



THE EMPIRE IN THE WRITINGS OF KIPLING,  
FORSTER AND ORWELL

by

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## CHAPTER III

E.M. FORSTER

## A PASSAGE TO INDIA

One doesn't know the fate of books.  
But one would think this should be  
a classic on the strange and tragic  
fact of history and life called India.

G.L. Dickinson.

E.M. Forster's own passage to India began in friendship and personal relations with an Indian Muslim Syed Ross Masood in 1907. He was greatly indebted to him for having awakened his interest in India, in return for which he dedicated to him A Passage to India. In the Everyman edition of this novel the dedication was shared by another Indian, this time a Hindu, the Maharajah of Dewas State Senior. In an article on Syed Ross Masood he says: "Until I met him, India was a vague jumble of rajahs, sahibs, babus, and elephants, and I was not interested in such a jumble: Who could be?"<sup>1</sup> This was a kind of India which existed in the minds of many at that time and was accepted even by those who knew India personally, although it did not correspond to reality. It was a distorted picture which left out much that was India. Forster had been troubled by the problem of what is real, a problem he has explored in The Longest Journey. It is considered both philosophically, and psychologically as a problem which affects personal relations. Forster gives two meanings to "real" in that novel. A number of undergraduates, including Ansell, are discussing philosophy in Rickie's room. "They were discussing the existence of objects. Do they exist only when there is someone to look at them? or have they a real existence of their own. It is all very interesting, but at the same time it is difficult." (p. 7) The discussion is broken by the arrival of Agnes and her brother. The discussion party disperses except Ansell, a friend of Rickie, who introduces him to Agnes. Ansell completely ignores the extended hand of Agnes. He has been very rude and

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1. Two Cheers for Democracy, London, 1951, p.299.

Rickie says that Ansell is not a gentleman. He is the son of a draper and only got into Cambridge because he is very clever. Later Rickie protests to Ansell against his ungentlemanly behaviour. Rickie has a high opinion of Agnes and thinks she is kind, good-tempered and really nice. Ansell tries to explain that Agnes "was not really there," and says, "Did it never strike you that phenomena may be of two kinds: one, those which have a real existence, such as the cow; two, those which are the subjective product of a diseased imagination, and which, to our destruction, we invest with the semblance of reality? If this never struck you, let it strike you now!" (P24) Rickie has invested with the semblance of reality what exists only in his imagination; the Agnes that he knows is not the real one. Ansell knows better, therefore his action of ignoring Agnes is symbolic. Rickie is destroyed through his marriage with Agnes. It is not very difficult to solve the problem of material phenomena; the cow is there, and that settles it. But unfortunately all reality is not material phenomena and that complicates our problems. Agnes is not a simple material phenomenon. This aspect of reality is symbolized by a diagram on a piece of paper in front of Ansell when Rickie is protesting to him about his behaviour to Agnes. The diagram is "a circle inside a square, inside which was again a square". Ansell goes on drawing "within the circle a square, and inside that another circle, and inside that another square". (P24) This symbolizes the quest for "what is real" which goes on after having settled the enigma of the cow. When asked if they are real Ansell says "The inside one is - the one in the middle of everything, that there's never room enough to draw." (P24) There is

reality within reality and what is at the centre of all is a problem which Forster deals with in A Passage to India. This central mystery is like the innermost cell of the Hindu temple the exterior of which represents the world-mountain.<sup>2</sup> The Hindu temple architecturally represents the material aspect of reality; it symbolizes matter and all forms of life and various aspects of human life and yet it contains within the cell which is the womb of all and which represents ultimate reality. According to the Hindus each individual perceives reality as a result of his virtues and limitations:

"These searching reflections of the Saint are a kind of commentary on the idea of Maya, the problem "what is real?" as conceived by the Hindu. "Reality" is a function of the individual. It is the result of the specific virtues and limitations of individual consciousness. While the saint had been wandering about the interior of the cosmic giant he had perceived a reality which had seemed to him congenial to his nature, and he had regarded it as solid and substantial. Nevertheless, it had been only a dream or vision within the mind of the sleeping God. Contrariwise, during the night of nights, the reality of the primal substance of the god appears to the human consciousness of the saint as a bewildering mirage. "It is impossible," he ponders, "it cannot be real."<sup>3</sup>

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2. "The dark innermost sanctuary of the temple has, as a rule, one door and no windows. It is called the garbhagriha the 'womb-house'. This womb-chamber is enclosed and surmounted by the mountain of the temple. Therein the worshipper beholds the image and is reborn to a new life. The density of internal space in Buddhist temples (also in the large halls that precede the garbhagriha) holds between the tangible limits of the walls and sculptured pillars shadows and the scent of fading flowers and burning incense, oil lamps and the exhalations of pilgrims and worshippers. The symbolic shape of the cave had come to rest in the innermost sanctuary and its darkness seeped into its surroundings. Even in the open pillard halls of the temples in West and South India the weighty pillars grind the sunlight into particles that are swallowed up by the darkness between their close-set shapes." Stella Kramrisch, The ART OF INDIA, London, 1965, p.20.
  3. ZIMMER, H.: Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, Washington, D.C., 1946, p.39.

Civilization and culture provide the environment and the framework as well as the incentives which either help or impede the pursuit of what is real, in its material as well as spiritual aspects. It is in this context that the connection between The Longest Journey and A Passage to India seems closest. In the former the metaphysical problem is there, emphatically and insistently, but it fails to find a solution. The West provides facilities, opportunities, environment and incentives for the study and exploration of the material aspect of reality. The materialistic culture of the West provides no framework, no environment and little encouragement to the pursuit of that other aspect of reality. Although Cambridge provided<sup>an</sup> environment for a contemplative life and for the study of philosophy, Literature and other humanities it did not help in the understanding of the ultimate reality. Ansell studies philosophy there and searches for certitude through reason. Rickie creates a world of fantasy by writing stories about Greek Mythology, in other words he lives a life of imagination related neither to the mind nor to the body. Cambridge is neither in harmony with Sawston nor with Wiltshire. The aesthetic view of life which Forster explores in Where Angels Fear to Tread, has its limitations and weaknesses. It selects what is beautiful from life and depends for the elation of the mind on it. It is a brittle view of life which can be easily shattered by the crude realities of life. Philip sustains himself on a vision of Italy which is formed by selecting what is beautiful in its past, in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, and put together in his Baedeker. He wakes up from this vision with

a jolt when he learns that Gino is the son of a dentist:

"Philip gave a cry of personal disgust and pain. He shuddered all over, and edged away from his companion. A dentist! A dentist in Monteriano. A dentist in fairy-land! False teeth and laughing gas and the tilting chair at a place which knew the Etruscan League, and the pax Romana, and Alaric himself, and the Countess Matilda, and the Middle Ages, all fighting and holiness, and the Renaissance, all fighting and beauty! He thought of Lilia no longer. He was anxious for himself: he feared that Romance might die."<sup>4</sup>

To the mystery of the universe beauty offers no solution. It can only relate and lift the mind. The Dionysian view of life, though offering an escape and release from the conventions and values of an ascetic social order, leads to the disintegration of the balance in life which is to be brought about by a vital harmony between body and soul or passion and intellect. Although Eustace escapes from his conventional countrymen through a vision of Pan he disintegrates into a universal participation in nature.

"He spoke first of night and the stars and planets above his head, of the swarms of fire-flies below him, of the great rocks covered with anemones and shells that were slumbering in the invisible sea. He spoke of the rivers and waterfalls, of the ripening of bunches of grapes, of the smoking cone of Vesuvius and the hidden fire-channels that made the smoke, of the myriads of lizards who were lying curled up in the crannies of the sultry earth, of the showers of white rose-leaves that were tangled in his hair. And then he spoke of the rain and the wind by which all things are changed, of the air through which all things live, and of the woods in which all things can be hidden."<sup>5</sup>

Forster studied different civilizations, the classical Greek, the Renaissance Italian, the different civilizations which met and overlapped one another at Alexandria and the ancient civilizations

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4. Where Angels Fear to Tread, Arnold's Pocket Edition, 1959, p.32.

5. Collected Short Stories: London, 1948, p.21.

of India. His quest led him to India where he hoped it would come to an end. He took his spiritual passage to India, though not with the naive Whitmanesque optimism. He had to discard the popular image of India. It was a spiritual act which Forster could perform through that combination of intelligence and sympathy of which he was capable. He could see that the Anglo-Indian image of India was a product of their diseased imaginations and their limitations and prejudices. Of course, it was very 'real' to them and their whole life of "telegrams and anger"<sup>6</sup> was formed round this 'reality'. It was an extension of their Sawstonian outlook into the Indian Empire. And it was this life of action of the Anglo-Indians which Kipling so consistently idealized and admired in his short stories.

"It will readily be granted, I think, that no two more different writers than Mr. Kipling and Mr. Forster can be imagined. But it is that very opposition which shows that the insistent thought which causes each to write has its source in the same problem. We go back to Arjuna and Krishna, to the problem as to whether the life of action or the contemplative life be the better choice. We have Mr. Kipling's answer. Mr. Forster's answer is the contrary one. For him the life of action is a life of 'telegrams and anger', of deliberately finking the emotions of which the 'inner life' is made up. The outer life of telegrams and anger, of doing things, of making motor-cars, and roads, and Empires, destroys the best of human impulses, charity, understanding, and respect of persons. It involves a cramping submission to social conventions, a humiliating kow-towing to Mrs. Grundy, a substitution of materialistic morality for the better morality of the spirit. It destroys, in fact, not passion, but love, which may involve passion; and love is the only creation man has to his credit."<sup>7</sup>

As put by Professor Dobree Forster seems to favour the life of contemplation rather than action. Forster actually advocated the necessity of finding a human mean between the Monk and the Beast.

6. This expression is used by Margaret Schlegel in Howards End.

7. Bonamy Dobree: The LAMP and the Lute, London, 1964, p.70.

This was to be discovered by 'continuous excursions into either realm.'

"The business man who assumes that this life is everything, and the mystic who asserts that it is nothing, fail, on this side and on that, to hit the truth. 'Yes, I see dear; it's about halfway between,' Aunt Juley had hazarded in earlier years. No; truth, being alive, was not half way between anything. It was only to be found by continuous excursions into either realm, and though proportion is the final secret, to espouse it at the outset is to insure sterility."<sup>8</sup>

A life of contemplation is not the ideal, but it is a desirable one when most men are engaged in the life of action. The ideal would be the just proportion of action and contemplation, of body and spirit and of passion and intellect in each individual. In India, what Kipling did not see, and what Forster saw was a tragedy which happened through the insolence and the mistaken sense of superiority of the Anglo-Indians. A unique opportunity for harmony and balance between two civilizations was being lost because the Anglo-Indians did not have developed hearts. Each civilization could balance the limitations of the other. The civil stations in India where the Anglo-Indian communities lived were of suburban communities at their worst as they lived in more complete isolation than was possible in Britain.<sup>9</sup> Their life was divided between the office and the club and they lived a life of constant pose, an illusion maintained by a belief in their imperial ideals of duty and service reinforced by the National Anthem reminding them of their identity.

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8. Howards End, Arnold's Pocket Edition, reprinted 1960, P.206.

9. G.L. Dickinson gives a picture of this isolation, and the life of the Anglo-Indian community in an essay, "Anglo-India" in Appearances, London, 1914. See Appendix A.

"Meanwhile the performance ended, and the amateur orchestra played the National Anthem. Conversation and billiards stopped, faces stiffened. It was the Anthem of the Army of Occupation. It reminded every member of the club that he or she was British and in exile. It produced a little sentiment and a useful accession of will-power. The meagre tune, the curt series of demands on Jehovah, fused into a prayer unknown in England, and though they perceived neither Royalty nor Deity they did perceive something, they were strengthened to resist another day." (P.28)<sup>10</sup>

The God of Anglo-India was Jehovah, the God of the chosen, the elect and the superior. He was not the God of India. Even Mrs. Moore's God of Universal Love was less satisfying in India than in England. Communication between Mrs. Moore and her son, Ronny Heaslop becomes difficult, if it does not break down completely, when God is mentioned by Mrs. Moore:

'I suppose so, I suppose so'. They did not part for a few minutes but the conversation had become unreal since Christianity had entered it. Ronny approved of religion as long as it endorsed the National Anthem, but he objected when it attempted to influence his life. Then he would say in respectful yet decided tones, 'I don't think it does to talk about these things, every fellow has to work out his own religion,' and any fellow who heard him muttered, 'Hear!' Mrs. Moore felt that she had made a mistake in mentioning God, but she found him increasingly difficult to avoid as she grew older, and he had been constantly in her thoughts since she entered India, though oddly enough 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 seemed always an arch, beyond the remotest echo a silence. (pp.55-56)

Her God is not infinite to embrace all and everything.

The Anglo-Indians were mostly the product of the English public-schools. Forster satirizes their attitudes and values in A Passage to India; earlier he has satirized in The Longest Journey the public school, Sawston. He describes it there as 'a beneficent

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10. I have used Edward Arnold's Pocket Edition of A Passage to India (1961) for quotations; page numbers are shown at the end of quotations.

machine'. It encourages competition and efficiency, qualities which are valued in the life of "telegrams and anger".

"'School', said Mr. Pembroke, slowly closing the lid of the desk, - 'School is the world in miniature'".<sup>11</sup>

This is Herbert Pembroke speaking to the Dunwood House boys at Sawston at the beginning of the term. Forster has only given the substance of the speech. "Rickie, at all events, refused to be critical".<sup>12</sup> He has come to Sawston as assistant-master from Cambridge. He has once wished to be a writer but his short stories are not accepted by editors, because they are inspired by the romantic spirit of Greek Mythology.

"How could Rickie, or anyone make a living by pretending that Greek Gods were alive, or that young ladies could vanish into trees? A sparkling society tale, full of verve and pathos, would have been another thing, and the editor might have been convinced by it."<sup>13</sup>

But his living is assured if he says good-bye to the life of imagination and becomes involved in the working and running of 'a beneficent machine'. He is resigned to his new life and has accepted his role and 'refused to be critical' of Herbert Pembroke's speech. The spirit of Cambridge, of free and disinterested inquiry is muddled and Rickie has become a mere tool for the greater glory of Britain and her middle-classes.

"Herbert's experience was far greater than his, and he must take his tone from him. Nor could anyone criticise the exhortations to be patriotic, athletic, learned and religious, that flowed like a four-part fugue from Mr. Pembroke's mouth. He was a practised speaker - that is to say, he held his audience's attention. He told them that this term, the second of his reign, was the term of Dunwood House; that it behoved every boy to labour during

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11. The Longest Journey, Arnold's Pocket Edition, 1955, p.178.

12. *Ibid.*, p.178.

13. *Ibid.*, p.172.

it for his house's honour, and, through the house, for the honour of the school. Taking a wider range, he spoke of England, or rather of Great Britain, and of her continental foes. Portraits of empire builders hung on the wall, and he pointed to them. He quoted imperial poets. He showed how patriotism has broadened since the days of Shakespeare, who, for all his genius, could only write of his country as -

This fortress built by Nature for herself  
Against infection and the hand of war;  
This happy breed of men, this little world;  
This precious stone set in the silver sea.

And it seemed that only a short ladder lay between the preparation-room and the Anglo-Saxon hegemony of the globe."<sup>14</sup>

Later in 1920 when he wrote 'Notes on the English Character', he described the public-schools as the "heart of middle-classes."<sup>15</sup>

The middle-classes of England had gained ascendancy through the Industrial Revolution and the Reform Bill of 1832. The first gave them wealth, the latter political power. They created and organized the British Empire and influenced the nineteenth century literature. Their chief characteristics as given by Forster were "solidarity, caution, integrity, efficiency. Lack of imagination, hypocrisy."<sup>16</sup> The public-school system flourished in England only and because of the middle-classes.

"How perfectly it expresses their character - far better, for instance, than does the university, into which social and spiritual complexities have already entered. With its boarding houses, its compulsory games, its system of prefects and fagging, its insistence on good form and an esprit de corps, it produces a type whose weight is out of all proportion to its numbers."<sup>17</sup>

The school became an important and permanent influence on the subsequent life of the boys who "remember with regret that golden time when life, though hard, was not yet complex; when they all worked together and played together and thought together, so far as

14. Ibid, pp.173-179.

15. Abinger Harvest, London, 1936, p.3.

16. Ibid, p.3.

17. Ibid, p.4.

they thought at all! When they were taught that school is the World in miniature and believed that no one can love his country who does not love his school. And they prolong that time as best they can by joining their Old Boy's Society; indeed, some of them remain Old Boys and nothing else for the rest of their lives. They attribute all good to school. They worship it".<sup>18</sup> It was this type who went to the colonies "into a world that is not entirely composed of public school men or even of Anglo-Saxons, but of men who are as various as the sands of the sea; into a world of whose richness and subtlety they have no conception. They go forth into it with well-developed bodies, fairly developed minds, and undeveloped hearts. And it is this undeveloped heart that is largely responsible for the difficulties of Englishmen abroad. An undeveloped heart - not a cold one."<sup>19</sup>

The difficulties of Englishmen in India arose from their inability to see the complexity of several cultures and civilizations. If they were to do justice and run the country efficiently, and if trains were to run to the timetable, and famines prevented and if epidemics were to be controlled, they were not to be involved in the complexity of life. It was easier, comfortable and expedient to remain aloof. They could not compromise their aloofness by being pleasant to the natives. This attitude is brought out in the conversation between Ronny Heaslop and his mother Mrs. Moore when they are alone after dinner one evening. Ronny and Adela do not agree on certain things and he

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18. Ibid, p.4.

19. Ibid, pp.4-5.

explains to his mother his difficulties, who says:

'Yes, as Mr. McBryde was saying, but it's much more the Anglo-Indians themselves who are likely to get on Adela's nerves. She doesn't think they behave pleasantly to Indians, you see.'

'What did I tell you?' he exclaimed, losing his gentle manner. 'I knew it last week. Oh, how like a woman to worry over a side-issue!'

She forgot about Adela in her surprise. 'A side-issue, a side-issue?' She repeated. 'How can it be that?'

'We're not out here for the purpose of behaving pleasantly!'

'What do you mean?'

'What I say. We're out here to do justice and keep the peace. Them's my sentiments. India isn't a drawing-room!'

'Your sentiments are those of a god', she said quietly, but it was his manner rather than his sentiments that annoyed her. Trying to recover his temper, he said, 'India likes Gods.'

'And Englishmen like posing as Gods.'

'There's no point in all this. Here we are, and we're going to stop, and the country's got to put up with us, gods or no gods. Oh look here', he broke out, rather pathetically, 'What do you and Adela want me to do? Go against my class, against all the people I respect and admire out here? Lose such power as I have for doing good in this country because my behaviour isn't pleasant? You neither of you understand what work is, or you'd never talk such eyewash. I hate talking like this, but one must occasionally. It's morbidly sensitive to go on as Adela and you do. I noticed you both at the Club to-day - after the Collector had been at all that trouble to amuse you. I am out here to work, mind, to hold this wretched country by force. I'm not a missionary or a Labour Member or a vague sentimental sympathetic literary man. I'm just a servant of the Government; it's the profession you wanted me to choose myself, and that's that. We're not pleasant in India, and we don't intend to be pleasant. We've something more important to do. (pp.52-53.)

This conversation brings out the Anglo-Indian official attitude to India. The factual side of India was very thoroughly documented in the Imperial Gazetteers. Variety was not denied to India in them, but it was the variety of colour, language, religion, ethnology, and geography. It was not one of complexity. The aim was to rule efficiently, maintain peace and order and improve and civilize; therefore the emphasis on this massive factual information which sometimes was carried to unnecessary lengths.

Kipling in two of his short stories in Plain Tales from the Hills, 'Pig' and 'Wressley of the Foreign Office', deals with this zeal for factual information. Very little attempt was made to understand India with sympathy and intelligence. It was an India, the India of the Anglo-Indians, in which the Sahib figured very largely and prominently; he dominated the scene. For political and economic reasons this was the 'real' India for the ruling class. The other aspects or facets of India did not exist for it. A new system of education had been introduced to serve the imperial purposes. Persian, which was the *lingua franca* of India for centuries was replaced by English and with this the general level of culture, especially among the Muslims, declined. India's own educational system was uprooted and rendered ineffective as it did not serve the imperial purposes and would have ensured the continuity of an elite, which, if not actually hostile, would have challenged the superior posturing of the sahibs. In order to strengthen the myth of their superiority they considered their own literature, history, arts and sciences as far superior to those of India. The Europeans never suspected for a moment that something might have been wrong with them and their judgements; it never occurred to most of them that they were prejudiced in favour of their own literature, sciences and philosophy and that the confusion attributed to India might exist in their minds and indicate lack of sympathy and understanding. Nevertheless Hindu literature was made available through translation to interested people at home. This was part of the interest in oriental literature which the romantic movement had created. Both Mathew Arnold and W.B. Yeats were influenced by Hindu sacred literature but it is to be noted

that they were not Anglo-Indians and did not share their disdainful attitude. They were both sick of the excessive materialism of the West and turned to India and its ancient literature because of their different personal and psychological needs. They did not show any interest in the problems of contemporary India. Arnold's interest in the Bhagavad Gita was therapeutic; he found it healing and recommended its reading to his friend Clough because "the Indians distinguish between meditation or absorption - and knowledge."<sup>20</sup> Clough did not like the book. His critical intellect could not accept what had appealed to the creative imagination of Arnold. Mathew Arnold's brother, William Arnold went to India as an ensign in a native infantry. He changed over to the Civil Service and then finally to the Education Service in 1853 when he became the Director of Education in the Punjab. He wrote a novel, Oakfield, or Fellowship in the East, about his experiences in India. He was disappointed by the attitude of the Anglo-Indians. He was a very civilized man like his brother and could not understand the philistinism of the English in India. Forster read this novel out of curiosity because it was written by Mathew Arnold's brother:

"Mathew Arnold is of all the Victorians the most to my taste: A great poet, a civilized citizen, and a prophet who has managed to project himself into our present troubles, so that when we read him now he seems to be in the room. I took up this novel by his brother with a curiosity that has not been disappointed. It is a strange, quixotic, disillusioned work and it hands out no bouquets, either to Indians or to Englishmen working in India."<sup>21</sup>

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20. Trilling, L: Mathew Arnold, London, 1955 (3rd Impression) pp.24-25.

21. Two Cheers for Democracy, London, 1951, p.202.

Oakfield, the hero of the novel, finds lack of seriousness in the Europeans concerning their duty to India and is disillusioned by "the general laxity of European morals in the East."<sup>22</sup> India does not figure in the novel. "India is passed with a puzzled sigh, with a sense of ignorance and impotence."<sup>23</sup> William Arnold's wife died in India and was buried at Dharamsala in the Himalayas. He himself died at Gibraltar when returning home because of ill-health. He was thirty-one. There is a faint whisper in the elegiac poem, which his brother wrote on him, of the usual complaint that India's heat and hard work caused his death.

For there, with bodily anguish keen,  
 With Indian heats at last fordone,  
 With public toil and private teen -  
 Thou sank'st, alone.

(A Southern Night, lines 25-28)

Otherwise India is romanticised by Arnold in this poem.

Some sage, to whom the world was dead,  
 And men were specks, and life a play;  
 Who made the roots of trees his bed,  
 And once a day  
 With staff and gourd his way did bend  
 To villages and homes of man,  
 For food to keep him till he end  
 His mortal span  
 And the pure goal of being reach;  
 Hoar-headed, wrinkled, clad in white,  
 Without companion, without speech,  
 By day and night  
 Pondering God's mysteries untold,  
 And tranquil as the glacier-snows -  
 He by those Indian mountains old  
 Might well repose.

(A Southern Night, lines 77-92).

Yeats was more directly influenced by Hinduism. He knew many Indians, including the famous Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore,<sup>3</sup> and

22. Ibid, p.203.

23. Ibid, p.203.

the Nationalist Poetess Sarojini Naidu who was always welcome at his 'Monday Evenings'. He was also attracted to the life and work of another Bengali writer Toru Dutt. He wrote an introduction to Tagore's own translation of Gitanjali in English. He also met in London an Indian monk, Shri Purohit Swami who reawakened his old interest in Hinduism. This Swami wrote his autobiography which was published, with an introduction by W.B. Yeats, by Macmillan in 1932. Its title was, An Indian Monk, his Life and Adventures. Yeats spent the winter of 1935 with the Swami in Majorca to help him in the translation of the Upanishads. But he got tired of too much Hindu mysticism in old age. There is an interesting conversation on record which is of importance in this context:

"Professor Bose brought a gift, The History of Upanishads, from another Indian Scholar, Professor Randa, and called at Riversdale in company with Dr. Wilbraham Trench of Trinity College (the "man of known sobriety"), to present it. Yeats, who was in an excited mood, opened the conversation by saying that his friend Tagore wrote "too much about God". "My mind [he said] resents the vagueness of all such references. Another sort of mysticism which is harmful to poetry is that of Peter Bell and the primrose." Doctor Trench: "But what about Wordsworth's little poem on the primrose-tuft in the rock? Flowers clinging to stem, stem to rock, rock to earth, 'constant to her sphere', and God over all through the season's changes." Yeats (waving the implied rebuke aside): "I have fed upon the philosophy of the Upanishads all my life, but there is an aspect of Tagore's mysticism that I dislike. I find an absence of tragedy in Indian poetry. Indians should write in Urdu or in Bengali." Bose: "our problem is not so much to get into conflicts as to get out of them." Yeats: "When I talked to Indians in Oxford I found just one, only one, who disclaimed trying to express himself in English. That was because he was a Nepali and had therefore never lost independence or bowed to the yoke. Let Tagore cast off English." Bose: "The question is a complicated one. We have the different traditions of the Moslems and the Hindus to contend with. Can you give me a message to India?" Yeats: "Let 100,000 men of one side meet the other. That is my message to India, insistence on the antinomy." He strode swiftly across the room, took up Sato's sword, and unsheathed it dramatically and shouted, "Conflict, more conflict."<sup>24</sup>

If Tagore had only written in Bengali and had not taken up English as a literary medium, Yeats would not have known him. The Moslems disdained to use English for their literary purposes and the result was that Yeats did not know anything about their literature. The introduction of English language and education added to the complex situation in India. It might have helped in the solving of the imperial practical problems and the running of the Indian administration, and in bringing Western knowledge to India, but it also created its own problems. Those who introduced English language and education in India thought it would solve India's problems. They did not see the complexity of the situation which was confused by the imperial prejudices. Macaulay's minute on Indian education is a remarkable document revealing this lack of the understanding of the complexity of the situation. It is not only misinformed but is also a very malicious expression of the imperial prejudices. Macaulay wanted to improve and civilize India and he advocated the introduction of Western Education. He had no knowledge of either Sanskrit or Arabic nor of Persian and proceeded to pass judgements of value in the difficult field of comparative literature. Even today the scope of comparative literature remains limited and only rarely ventures outside Western tradition. Macaulay readily accepted the valuation of the Orientalists and made that wild and foolish generalization:

"I have never found one among them [the Orientalists] who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia."<sup>25</sup>

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25. Lord Macaulay: Speeches with his Minute on Indian Education, The World's Classics, London, 1935, p.349.

He believed in the intrinsic superiority of Western literature as an established fact. And although Macaulay was an historian as well as an artist, he could not escape the erroneous view that History is a factual record of events and nothing else.

"It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say, that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in Sanscrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgements used at preparatory schools in England."<sup>26</sup>

Macaulay could not see that the Hindu attitude to History was very different from the Western. It is not a mere accident that there are no early Indian historians and that the factual documentation of the history of ancient India is a modern development. There is an enormous amount of early literature of India. It represents various aspects of intellectual activity. A striking thing is the absence of interest in the historical process. It becomes apparent when we compare early Indian and European classical literatures.

"But if we compare any ancient Indian literature, Brahman, Jain, or Buddhist, with the Greek and Latin classics, we shall find one striking deficiency; in none of them has the art of historical composition been developed beyond its earliest stages. Its sources - heroic poems, legendary chronicles, ancient genealogies - are indeed to be found in abundance. From the literatures and from the monuments we learn the names, and some of the achievements, of a great number of nations, who rose to power, flourished, and declined in the continent of India during the twenty-two centuries before Mohammedan conquest; but none of these nations has found its historians. Ancient India has no Herodotus or Thucydides, no Livy or Tacitus."<sup>27</sup>

This absence of historians is the result of the Hindu concept of time and his attitude to the historical process. His concept of time in its chronological aspect is to be found in the Puranas,

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26. Ibid, p.349.

27. Rapson, E.J.: Ancient India, Cambridge, 1914, pp.15-16.

"Which teach that the Universe undergoes an endless series of creations and dissolutions corresponding to the days and nights of the God Brahma, each of which equals 1000 'great periods' of 4,320,000 years. What we know as the historical period of the world was for them the 'Kali Age', or the shortest or the most degenerate of the four ages which together constitute a 'great period'. It was but as a drop in the ocean of time and might be neglected."<sup>28</sup>

He looks upon the historical process as an illusion or a dream and goes beyond it to what is real.

"He looks at history as the result of philosophy, as the working out of a great world-plan of human evolution. The European on the other hand, looking outwards, depends for his peace and happiness on the outward, ever-changing things of life. His eyes are trained to notice the sharp edges of all out-lines. He revels in emphasising differences. He thinks that life develops out of forms, and functions out of organs, and declares that history is, after all, a mere congeries of passing events connected with the speakings, doings and intriguing of men and women. 'seeking within', remarks Georgia Gagarin, 'has made the Hindu mystical, dreamy, visionary, metaphysical, oblivious of the world and its pleasures, suspicious of senses as a reliable instrument of gaining knowledge. Seeking without has made the Western practical, wide-awake in matters worldly, relying on his senses, doubting anything super-physical, and therefore unphilosophical!'"<sup>29</sup>

If Macaulay had cared to understand the Hindu attitude he would not have ridiculed the absence of historical information from the literatures of ancient India. He applied a limited historical method and thought it ridiculous that ancient Indians had not done so. He did not realize that different cultures demand different historical methods and interpretations of the past. He probably could not see the difference between 'fact' and 'truth'. All 'truth' is not 'fact'. Though myth may not be 'fact' that is no reason why it should not represent 'truth'.

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28. Rapson, E.J. Ancient India, Cambridge, 1914, p.7.

29. Wadia, A.S. Reflections on the Problems of India, London, 1914, p.54.

In his review of E.J. Rapson's Ancient India, E.M.Forster writes,

"Facts are a sign of decay in the world's fabric. They are like dust crumbling out of the palace walls which Brahma, after the thousand periods that are his night, will rebuild. We cannot conceive of the joy and the beauty of that palace, because facts have silted in through our senses and blocked the soul. Some day the palace will fall, and we with it; and when it is rebuilt we shall be re-created too. For We are the palace and the palace is We, and when the soul glances hither and thither among the falling masonry it is really looking for the soul."<sup>30</sup>

This is the kind of notion which must be there if the Western mind wishes to understand the pre-Islamic civilizations of India.

"He must not expect a sweeping narrative, or vivid portraiture - there is no material out of which they can be constructed - nor political philosophies such as inform the chronicles of Florence or Greece. He is studying something that has never interested the Indian, and this must be his main interest. History to the Indian is a pattern in the fallen dust, and such a monograph as Professor Rapson's would seem a childish fabric woven out of old inscriptions and books whose true purport was holiness, out of old coins and cross references, out of the ignorant exclamations of visitors, Greek or Chinese. All this material (he would feel) has been wrested from its proper place. Arranged as it is, it reveals nothing about the palace walls, and it exhibits the dawn not of progress, but of misery. The West may call such an arrangement scientific. The Indian knows very well that it is not. And it is only by remembering his profound indifference to his own past that we can study it intelligently."<sup>31</sup>

Similarly mythology may not be factually true, but that certainly does not prevent it from being an interpretation of the past. Professor Toynbee when dealing with the difficult problem of the genesis of civilization examined and rejected the methods and techniques of biology and geology as insufficient. Race and environment were not in themselves found sufficient as factors accounting for the birth of a civilization. He found his key in mythology.

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30. "The Age of Misery." New Weekly, 27 June 1914, Vol.2. p.52.

31. Ibid, p.52.

"The fallacy in the two views already examined and rejected is that they apply the procedure of material sciences, biology and geology, to a problem that is really spiritual. A survey of the great myths in which the wisdom of the human race is enshrined suggests the possibility that man achieves civilization, not as a result of superior biological endowment or geographical environment, but as a response to a challenge in a situation of special difficulty which rouses him to make a hitherto unprecedented effort."<sup>32</sup>

The limitations of Macaulay as an historian are now in the open because the methods of the nineteenth century historiography are found wanting by those of the twentieth century. Among the many erroneous assumptions popular in the last century was the one that there was only one civilization and that it was the Western civilization. This view has been challenged by Toynbee who believes in the diversity of civilizations and that a comparative study of them is possible.

"This thesis of the unity of civilization is a misconception into which modern Western historians have been led by the influence of their social environment. The misleading feature is the fact that, in modern times, our own Western civilization has cast the net of its economic system all round the world, and this economic unification on a Western basis has been followed by a political unification on the same basis which has gone almost as far; for though the conquests of Western armies and governments have been neither as extensive nor as thorough as the conquests of Western manufacturers and technicians, it is nevertheless a fact that all the states of the contemporary world form part of a single political system of Western origin.

These are striking facts, but to regard them as evidence of the unity of civilization is a superficial view. While the economic and political maps have now been Westernized, the cultural map remains substantially what it was before our Western society started on its career of economic and political conquest. On the cultural plane, for those who have eyes to see, the lineaments of the four living non-Western civilizations are still clear. But many have not such eyes; and their outlook is illustrated in the use of the English word 'natives' and of equivalent words in other Western languages.

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32. Arnold Toynbee: A Study of History: abridgement by D.C. Somervell, London, 1960, pp.915-916.

When we Westerners call people 'natives' we implicitly take the cultural colour out of our perception of them. We see them as wild animals infesting the country in which we happen to come across them, as part of local flora and fauna and not as men of like passions, with ourselves. So long as we think of them as 'natives' we may exterminate them or, as is more likely to-day, domesticate them and honestly (perhaps not altogether mistakenly) believe that we are improving the breed, but we don't begin to understand them."<sup>33</sup>

This egocentric illusion of the West is still very strong and in spite of the efforts of men like E.M. Forster and A.J. Toynbee and others, many European intellectuals still hold on to the privileged position of being the only civilized people of the world. The West is more eloquent than ever in telling Asia and Africa to develop along the lines of Europe and North America. Western science, technology, social, political and economic institutions, literature and Arts are exported for the improvement of the so-called under-developed or backward countries. The British politicians and leaders proclaim with greater emphasis than ever their obligations and role east of Suaz and the U.S.A. think they are the only chosen people to decide the destiny of the Free World, which is nothing but their self-assumed right to interfere with the liberties of others. There are many and very subtle manifestations of this spirit in the contemporary world. The British Council is suffering from the same illusion as it keeps telling the Commonwealth Governments and Universities that their salvation lies in depending on the English language. In the troubled world of today one would have expected the spreading of education and the modern mass media of communication to promote better understanding between people and people. Instead it has

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33. Arnold Toynbee: A Study of History, abridgement by D.C. Somervell, London, 1960, p.36.

resulted in the reinforcement of old and existing prejudices and in the creation of new ones and the gulf between different nations and races is widening rather than narrowing. One reason is the tendency to select areas of interest, and concentrate on them exclusively, in relation to the requirements of the selector and as news agencies, radio and television and the press happen to be controlled by interests centered in the West it naturally has the greater opportunity not only to dominate but to direct and decide what to choose and when to do so. People in Asia and Africa are often given a wrong image of the West by concentrating on all that is desirable and praiseworthy to the total exclusion of what would disgust and annoy. On the other hand India has been projected to the common man in Britain as a country with a vast population of hungry and extremely poor people always on the verge of dire famine; although in this case there is nothing sinister about it, the aim is to help India by making people realize she needs help, nevertheless the image is not true of India as a whole and Indians are, I think rightly, embarrassed by it. It is not very difficult to build a picture about a country and its people which in spite of being very factual will yet be far from being true and real. A frightening picture of life in Britain can be composed by deliberately choosing areas of undesirable aspects of British life, such as slums, crime, violence, road accidents, drunkenness, the miserable and lonely life of the old, the immorality of some people and the vicious class conflict.

This egocentric illusion of the West is slow to die. It gives the West a privileged position which it is reluctant to give up. A few days back a multi-religious gathering was held

in the Westminster Abbey for peace in Viet-nam. Some Anglican churchmen refused to participate as their action would imply the compromising of Christianity as a superior religion. This is not much different in spirit from Macaulay's attitude to Brahmanism.

In an essay 'The Gates of Sumnath' he observed:

"The great majority of the population of India consists of idolators, blindly attached to doctrines and rites which are in the highest degree pernicious . . . . The Brahmanical religion is so absurd that it necessarily debases every mind which receives it as truth: and with this absurd mythology is bound up an absurd system of physics, an absurd geography, an absurd astronomy. Nor is this form of paganism more favourable to art than to science. Through the whole Hindu pantheon you will look in vain for anything resembling those beautiful and majestic forms which stood in the shrines of Ancient Greece . . . As this superstition is of all superstitions the most irrational and of all superstitions the most inelegant, so it is of all superstitions the most immoral."<sup>34</sup>

E.M. Forster has quoted the same passage in "The Art and Architecture of India."<sup>35</sup> He disagrees with Macaulay's attitude to Indian sculpture. There is no resemblance of form in the Greek and Indian Arts. This is a fact. But it does not mean anything more than that. They represent different ideals.

E.M. Forster explains Macaulay's difficulty thus:

"But it does so happen that Greece and India are different places, seeking different goals, which trifling fact escaped him. Macaulay was a great man, and when a subject was congenial to him he could be sensitive as well as forcible. But he was not good at making the preliminary imaginative jump; he never thought of learning from India, he only thought of improving her, and since Indian art did not strike him as improving, it had to be destroyed."<sup>36</sup>

It is not very easy to make this imaginative jump. It involves, in the first place, the freeing of the imagination from the traditions and culture with which it is normally associated.

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34. Lord Macaulay: "The Gates of Sumnath" in Selected Speeches, The World's Classics, London, 1935, pp.202-203.

35. See The Listener, 10 September, 1953, pp.419-421.

36. Ibid, p.419.

It also means a period of incubation which not only creates the desire to know with sympathy and understanding the art and literature of a different people or society but also provides for acculturation through study. It implies the ability to detach one's self from one's own culture and background. Forster had this ability. His imagination was non-attached. He was always prepared to give up and explore. He could easily detach himself from his own middle-class and view its short-comings and faults in a non-attached and dispassionate manner. It is the ability which enables one to overcome the barriers of class, society, race, nation and civilization. It enables one to connect the life of action with the life of contemplation. It is very difficult to belong to a society or an institution and yet remain detached and retain one's ability to stand outside it at a moment's notice. But the ability can be developed as Forster did; Cambridge exercised great influence on its development.

If one remains within a circle how is one to know what lies outside it. This is the problem which Forster explores in Chapter VII of The Longest Journey.

Rickie is troubled by the thought that he is becoming narrow, by remaining enclosed 'in a circle', Cambridge.

"'We are bound to get narrow', said Rickie. He and his friends were lying in a meadow during their last summer term .... 'Cambridge is wonderful, but - but it's so tiny. You have no idea - at least, I think you have no idea - how the great world looks down on it.'"<sup>37</sup>

Ansell, as usual, wants to know this 'great world' which lies outside Cambridge. He asks Rickie a number of questions: "Where is

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37. The Longest Journey, P.73.

the great world? How do you set about finding it? How long does it take to get there? What does it think? What does it do? What does it want? Oblige me with specimens of its art and literature?"<sup>38</sup>

Ansell does not worry about the isolation of Cambridge from the 'great world'. His own attitude and philosophy he states in a more positive way:

"There is no great world at all, only a little earth, for ever isolated from the rest of the little solar system. The little earth is full of tiny societies, and Cambridge is one of them. All the societies are narrow, but some are good and some are bad - just as one house is beautiful inside and another ugly. Observe the metaphor of the houses: I am coming back to it. The good societies say, 'I tell you to do this because I am Cambridge.' The bad ones say, 'I tell you to do that because I am the great world' - not because I am 'Peckham', or 'Billingsgate', or 'Park Lane', but 'because I am the great world.' They lie. And fools like you listen to them, and believe that they are a thing which does not exist and never has existed, and confuse 'great', which has no meaning whatever, with 'good', which means salvation .... to compare the world to Cambridge is like comparing the outsides of houses with the inside of a house. No intellectual effort is needed, no moral result is attained. You only have to say, "Oh, what a difference!" and then come indoors again and exhibit your broadened mind."<sup>39</sup>

It is not my intention to suggest that Forster speaks through his characters. The ideas of Ansell and Rickie are their ideas. If we try to interpret them as the author's we are denying him the right to change and grow. We also leave out the influence of mood which is very much determined by time and place through associations with what is happening inside us. We have to look beyond the novel and the characters to gain perspective and allow time and place to affect growth and maturity. In an interview<sup>40</sup> Forster was asked, "Do any of your characters represent yourself at all?" And he

38. Ibid, p.74.

39. Ibid, p.74.

40. The Art of Fiction: I.E.M. Forster, by P.N. Furbank and F.J.H. Haskell. Paris Review, Spring, 1953, Vol. I, No.1., pp.28-41.

replied, "Rickie more than any". On the strength of this and additional internal evidence that Rickie wrote short-stories like Forster and that both were educated at Cambridge critics have looked upon The Longest Journey as an autobiographical novel. But Rickie is a character in a novel. He is killed and that is the end of him. Forster continued to live and therefore matured and grew in intellect and imagination. He remains detached from his characters and can easily shift his point of view. He treats his characters as individuals and not as types and they only represent themselves. Rickie fails in his attempt not to become narrow and remains attached to a small society; and in his attempts to see 'the great world' he attaches himself to Sawston and to Agnes. Forster, however, in actual life escaped the fate of Rickie; he did not become narrow. Rickie would never have written A Passage to India. It is quite in Rickie's character to have written short-stories about Greek gods. His cultural heritage and his education in classics at Cambridge has prepared him for that. But it is difficult to imagine him as the author of A Passage to India without the necessary preparation over a long period which we can trace in Forster's writings - specially in his essays and reviews - about Indian religions, arts, architecture and civilizations.

Forster never lost his belief and faith in the detached point of view. Its value increases as civilizations reach crises.

Cambridge played an important role in its development.

"He [G. Lowes Dickinsen] had no idea what Cambridge meant - and I remember having the same lack of comprehension about the place myself, when my own turn came to go up there. It seems too good to be real. That the public school is not infinite and eternal, that there is something more challenging in life than team-work and more vital than cricket, that firmness, self-complacency and fatuity do not

between them compose the whole armour of man, that lessons may have to do with leisure and grammar with literature - it is difficult for an inexperienced boy to grasp truths so revolutionary, or to realise that freedom can sometimes be gained by walking out through an open door."<sup>41</sup>

This realization stayed with him and helped him seek for open doors.

It was developed by the existence of discussion societies at Cambridge. He writes about these

"discussion societies which still flourish at Cambridge and play an appreciable part in its mental life. The characteristics of such societies vary but little. The members are drawn from the older undergraduates and the younger dons, they meet of an evening in one another's rooms, a paper is read, lots are drawn to determine the order of the speeches, the order is observed or ignored, there are developments or digressions, and finally the reader replies to his critics, handing round as he does so some such refreshments as anchovies on toast or Walnut cake. Some of the discussions are logical in their tendency, others informative or whimsical, but in all cases formality is avoided ... The young men seek truth rather than victory, they are willing to abjure an opinion when it is proved untenable, they do not try to score off one another, they do not feel diffidence too high a price to pay for integrity; and according to some observers that is why Cambridge has played, comparatively speaking, so small a part in the control of world affairs. Certainly these societies represent the very antithesis of the rotarian spirit. No one who has once felt their power will ever become a good mixer or a yes-man. Their influence, when it goes wrong, leads to self-consciousness and superciliousness; when it goes right, the mind is sharpened, the judgement is strengthened, and the heart becomes less selfish. There is nothing specially academic about them, they exist in other places where intelligent youths are allowed to gather together unregimented, but in Cambridge they seem to generate a peculiar clear white light of their own which can remain serviceable right on into middle age."<sup>42</sup>

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41. Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson: by E.M. Forster, Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., London, 1962, p.26.

42. Ibid, pp.65-66.

Cambridge in old age meant much more to him: "I have been more or less connected with Cambridge all my life. I came here as an undergraduate and went away to work for many years, travelled to India and so on. And now I have come back to it in my old age and am very glad to have come back. I think it is a place for the very young and the very old. Middle-aged people ought to go away and get other experiences, that is my general feeling about Cambridge. But I am very thankful to be here myself ... that the old people and the young can meet here very easily and

It was, again, the same ability which enabled him to overcome the dilemma of whether to be an individual, to be one's self caring for one's internal life and culture or to become part of something larger, a group, a society, a political party, the state or the Empire. Though he remained detached from politics and his interest in it remained non-partisan and academic, he could not avoid becoming involved in the thirties. Conditions had changed. Civilization was on trial and it was important to find a balance between the private and the public life. It was not, however, everybody's dilemma. For those who did not understand the complexity of the human situation the choice was easy to make. It was not so easy for Forster.

"We are troubled to-day, each of us, because we can lead neither the private nor the public life with any decency. I cannot shut myself up in a Palace of Art or a Philosophic Tower and ignore the masses and the misery of the world. Yet I cannot throw myself into movements just because they

42 (Contd.)

without self-consciousness. It is quite easy for people of my age to meet undergraduates and they do not seem to mind. That is one of the reasons I am fond of this place. I do not know how much it has actually helped in my writing. It is not a place in which a writer ought to remain. I am quite sure he ought to go out into the world and meet more types, I was going to say meet people of more classes, but of course in Cambridge you can now meet people of all classes, but mostly selected intellectuals. It is most necessary for the writer, and for everyone else, to go all over the place.

Oddly enough it was Cambridge that first set me off writing. And in this very room where I now am there was at one time my tutor, a man called Wedd, and it was he who suggested to me that I might write. He did it in a very informal way. He said in a sort of drawling voice, 'I don't see why you should not write', and I being very diffident was delighted at this remark, and thought, after all why shouldn't I write? And I did. It is really owing to Wedd and to that start at Cambridge that I have written. I might have started for some other reason." (E.M. Forster on His Life and His Books: An Interview Recorded for Television, by David Jones. Listener, 1, January, 1959, pp.11-12.)

are uncompromising, or merge myself in my own class, my own country, or any one else's class or country, as if that were the unique good."<sup>43</sup>

In 1938 he felt he had become too involved in the public life and politics and the need of the private life and the Ivory Tower must be asserted. It is, however, very important to notice that he did not want to retire to this Ivory Tower either for mysticism or abstract thought but for 'the detailed contemplation of events',<sup>44</sup> in order to create a sense of proportion and sanity and to provide guidance to the floundering humanity.

"We are in a muddle. We veer from one side of human nature to the other: now we feel that we are individuals, whose duty it is to create a private heaven; and now we feel we ought to sink our individuality in something larger than ourselves - something which we can only partially like and partially understand ... to-day politics are more insistent than ever before. We can't get away from Nationalism, Fascism and Communism, - three isms, - nor from armaments, their result, nor from moral rearmament, their dreary and ineffective counterpoise. The world is frightening. It is also boring, because the tragic march of events seems to be accompanied by no tragic splendour. Public taste declines, the countryside is being destroyed, the town vulgarized."<sup>45</sup>

These were the conditions in the years before the second world war which, thought Forster, created the need and the motive for retiring to the Ivory Tower - not for mysticism nor for abstract thought but for the solutions of the more insistent problems of the day.

"Practical conduct can be learned only by contacts with our fellow men, but when it comes to mysticism, to abstract thought, and to the detailed contemplation of events, we certainly need solitude. Mysticism is out of favour for the moment, and abstract thought is not much approved either. But the detached contemplation of events is the aim of every public-minded person. We all want to know what civilization is doing, what it is developing into, whether the present economic system will hold, whether the discovery

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43. "Ivory Tower;" Atlantic Monthly, January, 1939, Vol. CLXIII PP.51-58.

44. *Ibid*, P.57.

45. *Ibid*, P.53.

of flying will transform the world abruptly or gradually and so on ... We are here on earth not to save ourselves and not to save the community, but to try to save both."<sup>46</sup>

Forster's first visit to India in 1912 in the company of G.L. Dickinson and R.C. Trevelyan had a profound influence on his outlook. He had then no intention of writing a book about India.

"I first went out to India half a century ago. I had no intention then of writing a book. I went to sight see and to stay with friends - particularly with Syed Ross Masood to whom I subsequently dedicated *A Passage to India*, and with Malcolm Darling to whom, still more subsequently I dedicated *The Hill of Devi*."<sup>47</sup>

He had a varied experience in India of meeting people and seeing places. He and his friends had "an introduction to Chhattarpur's fantastic and endearing Maharajah."<sup>48</sup> In Aurang Abad, Deccan, he stayed through March-April 1913 with a friend of Masood, a young Moslem, Saeed by name, who impressed him by his volatile personality and gave Forster some ideas for his character Dr. Aziz. Saeed was holding a judicial post in Aurang Abad. In the section of the Diaries about the voyage out there are some beautiful descriptive passages. On board the ship he saw an "anglicised Indian" who later "reported his cabin mate to the steward for threatening to throw him out of the window."<sup>49</sup> This was probably his first experience of the humiliation that Indians had to suffer at the hands of the Anglo-Indians. His table lady was "once a nurse in the Bhopal Purdah." She had the usual Anglo-Indian prejudices and hated the old Begum because she addressed her as 'tum', the second person singular pronoun for children and inferiors, the polite form being 'Āp'. She said to Forster, "If our children stop in India

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46. Ibid, P.57.

47. Indian Entries: Encounter, January 1962, Vol. 18, P.20.

48. Ibid, P.20.

49. Ibid, P.21.

they get to talk chi-chi and it is such a stigma - we are disgraced."<sup>50</sup> Forster carried an introduction to the Begum of Bhupal she spoke of and she advised him to consider himself 'the Begum's equal' when he would meet her. This lady, probably, was the source of Miss Derek in A Passage to India. Suez is the entrance to the East. It held no surprise for him except the canal.

"Sunrise over the desert and passed all day through the East which has been fastened on by artists to a greater extent than Italy so that nothing is a surprise. The canal was a surprise - so long, varied, and such views .... As we entered the gulf, the sky was covered with unfamiliar stars."<sup>51</sup>

There are frequent descriptions of sunsets and moon-sets. There are more examples of Anglo-Indian snobbery. His lady neighbour said to him:

"They tell me that young Indian's lonely. I say well he ought to be. They won't let us know their wives, why should we know them? If we're pleasant to them they only despise us."<sup>52</sup>

He was also very satiric about the tournament on board.

"Played the shovel-board tournament and spoilt the chances of a promising partner, who was nice over it. Horrid female opponent. By what selection are the organizers of these things bound? As if by magic the appropriate colonel or captain is at the top. And is it chance that the Indian has been drawn to play with the wife of his guardian, believed a semi-Indian?"<sup>53</sup>

His reaction to the East, specially its seas, night-skies, sunsets and sea-creatures was one of great joy and happiness.

"There was a concert but I sat reading by the sea, thinking now and then of the apparent happiness of sea-creatures, jelly-fish, purple and scarlet, who float near the surface as soon as it is calmer, flying-fish in parties, most frequent at rise and set of sun, what I still believe were water-snakes asleep, though others say sea weed, and traces of scarlet, many hundreds of yards wide, said to be fish-spawn. There is

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50. Ibid, P.21

51. Ibid, P.21.

52. Ibid, P.21.

53. Ibid, P.21.

a sense of joy never conveyed by the air nor by the dashing waters of the north. Coleridge knew of it."<sup>54</sup>

Obviously Forster was thinking of Coleridge's 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner', and his joy seems to be influenced by the magic of the scene and the poem. There is also a reference to Walt Whitman.<sup>55</sup>

His first sight of India is described in these words:

"False India - a coloured bank - turned into true, a queer red series of hills, a little disquieting, as though Italy had been touched into the sinister. I had seen little yellow butterflies the day before, and now other kinds fluttered among the baggage. The Taj hotel was the most prominent building - our destination, but a rumour of cholera came. The last horrid meal on the horrid ship ended as we reached Bombay, and we went on shore in style in a native boat, an ugly crew but beautiful skins."<sup>56</sup>

At Chhattarpur he and his friends stayed in the guest-house which was outside the town on a hill commanding a view which Forster described as:

"The view, which I feared the moonlight had romanticized, is beautiful always - thickly wooded in front with the temples of the town in the foreground, and barer behind; while in every direction the graceful hills diversifying it. The only idyllic place I have seen yet. The guest house is on a narrow ridge which rises to a temple of Hanuman."<sup>57</sup>

Forster saw some Hindu mystery plays about Krishna performed in the palace. His description of the plays he saw is very detached; he does not ridicule or satirize.

"Krishna, Radha, and four Gopis sat enthroned on the roof of the palace, and, without saluting us, began. The earlier scenes showed their games and the battles of the Pandava war, and conveyed ecstasy, but the last and the longest was best. A blue shawl was held up, over which we could see Krishna as a baby in his mother's lap, but a Rishi who knew his divinity and had come from afar to worship, could not see him, 'Show me the child'. The woman answered 'No, for you have snakes and scorpions about you'. - 'I am a hermit, disguised thus to come here safely. Show me the child for

54. Ibid, pp.21-22.

55. See Appendix B for a discussion of Forster and Whitman.

56. Indian Entries: Encounter, January, 1962, Vol. 18, P.22.

57. Ibid, P.22.

he is my God' - 'He is too young. You will frighten him' - 'He is my God and will come out to me'. Then he goes, and Krishna begins to wail. The women try to comfort him, but cannot, and have to call the hermit back. Krishna smiles. 'Holy Rishi, stop here for ever', says the mother. He answers 'I will come back whenever the baby cries'. It ends by the mother carrying Krishna out and the hermit circumambulating them and then prostrating ... the music more intelligible than the Nautch ... The dancers sang noises not words."<sup>58</sup>

Forster was not very sure of how to describe a dance:

"Krishna and Radha wore black and gold. What to describe - their motions or my emotions? Love in which there neither was nor desired to be sensuality, though it was excited at the crisis and reached ecstasy. From their quieter dancing, dignity and peace. The motions are vulgarised by words - little steps, revolutions, bounds, knee dancing - how clumsy it gets and will my memory always breathe life into it? Radha was most beautiful and animated, but a little touched by modernity; and Krishna hieratic, his face unmoved while his body whirled, soared highest."<sup>59</sup>

The atmosphere at Chhattarpur was pervaded by religion and Forster has recorded in his "Indian Entries" several utterances of the Hindu ruler of the State, e.g. "If the soul has walked with the gods, and if the Beloved on earth is a staircase by which we can climb to Heaven again, then will you tell me who has put barriers in the way? Have I made myself plain?"<sup>60</sup>

From Chhattarpur Forster went alone to Aurang Abad in southern India where he lived for a few weeks among Muslims. He stayed with Saeed "in a lovely wooden hall: two rooms of trip~~le~~le arches, which, like the internal pavilions, were painted blue; my bedroom - half the height - was to right, servants to left. Square tank of green water."<sup>61</sup> This house resembles the house

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58. Ibid. pp.22-23.

Another account of the mystery plays is given by G.L. Dickinson in his Appearances. J.R. Ackerley's A Hindu Holiday, is a book about the Maharajah of Chhattarpur. It gives a fuller picture of his life, his ministers, the State and the Hindu festivals etc.

59. Ibid, p.24.

60. Ibid, p.23.

61. Ibid, p.25.

of Mr. Fielding in A Passage to India which inspires Aziz at the tea party.

"The room inspired him. It was an audience hall built in the eighteenth century for some high official, and though of wood had reminded Fielding of the Loggia de' Lanzi at Florence. Little rooms, now Europeanized, clung to it on either side, but the central hall was unpapered and unglassed, and the air of the garden poured in freely. One sat in public - on exhibition, as it were - in full view of the gardeners who were screaming at the birds and of the man who rented the tank for the cultivation of water chestnut .... Beautiful certainly." (pp.73-74.)

Aurang-abad was quite different from Chhattarpur. Among the mosques; forts, palaces, tombs and shrines, the spirit of vanished empires haunted the young educated Muslims. Forster writes about a visit to a mosque in the moonlight and the following day to court with Saeed. In the next court room "more went on; civil surgeon giving evidence in murder case. Punkah boy, seated at the end of table, had the impassivity of Atropos."<sup>62</sup> Here Forster saw enough of Indian courts to give him material for his Court scene in A Passage to India. The punkah boy appears there in a symbolic role. Through Saeed he met other Muslims, mostly educated and government servants, including a barrister, a superintendent of police, a superintendent of jail, Mohammad Ishaq, and a "vast young man like an Italian". Forster enjoyed their company, mostly at dinner and listened to their conversation, and also taking part in it. All this he reproduced in the second chapter of his novel. Saeed was a man of an emotional type who could turn "into a dashing young dog", was "a remnant of" a "vanished empire", and who could "burst out against the English: "It may be 50 or 500 years but we shall turn

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62. Ibid, p.25.

you out".<sup>63</sup> Amid the ruined palaces, forts and tombs Saeed felt the vanished glory of the past and yearned to rule.

Though Forster himself thought while "looking over the parched Deccan, 'what should I do with such a kingdom?'" Saeed never allowed any fine impulse ungratified, consequently he was in debt which depressed Forster. Dr. Aziz in A Passage to India, is unmistakably fashioned after Saeed. Pathos was the dominant sentiment of Aurang abad. Discussions often led to what was wrong with Indians. Once someone asked Forster very bluntly, "And what is the greatest defect of Indians in your opinion?" It was a very embarrassing question, but Forster got over it by saying, "inability to co-operate. I ought to have said untruthfulness or vanity, but they are not accusations that can be borne or profited by. Poor India'll do nothing yet: no constructive policy except vague 'education': but it is character not knowledge they need, and they will get this best by building up a framework of social intercourse ... on the other hand a capacity for friendship triumphing over suspicion and forgetfulness. This must bind. And sanity about death removes an emotional strain."<sup>64</sup> Nationalism was then not a conscious force and Forster saw no indication of it among the Indians he met.

On March 29 and 30, 1913, Forster visited some Hindu and Buddhist caves. The Buddhist group had "no beauty as at Gawalior or Sumnath". In the Hindu caves he had an interesting experience, though they, too, "had no beauty either", they were very different from the Buddhist. Here he felt "the brute aroused instead of somnolent: that was all". Five days after the visit he wrote:

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63. Ibid, p.26.

64. Ibid, p.26.

"their impression is already fading, I think because there is no beauty and I do not believe in the devil, whose palace they are. They are Satan's masterpieces to terrify others: the moustached Buddhas are not glaring at me."<sup>65</sup>

Forster put this experience of terror to a great creative purpose in his novel about India. Finally he left India on the second day of April 1913 and thus ended his first visit to India but with enough of the basic material for his last novel, which was not its purpose.

