CHAPTER – III

 RITES OF PASSAGE

To The Ends of the Earth, The sea trilogy of William Golding that came out in 1991 actually consists of three novels published earlier. They are Rites of Passage, Close Quarters and Fire down Below. Rites of Passage was first published in 1980, Close Quarters in 1987 and Fire Down Below in 1990. When Golding published Rites of Passage he was not thinking in terms of trilogy. In his foreword to the trilogy Golding remarks:

The present volume began as three separate novels and I have made tentative gesture towards turning them into a trilogy. But the truth is I did not foresee volumes two and three when I set down to write volume one. Only after volume one was published did I come to realize that I had left Edmund Talbot, a ship and whole ship’s company to say nothing of myself, I got them some way on with a second volume and home and dry with a third (vi-viii), 1.
He later on admits that the beginning of *Rites of Passage* provided him with much material which he had not known was concealed there. Things began to take shape when he started writing *Close Quarters*. By the time he wrote *Fire down Below* he was able to create three novels with major characters, including the century characters, Edmund Talbot, and linked incidents in the background of a ship going on a journey from England to Australia. These are the factors common to all the novels.

The trilogy has been written in the form of diary written by Edmund Talbot. Talbot wrote this diary for his godfather who in fact was instrumental in securing a post for him as a civil servant in Australia. The diary has been written in the note book provided by the godfather whom Talbot does not name. The Novel begins thus: Honored godfather.

With those words I begin the journal I engaged myself to keep for you-no words could be more suitable very well then. The place on board the ship at last. The year: you know it. The date? Surely what matters is that it is the first day of my passage to the other side of the world; in token where of I have this moments inscribed
the number one at the top of this page for what I am about to write must be record of our first day. The month or day of the week can signify little since in our long passage from the south of old England to the Antipodes we shall pass through the geometry of all four season.”

The beginning of the novel consists primarily of a description of the ship and its passengers. It was not a passenger ship but a war ship being used to carry passengers. For Talbot it was his first journey by sea. So he was very uncomfortable.

Golding had the opportunity of serving the British navy during the World War II. So he was familiar with the constructing of a ship and the names of its various parts. His knowledge came handy when he started writing this sea trilogy. In the first book he gives a very vivid description of his accommodation. The hutch contained a sleeping place like a trough on the side of the ship. There were two drawers built under it. At one end of he hutch there was a folding writing table. At the other end was a canvas bowl with a bucket under it. There was a mirror above the bowl and two shelves for books at the foot of bunk. There was also a canvas chair in the
hutch. This was the place which becomes the home of Talbot during his entire journey. The name of the captain of the ship was Captain Anderson. About the other passengers, Talbot says "We have ladies, some young, some middling, some old. We have some oldish gentlemen, a youngish army officer and a younger parson." 33 this is the first introduction of the second most important character of the novel, Parson Colley about him Talbot adds "This last fellow tried to ask blessing on our meal and fell to eating as bashful as a bride."

Wheeler the attendant of Talbot on the ship has been drawn very lively by Golding. He is typical servant who knows how to take out money from a wealthy passengers. He takes advantage of the fact that Talbot is making his first journey on sea. When Talbot falls sea sick, Wheeler provides him with a drink that revives him, but he charges money for the service. He tries to sell him whatever he can and charge a huge amount for it. Apart from the captain the other crew members on the ship are Mr. Smile, Mr. Davies, Mr. Willish and Mr. Tommy Taylor. About them Talbot writes-

Mr. Smiles the sailing master is old but not as old as Mr. Davies our senior midshipman. Who is nearly as old as the ship! He
descended not merely the ladder to the level of the waist where I was but the next one down as well-going away with a slow and broken motion for all the world like a stage apparition returning to the tomb. After leave obtained, Mr. Wills, my young acquaintance brought his companions to me that with some ceremony. Mr. Tommy Taylor must be a clear two years younger than Mr. Willis but has the spirit and well-knit frame that his elder lacks. Mr. Taylor is from a naval family.

