

S. V. Pradhan

A Passage to India: Realism Versus Symbolism, A Marxist Analysis

"But what appears to be a formal-aesthetic or, if one likes, literary-historical matter, in fact goes far beyond aesthetics or literary history."¹ G. Lukács

Yet each must seek reality:
For those within the room, high talk
Subtle experience—for me
The spark, the darkness, on the walk.² E.M. Forster

The critics of *A Passage to India* are divided into two main camps, one of which considers the novel to be a great achievement while the other one believes such an estimate to be "a coterie judgment."³ While a number of critics of the latter view approach it as a realistic novel, the more significant critics of the former persuasion see it as a "symbolic" novel and dismiss the criterion of realism as being irrelevant.⁴ This gives rise to an anomalous critical situation in so far as the same novel is considered to be a failure as realism and an outstanding success as symbolism.⁵ We are confronted here with an important critical question: If two sets of criteria lead to contradictory judgments when applied to the same work, does one welcome them as instances of "critical pluralism" or does one try to determine which of the two criteria is more acceptable? Or to be more specific: Is it possible that *Passage*, though poor as realism, is extraordinary as symbolism?

A "coterie-critic" could perhaps point out that the anti-*Passage* views are based on the questionable assumption that *Passage* is wholly a realistic novel. He could also argue that such an assumption ignores the "symbolic" dimension of the novel which might well account for what the realistic assumption sees as "defects," namely, the restricted scope of the novel, its slight characterization and its lapses in verisimilitude.⁶ Indeed, he could claim that the dual nature of *Passage* as realism and symbolism makes it a new kind of novel — a

fact of which Forster himself was aware.⁷ Therefore, while it may be tempting to judge it as traditional realistic fiction, such a procedure is certainly unjust to the new enterprise the novel obviously represents.

The "coterie critic" does have a point. The critics who have studied the novel for its "realism" operate with the popular notion of realism as "a slice of life". They examine it for its "accuracy" and "fidelity" to detail and debate seriously whether the Anglo-Indian reality, the Civil Service, and the judicial procedure were really as Forster depicts them and either present evidence of Forster's awareness of the contemporary colonial situation or deplore his inadequate knowledge, understanding and presentation of it.⁸ As if a faithful reflection of the surface of contemporary reality rather than its trends, tendencies, and undercurrents were the hallmark of realism.

If one starts with such a sterile notion of realism, which assimilates it to the documentary, one obviously needs an expression like "symbolism" to refer to that peculiar quality whereby art invests its material with greater meaning so that it contains a significance that transcends the characters and situations in it.⁹ But surely, such a quality is not and has never been inconsistent with realism, as should be clear from the writings of Balzac and Tolstoy. However, it must be granted that symbolism denotes not only a "moment" of realism but also a movement away from it. Which of the two meanings do the critics have in mind when they speak of Forster as a symbolist? If they mean symbolism as a movement away from realism, Forster's realistic core (which connects him with the tradition of realistic fiction and which, by the way, leads many critics to dismiss him as a "modernist")¹⁰ is difficult to explain away. *Passage* would therefore seem to be an intermediate species like the flying reptiles.

It is clear, then, that an adequate discussion of Forster's realism is contingent on an adequate understanding of realism and symbolism and the relationship between the two. Since bourgeois art and criticism abandoned realism long ago and since its mantle has fallen on Marxist criticism, this paper proposes to enlist the latter's aid, particularly that of Lukács, in its attempt to discuss *Passage* seriously as a realistic novel.¹¹

Let me briefly explain how Lukács interprets the rival claims of realism and symbolism before going on to examine *Passage* for its realism. For him, unlike for bourgeois critics, they are not separate genres, each with its own validity. He takes a less *ad hoc* view of genres and considers a genre to be "a peculiar reflection of reality". It is "a reflection of certain typical and general facts of life that

regularly occur and which cannot be adequately reflected in other available genres."¹² On the basis of this view one would expect Lukács to be critical of the multiplication of genres in bourgeois criticism. He says: "The genre theory of later bourgeois aesthetics which splits up the novel into various 'sub-genres' — the adventure novel, detective novel, psychological novel, historical novel etc., and which vulgar sociology has taken over as an 'achievement' — has nothing to offer scientifically."¹³ In other words, no bourgeois sub-genre is authentic because it does not possess a single quality unique to it.

Lukács substantiates this claim with reference to the psychological novel. After having noted that the earlier novelists were notable psychologists, he goes on to point out a typical modern literary process which detaches an aspect of the totality of the novel from "the objective determinants of social life" and establishes the detached aspect as "a self-contained and independent sphere of human life."¹⁴ Thus, though earlier novels possess a profound psychological interest, the psychological novel is a new phenomenon. Though earlier novels deal with history, the historical novel is a later growth. Similarly, though earlier novels employ symbols, the symbolic novel is a modern innovation. What characterizes these new sub-genres, then, is the autonomy of a single feature which is divorced from the totality of different aspects of the novel. This process is, of course, dictated by the objective needs of the socio-economic formation which are experienced as subjective attitudes and predilections by artists and writers. To put it more simply: All these deviations from realism are characteristic of its declining phase which, in its turn, is found to accompany the decline of capitalism.¹⁵

The symbolic novel, then, according to Marxist criticism, comes into existence because the novelist, who no longer has a firm grasp of the outer, social reality and who does not comprehend its manifold mediations or objective connexions, substitutes for the external social landscape, the internal landscape of the private psyche. The real content of symbolism, therefore, is its flight from reality, though its ostensible content is a search for a "higher transcendent reality."