Forster does not mention in these selections from his "Indian Entries" his visit to the State of Dewas Senior. He went again to this State as the Maharajah's private secretary in 1921 and stayed for a longer period there. The letters that he had written home from there to his mother and friends were published together with some essays to provide additional information and some explanatory notes in 1953 in The Hill of Devi. The letters of his earlier visit to the State were also included in it, which show Forster's "bewilderment and pleasure at plunging into an unknown world and at meeting an unknown and possibly unknowable character",<sup>66</sup> the Maharajah himself. These letters reveal Forster's mind and attitude and those qualities which enabled him to understand an Indian mind. He does not criticise or throw about judgements on Indians right and left as many other Englishmen would naturally have done. His modesty and intelligence remain their prominent features. He does commit one small error of judgement which, however, is redeemable and can be easily explained. He gave two rupees to his servant Baldeo on Christmas day as advised, saying 'bara din ke waste' (for Christmas). Baldeo said, 'Bahut

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65. Ibid, p.27.

66. Preface to The Hill of Devi, London, 1953, p.9.

achha' (meaning 'very well'). Forster slipped into an error here by observing in his letter in which he mentioned this incident that: "There seems to be no Indian word for thank you". This can be easily explained. Baldeo had not been long in the service of Forster. It is certain Baldeo had been serving Anglo-Indians before this, otherwise he would not have been recommended to him if he had no knowledge of their habits and what was to be expected of him as a servant. It was natural for a man to become abject and servile if he remained in the service of the Anglo-Indians long enough. Abject fear of the sahib and the memsahib and blind obedience to their orders were very commendable qualities. Mostly they were given orders and they responded to each by saying 'Bahut achha' (very good). Baldeo did not know that Forster was different.

In his letter of 26th December 1912 he describes Dewas State Senior as 'this amazing little state, which can have no parallel, except in a Gilbert and Sullivan Opera'. Forster's comic sense was very much alive while in India and helped him over difficult situations. His sympathy, modesty and detachment all paid him well and helped him a lot. There is no sense of frustration, disappointment or friction in the bewildering confusion of India. Perhaps he was not in direct contact with those circles of humanity of India which lie far outside the palaces, but that does not mean that he was not aware of them. They came to the foreground later when he was writing his novel for a moment and made their presence felt. Amid the festivities of the palaces and the kindness of friends he did not forget that there were circles of humanity to which no invitation and kindness were extended.

"He had spoken in the little room near the courts where the pleaders waited for clients; clients, waiting for pleaders, sat in the dust outside. These had not received a card from Mr. Turton. And there were circles even beyond these - people who wore nothing but a loin cloth, people who wore not even that, and spent their lives in knocking two sticks together before a scarlet doll - humanity grading and drifting beyond the educated vision, until no earthly invitation can embrace it." (P.40).

Forster had the advantage of being a guest who had been introduced by the Maharajah's former tutor, Malcolm Darling, who had won the respect and friendship of the Maharajah and his court. It was because of this that Forster was shown more than courtesy. His reception in Indian society was frank, open, informal and free from any official inhibitions. He was given Indian dress to wear and on one occasion was even introduced to the Rani. This was a great surprise for him: "Two ladies went first and then we, and had a lovely vision. She was extraordinarily beautiful, with dark 'gazelle' eyes."<sup>67</sup>

There was always suspicion and anxiety in the atmosphere if visitors to a state were political officers or their friends. This is what Forster realized both at Chhattarpur and Dewas.

"As at Chhattarpur, I became privy to all the anxieties through which an Indian passes when his political superiors call. Would all go well, what would they think of him & c? Oh dear, why would the servants not bring lunch: Would I run and hurry them up &c."<sup>68</sup>

In such an atmosphere no frankness and openness could grow. On the other hand it might have been responsible for more frankness than usual in the company of Forster and Malcolm. The tension being lifted with the political people gone, the Indians might have rallied with more exuberance and freedom to Englishmen in

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67. The Hill of Devi, London, 1953, p.24.

68. Ibid, p.25.

whose presence they were not inhibited.

One letter from Delhi, dated March 6, 1913, was written to his old friend Mrs. Aylward, a profoundly Christian woman who was interested in everything religious. This letter contains a conversation which he had with the H.H. a little before he wrote it. Religion draws out the Indian. He becomes more communicative and easy. Forster observes in this letter that English people are offended if religion is introduced in conversation and if there is a difference of opinion they are shocked. This was a very basic difference in attitude to observe. The Maharajah's "attitude was very difficult for a Westerner. He believes that we - men, birds, everything - are part of God, and that men have developed more than birds because they have come nearer to realizing this. That isn't so difficult; but when I asked why we had any of us ever been severed from God, he explained it by God becoming unconscious that we were parts of him, owing to his energy at some time being concentrated elsewhere. 'So', he said, 'a man who is thinking of something else may become unconscious of the existence of his own hand for a time, and feel nothing when it is touched? Salvation, then, is the thrill which we feel when God again becomes conscious of us, and all our life we must train our perceptions so that we may be capable of feeling when the time comes.'"<sup>69</sup>

Forster then tries to explain the Hindu point of view to a Christian;

"If you believe that the Universe was God's conscious creation you are faced with the fact that he has consciously created suffering and sin, and this the Indian refuses to believe. 'We were either put here intentionally or unintentionally', said the Rajah, 'and it raises fewer difficulties if we suppose it was unintentionally'."<sup>70</sup>

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69. Ibid, p.29.

70. Ibid, pp.29-30.

It is very difficult to see the dividing line between philosophy and religion in Hinduism, especially when it is described to a non-Hindu. But it was the personality of the Maharajah which illuminated what would have otherwise remained obscure. "This reads more like philosophy than religion, but it is inspired by his belief in a being who, though omnipresent, is personal, and whom he calls Krishna. He is really a remarkable man, for all this goes with much practical ability and a sense of humour."<sup>71</sup> This was an important conversation he had had with the Rajah on religion and its echoes can be heard in A Passage to India. Of the aspect of Hinduism which can be accepted with little difficulty even by a Christian and which is the Hindu belief that all things - 'men, birds, everything' - are part of God we can hear an echo in the following passage, which is the Christian approach to a Hindu belief.

"In our Father's house are many mansions, they taught, and there alone will the incompatible multitudes of mankind be welcomed and soothed. 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." (pp.40-41).

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71. Ibid, p.30.

On a previous occasion he had the opportunity of a religious conversation with the ruler of Chhattarpur amid the splendid and the romantic scenery of Bundel Khund in the wooded Vindhya. The subject was meditation, its degree of concentration and whether it was possible to exclude troubles and painful thoughts. No, it was not possible to banish troubles and painful thoughts from the mind while meditating unless one meditated on love, because it alone had the power to keep thought out. "I try to meditate on Krishna. I do not know that he is a God, but I love Love and Beauty and Wisdom, and I find them in his history. I worship and adore him, as a man. If he is divine he will notice me for it and reward me; if he is not, I shall become grass and dust like the others."<sup>72</sup> Here another aspect of Hinduism has been touched by the ruler, and, which is this, that through power of love man can become unconscious of pain and suffering; echoes of this can also be heard in Forster's description of the ceremony of the birth of Krishna in the Temple Section of A Passage to India.

"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." (pp.299-300).

Hinduism ignores misery, pain and suffering; they exist because of the concentration of the energy of God somewhere else and man should also become unconscious of them by contemplation on Love. Christianity on the other hand accepts pain and suffering as essential for a religious experience. Christ himself suffered on the cross and all the Christian saints acquired

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72. Ibid, pp.30-31.

sainthood through suffering and pain. It is because of this difference of attitude that Mrs. Moore appears with her troubles in the vision of Professor Godbole who accepts her because he is imitating God, although he knows she is a Christian and he a Brahmin. It makes no difference that he sees in his vision 'Mrs. Moore, and round her faintly clinging forms of trouble.' (p.302).

The two rulers between them helped Forster to understand the Hindu religion. He had more opportunity of knowing very intimately the Maharajah of Dewas State Senior when he became his private secretary in 1921. He was a very complex personality and Forster had to admit:

"Quite often I did not understand him - he was too incalculable - but it was possible with him to reach a platform where calculations were unnecessary. It would not be possible with an Englishman."<sup>73</sup>

He had a flair for practical jokes. It is a part of Indian character and in the court of the state Forster had plenty of opportunity to see much buffoonery and horseplay. Forster himself was once chosen as the victim on April Fool's day in spite of his caution.

"He sent me a message to my office asking me to go at once to a remote shed in the garden since something peculiar had been observed there. I excused myself. Nor, when hidden to refreshment, did I accept a cigarette of unusual shape. Nor was I asked to get an electric shock by sitting on a sofa. But I did drink some whisky-and-salt, to the Court's uncategorical delight. Foolery, fun, practical jokes, bawdry - I was to be involved in them all as soon as I felt myself safe. He even made a pun on my name which eludes quotation: too indecent, too silly. But gay, gay."<sup>74</sup>

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73. Ibid, p.61.

74. Ibid, p.62.



No picture of Indian life will be complete without this foolery. Mohammad Latif, the poor relative, in A Passage to India, is often the victim of such foolery and horse-play.

India had its consolations for him, waiting to take him by surprise now and then. Sleeping in the open on the flat roofs in summer is very common in India like other tropical countries. It was a totally new experience for Forster to sleep in the open with nothing between him and the beautiful night-skies bespangled with stars:

"I usually slept on the roof, facing Devi. The nights were increasingly lovely, and I got to know the visiting stars. The constellation of the Lion would often hang exactly above me, the disk of Regulus so large and bright that it resembled a tunnel."<sup>75</sup>

In the letter of April 6, 1921 he describes an adventure which he calls 'typical' of India and which later appears in A Passage to India. Malarao Sahib a courtier once took him on a visit to his village.

They were walking 'along the banks of the Sipra, a deep green river, haunted by sweet skipping birds. There we had an exciting and typical adventure. Our train of villagers stopped and pointed to the opposite bank with cries of a snake. At last I saw it - a black thing reared up to the height of three feet and motionless. I said 'It looks a small dead tree', and was told 'Oh no' and exact species and habits of snake were indicated - not a Cobra, but very fierce and revengeful, and if we shot it it would pursue us several days later all the way to Dewas. We then took stones and threw them across the Sipra (half the width of Thames at Weybridge) in order to make snake crawl away. Still he didn't move and when a stone hit his base still didn't move. He was a small dead tree. All the villagers shrieked with laughter."<sup>76</sup>

It is not an unusual incident. I can recall several incidents from my own experience or related to me by others. Once in the summer vacations I went to Nathia Gali, a beautiful hill

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75. Ibid, p.63.

76. Ibid, p.63.

station in the Hazara hill-tract. One day while walking along a forest trek with friends who were a little ahead of me, I looked down into a ravine and saw what looked like a beautiful animal with golden brown fur. I called to my friends in excitement to come and see 'this beautiful animal'. To my chagrin it turned out to be a hill girl cutting grass who straightened her back to look up. My friends, of course, misunderstood me. The foliage, the face of the girl and the light and shadows had played a trick on me. My imagination might have been a contributing factor. Such optic illusions if they are peculiar to the East, surely point to some combination of light, objects, distance, terrain and imagination which is responsible for them.

Forster had arrived at Dewas during the Holi festival. It is a very colourful and riotous festival of merry-making and horse-play and he saw something Dionysiac in it. Women have the freedom to abuse men and passers by violently on this occasion. "This abuse is of course traditional and has nothing personal in it: 3,000 years ago in Greece the women did just the same thing at certain festivals."<sup>77</sup> In the letter of April first he mentions a play which he saw at the Cavalry tea-party and which is described in an explanatory passage as "so characteristic of the riotous season that I could not describe it when writing to my suburban home. It was a ribald oriental farce."<sup>78</sup>

The State was not well-administered and Forster foresaw that in the general political unrest and awakening in British India surrounding it, it had little chance of survival. "If Fate in the form of any political party should ask Dewas a Question, what

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77. Ibid, p.64.

78. Ibid, p.65.

answer could Dewas give?"<sup>79</sup> When Masood came to see him Forster had the opportunity of witnessing a subtle confrontation between Muslim and Hindu minds.

"Masood is here, having speeded from Hyderabad, and very funny it has been to watch the contest between his heavy premier Moslem artillery and the light Marathas bowmen, a contest that is conducted with high courtesy on both sides, and I think with mutual respect."<sup>80</sup>

This mutual respect and courtesy existed on a very limited scale. The political history of the sub-continent points to the existence of suspicion and ill-will. G.L. Dickinson had a different experience; he had encountered a Muslim pleader who was very doubtful about the future of Muslims in a free democratic India. The encounter between Aziz and Godbole at Melding's is similar in nature. There is respect and courtesy but no understanding. The simple mind of Aziz was no match for the unfathomable Godbole.

During his stay in Dewas, a literary society was formed which was called Dewas Literary Society. On one occasion Forster

"quoted a story of Dostoyevsky about the wicked woman and the onion. She had been so wicked that in all her life she had only done one good deed - given an onion to a beggar. So she went to hell. As she lay in torment she saw the onion, lowered down from heaven by an angel. She caught hold of it. He began to pull her up. The other damned saw what was happening and caught hold of it too. She was indignant and cried, 'Let go - it's my onion', and as soon as she said 'My onion' the stalk broke and she fell back into the flames. I had always thought this story touching, but I had no idea of the effect it would produce on the Dewas Literary Society. Hitherto they had been polite, bored, straining to follow. Now their faces softened and they murmured, 'Ah, that is good, good. That is 'bhakti'. They had encountered something that they loved and understood. I have often thought of that moment since - that flash of comprehension in the midst of India. Of the many English writers I had quoted not one had touched them. Their hearts were unlocked by a Russian."<sup>81</sup>

79. Ibid, p.67.

80. Ibid, p.68.

81. Ibid, p.75.

Professor Godbole has a similar reaction to one particular poem of Dr. Aziz in which

"he had ... gone straight to internationality. 'Ah, that is bhakti; ah, my young friend, that is different and very good. Ah, India, who seems not to move, will go straight there while the other nations waste their time. May I translate this particular one into Hindi? In fact, it might be rendered into Sanskrit almost, it is enlightened.'" (P.306).

Both these incidents suggest that there are areas of human experience in which different nationalities like the Russian and the Indian, and people of different faiths like Godbole and Aziz can meet.

There was much in the character of H.H. which Forster did not like, particularly its inharmoniousness had been puzzling him. He, however, later discovered that it was due to the unhealthy influence of his uncle on him. There is a passage in a letter to his tutor and friend G.L. Dickinson about this:

"Scindhia (H.H's uncle) is in private life an insolent and surly buffoon and in public a militarist and an obscurantist. The Maharajah idealizes him and adores him like a school girl, and the influence explains all or nearly all I don't like in his character. It was very illuminating. Much that has puzzled me by its inharmoniousness has become clear - the tiresome practical jokes, the growing dread of education, the bawdy talk which is subtly wrong - I can see their origin, and they are to some extent faults of taste. In fact I was coming round a little to your view of the Indian or anyhow the Hindu character - that it is unaesthetic. One is starved by the absence of beauty. The one beautiful object I can see is something no Indian has made or can touch - the constellation of the Scorpion which now hangs at night down the sky. I look forward to it as to a theatre or a picture gallery after the constant imperfections of the day."<sup>82</sup>

These constellations he had been watching every night are mentioned in A Passage to India. When Aziz is acquitted the Nawab Bahadur gives a dinner of victory that evening which Fielding attends. Fielding is sleeping with the other guests on the Nawab Bahadur's roof.

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82. Ibid, p.87.

"The Victory Banquet was over, and the revellers lay on the roof of plain Mr. Zulfiqar's mansion, asleep, or gazing through mosquito nets at stars. Exactly above their heads hung the constellation of the Lion, the disc of Regulus so large and bright that it resembled a tunnel, and when this fancy was accepted all the other stars seemed tunnels too." (p.260).

Forster also had reason to believe that the Maharajah might have possessed super-normal powers. Once an electric engineer and his wife had been visiting the State for the second time. They related an incident which had happened to them on their return journey to Bombay after their first visit. While crossing the Sipra, an animal dashed from the ravine and hit their car. In the novel this happens to the Nawab Bahadur's car in which Ronny and Adela were having a drive.

"His Highness sat up keenly interested. 'The animal came from the left?' he asked.

'Yes'.

'It was a large animal? Larger than a pig but not as big as a buffalo?'

'Yes, but how did you know?'

'You couldn't be sure what animal it was?'

'No, we couldn't'.

'He leant back again and said, 'It is most unfortunate. Years ago I ran over a man there. I was not at all to blame - he was drunk and ran on to the road and I was cleared at the inquiry, and I gave money to his family. But ever since then he has been trying to kill me in the form you describe'."<sup>83</sup>

This accident happens to the Nawab Bahadur in the novel.

"Nine years previously, when first he had had a car, he had driven it over a drunken man and killed him, and the man had been waiting for him ever since. The Nawab Bahadur was innocent before God and the Law, he had paid double the compensation necessary; but it was no use, the man continued to wait in an unspeakable form, close to the scene of his death. None of the English people knew of this, nor did the chauffeur; it was a racial secret communicable more by blood than speech." (P.103).

Forster, however, made a mistake in transferring what happened to a Hindu to a Muslim; we Muslims do not believe in the passing of a

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83. Ibid, pp.89-90.

human soul into an animal form, nor do we believe that the souls of dead people haunt the living. After death a man continues to live, in a different state according to his actions, in the next world. We do, however, believe in the existence of Jinns, supernatural creatures like angels mentioned in the Quran.<sup>84</sup> It is a popular belief, rather a superstition, that they can assume any form they like, whether human or animal and appear in lonely places. When Aziz sees Mrs. Moore move in the shadow of the arches of the mosque, it is this popular belief which is influencing his reaction. When the Nawab Bahadur is telling his little court about the incident "only Aziz held aloof, because a personal experience restrained him: was it not by despising ghosts that he had come to know Mrs. Moore?" (PP.103-104) By mixing the beliefs

84. The Jinns are frequently mentioned in the Quran:

- (a) 'Yet they ascribe as partners unto Him the Jinn, although he did create them, and impute falsely, without knowledge, sons and daughters unto Him'. Surah VI, verse 101.
- (b) 'Thus have we appointed unto every Prophet an adversary - devils of humankind and jinn who inspire in one another plausible discourse through guile'. Surah VI, verse 113.
- (c) "In the day when He will gather them together (He will say) O ye assembly of the Jinn! Many of human kind did ye seduce'. Surah VI, verse 129.
- (d) 'He saith: Enter into the Fire among nations of the Jinn and human kind who passed away before you' Surah VII, verse 38.
- (e) 'Already have We urged unto hell many of the jinn and humankind, having hearts wherewith they understand not, and having eyes wherewith they see not, and having ears wherewith they hear not'. Surah VII, verse 179.
- (f) 'And there were gathered together unto Solomon his armies of the jinn and humankind, and of the birds, and they were set in battle order;' Surah XXVII, verse 17.
- (g) 'And the Jinn did We create aforetime of essential fire. Surah XV, verse 27.
- (h) 'And if We had so willed, We could have given every soul its guidance, but the word from Me concerning evil-doers took effect: that I will fill hell with the jinn and mankind together', Surah XXXII, verse 13 etc.  
(The Meaning of the Glorious Koran: an explanatory translation by Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall.)

of two creeds, rather three, because he uses the word 'ghosts',<sup>85</sup> Forster creates confusion. Forster knew enough of both Islam and Hinduism that he must have been aware of this difference. I think Forster was intentionally mixing up the popular beliefs, or superstitions rather, of three different communities. When the accident is mentioned by Adela and Ronny Mrs. Moore asks enigmatic questions like the Maharajah did when the electric engineer recounted his.

"When the animal runs into us the Nawab loses his head, deserts his unfortunate chauffeur, intrudes upon Miss Derek ... no great crimes, but no white man would have done it.

'What animal?'

'Oh, we had a small accident on the Marabar road. Adela thinks it was a hyena?'

'An accident?' she cried.

'Nothing; no one hurt. Our excellent host awoke much rattled from his dreams, appeared to think it was our fault, and chanted exactly, exactly.'

Mrs. Moore shivered, 'A ghost!' But the idea of a ghost scarcely passed her lips. The young people did not take it up, being occupied with their own outlooks, and deprived of support it perished, or was reabsorbed into the part of the mind that seldom speaks." (P.101).

Ronny does not know the reason why the Nawab Bahadur is

'rattled'. The Nawab Bahadur has instructed his driver to take the Gangavati Road and soon after he falls asleep, and then Ronny asks the driver to take the Marabar Road instead. So he is not expecting the 'ghost' which he would do had he known the car is driving along the Marabar Road. Later when he is telling about the incident he is very grateful to God that nothing serious has happened to his 'honoured guests'. The racial secret which the Indians showed is also communicable to some obscure part of Mrs. Moore's mind, "the part of the mind that seldom speaks". (P.101) But she does not let it become articulate because "the young people didn't take it up, being occupied with their own outlooks". (P.101).

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85. If this word has been used in the prevailing sense of the soul of a deceased person, spoken of as appearing to the living, then it does not imply neither Hindu nor Muslim belief but Christian.

The most interesting of Forster's letters from India are those which deal with the birth of Krishna or the Gokal Ashtami festival. Forster calls them 'the most important of my letters home'. They are of great significance for an interpretation of A Passage to India, especially of the Temple Section. Amid the trivialities, the trash, the confusion and mess, Forster could not fail to see religious ecstasy and the appearance of a beautiful and spiritually inspired expression on the faces of the devotees.

"The altar is in a mess of little objects, stifled with rose leaves, the walls are hung with deplorable oleographs, the chandeliers, draperies - everything bad. Only one thing is beautiful - the expression on the faces of the people as they bow to the shrine ... there is no dignity, no taste, no form, and though I am dressed as a Hindu I shall never become one. I don't think one ought to be irritated with idolatory because one can see from the faces of the people that it touches something very deep in their hearts.<sup>86</sup>

At the time he knew little about the legend of Krishna to be able to explain the ceremony to himself, especially the significance of the drowning of the Town of Gokul in the tank.

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86. The Hill of Devi: London, 1953, pp.106-107. (His sympathetic and understanding attitude to Hinduism had been misunderstood by some critics; although it simply illustrates his universal sympathy and cosmopolitanism and must not be over-emphasized. It would be appropriate to quote here a passage from 'Advance, India!' which describes an incident which touched him at a Muslim marriage ceremony. The marriage ceremony itself annoyed him because it was farcical and had been ridiculously Westernized. "It was depressing, almost heart rending, and opened the problem of India's future. How could this jumble end? Before the Maulvi finished a gramophone began, and before that was silent a memorable act took place. The sun was setting, and the orthodox withdrew from us to perform their evening prayer. They gathered on a terrace behind, to the number of twenty, and prostrated themselves towards Mecca. Here was dignity and unity; here was a great tradition untainted by private judgement; they had not retained so much and rejected so much; they had accepted Islam unquestioningly, and the reward of such an acceptance is beauty." [Abinger Harvest, London, 1936, pp.301-302.]

"As to the explanation of this, as apart from what one was told by the pious, I know too little to conjecture, but was reminded of the Adonis festival, where the god is born, dies, and is carried to the water, all in a short time. H.H. says the Town of Gokul is meant to represent Krishna who cannot of course be drowned."<sup>87</sup>

Forster, however, had become interested and did some research later to find<sup>out</sup> more about Krishna. The personality of H.H. played an important role in the illumination of a Hindu religious experience. He was more concerned with what the whole thing meant to H.H. than to himself. There is a long quotation from a letter which H.H. had written to Malcolm Darling in 1909 about the Krishna ceremony; it is followed by these two questions by Forster in order to understand the nature of a personal experience of H.H.

"But what did he feel when he danced like King David before the altar? What were his religious opinions?"<sup>88</sup>

The answer to the first question was very easy to find in attributing mystic experience to H.H.

"He felt as King David and other mystics have felt when they are in the mystic state. He presented well-known characteristics. He was convinced that he was in touch with the reality he called Krishna. And he was unconscious of the world around him .... He was in an abnormal but recognizable state; psychologists have studied it."<sup>89</sup>

Forster came to understand Hinduism through the Maharajah. It is very difficult to refer to any body of dogmatic assertions or pronouncements of faith if you want to know Hinduism. It is exclusive, it is paradoxical and it is all inclusive. These

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87. The Hill of Devi, London, 1953, P.112.

88. Ibid, P.115.

89. Ibid, P.115.

See for a discussion of Forster's sense of the mysterious Appendix C.

qualities are reflected in the character of Professor Godbole. Again in Forster's approach to Hinduism his acquaintance with the Maharajah and other Hindus has played an important role. He also read a good deal of Hindu literature in between his first two visits to India. He has not lost his interest in India and has been reading about it ever since. The passage about the religious opinions of the Maharajah is very revealing not only about his complex personality but it illuminates Hinduism as well.

"The unseen was always close to him (H.H.), even when he was joking or intriguing. Red paint on a stone could evoke it. Like most people, he implied beliefs and formulated rules for behaviour, and since he had a lively mind he was often inconsistent. It was difficult to be sure what he did believe (outside the great mystic moments) or what he thought right or wrong. Indians are even more puzzling than Westerners here. Mr. Shastri, a spiritual and subtle Brahmin, once uttered a puzzler: 'If the Gods do a thing, it is a reason for men not to do it'. No doubt he was in particularly religious mood. In another mood he would have urged us to imitate the Gods. And the Maharajah was all moods. They played over his face, they agitated his delicate feet and hands. To get any pronouncement from so mercurial a creature on the subject, say, of ascetism, was impossible. As a boy, he had thought of retiring from the world, and it was an ideal which he cherished throughout his life, and which, at the end, he would have done well to practise. Yet he would condemn ascetism, declare that salvation could not be reached through it, that it might be Vedantic but it was not Vedic, and matter and spirit must both be given their due ... In such a mood he seemed Greek ... He believed in the heart, and here we reach finer ground. 'I stand for the heart. To the dogs with the head', cries Herman Melville, and he would have agreed. Affection, the possibility of it, quivered through everything, from Gokal Ashtami down to daily human relationships. When I returned to England and he heard that I was worried because the post-war world of the twenties would not add up into sense, he sent me a message. 'Tell him', it runs 'tell him from me to follow his heart and his mind will see everything clear'. The message as phrased is too facile: doors open into silliness at once. But to remember and respect and prefer the heart, to have the instinct which follows it wherever

possible - what surer help than that could one have through life? What better hope of classification? Melville goes on: 'The reason that the mass of men fear God and at bottom dislike him, is because they rather distrust His heart? With that too he would have agreed.'<sup>90</sup>

Forster went to sacred literature and other sources for a better understanding of the "Krishna birth-stories, which are the Bhagavad Purana, Book X, and the Vishnu Purana, Book V."<sup>91</sup> He discovered parallels between the Bhagavad Purana version and the performance of the birth ceremony at Dewas, which he followed as a model for his description of the ceremony in A Passage to India. The Dewas performance was not the only Krishna rite he had witnessed. At Chhattarpur he had seen "delightful tableaux and dances ... staged for the benefit of its exotic Maharajah: Lowes Dickinson has also described them in his Appearances and also J.R. Ackerley in his Hindu Holiday."<sup>92</sup> But what distinguished the Dewas performance from those of Chhattarpur was the tradition behind it while the latter were 'purely personal'. The ceremony revealed yet another aspect of Hinduism to Forster; that the trivial and the comic have their place in Hindu cosmology. There are several quotations of this kind from Bhagavad Purana.<sup>93</sup>

"When the festival was over one was left with something inexplicable, which grows a little clearer with the passage of the years. One was left, too, aware of a gap in Christianity: the canonical gospels do not record that Christ laughed or played. Can a man be perfect if he never laughs or plays? Krishna's jokes may be vapid, but they bridge a gap."<sup>94</sup>

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90. Ibid, PP.115-116.

91. Ibid, P.117.

92. Ibid, P.120.

93. For a discussion of this aspect of Hinduism, which made Forster aware of a serious gap in christianity see Appendix D.

94. The Hill of Devi, London, 1953, P.119.

Forster elaborates this aspect of Hinduism in the description of the ceremony at Mau in A Passage to India:

Down in the sacred corridors, joy had seethed to jollity. It was their duty to play various games to amuse the newly born God, and to stimulate his sports with the wanton dairy-maids of Brindaban. Butter played a prominent part in these. When the cradle had been removed, the principal nobles of the State gathered together for an innocent frolic. They removed their turbans, and one put a lump of butter on his forehead, and waited for it to slide down his nose into his mouth. Before it could arrive, another stole up behind him, snatched the melting morsel, and swallowed it himself. All laughed exultantly at discovering that the divine sense of humour coincided with their own. 'God's love!' 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. All spirit as well as all matter must participate in Salvation, and if practical jokes are banned, the circle is incomplete. (P.301).

Between his first two visits to India, the first in 1912-13 and the second in 1921, Forster had become passionately interested in India and his earlier experiences were reinforced by reading books about ancient Indian history, Hinduism, Indians Arts and Architecture. He was not, however, interested in the contemporary political history of the country. It is very important to explore and find out what India actually meant to him. During the war he went to Egypt to serve with the Red Cross and was stationed at Alexandria. His experiences in the Middle East made important contributions to the final shape of A Passage to India. His views about history were influenced by a Greek poet C.P. Cavafy whose acquaintance he made in Alexandria; but more about this influence later. Forster had been constantly revising his last novel and there are several manuscript versions of it.<sup>95</sup>

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95. See "The Wobblings of E.M. Forster", O.G.W. Stallybrass, The Guardian, June 20, 1960, p.5.

"I began this novel before the 1921 visit, and took out the opening chapters with me, with the intention of continuing them. But as soon as they were confronted with the country they purported to describe, they seemed to wilt and go dead and I could do nothing with them. I used to look at them of an evening in my room at Dewas, and felt only distaste and despair. The gap between India remembered and India experienced was too wide. When I got back to England the gap narrowed, and I was able to resume. But I still thought the book bad, and probably should not have completed it without the encouragement of Leonard Woolf."<sup>96</sup>

Forster had consistently remained detached from the politics of India. He did not approach her historically in A Passage to India. He was primarily concerned with the problem of the relations between the rulers and the ruled, of course, only those of the latter who came into contact with the former; this is approaching the problem of personal relations in a different context, imperial and racial. In A Passage to India he is not dealing with any specific political situation or problem. In an interview recorded for television Forster said to David Jones:<sup>97</sup>

"I am delighted A Passage to India had a success and that it was influential, because the political side of it was an aspect I wanted to express, although it is not primarily a political book." Nor is it a sociological book about race relations. The socio-political content of the novel is a part of the total complexity of vision that he wanted to project in it. He was capable of incisive political criticism, and when he was dealing with any specific political situation or movement he could handle it very intelligently and without losing his balance. The Muslims of the Indian Sub-continent have always been pro-Turkish; they had

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96. The Hill of Devi, London, 1953, p.155.

97. "E.M. Forster on His Life and His books": An Interview Recorded for Television, by David Jones. Listener, 1 January, 1959, pp.11-12.

transferred their sympathies to the Ottoman Empire after the fall of the Mogul Empire in India. Therefore the political turmoil in Turkey in the early twenties had serious repercussions in India. The dormant pro-Turkish sentiment became a strong political movement, called the Khilafat Movement. Aligarh Muslim University and two leaders, brothers as well, Maulana Mohammad Ali and Maulana Shaukat Ali, known as the Ali brothers, played an important role in this movement. E.M. Forster wrote a sympathetic article, "India and the Turk," for the Nation and Athenaeum published on 30 September 1922. He could even understand and explain the combination of two apparently contradictory streams in the political sentiments of the Indian Muslims - Nationalism and Pan-Islamism. For him they were "two diverse yet not incompatible aims." He knew that the British imperial policy and diplomacy in Turkey, Egypt and Persia were reinforcing the anti-British sentiments in India.

"Mr. Shuster is dismissed, and Persia is left to the mercies of the Russian Bear and the British Lion. The history of this tragedy has yet to be written, but it is improbable that any Englishman will look back to the Anglo-Russian agreement with pride. We have betrayed Persia and endangered India. We have alienated the Indian Mohammedans, and led them to suspect a crusade against Islam."<sup>98</sup>

An important proof of his capacity for serious political criticism is his introduction to The Government of Egypt, Recommendations by a Committee of the International Labour Research Department, 1920. His stay in the Middle East during the War proved very fruitful in producing some illuminating criticism of imperialism.

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98. "The Rose Show:" New Weekly, 11 July 1914, Vol. 2, P.119. Review of The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia, by E.G. Browne.

"He points out that even though as early as 1883 Gladstone's Government had indicated a desire to end the British occupation as soon as possible, the British were still there in 1920, on the pretext of giving 'advice' to the Egyptians. The pamphlet recommends that since the dislocations caused by the war can now be expected to subside, Britain should withdraw and recognize Egypt as an independent state. The proposal is made by the committee, not by Forster, but he obviously agrees with it."<sup>99</sup>

Here again the British failed to treat the Egyptians as individuals and for lack of personal relations. The Egyptians were not trusted and the British were responsible for some serious incidents of provocation. The situation became critical when a ridiculous censorship was imposed and conscription for the Labour Corps was introduced and the use of force and high handedness in procuring supplies.

In India the arrogance, snobbishness and the social misbehaviour of the Anglo-Indians had been responsible for increasing the political friction. In a letter from Hyderabad where he was visiting his friend Syed Ross Masood, dated 12 November 1921, he wrote:

"The National Congress meets in December at Ahmedabad, and it will certainly carry through its resolution in favour of Civil Disobedience, and if there is general response this expensive royal expedition will look rather foolish. I have been with pro-Govt. and pro-English Indians all this time, so cannot realize the feeling of the other party: and am only sure of this - that we were paying for the insolence of Englishmen and English women out here in the past. I don't mean that good manners can avert a political upheaval. But they can minimize it, and come nearer to averting it in the East than elsewhere. English manners out here have improved wonderfully in the last eight years. Some people are frightened, others seem really to have undergone a change of heart. But it's too late. Indians don't long for social intercourse with Englishmen any longer. They have made a life of their own."<sup>100</sup>

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99. Wilfred Stone: The Cave and the Mountain, London, 1966, p.286.

100. The Hill of Devi, London, 1953, p.155.

There is a danger in placing A Passage to India in the political and social writings of Forster. It will give an exaggerated impression of the political or public side of the novel. Politics also coloured the reaction of the readers which was determined largely by whether you were Indian, Anglo-Indian, liberal or conservative, a sheep or a goat. The Americans, too, reacted politically. This varied political reaction in itself should have been a warning to critics not to fall into the error of a purely political or social interpretation. Such an interpretation leaves out of consideration the personal or creative contribution of the writer or his vision. The Anglo-Indians, quite naturally, did not think well of the novel.

"Another time he (the Maharajah of Dewas State Senior) got some amusement out of A Passage to India. He dined at the Vice-regal Lodge at Delhi soon after it had been published, and found that it was ill-thought of there. Lady Reading did not care for it at all, and the newly appointed Indian Member of Council expressed himself severely. He let them discourse as they would and then sweetly said that the author had been his Private Secretary. 'That comes of Chiefs getting the wrong kind of Europeans around them', Lord Reading interjected. 'But it is then your Excellency's fault, for we cannot employ any European without your concurrence'. And he proceeded to praise the work warmly."<sup>101</sup>

Among those who have exaggerated the political motive and influence of this novel is an Indian writer Mr.N.C.Chaudhuri. He goes as far as to assert,

"A Passage to India has possibly been an even greater influence in British imperial politics than in English literature .... From the first, the more active reaction to it followed the existing lines of political cleavage, its admirers being liberal, radical, or leftist sheep and its detractors conservative, imperialist, and diehard goats. The feud between English liberalism and the British empire in India

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101. Ibid, p.160.

was as old as the empire itself. Except for a short period of quiescence when Liberal-Imperialism was in vogue, it raged till 1947. Mr. Forster's novel became a powerful weapon in the hands of the anti-imperialists, and was made to contribute its share to the disappearance of British rule in India."<sup>102</sup>

Of its political influence and its anti-imperialist propaganda value there is no evidence. I wish Mr. Chaudhuri had produced some. The liberals, and the conservatives were already decided about their attitude to the Empire and their opposition on this matter was an established political principle. British rule would have disappeared from India, anyhow, A Passage to India or No Passage to India, and it is difficult to assess the value of this novel from this point of view. Nationalism was a natural consequence of imperialism. Moreover it was not the novel which suddenly made the Indians aware of the bad treatment received at the hands of the British rulers. They knew that the British considered them socially inferior, that their homes, clubs and society were all closed to them and their friendship with them was impossible. Educated Indians, especially those who had been educated in England and who knew how well they were treated there, knew to their humiliation and bitterness how different was their treatment in India. Enlightened Indians and Englishmen both resented the social attitudes and snobbery of the Anglo-Indians. The mind of the cultivated Indian Forster knew well enough as we can gather from his review of A.S. Wadia's Reflections on the Problems of India, published in the New Weekly on March 28, 1914. Mr. Wadia was very critical of the Anglo-Indians' treatment of the cultivated Indians:

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102. Chaudhuri, N.C. "Passage to and from India," Encounter, June 1954 (P.19).

"He resents the behaviour of the Anglo-Indian to the cultivated Indians. Most Indians do, and one understands their resentment ... but in his personal annoyance he quite forgets this. Why should the ruling caste behave with sympathy or politeness to him? Surely none."<sup>103</sup>

Behind this resentment was a frustrated desire for a privileged position. Psychologically, though not socially, the cultivated Indian was in no better position than the Anglo-Indian.

"The truth is that, though willing to face facts, he does demand something soft behind him, while he faces them - an armchair, or perhaps a Settee, where his friend Mr. M., who was once insulted in the Byculla Club, may sit, too. This demand for a Settee is universal. It is made equally by the chamars and some of us are looking round to see whether there may not be enough stuff in the world to grant it. He knows that there is no more stuff - he has private information on the point. There ought to be a little more behind him, but, with that exception, society is as it will be, and must be forever."<sup>104</sup>

On the question of the Anglo-Indian society there is an interesting letter from G.L. Dickinson to H.O. Meredith:

"Anglo-Indian society is the devil - it's worse than America. We eschew it all we can. It's the women more than men that are at fault. There they are, without their children, with no duties, no charities, with empty minds and hearts, trying to fill them by playing tennis and despising the natives ... There is no solution of the problem of Governing India. Our presence is a curse both to them and to us. Our going will be worse. I believe that is the last word. And why can't the races meet? Simply because the Indians bore the English. That is the simple adamant fact."<sup>105</sup>

Moreover there is no evidence that A Passage to India was widely read by the educated Indians. As far as I know it never became University reading in pre-Independence India. It certainly was not the novel representing Forster in the M.A. Course prescribed in 1951 by Dr. B.G. Brookes, then Chairman of the English Department, for the University of Peshawar, Pakistan.

A Room with a View was the novel we read and discussed and as far

103. See "The Indian Mind." New Weekly, March 28, 1914, Vol. 1, p.55.

104. Ibid, p.55.

105. quoted by Forster in Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, London, 1962, p.141.

as I remember A Passage to India was not even mentioned in the lectures.

There is enough evidence, on the other hand to substantiate that Forster's aim was not directly or merely or purely political in A Passage to India. I have already quoted Forster's own comment that it was not a political novel. The Temple Section of the novel has no political significance and structurally its place in the novel would be difficult to justify if we treat it merely as a political novel. In the court scene the plot reaches its climax and the dramatic interest declines after that. Adaptations of the novel as play or drama leave out the Temple Section.<sup>106</sup> During an interview for the Paris Review, P.N. Furbank and F.J.H. Haskell asked Forster what was the exact function of the long description of the Hindu festival. Forster replied:

"It was architecturally necessary. I needed a lump, or a Hindu temple if you like - a mountain standing up. It is well placed; and it gathers up some strings. But there ought to have been more after it. The lump sticks out a little too much."<sup>107</sup>

The creative core of the novel delivered itself independently of the aims and motives of the novelist.

"When I began A Passage to India I knew that something important happened in the Marabar Caves, and that it would have a central place in the novel - but I didn't know what it would be - The Marabar caves represented an area in which concentration can take place. A cavity. They were something to focus everything up: they were to engender an event like an egg."<sup>108</sup>

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106. A Passage to India, A Play in Three Acts by Santha Rama Rau, from the novel by E.M. Forster, London, 1960.

"The play was first performed at the Playhouse, Oxford, on 19 January 1960." (B.J. Kirkpatrick: A Bibliography of E.M. Forster, London, 1965, p.179).

107. See Paris Review, Spring, 1953, Vol. 1, No.1 pp.28-41.

108. Ibid, pp.28-41.

Forster had no partisan interest in the politics of India. When he went to India for the third and last time in 1946 at the invitation of the All India Centre of the P.E.N. Club to attend a Conference of Indian writers he was surprised to notice an increased interest in politics:

"The big change I noticed was the increased interest in politics. You cannot understand the modern Indians unless you realize that politics occupy them passionately and constantly, that artistic problems, and even social problems - yes, and even economic problems - are subsidiary. Their attitude is 'first we must find the correct political solution, and then we can deal with other matters'. I think the attitude is unsound, and used to say so; still, there it is, and they hold it much more vehemently than they did a quarter of a century ago. When I spoke about the necessity of form in literature and the importance of the individual vision, their attention wandered, although they listened politely. Literature, in their view, should expound or inspire a political creed."<sup>109</sup>

On the relation between art on the one hand, and science, politics, history, economics and sociology on the other hand, Forster gave his views and opinions in his address to the American Academy of Arts and Letters in New York on "Art for Art's Sake" in 1949.<sup>110</sup> A work of art exists in its own right. Its artistic value depends on its own perfection as a work of art:

"A work of art - whatever else it may be - is a self-contained entity, with a life of its own imposed on it by its creator. It has internal order."<sup>111</sup>

It has the artist's personal vision as authority for it. Its external form as well as its political, social and moral information are incidental to it. If we look upon A Passage to India as a work of art, then its political and social elements are

109. "India Again" in Two Cheers for Democracy, London, 1951, pp.327-328.

110. Harper's Magazine, New York, August, 1949, Vol. 199, pp.31-34. '... slightly amended version of an address delivered before a combined meeting of the American Academy and the National Institute of Arts and Letters'. Reprinted: Two Cheers for Democracy, 1951, pp.98-104.

111. Two Cheers for Democracy, London, 1951, p.98.

merely incidental to it and, therefore, of no artistic value.

"A work of art, we all agreed, is a unique product ... It is unique not because it is clever or noble or beautiful or enlightened or original or sincere or idealistic or useful or educational - but because it is the only material object in the universe which may possess internal harmony."<sup>112</sup>

We are invited to look for this internal order, this personal vision in A Passage to India. A man who held such views about works of art could not intend his best novel as a vehicle of anti-imperialist propaganda. If we choose it as such, surely we are ignoring its essential element. This is what N.C. Chaudhuri is doing when he says:

"The intention seems to have been to bring even English readers to agree with the last outburst of the hero of the novel, Aziz. 'We shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea, and then you and I shall be friends.'<sup>113</sup>

Aziz is speaking in his own right as an individual.

Mr. Chaudhuri seems to agree with Aziz, although he would not have allowed him to enter his home.<sup>114</sup> Mr. Chaudhuri is quoting out of the context here to score a point. How can Forster's intention be to make English readers agree with Aziz when he himself does not do so.

112. Ibid, P.101.

113. Chaudhuri, N.C., 'Passage to and from India', Encounter, June, 1954, P.19.

114. Mr. Chaudhuri visited England in 1955 at the invitation of the B.B.C. and stayed for five weeks. The result of this visit was his book A Passage to England. During this visit he met E.M. Forster. Two remarks of Mr. Chaudhuri impressed Forster. "The second remark was about Aziz, a character in my novel A Passage to India. He announced with some firmness that Aziz would never have been admitted into his ancestral home. This does not matter for Aziz, who has after all elsewhere to go but it made me wonder whether I should have been admitted either." ('A known Indian,' a review of N.C. Chaudhuri's A Passage to England by E.M. Forster, The Observer, 16 August 1959, P.14)

"Why can't we be friends now?" said the other, holding him affectionately. "It's what I want. It's what you want." 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." (P.336)

Forster is concerned about the efforts of Aziz and Fielding to be friends and maintain personal relations. The friendship fails, and when the British left India in 1947, did it improve the chances of that friendship? Mr. Chaudhuri says, "I should like the English people to take my word for it that there is no greater myth than the much-talked-about Indo-British friendship since 1947."<sup>115</sup>

Forster knew long before, and I hope the post-independence politics has convinced Mr. Chaudhuri also, that politics alone cannot solve the problems of India, nor of any country for that matter. India presents a special difficulty in a difficult world.

"I do not know what political solution is correct. But I do know that people ought not to be so poor and to look so ill, and that rats ought not to run about them as I saw them doing in a labour camp at Bombay."<sup>116</sup>

The failure of politics to deal with the problems of mankind, to alleviate human misery and to help create a stable and happy world is a universal phenomenon. Politicians talk of creating order in the world to make it stable. Their failure is due to the fact that "they tend, however, to confuse order with orders, just as they confuse creation with regulations. Order, I suggest, is something evolved from within, not something imposed from without; it is an

115. Chaudhuri, N.C., Passage to England, London, 1959, P.2.

116. "India Again" in Two Cheers for Democracy, London, 1951, P.328.

internal stability, a vital harmony, and in the social and political category it has never existed except for the convenience of historians."<sup>117</sup> The reason for this failure lies deeper.

"We were promised a new order after the first World War through the League of Nations. It did not come, nor have I faith in present promises, by whomsoever endorsed. The implacable offensive of science forbids. We cannot reach social and political stability for the reason that we continue to make scientific discoveries and to apply them, and thus to destroy the arrangements which were based on more elementary discoveries. If science would discover rather than apply - if, in other words, men were more interested in knowledge than in power - mankind would be in a far safer position, the stability statesmen talk about would be a possibility, there could be a new order based on vital harmony and the earthly millenium might approach. But science shows no signs of doing this: she gave us the internal combustion engine, and before we had digested and assimilated it with terrible pains into our social system, she harnessed the atom, and destroyed any new order that seemed to be evolving. How can man get into harmony with his surroundings when he is constantly altering them? The future of our race is, in this direction, more unpleasant than we care to admit, and it has sometimes seemed to me that its best chance lies through apathy, uninventiveness, and inertia. Universal exhaustion might promote that change of Heart which is at present so briskly recommended from a thousand pulpits. Universal exhaustion would certainly be a new experience. The human race has never undergone it, and is still too perky to admit that it may be coming and might result in a sprouting of new growth through the decay ... I do want to emphasize that order in daily life and in history, order in the social and political category is unattainable."<sup>118</sup>

Whatever else he might have thought about the political future of India at the time of writing A Passage to India, one thing is certain that he could not swallow the idea of its becoming a nation:

"India a nation! What an apotheosis! Last comer to the drab nineteenth-century sisterhood! Waddling in at this hour of the world to take her seat! She, whose only peer was the Holy Roman Empire, she shall rank with Guatemala and Belgium perhaps!" (P.335).

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117. "Art for Art's Sake", In Two Cheers for Democracy, London, 1951, p.99.

118. Ibid, p.100.

India did not become one but two nations who took their seats with Guatemala and Belgium in the United Nations if not in the League of Nations. His India was divided in 1947, and lover as he was of India he did not react violently to it as many did in Britain and even do so today. That must have been a severe strain on his detached attitude to politics and his liberalism; he has come through without losing his head and there is no suggestion of resentment or rejection in this reference to the event:

"Since I am dealing with past events, my vocabulary is often antiquated. For instance I call English people 'Anglo-Indians'. And throughout I use 'India' in the old, and as it seems to me the true, sense of the word to designate the whole sub-continent. Much as I sympathize with the present government at New Delhi, I wish it had not chosen 'India' to describe its territory. Politicians are too prone to plunder the past."<sup>119</sup>

India for him does not mean a political territory, it refers to a geographical area which covers at the moment the political territories of two independent states.

There is a passing reference to Kashmir in a fantasy, 'Fog over Ferney' published in the Listener, December 18, 1958, from which it can be inferred that he disagreed with Nehru's Kashmir policy. This fantasy brings Voltaire back to life in the late fifties of this century. As was his habit he wanted to write letters to the contemporary heads of state. For one reason or another he rejected the idea of writing to most heads of state. Finally he decided to write to Nehru, Prime Minister of India.

"Pulling himself together he composed his letter to President Nehru<sup>120</sup> in French, apologizing as he did so for the barbarity of the tongue, and putting as he did so his tongue in his cheek. He omitted any reference to Kashmir, for he did not

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119. Preface to The Hill of Devi by E.M. Forster, London, 1953, p.10.

120. This is an error. Nehru remained the Prime Minister of his country from 1947 until his death. He was never her President.

wish to alienate his one influential friend."<sup>121</sup>

The only reference to Kashmir which could alienate Nehru, and which does alienate Indian leaders today, would have been in the context of a criticism of his policy on Kashmir.

After this exploration of the political attitude of Forster to India it is time to turn to the crucial point of what image of India does he project in his writings in general, and in A Passage to India in particular; also to find the nature of this image. Mrs. Moore hears Adela announcing 'I want to see the real India', as she re-enters the club on her return from the excursion to the mosque in the moonlight. Their romantic expectations have not been fulfilled after their arrival in India.

"Mrs. Moore agreed; she too was disappointed at the dullness of their new life. They had made such a romantic voyage across the Mediterranean and through the sands of Egypt to the harbour of Bombay, to find only a gridiron of bungalows at the end of it. But she did not take the disappointment as seriously as Miss Quested, for the reason that she was forty years older, and had learnt that life never gives us what we want at the moment that we consider appropriate. Adventures do occur, but not punctually. She said again that she hoped that something interesting would be arranged for next Tuesday." (P.27).

At the end of the performance of 'Cousin Kate' when Ronny joins them he offers them drinks.

"They refused - they were weary of drinks - and Miss Quested, who always said exactly what was in her mind, announced anew that she was desirous of seeing the real India."

"Ronny was in high spirits. The request struck him as comic, and he called out to another passer-by: 'Fielding! how's one to see the real India?'

"'Try seeing Indians', the man answered and vanished." (pp.28-29)

Forster was not happy about what people meant by 'the real India'.

On his last visit to India he remarked:

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121. "Fog over Ferney: A Fantasy: Listener, 18 December, 1958, pp. 1029-1030.

"No - externally India has not changed. And this changelessness in her is called by some observers 'the real India'. I suspect it. It always makes me prick up my ears. But you can use it if you want to, either for the changes in her or for the unchanged. 'Real' is at the service of all schools of thought."<sup>122</sup>

The image of India is thrown into relief by contrast with that of Egypt. The latter is less complex and therefore is easy to comprehend. The different cultures and civilizations are inextricably mixed up but they are identifiable into layers one over the other. The Coptic, the Judaic, the Greek, the Roman, the Christian and the Arab elements don't lose their identity with the result that Egypt excites one's sense of history. It is of symbolic significance that Forster wrote historical essays on Alexandria and also wrote a guide to it. It is easy to provide guidance to places of historical interest in Alexandria where they have not lost their identity. It would have been difficult to do so in India where you are less certain of the identity of things. Egypt is an intermediary between the West and India. India is not only complex, its complexity is difficult to approach historically. It needed a different medium to comprehend it; only an artistic medium could cope with it.

"There are a hundred Indias, but only two or three Egypts. Now and then one has the illusion that Egypt also is multiform and infinite, and that the Nile, like the Ganges, flows from the hair of God through men into Hell. At evening perhaps; in the Delta when the animals, suddenly sacred, walk in short processions through the purple air - a donkey, two sheep, a buffalo; a goat, a buffalo, three sheep; the owner following, or perhaps at mid-day; in the desert: when the little flat stones jump and quiver, and pieces of sky slop into the sand, or under the arcades of some huge mosque at Cairo or Rosetta; worshippers are kneeling on pale yellow rushes in a pale grey light. Then the imagination and the theories that attend upon it awake,

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122. "India Again: Two Cheers for Democracy, London, 1951, p.328.

and one says: "This is East," or "This is Romance," or "Here, too, is an entrance into life and all the lives". The illusion soon passes. The Valley of the Nile may be long, but it is narrow, very narrow. Day after day one meets in it the same faces and fields and thoughts, and the towns that are strung about it are of the Nile's substance, not jewels out of unattainable treasuries ..."<sup>123</sup>

In both countries good-and-evil exists, but in neither has good been separated from the evil.

"The life of Egypt has still a good hundred years to run, and a longer span may be assigned to the lives of India. Perhaps neither or both of them lead to eternal truth. But before God descends with science to divide the sheep from the goats, before the desirable are all placed at their observation points and the undesirable in the corridors radiating therefrom - what a comfort not to be sure which is which! ... And the East never has been the least sure either in India or in Egypt."<sup>124</sup>

Egypt influenced him historically; India, spiritually.

The former enlarged his sense of history; the latter, his sense of Infinity. It is very difficult to know the whole truth about the past. Much of the body of the past had disappeared leaving a ruined city here, a buried temple there, an inscribed pillar somewhere in a wilderness tempting us to know the spirit and the truth of the past from the broken pieces. Forster seems to imply in his historical writings that a complete understanding of the past involves an act of complete emancipation from the present. We can enter into the spirit of the past through imagination. Hence an historian who is an artist at the same time and therefore uses his imagination is often a better historian than one who relies more on scientific methods and techniques and who is by nature of his discipline after facts and the verification of these facts. It is difficult, however, to salve all the facts

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123. "Two Egypts." *Athenaeum*, 30 May 1919, pp.393-394. Review of Recollections and Reflections, by Coles Pasha; and Through Egypt in War-Time, by Martin S. Briggs.

124. *Ibid*, pp.393-394.

from the ravages of time. In one of Forster's early short stories Albergo Empedocle, Harold and Mildred, engaged to be married, are travelling in Sicily. Amid the ruins of Greek temples, the feeling of the past grows so strong upon Harold and he enters into its spirit so completely that he awakens to the truth that he has lived there before, in fact a long time ago as a Greek. The story has been misinterpreted as one dealing with transmigration of the soul, especially by the reference to Empedocle in the title of the story, which is the name of the hotel they are staying in. Perhaps the kind of incident in this story underlies the belief in transmigration of the soul, but this is not Forster's theme here.

"But what are dates?' said Mildred. 'What are facts, or even names of persons? They carry one a very little way. In a place like this one must simply feel'.

'Rather', said Harold, trying to fix his attention. 'You must throw yourself into a past age if you want to appreciate it thoroughly. Today you must imagine you are a Greek.'"<sup>125</sup>

Of course, one cannot take as the serious views of the author what the characters say in a story, nevertheless, the basic attitude implied here is shown by Forster in his serious essays. He knew the historian's difficulties in dealing with the past; that they divest it of the chaos and mess of life and impose an order on it, an order arising out of historicity and historiography.

"Difficult to realise that the past was once the present, and that transferred to it, one would be just the same little worm as today, unimportant, parasitic, nervous, occupied with trifles, unable to go anywhere or alter anything, friendly only with the obscure, and only at ease with the dead."<sup>126</sup>

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125. "Albergo Empedocle": Temple Bar, December 1903, Vol. 128, pp.663-684. First published story.

126. "The Consolations of History", Athenaeum, 16 January 1920, pp. 69-70. Reprinted: Abinger Harvest, London, 1936, p.163.

He does not approve of the moral interpretation of the past. Most historians do not bring a sense of actuality to their treatment of history and they enjoy a kind of freedom which is denied to them when dealing with contemporary events.

"If only the sense of actuality can be lulled - and it sleeps for ever in most historians - there is no passion that cannot be gratified in the past. The past is devoid of all dangers, social and moral, and one can meet with perfect ease not only kings, but people who are even rarer on one's visiting list."<sup>127</sup>

Imagination is **shaped** and formed by traditions, arts, literature, religion and all that comes under culture. In a way the continuity of the past through tradition and culture limits the sense of history. The earlier Forster was fresh from Cambridge of his undergraduate days where he had been soaked in Hellenism. The Greek view of life appealed to him. His imagination was moulded by Greek Mythology which provided a world free from inhibitions, asceticism and formalism. It made him feel nearer to the classical Greece than Gemistus Pletho in the fourteenth century, when the spirit of the Renaissance was struggling towards freedom:

"For his ways were huddled and mediaeval; and his cramped limbs were never freed from the barbarism and the stupid pomp and the dirt. But his eyes were fixed outside the narrow enclosure of his century, on the serene plains of antiquity, on temples that stood among gardens, on cities that had no walls, on the spacious country where man had once been beautiful and whole and happy, and whither he hoped men might yet return. We who also stand looking at that country, owe gratitude as well as sympathy. For if we stand nearer to it than he did, it is in some measure owing to him."<sup>128</sup>

There is an increased awareness in the younger Forster of that world of beauty, proportion and nobility and above all of its

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127. "The Consolations of History"; Athenaeum, 16 January 1920, pp.69-70. Reprinted: Abinger Harvest, London, 1936, p.163.

128. "Gemistus Pletho", Independent Review, October 1905, Vol. 7, pp.211-223. Reprinted: Abinger Harvest, London, 1936, p.176.

intellectual and spiritual richness. His 'hellenism' was seriously challenged by his experiences in India and Egypt. There is a little essay in Pharos and Pharillon which shows the changing 'hellenism' of Forster. One can trace this in "The Return from Siwa", an essay showing a profound change in Alexander after his return from a visit to Siwa, an oasis in the desert:

"Alexander still conceived of civilization as an extended Greece, and of himself as a Hellene. He had taken over Hellenism with an ardour that only a proselyte knows ... After his return from Siwa his aspirations alter. Never again does he regard Greece as the centre of the world ... The building of Alexandria proceeded, and copied or magnified forms from the perishing peninsula overseas. Dinocrates planned Greek temples and market places, and they were constructed not slavishly but with intelligence, for the Greek spirit still lived. But it lived consciously, not unconsciously, as in the past. It had a mission, and no missionary shall ever create."<sup>129</sup>

There is a parallel between the civilizing mission of the Greeks and that of the Western Colonial powers in Asia and Africa. But the difference between the two is very great. The latter was commercial and imperial and was conducted with little sympathy and intelligence. Alexander lost his interest in hellenizing and town-planning and had a more heroic dream.

"And Alexander, the heroic chaos of whose heart surged with desire for all that can and cannot be, turned away from his Hellenic town-planning and his narrow little antiquarian crusade, and flung himself again, but in a new spirit, against the might of Persia. He fought her as a lover now. He wanted not to convert but to harmonize, and conceived himself as the divine and impartial ruler beneath whom harmony shall proceed. That way lies madness. Persia fell. Then it was the turn of India.... He was never ... a balanced young man."<sup>130</sup>

Here and there harmony and synthesis did take place but at what price and at what cost of human energies. The Gandhara school of

129. "The Return from Siwa" in Pharos & Pharillon, London, 1961, p.25.

130. Ibid, p.27.

sculpture which flourished in areas which are now in West Pakistan is a clear example of such a harmony. The Gandhara region extends West into Afghanistan and South-east to the Jumna Valley.