Among the female passengers on the ship was Miss Graham. She had been governess to the children of a wealthy family. Through she pretends to be some one from a noble family, she is irritated when she feels that her true identify has been discovered by Talbot. Another woman passenger is Miss Zenobia who is coquette. She tries to capture the attention of Talbot through gestures and activity, but Talbot proves to be wily. He takes advantage of her bold gestures and establishes a physical contact with her. When Zenobia tries to make the matter serious, he brushes her aside.

Golding devotes the first section of the novel in introducing the ship and the characters. In the beginning, we are rather baffled
and cannot make much sense of a number of details heaped upon us. For Example, the detailed destruction of the decrepit ship and various activities appear oppressive. Moreover, we have a feeling that nothing is happening. There is no movement of the plot but as the novel progresses, we realize that all those description were necessary to create the proper ambience in which a tragic action takes place later on.

William Golding is known for two things in his writing, his vivid observation of people and objects and his ability to create an ambience. It is through these two things that he creates the moral world that he wants to create. Golding is a moralist. He, however, is not an idealist. He is fully aware of the innate reality of societies. Nor does he ever try to gloss over things. As a result his novels present a bold and realistic picture of life in which the novelist does not shy away from depicting life as in Rites of Passage the pictures of society that he creates has been created not through society at large but through a limited people shown in the back drop of the ship.
The passengers and crew members of this ship represent a cross section of the British society during the mid twentieth century. Everything has been viewed through the eyes of Edmund Talbot. He is not exactly an aristocrat, but a man with aristocratic pretensions. It is these pretensions that the novelists aims at satirizing. In the course of the daily activity, these pretensions have been laid bare and punched through and through. Since the very beginning of the novel Talbot is highly conscious of being the godson of a Lord in England, and he impresses this fact upon everyone that he comes across on the ship. It ultimately becomes the reason of the tragedy that takes place on the ship.

The novelist built up the situation gradually. He begins with the ship, its crew member and finally the captain of the ship. Captain Anderson and Parson Colley. The conflict that emerges in the novel later on lies in relationship between Talbot and the captain on the one hand and between the captain and the parson on the other. Most of the characters play only a minor role, chiefly to create the background.
Since the beginning Talbot presents the parson in a poor light. The first appearance of the parson on the scene has been described in a comic light:

There emerged from our lobby into wind and rain of the waist a parson! I supposed he was the same fellow who had tried to ask a blessing on our first dinner and been heard by no one but the Almighty. He wore knee breeches, a long coat and bands that beat in the wind at his throat like a trapped bird at a window! He held his hat and wig crushed on with both hands and he staggered first one way, the other like a drunken crab (of course your lordship has been a drunken crab!) this parson turned like all people unaccustomed to a tilted deck, and tried to claw his way up it rather than down. He was, I saw about to vomit, for his complexion was the mixed pallor and greenness of mouldy cheese. Before I could shout a warning he did indeed vomit then slid down to the deck.5

Captain Anderson has been depicted as the other extreme of parson Colley in the eyes of Edmund Talbot. If the parson is an object of contempt for Talbot, captain Anderson presents a
challenge to his authority being the captain of the ship, he is lord and master of it. As such, his authority is absolute and he exercise his authority tyrannically. Talbot considers himself beyond the authority of such official lord and in this very fact lies the conflict. He defies the orders of the captain regarding the behavior of the passengers on the ship and this brings him face to face with the captain and creates situations which ultimately prove tragic.

Golding has presented Talbot's encounter with both Colley and Anderson in a very interesting light. These encounters also show Talbot's attitude towards both these men. When Talbot saw Colley for the first time, the latter presented a comic sight. Colley was moving on the deck of ship while the ship was unstable. As he comes closer the ship gave a sudden jerk. The result was that Colley came half running and half flying down the deck and might will have gone clean through the railing had Talbot not grabbed him by the collar. Colley looked to him only a wet and green faced. Thus he did not form a favorable impression of the parson.
After Talbot had spent three or four days on the ship he decided to meet Captain Anderson. Till then Captain had not appeared before the passengers.

He confined himself to his own cabin where passengers were not allowed to go. He had in fact put a notice in this regard, but Talbot had not cared to read the notice. After announcing his decision to meet Anderson to Mr. Cumbershum, who was the second in command on the ship, he went one morning to the Captain's office. Golding gives a very amusing account of this meeting which brings out the characters of these men strikingly. What is remarkable about this description is the subtle irony that pervades the whole account.

