

## **T.S. Eliot's *The Wasteland* and Niranjan Bhagat's *Prawaldweep*: A Reading in the light of Intertextuality**

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The A text is ...a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations. The writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. Its only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any of them (Barthes).

The word 'Intertextuality' is believed to be derived from the Latin word "Intertexto", which means "to intermingle while weaving". The concept of Intertextuality was introduced by Julia Kristeva in her critically acclaimed essay, *Work Dialogue and Novel*. Later she expounded it in her work called, *The Bounded Text*. She proposes the idea of Intertextuality as the component that represents the original text as the "site" in which the literary process is only focusses on the static structure of it,

"an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed

meaning), as a dialogue among several writings" (1980, 65).

In this critical proposal, she seems to be trying to develop a theoretical framework based on Bakhtin's "spatialization" of literary linguistics, she argues that "each word (text) is an intersection of other words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read" (1980, 66). There are always the hidden meanings and dimensions in a form of denotation and connotation in the presented text. And, that is one the reasons why a text cannot be read alone as a "Self-contained system". It comes along with some historical background, geographical context, author's 'Authority' in the form representation, the absorption of Other's ideologies and cultures, etc. It is significant to note here that, the 'Intertextuality' proposed by critics like Kristeva and Barthes rejects the possible autonomy of the text which has been propagated by many critics in the present era with the tag-line of "New Critical Principles".

The text cannot survive alone and therefore, the theory of Intertextuality caters on the principle that a text can never be considered as the self-sufficient whole or the closed and restricted system. This was the incentive part of the theory, based on which the further dimension has been opened up. The practical approach that has been employed here by the critics who are in favour of the 'Intertextual' approach is that in the process of literary creation, we need to derive the fundamental 'idea' taking into consideration, the various significant contributions, and a wide range of themes and subject matters of other writers on the sphere of 'World Literature'. One of the most consequential aspect of it can be the "progressive dissolution" of the two different texts as a complimenting, coherent, and multi-dialogic texts. The readers can compare or rather complement both the texts, critique them and try to unfold the shift of emphasis by a critical reading.

The passive position of one text in contrast to the active role of the other. In the process of influence one text appropriates and transfers feature from another text without transforming them in accordance with a new goal of its own. (Kulavkova,).

Interestingly, if one observes the range of critics who have been propagating the reliability of 'Intertextuality', the findings will lead to the names of the Intellectual masters such as Plato-The

Father of Western Philosophy, his disciple Aristotle, Longinus, Horace, Derrida, Roland Barthes, Kristeva, Riffaterre, etc. Beginning with Plato, the Classical and probably the oldest influencer of the New Intertextuality is known for his opposition to poetry on the moral grounds, has employed the intertextual elements in his Political arguments. He has located the Socratic dialogue in the form of "heteroglossic" dialogism, which Kristeva chooses to call- "Intertextuality".

Thomas Sterns Eliot is the epitome of Modernity in the world of English poetry. His childhood upbringing initially developed him as a firm believer of God. He did study Philosophy at Harvard, it is a known fact that he was a learner of Sanskrit, rather Indian Philosophy. One of the most destructive event in the world history- 'the outbreak of World War-I' changed rather transformed the way he perceived his world. His faith in humanity was shaken by this disastrous occurrence. Later, he came to England, became friends with and influenced by the renowned Literary figure of that time-Ezra Pound. His literary merit led him towards the highest achievement in the form of Nobel Prize of Literature in 1948. Eliot was greatly affected by the social and economic crisis that followed the World-War. These circumstances followed by the breakdown in health led him towards the creation which was absorbed in disillusionment and gloominess, and thus, his later works were the representatives of the 'reality', which is not joyful and full of happiness, but dreadful and destructive.

On the other hand, NiranjanBhagat was born in Ahmedabad, India. He acquired the Higher education from both Ahmedabad and Mumbai. His life in Mumbai transformed him as a more sensitive human being, not only this it also unfurled the literary consciousness within his soul. He became more drawn towards poetry and poetic creation. After graduating from Mumbai, he came back to Ahmedabad and continued to teach at various renowned institutes, which was followed by his active involvement in the literary circle of the city. The range of Bhagat's literary creation is wide, it begins with the love poetry, the realization of youthfulness, and then a sudden transition into the realistic approach towards life. It is important to note here that, Bhagat was much influenced by the poetic works of T.S. Eliot. He was not just a great admirer of the much acclaimed work of Eliot, known as *The Wasteland*, but he had adapted the narrative and style in his most renowned literary contribution to Gujarati literature- *Prawaldweep*, later translated as *The Coral Island* in English by SugunaRamanathan and Rita Kothari.

