The terms “Datta, Dayadhvam, Damyata” in the section of *The Waste Land* entitled “What the Thunder Said” signify a possible way of escaping from the malaise of the fractured modern-day existence. The terms respectively mean “give,” “be sympathetic,” and “control,” which could collectively be interpreted as a way of dealing with the chaos and disorder of post-war life.

The terms "Datta, Dayadhvam, and Damyata" are from Hindu mythology, specifically from the second Brahmana. In this Brahmana, the gods ask Devas and Asuras to have self control and be compassionate and ask mankind to be charitable.

In this poem, the terms suggest that mankind needs to follow these instructions in order to avoid a repeat of World War I.

In the poem, Eliot's speaker asks, "What have we given?" To him,*’datta*’ here refers to self-sacrifice, particularly in terms of giving life and limb for a friend. This can be connected to the First World War: in this section of the poem, Eliot refers to a "friend" and an act of sacrifice for him, which alone means that someone has really existed.

In terms of ‘*dayadhvam’,*Eliot alludes to prisons and how each person is in his own prison. In order to be sympathetic, as this order directs, it is important for everyone to be aware that we are all in our own prisons and to sympathize on this front.

*‘Damyata’,*the final element, directs the reader to be compassionate. Eliot describes a boat which responds as directed to the hands which control it and suggests that we, like the boat, will feel more secure if we do not resist what is happening to us, but instead have compassion for what the world is being asked to do in order to recover.

One of the most noteworthy features of Eliot's [*The Waste Land*](https://www.enotes.com/topics/waste-land) is its polyphonic quality (its use of many different voices). One of those voices is that of the thunder that speaks in the poem's final section. Eliot derives the speaking thunder from an ancient Indian philosophical work called the ‘*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*’ in which people are enjoined to adopt certain moral standards in their lives.

These standards are “Datta,” giving; Dayadhvam,” being compassionate; and “Damyata,” exercising control. Though these moral commands are unmistakably the products of Eastern philosophy, their derivation from the thunder, which all of us experience at some point in our lives, gives them a universal relevance, even to those of us who live in the West.

In fact, they are particularly relevant to those who live in the West, especially those who live in the fractured, chaotic society of the post-war era, when many of the old moral, cultural, and political certainties had been upended by years of bloody, senseless conflict.

In the midst of all this chaos, amid the broken fragments of Western civilization, the wisdom of the East, as manifested in the notions of giving, sympathizing, and controlling, hold out the hope, however remote, of building the foundations of a new social and moral order on the ruins of the old.