But how does a critic judge a work belonging to a "new" genre? He could either accept the genre in its own right as an independent and autonomous category and derive criteria for judging the new work from a study of manifestations of the same trend. Or he could investigate with specific reference to the work under consideration how and why the "new" genre has deviated from the old one. The former

method, which smacks of circular reasoning, is characteristic of bourgeois criticism, while the latter approach is specifically Marxist.¹⁶ It should therefore be clear that analyzing a "symbolic" novel as a deviation from realism dictated by several considerations is not perverse but logical, and that it displays both a sense of history and a critical attitude towards literary change. The present paper hopes to establish this with reference to *Passage*.

If a Marxist critic were to suggest that *A Passage to India* is successful as realism on Marxist principles, he would perhaps find support for his view in some of the critical pronouncements of Lukâcs in *The Historical Novel*. He writes: "It is not a particular condition of society, or at least, is only apparently a condition which is portrayed [in the novel]. The most important thing is to show how the direction of a social tendency becomes visible in the small, imperceptible capillary movements of individual life."¹⁷ It may be argued that such a tendency, which receives its moving expression in the last scene of the novel when Aziz asks the British to "clear out", is depicted throughout the novel in terms of incidents, situations and characters.¹⁸ Lukâcs also says: "To fulfil the aims of the novel all that is required is to show convincingly and powerfully the irreversible course of social historical development. The essential aim of the novel is the representation of the way society moves."¹⁹ What *Passage* represents is that the parting of the ways was unavoidable and inevitable — a view characteristic of British Liberalism since the early nineteenth century.

If Indian nationalism in an inchoate form is seen to exist as a tendency in the novel, the opposite tendency of British liberalism receives a more poignant and convincing expression. We first see it in action at the Bridge party where it fails to realize the liberal goal. Appearing as a witness to this bathetic overture at the official level, Fielding, an impartial but sympathetic liberal, moves to the centre of the novel with his effort to establish what the Bridge party failed to achieve, namely, a rapport between the British and the Indians at the personal level (Adela, Mrs. Moore and Aziz at Fielding's party). The attempt, however, misfires at the temporal level, though it succeeds in the end at the spiritual level (Godbole and Mrs. Moore, Fielding and Hinduism). But this success is undercut by a parallel development, namely, Aziz's rejection of the English symbolized by his repudiation of Fielding, who commits himself to his kind just as Aziz discovers nationalism. The plot, then, enacts some of the phases of the fateful encounter between British liberalism and Indian nationalism. The

novel, therefore, certainly has its roots in the life of the nation, and Raymond Williams notwithstanding, it is certainly not "personal" at least as far as the political aspect of the novel is concerned.²⁰

There is another kind of conflict in the novel which has considerable significance for a Marxist critic. At the cultural level, the conflict between the British bourgeoisie and the developing Indian bourgeoisie took the form of a conflict between British rationalism and Indian mysticism and obscurantism. Forster's instinct as a novelist told him that the fundamental conflict between these classes in the economic sphere manifested itself in different segments of the Superstructure, which includes not only politics but also culture, philosophy, and religion. Thus the Anglo-Indians consider themselves to be Christians, though they seem to be indifferent to Christianity except as a symbol of their group solidarity in an alien country. However, Hinduism for them is a bundle of idols and superstitions. In contrast to this somewhat liberal Christianity of the Anglo-Indians, Fielding and Adela, who are more thorough-going, are rationalists rather than Christians, though Fielding softens towards Hinduism in the end. Mrs. Moore's Christianity takes several blows in India, and following the experience in the cave, she seems to have been converted to the world-view of Jainism.²¹ We thus see that the religious and philosophical views of most of the English characters receive peculiar inflections from their contact with India and Indian religions. And significantly enough, Fielding's concession to Hinduism goes hand in hand with the transfer of his loyalties to the British. The "latest newcomer" to the imperialist fold does not see unreason in Bhakti, though E.M. Forster discovers precisely this in *The Hill of Devi*.²² Fielding's guarded remark that there is "something" in religion that the Hindus have "perhaps" found (p.270) is, I submit, of a piece with the liberal British policy of religious toleration. What the novel presents, then, is a dialectical interaction between the British and the Indians at the level of the superstructure.

Besides socio-political tendencies and the struggle at the cultural level, *Passage* does present the changes taking place in the life of the people, their hopes, fears, aspirations and also the new political temper of the country evidenced at the trial. Like a true novelist, Forster translates these changes into human actions and feelings, and does not just theorize about them. For instance, though the victory procession after Aziz's trial (pp.225-230) has almost the feel of a popular revolt and the air of a new political consciousness, Forster's

presentation of the circumstances leading up to it is such that when this event does take place, we see it as something inevitable and as a continuation and intensification of the normal popular life. The discussion on "whether it is possible to be friends with an Englishman" (p.12), the Tonga episode involving the Memsahibs and Aziz (p.18), the Bridge party (pp.39-64), the game of polo between Aziz and the nameless subaltern (p.57) and Miss Derek's exploits in the feudal state (p.89-90) strike one as composing a pattern which is incomplete without the celebration that unites (however briefly) the Hindus and the Muslims in their common opposition to the common enemy.

