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Course Material

Department of English and Modern European Languages

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B.A. (Hons.) English Semester-VI

Paper I: Twentieth Century British Fiction (Code: Eng- 601)

Unit-I Joseph Conrad : *Lord Jim*

E.M. Forster : *A Passage to India*

Unit-III Virginia Woolf : *Mrs. Dalloway*

Muriel Spark : *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*

Dear Students, Hello.

As I've already taught you Conrad, I'll provide you course material for the topics highlighted above.

You can find below the material on **E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India***.

In case you have any doubts you can contact me on phone or send queries to my email.

All the best!

E.M. Forster : *A Passage to India*

Bionote

-E.M. Forster (1879-1970) is Great Britain's chief representative of humanism. He published five novels in his lifetime - *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905), *The Longest Journey* (1907), *A Room with a View* (1908), *Howards End* (1910) and *A Passage to India* (1924) - a number of short stories (collected in 1948), criticism, essays and biographies

-His finest achievement is, without doubt, *A Passage to India*; after it he wrote no more creative work of significance. Forster's stature as a major novelist undoubtedly depends on this novel.

In an excellent book of criticism, *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), Forster very interestingly examined and then rejected Henry James'

notion that the writer of fiction must above all avoid giving his own point of view; and in his own fiction he is very much the omniscient narrator.

While Forster the novelist retired prematurely, the professional man of letters remained as busy as ever, and in the buildup to the Second World War (and the decades that followed it), he established an international reputation, through his essays, reviews, lectures, and broadcasts, as one of the most prominent, authoritative, and engaging public intellectuals of his day

By the late 1920s, Forster had also become well known as a literary critic and, in *Aspects of the Novel* (1927),

The of Forster's *Selected Letters* (1983, 1985) and his *Commonplace Book* (1985) provided yet further insights into both Forster the man and Forster the writer.

Publication

A Passage to India. published in 1924.

Overview

It is a picture of society in India under the British Raj, of the clash between East and West, and of the prejudices and misunderstandings that foredoomed goodwill. Criticized at first for anti-British and possibly inaccurate bias, it has been praised as a superb character study of the people of one race by a writer of another.

The story is told in three parts, I, *Mosque*, II, *Caves*, III, *Temple*, and concerns Aziz, a young Muslim doctor, whose friendliness and enthusiasm for the British turn to bitterness and disillusionment when his pride is injured. A sympathy springs up between him and the elderly Mrs Moore, who has come to visit her son, the city magistrate.

Accompanying her is Adela Quested, young, earnest, and charmless, who longs to know the 'real' India and tries to disregard the taboos and snobberies of the British circle.

Aziz organizes an expedition for the visitors to the famous Caves of Marabar, where an unforeseen development plunges him into disgrace and rouses deep antagonism between the two races. Adela accuses him of insulting her in the Caves, he is committed to prison and stands trial.

Adela withdraws her charge, but Aziz turns furiously away from the British, towards a Hindu-Muslim unity.

In the third part of the book he has moved to a post in a native state, and is bringing up his family in peace, writing poetry and reading Persian. He is visited by his friend Mr Fielding, the former principal of the Government College, an intelligent, hard-bitten man. They discuss the future of India and Aziz prophesies that only when the British are driven out can he and Fielding really be friends. Among the many characters is Professor Godbole, the detached and saintly Brahman who is the innocent cause of the contretemps, and who makes his final appearance in supreme tranquillity at the festival of the Hindu temple.

Background, Notes, Analysis

In *A Passage to India* Forster's creative impulse was strong enough to generate an organic plot, hinging on an ambiguity - Aziz is tried for attempted rape; (what happened in the Marabar Caves between Adela Quest and Aziz will never be known).

He conveys a unique sense of the tragedy of the gap that lies between Indians and Englishmen, even if they do not desire it. Further, while this novel works perfectly on a realistic and psychological level, it also functions on a symbolic level - with the Marabar Caves themselves, and the strange figure of Mrs. Moore, as the two central symbols.

The wisdom of Mrs. Moore, although it consists of no more than an understanding of the necessity of good will in every kind of situation, is thoroughly 'modern' in its function, and it is still as valid as it was in 1924.

E M Forster began writing *A Passage to India* after his first visit to India in October 1912.

Forster finished *A Passage to India* after returning to India for nine months in 1921, this time as private secretary to the Maharajah of Dewas State. In the intervening period of between 1912 and

1921, the devastating losses of the First World War – a war to which Indian troops had made a substantial contribution – had permanently changed Britain’s relationship with its Empire. Adding to the turbulence, in April 1919, in what became known as the Amritsar Massacre, colonial troops shot and killed 379 unarmed Indians who were protesting for self-governance, and wounded a further 1,200.