*The Wasteland* by Eliot is the milestone, a personification of literary marvel, the words cannot express the beauty that it inherits. It is the greatest creation of T.S. Eliot which has not only given him wide acclamation from all over the world, but it has put him in the parallel position with the authors of the World classics. *The Wasteland* illustrates the human life in the most realistic manner in the five sections which are: *The Burial of the Dead; A Game of Chess; The Fire Sermon; Death by Water; and What the Thunder Said*. It is known to be a fragmentary work, but if one reads it through the critical lenses to perceive the aesthetic elements embedded into it, she/he would realize that the narrative of *The Wasteland*, itself is the epitome of the 'New Intertextuality' which has been substantiated earlier in the present paper. The use of allusions and references to the classics visibly states that he was a scholar of world classics, whose literary knowledge was not restricted to one arena, but it was the expansion of the literary space. It is a profound presentation of allusions, myths, hidden meanings, and the quest.

It is a poem about barren land, a sterile land, a dead land. The Poet's chief concern is the contemporary civilization after the naked dance of death and violence in the preceding wars. The epigraph of this narrative poem itself introduces its theme:

For once I saw with my very own eyes the sibyl at Cunde hanging in a cage and when the boys said to her, Sibyl what do you want? She answered "I Want to die" (Eliot).

The Epigraph indicates the state of being physically, emotionally and spiritually sterile. The poem reflects the broken and fragmented pieces of Modern civilization. Commenting on the theme of the poem Patterson observes that:

*The Wasteland* is 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).

On the other side of this vast literary ocean, there is Niranjana Bhagat and his literary landmark, *Prawaldweep*, a long narrative poem, which reflects the pessimism, and gloominess of Mumbai and its locale. It can be considered the first-ever and seasoned expression of Modernism in the

domain of Gujarati literature, especially the genre of poetry. It was inspired by the literary style of Eliot, and Baudelaire. The Modern-day critics identify the presentation of Mumbai as *raison d'entre*. The title of the poem: *Prawaldweepis* symbolic as it evokes the picture of an island city on the verge to be sunk. The poet expresses the premonition of the annihilation of the city:

Grass will grow one day in every street,

The coral build its home here.

Before that happens, go it you will:

Time beckons you to come (PD: 3).

As Eliot has depicted London as fragmented city, Bhagat has considered Bombay as "*AdhunikAranya*, a Modern Forest". The section "*At the Fountain Bus-stop*" one may find the allusions to Dante's *Inferno*. The inhabitants of the coral island are immobile, they have lost the way and the direction. If *The Wasteland* is the illustration of the Intertextuality, then *Prawaldweepis* the shadow which follows the tradition of its predecessor: *The Wasteland*

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In the air an indefinable smell;

Take a deep breath if you wish and see!

A breath not unknown to Dante, nor strange

When he, blest soul, went journeying in to hell (PD: 21).

Both the narrative poems: *The Wasteland* and *Prawaldweeptalk* about the decay and degeneration of human race and civilization, but the beauty of *Prawaldweep* lies in the fact that in the end, it invokes the 'New Beginning'. The section called, *Gayatri*, which is apparently the concluding section of the poem is the pinnacle of not only the *Prawaldweep* but NirranjanBhagat's entire creative output. Here, the poet returns to the traditional metrical form of *Anushtup* which is also metaphorical and symbolic. The poem begins with the destruction, and ends with rejuvenation in

the form of a prayer to the Sun God. It also shows the liberation of the human race, which gets reflected in the ending lines of *The Wasteland* too.

Intertextuality in the plain words denotes to the amalgamation of the two different text at various levels of creation. It can be explained through the process of communication, which here takes place between the two separate textual entities. The Intertextuality in both the texts appears at mythological, historical, and thematic level. The crux of the present argument is that the original appeal of both the text doesn't die down when the intertextual analysis has been done. The organic appeal and purity always get retained, the sole reason being the aesthetic elements of both the creations. Both Eliot and Bhagat acknowledge the responsibly of employing the aspects of Intertextuality wisely to enhance the overall impact of the piece of creative literature. Thus both poems secure their position in the arena of the higher form of intertextuality.

Both the poems share the element of circular progression, which includes the description of the two different worlds, two cities, to be specific; the river and the huge ocean represent the fluidity of two different identities, which sometimes seem to be creating a tangent, but at the same time the other narrative similarities provide a space for both the individual texts to get merged within the domain of intertextuality. At times, reader may find the arguments of Kristeva and other propagators of Intertextuality to be true regarding the minimum chances of the text to survive alone in the absence of any 'parent text' or the text to which one can allude to. It definitely provides the "Authentic' voice to all the texts contributing in the space of Intertextuality. Here, is a quote from Eliot's *The Wasteland* that concludes the argument of the present work:

These fragments I have shored against my ruins  
 Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's madagaine.  
 Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.  
 Shantihshantihshantih (Eliot).

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