

A Universe With a View: E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*

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ABSTRACT

This paper will explore Forster's concepts of religious meaning and the sacred in *A Passage to India*. It is generally acknowledged that the three sections of the novel: Mosque, Caves and Temple, stand for the three seasons in India, but they may also indicate conceptions of three systems of religious belief: the Christian/Moslem system that stresses allegorical understanding of opposites, like Good and Evil; the nihilist vision of nothingness and endless, meaningless repetition through time, (non-belief in this case) symbolized by the Marabar Caves; and the creation/destruction and all-embracing mysticism of Hinduism in the final part, *Temple*, which uses a religious festival to portray and dramatize the Hindu belief system. Forster presents these three belief systems as a way of exploring what it means to believe; he does not favor one system over any other; he may possibly be charting the evolution of religious belief in the individual as well as its development on wider levels of human consciousness.

On a more mundane level, Forster takes up the question of the potential for mutual understanding between Indians and Anglo-Indians and appears to conclude that the two cultures were destined to remain divided in understanding each other until some future time of higher consciousness and tolerance.

Forster offers gentle and ironic hope for the future in the person of Ralph, Mrs. Moore's son. In fact, Mrs. Moore herself is an embodiment of this hope in the present time of the novel: the sacral nature of creation is reaffirmed by her instinctive intuition; her sense of the sacred is Forster's affirmation that there is meaning in human existence — that the journey each of us makes through life is a journey toward God. In Whitman's words:

*O my brave soul! O farther sail! O daring joy, but safe!
Are they not all the seas of God?*

*Oh Thou transcendent,
Nameless, the fibre and the breath,
Light of the light, shedding forth universes, thou centre of them,
Thou mightier center of the true, the good, the loving,
Thou moral, spiritual fountain-affection's source-thou reservoir,
(O pensive soul of me-O thirst unsatisfied-waitest not there?
Waitest not haply for us somewhere there the Comrade perfect?)
Thou pulse-thou motive of the stars, suns, systems,
That, circling, move in order, safe, harmonious,
Athwart the shapeless vastnesses of space,
How should I think, how breathe a single breath, how speak, if,
out of myself,
I could not launch, to those, superior universes?*

— Whitman "Passage to India"

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1. Introduction

Most readers of *A Passage to India* come to the correct conclusion that it is primarily about the British and the native Indian inability to understand one another. Readers also sense, however, deeper meanings to the novel. Most good novels, and this is one of the best, operate on various levels of meaning. Scenes that appear at first to be true-to-life because of their apparently random presentation are often, upon reflection, discovered to have a particular structure that gives coherence and artistic balance to the whole. Beneath the surface level of social and political relations between the rulers and the ruled, lies Forster's concept of the cosmos. The three main religious 'stances' treated in the book, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism are seen by the author as representing social strategies or coping mechanisms to deal with what is represented in the middle part of the book in *Caves*: primordial time and emptiness — the void.

2. Mosque

Here we are introduced to Anglo-India; the India of the Raj. Two of the main characters, Mr. Fielding and Dr. Aziz, represent the two worlds of England and India. Adela Quested has traveled to India with Mrs. Moore to marry her son, Ronnie Heaslop, who is an official of the British government in Chandrapore, the fictional town where the action of the first two parts takes place. There are various other characters that represent types, and they will be mentioned as they bear upon the theme of this paper.

Forster's famous dictum, 'Only connect,' applies here: Fielding and Aziz feel a natural friendship for each other and each, with the best of intentions, tries to make this relationship real. Sometimes they succeed, more often they fail and misunderstandings and resentment replace goodwill.

The section title *Mosque* is taken from a particular scene in the novel where Mrs. Moore and Dr. Aziz first meet. While the friendship of Fielding and Aziz is important, the role of Mrs. Moore, at least for the purposes of this paper, is much more significant, and following her trajectory through the novel yields the thesis of this paper.

Fielding, an educator, tries and fails in his English way to be friends with the Moslem-Indian, Aziz, but Mrs. Moore makes a deeper connection almost immediately with him, and thus, with India. She is not dissimilar to Mrs. Wilcox in *Howard's End* in that she transcends the other characters through her reliance on intuition in human relations and in understanding the larger meanings of experience.

Aziz stops at the mosque to rest because his feet hurt from walking. As he sits in the courtyard he notices the front of the building in the moonlight. On it are written the ninety-nine names of God in black on a white frieze; the "contrast of this dualism and the contention of shadows within pleased Aziz, and he tried to symbolize the whole into some truth or religion

of love” (41). The mosque sets his imagination free, something ‘a temple of another creed, Hindu, Christian or Greek’ (ibid.) would fail to do. Islam is to him ‘his body and his home’ (ibid.).

Having identified Aziz completely with Islam, picturing him sitting on a low wall in the courtyard, Forster is ready to introduce him to Mrs. Moore, who has left the stuffy English club for a breath of air.

He notices that one of the pillars seems to move. Hallucination? The ‘pillar’ sways in the gloom and detaches itself; he fears a ghost but does not move to run; another pillar moves and an Englishwoman emerges into the moonlight. Aziz calls to her and she is startled:

‘Madam, this is a mosque, you have no right here at all; you should have taken off your shoes; this is a holy place for Moslems.’

‘I have taken them off.’

‘You have?’

‘I left them at the entrance.’

(42)

She knows intuitively that in a holy place, one should remove one’s shoes. This does a great deal not only to establish her character, but to show the way toward understanding between cultures and even to demonstrate the value of intuition as a survival mechanism. Aziz notes that so few ladies (English ladies) even bother to remove their shoes, especially if no one is near. Mrs. Moore replies, “That makes no difference, God is here” (42). That does it for Aziz—he immediately falls spiritually in love with Mrs. Moore. He moves toward her, asks her name and sees with a shock that she is old “with a red face and white hair. Her voice had deceived him” (43). They fall into conversation.

As they talk, Aziz feels love, “the flame that not even beauty can nourish was springing up” and his ‘heart began to glow secretly’ (45). He tells her she understands him.

‘I don’t think I understand people very well. I only know whether I like or dislike them.’

‘Then you are an Oriental.’

(45)

This connection between Mrs. Moore and Dr. Aziz, between an English lady and an Indian gentleman, is at center a connection between one feeling human being and another, even though much of it is based on misunderstanding. This seems a clear demonstration of Forster’s credo, ‘Only connect.’

2.1 Mrs. Moore's 'acceptable hints of infinity'

Back, back to wisdom's birth, to innocent intuitions

— Whitman "Passage to India"

As becomes apparent later in the novel, Mrs. Moore is much more than an elderly English lady — her consciousness has changed since coming to India — she has become someone else. For example, in a scene following hard on her meeting with Aziz, she has fallen into a doze outside the English club; she awakens and gazes at the moon, which in England had seemed 'dead and alien' (50) but

here she was caught in the shawl of night together with earth and all the other stars. A sudden sense of unity, of kinship with the heavenly bodies, passed into the old woman and out, like water through a tank, leaving a strange freshness behind. She did not dislike Cousin Kate or the National Anthem, but their note had died into a new one, just as cocktails and cigars had died into invisible flowers.

(51)

Mrs. Moore has perceived a new reality, beyond England or India — one beyond any cultural or even human constraints. *Cousin Kate*, the play they are performing at the club, can be seen as a cultural artifact, while the National Anthem obviously represents England. Note that Foster uses the expression 'died into' in referring to the cultural artifacts, (*Cousin Kate* and the National Anthem), cocktails and cigars becoming 'invisible flowers'; this can be understood to mean a rebirth, as Mrs. Moore has entered a heightened state of consciousness. Mrs. Moore has passed beyond cultural boundaries, to 'kinship with the heavenly bodies' and a sense of unity with the Cosmos. Her transformation can be located from this narrative moment.

Later in the same chapter, in a carriage with Adela and Ronnie, the three of them look at the Ganges in the moonlight, which looked 'like a luminous sheaf upon the fields of darkness' (53) and Mrs. Moore exclaims, upon learning there are crocodiles that eat the dead bodies which are thrown into the holy river:

'What a terrible river! What a wonderful river!' and sighed. The radiance was already altering, whether through shifting of the moon or of the sand; soon the bright sheaf would be gone, and a circlet, itself to alter be burnished upon the streaming void.

(53)

Her exclamation about the Ganges is apt because she feels terror and wonder at the sight. The river seems to her to merge with the firmament in this description — the river itself becomes part of the ‘streaming void.’

Mrs. Moore’s last, and most important, act in this important chapter is to observe a wasp sleeping on a coat peg as she is about to hang up her cloak. Noticing that it is not at all like English wasps, the narrator observes that nothing in India is like England. Forster describes the wasp clinging to the peg, asleep “while jackals in the plain bayed their desires and mingled with the percussion of drums” (55). Mrs. Moore says, ‘Pretty dear’ (ibid.) to the wasp, who does not wake, but “her voice floated out, to swell the night’s uneasiness” (ibid.).

The dimensions of her voice, going beyond normal human utterance, (floating out to swell the night’s uneasiness) here gives the feeling that she occupies a different level of reality. The wasp will appear again in this novel twice, and at crucial times. Her voice mingles with the natural sounds of the world, and it is as if her voice is that of a goddess.

2.2 Beyond Bridges

Readers have long noted that Forster seems inclined in all his novels to attempt to resolve opposites: the upper and lower classes in *Room With a View* and *Howard’s End* and materialism vs. cultural idealism in the last mentioned novel. The house itself is the scene for resolution of some opposites in *Howard’s End* and in *Room With a View*, when Lucy marries George Emerson, there is a merging of the two classes. However, in *Passage*, Forster can be seen as moving beyond such mundane social and ideological resolutions and beyond even oppositions between different cultures — to a higher level of experience and meaning.

In Chapter IV, the leaders of English society in India invite prominent Indians to a ‘bridge’ party. The reference here is obviously not to the game. The Indians, both Hindu and Moslem, discuss this coming event and take different stances — some positive and some negative. Forster notes, however, in the persons of Mr. Graysford and Mr. Sorley, two devoted missionaries, that “All invitations must proceed from heaven perhaps; perhaps it is futile for men to initiate their own unity, they do but widen the gulfs between them by the attempt... in our Father’s house are many mansions, they taught, and there alone will the incompatible multitudes of mankind be welcomed and soothed” (58). Again, to immediately take this at face value is dangerous in Forster because appearances deceive. This would seem a pessimistic and ironic statement on the surface: that the different races and religions will never be able to exist in amity on this earth. However, Forster carries the missionaries’ speculations further, in what appears to be a comic extension of God’s grace:

Not one shall be turned away by the servants on the veranda, be he black or white, not one shall be kept standing who approaches with a loving heart. And

why should the divine hospitality cease here? Consider, with all reverence, the monkeys. May there not be a mansion for the monkeys also? Old Mr Graysford said No, but young Mr Sorley, who was advanced, said Yes; he saw no reason why monkeys should not have their collateral share of bliss, and he had sympathetic discussions about them with his Hindu friends. And the jackals? Jackals were indeed less to Mr. Sorley's mind, but he admitted that the mercy of God, being infinite, may well embrace all mammals. And the wasps? He became uneasy during the descent to wasps, and was apt to change the conversation. And oranges, cactuses, crystals and mud? And the bacteria inside Mr Sorley? No, no, this is going too far. We must exclude someone from our gathering, or we shall be left with nothing.

(ibid.)

The jackals and wasps are the same jackals and wasps of Mrs. Moore's reverie, of her pronouncement, 'Pretty dear.' Notice that after monkeys, on which Mr. Sorley speculates with his Hindu friends, and jackals, which may well be included, the 'descent' to wasps is where Mr. Sorley stops — but not Mrs. Moore — she would include all creation. She is beyond Christian or Moslem systems of exclusion; it will be seen later that she is more in sympathy with Hindu all-inclusiveness. She is beyond, in Forster's estimation, attempts to build bridges because she has already established connections with other human beings that do not depend on a consciousness of 'we' and 'they' and other traditional stances. Forster is saying that religious systems, of their own nature, are exclusionary; that the 'nothing' we shall be left with once we try to include all creation in a system of belief is what terrifies believers in organized religions. A cousin of this same 'nothing' certain characters will find in the Marabar Caves. Mrs. Moore's reaction to the Marabar experience will be crucial in understanding what Forster is trying to do in this, his greatest novel.

2.3 Beyond Partiality

The next chapter begins with the pronouncement, "The bridge party was not a success..." and shows the uneasiness of the British and Indian guests when they are thrown together; their prejudices and their fears are just barely concealed. Once he has established this discord, however, Forster shows us kites which

hovered overhead, impartial, over the kites passed the mass of a vulture, and, with an impartiality exceeding all, the sky, not deeply coloured but translucent, poured light from its whole circumference. It seemed unlikely that the series stopped here. Beyond the sky must not there be something that over-

arches all the skies, more impartial even than they? Beyond which again....

(60)

The impartiality and 'beyondness' of the universe Forster again sets against the bias and division of the here and now, of the mundane world below. This is another foreshadowing of what will happen in the Caves, but the characters themselves are not ready to experience this yet; only the narrator and the reader are aware of the suggested worlds beyond and within.

When Mrs. Moore meets some of the Indian ladies at the party, she expresses her regret that she cannot speak their language, to which one of the ladies replies, "Perhaps we speak yours a little" (62). Two Indian ladies are introduced and Forster notes of them that "There was a curious uncertainty about their gestures, as if they sought for a new formula which neither East nor West could provide" (ibid.). So, their inner impulse is to go beyond partiality — to transcend their circumstances; something Mrs. Moore has already done unconsciously but not socially; even she fails to 'connect' with these Indian ladies. However, as they are taking their leave, Mrs. Moore has an 'impulse' and asks Mrs. Bhattacharya if she and Miss Quested might call some day. After a comic attempt of fix a time and day, Thursday is agreed upon. Mrs. Moore has made the attempt to bridge the gulf that separates the two cultures and has found the other side willing, but this will lead to further muddles in Forster's social, if not transcendental, world.

