CHAPTER IV

HOWARDS END AND A PASSAGE TO INDIA: EXPERIMENTS IN ‘CONNECTION’
Forster's critical creed centres around his passionate desire to reconcile prose and passion, to bridge the widening gap between the Benthamite and the Coleridgean views of the world. Art, according to him, should somehow connect the two so that a meaningful survival is ensured on this disordered planet. This seems to be in line with Woolf's idea of androgynous art. Art, for Woolf, should bring about a union between the female and male principles which is the only means for wholeness and integrity. In the age of anxiety and despair where T.S. Eliot could "connect nothing with nothing", Forster proposed: "Only connect ..." His criticism was a quest for reserves of spiritual and creative energies in man. But Forster was no dreamy idealist, no pedlar of Erewhonian myths. His was a tough-minded assertion of a spiritual vision of man. His humanism took him into the midst of human affairs, and human situations. His ideals as a critic came directly into conflict with values. Forster did not withdraw into the inner world of poetry and vision but as a serious artist he demonstrated a marriage between prose and passion, the inner world of vision and the outer world of action, because he felt that somehow one must attempt a connection or else we shall all perish. His novels,
particularly *Howards End* and *A Passage to India* are experiments in 'connection'.

In *Howards End* the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels represent the Benthamite and the Coleridgean cultures respectively. These are the two antagonistic interpretations of the world. One stresses the public aspect of action and events and the other insists on the personal aspect of life. Wilfred Stone compares this dichotomy between Wilcoxes and Schlegels to Dickinson's dichotomy between the "Red-bloods" and the "Mollycoddles". He describes these two types at length.

The Red-bloods had their originals in the wellborn bullies and roughs of the "best set," those cricket-playing conformists of the public school (and university) who were destined to rule Britain and her empire; the Mollycoddles were those, like Dickinson and Forster, almost as wellborn, who hated and envied the strong ones and consoled themselves with dreams that one day the meek and the sensitive would inherit the earth.2

Forster undoubtedly was on the side of the Mollycoddles and Margaret Schlegel reflects his views in the novel. He believed in the motto: Be soft even if you stand to get squashed. This Dickinsonian dichotomy can be clearly applied to the types of people in the novel. The Wilcoxes are the Red-bloods. They are in business and "belong to a world of

1 Wilfred Stone, *The Cave and the Mountain*, p. 236.
2 Ibid., pp. 236-237.
'telegrams and anger"; they regard the world as being organized towards given ends. They are sharp towards the lower orders, deferential towards social formalities, respectful towards machinery. Predominantly practical, predatory, expansionist, their spirit is the spirit of Whiggery, their economies and social philosophy are laissez faire. Their household is masculine and has all the energy associated with the male principle. Wilcoxes believe in action and their deity is efficiency. Theirs is the world dominated by committees and it is interesting to see the Wilcox committee sitting together to decide over Mrs. Wilcox's last wish. Forster presents the semi-comic scene thus:

Considered item by item, the emotional context was minimized, and all went forward smoothly. The clock ticked, the coals blazed higher, and contended with the white radiance that poured in through the windows. Unnoticed the sun occupied his sky, and the shadows of the trees stems, extraordinarily solid, fell like trenches of purple across the frosted lawn. It was a glorious winter morning. Evie's fox terrier, who had passed for white, was only a dirty grey dog now, so intense was the purity that surrounded him. He was discredited, but the black birds that he was chasing gloowed with Arabian darkness, for all the conventional colouring of life had been altered ...

To follow it is unnecessary. It is a rather a moment when the commentator should step forward.

---

Ought the Wilcoxes have offered their home to Margaret? ... The practical moralist may acquit them - almost. For one hard fact remains. They did neglect a personal appeal.¹

In the Wilcoxes' world personal relation is meaningless. It is a thing to be disposed of as just an item on the agenda. They represent the outer world of daylight experience where action and events matter, and feeling and emotions have no place at all. They are the practical pragmatic, matter-of-fact, British-to-the-backbone materialists on whom rests the Empire and her success. Margaret, a member of the opposing camp, is aware of the necessity and relevance of the Wilcox culture which is responsible for the present prosperity of England. She tells Helen:

If Wilcoxes hadn't worked and died in England for thousands of years, you and I couldn't sit here without having our throats cut. There would be no trains, no ships to carry us literary people about in, no fields even. Just savagery .... More and more do I refuse to draw my income and sneer at those who guarantee it.²

Here Margaret is only asserting an historical fact. The industrial milieu which the Wilcoxes represent has changed the face of the earth. They have achieved success at the cost of imagination and personal appeal. They have bull-dozed their way to the top, and created a milieu governed by materialistic

---

² Ibid., pp. 177-178.
and utilitarian values. But nevertheless, the reality of such outer life cannot be denied, though it has been built upon sand. Margaret herself testifies to the reality of Wilcox milieu. She tells Helen:

The truth is that there is a greater outer life that you and I have never touched - a life in which telegrams and anger count. Personal relations that we think supreme, are not supreme there. Their love means marriage settlements, death, death duties. So far I'm clear. But here's my difficulty. This outer life, though obviously horrid, often seems the real one - there's grit in it. It does breed character. Do personal relations lead to sloppiness in the end?\(^6\)

Boorish industrialism untouched by personal sentiments is what the Wilcox culture stands for in the novel. For them social propriety counts more than human or personal sympathy. In contrast to them are the Schlegel sisters with their 'fetishes and intellectual heritage.' They are thoroughly Bloomsbury; they entertain musicians, artists and even an actress; they believe in literature, art and personal relations; they are moralists and anti-utilitarians; they have a nobbish faith in the rightness of their own sensibilities.\(^7\) Their household is predominantly female. They are emancipated, modern, humane, thoughtful and responsive to the plight of the less fortunate. Their idealism is attributable

\(^6\) Ibid., p. 41.