Forster had begun the novel ‘as a little bridge of sympathy between East and West’. He wrote that he wanted the book to speak to ‘something wider than politics’, and to be ‘philosophic and poetic’, and indeed he has been praised for his ability to conjure the different aspects of British, Muslim and Hindu India.

The novel is structured in three parts: I, Mosque, II, Caves and III, Temple. Its main character, a Muslim doctor called Aziz, arranges a trip to the Marabar Caves. When he is sent to prison on the basis of a false accusation of sexual assault by the English traveller Adela Quested, he turns against British rule. The novel ends with him telling the character Fielding his prediction that they can only truly be friends when India is free; a point Forster illustrates with the image of horses galloping in different directions.

Despite its success, however, it was Forster’s last work of fiction.

A Passage to India has a tripartite structure labeled mosque, caves, and temple. Each section serves as a symbolic signpost and corresponds to the seasons of the Indian year.

After being summoned to the house of Major Callendar, Dr. Aziz, a Moslem doctor at the government hospital, discovers that the major has gone and that he must walk back to his house because two English women departed in his hired tonga (two-wheeled vehicle). While stopping at a mosque on his way back to Chandrapore, Aziz meets Mrs. Moore, the mother of Ronald Heaslop, the city magistrate. Aziz and Mrs. Moore seem to “connect” with each other and share a common understanding of life. Under the racially fragmented system of British colonialism, however, neither the British nor the Indians can speak publicly of this kind of communication. The elderly Mrs. Moore invites Aziz to walk back to the club with her and introduces him to Adela Quested, newly arrived from England and the fiancé of her son.

Although *A Passage to India* clearly addresses social and political issues, the major theme is the plight of the human race. The fact that the characters struggle unsuccessfully

to “connect” in the novel indicates Forster’s pessimism, yet he portrays a desire on the part of Aziz, Fielding, Mrs. Moore, and Adela to understand and to establish meaningful relationships with each other.

Mrs. Moore and Adela want to see the real India and complain about the colonized India that they have seen. Turton, a member of the British club, holds a bridge party for them and invites a few native Indian guests. The party is a failure, in that the Indians separate into groups apart from the British and the situation is uncomfortable. Fielding, the government college principal who associates freely with the Indians, invites the ladies to tea at his home.

Adela persuades him to include Aziz and Professor Godbole, a Hindu teacher and associate of Fielding. At the tea, Adela and Mrs. Moore have a refreshing conversation with Aziz and Godbole. Aziz is overjoyed by the interaction of the group members and invites all of them to visit the Marabar Caves. Mrs. Moore and Adela accept the invitation, and Aziz plans an elaborate outing.

Heaslop arrives to escort his mother and his fiancé to a game of polo and is very rude to Aziz. The incident causes Adela and Heaslop to quarrel, and she breaks off their engagement. The couple then goes for a ride, and after striking an unidentified animal on the road, Adela changes her mind, and they are reconciled.

Unfortunately, Godbole and Fielding miss their train and Aziz must escort the British ladies to the Marabar Caves alone. Mrs. Moore is frightened by a loud booming echo in the first cave and stops to rest. Considering the gulf between the British and Indians,

Mrs. Moore sees the futility of her Christian and moralistic ideas about life echoed in this hollow sound. Mrs. Moore declines to continue their explorations, and Aziz, a guide, and Adela

proceed along. Adela upsets Aziz by inquiring whether he has more than one wife. Aziz leaves her briefly to regain his composure, and Adela wanders into a cave and claims that she is almost assaulted by Aziz. She stumbles down a hill, where she meets Nancy Derek, who has brought Fielding to the caves. Nancy takes Adela back to Chandrapore.

The Marabar Caves section of the novel is one of the most puzzling.

Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson and a number of readers and other reviewers of Forster's works objected to the mystery of the caves scene.

In a June 26, 1924, letter to Dickinson, Forster wrote the following:

In the cave it is either a man, or the supernatural, or an illusion. And even if I know! My writing mind therefore is a blur here—i.e. I will it to remain a blur, and to be uncertain, as I am of many facts in daily life. . . . It sprang straight from my subject matter.

Mrs. Moore is at once devastated and terrified by the hollow, booming echo from the caves. Her revelation suggests that perhaps the gulf that lies between the British and Indians cannot be bridged and that her Christianity is no match for the inexplicable.

She has no answer for the confusion at the caves and realizes that all the British can do is to “muddle.”

