



# Paradigm Expression of Disintegration and Disillusionment of modern society: A Comparative study of Nirjan Bhagat's Pravalvdeep and T.S.Eliot's The Waste Land

## ❖ Abstract:

The present paper focuses on the study of representation of modern world particularly a twentieth century era which is full of disillusionment and disintegration has been very creatively penned down in critical and analytical mode in works of T.S. Eliot and Nirjan Bhagat. It is truly said that literature mirrored its society as it is. This paper deals with the impact of modern ethics on modern mind. Both the works sets an example of religious bankruptcy and sterility of modern world. The society which is chaotic and inhumane in every aspect is being presented through both the works in symbolic tone. Wasteland talks about arid land keeping in mind the Heart of England that is London in the same way Nirjan Bhagat's 'Pravalvdeep' deals with the most metropolitan city of India that is Bombay as he calls it 'Adhunik Aranya'. Both the works throws light on urbanization, nothingness, rootlessness, spiritual and emotional degradation of generation. The consciousness of modern sterile world is shown by the great writers of Twentieth century throughout the world. It is unavoidable to point out that both writers are greatly influenced by classic works of previous ages such as Baudelaire, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Kavi Nanhalal and Sundram in manner of narrative and in narration of subject matter.

**Key words:** Disillusionment, Disintegration, Degradation, Adhunik Aranya, Arid land, Sterility, religious bankruptcy.

## ❖ Introduction:

This paper is an attempt to make comparative analysis of T.S.Eliot's magnum opus "The wasteland" (1922) and Nirjan Bhagat's milestone Gujarati poem "pravalvdeep" (1957) which was later translated by Rita Kothari as "Coral Island" (2002) into English Language. Both the major works inherit a balance and seasoned expression of modernism. The wasteland and pravalvdeep deals a vision of desolation and spiritual drought. These are the poems which are diagnosis of the spiritual distemper of the age. The central idea of the poems is life in death or living death of modern world. As present paper deals with the comparison of both texts as an expression of modern arid land let us have some idea about what comparative study is.

As Vijay Kumar Das points out in *Comparative Literature*:

**"Comparative Literature analyses the similarities and dissimilarities and parallels between two literatures. It furthers studies themes, modes, conventions and the use of folk tales, myths in two different literatures or even more."** (Das, 32)

The title Pravalvdeep (Coral Island) is symbolic like Eliot's The Waste land, and evokes the picture of the land which is sterile which has nothing to produce fruitful as Bhagat in his pravalvdeep (Coral Island) writes in poem *Adhunik Arnya*:

**"Fierce Creatures – humans-roam this forest  
Made of concrete, stone, cement and glass."** (Bhagat, 5)

Though we live in 'Adhunik Arnya' or in 'arid land' where people are like paintings, where man are nothing but mere fierce creatures all this images used by Bhagat in his coral island signifies the barrenness of modern world and 'disillusionment of generation.' In the same way title of Eliot's poem the waste land symbolizes 'a vision of desolation and spiritual distemper of the age.' The wasteland reflects contemporary spirit in its totality. Its anxiety, its despair, its neurosis, its boredom and mental vacuity have all been brought out. As Eliot points out,

**"Shape without form, shade without color,  
Paralyzed force, gesture without motion."** (Eliot 83)

The modern man has been fighting for their existence, out of traumatic mental psyche it is difficult for them to bring out to the solutions. Everyone's desires towards urbanization results in to compulsion where one has to live in 'unreal city.' The idea of unreal city in Nirjan Bhagat's Pravalvdeep can be seen as the title of Mumbai city poised to sink any time. The poet goes as far as to predict a geographical annihilation of the city as:

**"Come let's go to Bombay city,  
That tailless crocodile."  
.....  
Grass will grow one day in every street,  
The coral builds its home here."** (Bhagat, 3)

Titles such as “Fountainna Bus stop Par”, “Churchgate thi Local man”, “Falkland Road” (the infamous red-light area), “Colaba Par Suryast” indicate clearly the subject matter of the poems. “Patro” is a unique poem in Pravaldeep. The translators of the Gujarati poems Pravaldeep into English as the Coral Island, Suguna Ramanathan and Rita Kothari say:

**“With the publication of Pravaldeep in particular, a new kind of poetry became possible in Gujarati. For the first time, a Westernized sensibility with its concomitant urban bias and alienated psyche ranges over the scene.” (Bhagat vii)**

Bhagat is greatly influenced by the writers such as Ravindranath Tagore. His experience of reading of Tagore can be seen in his other works like ‘Jagruti’ not only this but some poems of Gitanjali also we can find the same tone of narrating the nature of self-realization as in one of the poem from Gitanjali in which Tagore evokes the journey which we all lead and this theme has been dealt by both Bhagat and Eliot in their works. In such Lines as Tagore writes,

**“They Guided me all the daylong to the mysteries of  
The country, of the pleasure and pain, and, at last,  
To what place gate have they brought me in the  
Evening At the end of my journey?” (Tagore 33)**

The opening section of The waste Land is entitled “The Burial of the Dead” refers to the contemporary rootlessness. The first opening lines like;

