

## The Voices of the Bhagavad Gita and Upanishad in T.S Eliot's the Waste Land

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### Abstract

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T.S Eliot's *The Waste Land* is a complicated text rooted in complex Eastern philosophy. His imagery and characters echo those of which appear in both *The Bhagavad Gita* and in the *Upanishad*. Inspired by his own misfortunes in life, particularly in marriage, Eliot explores the themes of life and death and asks the reader to explore these themes with him. His use of Hindu texts in conjunction with his biography makes this poem a true cosmopolitan piece and a significant contribution to the literary world.

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Many critics and readers of T.S Eliot's *The Waste Land* have acknowledged the vast amount of religious references. From as early as when the poem first became published writers such as John Peale Bishop have called it "a Hindu puzzle" (Rainey 33) others have said it is "a epic in a walnut shell" (35), and recent scholars such as Liliana Pop in her article "The Use of Poetry and The Use of Religion" argue that Eliot saw a vast importance in correlating religion and art. Pop's point can be traced back to Eliot's essay "Tradition and The Individual Talent" in which Eliot himself advocates a need for a worldly tradition: "Every nation, every race has not only its own creative, but its own critical turn of mind" (Eliot 99). Clearly religion would be a part of the nation's creative mind. But the question at large remains whose tradition is Eliot using in the poem? Of course readers cannot overlook the references to Dante, Homer and so on therefore it is not surprising that Eliot originally wanted to title the piece "He Do The Police In Different Voices"; and yet there is one voice that recent critics seem to overlook and that is the voice of the Hindu God Krishna.

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Despite the fact that Krishna as a character never shows up in the poem, the influence of the *The Bhagavad Gita* is undeniable, as is the direct use of the *Upanishad*. Therefore, to truly understand the poem particularly "The Fire Sermon" and "Death by Water" one must understand Hindu philosophy. Within Hinduism the *Upanishad* deals with creation and death. The *Gita* serves as a philosophy of how one should live one's life. The most common themes in these two works are the juxtaposition of life and death, overcoming material and sensual attachments, and ways to attain enlightenment. Eliot draws upon the troubles from his own life especially from his turbulent marriage to Vivian, seeks the teaching from the two texts, particularly in its treatment of death, sex, and immortality, to write *The Waste Land*.

The sections "The Fire Sermon" and "Death by Water" are heavily rooted in Hindu philosophy and contain both the problems and solutions of the modern world.

Eliot takes on the voice of Krishna to tell his readers of the problems of today's world, as well as the resolutions to attain peace by forming a direct union with the writer and reader. An example of this is when he calls his readers "mon semblable,-mon frere" (l 76) his other, his brother, or directly inviting the reader into the unreal city: "There is a shadow under this red rock/ (Come in under the shadow of this red rock)" (l 25-26) and allowing readers access into the secret lives of the various characters. This type of partnership parallels what Swami Prabhupada (the founder of the International Krishna Consciousness Society) calls the "transcendental friendship of Krishna and Arjun" (4) in his translation of *The Bhagavad Gita*. To provide some context of this friendship it is important to understand the epic that the *Gita* arrives from, *The Mahabharata*, which translates into the 'great maintaining'. Much like *The Waste Land* the *Mahabharata* is a narrative poem that deals with a multitude of characters, plots, and themes all leading to a grand battle over duty, responsibility, and the maintaining of rightful order. Arjun is the warrior prince that is struggling to understand the world around him because he is constantly overcome by grief at the sin of others.

Krishna comes to Arjun at the battlefield and recites to him the *Bhagavad Gita*, which provides Arjun the universal and cosmic truths of how to live one's life with purpose and action. Simultaneously Krishna provides Arjun with the ultimate truth--death (4) and the three modes of destruction: passion, ignorance, and attachment (5) all three show up in Eliot's piece. Hinduism was not something alien to Eliot.

