THE WASTE LAND AND ODIA MODERNISM*

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Abstract

The *Waste Land* by T.S. Eliot is widely acknowledged as one of the most influential poems of the twentieth century. Very few linguistic cultures of the world could remain uninfluenced for long by the poem and the new aesthetic it represented. Odia, a major language of eastern India was no exception. This article is a modest attempt to examine the reception of *The Waste Land* in Odisha and the way it shaped Odia literary modernity. In 1956, acclaimed poet and novelist Jnanindra Verma translated T. S. Eliot's magnum opus *The Waste Land* along with a few other poems under the title "Poda Bhuin O Anyanya Kabita", which was published by Prafulla Ch. Das. Das corresponded with Eliot regarding the translation and with his consent he motivated Jnanindra Verma to translate the major poems of Eliot. In all probability, he also gained a copyright permission for its translation into other Indian languages. More remarkable in that 80-page book was Eliot's prefatory message written to Prafulla Ch. Das. Though *The Waste Land* was not immediately known to the general Odia literary circle with its publication in 1922, it has been proved to be the most influential poem (from the 1940s onwards) that shaped Odia modernity. It has helped the evolution of Odia modernity, beginning with Tagore's mysticism through the experimentalist approaches of the progressives and lastly to a solitary movement in the 1950s, Odia modernism is spiritually rooted in Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

Keywords: T.S.Eliot, Odia Modernism, Poetry, The Waste Land, Translation

*This research topic is conceived by Sumanyu Satapathy, former Head, Departement of English, University of Delhi. He has not only provided insight and expertise that immensely assisted the research, but also guided the entire research process.
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The Waste Land (1922) by T.S. Eliot (1888-1965) is widely acknowledged as one of the most influential poems of the twentieth century. Very few linguistic cultures of the world could remain uninfluenced for long by the poem and the new aesthetic it represented. Odia, a major language of eastern India was no exception. Odia writers did not seem to be convinced by its methods for nearly two decades after its publication, though they were not unaware of it. A few articles and chapters in the histories of *Adhunika Odia Kavita* have discussed the phenomenon, but much else remains to be done. This article is a modest attempt to examine the reception of *The Waste Land* in Odisha and the way it shaped Odia literary modernity. Before doing so, a brief contextualization of Odisha of the 1930s and 1940s may be in order.

In British-ruled India, the nationalistic fervours were at an all-time high after the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre in 1919. The non-cooperation movement launched in September 1920 gave greater intensity to the Indian freedom movement. 1922 also happens to witness the establishment of the Soviet Union, marking the rise of communism. The devastating impact of the first world war was far from over. In particular, the Bolshevik revolution in Russia highly influenced the literature of most Indian languages including Odia. Due to these factors, European modernists like Joyce, Pound, and Eliot did not gain immediate attention in India in general and Odisha in particular.

In the context of Odisha, literary culture took an interesting turn in the second decade of the twentieth century. English education in Odisha received a boost with the establishment of the Post-Graduate Department of English in Ravenshaw College in 1922, while undergraduate studies in English literature had already become functional in 1916. This probably worked as a threshold to the vistas of western literature. Even though the older generation of poets continued to be influenced by Scott, Byron, Tennyson and Milton.[2] Much of their works were also translated into Odia during this period (like Nilakantha Das translated Tennyson's *Enoch Arden* as *'Dasa Nayak'* and *The Princess* as *'Pranayini'*).

A few of the major poets of the post-Radhanath era (Gopabandhu Das, Nilakantha Das, Godabarish Mohapatra et al) were drawn to the freedom movement now spearheaded by Gandhi. This decade also witnessed the rise of younger but strong voices in Odisha. They echoed the romantic imagination inspired by the English Romantics, and for some obvious reasons, Rabindranath Tagore. Led by Annada Shankar Ray (1904-2002), the poets of the so-called 'Sabuja Group'

failed to publish any significant work before 1930, while their attempt to open up a new venture in writing poetry was significant enough. Though this group was partly influenced by the writings of Rabindranath Tagore and the same was reflected in its writings, it had a unique undertone that can be described as "a meditative-melancholic attitude towards life".[3] Along with British romantic and victorian poets the young university wits were also drawn to the powerful voice of Rabindranath Tagore. In fact, the latter cast a spell on "the sabuja poets". This group comprises pravasi Bengali Annada Shankar Ray, Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi and et al. The works of W.B. Yeats started gaining popularity in the 1930s and he along with Irish poet George William Russel, was regarded as the pioneer of English modernist poetry. Despite the fact that little was known about Eliot, an anti-modern stance among Odias was palpable. Though the new generation of poets came to know about the works of Eliot they seemed to have been too puzzled to be immediately affected by them. So far as Eliot's influence is concerned, poets like Laxmikanta Mohapatra (1888-1953) and Nilakantha were familiar with Eliot's important works, but there was no evidence of his influence on their poetry. Laxmikanta emphasized the role of inspiration behind a poet's work. By the 1940s, he had developed a good grasp of modern poetry in general and was impressed *by Four Quartets.*[4] However, he was quite unbiased in the view that it may fuel 'propagandist contemporary literature in Odisha'[5].

