

Travel and Transformations: The Transcultural Predicament of Female Travellers in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924)

Nadia Butt

Department of English, University of Giessen

Abstract

Travelling to a new continent and undertaking a journey is often the most fundamental aspect of colonial and postcolonial literatures, especially in the genre of the novel. This article seeks to address travel as an agent of transformation in relation to the transcultural predicament of female travellers in E.M. Forster's novel *A Passage to India* (1924). By seeking a connection between gender and travel, the article demonstrates that the passage to India turns out to be a life-changing experience for the two women travellers, Adela Quested and Mrs Moore, who demonstrate different travel motives, expectations, and goals as compared with their male counterparts. By going beyond the discussion of the novel as a study in anti/colonialism and the impossibility of East meeting West, I set out to examine how the position and status of women on the move in the early phase of twentieth-century literature helps to comprehend the crucial role of travel in shaping their private spheres, particularly the suppressed sides of their self and sexuality within the colonial, imperial, male dominated framework. Moreover, I also investigate how these female travellers despite challenging and contesting colonial engagements within their limited domain end up in only aggravating their transcultural predicament during and upon the end of their journeys. Hence, the article looks deeper into the role of female travellers in the novel as they struggle to define themselves in a new cultural and geographical landscape.

Keywords: female travellers, journey motif, transcultural predicaments, colonial India, imperialism

1. Introduction: Travel, Culture and Gender

Kristi Siegel declares, “Each journey takes the unmistakable imprint of gender” (2004, 9). In other words, gender impinges on the practice of travel. Susan Bassnett chooses to categorise women travellers as “doubly different” (2002, 226) as compared with male travellers whereas Joyce E. Kelly points out “the gendered nature of travel” texts (2015, 17). How women travel is not only connected with asserting freedom or liberty but also encountering cultural difference in a new country or continent. According to Carl Thompson,

To begin any journey or, indeed, simply to set foot beyond one’s own front door, is quickly to encounter difference and otherness. All journeys are in this way a confrontation with, or more optimistically a negotiation of, what is sometimes termed alterity [...] all travel requires us to negotiate a complex and sometimes unsettling interplay between alterity *and* identity, difference *and* similarity. (2011, 9; italics in original)

Sara Ahmed presents another approach to alterity by claiming that “strange cultural encounters” are, in reality, a means of encountering “a stranger in us” (2000, 19–74). Consequently, the ideas of cultural difference, gender and travel tend to overlap in the discourse of both literary and cultural theorists. Taking inspiration from such an overlap, I aim to examine how British women travelled in the early twentieth century and how they experienced cultural difference in the age of imperialism. Since I claim that travel is conducive to cultural and psychological transformations, I address the transcultural predicament of two female travellers, namely Adela Quested and Mrs Moore in E.M. Forster’s *A Passage to India* (1924).

The novel has been discussed as an anti-colonial text from several perspectives (see Said 1993; Suleri 1992). However, the companionship of the female travellers has not been yet touched upon from the perspective of travel and transculturation especially in relation to the emergence of personal and cultural ambivalences the duo, consisting of persons from a young and an old generation, appears to encounter. Divided into two parts, part one of this article theorises the connection between travel and the transcultural along with the role of spatiality and topography, whereas part two employs these concepts as a reading methodology while treating them as important strands of female travel in the novel.

2. Mapping Travel, Transculturation and Spatiality in *A Passage to India*

Travel literature is currently considered to be reflective of the modern condition. Academic interest in travel is prominent in postcolonial studies as postcolonial scholars seek to understand and challenge the destructive consequences of the large European empires of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Thompson 2011, 3). While elucidating the genre of travel writing, Thompson, therefore, states, “From fifteenth to the twentieth centuries, the genre of travel writing played a vital role in European imperial expansion, and the travel writing of this period is accordingly highly revealing of the activities of European travellers abroad and of the attitudes and ideologies that drove European expansionism” (2011, 3). Edward Said’s seminal work *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) also underlines the imperial agenda in reading major works of British literature about travelling to distant lands for purposes of celebrating and justifying imperialism. Indeed, no matter which century we go back to – whether centuries of colonial times or present times – travel seems to appeal to the travelling imagination of Western writers tremendously. Now the question arises if travel is only a synonym for mis/adventure, or it is a means of simply discovering unfamiliar or ‘imaginative geographies.’ Or if travel practices only satisfy ‘oriental’ or exotic fantasies and imaginings of the ‘occident’ as Said contends in his work *Orientalism* (1973). The answers to these questions are hard to find in Forster’s novel as he deals with (imperial) travel as a highly ambivalent and complex practice causing an emotional and cultural breakdown of the female travellers in the novel.

