

## Original Paper

# The Journeys of the Heart of the Two Women in *A Passage to India*

Mingjing Su<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing 210000, China

\* Mingjing Su, Nanjing Normal University, Nanjing 210000, China

Received: April 8, 2018

Accepted: May 18, 2018

Online Published: May 23, 2018

doi:10.22158/wjer.v5n2p184

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/wjer.v5n2p184>

### Abstract

*A Passage to India* is the magnum opus of E. M. Forster—a famous English novelist in the first half of 20th century. This essay does a comparative study about the different changing courses in the two heroines' mind in India. Adela, one of them, tends to spiritualism from traditional English rationalism (materialism or literalism). While the other, Mrs. Moore, goes roughly from emotionalism to rationalism. However, there are two diverse outcomes: Adela builds her new mental scene finally, but Mrs. Moore fails to remodel herself after the collapse of her perceptual world. And the paper makes a deep analysis on the reason giving rise to such results. It is found, there are two main reasons. One is the different importance of the original values in their soul. The other one is the disparate conflict resolution styles when great changes happen in their inner heart.

### Keywords

E. M. Forster, Adela, Mrs. Moore

### 1. Introduction

Edward Morgan Forster is an outstanding English novelist and literary critic in the twentieth century. He is born into a comfortable London family in 1879 and dead in Coventry in 1970. The first half of Forster's life was committed to the creation of novels, while after the publication of *A Passage to India*, he never again attains the standard of craft or the depth of observation that characterizes his early works but is content to write critical essays or lectures. His novels is complicated where both the features of British traditional novels, the nineteenth century realism and the innovative writing techniques of modernism in the twentieth Century.

Published in 1924, *A Passage to India* is a modernist and psychological novel, which is the product of Forster's two trips to India in 1912 and in 1921. As the last novel of Forster, it is also considered as the

most widely read and influential one among his works. The story happens in the twentieth century British India, and the novel consists of three parts: “Mosque”, “Caves”, and “Temple”.

It tells, two English women, the young Miss Adela Quested and the elderly Mrs. Moore, travel to India to visit Ronny—Mrs. Moore’s son, Adela’s fiance and a British colonial judge, to decide whether Adela would marry him or not. Mrs. Moore and Adela each hope to see a “real India” during their journey. In the first part of the book, Mrs Moore establishes a friendly relationship with Aziz, an India Muslim doctor. In the second part, Aziz invites two women to Marabar Caves for a sightseeing. But when they come out of the Caves, Adela accuses Aziz of assaulting her in the cave, and Mrs Moore refuses to testify for Aziz and sails back to England.

## **2. The Journeys of the Heart and the Two Women in the Novel**

India is the world of feeling and instinct. The UK. is that of rules and empirical evidence. Sympathetic Mrs Moore is called as “oriental”, because she acts on feelings not on rules at the first part of the novel. As part of the matrix which maintains power, the Anglo-Indians endeavors to impose their mode of realism on the multiple groupings of subject peoples. They present themselves as figures of enlightenment and empirical evidence, bringing law and education to the benighted savages. As such, it is not permissible for them ever to admit they are wrong. They are rule-bound, conventional, utterly dependent on a concept of observable “facts” for their interpretation of India, in contrast to the Indians who are presented as instinctive and feeling beings.

### *2.1 The Journeys of the Heart*

Both Adela and Mrs. Moore want to find the “real” India through this passage to India, not the cultural institutions under the British governance. Meanwhile, it is also a journey of their inner hearts. Various oddities and mysteries in India exert a tremendous influence on them and throw them into enormous sense of fear. Their original beliefs are crumbling. Although both their worlds of ideas are broken into pieces, they got the contrary ending. Adela finishes a wonderful transformation from rationalism to spiritualism, while Mrs. Moore unsuccessfully reverses her thinking towards rational from emotional.