\(^7\) Wilfred Stone, op. cit., p. 239.
to their German background. Their standard of morality stresses personal sympathy rather than social propriety. Social conscience, for them, is less important than personal relations. They are the dreamy intellectual idealists representing the inner life and the forces of 'the unseen'.

Their values come directly into conflict with the Wilcoxian values. They stand for the female principle of order, sympathy, harmony and understanding. They are romantic in their temperament as against the practical English heritage which the Wilcoxes stand for. This antithesis between the Wilcoxes and the Schlegels creates a dialectic "in which the national contests with the international, the seen with the unseen, the practical with the romantic, the prose with the poetry and the passion." In this conflict Forster clearly shows his affiliation with the German and Coleridgean idealism with its implicit separation of utilitarian and aesthetic functions. He is on the side of the Schlegels all through the conflict. But he believes that truth can be found only by making repeated journeys into both the extremes, and finally by bringing about a union of the two. The novel thus is an attempt to test the ability of Bloomsbury liberalism to survive a marriage with the great outside world of action and events. The juxtaposition of Wilcoxes and Schlegels is meant

---

8 Malcolm Bradbury, "Howards End", p. 133.
to show the conflict in which one can bring about a synthesis by the Forsterian motto which Margaret Schlegel lives out in the novel.

"Only connect": this is Forster's plea for meaningful survival in a world in which life is fragmented. Margaret's marriage with Henry Wilcox is a symbolic union of the two cultures they represent. It is her deliberate attempt to attain proportion, to achieve wholeness or in Woolfian terms, androgyny. Sterile idealism and romantic dreaming alone cannot improve the world, nor can inhuman industry alone better the situation. There has to be a connection between the two systems of values so that life becomes meaningful, so that art becomes meaningful. It is the only way to escape decadence and brutality which the two extremes threaten to unleash in the world. In the thematic framework there is, therefore, a "joining of power and sensibility, the heroic and the civilized, male and female".10 Weakening of imagination the industrial world is what Forster deplores and the plea for imagination can

---

9 Howards End, p. 188.
10 Wilfred Stone, op cit., p. 236.
be effective only if one can connect poetry and passion with
the "civilization of luggage", which prized money first,
inlect second, imagination not at all.

It is the vice of a vulgar mind to be thrilled by
bigness, to think that a thousand square miles are
a thousand times more wonderful than one square
mile .... That is not imagination. No, it kills it
.... Oh yes, you have learned men, who ... collect
facts, and facts, and empires of facts. But which
of them will rekindle the light within?11

Margaret Schlegel tried to rekindle the light within by
attempting to connect the prose with the passion. This is
the only way to spread what Arnold calls "sweetness and
light." She is the ideal of proportion in the book. Her
search for truth differs from that of a 'yogi', or from that
of a commissar. Her truth is a synthesis, an organic whole
which is greater than the sum of its parts. In contrast to
her sister Helen's romantic love, Margaret's love for Henry
Wilcox is a means of "setting his soul in order",12 of making
him a "better man", of helping him "to the building of the
rainbow bridge that could connect the prose in us with the
passion."13 Her connection is a heroic attempt to keep
proportion, an effort to join the prose and the passion.
Whereas Helen's connection is a kind of hysterical self-
immolation verging on the suicidal.14 She destroys Leonard

11 Howards End, p. 43.
12 Ibid., p. 219.
13 Ibid., p. 240.
14 Wilfred Stone, op cit., p. 255.
Bast and makes him die a symbolic death even before he actually dies. She fails to achieve proportion, and thereby falls short of attaining truth as Margaret views it.

The businessman who assumes that this life is everything, and the mystic who asserts that it is nothing, fail, on this side or 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 halfway between anything. It was only to be found by continuous excursions into either realm, and through proportion is the final secret, to espouse it at the outset is to insure sterility. 15

Margaret's love affair with Mr. Wilcox is an excursion into the other extreme in order to establish proportion and to escape from sterility. She tells Helen

There is the widest gulf between my love-making and yours. Yours was romance; mine will be prose. I'm not running it down - a very good kind of prose, but well considered, well thought out . . . . I know all Mr. Wolcox's faults. He's afraid of emotion. He cares too much about success, too little about the past. His sympathy lacks poetry and so isn't sympathy really. I'd even say - she looked at the shining lagoons - "that spiritually, he's not as honest as I am. Doesn't that satisfy you?" 16

Margaret hovers between the two worlds and realises the truth of both, accepts men as they are and continues to search for truth. She reflects:

16 Ibid., p. 177.
are, now yearning with her sister for truth! Love and Truth - their warfare seems eternal.\textsuperscript{17}