The initial meaning of the word travel in English as “travail” refers to “bodily or mental labour or toil,” “exertion, trouble, hardship, suffering” as described in *Oxford English Dictionary* online (2019). As for travel, according to the *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* online (2019), it is defined as “a movement through space that changes the location of something” or “the act of going from one place to another” (2019). More than travel as travail, I look at it as a movement at several levels. This movement is even implicit in the title of the novel. In this regard, Robert Burden has made a perceptive observation:

The title, like the rest of the novel, does not settle on a single meaning. Amongst its meanings, ‘a passage’ signifies travel (by boat), the ticket itself, and a right to be conveyed; the act of moving through or passed something; access through a corridor or door to another part of the building; a noteworthy portion of a written text; a phrase

or short section of a musical composition; and the action or process of passing from one place or condition to another. In the passage to the other, cultural diversity seems a muddle. However, for those who want to impose the unity of a single cultural reality, cultural relativity appears to offer no consolation, only disillusion. Thus the title of the novel may be read as ironic. (2015, 99)

In this way, the very word travel and its several offshoots like ‘passage’, ‘mobility’, ‘migration’, ‘movement’ cannot be so easily defined, since travel is a multidimensional notion, which the current research tends to establish (see Neumann and Nünning 2012; Bal 2002; Clifford 1997). Similarly, the idea of mobility, included in the term ‘travel’, is no longer the research focus of anthropologists alone but appears to have increasingly fascinated contemporary literary scholars (see Graulund and Edward 2012, or Berensmeyer, Ehland and Grabes 2012). Travel literature as “a hybrid genre that straddles categories and disciplines” (Holland and Huggan 2000, 8) has been discussed with reference to several other aspects in different disciplines in the last years; for example, it is examined in relation to translation by James Clifford who defines it as overlapping experiences punctuated by various translation terms (1997, 11) whereas Michel Butor widens the scope of travel, including reading and writing as part of travel (1974); it is also addressed in regard to gender, colonialism and transnationalism (Grewal 1996; Mills 1991) or memory and modernity (Erl 2011; Burden 2015). In short, travel is increasingly an interdisciplinary concept, which encompasses the poetics of exile, rootlessness, immigration, or borders as spaces of conflict or communication.

Travel and transculturation are deeply connected to each other as several studies demonstrate (Pratt 1992; Taylor 1991, 90–104). Travel writing, according to Mary Pratt, unfolds spaces of cultural encounter as “contact zones” – sites where people and their cultures encounter alterity and mix with each other, occasionally leading to transculturation and hybridity (1992, 1–11). Indeed, travel tends to involve the idea and experience of cross-cultural as well as cross-border travel, leading to a new perspective on cultural connections as well as conflicts. Diana Taylor maintains that since theories travel and change their meaning, it is important to examine “the changing usage of the term transculturation” and “how socio-economic and political power of one culture impacts on, without altogether determining, another” (Taylor 1991, 90). She highlights, “Transculturation is not inherently or necessarily a minority or oppositional theory [...] The term applies not only to other colonized or dominated cultures, but [...] to dominant ones as well [...] Transculturation suggests a shifting or circulating pattern of cultural

transference” (1991, 93). Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz developed the concept of transculturation in 1940 to argue for a replacement of the term acculturation in sociology and ethnography.¹ Since then, transculturation has been widely discussed in relation to terms such as hybridity, métissage, creolization, syncretism, diaspora, third space, in-betweenness, to name but a few.²