So far we have considered the positive aspects of Forster's realism. Let us now look at its negative aspects. While the novel does to a large extent reflect the historical and social conditions of contemporary India, it ignores some significant areas of Indian life. In fact, it moves within the magic circle of a few characters who still retain their pre-nationalistic innocence and preoccupations. They are still eager to please the Englishman and pay him exaggerated deference; they still distinguish between the Englishmen "at home" and the Englishmen in India; and they still hanker after English sympathy and English applause. These are not India's men of destiny: the bourgeoisie who emerged in the late nineteenth century and who with their opposition to the British made an essential difference to the character of the Indian national life by the end of the First World War. Forster missed the opportunity of drawing vital, relevant and genuine Indian types who looked to the future and who did not either pine for a vanished imperial glory or invoke a god who never came.

This is symptomatic of Forster's divorce from the life of the people and a reminder of the limitations of his realism. Indeed, the people appear but three times in the novel. We notice them at the railway station where the Collector sees them sleeping and to whom he addresses his sadistic fantasy (p.163), at the victory celebration, and at the Gokul Ashtami festival where they wear a beatific expression on their faces (p.280). We also see their representatives in the Punkahwallah (p.212), the gardener who likes Godbole's song (p.78), the peon who is fined eight annas (p.94), and the Nawab's Eurasian driver (pp.88-89), to mention only a few. While all these sketches add up to some kind of a picture of popular Indian life, unfortunately this life remains a separate sphere that hardly interacts with the privileged sphere of the central characters, who, racial oppression excepted, do not share the problems and pressures of popular life, and, having very little in common with it, pursue their own individual interests.

Forster's divorce from Indian life also manifests itself in his refusal to take notice of the Indian nationalist movement except in an indirect manner. A nationalist mass movement represents the development of millions of people from mere "spontaneity" (which implies lack of reflection) to "consciousness." It produces a number of people who possess specific individual abilities at the same time as they share in a common ethos. These individuals are markedly different from the men who either survive from the feudal, pre-nationalist phase (Aziz in the first two books) or who still belong to it spiritually (Godbole). If Forster does not exactly ignore this new type altogether — for instance, he hints at its presence in Amritrao — significantly enough, he refuses to develop it.

This leads one to suspect that whatever his intellectual convictions, as a novelist Forster fails to take the Indian side of the Indo-British conflict as seriously as the Anglo-Indian side. For, as almost every critic has recognized, the ethos of British imperialism is evoked in such brilliantly etched types as Ronny, Turton, Major Callendar, the nurse and the nameless subaltern. Ronny and Turton in particular, like typical characters in the realistic tradition, possess at a fairly high level of consciousness important traits that have many-sided and complex connexions with the forces and problems of the age. Their individual traits flow from the imperialist situation they find themselves in: Mrs. Moore particularly feels the force of this process in Ronny, who cannot bear to hear his "viola" mentioned in public and who now admires as art what he once scorned (pp.40-41). They also derive their *raison d'être* from the force that subjugated more than half the world and which, by the way, they themselves helped create. The typicality of Ronny and Turton becomes obvious against the background of Mrs. Moore and Adela, who resolutely, heroically, and tragically refuse to dwindle into Anglo-Indianhood.

On the other hand, as we shall see in the next section, such Indian characters as Aziz, Godbole, Mahmoud Ali, Pannalal and the Nawab who help to evoke the Indian ethos, are largely psychological types and are, therefore, unlike the Anglo-Indian types, not seriously connected with the social historical forces and trends of the age. (Only after the trial and towards the end of the novel does Aziz achieve such a connexion.) Representing nothing but themselves, between them they create an atmosphere of spinelessness, impotent petulance, fervid mystification, and pathetic camaraderie which is characteristic more of the "princely states" than of British India in the twentieth century. Thus, while the insider's understanding of British society helped For-

ster create excellent Anglo-Indian types, his divorce from Indian life (in spite of his numerous Indian friends) led him to present his Indians mostly as psychological types rather than as types in the realistic tradition. We shall analyze his major Indian characters in the next section in order to discover their strengths and flaws as types, the limitations of his realism, and the source of his "symbolism."

The assumption underlying the analysis that follows is that the Novel aims at evoking the "totality" of the process of social life and development by presenting a limited section of reality. Since this totality includes, besides the surrounding nature, customs, institutions, and habits characteristic of a certain phase of society, the "direction" in which it is moving, the novelist provides more than mere faithful naturalistic depiction either of the mind or of the world. In order that he may be able to combine truth of detail with the overall truth of direction or tendency, he conceives and presents his characters, circumstances and situations in such a way that they are informed by those "manifold connexions" with the objective universal problems which "mediate" reality.²³ These ingredients of the Novel, therefore, cease to be arbitrary and gain in historical validity. It is thus that characters as well as circumstances acquire typicality in the Marxist sense.