Looking back on this period, Jatindra Mohan Mohanty (b. 1932) mentioned:

> The times were uncertain, the changes were rapid, and in those years immediately before Independence as the Indian sensibility was trying to adjust itself to the new, complex predicament of living, it found a kinship with Eliot, particularly with the poet's vision and understanding of life. Tagore was aware of Eliot, and it is pointed out that Tagore's later poetry had some affinity with that of Eliot. But in Bengal, it was the other group of poets younger to Tagore, such as Sudhindranath Dutta, Buddhadeb Bose, Bishnu Dey and Samar Sen, who were closer to Eliot in spirit and practice. In a way put forth their reactions to contemporary life as significantly as Eliot had done in his poetry. But it was not so in all Indian languages. This was surely not the case in Oriya poetry in the thirties and forties.[6]

The socialist approach gained more popularity in Odia literature than that in the modernist poetry of Pound and Eliot. The following statement of Laxmikanta Mahapatra seems a befitting reason for why the influence of European modernism was overshadowed by the

Marxist influence:

> The stories of Kings, Nobles and aristocrats were taken as the major background for literature. There was place for the life and ideas of the rustic ordinary people, what we call folk literature today, in literature. Odia literature was entirely under the influence of the bourgeois. People showed respect mixed with fear to the upper-class and regarded them as their ideals.[7]

The latter incident had a more striking and immediate impact on Indian literature than the former one. As a result, a strong wave of the communist spirit influenced a number of writers in Odisha through the Bengali Marxist poets. Known as the "Progressive Poets", the group "developed a rhetorical defiant attitude at par with the prevailing ideas of social equality and nationalistic challenge."[8] Bhagabati Charan Panigrahi, Sachidananda Routray, Rajkishore Ray and Pyarishankar Ray were the leading figures of this group. Eminent scholar Natabara Samantaray in his essay "History of the Progressive Literary Movement in Odisha" explains,

> It can be said that the birth of the progressive literary movement in Odisha was delayed on account of some potent factors. It struck its roots in Odisha in 1935-36. International events, the freedom struggle in India and, above all, the rise of youth power in Odisha brought this about. Now the question arises- What accounts for its sudden emergence? However, on closer scrutiny, one finds that this movement had not occurred suddenly in Odia literature. Sabuja poets, Kalindi and Baikuntha in particular, had, without their knowing it, prepared the ground for it.[9]

With a photograph of Maxim Gorky on its cover page, a journal named "Pragati" was published in 1937 to foster progressive ideas in Odisha as well as to work as a mouthpiece for the groups that opposed the British colonialism. Since it was the period of India's struggle for Independence, the progressive ideology received substantial momentum. Somehow, the new Progressive poets developed a peculiar ideology regarding 'Marxism', for instance, 'there is no place of dream and imagination in Marxism'[10]. The writers rejecting the delicate dreams of the Sabuja poets followed suit.

Though in Bengali literature Tagore was still the major voice, 'new poets' emerged during the 1930s who were not against Tagore, but believed in new approaches, following a way different from Tagore. The first ever mention of Eliot in Tagore's work can be found in his 1932 essay "Adhunik Kavya" where Tagore interpreted Eliot's poetry as 'decadent' and 'depressing'.[11] Perhaps he found that Eliot's imagist approach towards the falling civilization was

against his mystic and optimistic vision. Though he translated a few stanzas from "Preludes" it was with the intention of showcasing Eliot's obsession with 'ugliness'. But this biased notion did not stay long. The third decade of the Twentieth century witnessed the emergence of a 'new poet' who was the harbinger of modernity in Bengali poetry – Bishnu Dey. Dey, a student of English literature and someone who had developed a fancy for the music of Bach, Beethoven and Mozart early on, had a strong fascination for Eliot's poetry. Bishnu Dey translated 17 of Eliot's poems including the *Waste Land* at an early age. It was due to Dey's attempt that Tagore moved towards fancying Eliot. Dey translated "The Journey of the Magi" (concealing the original poem) and sent it to Tagore seeking his advice on improving its prose metrics. Dey wrote, "…. I am writing this to you without thinking about my right to do so. For some time now, many of my poems are getting deficient in rhyme."[12] Tagore made some modifications and it got published in the magazine Parichaya titled *"Tirthayatri"*. While translating Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Dey focused on the cultural transference of allusions rather than the literary translation, for example, he named "Ash Wednesday" as "Chadaker Gaan", "The Virgin" as "Devakimata", "Eternal Dolour" as "Chirantan Mathur", "Gerontion" as "Jaraayana", "Christmas" as "Janmashtami" etc.

Poets like Jibanananda Das, Sudhindranath Dutta, Bishnu Dey, Buddhadev Basu, and Amiya Chakraborty were deeply influenced by Pound and Eliot. In his 1957 essay "Swadesh o Sanskriti" (Native land and Culture), Buddhadev Basu, one of the pioneers of modernism in Bengali poetry recalls that the *Waste Land* "was an eye-opener for his generation as it acquainted them with the pervasive jejuneness of post-war civilization as nothing else did, and it introduced them to a poetic idiom for negotiating the zeitgeist."[13] Dey's mutual acceptance of Marxist ideology and Eliot's poetic style proved to be a turning point in modern poetry written in Bengali as well as Odia.

While most of the Sabuja poets were quite taken in by Tagore's mysticism, their younger contemporaries showed a greater inclination towards Marxist thought. Unlike the-then emerging Bengali poets like Bishnu Dey, they failed to show mutual acceptance towards European modernism and Marxist ideology and could not focus on modernist experiments. Modernism did witness a twilight phase by a cross-cultural influence with Sachidananda Routray – an Odia poet staying in West Bengal, and Annada Shankar Ray, a Bengali poet staying in Odisha, who played pivotal roles in giving new dimensions to the Odia literary landscape.