It may be objected that the English secular community cannot be thought to stand for Christianity per se, but the following ironic comment by the narrator concerning Mahmoud Ali, who was glad he had attended the party indicates otherwise, at least jocularly, for, "Shrines are fascinating, especially when rarely opened, and it amused him to note the ritual of the English Club, and to caricature it afterwards to his friends" (64-65).

Mr. Fielding is pleased by the cordiality that the new English ladies show the Indians; he is so pleased he decides to tell them of that pleasure. He approaches Miss Quested and finds her "looking through a nick in the cactus hedge at the distant Marabar Hills, which had crept near, as was their custom at sunset; if the sunset had lasted long enough, they would have reached the town, but it was swift, being tropical" (65). In most of Forester's novels, place is of great importance and buildings (*Howard's End*) and geography (Italy in *Room With a View*) play an important role in the drama; but this passage is startling because it converts an optical illusion into a seeming reality as it pictures the hills alive — and not with the sound of music. This is an ominous suggestion of the calamity to come; Miss Quested is to be the main player in this calamity, so it is fitting that the hills are first seen through her eyes and that this should happen when Fielding first meets her.

Fielding invites them to tea on the same Thursday they are to go to the Indian lady's and Miss Quested feels 'all the nice things are coming Thursday' (66). As her mood livens, she contem-

plates the hills and finds them lovely, but 'she couldn't touch them' because the vision of her married life to Ronnie falls 'like a shutter' between her and India. They will soon touch her and not in a lovely way. She feels isolated from the reality of India and that "she would see India always as a frieze, never as a spirit and she assumed that it was a spirit of which Mrs. Moore had had a glimpse" (ibid.). As noted earlier in this paper, Mrs. Moore has had more than a glimpse; she has been altered by her night experience, but of course Miss Quested, Adela, does not know this.

Later in the chapter, Ronnie and his mother, Mrs. Moore, have a discussion concerning the English in India; to Ronnie, taking the predictable position of a government functionary, law and order are paramount — politeness and civility to the Indians, indeed, humanity and understanding, become secondary if not wholly dispensable. Mrs. Moore objects that "The English *are* out here to be pleasant" (70). When he asks why, she replies:

'Because India is part of the earth. And God has put us on the earth in order to be pleasant to each other. God... is ... love.' She hesitated, seeing how much he disliked the argument, but *something made her go on*. 'God has put us on earth to love our neighbors and to show it, and He is omnipresent, even in India, to see how we are succeeding.'

(ibid. *emphasis mine*)

The *something that made her go on* is important because she has already responded to this *something*; we see a human soul following the same intuition that caused her to remove her shoes in the mosque, to see the wasp as a 'pretty dear' and now to assert in the only way she knows how, that God is love. (Later in the novel, the saying 'God is love' will become transposed through an error in English to 'God si love' and become almost an anthem and symbol for Mrs. Moore.) Love is what animates the cosmos. She knows this to be true, though she perhaps does not know why.

She continues, "The desire to behave pleasantly satisfies God... The sincere if impotent desire wins His blessing. I think everyone fails, but there are so many kinds of failure. Goodwill and more goodwill and more goodwill. Though I speak in the tongues of..." (70-71). (This pattern, 'Goodwill and more... and more...' will be echoed by another character — Aziz, because of the influence Mrs. Moore has on him.) Religion, however, makes Ronnie uncomfortable. In Ronnie's view "the conversation had become unreal since Christianity had entered it..." (ibid.) but to Mrs. Moore God has become an increasingly important presence, not only because she is growing older but because "He had been constantly in her thoughts since she entered India, though oddly He satisfied her less. She must needs pronounce His name frequently, as the greatest she knew, yet she had never found it less efficacious. Outside the arch there always seemed an arch,

beyond the remotest echo a silence" (ibid.). The name of the Christian God is no longer a protection against evil and an invocation of good. She is finding it less powerful because of her surroundings, her age and the fact that she feels overwhelmed. So ends Chapter III.

Leonard Woolf feels that the above quote ("Outside the arch there always seemed an arch, beyond the remotest echo a silence") can stand as a metaphor for the book itself (CA; 1924), so finely woven are the themes. Beyond the attempted friendship of Fielding and Aziz; beyond the cultural differences; beyond the politics of England and India; beyond the religions of each nation; beyond all these things are more arches, more silence beyond the echo, beyond, in George Eliot's phrase, 'that roar which lies on the other side of silence.' Mrs. Moore has intimations of infinity, emptiness, the void. Soon she will confront them in the Marabar Caves.

Mr. Fielding's inclination is similar to Mrs. Moore's: goodwill and more goodwill and more goodwill. As an educator, he is interested in the exchange of ideas. He sees the world as "a globe of men who are trying to reach one another and can best do so by the help of goodwill plus culture and intelligence — a creed ill-suited to Chandrapore" (80). It is ill-suited because among the English at Chandrapore, Fielding is an outsider and is treated with distrust. They are right to distrust him because he treats the Indians as equals, something they cannot do. His friendship for Aziz is only the most apparent manifestation of his egalitarian personality. Aziz feels Fielding's 'fundamental goodwill' when he comes to tea:

His own went out to it, and grappled beneath the shifting tides of emotion which can alone bear the voyager to an anchorage but may also carry him across it onto the rocks... he was sensitive rather than responsive. In every remark he found a meaning, but not always the true meaning, and his life, though vivid, was largely a dream.

(84)

Aziz is the perfect candidate to lead Mrs. Moore and Adela on a journey to the Marabar Caves and the perfect victim. He can be natural with them at tea with Fielding because 'Mrs. Moore was so old and Miss Quested so plain,' (85) so he is spared the anxiety he might feel with young beautiful English women.

Adela thinks she and Mrs. Moore have somehow unintentionally offended Mr. and Mrs. Bhattacharya, whom they were supposed to visit this Thursday morning. Adela asks Aziz to explain why the Bhattacharya's carriage had not come for them. Aziz, after hearing the details, feels that it is because the Bhattacharyas are 'slack Hindus.' Aziz is of course a Moslem. Fielding thinks it an interesting notion; Adela says she hates mysteries; Mrs. Moore says, 'I like mysteries but I rather dislike muddles' (86). Fielding says a mystery is a muddle — that "A mystery is only a high-sounding term for a muddle... Aziz and I know well that India's a

muddle” (ibid.). Aziz feels out of his depth and impetuously invites them to visit:

The old lady accepted: she still thought the young doctor excessively nice; moreover, a new feeling, half languor, half excitement, bade her turn down any fresh path. Miss Quested accepted out of adventure. She also liked Aziz, and believed that when she knew him better he would unlock his country for her.

(86)

Thus is the fateful invitation made, not to the Marabar Caves as yet, but the groundwork has been laid. At this gathering for tea at Fielding’s we meet Prof. Godbole, whose name is not insignificant; he is a Hindu Brahman and figures largely in the third part of this novel, *Temple*. His “whole appearance suggested harmony — as if he had reconciled the products of East and West, mental as well as physical, and could never be discomposed” (89). Unlike Godbole, Aziz is discomposed that Adela has taken his invitation seriously; he is upset and blurts out, “I invite you all to see me in the Marabar Caves” (91). He is too ashamed to take them to his bungalow, which is poor and shabby. Still, it is a strange invitation: ‘to see me’ in the caves. Godbole assumes Miss Quested must have visited the caves already; Adela says she has never even heard of them. She asks, “What are these caves?” (ibid.). Aziz tries to explain but it soon becomes apparent that he has never visited them himself. It is left to Prof. Godbole to describe them: “... an expression of tension came over his face... ‘There is an entrance in rock which you enter, and through the entrance is the cave’” (92). Aziz assumes that they are ‘immensely holy’ but Godbole says that they are not at all holy. Then they must be ornamented in some way? No. Well, then why are they so famous? asks Aziz, and presses Godbole to describe them for Adela; (Mrs. Moore has gone off with Fielding to see the college); but Aziz soon realizes that Godbole is concealing something about the caves. He is inhibited in some way. Aziz understands this because he has often felt the same way when called upon by Englishmen to explain something in India; it was “a power he couldn’t control (that) capriciously silenced his mind. Godbole’s had been silenced now; no doubt not altogether willingly, he was concealing something” (ibid.). Aziz, with the

comparatively simple mind of the Mohammedan was encountering Ancient Night. Aziz played a thrilling game. He was handling a human toy that refused to work — he knew that much. If it worked, neither he nor Professor Godbole would be the least advantaged, but the attempt enthralled him and was akin to abstract thought. On he chattered, defeated at every turn by an opponent who would not even admit that a move had been made, and further

than ever from discovering what, if anything, was extraordinary about the Marabar Caves.

(92)

The reticence of the Brahman is beyond Aziz. Perhaps Godbole knows about the caves, but he isn't telling; perhaps he knows nothing at all. The reference to 'Ancient Night' appears to be something both Aziz and Godbole have experienced before — something that silences both their minds, something that is a common Indian mind-set. 'Ancient Night' may stand for a Hindu concept or it may have a wider meaning. The caves are obviously a mystery and will remain so. At this point Ronny drops in and the spell is broken. Mrs. Moore and Fielding return and everyone says goodbye. Adela notes that it's a shame that Prof. Godbole hasn't sung, something for which he is well-known; and he then and there proceeds to give them a 'song':

This thin voice rose and gave out one sound after another. At times there seemed rhythm, at times there was the illusion of a western melody. But the ear, baffled repeatedly, soon lost any clue, and wandered in a mass of noises, none harsh or unpleasant, none intelligible. It was the song of an unknown bird... The sounds continued and ceased after a few moments as casually as they had begun — apparently halfway through a bar, and upon the sub-dominant.

(95)

The references to wandering, to illusion, to bafflement, all suggest the echo Mrs. Moore and Adela will hear in the caves. Godbole explains the meaning of the song when Fielding asks: it is about the God Krishna, the singer asking him to come, which the God refuses to do.

Forster ends the chapter with "there was a moment of absolute silence. No ripple disturbed the water, no leaf stirred" (96). It is as if the universe is listening.

2.4 Ghosts

Ronnie and Adela go for an evening drive with the Nawab Bahadur, a rich nobleman. On the road, they see 'melancholy trees'; all the scenery is of poor quality — the countryside is 'too vast to admit of excellence.' In a backward allusion to Godbole's song calling Krishna, Forster notes that "In vain did each item in it call out, 'Come, come,' There was not enough god to go around" (103). The darkness that falls seems to be a living thing that crawls across the landscape. The land itself seems haunted and cursed.

Then they have a car accident. The car has run up an embankment and into a tree. Adela thinks that they have hit an animal — she has seen it. When Ronnie examines the car, he sees

that the paint is chipped off; they appear to have actually hit an animal. Adela says, "I saw its hairy back quite plainly" (104). They look for tracks but can't find any.

At this point Miss Derek pulls up in her car and gives them a lift back to the bungalow.

Mrs. Moore has been asleep and dreaming of her other children, Ralph and Stella, who will figure prominently at the end of the novel. When Ronnie and Adela return, they announce to her that they have decided to get married and she thinks, "My duties here are evidently finished, I don't want to see India now; now for my passage back" (109). She no longer feels the romantic lure of adventure — only duty.

When they tell Mrs. Moore about the animal they ran into on the road, causing the accident, Mrs. Moore shivers and thinks 'A ghost!' (111) but 'the idea of a ghost scarcely passed her lips' (ibid.). Ronnie and Adela don't notice and the idea, "deprived of support... perished, or it was reabsorbed into the part of the mind that seldom speaks" (ibid.). Mrs. Moore's goddess-like intuition is at work again, divining the truth. Adela asks her what made her think the accident involved a ghost. Mrs. Moore asks her what ghost — she has forgotten it and explains, "I couldn't have been thinking of what I was saying" (112), which is exactly why this message from her subconscious is given added force here.

Meanwhile, as the Nawab Bahadur is waiting in Chandrapore for his car to be repaired, he recalls that nine years before, when he had first gotten a car, he had driven it over and killed a drunken man and that the man's ghost waits for him at the scene of the accident; now that the second accident has taken place, it appears to have been the dead man's ghost seeking revenge. It is a 'racial secret.' He relates the circumstances of the accident to a few listeners, one of whom is Aziz, who holds himself aloof "because a personal experience restrained him: was it not by despising ghosts that he had come to know Mrs. Moore?" He whispers to Bahadur's grandson "...I want you to promise me — not to believe in evil spirits" (113). Aziz fancies himself, unlike the older superstitious Bahadur, to be modern and practical.

What should be noticed is that this ghost waits in a specific place for Bahadur and that Mrs. Moore, whose first intuitive reactions are quite powerful in the context of the novel, knows about the ghost without being told; as a 'racial secret' she shares it with Bahadur and perhaps other Indians, and since her religiosity has given her a special passage into India, she has assumed a different level of awareness. Is not Mrs. Moore then, as was proposed earlier in this paper, a kind of Indian goddess? It will be seen that she becomes one after her visit to the Caves.

2.5 Aziz's Poem

Doctor Aziz falls ill. Not too ill, just a little, enough to remind himself that he is mortal. His 'touch of fever' has him bedridden. As he dozes he hears church bells, it is Sunday, and he thinks of the two missionaries, Mr. Graysford and young Mr. Sorley, who make converts during times of famine, but are ignored by the populace when times are good again.

He is visited by four Moslem friends and learns that Dr. Godbole has fallen ill too; being a doctor and an acquaintance, Aziz is distressed, for he thinks Godbole might have cholera. Godbole is attended by Dr. Panna Lal, another Hindu. This allows Aziz to observe in a racial slur that they are "... both Hindus; there' we have it; they hang together like flies and keep everything dark" (118). Now this utterance has a specific resonance: just prior to the visit of his friends, Aziz had admonished his servant to kill a batch of flies that were gathered on an electric wire hanging from the ceiling of his room. Forster obviously wants to make the point that religious prejudice forces the different sides to treat each other as less than human — as insects or vermin that deserve killing. Then there is also the confrontation that has been previously cited in this paper, between Aziz and Godbole; Aziz trying to persuade Godbole to explain about the Marabar Caves, where Aziz is faced with 'Ancient Night' in the person of Godbole (Hindus make everything dark).