Aziz meets Fielding at the caves, and neither knows what has happened. They assume that Adela decided to leave with Nancy. Aziz and Fielding return by train, and Aziz is met by the police inspector and arrested. Fielding and Mrs. Moore alienate themselves from the British by siding with Aziz.

Realizing his mother's position about the matter, Heaslop arranges passage for Mrs. Moore to return to England, and she dies at sea.

During the trial, one of Aziz's friends accuses Heaslop of smuggling his mother out of India so that she cannot testify in defense of Aziz.

The Indian spectators loudly begin calling for Mrs. Moore. Then, Adela exonerates Aziz with her testimony and is publicly ostracized by the British. Fielding rescues Adela, encourages Aziz not to file a damage suit against her, and she returns to England. Two years later, Aziz is the personal physician to the rajah of Mau, a Hindu state in India, and Godbole is the minister of education.

Aziz has become totally disillusioned with the British, including Fielding. He has not accepted any letters from Fielding because he assumes that Fielding has married Adela. Aziz is angered to learn that Fielding is visiting Mau as a part of his official duties. When Aziz meets Fielding again, he discovers that the former Stella Moore, daughter of Mrs. Moore, has married Fielding. Because of the distance between them, Aziz and Fielding cannot renew their friendship. The floods in Mau prevent the Fieldings from leaving immediately.

Before Fielding and his family make their departure from India, he and Aziz decide to go horseback riding together and begin rather amicably discussing the British/Indian problem. Sensing the end of their association, Aziz and Fielding attempt to swear eternal friendship but are forced down separate paths by rocks presenting narrow pathways for the horses. This symbolizes their inability to bridge the gulf between their races and indicates that a friendship between them is not yet possible.

The Indian setting is very important in *A Passage to India* and is an antagonistic agent to the British colonialists. The landscape attempts to expel the British, and some critics pinpoint the correspondence of the three sections of the novel to three divisions of the Indian year: cool spring, hot summer, wet monsoon.

The caves are elemental, and the

narrative begins with extensive references and descriptions of the physical setting. The nothingness of the caves should convince people to accept the irrational and emphasizes their relative insignificance. The British experience in India suggests that humanity must not oppose the natural rhythms of the earth and attempt to impose order on the “chaos” that is India.

This spiritual muddledom is something that Forster has been examining in all his earlier novels; but here he relates it to a more general concept, to the very religious sense itself. *A Passage to India* is well named: it is the journey from Western ideas of choice, selection, organisation, materialism into the formless chaos of life which challenges all these categories and which, most important of all, tests Western notions of the Absolute. Mrs Moore, good, ordinary lady, is the perfect medium for the encounter.

The invocation of Krishna is an invocation of life in all its wholeness; and where Mosque and Cave, human thought and endeavour and that which they have grown out of, fail to harmonise, the Temple into the infinite may yet achieve the reconciliation. The world of India and its religion become descriptive of a state of complex being such as Western humanism fails to reckon with; and under the muted sadness of the ending,

Read the following essay

The mystery and muddle of *A Passage to India*

- Article written by: Kate Symondson

Kate Symondson explores the tensions and dualities at the heart of *A Passage to India* and the challenges E M Forster faced in writing the novel.

In *A Passage to India*, India looms as unfathomable, undefinable, or, to use E. M. Forster’s expression: a mystery and a muddle. On his first visit to the country in 1912, Forster’s experience of the ancient city of Ujjain fed his blurry impression of India. Here, he found that:

There was no place for anything, and nothing was in its place. There was no time either. [...] One confusion enveloped Ujjain and all things. Why differentiate? I asked the driver what kind of trees those were, and he answered ‘Trees’; what was the name of that bird, and he said ‘Bird’; and the plain, interminable, murmured, ‘Old buildings are buildings, ruins are ruins’.

The India of Forster’s 1924 novel spills beyond all order, all comprehension, and the mystery and muddle that characterises what he depicts as an essentially unknowable country leaves the

reader of the story with many unanswered questions, and an overwhelming sense of irresolution. I P Fassett, a critic for *The Criterion* (a modernist magazine), complained that the novel was 'all very vague'. Living until 1970, Forster was plagued by readers for decades with the question: 'what happened in the Marabar Caves?' His definitive and immovable response? 'I don't know', he would simply – frustratingly – say. Even the incident at the heart of the novel's plot, therefore, was, like India, maintained as a mystery. In a letter to his friend and fellow author, William Plomer, he connects the plot's mystery with India's: 'I tried to show that India is an unexplainable muddle by introducing an unexplainable muddle – Miss Quested's experience in the cave.' In his refusal to give away anything beyond what is contained in *A Passage to India*, more than ever, it is up to the reader to draw his or her own conclusions.