Sachidananda Routray (1916-2004), who started his poetic career with the publication of "Patheya" in 1932, showed reluctance towards Eliot and Pound in the early decades of his career. But slowly, he gravitated towards the Eliotic style during the 1950s and thereafter. Initially, he regarded Eliot as simply a Christian poet who had taken shelter in a Catholic Church, and Ezra Pound as a wayward Fascist.[14] The reason might either be Eliot's obscurity, or Routray could have been scared of his own Marxist overtone getting hampered by Eliot's mystic vision. Though by the 1950s he had started following Eliot's style, Routray did not acknowledge him as a part of propaganda but rather mentioned his indebtedness towards the Russian and French poets.[15] In 1947, Routray published his anthology of poems "Pandulipi" that contained 70 poems which were written between 1934 to 1946. This book clearly embodies the influence of T. S. Eliot on his poetry and paradoxically, he criticizes Eliot in the preface to this volume. While he puts forth the literary concepts of Bishnu Dey (from his essay "Ruchi O Pragati") on verse-libre, he rejects Dey's pro-Eliotic attitude. In the preface, he writes: "But it is not wise to get rid of the realistic with a load of realism, which may be found similar to chopping off the head to get rid of the headache. No matter how we think that we have strayed from realism, realism won't be separated from us; and it is impossible to be so. xxx That's why, shrieking saying 'we lost everything' or like when Eliot wails saying 'London Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down' is beyond the ideology of emerging literature. It is just like a disease of sick-mindedness caused by a reactive experience, not the pleasure of progressive thought." He terms Eliot's melancholic lines as "utter anxiety and cry of distress of a tired poet".[16]

But surprisingly, at the same time, he also emphasizes the need of merging poetic language with spoken language and 'the utility of incorporating prose virtues in poetry' like Eliot. The influence of Eliot's style is evident in his poems, for instance –

In the drawing-room,
timber wood's Indolent breathes,
Smell of fresh burnish,
The rhythm of slightly descending evening's
Deeming darkness,
Felt so good.

(*'Rajajema'*, line 35 - 40)[17]

The above lines are a clear replication of Eliot's narration from "A Game of Chess". Rajajema is infused with the glow of Cleopatra

and is filled with Eliotic images. Similarly, "Mruta Bandara" (The Deserted Port) also evokes the same imagery:

> Hawks looking for insects, at the bank of the blue lake,
> the vehicles loaded with cattle Plies
> cross the crimson path of the distant hills,
> ….
> The fish-loaded goods train passes with a spark of silent movement
> Casting a dim untidy shadow on Chilika.[18]

Nevertheless, Routray accepted Eliot's views later on in his works. In his essay *"Adhunika Kabitara Dhyana O Dharana"* (from the book *"Adhunika Sahityara Keteka Diga"*, published 1983) Routray wrote: "This writer is often deeply saddened with the so-called revolutionist (Marxist) poets of our country who haven't achieved anything worthier than the garbage of our city (Cuttack), rebuking the modernist poets with harsh words. A few days back, in an event organized by a college, this author had witnessed a senior revolutionist poet calling T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound 'bastards' - not once rather twice or thrice."[19]

In 1949, an eminent critic and novelist Surendra Mohanty (1922-1990), wrote a long essay named "Vimsa Satabdire Mayabaada" (The Twentieth century Illusionment). It focused on the disillusionment in modern poetry in which he discussed T. S. Eliot's the *Waste Land*. Mohanty sharply criticized the rejection of Eliot's poetry by a pseudo-Marxist group of poets in Odisha. Mohanty writes: "The Marxist critics may reject this (Eliot's disillusionment and lassitude in Prufrock) describing it as a mode of luxury of the bourgeoisie. But it is essential to realize the reasons of this illusionment."[20] This statement clearly shows that there was a certain aversion among the Marxist poets in Odisha towards Eliot's poetry. Surendra Mohanty analyses T. S. Eliot's the *Waste Land* as a representative poem of the Twentieth Century. He lauds Eliot's poetic vision and offers an analytical commentary on the *Waste Land* in Odia, perhaps first time in any Indian language. When Nilakantha Das first read the manuscript of this essay, he translated a few lines from the *Waste Land* into Odia, which were then quoted by Mohanty. Nilakantha Das's translation of a few stanzas of *The Waste Land* stands as one of the finest translations of Eliot:

> Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
> Waited for rain, while the black clouds
> Gathered far distant, over Himavant.

(*The Waste Land* lines 395 – 397)

Kshinasrotã Gangã Grishme Mudritã Latikã
Chãnhichi Barashã Jale, Chãnhu kãnhi dure
Himabarta Chule Ghote Krushna Meghamãlã.

(The streams of Ganga now thin, like a dried creeper
Wistfully waiting for the rain drops, and casts its sight to the farthest region
Atop the Himalayan mountain, where the dark clouds get assembled.)[21]

The influence of Eliot on Odia Literature witnessed a quantum leap in the 1950s. Prafulla Chandra Das (1927-2001), founder-publisher of Manmohan Pustakalaya, took a significant step in publishing the Odia translations of Nobel winning classics. Under his pioneering capacity, most of the modern classics of Western literature were translated into Odia, which included Roman Rolland's *Jean-Christophe*, Ernest Hemingway's *Old man and the sea*, Bertrand Russell's *The Satan in the Suburbs*, Herman Hesse's novel *Siddhartha*, Paul S Burke's *The Good Earth* etc. Under the pseudonym 'Subhadranandan' he himself translated several books among them. Despite incurring financial losses, he went on to create the modern translation movement in Odia literature. Undeniably, Odia literature witnessed a good number of translation works (English to Odia) in the early twentieth century. Earlier Nilakantha Das had translated Tennyson's *Enoch Arden*, Godavarisha Mishra had translated Hugo's *Les Misérables* and Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*. The major plays of Shakespeare were also rendered into Odia by Balakrushna Kar and Mayadhar Mansingh. But what Prafulla Chandra Das attempted may be termed avant-garde in Odia translation history. Das inspired many Odia writers to translate the 'modern world classics' into Odia and as a result, more than 70 of them got translated. The role of Prafulla Chandra Das was significant in many respects. He communicated with most of the Nobel laureates seeking their permission regarding translation of their books. With their due approval, he went on publishing them.[22] The efforts he made with them is definitely a rare attempt in not only in Odisha but in the entire Indian literary terrain. He even acquired a permission letter from the Secretary of Swedish Academy in favour of publishing the Nobel prize acceptance speech of Eliot. He also made pen-friends with many renowned poets and translators across the globe, including Ukrainian poet and translator Ihor Kostetsky[23], who translated Eliot's *The Waste Land* in 1955 (a year before Jnanindra Verma did it in Odia) and Pound's selected poems in 1960 (the same year Verma translated Pound).