"A number of objects have been unearthed, from Afghanistan southward to the Jumna, which show Greek influence and are sometime Greek in effect. To select from the examples given by Mr. Bannerjee: a coin with a nautch girl on the reverse, but a Greek inscription on the obverse; statues of Buddha in Greek costume; representations of Pallas Athene and Ganymede. It is clear that the successors of Alexander the great were playing the same game in the Punjab as in the Levant, and were fostering a Graeco-Buddhist civilization, contemporary with the Graeco-Jewish civilization at Alexandria ... Buddha, already on friendly terms with the Hindu Pantheon, could behave with perfect politeness to the new troupe from Greece. Pessimistic, and inclined to cynicism despite his compassionate heart, he knew that religion is not a reality but a habit of the mind, superior to most habits, but like them to be abandoned before we escape from the wheel - to be lived down, in fact, although the process may extend over a thousand of our lives. Whether men gained good or evil from gymnastic exercises would depend on their own pre-dispositions; it could have nothing to do with the origin of gymnasiums. Such was the spirit of India, as powerful as the conscious national spirit of the Jews, as the sequel shows. For in a few generations the Hellenic influences died out, not through persecution, but because their day was ended. Poseidon becomes Siva on the coins, Artemis a wild Apsara, and the Greek types of Gandhara are lost in the sculptured jungles of Amara Vati. There is a break in Indian records about 400 A.D., when a mediaeval darkness descends. But before that break comes the Greeks and their ideals have disappeared."<sup>131</sup>

The harmony failed because of the inexorable law of evolution and change. The British failed to create harmony; they established little pockets of order instead. The whole business reminds one, on a minor and a less heroic scale, of Kitchener building a school at Khartoum after its fall into the hands of the British. Was it an attempt to harmonize or convert? The Aryan brother in spats

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131. "Jehovah, Buddha and the Greeks;" Review of Hellenism, by Norman Bentwich; and Hellenism in Ancient India by G.N. Bannerjee, Athenaeum, 4 June, 1920, pp.730-31.

and hat symbolize a very superficial harmony. Professor Godhole's efforts only amount to a suggestion of harmony.

He was elderly and wizen with a grey moustache and grey-blue eyes, and his complexion was as fair as a European's. He wore a turban that looked like pale purple macaroni, coat, waistcoat, dhoti, socks with clocks. The clocks matched the turban, and 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." (P.76)

The Kitcheners, the Gordons, the Turtons and the Burtons through the length and breadth of the Empire failed to achieve with better opportunities what Alexander had done, even if it did not live long. Perhaps they failed to perceive and did not have their moments of revelation like Alexander. Something had spoken to him in the recesses of the Siwan oasis as something speaks to Mrs. Moore in the Marabar Caves. He had his moment of sudden illumination; he had his vision:

"A scare he did get - a fright, a psychic experience, a vision, a 'turn'. His development proves it ... He has caught, by the unintellectual way, a glimpse of something great, if dangerous, and that glimpse came to him first in the recesses of the Siwan oasis."<sup>132</sup>

Alexander's vision was of something 'great, if dangerous';

Mrs. Moore's vision is frightening: it is negative and destructive.

"What had spoken to her in that scoured-out cavity of the 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 ... visions are supposed to entail profundity, but - wait, till you get one ... The abyss also may be petty, the serpent of eternity made of maggots. (P.217).

Mr. Fielding nearly has one, but, somehow or other he is not in tune for it; if he had had his vision, it would have been of something gracious and beautiful:

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132. 'The Return from Siwa' in Pharos and Pharillon, London, 1961, pp.27-28.

"It was the last moment of the light, and as he gazed at the Marabar Hills they seemed to move graciously towards him like a Queen, and their charm became the sky's. At the moment they vanished they were everywhere, the cool benediction of the night descended, the stars sparkled, and the whole universe was a hill. Lovely, exquisite moment - but passing the Englishman with averted face and on swift wings. He experienced nothing himself; it was as if someone had told him there was such a moment, and he was obliged to believe. And he felt dubious and disconcerted suddenly, and wondered whether he was really and truly successful as a human being. After forty years experience, he had learnt to manage his life and make the best of it on advanced European lines, had developed his personality, explored his limitations, controlled his passions - and he had done it all without becoming pedantic or worldly. A creditable achievement, but as the moment passed, he felt he ought to have been working at something else the whole time, - he didn't know at what, never would know, never could know, and that was why he felt sad. (P.199).

Alexander followed the path of madness and in his efforts to harmonize, though he succeeded in a way and for some time, he destroyed Persia and the Indus Valley Kingdoms of North-West India. Mrs. Moore loses all sense of value and becomes incommunicative. Fielding after his brush with beauty and graciousness gradually loses his ideals and liberalism and hardness begins to grow upon him and the earlier doubts he has had about his friendship with Aziz begin to assert themselves strongly.

"He too felt that this was their last free intercourse. All the stupid misunderstandings had been cleared up, but socially they had no meeting-place. He had thrown in his lot with Anglo-India by marrying a country-woman, and he was acquiring some of its limitations, and already felt surprise at his own past heroism. Would he today defy all his own people for the sake of a stray Indian? Aziz was a memento, a trophy, they were proud of each other, yet they must inevitably part." (P.332).

C.P. Cavafy's influence on Forster has not received due attention and his writings of the Alexandrian period are dismissed in a few sentences as minor and unimportant. Pharos and Pharillon is quite obviously influenced by Cavafy. "The Consolations of History," an

essay reprinted in the Abinger Harvest, is Cavafian in its satiric treatment of the past. Cavafy's sense of history was ironic. His poetry began in the exploration of his own sensations and experiences and passed on from them to history.

"He begins from within. But he never makes a cult of himself or of what he feels. All the time he is being beckoned to and being called to by history, particularly by the history of his own race. History, too, is full of courage, cowardice, lust, and is to that extent domestic. But it is something more. It is an external inspiration. And he found in the expanses and recesses of the past, in the clash of great names and in the tinkle of small ones, in the certified victories and slurred defeats, in the jewels and the wounds and the vast movements beginning out of nothing and sometimes ending nowhere: he found in them something that transcended his local life and freshened his art. Demurely, ironically he looks into the past, for he knew the answers."<sup>133</sup>

With this historical sense Cavafy joined a sensual and homosexual sensibility. Some of Cavafy's poems are shamelessly about homosexual love and passion, and these might have been influential in forming Forster's stand on homosexuality. He defended James Henley's novel, Boy, in 'Liberty in England', republished in Abinger Harvest. Moreover Cavafy's poetry "can give the sense of human flesh and blood continuing through centuries that are supposed to be unsatisfactory."<sup>134</sup> Both share a similar attitude to Christianity, especially its asceticism. At Alexandria Forster became increasingly aware of a closer connection between History and Literature; the magic of imagination

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133. 'In the Rue Lepsius', Broadcast talk on The Poems of C.P. Cavafy, translated by John Mavrogordato, with an introduction by Rex Warner, Listener, 5 July, 1951, pp.28-29. Reprinted in Two Cheers for Democracy as "The Complete poems of C.P. Cavafy" (P.248).

134. Two Cheers for Democracy, London, 1951, p.249.

can transform the dead past into something living and breathing. Speaking of Theocritus in Alexandria, A History And A Guide, he writes: "Only through literature can the past be recovered and here Theocritus, wielding the double spell of realism and of poetry, has evoked an entire city from the dead and filled its streets with men."<sup>135</sup> History was preparing his imagination for its most compact creative achievement:

"The past once was alive and it is now dead, and if a writer succeeds in expressing these facts simultaneously, as Hardy does in 'The Dynasts' and D'Annunzio in 'La Citta Morta', he has achieved a great literary effect. The expressions must be simultaneous, there must be a complete fusion of all tenses, or the spell fails. Napoleon and Agamemnon are men and will not be men, were men and are not men at the same time ... Yet though the passage has become easy it has lost nothing of its Miltonic horror. The tenses have not fused in any philosophic sense; it is an aesthetic faith that has interwoven them, three in one and one in three, and made them a garment of poetry."<sup>136</sup>

Alexandria of the pre-Christian days appealed to Forster's liberal imagination, because it was here that a harmonious and smooth fusion of the pagan religions of Egypt and Greece had taken place:

"The idea that one religion is false and another true is essentially Christian, and had not occurred to the Egyptians and Greeks who were living together at Alexandria ... Osiris - Apis - Dionysius - Zeus - Aesculapius - Plato may seem to us an artificial compound, but it stood the test of time, it satisfied men's desires, and was to be the last stronghold of Paganism against Christianity."<sup>137</sup>

Also it was here that the Graeco-Judaic synthesis took place.

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135. Alexandria: A History and a Guide, Alexandria, 1922, p.30.

136. "Literature and History", The Athenaeum, 2 January, 1920, pp.26-27. Review of Etudes et Fantaisies Historiques, 2e Serie, by E. Rodocanachi.

137. Alexandria: A History and a Guide, Alexandria, 1922, pp.17-18.

"The Jewish people were at this time in a complicated position. They were dispersing into the Gentile world, and while the parent stock in Palestine remained orthodox, the Dispersion adopted the Greek speech and dallied with Greek thought. At Alexandria an important Graeco-Judaean civilization sprang up, which produced the monumental translation of the Septuagint, the beautiful poem of The Wisdom of Solomon, and the interesting philosophic system of Philo. The Jews who remained in Palestine produced nothing as notable, and partly for this reason posterity has censured them."<sup>138</sup>

The Romans arrived at Alexandria with a sense of moral responsibility and set about reforming this happy blend of Egypto-Grecian paganism.

"The solid but unattractive figure of Rome ... came forward with studied politeness as the protection of liberty and morals in the East. Legal and self-righteous, she struck a chill into the whole Hellenistic world. She was horrified at its corruption - a corruption she never failed to take advantage of, and the shattered empire of Alexander fell piece by piece into her hands."<sup>139</sup>

It is not very difficult to see a parallel between the attitudes of the Romans and the nineteenth century European imperialists. The East was morally and socially corrupt and uncivilized according to them, like the Romans they took advantage of its so-called backwardness and corruption and as imperial powers it became their bounden duty to improve and Westernize. This was not how Forster looked upon the encroachment of the West on the Middle East and India. The Turtons and the Burtons were playing in India the role of the Romans in Alexandria. Of the Alexandrian philosophers, the one man Forster admired the most and liked was the Neo-platonist, Plotinus. He became the possible symbol of the bridge between East and West.

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138. "Jehova, Buddha and the Greeks", Review of Hellenism, by Norman Bentwich; and Hellenism in Ancient India by G.N. Bannerjee, Athenaeum, 4 June, 1940, pp.730-31.

139. Alexandria: A History and a Guide, Alexandria, 1922, p.20.

"Plotinus was probably born at Assiout; probably; no one could find out for certain because he was reticent about it, saying that the descent of his soul into his body had been a great misfortune, which he did not desire to discuss. He completed his main training at Alexandria, and then took part in a military expedition against Persia, in order to get in touch with Persian thought (Zoroastrianism), and with Indian thought (Hinduism, Buddhism). He must have made a queer soldier and he was certainly an unsuccessful one, for the expedition suffered defeat, and Plotinus was very nearly relieved of the disgrace of having a body."<sup>140</sup>

The exploration of the East in the spirit of Plotinus never became a popular idea with the imperialists. Least of all was it explored in that spirit by literary artists. We find here and there a historian, an archaeologist, a traveller or a writer who have shown sympathy and the willingness to understand. Most of Forster's articles and reviews of the period 1914-22 deal with the works of such men. They opened new vistas and possibilities to Forster and reinforced and illuminated his own experiences in the East. By 1920 he had become so disgusted with the aggressive destructiveness of imperialism and Western civilization that it almost made him sentimental and welcome with great joy and enthusiasm any fantasy that might offer an escape. Such a fantasy was a little French book of illustrations, Macao et Cosmage.

Notice the vehemence of Forster's enthusiasm in his review of this book:

"O beautiful book!... O fifty pages, each livelier than its brother, so gorgeous in your colours, so moving in your theme that the beholder falls a-doting, and phrases of music come into his ear, and quotations from poetry to his lips!"<sup>141</sup>

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140. Alexandria: A History and a Guide. Alexandria, 1922, p.57.

141. ('L'experience du Bonheur' Review of Macao et Cosmage, by E.L.L. Edy-Legrand, Athenaeum, 23 January, 1920, pp.122-123). Reprinted as: "Happiness!", Abinger Harvest, 1936 (pp.36-38) p.36.

On a beautiful island, Macao and Cosmage were living in happiness, freedom and bliss until the arrival of the Commandant Letambot who flew on it the French tricolour. Soon the island was thrown open to "soldiers, colonists, officials, photographers, commercial travellers, botanists, electricians, policemen."<sup>142</sup> The trees, the birds and the animals disappeared and the clear blue sky was hidden from sight by the smoke of the factories. Happiness vanished too. Macao and Cosmage left the island "to seek some corner which civilization had not yet blessed."<sup>143</sup> And this was the message of the little book for Forster in the post-war world of the twenties:

"O beautiful book! O Wisest of books! What help do you bring after all? You only underline the inevitable. As the author remarks, 'Enfant, Macao etait sage, mais le gouverneur avait raison?' But your scarlet birds, your purple precipices and white ponds, are part of a dream from which humanity will never awake. In the heart of each man there is contrived, by desperate devices, a magical island such as yours. We place it in the past or the future for safety, for we dare not locate it in the present, because of the Commandant Letambot, who sails upon every sea. We call it a memory or a vision to lend it solidity, but it is neither really; it is the outcome of our sadness, and of our disgust with the world that we have made."<sup>144</sup>

His overall interpretation of history is pessimistic. I think one can form a fairly accurate idea of his interpretation by examining what he says about the interpretation of history by others. An overall interpretation of history is somehow connected with the problem of solving the riddle of the universe and the meaning of life. Historical evidence is very often brought

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142. Abinger Harvest, London, 1936, p.37.

143. *Ibid*, p.37.

144. *Ibid*, pp.37-38.

forward in support of our statements about the future as well. Let us examine what Forster says about Dante, H.G. Wells and Yeats, especially about their sense of history. Dante as a prophet had the advantage of believing in God.

"He who wishes to make a statement about the future that shall be these three things, complete, optimistic, convincing - he must believe in God. 'News from Nowhere', to take one example, is optimistic and convincing, but it is incomplete; it has to reject such human emotions as would clash with Eternal Life beside the Upper Thames. 'L'Isle des Pengouins', on the other hand, rejects nothing and is wholly convincing; but its conclusions are pessimistic."<sup>145</sup>

Forster has renounced his faith in God and that partly accounts for his pessimism. He found H.G. Wells, on the other hand unconvincing:

"The globe he describes, refuses to evolve into the footstool he anticipates. His method is scientific, his enthusiasms are for science, but his final dedication would only be credible if stated transcendently.

And our singing shall build  
In the void's loose field

A world for the spirit of Wisdom to wield.  
Perhaps our singing will. But our acts and the observable acts of our neighbours will not. They build civilization ...

Unless we can show a divine and increasing support for all that makes for righteousness, a sort of heavenly bonus on our better deeds, unless we can show with the Christian that a man shall see God, the precious things on earth must obey the same stern and unsympathetic law that has ruled them in the past. Precious they are, and if an individual has the straight chance of dying for them and takes it, he has been lucky. But they are childless, that is their law. History reveals evolution, not progress."<sup>146</sup>

He regarded Yeats's interpretation as very personal; his symbols and imagery derived from a 'private invention of his own called the Great Wheel'. Forster regarded Yeats a great poet and also one who 'lived poetry' but there were also elements in his

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145. "Mr. Wells' "Outline". Review of The Outline of History, Vol. 2, by H.G. Wells. Athenaeum, 19 November, 1920, (pp.690-691) P.690.

146. Ibid, p.690.

life and poetry which he described as 'bunkum'.

"The epoch of Christianity and the rocking cradle is to be succeeded by the epoch of mercilessness and roughness, slouching in their turn towards their incarnation. That is the conception, and it is a fine one. But the expression 'Spiritus Mundi' provides an example of what I have ventured to call Yeats' bunkum. It alludes to a theory of the universe and of history which he worked out elsewhere in detail, the theory or rather the doctrine of the Great Wheel. This doctrine (he asserted) he discovered in a book which he never produced, and it was confirmed by a medium. It entailed twenty-eight cycles, each for one day of the lunar month, and people took their characteristics from the cycle in which they were born."<sup>147</sup>

Forster believed in the freedom of the individual, in the freedom of his will and hoped that man could create a better world than the one we are living in, though there are threats of destruction of all that is precious and valuable in civilization. If one believes that man is living under a constant threat and that his very existence is in danger and that no civilization can guarantee its own security, one is likely to behave in a queer way. Very small joys and pleasures of life begin to assume large proportions and one tends to behave as if the blow might come any time. Although some might find it difficult to enjoy life if they are worried by the future of mankind all the time. Forster's own values may have their appeal only if they are looked at in the context of this situation we find ourselves in. We are living in an age of worries.

"Disillusion and distrust of problems began back in the 'twenties - the most clear-sighted decade of our own half century. It realised that nothing had been solved, and that so-called solutions were hydras who produced more heads than had been decapitated. It turned instead to curiosity, to pleasure, and to compassion - the shaky tripod upon which indeed any future civilization will have

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147. "An Indian on W.B. Yeats'. Review, broadcast in the Indian Service, of The Development of William Butler Yeats, by V.K. Narayana Menon, Listener, 24 December, 1942; p.824.

to rest. Today the situation foreseen by it has occurred. Problems have disappeared, or have retreated to platforms, and worries have taken their place. Today more and more people realize that the world we are pleased to call 'ours' has passed out of our control, and that the human race may not be destroyed, it is powerless to avert its own destruction."<sup>148</sup>

He gave a reassessment of his values in an interview to David Jones recorded for television January 1, 1959.

"I suppose such views and beliefs that I have, have come out incidentally in my books ... And any one who has cared to read my books will see what value I attach to personal relationships and to tolerance and, I may add, to pleasure. Pleasure one is not supposed to talk about in public however much one enjoys it in private. But if I have had any influence I should be very glad that it had induced people to enjoy this wonderful world into which we are born, and of course to help others to enjoy it too. Coming down to people I have already indicated the kind of people I like - the people who are cheerful, courageous, brave, and tolerant - people who can put themselves in another person's place and not do harm because they know how much it hurts to be hurt. Oh yes, and gaiety I like - and earnestness of purpose provided it is properly controlled ... but when I think of the future I am most terribly worried about it. But I think it is ... it is frightfully difficult. One has two duties - to be worried and not to be worried. And not to be worried is very important because you cannot enjoy or understand the world around you if you are in a fuss all the time. But I think the thing is very grim and I see no escape through further scientific discoveries, or, to put it more accurately, the only way science can help us in the future is psychologically. Not physically. It has gone far too far in the physical direction. It is the old phrase - we must have a change of heart. And I think that can be expressed in scientific terms, and that is by altering ourselves and helping others to alter that we may get through the frightful crisis that has been induced by our own ingenuity."<sup>149</sup>

Here is proportion and harmony between pessimism and optimism: to worry and not to worry, to hope and despair but nothing in excess. But will all of these values of Forster's and the values of other writers survive the passage of time? And if time changes

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148. "This Worrying World:" Review of The American Earthquake, by Edmund Wilson, and Man's Western Quest by Denis de Rougemont and The Question by Henri Alleg, Listener, 22 May, 1958, p.865.

149. "E.M. Forster on His Life and His Books:" An interview recorded for television, by David Jones, Listener, 1 January, 1959, pp.11-12.

all and everything and if the values of today are the nothing of tomorrow why attach any value to anything at all. This is the line of argument which inescapably leads to complete and total negation. E.M. Forster explores this inevitable position of his historical views in A Passage to India. It is difficult to live after one has experienced negation, when everything exists and nothing has value. Forster allows mercifully Mrs. Moore to phase out of India and then die in the Indian ocean on her way home. Even divine sanction and holiness fail to give values the ability to survive the passage of time:

"The passage of time has almost expelled both Jehovah and Buddha from their holy places; almost, but not quite - the parallel is curious here. The glory is gone from Mount Moriah, but the rock where Abraham offered Isaac remains, and the Dome of the Rock covers it, a provocative extinguisher, which Zionists would probably remove. The glory is also gone from Buddh-Gaya, where Buddha obtained enlightenment, but a small temple exists, where he is adored by favour of the British Government in a half-hearted fashion. Buddh-Gaya is a sunken area; standing on its edge one looks down on a tangle of paths and votive bells. No Indians worship there, for Buddhism has died out of India, in accordance with its own law. But pilgrims from Thibet sometimes light lamps so that the floor of the temple looks like a lake of fire and streams of hot air agitate the dirty banners above the image. Behind the temple is a neglected tree, descendent of the Bo tree where Buddha sat and struggled with evil until "the different regions of the sky grew clear, the moon shown forth, showers of flowers fell down from the sky upon the earth, and the night gleamed like a spotless maiden." Where are those Powers? "Rams and righteousness." thunders Jehovah. Where is that righteousness? "Nothing in excess", murmured Athene to them both, and disappeared more completely than either ... And amid the contradictory echoes humanity moves forward, stumbling and jibbing upon its own painful road, and obstinately refusing to accept salvation."150

When the soul is weary, sad and bruised it finds soothing solitude in 'a magical island', dormant in the heart of each man, and which is like that of Macao and Cosmage; creative solitude in the Ivory Towers and contemplative solitude in Temples. As

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150. "Jehovah, Buddha and the Greeks." Athenaeum, 4 June 1920, pp.730-731.

Indian architecture Forster had known Hindu temples for a long time before he came to find their real meaning and message. It is significant to know that the Hindu temple acquired symbolic meanings for him in relation to his own 'experiences and needs'. Forster has written three different articles on the Hindu Temple at different times; the first and the earliest called simply "The Temple", a review of some official Indian archaeological publications, appeared in The Athenaeum on 26 September 1919; the second called "The Individual and His God" was a "broadcast talk in the overseas service of the B.B.C. on 22 November 1940 on the photographic exhibition of Indian art at the Warburg Institute, London, and was published in the Listener on December 5, 1940;" The third was called "The World Mountain", a review of The Art of India by Stella Kramrisch, published in the Listener on 2 December, 1954.

In the first he approaches the temple as architecture, especially the ancient Indian. He relates his own experience of visits to temples. The venture of visiting a temple is shrouded in the usual uncertainty of India.

"Ought we not to start? The elephant must be waiting."  
 "There is no necessity. Elephants sometimes wait four hours."  
 "But the temple is far."  
 "Oh no, there are thirty of them."  
 "Thirty temples! Are they far?"  
 "No, no, no, not at all - fifteen really, but much jungle; fifteen to come and fifteen to go."  
 "Fifteen of what?"  
 "Fifteen all."<sup>151</sup>

It is difficult to get plain answers to plain questions in India; cultural differences make communication difficult between an English man and an Indian.

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151. "The Temple". Athenaeum, 26 September 1919, p.947.

"After such preparations, and in such a spirit the Temple used to be attacked; and came off victorious. Whether it was one or fifteen or thirty, or thirty miles off, or thirty miles of temples, was never proved, because the elephant misunderstood, or plans changed, or tiffin was too delicious. Evening fell, and the pale blue dome of the sky was corniced with purple where it touched the trees. 'It will now be too late for the temple.' So it keeps its secret in some stony gorge or field of tough grass, or, more triumphant still, in the land beyond either, where a mile and an elephant are identical and everything is nothing."152

However, the temples could not keep their secrets from the Anglo-Indian officials in the Archaeology Department who refused to be satisfied by evasive answers to plain questions, who cleared the jungle and succeeded in getting the temples to reply to questions about the architecture. This official attitude is satirized by Forster because it does not put one in the right relation of understanding and knowing.

"Prevarication is useless. It is no use saying: 'I am a temple no longer. No man, not even a God, has visited me for a thousand million years.' Once a temple, always a temple; and in any case the statement is unhistorical. Pointing with his switch, the official mutters: 'Clear away those custard apples so that we can have a look at the beastly thing ... Seventeenth-century Vishnavite! Exactly. And I was told it was Jain .... And look here: the women are not to pat cow-dung on it. If they do they'll get fined.' He rides on, and the Temple is cleared up, and is photographed, looking sulky and spruce."153

The Temple could not escape with evasiveness and prevarication and had to answer questions which helped in compiling dull information about its architectural aspects. The evasiveness of the Indian mind, on the other hand, baffled the English; they could never get round or over it; they were simply helpless. This is brought out in the confrontation between Fielding and Professor Godbole, but more of it later. Forster found the official description of

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152. Ibid, p.947.

153. Ibid, p.947.

the Hindu temples very dull, matter-of-fact and very unimaginative.

"To the north of Navil Kuriki is a fine mastikal containing figures of husband and wife, the latter holding a mirror in the left hand and a lime between the thumb and forefinger of the right-hand. In some cases flames are shown as issuing from the head of the female figure, and the couple are represented as dancing as an indication of their joy after coming together in Heaven."<sup>154</sup>

As with everything in India something went wrong with archaeology as well.

"At all events, as one reads these Reports, one does miss the high consecrated fervour that inspires similar publications about Egypt and Greece. The Anglo-Indian officials seem to get their teeth and get through the mirrors and the limes in Nam Jappa's backyard as quick as they can. It's a job that's got to be done, like any other job."<sup>155</sup>

The Temple failed to inspire the Western imagination; to be more precise, the official Anglo-Indian imagination. It is odious and it refuses to influence the mind in a gracious way and set it on the path to Truth.

"It is unaccommodating, it rejects every human grace, its jokes are ill-bred, its fair ladies are fat, it ministers neither to the sense of beauty nor to the sense of time, and it is discontented with its own material."<sup>156</sup>

In spite of all this it is unforgettable. It stays in the mind and like Mrs. Moore's echo it is difficult to get rid of; herein lies its value and significance. It helps when it is needed.

"When we tire of being pleased and of being improved, and of the other gymnastics of the West, and care, or think we care, for Truth alone; then the Indian Temple exerts its power, and beckons down absurd or detestable victory to an exit unknown to the Parthenon."<sup>157</sup>

Another important secret of the Temple was revealed to him when he experienced great joy and relief on a visit to a photographic exhibition of Indian temples during the 'dead of the war night'.

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154. Ibid, p.947.

155. Ibid, p.947.

156. Ibid, p.947.

157. Ibid, p.947.

The exhibition was held at the Warburg Institute. Forster was tired of the war, politics and the talk of the community-spirit. Democracy was at war with Fascism and to fight this war efficiently the democratic society allowed itself to be regimented like a totalitarian one. The individual was forgotten in the concern for the survival of the community. The exhibition inspired Forster with hope. The temple held out a promise for those who were concerned about the survival of individualism. It was the dark interior above all which offered comfort to the weary spirit because there it was alone with God.

"Today one hears of nothing but the community-spirit. It is boosted in season and out. I weary of it, and it was with relief and joy that I saw these great temples where the individual is at the last resort alone with his God, buried in the depths of the world-mountain. I came away feeling not only that Hindu art is a remarkable achievement - that I had always realized - but that it was an achievement that I might interpret in view of my own experiences and needs ... thinking, 'Yes the people who built these temples, the people who planned Khajraho and Orissa and Madura - knew about that. They belonged to another civilization, but they knew, they knew that the community cannot satisfy the human spirit.'"<sup>158</sup>

Forster might be misunderstood here, that the community-spirit has no purpose or value. Because of the war almost all those activities of the community which are to satisfy the human spirit were suspended or directed to boost up the war effort. Forster is fond of music; he used to attend concerts and festivals. Now music is a community activity but one which satisfies the human spirit if nobly inspired; but all music became patriotic and martial during the war. The exhibition had nothing to do with war. It was organized by Dr. Stella Kramrisch and Dr. Saxel. Dr. Kramrisch later published a book on The Art of

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158. "The Individual and His God." Listener, 5 December 1940, pp.801-802.

India in 1954, which Forster reviewed for the Listener. In his review Forster acknowledged his debt to Dr. Kramrisch for discovering for him the secrets of the temple when he most needed them.

"Briefly she showed me the temple as the World Mountain on whose exterior is displayed life in all its forms, life human and superhuman and subhuman and animal, life tragic and cheerful, cruel and kind, seemly and obscene, all crowned at the mountain's summit by the sun. And in the interior of the mountain she revealed a tiny cavity, a central cell, where, in the heart of the world's complexity, the individual could be alone with his God. Hinduism ... its main concern is the individual and his relation to reality, and however much it wanders over the surface of the world mountain it returns at last to the mountain's heart. This happens to appeal to me. This used to help me in bombed London ... I reached the Hindu temple, and there, and in the interpretation thereof, I found peace and strength."<sup>159</sup>

Though it took him long to understand the true significance of the Hindu Temple, it was not difficult for him to grasp the religious essence of Hinduism. His own emancipation from Christian bias helped towards an understanding attitude to it. His views on this subject he expressed in his review of The Gods of India by E.O. Martin published in The New Weekly on May 30, 1914.

Martin was a missionary and had failed to understand Hinduism. One reason, perhaps, was the fact that Martin approached it through its mythology which always proves a difficult barrier for the Western mind to overcome. Martin's book was on Hindu mythology, and Forster considered it 'a better guide' for the beginner, as it drew freely from sacred books as well as modern authorities, and in addition to that, contained photographic illustrations. It is the moral consciousness of Martin which intervenes to comment

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159. "The World Mountain:" Listener, 2 December, 1954, pp.977-978.

adversely.

"But, naturally enough, he comments. Being a missionary he could scarcely do otherwise, and though anxious to be fair to the 'gods and goddesses', his comments are naturally scathing. Deity after deity is summoned before the tribunal of Wesleyanism, and dismissed with no uncertain voice. Krishna stole butter as a baby and worse later. Juggernath is a goggle-eyed cog. Brahma 'has an unenviable moral record', and his head was once cut off by the thumbnail of Siva's left hand. 'What a scene is this for the wonder of the World'. Mr. Martin cries. Some goddesses are satanic, like Kali, others corrupt, like Radha ... Hinduism is not what he can regard as 'really religion', and his hatred of it is inevitable. Good and evil are blurred. The benevolent wife of Siva assumes, as Durga, the name of the demon she conquers, and, as Kali, his attributes. Demons, by their holiness and austerities, can acquire power over the gods, and are only kept out of heaven by a trick. Sex is worshipped symbolically in Saivism and actually in some Sakti-rites. The divine is so confounded with the earthly that anyone or anything is part of God. In this chaos, where shall a man find guidance? What promise does he receive?"<sup>160</sup>

Protestant Christianity aims at good conduct; it has an ethical code 'applicable to daily life', a code sanctioned by the divine.

"The code is so spiritual and lofty, and contains such frequent references to the Unseen, that few of its adherents realise it only expresses half of the religious idea. The other half is expressed in the creed of the Hindus."<sup>161</sup>

It would not have been possible for Forster to have extracted this idea from the bewildering confusions presented by Hinduism to an outsider if it had not allowed freedom of approach from different angles.

"Hinduism, so solid from a distance, is riven into sects and clans, which radiate and join, and change their names according to the aspect from which they are approached."  
(A Passage to India, P.304).

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160. "The Gods of India:" New Weekly, 30 May 1914, Vol. 1, P.338.  
A Review of E.O. Martin's The Gods of India.

161. Ibid, P.338.

Sectarian differences are not the result of theological differences or polemics; because there is no theology and consequently no polemics in Hinduism.

"It is rather difficult for Europeans, bearing in mind the religious history of Europe to understand that sectarian differences have never had quite the same significance in India as that which commonly obtains in Europe. It would hardly occur to an Indian who is a devotee of Vishnu to believe that his neighbour, who worships Siva, is on that account a heretic and doomed to everlasting perdition. Vishnu is to him that aspect of the One supreme which is most favourable for himself, his family, his caste, or his race; therefore for his worldly and spiritual advantage he will concentrate his thoughts upon that aspect. Vishnu for him becomes also Siva, Brahma, and Parameshwar - the Lord of all; but he will not quarrel with his neighbour because he wishes to ascribe all the powers of the supreme Deity to Siva, on any other aspect of the one."<sup>162</sup>

The Hindu aims at vision and wants to become God. The unseen is always there around him.

"He has a constant sense of the Unseen - of the power behind if he is philosopher, and he feels that this tangible world, with its chatter of right and wrong, subserves the intangible."<sup>163</sup>

The problem of conduct is handled differently by the Hindus. It is neither important nor easy to separate good from evil and divide humanity into sheep and goats. After the panic of Adela in the Caves, the Anglo-Indians are in no doubt that Aziz is a goat; his friends, including Mr. Fielding, regard him a sheep. But Professor Godbole is not so sure. Mr. Fielding asks a plain question and he expects a plain answer to it from Professor Godbole. His efforts are useless because he is encountering the evasiveness of the Hindu mind.

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162. E.B. Havell: The Ideals of Indian Art, London, 1920, PP.11-12.

163. "The Gods of India". Review of The Gods of India, by E.O. Martin: New Weekly, 30 May, 1914, Vol. 1, P.338.

"Ah, that is rather a different question from your previous one, and also more difficult: I mean difficult in our philosophy. Dr. Aziz is a most worthy young man, I have a great regard for him; but I think you are asking me whether the individual can commit good actions or evil actions, and that is rather difficult for us ... Because nothing can be performed in isolation. All perform a good action, when one is performed, and when an evil action is performed, all perform it, ... I am informed that a highly esteemed English lady is now seriously ill in consequence. My answer to that is this: that action was performed by Dr. Aziz ... It was performed by the guide ... It was performed by you ... It was performed by me ... And by my students. It was even performed by the lady herself. When evil occurs, it expresses the whole of the Universe. Similarly when good occurs ... We are discussing good and evil. Suffering is merely a matter for the individual. If a young lady has sunstroke, that is a matter of no significance to the universe. Oh no, not at all, oh no, not the least. It is an isolated matter, it only concerns herself. If she thought her head did not ache, she would not be ill, and that would end it. But it is far otherwise in the case of good and evil. They are not what we think them, they are what they are, and each of us has contributed to both ... Good and evil are different, as their names imply. But, in my own humble opinion, they are both of them aspects of my Lord. He is present in the one, absent in the other, and the difference between presence and absence is great, as great as my feeble mind can grasp. Yet absence implies presence, absence is not non-existence." (PP.185-186).

Fielding's question remains unanswered, after all. Conduct does not matter; good actions may bring release from suffering or cause happiness and bad actions bring misery but the goal is to find truth and Reality. A Hindu "will realize the universe as soon as he realises himself, and pity, courage, reliability, etc., may help him or may hinder him in his quest; it depends. The deities may help him, or they may mislead, like the shadows of earth; it depends, depends on the step he has taken just before."<sup>164</sup> And the paths that lead to the Absolute, the Infinite, are many. "India has always taught that Truth is absolute, but there are many ways of realizing it."<sup>165</sup>

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164. Ibid, P.338.

165. E.B. Havell, The Ideals of Indian Art, London, 1920, P.12.

Forster once met a holy man at Benares who showed him a picture of the human frame, divided into several parts in a strange way.

"God was in the brain, the heart was a folded flower. Yoga unfolded the flower, and then the soul could set out on its quest of God. Two roads lay open to it. It could either proceed directly, by the spinal cord, or indirectly through one of the Hindu deities who were dispersed about the body. When asked which road was the best, the Holy man replied, "That by the spinal cord is quicker, but those who take it see nothing, hear nothing, feel nothing of the world. Whereas those who proceed through some deity can profit by - 'he pointed to the river, the temples, the sky, and added, 'That is why I worship Siva'. But Siva was not the goal."<sup>166</sup>

But it is above all the paradoxical nature of Hinduism which appealed to E.M. Forster. He reviewed two books for the Daily News and Leader of April 30, 1915 under the heading Mission of Hinduism. One of these books was Footfalls of Indian History by Sister Nivedita (Margaret E. Noble) and the other was Hinduism in Europe and America by Elizabeth A. Reed. Sister Nivedita looked upon India as light and history as the most satisfactory path to India. She also regarded India as a unity; India "once was, still certainly is, and in the future visibly shall be, one, and shall give light to those who sit in comparative darkness. Magadha (the modern Behar) is the centre. There over two thousand years ago, the great Gupta Empire arose, and there Buddha taught and attained renunciation. Buddha unified Hinduism. He did not generate a new religion, as Christendom supposes. He was a preacher, like Rama Krishna in the nineteenth century; after his death India becomes spiritually, one;

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166. "The Gods of India:" New Weekly, 30 May 1914, Vol. 1. P.338.

architecturally, that unity is expressed in the Ajanta and the Elephanta caves. The book ... emphasizes this supposed unity of India."<sup>167</sup>

Forster did not agree with this; India was not one but many and she had different faces. The inclusiveness of Hinduism emphasizes the fact that we are all different.

"But it also emphasizes the other side of the human paradox - the fact that we are all the same; stripped of its local trappings, of its hundred handed Gods, and monkeys and bulls and snakes, and Twice-born, it preaches with intense conviction and passion the doctrine of unity. It believes in caste, it believes in Pantheism also, and these two contradictory beliefs do really correspond to two contradictory emotions that each of us can feel, namely, 'I am different from everybody else', and 'I am the same as everybody else'. The historical unity that Sister Nivedita derives - not very convincingly - from ancient Magudha, prefigures a spiritual unity in which all races and sex shall one day be merged."<sup>168</sup>

This unity is symbolized in A Passage to India in the first chapter by the overarching sky. The theme of the novel is developed in the description of Chandrapore, which is "edged rather than washed by the river Ganges, it trails for a couple of miles along the bank, scarcely distinguishable from the rubbish it deposits so freely. There are no bathing-steps on the river front, as the Ganges happens not to be holy here; indeed there is no river front, and bazaars shut out the wide and shifting panorama of the stream. The streets are mean, the temples ineffective." (P.9) The few fine houses are hidden in gardens; there is no decoration and no art and "the very wood seems made of mud, the inhabitants of mud moving. So abased, so monotonous is everything that meets the eye, that when the Ganges comes down

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167. "The Mission of Hinduism", Daily News and Leader, 30 April 1915, P.7.

168. Ibid, P.7.

it might be expected to wash the excrescence back into the soil. Houses do fall, people are drowned and left rotting, but the general outline of the town persists, swelling here, shrinking there, like some low but indestructible form of life." (P.9). From a different angle the same city appears as a 'city of gardens'.

"... a tropical pleasaunce washed by a noble river. The toddy palms and neem trees and mangoes and pekul that were hidden behind the bazaars now become visible and in their turn hide the bazaars. They rise from the gardens where ancient tanks nourish them, they burst out of stifling purlieus and unconsidered temples. Seeking light and air, and endowed with more strength than man or his works, they soar above the lower deposit to greet one another with branches and beckoning leaves, and to build a city for the birds." (P.10).

This is a prospect which hides from the view the filth, the confusion and ugliness; a romantic illusion hiding reality. It is also a view from the civil station and symbolizes the Anglo-Indians attempt at maintaining a romantic illusion while in India in order not to see human misery. The civil station itself

"provokes no emotion. It charms not, neither does it repel. It is sensibly planned, with a red-brick club on its brow, and further back a grocer's and a cemetery, and the bungalows are disposed along roads that intersect at right-angles. It has nothing hideous in it, and only the view is beautiful; it shares nothing with the city except the over-arching sky." (P.10).

It is a very apt description of the people dwelling there. They are cold and orderly people with developed minds but undeveloped hearts. The club-on-the-brow symbolizes Sawston-in-India. The Europeans share nothing with the inhabitants of the city except common humanity or the spiritual unity of mankind, a fact which is as remote from their consciousness as the 'over-arching sky' from the earth. The novel is the development of

this opening theme which has been so masterfully introduced and elaborated in the description of the city.

"The theme which this book hammers home is that for all our differences, we are in fact one. There is no getting out of this, our common boat. Not only are we related, each to each, as persons, but we partake also of the earth, sky, and waters, of mud, temples and bacteria; of oranges, crystals, and birds - and of the unseen as well. Physically of one environment, we are also psychically one, and it is reason's denial of our commonality, the repression of that participation mystique, which has caused man to rule his Indias and himself with such futility and blindness - and has in our era occasionally shown us the shadow incarnate as a Hitler or a Stalin. Without preaching, the novel asks us to be responsible, to integrate ourselves, to link reason and instinct, to base our civilized arrangements on what the human race has in common instead of on what rives it into races, classes, religions, sexes, and divided personalities."<sup>169</sup>

The sky takes in and includes all and everything in its over arching span; it can give beauty, glory and benediction to the earth.

"The sky can do this because it is so strong and so enormous. Strength comes from the sun, infused in it daily, size from the prostrate earth." (P.11).

Yes, the sky can do this; but it is so far away that "the distance between the vault and them (the stars) is as nothing to the distance behind them, and that farther distance, though beyond colour last freed itself from blue." (PP.10-11) All the strife and struggle of life, the hurry and the worry of it, anger, jealousy, hatred, cities, rivers, bridges, wars and battles all these along with the differences of class, race, religion and sex are reduced to nothingness when viewed from the immense distance of the sky. Forster's reaction to a model of the Earth in space which he observed in the Astronomical section of the Paris

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169. Wilfred Stone; The Cave and the Mountain, London, 1966, PP.339-340.

Exhibition 1937 is very interesting as it provides a dimension in space to life on earth as we know and experience it; the distance reduces in size and importance our world and everything on it.

The model "considers the convenience of the observer, as an exhibit should. Staged in a solemn alcove, against a background of lamp-super-black, it preens its contours eternally, that is to say from opening to closing time, and allows us to see our home as others would see it, were there others who could see. Its colouring, its general appearance, accord with the latest deductions. The result is surprising. For not France, not even Europe, is visible. There are great marks on the surface of the model, but they represent clouds and snows, not continents and seas. No doubt the skilled observer could detect some underlying fussiness, and inferior civilization, but the average voyager through space would only notice our clouds and our snows; they strike the eye best. Natural boundaries, guns in action, beautiful women, pipe-lines - at a little distance they all wear the same veil. Sir Malcolm Campbell beats his own record till he sees his own back, Mr. Jack Hulbert cracks still cleaner jokes, forty thousand monkeys are born in Brazil and fifty thousand Italians in Abyssinia, the Palace of the Soviets rises even higher than had been planned, Lord Baden-Powell holds a yet longer Jamboree, but all these exercises and the areas where they occur remain hidden away under an external shimmer."<sup>170</sup>

We are plunged straight into the life of Chandrapore in the second chapter. There is an impression of fellow-feeling, humour and the goodness of life in the conversation between the Muslim friends of Dr. Aziz. One has the impression, and I think it is intentionally conveyed by the author that here are some Indians who have succeeded in making their own social life complete and happy without Anglo-India. The conversation becomes a serious discussion about whether it is possible to be friends with an Englishman. Hamidullah has been educated at Cambridge and has enjoyed the friendship of the English there. It is possible to

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170. "The Last Parade." Two Cheers for Democracy, London, 1951, P.15.

be friends with them in their home, England, but not in India. Something happens to the English in India which makes them socially difficult for the Indians.

"They all become exactly the same, not worse, not better. I give any Englishman two years, be he Turton or Burton. It is only the difference of a letter. And I give any English woman six months. All are exactly alike." (P.13)

The general impression is that of a happy, contented people who would have been happier if treated with a little kindness by the Turtons and the Burtons. Their grievances are social. Aziz can find happiness in the company of his friends and enjoy smoking his hookah.

"It was delicious. He lay in a trance, sensuous but healthy through which the talk of the two others did not seem particularly sad ... Delicious indeed to be on the broad verandah with the moon rising in front and the servants preparing dinner behind, and no trouble happening." (P.12)

Forster discovered at Aurangabad that the Indians have a greater capacity for friendship which enables them to overcome social difficulties. Here they are presented as having succeeded in happy friendship which is not to be disturbed by sad thoughts of whether or not one can be friends with an Englishman.

"Why talk about the English? Brrr...! Why be either friends with the fellows or not friends? Let us shut them out and be jolly. Queen Victoria and Mrs. Bannister were the only exceptions, and they're dead." (P.14).

When the others are led to politics, which is inevitable in India, Aziz goes into the garden where the "trees smelt sweet - green blossomed champaks - and scraps of Persian poetry came into his head." His friends, the garden, the sweet-smelling trees, the moon, the dinner, and the jolly hookah, all these put him in

his best mood and Aziz

"began quoting poetry, Persian, Urdu, a little Arabic. His memory was good, and for so young a man he had read largely; the themes he preferred were the decay of Islam and the brevity of love. They listened delighted, for they took the public view of poetry, not the private which obtains in England. It never bored them to hear words, words; they breathed them with the cool night air, never stopping to analyse; the name of the poet, Hafiz, Hali, Iqbal, was sufficient guarantee. India - a hundred Indias - whispered outside beneath the indifferent moon, but for the time India seemed one and their own, and they regained their departed greatness by hearing its departure lamented, they felt again because reminded that youth must fly." (P.17).

Aziz has been conceived in the spirit of the Urdu literature of the period following the gloomy incidents of 1857. The poets of Delhi and Lucknow saw the glory of the Mogul Empire crumble to pieces and vanish from sight. The last Mogul king, Bahadur Shah Zafar was exiled into Rangoon. He himself was a poet more than a king and his poetry reflects this pathos very strongly. The fortunes of the poets declined as the Courts that offered them patronage disappeared. It was natural that literature should reflect this gloomy and sad period. This kind of literature, if not exclusively, is very largely Muslim. Pathos became the dominant characteristic of poetry. The decline of the Ottoman Empire to which the sympathies of the Indian Muslims were transferred when the Mogul Empire fell prolonged this phase into the twentieth century. The Khilafat movement sprang as a result of it. Aziz reflects in his complex character all these feelings and sympathies. He is an offspring of the aspirations of Muslim India. It was in the educated Muslims that these feelings were crystallized and Aligarh Muslim University played an important role in it.

"Moreover ... Turkey has a special appeal to him (the Indian Muslim) as the one power surviving from a great past, the appeal of pathos, so overwhelming to an oriental, as a glance at his literature will show."<sup>171</sup>

But pathos is not a natural characteristic of all oriental literature. It only reflected sentiments and feelings which were connected with political and historical events. Later when Lahore became the cultural centre of the Muslims and politically they became conscious of themselves as a separate nation a different note was struck in poetry. Iqbal was the poet of this new Era. Forster knew about this new trend. Islam becomes a source of inspiration to fight for freedom and liberty; courage, determination, faith, unity and discipline, these begin to dominate the new poetry and the thoughts of the Muslims.

"All the same he (Iqbal) was a fighter. He believed in the Self - the Self as a fighting unit - and his philosophy is not an inquiry into truth but a recommendation as to how the fight should be carried on. Fight we must, for man is the vice-regent of God upon earth. We must fortify our personalities. We must be hard. We must always be in a state of tension and try to be supermen."<sup>172</sup>

Aziz is historically the child of the spirit of the dark period; but it does not make him a pessimist; because his own culture and civilization retained their identity through the changing political conditions. Social conditions had remained unchanged as the English failed to make a great social and cultural impact on the life of the Indians. Here customs, manners and gestures were not completely Westernized. In Africa, on the other hand, the social and cultural impact was greater and more violent; a casual glance at African literature will convince

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171. See "India and the Turk": Nation and Athenaeum, 30 September 1922, PP.844-845.

172. 'Mohammad Iqbal' in Two Cheers for Democracy, London, 1951, P.296.

one of this fact. Aziz feels a kind of depression stealing on him as he enters the civil station; its "roads, named after victorious generals and intersecting at right angles, were symbolic of the net Great Britain had thrown over India." (P.18) He does not understand the gestures and manners of the Anglo-Indians; they are aloof, cold and snobbish; they have no grace and kindness and he is "happy to shake the dust of Anglo-India off his feet! To escape from the net and be back among manners and gestures that he knew!" (P.20) Social changes were to follow later, but as a result of different forces coming into the wake of Indian Nationalism. Revivalist movements set in a new pride in the indigenous cultures.

"The Indian has taken up a new attitude. Ten or fifteen years ago he would have welcomed attention, not only because the Englishmen in India had power, but because the etiquette and customs of the West, his inevitable destiny, were new to him and he needed a sympathetic introducer. He has never been introduced to the West in a social sense, as to a possible friend. We have thrown grammars and neck ties at him, and smiled when he put them on wrongly - that is all."<sup>173</sup>

Though Aziz wears Western clothes and speaks good English, his life, on the social level, remains completely oriental; his friends are Indians and the women are still behind the purdah.<sup>174</sup>

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173. "Reflections in India, 1: Too Late?" Nation and Athenaeum, 21 January, 1922, PP.614-615.

174. On his last visit to India in 1945 Forster noticed a great social change in India; that is, the coming out of women from behind the purdah "It struck me particularly in cities which are largely Moslem, such as Lahore and Hyderabad, where women once kept rigidly behind the veil. I have been in my life three times to Hyderabad, some of my happiest Indian days were spent there, so I have been able to trace this change. My first visit was in 1912 and then I saw scarcely any Indian woman. My second visit was in 1921, when I was admitted into some family circles, and saw a good deal of what may be called 'semi-purdah' - ladies coming out into company, but not coming avowedly, and retiring at any moment behind the veil if they felt disposed to do so. Today, purdah has broken down at Hyderabad, except among the most

Begum Hamidulla, a distant aunt of Aziz complains of a family circumcision which has not been celebrated with adequate pomp. Circumcision and marriage, such are the topics of conversation behind the purdah and naturally Aziz is asked when is he going to get married again. Aziz does not want to marry again. 'Once is enough'. His three children are happy with their grandmother. Begum Hamidullah's argument becomes a general one and <sup>she</sup> says that if men refused to marry what will become of all the marriageable daughters and sisters. The argument creates such an emotionally subtle situation that polygamy stands justified under certain social conditions. "While the tale was in progress, it convinced the two men, the tragedy seemed a slur on the whole community; better polygamy almost, than that a woman should die without the joys God has intended her to receive." (P.16). This is Forster's only venture behind the purdah in the novel and though very brief it gives a glimpse into the social life of the Indian Muslims. Forster knew his limitations in this respect and strictly confined himself to his knowledge.

"As if there were not puzzles enough, the women must needs come in, or rather fail to do<sup>so</sup> and introduce problems that would vanish if they could be<sup>seen</sup> or talked about freely.

174. (Contd.)

conservative, and at the receptions to which I went the women sometimes outnumbered the men. Since they kept to their lovely Indian saris, the effect was exquisite; it was a delight to look round at so much gracefulness and graciousness, at so many and such well-chosen colours ... our world does not go back, though whether it progresses God alone knows, and in India, as in the West, women will shortly have the same opportunities for good and for evil" (India Again: Two Cheers for Democracy, London 1951, P.329).

They are present in a vague sort of a way in the fields and railway stations. But what is going on inside that lump of dusty black cloth, that carriage whose shutters suggest that a commercial traveller lurks cocooned, that other part of the house? We have much information, from the Arabian Nights onward, but it arrives in so literary a condition that to me it never seems very real, and the Harem presents itself less a mystery than an emptiness. It seems the more unreal because the tiny glimpses I have had of domestic arrangements in those parts were not the least according to recipe, and nothing that I have read has illuminated them. No doubt they were exceptional; one spends one's life among exceptions. But these other gentlemen; who write with such profusion and aplomb - what exactly were their glimpses?"<sup>175</sup>

Oriental women were a mystery to Europeans and they have been a great source of romance and amours. The Arabian Nights was never treated as pure fantasy. Forster by analyzing the novels of Pickthall and Loti came to the conclusion that Eastern women, especially those living in the Harem, were far from being truly depicted in their novels.

"Perhaps a woman novelist may one day tell us what does happen in the Harem, for Mr. Pickthall and Loti leave us bewildered between them. But she must be a novelist, not a journalist or a missionary. Until she comes we must inflame ourselves at Goha le Simple, and wonder. And by the time she comes the Harem system may be only an historical curiosity."<sup>176</sup>

Ahmed Ali in his novel 'Twilight in Delhi' does take readers behind the purdah and shows them the life of Indian women; but his novel is dated as it deals with the decadent Muslim society of the post-1857 Delhi. More recently women short-story writers and novelists of the Indo-Pak sub-continent have written about their own society, but their stories and novels are chiefly in Urdu and are not available to Europeans. Khadija Mastoor, Hajra Masroor and Qurat-ul-ain-Haider are good women writers, who

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175. "Salute to the Orient" in Abinger Harvest, London, 1936, P.254.

176. Ibid, P.257.

understand the psychology of their own sisters better and can give a more revealing and intimate interpretation of their own customs and traditions. But the lifting of purdah has not changed the psychology of the oriental woman a great deal; she is still very much oriental, just as Aziz remains an oriental in spite of his necktie, felt hat, his English and his knowledge of the post-impressionists. Aziz is rooted in his own culture and has not completely alienated himself from his own society; but his compromises with Western civilization and his skill in surgery fail to win him the sympathies of the Anglo-Indians. Most probably he is the product of institutions like Aligarh Muslim University.

Those who were educated in institutions completely modelled after the public schools of England, where within a few years they were totally alienated from their own culture and society, were socially in their own community less fortunately placed. Of course they were at an advantage in the competitive examinations for the I.C.S., but they neither belonged by sympathies to their own society nor were they treated as socially their equals by the Anglo-Indians. They were a distinct class like the Eurasians. Such became the target of the keen satire of a great Urdu poet Akbar Allahabadi.

The Bridge-party is significant not for its satire alone which is here directed against the Anglo-Indians by a fellow Englishman; it could equally well be directed against the 'Aryan Brother in a topi and spats' by a poet like Akbar Allahabadi. Mrs. Moore and Miss Quested are not happy with the bridge-party.

It is not what they want. Ronny thinks it is picturesque. "No, it was not picturesque; the East abandoning its secular magnificance, was descending into a valley whose farther side no man can see." (PP.41-42.). This party, which is like many of its kind, organized in execution of a policy introduced from above to promote better social relations and opportunities for mutual understanding, shows all the more the gulf that exists between the rulers and the ruled. The Indians stand at one end of the tennis lawn and the English at the other. Besides being comic it raises the serious question of the adjustment of the East and West. The official nature of it gives it a sinister twist. The Indians and the English are not socially gathering together of their own free will as individuals. The authority of Turton has placed many Indians under obligation to him and they come to please him. The barristers and the Vakils come because of Ronny, the City Magistrate. The Nawab Bahadur, landowner, philanthropist and a man of learning and benevolence has his own reasons for coming. Because of his standing and influence in both the communities of the province his acceptance persuades even those others to come who have suspected the intentions of Turton. The English on the other hand suspect the educated Indians' loyalty. Besides this atmosphere of mutual suspicion, distrust and ill-will, lack of sympathy and kindness the Indians remain ill-at-ease. Their gestures, especially of the women, are uncertain.

"The shorter and the taller ladies both adjusted their saris, and smiled. There was a curious uncertainty about their gestures, as if they sought for a new formula which neither East nor West could provide. When Mrs. Bhattacharya's husband spoke, she turned away from him, but she did not mind

seeing the other men. Indeed all the ladies were uncertain, cowering, recovering, giggling, making tiny gestures of atonement or despair at all that was said, and alternately fondling the terrier or shrinking from him." (P.45).

Adela and Mrs. Moore both fail to make them talk. It is a struggle "against the echoing walls of their civility. Whatever she said produced a murmur of deprecation, varying into a murmur of concern when she dropped her pocket-handkerchief. She tried doing nothing, to see what that produced, and they too did nothing." (P.46). Mrs. Moore on an impulse tells Mrs. Bhattacharya that she wonders whether she would allow them to call on her some day. The conversation that follows makes everybody laugh and be happy for a moment but none knows that two civilizations have blundered; each understands, and therefore misunderstands the other in terms of her own culture.

"When?" she replied, inclining charmingly.

"Whenever is convenient."

"All days are convenient."

"Thursday ...."

"Most certainly."

"We shall enjoy it greatly, it would be a real pleasure.

What about the time?"

"All hours."

"Tell us which you would prefer. We're quite strangers to your country; we don't know when you have visitors," said Miss Quested.

Mrs. Bhattacharya seemed not to know either. Her gesture implied that she had known, since Thursdays began, that English ladies would come to see her on one of them, and so always stayed in. Everything pleased her, nothing surprised. She added, "We leave for Calcutta today."

"Oh, do you?" said Adela, not at first seeing the implication. Then she said, "Oh, but if you do we shall find you gone."

Mrs. Bhattacharya did not dispute it. But her husband called from the distance, "Yes, yes, you come to us Thursday."

"But you'll be in Calcutta."

"No, no, we shall not." He said something swiftly to his wife in Bengali. "We expect you Thursday."

"Thursday ...." the woman echoed.

"You can't have done such a dreadful thing as to put off going for our sake?" exclaimed Mrs. Moore.

"No, of course not, we are not such people." He was laughing.

"I believe that you have. Oh, please - it distresses me beyond words."

Everyone was laughing now, but with no suggestion that they had blundered." (Pp.46-47).

The Bhattacharyas do not send their carriage on Thursday morning; both Mrs. Moore and Adela think something must have been the reason and ~~which~~ they are anxious to find out. The same afternoon they go to Mr. Fielding's tea party, to which Aziz and Godbole are also invited. Aziz is already there. The ladies mention this incident to him and want an explanation. Aziz says that the Bhattacharyas were probably ashamed of their house. Fielding knows it was one of those incidents that better be left unexplained; because if you know, you know without an explanation. Through this incident Forster is projecting the differences that separates one culture from another on the level of verbal behaviour. That afternoon Aziz is in his best mood. Fielding's friendliness and informality have put him quite at ease and he is soaring high. His invitation to Adela, Mrs. Moore and Mr. Fielding to come and see him at his home is in harmony with his happy mood. He is in a giving mood. The invitation is true to the mood he is in. Adela accepts his words literally. The Bhattacharyas have simply wanted to be polite and please, not knowing that what they have said simply to please is a serious social commitment in the eyes of the English ladies. Aziz, too, makes a social commitment and unknowingly. He knows that his bungalow is a poor, "detestable shanty near a low bazaar. There was practically only one room in it and that infested with small black flies." When asked for his address he tries to divert the attention away from it by admiring Fielding's house and commenting on its style

of architecture. Soon he is in the world of fantasy and dispensing his own kind of justice:

"We punish no one, no one," he repeated, "and in the evening we will give a great banquet with a nautch and lovely girls shall shine on every side of the tank with fireworks in their hands, and all shall be feasting and happiness until the next day, when there shall be justice as before - fifty rupees, a hundred, a thousand - till peace comes." (P.75)

Aziz is creating an atmosphere, a world of his own and whatever he says is said in relation to that and his mood and not as verbal truth. He tells Mrs. Moore that the water she has seen by the mosque comes down and fills the tank in Mr. Fielding's garden. He is wrong about this as a depression and the whole city of Chandrapore lie between the mosque and Fielding's house and no Emperor could have caused it to flow uphill. But it does not matter. Aziz is uttering a mood and not giving accurate tourist information about the city.

"Ronny would have pulled him up, Turton would have wanted to pull him up but restrained himself. Fielding did not even want to pull him up; he had dulled his craving for verbal truth and cared chiefly for truth of mood. As for Miss Quested, she accepted everything Aziz said as true verbally. In her ignorance, she regarded him as 'India', and never surmised that his outlook was limited and his method inaccurate and that no one is India." (PP.75-76)

Later when Godbole promises to send some Indian sweets for them, Aziz, too, wants to send some but he regrets that he has no wife to cook them.

"They will give you a real Indian treat. Ah, in my poor position I can give you nothing." (P.78)

Adele reminds him that she does not know why he says that, when he has so kindly asked them to his house.