Let us see how Forster's Hindu and Muslim characters fare as "types" in the Marxist sense defined above. In view of Nirad Chaudhari's criticism that Forster's Indian characters belong to the past, that he has failed to notice the new types that were emerging in India, and that the protagonist should have been not a Muslim but a Hindu, the question arises as to whether Aziz is or is not a modern Indian type.²⁴ One finds that Aziz's destiny—at least till he goes to Mau — is typical in so far as it expresses the life of the people and the problems of the epoch. Though he belongs to the privileged class of Indians, the life of the people under colonialism — their precarious existence at the mercy of the white rulers and the daily racial snubs, insults, and provocations — is poignantly reflected in the events of his life. He comes in contact with the great problems of the age — oppression and racial discrimination — at different levels and in different walks of life. He experiences them at the social, political and judicial levels and is also moulded by them. Indeed, one gets the feeling that what one sees is only a fragment of a layer of reality, and that oppression is endless like the arches that rise beyond one another and the echo that can hardly be stilled. Aziz, therefore, rises to the status of a true Indian type, whatever be the feudal marker of faith by which he is, incongruously, identified in the Capitalist age.

Moreover, what makes Aziz a true Indian type is the fact that his progress from love for the English to hatred for them recapitulates the Indian side of the different phases of the Indo-British encounter, just as Fielding's progress, as we have already seen, enacts its British side. After his initial friendship with the British (not free from its own stresses and tensions) comes the period of estrangement, which is followed by open hostility. This is, indeed, the pattern of the Indo-British social experience as Percival Spear and Anglo-Indian writers on the Raj tell us.²⁵ Aziz is, therefore, a splendid type socially as well as historically, besides possessing a rich and unique individuality.

However, Aziz has his limitations as a type. For instance, he is more or less cut off from the opposite Hindu camp and, therefore, does not embody more than a fragment of popular Indian life. Moreover, his withdrawal from British India, the mainstream of Indian life, cuts him off from the forces of social life that give him his strength and identity, and this withdrawal reduces him. Perhaps he gets even with the rulers psychologically by turning his back on them. Though one may appreciate this response as the gesture of a sensitive and self-respecting man, it is, as a matter of fact, uncharacteristic of the Indian intelligentsia in the days of the Raj. Thus, though he is still credible as a private individual, he has lost his earlier status as the embodiment of a force and a trend, for his destiny does not reflect or in any way suggest either the character or the destiny of the subject people. After the storm has subsided, the Anglo-Indians are more bitter than ever, the Indians as divided as before, and Aziz has escaped to a feudal fastness, leaving British India to her own fate. Thus the hero's destiny runs counter to that of the colonial society and fails to articulate it, and from the type that he was, he sinks into being merely a private individual nursing a petty and private grievance against a whole race. A fully rounded character has deteriorated into a flat one; or to put it differently, Aziz has been psychologized.

Like Aziz, Godbole also presents a baffling mixture of the typical and the non-typical, which makes one suspect that he too has been psychologized. His sartorial synthesis of the East and the West (a dhoti, socks with clocks, and a turban, p.71) his love of food, his piety, and his obscurantism passing for Hindu wisdom (cf. his discourse on good and evil, p.175) have a basis in reality and capture some of the typical traits of the Brahmin intelligentsia of the period. However, unlike the notorious Chitpavan Brahmins of Valentine Chirol's description, Godbole is above politics, removed from his times, and indifferent to the world he lives in.²⁶ Though Forster's in-

stinct as a novelist made him recruit one of his major characters from among the Brahmins, what made them the important representatives of the epoch is excluded from the novel. He has isolated his Brahmin from the problems of the age that the Brahmins tackled as nationalist teachers, journalists and intellectuals. By depriving him of his social roots, and dwelling on the life of the "mind" and the "spirit", Forster has psychologized his Brahmin and fashioned an empty psychological type out of a complex reality.

Since the process of psychologizing is accompanied by the parallel process which misses the significant forces and trends of the age, an analysis of the former cannot ignore the historical situation. Our examination of the major Indian characters, Aziz and Godbole, cannot, therefore, be a "pure" character-study and must proceed to a broader inquiry.

The destinies of Aziz and Godbole represent a peculiar response to British imperialism. Consider, for instance, Godbole's voluntary withdrawal from British India into the princely state, and Aziz's retreat to the same feudal stronghold. If Aziz seems to come more and more under the influence of Godbole and strikes one almost as being his Muslim disciple,²⁷ what makes it ominous is the former's retreat from reason in keeping with the latter's flourishing spirituality. Godbole's spirituality, which is in evidence at the tea-party (p.78) and after the fateful picnic (p.174-175) now attains, judging by the space and focus accorded it in the Temple, the luxuriant growth of a tropical weed. On the other hand, Aziz's scientific temper, or whatever he possessed of it in British India, atrophies in the backwater of feudal life. And as Fielding is quick to realize (p.316) this generous, sentimental, and loveable man degenerates into an embittered and superstitious Hakim (a Muslim country doctor). These situations and developments unequivocally suggest that a massive retreat from rationalism, the prevailing temper of capitalism, was the major Indian response to British imperialism.