In fact when he had decided to go back to Harvard and become a professor of philosophy, he signed up for courses of Indic Philosophy and Sanskrit (Worthen 32). Worthen goes on to say that during this time Eliot himself was going through a crisis of identity, especially in his marriage to Vivien, but also in terms of his own spiritual beliefs. Worthen quotes Eliot : the void that I find in the middle of all human happiness and all human relations...I am one whom this sense of void tends to drive towards asceticism or sensuality. only 'severe religions discipline (on the one hand) or 'gross sexual indulgence (on the other) might alleviate-temporarily-such feelings of emptiness. (106-107)

Clearly, Eliot is struggling to attain peace, he is unable to maintain his happiness. He goes back and forth between indulgence (giving into the desires) and detachment (religious discipline), and although he claims in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that the poet is removed from the work, *The Waste Land* completely contradicts that claim and serves as a mirror of his confusion and anxiety, particularly in the "Fire Sermon".

Lust, emptiness, and meaningless sexual encounters dominate the latter part of the section. Emptiness and the preparation of facing the truth dominate the former part. The poem opens up with "The river's tent is broken; the last fingers of leaf/ Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind/ Crosses the brown land unheard. The nymphs are departed" (l 173-175). Everything is sensualized, the leaf has fingers which are digging into a wet surface, also the wind passes this silently, secretly. The last line about the nymphs is repeated throughout the section. Nymphs are associated with sexuality, but they are also a part of myth. Eliot is using the nymphs as symbols of temptation and promiscuous behavior, and because the nymphs are human Eliot is claiming that those virtues of lust, temptation, and seduction represent a failure of human behavior. This is especially true because the nymphs bring excitement; they arouse the mode of passion. Soon as the nymphs depart there is a tone of sadness and emptiness. In fact the first speaker of this section is looking at the remnants of a good time and is mourning for a loss.

The city is described as empty for not only did the nymphs depart but the river Thames, "...bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers...or other testimony of summer nights" (177-179). Life is lost, memories of merry making are lost and the speaker weeps (182).

Pleasure seeking modes lead to destruction, everything sensual and material dies. Death is a reoccurring state throughout the poem. As the voice of Krishna, Eliot tells his readers that life is constantly in flux. This is seen in nature with the seasons. Also it is seen the material objects by the Thames which no longer remain in this poem. Yet, what does stay constant is the river because it contains the element of water and as Eliot will explain later water serves as life. So this section, as the earlier ones juxtapose life and death. Furthermore, this section parallels the conversation between Arjun and Krishna before the *Gita* is recited. Arjun looks out to the battlefield and is overcome with enormous grief because he is at war with himself.

He knows he has to fight his family and others who have been there his whole life:

When the son of Kunti, Arjun saw all these different grades of friends and relatives, he became overwhelmed with compassion and spoke thus, my dear Krishna, seeing my friends and relatives present before me in such a frightening spirit, I feel the limbs of my body quivering and my mouth drying up. My whole body is trembling...my skin is burning. (1.27-1.30)

Arjun is having a hard time accepting the fact that death is destined to come by his hand upon many of his loved ones. Death is also very much present in "The Fire Sermon" as signified by the rat:

A rat crept softly through the vegetation  
 Dragging its slimy belly on the bank  
 While I was fishing in the canal...white bodies lay naked on the low damp ground  
 And bones cast in a little low dry garret  
 Rattled by a rats foot only, year to year. (l 194-195)

The rat becomes a *momento mori* furthermore this section makes a reader feel dirty, repulsed and wanting to escape from the bank. A series of events follow this section that lead to a failure of transcendence.

The first of which is between Mrs. Porter and her daughter who clean their feet in soda water. The element of water is supposed to purify, which is why the last section is titled "Death by Water" yet the two women use water that is not in its pure element: it has been carbonated and therefore tainted. That becomes the first example of failure to clean one's self.

The next concerns the merchant from Smyrna whose intentions toward the speaker seem self-interested. Following that arises the speaker as Tiresias who becomes the spectator, and though blind he has been given the internal gift of sight. The *Mahabharata* has a similar character Sanjay who too was given the divine sight in order to be a spectator of the war, and narrate the events to his blind king. This is further explained in *The Mahabharata* edited by Theodore Bary: "Sanjay's mission is followed by an effort on the part of Lord Krishna himself to secure the restoration of the Pandava kingdom by peaceful means" ( xix). The reader is the blind king, Eliot is Krishna providing the sight to Tiresias to tell us about the inner and outer wars the characters face. Specifically the characters are in the war of lust.