"He thought again of his bungalow with horror. Good heavens, the stupid girl had taken him at his word! What has he to do?" (P.78)

Here we see another attempt at meeting on a social level fail. Forster as novelist has given enough of the personalities involved to make it possible for those readers who care to find out the reasons. Human personality is shaped and given form by the cultural environment it shares with other members of the same community. For intercourse between members of the same community there is the common language. Individuals belonging to different communities with different cultures and who are able to communicate in the language of one of them, are in greater danger of misunderstanding than if they did not know each other's language at all. Aziz uses language as a poet, to create a mood and a world in harmony with that mood, Adela being rational uses her as an instrument of inquiry to increase her knowledge.

A few observations of J.R. Firth on the social aspects of language will help us in understanding the deeper significance of such incidents in a novel which deals with several cultures and civilizations.

"In the give and take of a great deal of conversation, far more than most of us realize, it is the key, mode, or mood - perhaps I ought to say 'keys' and 'moods' - of the interplay of this 'choric' behaviour which matters, rather than what is loosely called the exchange of ideas ... the conversation of social groups called together by the routine life of the community is very narrowly determined by social conditions and the culture of the groups ... But the force and cogency of most language behaviour derives from the firm grip it has on the ever-recurrent typical situations in the life of social groups, and the normal social behaviour of the human animals living together in those groups ... A common language is a sort of social switchboard which commands the power grid of the driving forces of the society. The meaning of a great deal of speech behaviour is just the combined personal and social forces it can mobilize and direct. The power and magic of speech, as we noticed in an earlier chapter is stronger when it mobilizes either our own most primitive feelings or gives us such command of the forces of nature as the triumphs of science."<sup>177</sup>

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177. J.R. Firth: The Tongues of Men and Speech. London, 1964. PP.112-114.

A more systematic study of Language, Culture and Personality was carried out by Edward Sapir. What surprises me is the successful manner in which Forster as a novelist has handled such situations and it is this which convinces one all the more of his virtues as a writer.

Fielding's party, which has started so well, ends in irritation because of the 'insensitive interruption' of Ronny. Godbole has promised to sing and it looks as if the party would end without the song; but when Adela says to him, 'It's a shame we never heard you sing' he replies, 'I may sing now.' The song is not 'intelligible' and it is like 'The Song of an unknown bird.' The Europeans listen out of curiosity or out of politeness. They do not understand either its music or its words. "Only the servants understood it. They began to whisper to one another. The man who was gathering water chestnut came naked out of the tank, his lips parted with delight, disclosing his scarlet tongue." (P.83) It is a religious song as Professor Godbole explains to them. It is a song of invitation to Shri Krishna, Lord of the Universe, to come. He refuses to come in the song. Mrs. Moore remarks gently, 'But He comes in some other song, I hope?'

"'Oh, no, He refuses to come,' repeated Godbole, perhaps not understanding her question 'I say to him, come, come, come, come, come, come. He neglects to come.' (P.84)

Once again communication has broken down because of misunderstanding due to differences in cultural and religious background. The song is followed by 'absolute silence', when 'Ronny's steps had died away.'

The drama in the caves is projected against a geological time-scale. Seen in this dimension not only our values, but

civilizations themselves lose much of their meaning and significance. Those passages which create this time-scale are the best of Forster's descriptive writing. The Caves are in a very ancient land. The land itself was once nothing but ocean.

"The Ganges though flowing from the foot of Vishnu and through Siva's hair, is not an ancient stream. Geology, looking further than religion, knows of a time when neither the river nor the Himalayas that nourished it existed, and an ocean flowed over the holy places of Hinduism." (P.129).

It took aeons and aeons for the Himalayas to rise in the north and then some more aeons for the silt washed from these mountains and deposited in the ocean to rise as land.

"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." (P.129).

The Gods of India, who in the time-scale of history of man and his civilizations, are very ancient, are not so in the geological time-scale. However there is a part of India which is very old indeed, older than the world it forms a part of.

"But India is really far older. In the days of the pre-historic ocean the southern part of the peninsula already existed, and the high places of Dravidia have been land since land began, and have seen on the one side the sinking of a continent that joined them to Africa, and on the other the upheaval of the Himalayas from a sea. They are older than anything in the world. No water has ever covered them, and the sun who has watched them for countless aeons may still discover 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." (P.129).

Time is infinite and from our particular point in time we can look backward to the beginning of the world and even beyond if we can stretch our imagination as well as forward to changes that time may work in our lives or the lives of our children and even beyond that to changes on the geological scale. Measured thus

and placed in the infinity of time and space what chances have our personalities and our values and even our complex civilizations of retaining any significance and meaning. The ancient hills of India, 'flesh of the sun's flesh', are doomed in aeons to come to change.

"Yet even they are altering. As Himalayan India rose, this India, the primal, has been depressed, and is slowly re-entering 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. Meanwhile the plain of the Ganges encroaches on them with something of the sea's action. They are sinking beneath the newer lands. Their main mass is untouched, but at the edge their out-posts have been cut off and stand knee-deep, throat-deep in the advancing soil. There is something unspeakable in these out-posts. 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 hill elsewhere, they bear no relation to anything dreamt or seen. To call them 'uncanny' suggests ghosts and they are older than all spirit." (Pp.129-130).

The antiquity, the uniqueness, the emptiness of the place of all spiritual and religious significance are emphasized. They are older than man and far older than his attempts at understanding the riddle of the universe, and his religions and his civilizations.

"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 Sadhus 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." (P.130).

You can only give a description of the caves and that, too, can be done in a sentence or two and you cannot say anything more than that. In fact the hills and the caves are so old that they have no history.

"The caves are readily described. 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 the group of hills, and this is all, this is a Marabar cave." (P.130).

The silence of Godbole about the caves has not only mystified other characters in the novel but many critics as well. They think Godbole is deliberately keeping a racial secret and is not willing to share it with others. In the conversation about the caves at Fielding's Forster builds up Adela's as well as the readers' expectations to hear something revealing and very significant about them:

"'Oh, that is a most magnificent entertainment compared to my poor sweets. But has not Miss Quested visited our caves already?'

'No. I've not even heard of them?'

'Not heard of them?' both cried. 'The Marabar Caves in the Marabar Hills?'

'We hear nothing interesting up at the Club. Only tennis and ridiculous gossip.'

The old man was silent, perhaps feeling that it was unseemly of her to criticize her race, perhaps fearing that if he agreed she would report him for disloyalty. But the young man uttered a rapid 'I know'.

'Then tell me everything you will, or I shall never understand India. Are they the hills I sometimes see in the evening? What are these caves?'

Aziz undertook to explain, but it presently appeared that he had never visited the caves himself - had always been

'meaning' to go, but work or private business had prevented him and they were so far. Professor Godbole chaffed him pleasantly. 'My dear young sir, the pot and the kettle!

Have you ever heard of that useful proverb?'

'Are they large caves?' she asked.

'No, not large.'

'Do describe them, Professor Godbole'.

'It will be a great honour! He drew up his chair and an expression of tension came over his face. Taking the cigarette box, she offered to him and to Aziz, and lit up herself. After an impressive pause he said:

'There is an entrance in the rock which you enter, and through the entrance is the cave'.

'Something like the caves in Elephanta?'

'Oh, no, not at all; at Elephanta there are sculptures of Siva and Parvati. There are no sculptures at Marabar.'

'They are immensely holy, no doubt,' said Aziz, to help on the narrative.

'Oh no, oh no.'

'Still they are ornamented in some way.'

'Oh no'.

'Well, why are they so famous? We all talk of the famous Marabar caves. Perhaps that is our empty brag.'

'No, I should not quite say that.'

'Describe them to this lady, then.'

'It will be a great pleasure.' He forewent the pleasure, and Aziz realized that he was keeping back something about the caves. He realized because he often suffered from similar inhibitions himself. Sometimes to the exasperation of Major Callander, he would pass over the one relevant fact in a position, to dwell on the hundred irrelevant. The Major accused him of disingenuousness, and was roughly right, but only roughly. It was rather that a power he couldn't control capriciously silenced his mind. Godbole had been silenced now; no doubt not willingly, he was concealing something. Handled subtly, he might regain control and announce that the Marabar Caves were - full of stalactites, perhaps; Aziz led up to this, but they weren't." (Pp.78-80).

Aziz and Adela both fail to get anything positive uttered about the caves. Adela is waiting in expectation of some revelation about them and Aziz has been handling Godbole towards that end. But it leads nowhere and Adela's curiosity remains unsatisfied. At the supreme moment things just fail her and no expectations are fulfilled. The experience is repeated when, expecting to see a magnificent sunrise from the moving train towards the Marabar Hills, the romantic impulse is disappointed.

"I'd not have missed this for anything,' said the girl, exaggerating her enthusiasm. 'Look, the sun's rising - this'll be absolutely magnificent - come quickly - look. I wouldn't have missed this for anything. We should never have seen it if we'd stuck to the Turtons and their eternal elephants.'

"As she spoke, the sky to the left turned angry orange. Colour throbbed and mounted behind a pattern of trees, grew in intensity, was yet brighter, incredibly brighter, strained from without against the globe of the air. They awaited the miracle. But 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. The hues in the east decayed, the hills seemed dimmer though in fact better lit, and a profound disappointment entered with the morning breeze. Why, when the chamber was prepared, did the bridegroom not enter with trumpets and shawms, humanity expects? the sun rose without splendour. He was presently

observed trailing yellowish behind the trees, or against the insipid sky, and touching the bodies already at work in the fields." (Pp.143-144).

Professor Godbole's silence, though very meaningful, is not deliberate and he is not keeping any secret. It is the silence resulting from incommunicability; human speech or language is limited and it simply cannot describe or utter beyond a certain point. Silence then becomes significant. He can only describe that there is an entrance and through the entrance is the cave. What more can he do? The caves are all alike; it is very difficult to find anything individual or peculiar about any one of them to distinguish it from the others. There is not even a cumulative effect of visiting them one after the other.

"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." (P.130).

There is nothing in them to start a conversation about.

"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 bee's-nest or a bat, distinguishes one from another. Nothing, nothing attaches to them, and their reputation - for they have one - does not depend upon human speech. It is as if the surrounding plain or the passing birds have taken upon themselves to explain 'extraordinary', and the word has taken root in the air, and been inhaled by mankind." (P.130).

After this what can Professor Godbole or anyone possibly say. The caves have no history; they are not holy; they have no paintings or sculptures and there are even no legends and traditions embodied in human speech about them. But E.M. Forster as a writer does succeed in saying something very effective about them and their description in his novel is excellent descriptive prose. He succeeds because of his imagination and creative power

as a writer. Their symbolic value is great because of their antiquity and emptiness and also because of the fact that human speech has associated nothing with them, no tradition, no legend, no utterance; they have retained their primal quality and they can envelop in their ' boum ' the cherished values of man, especially the values of modern Western civilization.

"They are dark caves. Even when they open towards the sun, very little light penetrates down the entrance tunnel into the circular chamber. There is little to see, and no eye to see it, until the visitor arrives for his five minutes, and strikes a match. Immediately another flame rises in the depths of the rock and moves towards the surface like an imprisoned spirit! The walls of the circular chamber have been 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.

"Only the wall of the circular chamber has been polished thus. The sides of the tunnel are left rough, they impinge as an after-thought upon the internal perfection. An entrance was necessary, so mankind made one. But elsewhere, deeper in the granite, are there certain chambers, that have no entrances? Chambers never unsealed since the arrival of the gods. 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, a 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 rumoured 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." (Pp.130-132).

The description of the country through which the train slowly ascends to the Marabar Hills and as seen by Mrs. Moore and Adela

Requested reflects their minds, characters and moods. On a previous occasion Adela and Ronny have explored a bit of the same country in the Nawab Bahadur's car. There is no suggestion of beauty or mildness or softness in the description of it there:

"Ronny instructed the chauffeur to take the Marabar road rather than the Gangavati, since the latter was under repair, and settled himself down beside the lady he had lost. The car made a burring noise and rushed along a chaussee that ran upon an embankment above melancholy fields. Trees of a poor quality bordered the road, indeed the whole scene was inferior, and suggested that the countryside was too vast to admit of excellence. In vain did each item in it call out, 'Come, Come.' There was not enough god to go round. The two young people conversed feebly and felt unimportant. When the darkness began, it seemed to well out of the meagre vegetation, entirely covering the fields each side of them before it brimmed over the road." (Pp.91-92).

The country is too vast to manage and man's efforts to improve have produced no visible signs. The earth is unkind and hard, the sun is very strong and powerful. Adela's mind is struggling to take hold of this country which is to become her home after her marriage with Ronny. Her mind is not in tune with this country that she is observing from the moving train, and she feels alienated and returns to her plans for her future.

"Then she went back to her plans; plans had been a passion with her from girlhood. Now and then she paid tribute to the present, said how friendly and intelligent Aziz was, ate a guava, couldn't eat a fried sweet, practised her Urdu on the servant; but her thoughts ever veered to the manageable future, and to the Anglo-Indian life she had decided to endure. And as she appraised it with adjuncts of Turtons and Burtons, the train accompanied her sentences, 'pomper, pomper', the train half asleep, going nowhere in particular and with no passenger of importance in any of its carriages, the branch-line train, lost on a low embankment between dull fields." (P.142).

Her mind is occupied with planning for which it is equipped and trained. Her education has prepared her for this purpose to be able to live her life in a rational and orderly way. It is not

equipped to take hold of this country and plan for it. It is beyond her. Her curiosity to know India has brought her there; but the message of this country does not touch her mind, just as the message of Godbole's song has failed to do, although it is she who says what a shame they did not hear Godbole sing.

"Its message - for it had one - avoided her well-equipped mind. Far away behind her, with a shriek that meant business, rushed the Mail, connecting up important towns such as Calcutta and Lahore, where interesting events occur and personalities are developed. She understood that. Unfortunately, India has few important towns." (P.142).

She can understand the life of the towns and, therefore, a very tiny part of India like a drop in the ocean. When she says she wants to know India she only means what she can understand, which happens to be a tiny portion. She lacks imagination and without it she is ill-equipped to take in the whole of it because:

"India is the country, fields, fields, then hills, jungle, hills, and more fields. The branch line stops, the road is only practicable for cars to a point, the bullock-carts lumber down the side tracks, paths fray out into the cultivation, and disappear near a splash of red paint. How can the mind take hold of such a country? Generations of invaders have tried, but they remain in exile. The important towns they build are only retreats, their quarrels the malaise of men who cannot find their way home. India knows their trouble - she knows of the whole world's trouble, to its uttermost depths. She calls 'come' through her hundred mouths, through objects ridiculous and august. But come to what? She has never defined. She is not a promise, only an appeal." (Pp.142-143).

Adela fails to come to terms with this India; her limitations lead to the panic in the caves. Unknowingly and through her limitations she releases evil and hysteria which grip the city of Chandrapore. Her failure is due to her intellectualism. She has approached India rationally just as she has done the problem of her marriage to Ronny. She has come to India to see whether

she can like India. She finds that India has changed Ronny into an average Anglo-Indian and she begins to doubt whether her marriage to him would be successful. She discusses her trouble with Ronny in a very reasonable way. She does not like to become like the other English women at Chandrapore which is inevitable. She refuses to accept without question the attitudes of the Anglo-Indians and this becomes the chief obstacle in her way to make up her mind. It is interesting to note that the crisis in her relations with Ronny is reached after Fielding's tea-party at which she has met Dr. Aziz. She has been influenced by Aziz's lively and impulsive temperament. When Ronny drops in her attitude to him has already become cool. She is very much annoyed with him and wishes for an opportunity to quarrel with him.

"How gross he had been at Mr. Fielding's - spoiling the talk and walking off in the middle of the haunting song! As he drove them away in the tum-tum, her irritation became unbearable, and she did not realize that much of it was directed against herself. She longed for an opportunity to fly out at him, and since he felt cross too, and they were both in India, an opportunity soon occurred. They had scarcely left the college grounds before she heard him say to his mother, who was with him on the front seat, 'What was that about caves?' and she promptly opened fire.

"Mrs. Moore, your delightful doctor has decided on a picnic, instead of a party in his house; we are to meet him out there - you, myself, Mr. Fielding, Professor Godbole - exactly the same party.'" (P.85)

She quarrels with Ronny and Mrs. Moore remains indifferent.

This incident is very uncharacteristic of both Ronny and Adela, of Adela more than Ronny. Both are soon ashamed.

"Miss Quested was thinking over her own behaviour, and didn't like it at all. Instead of weighing Ronny and herself, and coming to a reasoned conclusion about marriage, she had incidentally, in the course of a talk about mangoes, remarked to mixed company that she didn't mean to stop in India.

Which meant that she wouldn't marry Ronny: but what a way to announce it, what a way for a civilized girl to behave!" (P.87).

What has changed so suddenly this reasonable, inquisitive and 'civilized' girl to behave in that extraordinary and shameful way. Aziz has unconsciously influenced her mind. Her restraint breaks down. Aziz possesses more vitality and impulsiveness than Ronny; Adela is responding to Aziz in a way not entirely free from sexual attraction. Ronny strongly disapproves of Adela being left alone with the Indians. Professor Godbole does not matter much; it is Aziz he disapproves of being intimate with Adela and protests to Fielding who says, 'I really can't see the harm'. Ronny is helpless because Fielding has failed to see that Aziz is a bounder. "If you can't see, you can't see ... Can't you see that fellow's a bounder?" What Adela has done is not against European etiquette; neither Mrs. Moore nor Fielding are aware of anything improper in leaving her alone with the Indians. Ronny's disapproval cannot be explained in terms of racial or Anglo-Indian prejudice alone. Ronny's behaviour can be explained in terms of sexual jealousy, though Forster does not mention it explicitly. In an earlier manuscript the sexual attraction between Aziz and Janet (later changed to Adela in the final manuscript) was very explicit, where "Aziz and Janet drift into one another's arms - then apart."<sup>178</sup> But this explicit attraction and jealousy are

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178. Mr. Forster presented several manuscripts of A Passage to India to be auctioned at Christie's in aid of the London Library. Mr. O.G.W. Stallybrass wrote an article on the early versions of the novel entitled "The Wobblings of E.M. Forster" published in the Guardian, June 20, 1960, p.5. This remarkable line quoted here was produced by Mr. Stallybrass as evidence of the 'discarded intentions and his methods'. But I do not think Forster had discarded his intention; his method, may be, but not his intention.

made unconscious and very subtly implied in the behaviour of Ronny and Adela. The impulse in Adela's mind is not strong enough to break out in the conscious part of it; it has moved in response to the charm of Aziz and the fantasy world he has created by his talk and it subsides when the stimuli are withdrawn. She considers in a very reasonable and cool way the problem of her marriage with Ronny on the maidan. There she announces her decision to Ronny in these words:

"It's something very different, nothing to do with caves, that I wanted to talk over with you'. She gazed at the colourless grass. 'I've finally decided we are not going to be married, my dear boy.'" (P.87).

Adela will not have admitted under any circumstances that either Aziz or the caves have anything to do with her decision. She believes that it is a decision reached after careful consideration of the entire situation. Though it is nothing of the kind. She wants to talk about it and answer any questions that Ronny may ask after she has made up her mind. She is not aware of the unconscious impulses that are at work in her mind. Ronny is hurt but he does not create a scene about it. He would not force her against her will and thus violate 'the sanctity of personal relationships'. They think that they have behaved rationally and Adela remarks, 'I suppose that there is nothing else,' and it is at this very moment that she notices that little green bird in the dome of the tree. Yes there are other things like that green bird which they fail to identify. They are surrounded by an irrational world, a mysterious world where "the mere asking of a question causes it to disappear or to merge in something else."

Ironically it is a jolt in the Nawab Bahadur's car which brings them nearer again. The unpredictable and unforeseen little things that affect life, the irrational and mysterious elements in life that are so potent.

"Her hand touched his, owing to a jolt, and one of the thrills so frequent in the animal kingdom passed between them, and announced that all their difficulties were only a lover's quarrel." (P.92)

But it is a 'spurious unity' that so suddenly and unpredictably descends on them.

"It would vanish in a moment, perhaps to reappear, but the darkness is alone durable. And the night that encircled them, absolute as it seemed, was itself only a spurious unity, being modified by the gleams of day that leaked up round the edges of the earth, and by the stars." (P.92)

Though spurious and unendurable it thrills them and Adela reconsiders her earlier decision.

"Neither had foreseen such a consequence. She had meant to revert to her former condition of important and cultivated uncertainty, but it had passed out of her reach at its appropriate hour. Unlike the green bird or the hairy animal, she was labelled now. She felt humiliated again, for she deprecated labels, and she felt that there should have been another scene between her lover and herself at this point, something dramatic and lengthy. He was pleased instead of distressed, he was surprised, but he had really nothing to say. What indeed is there to say? To be or not to be married, that was the question, and they had decided it in the affirmative." (Pp.98-99).

No durable relationship can be established on this. There is no passion, no love and understanding between them. When she is travelling to the Marabar Caves in the train she is planning for her married life in India. Ronny does not figure in these plans, nor does she consider her engagement to him an exciting event. She has felt nothing acutely about it. Since Godbole has sung his song both she and Mrs. Moore have been wrapped in apathy.

" ... and the difference between them was that the elder lady accepted her apathy, while the younger resented her. It was Adela's faith the whole stream of events is important and interesting, and if she grew bored she blamed herself severely and compelled her lips to utter enthusiasms. This was the only insincerity in a character otherwise sincere, and it was indeed the intellectual protest of her youth. She was particularly vexed now because she was both in India and engaged to be married, which double event should have made every event sublime." (P.139).

She is getting nearer the Caves. The train comes to a halt at a roadside platform where an elephant is waiting for them. They are near the hills and the surrounding country is strewn with rocks and boulders. The earth is harsh and hard and gives no sign or promise of 'colour or vitality'. It is dead and lifeless. There are only two movements, both mechanical. One is made by the train, <sup>which</sup> "hoping to return, wobbled away through the fields, turning its head this way and that way like a centipede." The other movement is made by the wheels on the counterpoises of the wells revolving slowly on their pivots "all over the plain and dispersed a feeble flow of water. The scene was agreeable rather than not in the mild morning air, but there was little colour in it, and no vitality." (P.146). And as the elephant approaches the bare hills, a silence like that of the isolation of the senses invades them, as if enveloped in the undefinable influence exuded by the hills. It is a kind of "spiritual silence which invaded more senses than the ear." (P.147)

Life loses its consequences, thoughts are arrested, and sounds do not generate echoes. "Everything seemed cut off at its root, and therefore infected with illusion." (P.147) Things refuse to be identified. There are some mounds which the villagers say are graves as well as the breasts of the goddess Parvati and a

dead tree is said to be a snake. The confusion is not cleared up. The mind of Adela is struggling to make sense of what she is observing. Her rational mind demands explanation to give everything its proper place in her psyche, neatly labelled and arranged, but India refuses to be encompassed by a mind which has shut itself to intuition and the impulses from the unknown and the unknowable. The result is a feeling of confusion and bewilderment.

"Nothing was explained, and yet there was no romance. Films of heat radiated from the Kawa Dol precipices, increased the confusion. They came at irregular intervals and moved capriciously. A patch of field would jump as if it was being fried, and then lie quiet. As they drew closer the radiation stopped."(P.147)

Soon they are swallowed by a granite gorge approached through stone and rock strewn country. Heat radiates from the walls and make it stuffy and depressing. The country, the gorge of granite, the hot air combine to extinguish all thoughts of beauty, benevolence and kindness out of mind. Even developed minds and personalities are put out.

"The stones plunged straight into the earth, like cliffs into the sea, and while Miss Quested was remarking on this, and saying that it was striking, the plain quietly disappeared, peeled off so to speak, and nothing was to be seen on either side but the granite, very dead and quiet. The sky dominated as usual, but seemed unhealthily near, adhering like a ceiling to the summits of the precipices. It was as if the contents of the corridor had never been changed."(Pp. 147-148)

Aziz cannot help them in comprehending this aspect of India, because he himself is at a loss. He occupies himself in hospitality and takes no notice of what he does not understand.

"Occupied by his own munificence, Aziz noticed nothing. His guests noticed a little. They did not feel that it was an attractive place or quite worth visiting, and wished it could have turned into some Mohammedan object, such as a

mosque, which their host would have appreciated and explained. His ignorance became evident, and was really rather a drawback. In spite of his gay, confident talk, he had no notion how to treat this particular aspect of India; he was lost in it, without Professor Godbole, like themselves." (P.148).

Their destination is not a pleasant place for a picnic.

"The corridor narrowed, then widened into a sort of tray. Here, more or less, was their goal. A ruined tank held a little water which would do for the animals, and close above the mud was punched a black hole - the first of the Caves. Three hills encircled the tray. Two of them pumped out heat busily but the third was in shadow, and here they camped." (P.148)

In such a place Mrs. Moore feels 'bottled up' and murmurs, 'A horrid, stuffy place really.' Aziz is soon elated by the presence of the ladies as his guests. He is once again inspired as at Fielding's.

"The expedition was a success, and it was Indian; an obscure young man had been allowed to show courtesy to visitors from another country, which is what all Indians long to do - even cynics like Mahmoud Ali - but they never have the chance. Hospitality had been achieved, they were 'his' guests; his honour was involved in their happiness, and any discomfort they endured would tear his own soul." (P.149)

But the expedition proves a disaster through no fault of his. His imagination finds wings and he is soaring high like an inspired poet. He talks of the Mogul Emperors and Adela grows very interested but Mrs. Moore remains uncommunicative. Ever since she has decided to marry Ronny, Adela has been worried by what she calls her 'Anglo-Indian difficulty.' She does not want to become a narrow-minded and prejudiced memsahib like the lot she finds at Chandrapore. She hopes Aziz will tell her of something to help her overcome barriers set up by men between themselves. She thinks Akbar's religion a possible answer as it intends to embrace the whole of India. Mrs. Moore cannot help her in this

matter; she has lost interest, and tells Adela it is not her difficulty.

"Ah, that's true. Well, by marrying Mr. Heaslop, I shall become what is known as an Anglo-Indian. He held up his hand in protest. 'Impossible. Take back such a terrible remark.'

'But I shall; it's inevitable. I can't avoid the label. What I do hope to avoid is the mentality. Women like - ' She stopped, not quite liking to mention names; she would boldly have said 'Mrs. Turton and Mrs. Callandar' a fortnight ago. 'Some women are so - well, ungenerous and snobby about Indians, and I should feel too ashamed for words if I turned like them, but - and here's my difficulty - there's nothing special about me, nothing specially good or strong, which will help me to resist my environment and avoid becoming like them. I've most lamentable defects. That's why I want Akbar's "universal religion" or the equivalent to keep me decent and sensible.' (P.152)

This free and frank conversation, very friendly and honest is the only beautiful thing to happen in the Hills; but it, too, is broken unintentionally by an error of Adela.

"'I am told we get all rude after a year' 'Then you are told a lie', he flashed, for she had spoken the truth and it touched him on the raw; it was itself an insult in these particular circumstances. He recovered himself at once and laughed, but her error broke up their conversation - their civilization it had almost been - which scattered like the petals of a desert flower, and left them in the middle of the hills." (P.153)

Aziz has tried to recreate or recapture something of the civilization his forefathers had created in India, the Muslim civilization. The magic spell which he wants to cast around him as a protection against the aspect of India which he does not understand is broken by Adela. Then there is nothing left but to address himself to the task of showing the caves to them. The first cave is not far from where they have camped in the shadow of the rock. The stones that they climb over are "unattractive", the sun is very hot by this time and comes "crashing on their backs."

The description is very symbolic of the theme; all are entering the womb of the unknown, a place devoid of any attributes, legend, religion and poetry. They are sucked in and then belched out.

"Bending their heads, they disappeared one by one into the interior of the hills. The small black hole gaped where their varied forms and colours had momentarily functioned. they were sucked in like water down a drain. Bland and bold rose the precipices; bland and glutinous the sky that connected the precipices; solid and white, a Brahminy 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. The kite flapped away ... Before birds, perhaps ... and then the hole belched and humanity returned." (P.153).

The narrative has here reached the climax and in order to understand what actually happens or does not happen in the caves we have to examine the text very carefully. Things happen on several levels here. Things happen to Mrs. Moore on both physical and psychical level. What happens to her physically is very plain and clear from this passage.

"A Marabar cave had been horrid as far as Mrs. Moore was concerned, for she had nearly fainted in it, and had some difficulty in preventing herself from saying so as soon as she got into the air again. It was natural enough: she had always suffered from faintness, and the cave had become too full, because all their retinue followed them. Crammed with villagers and servants, the circular chamber began to smell. She lost 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 mouth 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." (Pp.153-154)

The echo is the core of her psychic experience; the physical panic gradually subsides, and as it does so, the psychic implications come more and more evident. The echo is very unexpected. Professor Godbole has said nothing about it. The

echo annihilates all distinctions; values are shattered. It drowns everything into its 'Boum'.

"The echo in a Marabar cave is ... entirely devoid of distinction. Whatever is said, the same monotonous noise replies, and quivers up and down the walls until it is absorbed into the roof. 'Boum' is the sound as far as the human alphabet can express it, or 'bou-oum', or 'ou-boum', - utterly dull. 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 circling, 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." (P.154).

Mrs. Moore can recover from the physical discomfort and panic and forget the stench and the press but it is impossible to get rid of the echo. Everything loses its value for her, even her two children, Ralph and Stella, back in England, do not mean much now and she stops writing a letter to them as she cannot get beyond 'Dear Stella, Dear Ralph.' The elephant, too, has become unimportant. And the more she thinks about her experience, it becomes all the more frightening. She does not wish to repeat it. It has exhausted her and has drained her of love, care for others, affection and her sense of the unseen. The echo has come at a moment of physical panic when she cannot take the strain of it. It has come when her body has no strength to resist the onslaught of negation.

"... it had managed to murmur, '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 or 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 caves because it robbed infinity and eternity of their vastness, the only quality that accommodates them to mankind." (P.156)

She tries to remind herself that her despair can have purely physical causes; she is old and has got up early that morning. Then the journey to the caves and the heat as well as the stuffy and the crowded dark cave have exhausted her. The experience in the cave has only crystallized her trouble. She has brought her trouble with her; the inadequacies of her personality, culture and faith. She is not conscious of her own limitations before she arrives in India. Ever since then she has been feeling dissatisfied with things. She finds much in her son to disapprove of and she loses interest in the purpose of her journey, which is to let Adela and Ronny see if they can decide to get married. After the echo in the cave she becomes increasingly conscious of her own insignificance and smallness and even her religion does not offer any comfort and courage.

"But suddenly, 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'" (P.157)

Her vision begins to take a definite shape and form now, and though she could not comprehend the universe even before, it did mean something to her, but now it has become both incomprehensible and meaningless.

"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. She sat motionless with horror,

and, when old Mohammed Latif came up to her, thought he would notice a difference. 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." (P.157)

A careful reading of chapter fourteen will make it very clear as to what actually happens to Mrs. Moore. In fact it will be more correct to say that what has been happening to her since her arrival in India comes to a head in the cave. Readers and critics are often intrigued by the question, what happens in the caves? I do not ask myself this question for the simple reason that everything has been so clearly stated by the author that I do not feel the need of it. I think that the possible reason for the confusion is that many readers and critics believe that something very mysterious and non-physical in nature happened in the caves to Mrs. Moore and that the author is keeping silence about it like Professor Godbole. There is a psychical interpretation of the cave incident much favoured by some including Forster's tutor and close friend G.L. Dickinson. There is a hint in his letter to Forster about this novel ~~that~~ something psychical has happened in the caves:

"I have now finished your book, I think it is so good that I haven't much to say about it. For it is always easier to pick holes. The theme - the incompatibility of Indians and English - is done as perhaps only you could do it - with the power of understanding both sides. But then there are all sorts of behind suggestions; and I have a feeling - rare for me at my age - that you have lifted a new corner of the veil. What you see behind it is indeed disquieting enough; but we cannot shirk it for that reason; at least I don't want to. But it is one of the puzzling things about life how "Cheerfulness will break in." So that in the midst of my intellects' most hopeless despair and rage I know that in fact I think there may be some point in the terrible business, which, if one knew, one might approve. Aziz I think a triumph - so alive and so consistently inconsistent.

You will know well by now, and no doubt knew before, the crux of the doubt - what did happen in the caves? Why mayn't we know? Why mightn't we know all the time? I expect however that you had good reason for your handling of this, and I don't much mind myself. More important is that, whereas in your other books your kind of double vision squints - this world, and a world or world's behind - here it all comes together. One doesn't know the fate of books. But one would think this should be a classic on the strange and tragic fate of history and life called India. Anyhow you will feel that you have pulled it off, a satisfaction that will abide underneath the never to cease dissatisfaction which belongs to life, and is life if one lives at all."<sup>179</sup>

The psychical interpretation of the experience of Mrs. Moore in the cave is not acceptable in view of the fact that the author did not have much faith in the psychical as I have elsewhere shown. There is also no room for a narrow religious interpretation of it from the Christian point of view which looks upon religious experience as distinct from the physical or biological as Christianity has established the separation of the spiritual from the worldly. This attitude pre-disposes critics to expect that something spiritual has happened to Mrs. Moore, something which stands isolated in her vision, something that stands by itself as of spiritual significance having no relation to the rest of her experience or her character. Professor Lionel Trilling sums up his attempt at explaining Mrs. Moore's experience in these words:

"She has had the beginning of the Hindu vision of things and it has crushed her. What the Hindu vision is, is expressed by Professor Godbole to Fielding:

'Good and evil are different, as their names imply. But, in my own humble opinion, they are both of them aspects of my Lord. He is present in the one, absent in the other, and the difference between presence and absence is great,

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179. Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, London, 1962, pp.215-216.

as great as my feeble mind can grasp. Yet absence implies presence, absence is not non-existence, and we are therefore entitled to repeat: "Come, Come, Come, Come."<sup>180</sup>

There is no evidence in the novel to support this claim. Her vision is the total negation and annihilation of her values and faith. The Hindu vision on the other hand is all inclusive. But Mrs. Moore has not been in close contact with the Hindus or Hinduism as such. Her first encounter is with an Indian Muslim, Dr. Aziz, in the mosque. It results in spontaneous understanding and sympathy on both sides. Dr. Aziz matters more to her than Professor Godbole before the cave incident. She fails to establish contact with the latter. Earlier when she sees the wasp on the peg and says 'pretty dear', it is her Christian compassion which she thinks they needed most in India but which is not enough in itself. Her own religion is Christianity which she has not rejected like Adela or Fielding because of their rationalism, nor has she pushed God (like Ronny) out of her daily life. Christianity is her faith and the basis of her values and attitude to life previous to the annihilating experience in the cave. Moreover there is nothing Hindu about the caves; in fact they do not belong to any faith nor are they associated with any god or goddess. This has been made very clear by the author in his description of the caves. So nothing religious or spiritual or mystic in the narrow Christian sense, in isolation or distinct from the total psycho-physical experience happens to Mrs. Moore. In fact Forster seems to have no intention of suggesting that anything supernatural has happened. This is what some critics

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180. Trilling, L.; E.M. Forster, A Study: London, 1962, p.136.

and readers believe to have happened thinking that the author's seeming silence about it is enough proof of it and the rest is everybody's guess which accounts for the many different interpretations. Sometimes the esoteric interpretations become a hindrance rather than an aid in understanding the novel. As a Muslim my religion has made it possible for me to see and appreciate what has happened.<sup>181</sup> Nothing does happen which has not been made inevitable by the physical conditions as well as the mind and personality of Mrs. Moore. Among the physical conditions the tired and old body of Mrs. Moore plays a distinct role. A younger Mrs. Moore would not have had the same experience. Her experience can be explained in psycho-physical terms for which Forster has given enough matter for those who care to look closely into the evidence. In Forster's view the spiritual is inseparable from the physical; any human experience in its totality is determined by psycho-physical happenings and to isolate the psychological from the physical and hold them responsible alone for the experience is to misunderstand it. Human experience is

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181. "Islam does not bifurcate the unity of man into an irreconcilable duality of spirit and matter. In Islam God and the Universe, spirit and matter, church and state are organic to each other. Man is not the citizen of a profane world to be renounced in the interest of a world of spirit situated elsewhere. To Islam matter is spirit realizing itself in space and time." (From the Presidential Address, delivered by Dr. Mohammed Iqbal at the Annual Session of the All-India Muslim League, held in Allahabad, in 1930). Forster knew Iqbal and it is possible he knew his philosophy of religion. He reviewed The Secrets of Self, by Iqbal, translated by R.A. Nicholson from the Persian, for the Athenaeum, 10 December 1920, pp.803-804. He also gave a broadcast talk in the Home Service on A Great Indian Poet-Philosopher. (See Listener, 24 May, 1946, p.686). This was reprinted as "Mohammed Iqbal" in Two Cheers for Democracy, 1951.

very complex and there is always a residuum of the unexplained even after the most thorough and neat scientific analysis. There is room for a purely physical explanation of Mrs. Moore's experience but that, too, is certainly not the intention of Forster. Mrs. Moore grows very irritable, incommunicative, and difficult after the cave adventure and to her rational countrymen and countrywomen it is due to her old age, fatigue, nerves and the approaching hot season. They fail to look beyond the physical events which are so obvious to the psychological elements which are not so obvious. Forster has scored a great success in his art by overcoming the difficulty of creating an experience of great spiritual significance without the intervention of the Divine or the supernatural. It is nevertheless a mystic experience but fully and authentically substantiated by the psycho-physical events in relation with the character and personality of Mrs. Moore. So in supernatural and psychical terms, nothing, absolutely nothing does happen in the cave. In connection with this experience there is an interesting footnote on p.331 of The Cave and The Mountain by Wilfred Stone:

"In discussing her character with Forster, the author read aloud the following passage from Women in Love as suggesting the kind of state Mrs. Moore had reached. Forster was interested, asked to read the passage himself, and commented to this effect; "Yes it's very like, isn't it? Though of course Lawrence was dealing with a relationship between the sexes, which doesn't apply to Mrs. Moore" (Conversation with Forster, March 12, 1965) The passage is as follows: "There is," he said, in a voice of pure abstraction, "a final me which is stark and impersonal and beyond responsibility. So there is a final you. And it is there I would want to meet you - not in the emotional, loving plane - but there beyond, where there is no speech and no terms of agreement. There we are two stark, unknown beings, two utterly strange creatures ... And there could be no obligation, because there

is no standard for action there, because no understanding has been reaped from that plane. It is quite inhuman, - so there can be no calling to brook, in any form whatsoever - because one is outside the pale of all that is accepted, and nothing known applies. One can only follow the impulse, taking that which lies in front, and responsible for nothing, asking for nothing, giving nothing, only each taking according to the primal desire." (New York, 1922), pp.165-66." 182

There is a further difference besides the one already pointed out by Forster and that is that here the experience has made the experient very articulate. He knows what has been his essential being when divested of all the trappings of culture and personality; and there is something positive left at the core of their being beyond speech, responsibility, obligation and action. Mrs. Moore on the other hand becomes very incommunicado; hers is not an experience of disembodiment, both physical and cultural. Nor is it an experience of a state of disembodiment from pain and impermanence into a state of immortality like that of Keats's in "Ode to A Nightingale". It is an experience of total annihilation of her values, a vision or a nightmare in which Christianity and her Western liberal attitude are severely challenged and utterly and completely destroyed. But the indestructible part of her personality becomes a gracious and noble influence that struggles with the evil and panic which is released by Adela's limitations and which grips like an hysteria the people of Chandrapore, both English and Indians. It is her gracious memory which restores Adela's sanity and enables her to see clearly and decisively through the muddle and the confusion of the days following her

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182. Wilfred Stone: The Cave and the Mountain, London, 1966, footnote on page 331.

panic in the cave that Aziz is innocent. Mrs. Moore, unknown to the Indians assembled outside the Court, becomes a magic chant of Esmiss Esmoore, Esmiss Esmoore, as if possessing the power to release Dr. Aziz. It is again for her sake that Aziz is finally persuaded by Fielding to give up his intention of claiming damages from Adela. And she recurs to Professor Godbole in his religious ecstasy and though <sup>she is</sup> a Christian he impells her towards completeness.

David Shusterman, an American critic has pointed another parallel experience of negation and nihilism in Hemingway's short story "A clean, well-lighted Place."

"The extreme nihilism, this lowest depth of negation has its counterparts among other creative writers of the twentieth century. One of the most notable is to be found in the writing of Ernest Hemingway, and a comparison of the most famous American writer of fiction in recent times (with possibly one exception) with the man who has sometimes been called the leading Englishman of letters is enlightening. The famous Hemingway "Wound" stemmed from an intense personal physical experience in the Italian front during the First World War. The wound which in The Sun Also Rises seemed to be chiefly mental and moral was seen to have a real basis in physical fact in A Farewell to Arms. The short stories written by Hemingway during the 1920's and 1930's filled in the picture of a writer who had been stirred to the bottom of his sensitive being by his experiences during and since the war. This ultimate expression of disbelief in values reaches its nadir in that remarkable short story "A clean, well-lighted place." What a man needs, thinks the old Spanish waiter as he turns off the lights in the Cafe, is a clean well-lighted place to withstand the horrors of modern life. For he found that everything is a nothing. 'It was all a nothing and a man was nothing too.' He 'knew it all was nada y pues nada y nada y pues nada.'"183

Kipling's hero of The Naulakha, Tarvin, confronts the unknown in the shrine of the 'Cow's Mouth' in the dead city of Gunnaur. He is seeking for the crown jewels, the Naulakha as a means of bringing a railroad and prosperity to his home town Topaz in the

183. Shusterman, D.; Quest for Certitude in E.M. Forster's Fiction, Indiana University Press 1965, pp.167-168.

American West. His quest in the East is symbolical of the imperial attitude, to seek for the prosperity of his own land in the exotic East. The terror of the unknown is waiting for him in the deserted Shrine, overgrown with scrub. While looking for the shrine of the Cow's Mouth, he feels uneasy and less sure of himself in the dead city; his mind cannot understand the message of, or take hold of, a city <sup>which</sup> though dead, is not in ruins yet. He is a little relieved to see one house in ruins.

"His complaint against all the others, the temples and the palaces, was that they were not ruined, but dead - empty, swept, and garnished, with the seven devils of loneliness in riotous possession. In time - in a few thousand years perhaps - the city would crumble away. He was distinctly glad that one house at least had set the example." (Vol. 19, P.156)

He is looking in the dead city for jewels that will help build railroad and towns in the far West. He does not realise that this city, too, was once built by people who had developed a different civilization. But it does not matter; it is dead and it fails to waken any realization in him. The futility and the utter insignificance of man's action and his works in the face of the inexorable ravages of time do not dawn upon him because he is representing the spirit of the West and its philosophy. A little beyond the ruined house is the Cow's Mouth in "Some sort of disused quarry fringed to the lips with rank vegetation." He slips on the worn steps that lead down to the bottom, and falls. When he rises he hears a "malignant chuckle, half-suppressed, which ended in a choking cough, ceased and broke out anew." He is disconcerted and annoyed by this hidden 'scoffer'. It undermines the imperial posture and superiority. The white man is above laughter and ridicule.

(Orwell was driven to shoot an elephant against his will because he could not face the laughter and the ridicule of the Burmese crowd.) At the bottom of the quarry is a tank of stagnant water, from the masonry wall of which have sprung trees. The water is fetid and corrupted. There is an atmosphere of decay all round.

"The chuckle that had so annoyed Tarvin broke out again as he listened. This time it was behind him, and, wheeling sharply he saw that it came from the rudely-carved head of a cow, and dripped along a stone spout into the heavy blue pool. Behind that spout that moss-grown rock rose sheer. This, then, was the Cow's Mouth!" (Vol. 19, P.158)

The 'boun' in the Marabar caves annihilates the values of Mrs. Moore. She cuts herself from life, and the people who are so dear to her do not matter any more. She loses all interest in Aziz and will not testify in the court that he is innocent and leaves India before the trial. When Adela comes to her for help she finds her very difficult and unsympathetic. She refuses to be involved in the panic and hysteria that follow the Marabar excursion. The chuckle of the Cow's Mouth, on the other hand, mocks Tarvin, and rouses in him aggressiveness and the will to fight back; the echo in the cave is all-enveloping, while the chuckle is soon located. But Kipling's hero affirms his will to dominate through action. Exploration of the tank and the place around is part of the action; he does not shrink from going forward. He is then at the bottom resting on the ledge running round the tank. He looks up and wishes to be in the open where the sun shines warm and bright and reassuring. He discovers a passage, which is very dark and he cannot see anything there; he strikes a match, it goes out immediately in the draught; "it was his racial instinct of curiosity rather than

adventure that led him to throw himself at the darkness, which parted before and closed behind him." In the dark interior of the passage he hears a kind of sound more like a whisper or "like the shivering backward draw of a wave on a pebbly beach;" but he persists forward through the passage which opens out into "a black space of unknown dimensions." He sees the dim outline of a pillar in the gloam and becomes aware of bones strewn all around.

"Then he became aware of pale emerald eyes watching him fixedly, and perceived that there was deep breathing in the place other than his own. He flung the match down, the eyes retreated, there was a wild rattle and crash in the darkness, a howl that might have been bestial or human, and Tarvin, panting between the tree roots, swung himself to the left, and fled back over the mud-banks to the ledge, where he stood, his back to the Cow's Mouth and his revolver in his hand." (Vol.19 P.160)

He experiences physical terror, but he thinks he can assert himself in face of it, and the revolver in his hand is symbolic of his values. When he climbs out into the open sunshine, he feels now quite at home in the dead city which has unnerved him before his descent into the shrine. He has not realized the futility of his ambitions and his search. Back in his room he rejects the idea of a further exploration with a torch as he thinks he has had enough of the Cow's Mouth. "It was his pride that he knew when he had had enough." And he becomes more determined to get what he is after. His affirmation is characteristic of Kipling's heroes. "His experience at the Gye Mukh only sharpened his determination, adding to it a firm willingness to get even with the man who had sent him there." He flees from an unseen fear:

This I saw ~~when~~ the rites were done  
 And the lamps were dead and the Gods alone  
 And the gray snake coiled on the altar stone -  
 Ere I fled from a fear that I could not see,  
 And the Gods of the East made mouths at me. (Vol. 19. P.145)

But this is no retreat with the acceptance of the negation. Action is the answer to assert himself and he plunges himself into the life of anger and telegrams with more zest and determination than ever before and involves himself more in the life of the state. He thwarts a palace plot for the assassination of the prince and sends him away to be educated. He brings order with his sharply defined categories of right and wrong. He stamps his own code of morality on the chaos and confusion of the Indian State and leaves India after he "had flung all their world forward on the torrent of his vitality." (Vol. 19. P.213)

The sahib in the "Bubbling-well Road" has a similar experience when he loses his way in the tall river grass which he enters after wild boars. Somewhere in the middle of the jungle-grass lives a priest who is stoned by the villagers whenever he comes out in the open. The sahib has his terrier with him; at one place he misses him and says to himself "where has the little beast gone to?" and he immediately hears a deep voice coming from under his very feet repeat what he has said. He repeats his call to his terrier and then listens. He thinks he heard a man laughing at him in an offensive way. It is the chuckle which unnerves him. He is a sahib and he does not like the idea of being laughed at; his pride will not take that.

"The heat made me sweat, but the laughter made me shake. There is no earthly need for laughter in high grass. It is indecent, as well as impolite." (Vol. IV. P.401)

His arrogance and his imperial posture demand action. He begins to look round and soon finds a well covered by grass; it is deep and when he leans over its mouth he sees moving things in the thick black water at the bottom.

"The laughing sound came from the noise of a little spring,

spouting half-way down one side of the well. Sometimes, as the black things circled round, the trickle from the spring fell upon their tightly-stretched skins, and then the laughter changed to a sputter of mirth." (Vol. IV. P.402)

He finds his way to the priest's hut and then makes him lead him out into the open. His final gesture of defiance and arrogance is to try to set the patch of grass alight, but it would not burn as it is green; but he goes away determining to come back on a fine summer day and with a wind to help he would set the grass on fire. He realizes nothing, but he shrinks from nothing. The essence of a Kipling's hero is in action, in self affirmation. They are nothing if they do not act.

Adela because of her rationalism refuses to realize the significance of her spiritual challenge in the 'boum'; she must find some cause for it in the external circumstances that precede the panic in the cave. On their way to a group of caves, Adela and Aziz pass several isolated ones, which they enter, because the guide persuades them to do so. They do not talk much as each is occupied with his or her own thoughts. Aziz is worried about the arrangements of the breakfast. His hospitality will suffer if anything goes wrong. Moreover he is not feeling easy and self-possessed in the company of Miss Quested alone and he is further alienated when he learns that she is going to marry Ronny. Adela on the other hand is thinking of her marriage. She is still planning so rationally and efficiently for her future. All the scenes of the coming days pass before her eyes like a procession, but the business that seriously occupies her mind is concerned with her life at Chandrapore. Aziz does not help her to find a solution to her problem and difficulties. She is expecting something

universal like Akbar's religion to embrace everything in India. Only the 'broum' of the caves has the quality of embracing and enveloping everything; but then everything loses its identity. The echo is a comment on man's efforts at civilization. To build a new and universal civilization mankind has to undergo an experience of spiritual negation of all that he holds so dear. Men are divided by their values. Adela's approach is rational and does not undergo a change of heart.

"There were real difficulties here - Ronny's limitations and her own - but she enjoyed facing difficulties, and decided that if she could control her peevishness (always her weak point), and neither rail against Anglo-India nor succumb to it, their married life ought to be happy and profitable. She mustn't be too theoretical; she would deal with each problem as it came up, and trust to Ronny's common sense and her own. Luckily, each had abundance of common sense and good will." (P.158)

It is here that a row of foot-holds in the rock reminds her of the pattern in the dust made by the wheels of the Nawab Bahadur's car, which they had examined for the tracks of the animal that had hit the car. She suddenly realises that she and Ronny do not love each other. It was an animal thrill they had felt when the car jolted them and their bodies touched, and they later announced their engagement. (Helen Schlegel and Paul Wilcox succumb to passion one evening under the elm tree and embrace and kiss.) No impetuous passion has taken place here, only a thrill but is it enough for a stable relationship? It is a very sudden realization. She begins to see clearly what has happened.

"Vexed rather than appalled, she stood still, her eyes on the sparkling rock. There was esteem and animal contact at dusk, but the emotion that links them was absent." (P.159)

She begins to doubt the wisdom of having got engaged to Ronny.

It is her common sense which immediately suggests it would create trouble to break off her engagement and she is not even sure if love is necessary for a successful marriage. She talks to Aziz about his marriage and children and thinks he is handsome and that his wife and children, no doubt, are beautiful too. She reflects that neither she nor Ronny has physical beauty and charm which does make a difference in a relationship which must endure and be stable. She has heard from Mrs. Turton that every Muslim marries four wives allowed to him by his religion and naturally thinks Aziz must have several wives. Polygamy is not practised because it is legally prescribed as is thought by Europeans. It is allowed under certain social conditions as well as individual circumstances in order to prevent harm to society and individuals. Gratification of sex is not its end. Earlier in the novel Aziz replies to Begum Hamidullah's question as to when he is going to get married again, that once is enough. The conversation that follows explores social conditions under which polygamy seems justified. Europeans refuse to consider the social and moral justification of polygamy. It can prevent prostitution, illegitimate children, sexual promiscuity and when you make a man responsible for the welfare of the women he is intimate with sexually you are making him think before he takes any step. If you allow men and women to incur no responsibility for the consequences of their sexual behaviour you are encouraging them to promiscuity. Aziz like all Moslems was sensitive on this point as it is always meant as an insult when a Muslim is asked by a European how many wives he has. Adela does not know about the

social implications of Mrs. Turtons remark. She is merely inquisitive and asks Aziz about the number of his wives. Aziz dashes away into the nearest cave to recover himself. There are several caves around and Adela enters one of them when she does not see him after having followed him at her leisure. It is here that she experiences the panic. What is the nature of this panic is a more relevant question than what really happens to her in the cave. Aziz has already entered a cave before she enters another so it cannot be true that he has followed her as is later on supposed. There is nothing either in the thoughts or behaviour of Aziz to suggest any intention of assault. He does not think Adela is beautiful and has remarked to Fielding that she has practically no breasts. There is no sense in the interpretation of Adela's panic and illusion as the objectification of her unconscious desire to be raped by Aziz whose vitality has impressed her. Forster has clearly stated that she "didn't admire him with any personal warmth" and she had "nothing of the vagrant in her blood." Her experience is an illusion, a *Māyā*; it is the panic caused by the total and complete failure of her education, her common sense and her rationalism to cope with the problems and difficulties she is to face after her marriage with Ronny. She is ashamed that only animal contact has brought her and Ronny together. Unknown forces from the depth of her psyche are grappling with her mind; the assault that she imagines has taken place reflects this struggle and the division of her developed personality into two. When among her own people and in her own social conditions she derives strength from her rationalism to

withstand the onslaught of the unconscious. But the echo undermines and wrecks her resistance and she becomes the victim of her own repressed desires. She has refused to understand the deep undercurrents from which our actions spring. The entrance into the cave is symbolical of her descent into the primal depths of her being, because the caves represent no civilization, no religion, no culture, which all belong to and are part of our conscious life and being. She realizes later in the court very vividly that Aziz is innocent. She realizes the limits of her rationality and recognizes the part played by the irrational and the unseen in our life. The cave is like a test tube which has been sterilized, emptied of everything that might affect our thoughts, such as religion, sculpture, painting or even an animal, a bee or a bat, into which her developed personality and her whole attitude to life are put to the test of facing panic and emptiness. It is a test of the total personality including the physical because it is difficult to dissociate the physical from the psychical in a total human experience. But inside the cave the normal physical sensations are under the control of the 'boum'. It is that element inside the cave which concentrates panic and emptiness; for Mrs. Moore it is emptiness more than panic, for Adela the other way around. Her experience is turned inward by the 'boum' to include her illusion, her limitations as to the apprehending of truth, her rationalism, and what makes up her reality, which includes her total attitude or philosophy of life as manifested in her behaviour and values. She flees from the cave in panic to her own society which interprets her experience in terms of their own conventions and prejudices. It is difficult

to accept that she has rejected her values; has she done so she would not have fled to the bosom of the Anglo-Indians. Her values include her own society; she by deciding to marry Ronny has taken a step forward to own this society and has already made a compromising move by intending not to rail against it. She recognizes the unseen but in terms of her own culture and society; she begins to kneel in the morning to Christianity.

"Adela after years of intellectualism, had resumed her morning kneel to Christianity. There seemed no harm in it, it was the shortest and easiest act to the unseen, and she could tack her troubles on to it. Just as the Hindu clerks asked Lakshmi for an increase in pay, so did she implore Jehovah for a favourable verdict. God who saves the king will surely support the police. Her deity returned a consoling reply, but the touch of her hands on her face started prickly heat, and she seemed to swallow and expectorate the same insipid clot of air that had weighed on her lungs all the night." (P.220)

Notice the satirical note in Forster's treatment of Adela's surrender to the unseen; but because it follows the line of the conventional approach to the unseen it is totally inadequate. Mrs. Moore is happy with her faith before she arrives in India; she begins to find it less and less satisfying until inside the cave it is finally negated and she cannot find any comfort in the chatter of talkative Christianity. Adela on the other hand finds intellectualism more reliable until her confrontation with emptiness and then she turns to the conventional rapport with the unseen. She needs fresh inspiration; instead she is inhaling and exhaling a stale, insipid faith. That is why she cannot see her mistake. It is in the Court that her moment of inward realization comes. It comes when she notices that magnificently formed Sudra in the Court, who sits aloof and uninvolved in the hysteria and muddle released by her. It is then that she realizes her limitations:

"Something in his aloofness impressed the girl from middle-class England, and rebuked the narrowness of her suffering. In virtue of what had she collected this roomful of people together? Her particular brand of opinions, and the suburban Jehovah who sanctified them - by what right did they claim so much importance in the world, and assume the title of civilization? Mrs. Moore - she looked round, but Mrs. Moore was far away on the sea; it was the kind of question they might have discussed on the voyage out before the old lady had turned disagreeable and queer." (PP.226-227)

Mrs. Moore can balance the short-comings of her personality and between them can find an answer to the central question of the importance of the self-assumed role of the British in India. There is a closer rapport between them when they arrive in India; but they drift apart as Adela picks up her rapport with Ronny and moves in the direction of becoming one of the Anglo-Indians. The court scene is significant in many ways. It is a satire on the legal systems and their total inability to cope with a situation which is cleared only by the honesty and sincerity of Adela. If she says that Aziz has followed her into the cave nothing will save him. Mr. MacBryde has provided himself with enough circumstantial evidence, reinforced by his theories about the natives being of criminal disposition, to get a conviction. The defence consisting of a barrister from Calcutta who has great reputation, Mr. Amritrao and the hysterical Mahmoud Ali, are raising irrelevant points which cannot help Aziz. The weaknesses of both the Indians and the British are thrown into sharp relief by the passive Sudra who presides like a deity on the inconsequential squabbles of the assembled people. The British are arrogant and confident of their victory. Champagne has already been ordered for the celebration. The Indians are pathetically irrelevant. The crowd outside takes up the name of Mrs. Moore and begins to

chant its Indianized form *Esmiss Esmoore* which is symbolical of Mrs. Moore's orientalness which Aziz has perceived in the mosque. The critical moment comes when Adela stands up to give evidence. This is the important moment, the supreme moment that can clear the muddle and reveal truth or let continue the evil and the hysteria. What are the new elements that enter here to make Adela see the truth? The ability to connect various fragments of her experience together and let it be illuminated as if from within. She perceives more clearly than ever the relationship between her engagement and her conversation with Aziz immediately before he dashed away into the nearest cave. Here is another possible explanation, psycho-analytical in nature, which might tempt one to put it forward. Adela has realized that she does not love Ronny but she does not want at the same time to break her engagement and cause misery and suffering. Her common sense has prevailed to check her thoughts along that direction. Her illusion or hallucination is a device of her unconscious, a kind of elaborate escape mechanism, to break away from Ronny; because she does in the end return to England and does not get married to Ronny. Adela has intended to tell the truth and nothing but the truth, so she returns in her imagination to the caves. She is able to stand outside this experience and examine it in this detached way. She has achieved emancipation from her own society, represented by Mr. MacBryde who is questioning her:

"A new and unknown sensation protected her, like magnificent armour. She didn't think what had happened, or even remember in the ordinary way of memory, but she returned to the Marabar Hills, and spoke from them across a sort of darkness to Mr. MacBryde. 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. Why had she thought the expedition 'dull'? Now the sun rose again, the elephant waited, the pale masses of the rock flowed round her and presented the first cave; she entered, and a match was reflected in the polished walls - all beautiful and significant, though she had been blind to it at the time. Questions were asked, and to each she found the exact reply; yes, she had noticed the 'Tank of the Dagger', but not known its name; Yes, Mrs. Moore had been tired after the first cave, and sat in the shadow of a great rock, near the dried-up mud. Smoothly the voice in the distance proceeded, leading along the paths of truth, and the airs from the punkah behind her wafted her on ... '... the prisoner and the Guide took you on to the Kawa Dol, no one else being present?'" (Pp.236-237)

Notice that the procession of facts as it passes before her in the questions of Mr. MacBryde is very clear in her mind. She is very positive about every one of them. When it comes to the question of whether Aziz has followed her in the cave she had entered she begins to see the difference. It is the crucial question, which looks different as she sees it from the detached position, a position which may well be called, the Forsterian detachment. It is an act of imagination which illuminates the truth; Mr. MacBryde is leading her along the logical path which leads to the inevitable conclusion that Aziz is guilty. She refuses to follow him beyond a certain point. There is a point in human experience beyond which logic cannot go, nor can you be accompanied by anyone else; you must go alone beyond it in quest of the truth. Adela does that and finds Aziz innocent. The Court with its elaborate legal machinery suddenly looks flimsy; it is smashed by an inward realization by Adela. MacBryde and all others are helpless.