In 1956, acclaimed poet and novelist Jnanindra Verma (1916-90)

translated T. S. Eliot's magnum opus *The Waste Land* along with a few other poems under the title "Poda Bhuin O Anyanya Kabita", which was published by Prafulla Ch. Das. Das corresponded with Eliot regarding the translation and with his consent he motivated Jnanindra Verma to translate the major poems of Eliot. In all probability, he also gained a copyright permission for its translation into other Indian languages. More remarkable in that 80-page book was Eliot's prefatory message written to Prafulla Ch. Das. Eliot wrote, "It is with pleasure that I respond to the invitation to offer a prefatory message to the readers of this Oriya translation of some of my poems. I am unable to read this translation, which will, I hope, be read by some who are unable to read the original. But I should like to think that this translation might prove a real contribution to Oriya poetry, and that my poems might thus provide some inspiration for Oriya poets. For the most important service that the poetry of other lands and languages can perform for us, is the stimulus and the suggestions that it can give to our own poets. It is, therefore, to the living poets of the Oriya language that I should wish the Oriya version of my poems to be dedicated."[24]

By the time Verma translated Eliot, he had already established his own powerful language often filled with lucidity and emotion. Works such as *Chandrara Fossil* (The Fossil of the Moon), *Duiti Suryara Jeevani* (Lives of Two Suns), *Swarnayugara Sandhya* (An Evening of the Golden Age) etc. show his grasp over language. Unlike Vishnu Khare and Bishnu Dey, who translated Eliot at an early age, Verma was mature enough as a poet when he ventured into *The Waste Land*. Along with *The Waste Land,* he went on translating other poems of Eliot that includes, The Love Song of Alfred Prufrock *(Alfred Prufrock nka Prema Sangita),* Gerontion *(Jaragama),* Ash-Wednesday *(Budhabaara Upaasanaa),* The Journey of the Magi *(Jnanee Tapasweenka Abhijaatra),* Marina *(Marina),* Landscapes: New Hampshire *(Prakruti Chitra: New Hampshire),* Virginia *(Virginia),* Two Choruses from the Rock *(Paharda Natakara Duiti Milita Kantha Gaana).*

In 1958, Verma translated selected poems of Ezra Pound (published by Prafulla Chandra Das), for which he bagged the Odisha Sahitya Academy Award for translation for the same year. The preface to this book was written by T. S. Eliot at the request of Mr. Prafulla Ch. Das. "Pound has found his sources and his inspiration in languages living and dead, and in literatures East and West. Gifted with prodigious facility in learning languages, he has turned his eye upon one literature after another, from Spain and Portugal to Japan. Many literatures have enriched his verse; in turn his own poetry can

enrich that of living poets in every language. Pound is in fact the greatest living master of versification, and the master who has the most to teach poets of other languages. It is in this conviction that I commend his poetry in English and in translation to all poetry lovers in Orissa", wrote Eliot. [25]

Verma shows his calibre as a veteran poet in his translation, especially when Eliot goes on narrating a certain situation or image that has nothing to do with a passive reference. It may be the broken image of a landscape or the Cleopatra scene, Verma exhibits his bona fide skill as a prolific Odia poet who is able to use the language with equal ease and draw out the same spirit in a target language. The first stanza of "A Game of Chess" is a perfect example of Verma's grasp over Odia language. He skillfully uses Odia *Taddhita* (derivatives from nouns, pronouns and adjectives) and Krudanta (a derivative form of a root) and other devices to trans-create the equally spirited words in Odia. He terms the golden Cupidon as "Swarna-gaŋdhã Atanu", the coffered ceiling as "Kothi-karaa gharara chhaata" etc.

"And other withered stumps of time,
Were told upon the walls;"

(*The Waste Land*, line 104 – 105)

"Samayara Anya Sabu Shuska Abashesha
Kãntha Dehe Hoichi Kathita;"

Though Eliot chose Free verse for his poems, in Verma's translation, it seems as if he tries to create a melodic rhyme at possible places using his liberty as a translator and gently loosening the tight grip of original text.

O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter
And on her daughter
They wash their feet in soda water.

(*The Waste Land*, line 199 – 201)

Srimati Porter Pare Chandra Dhale Ujjwala Jochhanã,
Au Taara Kanya Puni Se Parase Dhanyã,
Dhuanti Semane Goda Dhali Dhali Soda Pani Banyã.[26]

(The moon pours luminous light upon Mrs. Porter,
And her daughter too is glorified with that glowing touch,
While they let their feet being washed with a flood of soda mixed water.)

At some places, Verma creates equally melodious diction without slightest deviation from the precise meaning in the source language.

Under the firelight, under the brush,
her hair Spread out in fiery points.

(*The Waste Land*, line 108 – 109)

Niãnra Aloka Tale, Bartikã ra Tale, Kesharãshi
Se Nãrira Lotijãe Sphulinga Bhitare.[27]

(Under the light of the burning fire, under flame of the lamp-wicks, the hair
Of that Lady, rolls into the radiant sparks.)