'The sense of racial tension, of incompatibility, never left me'

Writing *Passage* was not easy. Forster began the novel after his 1912 trip, but didn't finish it until 1924, following a second trip to the country in 1921. His writing first faltered around 1913. At that time, he wrote to his friend Forrest Reid complaining that 'The only book I have in my head is too like *Howards End* to interest me'. 'I want something', he said, 'beyond the field of action and behaviour [...] India is full of such wonders, but she can't give them to me'. India proved too elusive, and, as his memories faded he withdrew into another project: writing the book that was to eventually become *Maurice*. Though his Indian novel wasn't yet to be, *Maurice* did cater to his urge to write something unlike his previous four novels, allowing him to move away from the quaint conventionality and polite restraint of quintessential Englishness. As he pushed beyond the boundaries of Edwardian romance in his gay novel, Forster sought images and a language that also went beyond the bounds of the familiar. India, he felt, demanded the same.

After spending time as secretary to the Maharajah of Dewas, Forster returned (though somewhat unhelpfully) to his Indian novel. A lot had changed in the decade or so since he'd last worked on it – in India, in England, in the world. The First World War had, of course, had a tremendous impact, and politically, culturally, socially, Anglo-India had significantly, irrevocably changed. In 1919, Colonel Dyer ordered his British Indian army troops to open fire on a crowd of nonviolent protesters who had gathered for a Sikh festival in north-west India. Over a thousand died in the ten minute ceaseless fire, in what became known as the Amritsar Massacre. Forster had already considered himself anti-imperial, but following this, was deeply, vehemently so. With 70 or so pages of the book written before these events and this time-lapse, he faced a chronological issue. His solution was to write the novel 'out of time'. He makes no reference to dates or the ferment of contemporary politics, and it is difficult to say with any certainty whether it is post- or pre- war. The tone of the book had certainly changed however, as he wrote in 1922 to Syed Ross Masood (to whom he dedicated the novel), 'when I began the book I thought of it as a little bridge of sympathy between east and west, but this conception has had to go, my sense of truth forbids anything so comfortable'. Like *Howards End*, this is a novel that hopes for connection, but, just as the India of the novel is depicted, the call for connection is 'not a promise, only an appeal'.

The Twilight of the Double Vision

As with so much of Forster's fiction, *A Passage to India* is unsettled by binary tensions. The central question of the novel – whether an Englishman and an Indian can ever be friends – is played out in the drama of converging and diverging opposites. In his other novels, the solid, ordered world of 'telegrams and anger', 'pickpockets and trams' is troubled by a sense of the unseen, the metaphysical. In *Passage*, Forster works his philosophical and aesthetic preoccupation with dualism to its climax.

Writing of the condition of modernity, Forster complained that 'the heavens and the earth have become terribly alike since Einstein'. In *Passage*, there is a sense that he is working to restore that double vision of the earthly and heavenly, the solid and the nebulous. The tripartite structure, repeated images – the wasp, 'mosque, cave, mosque, cave' – and atmospheric, metaphysical language imbue the novel with a rhythmic, musical quality, suggesting 'something more' than can usually be seen or said. Mrs Moore seems to see through the visible, material world to some inexpressible, transcendental beyond. After experiencing the Marabar caves,

She had come to that state where the horror of the universe and its smallness are both visible at the same time – the twilight of the double vision [where...] a spiritual muddledom is set up for which no high-sounding words can be found.

The echo has an extraordinary nullifying effect. It trivialises the systems and structures that order and reassure, and, in the senseless pervasive reverberation of the 'ou-boum', articulation fails, and certainties fall into fathomless abyss. In *Howards End*, the merging of 'the prose and the passion', the material and metaphysical realise Forster's hope for connection. In *Passage*, however, the unseen forces trouble and thwart resolution. In answer to the question of whether an Englishman and an Indian can be friends, India replies – in her hundred, undefined voices – 'No, not there,' 'not yet'.

Read and consider the following passages from the novel

==The domination of the Indian people by the forces of British imperialism suggests the impossibility of bridging the gulf of antipathy between the races.

== Going to hang up her cloak, she found that the tip of the peg was occupied by a small wasp. She had known this wasp or his relatives by day; they were not as English wasps, but had long yellow legs which hung down behind when they flew. Perhaps he mistook the peg for a branch - no Indian animal has any sense of an interior. Bats, rats, birds, insects will as soon nest inside a house as out; it is to them a normal growth of the eternal jungle, which alternately produces houses trees, houses trees. There he clung, asleep while jackals in the plain bayed their desires and mingled with the percussion of drums. (Ch.3)

== "Pretty dear," said Mrs Moore to the wasp. He did not wake, but her voice floated out, to swell the night's uneasiness' (Ch. 3).