### *2.2 Adela Quested*

Adela is a young independent and educated free thinker, but also a pragmatic British woman who possesses the common traditional British rational cognition. On one hand, Adela has some criticism about the English standards and antipathy towards their common behaviors. She does not wish to marry Ronny, a typical British colonist, and become a snobbish, elegant lady that she always hates. On the other hand, she is inevitably influenced by the traditional British rationalism to bide by the rules as the general agreements of British, and represses her heart deeming that she’d better get married with Ronny. Therefore, she seems to be a different English lady but is an atheist who believes in traditional rationalism in fact. Adela, like Mrs Moore, expects to know the realities of India, nevertheless, in contrast to Mrs Moore’s genuine love for India, her desire is out of logic. In this regard, one can see Fielding’s judgment that she has an intellectual, unemotional curiosity about India. Fielding evaluates

that “She goes on and on as if she’s at a lecture trying ever so hard to understand India and life and occasionally taking a note”. Mrs. Moore is unconscious in dealing with the friendship with Indian people, whereas Adela consciously and rationally pursues this intercultural friendship as an interesting experience enriching herself.

Adela wavers between spiritualism and intelligence, which mostly manifests in her attitudes towards the matter that whether she would marry Ronny or not. Intellectually, it may be reasonable to marry Ronny, but ideally, she is reluctant to do that. At the tea party, When Aziz suggests that Adela settle in India, she said: “I’m afraid I can’t do that”. “... She made the remark without thinking what it meant ... not for half an hour did she realize that it was an important remark and ought to have been made in the first place to Ronny”.

In chapter eight, such hesitation between reason and emotion is quite obvious. After the tea party, she tells Ronny that she has decided not to marry him; however, after “the green bird” and “the car breakdown” incidents, she says she would like to get married. Adela seems to be aware of her own mind and attempts at being honest to herself, when she subconsciously blurts out that settlement in India is outside of her plan. But then an irresistible sense of loneliness and insecurity arises in her heart, owing to a green bird impossible of being identified and named and an unexplained incident of car breakdown. That lets her resonate with “a same world” fellow—Ronny, and with Ronny, it feels as though she gains a feeling of belonging and security. On the one side, Adela pursues emotional release, expecting to break the shackles, yearning for freedom. Consequently, she is unwilling to marry Ronny, to be labeled, to be limited and to become a club British woman. On the other side, deeply influenced by the traditional British rationalism, she has a sense of fear about things that cannot be marked or named. She needs something that can be comprehended with her rational thought and something within the “rules” that helps keep the invisible visible in her mind. And thus when she is in a state of panic because of the unknown, the unlabeled and the unnamed in India, she is reasonably determined to marry Ronny.

In the first part of the novel, she is intellectual and follows the “rules” on the whole. She is occasionally tired of that “traditional British style” and aware of her inner appeal, though. She complains that the British treat Indians from an intellectual level not an emotional level, nevertheless Fielding considers that her complains are out of logic not emotion as well. She is alarmed at the boring marriage life when she and Ronny dine with McBrydes and Miss Derek. She believes she would never abide by those rules and thoughts. And yet, she thinks it is not harm to get married.

The confrontation and conflict becomes fierce until the tea party is finished. At the time, Adela’s world of spiritualism is under construction and the world of intellectualism is going to collapse. On her way to Marabar caves, she is clearly cognizant of her lovelessness for Ronny. The horrible experience in the cave is exactly produced by the confrontation of intellect and emotion. Her imagined assault is actually the outward manifestation of the intense inner turmoil: the awareness for freedom is one thing, but she is raised under the restrictions of the rules and subconsciously represses herself. She finds herself never

falling in love with Ronny or even anyone else but falls into guilty and pain.

The lingering echo is something beyond her comprehension, beyond the scope of reason. It is the truth in her mind difficult to be accepted and it is also the disasters completely destroying her rational world. She could not rationally and logically recall what happened in the cave till the end.

The echo in the Marabar caves is destruction but also liberation. Finally, Adela comes to realize that her experience in the cave is her illusion, acknowledging her inability to explain what has happened. Aziz is innocent, and she calmly withdraws the lawsuit. She accepts all kinds of strangeness outside of rationality in India, which implies her liberation of soul, acceptance of inner emotion. The world of spiritualism is built, and it is also free from her trouble of echo.

### *2.3 Mrs. Moore*

Unlike rational Adela, Mrs. Moore acts on feelings. She is emotional and advocates spiritualism, having a cross-cultural sympathy. She prefers to perceive relying on her intuition rather than evaluate through labeling, therefore she establishes a friendly relationship with Aziz in chapter two. Aziz praises that she is an “oriental”, precisely because she follows her heart just as emotional as the Oriental. “Rather surprised, she replied: ‘I don’t think I understand people very well. I only know whether I like or dislike them’ ‘Then you are an Oriental’”. In the first part of the novel, Mrs. Moore owns a philanthropic and compassionate understanding and consideration ignoring individual differences. She symbolizes an ideally spiritual and race-blind openness.