Forster insightfully comments, "Professor Godbole had diminished his appeal by linking himself with a co-religionist. He moved them less than when he had appeared as a suffering individual. Before long they began to condemn him as a source of infection. 'All illness proceeds from Hindus, Mr Haq said'" (ibid.).

Forster notes that Aziz liked to hear his religion praised because 'it soothed the surface of his mind' (ibid.). He is stimulated to recite a poem by Ghalib. Although the poem has nothing to do with what they are talking about, all the Moslems present feel overwhelmed by its pathos. All grows quiet as 'words accepted as immortal filled the indifferent air' (119). They feel all the more Moslem. They feel India is theirs. But it does more than make them aware of their religious and ethnic identity: "it was a passing reminder, a breath from the divine lips of beauty, a nightingale between two worlds of dust. Less explicit than the call to Krishna, it voiced our loneliness nevertheless, our isolation our need for the Friend who never comes yet is not entirely disproved" (ibid.). The need for the divine, then, for Forster, is present in all his characters, whether Hindu or Moslem or Christian. The mention of Krishna obviously refers to Dr. Godbole's song, previously mentioned. So, we see Forster's two main religious characters, Aziz and Godbole, both falling ill, both reciting songs, but still failing to understand each other. His third religious character, Mrs. Moore, will fall ill after visiting the Marabar Caves; an illness that will prove fatal, and she will pass away on the boat home to England.

Aziz is then paid a visit by the Hindu doctor attending Godbole, and he and his little group of Moslems discover that the malady the plagues Godbole is hemorrhoids. After some unpleasantness between Moslems and Hindus, Fielding arrives to check on his friend's condition. They fall into a discussion about illness:

'The whole world looks to be dying, still it doesn't die, so we must assume the existence of a beneficent Providence.'

'Does Mr Fielding think it's true?'
'Think which true? The world isn't dying. I'm certain of that!'
'No, no — the existence of Providence.'
'Well, I don't believe in Providence.'
'But how then can you believe in God?' asked Sayed Mohammed.
'I don't believe in God.'

(123-124)

This view was perhaps Forster's own. When asked by Aziz if many people in England are atheists now, he replies, "The educated thoughtful people? I should say so... the truth is the west doesn't bother much over belief and disbelief in these days. Fifty years ago...much more fuss was made"(124). The conversation then degenerates into a squabble about politics and the morality of England being in India. After a brief time, "... they filed out — four Mohammedans, two Hindus and the Englishman"(125). Each group at odds with the others; Moslems, Hindus and the Englishman failing again to understand each other. Another muddle.

2.6 The Sun

The next short chapter is an interlude that heightens the feeling of discord in the passages just discussed and in the novel as a whole. Forster discusses the heat and the coming of the hot season, which all Indians fear; this is clearly linked to the scenes in the bungalow because Forster says of the heat that "the street was deserted as if a catastrophe had cleaned off humanity during the inconclusive talk"(126). In an allusion to the 'inconclusive talk' we see an unfinished house across the street — a squirrel hung "head downwards on it...twitching its mangy tail... the squeaks it gave were in tune with the infinite, no doubt, but not attractive except to other squirrels," while "more noises came from a dusty tree, where brown birds creaked and floundered about looking for insects..." (ibid.). Forster then offers this observation:

It matters so little to the majority of living beings what the minority, that calls itself human, desires or decides. Most of the inhabitants of India do not mind how India is governed. Nor are the lower animals of England concerned about England, but in the tropics the indifference is more prominent, the inarticulate world is closer at hand and readier to resume control as soon as men are tired.

(126)

The viciousness of the heat in India drives men indoors and away from the natural world. They become aware of the weather as a hostile force. Forster seems to be saying that man's life is

a small thing when compared to the pervasive natural world; men feebly attempt to maintain their importance in the face of a vastness horrible to them because it reminds them of their own puny nature, and this is especially so in the tropics; nature is closer and more powerful there.

Religion, too, being a construct of man to help him deal with natural forces, is a weak and tiny attempt at explanation and control of nature. In the final paragraph of this interlude, Forster presents one of his most powerful images. It is of the sun:

April, the herald of horrors, is at hand. The sun was returning to his kingdom with power but without beauty — that was the sinister feature. If only there had been beauty! His cruelty would have been tolerable then. Through excess of light, he failed to triumph, he also; in his yellow-white overflow, not only matter, but brightness itself lay drowned. He was not the unattainable Friend, either of men or birds or other suns, he was not the eternal promise, the never-withdrawn suggestion that haunts our consciousness; he was merely a creature, like the rest, and so debarred from glory.

(127)

There is no divinity in the Indian sun, which is so powerful in the hot season. It is just brute power, which is not divine. However, there are worlds beyond worlds. Realities beyond this reality. Endless. The sun is not a god. He is not the divine unattainable friend that Godbole seeks in his song and Aziz tries to describe with his poetry. Even Mrs. Moore's transcendental experience on the balcony is only a brief whisper of what lies beyond. Forster's cosmos appears as the layers of an onion: successive realities and systems that seem literally endless. The 'eternal promise,' the 'never-withdrawn suggestion' which men perceive at times, is perhaps the only 'glory' to be sought; it is perhaps an illusion which only men, of all the creatures in the created worlds, feel.

2.7 Kindness and Goodwill

In Chapter V, it will be remembered, Mrs. Moore declares, "The desire to behave pleasantly satisfies God... Goodwill, and more goodwill and more goodwill" (70). In Chapter VII, it was noted of Fielding, that he believed, "The world... is a globe of men who are trying to reach one another and can best do so by the help of *goodwill* plus culture and intelligence..." (*italics mine*; 80). In line with these concepts, is a statement by Dr. Aziz in Chapter XI, "Kindness, more kindness, and even after that more kindness. I assure you it is the only hope (for India)" (128). The echoes in structure and wording are important in that they show Forster's concern with the values of goodwill and kindness; of their necessity, in fact, in all human connections; further, they support his credo, 'Only connect'. In another sense, the

pattern of the declarations by Mrs. Moore and Dr. Aziz reflect one ordering of Forster's priorities: X...and more X and even more X. Of course, Dr. Aziz is referring to India and Mrs. Moore is referring to human relations, but the formulation is a thread that runs throughout this novel and Forster's works. Kindness and goodness are the cornerstones of human life; they are, by extension, signs of the divine, or what man understands as the divine. They are evidences of 'the eternal promise' and the 'never withdrawn suggestion.'

When Mr. Fielding leaves his bungalow, Aziz ponders goodness and kindness and drops off to sleep and passes "into a region where these joys had no enemies but bloomed harmoniously in an eternal garden, or ran down watershoots of ribbed marble, or rose into domes whereunder were inscribed, black against white, the ninety-nine attributes of God" (133).

The 'ninety-nine... of God' was first mentioned in Chapter II, as Aziz was sitting in the moonlit mosque, where "The front — in full moonlight — had the appearance of marble, and the ninety-nine names of God on the frieze stood out in black, as the frieze stood out white against the sky" (41). God's names and attributes in Aziz's imagination and this final dream lead into the next section of the novel, where all will change for the characters mentioned so far, *The Caves*.

3. The Caves

*Ah who shall soothe these feverish children?
Who justify these restless explorations?
Who speak the secret of impassive earth?
Who bind it to us? What is this separate Nature so unnatural?
What is this earth to our affections? (unloving earth, without a throb to answer ours,
Cold earth, the place of graves.)*

— Whitman "Passage to India"

Forster begins Chapter XII by going back in time to when the Ganges did not exist, when there were no Himalayas, when an ocean 'flowed over the holy places of Hindustan' (137):

The mountains rose, their debris silted up the ocean, the gods took their seats on them and contrived the river, and the India we call immemorial came into being. But India is really far older.... the high places... have been land since land began.... They (the Marabar Hills) are older than anything in the world. No water has ever covered them, and the sun who has watched them for countless eons may still discern in their outlines forms that were his before

our globe was torn from his bosom. If flesh of the sun's flesh is to be touched anywhere, it is here, among the incredible antiquity of these hills.

(ibid.)

The reference to the sun in 2.7 of this paper will be recalled. His power without beauty and especially his cruelty are of importance. But Forster does not end his geologic introduction before noting that even the hills are "slowly reentering the curve of the earth. It may be that in aeons to come an ocean will flow here too, and cover the sun-born rocks with slime" (ibid.). However, the plain of the Ganges is encroaching on these hills, which 'are sinking beneath the newer lands' and though their 'main mass is untouched' at the "edge their outposts have been cut off and stand knee-deep, throat-deep, in the advancing soil" (ibid.).

These "outposts" are to be the scene of the picnic to the hills that Dr. Aziz has suggested. There is something 'unspeakable in these outposts' (ibid.) because

They are like nothing else in the world, and a glimpse of them makes the breath catch. They rise abruptly, *insanely*, without the proportion that is kept by the wildest hills elsewhere, they bear no relation to anything dreamt or seen. To call them 'uncanny' suggests ghosts, and *they are older than all spirit*. Hinduism has scratched and plastered a few rocks, but the shrines are unfrequented, as if pilgrims, who generally seek the extraordinary, had here found too much of it. Some saddhus did once settle in a cave, but they were smoked out, and even Buddha, who must have passed this way down to the Bo Tree of Gaya, shunned *a renunciation more complete than his own*, and has left no legend of struggle or victory in the Marabar.

(*italics mine*; 138)

The caves are truly beyond; they are beyond time, beyond religion, beyond belief. They were even shunned by the Buddha as requiring *too much* renunciation. Holy men have been 'smoked out' as if they were being forcibly ejected. Of course, this may refer simply to the building of fires where no natural exit for smoke exists, yet it may mean that the saddhus were terrorized into leaving by the caves themselves. The caves are shunned by men as utterly alien.

Because they lie between the sun's hills, that were 'torn from his bosom' and the plain of the Ganges, which 'encroaches on them with something of the sea's action' and where man has long existed, they form a middle ground in Forster's imagination; one which is neither of sun nor sea — an area perhaps belonging to another age and another world.

Physically, they are 'readily described,' something Dr. Godbole was unable to do (138): "A

tunnel eight feet long, five feet high, three feet wide, leads to a circular chamber about twenty feet in diameter. This arrangement occurs again and again throughout this group of hills, and this is all, this is a Marabar cave. Having seen one such cave, having seen two, having seen three, four, fourteen, twenty-four, the visitor returns to Chandrapore uncertain whether he has had an interesting experience or a dull one or any experience at all" (ibid.). The caves literally fog and dull the mind, another example of a 'muddle.' But even more than a feeling of disorientation and ambiguity result from a visit here; Forster makes it a point to say of the tourist that

He finds it difficult to discuss the caves, or to keep them apart in his mind, for the pattern never varies, and no carving, not even a bees' nest or a bat, distinguishes one from another. Nothing, nothing attaches to them and their reputation — for they have one — does not depend on human speech. It is as if the surrounding plain or the passing birds have taken it upon themselves to exclaim 'Extraordinary!' and the word has taken root in the air, and been inhaled by mankind.

(*italics mine; ibid.*).

This is perhaps why Dr. Godbole had such difficulty explaining the caves to Aziz and Adela: they are beyond explanation; their primal nature is incomprehensible. Not even animals go near them because they are so alien. Nothing attaches to them because there is no connection to anything in this world. Their sameness and mind-numbing repetition are like some sort of ugly city with endless apartment blocks that are all the same. This is the soul-destroying feeling Forster wants to convey about the caves. They are ancient and yet they are the future of man — part of the nihilism that will arise so forcefully in the twentieth century.

Their repetitiveness is truly nightmarish. In shape, their entrances resemble individual graves: eight feet long, five feet high, three feet wide; their inner chamber is like a womb: a circular chamber, so they are the beginning and the end, the alpha and omega.

Forster says that "even when they open towards the sun, very little light penetrates down the entrance tunnel into the circular chamber" (ibid.). Besides, there is nothing to see, nothing that humans can know, understand or identify with. Upon striking a match, the visitor sees a mirror-like surface reflecting another flame which magically appears like:

an imprisoned spirit; the walls of the circular chamber have been most marvellously polished. The two flames approach and strive to unite, but cannot, because one of them breathes air, the other stone. A mirror inlaid with lovely colours divides the lovers, delicate stars of pink and gray interpose,

exquisite nebulae, shadings fainter than the tail of a comet or the midday moon, all the evanescent life of the granite, only here visible. Fists and fingers thrust above the advancing soil — here at last is their skin, finer than any covering acquired by the animals, smoother than windless water, more voluptuous than love. The radiance increases, the flames touch one another, kiss, expire. The cave is dark again, like all the caves.

(138-139)

Notice the mention of all the elements within the world of the cave chamber; fire in the flame, the air that the flame breathes, stone or earth, and how the smooth surface of the stone is like water. The flame — an imprisoned spirit seeking escape, becomes a metaphor for the human spirit. What is in the mirror seems to be an illusion, however real it may seem at the moment, for time has a place here in the duration of the flame of life. This 'mirror' also shows other wonders: the life of the granite, which Forster elegantly describes using the cosmic imagery of comets, stars, nebulae, and the moon. It is as if the universe has allowed the rock to speak, given it a tongue. The 'fists and fingers' of the rock are 'thrust above the advancing soil' in a shout of exclamation. Their 'skin,' this mirror-rock, is finer than any 'covering acquired by animals' ... 'more voluptuous than love' where the two worlds kiss and then die, leaving the cave dark again. It is well to remember that the rock of the caves themselves has been torn from the sun, that the soil that encroaches on the hills is from the sea and that the interior reflects whatever enters the caves, in this case, humans with fire and with imagination.