The Hindi translation of Eliot's *The Waste Land* was brought out by the same publisher in 1960. The translator was a nineteen-year-old, young yet promising poet, Vishnu Khare (b. 1940), who later went on to become one of the major Hindi poets of the Twentieth century. Khare (who was younger to Verma by more than twenty years) showed his spirit of vibrant youth in his translation by getting into the heart of Eliot's poem and tightly following Eliot's poem keeping the literary meaning unchanged.[28] Named as *"Maru-pradesh aur anya kabitayein",* the book also included Eliot's other poems such as "Prufrock", "Preludes", "Gerontion", "Ash Wednesday", "The Journey of the Magi", and three of "Landscapes", two of the "Choruses from the Rock". Noted Hindi essayist and poet Humayun Kabir wrote the preface to the book (in English). Harish Trivedi in his essay "Eliot in Hindi, Modes of Reception" mentions, "While going some way towards giving us a sample of the whole Eliot, Khare is also distinguished for giving us Eliot and nothing but only Eliot. His translations of Eliot must be among the most closely faithful ever attempted into Hindi of any foreign writer."[29]

Adherence to the literal meaning can also be traced in Verma's translations. As both the books were published with arrangements by the same publisher, there may have been some instructions from the publisher's side to stick to the literariness of the poem. Verma had created a very mystifying notion regarding the translation of Pound and Eliot. The loaded allusions, passive references, cross-cultural elements and intertextuality in *The Waste Land* made Verma take it as an obscure art and he declared, you don't have any other way except using your own comprehension to understand the poem.[30] So he drew his own interpretations of Eliot's allusions and references, that made his translation, at some places, quite annoying. Though Verma tried his best to balance the literal accuracy, he failed to create a poetic fidelity. He focused so much on the lexicographical meaning that at some places the translation became hilarious:

O OOO that Shakespearean Rag—
It's so elegant
So intelligent

O Ho Ho Ho Shakespeare ra sehi chira kana
Taaha sate eteswadya
Etebuddhishila![31]

Here Verma fails to connect to the allusions of American rag music culture, instead he goes by the lexicographical meaning of 'rag' as 'a piece of torn cloth'. Though Verma had equal hold over English and Odia, intertextuality and cross-cultural approaches were major obstacles for his erroneous interpretation of Eliot's works. At some places, he used parallel allusions for translation, but those were decidedly weak as compared to the original. For instance, he names the second section "A Game of Chess" as *"Pasaakhela"* (a game played in India that is commonly found in folktales and myths), and the third section "Fire Sermon" as *"Agni Mantra"* (Hymns to the fire that is commonly found in Hindu religious scriptures). Similarly, he erroneously translates, "the agony in stony places" as *"Shila bhuin re prasari gala pare jantrana" (After pain was spread across a stony land)*, "stopped in the colonnade" as *"Band hoigalu ame karnish o stambha bhitare"* (We were stuck between cornice and columns) etc. In his attempt to draw down the literary meaning of the lines, his poetic approach seems to swing within the gray areas of allusion and references. At some places Eliot's direct references in form of quotes in Russian or Italian language are entirely missing. This might have happened since Eliot didn't mention these quotes in a non-English language in his 'Notes', and practically speaking, it would not have been possible for Verma to figure out the meaning of a Russian sentence. While Khare's translation included Eliot's 'Notes', Verma skipped them. He may have found them unnecessary for a common Odia reader, who may not make the effort to read the translation with notes. This could have been a major reason why Jnanindra's translation of Eliot fell flat. The charm of the poem was lost since the resonance for the allusions and allusive phrases were missing. At some places, Verma took help from the Notes, and at other places (probably when the notes themselves seemed intriguing and obscure) he used his own imagination to figure out the meaning. For example, he perfectly translates the stanza from "Tristan und Isolde" written in German, obviously with the help of the 'Notes' and again he skillfully narrates the legend of Philomel in 'The Game of Chess' as *"Rajakanya Bihangami hoijae jatha"*.

Unlike Bishnu Dey's Bengali translation, Verma retained the

proper nouns in Odia like 'Starnbergersee', 'Madame Sosostris', 'Thames', 'Aquitaine' etc. But Bishnu Dey Indianized them, most probably as a result of Tagore's influence. Renowned Pakistani translator and poet, Anis Nagi, who translated *The Waste Land* into Urdu, replaced the proper nouns with indigenous words, such as *'Yamuna'* for 'Thames', *'Kathiawar'* for 'Carthage', *'Chittor'* for 'Mylae' etc.[32] Jagannath Chakraborty's Bengali translation of *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* was published in 1964, named as *"Podo Jami O Choutal"*. A few similarities can be noticed in the translations of Chakraborty and Verma. Chakraborty rendered *The Waste Land* as 'Podo Jomi', its meaning similar to Verma's 'Poda Bhuin'. He termed *The Burial of the Dead* as 'Antyesti' (like Verma's 'Mrutakara Satkara'). Another translation by Anil Biswas was published in 1974. However, both translations by Jagannath Chakraborty and Biswas seem to have been cautious and loyal to the original text (probably focusing more on Notes) with almost 'a scholarly precision'.[33]

Prafulla Chandra Das, the publisher of the book, had clarified his intention behind publishing the translations of English poems into Odia. In a preface he wrote "The purpose behind translating the poetry of great poets of the world is to cast the gaze from the past to the present. But translation is one of the ways which increase the innuendo of a language. Through translation, a nation obtains a place in the psyche of another nation and there is a reciprocity of thought and intellect between them. One needs expertise in two fields before translating (a text) from a foreign language. One requires not just the ability to comprehend the vocabulary of the source language, but also an aesthetic sense in interpreting its usage and diction and secondly, the potential of retaining the equal spirit of diction and usage in the target language. I am hopeful, Mr. Jnanindra Verma has carefully maintained both."[34] Verma's attempt grabbed immediate attention and criticism and from several perspectives, and it generated a new approach in Odia literature. Firstly, it was one of the few first modern European poems in an Indian language. Secondly, after its publication there started a conscious critical argument regarding Eliot and his direct influence on Odia literary tradition. The camouflaged presence of Eliot's influence amidst the Marxist wave now became a topic of open critical argument.