"And then the flimsy framework of the court broke up, the shouts of derision and rage culminated, people screamed and cursed, kissed one another, wept passionately. Here were the English, whom their servants protected, there Aziz fainted in Hamidullah's arms. Victory on this side, defeat on that - complete for one moment was the antithesis. Then life returned to its complexities; person after person

struggled out of the room to their various purposes, 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." (P.240).

But the muddle is not completely cleared. There are forces which are beyond the control of Adela's moment of clarity. Other forces hitherto inactive are released. The Indians are triumphant and their restraint breaks down completely. Aziz has completely lost his universal generosity. He no longer feels like the great Mogul emperors in a giving mood. He declares to Fielding his intentions of claiming damages from Adela and is planning to travel with it. Fielding finds it very hard to persuade him to give up his revengeful attitude which he finally succeeds in doing by requesting him to be generous for the sake of Mrs. Moore.

Adela is reluctantly thrown on Fielding. She has renounced her own people, and she finds herself 'without a part in the universe she had created'. (P.241) She suddenly finds herself all alone, disowned by the Anglo-Indians and not owned by the Indians who should have been grateful to her for her honesty. Only Fielding stands by her and makes arrangements for her accommodation. His kindness to her is misunderstood by the Indians, especially Aziz whose suspicions are confirmed by Fielding insisting that Aziz give up his claims to damages. He thinks Fielding is going to marry Adela and is saving her money. Adela has undergone a cleansing experience, her pride is gone and its place is taken by self-abasement; she allows herself to be at others' mercy.

She has failed to touch the hearts of Indians in the court because she has shown no emotion. She does not touch their imagination.

"Truth is no truth in the 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 girls' sacrifice - so creditable to Western notions - was rightly rejected, because, though it came from the heart, it did not include her heart. A few garlands from students was all that India ever gave her in return." (p.254-255)

She considers the whole affair in the Marabar caves with Fielding. They discuss it rationally without reaching any definite conclusion. Here Forster demonstrates the inability of reason to encompass everything. There is always a residuum of human experience which remains unexplained. All the possible explanations are found unsatisfactory.

The Temple section is the expansion part of the novel. I think here Forster is intending to do what he explains in the Aspects of the Novel.

"Expansion. That is the idea the novelist must cling to. Not completion. Not rounding off but opening out. When the symphony is over we feel that the notes and tunes composing it have been liberated, they have found in the rhythm of the whole their individual freedom."184

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184. Aspects of the Novel, London, 1927, P.216.

CHAPTER IV

GEORGE ORWELL

BURMESE DAYS

And that Orwell was a bit of a nagger  
cannot be denied.

E.M. FORSTER.

I will develop my argument along the following lines in this chapter:

(a) first to analyse Orwell's attitude to the Empire and imperialism. This is done by comparing it with Kipling's and Forster's in order to see in what ways it differs from theirs.

(b) to discuss the relationship between Orwell's views about the Empire and his background, education and Burmese experiences.

(c) to analyse the particular relationship between his Burmese experiences and Burmese Days - especially the relationship between Orwell and his character Flory.

(d) and lastly a discussion of Burmese Days as a novel and its failings and defects.

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If Kipling was pre-occupied with the problems of imperial responsibility and the practical matters involved in the discharge of the white man's burden, and E.M. Forster with those of cultures and civilizations, George Orwell was committed to more immediate problems of social justice. Kipling remained, from the practical point of view, on the periphery of the imperial responsibility and although not within the administration of the Indian Empire he showed a very strong and enthusiastic sense of it by his adulation and idealizing of the soldier and the administrator. One must remember that Kipling returned to India when seventeen, straight out of United Services College. It was a school specifically founded to educate children of Anglo-Indian

parents. It prepared its pupils for the Imperial Army and Administrative Services, and its education was designed specifically to develop an imperialist mentality and foster a love of country and action. Kipling was neither to be a soldier like Stalky nor an engineer like Beresford. He wanted to be a literary man and had intended to go to London, not Lahore. But his father obtained him a post on the Staff of the Civil and Military Gazette at Lahore. Kipling joined his parents there, and though a mere youth of seventeen "there was a good deal in his new circumstances to make him feel adequately acknowledged as grown up. He had his own manservant and his own pony-and-trap; as he was the only European on the Staff of the Civil and Military apart from its editor, he had a certain amount of responsibility as well as a great deal of hard work of a routine and unexciting sort."<sup>1</sup> He also became a member of the Punjab Club where he mixed with older, seasoned men doing different jobs in the Government. He listened to their endless talk and formed his ideas as to how the Empire was administered.

"And in that Club and elsewhere I met none except picked men at their definite work - Civilians, Army, Education, Canals, Forestry, Engineering, Irrigation, Railways, Doctors and Lawyers - samples of each branch and each talking his shop."<sup>2</sup>

Hero-worship, under such circumstances, came naturally to him in India where it was strengthened by the unchallenged and privileged position of the Sahib and the hierarchical nature of the administration with the Emperor or Empress on top.

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1. J.I.M. Stewart, Rudyard Kipling, London, 1966, P.41.

2. Rudyard Kipling, Something of Myself, London, 1964, P.42.

E.M. Forster, on the other hand, viewed the role of the administrator from a different angle, that of an outsider on a short visit the first time he travelled to India, and as a secretary to a native ruler on his second visit. He thought that the claim to imperial responsibility was hollow, because it was a very narrow-minded view, never really seeing beyond mere office work. He found the administrators and soldiers to be snobbish and vulgar. He had known educated Indians before going to India and was in a position to benefit from his own experiences and also from the material made available by sympathetic scholars and orientalists. By this time, the Indians had regained self-confidence after a period of defeatism and resignation following the events of 1857, and had begun with pride to assert a faith in their own cultures and civilizations. Forster had taken note of this change; moreover he also knew about the feelings of those Indians he had met in Cambridge. With faster and easier communication, more and more Indians were coming over to Britain for higher education. Through personal relationships they discovered that they could be friends with the English on a basis of equality, that the English were as human as themselves and not after all the gods they pretended to be in India. It was such Indians who, after their return home, bitterly resented the Anglo-Indian attitudes and snobbery.<sup>3</sup> Kipling, unfortunately, had no knowledge of the feelings of this class, and he had nothing

3. See A.S. Wadia: Reflections on the Problems of India, London, 1914.

Among the many problems of India that Wadia discussed in his book was the relationship between the English and the Indians. He was a man of culture and strongly resented the attitude of the English.

but ridicule for the graduates of the Indian Universities. Educated Indians are introduced in a few of his stories; Chunder De is a Bengali graduate who after a successful start in the Civil Service in Bengal is transferred to a turbulent district in the North-West Frontier where he proves very inefficient. Hurree Chunder Mookerjee is an educated Bengali who is in the secret service in Kim, a vain scholar, proud of his babu English. There is no reason why Kipling's educated Indians should mostly be Bengalis, as by this time Universities had sprung up all over India and there was one at Lahore just opposite the Museum of which his father, John Lockwood Kipling was curator. In 'On the City Wall' Kipling introduced Wali Dad, the only educated Indian treated with real sympathy and understanding. In this one case, Kipling showed an ability to understand the Indian mind, but treated the rest of his educated native characters with the traditional contempt and ridicule of the Anglo-Indians. Forster knew India and the Indians in a different way. India was for him a bewildering mixture of cultures and civilizations which he loved and tried to understand; but he knew very little about the kind of natives that Kipling knew so very intimately - those ground down to abject servility and humiliation; those who looked upon the Anglo-Indians as gods and who obeyed and worshipped them.

George Orwell is quite different from both Kipling and Forster. In the first place he had almost no first hand experience of India proper. There is no evidence in his writings that he was in any way interested in the cultures, civilizations, religions, history or literature of India, though he served in the Imperial Police

Service in Burma for five years. Although Burma was annexed by the British to their Indian Empire it had little in common with it. The fiction which has Burma for its background has a distinct tone. The Burmese hated the British openly and relentlessly. They insulted and jeered at them at every opportunity. The Buddhist priests shared, too, this hatred of the British.

Neither Kipling nor Forster was ever the subject of open insults as was Orwell in Burma. Kipling commanded the obedience of the native servants as a child like Punch in "Baa, Baa, Black Sheep", the darling of the domestic servants. He never had it so good as in the house of his father where the ayah, Meeta and the hamal were all at his service. Tods in "Tods' Amendment" knew the natives in the bazaars of Simla so intimately that he had more knowledge of their problems than the members of the Viceroy's Council and caused an amendment to a Bill.

"Tods was the idol of some eighty jhamphanis and half as many saises. He saluted them all as 'O Brother'. It never entered his head that any living human being could disobey his orders; and he was the buffer between the servants and his Mamma's wrath. The working of that household turned on Tods, who was adored by everyone from the dhobi to the dog-boy. Even Futeh Khan, the villainous loafer khit from Mussoorie, shirked risking Tods' displeasure for fear his co-mates should look down on him."<sup>4</sup>

Kipling's Anglo-Indian children ruled supreme in the world of the domestic servants and the bazaar natives and their happy and spoiled childhood reflects Kiplings' own. Forster was respected and liked by his Indian friends, all the more because he did not have any official authority and capacity and the Indians felt free and equal in his company. This is the impression that one

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4. See 'Tods' Amendment' in Plain Tales from the Hills, The Works of Kipling, Vol.1. Sussex Edition, London, 1937-39, P.266.

gathers from his Indian Entries and the Hill of Devi.

Orwell, on the contrary, experienced the open and unprovoked hatred of the Burmese in spite of the fact that he was in the police service, because of which one would expect him to have been feared and respected. He has left this record of it:

"In Moulmein, in Lower Burma, I was hated by large numbers of people - the only time in my life that I have been important enough for this to happen to me. I was the sub-divisional police officer of the town, and in an aimless, petty kind of way, anti European feeling was very bitter. No one had guts to raise a riot, but if a European woman went through the bazaars alone somebody would probably spit betel juice over her dress. As a police officer I was an obvious target and was baited whenever it seemed safe to do so. When a nimble Burman tripped me up on the football field and the referee (another Burman) looked the other way, the crowd yelled with hideous laughter. This happened more than once. In the end the sneering yellow faces of young men that met me everywhere, the insults hooted after me when I was at a safe distance, got badly on my nerves. The young Buddhist priests were the worst of all. There were several thousands of them in the town and none of them seemed to have anything to do except to stand on street corners and jeer at Europeans."<sup>5</sup>

This is the opening paragraph of "Shooting an Elephant". Such appears to have been neither the experience of Kipling nor of Forster; there is certainly no evidence of it in their writings. Kipling once narrowly escaped death at the hands of an unknown sniper hidden in the Khyber hills.<sup>6</sup> He had gone up to Jumrood beyond Peshawar to cover for his paper the royal reception of Amir Abdur Rahman of Kabul who was to arrive with his retinue in

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5. Shooting an Elephant, London, 1953, P.1.

6. "Kipling was among those who went on to Peshawar and nine miles farther to Fort Jumrood at the mouth of the Kyber Pass, to attend the formal reception of the Amir at the frontier post. While waiting some days at Jumrood, Kipling wandered into the pass, turning back only when a tribesman 'took a pot-shot' at him. This was his first and last experience of the North-West Frontier." (Charles Carrington: Rudyard Kipling; His Life and Work, London, 1955, P.59).

a day or two. This happened in March 1885. Kipling wandered out of the Fort in the evening and some watchful Afridi or Shinwari tribesman took a shot at him. It is possible that Kipling might have imagined the shot was aimed at him. Anyhow he took the incident in good spirit and probably had it in mind when he wrote his poem 'Arithmetic on the Frontier' which appeared in the first edition of Departmental Ditties (June 1886). It has a strong smack of realism and the feeling of helplessness on the Frontier which reflects experience:

The flying bullet down the Pass,  
That whistles clear: 'All flesh is grass'.

.....  
A scrimmage in a Border Station -  
A canter down some dark defile -  
Two thousand pounds of education  
Drops to a ten-rupee jezail -  
The Crammer's boast, the Squadron's pride,  
Shot like a rabbit in a ride!

These incidents of hostility along the North-West Frontier were not peculiar to the days of the British Raj. The Frontier tribes were never willing to surrender their independence and gave considerable trouble to the Mogul Emperors, especially to Akbar and Aurangzeb. The British were not the first rulers of India to send military expeditions to the Frontier. Emperor Aurangzeb had to send expeditions against the great Khattak leader, Kushal Khan Khattah, a poet and a warrior as well. After the British withdrawal in 1947, in spite of the fact that the Afridis showed only a little hostility, all the big military cantonments in the heart of the tribal territory were vacated in pursuance of a deliberate policy of the Government of Pakistan to win the confidence of the tribes. The regular army along the border was

replaced by the militia, scouts, levies and the Frontier Constabulary all recruited from the different tribes. Thus they were not only given employment but a sense of responsibility. They became the guards of the Frontier and were no longer enemies. During the British Raj, no doubt, the border skirmishes along the tribal belt were more numerous. One reason was that the British were foreigners and a holy war against them could be raised easily at any provocation. It seems that as a matter of policy the Government of India kept the border tension alive without letting it become serious. Thus they were able to maintain a large Imperial Army in which the younger sons of the middle classes of Britain could get commissions. Inquisitive members of Parliament were also kept silent regarding the maintenance of a huge Imperial Army in India. Moreover as fighting before the first World War was not very destructive of life and property the British military officers had a sporting interest in provoking small border skirmishes and tribal risings to provide action and fun. A soldier's life in the barracks was gloomy on the whole. The heat, the epidemics and the loneliness broken by drunkenness put considerable strain on the British soldier. Kipling depicts the horrors of a soldier's life in his ballads and stories.

"'Tain't so much the bloomin' fightin', though there's enough o' that. It's the bloomin' food and the bloomin' climate. Frost all night, and bilin' sun all day, and the water stinks fit to knock you down. 'Tain't no bloomin' picnic in those parts I can tell you.'"

So it was with great relief that the Frontier fighting was hailed. "The relief of tension came with the recurring campaigns on the

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7. 'Drums of the Fore and Aft' in Wee Willie Winkie, Under the Deodars and other stories, The Works of Kipling, Vol. III, Sussex Edition, London, 1937-39, P.395.

Frontier, to which the soldiers looked forward with excited pleasure, though the wars offered small prospect of plunder or promotion."<sup>8</sup> Fighting was still mainly a romantic adventure and the officers enjoyed it as much as the men. Even a subaltern's life could be lonely and monotonous although he could find escape through sports and other activities.

"The regular working of the Empire shifted his world to India, where he tasted utter loneliness in subaltern's quarters - one room and one bullock-trunk - and, with his mess, learned the new life from the beginning. But there were horses in the land - ponies at reasonable price; there was polo for such as could afford it; there were the disreputable remnants of a pack of hounds, and Cottar worried his way along without too much despair. It dawned on him that a regiment in India was nearer the chance of active service than he had conceived, and that a man might as well study his profession. A major of the new school backed this idea with enthusiasm, and he and Cottar accumulated a library of military works, and read and argued and disputed far into the nights. But the adjutant said the old thing: 'Get to know your men, young 'un, and they'll follow you anywhere. That's all you want - know your men.' Cottar thought he knew them fairly well at cricket and the regimental sports, but he never realised the true inwardness of them till he was sent off with a detachment of twenty to sit down in a mud fort near a rushing river which was spanned by a bridge of boats. When the floods came they went forth and hunted strayed pontoons along the banks. Otherwise there was nothing to do, and the men got drunk, gambled, and quarrelled. They were a sickly crew, for a junior subaltern is by custom saddled with the worst men. Cottar endured their rioting as long as he could, and then sent down-country for a dozen pairs of boxing-gloves."<sup>9</sup>

An escape in real action was welcome to break such loneliness and monotony.

"But fate sent the change that was needed, in the shape of a little winter campaign on the border, which, after the manner of little campaigns, flashed out into a very ugly war; and Cottar's regiment was chosen among the first."<sup>10</sup>

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8. Charles Carrington: Rudyard Kipling, London, 1955, P.100.

9. 'The Brushwood Boy' in The Day's Work, The Works of Kipling, Vol. VI, Sussex Edition, London, 1937-39, PP.386-387.

10. Ibid. P.400.

I think it was this tremendous relief which the subalterns and the soldiers experienced which was responsible for the gusto and enthusiasm with which these campaigns were talked about. Consider also with what gusto and enthusiasm Kipling's fighting pieces are described. Although he had never seen actual fighting, if his war pieces are compared with the accounts of such fighting and military expeditions of the soldiers and officers, they are very realistic.<sup>11</sup> The tone is similar and Kipling caught it most probably by listening to such officers who had seen action in the club. But what a different tone is struck by sensitive writers of the first and second World Wars.<sup>12</sup> Even Kipling's stories about the first World War deal with personal sufferings brought about by fighting. The horrors and disgusting scenes of trench fighting and gas warfare ended whatever romance still clung to soldiering and fighting. Previously in the nineteenth century joining the army as a private was not respectable but it could still be romanticised and to become an officer was honourable. The traditional class division was carried into the ranks of the army.

"Socially, the private soldiers were in fact drawn from the unemployed or unemployable, so that 'going for a soldier' was, in the respectable working-class, regarded as the last degradation, analogous with 'going to the bad.' Once enlisted and marked out by a uniform, the soldiery formed a caste apart and a caste of untouchables, living under conditions in barracks that were not even healthy."<sup>13</sup>

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11. See Appendix E.

12. For example the following books:

- (a) A Farewell to Arms by Ernest Hemingway, London, 1929.
- (b) Good-bye to all That by Robert Graves, London, 1929.
- (c) Memoirs of an Infantry Officer by Siegfried Sassoon, London, 1930.

13. Charles Carrington: Rudyard Kipling, London, 1955, P.105.

Learoyd, one of the three famous soldiers of Kipling, joined the army because he was no good. He tells the story of his doing so to his friends in "On Greenhow Hill".

"'Nobody never made Jesse my master, but it seemed to me he was about right, and I went away into the town an' knocked up against a recruitin'-sergeant.... I was to get away, and this were th' regular road for the likes o' me. I 'listed there an' then, took th' Widow's shillin', and had a bunch o' ribbons pinned i' my hat.'"

And when he went round the following day to say good-bye to his sweet-heart the father of the girl would not allow him to see her.

"But next day I found my way to David Roantree's door, and Jesse came to open it. Says he, "Thou's come back again with 'th' Devil's colours flyin' - thy true colours, as I always telled thee.'"<sup>14</sup>

This was how a soldier was looked upon - a social outcast. So it was often assumed that a man must have something of a devil inside him to join as a private. This, I think, was the reason for the three famous soldiers of Kipling, Mulvaney, Ortheris and Learoyd, to be shown as they are. It is in Kipling's stories that we find a fuller and sympathetic treatment of the nineteenth century soldier.

"Search English literature and you will find no treatment of the English soldier on any adequate scale between Shakespeare and Kipling. He who wishes to know how British soldiers fight, how officers and men regard one another, how they talk the night before the battle, will seek the information in King Henry V, or in Barrack-Room Ballads, for it is to be found almost nowhere else in our English classics."<sup>15</sup>

These were some of the facts, which, Orwell thought, showed the English hatred of war. He thought this anti-militarism was deep-rooted in English history.

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14. "On Greenhow Hill" in Life's Handicap, The Works of Kipling, Vol. IV, Sussex Edition, London, 1937-39, P.97.

15. Charles Carrington: Rudyard Kipling, London, 1955, P.106.

"And with this goes something that is always written off by European observers as 'decadence' or hypocrisy, the English hatred of war and militarism. It is rooted deep in history, and it is strong in the lower-middle class as well as the working class. Successive wars have shaken it but not destroyed it; well within memory it was common for the red-coats to be booed at in the streets and for the landlords of respectable public-houses to refuse to allow soldiers on the premises.<sup>16</sup> In peace-time, even when there are two million unemployed it is difficult to fill the ranks of the tiny standing Army, which is officered by the country gentry and a specialized stratum of the middle-class, and manned by farm labourers and slum proletarians. The mass of the people are without military knowledge or tradition, and their attitude towards war is invariably defensive. No politician could rise to power promising them conquests or military 'glory', no Hymn of Hate has ever made any appeal to us."<sup>17</sup>

When Kipling went to London from India to try his fortunes there as a writer, having been encouraged by the success of his Anglo-Indian stories, he was annoyed by the fact that the English as a whole were not imperial minded and was very indignant with them for knowing little or nothing about their vast Empire. He had seen it with the English Flag flying everywhere and wrote The English Flag in 1891 to express his feelings. The tone of the poem is set by the opening stanza:

"Winds of the World, give answer! They are whimpering to  
and fro -  
And what should they know of England who only England know?  
The poor little street-bred people that vapour and fume  
and brag,  
They are lifting their heads in the stillness to yelp at the  
English Flag."<sup>18</sup>

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16. Kipling's Tommy had precisely the same complaint that he was refused a drink by a publican and a seat in the theatre.

I went into a public-'ouse to get a pint o' beer,  
The publican 'e up an' sez, "We serve no red-coats here".

.....

I went into a theatre as sober as could be,  
They gave a drunk civilian room, but 'adn't none for me;  
(See "Tommy," Definitive Edition of Kipling's Verse, London, 1960, P.398)

17. George Orwell, England your England, London, 1953, P.198  
The Title Essay from which the quotation is taken was first published in the Lion and the Unicorn, London, 1941.

18. The Definitive Edition of Rudyard Kipling's Verse, London, 1960, P.221.

This ignorance on the part of the English was a matter of great concern for Kipling and he made it his responsibility to remove it. Orwell on the other hand was happy to find that only a small section of the English people were bragging of the Empire. He found that the mass of the people simply ignored its existence. For him it did not mean lack of patriotism as Kipling thought.

"In England all the boasting and flagg-wagging, the 'Rule Britannia' stuff, is done by small minorities. The patriotism of the common people is not vocal or even conscious. They do not retain among their historical memories the name of a single military victory. English literature, like other literatures, is full of battle-poems, but it is worth noticing that the ones that have won for themselves a kind of popularity are always a tale of disasters and retreat. There is no popular poem about Trafalgar or Waterloo, for instance. Sir John Moore's army at Coruna, fighting a desperate rearguard action before escaping overseas (just like Dunkirk!) has more appeal than a brilliant victory. The most stirring battle-poem in English is about a brigade of Cavalry which charged in the wrong direction. And of the last war, the four names which have really engraved themselves on the popular memory are Mons, Ypres, Gallipoli and Passchendale, every time a disaster. The names of the great battles that finally broke the German armies are simply unknown to the general public."<sup>19</sup>

For Kipling patriotism and imperialism were closely connected but for Orwell they were entirely separate; according to the former you were not a patriot unless you were at the same time an imperialist, while for the latter it was not necessary to be an imperialist in order to be a patriot. Orwell thought that anti-militarism was quite in the English character and that it was the result of history and tradition. Apparently it is difficult to see how the British were able to acquire a vast Empire without

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19. G. Orwell, England your England, London, 1953, P.199. The Title Essay was first published in The Lion and the Unicorn, 1941.

being militarists. Hypocrisy, says Orwell, is the explanation that comes to mind. Orwell's analysis of the situation reflects his paradoxical nature.

"The reason why the English anti-militarism disgusts foreign observers is that it ignores the existence of the British Empire. It looks like sheer hypocrisy. After all, the English have absorbed a quarter of the earth and held to it by means of a huge navy. How dare they then turn round and say that war is wicked?

"It is quite true that the English are hypocritical about their Empire. In the working class this hypocrisy takes the form of not knowing that the Empire exists. But their dislike of standing armies is a perfectly sound instinct. A navy employs comparatively few people, and it is an external weapon which cannot affect home politics directly. Military dictatorships exist everywhere, but there is no such thing as a naval dictatorship. What English people of nearly all classes loathe from the bottom of their hearts is the swaggering officer type, the jingle of spurs and the crash of boots."<sup>20</sup>

This was written in 1941 when Britain was in a desperate plight and needed all the moral strength that it could get from a rationalization of the situation. The war between Nazi Germany and Imperial Britain was looked upon as a war between Totalitarianism and Democracy. This was a simplification of a whole complex of events. Orwell skilfully avoids the question of why the Indians and Africans were made to fight in Burma, North Africa and elsewhere. At home he wanted a social revolution to tide the nation over, because England resembled "a family with the wrong members in control that, perhaps, is as near as one can come to describing England in a phrase."<sup>21</sup> Though theoretically he thought it honest to let the Empire go, when it came to the actual problem of what was to be done about it he had certain

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20. Ibid, PP.199-200.

21. Ibid, P.210.

reservations. He hated imperialism, but under the abnormal conditions of war, his hatred could co-exist with a broad-based patriotism. Orwell produced his books under either personally or nationally abnormal conditions. Having been down and out in Paris for some months he was happy to be returning home to London with a job in prospect and that disposed him so favourably to England as to lead him to present a thoroughly distorted view to a foreign couple:

"On the journey I fell in with a couple of Roumanians, mere children, who were going to England on their honeymoon trip. They asked innumerable questions about England, and I told them some startling lies. I was so pleased to be getting home, after being hard up for months in a foreign city, that England seemed to me a sort of Paradise. There are, indeed, many things in England that make you glad to get home; bathrooms, armchairs, mint sauce, new potatoes properly cooked, brown bread, marmalade, beer made with veritable hops - they are all splendid, if you can pay for them. England is a very good country when you are not poor; and, of course, with a tame imbecile to look after, I was not going to be poor. The thought of not being poor made me very patriotic. The more questions the Roumanians asked, the more I praised England; the climate, the scenery, the art, the literature, the laws - everything in England was perfect.

"Was the architecture in England good? The Roumanians asked. 'Splendid!' I said. 'And you should just see the London statues! Paris is vulgar - half grandiosity and half slums. But London -'

"Then the boat drew alongside Tilbury pier. The first building we saw on the waterside was one of those huge hotels, all stucco and pinnacles, which stare from the English coast like idiots staring over an asylum wall. I saw the Roumanians, too polite to say anything, locking their eyes at the hotel. 'Built by French architects', I assured them; and even later, when the train was crawling into London of the eastern slums, I still kept it up about the beauties of English architecture. Nothing seemed too good to say about England, now that I was coming home and was not hard up any more."<sup>22</sup>

But the job he was looking forward to could not be had for quite some time and so he was forced to live in poverty in London. He came in very close contact with the many down and outs in the capital of the Empire, experienced abject poverty and realized that only a small section of the people benefited from the vast Empire. From this discovery onward Orwell became more interested in politics and economics and became a consistent left-wing critic. Kipling also had financial difficulties in London in the beginning like the hero of his semi-autobiographical novel, The Light that Failed, but he was never really down and out. He knew the poor and the slums of London but the imperial problems came first on his list. Kipling had also sensed the anti-militarism of the English but he looked upon it as a sign of decadence in an imperial nation and wrote angry poetry like "The Islanders" published in 1902. He explained the situation in a different way. The English, he thought, had been turned into a peace-loving and ease-loving people by years and years of prosperity and natural protection offered by the sea against an invasion:

Fenced by your careful fathers, ringed by your leaden seas,  
 Long did ye wake in quiet and long lie down at ease;  
 Till ye said of strife, "What is it?" of the sword, "It is  
     far from our ken";  
 Till ye made a sport of your shrunken hosts and a toy of  
     your armed men.  
 Ye stopped your ears to the warning - ye would neither look  
     nor heed -  
 Ye set your leisure before their toil and your lusts above  
     their need.

Kipling was warning the people of Britain - the Islanders - of their responsibility to themselves and their Empire and at the same time reminding them of their shame and humiliation 'at the hands of a little people, few but apt in field':

Because of your witless learning and your beasts of warren  
 and chase,  
 Ye grudged your sons to their service and your fields for  
 their camping-place.  
 Ye forced them follow in byways the craft that ye never  
 taught.  
 Ye hampered and hindered and crippled; ye thrust out  
 of sight and away  
 Those that would serve you for honour and those that served  
 you for pay.

Orwell looked back with nostalgia to the England before the  
 first World War not because it was desirable to put the clock back,  
 but because of the loss of the sense of security. It was the  
 England that Kipling represented. The middle-class was in the  
 ascendancy and in power and the Empire was secure though the Boer  
 War had shaken the British out of their indolence. Kipling  
 warned the people in "The Islanders"; he rebuked the middle-classes  
 for their indifference to militarism and the working-classes for  
 their ignorance:

Yet ye were saved by a remnant (and your land's long  
 suffering star)  
 When your strong men cheered in their millions while  
 your striplings went to the war.  
 Sons of the sheltered city - unmade, unhandled, unmeet -  
 Ye pushed them to the battle as ye picked them raw from  
 the street.  
 And what did ye look they should compass?  
 Warcraft learned in a breath,  
 Knowledge unto occasion at the first far view of Death?

And the following lines should leave no doubt in our minds  
 that he was addressing the middle-classes especially the upper-  
 middle class for neglecting their responsibility to be militarily  
 prepared for protecting the Empire on which their prosperity  
 depended.

So? And ye train horses and the dogs ye feed and prize?  
 How are the beasts more worthy than the souls, your  
 sacrifice?

But ye said, "Their valour shall show them"; but ye said,  
 "The end is close".  
 And ye sent them comfits and pictures to help them hang  
 your foes:  
 And ye vaunted your fathomless power, and ye flaunted your  
 iron pride,  
 Ere - ye fawned on the Younger Nations for the men who could  
 shoot and ride!  
 Then ye returned to your trinkets; then ye contented your  
 souls  
 With the flannelled fools at the wicket or the mudied oafs  
 at the goals.<sup>23</sup>

Orwell, like Kipling, held the ruling class responsible for taking no interest in the defence of the country and thought they were unable to foresee what preparations in the form of armaments were to be made to be ready against a foreign invasion:

"Since the 'fifties every war in which England has engaged has started off with a series of disasters, after which the situation has been saved by people comparatively low in the social scale. The higher commanders, drawn from the aristocracy, could never prepare for modern war, because in order to do so they would have had to admit to themselves that the world was changing. They have always clung to obsolete methods and weapons, because they inevitably saw each war as a repetition of the last. Before the Boer War they prepared for the Zulu War, before 1914 for the Boer War, and before the present war for 1914. Even at this moment hundreds of thousands of men in England are being trained with the bayonet, a weapon entirely useless except for opening tins. It is worth noticing that the Navy and, latterly, the Air Force, have always been more efficient than the regular Army. But the Navy is only partially, and the Air Force hardly at all within the ruling-class orbit."<sup>24</sup>

Kipling hoped that the middle classes could rise to the occasion because they were the People, and he did not rule out the possibility of a revolution.

Will ye rise and dethrone your rulers? (Because ye were  
 idle both?  
 Pride by insolence chastened? Indolence purged by sloth?)  
 No doubt but ye are the People; who shall make you afraid?  
 Also your gods are many; no doubt but your gods shall aid.<sup>25</sup>

23. See "The Islanders" in The Definitive Edition of Kipling's Verse, London, 1960, pp.301-304.

24. G. Orwell: England your England, London, 1953, p.213.

25. "The Islanders" in The Definitive Edition of Kipling's Verse, London, 1960, p.304.

After the early years of the twentieth century Victorian prosperity began to decline. Orwell was born just in this period of decline and he placed his own parents in "the lower-upper-middle class. The upper middle class, which had its hey day in the eighties and nineties, with Kipling as its poet laureate, was a sort of mound of wreckage left behind when the tide of Victorian prosperity receded. Or perhaps it would be better to change the metaphor and describe it not as a mound but as a layer - the layer of society lying between £2000 and £300 a year: my own family was not far from the bottom."<sup>26</sup>

With a longer historical perspective in the thirties than Kipling had when he wrote "The Islanders", Orwell could see that the upper-middle class had declined and that there was no hope of its survival in its older forms.

"Of course it is obvious now that the upper-middle class is done for. In every country town in Southern England, not to mention the dreary wastes of Kensington and Earl's Court, those who knew it in the days of its glory are dying, vaguely embittered by a world which has not behaved as it ought. I never open one of Kipling's books or go into one of the huge dull shops which were once the favourite haunt of the upper-middle class, without thinking 'change and decay in all around I see.' But before the war the upper-middle class, though already none too prosperous, still felt sure of itself. Before the war you were either a gentleman or not a gentleman, and if you were a gentleman you struggled to behave as such, whatever your income might be."<sup>27</sup>

The activities and pursuits of the leisured middle-class which Kipling thought were diverting the energies of the only People were becoming impossible with the decline of prosperity and Orwell knew this change very well as he himself belonged to an impoverished but genteel family.

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26. The Road to Wigan Pier, London, 1959, P.123.

27. Ibid, P.124.

"Probably the distinguishing mark of the upper-middle class was that its traditions were not to any extent commercial, but mainly military, official, and professional. People in this class owned no land, but they felt that they were landowners in the sight of God and kept up a semi-aristocratic outlook by going into the professions and the fighting services rather than into trade. Small boys used to count the plum stones on their plates and foretell their destiny by chanting, 'Army, Navy, Church, Medicine, Law'; and even of these 'Medicine' was faintly inferior to the others and only put in for the sake of symmetry. To belong to this class when you were at the £400 a year level was a queer business, for it meant that your gentility was almost purely theoretical. You lived, so to speak, at two levels simultaneously. Theoretically you knew all about your clothes and how to order a dinner, although in practice you could never afford to go to a decent tailor or a decent restaurant. Theoretically you knew how to shoot and ride, although in practice you had no horses to ride and not an inch of ground to shoot over. It was this that explained the attraction of India (more recently Kenya, Nigeria, etc.) for the lower-upper-middle class. The people who went there as soldiers and officials did not go there to make money, for a soldier and an official does not want money; they went there because in India, with cheap horses, free shooting, and hordes of black servants, it was so easy to play at being a gentleman."<sup>28</sup>

Kipling would certainly have not agreed with Orwell's ideas as a whole. His idea was different about the role of the Englishmen in the colonies. They were there not for their own selfish ends but were there because they could do things for others at the cost of considerable sacrifice. Orwell merely thought, and the idea became more important under the stresses and dangers of the second World War, that England needed a social revolution to eliminate the class-system in order to make available equal opportunities of education and employment for all.

There is one attitude which is more or less common to Kipling, Forster and Orwell. It is their attitude to the future form of the British Empire. Kipling could not foresee the

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28. Ibid, P.125.

changing conditions which would require a reassessment of the whole situation. The attitude of the die-hard imperialists was paradoxical in nature. They claimed to have a civilizing mission which implied that a day would come when the colonies would be civilized enough to stand on their own feet. But in their hearts they wanted no change and to maintain a situation in which they would always be unchallenged. Hence their love for the childlike, obedient and barbaric natives and ridicule of the educated natives. Kipling admired those natives who because of their primitive way of life gave unquestioned obedience to the Sahibs some of whom could become a legend, e.g. "The Tomb of His Ancestors". Why does he admire Gunga Din and Fuzzy-Wuzzy and ridicule Chunder De? Forster's position I have made clear in Chapter III. He had the advantage of knowing more about India as a big country with a long history, traditions and layers upon layers of cultures and civilizations - not just dead and extinct cultures but having something which the West could borrow to enrich its own materialistic civilization. His understanding of the Indian mind, especially of the educated, is greater and more sympathetic; yet of the national aspirations of India he took little notice, perhaps because nationalism did not count in his philosophy of life. He knew that the relations between the rulers and the ruled were in a mess and that the Indian intelligentsia had been alienated by the arrogance and snobbery of the Anglo-Indians. This according to him meant the loss of a great opportunity of mutual cultural understanding and co-operation; a new way of life could have been evolved had it not been for the vulgar prejudices of the Anglo-Indians. About the political

aspect of the Empire, especially its future, he thought little simply because politics played a dirty role in the conduct of national and international life. Orwell was in Burma at a time when nationalism had become a powerful force, yet in Burmese Days there is no reflection of it. His attitude, that of a police officer, is to look upon nationalists as trouble makers.

Yet he knew about Gandhi from reading Indian newspapers. He had read the opening chapters of his autobiography in Burma. "At about the time when the autobiography first appeared I remember reading its opening chapters in the ill-printed pages of some Indian newspaper."<sup>29</sup> In his essay on Gandhi he minimizes his political role and concentrates his attention on the spiritual side of his personality. This is a non-activist and pacific side and therefore one that the English could like and patronize. Politically the Anglo-Indians did not like Gandhi, but his autobiography, said Orwell,

"made a good impression on me, which Gandhi himself at that time did not. The things that one associated with him - home-spun cloth, "soul forces" and vegetarianism - were unappealing, and his mediaevalist programme was obviously not viable in a backward, starving, over-populated country. It was also apparent that the British were making use of him, or thought they were making use of him. Strictly speaking, as a Nationalist, he was an enemy, but since in every crisis he would exert himself to prevent violence - which, from the British point of view, meant preventing any effective action whatever - he could be regarded as "our man". In private this was sometimes cynically admitted. The attitude of the Indian millionaires was similar. Gandhi called upon them to repent, and naturally they preferred him to the socialists and communists who, given the chance, would actually have taken their money away. How reliable such calculations are in the long run is doubtful; as Gandhi himself says, "in the end deceivers deceive only themselves"; but at any rate the gentleness with which he was nearly always handled was due partly to the feeling that he was useful. The British Conservatives only became really angry

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29. Shooting An Elephant, London, 1950, P.102.

with him when, as in 1942, he was in effect turning his non-violence against a different conqueror."<sup>30</sup>

All this suggests that Gandhi must have been frequently mentioned in the Club. There is a reference to Nationalists in Burmese Days and also the Amritsar Massacre in Jalianwala Bagh. There is an indication of the existence of tension in the very atmosphere of Burma and Orwell makes no secret of the fact that he hated the Buddhist priests because they were insolent. The question, why were they insolent, is brushed aside because it would have led to the very important question of why were the British in Burma at all. This is a question which brings the British to face their own hypocrisy. Orwell had admitted that the English were guilty of hypocrisy in respect of their Empire. Forster had maintained that hypocrisy was an important element in the English character. When it came to the question of the future of the British Empire, Orwell, and to some extent even E.M. Forster, in spite of all their liberal ideas of social justice and equality and "two cheers for democracy" could not overcome the inherent hypocrisy. Only a hypocrite, and for that matter a very subtle one, could have written about India and the Empire as Orwell does in The Lion and the Unicorn in 1941 in the following words:

"What we must offer India is not "freedom", which, as I have said earlier, is impossible, but alliance, partnership - in a word, equality. But we must also tell the Indians that they are free to secede, if they want to. Without that there can be no equality of partnership, and our claim to be defending the colonial peoples against Fascism will never be believed. But it is a mistake to imagine that if the Indians were free to cut themselves adrift they would immediately do so. When a British government offers them unconditional independence, they will refuse it. For as soon as they have the power to secede the chief reason for doing so will have disappeared.

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30. "Reflections on Gandhi" in Shooting an Elephant, London, 1950, pp.102-103.

"A complete severance of the two countries would be a disaster for India no less than for England. Intelligent Indians know this. As things are at present, India not only cannot defend itself, it is hardly even capable of feeding itself. The whole administration of the country depends on a framework of experts (engineers, forest officers, railway men, soldiers, doctors) who are predominantly English and could not be replaced within five or ten years. Moreover English is the chief lingua franca and nearly the whole of the Indian intelligentsia is deeply anglicized. Any transference to foreign rule - for if the British marched out of India the Japanese and other powers would immediately march in - would mean an immense dislocation. Neither the Japanese, the Russians, the Germans and the Italians would be capable of administering India even at the low level of efficiency that is attained by the British. They do not possess the necessary supplies of technical experts or the knowledge of languages and local conditions, and they probably could not win the confidence of indispensable go-betweens such as the Eurasians.<sup>31</sup> If India were simply "liberated", i.e. deprived of British military protection, the first result would be a fresh foreign conquest, and the second a series of enormous famines which would kill millions of people within a few years.

"What India needs is the power to work out its own constitution without British interference, but in some kind of partnership that assures its military protection and technical advice. This is unthinkable until there is a socialist government in England. For at least eighty years England has artificially prevented the development of India, partly from fear of trade competition if Indian industries were too highly developed, partly because backward peoples are more easily governed than civilized ones. It is a commonplace that the average Indian suffers far more from his own countrymen than from the British. The petty Indian capitalist exploits the town worker with the utmost ruthlessness, the peasant lives from birth to death in the grip of money-lenders. But all this is an indirect result of the British rule, which aims half-consciously at keeping India as backward as possible. The classes most loyal to Britain are the princes, the land-owners and the business community - in general, the reactionary classes who are doing fairly well out of the status quo. The moment that England ceased to stand towards India in the relation of an exploiter, the balance of forces would be altered. No need then for the British to flatter the ridiculous Indian princes, with their gilded elephants and cardboard armies, to prevent the growth of the Indian Trade Unions, to play off Muslim against Hindu, to protect the worthless life of the moneylender, to receive the salaams of toadying minor officials, to prefer

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31. His own picture of the Eurasians as given in Burmese Days, is in no way that of 'indispensable go-betweens.'

the half-barbarous Gurkha to the educated Bengali. Once check that stream of dividends that flows from the bodies of Indian coolies to the banking accounts of old ladies in Cheltenham, and the whole Sahib-native nexus, with its haughty ignorance on one side and envy and servility on the other, can come to an end. Englishmen and Indians can work side by side for the development of India, and for the training of Indians in all arts which, so far, they have been systematically prevented from learning."<sup>32</sup>

Orwell failed to realise that a cripple and a healthy man can never be equal partners in any activity; and even if a cripple is given freedom of movement he remains dependent on others. It has been the experience of the African and Asian members of the British Commonwealth that they could not be equal partners, on any level, with Britain, Canada and Australia. A highly industrialized Britain and an agricultural India or Pakistan or any other country similarly placed could never be equal partners. Orwell should have known from his Burmese experiences that the Indians and the Burmese would lose no opportunity to get complete independence. Burma was the first country to sever all ties with Britain except the normal diplomatic ones. She chose not to be a member of the British Commonwealth and whatever her problems she has saved herself from being a pawn in the power game. I am not surprised that Orwell came to the conclusion that intelligent Indians thought that complete independence would be a disaster. He also thought that the "Indian intelligentsia is deeply anglicised." His contact with educated Indians was very limited and he knew only the type he represented by Dr. Veraswami in Burmese Days. Dr. Veraswami is an anglophile to a ridiculous degree. Orwell is clearly

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32. G. Orwell: The Lion and the Unicorn, London, 1962, PP.81-82.

satirizing him in his novel and is following the traditional treatment of the educated Indians. Kipling, too, ridiculed the educated Indian. How is one to distinguish satire and ridicule from the sneer of the pukka sahib, "What do you think of the Aryan Brother in a topi and spats?"<sup>33</sup> or of the pukka memsahib, "Why, fancy, she understands!"<sup>34</sup> I think I am justified in quoting here at length a conversation between Flory and his Indian friend Dr. Veraswami. Orwell here in this conversation touches upon several points which he was later to contradict in The Lion and the Unicorn.

"Well, doctor," said Flory - the doctor had meanwhile thrust him into a long chair, pulled out the leg-rests so that he could lie down, and put cigarettes and beer within reach. "Well, doctor and how are things? How's the British Empire? Sick of palsy as usual?" "Ah, Mr. Flory, she is very low, very low! Grave complications setting in. Septicaemia, peritonitis and paralysis of the ganglia. We shall have to call in the specialists, I fear. Aha!" It was a joke between the two men to pretend that the British Empire was an aged female patient of the doctor. The doctor had enjoyed this joke for two years without growing tired of it. (P.37)<sup>35</sup>

Flory always feels a great relief in the company of the doctor not so much for the conversation as for the freedom with which he can speak his inner thoughts. He is bored by the dull assortment of the Anglo-Indians at the Club and feels a secret joy in doing a non-conformist thing by palling with an Indian. He is disgusted by the pretensions of the white community and their code of morality summed in such phrases as 'the British prestige, the white

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33. E.M. Forster: A Passage to India, Arnold's Pocket Edition, London, 1961 (Reprinted), P.41.

34. Ibid, P.45.

35. For page numbers at the end of each citation from Burmese Days refer to the Uniform Edition, published at London by Secker and Warburg in 1949.

man's burden and the pukka sahib sans peur et sans reproche!

The doctor protests strongly against Flory's outburst of resentment, and advises prudence. But Flory cannot stand the ennui any longer.

"You don't have to listen to the honourable gentlemen talking, doctor. I stood it as long as I could this morning. Ellis with his 'dirty nigger,' Westfield with his jokes, Macgregor with his Latin tags and please give the bearer fifteen lashes. But when they got on to that story about the old havildar - you know, the dear old havildar who said that if the British left India there wouldn't be a rupee or a virgin between - you know; well, I couldn't stand it any longer. It's time that old havildar was put on the retired list. He's been saying the same thing ever since the Jubilee in 'eighty-seven." (P.38)

This puts the doctor in an embarrassing situation. He cannot understand why Flory always speaks ill of the pukka sahibs. He reminds him of the great things done by the great administrators in British India - men like Clive, Warren Hastings, Dalhousie and Curzon. In spite of his education Dr. Veraswami is blind to the sense of inferiority in him which is one of the worst products of our imperial situation. What a free and a democratic mind would have condemned as injurious to individuality he praises in the English gentleman.

"And consider how noble a type iss the English gentleman! Their glorious loyalty to one another! The public school spirit! Even those of them whose manner iss unfortunate - some Englishmen are arrogant, I concede - have the great stirring qualities that we orientals lack. Beneath their rough exterior, their hearts are gold." (P.38)

As an Englishman Flory knows from inside the nature of this seeming loyalty and hanging-together. It is imposed from without and is not the result of mutual respect and friendship.

"There's a kind of spurious good-fellowship between the English in this country. It's a tradition to booze together and swap meals and pretend to be friends, though we all hate each other

like poison. Hanging together, we call it. It's a political necessity. Of course drink is what keeps the machine going. We should all go mad and kill one another in a week if it weren't for that. There's a subject for one of your uplift essayists, doctor. Booze as the cement of Empire." (PP.38-39).

The doctor thinks that Flory's ideas are seditious and can only be suited to the slanderous, low-grade local newspaper the Burmese Patriot. It is a paper which U Po Kyin uses for spreading sedition and slanders and then getting them attributed to his enemies. Flory argues with the doctor that the Anglo-Indians are all hypocrites because they pretend all the time that they have a high responsibility while in actual fact they are simply exploiting the colonial peoples. He can put up with the philistinism of the fools at the Club provided they are not 'living a lie the whole time.' Flory has to elaborate this point of living a lie for the doctor who is obviously blind to the economic forces in imperialism.

"Why, of course, the lie that we're here to uplift our poor black brothers instead of to rob them. I suppose it's a natural lie enough. But it corrupts us, it corrupts us in ways you can't imagine. There's an everlasting sense of being a sneak and a liar that torments us and drives us to justify ourselves night and day. It's at the bottom of half our beastliness to the natives. We Anglo-Indians could be almost bearable if we'd only admit that we're thieves and go on thieving without any humbug." (P.39)

When told by the doctor that his argument is weak, that the English were not there to rob and exploit but were doing all that they were there for for the sole benefit of the natives, Flory is more explicit.

"My dear doctor," said Flory, "how can you make out that we are in this country for any purpose except to steal? It's so simple. The official holds the Burman down while the businessman goes through his pockets. Do you suppose my firm,

for instance, could get its timber contracts if the country weren't in the hands of the British? Or the other timber firms, or the oil companies or the miners and planters and traders? How could the Rice Ring go on skinning the unfortunate peasant if it hadn't the Government behind it? The British Empire is simply a device for giving trade monopolies to the English - or rather to gangs of Jews and Scotchmen." (P.40)

Dr. Veraswami is an Indian Brahmin. One reason why he is so foolishly pro-British, perhaps, is a sense of insecurity. The Burmans hated both the British and the Indians. For them they were alike foreigners. The educated Indian came in the wake of the British conquest to join and set up the new administrative machinery. The situation was more or less similar to that in South and East Africa, where the African was exploited by the Europeans as well as the Indian petty traders. One reason why U Po Kyin is successful in his attempt to discredit Dr. Veraswami with the British is the fact that he, a Burmese, can get the services of other Burmese clerks in the government offices in Kyauktada. Dr. Veraswami supports his argument by enumerating the too obvious benefits of the British Raj such as machinery, ships, railway roads, and above all, the civilizing influence of the Western education. Flory thinks that the education introduced by the British is fruitless as it is not balanced on the technical side. What the Indians need is science and technology. Of literature, history and languages they have plenty of their own.

"We teach the young men to drink whisky and play football, I admit, but precious little else. Look at our schools - factories for cheap clerks. We've never taught a single useful manual trade to the Indians. We daren't; frightened of the competition in industry. We've even crushed various industries. Where are the Indian muslins now? Back in the 'forties or thereabouts they were building seafaring ships in India, and manning them as well. Now you couldn't build a

seaworthy fishing boat there. In the eighteenth century the Indians cast guns that were at any rate up to the European standard. Now, after we've been in India a hundred and fifty years, you can't make so much as a brass cartridge case in the whole continent. The only Eastern races that have developed at all quickly are independent ones. I won't instance Japan, but take the case of Siam -." (PP.40-41)

Dr. Veraswami contests Flory's argument and says that Flory doesn't know anything about the oriental character which is by its very nature hindering progress. He sees signs of progress all round him like the school, the prison, the hospital, the police station and the court all of which can be seen from the veranda where they are sitting. This facile concept of progress is not uncommon amongst educated people in underdeveloped countries. They take modern buildings, factories, schools, European manners and ways of living for progress. They do not see in this a threat to their cultures and civilizations. No one has time to pause and think about whether there can't be a form of civilization which depends less on commercialized technology. Their own ways of life and civilizations have been so weakened and undermined by the aggressive exploitation of the nineteenth century imperialism that they no longer seem viable and the only and speedy way out of the chaos seems to be the imitation of the West. The desire to imitate is stronger among the educated class and is mainly confined to such areas as dress, manners, relations between the sexes, furniture, books, entertainment, sports and ideologies. There will inevitably be some changes in the structure of society even if only technology was borrowed from the West. Dr. Veraswami is doing nothing unusual in lauding Western education and its civilizing effects and in giving credit to the British for the signs of progress

all round him. But as a character in the novel he remains only a stereotype of this kind of educated man, and unlike Aziza, he rarely shows anything beyond the stereotype. Orwell is here making a point of some validity, but he fails to reveal the humanity of Dr. Veraswami.

Flory warns the doctor what this so called 'uprush of modern progress' would end up in:

"In fact, before we've finished we'll have wrecked the whole Burmese national culture. But we're not civilizing them, we're only rubbing our dirt on to them. Where's it going to lead, this uprush of modern progress, as you call it? Just to our own dear old swinery of gramophones and billy-cock hats. Sometimes I think that in two hundred years all this - " he waved a foot towards the horizon - "all this will be gone - forests, villages, monasteries, pagodas all vanished. And instead, pink villas fifty yards apart; all over these hills, as far as you can see, villa after villa, with all the gramophones playing the same tune. And all the forests shaved flat - chewed into wood pulp for the News of the World, or sawn up into gramophone cases. But the trees avenge themselves, as the old chap says in The Wild Duck. You've read Ibsen, of course?" (P.42)

This conversation is more like a formal debate in which argument, and counter-arguments are given. It lacks those personal touches which reveal the characters of the participants in the conversation. Here Orwell seems to be more interested in the ideas rather than the characters; in other words the intellectual overshadows the creative in the artist. The deficiencies in Orwell as an artist become apparent if we compare the conversation analysed above with that between Dr. Aziz and Mr. Fielding on their first meeting. The conversation is less formal although it is their first meeting. Both Fielding and Dr. Aziz rely on their feelings and say what they feel inclined to say without pre-meditation. The conversation opens in a very

casual way. When Aziz is announced, Fielding is dressing in his bedroom after a bath and shouts from there to Aziz to make himself at home. The conversation that follows is very personal and reveals the many sides of their different characters. They talk from their hearts about what comes into them casually. There is no discussion of a formal kind.

"Lifting up his voice he shouted from the bedroom: 'Please make yourself at home.' The remark was unpremeditated, like most of his actions; it was what he felt inclined to say.

To Aziz it had a very definite meaning. 'May I really, Mr. Fielding? It's very good of you,' he called back; 'I like unconventional behaviour so extremely.' His spirits flared up, he glanced round the living room. Some luxury in it, but no order - nothing to intimidate poor Indians. It was also a very beautiful room, opening into the garden through three high arches of wood. 'The fact is I have long wanted to meet you,' he continued. 'I have heard so much about your warm heart from the Nawab Bahadur. But where is one to meet in a wretched hole like Chandrapore?' He came close up to the door. 'When I was greener here, I'll tell you what. I used to wish you to fall ill so that we could meet that way.' They laughed, and encouraged by his success he began to improvise. 'I said to myself: How does Mr. Fielding look this morning? Perhaps pale. And the Civil Surgeon is pale too, he will not be able to attend upon him when the shivering commences. I should have been sent for instead. Then we would have had jolly talks, for you are a celebrated student of Persian poetry.'

'You know me by sight then.'

'Of course, of course. You know me?'

'I know you very well by name.'

'I have been here such a short time, and always in the bazaar. No wonder you have never seen me, and I wonder you know my name. I say, Mr. Fielding.'

'Yes?'

'Guess what I look like before you come out. That will be a kind of game.'

'You're five feet nine inches high,' said Fielding, surmising this much through the ground glass of the bedroom door.

'Jolly good. What next? Have I not a venerable white beard?'<sup>36</sup>

The difference between Dr. Aziz and Dr. Veraswami is very great and the liveliness of the former is due to Forster's ability to

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36. A Passage to India, Arnold's Pocket Edition, London, 1961  
(Reprinted) PP.67-68.

understand through sympathy and intelligence an Indian mind. He had many Indian friends, among whom he liked and respected two in particular Syed Ross Masood and the Maharajah of Dewas State Senior. Dr. Veraswami is the traditional presentation of an educated Indian. He is very apologetic and obsequious. He is an Indian of the wrong kind and if Orwell could see no more than this in his Indian character, he had a very limited understanding of the Indian mind. This is a very serious limitation as it is responsible for making those erroneous observations about the Indian intelligentsia in The Lion and the Unicorn. Forster's Dr. Aziz is different altogether. He is the kind of character that can come alive in the imagination and with whom Fielding can believably establish personal relationship. He is not a mere mouthpiece or a part of the mechanics of the novel, but has his own life. Moreover Dr. Aziz is rooted in his own culture and we are given those exquisite pictures of his life in private and among his friends which are a great triumph of Forster's insight into Indian life and thought, the conversation drifting into poetry in Urdu, Persian and Arabic. Dr. Veraswami is a flat, uninteresting and uninspiring character. He does not show any consciousness of his own culture at all. He is a mere spokesman into whose mouth are put all the arguments which an imperialist would have uttered in support of the Empire in order to give occasion and opportunity to Flory to come out with his counter-arguments against imperialism. George Orwell was wrong to think that 'nearly the whole of the Indian intelligentsia (was) deeply anglicized.' It is only a generalization. Does he mean by it people like Dr. Veraswami and the graduates of the Indian

Universities who through their knowledge of English culture and literature acquired excessive and uncritical reverence for it in the imperial situation? English literature was not critically studied in the context of the cultures of India. In fact the critical ability was atrophied to such an extent that patriotic poetry of the jingoistic kind was part of anthologies included in the curricula. I remember one called The Bridges of Song which included Henry Newbolt's 'He Fell Among Thieves' a poem about an English army officer who fell after a border skirmish into the hands of tribesmen on the North-West Frontier. We as students could not see the inverted logic of imperialism in the poem. This is just one example of the failure of literary education in India during the British Raj. This kind of education could never lead to self-respect and dignity. Orwell himself through Flory condemns Indian education as a corrupting influence; it taught the Indians nothing very useful. Their hearts and minds were opened to the commercialized culture of the West. Forster knew what was wrong with Indian education. He called it 'vague education' because it did not prepare the students to grapple with the problems of India which were manifold. It did not strengthen the bonds between the individual and society. Between the private and the public life of the educated Indian there was hardly any channel of communication. It can be provided by one's own culture. Apart from his knowledge as a doctor, there seems to be no relation between the private life of Veraswami and the ideas he has learnt from reading English writers. He can hardly apply these ideas in his private life. Even as a doctor he does not enjoy his work:

for him it is very unpleasant, to be disposed of as quickly as possible. One busy, hot morning Flory visits him while he is at work in the out-patients' Department of the hospital.

Dr. Veraswami is relieved at the sight of his English friend

"What a delightful visit, Mr. Flory! Please to make yourself comfortable - that iss, if one can possibly be comfortable in such a place ass this ha, ha! Afterwards, at my house, we will talk with beer and amenities. Kindly excuse me while I attend to the populace."

Flory sat down, and the hot sweat immediately burst out and drenched his suit. The heat of the room was stifling. The peasants steamed garlic from all their pores. As each man came to the table the doctor would bounce from his chair, prod the patient in the back, lay a black ear to his chest, fire off several questions in villainous Burmese, then bounce back to the table and scribble a prescription. The patients took the prescriptions across the yard to the Compounder, who gave them bottles filled with water and various vegetable dyes. The Compounder supported himself largely by the sale of drugs, for the Government paid him only twenty-five rupees a month. However, the doctor knew nothing of this.

On most mornings the doctor had not time to attend to the out-patients himself, and left them to one of the Assistant Surgeons. The Assistant Surgeon's methods of diagnosis were brief. He would simply ask each patient, "where is your pain? Head, back or belly?" and at the reply hand out a prescription from one of three piles that he has prepared beforehand. The patients much preferred this method to the doctor's. The doctor had a way of asking them whether they had suffered from venereal diseases - an ungentlemanly, pointless question - and sometimes he horrified them still more by suggesting operations. 'Belly-cutting' was their phrase for it. The majority of them would have died a dozen times over rather than submit to 'belly-cutting.'

As the last patient disappeared the doctor sank into his chair, fanning his face with the prescription-pad.

"Ach, this heat! Some mornings I think that never will I get the smell of garlic out of my nose! It iss amazing to me how their very blood becomes impregnated with it. Are you not suffocated, Mr. Flory? You English have the sense of smell almost too highly developed. What torments you must all suffer in our filthy East!"

"Abandon your noses, all ye who enter here, what? They might write that up over the Suez Canal. You seem busy this morning?"

"Ass ever. Ah but, my friend, how discouraging is the work of a doctor in this country! These villagers - dirty, ignorant savages! Even to get them to come to hospital iss all we can do, and they will die of gangrene or carry a tumour ass large ass a melon for ten years rather than face the knife.

And such medicines ass their own so-called doctors give to them! Herbs gathered under the new moon, tigers' whiskers, rhinoceros horn, urine, menstrual blood! How men can drink such compounds iss disgusting." (PP.144-146)

Dr. Aziz has a different attitude to his profession. He is a surgeon and he likes his work at the hospital. When there are cases to be attended to he forgets all other aspects of his mercurial personality.