As noted by John Worthen in his edition of T.S Eliot's biography, the section of "The Fire Sermon" was largely inspired by Eliot's marriage to Vivien. Worthen states: "Vivien seemed possessed of everything he did not have; and he had met her at one of those 'essential moments' in life, which he later described as 'the times of birth and death and change'" (41) those three themes are clearly presented in *The Waste Land*. Additionally, Vivien was a woman who was very sexually active, yet Eliot was inexperienced and curious. It is later mentioned in the biography that Vivien felt like nothing more than a sexual object for Eliot, and needed him to adore her (52). Eventually it was this inability to separate love from lust which led to the two separating, and clearly inspired Eliot to write the scene between the typist and the clerk. The following lines reflect the sexual desires that Eliot was feeling:

At the violent hour, when the eyes and back  
 Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits  
 Like a taxi throbbing waiting  
 I, Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives. (l 215-218)

As mentioned earlier Eliot was caught between wanting religion to escape this desire or just giving into it, and this is symbolized by the entrapment of two lives--the pious life and the sinful life. Eliot also goes onto say in his biography that Tiresias symbolizes the barriers that get formed between people (Worthen 103). In other words Tiresias narrates how self-interest can lead people to become unaware and unconscious of their wrong doing, and perhaps the most oblivious, and ignorant (one of the modes of destruction in the *Gita*) characters in this section are the typist and clerk:

The meal is ended, she is bored and tired  
 Endeavors to engage her in caress  
 Which are still unreprieved, if undesired  
 Flushed and decided, he assaults her at once  
 Exploring hands encounter no defense  
 His vanity requires no response. (l 240- 245)

One can read this scene as an act of necrophilia since the only person who gets any satisfaction is the clerk, the typist feels nothing.

The word assault gives one the image of a violent animal, and it this specific word choice and imagery that Krishna uses when he tells Arjun the dangers of lust on ones transcendental journey.

In the scene above there is an enormous sense of violence and rage. The typist and the clerk are not engaging in an act of intimacy on the contrary it is operating on the modes of passion, ignorance and attachment. Krishna speaks on how these modes are connected and how they are born from senses, "While contemplating the objects of the senses, a person develops attachment for them, and from such attachment lust develops, and from that lust anger arises" (2.67). Perhaps the most troubling part of this scene, as voiced by Tiresias, is that the typist engages in these acts continuously because she is seeking that moment of pleasure again and again. In fact they both are, and because they are unable to retain that pleasure they become angry, and thus behave violently. Jewel Brooker in *Reading The Waste Land Modernism and The Limits of Interpretation* says about the scene, "Eliot is condemning the fires of sexual passion...salvation involves overcoming the lust of flesh...sex is a temporary state of transcendence achieved through alienation of quotidian consciousness. Sex and religion are rival modes of unity" (121-122). Brooker goes onto discuss that sex actually handicaps any agency the characters have because sex prohibits them from escaping the world. However, the typist's constant efforts in trying to attain some pleasure and joy show that she feels something but cannot get true joy, because her mode is wrong and she relies too much on the senses. Krishna states in the *Gita* "One who is not connected with the supreme can have neither transcendental intelligence nor a steady mind, without which there is no possibility of peace. And how can there be happiness without peace?" (2.67). The lack of peace comes from what Tiresias calls the throbbing between the two worlds.

As mentioned before Eliot's wife Vivien was the inspiration behind the typist character. In the biography it is mentioned that she suffered from depression and bipolar syndrome (Worthen 115) she was not content with her life or marriage. Particularly because she knew that her and Eliot's relationship was very much based on lust and sex the marriage was just an illusion. Vivien was more aware of the problems that the attachment to lust was doing to their marriage, however she was caught in the cycle and could not escape it therefore was always sad.