The scene in 1950s in Odisha was quite significant since the Odisha literary circle had started commenting more openly upon Pound and Eliot. Even in the colleges there were Professors who could be divided as 'Pro-Eliot' and 'Anti-Eliot'. The 'Pro-Eliot's were known for their active inclination towards Eliot's poetry and the adaption of Eliot's style in Odia literature.[35] Students who studied in this phase

were more critical of Eliot's calibre as a poet. For example, poets like Guruprasad Mohanty, Bhanuji Rao had high esteem for Eliot's poetry, while writers like Manoj Das showed more interest in Eliot's prose (like *Tradition and Individual Talent* etc.).[36]

'Prajna', a quarterly magazine that started in 1960 with Bhanuji Rao (1926-2001) its editor, heralded the modernist approach in Odia literature. With Jatindra Mohan Mohanty as its backbone and Bidhubhushan Das its advisor, the magazine emerged as a flag-bearer of a genuine sense of modernity in Odia poetry, and strongly refuted the misconceptions regarding modernity which were prevalent in Odisha. Both Mohanty and Das being professors of English literature could overcome the obscurity of modernism and introduced them in Odia literature inspiring a new generation of writers.

Among that new generation of writers was Guruprasad Mohanty, a lecturer of English literature, who was profoundly inspired by Eliot. He wrote *Kalapurusha* in 1957 and it was published in 1960 in the second issue of *Prajna*. Unlike Routray or Verma, Guruprasad Mohanty studied Eliot at the University level. Undoubtedly, he was well versed in Eliot's work, and hence followed his style in Odia. With the publication of *Kalapurusha*, Mohanty introduced his unparalleled poetic calibre that at once garnered praiseworthy attention as well as harsh criticism. Even now, most Odia critics consider *Kalapurusha* to be a mere translation or trans-creation of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, and whenever Eliot's translation in Odia is discussed *Kalapurusha* is represented as a translation or at best, a follow-up, but the purpose behind *Kalapurusha* was completely different. The editorial of *Prajna* in which *Kalapurusha* was published mentions "... In this issue, we have published modern Odia poet Guruprasad Mohanty's long poem "*Kalapurusha*". Mr. Mohanty has informed that he had finished this poem by 1957 and he took two years to write the poem. He has also mentioned that readers may find similarity of his poem '*Kalapurusha*' with Eliot's *The Waste Land*. This similarity is intentional and at the same time unintentional. The reason is he has experimented on expressing the spirit and thoughts behind *The Waste Land* within the strength and scope of Odia language. However, we request our readers to read the poem with a sincere approach. *Kalapurusha* is a genuine Odia poem and that is its biggest identity."[37]

Kalapurusha is divided in five parts like *The Waste Land* and follows free verse. Except the opening and the concluding stanza, it doesn't follow the content of Eliot's poem. Style is the only adaption in Mohanty's case. Even the second stanza of the first part bears Mohanty's originality and typical Odia landscape:

Everything was almost alright,
Until that day, when rain descended,
with the stream of disbanded unrestrained clouds
Amazed and surprised,
with my hands in my pockets,
at Mahanadi shore
Speechlessly I gazed at the teary heart of the monsoon.
That day, rain poured outside,
and inside the cozy mess
Bridge game was engrossing enough,
With Ace, King, Spade, Heart, Tea-cups and cigarettes
The monsoon months slackened
Like a lady's unlocking plait.
I remember one and a half years ago,
One and a half years ago,
I fell in love with you."

(*Kalapurusha*, lines 11 - 20)[38]

At several places, Mohanty's poetic excellence is so strong that it creates different yet equally powerful narrative like that of *The Waste Land*:

How long is the path from Ramakrishna Mission to Emar Math?
Rain that once poured in Tamralipta, Charitra and Simhala islands
Rain that once returned from Barunabanta, through the narrow lanes of New Delhi, Kolkata and Cuttack,
So now all the lassitude of vanity, and the debacle of Kathajodi sands,
The testament of papers, condolence meets, brief biographies.[39]

In *Kalapurusha*, Mohanty offers a picture of the present life in contrast to the past. A mystifying undertone of love, lust, faith and trust runs throughout the poem, and all of them are connected by the metaphor of rain. Charged with the amazing amalgamation of memory, re-memory and forgetfulness, the poem also bears references to the past. A quest runs throughout the poem, but it is proved to be unending.

In the road and under the bridge
Around the trees and in canal water
There are so many shadows Without nose,
without ear Without any form of the face
Only dark melancholy under the cold eyelids
Unspoken, unrealized Under the coat, pant and tie
Under the Gandhi cap, and under the silk saree
Only the sound of worm and insect
Unspoken, unrealized.

Though *Kalapurusha* was inspired by *The Waste Land* and vividly follows its style and form, it embodied a different theme that was genuinely Odia in spirit and taste. In an interview published in *Sachitra Vijaya*, Mohanty told, "It happened one evening - poet Radhamohan Gadanayak and me were strolling on the Puri sea beach. Gadanayak talked about T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and told 'No such poem like this has been written in Odisha'. Then he mentioned 'You can write, if you try.' That day after returning from the sea-beach I wrote the first part of *Kalapurusha*, with 'April is the cruellest month' through the metaphor of rain. Without any hesitation I can accept that there is clear influence of Eliot on the first part of *Kalapurusha*, but I have tried to make something new and original in the rest parts. After writing the first part of *Kalapurusha* we (Gadanayak and me) completely forgot this discussion. During this period, I also wrote some other poems. After 4 or 5 years I resumed writing *Kalapurusha* in parts, and completed it in two or three years."[40]

With its publication, *Kalapurusha* faced some harsh criticism. Mayadhar Mansingh (1905-73), who still advocated the romantic spirit, criticized Mohanty's approach: "One searches in vain in these nerveless echoes of other people's words for the slightest glow and warmth of strong individual feeling, or the crusaders' spiritual fire, or the revolutionary's righteous anger. Sachi Routray's hammer and sickle variety of poetry and that of his erstwhile comrades had at least a fire which warmed many hearts. But these ersatz Pounds and Eliots have neither the dream of the brave new world of the Leftists nor the sense of prophetic frustration as revealed in 'The Waste land', nor yet the amazing scholarship that lies behind Pound's cantos."[41] Tarini Charan Das termed it as an unsuccessful epic partly-based on T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.[42] Girija Kumar Baliyarsingh described it as the dwarf-incarnation of Eliot's *The Waste Land*.[43] But despite harsh criticism it is amply evident that with *Kalapurusha,* a new era started in Odia poetry when poets actively followed Eliot's style.[44] Ramakanta Ratha, too adopted Eliot's theme in his poem 'Chaupahara' where one can find the joint influence of *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* with an Indian myth of *Trishanku*.