The novel is a drama of this warfare between Love and Truth in which proportion is the only means of peace and harmony. This warfare takes a social dimension when the question: who shall inherit England? is raised. "Howards End" is a spiritual symbol for England and at the end of the novel we find the Schlegel sisters in possession of "Howards End." The Mollycoddles are victorious and we find Margaret standing like an angel guarding "Howards End" and its occupants against Wilcox Red-bloods. The heir to Howards End is certainly, Helen's child, an indirect result of the Wilcox's irresponsibility and Helen's suicidal romance. Schlegelian standard of personal sympathy lives symbolically through Leonard's child, though Leonard himself is sacrificed in the process. He is disposed of through death and Henry Wilcox is defeated through moral enervation. The Schlegels triumph but by destroying everyone they come into contact with. If Henry Wilcox lives on happily with Margaret, it is not the Henry Wilcox whom we have known, but a moral ghost who was created anew as a result of Margaret's attempts to 'connect.' Leonard lives but through Helen's child who is the result of a hysterical union in the cause of moral sympathy, and who, therefore, will be a shadowy existence. If Schlegels' way is Forster's way to achieve

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 228.
proportion, much of human life, whether it is that of Wilcoxes or of the Basts, will be destroyed before Forster can do us a novel. One can certainly notice a curtailment of life in the interest of moral enthusiasm. Forster's mission in this novel is to defeat the devil, the Benthamite culture, represented by the Wilcoxes, which is "blinded by arithmetic, deaf to the warnings of poetry, which assumed that a man is only the sum of his qualities."

Margaret's final triumph over the Wilcoxes symbolizes the triumph of the female principle over the male principle. Failure to connect is what is wrong with the Wilcoxes who are dominated by the male principle. When Henry objects to Helen's presence in Howards End on the ground of social propriety Margaret gives a long speech exposing his failure to connect.

"Not any more of this" she cried. "You shall see the connection if it kills you, Henry. You have had a mistress - I forgave you. My sister has a lover - you drive her from the house. Do you see the connection? Stupid, hypocritical, cruel - oh, contemptible - a man who insults his wife, when she's alive and cants with her memory when she's dead. A man who ruins a woman for his pleasure, and casts her off to ruin other men. And gives bad financial advice, and then says he is not responsible. These men are you. You can't recognise them because you can't connect. I've had enough of your unweeded kindness. I've spoilt you long enough .... No one has ever told you what you are - muddled, criminally muddled. Men like you use repentence as a blind. So don't repent."

18 Stone, p. 7, quoted from Galsworthy Lowes Dickinson.
Only say to yourself, 'what Helen has done, I've done.'

This reveals an essential difference between the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes. The Wilcoxes never admit being wrong whereas the Schlegels admit that they may be wrong. Henry's shirking of responsibility for Leonard's misery and Helen's romantic sympathy for Leonard are the extremes which are contrasted in the novel. Margaret keeps proportion by trying to connect in this extreme situation, and makes sure that Leonard's child becomes the heir to Howards End. The condition of the Schlegel sisters may be said to be the condition of spiritual and moral laissez-faire. They try to attune themselves to the Wilcox rhythms of "telegrams and anger." Helen heads for a headlong collision resulting in hysteria and violence while Margaret connects throughout. "She connected, though the connection might be bitter."²⁰

Keeping proportion becomes the central criterion of quality in the novel. Proportion rings throughout the novel through the operation of the metaphors of wholeness, that of seeing life steadily and seeing it whole. The former is the business of a successful materialist while the latter, that of the sensitive and the plucky. Forster naturally chose the

---

¹⁹ Howards End, p. 300.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 207.
latter and so did Margaret in the novel. These two different ways of reacting to life are representative of the two contrasting cultures in the book. Margaret herself becomes the advocate of seeing life whole. She says:

It is impossible to see modern life steadily and see it whole, and she had chosen to see it whole.
Mr. Wilcox saw steadily.  

Modern life is so mechanized and fragmented that one cannot look at it and consider it item by item and at the same time comprehend it as a whole. The Wilcoxes look at life, love, marriage, death etc., in a committee room considering them item by item and so they fail to achieve a whole, complex vision of life. The Schlegels, on the other hand, prefer to see it whole. Leonard, the representative of the poor class, the culturally underdeveloped, also perceives the impossibility of doing both, seeing life steadily and seeing it whole. He says:

Oh, it was no good, this continual aspiration ... To see life steadily and to see it whole was not for the likes of him.  

This "continual aspiration" to keep proportion seems to become a reality when Margaret indulges in a rather romantic contemplation of the eternal life of the countryside.

---

21 Ibid., p. 165.
22 Ibid., p. 67.
In these English farms, if anywhere, one might see life steadily and see it whole, group in one vision its transitoriness and its eternal youth, connect — connect without bitterness until all men are brothers.\textsuperscript{23}

Proportion, Connection, Wholeness: these are the rhythms with which the novel closes. Ruth Wilcox represents the achievement of proportion. She is the living affirmation that "it is private life that holds out the mirror to infinity."\textsuperscript{24}

Her life with the Wilcoxes is indirectly pictured by Margaret

To be humble and kind, to go straight ahead, to love people rather than pity them, to remember the submerged — well one can't do all these things at once, worse luck, because they're so contradictory. It's then that proportion comes in — to live by proportion. Don't begin with proportion. Only prigs do that. Let proportion come in as a last resource when the better things have failed.\textsuperscript{25}

Mrs. Wilcox kept proportion when the better things have failed.

This is what Margaret thinks as greatness in her.