"Several surgical cases came in, and kept him busy. He ceased to be either outcast or poet, and became the medical student, very gay, and full of details of operations which he poured in to the shrinking ears of his friends. His profession fascinated him at times, but he required it to be exciting, and it was his hand, not his mind, that was scientific. The knife he loved and used skilfully, and he also liked pumping in the latest serums. But the boredom of regime and hygiene repelled him, and after inoculating a man for enteric, he would go away and drink unfiltered water himself."<sup>37</sup>

He is a better surgeon than his English superior Major Callendar, who knows if Dr. Aziz had operated on Mrs. Graysford's appendix, the old lady would probably have lived. But notice the failure of Indian education, even when it is scientific, as in the case of Aziz, to be applied to personal life. Later at Mau, as a doctor to the Hindu ruler of the State he has to drop much of his scientific training into disuse.

"Nominally under a Hindu doctor, he was really chief medicine man to the Court. He had to drop inoculation and such Western whims, but even at Chandrapore his profession had been a game, centering round the operating table, and here in the backwoods he let his instruments rust, ran his little hospital at half steam, and caused no undue alarm."<sup>38</sup>

Of the personal or inner life of Dr. Veraswami we know almost nothing. We have no glimpses into his family life. It would

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37. A Passage to India, P.56.

38. Ibid, P.304.

have been difficult for any Englishman to know intimately the domestic life of a Hindu, especially when the women are orthodox. This serious defect in the presentation of a native character cannot be wholly excused on the ground that Orwell himself would not have been admitted into a Hindu house. It would have been impossible to overcome the social and cultural barriers. But surely Orwell could through the thoughts of Veraswami project a picture of his domestic life with intelligence, sympathy and compassionate imagination. Orwell would never have found himself inside a Hindu home, but he could find out by asking and by using his imagination. Forster also had this difficulty of getting to know the women's side of domestic life in India. But he was able on the strength of what he had learnt from his friends about what happened behind the purdah at least to take us there once and show us Dr. Aziz meeting Begum Hamidullah, a distant aunt. Forster had to exercise restraint on his imagination and produce strictly within his limitations a scene which is true to life. Forster also projects through Aziz's thoughts the picture of his dead wife, about their changing relationship from disappointment to love. When she dies Aziz realizes her place cannot be taken by another woman. We also learn about his three children.

But it is not very difficult for an Englishman to visit Burmese in their homes. Burmese women are free and are not segregated and kept behind purdah. Orwell frequently shows us his other native character U Po Kyin at home, alone with his wife. Here we know more about the private life of the native characters. But here another limitation of Orwell hinders the creative impulse.

U Po Kyin is always deep in intrigues against Dr. Veraswami to

discredit him with the Europeans and smooth his way to honours at the Governor's Darbar. Everything else is sacrificed to his role in the plot. He must fulfil this role logically and mechanically. Even in his most private life with his wife he is talking about his intrigues and his triumphs over the gullible Europeans. That scene in A Passage to India where Dr. Aziz meets Begum Hamidullah has nothing to do with the plot. It serves to give not only a fuller picture of Dr. Aziz as a human being and his social life but also something about the Indian Muslims and their culture. The Indian characters of E.M. Forster are balanced as they have retained contact with their own culture, as a result of which they can reveal self-respect and dignity. Dr. Aziz is happy when in the company of his own friends. He has his own place in their society and he understands their thoughts and gestures and he retains his identity. He can be at his best in the company of understanding and sympathetic Europeans. His gesture of wrenching his own collar stud to give it to Mr. Fielding is very revealing about his character and shows his capacity for friendship. Ronny sees Aziz's collar climb up and thinks about the inadequacy of Indians in matter of dress. Later when he remembers this incident he laughs at it. Actually Forster has revealed here the inadequacy of Ronny who does not show any generosity in his attitude. Notice how high Aziz is soaring at Fielding's tea-party before the arrival of Ronny Heaslop. It is the insolence and snobbery of the Anglo-Indians which shatters his dignity. Even the pro-British Nawab Bahadur is a man of culture, dignity and has social influence. For Orwell he would

have been just one of those toadying landowners who regularly salammmed the British official. Forster was interested in individuals and the complexity of human nature and refrained from labelling people simply as pro-British or anti-British. Forster knew the Maharajah of Dewas State Senior and was impressed by his complex personality. For Orwell he would have been one of those "ridiculous Indian princes, with their gilded elephants and card-board armies,"<sup>38</sup> whom the British flattered. But as presented by E.M. Forster, the Nawab Bahadur in A Passage to India and the Maharajah in The Hill of Devi, are credible human characters. Both the Nawab Bahadur and the Maharajah belonged to that exceptional class which was safe from the normal insolence of the Anglo-Indian officials. They were rather respected according to their station. Those educated Indian characters of Forster who are not socially treated well by the Anglo-Indians are human enough to resent it. But Dr. Veraswami is so spineless that he does not even feel resentment at being called 'greasy nigger' or 'very slimy'. I think the official capacity of Orwell prevented such Indians or Burmans who were in close contact with him from taking him into their confidence to reveal their true feelings to him. In a writer of compassion, should this even have been necessary? Forster on the other hand commanded the frank confidence of his Indian friends. Moreover unlike Forster, Orwell had not prepared himself culturally by reading about Burma and the Burmese religion, history, literature and life in general. There is no evidence of his having made any attempt

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38. The Lion and the Unicorn, London, 1962, P.82.

at it with the exception of reading the opening chapters of Gandhi's autobiography in an Indian paper; and that, too, had nothing to do directly with Burma. Even Gandhi failed to interest him in the complex character of India. This attitude of mind is responsible in the main for the lack of cultural atmosphere in Burmese Days. There is only one aspect of Burma in which Orwell was passionately interested, the natural scenery. Nature is inescapably present in Burmese Days. It is an essential ingredient of this novel as in all colonial fiction. But it is particular objects only which attract Orwell. Nature has none of the metaphoric reverberations which are to be found in Forster or Conrad at their most impressive and disturbing. The Irrawady like Conrad's Congo flows through a tropical jungle. But for Orwell the jungle is simply there and it does not represent any psychological or spiritual reality.

"The canoes, each hollowed out of a single tree-trunk, glided swiftly, hardly rippling the dark brown water. Water hyacinth with profuse spongy foliage and blue flowers had choked the stream so that the channel was only a winding ribbon four feet wide. The light filtered greenish, through interlacing boughs. Sometimes one could hear parrots scream overhead, but no wild creatures showed themselves, except once a snake that swam hurriedly away and disappeared among the water hyacinth." (P.158)

Nature here fails to acquire a character of its own. The treatment of the individual objects such as the sky, the trees, the flowers, the climate, especially the heat, fail to add up to a unified effect and impact. A generic idea must be there behind to direct the shaping power of the imagination. In the case of Conrad the idea of the "Heart of Darkness" acts as a unifying force. In that of E.M. Forster it is the Marabar Caves which are at the

centre of the description of and treatment of nature. No such unifying idea lurks behind the description of nature in Burmese Days. Orwell could not invest Burma with any meaning or significance. He could use Burma simply as background material. I, therefore, cannot agree with Laurence Brander when he says:

"Nature, along with U PO Kyin, is the most effective character in the story and she is rich and oppressive. 'The heat throbbed down on one's head like a steady, rhythmic thumping, like blows from an enormous bolster.' And again:

'There was something horrible in it - horrible to think of that blue, blinding sky, stretching on and on over Burma and India, over Siam, Cambodia, China, cloudless and interminable ... Hardly a living creature stirred except men, and the black columns of ants, stimulated by the heat, which marched ribbon-like across the path, and the tailless vultures which soared on the currents of air.'

He describes the ferocious strength of natural life:

'By the roadside, just before you got to the jail, the fragments of a stone pagoda were littered, cracked, and overthrown by the strong roots of a peepul tree. The angry carved faces of demons looked up from the grass where they had fallen. Nearby another peepul tree had twined itself round a palm, uprooting it and bending it backward in a wrestle that had lasted a decade."<sup>40</sup>

The illustrations given by Brander do not support his claim that nature is treated as an effective character by Orwell. It is the physical treatment of nature in which Orwell succeeds in the form of sights, sounds, sensations of temperature to give a sense of place. In the passage about the 'blinding sky' chosen by Brander Orwell suggests nothing beyond the immediate discomfort which a European, who is not used to blue and open skies, feels under it, especially when it rains down heat. A far more suggestive and complex image of the sky is projected by Forster in the opening Chapter of A Passage to India. Its immensity, its distance, its colours, its ability to give beauty and benediction, its strength

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40. Brander, L. George Orwell, London, 1954, PP.87-88.

and its enormity all are suggested. In actual experience all these qualities of the sky would not have been felt at the same moment. They are impressions of the Indian sky experienced over a period recording the different moods of it and then by the plastic power of imagination recreated into a compact image. It is a creative description as against Orwell's mere recording of sensations. More will be said about the qualities of Orwell's descriptions in the later part of the chapter. Here I wanted to establish that for lack of cultural material the physical side of Burma predominates. Flory is a stereotyped liberal Englishman who loves Burma and the Burmese and praises their customs. This lets him down in the eyes of the other European residents of Kyauktada; this aspect of Flory's character is hard for Elizabeth to accept. But in spite of this and his friendship with the doctor, there is hardly any trace of sympathetic understanding of Burmese life. Dr. Veraswami is an Indian Brahmin who cannot be of any help to Flory to acquire intimate knowledge of the Burmese mind. The doctor is even less sympathetic than his English friend. He speaks villainous Burmese and calls the Burmese barbarous cattle. Flory has a Burmese mistress, with no genuine love on either side to make it anything but a sordid, miserable and unhealthy relationship. Orwell chose an unpleasant and boring subject for his novel but he failed to make it interesting and lively. It was rooted in his Burmese experiences which were not very pleasant as we shall see later. He makes his characters and the relationship between them arid and barren because he has not humanized his characters. Little acts and gestures, sudden moods

and vagrant thoughts deepen our consciousness of the character's humanity. When Aziz wrenches his own collar stud it suddenly brings him to life, when Mrs. Moore notices a wasp on the peg and says 'pretty dear' a whole complex of relationships is suggested. Orwell allows his characters linear relationships, mere links for discussion, despair or hatred. Relationships can be barren and arid but a novelist should not allow his novel to become arid because of that. Flory's servants are all Burmese but they also keep their distance from their sahib as all native servants must. The friendship between Dr. Veraswami and Flory is not like that between Dr. Aziz and Fielding. It is not as spontaneous and frank. It is as it were a political liaison. Flory by associating with the doctor is behaving out of spite, as it were, out of a sense of revenge and guilt. His inner life is not enlightened and balanced like that of Fielding, because he both hates and loves Burma. Although Flory is more cultured than the other Anglo-Indians and has maintained his habit of reading serious literature, it has not helped him develop an active and healthy contemplative habit of mind. The others only read newspapers and sub-literature, Pink 'un and Vie Parisienne. Maxwell, the acting Divisional Forest Officer is interested in reading the Field, Mr. Lackersteen does not venture beyond "studying the illustrations in La Vie Parisienne", while Flory likes serious things like 'G.K. Chesterton's article in the London News.' Flory often suffers from a destructive sense of loneliness because Orwell had suffered himself; but to create in a novel a character with frequent bouts of despair and loneliness and yet fail to reveal anything significant

through it about human nature or life is a serious defect in Orwell's novel writing. Though Forster had himself not suffered any depression or loneliness and had experienced things of great spiritual value in India, in his novel through Mrs. Moore's despair after the cave excursion, he arouses stronger feelings in us, because it stands in a more complex relationship with other elements in the novel than does Flory's despair. Thus in Orwell, we are merely told that Flory's life is arid, lonely and full of despair, whereas in A Passage to India, the author aims at giving us a passionate insight into the experience of despair. Kipling could evoke the sense of helpless loneliness e.g. "At the End of the Passage", but with this went coupled a strong sense of Imperial responsibility which sustains his characters under its stresses and even if some, like Hummil in this particular case, break down it is only to increase our sense of the strain. Orwell had experienced this utter loneliness himself but he failed to turn it to a spiritual use. He simply reproduces it in Flory. Flory has no faith in the White Man's Burden and the like sentiments and looks upon himself as an agent of exploitation of the Burmese coolies under the protective wing of the British Empire. He has agonizing moments of despair and disgust with himself. He misses true and genuine friendship. His visits to the club often end in bitterness as he is known for his unorthodox views about the Empire and is baited frequently by Ellis. The violence of his feelings at the end of one such visit is evident in his reflections in the following words:

"Flory pushed back his chair and stood up. It must not, it could not - no, it simply should not go on any longer! He must get out of this room quickly, before something happened inside his head and he began to smash the furniture and throw bottles at the pictures. Dull boozing, witless porkers! Was it possible that they could go on week after week, year after year, repeating word for word the same evil-minded drivel, like a parody of a fifth-rate story in Blackwood's? Would none of them ever think of anything new to say? Oh, what a place, what people! What a civilization is this of ours - this godless civilization founded on whisky, Blackwood's and the 'Bonzo' pictures! God have mercy on us, for all of us are part of it." (P.33)

The prayer at the end is significant as it reveals Flory's sense of guilt. Moreover he is not strong enough to utter his disapproval of the views of others in their presence. Perhaps one reason why he goes to Dr. Veraswami's is to utter his seditious views, without fear of being subjected to censure by his own people. This is also due to lack of conviction in his views and the weakness of his character. Fielding, on the other hand is strong enough to openly side with Dr. Aziz against Adela's charge and defy the Anglo-Indian community of Chandrapore, a larger one than that of Kyauktada. This, of course, merely means that Flory is different from, perhaps less admirable than Fielding. Orwell had every right to create a weak and less admirable character. The fault of the novel lies elsewhere, in the failure of Orwell to render this fault and weakness of Flory in a powerful and compelling way - because of the characteristically mechanical quality of the 'debate' which it contains.

There is an ugly scene in the evening of the day of the Marabar excursion and Fielding faces it with courage against insults and provocation, only because he is convinced of the innocence of Dr. Aziz and stands by him. Flory is given to violent

self-examination sometimes, particularly when he gets annoyed with the Europeans. One restless night when he can get no sleep and when the dogs in the maidan, by their continuous baying of the moon add to his irritation and discomfort, he gets up to shoot the one which "had taken a dislike to (his) house, and had settled down to bay at it systematically."<sup>41</sup> It is no use to lie on the bed.

"Flory got his jacket and some cigarettes, and began to stroll up and down the garden path, between the ghostly flowers. It was hot, and the mosquitoes found him out and came droning after him. Phantoms of dogs were chasing one another on the maidan. Over to the left the gravestones of the English cemetery glittered whitish, rather sinister, and one could see the mounds near by, that were the remains of old Chinese tombs. The hillside was said to be haunted, and the club chokras cried when they were sent up the road at night." (P.62)

It is a moment of dissatisfaction with himself, because of "a nasty, dirty affair at the club that evening." It is one of his weaknesses that he cannot assert himself even if on the right.

"Cur, spineless cur," Flory was thinking to himself; without heat, however, for he was too accustomed to the thought. 'sneaking, idling, boozing, fornicating, soul-examining, self-pitying cur. All those fools at the Club, those dull louts to whom you are so pleased to think yourself superior - they are all better than you, every man of them. At least they are men in their oafish way. Not cowards, not liars. Not half-dead and rotting. But you -." (P.62)

Westfield had produced that evening at the club a copy of the Burmese Patriot and had drawn the attention of the Europeans to a libellous article attacking Mr. Macgregor. All became so

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41. The scene is nightmarish and reminds one of a similar scene in a story by Kipling, "The Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes." Somewhere in an Indian desert, an engineer, Morrowbie Jukes, is tossing restlessly and feverishly on his camp-bed in his tent. The dogs in the desert all round are baying the full moon. He gets up and rides after one to spear it through.

infuriated at the insolence of it that even Flory had been forced to pretend that he, too, was angry. The article had been on a sudden impulse attributed to Dr. Veraswami by Ellis, though, as a matter of fact, it had been due to the dirty machinations of U PO Kynin and had been written by a clerk in Mr. Macgregor's office. Flory had failed to defend his friend. Instead he had signed a notice along with the others to the effect that the election of a native member to the Club might be postponed. Flory had actually promised to support the doctor who

"after all, was his friend, indeed, almost the sole friend he had in Burma. They had talked and argued together a hundred times, the doctor had dined at his house, he had even proposed to introduce Flory to his wife - but she, a pious Hindu, had refused with horror. They had made shooting trips together - the doctor, equipped with bandoliers and hunting knives, panting up hillsides slippery with bamboo leaves and blazing his gun at nothing. In common decency it was his duty to support the doctor. But he knew also that the doctor would never ask for any support, and that there would be an ugly row before an oriental was got into the Club. No, he could not face that row! It was not worth-it." (PP.47-48)

It is not worth it because he has no conviction that his liberal ideas are of any use or that the Club ~~was~~ not matters at all.

He reflects that he

"had signed a public insult to his friend. He had done it for the same reason as he had done a thousand such things in his life; because he lacked the small spark of courage that it was needed to refuse. For, of course, he could have refused if he had chosen; and equally of course, refusal would have meant a row with Ellis and Westfield. And oh, how he loathed a row! The nagging, the jeers! At the very thought of it he flinched; he could feel his birth-mark palpable on his cheek, and something happening in his throat that made his voice go flat and guilty. Not that! It was easier to insult his friend, knowing that his friend must hear of it." (PP.63-64.)

The portrait of Flory has its limitations as art. Nevertheless, Orwell offers the reader a detailed background against which

Flory's actions can be interpreted and understood. Our response to Flory is limited because this understanding is to a considerable degree mechanical. Thus we understand rationally why he should not behave as he does in betraying Veraswami, but because of the weakly established relationship between the two men, discussed above, we cannot feel very strongly about it. What emotion the reader does feel will probably emerge largely from his own imagination, rather than from the controlled stimulus of art, and so is unlikely to go beyond a moralistic indignation. At this point, however, perhaps I should outline this background to Flory's character.

His morbid self-examination indicates a sensitive nature, which under different conditions might have developed differently. Fifteen years of exile in Burma have set his character. He is incapable of action and he dares not go against public opinion. In order to understand his present predicament we have to review in brief here his life from the beginning. The development of his character is affected by an accident before birth. He has a blue birthmark on his cheek. When he is nine he is sent to school where the other boys stare at him and, after a few days, begin to call him by the nickname Blueface. Later it becomes Monkey-bum when the school poet writes a couplet about him:

'New-tick Flory does look rum,  
Got a face like a monkey's bum.'

He is, however, good at football and at telling lies and is soon able to 'live-down Monkey-bum.' He is next sent to a third-rate cheap public school.

"It aped the great public schools with their traditions of High Anglicanism, cricket and Latin verses, and it had a school song called 'The Scrum of Life' in which God figured as the Great Referee. But it lacked the chief virtue of the great public schools, their atmosphere of literary scholarship. The boys learned as nearly as possible nothing. There was not enough caning to make them swallow the dreary rubbish of the curriculum, and the wretched, underpaid masters were not the kind from whom one absorbs wisdom unawares. Flory left school a barbarous young lout. And yet even then there were, and he knew it, certain possibilities in him; possibilities that could lead to trouble, as likely as not. But, of course, he had suppressed them. A boy does not start his career nicknamed Monkey-bum without learning his lesson." (PP.64, 65)

When he finishes school his parents find him a job in a timber firm and he is sent to the Orient. He is not yet twenty, life is before him and he has the East to explore. He does not seem to have any romantic illusions. He spends the first six months of his life in Burma at Rangoon where he is supposed to be learning the office side of his job. For the whole of that period he has lived

"in a 'chummery' with four other youths who devoted their entire energies to debauchery. And what a debauchery! They swilled whisky which they privately hated, they stood round the piano bawling songs of insane filthiness and silliness, they squandered rupees by the hundred on aged Jewish whores with the faces of crocodiles." (P.65)

From there he goes to a life in a camp into the jungle, which, in the beginning is a welcome change; but it begins to tell upon him as the years go by. Then the hurried trips to Rangoon once a year become a great joy and relief; there he would get hold of books new from England and enjoy dinner at Anderson's. In due course he becomes acclimatized to Burma. When the war breaks out he is not yet twenty-four and can join the Army if he wants and can break away from the corrupting monotony of his life. But he has gone too far along the path of damnation to redeem himself.

"In reality Flory had dodged the war because the East had already corrupted him, and he did not want to exchange his whisky, his servants and his Burmese girls for the boredom of the parade ground and the strain of cruel marches." (P.67)

He misses his only chance of realizing the "possibilities" within him. There is only one thing worth-while that he keeps doing and that is reading all the books that he can lay his hands on. Silence and books almost force him to think. But thinking becomes morbid and self-centered if you don't have anything constructive to think about. Flory does not have the necessary philosophical or cultural training and material to fill his mind with ideas.

"Flory took to books voraciously and learned to live in books when life was tiresome. He was growing adult, tiring of boyish pleasures, learning to think for himself, almost willy-nilly." (P.68)

His youth is soon consumed by 'eight years of Eastern life, fever, loneliness and intermittent drinking.' He is in the timber extracting business and spends his time among coolies whom he sees sweating and labouring in the jungle for very very poor wages. He sees the injustice and cruelty of exploitation and begins to think about imperialism and its consequences. He begins, quite naturally to hate the British Empire and the people who run it. But hatred in itself can only generate negative attitudes and lead to no healthy views. It can only fill life with bitterness, and a life already corrupted by loneliness and monotony is made intolerable by it. No charity, love and kindness can live in such a devastated mind. Flory's life is slowly being poisoned and Orwell knew that if he himself had stayed in Burma for a little longer he would have become like Flory an embittered and powerless

failure.

"Each year had been lonelier and more bitter than the last. What was at the centre of all his thoughts now, and what poisoned everything, was the ever bitterer hatred of the atmosphere of imperialism in which he lived. For as his brain developed - you cannot stop your brain developing, and it is one of the tragedies of the half-educated that they develop late, when they are already committed to some wrong way of life - he had grasped the truth about the English and their Empire." (P.68)

He hates the Empire, as well as the Europeans in the East, from living in their society. He has no generosity and cannot forgive the failings and short-comings of the Anglo-Indians. He is required to conform to their values and customs without any exercise of judgement and reason. There is something in the Imperial system which requires people to suppress the voice of their conscience. All vices are tolerated in one so long as one upholds the Code of the Sahib. Flory cannot discuss with the other Anglo-Indians the system of which they are all cogs. Instead he has to pour his ideas into the reluctant ears of Dr. Veraswami. There is no healthy discussion, only an embittered indictment of the Empire.

"It is a stifling, stultifying world in which to live. It is a world in which every word and every thought is censured. In England it is hard even to imagine such an atmosphere. Everyone is free in England; we sell our souls in public and buy them back in private, among our friends. But even friendship can hardly exist when every white man is a cog in the wheels of despotism. Free speech is unthinkable. All other kinds of freedom are permitted. You are free to be a drunkard, an idler, a coward, a backbiter, a fornicator; but you are not free to think for yourself. Your opinion on every subject of any conceivable importance is dictated for you by the pukka sahib's code." (P.69)

Because the Anglo-Indian Society is intolerable, their code of morality oppressive, and the Club is a bad influence. The Club played an important role in the stations throughout the Empire.

It was holy ground where the Europeans were safe from the natives.

"Beyond that was the European Club, and when one looked at the Club - a dumpy one-storey wooden building - one looked at the real centre of the town. In any town in India the European Club is the spiritual citadel, the real seat of the British power, the Nirvana for which the native officials and millionaires pine in vain. It was doubly so in this case, for it was the proud boast of Kyauktada Club that, almost alone of Clubs in Burma, it had never admitted an oriental to membership." (P.17).

In reality these Clubs were often dull and vulgar places and in Orwell's picture of the Kyauktada Club there is nothing to make membership worth all the fuss to a native. Apart from servants all natives are strictly excluded and it is this very fact which makes its membership desirable to a native. The policy in the upper circles of the Government is changing to the liberal and instructions, more advice than orders, are issued to all districts to consider the problem of admitting one or two loyal natives as members. It might have been done in view of the mounting pressure from the Indian intelligentsia which resents the exclusiveness of these horrible Clubs. The rising of nationalism also makes it desirable to improve social relations between the rulers and the ruled. I do not think that it would have mattered much whether Veraswami or U PO Kyin or both became members of the Kyauktada Club. For them it means honour and prestige which is simply being foolish. Orwell calls these little clubs "Kipling-haunted." As an influence on the developing character of Flory it is the absence of enlightened and healthy conversation from the Club which matters most. It always and invariably takes the form of profounding theories of how to rule the native or how best to deal with the Nationalists. The senior officials always assume an air

of authority and expect to be deferred to on the basis of long service and experience. The seniors never fail to bring their official character along with them.

"Mr. Macgregor was already dressed in a silk suit, and was carrying the Club account books under his arm. He managed to bring a sub-official air even into such petty business as a Club meeting." (P.231)

The younger members are expected to respect the views and opinions of the seniors. Kipling always ridicules such young officers who refuse to respect the experience of the old timers in the services. This kind of situation fills Flory with disgust because he is young, intelligent and very sensitive.

"Year after year you sit in Kipling-haunted little Clubs, whisky to right of you, Pink'Un to left of you, listening and eagerly agreeing while Colonel Bodger develops his theory that these bloody Nationalists should be boiled in oil. You hear your oriental friends called "greasy little babus", and you admit, dutifully that they are greasy little babus. You see louts fresh from school kicking grey-haired servants." (P.69)

It is these things which set the blood of Flory on the boil and make him hate his countrymen in the East. And the disgusting thing about this secret loathing and revolt is that it is not honest, sincere and honourable. It is not out of sympathy with the natives. One does not care about them. It is a mean, self-centered, disgusting revolt, feeding on personal resentment.

"For, au fond, what do you care if the Indian Empire is a despotism, if Indians are bullied and exploited? You only care because the light of free speech is denied you. You are a creature of the despotism, a pukka sahib, tied tighter than a monk or a savage by an unbreakable system of tabus." (P.69)

Step by step Orwell is driving his character, Flory, to a tragic end. There is nothing wrong about that. But in this novel

Flory's tragedy is mechanical and systematically prepared by the author. He has not been sufficiently humanised to rouse us emotionally. We do not feel much compassion and interest in him. One can see how, in a mechanical and systematic way, Orwell works out this theme, but somehow the novel remains inert because of this mechanical treatment. The trouble is that we don't see anyone here as human, neither Veraswami or U PO Kyin on one side, nor the members of the club on the other, and Flory remains only another extension of this emotional desert. This may have been Orwell's experience of Burma, but can a work of art merely be representational like this, particularly if what it has to represent is simply arid and dehumanizing?

There are so many things which can interest a sensitive young man like Flory in the East, and in this way he can exercise his intelligence in a healthy way. He is not a mystic otherwise contemplation would have suited his temperament and lonely life. He does not show any interest in Buddhism nor does he try to seek answers to his dilemmas and troubles in religion. His inner life is equally arid.

Flory tries several times to get to England to renew his contact with his country and his people but there is always something or other to prevent this. First comes the war and then shortage of men in the Firm is responsible for the delay in his leave. But once he does get a chance to get away and sails home, happy at the thought of returning to dear England, but he is also very frightened. He knows that he can still do something worthwhile, begin a new life, get married to a 'civilized girl', and

after ten or fifteen more years in Burma retire to a country life in England. He dreams:

"They would buy a cottage in the country, surround themselves with friends, books, their children, animals. They would be free for ever of the smell of pukka sahibdom. He would forget Burma, the horrible country that had come near ruining him." (PP.70-71)

But he is not that fortunate. He has to turn back from Colombo where a cable has been waiting for him. His successor has suddenly died. He is needed immediately. Thus he misses the only chance of saving his soul. But he also realises, perhaps this is only a consoling thought, that England would not have cured his loneliness.

"For he had realized that merely to go back to England was no remedy for loneliness; he had grasped the special nature of the hell that is reserved for Anglo-Indians. Ah, those poor prosing old wrecks in Bath and Cheltenham! Those tomb-like boarding-houses with Anglo-Indians littered about in all stages of decomposition, all talking and talking about what happened in Boggleywalah in '83! Poor devils, they know what it means to have left one's heart in an alien and hated country." (P.72)

So back he goes to Burma. All his servants are waiting for him at the platform. They have brought several petty presents to offer:

"Ko s'la had brought a sambhur skin, the Indians some sweet-meats and a garland of marigolds, Ba Pe, a young boy then, a squirrel in a wicker cage." (P.71)

The old familiar faces and people and the scenes make him suddenly realize that he is happy to be back.

"Something turned over in Flory's heart. It was one of those moments when one becomes conscious of a vast change and deterioration in one's life. For he had realized, suddenly, that in his heart he was glad to be coming back. This country which he hated was now his native country, his home. He had lived here ten years, and every particle of his body was compounded of Burmese soil. Scenes like these - the sallow evening light, the old Indian cropping grass, the

creak of the cart-wheels, the streaming egrets - were more native to him than England. He had sent deep roots, perhaps his deepest, into a foreign country." (PP.71-72)

But merely to notice and like the picturesque in the Burmese scenes is not equal to have sent deep roots in a foreign country. That gift of a squirrel seems to one more important than all the sights and sounds Orwell lists here and this is Orwell's limitation - the human gesture, the futile gift which, nevertheless, is an attempt at communication, almost an expression of love or affection is passed by in favour of the picturesque 'Burma observed.' It is these little gestures which reveal the humanity of people and so of characters in a novel. The fault here is in the texture of the novel, Orwell's, and not in character, Flory's.

Flory is an auto-biographical character. There are elements in him which correspond, in a disguised form to more or less similar ones in Orwell's character. Flory is a projection of Orwell as he might have been had he stayed in Burma long enough. Orwell took a warning from his experiences in Burma and when he went on leave in 1927 he did not return to it. Like Flory's unspecified ambitions, because he is only vaguely aware of the possibilities inside him, Orwell's ambitions to become a writer were frustrated in Burma.

"From a very early age, perhaps the age of five or six, I knew that when I grew up I should be a writer. Between the ages of about seventeen and twenty-four I tried to abandon this idea, but I did so with the consciousness that I was outraging my true nature and that sooner or later I should have to settle down and write books."<sup>42</sup>

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42. England your England, London, 1953, P.7.

This period of his life roughly corresponds to that which he lived in Burma. He went there in 1922 when he was nineteen and left it in 1927 when he was twenty-four. He gained nothing but a hatred of both the British Empire and the Burmese, especially the Buddhist priests. Orwell was at school during and just after the first World War, a period which he describes as a "queer time to be at school, for England was nearer revolution than she has been since or had been for a century earlier."<sup>43</sup> He believed that the public school system was suited to turning out snobs.

"I suppose there is no place in the world where snobbery is quite so ever-present or where it is cultivated in such refined and subtle forms as in an English public school. Here at least one cannot say that English 'education' fails to do its job. You forget your Latin and Greek within a few months of leaving school - I studied Greek for eight or ten years, and now, at thirty-three, I cannot even repeat the Greek alphabet - but your snobbishness, unless you persistently root it out like the bindweed it is, sticks by you till your grave."<sup>44</sup>

Orwell was an intelligent boy and won a scholarship to Eton, where he was among the sons of richer parents. Flory was sent to a cheap public-school where he almost learnt nothing. Moreover he is made to belong to an earlier generation, because Flory was in Burma when the War broke out while Orwell was yet at school. This was obviously done for the reason that Flory should miss being affected by the revolutionary spirit of the post-war period. Flory did not have the literary and political awareness of Orwell. The difficult position of Orwell at Eton developed in him a paradoxical attitude to snobbishness and gentility. The sense of his own gentility became very acute while he hated those who were richer:

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43. The Road to Wigan Pier, London, 1959, P.140.

44. Ibid, P.139.

"I despised anyone who was not describable as a 'gentleman', but I also hated the hoggishly rich, especially those who had grown rich too recently. The correct and elegant thing, I felt, was to be of a noble birth but to have no money. This is part of the credo of the lower upper-middle class. It has a romantic, Jacobite-in-exile feeling about it which is very comforting."<sup>45</sup>

The revolutionary atmosphere of the time had also a peculiar character.

"Throughout almost the whole nation there was running a wave of revolutionary feeling which has since been reversed and forgotten, but which has left various deposits of sediments behind."<sup>46</sup>

The war was directly responsible for it. The elderly rulers had bungled through the war and the younger generations were dissatisfied with the post-war situation. The secure and stable world of the pre-war days had suddenly disappeared and the established institutions, values, morality and authority were being questioned. The kind of secure, smug and happy world to which the war put an end has been so nostalgically evoked in Coming Up for Air. Orwell recalls the mood of the post-war world in these words:

"By 1918 everyone under forty was in a bad temper with his elders, and the mood of anti-militarism which followed naturally upon the fighting was extended into a general revolt against orthodoxy and authority. At that time there was, among the young, a conscious cult of hatred of 'old men'. The dominance of 'old men' was held to be responsible for every evil known to humanity, and every accepted institution from Scott's novels to the House of Lords was derided merely because 'old men' were in favour of it."<sup>47</sup>

The Public-school boys were also affected by this general revolutionary mood; the result was a paradoxical attitude. The Snobbishness was retained though "the O.T.C., the Christian

45. Ibid, P.139.

46. Ibid, P.140.

47. Ibid, P.140.

religion, and perhaps even compulsory games and the Royal Family"<sup>48</sup> were derided. Two significant incidents from Orwell's school days are worth mentioning as they indicate more than anything else the revolutionary change he had mentioned:

"One day the master who taught us English set us a kind of general knowledge paper of which one of the questions was, 'Whom do you consider the ten greatest men now living?' Of sixteen boys in the class (our average age was about seventeen) fifteen included Lenin in their list. This was at a snobbish expensive public school, and the date was 1920, when the horror of the Russian Revolution was still fresh in every one's mind. Also there were the peace celebrations in 1919. Our elders had decided for us that we should celebrate peace in the traditional manner by whooping over the fallen foe. We were to march into the school-yard, carrying torches, and sing jingo songs of the type of 'Rule Britannia'. The boys - to their honour I think - gayed the whole proceeding and sang blasphemous and seditious words to the tunes provided."<sup>49</sup>

Orwell was both a snob and a revolutionary at the same time. It was an immature attitude which largely expressed itself in reading authors with a socialist outlook and philosophy. He read the entire published works of Shaw, Wells and Galsworthy and called himself a socialist. He did not know, however, what socialism was about and had hardly obtained the notion that the working classes, too, were human beings. He could agonize over the condition of the working classes from a distance, as it were, when he read about them in books like Jack London's 'The People of the Abyss', but he was afraid of any physical contact with them. With these half-formed attitudes and immature ideas he went to Burma in 1922 as an officer in the Indian Imperial Police. He was not yet twenty at the time like his character Flory. He found himself a member of a small British Community in an 'out-post of

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48. Ibid, P.140.

49. Ibid, P.141.

the Empire.' This community regarded itself as a class marked by its skin. The colour of your skin entitled you to be Sahib and because the cost of living was cheap you could live like a gentleman. It was not expensive to have a few servants and horses.

"As a matter of fact most of the white men in Burma were not of the type who in England would be called 'gentlemen', but except for the common soldiers and a few nondescripts they lived lives appropriate to 'gentlemen' - had servants, that is, and called their evening meal 'dinner' - and officially they were regarded as being all of the same class."<sup>50</sup>

Orwell had not yet purged himself of his snobbishness. He tried to do it immediately after his return from Burma by living a life of poverty and destitution among the down and outs of Paris and London. The Anglo-Indian class-consciousness was of a peculiar character. So far as the community as a whole was concerned, as a distinct social unit, excluding all natives and even the Eurasians, it regarded itself as a class. This unity of class had to be reconciled with the hierarchical nature of the bureaucracy. A man's relative position within the community was determined by his post, department, income and seniority. The Indian Civil Service was given greater respect than many other useful departments (Civil Service is still most sought after both in India and Pakistan and the prestige given to it in British Raj continues. The civil servants behave exactly like the white sahibs whom they have replaced). The fact did not matter in the least that you were in the Education, Forest or Medical services, where you were likely to be more useful to the

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50. Ibid, P.143.

natives and you had a better chance of discharging the white man's burden. Your place on the Civil List decided your position in this hierarchical society and you were valued in terms of it. Your qualities as an individual did not matter much. The great interest that Mrs. Lackersteen takes in the reading of the Civil List is not without a reason. It helps her arrange people's position.

"Mrs. Lackersteen was sitting, as usual, in the best place under the punkha, and was reading the Civil List, the Debrett of Burma." (P.174)

If a member of the British aristocracy showed up in remote parts of the Empire he was given without question the traditional respect and honour. And the smaller the station and the European community, the greater the respect, especially by women, provided the aristocrat showed a little condescension by associating with them. Such a situation arises in Kyauktada at the arrival of the Honourable Verrall. I shall deal with this problem later on.

Flory's intimacy with Ma Hla May is in a way connected with an important discovery that Orwell made in Burma. He found that 'the natives were not treated with physical repulsion', though considered inferior socially. At home the lower-classes 'smelled' in a repulsive way. Orwell had a morbid sense of smell and was particularly sensitive to repulsive human odours. He had been brought up on the prejudice that the lower classes smelled. Later on return from Burma among the tramps and beggars, the down and outs, the unemployed and later still in the trenches during the Spanish Civil War he had plenty of experience of repulsive sights

and odours. The Class prejudice manifested itself in a different way in Burma. It proved stronger than colour prejudice.

"The essential point was that the 'natives', at any rate the Burmese, were not felt to be physically repulsive. One looked down on them as 'natives', but one was quite ready to be physically intimate with them; and this, I noticed, was the case with white men who had the most vicious colour prejudice."<sup>51</sup>

Orwell thought that it was because Europeans became lazy in the East and allowed their servants to dress and undress them. He himself allowed his Burmese boy to help him dress and undress and was not repelled by almost physical contact with him, though he said he would not have allowed an English man-servant to handle him 'in that intimate manner'. Orwell got rid of his prejudices by living among the lower classes. Flory reacts to the smells of Ma Hla May exactly as Orwell did to the smell of Burmese. If the affair between Flory and Ma Hla May is not satisfactory it is because there is no love in it. Physically he feels no repulsion.

"A mingled scent of sandalwood, garlic, coco-nut oil and the jasmine in her hair floated from her. It was a scent that always made his teeth tingle." (P.53)

Yet this does not prevent physical intimacy.

"Rather abstractedly he pressed her head back upon the pillow and looked down at her queer youthful face, with its high cheekbones, stretched eyelids and short, shapely lips. She had rather nice teeth, like the teeth of a kitten ... He began to stroke her brown throat, rising like a smooth, slender stalk from the collarless ingyí." (P.53)

Orwell says:

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51. Ibid, P.143.

"I felt towards a Burman almost as I felt towards a woman. Like most other races, the Burmese have a distinctive smell - I cannot describe it: it is a smell that makes one's teeth tingle - but this smell never disgusted me."<sup>52</sup>

If the physical characteristics of the orientals are taken one by one, they are better than those of the Europeans. Even in general appearance orientals are more attractive than Europeans:

"Admittedly the white races throw up a few individuals who for a few years are supremely beautiful; but on the whole, say what you will, they are far less comely than orientals."<sup>53</sup>

When he had been in Burma for less than a year, he was attached to a British regiment. Although the soldiers were healthy and cheery and physically at their best as white men can be, he shrank from being near them. This attitude he had acquired at home. For him the soldiers were 'common people' and they therefore smelled:

"In the hot mornings when the company marched down the road, myself in the rear with one of the junior subalterns, the steam of those hundred sweating bodies in front made my stomach turn. And this, you observe, was pure prejudice. For a soldier is probably as inoffensive, physically, as it is possible for a male white person to be. He is generally young, he is nearly always healthy from fresh air and exercise, and a rigorous discipline compels him to be clean. But I could not see it like that. All I knew was that it was lower-class sweat that I was smelling, and the thought of it made me sick."<sup>54</sup>

There is nothing biologically different between the lower and the upper classes. If the upper classes are made to sweat as much as the lower classes and with less adequate amenities to wash they would smell the same. It is interesting to note that physical perfection is an ideal in Europe, and was certainly an

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52. Ibid, P.144.

53. Ibid, P.144.

54. Ibid, P.145.

ideal of the classical art. It was never an ideal of oriental art. It is also interesting to recall in this connection the effect on Adela's mind of the physical beauty of a Sudra, almost naked and pulling unconcernedly the punkha in the Court scene in A Passage to India.

"Almost naked, and splendidly formed, he sat on a raised plat-form near the back, in the middle of the central gang-way, 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 strange 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."<sup>55</sup>

Obviously Forster had in mind the Greek ideal of physical perfection and beauty so manifest in its arts. Flory hates the Empire and the society of the Europeans. This I have analysed already in tracing the development of his character. Orwell, too, hated the Empire, a hate which he transferred to Flory with necessary changes to make it consistent with his character and the circumstances of his life. Here I shall try to trace how Orwell himself acquired a hatred for imperialism.

"I was in the Indian Police five years, and by the end of that time I hated the imperialism I was serving with a bitterness which I probably cannot make clear. In the free air of England that kind of thing is not fully intelligible. In order to hate imperialism you have got to be part of it."<sup>56</sup>

His unpleasant experiences as a police officer, no doubt, contributed a great deal to this hatred, but there were other reasons too,

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55. A Passage to India, Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., London, 1961, P.226.

56. The Road to Wigan Pier, London, 1959, P.145.

including his experiences as a white man in the East. These experiences cannot be isolated from the earlier development of his character. The influences of the time have already been discussed when he was at school. He had wanted to be a writer. This was a dream as a child. He was the middle child with two sisters each on either side. He was isolated from both of them by a gap of five years.

"For this and other reasons I was somewhat lonely, and I soon developed disagreeable mannerisms which made me unpopular throughout my schooldays. I had the lonely child's habit of making up stories and holding conversations with imaginary persons, and I think from the very start my literary ambitions were mixed up with the feeling of being isolated and undervalued."<sup>57</sup>

His first literary composition was a poem about a tiger which he dictated to his mother when he was four or five. Later he thought it must have been a plagiarism of Blake's 'Tiger, Tiger'. As a boy he wrote patriotic poems. One which he wrote during the first World War was printed in the local newspaper. Another was written, two years later, on the death of Kitchener. Then at school, like Kipling he had his apprenticeship by editing the school magazine. Both Orwell and Kipling went straight from school to India. Kipling went to work in the office of the Civil and Military Gazette at Lahore and later in the Pioneer's Office at Allahabad; he had seven years' apprenticeship as a writer. Forster was at Cambridge where he was advised by his tutor to take to writing as a career. Orwell, however, while at school trained himself in his own way:

"However throughout this time I did in a sense engage in literary activities. To begin with there was the made-to-order stuff which I produced quickly, easily and without much

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57. England your England, London, 1953, P.7.

pleasure to myself. Apart from school work, I wrote vers d'occasion, semi-comic poems which I could turn out at what now seems to me astonishing speed - at fourteen I wrote a whole rhyming play, in imitation of Aristophanes, in about a week - and helped to edit school magazines, both printed and in manuscript. These magazines were the most pitiful burlesque stuff that you could imagine, and I took far less trouble with them than I now would with the cheapest journalism. But side by side with all this, for fifteen years or more, I was carrying out a literary exercise of a quite different kind; this was the making up of a continuous 'story' about myself, a sort of diary existing only in the mind."<sup>58</sup>

He used to imagine himself a 'hero of thrilling adventures.' But he made an important step forward when he began simply to describe what he did and saw. This developed in him the habit of describing in minute detail objects and events, and for themselves. It shows up as a weakness in his novels, especially Burmese Days.

"For minutes at a time this kind of thing would be running through my head: 'He pushed the door open and entered the room. A yellow beam of sunlight, filtering through the muslin curtains, slanted on the table, where a matchbox, half open, lay beside the inkpot. With his right hand in his pocket he moved across to the window. Down in the street a tortoise shell cat was chasing a dead leaf,' etc. etc. This habit continued till I was about twenty-five, right through my non-literary years. Although I had to search, and did search, for the right words, I seemed to be making this descriptive effort against my will, under a kind of compulsion from outside. The 'story' must, I suppose, have reflected the styles of the various writers I admired at different ages, but so far as I remember it always had the same meticulous descriptive quality."<sup>59</sup>

At sixteen he discovered the joy of playing with words and their associations. He had wanted to write books and he knew what kind of books he was going to write if he became a writer at all. He had wanted to write 'naturalistic novels with unhappy endings, full of detailed descriptions and arresting similes and also full of

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58. Ibid, P.8.

59. Ibid, PP.8-9.

purple passages in which words were used partly for the sake of their sound.<sup>60</sup> Burmese Days is in many ways that kind of novel. It is evident from this brief survey of his early life that the Burmese experiences of Orwell had a profound influence on his writings.

Christopher Hollis in A Study of George Orwell says that towards the end of the last term at Eton a master gave Orwell some such advice, 'You've had enough of education. Take a job abroad and see something of the world.'<sup>61</sup> He could have easily gone on to Oxford or Cambridge for a University education. Instead he went to Burma, perhaps looking for adventure out there in the outposts of the Empire. One direct result of this was his complete severance from all intellectual company. The description of his experiences in Burma and his treatment of Flory in Burmese Days leave no doubt that he was not happy there. The thought that he had to abandon the idea of writing weighed heavily on his mind.

"Between the ages of about seventeen and twenty-four I tried to abandon this idea, but I did so with the consciousness that I was outraging my true nature and that sooner or later I should have to settle down and write books."<sup>62</sup>

He was still very young and if he got away from Burma in time, he could still realize his ambition as a writer. It was another aspect of his Burmese experiences that he began to see clearly the kind of life he was in for and that he must get away before his roots went too deep like Flory's. When he left Burma on leave

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60. Ibid, P.9.

61. Christopher Hollis, A Study of George Orwell, London, 1956, P.26.

62. England your England, London, 1953, P.7.

in 1927 he decided not to return. But it was not possible to settle down without money. He had to struggle very hard in Paris and London for bare existence and the hope of becoming a writer did not come nearer. The struggle of Gordon Comstock, hero of Keep the Aspidistra Flying is the struggle of Orwell. It was a desperate struggle and Gordon Comstock realized increasingly that a poet who lived a humiliating life on thirty shillings a week in London had to abandon poetry.

"He had finished for ever with that futile dream of being a "writer." After all, was not that too a species of ambition? He wanted to get away from all that, below all that, Down, down! Into the ghost kingdom, out of the reach of hope, out of the reach of fear. Underground, underground! That was where he wished to be."63

His five years stay in Burma had come at a time when he was very young, sensitive and open to new experiences. At the time he left it he was twenty-four years old, the approximate age at which he would have left university if he had joined one after Eton in 1922. Both Kipling and Orwell were born in India to Anglo-Indian parents. While Kipling had vivid memories of his childhood days in Bombay, we have no such record of Orwell's at Motihari in Bengal where he was born in 1903. Perhaps he was sent to England when still a mere infant. The fact that he did not remember having seen his father before he was eight, when his father came home on retirement, gives us a clue that he must have been an infant at the time of leaving India. There is a statement about his early childhood which is significant in its relation to his Burmese experiences later.

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63. Keep the Aspidistra Flying. London, 1954, P.268.

"Looking back on my childhood, after the infant years were over, I do not believe I ever felt love for any mature person except my mother, and even her I did not trust, in the sense that shyness made me conceal most of my real feelings from her."<sup>64</sup>

Kipling, on the other hand, was more attached to his parents and sister. He respected his father, remained under his influence and valued his opinions about his writings; for his mother he had great love. There is no record of any conflict with any of them. Both went to the East when very young after leaving their schools (Kipling was seventeen and Orwell nineteen) and both returned to England when approximately the same age. Both had financial difficulties as both wanted to be writers, with this difference that Kipling was already known to the literary world through his Indian stories while Orwell had yet to produce anything. His first book Down and Out in Paris and London was published in 1933, six years after his return. Forster had visited India twice before he wrote A Passage to India, with a ten years gap between the two visits. He stayed for a total of fourteen months on these two visits. He had been preparing himself in order to provide cultural contexts for his personal experiences by reading about India in between the two visits and even after. He wrote his novel on India in maturity and after having produced four of his five novels. These are some of the reasons why his novel is far superior in quality and depth.

One reason why Orwell hated Burma was the despair and the helplessness of life out there and the fact that it was preventing

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64. Quoted by Laurence Brander; see his book, George Orwell, London, 1954, P.3. Original source of this quotation has not been given by Brander and I have not been able to locate it.

him from the only course of action. Inability to act was one of the weaknesses of Flory too, but in Burma what kind of action was possible for him? If you want to change society (Orwell very much wished to do so), and in the modern context it means changing the economic structure you need freedom of action first, but this is often denied to individuals. So you need to organize yourselves into political parties or Trade Unions to gain political power. In the East it was impossible for both Flory and Orwell though not, as events showed, for the Burmese themselves; but in England Orwell could participate in the political life of the country. On his return he became politically engaged and committed for the rest of his life, and his writings, in a sense a way of getting rid of his guilt over Burma, became explicitly political.

In his essay Why I Write Orwell had given reasons why he had become a political writer. According to his views there are four great motives for writing apart from the need to earn money. The first of these he calls sheer egoism. People write because they want to seem clever, to be talked about and enjoy being famous and respected and even remembered and honoured after death. This he considered a very strong motive, common to all successful men in various fields. Such people possess strong individualities and are wilful enough not to be submerged in the mass of humanity who are not selfish and are willing to live for others.

"But there is also the minorities of gifted, wilful people who are determined to live their own lives to the end, and writers belong in this class. Serious writers, I should say, are on the whole more vain and self-centred than journalists, though less interested in money."<sup>65</sup>

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65. England your England, London, 1953, P.10.

The second motive to write arises out of aesthetic feelings. We perceive beauty in things that we see and the sounds that we hear, and in words and their arrangement. The appeal of beauty is very widespread and allows for greater variety in stimulus and response. According to Orwell no book, however utilitarian in purpose is free from aesthetic considerations. The third motive is historical in nature.

"Desire to see things as they are, to find out true facts and store them up for the use of posterity."<sup>66</sup>

The last of the four motives he calls political purpose. It keeps a definite aim in view - to keep people moving in a given direction towards achievement of a common good.

"Once again, no book is genuinely free from political bias. The opinion that art should have nothing to do with politics is itself a political attitude.

"It can be seen how these various impulses must war against one another, and how they must fluctuate from person to person, and from time to time. By nature - taking your 'nature' to be the state you have attained when you are first adult - I am a person in whom the first three motives would outweigh the fourth. In a peaceful age I might have written ornate or merely descriptive books, and might have remained almost unaware of my political loyalties. As it is I have been forced into becoming a sort of pamphleteer. First I spent five years in an unsuitable profession (the Indian Imperial Police, in Burma), and then I underwent poverty and the sense of failure. They increased my natural hatred of authority and made me for the first time fully aware of the existence of the working classes, and the job in Burma had given me some understanding of imperialism. But the experiences were not enough to give me an accurate political orientation. Then came Hitler, the Spanish Civil War, etc. By the end of 1935 I had still failed to reach a firm decision."<sup>67</sup>

The thirties were a period in which most writers were groping for a purpose to write for. They were more politically oriented than the writers of the twenties and were more clearly and definitely

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66. Ibid, P.11.

67. Ibid, PP.11-12.

partisan in their attitude. Orwell sums up the literary climate in these words:

"But quite suddenly, in the years 1930-35, something happens. The literary climate changes. A new group of writers, Auden and Spender and the rest of them, has made its appearance, and although technically these writers owe something to their predecessors, their 'tendency' is entirely different. Suddenly we have got out of the twilight of the gods into a sort of Boy Scout atmosphere of bare knees and community singing. The typical literary man ceases to be a cultural expatriate with a leaning towards the church, and becomes an eager-minded schoolboy with a leaning towards communism. If the keynote of the writers of the twenties is 'tragic sense of life,' the keynote of the new writers is 'serious purpose' ... In other words, 'purpose' has come back, the younger writers have 'gone into politics.' As I have pointed out already, Eliot and Co. are not really so non-partisan as Mr. MacNeice seems to suggest. Still, it is broadly true that in the twenties the literary emphasis was more on technique and less on subject-matter than it is now ... By throwing 'pure art' overboard they have freed themselves from the fear of being laughed at and vastly enlarged their scope. The prophetic side of Marxism, for example, is new material for poetry and has great possibilities."<sup>68</sup>

This was the literary atmosphere in which the already politically oriented tendencies of Orwell were shaped and formed after Burma together with his experiences of poverty in Paris and London and later as a volunteer fighting against Fascism in Spain. His suspicions of totalitarianism became confirmed during the Spanish Civil War, which also crystallized for him his political credo.

"The Spanish War and the other events in 1936-7 turned the scale and thereafter I knew where I stood. Every line of serious work that I have written since 1936 has been written directly or indirectly, against totalitarianism and for democratic socialism, as I understand it. It seems to me nonsense, in a period like our own, to think that one can avoid writing of such subjects. Everyone writes of them in one guise or another. It is simply a question of which side one takes and what approach one follows. And the more one is conscious of one's political bias, the more chance one has of acting politically without sacrificing one's aesthetic and intellectual integrity."<sup>69</sup>

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68. Ibid, PP.117-118, 119, 120.

69. Ibid, P.13.

His first book was Down and Out in Paris and London, in which he explored poverty, and was published in 1933 and followed by Burmese Days in 1934. The latter was his first published novel and it deals with the colonial situation in Burma which was very unsatisfactory. Keep the Aspidochelone Flying is about money and its unequal and unsatisfactory distribution in a capitalist society; The Clergyman's Daughter, his first written novel, with the loss of faith and the inadequacy of religion, and Coming Up for Air with the insecure conditions of life between the two World Wars with a flashback to the comparative security and peace of Edwardian days. All are pessimistic interpretations of unsatisfactory social and political conditions. All underlie the wish to change society through political action. But political action alone is not enough as Orwell was to find himself. Animal Farm is a satire on the Russian regime of the Stalinist era and 1984 a nightmarish projection of the police state and world powers of the not very distant future. To write with a political purpose, however, does not amount to writing pure politics. Orwell tried to maintain certain aesthetic standards and make political writing into art. He wrote in 1947 'Why I Write', an essay I have already quoted from and in which there is a paragraph about the relation between aesthetics and politics in his writings:

"What I have wanted to do throughout the past ten years is to make political writing into art. My starting point is always a feeling of partisanship, a sense of injustice. When I sit down to write a book, I do not say to myself, 'I am going to produce a work of art.' I write it because

there is some lie that I want to expose, some fact to which I want to draw attention, and my initial concern is to get a hearing. But I could not do the work of writing a book or even a long magazine article, if it were not also an aesthetic experience. Anyone who cares to examine my work will see that even when it is downright propaganda it contains much that a full-time politician would consider irrelevant. I am not able, and I do not want to completely abandon the world-view that I acquired in childhood. So long as I remain alive and well I shall continue to feel strongly about prose style, to love the surface of the earth, and to take pleasure in solid objects and scraps of useless information. It is no use to suppress that side of myself. The job is to reconcile my ingrained likes and dislikes with the essentially public non-individual activities that this age forces on us."<sup>70</sup>

Of the Burmese experiences those that happened to him in his capacity as a police officer were very unpleasant in nature. He was not satisfied with his role as a police officer, because he saw himself as an instrument of cruelty and suppression. Moreover the other Europeans looked down upon the police because they did the dirty side of ruling the natives:

"But I was in the police, which is to say that I was part of the actual machinery of despotism. Moreover, in the police you see the dirty work of Empire at close quarters, and there is an appreciable difference between doing dirty work and merely profiting by it. Most people approve of capital punishment, but most people wouldn't do the hangman's job. Even the other Europeans in Burma slightly looked down on the police because of the brutal work they had to do. I remember once when I was inspecting a police station, an American missionary whom I knew fairly well came in for some purpose or other. Like most Non-Conformist missionaries he was a complete ass but quite a good fellow. One of my native Sub-inspectors was bullying a suspect (I described this scene in Burmese Days). The American watched it, and then turning to me said thoughtfully, 'I wouldn't care to have your job.' It made me horribly ashamed. So that was the kind of job I had! Even an ass of an American missionary, a teetotal cock-virgin from the Middle West, had the right to look down on me and pity me."<sup>71</sup>

The scene at the police station in Burmese Days in itself is not so very revolting as to make Orwell so disgusted with himself,

70. Ibid, PP.13-14.

71. The Road to Wigan Pier, 1959, PP.147-148.

In the context of Burma and how the police behave in Eastern countries it is not unusual.

"At the same time, too, Westfield, who had gone out early, was leaning against the notched and ink-stained table of the police station, while the fat Sub-inspector interrogated a suspect whom two constables were guarding. The suspect was a man of forty, with a gray, timorous face, dressed only in a ragged longyi kilted to the knee, beneath which his lank, curved shins were speckled with tick-bites.

"Who is this fellow?" said Westfield.

"Thief, sir. We catch him in possession of this ring with two emeralds very dear. No explanation. How could he - poor coolie - own a emerald ring? He have stole it."

He turned ferociously upon the suspect, advanced his face, tomcat-fashion till it was almost touching the other's, and roared in an enormous voice:

"You stole the ring!"

"No."

"You are an old offender!"

"No."

"You have been in prison!"

"No."

"Turn round!" bellowed the Sub-inspector on an inspiration.

"Bend over!"

The suspect turned his grey face in agony towards Westfield, who looked away.

The two constables seized him, twisted him round and bent him over; the Sub-inspector tore off his longyi, exposing his buttocks.

"Look at this, sir!" He pointed to some scars. "He have been flogged with bamboos. He is an old offender. Therefore he stole the ring!"

"All right, put him in the clink," said Westfield moodily, as he lounged away from the table with his hands in his pockets. At the bottom of his heart he loathed running in these poor devils of common thieves. Dacoits, rebels - yes; but not these poor cringing rats!

"How many have you got in the clink now, Maung Ba?" he said.

"Three, sir."

The lock-up was upstairs, a cage surrounded by six-inch wooden bars, guarded by a constable armed with a carbine. It was very dark, stifling hot, and quite unfurnished, except for an earth latrine that stank to heaven. Two prisoners were squatting at the bars, keeping their distance from a third, an Indian coolie, who was covered from head to foot with ringworm like a coat of mail. A stout Burmese woman, wife of a constable, was kneeling outside the cage ladling rice and watery dahl into tin pannikins.

"Is the food good?" said Westfield.