There since it would be in some sense on official visit, I dressed myself with care so as to make a proper impression on the captain. I was in great coat and beaver, though I took the precaution of securing this last on my head by means of a scarf passed over the crown and tied under my chin. I debated the propriety of sending Wheeler to announce me but thought this too formal in the circumstance. I pulled on my gloves,
therefore, shook out my caps, glanced down at my boots and
found them adequate. I went to climb the ladders — though of
course they are staircases and broad at that-to the quarter deck
and poop. I passed Mr. Cumbershum with an underling and
gave him good day. But he ignored my greeting in a way that
would have offended me had I not known from the pervious
day’s exchanges that his manners are uncouth and his temper
uncertain. I approached the captain therefore, who was to be
recognized by his elaborate if shabby uniform. He stood on the
star board side of the quarter deck, the wind at his back where
his hands were clasped, and he was staring at me, his face
raised, as if my appearance was shock.

The first statement, as Talbot puts it, was unbelievably
discourteous one. He growled, “Who the devil is this,
Cumbershum? Talbot had not expected such a remark and so was
astonished. Then he gave his introduction in a loud voice. It was the
name of his godfather that made an effect on the Captain. He tried
his best to control his irritation and mumbled some remark about the
lord who was Talbot’s godfather.
This encounter has been used by the novelist as the root cause of the crisis that develops later on. It so happened that parson Colley also visited captain Anderson shortly after. The captain who has been depicted as an arrogant and dictatorial person did not want to interact with the passengers. In the case of Talbot also his reaction had been violent, but despite all his ill temper he was not an impractical person. So he had swallowed his anger when he came to know about Talbot's connection with the lords who was certainly a very influential person. But, when parson Colley went to meet the captain, the latter could no longer contain his irritation. So he behaved with the parson in a very ill manner way. Using all his authority he crushed the parson's personality, this had a very strange effect on Colley. Golding however presents the whole thing in a very gradual manner and lets us know about it by stages. This is the mastery of craft that he creates a kind of suspense the whole situation.

Before going on to main conflict of this novel Golding creates an atmosphere of social farce in his story. This he does through the two female characters that the novel has. These women are not the romantic creatures of a romantic story. The first one is Miss
Granham whom Talbot meets in the dining hall of the ship. Describing her he notes" Surrounded or attended by some gentlemen was a severe looking lady of uncertain years whose bonnet was designed as a covering for the head and as a genuine privacy for the face within it rather than as an ambush to excite the curiosity of the observer." Talbot comments that she had a 'Quakerism air' about her.

Talbot's first meeting with her does not prove as amicable as he would have wished it to be. Hearing Miss Granham talk about a card game Talbot observes that since it was a long voyage he hoped that he would have the benefit of her instruction at some stage. The word 'instruction' has an alarming effect on her. In a bitter tone she says to Talbot that he has rightly discovered that she is a governess. He realizes that quite unintentionally he had ruffled the lady, he tries to placate her by saying that hers was indeed the most necessary and gentle professional open to a lady. He goes on talking about his own governess whom he loved and admired very much. She however is not pleased easily and finally Talbot leaves her alone.
In contrast to the character of Miss Granham Golding presents
the character Zenobia. Her first introduction to Talbot is quite
dramatic.

She appeared going yet richly and frivolously dressed. She
came in with such a sweep and flutter that the bonnet fell to the
back of her neck, revealing a quantity of golden curls. We rose- or
most of us, at least but with an admirable presence seated us again
at a gesture, went straight to the florid gentlemen, leaned over his
shoulder and murmured the following sentence in accents of
exquisite, far for too exquisite, beauty.9

The reader as well as Miss Granham gets a taste of Zenobia's
tongue when she retorts to Granham- "I am sure your virtue is safe
any where."10. Unlike Granham, Zenobia is a coquette. Talbot notes
that she fluttered in the full afternoon sun light that slanted across
the great stern window. Talbot even uses the image of a butterfly
to describe her. Even her careless gesture had a design behind them.
Her bonnet was still held loosely by ribbon at the back of her neck
so that a charming profusion of curl was visible by her cheek and
ear. Yet is seemed to him—even at the first sight that the very
brightness of her eyes was more a product of makeup than of nature.
Talbot comes to the conclusion that Zenobia was approaching a mature age and thus needed all the help of artifice to keep her charm intact. In her gesture, her movements and even in her tops there was a touch of theatre.