She was not intellectual, nor even alert, and it was odd that, all the same, she should give the idea of greatness. Margaret, zig-zagging with her friends over Thought and Art, was conscious of a personality that transcended their own and dwarfed their activities. There was no bitterness in Mrs. Wilcox; there was not even criticism; she was lovable, and no ungracious or uncharitable word had passed her lips. Yet she and daily life were out of focus; one or the other must show blurred. And at Münch she seemed more out of focus than usual, and nearer the line that divides daily life from a life that may be of greater importance.\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p. 264.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 91.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p. 83.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., pp. 86-87.
If Mrs. Wilcox is a symbol of proportion, why does she fail to change the Wilcox system? This is a moral question that can be asked in the novel. The book has no direct answer to it and shows and ethical evasiveness. One can only conclude that "the better things have failed" with Mrs. Wilcox and so she ended her life calmly by keeping proportion. But to Margaret she becomes a source of inspiration and solace. To her Ruth Wilcox is an evidence that God works in other ways. Through Ruth, Margaret finds a home amidst the civilization of luggage. She finds in Ruth Wilcox everything that she can retain as religion. She finds in Ruth's life the truth that the unseen cannot be expressed adequately in public life and "... personal intercourse, and that alone, that ever hints at a personality beyond our daily vision." From Ruth she learns her mission, that is, not to contrast the seen and the unseen, poetry and prose, the outer life and the life, but to reconcile them. Margaret realises that she must "fill out both the prose and poetry in her own life, and this filling out is the principle of expansion in the novel."  

The rhythms of the novel close like Beethoven's Fifth Symphony and we find the Schlegels escaping into the

27 Ibid., p. 91.
28 Malcolm Bradbury, p. 138.
music heard after the orchestra stops, into the future perfection which "has never actually been played." A world of spiritual absolutes alone is fit for the Schlegels and they drift into it. So the novel does not close, but opens out. Margaret's attempts to "fill out" the prose and the poetry are not yet over, but they provide an "expansion, not completion" for the possibilities of the novel. The book as such is an eloquent plea for personal relation and Bloomsbury liberalism. Through the unsuccessful experiments at connection Forster tries to find out an alternative to decadence and brutality that seem to threaten life in the modern world. Proportion is his answer, Connection is his means. The book is a drama of conflict and an attempt to establish proportion both in social and personal life.

*A Passage to India* is Forster's greatest achievement as a novelist. His views on the novel are best exemplified in this book. His critical views of fiction are fully in evidence in *A Passage to India*. It is the greatest example of moderation which Forster advocates amidst the fury of new experiments in the genre. Forster believed that the novel should retain its traditional stock-in-trade or else it loses its values. What should be new in fiction is the new sensitiveness

---

29 *Aspects of the Novel*, p. 143.
30 Ibid.
with which the novelist should inform his work. He is suspicious about the innovations of his contemporaries. For Forster the traditional form and methods are indispensable, but the novelist must be able to present the poetic, the passionate and the personal aspects of life. As a novelist Forster's main concern is to represent how people live life as it is. And so he distrusts any dominant pattern for the novel. According to him, in fiction "life should be given the preference and must not be whittled or distended for a pattern's sake." Human beings are the permanent material of fiction and the novel is 'sogged with humanity.' For this reason "the novel is not capable of as much artistic development as the drama: its humanity or the grossness of its material ... hinder it."  

It will be our task to determine whether in .. A Passage to India he is successful in practising all that he preached in Aspects of the Novel. The answer is yes, but. Let us look at the novel in terms of the different aspects of the novel. The first aspect which Forster speaks of is the story. If one asks whether A Passage to India has a story, the answer which Forster himself would give is: "Yes - oh dear yes - the novel tells a story." After reading the first few

---

31 Aspects of the Novel, p. 145.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., p. 40.
chapters the reader is curious to know what happened next. The novel reveals a "double allegiance", that is, to life in time and life by values. Forster does not hide the clock in the novel nor does his allegiance to life in time lead us to its normal destination, the grave. He harmonises the two and so we hear both the ticking of the clock and the voice of values. The clock ticks on, two English ladies desirous of seeing the real India land up in Chandrapore. One of them accidently falls in with a young Indian doctor. Friendship develops and the young doctor arranges an expedition into the Marabar Caves in order to show the real India to the English ladies. He is joined by Cyril Fielding, the liberal educationist, who is in with Aziz and the Indians. Something happens in the cave into which Adela Quested enters. Dr. Aziz is accused of raping Adela and is arrested. Racial rivalry is let loose and during the ordeal Fielding is on the side of his friend Aziz against his fellow countrymen. In a packed court-room Adela breaks down and withdraws her charge against Dr. Aziz. The Indians are happy and Fielding becomes their hero. Adela is rejected by the Anglo-Indians and is left alone. Fielding comes close to her and helps her to be let off without paying damages to Aziz. The clock ticks on. Adela sails for England. Fielding too goes to England. Aziz and his friends grow suspicious and conclude that Fielding

34 Ibid., p. 43.
has married Adela. Meanwhile the news of Fielding's marriage reaches Aziz. He is filled with suspicion and hatred. Fielding comes back to India with his wife Stella Moore and her brother Ralph. He meets Aziz in Mau. Misunderstanding is cleared but they part forever. This is roughly the story of A Passage to India. This 'little worm' of time which we have separated from the novel appears to be so unlovely and dull. But Forster places it against the background of the Marabar Caves which frustrate and create complications in the life by time. The Marabar represents the utter negation of everything that is important in life by time. It even repudiates an attempt at its own description by Godbole, which ultimately becomes a series of negations.