It is clear that Eliot influenced the literary context of Odisha to a considerable extent. Though *The Waste Land* was not immediately known to the general Odia literary circle with its publication in 1922, it has been proved to be the most influential poem (from the 1940s onwards) that shaped Odia modernity. It has helped the evolution of Odia modernity, beginning with Tagore's mysticism through the experimentalist approaches of the progressives and lastly to a solitary

movement in the 1950s, Odia modernism is spiritually rooted in Eliot's *The Waste Land*.

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Notes

1. In 1952, Laxmikanta Mahapatra mentions in an interview (by Faturananda) "I assure you; I entered the Odia literary fold five decades ago, at that period Radhanath (Ray) had an immense influence on Odia literature. In Bengal writers like Hemachandra, Naveenchandra and Michael emerged who followed the English poets like Scott, Byron, Tennyson and Milton; and this light was reflected in Odia literature." (Mahapatra, Laxmikanta. "Dagdha Kanchanara Kanti." *Kantakabi Granthabali.* Vol. 2. Cuttack: Orissa Book Emporium, 1952. p3. Print.)
2. See Mohanty, Jatindra Mohan. "T. S. Eliot and Modern Oriya Poetry: A Study in Assessment." *Tradition and Creativity: Essays on Oriya Literature.* Bhubaneswar: Subarnarekha, 2003. p194. Print.
3. In his essay "Apasruta Munha, Muhurta Shataka" (from the book *Smurtira Pradeepa*) Manoj Das recollects his first meeting with Laxmikanta Mahapatra. Das describes how Mahapatra narrated the significance of Eliot's *Four Quartets* (1943) and the dramatic works of George Bernard Shaw. (See, Das, Manoj. "Apasruta Munhan Muhurta Sataka" *Smrutira Pradipa.* Cuttack: Jagannatha Ratha, 2007. p44)
4. See, Mahapatra, Laxmikanta. "Dagdha Kanchanara Kanti." *Kantakabi Granthabali.* Vol. 2. Cuttack: Orissa Book Emporium, 1952. p5. Mahapatra says, "… there are quite a lot of new forms and styles found in small or fragmented poems, but it lacks the genuine spirit of a poet and has become overtly verbose. Most of the poems seem to be propagandist and just a temporal literary creation."
5. Mohanty, Jatindra Mohan. "T. S. Eliot and Modern Oriya Poetry: A Study in Assessment." *Tradition and Creativity: Essays on Oriya Literature.* Bhubaneswar: Subarnarekha, 2003. p 194.
6. In an answer to a question by Faturananda, "How was the literary scene in Odisha like when you entered the literary fold?". Here Laxmikanta Mahapatra narrates the Odia literary scenario in the first decade of the twentieth century. (*Kantakabi Granthabali.* Vol. 2. p1)

7. Mohanty, Jatindra Mohan. "T. S. Eliot and Modern Oriya Poetry: A Study in Assessment." *Tradition and Creativity: Essays on Oriya Literature*. Bhubaneswar: Subarnarekha, 2003. p 194.
8. Samantaray, Natabara. "History of the Progressive Literary Movement in Odisha (The First Phase)." Trans. Sumanyu Satapathy and Animesh Mohapatra. Natabara Samantaray (A Reader). New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2017. Print.
9. In the chapter "Prathama Prakashanara Anubhuti" Manoj Das narrates about his first unpublished short story in his book 'Smrutira Pradeepa'. Das wrote a story named "Narayan Mishrara Swapna" (The Dream of Narayan Mishra) when he was in Class viii or ix. His teacher, who was a renowned Marxist writer and a follower of Marxist Ideology, rejected the story mentioning "There is no place for dreams in Marxism". And subsequently Manoj Das realized that most of the Marxist writers and leaders believed this same notion. Sachi Routray, in the later phase of his career, slammed the pseudo-Marxists for these baseless ideas. (see, Das, Manoj. "Mora Prathama Prakashanara Anubhuti", *Smrutira Pradipa*. Cuttack: Jagannatha Ratha, 2007. p 239.
10. See, Ramakrishna Bhattacharya's essay "Tagore Translates Eliot", where he narrates how Tagore translated Journey of the Magi and his conversations with Bishnu Dey regarding this. (Bhattacharya, Ramakrishna. "Tagore Translates Eliot: Correction Required." *Calcutta Voice*. July - September (1998): 12-13. Print.)
11. Ibid.
12. Sarkar, Abhisek. "Whitman, T.S. Eliot and Modern Bengali Poetry." *JUSAS Online*. Jadavpur University Society for American Studies, 13 July 2014. Web.
13. See, Routray's preface "Nandimukha" to his poetry collection *Pandulipi* (1947). He mentions "[It is found] On one side the lamentation of a defeated, weary Eliot, the intense romantic pain of his injured mind, his quest for coherence in the tradition of myths, and finally taking shelter inside a Catholic church – and on the other side Pound's departure towards the fake crossroad of integrity forcefully built by the fascists."
14. Routray quotes a stanza from Vladimir Mayakovsky's "At the top of my Voice" as epigraph to his poetry collection "Pandulipi", whereas a number of poems showed clear influence of Eliot and pound.
15. See, Routray's preface "Nandimukha"
16. Translated from original Odia poem 'Rajajema' from the book "Pandulipi" (1947) p165
17. Back-translated from original Odia poem 'Mrutabandara' from the book "Pandulipi" (1947) p 111. The poem was first published in 1943 in Bengali magazine 'Kabita' edited by Buddhadeb Basu.
18. See Routray's essay "Adhunika Kabitara Dhara O Dharana" from his book 'Adhunika Sahityara Keteka Diga' (1983) p45
19. See Surendra Mohanty's essay "Vimsa Satabdire Mayabaada" (from his book 'Surendra Bichitra') in which he discussed the poetry of Eliot and Pound. The essay was originally written in 1949, but was not published until 1983.
20. Ibid. Nilakantha Das's translation of Eliot's TWL (lines 395-397) quoted in Surendra Mohanty's essay.
21. Das brought permission from Eliot for translation of *The Waste Land* into Odia and Hindi (probably for all Indian languages, as assumed by Harish Trivedi). Pound too sent his approval to Das for publication of his selected poems in Odia, which also had an introduction by Eliot. (see, Trivedi, Harish. "Eliot in