Though it must be admitted that this withdrawal from British India does reflect the greatest problem of the age, namely, the inferior position of the Indian in his own country under imperialism, it also suggests very strongly that a sensitive Indian could live a life free from degradation and humiliation only in a native state and that *this* India is the real India where, unlike in British India, there is joy, happiness, love, ecstasy, God, Harmony in spite of the obvious confusion, and, as Stella has discovered, the religion that calms and is soothing (p.314). Aziz's escape from British India and his parallel retreat from

rationalism thus give a twist to the novel which, contrary to what one would expect from the realistic character of the first two parts, sets it moving in the direction of a memoir or what Raymond Williams calls a "personal" novel.

What I mean is that Forster is promoting here a view of princely India which is as false as it is flattering to those pockets of feudal India which the British propped up for their own reasons. As if British India were unreal and "real India" existed only in an anachronism like Mau with its atmosphere of religious abandon and "Hindoo Holiday". But this feudal survival has little in common with the India of Amritraos and Mahmoud Alis — the professionals who spearheaded the nationalist movement in the first two decades of the twentieth century. It could only harbour the likes of Godbole. In making Aziz cast his fate with this mediaeval relic, Forster distorts the real process of history. For as a matter of fact, feudal India followed the lead of British India and in numerous ways sought to modernize itself so far as this was consistent with feudalism.²⁸ In *Passage*, however, the lead passes into the hands of feudalism, mysticism, unreason, and Hinduism in as much as Mau is represented as a retreat from British India and perhaps tacitly held up as a pattern for it.

It may be argued that such feudal survivals continue to haunt India even today and that Forster was perfectly justified in presenting what he saw. While it is true that in India particularly the superstructure tends to survive indefinitely, one does expect him, like the great realistic writers of the past, to distinguish between regressive tendencies and the ones which point to the future, and depict them all faithfully, whatever his subjective preferences. However, he has weighted the first two parts heavily against British India, and in the final part tipped the scales in favour of feudal India. As a result, the picture of modern India is on the whole distorted, subjective and private. Forster is not only unfair to the British bourgeoisie in completely ignoring their progressive role in India, he is also unjust to their Indian counterparts who, while developing under the shadow of the "mighty oak," were preparing to inherit the Raj at the same time as they fought it for a fair share of the Indian market.²⁹ Instead of a depiction of the real trends of history in terms of characters and incidents, then, Forster has offered a private Indian feud with official British India as the core of the novel and thus psychologized both Aziz and Godbole. The result is that Aziz forfeits such typical features as he possesses when he goes to Mau, and Godbole, who

acquires a false universality, comes across not as the anachronism he was even then but as a timeless saviour — perhaps the first of the “Gurus.”

That Aziz has been psychologized becomes clearer if one remembers that Pannalal, Amritrao and Mahmoud Ali — professionals all of them — did not leave British India in response to British oppression but continued to hold their own either as sycophants, collaborators or opponents. In fact, no Indian sought “political asylum” in “native India” for the obvious reason that it represented an unholy alliance of native and British despotisms. Though the motivation to leave British India that Forster imparts to Aziz is real, the actual move itself is thoroughly uncharacteristic of Indian intellectuals.³⁰ But if one abstracts him from his social historical environment, his removal to a region free from the white man’s contumely would seem to be perfectly logical. But such a logicity has been dearly bought. Forster has departed from the rich, baffling and contradictory Indian reality in order to depict an abstract and ideal response and ignored in the process the specifics of the situation which normally control and articulate an artistic response. He has sacrificed the concrete typicality of the realistic tradition and achieved an abstract universality characteristic of symbolism.³¹

Similarly, Forster could turn Godbole into a psychological type and endow him with “other-worldly” features because he takes an ahistorical view of Bhakti, which he regards as an eternal source of wisdom not available to Jainism, Islam, and Christianity.³² He does not realize that Bhakti has played a positive as well as a reactionary role in Indian history. As an activist and progressive cult, it has been a unifying force rallying people in self-defence against oppression, whether domestic or external. As a reactionary movement, it assumed a passive, negative, and quietistic character, degenerating at times into an anodyne for peasants and workers.³³ Of these two aspects of Bhakti, positive and negative, Forster has chosen to present the latter as the height of Indian wisdom. This is, one suspects, symptomatic of Forster’s divorce from Indian life. For, as a matter of fact, early Indian nationalists like, say, M.G. Ranade saw no contradiction between positive Bhakti and nationalism. And what is even more important, Gandhi, in the best traditions of this kind of Bhakti, used it at his mass meetings to unite different nationalities and inspire in the people a sense of self-respect and self-confidence. What is clear, then, is that the character of Bhakti depends on the nature of the social force that adopts it. When Bhakti is just an “encounter” between the

individual and his god, as it is in Godbole's case, it is utterly empty of any significant social content and its real, ideological meaning lies in its indifference to the empirical world. Therefore Godbole's Bhakti, which misses the great currents of Indian national life in the early twentieth century, imposes severe limitations on Forster's portrayal of India and is responsible for the presentation of Hindus as mostly ineffectual and otherworldly individuals. In short, if Godbole is a psychological and not a Marxist realist type, it implies a necessary impoverishment and consequent distortion and mystification of objective reality.

We have examined so far why Forster has psychologized his characters, and tried to analyze how this process works. It remains to point out some of the more important implications of this process for *Passage*.

