PREFACE

Thomas Stearns Eliot has been a conjuring name both to the readers and writers of modern Bengali poetry. This familiarity, among other things, has created, most importantly, an awareness of the role played by his poetry and prose in the emergence and growth of the modern Bengali poetry after Rabindranath.

T.S. Eliot attracts the Indian mind because of his basically philosophical view of life. He is sensitive not only to the beauties of the creation but also to its ugliness. He takes a measure of the negative before moving to the positive end. He pauses, broods, reflects and then comments. This suits an oriental mind. Again, Eliot's poetry is based on religious sensibility, which is not particularly catholic or even Christian in character, but a universal sensibility that sustains the religiosity of all time and all places. In Eliot's poetry, an Indian hears the echoes from the Bhagavad Gita, the Upanishads or the sermons of Lord Buddha. The mystic in Eliot draws an Indian mind instantly to his poetry. A realization half revealed; truth concealed in negative statements; and above all, an awareness of a world beyond our perception, endeared him to an Indian and particularly to a Bengali reader. May be, Eliot's modernity knows no man down, but his spirituality comes as a saviour of the soul and an Oriental, like any one else, has a natural preference for the latter.

Further, the advancement of science and the growth of industrialization in Europe, (which was also responsible for widening the gap between the Indian and European minds), in the 19th century particularly...
the beginning of the 20th century, is practically discarded by Eliot in
his poetry, as unimportant. Rabindranath also has done the same thing. In
this respect the outlook of these poets are similar. Hence, the mind
behind Eliot's poetry appears to be known to a Bengali reader. In other
words, though the English and the European poetry has always been closely
connected with the Bengali poetry from the time of Madhusudan, Eliot
brought Bengal and Europe closer. The relation between England and her
colony India had always been very cordial on the literary level. Eliot
raised it to the level of intimate relationship.

But all this refers mostly to Eliot's poetry, the impact of
which on the Bengali poetry, is yet to be fully realised. It is Eliot's
poetics and some of his early poems including 'The Waste Land', that
played a significant role in the growth and development of the Bengali
poetry after Rabindranath. It is for this reason, that the challenge
against the Romantic poetry which came in England after over a century,
was raised in Bengal when romanticism was at its zenith and when there was
no real sign of decadence of the romantic tradition. The disease was
diagnosed before the symptoms had fully developed and the preventive was
administered promptly. Besides, the poetics and the early poetry of Eliot
helped the Bengali poetry after Rabindranath to find out the ways and
means to sustain itself in a critical period, when all available material
and form of the Bengali poetry were drowned by a tremendous flow of lyric
and romantic poetry. In Europe, Eliot's poetry helped to overcome a period
of draught in literature, in Bengal; it was found helpful in time of a
literary deluge. Another characteristic of Eliot that helped the moderns
immensely was his spirit of enquir[.] Eliot would not accept any thing for
granted : be that a well-established principle or time-honoured deeply
entrenched belief. He would apply his critical mind and most often find
out a new meaning or add a new dimension to the existing one. The impor-
tance of the study of Eliot's poetry and poeties vis-a-vis Bengali poetry
after Rabindranath, therefore, cannot be ever emphasised. This study here,
however, confines itself to the role of Eliot's poetry and poeties in the
growth and development of the modern Bengali poetry after Rabindranath.
The Bengali poets discussed are - Bishnu Dey, Sudhindranath Dutta, Jiben-
ananda Das and Buddhadev Bose, who have played a pivotal role in shaping
the modern Bengali poetry and poetic sensibility.

The translations of poems, extracts from poems and other writings
are done by me, except in those cases where there are standard English
versions or translations done by the poets themselves. In rendering the
poems or the extracts from poems into English I had to keep in mind the
spirit of the poem or the extract concerned and also the context. Besides,
the whole pattern of the poetry of a particular poet also could not be
disregarded or overlooked. Keeping these in mind I tried to be exact and
literal in my translations.

So much is written about Eliot that it is not easy to say some-
thing new about him. Yet, after about fifty years of the publication of
"The Waste Land", it is clear that the dead is not quite buried. The
friendly dog digs up the corpse now and then from its snowy bed. This
emboldened me to look at Eliot from yet another point of view. Hence this
humble attempt to search the meaning of Eliot's works from the point of view of the modern Bengali poetry - its growth and development, which also means an attempt to understand the modern Bengali poetry from the point of view of Eliot's poetry and poetics.

So far as I know, no systematic research work has been done on this particular subject though it is generally agreed that Eliot's influence on modern Bengali poetry is considerable. Mrs. Dipti Tripathi, in her 'Adhunik Bangla Kavya Parichya' discussed the subject to an extent permitted by the nature of her work. Prof. Amalendu Bose, Bishnu Dey, Annada Sankar Roy, Lila Roy and some other modern critics have also thrown lights on the different aspects of the topic. All these works have been very thought provoking and suggestive but they do not exclusively deal with the topics of this thesis.

Words are inadequate to express my gratitude to Prof. A. Dutta, Head of the department of English, Gauhati University, who has guided me to prepare the thesis. To me he has been not only a guide but also a source of inspiration. This study involves one of the most enigmatic poets of the modern times and four other controversial poets of a different language and literature. Professor Dutta's erudition illuminated my way through the maze of ideas and made my burden easier. I should also thank the British Library authorities in Calcutta for the kind and cordial help they extended to me. I express my indebtedness to Sri Bishnu Dey, the poet, and many others who helped me with valuable suggestions and views.