An example of Zenobia's conscious effort at makeup suited to different occasions has been presented by the novelist later on. When Colley was giving his church service to the passengers of the ship, Zenobia also attended it. Remarking on the episode Talbot notes-

Just previous to the service I saw Miss Brockbank and her face was fairly plastered with red and white! The Magdalene must have looked just so; it may be leaning against the outer wall of the temple precincts. Not, I thought, was Colley one to bring her to a more decorous appearance. Yet later I found I had under estimated both her judgment and her experience. For when it was time for service the candles of the saloon irradiated her face, took from it the damaging years, while
what had been paint now appeared a magical youth and beauty!

While the novelist uses Miss Granham more as a part of background, he has given Zenobia an important though indirect role in the action of the novel. Zenobia attracts Talbot and one day he drags her into his cabin and makes physical contact with her. For him however, it is an occasional encounter to which he does not attach any serious implication. He does not encourage her further to establish any permanent relationship. On Colley Zenobia's charm has a different impact. The novelist gives a graphic, description of the service conducted by Colley. Zenobia had deliberately put on an appearance of a faithful devotee. Talbot was not befooled by her acting, but Mr. Colley who was unused to the wiles of feminine charm fell a victim to it. No sooner did he catch sight of her then he could not take his eyes off her face. Zenobia also put a picture of complete devotion. Her eyes never left Colley's face except when they were turned to heaven. Her lips were always parted in breathless ecstasy except when they opened and closed to pronounce 'amen'. Commenting on Zenobia's influence on parson Colley, Talbot
observes: "His book told him of painted women and how their feet go down to hell but did not include advice on how to recognize one by candle light. He took her to be what her performance suggested to him." 12

Since the novel has been presented in the form of Talbot's diary. The story also has been presented from his point of view. Golding has presented him as a vain young man who is unduly proud of his birth in a high family and particularly of his connection with an eminent lord. From his point of view Parson Colley who belongs to a humble origin and has no social connection is to be looked down upon.

The novelists, however creates a different impression on the readers through their attitudes towards Zenobia. Both of them are attracted towards her, but Talbot can see through her appearance while Colley is beguiled by it. Nonetheless, the way have been born a gentleman but he is a scoundrel. Regarding his infatuation with Zenobia he says "I have to admit that the woman is most damnably, most urgently attractive, paint and all". 13 He begins to plan to capture her physically. He was sure that Zenobia would not resist.
The problem however, was a suitable place for his amorous designs. Where so built that there was little privacy as the sound in one cabin could easily be heard on the ship in adjoining cabins. So Talbot waited for an opportunity which he got when an entertainment party was organized on the ship. Talking advantage of the fact that the people would be assembled in the ball room and that there would be enough noises all around, Talbot dragged Zenobia in his cabin.

Golding has given an ironic account of Talbot’s passionate encounter with Zenobia. Even in the moment of passionate heat Talbot could recognize the calculated reactions of Zenobia. In his response to her the novelists makes bare his character also.

Though Talbot is the central character not only of the Rites of Passage but also of the entire trilogy. It is parson Colley who gives the plot of the first part of this trilogy its crucial turn. It is through one incident in the story that Golding has created this turn.