This issue is talked about in the *Gita* :

The senses, the mind and the intelligence are the sitting places of this lust. Through them lust covers the real knowledge of the living entity and bewilders them. Therefore, O Arjun curb this great symbol of sin (lust) by regulating the senses, and slay this destroyer of knowledge and self-realization. (3.40-3.41)

For them the realization led to a divorce, which led to Eliot feeling a void that he was hoping religion would fill. In a documentary about *The Waste Land* put together by Frank Kermode and Peter Ackroyd it is stated that "he stood in a kind of symbolic relation to his own time, and turned private grief into a public grief on one level. He was able to transmogrify his own personality into something much larger than it really was, so that he could--his private career, as it were, could stand for the decline of the west". Eliot chose Hinduism because it is an ancient mystic belief that strongly discourages indulgence. The documentary states that "Eliot could pose as the religious mystic" that has "a remote past but a relevant past". This past is to do with eastern mysticism.

In accordance to Hindu beliefs ignorance is the mode of destruction that allows the senses to dominate, which gives way to illusions. This is what the typist experiences she is contained within the illusion that she is transcending. However, she is not the only flawed character in the section Elizabeth and Leister also experience failed transcendence. Elizabeth seduces Leister then after they have sex he weeps (l 299). Leister cannot attain her affection, nor can he retain that pleasure from sex, yet again there is an emphasis on the fleeting nature of sensual delight.

Elizabeth then says to him "I can connect/ Nothing with nothing/ The broken fingernails of dirty hands/ My humble people who expect/Nothing" (302-306). There is a real sense of dismay and melancholy within these lines. It is clear that Eliot was seeking a release from the suffering he was experiencing for he was Leicester craving for the affection of Elizabeth (Vivien). Yet this longing changes from physical desire to a spiritual one, "Burning burning burning/ O Lord Thou pluckest me out/ O Lord Thou pluckest/ Burning" (308-311), and it is at this point in the poem that Lord Krishna's voice can be heard the loudest.

Fire is one of the most important elements within Hinduism, because it represents desire and the means to eliminate the same. Both the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Upanishad* articulate the significance of fire as being the mode of ultimate sacrifice. Now, most scholars read Eliot's "Fire Sermon" as a Buddhist sermon, but it is a known fact that Buddhism sprung out of Hinduism. Before he was Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama was a Hindu prince and was raised on the philosophies of the *Bhagavad Gita* and *Upanishad*. Gautama, as told by Eknath Easwaran in *Dialogue with Death The Spiritual Psychology of the Katha Upanishad*, was disturbed by death--he did not understand it. However, then heard about the story of Nachiketa (from the *Upanishad*) and realized how death and life are connected by fire. Therefore, to truly understand the "Fire Sermon" one must go not to Buddhism but to its philosophical predecessor Hinduism.

Another very Hindu element of "The Fire Sermon" is in the act of sex itself. As Easwaran discusses, in Hinduism the individual is constantly connected to the supreme. Barriers do not exist between God and humans, the entity is one, and in every action God is present. Sex is no exception and sex has the ability to create life it is a mode of transcendence, but only when the intent is pure. If the fires are regulated then sex is not an act of sin however when the flames become overpowering then it leads to violence, aggression, and the act is tainted, for that is now lust. It is this lust that the typist, the merchant, Leicester are all experiencing, and it is the pure mode that they are seeking. Krishna states:

As the fire is covered is smoke, as a mirror is covered by dust, or as the embryo is covered by the womb, the living entity is similarly covered by different degrees of lust. Thus the wise living entity's pure consciousness becomes covered by his eternal enemy in the form of lust, which is never satisfied and which burns like fire. (3.38-3.39)



Lust is not only defined by sex in this section, the lust for power is just as prevalent. These characters are seeking acceptance, and affection from one another because they have lost that connection to the supreme, they have forgotten what exists within them. As mentioned earlier Eliot had said that Tiresias represents the barriers those barriers represent the individual being unable to connect with their inner supreme. Those barriers are burning within them and outside of them via flesh.

The fire is burning their intelligence, their pure consciousness is polluted, and yet paradoxically these characters need fire to remove that ignorance, "Others, who are interested in achieving self-realization through control of the mind and senses, offer the functions of all the senses, and of the life breath, as oblations into the fire of the controlled mind" (4.27). As Tiresias had described, the typist engages in one night stands continuously her mind cannot perceive the ways in which she is self-destructing because she is addicted to the pleasure.