If we remember that psychologism is an inevitable response to the erosion of the novelist's sense of social and historical processes, which leads to a loss of concreteness in presentation of characters and circumstances, one can see that such a presentation is abstract, ahistorical and metaphysical. In other words, psychologism leads to a mystification of reality.

Consider the Temple, for instance. Here Forster's powerful drama peters out into a spectacle which is mainly a miracle, a farce, and a divine comedy rolled into one, though it also smacks of a political morality. While for some the meaning of the novel resides in this part, particularly in its Hinduism, for a Marxist critic it introduces an element of mystification. Forster observes, for example, that "religion is a living force to the Hindus" (p.299) and notes several of its qualities and beneficent effects either authorially or through Fielding (pp.270, 279, 280, 284-285 and 314-315). He takes it for granted that this is as it should be and does not even stop to inquire whether it is not an unmixed blessing. He does not even suspect that this cult which brings out his suppressed religious emotions has a pathetic side to it which is a function of centuries of poverty, suffering and degradation. He fails to see it in its social historical context and turns it into an entity above time and space, a universal value which liberal agnostics have lost. Obviously, Forster is not responding to Bhakti or Hinduism as such. He, or his mouth-piece for *this* purpose, Fielding, feels that there is "something" in Hinduism because it satisfies the agnostic's nostalgia for faith. "She [Adela] was at the end of her spiritual tether, and so was he [Fielding]. Were there worlds beyond which they could never touch....They could not tell....They

had not the apparatus for judging" (256). When they declare that they don't "believe" in God, they feel like "dwarfs" (257). Though not for them "an infinite goal behind the stars," "wistfulness descended on them now, as on other occasions" (p.257). Such a state of mind is receptive to certain forms of unreason. In sum, Forster's concession to Hinduism is subjectively an act of guarded self-indulgence and objectively an instance of mystification.

If the erosion of the sense of social historical processes leads to abstraction, psychologism, and mystification at the level of content, it leads to symbolism at the level of technique. Lest the association between abstraction as described above and symbolism should seem strange, it may be pointed out that "abstraction" for Lukács refers to the absence, not of a sensory or sensuous or concrete quality, but of social historical mediations or connexions. Indeed, concrete details without such connexions—Lukács would describe them as "abstract immediacy"—are a fertile source of symbols. In fact, abstraction and symbolism are two sides of the same coin; as Lukács puts it: "The literary form of abstraction here is the symbol."³⁴ Forster's symbolism, as we shall see, is a manifestation of the same process that shapes his psychological types.

In order to see how Forster creates what have been generally considered to be symbols, let us consider briefly the caves, the echo and the Punkahwallah. While lucid observation, vividness, and concreteness characterize all of them, he does not fight shy of historical details. The historical perspective on the caves, for instance, is one of the triumphs of Forster's art. However, the social links between the caves and the life of the people from among whom several persons would seek "salvation" there, are just not there. As a result, any odd visit from any odd person qualifies for a spiritual interpretation. And though what she "discovers" is impressively mysterious, Mrs. Moore is presented as a symbol of the fulfilment of a spiritual quest and the caves can bear as many interpretations as there are critics. Similarly, as a symbol the meaning of the echo is almost inexhaustible and it has been considered to represent Vedanta as well as ascetic nihilism.³⁵ Again, though the portrait of the Punkahwallah shows Forster's genuine sympathy for the victims of the Indian caste system, it betrays no understanding of the new and profoundly important role as landless labourers and urban workers that the British had unwittingly cast for them by tearing apart the traditional fabric of the village community. He is therefore abstract enough to invite a symbolic interpretation. And indeed, he has been looked upon as a symbol of the

Collective Unconscious!³⁶ It seems that what these symbols have in common is that they combine superficial "concreteness" with real abstractness. Their sensory quality qualifies them for the aesthetic role of the symbol while their abstraction, which results from lack of mediations or links, turns them into counters which can be made to bear the weight of any abstract significance. As Lukács points out while commenting on Flaubert's symbolism: "From the literary point of view, it is the lack of transition between the purely empirical, naturalist observations, the small individual features of life and the abstract-general which is most characteristic...details, in themselves neither deep nor significant, are made into bearers of abstract-general connexions and identified with them".³⁷ And as our analysis has shown, this is Forster's strategy too.

The ultimate source of Forster's symbolism, then, is his alienation from the reality he has chosen to depict. What I mean is that he cannot see it or is not interested in seeing it as a concrete totality moulded by social historical determinants. Given this radical limitation abstraction, psychologism, inadequate types, mystification (which occasionally presses lyricism into service and invests India with a halo of incomprehensibility) and symbolism follow.

To say this is not to imply that Forster is a fullfledged "modernist." Strongly realistic as his art in *Passage* is, it bears the marks of the decline of realism which establish a certain affinity between it and modernism.³⁸ While one of its feet is firmly planted in the realistic camp, the other one strays quite often into the modernist one which harbours abstraction, psychologism and symbolism. It is an impossible posture that freezes one into immobility and confers on one the status of a transitional writer. It is not surprising that if *Passage* was designed as a new kind of experiment, it had no successors worthy of it.