About it Talbot writes:

Is it a farce or a tragedy? Does not a tragedy depend on the dignity of the protagonist? Must he not be great to fall greatly? A force then for the man appears now a sort of
Punchinello. His fall is in social terms. Death does not come into it. He will not put out his eyes or be persuaded by the furies—he has committed no crime, broken no law—unless out egregious tyrant has a few in reserve for the unwary. 14

This incident is both a farce and a tragedy because what happens is farcical in nature but the consequence is tragic. The incident involves Colley’s behavior in a drunken state. It’s consequence is so grave that it leads to his death. Golding creates the very dramatic description of whole incident. As is the case with the entire novel, this scene has also been presented from Talbot’s point of views. As he was talking to Mr. Prettiman he realized that the other’s attention was fixed some where else. Turning that direction he saw Colley appear from beneath the afterdeck and proceed towards the people’s part of the ship. Generally, passengers from the two side did not mix up. So Talbot was surprised to see Colley going towards the other side of passengers. What surprised him more was the fact that Colley was fully dressed in the clerical dress. He was clad in surplice gown, hood, wig, and cap. What appeared to Talbot from a distance was the fact that the passengers in the part were in a holiday mood. They were also intoxicated. At
first Talbot did not think much of it and came back to his cabin, but after sometimes he was forced to go out when he heard the sound of a loud applause coming from the lower passenger side. This applause was followed by another louder applause. Talbot was unable to understand the reason. He remarks—

I do not have to point out to your lordship the rarity of the occasion on which a parson is applauded in full fig or as what young Mr. Taylor describes as “Dressed overdressed” Groans and tears, exclamations of remorse and pious ejaculations he may look for if his sermon be touched with any kind of enthusiasm. Silence and convert yawns will be his reward if he is content to be a dull, respectable fellow! But the applause I was hearing from the fo’castle was more proper for an entertainment! It was as if Colley were an acrobat or juggler.15

Soon people began to gather there. Even captain Anderson came from his cabin. However being gentlemen and ladies they did not think it proper to go that part of the ship from where sounds of hilarity were coming. So they were left at a guessing game. One
thing was certain that men there were drunk. To their surprise they saw two men coming out as if play acting. They were copying the role of women and evidently they wanted to present their show to a higher audience also. They now realized that Colley was a part of this drunken hilarity. Soon it was confirmed that he also was drunk.

The climax of the whole scene came when Colley came out of that part of the ship in a very drunken condition. He was supported by another person. The worst came when Colley started urinating in the full public view. He was then carried to his chamber.

This episode proves to be the turning point of the story. Golding has built up the whole situation to a climax. A few days after this incident Talbot comes to know that Colley is quite unwell and a grave situation has arisen. It is Summers, the lieutenant informs him that the parson is mortally sick and there is no doctor available on the ship. Talbot at first does not understand what has really happened. Summers informs him that it is some thing strange.

Yet the man though he breathes every now and then, does not stir in it. His face is pressed down and hidden. He lies on his stomach and he is holding the bedpost very strongly.
Summers says:

"He has a strange power. It is almost as the Newtonian force is affected. The hand that holds the eyebolt might be made of steel. He lies, dinted into his bunk, drawn in to it as if made of lead." 16

Summers has come to Talbot to seek his help. When he finds him hesitating, he reminds him that he has been using his birth and his social position to get for himself. Since he has exercised the privilege of his position, he should also shoulder its responsibilities. He suggested that a visit from Talbot to Colley's cabin might help him in saving the man.

After much persuasion Talbot pays a visit to Colley's hutch. He finds Colley lying in the same position as Summers had described. Talbot calls Colley by name but does not get any response. He tries to talk to him but the result is the same. Later on when he meets Summers, the latter tells him that the best medicine for Colley would be a gentle visit from the Captain of whom he stands in such awe. It is then that he suggested that only Talbot can persuade him. He also says that Talbot's own meeting with the
Captain was responsible to a great extent for the condition of Colley. He explains the situation to Talbot:

"Had you not in a bold and thoughtless way out faced our captain on his own quarterdeck, had you not made use of your rank and prospects and connections to strike a blow at the very foundations of his authority, all this might not have happened. He is brusque and he detests the clergy, he makes no secret of it. But had you not acted as you did at that time, he would never in the very next few minutes have crushed Colley with his anger and continued to humiliate him because he could not humiliate you."17

Talbot's attitude towards the captain is not positive. He does not like him and he also considers him to be a tyrant. So it is not easy for him to ask the captain to visit Colley. Captain Anderson, however, is aware of Colley's his own problems in this regard because as the captain of the ship he has to be responsible for everything that happens aboard a ship.