"It is good most holy one," chorussed the prisoners."(PP.74-75)

Although the methods of investigation of the Sub-inspector are crude and illogical, the lock-up with its earth latrine obscene and the food poor, in the context of the Burmese situation and life it is not particularly disgusting. There are torture scenes in 1984 which far surpass in physical cruelty and inhumanity anything described here. Scientific methods may be more reliable but they are not necessarily more humane. Moreover it was not necessary that the earth-latrines should have been inside the lock-up. Westfield could have done something about it, but the disgusting thing is his indifference. He is after all a sahib and it is not his business to concern himself with the welfare of the prisoners. When the prisoner looked to him in silent agony he turned his face. He did not want to be involved. Even his inquiry after the food is just a routine question. That is as far as he can condescend, there is no sincerity behind it. He remains a mere spectator, aloof from the scene. Moreover the general question of justice still remains. Criminals are after all to be brought to justice so long as there is crime in society. Material prosperity and better conditions have brought the hope of a crime-free society not any nearer. Society will have to have effective means of deterring crime and punish the criminals. Orwell was very conscious of the inadequacies of the police function in Burma, but no steps were taken by the British to improve them. Even free and democratic societies cannot do without an efficient police force and criminals are not the only responsibility of the police in a well organized society; there are some very necessary duties in the

performance of which the policeman can have a sense of doing something useful. Of course the danger of the police becoming an instrument of suppression and torture, especially in a totalitarian state, is always there. The police can even control the thoughts and souls of the people and stamp out individuality and freedom. This is the kind of role Orwell assigns to the police in the world super-states of 1984. Compared to this the police in Burma must look almost humane and certainly less oppressive. But in the context of the Empire the role of the Imperial Police seemed to him exclusively that of suppressing the natives and making possible the exploitation of the colonies. But it is not in this context and capacity that the Sub-inspector is shown in this scene at the police-station of Kyauktada. I am sure similar scenes are taking place even now in Burma when it is free. Orwell, however, was haunted by these scenes; the poor, wretched prisoners, the flogging and the stinking lock-ups gave him a 'bad conscience' and a sense of guilt from which he wanted riddance. When he returned from Burma in 1927 after five years of unhappy life there he decided to resign from the Imperial Police.

"I was not going back to be a part of evil despotism. But I wanted much more than merely to escape from my job. For five years I had been part of an oppressive system, and it had left me with a bad conscience. In innumerable remembered faces - faces of prisoners in the dock, of men waiting in the condemned cells, of subordinates I had bullied and aged peasants I had snubbed, of servants and coolies I had hit with my fist in moments of rage (nearly everyone does these things in the East, at any rate occasionally: orientals can be very provoking) - haunted me intolerably. I was conscious of an immense weight of guilt that I had got to expiate. I suppose that sounds

exaggerated; but if you do for five years a job that you thoroughly disapprove of, you will probably feel the same. I had reduced everything to the simple theory that the oppressed are always right and the oppressors are always wrong: a mistaken theory, but the natural result of being the oppressor yourself. I felt that I had got to escape not merely from imperialism but from every form of man's dominion over man. I wanted to submerge myself, to get right down among the oppressed, to be one of them and on their side against their tyrants. And, chiefly because I had had to think everything out in solitude, I had carried my hatred of oppression to extraordinary lengths. At that time failure seemed to be the only virtue. Every suspicion of self-advancement, even to 'succeed' in life to the extent of making a few hundreds a year, seemed to me spiritually ugly, a species of bullying."<sup>72</sup>

The fact is that Orwell, while in Burma, had behaved very much like any other English man and had shown no courage and determination to stand against the oppression there. At least he could have refrained from bullying his subordinates, snubbing aged peasants and hitting servants and coolies. His conscience would have been less loaded if he had refrained from being a sahib and had done his duties in a more intelligent and decent way. And when he did atone for his guilt it was by identifying himself with the poor and the oppressed of Britain and not Burma. Moreover he had had to calm his doubts and questionings and had refrained from uttering his opinions openly:

"But of course I had to keep these notions to myself, because of the almost utter silence that is imposed on every Englishman in the East."<sup>73</sup>

Orwell had to face the dilemma of playing the role of the white man in the East; to pose as a sahib, as a superior species of mankind, without fear, always overcoming difficulties, working

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72. The Road to Wigan Pier, 1959, PP.149-150.

73. Ibid, P.148.

solely for the good of the native. This was a pose which was maintained in public and was accepted as traditional. You had no sense of its futility and hollowness so long as you were doing anything really useful like being in the Education and Medical Services. Your conscience was then at least at peace and you had no moments of regrets. It was possible, through selfless and devoted service to become a saint or a legend like Father Damien and Albert Schweitzer. But if your conscience troubled you you had to keep quiet. This was more likely to happen if you were placed in Orwell's situation. Occasionally those who were troubled by their conscience and a haunting sense of guilt did get a chance of unburdening their secret loads, if they found themselves in the right company. It seems those who were in the Education Service were often more liberal in their attitude.

"I remember a night I spent on the train with a man in the Educational Service, a stranger to myself whose name I never discovered. It was too hot to sleep and we spent the night in talking. Half an hour's cautious questioning decided each of us that the other was 'safe'; and then for hours, while the train jolted slowly through the pitch-black night, sitting up in our bunks with bottles of beer handy, we damned the British Empire - damned it from the inside, intelligently and intimately. It did us both good. But we had been speaking of forbidden things, and in the haggard morning light when the train crawled into Mandalay, we parted as guiltily as any adulterous couple."<sup>74</sup>

Had he more such chances to unburden himself 'intelligently and intimately' he would have come back to England less loaded with a sense of guilt for which he had to expiate by undergoing abject and avoidable poverty. He kept his notions to himself and worked out an anarchistic theory. He thought all forms of authority and government were evil, and that punishment did more harm than the

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74. Ibid, PP.146-147.

crime itself, and if people were left alone without any control they would behave decently. Later on in the light of more experience and mature reflection he had to change his views and dismissed his earlier attitude as 'sentimental nonsense'. His revised and mature judgement was:

"I see now as I did not see then, that it is always necessary to protect peaceful people from violence. In any state of Society where crime can be profitable you have got to have a harsh criminal law and administer it ruthlessly; the alternative is Al Capone."<sup>75</sup>

He thought that those who administered justice did think of punishment as evil. His own experience had prepared him to expect people connected with the administration of justice, like policemen, judges and prison warders in England, to have moments of regret and a sense of guilt. Orwell had identified himself while in Burma with oppression, which was necessary to imperialism. He did not see any moral justification for the Empire. But in England the same situation could not be applied. Most of the people connected with justice and its administration saw nothing wrong with the system. They were part of institutions and Departments which had been established according to laws, rules and precedents, and there were more laws and procedures to guide them. They were not as free as an administrator or public officer in the Colonies where abuse of law and authority could go without check. The very fact that laws and institutions are sanctioned by society does make a great difference. The individual concerned had his responsibility shared. In a free society, a judge or a policeman is administering the law of the country which has got the sanction of the society and has traditions behind it and he does not look

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75. Ibid, P.148.

upon it as anything evil. One can justify punishment as earned by the culprit. But in Burma the penal laws were foreign and administered by foreigners. The Burmese openly hated the English and Orwell had received his full share of insolence and jeers. Under such conditions it was likely for the criminal to think that he was being oppressed by foreign rulers, and not punished for his crimes.

In the course of his police duties, Orwell once witnessed a hanging; it proved to be an experience of great importance in his development. It made him hate capital punishment like nothing else. Again it also contributed in some way to his hatred of imperialism, although the hanging in itself had nothing to do either with the Empire or imperialism. Almost all sensitive writers distrust authority and its exercise. But the fact is that society cannot be organized without some kind of authority whether instituted or constituted. The fact that some people misuse their authority is in itself not a strong argument for the total abolition of all kinds of authority. Society can find means of preventing the exercise of authority from becoming cruelty and mere oppression. The moral education of those in authority is a subject to which insufficient attention is paid. All the same, a strong and well-informed public opinion can often prevent the worst excesses of authority.

The hanging incident already mentioned took place in the early hours of the morning on a wet day. The man who was going to be hanged was a Hindu, "a puny wisp of a man, with a shaven head and vague liquid eyes."<sup>76</sup> He was being prepared to be hanged,

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76. Shooting an Elephant, London, 1950, P.11.

and the whole procedure struck Orwell as some kind of ritual; in a sense, it was a ritual, that of administering punishment and justice. There was no consciousness shown on the part of the warders and the officials concerned, that they were destroying a human life, a healthy, vigorous human life.

"Six tall Indian warders were guarding him and getting him ready for the gallows. Two of them stood by with rifles and fixed bayonets, while the others handcuffed him, passed a chain through his handcuffs and fixed it to their belts, and lashed his arms tight to his sides."<sup>77</sup>

The whole procedure took place in a cold-blooded manner and there were hardly any signs of sympathy and compassion. The superintendent of the jail, an army doctor, showed impatience and said in his gruff voice, "For God's sake hurry up, Francis ... The man ought to have been dead by this time. Aren't you ready yet!"<sup>78</sup> Francis replied, "Yes sir, yes sir. All is satisfactorily prepared. The hangman is waiting. We shall proceed."<sup>79</sup>

For the superintendent it was an unpleasant job to be got over and done with as soon as possible. On their way to the gallows an incident happened which infuriated the superintendent.

"A dreadful thing had happened - a dog, come goodness knows where, had appeared in the yard. It came bounding among us with a loud volley of barks and leapt round us wagging its whole body, wild with glee at finding so many human beings together. It was a large woolly dog, half Airdale, half pariah. For a moment it pranced round us, and then, before any one could stop it, it had made a dash for the prisoner, and jumping up tried to lick his face. Everybody stood aghast, too taken aback even to grab the dog."<sup>80</sup>

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77. Ibid, P.11.

78. Ibid, P.12.

79. Ibid, P.12.

80. Ibid, P.12.

The dog showed love and affection to the prisoner and in a way reminded the human beings of their lack of love for their fellow human being. It was chased and caught, as if it was interfering with the procedure and the performance of a legal ritual. Orwell was watching with intense absorption every movement that the prisoner made and thinking about the whole affair; he saw the prisoner step aside to avoid a puddle. A kind of mystical realization dawned on him. "It is curious, but till that moment I had never realized what it means to destroy a healthy, conscious man."<sup>81</sup> Orwell was facing the age old mystery of life and death.

"When I saw the prisoner step aside to avoid the puddle I saw the mystery, the unspeakable wrongness, of cutting a life short when it is in full tide. This man was not dying, he was alive just as we are alive. All the organs of his body were working - bowels digesting food, skin renewing itself, nails growing, tissues forming - all toiling away in solemn foolery. His nails would still be growing when he stood on the drop, when he was falling through the air with a tenth of a second to live. His eyes saw the yellow gravel and the grey walls, and his brain still remembered, foresaw, reasoned - even about puddles. He and we were a party of men walking together, seeing, hearing, feeling, understanding the same world; and in two minutes, with a sudden snap, one of us would be gone - one mind less, one world less."<sup>82</sup>

Orwell is treating the incident in complete isolation from its complex context of society, law and justice and dwelling on the details which give it an individual character. Certainly all hangings do not take place on wet mornings with puddles on the way to the gallows and dogs do not make unexpected shows of affection to those who are being hanged. He does not consider the problem of why this man was being hanged; what was his crime and what kind of a life he had made for himself. What about the man or woman he

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81. Ibid, P.13.

82. Ibid, PP.13-14.

had murdered? He simply emphasizes the fact that the whole procedure of hanging the man was a callous, brutal and cold-blooded affair which revolted him. There was a very tense moment when the order of the superintendent was being waited for. During that moment "everyone had changed colour. The Indians had gone grey like bad coffee, and one or two of the bayonets were wavering. We looked at the lashed, hooded man on the drop, and listened to his cries - each cry another second of life; the same thought was in all our minds: oh, kill him quickly, get it over, stop that abominable noise."<sup>83</sup> This impatience and fear reveals at bottom the fear of death; it is the facing of the fear of death which reveals itself in the reactions of the bystanders. In the hanging of the criminal, each man was unconsciously facing death which cowed their spirits; even the dog was affected by the sight and slunk away from the dead body of the man it had shown affection to. There was a feeling of tremendous relief after the affair was over. They were all still alive and they were grateful for it and enjoyed every moment with greater awareness. After witnessing this gruesome scene they passed through the prison yard and saw the prisoners being ladled their breakfast.

"It seemed quite a homely, jolly scene, after the hanging. An enormous relief had come upon us now that the job was done. One felt an impulse to sing, to break into a run, to snigger. All at once everyone began chattering gaily."<sup>84</sup>

The Eurasian boy walking by Orwell's side offered him cigarettes and talked in a rather intimate way. Francis was telling the superintendent that all had "passed off with the utmost satisfactoriness."<sup>85</sup> Orwell suddenly found himself laughing

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83. Ibid, P.15.

84. Ibid, P.16

85. Ibid, P.

loudly with the others. The experience of having faced death with no harm done to them had brought them closer together and the superintendent offered them all a drink. He had a bottle of whisky in his car. A celebration or joie de vivre, who can tell, but there they were, all laughing and drinking together "native and European alike."<sup>86</sup>

Immediately after danger people tend to forget their usual prejudices. There is a scene in Burmese Days soon after the violent earthquake in which the dull and boozing company at the Club suddenly becomes more alive. The native butler pops in and out participating in the conversation and no sahib snubs him for being insolent. I think, for a brief space of time, whether after the hanging or the earthquake, the people behaved more decently as human beings. There was equality at least. The essay on 'A Hanging' is written in Orwell's best prose style suited to exposition. It is a very realistic piece of description and although the hanging he witnessed took place in Burma it had nothing to do with the Empire or imperialism. It could have taken place anywhere, but nevertheless it was an experience which added to his disgust for the Empire and made him loathe his job. Orwell does not argue his case against capital punishment; perhaps it was not his idea or purpose; what he seems to do is to show the incident as it affected him. I am not even sure whether he was actually disgusted; it may in a strange way have fascinated him. There is an interesting passage in Christopher Hollis's, A Study of George Orwell in this connection:

"Yet his protest against the "unspeakable wrongness" of capital punishment - his protest that it is wrong in itself,

irrespective of its consequences - whether defensible or not, is interesting. For it is clearly a position that is only tenable on the basis of a theology. Since man is destined to die anyway, nothing could well be less self-evident than the proposition that the preservation of life for a few more years is of enormous importance. Among secularists those who maintain that capital punishment should be inflicted whenever it is to the general convenience have the better of the argument. Orwell's position is only tenable if man had a destiny beyond this world. Here was one of a number of his opinions which only made sense on the assumption of an implicit acceptance of a future life."<sup>87</sup>

I think Christopher Hollis has not made his point very clear. If Orwell believed in a destiny beyond death, then death should not have worried him, especially sudden death. There is, however, one other point which can make the assumption of Hollis plausible. If there is a life after death and if that life is determined by what we do in this life then Orwell could plead that a criminal should be given a chance to prepare himself for it. To this one could reply that the mercy and forgiveness of God are the hope of sinners and criminals.

Another important incident 'which in a roundabout way was enlightening' was the one described in 'Shooting an Elephant'. It is significant to notice that the incident in itself, the shooting of an elephant gone must, is an ordinary one; nevertheless, it left a profound impression on him because of the context in which he put it. Shooting elephants and tigers and other big game was part of a Sahib's pastime in the colonies. Though this was a different kind of shooting. It was his duty. Early one morning a Sub-inspector rang him up and said that an elephant had gone must and was causing damage in the bazaar. Orwell got an old .44 Winchester rifle and started on his way to the scene of havoc.

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87. Christopher Hollis: A Study of George Orwell: The Man and His Works, London, 1956, P.40.

On the way he gathered some information from the Burmese about the elephant that had gone must. He reached that quarter of the town where the elephant had last been seen and where the Sub-inspector and some Indian constables were waiting for him. He could get no definite information about the direction the elephant had taken. He thought that, as was their habit in the East, the people were telling him lies. Then he heard an old woman who was driving away a boy with a switch. Orwell guessed that the old woman was doing so because there was something that the boy should not see. On turning round the corner he saw a ghastly scene. A black Dravidian coolie had been trampled to death in a very violent manner. It was a disgusting and revolting sight. Orwell as a police officer had seen murdered people, people who met violent deaths. But here was a sight he had never seen before.

"This was the rainy season and the ground was soft, and his face had scored a trench a foot deep and a couple of yards long. He was lying on his belly with arms crucified and head sharply twisted to one side. His face was coated with mud, the eyes wide open, the teeth bared and grinning with an expression of unendurable agony. (Never tell me, by the way, that the dead look peaceful. Most of the corpses I have seen looked devilish) The friction of the great beast's foot had stripped the skin from his back as neatly as one skins a rabbit."<sup>88</sup>

This was enough. He sent to a friend's for a better rifle, with the intention of defending himself in case he came upon the elephant suddenly. It had last been seen in a paddy field a few hundred yards away. Orwell started down to the field followed by an excited crowd of Burmese, shouting that the Sahib was going to

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88. Shooting an Elephant, London, 1950, P.4.

shoot the elephant. It made him feel uneasy as he did not intend to do so. The crowd made him feel nervous. "Looking and feeling a fool" he marched down the hill and to a piece of metalled road where he halted and began to watch the elephant in the field. It was very peaceful at the moment and did not show any signs of violence and hostility at the sight and shouts of the crowd. Orwell thought he was not going to shoot it after all. Moreover an elephant in Burma was like a piece of costly machinery for extracting teak from the jungle and must not be destroyed if one could avoid it. So he decided to watch it for a while and make sure that it would do no more violence and then go away. But he was actually in a more difficult situation than he had thought. The crowd made him nervous and he dare not lose his face. Until that moment he had never realized the utter helplessness and futility of a white man in the East; he must assert his role as a sahib and come through with success and triumph.

"And suddenly I realized that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it; I could feel their two thousand wills pressing me forward, irresistably. And it was at this moment, as I stood there with the rifle in my hand, that I first grasped the hollowness, the futility of the white man's dominion in the East."<sup>89</sup>

It was an experience of futility and hollowness and fear which in a way is similar to that of Mrs. Moore in the Caves, and Kipling's Sahib in "Bubbling-Well Road". Mrs. Moore faced the negation and hollowness of all her values; Orwell was facing the abyss which lies under the pose of being a sahib. When Kipling's sahibs are faced with such a situation they often succeed in maintaining their prestige. And on the surface Orwell did exactly that. He

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89. Ibid, P.6.

behaved in a way in which any white man in Kipling's stories would have done.

"Here was I, the white man with his gun, standing in front of the unarmed native crowd - seemingly the leading actor of the piece; but in reality I was only an absurd puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those yellow faces behind. I perceived in this moment that when the white man turns tyrant it is his own freedom that he destroys. He becomes a sort of hollow, posing dummy, the conventionalized figure of a sahib. For it is the condition of his rule that he shall spend his life in trying to impress the "natives," and so in every crisis he has got to do what the "natives" expect of him. He wears a mask, and his face grows to fit it. I had got to shoot the elephant. I had committed myself to doing it when I sent for the rifle. A sahib has got to act like a sahib; he has got to appear resolute, to know his own mind and do definite things. To come all that way, rifle in hand, with two thousand people marching at my heels, and then to trail feebly away, having done nothing - no, that was impossible. The crowd would laugh at me. And my whole life, every white man's life in the East, was one long struggle not to be laughed at."<sup>90</sup>

Orwell was facing a white man's dilemma in the East; to shoot or not to shoot that was the question. He did not want to, but he had to. He thought of testing the behaviour of the elephant by approaching within a distance of twenty-five yards, if it remained calm he would be justified in going away without shooting it, and if it charged he would be ready to shoot it. He knew that it was far too risky; the field was soft and slippery and if he missed he would have no chance of getting away. He must not show fear in front of the "natives"; a white man is never frightened; at least he must not show that he is. He also did not like the idea of the elephant in full pursuit of him and the natives roaring with laughter.

"The sole thought in my mind was that if anything went wrong these two thousand Burmese would see me pursued, caught,

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90. Ibid, PP.6-7.

trampled on and reduced to a grinning corpse like that Indian up the hill. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh."<sup>91</sup>

So there was no alternative; he must shoot the elephant from a safe distance. The dying of the stricken elephant affected him in a strange way. He saw 'a mysterious, terrible change ... come over the elephant' the instant the bullet struck it. The whole incident is described in detail leading to the climax when the elephant fell crashing to the ground.

"He neither stirred nor fell, but every line of his body had altered. He looked suddenly stricken, shrunken, immensely old, as though the frightful impact of the bullet had paralyzed him without knocking him down. At last, after what seemed a long time - it might have been five seconds, I dare say - he sagged flabbily to his knees. His mouth slobbered. An enormous senility seemed to have settled upon him. One could have imagined him thousands of years old. I fired again into the same spot. At the second shot he did not collapse but climbed with desperate slowness to his feet and stood weakly upright with legs sagging and head drooping. I fired a third time. That was the shot that did for him. You could see the agony of it jolt his whole body and knock the last remnant of strength from his legs. But in falling he seemed for a moment to rise, for as his hind legs collapsed beneath him he seemed to tower upwards like a huge rock toppling, his trunk reaching skywards like a tree. He trumpeted, for the first and only time. And then down he came, his belly towards me, with a crash that seemed to shake the ground even where I lay."<sup>92</sup>

The elephant took a long time to die and the rattling, tortured breathing continued. Orwell had to pump rifle load after rifle load of bullets to put an end to the unbearable gasps.

"I felt that I had got to put an end to that dreadful noise. It seemed dreadful to see the great beast lying there, powerless to move and yet powerless to die, and not even able to finish him."<sup>93</sup>

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91. Ibid, P.8.

92. Ibid, PP.8-9.

93. Ibid, P.10.

Orwell could not stand it any longer and left the place. It is significant to note that he could not bear the prayer chant - Ram, Ram, Ram! - of the Hindu about to be hanged. But how different in tone is the description of the shooting a leopard in Burmese Days. There is a feeling of great excitement and tremendous gusto about the incident. It is not done as a duty. Elizabeth has gone with Flory into the jungle to shoot pigeons. They do not expect to shoot a leopard and so it is all the more exciting.

"He stopped with his forepaws on the path. They could see his low, flat-eared head, his bare eye-tooth and his thick, terrible forearm. In the shadow he did not look yellow but grey. He was listening intently. Elizabeth saw Flory spring to his feet, raise his gun and pull the trigger instantly. The shot roared and almost simultaneously there was a heavy crash as the brute dropped flat in the weeds. "Look out!" Flory cried, "he's not done for!" He fired again, and there was a fresh thump as the shot went home. The leopard gasped. Flory threw open his gun and felt in his pocket for a cartridge, then flung all his cartridges on to the path and fell on his knees, searching rapidly among them. "Damn and blast it!" he cried. "There isn't a single S G among them. Where in hell did I put them?" The leopard had disappeared as he fell. He was thrashing about in the undergrowth like a great, wounded snake, and crying out with a snarling, sobbing noise, savage and pitiful. The noise seemed to be coming nearer. Every cartridge Flory turned up had 6 or 8 marked on the end. The rest of the large-shot cartridges had, in fact, been left with Ko S'la. The crashing and snarling were now hardly five yards away, but they could see nothing, the jungle was so thick. The two Burmans were crying out "Shoot! Shoot! Shoot!" The sound of 'Shoot! Shoot!' got farther away - they were skipping for the nearest climbable trees. There was a crash in the undergrowth so close that it shook the bush by which Elizabeth was standing. "By God, he's almost on us!" Flory said. "We must turn him somehow. Let fly at the sound." Elizabeth raised her gun. Her knees were knocking like castanets, but her hand was as steady as stone. She fired rapidly, once, twice. The crashing noises receded. The

leopard was crawling away, crippled but swift, and still invisible.

"Well done! You've scared him," Flory said.

"But he's getting away! He's getting away!" Elizabeth cried, dancing about in agitation. She made to follow him. Flory jumped to his feet and pulled her back.

"No fear! You stay here. Wait!"

He slipped two of the small-shot cartridges into his gun and ran after the sound of the leopard. For a moment Elizabeth could not see either beast or man, then they reappeared in a bare patch thirty yards away. The leopard was writhing along on his belly, sobbing as he went. Flory levelled his gun and fired at four yards' distance. The leopard jumped like a cushion when one hits it, then rolled over, curled up and lay still. Flory poked the body with his gun-barrel. It did not stir." (PP.171-173)

The incident of the leopard is described by Orwell with great gusto and enthusiasm, and brings the shooting expedition to an exciting climax, but it seems to have been introduced for its own sake. I am not even sure of the probability of the incident. It has not been woven into the texture of the novel, being related neither to character nor to plot. Merely to bring in incidents into the novel because they are exciting is not enough even if they are suggested by the surroundings: thus, because the novel is about Burma, a leopard must be thrown in for excitement and local colour. It is an inert and meaningless incident and if removed would make no difference to the structure of the novel. It does not add to our knowledge of either Flory or Elizabeth or even Burma which is the backdrop. It does not even generate significant echoes into the minds of the characters. The whole expedition is meant to bring Flory and Elizabeth nearer each other. But the link thus established between them is of a mechanical, artificial nature. Orwell misses several opportunities of revealing the humanity of his characters by significantly using small gestures and

objects; earlier before the leopard is reported by an old woman (in itself rather improbable) Elizabeth is thrilled by the pigeon she has just shot. It is her first pigeon. She fondles it with tenderness and she feels a sudden urge to fling her arms round Flory's neck and kiss him. Yet this momentary insight into a possible Elizabeth is never developed in the novel, because Orwell is neither interested in the humanity of his characters nor in the organic structuring of his novel. The characters do not have independent lives of their own. They do not escape the inevitable destiny which the author has fixed for them in his scheme. All their thoughts are known, one to the other; each knows what the other thinks; they are predictable. They are put into circumstances in which they behave mechanically without any indication of the unknown or the unpredictable. It is not surprising that U PO Kyin's engineered plots and schemes are so wonderfully and so very predictably successful. It seems that everything is under his control; the rest of the characters become mere pawns that he manipulates so cleverly, yet as he makes no secret of his plans, one wonders why no one else in the station has any knowledge of them. Even his ambitions are not sufficiently substantiated. It is not clear why he should take so much trouble and cause so much suffering and pain for the flimsy purpose of becoming a member of a horrid club. Now the relation between motive and action is an obscure one and people often do dreadful things for no normally acceptable reason. In a novel, however, if a character is conceived with sufficient precision obscurity of action and motive can become a virtue. But the link between

U PO Kyin's motives and actions is too obvious to make him interesting or even credible. In contrast, there are so many things in A Passage to India which remain obscure in spite of the best efforts of critics. Of course, obscurity in itself is not a virtue in a writer. But the obscurity in A Passage to India arises out of the consciousness that there is a residuum of reality or life or consciousness whatever you may call it which we cannot probe with reason and encompass in our rationalism. It is the failure of intellect to understand the depths of human consciousness and the way our actions and thoughts are, in an unknown way, influenced by the unknown and the unseen. The trouble with U PO Kyin is that he knows himself and others so thoroughly and so predictably that things happen as planned. Life is so logical for him and others are led by him to inevitable conclusions. On the other hand Mr. MacBryde attempts to lead Adela logically, step by step, question by question to the inevitable conclusion that Aziz is guilty. But at the critical point logic fails and the unpredictable happens.

Orwell's characters move in a linear direction towards the goal set before them. They fulfil their function and we can only judge them accordingly when they fail or succeed. In a good novel we judge and value characters in terms of our emotional response. They touch our humanity and our response is a subtle balancing of judgement and embrace. Orwell's characters fail to elicit any emotional response from us except that we are bored by them. His treatment of the Anglo-Indians is projected in the reactions and reflections of Flory. There is no variation on the

theme in the thoughts and feelings of the other Anglo-Indians, who are treated to confirm what has already been learnt about them from Flory. There are many ways to project a character in a novel. One is the direct treatment of the actions and thoughts of the character; another is what the other characters think about them; a third includes all that is conveyed by way of suggestion, comments and description that reveal a character. There are parts of human personality which neither the character himself nor his friends or those who come into contact with them can know because of the inherent human limitations. Only the author can give us an insight into character with the help of his art. Orwell's novel lacks vision or the creative power of imagination, which seems to have been crippled by the bitterness of his hatred of social injustice. Burmese Days was conceived in hatred of oppression and imperialism; it was to exorcise the dreams, nightmares, and ghosts of the Burmese scene that haunted his mind. But the hatred and guilt do not stir the depths of his being. His despair is born of the problems and injustices of the time and remains entangled in them.

He makes through his characters social and political points. Mrs. Lackersteen is the only female character before the arrival of her niece at Kyauktada. Mrs. Lackersteen is described as a woman of thirty-five 'handsome in a contourless, elongated way, like a fashion plate.' And she remains no more than she seems in the simile. She is treated merely as an illustration of the conventional memsahib. Her conversation at the Club is limited to complaints against heat and the servants who, according to her, are becoming

more idle every day because they can't be punished now as before. She lives in the nineteenth century and speaks of the insolence of servants, which she thinks is due to the Reforms and the newspapers. She thinks they are getting as bad as the lower classes at home. She keeps a watchful eye on her husband who never misses an opportunity to have a quick drink. Her husband exists for drinking and her sole purpose of life seems to be to prevent him from having his kind of good time. She never allows him to go alone to camp in the jungle and endures all discomforts there without any complaint. She is a pukka memsahib, designed so as to justify Flory's thinking, when he is considering someone to share his barren life with him,

"That quite impossible she. Someone like Mrs. Lackersteen, for instance? Some damned memsahib, yellow and thin, scandal mongering over cocktails, making kit-kit with the servants, living twenty years in the country without learning a word of the language. Not one of these, please God."(P.72)

At this point in the novel when Flory is driven into the inevitable conviction that his life in the East is dishonourable and rotting, Orwell slips in Elizabeth as a possible redeemer of his life. His consciousness is pervaded by an acute sense of self-pity.

"Some lines from Gilbert came into his mind, a vulgar, silly jingle but appropriate - something about 'discoursing on your complicated state of mind'. Gilbert was a gifted little skunk. Did all his trouble, then, simply boil down to that? Just complicated, unmanly whinings; poor-little-rich-girl stuff? Was he no more than a loafer using his idleness to invent imaginary woes? A spiritual Mrs. Whitterly? A Hamlet without poetry? Perhaps. It is not the less bitter because it is perhaps one's own fault, to see oneself drifting, rotting, in dishonour and horrible futility, and all the while knowing that somewhere within one there is the possibility of a decent human being." (PP.72-73.)

Elizabeth, however, is also conceived for a purely mechanical role in the plot and one suspects from the moment she enters upon the scene that she is to become inevitably the pukka and burra memsahib of Kyauktada. And the suspicions are confirmed when the novel closes upon the following note.

"Elizabeth has grown mature surprisingly quickly, and a certain hardness of manner that always belonged to her has become accentuated. Her servants live in terror of her, though she speaks no Burmese. She has an exhaustive knowledge of the Civil List, gives charming little dinner parties and knows how to put the wives of subordinate officials in their places - in short, she fills with complete success the position for which Nature had designed her from the first, that of a burra memsahib." (P.287)

The trouble with Orwell seems to be that he is treating his characters like a committed social historian whose concern is mainly with the visible actions, their external causes and his own thesis. He does not create fictitious characters with a life of their own. There is a logical fatality traceable to authorial compulsion in their linear movement in the plot.

E.M. Forster has made some revealing remarks about characters in fiction and the way they differ from real people in life and in history. He says it is the function of the novelist to reveal the hidden life at its very source. In actual life very little of this life comes to the surface because of social conventions, taboos, and the inability to communicate this hidden life even when there is a desire to do so. Historians depend on external evidence of character and they reveal as much of the inner life as is possible logically within the framework of this evidence. Of course it would be difficult to draw the line very neatly and say precisely where the historian begins to be creative rather than

simply recording because historians often treat imaginatively their evidence.

"The interesting and sensitive French critic, who writes under the name of Alain, has some helpful if slightly fantastic remarks on this point. He gets a little out of his depth, but not as much as I feel myself out of mine, and perhaps together we may move towards the shore. Alain examines in his turn the various forms of aesthetic activity, and coming in time to the novel (le roman) he asserts that each human being has two sides, appropriate to history and fiction. All that is observable in a man - that is to say his actions and such of his spiritual existence as can be deduced from his actions - falls into the domain of history. But his romanceful or romantic side (Sa partie romanesque ou romantique) includes "the pure passions, that is to say the dreams, joys, sorrows and self-communings which politeness or shame prevent him from mentioning"; and to express this side of human nature is one of the chief functions of the novel. "What is fictitious in a novel is not so much the story as the method by which thought develops into action, a method which never occurs in daily life ... History, with its emphasis on external causes, is dominated by the notion of fatality, whereas there is no fatality in the novel; there, everything is founded on human nature, and the dominating feeling is of an existence where everything is intentional, even passions and crimes, even misery."<sup>94</sup>

The method of Orwell is to give as much of the history of his characters as possible, to make clear his purpose. Flory's starts from before his birth with an accident that leaves a permanent blue mark on his face, which is responsible for much of his misery during childhood and schooldays. He is always conscious of it. And his life is followed through to its end by his suicide. Both Elizabeth and Verrall are treated in a similar way. This historical approach is in a way responsible for the lack of humanity in his characters. E.M. Forster does not

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94. Aspects of the Novel, London, 1927, pp.66-67. [Forster adds this footnote on P.67: "Paraphrased from Systeme des Beaux Arts, pp.314-315. I am indebted to M. Andre Maurois for introducing me to this stimulating essay."]

introduce his characters in a systematic historical way. We know Adela through her thoughts and self-communications and very little of her past life is treated historically; and so with Aziz and Fielding and Mrs. Moore. Adela is revealed through her reactions to India, Aziz and the Anglo-Indians of Chandrapore. There is no attempt to pre-determine her reactions and she resists the attempts to shape her notions and views made by Ronny, the Turtons and the Burtons. Elizabeth, on the other hand, has her reactions pre-determined by the history of her life with all the details of school, home and Paris and lack of money which plays an important role in it. Her short education and training are aimed at a comfortable life in the upper-middle class. A brief spell of prosperity enables her parents to send her to an expensive school where she rubs shoulders with rich and snobbish girls. The tide of prosperity subsides and she is withdrawn from the school, but it has determined her character, attitudes and views about life in general. It lasts only two terms but it fixes her snobbery for the rest of her life. Orwell is here scoring a point against the British educational system which according to him is determined in its structure and aims by the division into classes of the English society. Earlier he criticises the Public School system in the educational history of Flory which is not much different from his own. Elizabeth learns from her education nothing very useful. It only teaches her to categorise things into two mutually exclusive groups.

"With Elizabeth, it was these two terms during which she rubbed shoulders with the rich. Thereafter her whole code of living was summed up in one belief, and that a simple one. It was that Good ('lovely' was her name for it)

is synonymous with the expensive, the elegant, the aristocratic; and the Bad ('beastly') is the cheap, the low, the shabby, the laborious." (P.90)

The author's comment, 'Perhaps it is in order to teach this creed that expensive girls' schools exist' (P.90) is significant. It fixes Elizabeth's role in the novel as that of a mere illustration of this point. Elizabeth is not allowed to change her attitudes for the rest of her life.

"The feeling subtilized itself as Elizabeth grew older, diffused itself through all her thoughts. Everything from a pair of stockings to a human soul was classifiable as 'lovely' or 'beastly'. And unfortunately - for Mr. Lackersteen's prosperity did not last long - it was the 'beastly' that had predominated in her life." (P.90)

Elizabeth's mother also expresses simply the author's views about women and their role in life. She has messed about with her life. She devotes herself to the pursuits of an emancipated woman such as women's suffrage, Higher thought and literature. In such women Orwell saw the signs of the decadence of the English society. In contrast with this, Orwell treats the mother of Bowling, the central character of Coming Up for Air with sympathy and compassion because she is a simple, unpretentious woman, devoted to her work and her family living in the rural Lower Binfield in the peaceful days of Edwardian England.

When Elizabeth's father dies she goes to Paris with her mother. She lives a poor, mean life there but it fails to cure her of her failings. Here Orwell draws upon his own experience of life in Paris. Both Elizabeth and Dorothy, heroine of The Clergyman's Daughter experience to a great extent what Orwell himself experienced of poverty in Paris and London. Down and Out in London and Paris, Burmese Days and The Clergyman's Daughter were published in quick

succession one after the other. It is most likely that the social and political problems raised by the first should have influenced the other two books.

When Flory learns that Elizabeth has been in Paris before coming to Burma he is impressed by what is obviously his own romantic image of Paris. He asks her, "And did you really live in Paris? sitting in Cafes with foreign art students, drinking white wine and talking about Marcel Proust?" (P.85) His image of Paris is composed of cafés, boulevards, artists' studios, Villon, Baudelaire and Maupassant. This only serves to increase the self-pity of Flory, to make him feel that while he is rotting in the East others are having the best that Europe can give in its big cities, centres of arts and literature. Elizabeth does not dispel this image by telling him that her room in a mean lodging-house in the poorest quarter of the city did not look on a boulevard, but onto a poulterer's shop with reeking carcasses of wild boars. She rather enjoys the idea of her importance and the romantic halo cast on her miserable life.

This, at any rate, is the background Elizabeth leaves for Burma where she hopes to realize her dreams of a 'lovely' life, with horses to ride, servants to command. Unlike Adela she has no doubts and disappointments. The conventional Anglo-Indian image of India emerges in her mind on board the ship and she finds it very alluring. Orwell thought that the reason why people went to live in the colonies in Asia and Africa was social rather than moral or political. They did not go there because they thought it was their moral or imperial obligation to do so as Kipling's heroes do. They simply went there because there they could live easily according

to the conventions of the English middle and upper-middle classes. Elizabeth is made to react in this way.

"She was going to love India, she knew. She had formed quite a picture of India, from the other passenger's conversation; she had even learned some of the more necessary Hindustani phrases, such as 'idher ao', 'Jaldi', 'sahib log', etc. In anticipation she tasted the agreeable atmosphere of Clubs, with punkhas flapping and bare-footed white-turbaned boys reverently salaaming; and maidans where bronzed Englishmen with little clipped moustaches galloped to and fro, whacking polo-balls. It was almost as nice as being really rich, the way people lived in India." (P.96)

Her image contains definite elements which make her vulnerable to Verrall whom she sees whacking polo-balls on the Kyauktada maidan. The picturesque East invades her senses at Colombo, Ceylon. It is the colourful and the romantic aspects of the East that she is allowed to notice. She sees the East through Orwell's eyes, ears and nose. The latter is particularly prominent in noticing the smells and scents of coconut-oil, sandal-wood, cinnamon and turmeric, all mixed up and yet distinguishable to a girl on her first contact with the East. And from Rangoon up to Kyauktada in a train she observes the picturesque Burma all through. The scenes that haunted Orwell's imagination are observed without any reaction of any kind by Elizabeth; no feeling of strangeness, of uncertainty, of doubt or despair. She records mechanically like a photographic-apparatus: even the naming of objects that Elizabeth could not have named - egrets, chillies - distances the description from her. Orwell completely forgets his characters when he is describing Burma and it becomes difficult to see any purpose of the description except that it is done for its own sake. The sights

are supposed to be observed by Elizabeth as she is travelling north from Mandalay, but they do not seem to be seen by her.

"North of Mandalay the train, fuelled with wood, crawled at twelve miles an hour across a vast, parched plain, bounded at its remote edges by three rings of hills. White egrets stood poised, motionless, like herons, and piles of drying chillies gleamed crimson in the sun. Sometimes a white pagoda rose from the plain like the breast of a supine giantess. The early tropic night settled down, and the train jolted on, slowly, stopping at little stations where barbaric yells sounded from the darkness." (P.97)

Adela, on the other hand, is observing India with her own reactions while travelling to the Marabar caves. An intricate and revealing pattern is created by Forster by weaving meaningfully what Adela observes with what she is feeling and thinking at the same time. Forster does not forget her to celebrate the sights of India. Adela is universalised through her humanity while Elizabeth remains barren and her thoughts are moulded in the socio-political frame of the author's mind. She is dehumanized to illustrate views of the author about the middle-class conventions and the class-structure of the English society. The small stations in the Empire are extensions in exotic surroundings of the suburban societies with their conventions turning out there into rituals. E.M. Forster also regarded the civil station of Chandrapore as another Sawston in Indian surroundings. His treatment of the Anglo-Indians, however, does not become arid and boring. Its satire is comic: it enriches, conveying insights even into stupidity and arrogance. Orwell's, by comparison, appears vindictive and spiteful.

Elizabeth arrives at Kyauktada to be an instrument in driving Flory through despair and humiliation to suicide. He stakes

all his hopes of salvation and of living a decent life, on her. The shooting expedition helps to bring them closer together although <sup>they have</sup> ~~with~~ nothing else to share between them, ~~and~~ their views. They are wholly incompatible and yet they reach an understanding without speaking, so that Flory is to propose to her that evening in the Club. An earthquake at the very moment when Flory is proposing prevents this. Then the arrival of Verrall changes the situation completely. Twice before Flory fails to reach understanding with Elizabeth through interesting her in the life of the Burmese. Her rigidly set attitude and ideas do not accommodate either the dance of the Burmese girl or Li Yeik's hospitality. Both these incidents alienate her sympathies; in fact sometimes one wonders if she has any sympathies at all.

Orwell has already stated why she does not reach an understanding with Flory. Her dreams of a 'lovely' life are contained in the Sketch, the Tatler, the Graphic and the Sporting and Dramatic. The idle activities and the social engagements of the upper and middle classes are a golden life to her. She sees no escape from her dreadful and 'beastly' existence. Her idea of decent people is of a people who have lands to shoot grouse on, go to Ascot and sail at Cowes. Orwell at Eton had often felt wretched in the company of rich boys who talked of cars, of shooting grouse on the moors and of their yachts. And in his novel he misses no opportunity of bringing in issues relating to the class-structure and unjust distribution of wealth. He often tends to nag and drive his points beyond any limit of artistic control. Elizabeth is systematically antagonized by Flory's interests in books, art and the natives. In her mind art is associated with the disorderly

and good-for-nothing life of her mother and other artists and in Paris she has seen enough of such people, who have no idea of a decent life. Flory has lived his life in forced silence and his thoughts and ideas are seldom put to a social test. When Elizabeth comes along he begins at once to attempt to convert her to his views of things and people in the East. He behaves as if Elizabeth has brought a blank mind to the East, or, at least, is willing enough to be won over. Their rigidity of attitudes and ideas is due to their set roles, both personal and social, assigned to them in the novel. Nor does their clash of ideas lead to any conflict of personalities. Flory, therefore, fails in his attempts to make Elizabeth see the angle from which he looks on Burma, the Burmese and their customs. She thinks that Flory is always and unjustly inclined in favour of the Burmese and finds him very different in his ideas from the rest of the English community.

"It disquieted her. After all, natives were natives - interesting no doubt, but finally only a 'subject' people, an inferior people with black faces. His attitude was a little too tolerant. Nor had he grasped, yet, in what way he was antagonising her. He so wanted her to love Burma as he loved it; not to look at it with the dull, incurious eyes of a memsahib! He had forgotten that most people can be at ease in a foreign country only when they are disparaging the inhabitants." (P.118)

But apart from his friendship with Dr. Veraswami, which seems constructed artificially by Orwell for making political and social debate in the novel, Flory's love of Burma and the Burmese is never explored, but is simply asserted by Orwell, who does not seem to be able to create it imaginatively.

Incidents are introduced to occasion a debate in which Flory's (and Orwell's) ideas are opposed to the conventional ones.

Elizabeth would see a band of Burmans and remark:

"How revoltingly ugly these people are, aren't they?"  
 "Are they? I always think they're rather charming-looking, the Burmese. They have such splendid bodies! Look at that fellow's shoulders - like a bronze statue. Just think what sights you'd see in England if people went about half naked as they do here!"  
 "But they have such hideous-shaped heads! Their skulls kind of slope up behind like a tom-cat's. And then the way their foreheads slant back - it makes them look so wicked. I remember reading something in a magazine about the shape of people's heads; it said that a person with a sloping forehead is a criminal type."  
 "Oh, come, that's a bit sweeping! Round about half the people in the world have that kind of forehead!"  
 "Oh, well, if you count coloured people, of course -!"  
 (PP.118-119)

All sorts of pseudo-scientific theories dealing with racial differences were set afloat in the nineteenth century to reinforce nationalism and imperialism. Physical differences between the races were associated with superiority in the case of white races and with inferiority in the case of the coloured ones. I have discussed briefly some of these views and theories in the Introduction. Such theories had all sorts of ramifications on the popular level. MacBryde, the police officer in A Passage to India has an interesting theory about the relationship between crime and climate. The theory is very brief: "All unfortunate natives are criminal at heart, for the simple reason that they live south of latitude 30."<sup>95</sup>

Elizabeth has taken as fact some such spurious observation in some magazine that the Mongoloid shape of skull is proof of a criminal disposition. Orwell likes to explode such theories and prejudices as he does those which arise out of the class system in England. The imperial attitude required to play up all the

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95. A Passage to India, Edward Arnold (Publisher) Ltd., London, 1961, P.174.

physical differences and characteristics between the white and the other races and associate them with virtues in the case of the white to show their superiority. One of the favourite prejudices of the Europeans in the tropical colonies was about their susceptibility to sunstroke. Asiatics were supposed to have thick skulls and therefore <sup>be</sup> safe in the sun. In an article 'As I Please' published in the Tribune on 20 October, 1944, Orwell exploded as false and baseless this view:

"But why should the British in India have built up this superstition about sunstroke? Because an endless emphasis on the differences between the "natives" and yourself is one of the necessary props of imperialism. You can only rule over a subject race, especially when you are in a small minority, if you honestly believe yourself to be racially superior, and it helps towards this if you can believe that the subject race is biologically different. There were quite a number of ways in which Europeans in India used to believe, without any evidence, that Asiatic bodies differed from their own. Even quite considerable anatomical differences were supposed to exist. But this nonsense about Europeans being subject to sunstroke, and Orientals not, was the most cherished superstition of all. The thin skull was the mark of racial superiority, and the pith topi was a sort of emblem of imperialism."

It was so insisted upon that it became a medical fact. Even Dr. Aziz, who as a doctor should know his anatomy well, believes in this superstition and gives this advice to Mrs. Moore and Adela:

"'Good morning, good morning, put on your topis', shouted Aziz from further down the train. 'Put on your topis at once, the early sun is highly dangerous for heads. I speak as a doctor.'

'Good morning, good morning, put on your own.'

'Not for my thick head,' he laughed, banging it and holding up pads of his hair."<sup>96</sup>

The two Eurasians in the novel believe very strongly this superstition and insist on wearing topis as a sign of their blood

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96. A Passage to India, Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., London, 1961, P.144.

and race. They pretend to suffer from prickly heat and the climate and complain to Elizabeth about it at the Club gate when they see her. Orwell brings them in to draw attention to their pathetic position. They call themselves Europeans, England is their 'home', and they cherish European customs and ways of life. They are not realistic enough to make a life for themselves. They want imperial jobs which are unfortunately not available to them and Flory in his conversation with Elizabeth draws a pathetic picture of these unfortunate children of the Empire.

"I doubt it. You see, Eurasians of that type - men who've been brought up in the bazaar and had no education - are done for from the start. The Europeans won't touch them with a stick, and they're cut off from entering the lower-grade Government services. There's nothing they can do except cadge, unless they chuck all pretensions to being Europeans. And really you can't expect the poor devils to do that. Their drop of white blood is the sole asset they've got. Poor Francis, I never meet him but he begins telling me about his prickly heat. Natives, you see, are supposed not to suffer from prickly heat - bosh, of course, but people believe it. It is the same with sunstroke. They have to wear those huge topis to remind you that they've got European skulls. A kind of coat-of-arms. The bend sinister, you might say." (PP.122-123)

Orwell also introduces in Burmese Days a member of the British aristocracy, whose character he treats in considerable details. His method of treatment, again, is historical and he takes great pains with Verrall so that one begins to suspect, and quite rightly, that he is not doing so for the sole purpose of creating a fictional character. After all he comes to Kyauktada for a few days and then disappears from the scene after creating quite a stir in the Anglo-Indian community. He puts everyone in his proper place. His character is drawn with greater detail than seems justified by his role in the plot. Orwell's aim is to

satirize the privileges and respect given to members of the aristocracy. Verrall is a 'gentleman', a word that carries a kind of mystical influence and charm, and here this influence and power are made to radiate from Verrall. He has nothing of intrinsic value in him, runs into debts, insults senior colonels but never comes to any harm because his social position protects him. The look of his eye is enough to cow his opponents. Flory feels inferior in his presence and humiliated by making a fool of himself. One stare of his eye from behind the newspaper is enough to send Ellis into the card-room. He is helpless with Verrall; with anyone else he would have picked up a quarrel for beating their butler, whom he regarded as a piece of their Club furniture. Verrall is a type rather than an individual. He has all the qualities of a Kipling sahib with the sense of imperial responsibility left out. He has none of the ideals of the devoted sahib, the white man's burden and all that kind of thing. He is a snob, but his snobbery is different from that of the other Anglo-Indians. He behaves in a way in which he is able to preserve in India his position as a peer's son by maintaining a superior attitude. He does not identify himself as a white man with the others and their imperial role. He rather despises them. In Kyauktada his arrival causes excitement, which is soon turned into resentment and anger because he keeps aloof and injures the social susceptibilities of the whole community. He is finally caught in the social net by the cunning of Mrs. Lacktersteen, who offers her niece as a bait. He considers her quite a 'peach' and is persuaded to visit the Club, which he does in his own arrogant style

by kicking the butler who gives him a drink without ice. In England, being the youngest son, he would have found it difficult to live like a gentleman. Such were often dumped in the Empire, because they were no good at home, and they could easily obtain posts in the Imperial services through their family influence. Verrall has, however, to assert his position and privilege among people who, though not mostly gentlemen by birth, consider themselves all of a class and as gentlemen. Thus were the English class prejudices complicated by the colonial situation.

Orwell's treatment of the Anglo-Indians is on the whole very ungenerous. The community at Kyauktada is English society at its worst. Each character represents undesirable qualities which Orwell pursues relentlessly. The only character who possesses any good nature is Mr. MacGregor, but even he is allowed this bit of a concession with a good deal of reluctance. He is, otherwise, dull and unexciting with his oft-repeated jokes and his Latin tags. His morning ritual of physical exercises mystifies his bearer who watches him with "neither comprehension nor curiosity. He had watched these contortions - a sacrifice, he dimly imagined, to some mysterious and exacting God - every morning for five years." (P.74)

Orwell's picture of their life in the East is an oversimplification which leaves out many of the things that make up even the limited and unimaginative life. He sums up a whole lifetime in the East in a few words which reflects his dissatisfaction with his own life there.

"They lead unenviable lives; it is a poor bargain to spend thirty years, ill paid, in an alien country, and then come home with wrecked livers and pine-apple backside from sitting in cane chairs, to settle down as the bore of some second-rate Club." (P.68)

Orwell is not being fair to the Anglo-Indians and this is just an outline of a life-time spent in the East which if filled with all the details of life would present an entirely different picture. Orwell was disillusioned with the sahibs in the East. He had probably expected the outposts of the Empire to be manned by heroes and men dedicated to their work. But it was not simply the Anglo-Indians' fault that they did not turn out to be heroes and fine men. They had their failings and their prejudices but they were after all human beings and they could not all have been so boring and dull as he made them out in the projection of his hatred and loathing. And one should blame Kipling for giving a romantic and idealised picture of the Sahib in the East. Orwell was disappointed with the Anglo-Indians in Burma because he had found them falling very short of the ideal that Kipling had celebrated. He did not idealize his own characters. His disappointment with the Anglo-Indians and his hatred of the Empire was a severe limitation on his vision:

"On the other hand, the sahib log are not to be idealized. There is a prevalent idea that the men at the 'out-posts of Empire' are at least able and hard-working. It is a delusion. Outside the scientific services - the Forest Department, the Public Works Department and the like - there is no particular need for a British official in India to do his job competently. Few of them work as hard or as intelligently as the post-master of a provincial town in England. The real work of administration is done mainly by native subordinates; and the real backbone of the despotism is not the officials but the Army. Given the Army, the official and the business men can rub along safely enough even if they are fools. And most of them are fools. A dull, decent people, cherishing and fortifying their dullness behind a quarter of a million bayonets. (PP.68-69)

Some of the reasons for the stagnation of the Empire, which is related to the stagnation of English society as a whole are suggested in England your England. He makes it quite clear that

people with any initiative or intellectual leanings were soon disappointed with their jobs and duties in the colonies. It may have been his own experience in Burma because all the elements mentioned in the following paragraph can be traced in Orwell's own experiences.

"The stagnation of the Empire in the between-war years affected everyone in England, but it had an especially direct effect upon two important sub-sections of the middle-class. One was the military and imperialist middle class, generally nicknamed the Blimps, and the other the left-wing intelligentsia. These two seemingly hostile types, symbolic opposites - the half-pay colonel with his bull neck and diminutive brain, like a dinosaur, the highbrow with his domed forehead and stalk-like neck - are mentally linked together and constantly interact upon one another; in any case they are born to a considerable extent into the same families.

Thirty years ago the Blimp class was already losing its vitality. The middle-class families celebrated by Kipling, the prolific lowbrow families whose sons officered the Army and Navy and swarmed over all the waste places of the earth from the Yukon to the Irrawaddy, were dwindling before 1914. The thing that had killed them was the telegraph. In a narrowing world, more and more governed from Whitehall, there was every year less room for individual initiative. Men like Clive, Nelson, Nicholson, Gordon would find no place for themselves in the modern British Empire. By 1920 nearly every inch of the Colonial Empire was in the grip of Whitehall. Well-meaning, over-civilized men, in dark suits and black felt hats, with neatly-rolled umbrellas crooked over the left forearm, were imposing their constipated view of life on Malaya and Nigeria, Mombasa and Mandalay. The one-time empire-builders were reduced to the status of clerks, buried deeper and deeper under mounds of paper and red tape. In the early twenties one could see, all over the Empire, the older officials, who had known spacious days, writhing impotently under the changes that were happening. From that time onwards it has been next door to impossible to induce young men of spirit to take any part in imperial administration. And what was true of the official world was true also of the commercial. The great monopoly companies swallowed up hosts of petty traders. Instead of going out to trade adventurously in the Indies, one went to an office stool in Bombay or Singapore. And life in Bombay or Singapore was actually duller and safer than in London. Imperialist sentiment remained strong in the middle class, chiefly owing to family tradition, but the job of administering the Empire had ceased to appeal. Few able men went east of Suez if there was any way of avoiding it.

But the general weakening of imperialism, and to some extent of the whole British morale, that took place during the nineteen-thirties, was partly the work of the left-wing intelligentsia, itself a kind of growth that had sprouted from the stagnation of the Empire."<sup>96</sup>

Another suggestive passage which may help in throwing some light on the relationship between Orwell and the rest of the Anglo-Indians is one dealing with Kipling's surrender to the Anglo-Indian opinions and attitudes.

"Tawdry and shallow though it is, Kipling's is the only literary picture that we possess of nineteenth-century Anglo-India, and he could only make it because he was just coarse enough to be able to exist and keep his mouth shut in Clubs and regimental messes. But he did not greatly resemble the people he admired. I know from several private sources that many of the Anglo-Indians who were Kipling's contemporaries did not like or approve of him. They said, no doubt truly, that he knew nothing about India, and on the other hand, he was from their point of view too much of a highbrow. While in India he tended to mix with 'the wrong' people, and because of his dark complexion he was wrongly suspected of having a streak of Asiatic blood. Much in his development is traceable to his having been born in India and having left school early. With a slightly different background he might have been a good novelist or a superlative writer of music-hall songs. But how true it is that he was a vulgar flag-waver, a sort of publicity agent for Cecil Rhodes? It is true, but it is not true that he was a yes-man or a time-server."<sup>97</sup>

This implies that Kipling's ability in giving a literary picture of the nineteenth-century Anglo-India was due to his surrender to its opinions. Orwell on the other hand resented strongly the way individual initiative and personal opinions were crippled in the Orient and a kind of silence was imposed on one. But in his resentment and vengeful hatred of the Anglo-Indian attitudes he goes to the other extreme of rejecting everything and

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96. England your England, London, 1953, PP.216-218.

97. Kipling's Mind and Art, Essays ed. by Andrew Rutherford, Edinburgh and London, 1964, P.74 (Includes G. Orwell's Essay on Rudyard Kipling)

drowning every character and incident in his only novel about the East in his personal opinions and attitude. His treatment of the Anglo-Indians is just the opposite of Kipling's. Orwell disapproved, while Kipling approved of them and both lack the balance of contemplation and detachment.

There is another suggestive passage which may help us in understanding why Flory as a character is such a failure. It has already been said that Flory's character contains auto-biographical elements. Orwell's opinion about autobiography seems to be that it is only to be trusted when it reveals ugliness and filth. His biographical or historical treatment of Flory is aimed at revealing his failures, his shames and his weaknesses. In fact he does this to almost all his characters. Gordon Cumstock is treated in this way. His life is a series of humiliations resulting in an acute sense of bitterness. Dorothy is made to lose her memory and then all sorts of shameful and disgraceful things happen to her. Poverty and shame overshadow his novels. Life is equally miserable in the world super-states of 1984. The passage referred to opens his review of The Secret Life of Salvador Dali:

"Autobiography is only to be trusted when it reveals something disgraceful. A man who gives a good account of himself is probably lying, since any life when viewed from the inside is simply a series of defeats."<sup>98</sup>

Orwell once said that the scenery of Burma haunted his imagination like a nightmare and that he had to write Burmese Days to get rid of it. Strange things fascinated him even if he was revolted by them. There is an interesting passage in the essay 'North and South' included in England your England.

"I find that anything outrageously strange ends by fascinating me even when I abominate it. The landscapes of Burma, which,

98. Decline of the English Murder and Other Essays, Harmondsworth, (Penguin) 1965, P.20.

when I was among them, so appalled me to assume the qualities of nightmare, afterwards stayed so hauntingly in my mind that I was obliged to write a novel about them to get rid of them. (In all novels about the East the scenery is the real subject matter."<sup>99</sup>

Orwell's descriptions evoke Burma in vivid though not gaudy colours. If we take the last line of the quotation above seriously then a major purpose of writing Burmese Days was to describe the scenery. But the relation between characters and scenery is a delicate one and if no significant relationship is established between the two the result is a split in the structure of the novel. The scenery is intruded as it were by the author because it haunts his imagination. It is either to be related to the moods and thoughts of the characters and reveal significant aspects of their roles in the novel or it should be related to the total mood or the creative conception of the novel as a whole in which description would become the figurative extension of meaning. Forster does this kind of thing with his description of the Marabar Hills and Caves. It is not just mere description calling in front of the mind a vivid photographic reflection of an aspect of India. In fact when we are reading that part of the novel we are hardly aware of any scene conjured up before our eyes. It brings certain thoughts and feelings which are relevant to the central meaning of the novel. It recalls the total vision of India not just photographic aspects of it. We see the meaning of civilization and the significance or the insignificance of our individual achievements or values. Orwell fails to achieve any spiritual truth with his descriptions. They, therefore, stand out as independent treatments

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99. England your England, 1953, P.31.

of the visual aspects of Burma and for lack of any unifying idea they are not woven into the texture of the novel. If you detach some of these passages from the novel no great damage will be done to its unity. Take away the opening descriptive chapter of A Passage to India, which introduces the theme and develops it and it will make a great difference to the effectiveness of the second chapter which deals with the problems of the relationship between the English and the Indians from the Indian point of view. The nature of this relationship has already been stated in an extended and metaphorical way by the difference in the civil station and the city and put in a universal, human, and spiritual context by the metaphor of the overarching sky.

Orwell, on the other hand, in the opening paragraphs of Burmese Days, introduces U PO Kyin by a statement about him in the first sentence. But the rest of the passage is a description of what might have been Orwell's own physical sensations. U Po Kyin is laid aside as a 'great porcelain idol' for the moment and Orwell remembers Burma observed.