According to *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, transculturation is defined as “a process of cultural transformation marked by the influx of new culture elements and the loss or alteration of existing ones” (2019, n.p.) whereas *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines transcultural as: “Transcending the limitations or crossing the boundaries of cultures; applicable to more than one culture; cross cultural” (2018, n.p.). Consequently, there is a conspicuous difference made in the last years between transculturation and the transcultural, which needs to be kept in view when applying to a certain work of literature. However, for my purposes I place the term ‘transcultural predicament’ in the imperial context to employ it as a perspective of analysing the individual and cultural upheavals of Western female travellers. Gone down in history as arrogant *Memsahibs* or mere protégées of colonial rulers (Grewal 1996, 25), I find it significant to explore the impact of travel on these women in colonial India as presented within the realms of fiction, so that it is possible to examine them as modern travellers who are unable to cope with their position as ‘superior’ women in a so-called hostile geography. These modern women travellers strive to transcend the borders of home and hearth and enter the slippery realms of new cultural values and norms, which turn out to be beyond their comprehension. In the present context, the transcultural predicament is, hence, defined as a constant struggle to overcome the binary opposition of native and colonial culture,

¹ According to Ortiz: “[T]he word transculturation better expresses the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another” and the “creation of new cultural phenomena, which could be called neoculturation” (1940/1995, 102–103). In the post/colonial contexts, transculturation points to the cultural exchange between coloniser and colonised but such an exchange takes places from unequal positions (Pratt 1992, 4–7). See also Young 2016, 193–203.

² Since Ortiz’s original conception of the term and its developments, several scholars such as Wolfgang Welsch (1999) or Frank Schulze-Engler (2008) have tried to redefine transculturation as transcultural or transculturality to detach the concept from its original colonial and nationalistic contexts and propose its use in contemporary settings, shaped by global cultural flows (see Appadurai 1996). According to Welsch, transculturality, opposed to the ideas of intercultural and multicultural, refers to “mixes and permeation” (1999, 197), inviting us to acknowledge the importance of the hybrid forms of cultures today.

‘us’ and ‘them’, friends and enemies, self and other, love and hate, rationality and irrationality, and home and abroad in the wake of travel to an unfamiliar space and place.

It is important to keep in view that the notions of travel and the transcultural help us to consider more intricate and complex notions of cultural exchange and overlapping as much as cultural difference and antagonism. In other words, the connection between travel and the transcultural phenomenon facilitates our understanding of “the predicament of culture” (Clifford 1988, 1–18), which actually points to the challenges and tensions that are likely to surface as cultures and their members communicate or interact with one another. I claim that these kinds of challenges and tensions cause an insurmountable emotional burden on the two British tourists in Forster’s novel. So, travel and transculturation viewed as a unit are argued to be immersed in political, personal, subjective and psychological aspects as they appear to be closely connected in my analysis.

Nevertheless, there is another theoretical aspect, namely spatiality which cannot be ignored when theorising the connection between travel and transculturation. Barney Warf and Santa Arias declare “the spatial turn” (2014) in their work, the dimensions of which have already been addressed by seminal spatial theorists, particularly Edward Soja (1989) and Michel de Certeau (1980). According to Gail Fincham, “For E.M. Forster, individuals’ experience of space, in the places in which his novels are set, is simultaneously geographical, cultural and psychological” (2008, 38). Benita Parry has already pointed up the representation of India as a mysterious and macabre space as central to the development of the plot: “As a novel which orbits around a space which is unrepresentable within its perceptual boundaries, *A Passage to India* is impelled to obfuscate that of which it cannot speak, a self-declared incomprehension that issues in fabrications of contradictory Indias” (1998, 181; see also Suleri 1987, 169–175). Alison Blunt further connects spatiality to the gendering of travel and claims them as inseparable (1994), so do Catheryn Khoo-Lattimore and Erica Wilson (2017) who look at travel as an opportunity for women to escape and to enjoy freedom in a male-dominated space, as travel has often been associated with men over the centuries. Indeed, travel as a masculine undertaking has also been established by classics such as H. Ridder Haggard’s *King Solomon’s Mines* (1884) or R.M. Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island* (1858).