Colley's sickness creates a crisis on the ship. The ship had no doctor on it and Colley's condition was unusual. He was not
suffering from any ailment but he was not moving and was lying in 
the same condition all the time. Analyzing his condition Talbot 
feels that Colley’s awareness of his drunken state must have given 
him acute shame.

“There had been a time when he had awakened in physical 
anguish which had quickly passed into mental one. He lay like 
that in deepening pain, Deeping consciousness, widening 
memory, his whole being turning more and more from the 
world till he could desire nothing but death. Philips could not 
rouse him, nor even [s]ummers.18’

Captain Anderson was also aware of this situation. He realized 
that if something happened to Colley the responsibility ultimately 
would lie on him. This made him change his attitude towards this 
situation. One day Talbot received an invitation of dinner from the 
captain. On that occasion the captain asked him indirectly what 
could be done consider [\textsuperscript{\textasciitilde}a patient, H is opinion was valueless as he had no medical knowledge what so ever. Talbot suggested [\textasciitilde]okingly that he could consult Mr. Broklebank because as the men had informed him he had begun to study medicine what had given at up.
Captain Anderson seemed to grab this information. Talbot realizes that a visit by Broklebank to Colley would give the captain an official entry in the log that Colley was visited by a gentle man of some medical experience.

The captain assigns the duty of visiting Mr. Colley to Talbot and Mr. Broklebank. They however had no chance of helping Colley in anyway. Before they could be of any help Summers came to announce that Colley was dead. It stunned them all:

"Slowly each of us rose, coming, I suppose, from a Monet of furious inhospitality to another realization. I looked at the captain's face. The red suffusion of his anger had sunk away. He was inscrutable. I saw in his face neither concern, relief, sorrow nor triumph. He might have been made of the same material as the figurehead."

Golding has the story from the point of view of Talbot who is the central character not only of this novel but of the entire trilogy. However in Rites of Passage it is Colley and not Talbot who becomes the center of the story. And it is his death that makes Colley a tragic character. In his life was a man who aroused more
ridicule than admiration, but after his death he gains not only sympathy but also respect.

*Rites of Passage* shows Golding’s mastery over the craft of fiction. It is well written novel which sustains the interest of the readers till the end. Moreover, what Golding does is to present the story from two sides. The broader frame work is Talbot’s diary but it is Colley’s letter to his sister that presents the other side of the story. Talbot does not know why Colley behaved in the way that he did, nor does he know what happened when Colley was in the lower deck of the ship. He can only guess at the reason of the parson’s death. The secret of the entire situation is revealed when Talbot reads the letter that Colley had written to his sister. That letter fills in most of the gaps in the story and what remains has been rounded up at the end of the novel. Colley’s letter also explains the statement that summers had made to Talbot saying that it was Talbot’s visit to Captain Anderson that had ultimately led to humiliation of Colley at the hands of captain.

In his letter to his sister Colley had written about the slight that he had faced from the officers of the ship. He however had
thought is his duty to pay a visit to the captain of the ship. Unfortunately his visit took place just after the visit of Talbot to the captain. Captain Anderson behaved very rudely with him. Parson Colley felt utterly humiliated. The captain drew his attention to the notice which forbade to visit the upper part of the ship. He ordered him to read the notice and get it by heart. When Colley objected that he was treating him like a school boy that captain said — "I will treat you like a school by if I choose, sir, or I will put you in iron if I choose or have you flogged at the granting's if I choose or have you hanged at the yardarm. If I choose." 20

Colley was baffled. He had heard that the captain was mad but he had not imagined that he would become the victim of his madness. What made the matter worse was the fact that there were other people present to witness his humiliation. This was a great shock to him. He found that his body was bathed in perspiration. He felt cold but his face was hot. Tears of salt came into his eyes. He went back to his cabin and tried to find the captain's order pasted on the wall. When he read the order he decided to go back to the captain and asked his forgiveness for having read the order earlier. This decision was unfortunate because more humiliation
was there in store. Nothing his emotion at that moment Colley writes in his letter:

"My face felt swollen. It must have been as deeply suffused as his. I perspired more and more freely. My head still rang. The lieutenants were studiously and carefully examining the horizon. The two seamen at the wheel might have been cast in bronze. I believe I gave a shuddering job. The words I had learned so recently and easily went clean out of my head. I could see but dimly through my tears."