Tiresias on the other hand can because he is not engaging in those acts because he has control over his senses. In fact he has super sense because even though he is blind he can foresee everything. Moreover Eliot describes him as neither man nor woman, and though he is old and represents that past, he is also the present and the future. He is in fact the supreme, Krishna in a Greek mask. The "Universal Form" is regarded as one of the most important section within *The Bhagavad Gita* because this is the moment when Krishna shows Arjun his real form, beyond the material one. Arjun sees every element, animal, gender, action, life and death in this form. Upon seeing this Arjun comes to terms with death and with his duty as a warrior, and thus begins to fight. Tiresias is this form and he takes the readers to the final two sections in which salvation can be attained, through death and then through life.

The unreal city becomes a post apocalyptic place that is stuck the turning of the wheel has stopped and death anticipates life, "He who was living is now dead/ We who were living are now dying/ With a little patience" (Eliot 331-333). There is a huge void in the section of the thunder, as opposed to some of the earlier sections. Earlier on in the poem one can get a feel for the city, the people and sensuality. In the concluding sections however, there is a sense of nothingness, it is indeed lifeless, as represented by the lack of water. There seems to be no comfort in this city as everything is frozen in time therefore the word "sterile" (l 345) is very fitting.

The clouds are sterile, the city is sterile and there is no life other than the cock on the rooftop. Eerily enough the cocks crow calls forth the rain which recharges the city and brings with it the first form of life. Within the sterile city the "Ganga was sunken" (l 399). Eliot being knowledgeable about Hinduism would have known the significance of the river Ganga for funeral rites. It is believed that when one dies one's ashes must be submerged in the Ganga River in order for the soul to attain liberation (Prabhupada 29).

Yet before the rain the river had sunk meaning no one's soul could be free. Additionally, mountains are mentioned, especially the Himalayan mountain Himavant, who is the Hindu God of Snow. Snow is something that is between two states; it is a solid, yet when melted becomes liquid--water. Also, mountains represent one's elevated consciousness and it is over the mountains that the thunder articulates to the people how to deal with the destructive city. Therefore "What the Thunder Said" comes to represent meditation, that state in which one is conscious yet not. Meditation is one of the fundamental practices within Hinduism in fact it was this state of being that allowed Nachiketa to go to the world of death and communicate with Lord Yama (the God of death), and more importantly come back from that world (Easwaran 19) as told in *Dialogue with Death The Spiritual Psychology of the Katha Upanishad*.

Before moving into this section it is important to understand the concept of death in Hinduism. The story in the *Upanishad* is about a young boy Nachiketa and his father who gives him death. Nachiketa then spends three days and nights in meditation where he waits for Yama to receive him. The God of death takes a liking to the young boy and offers him three gifts. Nachiketa asks for Forgiveness, Kundalini and Immortality. During the conversation of Kundalini Nachiketa says to Yama "I have heard from the wise that there is a kingdom, a state of consciousness, in which one lives free from the ravages of age and live in ever-present vitality. They say you know a fire sacrifice that leads to this realm" (Easwaran 21). The characters in the poem want to go this realm, to be free from their misery their constant cycle of misfortune which is caused by the second strand of Kundalini. As explained in the story Kundalini consists of two strands of fire, "one is the will; the other passions and desires...when such passions come under the control of the will, immense vitality is at our fingertips" (23). To sacrifice these pleasure, to purify the will the speaker of the poem asked to be burnt, asked the supreme to remove them from the unreal city.

The last gift of immortality was not easily given Yama offered beautiful girls, jewels, mansions and all sorts of finery to the boy in place of immortality, but the boy knew that these were transient things so denied them all. Yama was impressed by his self-restraint so in turn gave him the secret to immortality "Om" (Easwaran 254). The Om is the vibration of God that resounds in all living things, and as explained in the story, Om has no beginning and no end, "The all knowing Self was never born, Nor will it die. Beyond cause and effect, This Self is eternal and immutable" (255).

Since many characters are not in tune with their higher self they cannot receive the gift of immortality. They are caught in a cycle of illusion and their lives are "a heap of broken images" (Eliot 22). This cycle is represented by the wheel, a symbol that has also been associated with death and life in both Hinduism and Buddhism.