Hindi Modes of Reception." *Indian Literature* 32.5 (1989): 142-43. Print.)

22. In the introduction to the book "Ezra Pounda Kabita" (Selected poems of Ezra Pound, page iv) Das mentions that he had come to know to Ukrainian poet Ihor Kostesky through the courtesy of Pound.
23. Eliot's courtesy-preface to the book "Podabhuin O Anyanya Kabita" (page ii)
24. Eliot's preface to the book "Ezra Pound nka Kabita" (Odia translation of Selected Poems of Ezra Pound), 1958. p 1.
25. See Verma, Jnanindra. "Poda Bhuin." *Jnanindra Verma Chayanika*. Ed. Bijayananda Singh. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2019. p 290.
26. Ibid. p 286
27. Harish Trivedi in his essay finds Khare's translation close to the original and "tight", whereas the Bangla translation by Bishnu Dey was Indianized. (Trivedi, Harish. "Eliot in Hindi Modes of Reception." *Indian Literature* 32.5 (1989): 142-43. Print.)
28. Ibid.
29. Jnanindra Verma in his prefatory note to "Ezra Pound Kabita" (1958), p iv. mentions, "…But that art (fusion of ancient myths in poem) has made the poems obscure and incomprehensible. According to Hugh Kerner, the ancient myths can be decoded with the help of encyclopaedias. But in the case of more intense obscurity, one doesn't have any other way except relying upon his own comprehensive ability to chalk out the meaning." (see Verma, Jnanindra. "Abataranika." *Ezra Pound Kabita*. Cuttack: Prafulla Chandra Das, 1958. p iv.)
30. See Verma, Jnanindra. "Poda Bhuin." *Jnanindra Verma Chayanika*. Ed. Bijayananda Singh. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2019. p 287.
31. Husain, Intizar. "'The Waste Land' in Translation." *DAWN.COM*. 16 Sept. 2013. Web. 25 Aug. 2022.
32. See Abhisek Sarkar's essay "Whitman, T.S. Eliot and Modern Bengali Poetry". Sarkar, Abhisek. "Whitman, T.S. Eliot and Modern Bengali Poetry." *JUSAS Online*. Jadavpur University Society for American Studies, 13 July 2014. Web.
33. Extracted from Prafulla Chandra Das's 'Introduction' (originally written in Odia) to the book *"Ezra Pound nka Kabita"*, p.iv
34. Extracted from a personal conversation made with Manoj Das.
35. In the "Introduction" to 'Manoj Das: A Reader', Prof P. Raja mentions Manoj Das was an ardent admirer of T.S. Eliot's "Tradition and Individual Talent". (Raja, P. Introduction. *Manoj Das: A Reader*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 2014. p 15) Das himself, emphasized the significance of the essay in his book "Bipulacha Prithvi" (Das, Manoj. "Samasamayika Samalochana". *Bipulacha Prithvi*. Cuttack: Prachi, 2010. p20).
36. From the Editorial of *Prajna* (1960, volume 1, issue 2), p2-3.
37. Mohanty, Guruprasad. *Samudra Snana*. 3rd ed. Bhubaneshwar: Lark, 1978. 38. Print.
38. Ibid. p 51.
39. Extracted from an interview with Mohanty published in "Sachitra Vijaya" (Oct 1995, p 45).
40. From Mansingh's book "History of Oriya Literature" (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1962) p 262. Mansingh criticized Guruprasad Mohanty and Bhanuji Rao for their inclination towards Eliot's style.
41. In the essay "*Odia Dirgha Kabita*" (Long poems in Odia) published in 'Dagara' (Vol 32, Issue 10-11, p 13), Tarini Charan Das writes, "It (*Kalapurusha*) can be termed as a partly-followed unsuccessful epic based on *Eliot's The Waste Land*.")

42. Girija Kumar Baliyarsingh wrote an essay named "*Kalapurusha: The Waste Land ra Bamanavatara*" (The Dwarf Incarnation of *The Waste Land*), published in *Utkala Sahitya*, Issue 2, (1974). Baliyarsingh writes, "Despite the use of quite astounding imagery, it has failed to enshroud the cultural contrast. xxx As a gentleman would say, "It is a Cuttack edition of *The Waste Land*."
43. Jatindra Mohan Mohanty in his essay "Tradition and Creativity: Essays on Oriya Literature" narrates Guruprasad Mohanty's *Kalapurusha* as a poem that brought genuine modernity in Odia poetry, terming it "new poetry in Oriya, arrived with a bang." (p200)