At first, it seems that it was this humiliation that drove Colley to drinking and finally took his life. This, however, is not the complete truth. It of course had started the process of Colley's humiliation, but the immediate cause had been another one. Talbot was unaware of this because when it took place he was engaged in something else. The event had taken place when Talbot was having a sexual encounter with Miss Broklebank. He had heard uproar but had not paid any special significance to it as a party was going on at the upper deck. Later on he pretended as if he knew everything, but actually he had missed the real reason behind Colley's humiliation. Actually when Colley was sleeping he heard a loud knock at his
door and when he opened the door he was force fully carried a way by two men who were wearing masks. Colley was still not very clear in his mind when he was dragged half – clad to the party that was going on. The drunken officers, particularly Deverel and Summers had behaved abominably with Colley. He was covered with faith and tossed in the air. Colley protested but was helpless. Finally the fun with him came to an end. Colley came back to his cabin only half conscious. What happened after that was not very clear in his mind. An idea persisted in his mind that people took liberty from him because he was not fully dressed as a clergy man should be. This obsessed his mind and that is why, after cleaning himself he put on the complete garb of a priest which he called the "ornaments of a spiritual man."

This is how Talbot had seen him before his being drunk.

What happened on the lower deck is any body's guess. The novelists deliberately keeps it vague. Talbot had no means of knowing it and so his diary is silent about it. Colley's letter to his sister also ends at this point. So the narrating voices are silent the readers is left largely guessing. The whole episode remains vague and this enhances its horror.
Golding has used Colley’s letter to present that side of Colley’s character which could not be presented through Talbot’s diary. This also gives him an opportunity to make an ironical comment on appearance and reality. Talbot’s diary gives us an ample idea of what Talbot thinks about Colley. He has not a very high opinion of the clergyman. If he talks to him with civility, it is not because he likes him or respects him but because he is a gentleman and so cannot behave rudely. Colley’s letter to his sister, however, tells us that Colley looked upon Talbot with high respect. He had misunderstood Talbot’s civility and taken it for a warm attitude on his part. Thus Colley’s letter is a very clever technique on his part to end the letter at the point where Colley’s downfall begins. Colley could not have written any further because he was in no condition to do so. But the silence about what actually made him drink and behave in that manner has been deliberately left unclear by the novelists. Colley’s death makes him a tragic character.

After Colley’s death an enquiry was held by Captain Anderson regarding the cause and circumstances leading to his death. Talbot takes part in that enquiry. The description of the enquiry is a
brilliant example of Golding's ironic vision. Roger, the crewman, was summoned before them. He proved to be a sly fellow who could not be trapped by the cross questioning by Captain Anderson. When he hinted that he could expose the role of officers in that death, Anderson became silent. He closed the enquiry at that point. Through this episode Golding satirizes the entire business of such enquiries in which the truth never comes out.

Golding gives two more twists to the story at the end of the novel. One is the sudden disappearance of Wheeler from the ship. It is supposed that somehow he fell off the ship and was drowned. Golding does not say any thing further about it. The reader is surprised at this silence, but Golding has done so only because he has to give another twist to the Wheeler episode in the second novel of the sea Trilogy.

The second twist to the story, more important because it throws light on the character of captain Anderson. Towards end of the novel Talbot comes to know about the life story of captain Anderson. Anderson was the son of a lord who had fallen in love with a woman of great beauty but no social standing. So he could not marry her when he was engaged to be married to the daughter of
another lord, the woman created a problem for him. She was pregnant. The lords found a way out of this crisis by finding a respectable husband for that woman. The husband of that woman was a clergyman. He was an honorable person who brought up Anderson the son of Lord, as his own son. But Anderson never learnt to respect, to love him for this. Not only that, he noted all the clergyman. This was the reason behind this ill treatment of Parson Colley.

The *Rites of passage* is a striking novel, which reveals Golding as a mature novelist who has a first control the art narration as well as the art of characterization. The novel also presents the basic concerns of Golding as a moralist.
REFERENCES


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