'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 at 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, they are 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....

The life in time which Forster presents in the novel is seen against the huge backdrop of the Marabar Caves which in the novel symbolise utter negation, valuelessness and meaninglessness. And yet it is the centre of the book which gives to it a meaning, and the readers a message.

Forster is not a moralist and the Marabar Caves are not moral or holy at all. But they do represent the 'extraordinary' in the novel. Without them the little worm of time, the story of the book, is dull and ordinary. The book itself opens with an allusion to this extraordinary phenomena,

Except the Marabar Caves and they are twenty miles off - the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary.

Except the extraordinary, you will have only the little worm of time, the story. And what is this extraordinary element? Forster says:

The caves are readily described. A tunnel eight feet long, five feet high, three feet wide, leads to 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. Having seen one such cave, having seen two, having seen three, four, fourteen,

36 Ibid., p. 9.
twenty-four, the visitor returns to Chandrapore uncertain whether he has had an interesting experience or a dull one or any experience at all. He finds it difficult to discuss the caves, or to keep them apart in his mind. ... Nothing, nothing attaches to them, and their reputation — for they have one — does not depend upon human speech .... 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 ....

These 'caves' provide the centre of the book, and they have a terrifying echo which disintegrates all sounds into a monotonous 'ou-boum'. This echo is a challenge to all human distinctions.

'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'.

Forster does not romanticize the Marabar Caves. He just presents them as looming large behind the story and the plot of the book. They also influence the characters of the book. Having "robbed infinity and eternity of their vastness" The Marabar Caves appear to be the vast roaring space against which Forster develops his plot and story. They are central to the aesthetic structure of the novel. What they symbolize can be deduced from Wilfred Stone's reading of the structure of the novel. Stone, though he generously assumes that the

37 Ibid., pp. 124-125.
38 Ibid., p. 147.
39 Ibid.
novel's structure is overshadowed by Forster's supposed knowledge of the structure of Hindu temples, gives a convincing account of the novel's aesthetic structure. Forster was taught to see 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." While in its interior there is "a tiny cavity, a central cell, where in the heart of world complexity, the individual could be alone with his god."40 The three sections of the novel represent these two forms of life and reality, the outer and the inner. In the novel, "the Caves" is flanked by "Mosque" and "Temple", which represent the exterior of the world mountain. While the 'Caves' symbolises the inner cell, the primal darkness and chaos before creation and history. It stands for the primal mystery before all knowledge, the primal nothingness before everything was created, the primal chaos before all order and the primal darkness before the creation of light. It represents the timelessness, worldlessness, formlessness, meaninglessness and the primitive disorder, the condition of life before civilization intruded and made forms, distinctions and systems. It symbolises the inner reality, the primitive mystery out of which everything originated. It symbolises the One before the many, while

"Mosque" and "Temple" stand for life in the daylight world of consciousness and experience. They represent the systems by which men try to live a meaningful life. They represent the different ways of responding to the call of the divine, the Hindu way and the Muslim way. Christianity is in the backdrop as it is the religion of the intellectual west. These three religious systems are measured against the backdrop of the Marabar Caves, the symbol of inner reality, the centre of India's appeal in the book. Forster sees how each of them responds to this appeal from the caves. This appeal is in the form of an echo which responds to everything with the same meaningless 'ou-boum', which disintegrates and dissipates all form and meaning. It offers the same response to the highest poetry and the coarsest obscenity. It repudiates all human endeavour at ratiocination and systematisation. The Marabar Caves irk the visitor with their indistinctiveness and the monotony of their echoes. They are the nucleus of the novel, the echo-producing centre. The two sections which flank it symbolise the human response to this echo in terms of the two major religions in India. The plot interest is focussed on something which happened in the caves, and an Indian gentleman, Dr. Aziz, is accused of molesting an English tourist, Adela Quested. The racial rivalry between the Indians and the English reaches a climax; Mutual hatred is in the air but one Englishman, Cyril Fielding is on the side of the Indians. He firmly believes that Aziz is innocent.
Ultimately this is established when Adela breaks down at the trial and confesses her mistake. The complication is resolved but one question is yet to be answered. What happened to Adela in the Cave? This question is never answered but instead Forster presents the different characters against the experience of the Caves. Adela is a miserable creature after the trial. Her tragedy is due to her failure to connect the outer and the inner lives, the exterior and the interior of the World Mountain. Schooled in the predominantly intellectual climate of the west, she is totally unprepared to enter the cave, to come to terms with the inner reality, to face India and to respond to her appeal. Instead she tries to interpret her experience in the cave in terms of her intellectual standards which operate by distinctions and classifications. She classifies her experience in the Cave as a rape. A rape must have been the only label she could give to that experience. The pride of intellect, of which she is a victim, cannot sustain itself in the face of the echo from the cave. She failed to connect harmoniously the outer world with the inner life. Instead she builds up intellectual defenses against the passion, the poetry in her. Just before entering the cave she is engaged in a conversation with her host, Dr. Aziz, on the subject of love and marriage. She is attracted by the charms
of Aziz but instead of admitting it she revolts against that natural impulse.