But this is not all. The walls of the circular chamber have been polished, while the tunnels leading to them have not; the tunnels "impinge as an afterthought upon the internal perfection" (139). Mankind, finding an entrance to the caves necessary, may have made one in this alien place; it is not stated. However, man, it appears, has not done the polishing,— only possibly made the entrance and then left. Whatever humans sought in these hills has obviously eluded them. Man's curiosity is apparently not as endless as the caves.

Forster then asks, "But elsewhere, deeper in the granite, are there certain chambers that have no entrances? Chambers never unsealed since the arrival of the gods?" (ibid.). The answer appears to be in the affirmative:

Local report declares that these exceed in number those that can be visited, as the dead exceed the living — four hundred of them, four thousand or million. Nothing is inside them, they were sealed up before the creation of pestilence or treasure; if mankind grew curious and excavated, nothing, nothing would be added to the sum of good or evil. One of them is rumored within the boulder that swings on the summit of the highest of the hills; a

bubble-shaped cave that has neither ceiling nor floor, and mirrors its own darkness in every direction infinitely. If the boulder falls and smashes, the cave will smash too — empty as an Easter egg. The boulder because of its hollowness sways in the wind, and even moves when a crow perches upon it; hence its name and the name of its stupendous pedestal: the Kawa Dol.

(italics mine; ibid.).

The Kawa Dol is on ‘the summit of the highest of the hills’ (139), a cave within a boulder, and though it is not described, the reader gets the impression it is round because if the boulder falls and smashes, the inside will be found to be ‘as empty as an Easter Egg’ (ibid.). The egg, of course, is an ancient symbol of fertility. In Hindu myth, Brahma the creator was born from a golden egg (IDS; 22). Forster’s image here of the Kawa Dol is paradoxical, like much else in his writing. It is a boulder, yet it sways lightly in the wind because it is hollow; it is contained within the rock, yet it has neither ceiling or floor; it ‘mirrors’ its own darkness infinitely; it is empty and sterile yet the figure of the Easter Egg gives it meanings connected with generation and fertility.

3.1 Area of Confusion

*Ah more than any priest O soul we too believe in God,
But with the mystery of God we dare not dally.*

— *Whitman “Passage to India”*

Forster notes in Chapter 14 that Adela and Mrs. Moore had been spiritually ‘slumbering’ since the time they had heard Professor Godbole sing his ‘queer little song’ calling on God.

It has been said of Forster that he felt life is mainly a routine affair where “Inside its cocoon of work or social obligation, the human spirit slumbers for the most part....” (145). Perhaps he is suggesting, too, that since they had heard Godbole’s song the two of them had lived more or less ‘inside cocoons.’

The two women begin their journey to the Marabar Caves with feelings of apathy and boredom. Perhaps Forster wants to convey the notion that they lack spiritual resiliency; he may even be suggesting they are suffering from a spiritual malaise, but why this should be connected, except in time and by coincidence, with Professor Godbole’s song, is never made clear. Suffice it to say that they lack any energy or resources to deal with a spiritual challenge or crisis, which is exactly what the Marabar Caves present.

On this trip, Mrs. Moore begins again to reflect on her attitude toward familial responsibility. Her main motivation in coming to India seems to have faded in importance. She feels

increasingly (vision or nightmare) that, though people are important, the relations between them are not, and that in particular too much fuss had been made over marriage; centuries of carnal embracement, yet man is no nearer to understanding man. And today she felt this with such force that it seemed itself a relationship, itself a person, who was trying to take hold of her hand.

(147-148)

Mrs. Moore is not in good health. She 'ought not to have attempted the expedition' (149). Her feelings seem to border on cynicism and disillusionment. It is at this point that the party first see the Marabar Hills close up as they look out the train windows. The hills, as they saw them earlier from the low height of the Civil Station, were astonishing but from here "the Marabar were gods to whom the earth is a ghost" (ibid.) and the Kawa Dol — the massif topped by a hollow boulder — is nearest. It "shot up in a single slab, on whose summit one rock was poised — if a mass so great can be called one rock. Behind it, recumbent, were the hills that contained the other caves, isolated each from his neighbor by broad channels of the plain" (ibid.). The hills seem to watch them: "The assemblage, ten in all, shifted a little as the train crept past them, as if observing its arrival" (ibid.).

The passengers eagerly await the sunrise over the hills, but they are disappointed because

at the supreme moment, when night should have died and day lived, nothing occurred. It was as if virtue had failed in the celestial fount... a profound disappointment entered with the morning breeze. Why, when the chamber was prepared, did the bridegroom not enter with trumpets and shawms, as humanity expects? The sun rose without splendour. He was presently observed trailing yellowish behind the trees, or against the insipid sky....

(149-150)

Adela, disappointed, reflects that England has better sunrises. She and Mrs. Moore think of Grasmere, in the Lake District, a place that was "romantic but manageable it sprang from a *kindlier planet*. Here an untidy plain stretched to the knees of the Marabar" (*italics mine*; 150). Thus the hostility and alien-ness of this place is emphasized yet again and contrasted with the known and beloved landscape of England.

As they set off for the hills on an elephant "a new quality occurred, a spiritual silence which invaded more senses than the ear. Life went on as usual, but had no consequences, that is to say, sounds did not echo or thoughts develop. Everything seemed cut off at its root, and therefore infected with illusion" (152). This stillborn reality is exemplified by some mounds along the edge of their route. What were they? Graves? A religious shrine? The villagers answer they are

both. Adela sees what she thinks is a snake and shouts out. The villagers agree. However, when she looks at it through field glasses, she sees it is only a twisted stump. She says, "It isn't a snake" but the villagers, once she has planted the idea, affirm that it is and refuse to abandon the idea — insisting it is a snake. Illusion and reality, or the perception of reality, are blending and shifting and each member of the party now seems cut off from the others and unable to communicate any commonality of thought or understanding.

As they approach the hills it is as if they are entering a new world. "Nothing was explained, and yet there was no romance. Films of heat, radiated from the Kawa Dol precipices, increased the confusion. They came at regular intervals and moved capriciously. A patch of field would jump as if being fried, and then lie quiet. As they drew closer, the radiation stopped" (153). This wavering heat increases the hallucinatory nature of all they see.

The granite of the hills is 'dead and quiet' (ibid.). The sky seems "unhealthily near, adhering like a ceiling to the summits of the precipices" (ibid.). They stop in a flat area surrounded by three of the hills. The first cave is seen: "close above the mud was punched a black hole" (ibid.).

Mrs. Moore is the first to discontentedly murmur, "A horrid, stuffy place really" (ibid.). But after a short rest they begin their explorations. The first cave is quite convenient, "Bending their heads, they disappeared one by one into the interior of the hills...they were sucked in like water down a drain" (158). They are only moments inside and then "the hole belched, and humanity returned" (ibid.). The verbals 'sucked down' and 'belched' give the feeling that entering and exiting the cave are unpleasant and rather disgusting events. During this interlude however, Forster interposes a picture of the earth before man:

Bland and bald rose the precipices; bland and glutinous the sky that connected the precipices; solid and white, a Brahmany kite flapped between the rocks with a clumsiness that seemed intentional. Before man, with his itch for the seemly, had been born, the planet must have looked thus.

(ibid.)

The feeling here is one of weight and 'stickiness', if that term may be used. This is not a graceful or inviting place but rather one to be shunned.

Mrs. Moore nearly faints within the cave... it was crammed with villagers and servants; it began to smell. She "lost Adela and Aziz in the dark, didn't know who touched her, couldn't breathe, and some vile, naked thing struck her face and settled on her face like a pad. She tried to regain the entrance tunnel, but an influx of villagers swept her back. She hit her head. For an instant she went mad, hitting and gasping like a fanatic. For not only did the crush and stench alarm her; there was also a terrifying echo" (ibid.). The echo is terrifying but 'entirely devoid of distinction' because "whatever is said, the same monotonous noise replies" it is the

sound of 'Boum' (159) that returns no matter what sound originates. Forster gives variants, 'bou-oum' and 'ou-boum' which suggest the 'Oum' chant sometimes used in Eastern meditation. All sounds made within the caves, even the concepts of "Hope, politeness, the blowing of a nose, the squeak of a boot, all produce 'boum'. Even the striking of a match starts a little worm coiling, which is too small to complete a circle, but is eternally watchful. And if several people talk at once an overlapping howling noise begins, echoes generate echoes, and the cave is stuffed with a snake composed of small snakes, which writhe independently" (159). The imagery of snakes here is disquieting. It is reminiscent of the Worm Oroborous, that eats its own tail and is an image of eternity; it also brings to mind maggots (small snakes which writhe) and death. The auditory result of any sound or even a thought (the blowing of a nose/hope/the squeak of a boot/politeness) all produce the one echo—"boum." People all talking at once produce a virtual deluge of 'boums' terrible enough to drive most people away.

When they emerge from the cave, Mrs. Moore realizes that what had touched her face was a 'poor little baby' and that "Nothing evil had been in the cave" (ibid.). But Mrs. Moore had not 'enjoyed herself' and decides not to enter a second cave. It is agreed that Adela and Aziz will explore the caves further but that Mrs. Moore will stay behind and rest. Mrs. Moore reflects on their 'feeble invasion' of the valley and feels that "even the elephant had become a nobody" (ibid.). As she thinks back on her experience, she becomes frightened because "the crush and the smells she could forget, but the echo began in some indescribable way to undermine her hold on life" (emphasis mine; 160). She had been deeply effected by the echo:

'Pathos, piety, courage — they exist, but are identical, and so is filth. Everything exists, nothing has value.' If one had spoken vileness in that place, or quoted lofty poetry, the comment would have been the same —'ou-boum'. If one had spoken with the tongues of angels and pleaded for all the unhappiness and misunderstanding in the world, past, present, and to come, for all the misery men must undergo whatever their opinion and position, and however much they dodge and bluff — it would amount to the same, the serpent would descend and return to the ceiling. Devils are of the North, and poems can be written about them, but no one could romanticize the Marabar, because it robbed infinity and eternity of their vastness, the only quality that accommodates them to mankind.

(160-161)

Now what in the world could be such a threat to the well-being of Mrs. Moore? This is more than just a subjective experience on her part; all in the party feel the disquiet, the wrongness of the place. Perhaps because of her age, Mrs. Moore suffers most, but what force could

possibly loosen her 'hold on life'? We must recall that Mrs. Moore has already had some powerful transcendental experiences at the mosque, on the roof of the club and she knew of the accident with the car — she knew of the ghost; her quasi-elevation to the status of Hindu diety will also be recalled. So it appears that here she is entering a new stage of experience in her life. The caves have 'robbed eternity and infinity of their vastness' according to Forster. She has had a glimpse of something terrifying. Perhaps Mrs. Moore has seen Death and Death has seen her.

Because her character is awake to spirit and spiritual experience, she is unusually sensitive to the echo and the negative power of the caves. She ponders her despair, which was "merely her despair, her personal weakness, and that even if she got a sunstroke and went mad the rest of the world would go on" (ibid.). As she comes to terms with mortality, this crisis of faith and belief comes to a head with the realization that:

at the edge of her mind, Religion appeared, poor little talkative Christianity, and she knew that all its divine words from 'Let there be light' to 'It is finished' only amounted to 'boum'. Then she was terrified over an area larger than usual; the universe, never comprehensible to her intellect, offered no repose to her soul, the mood of the last two months took definite form at last, and she realized that she didn't want to write to her children, didn't want to communicate with anyone, not even with God...For a time she thought, 'I am going to be ill,' to comfort herself, then she surrendered to the vision. She lost all interest, even in Aziz, and the affectionate and sincere words that she had spoken to him seemed no longer hers but the air's.

(ibid.)

Her religion is possibly seen to be impotent in ameliorating the power of the caves; the emptiness and meaninglessness of the caves have destroyed her comforting sense of the divine. Earlier in the novel, she had experienced the numinous and the luminous; now she has been confronted with darkness and despair and has no defense against it. This does not mean that Christianity is invalidated — only that even a strong faith can be shaken and even destroyed by experiences that are totally alienating.

Even though Mrs. Moore has never understood or considered the universe intellectually, it can be argued that she has understood it on another and deeper level. The very fact that she is so responsive to outside influences is one reason for her disorientation and despair in the caves. Her sensitivity and intuition at the mosque and her night-time visions on the roof of the club and in numerous other passages in the novel make it clear that Forster is using her self in the caves as a foil to her former self in the first part of the novel. Mrs. Moore has apparently

undergone a sea change. She no longer is concerned with the mundane cares involved with her son's marriage and the marriages of her other children back in England. She has withdrawn; she has already begun to die.

3.2 Caving In

With Mrs. Moore incapacitated below, Adela and Aziz, along with a guide, continue to climb and explore the caves. It is almost noon now and getting hot. As the temperature rises, Forster comments that "the boulders said, 'I am alive,' the small stones answered, 'I am almost alive.'" (ibid.). Does Forster mean that the sun brings life to the stones? The larger stones having more 'life' than the smaller ones because of the increased surface area? It will be remembered that earlier these stones were described as 'sun-born.'

They try a number of other caves at the guide's suggestion, but predictably, they are all alike: they light matches, admire the reflection and listen for the echo. Aziz and Adela don't talk much. Adela enters a cave alone. The guide does not remember which one of the twelve nearby. Miss Quested is lost! They are near the Kawa Dol. They see a car approaching in the distance. They begin to shout for her, but "a Marabar cave can hear no sound but its own" (165). But Miss Quested is not lost: she has joined the people in the car. Aziz starts back down and notices Adela's field glasses, lying near a cave entrance. He sees the strap is broken. He picks up the glasses and returns to the picnic site.

Mrs. Moore and Fielding (who arrived with Miss Derek in her car) are left with Aziz. Adela has apparently returned with Miss Derek to Chandrapore.