Forster’s *A Passage to India* particularly complicates the connection between spatiality and gendering of travel just as the relationship between travel and transculturation, rendering the whole notion of female travel a highly arduous and larger than life experience with India as a place of menacing and sinister experience for female travellers. The novel unfolds the passage undertaken by two ladies who seek to build bridges

between the East and the West, but this motif behind travel undergoes a radical change as these female travellers are increasingly twined with the Indian landscape of heat and dust – where the weather conditions fundamentally contribute to their predicament. Consequently, the novel systematically unfolds the collapse of discovering the ‘exotic other’ as associated with colonial travels, for the topography of Chandrapore, where the first two parts of the novel are set, does not seem to satisfy “colonial desires” or fantasies (Young 1995, 90–117). Rather, it shatters them completely just as the universal ideas of love, care, trust, compassion and friendship.

The three parts of the novel named after different geographical zones a) Mosque b) Caves and c) Temple are presented as the zones of contact, conflict and reconciliation. Set during the time of the British Raj and the Indian independence movement in the 1920s, Forster treats India as a stubborn, unconquerable space in his fictional frames as he points out: “Nothing embraces the whole of India, nothing, nothing” (135). Indeed, Forster presents the twin cultural conflict in the novel within his female characters, which tend to echo the conflict in the space around them. This conflict is soon fraught with personal problems: first, the British can never colonise India in the real sense of the word; second, Adela is not able to embrace real India as there are “a hundreds Indias” (13) to be discovered; third, the discovery of real India may urge the discovery of the self, the confrontation of which a traveller may not be able to tolerate.

It is noticeable during Adela’s and Mrs Moore’s travels that Forster’s novel shares several aspects with the literature of travel, which Percy G. Adams defines as “gigantic” with “thousand forms and faces” (1983, 281): first, the novel is based on the theme of travel with journey as a quest particularly elaborated by the character of Miss ‘Quested’; second, the two major female characters in the novel as tourists encounter cultural differences and conflicts, which are mostly indispensable to travelling abroad; lastly, the novel treats places and spaces – Mosque, Caves, Temple – as ambivalent travel destinations and further connects them to the major theme of friendship and connection visible in the novel between the coloniser and the colonised as Aziz declares in part three “Temple, ”: “Never be friends with the English! Mosque, caves, mosque, caves. And here he was starting again... the two nations cannot be friends” (296). These words remind the reader about Mrs Moore’s journey through India, as she befriends Aziz in a mosque, experiences a breakdown in the caves and becomes a dear symbol of remembrance in the temple when the Hindu Professor Godbole has a vision about her as “an old Englishwoman” with “one little, little wasp” (276). In short, the theme of travel in the novel invites us to ponder on the interrelationships of familiarity and unfamiliarity as well as connection and disconnection.

3. The Cultural and Emotional Dilemma of the Tourist Adela Quested

For every travelling subject, travel always means something different due the fact that every travel experience is emblematic of distinct travel expectations according to individual character and history. In the case of Adela Quested, as her type name indicates, travel is exploration and search, but more importantly it is escape, freedom, knowledge, romance, all in one. Adela as a newcomer to colonial India seems to go through the three stages of travel, which a typical traveller may go through according to his or her cultural and emotional background: first, hoping and expecting, for she hopes to accept a good match and expects to befriend natives in her new homeland as a settler; second, falling victim to India as a muddle, only bringing out the muddle within her; lastly, returning home after realising that she has made a mistake about choosing the marriage of convenience and not love, and above all of accusing Aziz as her assailant who has only accompanied her to the dreadful caves. Hence, any further travel plans have to be terminated so that she can go back home in order to avoid facing further hardships.

The first stage of Adela's travel to India is typical of any intrepid traveller who hopes to discover the exotic and the unknown, but she is soon singled out by the British settler community as not one of their kind. As a young, educated, emancipated, and curious woman, she is apparently in search of 'newness' to widen her cultural scope as she has announced upon her arrival in the Club, reserved only for the British, that she wants to see "real India" (23). Upon her arrival, the reader is convinced of the fact that Adela is honest and keen on meeting the natives beyond the prejudicial vision of her colonial rulers, including her fiancé, the city Magistrate Ronny Heaslop. However, her hidden sexuality, combined with the lack of attraction for Ronny, let alone love, begins to dominate and overshadows her good intentions. In short, her real travel motives start to cloud her mind to such an extent that she turns out to be almost insane before her departure to England. By encountering the 'other', she appears to encounter the stranger within from whom she strives to flee. Thus, the experience of travel or the desire of seeing "true India" (42), as opposed to her expectations, turns out to be a journey to a dark reality within her – a reality perhaps in the form of sexual discontent or repression or simply a form of exercising possession or power subconsciously.

