons, asuras) urging them to overcome cruelty and be sympathetic. Damyata(addressed to mankind) urging them to control their nature, overcome indulgence and find inner peace. SANTI! SHANTI! SHANTI! Peace should prevail everywhere, where poetry meets prophecy. This text would serve very well as a knowledge for children in schools and also in studying Indology started by G.S Ghurye.

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