At the end of chapter three, When Mrs. Moore goes to her bedroom, “she found that the tip of the peg was occupied by a small wasp ... ‘Pretty dear’, said Mrs. Moore to the wasp. He did not wake, but her voice floated out, to swell the night’s uneasiness”.

Madame Moore’s manner indicates her sensibility, tolerance for India and love for all living creatures, towards what is known as the lowest being in Hinduism. This moment, delighted for the acquaintance with Aziz and the resonance with him in some way, she has not yet been plunged into panic because of incomprehensible Indian things and religious ideas, and is still open-minded.

Fielding’s tea party is the turning point of her change. In the end of the tea party, professor Godbole sings a religious song, in which it tells of a woman who requests God to come to her and her companions but is rejected. “‘But He comes in some other song, I hope?’ said Mrs. Moore gently. ‘Oh no, he refuses to come’, ... ‘I say to Him, Come, come, come, come, come, come. He neglects to come’”. The song has a great impact on Mrs. Moore’s faith. It seems as if from hearing the song, Mrs. Moore embarks on the path of beliefs fading and the emotional world crumbling.

The echo in the Marabar caves intensifies the contradiction in Mrs. Moore’s mind. In the cave, she experiences the echo that assimilates all differences into a same sound “out boum”, which perhaps means “Pathos, piety, courage they exist, but are identical and so is filth. Everything exists, nothing has value”. It is suddenly realized that her faith is meaningless, worthless and insignificant. Meanwhile the idealization is badly frightening without differences—“If one had spoken vileness in that place, or quoted lofty poetry, the comment would have been the same ‘out bourn’”. This vision, in which the

good and the evil are indistinguishable, makes Mrs. Moore terrified and upset. Her belief is lost. The emotional world where she treats spirit as a force of salvation is in ruins, which she is overwhelmed by. Though she knows her faith has fallen, she is incapable of that and lets it drift. Being indifferent, losing interest in the relationship with people, she is so desperate that she considers herself as a selfish woman. She dies of a heart attack on the ship back home, with the body buried at sea. This fact further implies her belonging to neither world, India or England, spiritualism or rationalism, but permanently occupying the finite space between them.

### 3. The Ending and the Reason

Either of the two women has gone through a journey of faith destruction. But it is also a journey of self-discovery for Adela compared with a complete ruin for Mrs. Moore. Adela succeeds in building the emotional world after the collapse of the rational world, while Mrs. Moore fails to complete the transformation from sensibility to rationality. The triumph of Adela refers to her own liberation, no longer repressing herself, frankly admitting her apathy to Ronny and agreeing the dissolution of their engagement. She ultimately accepts what cannot be named and labeled and is beyond her intellect. The failure of Mrs. Moore is that she gives up her hope to construct a fresh rational world after the decline of her belief system.

There are two points for the reason of the differences between Adela and Mrs. Moore: first, Mrs. Moore's faith is the support of her mind. These emotional and spiritual things are extremely important to her, so once it comes crashing down, she is likely to feel despaired and depressed. However, whereas Adela is educated to form the rational thinking style, taking it as a code of conduct, she hates the traditional British behaviors and is eager to release herself. So, after a fierce struggle, she is much more receptive to her own heart and constructs the spiritual world triumphantly.

Secondly, Mrs. Moore's character is weaker, much tending to give up. No sooner has her faith crumbled than she falls into despair and takes a negative Masquerade, laissez-faire attitude to everything and everyone from the world. Returning from the Marabar Caves, she is neither willing to testify on behalf of Aziz (She does not think Aziz is guilty, though), nor responsible for the marriage of Adela and Ronny. Adela, however, with stronger treacherous consciousness and rebellious spirit, reacts far more violently in the Marabar cave, which reflects drastic confrontation between emotion and intellect confrontation.

Mrs. Moore thinks India as a "muddle", conversely, Adela recognizes that "Life is a mystery, not a muddle". It is actually some kind of escape to classify what cannot be understood as "muddle". "Muddle" is inapprehensible, representing Mrs. Moore's abandonment of questing. Mysteries can be solved, which implies Adela's initiative exploration spirit.