The juxtaposition of life and death appears throughout the poem. The opening lines set the wheel of life and death in motion "April is the cruellest month, breeding/lilacs out of the dead land, mixing/ memory and desire" (Eliot 1-3). Death leads to life which then leads back to death, and all that remains are memories caught in the subconscious mind of that truth, yet shielded by the longing of desire. The wheel appears again in Madame Sosostris's tarot cards and again in "Death by Water", hence this metaphysical object appears in the beginning and the ending of the poem even though death and life are present in every section. There is no end to a wheel similarly there is no end to the poem. The Hindus believe that the wheel symbolizes reincarnation, "As the embodied soul continuously passes, in this body, from boyhood to youth to old age, the soul similarly passes into another body at death" (*Gita* 2.13). Contrary to what some may believe, the idea of reincarnation is not positive because it signifies that one failed in attaining the Supreme. Eliot feels suffering for the life his marriage had died "We are reminded of Eliot's constant insistence both in his prose and his poetry, on pain and suffering. Awareness is painful, creation is painful, sincerity is painful, doubt and belief is painful. The human mind is perpetually driven by two desires, the material and immaterial" (Smidt 144). Because of the contradictions within modernity the soul is always in torment between wanting possessions and lovers, or wanting peace and harmony. Eliot uses death as a tool for liberation and this issue of death and decay sets up the climax of the poem. He does this, ironically, by using a creation story. In the section of "What the

Thunder Said" the speaker encounters a strange figure:

Who is the third who walks always beside you?  
 When I count, there are only you and I together  
 But when I look ahead up the white road  
 There is always another one walking beside you  
 Gliding wrapt in brown mantle, hooded. (Eliot 359-363)

Clearly, this is a divine figure because it is not entirely present, human or apparent. Yet the energy of this figure is felt by the speaker. Just like the scene between Arjun and Krishna on the battlefield, time had stopped so that Krishna could deliver his sermon to his transcendental friend. Time here has stopped also so that Eliot can deliver the sermon of the thunder. The thunder speaks the language of the *Upanishad*, specifically of Prajapati and his three descendants: Gods, Humans and Demons. To each Prajapati delivered the syllable DA.

In the *Upanishad* Da is first translated as Damyata by the demons. However Eliot decides to begin with Datta which was how the humans had received it. Datta means to give. This takes on many meanings in a person's life but given the context of the section, "give" means to give oneself to the a higher power. For Eliot writes in lines 401-409 that people get defined by their inability to control their restraints, "what have we given?...The awful daring of a moments surrender/ Which an age of prudence can never retract/ By this, and only this, we have existed" Datta means to give more to life, to oneself, and to one another. The giving is also of the self to the higher power, "the awful daring of a moment's surrender" (l 407). For when one surrenders to a higher power it is then one can give to others. The giving of the self is also a necessity for the artist. As Eliot states in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that "What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (117). Therefore, these solutions are given to better humanity and these virtues carry over to better the artist.

The second solution is Dayadhvam which the demons translated as merciful. In this stanza Eliot is using the image of a prison to say that people are stuck in the prison of their own desires and ignorance, "we think of the key each in his own prison" (Eliot 412).

Moreover, the prison represents enslavement to one's sense, the constant need to stimulate, indulge, and surrender to one's appetites and cravings. This may be the most important lesson because the need to get one's fix can lead to violence and aggression (as demonstrated in "The Fire Sermon"). Therefore to be merciful is to control desires in order not to cause harm to others. Mercy also plays into compassion. This solution is not to judge or belittle those who are unable to control their desires but it is to feel sorry for them. There has to be an awareness that there are godly people in this world just as there are demonic people. All these people are striving for one thing--immortality which is only attained via sacrifice of transient pleasures.

Therefore just as Datta had suggested it is important to give one another these solutions to help reach enlightenment. Also it is important to sympathize with characters such as the typist for she is not being merciful or giving to herself (in the pious sense). Because of the confusion of identity, morals and equality that arise during this period it seems the easy thing to do is alienate oneself from others. Through sympathy one can feel compassion for their fellow man and woman, and can guide them on how to escape, as Eliot is doing through this poem. Awareness is in the spreading of morality and good virtues. Dayadhvam does not encourage violence toward others but to educate, feel for and love them instead.