..... What a handsome little oriental he was, and no doubt his wife and children were beautiful too, for people usually get what they already possess. She did not admire him with any personal warmth, for there was nothing of the vagrant in her blood, but she guessed he might attract women of his own race and rank, and she regretted that neither she nor Ronny had physical charm. It does make a difference in a relationship—beauty, thick hair, a fine skin. 41

Stone offers a Jungian interpretation of what happens in the cave. What Adela faces in the cave is the "shadow, that deepest and darkest bottom of the unconscious which strikes unspeakable horror into those unequipped to encounter it." 42 Her own suppressed subconscious becomes alive and she experiences herself as "another." Failing to endure and accept this experience she tries to interpret it in terms used for describing events or experiences on the conscious level. She fails to connect her subconscious and her conscious. What she suffers from therefore, is an "undeveloped heart." The mess she creates in Chandrapore is the result of her tragic fragmentation and her incapability to respond to the vision in the cave. She tries to analyse her experience steadily and she does not and cannot see it whole.

Pitted against the 'Caves' all the characters appear

41 A Passage to India, p. 151.
42 Stone, p. 335.
to be helpless dwarfs with the exception of Godbole and Mrs. Moore. Mrs. Moore discards her intellectual, ethical and spiritual defenses as she faces the Marabar Caves. She, to a certain extent, is capable of "seeing it whole" as a result of which she loses her hold on life. She enters the cave totally unprepared by culture and religion, but she "surrendered to the vision" and thus loses all interest in the outer life of relationships. She comes to the conclusion that though people are important, relationship is not. Religion, which was her stronghold against the anomalies of the world, now appears to be "poor little talkative Christianity", and all its teachings from 'Let there be light' to 'It is finished' only amounted to 'boum'." Her intuitive adequacy, the secret understanding of the heart, enables her to endure her experience though she too is shattered by the echo. It does not disturb her afterwards as it does Adela. As a result of its influence Mrs. Moore experiences a sense of panic and emptiness. In Howards End the goblins in the Fifth Symphony infuse the same sense of panic and emptiness in Helen Schlegel. After entering one cave Mrs. Moore sits down, overcome by panic and emptiness. Panic because "she was terrified over an area larger than usual; the universe never comprehensible to her intellect, offered no

43 A Passage to India, p. 148.
repose to her soul." Emptyness because relationship and religion presented themselves to her like a vacuum. What happened in the cave presents itself to her as love — a love in a church, love in a cave, as if there is the least difference." The Marabar presents itself to her as the challenge of nothingness to which she surrenders and she withdraws from life as a "saint of nothingness." She is not capable of making a distinction between presence and absence of love. In Marabar love is absent. It symbolizes Being without attributes. Mrs. Moore took it as final and withdrew from India, while Godbole is aware of the presence. The section entitled 'Temple' begins thus:

Some hundreds of miles westward of the Marabar Hills, and two years later in time, Professor Narayan Godbole stands in the presence of God.

Her failure to comprehend India is echoed by the coconut palms of Asirgarh as she sails away.

'So you thought and echo was India; you took the Marabar Caves as final?' they laughed. 'What have we in common with them, or they with Asirgarh?' Good-bye!'

Mrs. Moore is not capable of an extended life after the ordeal at Marabar, and she cannot like Narayan Godbole stand in the

---

44 Ibid.,
47 A Passage to India, p. 279.
48 Ibid., p. 205.
presence of God and say to him: 'come, come.' Having failed to achieve completeness she is resurrected in Godbole's mind at Mau.

Thus Godbole, though she was not important to him, remembered an old woman he had met in Chandrapore days. Chance brought her into his mind while it was in this heated state, he did not select her, she happened to occur among the throng of soliciting images, a tiny splinter, and he impelled her by this spiritual force to that place where completeness can be found. Completeness, not reconstruction.  

Mrs. Moore kept 'proportion' though in an imperfect way. She, like Mrs. Wilcox, is a "redemptive character; unable to save herself she does miraculous things for others. She did them by being the sort of person she was. She continued to do them after her ordeal at the Marabar."  

Forster suggests that India is a mystery, a muddle, where one can come closest to the divine in Godbole's way probably. All other attempts to penetrate the unknown, to establish connection, are destined to fail. The mud-bespattered Godbole, amidst the noisy chaos of the third section, as he waits for and celebrates Krishna's coming to save the world, is closest to the goal of attaining the divine. It is he who

49 Ibid., pp. 281-282.
presides over the ceremony which symbolises the "approaching triumph of India", which is a "muddle", "a frustration of reason and form." His contemplative insight enables him to respond to the mysterious appeal of the unknown. He keeps on saying, 'come, come', to the god who neglects to come. He has an intuitive understanding of the Marabar and his view of good and evil corresponds respectively to the presence and absence of 'Love', the aspects of his Lord. He tells Fielding

'I am informed that an evil action is performed in the Marabar Hills, and 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.' He stopped and sucked in his thin cheeks. 'It was performed by the guide.' He stopped again. 'It was performed by you.' Now he had an air of daring and coyness. 'It was performed by me.' He looked shyly down the sleeves of his own coat. 'An' 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.'

In a manner that is impossible for the others in the novel, Godbole is able to connect the inner life and the outer life. He is able to keep proportion. He knows what is special about the Marabar Hills, that is, absence of love. He understands the hundred voices of India and responds to their appeal by joining their chorus, 'come, come.' He is central to the main action of the third section, where he waits for Love to take upon itself the form of Krishna and 'come' to save the world.