NOTES

1. Georg Lukács, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell, *The Historical Novel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1962), p.340.
2. The last line refers to the young labourer, "smoking as he leaned against the street-wall," whom Forster saw after his meeting with Henry James. "There, Forster told himself, was the reality he was after." Quoted by P.N. Furbank, *E.M. Forster: A Life* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1977), I, 164-165.
3. This is F.R. Leavis' view. See his "Elites, Oligarchies and an educated Public," in *Nor Shall My Sword: Discourses on Pluralism, Compassion and Social Hope* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1972), pp.224-227.

4. The following critics assess the novel as realism and find it wanting: Q.D. Leavis, "Mr. E.M. Forster," *Scrutiny*, V (1936), 100-105; Derek Traversi, "The Novels of E.M. Forster," reprinted in Philip Gardner, ed., *E.M. Forster: The Critical Heritage* (Delhi: Vikas, 1974), pp.387-399. George Thomson in his *The Fiction of E.M. Forster* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967) has protested against the exclusively realistic appraisal of Forster's fiction. Frederick P.W. McDowell in his *E.M. Forster: An Annotated Bibliography About His Writings* (De Kalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976) says that it seems "irrelevant" to judge Forster by the "standards of realism." (178). The following critics consider *Passage* as symbolism: Jacques Heurgon, "The Novels of E.M. Forster," reprinted in *The Critical Heritage*, pp.297-305; J.W. Aldridge, *After the Lost Generation: A Critical Study of the Writers of the Two Wars* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), pp.216-217. Most critics, however, view the novel as a combination of realism and symbolism. The most obvious representative of this trend is Walter Allen, *The English Novel: A Short Critical History* (London: Phoenix House, 1954). However, none of these critics realize that symbolism is a quality characteristic of the decline of realism and that this is demonstrably true of *Passage*.
5. Martin Green's discussion of *Passage* is critical of its realism. See his "British Decency," *Kenyon Review*, 21 (1959), 505, 532. For a favourable discussion of the novel as symbolism, see Jacques Heurgon.
6. For this kind of criticism one may consult: C.M. Bowra, "Beauty in Bloomsbury," *Yale Review*, NS 44 (1955), 461-464; Frederick Grubb, "Homage to E.M. Forster," *Contemporary Review* 195 (1959), 20-23; Martin Price, "People of the Book: Character in Forster's *A Passage to India*," *Critical Inquiry*, I (1975), 605-622.
7. Forster's insights into his own art are remarkable. He was aware, for instance, that "the great defect" of his "position" as a novelist was that he only saw "people in their leisure moments" (Forster's letter to Malcolm Darling on 12th December 1908 quoted by Furbank in *E.M. Forster*, I, 138). Besides, as Furbank observes on the same page, Forster had "very little power of imagining what people did in their working hours, or indeed very little interest in it." Forster wrote in 1913 that "I must keep myself from trying to look round civilization. I haven't the experience or the power, The influence of Galsworthy, Wells etc. is certainly bad for me." Furbank tells us that his "Indian experience" "helped to put him out of humour with the Galsworthyesque novel. He was attracted now by something more visionary" (*E.M. Forster*, I, 210). The result was *A Passage to India*.
8. I shall give only two instances of this kind of realistic appraisal: Nirad C. Chaudhari, "Passage to and from India", in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of A Passage to India*, ed. Andrew Rutherford (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1970), pp.68-77; G.K. Das, *E.M. Forster's India* (London: Macmillan, 1977).
9. I have derived this interpretation of symbolism from John Aldridge, *op.cit.*
10. Stephen Spender dismisses Forster as a modernist in *The Struggle of the Modern* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), pp. xi-xiii.
11. I should refer here to the Marxist thesis elaborated by Georg Lukács that realism is the literary faith of the bourgeoisie in its revolutionary phase and that with the development of the proletariat, it turns in the direction of naturalism, symbolism, psychologism and such other forms of modernism. This thesis underlies his *Studies in European Realism* (London: The Merlin Press, 1972) and *The Historical Novel*.

The kind of discussion proposed here has not been attempted in any of the Marxist critiques I have seen: Jonah Raskin, *The Mythology of Imperialism: Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad, E.M. Forster, D.H. Lawrence, and Joyce Cary* (New York: Random House, 1971): pp.257-271; W.H. Truitt, "Thematic and Symbolic Ideology in the Writings of E.M. Forster: In Memoriam," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 30 (1971), 101-109.

12. *The Historical Novel*, p.289.
13. *The Historical Novel*, pp.287-288.
14. *The Historical Novel*, p.288.
15. For a detailed discussion of the points made here, see *The Historical Novel*, pp.285-294.
16. In this context one may bear in mind the following remarks of Lukács': "Some overhasty and over-sensitive critics have a habit of creating a new aesthetic as soon as any new kind of writing appears. Thus any new manifestation of literature is immediately and uncritically raised into a criterion which is binding on literature in general....If we derive the

aesthetic criteria of a particular trend from the works belonging to this trend, they have ceased to be criteria. And an aesthetics which is afraid to approach the question of criteria, of the rightness of a particular trend or genre has abdicated from aesthetics" (*The Historical Novel*, p. 363).