Mrs. Moore's "thoughts were feeble; since her faintness in the cave she was sunk in apathy and cynicism. The wonderful India of her opening weeks, with its cool nights and acceptable hints of infinity, had vanished" (168). This is not good for Mrs. Moore. It appears that Forster is lessening the importance of her earlier transcendental insights by calling them 'acceptable hints of infinity'—as if her former revelations are less than real and meaningful now. More worrying is her mood. As noted, she has already begun to withdraw from life.

The picnic party now returns to the train and it occurs to Fielding that something is wrong with Adela. He questions Aziz about it but the doctor assures him Adela is fine and has merely decided unilaterally to return to town. As they leave the Marabar Caves, Forster comments that the 'nasty little cosmos' created by the hills is replaced by the more distant prospect of the Caves as 'finite and rather romantic' (171).

When they get back to Chandrapore Station, Aziz is arrested—the charge is not specified. Fielding feels there must be some mistake and reassures Aziz, but the doctor is taken to jail alone while Fielding goes with the police to try and sort out the 'muddle.'

3.3 Mrs. Moore's Withdrawal

Fielding learns from Mr. Turton, the Collector, that "Miss Quested has been insulted in one of the Marabar Caves" (172) by Aziz. Fielding asks Turton who is making the charge and when he learns that Adela herself had brought the charge, comments, "Then she's mad" (173). Fielding stands by his friend, Aziz. The Collector, however, is convinced of Aziz's guilt because he sincerely believes, after 25 years of experience in India, that nothing "but disaster result(s) when English people and Indians attempt to be intimate socially. Intercourse, yes. Courtesy, by all means. Intimacy, never, never" (174).

The rest of the English community has already begun to rally 'to the banner of race' (ibid.). The English have revenge and punishment in mind for the offensive Muslim doctor.

Mr. McBryde, the Superintendent of Police, is more level-headed than most Englishmen in Chandrapore, however. Fielding learns from him that the charge is "That he followed her into the cave and made insulting advances. She hit at him with her field-glasses; he pulled at them and the strap broke, and that is how she got away. When we searched him just now, they were in his pocket" (176). Fielding asks if Adela said anything else, and McBryde replies that there was an echo 'that appears to have frightened her' (ibid.). He adds that Miss Derek first saw Miss Quested 'running straight down the face of a precipice' and that Adela was 'practically done for — her helmet off —' (ibid.). McBryde says Adela was hysterical and if Miss Derek had not arrived, she might have injured herself further.

Fielding asks permission to see Adela because he feels she's 'under some hideous delusion' (177). Permission is denied because she is ill. It becomes clear that Fielding has sided with the Indians against 'his own people.'

Adela begins to recover and is anxious to see Mrs. Moore, who is also ill. So Ronnie, (her fiancée and Mrs. Moore's son) takes her to visit the old lady. They find Mrs. Moore 'puffy, red and curiously severe' (204). Adela takes her hand, but it is withdrawn. Mrs. Moore shows no inclination to become involved in the mess Adela has created. Mrs. Moore seems to say,

'Am I to be bothered for ever?' Her Christian tenderness had gone, or had developed into a hardness, a just irritation against the human race; she had taken no interest at the arrest, asked scarcely any questions...

(ibid.)

So Mrs. Moore appears now not to care about the case — she even seems to be somewhat resentful, not to say hostile. But one thing catches her interest: Adela mentions that she keeps hearing the echo from the caves, at which she asks, "Oh, what of the echo?" (205). Adela is not sure but says she can't get rid of it; Mrs. Moore comments, "I don't suppose you ever will" (ibid.). While it appears to Ronnie that his mother is being malicious, Adela feels Mrs. Moore

is being merely unkind by not saying what the echo is — Mrs. Moore then says,

‘ Say, say, say,’ said the old lady bitterly. ‘ As if anything can be said! I have spent my life in saying or in listening to sayings; I have listened too much. It is time I was left in peace. Not to die,’ she added sourly. ‘ No doubt you expect me to die, but when I have seen you and Ronnie married, and seen the other two and whether they want to be married — I’ll retire into a cave of my own.’ She smiled, to bring down her remark into ordinary life and thus add to its bitterness. ‘ Somewhere where no young people will come asking questions and expecting answers. Some shelf.’

(ibid.)

Mrs. Moore appears here to have changed a great deal from the sweet old lady introduced at the beginning of the novel. She will do her duty to her kin but that is all. She wishes to be left in peace, and like any good mystic or monk, to retire into her cell. When Ronnie reminds his mother that she will have to testify in court, she replies, “I have nothing to do with your ludicrous law courts. I will not be dragged in at all” (206). Adela agrees that the old woman should not be compelled to testify. Ronnie feels that his mother is not really “the dear old lady outsiders supposed, and India had brought her out into the open” (ibid.). Mrs. Moore declares, “I shall attend your marriage, but not your trial. Then I shall go to England” (ibid.). She laments her declining strength,

‘ My body, my miserable body,’ she sighed, ‘ Why isn’t it strong? Oh, why can’t I walk away and be gone? Why can’t I finish my duties and be gone? Why do I get headaches and puff when I walk? And all the time this to do and that to do and this to do in your way and that to do in her way, and everything sympathy and confusion and bearing one another’s burdens. Why can’t this be done and that be done in my way and they be done and I at peace? Why has anything to be done, I cannot see. Why all this marriage? And all this rubbish about love, love in a church, love in a cave, as if there is the least difference, and I held up from my business over such trifles!

(206-207)

Mrs. Moore no longer sees any need to make distinctions. One religion is the same as another, all belief systems equally irrelevant to her. All social conventions even more irrelevant. What ‘business’ is she being ‘held up from’? It may be that Mrs. Moore has more transcendent things on her mind. It may be stretching things to say that she has foreseen her own death, yet she

seems aware that her business no longer involves the mundane concerns of everyday earthly life. It will be remembered that she has already, in the first part of the novel, momentarily and for short periods, transcended her earthly self; but these earlier experiences are brief glimpses of the cosmos; now Mrs. Moore faces the reality of actual and immanent transcendence — the dissolution of boundaries that she has glimpsed before in the *Mosque* section of the novel. Her ‘business’ is of the most serious sort — that which each of us must face.

Mrs. Moore’s declaration has had its effect on Adela who now declares, “Aziz... have I made a mistake? Ronnie, he’s innocent; I made an awful mistake” (207). Immediately following this, Adela says, “My echo’s better” (ibid.). Mrs. Moore appears to have unintentionally brought her to her senses. However, it is too late to stop the trial now. Besides, Ronnie convinces Adela that she is wrong about Aziz, that he is guilty and Adela’s mental state is so fragile that she is easily persuaded. But when Mrs. Moore returns to the room and Adela asks her whether Aziz is innocent, the old lady replies, “Of course he’s innocent” (209). Mrs. Moore seems more concerned with her card game than Aziz’s innocence or guilt. She again launches into complaint:

‘ Oh, how tedious... trivial...’ and as when she had scoffed at love, love, love, her mind seemed to move towards them from a great distance and out of darkness. ‘ Oh, why is everything still my duty? When shall I be free from your fuss? Was he in the cave and were you in the cave and on and on... and Unto us a son is born, unto us a child is given...and am I good and is he bad and are we saved?... and ending everything in an echo.’

(emphasis mine; 210)

Adela cues on Mrs. Moore’s last word and almost joyously declares that the echo is almost gone, she feels Mrs. Moore is her savior, “I don’t hear it so much. You send it away, you do nothing but good, you are so good” (ibid.). But Mrs. Moore rejoins,

‘ I am not good, no, bad.’ She spoke more calmly and resumed her cards, saying as she turned them up: ‘ A bad old woman, bad, bad, detestable. I used to be good with the children growing up, also I meet this young man in his mosque, I wanted him to be happy. Good, happy, small people. They do not exist, they were a dream... But I will not help you to torture him for what he never did. *There are different ways of evil and I prefer mine to yours.*

(emphasis mine; ibid.)

Mrs. Moore feels that Adela has “started the machinery; it will work to its end” (211). This fateful view attesting that Mrs. Moore knows quite well that the trial will go on. If we look at

Mrs. Moore's declarative statements in this pivotal chapter a few things become apparent. Her sing-song comment using the phrases praising Jesus, 'unto us a child is born... etc.' echoes her comments in Chapter V, where she says, 'Though I speak with the tongues of....' when talking about the importance of goodwill between men. It will be remembered that though she was thinking of God more often now that she was in India, it was with less efficacy that she called upon him — very similar to Godbole's calling for God in the song he sang at the tea party. Mrs. Moore perhaps feels that Christianity has failed her as a support after her horrible experience in the caves. Perhaps she sees it as a belief system that loses something in a place like India — where everything is so alien to her. Ronnie concludes, fingering a steamship schedule, that his mother should leave India at once, "she was doing no good to herself or to anyone else there" (211).

3.4 Mrs. Moore's Passage

Passage, immediate passage!

Away O soul! hoist instantly the anchor!

Cut the hawsers — haul out — shake out every sail!

Have we not stood here like trees in the ground long enough?

Have we not grovel'd here long enough, eating and drinking like mere brutes?

Have we not darken'd and dazed ourselves with books long enough?

— Whitman "Passage to India"

Mrs. Moore's savior is Lady Mellenby, who when she learns that there are no more places available on the ship leaving for England, offers Mrs. Moore accommodation in her own reserved cabin. Ronnie feels 'it was like a gift from heaven' (ibid.). Mrs. Moore however, 'accepted her good luck without enthusiasm' because

She had come to that state where the horror of the universe and its smallness are both visible at the same time — the twilight of the double vision in which so many elderly people are involved.... in the twilight of the double vision a spiritual muddledom is set up for which no high-sounding words can be found; we can neither act nor refrain from action, we can neither ignore nor respect Infinity.

(212)

This double vision is apparently more than an Alzheimer-like muddle and confusion, because there is a doubling of vision, not a reduction to mere mental confusion — rather than a subtraction of sense it appears to be an addition to it. Still, this is the type of vision that brings

terror and confusion. There is paralysis. Her experiences in the first part of the book, when she saw “the water flowing through the Mosque-tank, or the Ganges, or the moon, caught in the shawl of night with all the other stars, (transcendence/unity with the universe) seemed a beautiful goal and an easy one” (ibid.). In the Mosque section of the book she sought an ability

To be one with the universe! So dignified and simple. But there was always some little duty to be performed first, some new card to be turned up from the diminishing pack and placed, and, while she was pottering about, the Marabar struck its gong.... What had spoken to her in that scoured-out cavity of granite? What dwelt in the first of the caves? Something very old and very small. Before time, it was before space also. Something snub-nosed, incapable of generosity — the undying worm itself. Since hearing its voice, she had not entertained one large thought, she was actually envious of Adela. All this fuss over a frightened girl! Nothing had happened, ‘and if it had,’ she found herself thinking with the cynicism of a withered priestess, ‘if it had, there are worse evils than love.’ The unspeakable attempt presented itself to her as love; in a cave, in a church — boum, it amounts to the same. Visions are supposed to entail profundity, but — wait till you get one, dear reader! *The abyss also may be petty, the serpent of eternity made of maggots....*

(212-213)

The narrator cautions us here that we all may experience the very thing that is unsettling Mrs. Moore, we may know intimately her spiritual crisis. This appears to be paradox and chaos; opposites and confusion, in a word, a nightmare. There is no grace here. The caves have undone her and her Christian faith has not saved her.

The meaninglessness she glimpsed in the caves has reduced her to a state of apathy and alienation; the double vision seems to have unhinged her; her once ‘dignified and simple’ wish to be one with the universe has been subverted to a simple desire to escape.

Mrs. Moore leaves Chandrapore alone at night. She travels all the next day. She reaches the ship and boards. The boat sails, and as it does, “thousands of coconut palms appeared all around the anchorage and climbed the hills to wave her farewell. ‘So you thought an echo was India; you took the Marabar Caves as final?’ they laughed. ‘What have we in common with them...? Goodbye’” (214). So the palms tell us at least, even though Mrs. Moore may not have heard them, that there is more than the stark nihilism or evil she experienced in the caves. With their fronds waving in the wind, they seem to be the diametrical opposite of the dark and closed environment of the caves; they are a symbol of life and hope, unlike the death and meaninglessness of the caves.

Mrs. Moore's physical withdrawal from the novel does not mean her presence is eliminated; like much else in this novel, absence indicates presence. With Mrs. Moore's passing from this life and India, she has become a deity, and just as Godbole has called to his God who does not come, Aziz, Godbole and others in the novel will each call to Mrs. Moore, in her incarnation as a Hindu deity; this will be seen in the analysis of the third and concluding section of *A Passage to India*.

3.5 The Punka-Walla Man

Chapter Twenty-four Forster begins with a description of the hot season in India and contrasts it with the climate of Europe. He notes how, when the weather turns cold in Europe, men retreat to their firesides for warmth; this in turn gave rise to 'exquisite fireside myths... Balder, Persephone' but in India 'the retreat is from the source of life':

the treacherous sun, and no poetry adorns it, because disillusionment cannot be beautiful. Men yearn for poetry though they may not confess it; they desire that joy shall be graceful, and sorrow august, and infinity have a form, and India fails to accommodate them. The annual helter-skelter of April, when irritability and lust spread like a canker, is one of her comments on the orderly hopes of humanity. Fish manage better: fish, as the tanks dry, wriggle into the mud and wait for the rains to uncake them. But men try to be harmonious all the year round, and the results are occasionally disastrous.

(214-215)

The above reference to men desiring that 'infinity have a form' may be a reference to the Marabar Caves. Adela and Mrs. Moore, being Europeans, are unable to cope with the formlessness they experienced in the caves. The darkness, the sense of emptiness within a smothering confined area and the echo have unbalanced them. Mrs. Moore has been emotionally driven away from both her family and India; Adela has imagined an attack by Aziz. What is more, Adela has now, "after years of intellectualism... resumed her morning kneel to Christianity... it was the shortest and easiest cut to the unseen..." (215). She has perhaps resorted to organized religion because it has a form — it offers a refuge from her experience in the caves.