The tea party, as a critical turning point, clearly reveals the discrepancy between the two. Ever since hearing Godbole's Hindu song, Adela and Mrs. Moore have felt nothing acutely as if living inside cocoons. "Inside its cocoon of work or social obligation, the human spirit slumbers for the most part,

registering the distinction between pleasure and pain, but not nearly as alert as we pretend”.

The image of cocoon indicates that Adela and Mrs. Moore are in a dormancy period. What that is waiting for them is some sort of radical transformation and metamorphosis. The women close their hearts and feel an emotional lack, which suggests that they are in confusion. When the existing concept world is about to collapse, the uncertainty about the future has them overwhelmed. Anxiety and fear keep them trapped in the “cocoon”. But their responses to this situation are distinct two kinds. Being unfeeling, Mrs. Moore chooses escape, laissez-faire and drift, whereas Adela blames herself for her apathy. When being aware of the condition, she does not let things drift, but actively intends to adjust.

#### 4. Conclusion

Adela and Mrs. Moore want to see a “real India” during their journey in India, not that under the governess of Britain. Various oddities of India strongly impact on them and challenge their old ideas. As a result, their original concept systems are destroyed.

Fortunately, Adela rebuilds her inner world following the heart. Unfortunately, Mrs. Moore feels misanthropic. There are probably two causes of such endings.

One is the different roles of the original value system in their heart. For Mrs. More, it is related to religion; while Adela, affected by her education, merely takes the traditional rationalism as the standard of action, in fact, she has long been dissatisfied with it.

The other is their opposite characters and attitudes. Adela explores positively, but Mrs. Moore passively escapes.

#### References

- Christensen, T. (2006). Bearing the White Man’s Burden: Misrecognition and Cultural Difference. In E. M. Forster’s “*A Passage to India*”, *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction* (Vol. 39, No. 2, pp. 155-178).  
<https://doi.org/10.1215/ddnov.039020155>
- Edwards, M. E. M. (2002). *Forster: The Novels* (pp. 24-33). New York: Palgrave.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-06795-1>
- Forster, E. M. (2010). *A Passage to India* (p. 10). New York: RosettaBooks LLC.
- Forster, E. M. (2010). *A Passage to India* (p. 15). New York: RosettaBooks LLC.
- Forster, E. M. (2010). *A Passage to India* (p. 31). New York: RosettaBooks LLC.
- Forster, E. M. (2010). *A Passage to India* (p. 34). New York: RosettaBooks LLC.
- Forster, E. M. (2010). *A Passage to India* (p. 51). New York: RosettaBooks LLC.
- Forster, E. M. (2010). *A Passage to India* (p. 58). New York: RosettaBooks LLC.
- Forster, E. M. (2010). *A Passage to India* (p. 64). New York: Rosetta Books LLC.
- Forster, E. M. (2010). *A Passage to India* (p. 64). New York: RosettaBooks LLC.
- Gu, K. (2012). The Post-Colonial Study of *A Passage to India*. *World Literature Review*, 2012(2), 264-267.

- Hale, N. (1960). A Passage to Relationship. In *The Antioch Review* (Vol. 20, No. 1, pp. 19-30).  
<https://doi.org/10.2307/4610208>
- Heffernan, L. (2002). *Spark Notes A Passage to India* (p. 16). New York: Spark Pub Group.
- Heffernan, L. (2002). *Spark Notes A Passage to India* (p. 38). New York: Spark Pub Group.
- Luo, W. L. (1999). Confusion and Septum of A Passage to India. *Studies on Foreign Literature*, 1999(2), 63-67.
- Robbins, R. (2003). *Pater to Forster, 1873-1924* (p. 205). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4039-3781-0>
- Shanks, E. E. M. (2002). Forster. In P. Gardner (Ed.), *The Critical Heritage: E. M. Forster* (pp. 306-316). London: Routledge.
- Suo, Y. H. (2010). *A Postmodern Interpretation of A Passage to India*. Shang Hai: Shanghai Jiaotong University Press.
- Thomson, G. H. (1961). Thematic Symbol in A Passage to India. In *Twentieth Century Literature* (Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 51-63). <https://doi.org/10.2307/440627>