17. *The Historical Novel*, p.169.
18. *A Passage to India* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 197), p.316. All subsequent references are to this edition and will be made in parentheses.
19. *The Historical Novel*, p.169.
20. *The Long Revolution* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1965), p.308.
21. This hypothesis is suggested in S.V. Pradhan, "A 'Song' of Love: Forster's *A Passage to India*," *The Centennial Review* 17 (1973), 297-320.
22. On 24th August 1921 Forster writes: "I cannot see the point of this [religious ecstasy, Bhakti], or rather in what it differs from ordinary mundane intoxication. I suppose that if you believe your drunkenness proceeds from God it becomes more enjoyable. Yet I am very much muddled in my own mind about it all...." In the same letter he goes on to say that the Gokul Astami celebration [a Bhakti festival] is "fatuous" and lacks "dignity," "taste," and "form". He also says that "though I am dressed as a Hindu I shall never become one." He concludes that it is "natural" that Missionaries lose their tempers with these ceremonies. Quoted by Furbank, II, 89-90.
23. *The Historical Novel*, p.163. Lukács uses these concepts in all his critical writings.
24. "Passage to and From India," in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of A Passage to India*, ed. Andrew Rutherford (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1970), pp.69-74.
25. For the early British attitudes towards Indians, see Percival Spear, *The Nabobs: A Study of the Social Life of the English in Eighteenth Century India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp.126ff. One of the more recent Anglo-Indian works on the Raj which deals with this topic is Humphrey Trevelyan's *The India We Left* (London: Macmillan, 1972), pp.13-16.
26. Chiról's vitriolic character-sketch of the Chitpawan Brahmins in his *Indian Unrest* (London: Macmillan, 1910) became notorious in India and "the father of the Indian unrest," B.G. Tilak, sued the writer for libel and defamation. Whatever the Indian response to the book, it is obvious that Chiról recognized the active and important role of the Chitpawan Brahmins in the life of the nation.
27. This is not really surprising because Aziz's heart-oriented creed is part of Sufism, which is the Muslim equivalent of Bhakti and which, in its own right, influenced Bhakti. For a detailed discussion, see Romila Thaper *A History of India* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1966), I, 308.
28. If this is seen at the economic level in the attempts of the princes to get the Indian capitalists to start industries in their states, at the political level it is reflected in their bathetic attempts to give themselves "democratic" constitutions.
29. For the progressive rule of the British bourgeoisie, see Karl Marx, "The British Rule in India," in *On Colonialism*, 4th ed. (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1968), pp.35-41. For a discussion of the "love-hate" relationship between the British and the Indian bourgeoisie, see Bipan Chandra, "The Indian Capitalist Class and Imperialism before 1947," in *Imperialism in the Modern Phase*, ed. A Rahman, et al. (Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1977), II, 543-571.
30. The psychologizing process can be seen at work in the following authorial comment: "His impulse to escape from the English was sound. They had frightened him permanently, and there are only two reactions against fright: to kick and scream on committees [This Light-hearted reference to the nationalists is symptomatic of Forster's attitude towards a significant aspect of Indian reality], or to retreat to a remote jungle, where the sahib seldom comes [but which he nonetheless rules firmly through "political agents"]. His old lawyer friends wanted him to stop in British India and help agitate, and might have prevailed [a true description this of the role of the lawyers], but for the treachery of Fielding (p.288)." The last phrase is revealing for Forster allows a purely personal factor to distort his presentation of the dominant tendency. Remarks of this kind lend support to Raymond Williams' view that *Passage* is a "personal" novel.
31. Thanks to this process of psychologizing, typical sentiments have a false ring when expressed by Aziz. Consider, for instance, his moving speech asking the Turtons and Burtons to clear out. "We'll drive you into the sea," he says. "While seeking refuge in a native state?" Mrs Moore might have asked him in her gentle ironic manner if she were living. "If not we, our children." Half-realizing his own inadequacy for that purpose, he assigns to his

children the role which his *contemporaries* were equipping themselves for. Clearly, the whole speech is a fantasy, a day-dream, and a wish-fulfillment, and it is perfectly in character. It is of a piece with Ghalib, his bulbul, and the narcissistic pathos typical of Mughal decadence. The right sentiments for a truly modern Indian type sink into an empty abstraction because there is no living bond between them and Aziz as he has been presented in terms of his attitudes, world-view, and experiences. Though he has acquired the ability to generalize his own life consciously, it is sadly and severely undercut by his retreat from British India and reason.

32. For a discussion of the religious dialectic in the novel, see Pradhan, "A 'Song' of Love."
33. This is the picture that emerges from Romila Thapar's *A History of India*, i, 186-189, 264, and 304-312.
34. *The Historical Novel*, p.258.
35. For the connexion between the echo and Vedanta, see Glen O. Allen, "Structure, Symbol and Theme in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*," in *Perspectives on E.M. Forster's A Passage to India*, ed. V.A. Shahane (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968), pp. 129-130. For the echo as a symbol of Bhakti, see Pradhan, "A 'Song' of Love."
36. Thomson suggests this in Chapter VI of his *The Fiction of E.M. Forster*.
37. *The Historical Novel*, p.258.
38. This affinity has been noted by Carolyn Heilburn in "Speaking of Books: A Modern Among Contemporaries," *New York Time Review*, 31 Jan. 1966. p.2.