During the first stage of travel, both Adela and Mrs Moore formulate a companionship based on trust, so they undertake a journey together in search of thrill and enjoyment like regular tourists even though both have different travel plans. However, very soon

both feel bored and disappointed, yet Mrs Moore being older is able to accept the new situation against her expectations more easily than her younger companion:

‘We aren’t even seeing the other side of the world; that’s our complaint,’ said Adela. Mrs Moore agreed; she too was disappointed at the dullness of their new life. They had made such a romantic voyage across the Mediterranean and through the sands of Egypt to the harbour of Bombay, to find only a gridiron of bungalows at the end of it. But she did not take the disappointment as seriously as Miss Quested, for the reason that she was forty years older, and had learned that life never gives what we want at the moment that we consider appropriate. Adventures do occur, but not punctually. She said again that she hoped that something interesting would be arranged for next Tuesday. (22)

At this stage, the reader can relate to her frustration as she is not ready to accept her boring life passively, which seems to be either a parody or a travesty of life back in England that she has apparently left behind for a more romantic and thrilling one on a continent far away from home. Further, she clearly has a romantic notion of travel, which should lead to her marriage with Ronny and learning about a different culture. Both these motives behind travel are in jeopardy during the second stage of her journey through India. Moreover, unlike Mrs Moore, she is not ready to come to terms with her new existence, which seems to become increasingly dull and drab:

They (Adela and Mrs Moore) had lived more or less inside cocoons, and the difference between them was that the elder lady accepted her own apathy, while the younger resented hers. It was Adela’s faith that the whole stream of events is important and interesting, and if she grew bored she blamed herself severely and compelled her lips to utter enthusiasms. This was the only insincerity in a character otherwise sincere. (124)

Obviously, as Adela arrives in India as a typical tourist full of curiosity dominating her imagination, her ideals seem to clash immediately with the ground reality, which makes her question her future in India and the later course of her life in a new land.

In front, like a shutter, fell a vision of her married life. She and Ronny would look into the Club like this every evening, then drive home to dress; they would see the Lesleys and the Challendars and the Turtons and the Burtons, and invite them and be invited

by them, while the true India slid by unnoticed [...] She would see India always as a frieze, never as a spirit, and she assumed that it was a spirit of which Mrs Moore had had a glimpse. (42–43)

Perhaps Adela's dilemma lies in the fact that she confuses seeing the true spirit of India with exploring Indian geography. As a result, she neither gets to know the natives better, nor does she learn about their complex cultural features that her naïve mind cannot comprehend. As spatial and geographical dimensions are crucial to having a pleasant or unpleasant travel experience, the visit to the caves as a joyful excursion turns out to be detrimental to Adela's vision of travel; she opts for visiting the caves as a satisfying and thrilling experience with Dr Aziz as her tour guide without imagining the unexpected dangers often attached to such trips. Forster treats Indian geographical space as increasingly dull and drab, so it is not a surprise that during the Marabar expedition, Adela realises that "Sightseeing bores [her]" (143) as it is only a superficial encounter with new places and that she needs to reconsider what she really wants in her life. Her friend Fielding has already suggested to her that she should "try seeing Indians" (23) if she really aims to understand her new homeland. Her dilemma is further aggravated by the fact that none of her countrymen are interested in India at all but only in exercising their hegemony by supporting the 'dignified' ones like Ronny who is a downright *sahib*: "Miss Quested learned it with anxiety, for she had not decided whether she liked dignified men" (22).