**“APRIL is the cruelest 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 dried tubers.” (Eliot 61),**

The title is derived from the service for the burial of the dead in the search of England. The initial lines are meditation of Tiresias, the representative of humanity. He had a chat with the German Princess, Marie. She is Globe trotter, symbolizing the rootlessness of modern man and the fact that life is lived entirely on the physical plane. She doesnot remembers her parents, sisters and brothers. She has no roots, either in the family, or community or the nation. Eliot considers such ties necessary for culture, for real life- spiritual and moral. The modern humanity is like princess, lives entirely on physical plane, and is entirely forgetful of religious and moral values. While in Pravaldeep there are almost comparisons with beasts (ferocious creatures). In The Waste Land, the first line is an inversion of the popular poetic myth that April is a month of warmth and joy. To the people of the Waste Land, April is unwelcome because they are incapable of participating in the process of the renewal of the earth; on the contrary, they prefer the cold of winter to the warmth of summer because they cannot endure the pangs of rebirth and fear the possibility of

resurrection. In Pravalvdeep also, especially the poem “Gayatri” talks about how man has completely lost touch with nature. In the morning, we wake up only because we have to. Bhagat writes here:

**“Same self, same name; nothing new.**

**Smiling at self, one asks : ‘whereto today!’**

**Newspaper alone proclaims the day as new;” (Bhagat 55)**

The second section of the poem is fittingly entitled, “A Game of The Chess”, for it explores the failure of sex relationship in the modern wasteland. Sex has become matter of intrigue, a matter of moves and counter moves between men and women. It has become a mere source of pleasure and has lost its spiritual significance. Likewise we can also see in pravalvdeep Bhagat talks about sexual degradation in the poem name “Prostitute” see the same description in the following lines;

**“I meet different kinds of people, new ones daily,**

**But expressly to forget.**

**None sees me by day. I**

**Have no address by night.” (Bhagat, 47)**

The third section entitled as “The Fire Sermon” is taken from the famous sermon of Lord Buddha in which the world is shown burning with lust and passion and hatred and a thousand other evils. It also reminds one of the Confession of St. Augustine wherein he represent lust as a burning cauldron. This philosophy we can also observed in the (Ch.16 Verse 21) Bhagavad Gita in which Shree Krishna Bhagvan explain to Arjuana that There are three gates leading to the hell of self-destruction for the soul—lust, anger, and greed. Therefore, all should abandon these three.

**त्रिविधं नरकस्येदं द्वारं नाशनमात्मनः |**

**कामः क्रोधस्तथा लोभस्तस्मादेतत्रयं त्यजेत् || 21||**

**(Bhagvad Gita)**

The theme of the Waste Land seems to be death – ‘Death by Water’ is only one facet of it. Death is continually contrasted with life and vice versa. In fact, the poem deals with ‘two kinds of life and two kinds of death’ and with the contrast that this fact offers. In one context, life which becomes devoid of meaning is equivalent to death, while in another context; sacrificial death is shown as life-giving, as almost a means of securing the renewal of life. The Waste Land is at one level, concerned with this paradox and with variations implicit in this self-contradictory movement. As Patterson draws our attention towards the theme of the poem:

**“The waste land forms a complex assemblage of moments of fear in which the voice of the persona articulates his isolation in his surroundings; an assemblage of voice in the wilderness of all time in which all hope of establishing meaningful communication is lost.” (Patterson: 153)**

In the Pravalvdeep also, we can find living men but as dead when Bhagat writes in his poem, “**At the Fountain Bus Stop**”:

**“Some expressionless,**

**Some whose faces change with passing minutes,**



**And some changeless and fixed.” (Bhagat 23, 25)**

According to the poet, there are only two beautiful persons in Bombay city who do enjoy their lives. One is the whore who begins her business at night and the second is the poet himself because the whole world has changed and the poet has accepted the change. Thus it is rightly pointed out that by living life lifelessly, we are

**‘Shape without form, shade without colour,  
Paralyzed force, gesture without notion’. (Eliot 83)**

Modern life is predominantly urban, and both the poets TS Eliot and Niranjan Bhagat being modern poets, the setting of their poetry is also urban. It may be Boston, Paris, Venice, London or Bombay, in some metropolis, the hub of modern industrial life. It is rare to find that either Bhagat or Eliot may have set their poems in the countryside. Their poetry is of urban landscapes. T S Eliot writes in *The Waste Land*:

**“O City city, I can sometimes hear  
Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,  
The pleasant whining of a mandolin  
And a clatter and a chatter from within  
Where fishmen lounge at noon : ....” (Eliot 69)**

In Pravaldeep, we move in charmed stretch between Malabar Hill and Colaba. We have the sweep of Marine drive at night, the lights near the Real and the sea. We have wandering crowds everywhere. This is the Bombay ‘Adhunik Aranya: A Modern Forest’ that catches the poet by the throat and will not let him go. He writes in this regards:

**“Cement, concrete, stones and glass,  
Wires, bolts, rivets, screws and nails  
Surpass the rainbow’s magic:  
Of such stuff this paradise!” (Bhagat 3)**

Even the very titles of the poems are very urbanized like *At the Museum*, *At the Aerodrome*, *In the Café*, *Flora Fountain*, and *Falkland Road* etc.