Despite her prayers, her echo had 'come back again badly.' In this state, she enters the courtroom. In the hot crowded courtroom, the first person that Adela notices is "the humblest of all who were present, a person who had no bearing officially upon the trial; the man who pulled the punkah" he is compared to a god, one of many in the book:

Almost naked, and splendidly formed, he sat on a raised platform near the

back, in the middle of the central gangway, and he caught her attention as she came in, and he seemed to control the proceedings. He had the strength and beauty that sometimes come to flower in Indians of low birth. When that race nears the dust and is condemned as untouchable, then nature remembers the physical perfection that she accomplished elsewhere, and throws out a god — not many, but one here and there, to prove to society how little its categories impress her. This man would have been notable anywhere; among the thin-hammed, flat-chested mediocrities of Chandrapore he stood out as divine, yet he was of the city, its garbage had nourished him, he would end on its rubbish-heaps. Pulling the rope towards him, relaxing it rhythmically, sending swirls of air above others, receiving none himself, he seemed apart from human destinies, a male Fate, a winnower of souls.

(220-221)

The punkah-wallah man is unaware of himself — he is egoless. He ‘scarcely knew that he existed’ and ‘he didn’t even know he worked a fan.’ His abstracted consciousness is like a god’s. Forster is concerned to show that the lowest of the low is really the highest of all because he transcends the concerns of the Europeans and Indians fighting it out in the court; they are merely base in their concern for such mundane and selfish things as honor, social place and even law.

He is a ‘male Fate’ a ‘winnower of souls.’ The paradox presented here, that though he has emerged from the garbage of Chandrapore, to which he will return at death, he is yet a god, one who ‘stood out as divine.’ This usage by Forster suggests the well-known symbol of the lotus in eastern and especially Hindu and Buddhist thought; “It is a symbol of the pure essence of human nature which is undefiled by samasara, the endless cycle of rebirth, or by the ignorance that the physical world generates; in other words, the lotus is enlightenment itself” (IDSEWA; 150). The lotus thrives in muck and still, swampy water, a symbol for the degraded physical world, much like Chandrapore, yet it emerges from the filth in beauty and glorious enlightened transcendence (as does the punkah-wallah man) — a flower that opens with the sun and closes each day as night falls.

This Indian ‘god’ in his “aloofness impressed the girl from middle-class England, and rebuked the narrowness of her sufferings” (221). Adela begins to reflect for the first time on what she has done by allowing Aziz to be accused unjustly and it is the punkah-walla man who has stirred her to reconsider; in a sense, he has brought her ‘enlightenment.’

The ‘trial’ continues with much squabbling and jostling for position. The triviality of the proceedings becomes clear. The British are concerned with maintaining their social superiority and the Indians with asserting their rights.

There is an argument over whether the Marabar Caves are Buddhist or Jain — as if that matters. The name of Mrs. Moore enters the argument on the assertion by the prosecutor that Aziz had tried ‘to get rid of her.’ Her name ‘burst on the court like a whirlwind.’ The prosecutor says he does not propose to call her, to which the defense replies:

‘You don’t because you can’t, you have smuggled her out of the country; she is Mrs. Moore, she would have proved his innocence, she was on our side, she was the poor Indians’ friend.’

(226)

Mrs. Moore begins to be seen by the Indians as their savior, their goddess. The defense counsel storms out of the court; there is a tumult and as it increases “the *invocation* of Mrs Moore continued, and people who did not know what the syllables meant repeated them like a *charm*. They became Indianized into Esmis Esmoor, they were taken up in the street outside” (emphasis mine; 227). The goddess now finally has a true Indian name after her death; ‘Esmis Esmoor’ which Forster probably intended to be taken with some humor; however, her naming serves to further his idea of her as a minor Hindu goddess embraced by the people. Ronnie, her son, feels it is “revolting to hear his mother travestied into Esmis Esmoor, a Hindu goddess”; the chant taken up by the people is:

‘ Esmis Esmoor
Esmis Esmoor
Esmis Esmoor
Esmis Esmoor...’

(228)

Suddenly the chant stops, and “it was as if the *prayer* had been heard.” Mrs. Moore is all the more present because of her absence, as will be seen.

The prayer to Mrs. Moore may at this point in the novel be seen as further influencing Adela to tell the truth, and as she rises to give her evidence, she feels suddenly calm and ‘protected’ as in ‘magnificent armour.’ She didn’t remember “in the ordinary way of memory, but she returned to the Marabar Hills, and spoke of them across a sort of darkness... The fatal day recurred, in every detail, but now she was of it and not of it at the same time, and this double relation gave it indescribable splendour” (230). This may be an echo of Mrs. Moore’s ‘double vision’ but in a positive rather than negative way. She begins to relate the truth of what happened that day. The prosecutor leads her with his questions “along the paths of truth, and the airs from the punkah behind her wafted her on...” (ibid.). We see here clearly that the

punkah-wallah man is one prime element in her realization of the truth, of her emergence from the darkness created by the caves; the chanting of Mrs. Moore's Hindu name and the change of air created by the punkah man have worked wonders — both the chant and punkah-walla man have helped her to tell the truth.

To further questioning, Adela admits she is afraid she has made a mistake. She admits that Aziz never followed her into the cave. The prosecutor realizes that Adela, by speaking the truth, has ended his case and he attempts to stop the proceedings. Of course, more pandemonium results. With both sides screaming, Adela feels something she does not understand begin to take hold of her and pull her through. "Though the vision was over, and she had returned to the insipidity of the world, she remembered what she had learned. Atonement and confession — they could wait. It was in hard and prosaic tones that she said 'I withdraw everything'" (232).

After more tumult, rejoicing by the Indians and anger and silence from the English, everyone leaves the court. And

before long no one remained on the scene of the fantasy but the beautiful naked god. Unaware that anything unusual had occurred, he continued to pull the cord of his punkah, to gaze at the empty dias and the overturned special chairs, and rhythmically to agitate the clouds of descending dust.

(233)

So Forster has offered us two gods — the punkah man and Esmis Esmoore. Both have helped Adela to see the truth; both have sprung from the dust of India.

3.6 Adela's Echo

After the trial's ignominious (for the English) and victorious (for the Indians) conclusion, Fielding is thrown together with Adela by the surging masses of people outside the courthouse and assumes responsibility for her, as she is now shunned by the other English. He gives her shelter at his school and she seeks to explain her strange behavior to him:

' ... You see, I have been unwell ever since the expedition to the caves, and possibly before it.'

' What kind of illness?' he inquired.

She touched her head at the side, then shook it.

' That was my first thought, the day of the arrest: hallucination.'

(239)

Fielding, who observed Adela closely in court, feels that her hallucination — her deluded state — disappeared suddenly under prosecutor McBryde's questioning, saying, " ... my belief is that poor McBryde exorcised you" (241). Adela asks him if he is referring to ghosts and Fielding denies he means it in that sense. Adela says that Mrs. Moore, someone she respects greatly, believes in ghosts; Fielding says she's an old lady — Adela accuses him of being rude. Fielding replies: "I only meant it is difficult, as we get on in life, to resist the supernatural" (ibid.), again displaying his rationality in the face of so much that is unexplained and puzzling in the behavior of others in India.

Forster observes that while Adela has told the truth finally, something is still lacking in her from the Indian point of view — sincerity. Forster comments, "Truth is not truth in that exacting land unless there go with it kindness and more kindness and kindness again, unless the Word that was with God also is God. And the girl's sacrifice — so creditable according to Western notions — was rightly rejected, because, though it came from her heart, it did not include her heart" (245). The reference to 'kindness and more kindness and kindness again' echoes Mrs. Moore's earlier statement "The desire to behave pleasantly satisfies God... Goodwill, and more goodwill and more goodwill" (70) and Aziz's statement "Kindness, more kindness, and even after that more kindness. I assure you it is the only hope (for India)" (128).

Fielding the rationalist, at the end of the chapter under consideration, has a queer notion, "that we exist not in ourselves, but in terms of each other's minds — a notion for which logic offers no support and which attacked him only once before, the evening after the catastrophe, when from the veranda of the Club he saw the fists and fingers of the Marabar swell until they included the whole night sky" (249).

3.7 'I shall consult Mrs Moore'

Now that Aziz has won his case, his Indian friends feel he should sue Adela for 20,000 rupees in damages — a sum that would ruin her. Fielding urges him to show mercy and let her off paying. But Aziz no longer wants anything to do with the English and has decided to move to a state where they have no control — an Indian state. Fielding pleads with him not to sue and he replies, "I shall consult Mrs. Moore" (252). He does not yet know she has died in Aden, on her return voyage to England. He continues:

"Her opinion will solve everything; I can trust her so absolutely. If she advises me to pardon this girl, I shall do so. She will counsel me nothing against my real and true honour, as you might.... I have seen her but three times, but I know she is an Oriental."

(252-253)

Fielding tells him she is dead but Aziz refuses to believe him, assuming it some sort of joke, and so Fielding decides to say no more — he will learn of it soon enough. Fielding then muses that “people are not really dead until they are felt to be dead. As long as there is some sort of misunderstanding about them, they possess a sort of immortality” (254). It is conceivable that even when Aziz learns of the death of Mrs. Moore, he will still believe she lives in some form and try to consult her in some way or other. Fielding reflects that he “had tried to kill Mrs Moore this evening, on the roof of the Nawab Bahadur’s house; but she still eluded him...” (ibid.); perhaps she eludes him because he represents rationality and logic in this novel and Mrs. Moore represents intuition and emotion. As Aziz says, ‘I know she is an Oriental.’

3.8 Mrs. Moore’s ghost

As mentioned earlier, Mrs. Moore dies on board the ship bound for England. It is important to notice that Forster makes it a point to say that she “was further in the tropics than she ever achieved while on shore, when the sun touched her for the last time and her body was lowered into yet another India — the Indian Ocean” (254). She follows the ship: “A ghost followed the ship up the Red Sea, but failed to enter the Mediterranean... during the transition” (from Asia to Europe) “Mrs Moore was shaken off” (255), so she stays behind.

In Chandrapore, her death is seen differently. Legends arise about her, which is in accord with her deification, already noted. There are the beginnings of a cult to her memory. This is not so unusual, as Forster notes that a hundred years before “when Europeans still made their home in the countryside and appealed to its imagination, they occasionally became local demons after death” (ibid.).

Her son Ronny feels some guilt because they parted on less than good terms, but he also still resents her because of the problems she caused, and with his other problems, he sees “threading them all together into a grotesque garland were these Indianizations of Mrs Moore” (256). Of Adela, Ronnie thinks no more and wishes her only to be gone back to England.

3.9 Mrs. Moore knew

Aziz finally consents, after much persuasion from Fielding, to let Adela off paying damages. Fielding goes round to the college to give her the good news and they fall into a discussion of the topics of marriage and what, again, really happened in the caves. Fielding wonders who might have followed her into the cave and she says, “Let us call it the guide... it will never be known” (261). And then, “Mrs. Moore — she did know” (ibid.). Fielding:

‘How could she have known what we don’t?

‘Telepathy, possibly.’

The pert, meagre word fell to the ground. Telepathy? What an explanation!

Better to withdraw it, and Adela did so. She was at the end of her spiritual tether, and so was he. Were there worlds beyond which they could never touch, or did all that is possible enter their consciousness? They could not tell... Perhaps life is a mystery, not a muddle; they could not tell. Perhaps the hundred Indias which fuss and squabble so tiresomely are one, and the universe they mirror is one. They had not the apparatus for judging.

(261)

That Fielding and Adela, while so similar, cannot judge is not surprising for they represent the rational logic of the west, not the supposed intuition of the east. Yet Forster immediately undermines their 'sensible, honest, even subtle' accord. Though they reach a new level of friendship and understanding, a 'friendliness, as of dwarfs shaking hands' ... even when they agree

'I want to go on living a bit,' or 'I don't believe in God,' the words were followed by a curious backwash, as though the universe had displaced itself to fill up a tiny void, or as though they had seen their own gestures from an immense height — dwarfs talking, shaking hands and assuring each other that they stood on the same footing of insight. They did not think they were wrong, because as soon as honest people think they are wrong instability sets up. Not for them was an infinite goal behind the stars, and they never sought it. But wistfulness descended on them now, as on other occasions; the shadow of the shadow of a dream fell over their clear-cut interests, and objects never seen again seemed messages from another world.

(262)

And so Adela leaves India and she and Fielding part friends, but they still seem unsure as to what has really happened to them. The mystery and the ghosts of the Marabar still linger, for they have been through a powerful experience that has permanently altered their rational English view of the world.

The monsoon makes its entrance at this point and the 'country is stricken and blurred.'

After an attempt to reestablish his friendship with Aziz, Fielding gives up and accepts a transfer back to England. So ends the second part.

4. Temple

4.1 'He is, was not, is not, was'

The final section of the novel takes us hundreds of miles from the Marabar, to Mau — two years have passed. Godbole is waiting for God to be 'born' at a temple festival. Forster notes, "God is not born yet — that will occur at midnight — but He has also been born centuries ago, nor can he ever be born, because He is the Lord of the Universe, who transcends human processes" (281). These seeming contradictions can only be grasped by discarding logic; Fielding and Adela, because they represent logic and reason, would be puzzled and frustrated by this statement; Aziz would ignore it and just say it was 'Hindu.'

Forster probably devoted this last section of his book to this representation of Indian thought because he found it most pervasive and puzzling and probably felt it best represents the culture. It will be remembered that he is balancing this world view against Christianity and Islam and the Nihilism — the nothingness — of the caves.