Having announced that she is "desirous of seeing the real India" (23), Adela has not only differentiated her intentions behind travel from other colonial settler counterparts but she has also made them utterly uncomfortable. These colonial settlers not only find her despicable but additionally consider her an outcast. "Miss Quested, what a name!" remarked Mrs Turton to her husband as they drove away [...] thinking her ungracious and cranky" (24). And "she wasn't pukka" (25). Thus, the reader soon notices Adela's inability to fulfil her desire to see the 'real India' as she has been put into an unreal situation, which seems to prevent her from experiencing the deeper dimensions of Indian culture as she has anticipated.

Miss Quested now had her desired opportunity; friendly Indians were before her, and she tried to make them talk, but she failed, she strove in vain against the echoing walls of their civility. Whatever she said produced a murmur of depreciation, varying into a murmur of concern when she dropped a handkerchief [...] Mrs Moore was equally unsuccessful. (39)

At this stage, the reader is first introduced to the leitmotif of the all-pervasive echo, which is to dominate the plot. The echo reaches its peak during and after the Marabar expedition. However, during the development of the plot, the reader is prepared for a number of echoes within her – the echoes of cultural connection and conflict, of a prospective marriage devoid of love, and of her own sexual repression combined with not being an attractive woman. The nihilistic echo in the Marabar Caves clearly shatters the idea of travel as romance as well as of ‘West meeting East’:

There are some exquisite echoes in India; there is the whisper round the dome at Bijapur; there are the long, solid sentences that voyage through the air at Mandu, and return unbroken to their creator. The echo in a Marabar cave is not like these, it is entirely devoid of distinction. Whatever is said, the same monotonous noise replies, and quivers up and down the walls until it is absorbed into the roof. ‘Bourn’ is the sound as far as the human alphabet can express it, or ‘bou-ourn,’ or ‘ou-boum,’ – utterly dull. Hope, politeness, the blowing of a nose, the squeak of a boot, all produce ‘bourn.’ Even the striking of a match starts a little worm coiling, which is too small to complete a circle but is eternally watchful. And if several people talk at once, an overlapping howling noise begins, echoes generate echoes, and the cave is stuffed with a snake composed of small snakes, which writhe independently. (137)

Forster seeks to demonstrate how cultural, social and psychological echoes are inextricably intertwined in Adela’s case, that it is not possible to separate one from the other. Additionally, since “echoes generate echoes” (137), creating a chain of chaos, Adela cannot help sinking deeper into her own personal chaos; in short, the echo inside her during the apparently harmless trip to the caves becomes as dominant as the echo outside, making her lose touch with reality. Hence, Forster invites the reader to place Adela’s transcultural predicament in the broader picture of India as an imperial space as well as India as a space of personal quest.

The echo seems to push Adela to the second, the darker stage of her travel she has not expected. The space of Indian muddle, just like the echo, strangely personifies the muddle within her the longer she stays in India, finally expelling her from that so-called hostile, destructive space back to the safe haven of England. Forster repeatedly toys with the leitmotif of both muddle and echo in order to underline how the internal and external landscapes are overlapping. The echo in the Marabar Caves proves to be not only a turning point in the novel but also in Adela’s life as she falls victim to the more macabre

dimensions of colonial India, which embodies more “a frustration of reason and form” (270) than a romantic journey. These muddles are mentioned in relation to mysteries as Forster seems to imply that since muddles and mysteries are at the heart of colonial India, so are they within the Western travellers like Adela and Mrs Moore. However, Mrs Moore, who tries to demonstrate her adventurous mindset, claims, “I like mysteries but I rather dislike muddles” (63).

It is during the second stage of travel, which shows a travel within travel, that Adela begins to face her reality and falls apart. In fact, it is not only a journey to India but also a trip to the Marabar Caves which proves to be a passage to self-discovery – self-knowledge, that is, a marriage of convenience is not a means to a fulfilling life, that love is important to her if not considered in the first place. It is this discovery in the dark confines of the Marabar Caves which makes her run out of them in panic. She begins to complain about an echo, which is increasingly making her sick. However, once Aziz is set free and as she is free of the shackles of ‘colonial desires’ and duties, she is no longer sick. Finally, she withdraws her charges against Aziz and calls herself a victim of hallucination – a delusion, which remains debatable for the reader.