"U PO Kyin, subdivisional magistrate of Kyauktada, in Upper Burma, was sitting in his veranda. It was only half-past eight, but the month was April, and there was a closeness in the air, a threat of the long, stifling mid-day hours. Occasional faint breaths of wind, seemingly cool by contrast, stirred the newly-drenched orchids that hung from the eaves. Beyond the orchids one could see the dusty, curved trunk of a palm tree, and then the blazing ultra-marine sky. Up in the zenith, so high that it dazzled one to look at them, a few vultures circled without the quiver of a wing." (P.1)

And having done with his sensations he returns to U PO Kyin,

"unblinking, rather like a great porcelain idol, U PO Kyin gazed out into the fierce sunlight." (P.1)

Orwell is treating U PO Kyin as part of the scene but he does not

point to any relationship between them except that both U PO Kyin and the scene are Burmese. The simile 'like a great porcelain idol' is significant. He begins to return to U PO Kyin in the third paragraph which opens with the following sentence:

"U PO Kyin's earliest memory, back in the 'eighties, was of standing, a naked pot-bellied child, watching the British troops march victorious into Mandalay." (P.1)

I think this would have been a far better and more effective opening of the book. Instead it opens with a scene, a scene not being observed by U PO Kyin who is part of it, but by the author. It is a vivid picture in Orwell's own imagination of a scene that he might have observed from his veranda. In the scene described in the opening paragraph the author aims at the physical sensation of heat and the glare of the sun. E.M. Forster deals with a similar situation but he is not giving the physical feeling of heat and its effect, he is again expressing something more through his description; he is conveying through it a complex meaning about man, animals, India and the world.

"The heat had leapt forward in the last hour, the street was deserted as if a catastrophe had cleaned off humanity during the inconclusive talk. Opposite Aziz's bungalow stood a large unfinished house belonging to two brothers, astrologers, and a squirrel hung head downwards on it, pressing its belly against burning scaffolding and twitching a mangy tail. It seemed the only occupant of the house, and the squeals it gave were in tune with the infinite, no doubt, but not attractive except to other squirrels. More noises came from a dusty tree, where brown birds creaked and floundered about looking for insects; another bird, the invisible copper-smith, had started his 'ponk ponk'. 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 .....

All over the city and over much of India the same retreat on the part of humanity was beginning, into cellars, up hills, under trees. April, herald of horrors, was 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."<sup>100</sup>

I have already mentioned the opening chapter of A Passage to India, a descriptive passage which is a kind of complex metaphor and the author's intention is not simply to give us information about the city of Chandrapore. It prefigures the relationship between the Indians who live in the city and the English who live in the Civil Station, complete with its church, club, grocer's and the cemetery. And then comes that superb metaphor of the overarching sky symbolising the fundamental oneness of mankind, which is only a distant dream, as the subsequent events in the novel prove, as distant as the arch of the sky is from the prostrate earth. Orwell has a parallel to this in the second chapter of Burmese Days when he is describing the town of Kyauktada. Orwell has already introduced U PO Kyin and Flory. The town is described as it would appear from Flory's gate:

"Flory's house was at the top of the maidan, close to the edge of the jungle. From the gate of the maidan sloped sharply down, scorched and khaki-coloured, with half a dozen dazzling white bungalows scattered round it. All quaked, shivered in the hot air. There was an English cemetery within a white wall half-way down the hill, and near-by a tiny tin-roofed church. Beyond that was the

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100. A Passage to India, Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., London, 1961, PP.119-120.

European Club, and when one looked at the Club - a dumpy one-storey wooden building - one looked at the real centre of the town."

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The native town, and the courts and the jail, were over to the right, mostly hidden in green groves of peepul trees. The spire of the pagoda rose from the trees like a slender spear tipped with gold. Kyauktada was a fairly typical Upper Burma town, that had not changed greatly between the days of Marco Polo and 1910, and might have slept in the Middle Ages for a century more if it had not proved a convenient spot for a railway terminus. In 1910 the Government made it the headquarters of a district and a seat of progress - interpretable as a block of law courts, with their army of fat but ravenous pleaders, a hospital, a school and one of those huge, durable jails which the English have built everywhere between Gibraltar and Hong Kong. The population was about four thousand, including a couple of hundred Indians, a few score Chinese and seven Europeans. There were also two Eurasians named Mr. Francis and Mr. Samuel, the sons of an American Baptist missionary and a Roman Catholic missionary respectively. The town contained no curiosities of any kind. (PP.17-18)

Orwell fails to convey through this description of the town anything but a tourist's impressions and information. It is pictorial in character. It does not add or extend the total meaning, if there is any total meaning in the novel, nor does it introduce any theme or develop it. It does nothing except introduce itself before the mind's eye in the procession of picturesque Burma. Forster's descriptions are neither informative nor pictorial but metaphorical and form part of the 'pattern and rhythm' of the novel. In his Aspects of the Novel he does not treat description in itself as an element or an aspect of the art of novel writing. The purpose of description is aesthetic but not independent of the total aesthetic quality of the novel. It must form part of what forster calls Pattern and Rhythm:

"Now we must consider something which springs mainly out of the plot, and to which the characters and any other element present also contribute. For this new aspect there appears

to be no literary word - indeed the more the arts develop the more they depend on each other for definition. We will borrow from painting first and call it the pattern. Later we will borrow from music and call it rhythm."<sup>101</sup>

Orwell's description does not perform this function.

Description in both Kipling and Orwell had the limited function of creating oriental background and local colour and very often it became an end in itself with them. It could not be successfully woven into the pattern of the novel with its echoes reverberating. Both these writers were carried away by their flair for describing oriental scenes in such vivid colours that it has nearly come to ruin the unity of Kim and Burmese Days. Both these books, excellent pictures though they are of India and Burma, lack the unity and compactness of A Passage to India. Again and again Orwell breaks off to describe a scene without concealing his own intrusion. In the second chapter after the description of Kyauktada follows a paragraph which deals with the effect of drink and heat on Flory's mood. He has just come out of his bungalow's gate, and the paragraph ends upon this sentence. 'He went in, past the big tennis-screen, which was overgrown by a creeper with star-like mauve flowers in the garden of the Club.' But who is seeing these flowers, Orwell or Flory? Here, of course it is Orwell putting in a sketch about flowers without relating it to the feelings or thoughts of Flory.

"In the borders beside the path swathes of English flowers, phlox and larkspur, hollyhock and petunias, not yet slain by the sun, rioted in vast size and richness. There was no lawn, but instead a shrubbery of native trees and bushes - gold mohur trees like vast umbrellas of blood-red bloom,

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101. Aspects of the Novel, London, 1927, P.191.

fragipanis with creamy, stalkless flowers, purple bougainvillea, scarlet hibiscus and the pink, Chinese rose, bilious-green crotons, feathery fronds of tamarind. The clash of colours hurt one's eyes in the glare. A nearly naked mali, watering-can in hand, was moving in the jungle of flowers like some huge nectar-sucking bird." (P.19)

All this attention to minute details would be justified if one was examining the garden. Flory's mood at that time is not suited to this purpose. In real life when one is in a garden, one is only vaguely aware of the colours of the flowers in an impressionist way. But above all what is the function of this passage in the novel? Does it deepen our awareness of Burma or of Flory's character? There is another garden description in chapter six, but there Orwell makes Flory and Elizabeth stop 'to look at the flowers.'

"They began chattering with extraordinary eagerness about the flowers. The girl 'adored' flowers, she said. And Flory led her up the path, talking garrulously about one plant and another.

"Look how these phloxes grow. They go on blooming for six months in this country. They can't get too much sun. I think those yellow ones must be almost the colour of primroses. I haven't seen a primrose for fifteen years, nor a wall-flower, either. Those zinnias are fine, aren't they? - like painted flowers, with those wonderful dead colours. These are African marigolds. They're coarse things, weeds almost, but you can't help liking them, they're so vivid and strong. Indians have an extraordinary affection for them; wherever Indians have been you find marigolds growing, even years afterwards when the jungle has buried every other trace of them. But I wish you'd come into the veranda and see the orchids. I've some I must show that are just like bells of gold - but literally like gold. And they smell of honey, almost overpoweringly. That's about the only merit of this beastly country; it's good for flowers. I hope you're fond of gardening? It's our greatest consolation, in this country." (P.83)

Orwell never missed an opportunity of introducing descriptive passages into his novel. One gets the impression that he was at times subordinating plot and character to the primary

object of describing the scenes that haunted him. Forster, on the other hand, never allows his description to get out of hand; it is always related to the thoughts and feelings of the characters, and when they are long passages or whole chapters they are meant like music to evoke a mood to make our minds receptive and participate in the aesthetic experience. When waiting for dinner, Dr. Aziz 'drifted into the garden.' Forster does not enter on a detailed description of the garden. He keeps the description to the minimum, and more is revealed about Dr. Aziz.

"A servant announced dinner. They ignored him. The elder men had reached their eternal politics, Aziz drifted into the garden. The trees smelt sweet - green-blossomed champak - and scraps of Persian poetry came into his head. Dinner, dinner, dinner ... but when he returned to the house for it, Mahmoud Ali had drifted away in his turn, to speak to his sais."<sup>102</sup>

The garden brings poetry into Aziz's mind and that is a metaphorical way of saying something significant about Aziz's cultural heritage. The relationship between garden and Persian poetry evokes complex cultural attitudes and Forster could hardly have directly stated what he has conveyed by that one sentence about the sweet-smelling trees and the scraps of Persian poetry. Another example to illustrate this point is that of the mosque where Aziz meets Mrs. Moore. The mosque is not directly or architecturally described for the sake of description. It means something to Aziz. It is a complex symbol which evokes many thoughts and feelings woven with the past and the present. Aziz's whole attitude to his religion, Islam is powerfully evoked, and Forster does it with the minimum of description:

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102. A Passage to India, Edward Arnold (Publishers) Ltd., London, 1961, P.15.

"He had always liked this mosque. It was gracious, and the arrangement pleased him. The courtyard - entered through a ruined gate - contained an ablution tank of fresh clear water, which was always in motion, being indeed part of a conduit that supplied the city. The courtyard was paved with broken slabs. The covered part of the mosque was deeper than is usual; its effect was that of our English parish church whose side has been taken out. Where he sat, he looked into three arcades whose darkness was illuminated by a small hanging lamp and the moon. The front - in full moonlight - had the appearance of marble, and the ninety-nine names of God on the frieze stood out black, as the frieze stood out white against the sky. The contrast between this dualism and the contention of shadows within pleased Aziz, and he tried to symbolize the whole into some truth of religion or love. A mosque by winning his approval let loose his imagination. The temple of another creed, Hindu, Christian, or Greek, would have bored him and failed to awaken his sense of beauty. Here was Islam, his own country, more than a faith, more than a battle-cry, more, much more ... Islam, an attitude towards life both exquisite and durable, where his body and his thoughts found their home."<sup>103</sup>

The mosque is described in terms of what it means to Aziz and not to Forster himself. Forster, though not a believer, was brought up in the Christian traditions, and his interest in the mosque would have been in the architecture, but he did not give a detailed description of it, because that was not his purpose; his interest was to reveal the complexity of Aziz's character and his religion which is with him an emotional attitude with a strong undercurrent of pathos.

"But the mosque - that alone signified, and he returned to it from the complex appeal of the night, and decked it with meanings the builder had never intended. Some day he too would build a mosque, smaller than this but in perfect taste, so that all who passed by should experience the happiness he felt now. And near it, under a low dome, should be his tomb, with a Persian inscription:

"Alas, without me for thousands of years  
The rose will blossom and the spring will bloom,  
But those who have secretly understood my heart -  
They will approach and visit the grave where I lie."<sup>104</sup>

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103. Ibid, PP.20-21.

104. Ibid, PP.21-22.

It is very difficult to separate the descriptive elements from the others without damaging the unity of the mood and the book. A Passage to India is by far a more compact and mature work of art than both Kim and Burmese Days. Kipling and Orwell both utilize their experiences in the East but they have not given an artistic unity to these experiences as Forster has done. Forster leads us to a focal point in the Marabar Caves which is the essence of his experiences. Burmese Days lacks such a focal point. It is also devoid of interest in whole areas of Burmese life such as culture, religion and customs. Orwell had been antagonized by the Buddhist priests and that, I think, was responsible for his indifference to one of the great religions of the world, Buddhism, as Richard Voorhees argues:

"In the religious feelings themselves he had almost no interest, not even the detached and ironical sympathy with religious doctrine and ritual such as Anatole France or a Santayana had. This lack of interest is evident in Burmese Days. Like E.M. Forster in A Passage to India Orwell in Burmese Days tries to make an oriental country intelligible to Western readers. Unlike Forster, he does almost nothing with the religious area of the country's culture. One would not expect a close equivalent of the marvellous scenes of the religious ceremonies in A Passage to India, but there is not even a remote equivalent of them in Burmese Days. The few satirical passages on religion in the book are probably the result of his maddening personal experiences with Buddhist priests (at the time they were the professional British Baiters among the Burmese); the general disregard of the whole religious area of the Burmese mind is probably due to the turn of his own mind."<sup>105</sup>

Orwell obviously lacked the sympathy and intelligence with which Forster could penetrate the Indian mind and understand its impulses and movements. Forster made Dr. Aziz, an Indian, the

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105. Voorhees, R.J., The Paradox of George Orwell, Purdue University Studies, 1961, P.21.

protagonist of his novel. Orwell made Flory, an Englishman and semi-autobiographical character, the protagonist of Burmese Days. Both the native characters, U PO Kyin and Dr. Veraswami are minor. Even Kipling in spite of his jingoism and Anglo-Indian prejudices, proved himself capable of showing greater sympathy and understanding in Kim. Although Kim is about the adventures of an Irish boy, Kim O'Hara, brought up in the bazaars of Lahore as a low-caste native, it is dominated by the kaleidoscope of India and the lama from Tibet in search of the River of the Arrow. The lama takes possession not only of the scene but of the mind of his creator also. He is a lovable character, simple, devoted, given to contemplation and absorbed in his search. He is afraid of the great world and is pathetically dependent on the Little Friend of All the World. He is not cut out for the world of action and he does not interfere with those who are. The description of his vision of Nirvana is a deeply religious piece of writing. Such was the gracious influence on Kipling's mind of Arnold's The Light of Asia.

Another weakness in the novel of Orwell is its simplified characterization. There is no subtlety of motives and thoughts. Everything is in the daylight so that it is not difficult to explain why the characters do what they do. They can be too easily labelled, the sheep can be easily segregated from the goats. In fact there is nothing in the novel but one goat after another, unless we think of Dr. Veraswami as a sheep for the slaughter. U PO Kyin is relentlessly and single-mindedly engaged in intrigues directed towards self-advancement. He plans his intrigues and

then everything turns out according to it. Nothing goes wrong. Ellis is always boiling with hatred against the niggers. He seems to have been created for that very purpose. Dr. Veraswami is a wretched creature with no sense of self-respect and dignity and though an Indian is exaggeratedly pro-British. He is completely carried away by the onslaught of so-called progress. Flory is hatefully anti-British though an Englishman, and consumed by his secret loathing. Elizabeth starts behaving like a memsahib straightaway, although even the worst of the Anglo-Indian women might be expected to take some time to pick up appropriate attitudes and ideas concerning their role as memsahibs. All characters lack complexity of human nature, which has been sacrificed to the requirements of Orwell's doctrine. They are what Forster calls flat characters; and such characters are constructed round a single idea and can be easily handled like pawns:

"Flat characters were called "humours" in the seventeenth century, and are sometimes called types, and sometimes caricatures. In their present form, they are constructed round a single idea or quality: when there is more than one factor in them, we get the beginning of the curve towards the round. The really flat character can be expressed in one sentence such as "I never will desert Mr. Micawber." There is Mrs. Micawber - she says she won't desert Mr. Micawber, she doesn't, and there she is .....

One great advantage of flat characters is that they are easily recognized whenever they come in - recognized by the reader's emotional eye, not by the visual eye which merely notes the recurrence of a proper name. In Russian novels, where they so seldom occur, they would be a decided help. It is a convenience for an author when he can strike with his full force at once, and flat characters are very useful to him, since they never need reintroducing, never run away, have not to be watched for development, and provide their own atmosphere - little luminous disks of pre-arranged size, pushed hither and thither like counters across the void or between the stars; most satisfactory."<sup>106</sup>

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106. Aspects of the Novel, London, 1927, PP.93-95.

Kipling and Orwell held opposite views and attitudes regarding the British Empire. Kipling believed in all the high ideals of nineteenth century imperialism. He regarded the British Empire as a vast benevolent organization run by selfless and devoted people who had to endure much hardship to spread progress and civilization. Orwell was an anti-imperialist but at the same time he did regard nineteenth century British imperialism as better and more benevolent than its contemporary French, Belgian or Dutch varieties or its totalitarian variety of the twentieth century. Orwell was stationed in Burma where he saw the British Empire primarily as a money-making concern and a ruthless and oppressing form of social injustice. He saw the meagerly paid coolies, whom he recognised as the victims of exploitation and who revealed to him the ugly economic aspect of imperialism only. It was very easy to see this aspect of the Empire at work in Burma because of the timber companies and monopolies and the rubber plantations owned by Europeans. And he did not see the sahib as carrying the white man's burden, only a nightmare. But the British Empire was a complex phenomenon and its aspects varied from place to place according to local conditions and interests. In Africa it had a different character than in India. In the Middle East it was mainly a political game before the oil wealth was discovered and then it became complicated with economic interests. In India it took different forms in various parts. The economic aspect was more vigorously at work in Burma and it was natural for Orwell to notice it. It was otherwise with Kipling. He was at the

administrative and political centre of the North-Western region of India. The politico-military aspects of imperialism were more visible and active there. Beyond the Frontier was the mysterious world of Central Asia where the Russian Bear and the British Lion were playing the Imperial game of nineteenth century diplomacy. The border skirmishes with the Frontier tribes kept the military interest alive which Kipling interpreted as the struggle of the Law against barbarism. In the mysterious tran-Frontier regions Englishmen with their Martinis and their wits could become kings. The Punjab is an agricultural region, and the land all owned by landlords whom Kipling did not see as the exploiters of the cultivators. The Canal Department must have been very busy in his days to provide irrigation facilities. It was also an era of building and construction and he saw the civil engineers at work. Kipling creates this busy atmosphere in some of his stories. The imperial ideals with their moral and religious overtones had not yet been challenged. And Kipling refused to see imperialism as economic and commercial exploitation. He thought economic advantage was an aberration from the imperial ideals and it was the administrator's job to prevent it. In 1913 in "A Serpent of Old Nile," the third letter in "Egypt of the Magicians" he says:

"And there are great English cotton and sugar interests, and angry English importers clamouring to know why they cannot do business on rational lines or get into the Sudan, which they hold is ripe for development if the administration there would only see reason. Among these conflicting interests and amusements sits and perspires the English official, whose job is irrigating or draining or reclaiming land on behalf of a trifle of ten million people."<sup>107</sup>

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107. The Works of Rudyard Kipling, Vol. XXXI; Letters of Travel (1892-1913), Edition de Luxe, London, 1920, P.247.

Even Orwell did not doubt the sincerity and hard work of the nineteenth-century imperialists and their belief in action. What he did not approve of was that they were naive enough to believe that the British Empire was primarily a civilizing concern and did not see the economic aspect of it. Orwell had to admit that whether for good or evil, the nineteenth century imperialists of the Kipling era had, at least, done something.

"The nineteenth-century Anglo-Indians, to name the least sympathetic of his [Kipling's] idols, were at any rate people who did things. It may be that all they did was evil, but they changed the face of the earth."<sup>108</sup>

It is interesting, however, to point out that in his treatment of the natives Kipling was more sympathetic than Orwell. Kipling had been in India when Anglo-Indian snobbery was at its worst yet he was closer to the natives of humble origin. He knew the dialects of the natives as a child, which disposed him favourably on them. Orwell was more of a pukka sahib in his general attitude to the natives. His native characters in Burmese Days bear this out. His conditions were very different from those of Kipling's because he had grown up in a changed world. All those ideas and institutions held in respect by Kipling's generation were under fire in the twenties. His public school education and his snobbish attitudes were in themselves sufficient to make him behave like a pukka sahib. And he did behave like one when in Burma. This is supported by the testimony of Christopher Hollis who was Orwell's school-mate and who happened to stop in Rangoon in 1925 on his way back from Java:

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108. Decline of the English Murder, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1965, pp. 49-50.

"Orwell had left school a year after me. I vaguely knew that he had gone 'out East' but did not know exactly where. I chanced to arrive in Rangoon in the summer of 1925 on my way back from Java. I had no notion that he was there but learnt it to my delight on the night of my arrival from a friend with whom he used to play squash. He came to dinner a few nights afterwards and a few nights after that I went back to dine with him.

"We had a long talk and argument. In the side of him which he revealed to me at that time there was no trace of liberal opinions. He was at pains to be the imperial policeman, explaining that these theories of no punishment and no beating were all very well at public schools but that they did not work with Burmese - in fact

Libbaty's a kind o' thing  
That don't agree with niggers."<sup>109</sup>

Actually he had been living a double life. Intellectually he was revolted by British imperialism, but he allowed himself to be part of its oppression as a police officer. Moreover it is significant that Orwell wrote his Burmese Days in that period of his life when he was undergoing a moral transformation. He was purging himself of his guilt and prejudices, and he must indict the British Empire, though he had no clear idea what should replace it. He simply exposed the wrongness of imperialism.

It seems as though Orwell was in a hurry to pack into his novel about Burma all his experiences of five years and get rid of the nightmare landscapes of Burma to be free to launch out on his political pamphleteering. The signs of a political writer are already visible in his first novel. His material in Burmese Days was controlled by a political argument, though not a political purpose, and not a vision of order and poetical truth as in A Passage to India. Conrad was also dealing with the inhuman aspect of imperialism, naked economic exploitation, in his Heart of Darkness, but he would not let it control his story; it was

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109. Christopher Hollis: A Study of George Orwell, London, 1956, P.27.

his vision which did the controlling and shaping. I think an easy test as to which of the two novels - A Passage to India and Burmese Days - is more obviously political is to use them as material for argument against imperialism. It will be very easy to find much in Orwell to argue against imperialism, without leaving out anything significant in the book; while to do this in respect of A Passage to India will be extremely difficult. There is no explicit argument as such and if we do find material for anti-imperial political propaganda we will only be taking the very insignificant elements leaving the more profound aspects untouched. Orwell became so exclusively pre-occupied with the immediate political problems of the time and so personally involved in what he approved of and what he did not approve of that he could not stand back and look at them in the context of the total meaning of the universe and the significance of life. I think that Edward M. Thomas was quite right in pointing out:

"If we compare even his best constructed novel, Burmese Days, with another book of similar background, A Passage to India, we immediately see that there is none of that delicate arrangement of coincidence and circumstantial irony by which Forster succeeds in suggesting an "order" or meaning, to have some sort of sensed Weltanschauung, and Orwell's concentration on isolated and contradictory facts precluded this."

Kipling and Orwell reflect the surface of India and Burma, in their kaleidoscopic variety of colour and scenes, but in none is the spirit of cultures and civilizations of the peoples of India so sympathetically and deeply reflected as in A Passage to India. It is by every standard by far the most successful work of art and colonial fiction would have been poor without it.

"We part company with a man who has been determined to see what he can of this contradictory and disquieting world and to follow its implications into the unseen - or anyhow to follow them round the corner."<sup>110</sup>

Forster wrote these words about Orwell. They might better have been written about himself.

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110. Two Cheers for Democracy, 1951, P. 74.

A P P E N D I C E S

APPENDIX A

G.L. Dickinson and Forster visited India in 1912 together. Dickinson wrote a book on his impressions of his travels in India and other Eastern countries. The book is called Appearances and was published in 1914. For the following extract see PP.16-19.

Anglo-India.

"From the gallery of the high-hall we look down on the assembled society of the cantonment. The scene is commonplace enough; twaddle and tea, after tennis; "frivolling" - it is their word; women too empty-headed and men too tired to do anything else. This mill-round of work and exercise is maintained like a religion. The gymkhana represents the "compulsory games" of a public school. It is part of the "white man's burden". He plays, as he works, with a sense of responsibility. He is bored, but boredom is a duty, and there's nothing else to do.

"The scene is commonplace. Yes! But this afternoon a band is playing. The music suits the occasion. It is soft, melodious, sentimental. It provokes a vague sensibility, and makes no appeal to the imagination. At least it should not, from its quality. But the power of music is incalculable. It has an essence independent of its forms. And by virtue of that essence its poorest manifestations can sink a shaft into the springs of life. So as I listen languidly the scene before me detaches itself from actuality and floats away on the stream of art. It becomes a symbol; and around and beyond it, in some ideal space, other symbols arise and begin to move. I see the East as an infinite procession. Huge Bactrian camels balance their bobbing heads as they pad deliberately over the burning dust. Laden asses, cattle, and sheep and goats move on in troops. Black bearded men, men with beard and hair dyed red, women pregnant or carrying babies on their hips, youths like the Indian Bacchus with long curling hair, children of all ages, old men magnificent and fierce, all the generations of Asia pass and pass on, seen like a frieze against a rock background blazing with colour, rhythmical and fluent, marching menacingly down out of infinite space on to this little oasis of Englishmen. Then, suddenly, they are an ocean; and the Anglo-Indian world floats upon it like an Atlantic liner. It has its gymnasium, its swimming-bath, its card-rooms, its concert-rooms. It has its first and second class and steerage, well marked off. It dresses for dinner every night; it has an Anglican service on Sunday; it flirts mildly; it is bored; but above all it is safe. It has water-tight compartments. It is "unsinkable". The band is playing; and when the crash comes it will not stop. No; it will

play this music, this, which is in my ears. It is Gounod's "Faust" or an Anglican hymn? No matter! It is the same thing, sentimental, and not imaginative. And sentimentally, not imaginatively, the Englishman will die. He will not face the event, but he will stand up to it. He will realize nothing, but he will shrink from nothing .... The East has swept over this colony of the West. And still its generations pass on, rhythmically swinging; slaves of nature, not, as in the West, rebels against her; cyclical as her seasons and her stars; infinite as her storms of dust; identical as the leaves of her trees; purposeless as her cyclones and her earthquakes.

The music stops and I rub my eyes, Yes, it is only the club, only tea and twaddle! Or am I wrong? There is more in these men and women than appears. They stand for the West, for the energy of the world, for all, in this vast nature, that is determinate and purposive, not passively repetitious. And if they do not know it, if they never hear the strain that transposes them and their work into a tragic dream, if tennis is tennis to them, and a valse a valse, and an Indian a native; nevertheless they are what a poet would see them to be, an oasis in the desert, a liner on the ocean, ministers of the life within life that is the hope, the inspiration, and the meaning of the world. In my heart of hearts I apologise as I prolong the banalities of parting, and almost vow never again to abuse Gounod's music."

There is a similarity in the treatment of Anglo-India by both Dickinson and Forster. But this similarity goes as far as the isolation and the self-sufficiency of Anglo-India is concerned. Forster went further into the complexity that was India. Dickinson saw the East as an 'infinite procession' as a 'frieze against a rock background blazing with colour'; perhaps that was responsible for his dissatisfaction with his Indian visit. It is similar to Adela's fear that she would never know India if she were to 'see India as a frieze, never as a spirit'. Aziz's ancestors came with Babur from Afghanistan. They were part of a procession that goes back to the dawn of history. For Forster the colourful procession is not India. Aziz is as much an alien in India as the English are. Before them came the

Aryans; they too are part of the procession; because India says 'Come, come, come, come'. 'But come to what? She has never defined. She is not a promise, only an appeal'.

Both realized that the failure of the English in India was due to their lack of imagination. Dickinson found the Anglo-Indians as depicted by Kipling, representing the energy and the efficiency of the West; but he also realized that through lack of imagination they had been spiritually atrophied as 'they never hear the strain that transposes them and their work into a tragic dream.' And what more befitting a description of a Kiplingesque hero than: 'he will realize nothing, but he will shrink from nothing.'

APPENDIX B

E.M. Forster and Walt Whitman.

E.M. Forster borrowed the title for his last novel from Whitman's poem "Passage to India", a fact which he acknowledged in his notes to the Everyman's edition of A Passage to India.<sup>1</sup> Something of the spirit of this poem seems to have been a contributing influence, but it is very difficult to define it. Perhaps a thorough examination of the available evidence will help us in reaching a conclusion. Critics have often touched upon it but have not examined it carefully. Two of the most outstanding engineering feats of the nineteenth century inspired Whitman to a vision of a great future. Whitman was a very optimistic poet and when the Pacific Rail Road was opened on May 10, 1869, and the Suez Canal on November 17, 1869, he celebrated them as heroic achievements and as the realization of great and heroic ideas which in turn were inspired by a kind of religious sentiment. Whitman had hoped that the Suez Canal would bring the East and the West closer together and help in the synthesis of civilizations and cultures. The traditional wisdom of the East and the practical West with its science and technology would give birth to a new Era in the formation of a world-wide civilization:

Passage O soul to India!  
 Eclaircisse the myths Asiatic, the primitive fables.  
 Not you alone proud truths of the world,  
 Nor you alone ye facts of modern science,  
 But myths and fables of old, Asia's, Africa's fables,  
 the far-darting beams of the spirit, the unloos'd dreams,  
 the deep diving bibles and legends,

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1. 'The title of the novel is from a poem of Walt Whitman's'. See Author's Notes to the Everyman's edition of A Passage to India, London, 1945, p.xxxi.



optimism have not been completely falsified. Individual writers have made praiseworthy efforts to understand the East, to consider it seriously and remind the West that its excessive materialism could be balanced for their own good by the spirituality of the East. I have particularly in mind Rene Joseph Guenon and F. Schuon, who explored the wisdom of the East in the hope of giving the West what it needs most now.<sup>2</sup> Guenon has concentrated exclusively on Hinduism. The other, besides many books on the wisdom of the East in general, has produced a small but a very remarkable book on 'Understanding Islam', which I have found very illuminating and among the orientalist's whose works I have read he alone has succeeded in imbibing the spirit of a religion which lies closer and nearer to the West. Guenon in his book East and West set out to find out how far the attitude of the West as symbolised by Kipling's 'East is East and West is West/And never the twain shall meet' was true. He thought that it was an erroneous idea and that closer relationship between the two was possible and profitable as well. His views on this point are similar to Toynbee's:

"So long as the Western people imagine that there only exists a single type of humanity, that there is only one "civilization", at different stages of development, no mutual understanding will be possible. The truth is that there are many civilizations, developing along very different lines, and that, among these, that of the modern West is strangely exceptional, as some of its characteristics show. One should never speak absolutely of superiority or

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2. Their works are in French, but they are available in English translation. Guenon's works include (a) Introduction to the Study of Hindu Doctrines, (b) Man and His Becoming according to the Vedanta, (c) The Reign of Quantity and the Signs of the Times; and Schuon's (a) The Transcendent Unity of Religions, (b) Spiritual Perspectives and Human Facts, (c) Gnosis: Divine Wisdom and (d) Stations of Wisdom.

inferiority, without making it quite clear from what point of view the things to be compared are being considered, even supposing that they are comparable. There is no civilization which is superior to the others from every point of view, because man cannot be equally active at the same time in every direction, and because there are some ways of development which seem actually incompatible with one another. One thing however may be mentioned, and this is that there is a certain hierarchy to be observed, and that things of the intellectual order, for example, are worth more than those of the material; if this is so, a civilization which shows itself inferior from the former point of view, in spite of being undeniably superior from the latter, will remain on the whole at a disadvantage, whatever may be the outward appearances; and so it is with the Western civilization, when compared with those of the East - but apart from all question of superiority, let them at least admit that the things which in their eyes are of the greatest importance do not necessarily interest all men to the same extent, that some may even consider them utterly negligible, and that there are other ways of showing intelligence than by making machines. It would be at least something if the Europeans came to understand this and behaved accordingly; their relations with the rest of mankind would then be somewhat changed, to the great benefit of the whole world."<sup>3</sup>

But the steam roller of Western civilization is heedlessly destroying the exquisite civilizations of the East to replace them by a hybrid one in the name of progress. Ironically the Eastern people themselves join enthusiastically in the destruction of their own cultures. Forster knew that it was happening. He was, however, less optimistic about the future of Eastern civilizations, probably because he knew the aggressiveness of the Western civilization. He had seen its destructive aspect in his own country and saw how the lovely and beautiful English countryside was ruthlessly destroyed by its onslaught of steel and concrete. Between East and West he wanted a harmonious synthesis as once was achieved at Alexandria by the Coptics and the Greeks. In India, he regretted, that the English through their silly

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3. Rene Guenon: East and West, London, 1941, pp.10-12.

snobbishness had lost a unique opportunity of the kind of synthesis and harmony achieved by the Greeks for a very brief time in the Gandhara region. He did not favour the complete substitution or replacement of Eastern cultures by the Western. He saw the destructive process in action both in the Middle East and India. It was seen by other sensitive Westerners as well. In his review of the later Diaries (1900-1914) of Wilfrid Blunt in 1920 he writes,

"That War, according to Blunt's interpretation, is essentially oriental. Germany is indeed the chief villain, but the chief victim is not Belgium but Islam. In the slow agonizing prelude the Germans and French intrigue in Morocco, Cromer rivets English rule upon Egypt, Italy attacks Tripoli, England and Russia apportion Persia, the Balkan Confederacy nearly captures Constantinople: and Turkey, obliged to choose between two gangs of robbers, chooses the Teutonic. Then is the grim perversion of Calvary accomplished, and the followers of Christ, who have developed economic imperialism and scientific warfare, spoil the followers of Mohammad, who have developed neither and were hoping to live the lives of their fathers ... He dreaded a war because it must involve Asia and Africa, and complete the enslavement of the conservative oriental nations."<sup>4</sup>

Forster seems to have accepted Blunt's interpretation of the aggressiveness of imperialism in the Middle East. Two years later, in his article "India and the Turk" published in The Nation and the Athenaeum on September 30, 1922 he writes:

"Islam is more than a religion, and both its opponents and supporters have wronged it by a hard legalistic insistence on the faith. It is an attitude towards life which has produced durable and exquisite civilizations, an attitude threatened by Europe's remorseless crusade today."

It was an experience of disillusionment for Forster, but he was not entirely unprepared for it: in Howards End he had explored the destructiveness and aggressiveness of the urban civilisation which was now extended to the Empire.

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4. Abinger Harvest, London, 1936, P.273.

Some critics have been misled by the fact that Forster owed his title "A Passage to India" to Whitman, into a belief that he shared Whitman's optimism. The evidence points in the opposite direction. He rejected it, otherwise he would not have called him stupid: "Walt Whitman sincere but so stupid".<sup>5</sup> Conditions in Europe and in the East were not in any way favourable to the Whitmanesque optimism in 1920. Sensitive and intelligent people were overcome by pessimism when they surveyed the world-scene.

"He (Wilfrid Blunt) always tended to conceive of the world as a garden, and now he sees its lilies and roses defiled beyond redemption, and he feels that his own efforts have failed. His pessimism is logical. We can only avoid it by supposing, with Walt Whitman, that the world is not a garden, but an athlete who learns while he suffers, and who will some day understand his own passions and cleanse his limbs. That day is far off. But if it ever dawns it will lighten not only the graceful nations of the East, but the dull plebian places of Europe - factories, mines, commercial offices, suburban drawing-rooms - and its radiance will be stronger than a king's because the whole of humanity will contribute to it."<sup>6</sup>

By 1946-47 his distrust of Whitman's optimism had become quite confirmed. "Forster ... finds little in Whitman but 'empty noises' and an ignorant naivete."<sup>7</sup>

Forster's novel itself ends on a note of doubt and uncertainty. The last passage bears it out. Aziz and Fielding can't be friends; East and West can't meet because "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,

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5. See "Indian Entries": Encounter, January 1962, Vol.18, pp.20-27.

6. Abinger Harvest, London, 1936, P.273.

7. Paul Fussel, Jr.: "E.M. Forster's Mrs. Moore; some suggestions," Philological Quarterly, Vol. 32, 1953, footnote on P.392.

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." (P.336). My own explanation is that Forster's intention was satirical in choosing the title rather than an indication of his acceptance of Whitman's optimism; which amounts to saying, "Well, here is A Passage to India, see how far does it go in fulfilling the expectations of Whitman who only wrote 'Passage to India' and never took a passage himself."

APPENDIX C

Forster's sense of the Unseen in relation to his Rationalism  
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Forster's agnosticism and rationalism did not prevent him from entertaining a sense of the mysterious. Scattered among his essays are references to the Unseen; this sense is lurking behind his novels and is very powerfully present in A Passage to India. He had more than once asserted 'unbelief' in the sense of no attachment to any dogma. He calls himself 'a child of unbelief',<sup>1</sup> in his article on Proust. He approves of Proust's theory of human intercourse that the more one loved a person the less one understood that person. It is the opposite of Dante's view ~~which~~<sup>which</sup> belonged to an age of Faith. This implies an acceptance of man's limitations:

"We cannot understand each other, except in a rough and ready way; we cannot reveal ourselves, even when we want to; what we call intimacy is only a makeshift; perfect knowledge is an illusion."<sup>2</sup>

His most explicit utterance on his agnosticism is found in 'What I Believe' where he says,

"I do not believe in Belief ... Faith, to my mind, is a stiffening process, a sort of mental starch, which ought to be applied as sparingly as possible ... My motto is: 'Lord, I disbelieve - help thou my unbelief.'"<sup>3</sup>

His outlook is undogmatic like Samuel Butler's who stood for 'tolerance, good temper, good taste, empiricism, and reasonableness.'<sup>4</sup> Forster openly acknowledged to have been

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1. Abinger Harvest, London, 1936, P.98.

2. Aspects of the Novel, London, 1927, P.98.

3. Two Cheers for Democracy, London, 1951, P.77.

4. 'The Legacy of Samuel Butler', Listener, 12 June, 1952, PP.955-956.

influenced by Samuel Butler among others; he was in particular influenced by Erewhon on which he wrote 'A Book that Influenced Me'. At one stage he undertook to write a book on him but had to abandon the project because of war. Like Butler he believes in the fallibility of human reason, but that is no reason to discard it:

"He (Butler) held that we should be reasonable as long as we can, and should not plunge into mysticism because problems are difficult, or in obedience to the command of a priest or a commissar. There will always be mystery, perhaps there always should be mystery, but it is for the free spirit of man to reduce the mysteriousness and extend the frontiers of the known."<sup>5</sup>

This sense of mystery is conveyed in works of art by the artist. Of Van Gogh he says: "he has a home beyond comfort and common-sense with the saints, and perhaps he sees God," Of Ibsen: "His stage throbs with a mysteriousness for which no obvious preparation has been made, with beckonings, tremblings, sudden compressions of the air, and his characters as they wrangle among the oval tables and stoves are watched by an unseen power which slips between their words."<sup>6</sup>

The relationship between reason and the mysterious or the unseen is a difficult one.

"It is difficult for most of us to realise both the importance and the unimportance of reason. But it is a difficulty which the profounder humanists have managed to solve."<sup>7</sup>

He distinguishes religious experience both from dogma and psychical phenomena. He called 'psychical research, that dustbin

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5. Ibid, PP.955-956.

6. Abinger Harvest, London, 1936, P.83-84.

7. Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson, P.120.

of the spirit'.<sup>8</sup> His views about religion have remained steady. At eighty years of age he told Philip Toynbee that his religious views had remained pretty steady.

"As a matter of fact my absence of religious views developed rather slowly, but since the age of twenty-four I've had more or less the same attitude. What I do see more clearly than I did is that reason can't solve everything, but I want it to solve as many things as it can. Also I'm more conscious of my own smallness and the smallness of this planet; but I don't find that this bothers me much."<sup>9</sup>

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8. Ibid, P.122.

9. "E.M. Forster at Eighty," by Philip Toynbee, Observer, 28 December, 1958, PP.8,10.

APPENDIX DKrishna, The Blue Boy

The gaiety of Krishna is among the many qualities that appealed to Forster. He made the acquaintance of Krishna the Lord of the Universe and the embodiment of Infinite Love in two Hindu states in India, Dewas State Senior and Chhattarpur. Krishna struck Forster as a very friendly, endearing and almost human god very unlike the forbidding and stern Jehovah. Krishna bridged the gap that Christianity could not. The worship of Krishna includes merriment and jokes, totally excluded from acts of worship by other religions including Christianity. Forster had become so fond of Krishna that he read the Bhagavad Purana and Vishnu Purana to know more about him than what he had learned from his own observation of his ceremonies.

"The Bhagavad Purana, which is the earlier in date, describes how Kamsa, the wicked king of Muttra, was driving his sister to her marriage when a voice warned him that her eighth child would destroy him. He therefore tried to kill her in the processional chariot, but was appeased by her promise that each child should be delivered up to him when born. So she was married, and she and her husband kept their promise. But their seventh child, Balarama, was transferred before birth into the womb of another wife, and the eighth child, Krishna, likewise escaped. The ninth child, a daughter, Kamsa tried to kill, but she mocked him, confirmed his doom and disappeared as a goddess into heaven. Like Herod, he then gave orders for all children in his kingdom to be massacred. Great was the lamentation, but Krishna, hidden away in the Village of Gokul, was safe. He, the supreme God, the incarnation of Vishnu, grew up as a herdsman, and worked and played with country boys and girls. He also performed miracles, and in due time he went up with his brother Balarama to Muttra, to wrestle before the king, Kamsa, enraged at their victories over his champions, gave orders that their father and mother should be killed. Krishna - the moment had come - leapt at the tyrant, flung his crown from his head, and tore him asunder in the arena, as a lion tears an elephant. The text continues: 'Kamsa, who had always trembled at the bottom of his heart at the thought of the Supreme Being, whether he ate or drank or

walked or slept or breathed, now had the unusual honour of seeing him face to face, and of being reunited to his divinity.'

If one can judge from a translation, and if one can condone silliness and prolixity, the tenth book of the Bhagavad Purana must be a remarkable work. It has warmth and emotion and a sort of divine recklessness and a sort of crude human happiness. Reading it today, I can trace parallels with our performance at Dewas. Krishna is 'a raft to sail on,' he is 'as small as the footprint of a calf,' he is born 'at midnight, in the thickest of darkness, like the full moon in the east, when all the directions were peaceful and the minds of the good and of the gods were serene.' 'Various and wonderful instruments of music are played when he is born,' and the sportive cowboys 'smear one another with butter' as we did. In infancy he and his brother 'drag their little feet with the tinkling sound of ornaments on them through the moist places and looked beautiful with their limbs besmeared with mire? He steals trifles, he 'commits nuisance in the premise of the house,' then 'stands like a very quiet boy.' He even eats earth and dirt; 'look in my mouth, then' he says, and 'the whole Universe of mobile and immobile creatures' is seen inside it. As he grows up he goes with his friends to the fields and woods, breakfasts by a stream while the cows stray, eats while they sit around him, 'his flute between his belly and his garment, the soft morsel in the left hand and fruits between his fingers, walled in by his comrades, and laughing and making them laugh.' 'He, the one deity of all sacrifices, exhibiting the gaiety of lads, while the celestial world looked on.' 'Thy glory purifies all the world' sing the bees. They dance, sing, fight, imitate birds and animals, and when he is tired he 'goes beneath a tree and rests on beds of tender leaves, with his hand cushioned on a herds-boy's thigh.' The frivolity, triviality goes on, and every now and then it cracks, as at our festival, and discloses depths. 'What am I,' cries the poet, 'invested with a body of seven spans in a small part of this egg the world? How inconceivably vast is the glory of Thee, of whom a pore is like a window through which innumerable eggs of Universes pass to and fro like atoms?'  
The Hill of Devi, (London, 1953, PP.117-119)

Forster reviewed W.G. Archer's book The Loves of Krishna under the title 'The Blue Boy' in The Listener, 14 March, 1957, in which his enthusiasm is unmistakable:

"The present reviewer has encountered Shri Krishna once or twice in a carnal way: has attended his birth and festival at Dewas; has seen his palace dances at Chhattarpur; has read the Bhagavad Gita and the tenth book of the Bhagavata Purana; possesses a picture of Jamini Roy of a young farmer claiming distant cousinhood; is indeed on nearer nodding terms with Krishna than with any other god. This is not saying much, for to what god does one venture to give a nod?

Jehovah's awful one certainly invites no response. 'Down on your knees!' is the more usual injunction. Krishna inclines to gaiety. Even if he kills a dragon he dances on its teeth, which St. Michael will not do. He is gay to the point of silliness ... this wayward deity. Discrepancies have to be faced. How is it that the warrior who drives Arjuna into battle and lectures him en route on the nature of the universe is also a dark-skinned cowboy who seduces hundreds of cow-girls?. The answer is that there must have been two deities who coalesced. The earlier one, the warrior, fits neatly into the Indian cosmogony as an incarnation of Vishnu. The later one began as a godling of a group of cattle-keepers in the Jumna Valley, was cheerful, disrespectful to the priesthood and to his elders, scandalously amorous, and he needed tidying up. He was tidied up in two directions - one social, the other mystic. Socially he became a King, who was legally married to hundreds of queens and was consequently respectable. Mystically, his amours - or rather the longings that were felt for him - symbolized the longings of the soul for God. The famous round dance, in which each girl believes that she, and she alone, dances with the beloved is ridiculous in terms of the body, possible in terms of the spirit. The infinite has enough to go round - enough and to spare."

Forster thought Hinduism could proselytise through Krishna as he could appeal through his multiple personality.

"Warrior, counsellor, roudy villager, divine principle, flautists, great king! these are some of Krishna's aspects, and to them must be added the destroyer of dragons, the Hercules-Siegfried hero who makes the earth habitable for men. It is no wonder that in India so varied a diety exercises a wide appeal. Hindu religion has the high distinction of being non-propagandist. But if it abandoned that distinction, as Buddhism in Ceylon appears to be doing, and competed with Christianity and Islam as the unique representation of Truth, it might well push Krishna forwards as its champion. There is no one in its contemporary pantheon, neither Siva nor Durga, who would function nearly as well."

Krishna has also left his mark on poems 'both sub-erotic and super-erotic, that have been inspired by him.' His gaiety sometimes made him silly:

"Krishna can be appallingly silly. His sense of fun makes the heart sink. He adores practical jokes. When his mirth is at its height he steals the cowgirls' dresses while they are bathing; and hangs them on a tree. As an alternative, he steals butter." [The Blue Boy. The Listener, 14 March, 1957, P.444]

Appendix EKipling's Description of Battles

In order to get an idea of Kipling's description of battles I reproduce here two pieces, one by Kipling who had never seen actual fighting, and one by Sir George Younghusband who wrote his memoirs called A Soldier's Memories (1917). The extract given here describes a battle which took place in 1878 on the North-West Frontier of British India with an Afghan horde. Sir George Younghusband was then a subaltern in the Indian Army. These battles and skirmishes must very often have been talked about by the subalterns and the soldiers in the clubs and messes. Kipling arrived in India four years after this battle had taken place. Skirmishes like this one were frequent on the Frontier and must have been talked about often. Kipling was very curious and asked questions and it is not difficult to imagine that he might have caught the zest and exuberance from the subalterns and the soldiers. About the language of his soldiers here is the testimony of one of the contemporary subalterns. Kipling partly invented the language for his soldiers; but later on some of the expressions that he gave to his soldiers became current in the cantonments.

"Rudyard Kipling was at Simla for brief periods of leave during the middle eighties. He was then sub-editor of the Civil and Military Gazette of Lahore. His "Plain Tales from the Hills" used to appear on the front page of that newspaper, over the initials R.K. We thought he was never in Simla long enough at a time to get the intimate knowledge of the social atmosphere which his writings portrayed. And we concluded, rightly or wrongly, that he was greatly helped in this respect by his clever little sister, who spent several seasons running at Simla. It was she, I think, who told us that her brother used to walk down the road to Jutogh, where was stationed a British Battery of Mountain Artillery and a Company of British Infantry, and

that on the road he used to stop and converse with the British soldiers, and thus got many of his quaint soldier expressions and turns of language. He used to do the same at Lahore, going down to the fort to meet soldiers.

And now for a curious thing. I myself had served for many years with soldiers, but had never once heard of the words or expressions that Rudyard Kipling's soldiers used. Many a time did I ask my brother Officers whether they had ever heard them. No, never. But sure enough, a few years after the soldiers thought, and talked, and expressed themselves exactly like Rudyard Kipling had taught them in his stories! He would get a stray word here, or a stray expression there, and weave them into general soldier talk, in his priceless stories. Rudyard Kipling made the modern soldier."<sup>1</sup>

The extracts which are given below are taken from 'The Drums of The Fore and Aft' [Wee Willie Winkie]. It describes a battle with an Afghan horde on the Frontier with great zest and exuberance. The two drummer-boys, Jakin and Lew, showed great courage in rallying the soldiers with their pipes and drum. The originals of Jakin and Lew are mentioned by R. Orme in A History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan:

"this word struck the whole division with terror, and all instantly ran back to the Cameleon (the officers accompanying to reclaim them), and Captaine Yorke, who marched at the head, was left alone, with only two drummers, who were black boys, beating the grenadiers march, which they continued but in vain, for none rejoined; on which Captaine Yorke went back, and found all his men in much confusion at the bastion, some even proposing to go out of the breach and quit the Fort."<sup>2</sup>

Kipling, characteristically, turned the black drummer boys into Jakin and Lew.

"It was not a pleasant sight that opened on the uninstructed view, for the lower end of the valley appeared to be filled by an army in position - real and actual regiments attired in red coats, and - of this there was no doubt - firing Martini-Henry

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1. Sir George Younghusband. A Soldier's Memories (London, 1917) P.187.
  2. R. Orme. A History of the Military Transactions of the British Nation in Indostan (London, 1775) Vol. 3rd. P.486.

bullets which cut up the ground a hundred yards in front of the leading company. Over that pock marked ground the Regiment had to pass, and it opened the ball with a general and profound courtesy to the piping pickets; ducking in perfect time, as though it had been brazed on a rod. Being half capable of thinking for itself, it fired a volley by the simple process of pitching its rifle into its shoulder and pulling the trigger ... That was not demoralising to the Afghans, who have not European nerves. They were waiting for the mad riot to die down, and were firing quietly into the heart of the smoke. A private of the Fore and Fit spun up his company shrieking with agony, another was kicking the earth and gasping, and a third, ripped through the lower intestines by a jagged bullet, was calling aloud on his comrades to put him out of his pain .... Then the foe began to shout with a great shouting, and a mass - a black mass - detached itself from the main body, and rolled over the ground at horrid speed. It was composed of, perhaps, three hundred men, who would shout and fire and slash if the rush of their fifty comrades who were determined to die carried home. ....

The Fore and Fit heard the Gurkha bugles bringing that regiment forward at the double, while the neighing of the Highland pipes came from the left. They strove to stay where they were, though the bayonets wavered down the line like the oars of a ragged boat. Then they felt body to body the amazing physical strength of their foes; a shriek of pain ended the rush, and the knives fell amid scenes not to be told. The men clubbed together and smote blindly - as often as not at their own fellows. Their front crumpled like paper, and the fifty Ghazis passed on; their backers, now drunk with success, fighting as madly as they ...

The English were not running. They were hacking and hewing and stabbing, for though one white man is seldom physically a match for an Afghan in a sheepskin or wadded coat, yet, through the pressure of many white men behind, and a certain thirst for revenge in his heart, he becomes capable of doing much with both ends of his rifle. The Fore and Fit held their fire till one bullet could drive through five or six men, and the front of the Afghan force gave on the volley. They then selected their men, and slew them with deep gasps and short hacking coughs, and groanings of leather belts against strained bodies, and realised for the first time that an Afghan attacked is far less formidable than an Afghan attacking.

As the Afghans wavered, the green standards on the mountain moved down to assist them in a last rally. This was unwise. The Lancers chafing in the right gorge had thrice despatched their only subaltern as galloper to report on the progress of affairs. On the third occasion he returned, with a bullet-graze on his knee, swearing strange oaths in Hindustani, and saying that all things were ready. So that squadron swung round the right of the Highlanders with a wicked whistling of wind in the pennons of its lances, and fell upon the remnant just when, according to all the rules of war it should have waited for the foe to show more signs of wavering...

The Afghan forces were upon the run - the run of wearied solves who snarl and bite over their shoulders. The red lances dipped by twos and threes, and, with a shriek, up rose the lance-butt, like a spar on a stormy sea, as the trooper cantering forward cleared his point. The Lancers kept between their prey and the steep hills, for all who could were trying to escape from the valley of death .... Long before the last volleys were fired the doolies were out in force looking for the wounded. The battle was over, and, but for want of fresh troops, the Afghans would have been wiped off the earth."<sup>3</sup>

These extracts should give an idea of how Kipling could create a battle scene packed with action and excitement. It is surprisingly similar in tone and excitement <sup>to</sup> ~~with~~ the description of an actual battle as given by a subaltern who took part in it.

"Looking along our right we saw a brave sight, the bravest possible - a body of Cavalry charging. It was none other than the renowned Cavalry of The Guides, which by a wonderful effort had crossed the seemingly impassable nullah, and was now falling with dauntless fury on ten times their numbers of the enemy. They whirled past us, and we, cheering like mad, dashed after them.

It is a splendid sight, such as no other perhaps equals, the wild charge of horsemen. Each man going for all he is worth, yelling to Allah, or other deity, to help him; yelling curses the most blood-curdling on his enemy; low bent so as almost to be lying along his horse's neck, and swish after swish, bringing his keen curved sword on to the head, or neck or back, of a flying enemy.

No time here for quarter, given or taken. The pursued, when overtaken, stops, turns, fires point blank at his pursuer, or slashes at him with his long knife, and next instant either escapes unscathed, or goes down like a blade of corn. These were separate single combats, but here and there were little miniature battles, where clumps of the enemy had got together, and where clumps of The Guides were attacking them. There seemed always tough knots, and we could see many a horse and men go down before the knot was cut .... Next, with a rattle and clatter and bang, up came the Horse Artillery, and began planting shells amongst the larger and more distant groups, and these too now began to melt away; and soon the whole plain behind the ridge was covered with flying figures.

Flying much too fast for us on foot to catch them, but the sun still glittered on the blades of the Cavalry as they hunted

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3. "Drums of the Fore and Aft". Wee Willie Winkie Etc. (London, 1895) Library Edition (reset) 1951. PP.359-372.

on, till at last man and horse could do no more. The sword arm was weary, and could no longer rise to strike; and the horse, ready to drop with fatigue, could barely be urged out of a walk.

. . . . .

Meanwhile the squadron had gone in pursuit, and the subaltern, with his friend the sikh and one or two others who had involuntarily stayed behind, set off to pick it up.

It was like a panorama, and when one saw a little figure drop in the plain one hardly realised it was a man killed, or badly wounded. Some of our men had lost their pugrees in the melee, and these were fearsome and awe-inspiring tragedians. A sikh with hair, long as a woman's, streaming in the wind, bending low and hard forward, yelling like a fiend, and bringing his curved sword down on all and sundry with a soft whistling drawing cut, is like a demon of dark dreams. Occasionally to be seen were individuals, or knots of men, who stood at bay, and these cost some lives to the pursuers, and many wounds. Gradually and by hard riding the late arrivals made their way up to where the white horse marked the Captain's position, and when they got there they found everything as the Captain expressed it, "pretty stony cold."<sup>4</sup>

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4. Sir George Younghusband. A Soldier's Memories (London, 1917) PP.63-69.

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KIPLING'S INDIAN TALES

The following list is not exhaustive, but it is fairly representative of Kipling's wide range of Anglo-Indians, natives and soldiers.

<u>Title</u>	<u>Date of first Publication</u>	<u>Collected</u>
Amir's Homily, The	1888	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
Arrest of Lieutenant Golightly, The	1886	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
At Howli Thana	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>
At the End of the Passage	1890	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
At the Pit's Mouth	1888	<u>Under the Deodars</u>
At Twenty-two	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>
Bank Fraud, A	1887	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Beyond the Pale	1888	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Big Drunk Draf', The	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>
Bisara of Pooree, The	1887	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Black Jack	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>
Bridge-Builders, The	1893	<u>The Day's Work</u>
Broken-Link Handicap, The	1887	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Brushwood Boy, The	1895	<u>The Day's Work</u>
Bubbling Well Road	1888	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
By Word of Mouth	1887	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
City of Dreadful Night, The	1885	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
Consequences	1886	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Conversion of Aurelian McGoggin, The	1887	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Courting of Dinah Shadd, The	1890	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
Dray Wara Yow Dee	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>

<u>Title</u>	<u>Date of first Publication</u>	<u>Collected</u>
Dream of Duncan Parrenness, The	1884	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
Drums of the Fore and Aft, The	1888	<u>Wee Willie Winkie</u>
False Dawn	1888	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Fatima	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>
Friend's Friend, A	1887	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Garden of Eden, The	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>
Gate of the Hundred Sorrows, The	1884	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Gemini	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>
Georgie Porgie	1888	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
God from the Machine, The	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>
Germ-Destroyer, A	1887	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Head of the District, The	1890	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
His Chance in Life	1887	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
His Wedded Wife	1887	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
In Error	1887	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
In Flood Time	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>
His Majesty the King	1888	<u>Wee Willie Winkie</u>
In the House of Suddhoo	1886	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
In the Matter of a Private	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>
In the Pride of His Youth	1887	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney, The	1889	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
Jews in Shushan	1887	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
Judgment of Dungara, The	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>
Kidnapped	1887	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>

<u>Title</u>	<u>Date of first Publication</u>	<u>Collected</u>
Lispeth	1886	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Little Tobrah	1888	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
Maltese Cat, The	1895	<u>The Day's Work</u>
Man Who Was, The	1890	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
Man Who Would be King, The	1888	<u>Wee Willie Winkie</u>
Mark of the Beast, The	1890	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
Miracle of Purun Bhagat, The	1894	<u>The Second Jungle Book</u>
Miss Youghal's Sais	1887	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Mutiny of the Mavericks, The	1891	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
My Lord the Elephant	1893	<u>Many Inventions</u>
Naboth	1886	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
Namgay Doola	1891	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
On Greenhow Hill	1890	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
Only a Subaltern	1888	<u>Wee Willie Winkie</u>
On the City Wall	1888	<u>Wee Willie Winkie</u>
On the Strength of a Likeness	1887	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Phantom 'Rickshaw, The	1888	<u>Wee Willie Winkie</u>
Pig	1887	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Poor Dear Mamma	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>
Private Learoyd's Story	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>
Return of Imray, The	1891	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
Rout of the White Hussars, The	1888	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Second-Rate Woman, A	1888	<u>Under the Deodars</u>
Sending of Dana Da, The	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>
Solid Muldoon, The	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>

<u>Title</u>	<u>Date of first Publication</u>	<u>Collected</u>
Story of Mohammad Din, The	1886	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Strange Ride of Morrowbie Jukes, The	1885	<u>Wee Willie Winkie</u>
Swelling of the Jordan, The	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u> 07
Taking of Lungtungpen, The	1887	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Tents of Kedar, The	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>
Through the Fire	1891	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
Thrown Away	1888	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
To be Filed for Reference	1888	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Tods' Amendment	1887	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Tomb of His Ancestors, The	1897	<u>The Day's Work</u>
Valley of the Shadow, The	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>
Watches of the Night	1887	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
Wayside Comedy, A	1888	<u>Wee Willie Winkie</u>
Wee Willie Winkie	1888	<u>Wee Willie Winkie</u>
With Any Amazement	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>
With the Main Guard	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>
Without Benefit of Clergy	1890	<u>Life's Handicap</u>
World Without, The	1888	<u>Soldiers Three</u>
Wressley of the Foreign Office	1887	<u>Plain Tales from the Hills</u>
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