Chandrapore

The opening description prepares us for what is to follow.

==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 there; 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, and though a few fine houses exist they are hidden away in gardens or down alleys whose filth deters all but the invited guest There is no painting and scarcely any carving in the bazaars. 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 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. (Ch. 1)

==The elephant walked straight at the Kawa Dol as if she would knock for admission with her forehead, then swerved, and followed a path round its base. 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. (Ch.14)

Structure of *A Passage to India*

A Passage to India falls naturally into three parts. The first is dominated by the educated Moslem gentlemen, with Aziz as the most prominent. It reveals the division of Chandrapore into two factions, the English and the Indians. It shows how each feels toward the other with a kind of uneasiness apparent in the differences between them. It is the period before the hot weather and on the surface, benign.

The Caves section plunges the groups into the hot weather. The cave incident that involves Aziz and Adela in a trial reveals the hatred that has lain below the surface in both groups. Evil and ugliness prevail and violence erupts briefly and then subsides, subservient to the oppressive heat.

Warily, in this section, Forster begins to sound the temple bells, and the voice of Hinduism becomes more and more prevalent.

The trial scatters the main participants in many directions. Mrs. Moore dies en route to England; Adela returns to England after her broken engagement; Fielding is promoted to a new position that involves travel; and Aziz and Godbole retire to the Hindu state of Mau, which is the setting for the final section of the novel.

The Temple section regroups three of the main characters, and, as the title suggests, brings Hinduism into the spotlight. Fielding, traveling less "light" than usual, is reunited with Aziz, but Fielding's marriage makes complete reconciliation impossible. The rainy season predominates and seems to give new life and to renew the life cycle.

Although some critics seem to believe that Forster ends the novel on a pessimistic note, the prevalence of Hinduism and its beneficent effect on Fielding somewhat denies the charge.

E. K. Brown discusses the rhythm in the book, saying that there is a rise-fall-rise pattern indicated in the events of the three parts of the book: in the first part, good; in the second, evil; and in the third, good again.

Godbole's song runs as a haunting melody through the part of the book that follows the tea party, popping up unexpectedly to produce strange effects. It finally comes to full fruition at the celebration of the birth of the god Krishna.

Mysticism in A Passage to India

Much has been written about mysticism in Forster's novels, primarily in *A Passage to India*. It is not, however, mysticism per se with which Forster is here concerned, but rather the mysticism of Hinduism. Any understanding of the mystic element in this novel requires some knowledge of the religion on the part of the reader. (See the short paragraph at the beginning of the commentary on Part III, the "Temple" section.)

But even such knowledge will not bring complete or immediate understanding, for Forster is not attempting to explain Hinduism, or to proselytize for it; his method of dealing with it is, in the main, allusive rather than expository.

The novel is full of unanswered questions: "Mrs. Moore felt increasingly (vision or nightmare?) that, though people are important, the relations between them are not." "God si love. Is this the first message of India?" The reader can find many others for himself; since Forster himself does not pretend to answer them, it would be presumptuous to do so here. In fact, part of the essence of mysticism is its inexpressibility; it cannot be reduced to words, to questions with answers.

However, the reader should at least be aware of those elements that have mystical overtones — primarily the character of Mrs. Moore, the echo and its effect on her, and many of the aspects of Hinduism.

Nature in *A Passage to India*

This novel does more than stress the malignant effect of moral and political domination; it also emphasizes the coexistence of nature with human struggle. Someone has noted that Forster knew and appreciated many of the beauties of India's landscape, but this is not the novel that depicts them. The mud, the dun-colored sky, the buzzing flies, the evil caves, the floods, and the merciless heat constitute for Forster the setting about Chandrapore. It is a place of cheerless plains and "lumpy" hills which contain the "fists and fingers" of the Marabar. "Nothing fits," and man's creations are completely out of harmony with nature.

It is quite evident that Forster intentionally chooses a most unlovely part of India to show the disharmony among the people who inhabit it. He explores the extremes of benevolence and malevolence and uses nature to help with both. For example, the beauty of the moon illuminates the lovely friendship of Mrs. Moore and Aziz; the pale sun against an "insipid sky" forecasts the evil of the cave incident. The wasp enhances Mrs. Moore's and Professor Godbole's concept of God's love for His creation. The bee stings bring Ralph and Aziz together, but the rocks force Fielding and Aziz apart. This influence of nature on human affairs is in line with Hindu philosophy.

Also see

- Roles of Godbole and Mrs Moore
- Symbols and motifs