Lastly is the solution Damyata which the Gods received as subduing. Of all three descendants of creation the Gods would have held the most power and would have had access to all the worldly pleasures. They were said to engage in too much sensual enjoyment and thus had to learn control, otherwise they would fail at their duty of governing the humans, as told by John Alphonso-Karkala in *An Anthology of Indian Literature*. Another way to read this would be as control: Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar

The sea was calm, your heart, would have responded  
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient  
To controlling hands. (Eliot 419-422)

Love and connections are only formed when things are quiet and still, not when they are in the middle of hot passionate fury. One must not let power consume oneself because if those in authority ignore others then the people can turn on them.

As this section suggests, by being controlled and subdued all the elements, objects, and people become calm. Perhaps if Eliot had used this calmness in his own life he would not have gone through the emotional turbulence of his marriage however that is the lesson he learnt and the intention behind this poem. With all the solutions presented the characters cannot remain ignorant. Knowledge has been passed down and as stated by Krishna "To show them special mercy, I dwelling in their hearts, destroy with the shining lamp of knowledge the darkness born of ignorance" (10.11). The last few lines of this speaker in the poem are "London bridge is falling down" (Eliot 426) which symbolize both as a reminder that death is still prevalent, but also as a symbol of transformation.

The bridge between life and death is falling, the bridge between ignorance and knowledge is falling as is the bridge between enlightenment and suffering. This collapse leads to an awareness "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" (430). The speaker is now Arjun and has had his realization of needing to let go, "My dear Krishna, O infallible one, my illusion is now gone. I have regained my memory by your mercy. I am not firm and free from doubt and am prepared to act according to your instructions" (18.73). Within this quote are all three solutions of Datta, Damyata and Dayadhama.

Eliot concludes the poem with "Shantih Shantih Shantih" (l 437) a phrase recited by Brahmin priests to close a prayer ceremony. This is done to invite in eternal peace and ward off bad energy, Eliot leaves this to humanity, his prayer for peace. These are also the concluding lines in the *Upanishad*:

Nachiketa learned from the King of Death  
The whole discipline of meditation.  
Freed from all separateness, he attained  
Immortality in Brahman. So blessed  
May we all be realizing the Self!  
Om Shanti Shanti Shanti. (Easwaran 265)

Peace is not accepting death. It is in knowing that life and death are transient; the eternal self can never die. This is the main message of *The Waste Land* that all people suffer, but their suffering can end. Harold Bloom in his edition of *T.S. Eliot* quotes Yeats as saying "Perhaps in this new, profound poetry, the symbol itself is contradictory, horror of life, horror of death" (102) and that the poem represents a man "helpless before the contents of his own mind" (96).

Indeed Yeats is correct in the sense that the poem reflects Eliot's own mental anguish of his marriage, falling into temptation, and feeling a loss within himself. However, the poem does not end with horror it ends with a chant of peace. Yet the question remains whether this poem ends at all? Since it is symbolizing the wheel of birth and death then this poem serves as a metaphysical text in which there is no beginning nor ending. After all April will always bloom life after a barren winter.

*The Waste Land* is a journey, a epic in fact in which one must discover the truth of their existence.

Just like Arjun and Nachiketa, the various characters in the poem had to first face their demons, listen to their guides, and then accept death as a way to immortality. Eliot and Vivien did not stay together, but one can see in the poem how Hinduism was able to help Eliot come to peace with that pain. As a traditionalist, Eliot knew the philosophical importance of the Hindu works, as a person he knew the mystic significance. A poem such as this one is truly global at its core, and does an immense job in bringing Eastern literature into the Western world. Clearly, Eliot was ahead of his time for to this day it seems no one has been able to craft such a complex and beautiful poem. To end with a quote by Krishna seems highly appropriate as Eliot would have wanted his words to carry over the message of harmony:

When his soul is in peace he is in peace, and then his soul is in God. In cold or in heat, in pleasure or pain, in glory or disgrace, he is ever with Him

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