51 A Passage to India, p. 280.
52 Ibid., pp. 174-175.
On account of this, critics have argued that Forster is recommending Hinduism as the only answer to the problems in the novel. V.A. Shahane finds in 'Mosque' "an attempted getting together"; "Caves indicates frustration and alienation"; 'Temple' signifies reconciliation "because the festival is symbolic of love and harmony." George H. Thomson correlates the three sections with the three stages of man's spiritual history: a shallow stage marked in the book by Aziz's "superficial optimism", a stage of disillusionment, embodied in Mrs. Moore's response to the caves, and a stage of qualified achievement, exemplified by Godbole in the last section. These critics are too quick to find a proper denouement for the novel and they do find one in Godbole's festival. But Forster did not intend a denouement for the novel. He wanted it to grow, to open out, to expand and not to close or achieve completion. The most one can say is that by presenting the Mosque-Caves-Temple sequence in the novel Forster is recommending 'proportion' between what needs synthesis, heart, mind and soul. The book exhorts a symbol-less, soul-less age "to connect the conscious and unconscious spheres of our being." Unless such

55 Stone, p. 339.
connection is made the traditional mistakes, - political, social, domestic, - will go on being committed. Forster's humanism does not lose sight of the separation that is the cause of all tragedy and unhappiness in the world.

Separation between conscious and unconscious is what used to be called the separation between man and God; humanism, if it is to mean anything, must deal with this fundamental fact. Adela, so withdrawn, fastidious, desexed, urban, and intellectual, is a heart-breaking caricature of the modern condition.56

Forster certainly honours the Hindu way of worship because of its "inclusion of merriment",57 which Christianity has shirked. It is the "least resistant to the unconscious and the instinctual, the least dogmatic and theological, the least appalled by the vision of the Shadow,"58 Forster admires Hinduism because it revives what the intellectual west has repressed and forgotten. Behind all these symbolic efforts to connect Forster tries to highlight that fact that for all our differences we are essentially one. It is our failure to recognize the unity behind the differences that is the cause of all disharmony and discord in the world. Godbole effects this unity for some time in "Temple." "The unity he makes is an image of art; for a moment at least all is one;

56 Ibid.
57 A Passage to India, p. 284.
58 Stone, op. cit., p. 339.
apprehensible by love; nothing is excepted or extraordinary. The novel itself assumes a similar unity, becomes a mystery, a revelation of wholeness; and does so without disturbing the story or the parable.¹⁵⁹

The other characters in the novel, in one way or other, fail to achieve completeness. Ronny Heaslop is a British-to-the-backbone administrator, a descendent of the Wilcoxes. He does not hear the echo from the cave and is not able to take hold of India. Fielding and Aziz remain outsiders as far as India is concerned. They too are incomplete and suffer from undeveloped souls. So *A Passage to India* does not have a hero or a heroine. There is no one in it who can be really called a hero. The main character in the novel is India herself. She fills the book with her hundred echoes and her never ending chorus is: "come, come'. She is no one, no place, no religion. India is a mystery. India does not belong to History or Politics. Then, what is India? In the novel "India (is) something which can hardly be conceived of."²⁶⁰ Forster himself gives the reason.

¹⁵⁹ Frank Kermode, "E.M. Forster as a Symbolist", p. 94.
India is the country, field, 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 home. India knows of their trouble. She knows of the whole world's trouble, to its uttermost depth. 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.

Forster presents the historical setting as a means of probing a universal condition. India's appeal to people, 'come, 'come,' can be interpreted as the cry of the severed roots of man in the earth asking for re-connection. Man has severed his "connection with the land" and the hundred voices of India are calling man back. A Passage to India evokes Forster's reverential view of nature. 'Nature' has been bull-dozed out of existence in the west. In 'India' Forster found nature which can symbolize what is permanent, whole and beautiful. India's appeal is a plea to all men to associate themselves with her, with nature, with what is permanent, whole and beautiful. "Destroy the old association between the land and the men who love her and you break a vital link with the instinctual life,

61 A Passage to India, p. 135.
62 Forster, "Our second greatest novel?" Two Cheers, p. 231.
with that sense of an ancient and unbroken heritage from the past which creates and enriches our cultural symbols. So the novel is not a novel about India alone, as Lionel Trilling has concluded. It has a wider significance, "it is about all of human life." 'India' in the novel is not to be limited by politics or geography. According to George H. Thomson, "India reflects all the world and all its people." India is an unfathomable mystery. Its vastness is repugnant to any order. It is a muddle, and therefore, it is incomprehensible. If India could be fathomed all creation would be comprehensible. "India" dwarfs the plot in A Passage to India, as it dwarfs the characters. The novel, therefore, is anti-hero and anti-plot. In Aspects of the Novel Forster defines plot thus:

The plot, then, is the novel in its logical in intellectual aspect; it requires mystery, but the mysteries are solved later on; the reader may be moving about in worlds unrealized, but the novelist has no misgivings.