The narrator comments that the assembled Hindus were "the toiling ryot, whom some call the real India" (ibid.). In this temple setting, unlike the austere Mosque in the earlier section, color and confusion predominate. Corridors open on other corridors; the building is of white stucco but most of the structure inside is obscured by "colored rags, iridescent balls, chandeliers of opaque pink glass, and murky photographs framed crookedly" (ibid.).

The villagers are in "a tender, happy state unknown to an English crowd, it seethed like a beneficent potion" (ibid.). Forster wishes to portray the gathering as a single organism and thereby show another unifying contradiction of Hindu belief; the concept of unity in diversity, order within chaos, chaos within seeming order:

When the villagers broke cordon for a glimpse of the silver image, a most beautiful and radiant expression came into their faces, a beauty in which there was nothing personal, for it caused them all to resemble one another during the moment of its indwelling, and only when it was withdrawn did they revert to individual clods. And so with the music. Music there was, but from so many sources that the sum total was untrammelled. The braying banging crooning melted into a single mass which trailed round the palace before joining the thunder. Rain fell at intervals throughout the night.

(282)

It was noted earlier in this paper that Forster in his novels is concerned with the tension between opposites on many levels; in *Howard's End* to take just one example, opposites are clearly defined in order to provide tension and explore ideas:

The schisms of British society make up a whole catalog: aesthetics versus business, prose versus passion, inner life versus outer life, male versus female, body versus soul, city versus country, class versus class, past versus present, life versus death, and so on.

(CHBN; 826)

This dialectic working out of forces in opposition is a feature of all Forster's fiction and stands as an emblem of his thought and world view, much like Hardy's concern with the workings of Fate. It appears that Forster always sought to reconcile these opposites. It also seems that he can really only be seen to succeed in *A Passage to India*, and specifically in the last section of the novel.

Francesca Kazan has pointed out that the three sections of the novel "represent 'a kind of Hegelian Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis,' this last stage in 'Temple' resulting in a 'reconciliation on the human level, the cancelling of the effects of the Marabar' (citing White); 'Temple' is often perceived as an affirmative gesture, an embracing of mankind in a momentary vision of unity" (CA III; 373). Indeed, unity and resolution appear as the overarching themes of the last section of the novel.

All the individuals in the temple in the example cited above are Hindus, (there are no Moslems or Christians, and so no stark oppositions), they are individuals who become united through religious experience. So Forster appears to be concerned with the opposition of self and other and this scene serves as a rather simple example when compared to the more complex juxtapositions in the other parts of the novel: of Moslems and Christians, Indians and Westerners, men and women, inner life and outer life etc. Still, anytime Forster consciously sets up a dialectic, we can consider it to be central to his ultimate artistic purpose.

Godbole is the main figure in the temple scene. He leads his little group of singers, with their cymbals, drums and harmonium — they sing:

'Tukaram, Tukaram,
Thou art my father and mother and everybody... etc.'

They sang not even to the God who confronted them, but to a saint; they did not one thing which the non-Hindu would feel dramatically correct; this approaching triumph of India was a muddle (as we call it), a frustration of reason and form. Where was the God Himself, in whose honour the congregation had gathered? Indistinguishable in the jumble of His own altar, huddled out of sight amid images of inferior descent, smothered under rose leaves, overhung by oleographs, outblazed by golden tablets representing the Rajah's

ancestors, and entirely obscured, when the wind blew, by the tattered foliage of a banana. Hundreds of electric lights had been lit in His honour (worked by an engine whose thumps destroyed the rhythm of the hymn). Yet His face could not be seen. Hundreds of His silver dishes were piled around Him with the minimum effect. The inscriptions which the poets of the state had composed were hung where they could not be read, or had twitched their drawing-pins out of the stucco, and one of them (composed in English to indicate his universality) consisted, by an unfortunate slip of the draughtsman, of the words, 'God si Love.'

God si Love. Is this the final message of India?

(282-283)

Is this resolution and sublimity or simple confusion and chaos? The question may be moot. Is this an expression of what it means to be Hindu? The image of the God seems buried amid carelessness and disorder; is this meant to mirror the world as we find it or is it just simple disorder caused by neglect and sloppiness? Is 'si' in 'God si Love' just an unfortunate mistake as Forster says, or is it a dissolution of boundaries and order, a kind of linguistic-mystical rearrangement? The focus of worship is lost in the Hindu melee; westerners would never understand, as Forster notes. Everything seems at odds with order and purpose: the God is 'lost in the crowd' so to speak; poems are placed where they cannot be read; the music is drowned out by electric generators; offerings are placed with minimum effect — it is a 'muddle' to use Forster's chosen term. Now, is this muddle a simple lack of order and sense or is it part and parcel of the underlying Hindu philosophy that the universe is beyond human notions of order and purpose? It seems that Forster is trying to truly represent Hindu thinking for his readers. Or it may just be a practical joke or another example of comic irony on Forster's part. It does not matter. Whether 'God si Love' was intentional or not is not the point. It has even been suggested that 'si' is used in the Italian sense, to mean 'God loves Himself' — though it is doubtful Forster meant it this way. Still, the all-inclusive and chaotic nature of Hindu thought is well-represented by Forster here.

After describing the physical details of the scene, Forster notices the worshippers.

Two mothers attempt to push their children to the front; he notices a little girl's leg that 'shot out like an eel'; the band in the courtyard, which is drenched by the rain, is playing a European waltz, which the devotional singers inside do not feel 'perturbed by' because 'they lived beyond competition' (283). Why this is so is not explained but it seems in accord with the oneness that Forster is seeking to describe — a lack of division, separation or competition — an effort at sublimation, oneness and co-existence.

Godbole is seen as a slapstick character almost, fumbling with his glasses, clumsily handling

the flowers around his neck; a colleague assists him and they sing 'into one another's gray moustaches' (283). His singers are becoming ecstatic, they "loved all men, the whole universe, and scraps of their past, tiny splinters of detail, emerged for a moment to melt into the universal warmth" (ibid), and in this way Godbole suddenly thinks of Mrs. Moore, who should be present at this ceremony because she has been consecrated previously as 'Esmis Esmoor' a new though minor Hindu deity; "Thus Godbole, though she was not important to him, remembered an old woman he had met in Chandrapore days. Chance brought her into his mind while it was in this heated state, he did not select her, she happened to occur among the throng of soliciting images, a tiny splinter, and he impelled her by his spiritual force to that place where completeness can be found. Completeness not reconstruction" (ibid). So Godbole has not caused Mrs. Moore to be reborn, but rather he has helped her spirit to merge with the universe and perhaps escape the cycle of rebirth — which is the Hindu goal. Now, crucially, he remembers Mrs. Moore's wasp, the one she saw on a coat peg, to which, when she noticed the creature asleep said, 'Pretty dear'; Godbole's "senses grew thinner, he remembered a wasp seen he forgot where, perhaps on a stone"; he "loved the wasp equally, he impelled it likewise, he was imitating God" (284), which is fine because he is god, as are all men. He thinks of the stone "where the wasp clung — could he... no, he had been wrong to attempt the stone, logic and conscious effort had seduced..." (ibid.). What is Forster doing here? Godbole impels Mrs. Moore's soul into the void, then the wasp that she blessed early in the novel, but not the peg/stone on which it sat because conscious effort intrudes at this point; logic destroys the power to impel spirit. The unity Godbole feels with Mrs. Moore, the wasp and the universe is gone. The conscious mind and logic are the enemy of unity and oneness — all mystic states. Can they be reconciled? In the next passage Forster seems to do just this.

Godbole awakes from his reverie and discovers himself dancing on the red carpet of the temple along with his fellow-singers. In this religious frenzy Godbole experiences many more things in the space of a heartbeat: "Noise, noise, the Europeanized band louder, incense on the altar, sweat, the blaze of lights, wind in the bananas, noise, thunder" and he notices his wrist-watch, 'eleven-fifty by his wrist-watch' which he sees just at a moment of transcendence, "seen as he threw up his hands and detached the tiny reverberation that was his soul" (284). This seems contradictory; the part of the mind that pays attention to time is usually far different from that part which experiences religious ecstasy — the conscious mind and the unconscious are always seen as opposites, in fact. But if we assume that Forster's Godbole is capable of uniting opposites and of experiencing unity in all experience, this is not so difficult to reconcile, though it is unusual. Forster appears to be saying that Godbole has been able to exist in a ecstatic state and still be aware of the mundane — a merging of opposite levels of consciousness.

Next to enter this ecstatic scene is the Rajah, who is ailing and is carried in on a litter.

He is removed from the litter, deposited near the altar 'exhausted with illness' and given a packet of red powder (ibid.). The moment of the birth of Krishna is approaching, and Forster notes that "in a land where all else is unpunctual, the hour of the birth is chronometrically observed" (ibid.). At midnight:

simultaneously the rending note of the conch broke forth, followed by the trumpeting of elephants; all who had packets of powder threw them at the altar, and in the rosy dust and incense, and clanging and shouts, Infinite Love took upon itself the form of SHRI KRISHNA, and saved the world. All sorrow was annihilated, not only for Indians, but for foreigners, birds, caves, railways, and the stars; all became joy, all laughter; there had never been disease nor doubt, misunderstanding, cruelty, fear. Some jumped in the air, others flung themselves prone and embraced the feet of the universal lover; the women behind the purdah slapped and shrieked; the little girl slipped out and danced by herself, her black pigtails flying. Not an orgy of the body; the tradition of that shrine forbade it. But the human spirit had tried by a desperate contortion to ravish the unknown, flinging down science and history in the struggle, yes, beauty herself. Did it succeed? Books written afterwards say 'Yes'. But how, if there is such an event, can it be remembered afterwards? How can it be expressed in anything but itself? Not only from the unbeliever are mysteries hid, but the adept himself cannot retain them. He must think, if he chooses, that he has been with God, but, as soon as he thinks it, it becomes history and falls under the rules of time.

(emphasis mine; 285)

These last few sentences beginning with "How can it be expressed..." fairly well describe the state usually thought of as religious ecstasy. As soon as the mind thinks about or reflects upon the religious experience, it is gone, like a dream. Forster's description of the celebration conveys the chaos and the joy felt by the worshippers, and his over two years of experience of India and Hindus is evident here. Forster seems to be saying that man's attempt to 'ravish the unknown' is vain; that, as in the caves, the universe does not really respond; man, in a sense, responds to himself, to his own desperate attempt to find meaning in the unknown. The 'rules of time' make the effort to hold on to a religious state impossible.

It turns out the ailing Rajah's physician is Dr. Aziz — and as the ruler is withdrawn from the festivities, Aziz attends him. The worshippers have a duty to amuse the newly-born God, so the ceremonies become even more chaotic and jolly. Butter is spread on people's faces and eaten, "All laughed exultantly at discovering that the divine sense of humour coincided with their

own" (286). They shout, 'God si love.' Forster comments, "There is fun in heaven. God can play practical jokes upon Himself, draw chairs away from beneath His own posteriors, set His own turbans on fire, and steal His own petticoats when He bathes. By sacrificing good taste, this worship achieved what Christianity has shirked; the inclusion of merriment" (ibid.).

So the Hindus seem to have understood what the Christians and Moslems have missed: that religion, to really heal and to be human must have an element of joyous fun; the unity achieved is only possible once barriers are broken down and all are free to express this joy. The grim and moralistic nature of dualistic religions that see the world in terms of good and evil miss the point — that creation is both good and evil and there is no separating the two. Acceptance is salvation. Forster continues, "All spirit as well as all matter must participate in salvation, and if practical jokes are banned the circle is incomplete" (ibid.).

Various other games are played. They crack open a pinata-type vessel and 'greasy rice and milk poured onto their faces' (287). Everywhere is 'filled with divine confusion' (ibid.).

Godbole is renewed in his religious conviction. He had seen Mrs. Moore, "he was a Brahman, she Christian, but it made no difference, it made no difference whether she was a trick of his memory or a telepathic appeal. It was his duty, as it was his desire, to place himself in the position of God and to love her, and to place himself in her position and to say to the God, 'Come, come, come, come.' This was all he could do. How inadequate! But each to his own capacities, and he knew that his own were small. 'One old English-woman and one little, little wasp,' he thought, as he stepped out of the temple into the gray of a pouring wet morning. 'It does not seem much, still, it is more than I am myself'" (287-288).

Godbole's capacities seem small to himself but this is natural, as the truly holy think little of themselves. He has blessed Mrs. Moore and her wasp, just as Mrs. Moore has blessed the wasp and all creation. In the end blessing and calling 'Come, come, come' to God is all man can do.

4.2 'The air was thick with religion and rain'

Fielding has arrived at Mau with his new wife (Aziz thinks it is Adela — another muddle) and her brother; his wife is really Mrs. Moore's daughter — the brother is Mrs. Moore's son, Ralph, who is nearly an imbecile, and can be considered a type of Holy Fool. Aziz refuses to see them and tears up all communications from Fielding.

On an outing with his three children to the tomb of a Moslem saint, Aziz sees Fielding and Ralph enter the shrine. He sees them exit in a hurry chased by a swarm of bees. This puts him in good humor and he calls to them, "Hullo, gentlemen, are you in trouble?" (295). Ralph has been stung by the bees. Aziz pulls out a couple of the stingers. So he and Fielding, once such good friends, meet again in a rather anticlimactic, not to say absurd, manner. Fielding asks him why he has not answered any letters. It begins to rain heavily. They exchange small talk. Fielding is 'older and sterner' and gives up trying to re-establish any intimacy. Fielding

mentions that he would like to take his new wife out in a boat to watch the torchlight procession of the God. Aziz says he has no interest in Hindism. When they reach the carriage, Aziz tells 'Mr. Quested,' Ralph, to jump in, and the muddle is cleared up and Aziz realizes he is Mrs. Moore's son and that Fielding's wife Stella, is Mrs. Moore's daughter. Aziz is embarrassed and resentful and tells Fielding, "I do not want you" (298). It is pouring rain now. He flees with his children.