Both Niranjan Bhagat’s as well as T S Eliot’s characters are all city people no matter whether it’s Sweeney, Aunt Helen, Tiresias in the *Waste Land* or the poet, the hawker, Blind man, Leper, beggar or Prostitute of the Pravaldeep. All typify one aspect or the other, of the gross and decaying when society in which they live and move. They are not important in themselves but as representatives of the corrupt, self-seeking, rotten and out of action western civilization. Their gross sensuality and animalism is emphasized by the use of suitable imagery.

The last section of *The wasteland* that is called “*What the Thunder Said*” throws light on Indian and Buddhist philosophy. Eliot recommends the wisdom of India for the spiritual salvation of modern humanity. Once there was total failure of rain in India and when the confused and perplexed people prayed to the Divine or God, He spoke to them in thunder, ‘*Da, Da, Da*’, thus indicating to them the three fold way of deliverance and spiritual salvation. First

Da means Datta “to give”, Second Da means Dayadharam i.e. “to sympathies”. Third Da means Damyata i.e. “self-control”. Likewise pravalvdeep hope for the better tomorrow as Bhagat writes;

**“O tomorrow’s sun! You rise in vain.  
In vain you’ll come to earth with eager joy  
Unless you shed your brilliance upon all,  
Unless you perfect uncompleted man.  
Free these souls and fill them with your power.  
Give, if you can, to each a chosen death.” ( Bhagat 65)**

The Waste Land is a rich dense mixture with five different parts or movements, and in view of its ‘rich organization’ it needs a protagonist. The spokesman of this point of view is perhaps Tiresias; in fact he is the ‘seer’ of the Waste land. T S Eliot writes about Tiresias:

**“Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a “character”, is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. ... .. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem.”**

In the Pravalvdeep also we find such characters especially in Patro where the hawkker who has no favorable fate when he says:

**“I may be called pheriyo but I don’t roam;  
Neither does my fate,” (Bhagat 43)**

and then he wants to be a tree when he says :

**“Arre, were I a tree leaning over this wall!  
Seven springs went by, but not a single flower!” (Bhagat 43)**

In the same poem, the prostitute compares herself to a crumpled paper which is nameless. Some call her Radha while some Rani. Her complaints:

**“None sees me by day.  
I have no address by night.” (Bhagat 47)**

Thus the characters of both the poems depict the ultimate reality of the modern society. The protagonist of The Waste Land, Tiersias’s failure in love with a girl has a universal significance because it represents the sexual failure of modern men too. In the section Fire Sermon, Eliot frankly depicts the mechanical and sordid love affair of the lady typist with the house agent’s clerk. After her love affair,

**“She smoothes her hair with automatic hand,  
And puts a record on the gramophone.” (Eliot 69)  
A prostitute in the Pravalvdeep cries out:  
“My body worth looking at ? Believe me, the  
Fragrance is external.” (Bhagat 47)**

At times both the texts seem circular and at times they are progressive. In Pravalvdeep, the poem begins with the decay and degeneration of Bombay city “**That tailless crocodile**” (Bhagat 3) and ends with the hope that one day we will be rescued from the materialistic world and if not allowed, to live again at least we would be given a right to choose which from of death we would prefer.

In The Waste Land also, in the beginning there is only barren desert and rock and towards the end of the poem, there is desire for water, there are clouds and so the expectations of rain. The philosophy of Buddha is seen in both the texts. In The Waste Land the city is unreal because it has no real civic life and is robbed of all the vitality of a throbbing, vital, communal life. Human beings seem like ghostly figures in this city. Eliot writes in the poem:

**“I think we are in rats’ alley**

**Where the dead men lost their bones.” (Eliot 65)**

**“I see crowds of people, walking round in a ring.” (Eliot 62)**

**“I will show you fear in a handful of dust.” (Eliot 61)**

**“...for you know only**

**A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,**

**And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,**

**And the dry stone no sound of water.” (Eliot 61)**

#### ❖ **Conclusion:**

Comparing Pravalvdeep as The Wasteland of Gujarati literature we find some similarity and differences. As wasteland and Coral island are both full of images and symbolism still the epigraph and structure of poem difference in some manners like Eliot has used past references and has dealt with the mythological ideas. Though the central idea or core theme of both the poems remains same as they are deal with the modernism that is hollowness of modern man. Though Bhagat inspired from poets like Baudelaire, Pound, Auden, and Rilke. Language of Both the works seems satirical on modern use and the images used by both poets are very much similar as Eliot talks about London and Bhagat gives account of Mumbai city in the same way. As Dr. Darshna Trivedi in her research on this particular topic points out,

**“If we analyses both the poem minutely it seems that pravalvdeep is the wasteland of Gujarati Literature. Rich in images, symbols and in the use of myth and allusion both the poems share a complex structure. With Eliot begins the age of experimental poetry in English Literature so with Bhagat begins the age of modern poetry in Gujarati Literature.” (Trivedi, 6)**

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