The Plot in A Passage to India does not form the core of the novel. It is shrouded with mysteries which are not solved. Frederick G. Crews observes how 'India' makes it impossible for a plot to operate in the novel. "To understand India is

65 Quoted from "Thematic Symbol in A Passage to India", by June Perry Levine, p. 117.
66 Aspects of the Novel, p. 95.
to understand the rationale of the whole creation; but the characters do not understand it, and Forster's plot makes us ask whether human faculties are capable of such understanding at all.\(^57\) So far as India is concerned "to pot with the plot"\(^68\) because the novelist prefers to mix (himself) up in (his) material and be rolled over and over by it." He does "not try to subdue any longer" but hopes "to be subdued, to be carried away".\(^69\) In *A Passage to India* "all human happiness and misery does not take the form of action, it seeks means of expression other than through the plot ...."\(^70\) Adela, Azâz and Fielding suffer, not as a result of any definite action. Godbole's happiness and the ignorant bliss of the Punkah-puller are not the result of any definite action. Causality does not overshadow all the incidents in the novel. Enthusiastic about a new scheme for the novel, Forster asks in *Aspects of the Novel*:

After all why has a novel to be planned? Cannot it grow? Why need it close, as play closes? Cannot it open out? Instead of standing above his work and controlling it, cannot the novelist throw himself into it and be carried along to some goal that he does not foresee?\(^71\)

\(^{57}\) Quoted from *The Perils of Humanism*, by Levine, p. 117.
\(^{68}\) *Aspects*, p. 99.
\(^{69}\) Ibid., pp. 91-94
\(^{70}\) Ibid., p. 93.
\(^{71}\) *Aspects of the Novel*, p. 95.
The last section of the novel is an exemplification of this enthusiastic scheme for the novel. In "Temple" Forster seems to have thrown himself into the muddle and chaos of the Mau festival, quite uncertain where he is led to -

God give love. Is this the final message of India? 'Tukaram, Tukaram ...'72

Forster did not plan an ending for the novel. The plot is not wound up. Forster has followed the "convention which allows a novelist to stop as soon as he feels bored."73 He imparts a strong prophetic vision in the novel which finds an extension in the reader's mind and so the novel keeps on growing in the minds of the readers. The feeling remains that the novelist has not rounded things off. The last sentences of the novel justify this feeling.

'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 the riders must pass single pile; 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.'74

72 A Passage to India, p. 281.
73 Aspects of the Novel, p. 94.
74 A Passage to India, p. 317.
The reader is not given a vision of completeness and fulfilment. But he is prepared for an extended life which the scheme of the book does not require the characters to represent. The Rhythms in the novel undoubtedly are 'proportion, connection, wholeness.' The novel is a drama of human struggle and failure which is presented with a curious mixture of hope and despair. The rhythm does not reach a stage of fulfilment or completion because Forster the novelist clings to the idea of "Expansion .... Not completion, Not rounding things off but opening out." Thus the final effect of the novel is the same as the effect of the Fifth Symphony of Beethoven's orchestra. We hear the music that has never actually been played. In the novel we look forward to a future perfection, to a fulfilment of the rhythmic appeal of the novel, 'proportion.'

According to Forster "prophetic fiction ... demands humility and the absence of the sense of humour." It reaches back ..." In *A Passage to India* one notices these characteristics of prophetic fiction. It demands humility because its subject matter is above rationality. In it one can observe a compulsion to "reach back" to some elemental

---

75 Aspects of The Novel, p. 149.
76 *A Passage to India*, pp. 285-286.
reality. The novel reaches back, not to pity and love, but to a prophetic vision of a fundamental unity which alone can ensure a meaningful survival to modern man. Only a momentary glimpse of this unity is presented in the novel, and that is through Godbole

Covered with grease and dust, Professor Godbole had once more developed the life of his spirit. He had, with increasing vividness, again seen Mrs. Moore, and round her faintly clinging forms of trouble. He was a Brahman, she Christian, but it made no difference, it made no difference whether she was at trick of his memory or a telepathic appeal. It was his duty, as it was his desire, to place himself in the position of the God and to love her, and to place himself in her position and say to the God, 'Come, come, come,' This was all he could do. How inadequate.

But each according to his capacities, and he knew that his own were small. 'One old Englishwoman and one little, little wasp,' he thought, 'It does not seem much, still it is more than I am myself.'

So the novel is a prophetic song urging us to "reach back" to that "connection with the land" which is Forster's means of attaining wholeness and integrity. The essential in A Passage to India "lies outside words", reaching beyond the remotest echo, the silence.

The Marabar Caves provide the element of fantasy in the novel. Forster defines fantasy as "... the introduction of a god, ghost, angel, ... into ordinary life; or the introduction of ordinary men into no-man's-land; ..." the fourth

77 A Passage to India, pp. 285-286.
dimension; ..."78 In *A Passage to India* ordinary men are introduced into the "non-man's-land" represented by the Marabar Caves. Forster's description of them justifies this view.

There is something unspeakable in these outposts. They are like nothing else in the world, and a glimpse of them makes the breath catch. They rise abruptly, insanely without the proportion that is kept by the wildest hills elsewhere, they bear no relation to anything dreamt or seen. To call them 'uncanny' suggests ghosts, and they are older than all spirit.79

The Marabar Caves suggest the extra-ordinary and the characters are measured against this fantastic element. They are the sphere of absolute nullity and utter negation against which human values are measured in the novel. They represent the condition which the traveller in "The other side of the Hedge" finds on the other side, and are fundamental to the contrast between inner life and outer life which the novel implies. They are the non-human forces which are basic to Forster's experiment in connection. *A Passage to India*, is, therefore, the finest illustration of the "rainbow" with seven "aspects", Forster's scheme for the modern novel.

---

78 *Aspects of the Novel*, p. 106.
79 *A Passage to India*, pp. 123-124.
80 *Aspects of the Novel*, p. 100.