At home, Aziz feels excited and happy. He feels the experience was 'uncanny'; the mention of Mrs. Moore's name — his sainted friend — stirs memories; "' Esmiss Esmoor' — as though she were coming to help him. She had always been so good, and that youth whom he had scarcely looked at was her son, Ralph Moore, Stella and Ralph, whom he had promised to be kind to, and Stella had married Cyril" (ibid.). Aziz is now ready to re-approach Fielding, meet Stella and Ralph and remember and revere Mrs. Moore.

The procession of the God, though he has been born, has not taken place yet. Performances would have been given for the Rajah, where the actors themselves would be worshipped, and where 'all became one' (299). But the Rajah has died the night before, overtaxed by the excesses of the ceremonial birth and the festivities of the temple. Forster says, "... death interrupts. It interrupted less here than in Europe, its pathos was less poignant, its irony less cruel" (ibid.). The claimants to the throne made no trouble because "religion is a living force to the Hindus, and can at certain moments fling down everything that is petty and temporary in their natures" (ibid.). The festival continues uninterrupted and 'all men loved each other' (ibid.). Of course, Aziz is puzzled by this goodwill among the Hindus, just as 'an average Christian' would be. From this we can see again that Forster considers the dualistic religions lacking the unity felt by Hindus.

Aziz wants an excuse to go out — all the Hindus are busy with their celebration and he feels at loose ends. He decides to take some medicine to Ralph for his bee stings; we feel the presence of Mrs. Moore again. On his way he passes the beginning of the procession of the God and runs into Godbole. They watch the street sweeper's band, and Forster comments, "All other music was silent, for this was ritually the moment of the Despised and Rejected; the God could not issue from His temple until the unclean sweepers played their tune, they were the spot of filth without which the spirit cannot cohere" (300). The idea that all opposites are subsumed under the system of beliefs known as Hinduism is again reiterated here; while Hinduism has the social caste system, philosophically and religiously, the out-castes are as necessary as the Brahmans and so cannot be excluded. This is the sort of inclusion Forster knew and perhaps sympathized with. The notion that the spirit needs 'filth' to cohere and be complete is an interesting one. But the concept is well-known in the east: the traditional belief in the necessity of opposites for completion and coherence, like Yin and Yang in China, is widespread and need not be explained here.

The scene as the God's palanquin moves away from the temple is a vivid one:

For an instant the scene was magnificent. The doors were thrown open, and the whole court was seen inside, barefoot and dressed in white robes; in the fairway stood the Ark of the Lord, covered with cloth of gold and flanked by peacock fans and by stiff circular banners of crimson. It was full to the brim with statuettes and flowers. As it rose from the earth on the shoulders of its bearers, the friendly sun of the monsoons shone forth and flooded the world with colour, so that the yellow tigers painted on the palace walls seemed to spring, and a pink and gray skein of cloud to link up the upper sky.

(300-301)

The reference to the 'friendly sun' is a stark contrast to earlier references to the sun in the first two sections of the novel. Earlier, Forster had seen the sun as cruel, alien and unfriendly; here in *Temple*, the sun is seen as bringing glory and color and because it is the monsoon, encouraging growth. Forster's division of the three sections of the novel according to the seasons of India is apparent here: the cool season of Mosque; the hot season of Caves and the monsoon of Temple — a time of richness and joy.

Aziz rides his horse to the European guest house, where he finds two letters lying on a piano, which he reads; from one he learns that Ralph Moore is 'almost an imbecile' (302). He hears a voice ask, "Oh, oh, who is that?" and "he could not remember where he had heard its tones before" (303); of course the tones are those of Mrs. Moore because the voice is that of her son.

Ralph comes into the light from the shadows of the other room — this might be construed as Mrs. Moore re-emerging from the darkness. Ralph is "a strange-looking youth, tall, prematurely aged, the big blue eyes faded with anxiety, the hair impoverished and tousled" (ibid.). Aziz asks how his bee-stings are, and Ralph replies that they throb, so Aziz tells him to come closer; Ralph is reluctant because Aziz's 'hands are unkind' (304). He senses that Aziz hates the English. Aziz says his remark is most strange, and says he will not hurt him. Ralph replies, "I don't mind pain, there is no pain." Aziz asks, "No pain?" Ralph says, "Not really." And Aziz sneers, "Excellent news." Ralph adds, "But there is cruelty" again referring to Aziz, rather than his bee-stings (ibid.).

The impression created from this exchange is one of Ralph's perceptiveness and intuition, so while he may be an imbecile, he is much like his mother because of his frankness, openness and strong intuition. Aziz tells him he has brought some salve for the stings. He offers to treat Ralph's stings but Ralph recoils, which Aziz thinks is 'great nonsense, your present behavior' (304). Ralph says, "You should not treat us like this" (305), obviously referring to the contempt and hatred Aziz feels for the British. He adds, "We have done you no harm" (ibid.), to which

Aziz responds, "Yes, I am Aziz. No, of course your friend Miss Quested did me no harm at the Marabar" (ibid.). But his last words are drowned out by the firing of celebratory guns for the festival. At this point, halfway through the festival, the "God had extended His temple" and the two of them are drawn to the porch by the 'sudden illumination' and the town is a "blur of light, in which the house seemed dancing, and the palace waving little wings. The water below, the hills and sky above, were not involved as yet; there was still only a little light and song struggling among the shapeless lumps of the universe" (ibid.). The chanting of the worshippers is clearly audible. Aziz makes to leave and wishes Ralph a good night. Aziz unconsciously extends his hand, "completely forgetting that they were not friends, and focusing his heart on something more distant than the caves, something beautiful" (306) and here we get the sense that he is thinking again of Mrs. Moore. Ralph takes his hand and Aziz feels remorse for his behavior. He asks,

'Don't you think me unkind anymore?'

'No.'

'How can you tell, you strange fellow?'

'Not difficult, the one thing I always know.'

'Can you always tell whether a stranger is your friend?'

'Yes.'

'Then you are an Oriental.'

(301)

These are the exact words Aziz used about Mrs. Moore when he first met her in the Mosque by moonlight—the words "he had said...to Mrs Moore in the mosque at the beginning of the cycle, from which, after so much suffering, he had got free" (306). Ralph is, in a sense, an incarnation of his mother, and Aziz seems to recognize this and therefore takes a liking to him—just as he did with Ralph's mother. He gives Ralph the ointment 'as a present' because 'you are Mrs. Moore's son' (ibid.), as he says. He asks Ralph if his mother ever spoke about him (Aziz) and Ralph answers, "In her letters, in her letters. She loved you" (ibid.). And Aziz says, "Yes, your mother was my best friend in all the world" (ibid.). He muses on her 'eternal goodness' and wonders what it amounted to—the answer is: 'nothing' because she did not testify on his behalf nor did she visit him in prison, and yet she "had stolen to the depths of his heart, and he always adored her" (ibid.).

Aziz tells Ralph that this is the monsoon season in India, 'our best weather' when everyone is happy and there is an abundance of good. He wishes he could show Ralph the country—the true India. He says, though, that he will take the boy out on the lake for an hour or so and wonders if the 'the cycle was beginning again' (307). He will take Ralph out in the boat as 'one

act of homage to Mrs Moore's son' (ibid.). Homage? Homage to mother and son? Forster may mean this facetiously, but perhaps there is something in this because Ralph is an 'imbecile', which is not too far from a fool, and fools have always been considered in western belief to be touched by God.

Aziz and Ralph go out in the boat. Aziz finds that he doesn't need to row because "the freshening gale blew them in the direction they desired" (307) which is toward the procession of the God. Apparently, the heavens are lending a hand in this, too. There are two flashes of red lightning and Ralph asks, "Was that the Rajah?" (ibid.). Aziz asks what he means. The boy says, "Row back, you will see what I mean" (ibid.). Aziz protests that there is no Rajah, but he starts to row back and Ralph says, 'There...' and they see a king sitting under a canopy in shining royal robes. Aziz is puzzled. Ralph somehow knows that the Rajah has died and feels that they should return. How Ralph knows this is a mystery, because it has been kept secret, but being Mrs. Moore's son, it can be assumed he is, like her, gifted with second sight. What they really saw was an image of the Rajah's father made to look like a living man; Ralph 'had directed him to it' and Aziz feels that "his companion was not so much a visitor as a guide" (308) and asks if they should go back, but the boy says, "There is still the procession" (ibid.) and urges Aziz to row nearer. Aziz obeys because "He knew with his heart that this was Mrs Moore's son, and indeed until his heart was involved he knew nothing" (ibid.). The heart is the only true way to knowledge and understanding for Aziz and, by extension, Forster. They get closer to the shore of the lake and see the palanquin of Krishna descend the water steps to the shore. The worshippers gather for a meal on the shore. Godbole appears and waves his arms at the two in the boat but his meaning is unclear.

They see above them the "secular power of Mau — elephants, artillery, crowds—" (309) and high above that

a wild tempest started, confined at first to the upper regions of the air. Gusts of wind mixed darkness and light, sheets of rain cut from the north, stopped, cut from the south, began rising from below... (they were) preparing to throw God away, God Himself (not that God can be thrown), into the storm.

(ibid.)

Another boat, with Fielding and his new wife in it, approaches that of Aziz and Ralph. The two boats, with the four 'outsiders' in them then collide with the floating shrine that has been brought into the lake by the worshippers, and though the collision is only slight "Stella, nearest to it, shrank into her husband's arms, then reached forward, then flung herself against Aziz, and her motions capsized them" (309-310). What follows is another Forster 'muddle':

They plunged into the warm, shallow water, and rose struggling into a tornado of noise. The oars, the sacred tray, the letters of Ronny and Adela, broke loose and floated confusedly. Artillery was fired, drums beaten, the elephants trumpeted, and drowning all an immense peal of thunder, unaccompanied by lightning, cracked like a mallet on the dome.

That was the climax, as far as India admits one.

(310)

Forster ends the chapter by saying again that the religious experience of this section of the book, from the opening temple ceremony to this climax, remains indefinable and inexplicable. “God si love. Looking back at the great blur of the last twenty-four hours, no man could say where was the emotional center of it, any more than he could locate the heart of a cloud” (310).

4.3 The Last Ride

Forster tells us that though Aziz and Fielding were friends again, “yet they would meet no more” (310). They go for a last ride in the Mau jungles, so their reconciliation is a success — in a limited way. The collision of the boats has caused a cessation of “nonsense and bitterness, and they went back to their old relationship as if nothing had happened” (311). It is a beautiful day for a ride, there were “round white clouds in the sky, and white pools on the earth; the hills in the distance were purple. The scene was as park-like as England, but did not cease being queer” (ibid.). Forster does not let the reader forget that this is still India and an alien place. Aziz has a letter for Fielding to give Adela, to thank her for telling the truth in court; he wants to do good actions all around. The conversation turns to Ralph and Fielding suggests he is really ‘a wise boy’ (312) and Aziz agrees.

Fielding asks Aziz if he knows anything about the festival that has just taken place — anything about Krishna and Gokul “the village where Krishna was born — well, more or less born” (313). Fielding explains he wants to “discover ... it’s spiritual side, if it has one” (ibid.). Aziz comments that Hindus are a mystery to him and always will be and asks why Fielding is so interested. Fielding says it is difficult to explain because he’s never really liked them, except for Godbole and asks, “Does the old fellow still say, ‘Come, come’?” (ibid.). Fielding wants to know if Godbole is still calling for God. We learn that Fielding’s wife and brother “like Hinduism, though they take no interest in its forms” (ibid.), and they won’t talk to him about it. He adds, “They know I think a certain side of their lives is a mistake, and are shy. That’s why I wish you would talk to them, for at all events you’re oriental” (ibid.). Aziz does not reply, and here we have another echo of Aziz’s comments to both Mrs. Moore and Ralph: “You’re an oriental.”

At this moment something, “not a sight, but a sound — flitted past him, and caused him to

reread his letter to Miss Quested. Hadn't he wanted to say something else to her? Taking out his pen, he added: "For my own part, I shall henceforth connect you with the name that is very sacred in my mind, namely Mrs Moore" (314). He emerges from this reverie, which may be understood as being caused by the spirit of Mrs. Moore, or at the very least her memory. He says, "Leave Krishna alone and talk about something sensible" (ibid), and so they do: they argue about politics.

They pass temples to Hanuman, the Hindu monkey-god and ride past a Savite temple; past great trees and butterflies and frogs but "The divisions of daily life were returning, the shrine had almost shut" (315). The novel is coming to an end now. The famous ending where Fielding asks Aziz, "Why can't we be friends now?" And adds "It's what I want. It's what you want" (ibid.).

But the horses didn't want it — they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single-file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath; they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, 'No, not yet,' and the sky said, 'No, not there.'

(318)

And so the novel ends. While this last passage appears to emphasize the division between the Anglo-Indians and the Indians (and does on one level), Forster, by adding the idea that all creation conspires to keep them separate, is again adding a mystical perspective; animate or inanimate, all things have a voice in creation in this novel. The universe is a participant in creating meaning. It must be remembered that Forster is resolving opposites throughout this novel; therefore, while on some levels divisions appear to exist, on a deeper level there is resolution, which is what Forster strove for in his life and in his work. Absence implies presence and presence absence. Mrs. Moore is gone but her presence is felt still in the minds of those she has touched. Separation may appear to be final for Aziz and Fielding and for India and England, but there is no real separation because they have shared a life and remain forever connected. Forster's credo, 'Only connect' now seems clear finally in his last novel: apparent divisions and seeming opposites are only that — there is a unity underlying all existence if only we have the eyes to see it and the sense to believe in it. Once the connection is made we are saved. In Whitman's words:

The races, neighbors to marry and be given in marriage....

All these hearts as of fretted children shall be sooth'd,

All affection shall be fully responded to, the secret shall be told,

All these separations and gaps shall be taken up and hook'd and link'd together.

"Passage to India"

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