This leads to the final stage of travel, namely the journey back home to simply discontinue travelling further and to give up her ambitions in India. Adela has tried to be honest, but mere honesty does not help as she ends up wrongly accusing an innocent man. It is during the last stage of travel that both Adela and the reader are able to grasp the experience of travel in colonial India during the first and the second stage more critically. The experience in the Marabar Caves destroys the thrill of travel. Forster does not refrain from experimenting with the idea of travelling to a distant place as intriguing. However, he underlines the fact that from a certain distance, travel appears to be rather alluring; for instance, the caves look magnificent from a distance but proximity to them turns out to be fatal to one’s sanity. This idea is confirmed at the very opening of the novel as well as at the end of the disastrous Marabar expedition. Forster states at the beginning of the novel, “Except for the Marabar Caves – and they are twenty miles off – the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary” (5), hinting at the fact that they are only extraordinary from a distance, for as one comes closer to them, they reveal their ugliness. Finally, Forster declares at the close of the Marabar trip, “As [the train] left the Marabars, their nasty little cosmos disappeared, and gave place to the Marabars seen from a distance, finite and rather romantic” (150). Hence, Adela has genuinely imagined India as a perfect travel destination without anticipating that she may not be able to penetrate the glass ceiling of colonial hierarchies that hamper a genuine transcultural dialogue.

The standard idea or motif behind travel is usually a positive undertaking, leading to a broader perspective on a new culture and country as Adela has hoped, but in Adela's case, the chaotic psychic journey distorts her vision of the world just as it distorts Mrs Moore's in another way. Adela begins to break down as soon her idealism about India, Indians, and her future life as a colonial settler dies out. Although Forster concludes, "This pose of 'seeing India' which had seduced him (Aziz) to Miss Quested at Chandrapore was only a form of ruling India; no sympathy lay behind it" (291–292), it is Adela who deep down seems to seduce Aziz in order to assert her new position as a possessive and powerful woman. Ian Baucom, therefore, claims that "The optic of tourism, and particularly of imperial tourism, is an optic of possession, animated by a desire to freeze the inspected object in time, to locate experience as an accessible, fixed, and re-presentable artefact" (1999, 118). In light of Ian's observations, perhaps, Adela is not a mere victim of hallucinations or delusion, but she is unconsciously shaped by a deeper desire to be both possessed and being in possession. As both these desires are not realised, she falls prey to a panic attack. *A Passage to India* is, in short, a passage to existential questions connected to culture and the self, which cannot be understood by merely focusing on the evil of colonialism but an evil within us that colonialism seems to breed or give vent to. So, a scrutiny of travelling female characters makes the reader look at travel as a life-changing experience, leading to a deeper understanding of our internal and external worlds.³

³ Joyce E. Kelly proclaims: "Estrangement from a customary place can focus a traveller's perception not just outwards but inwards, bringing increased awareness of the physical self, of patterns of consciousness, and of methods of expression, all fascinating new avenues of exploration for early twentieth-century writers [...] As Frances Bartkowski remarks, 'A new place is always an opportunity for sanctioned cross-thinking, inter-speaking [...] cross-'dressing', out of which something may emerge that transforms, transvalues, translated" (2015, 4).

4. The Plight of Mrs Moore and the Breakdown of her Humanism

Like Miss Quested, Mrs Moore also seems to go through the three stages of travel: the first stage is shaped by her new goals in India and excitement about a new place; the second stage is dominated by the suffocating and nihilistic experience in the caves, which leads to the last stage when she dies on the ship bound to her homeland and her dead body is thrown into the Indian ocean. Tragically, the same sea that has promised the romance of travel appears to kill her in the last stage of travel.

Mrs Moore is introduced to us as a “globe-trotter” (27), who comes to India as a “temporary escort, who could retire to England with what impressions she chose” (27). She appears to be an emancipated woman who has been married twice; Ronny is her son from her first marriage, whereas Stella and Ralph Moore are her children from the second one. Just as Adela is unable to connect with the English ladies in the Club, so is Mrs Moore who does not seem to be inspired by the phoney concepts of cultural superiority of the British and its ostentatious display there. In fact, Mrs Moore’s travelling together with young, adventurous Adela unfolds an interesting contrast between an old and a young traveller. Unfortunately, both of them drift apart in the face of their distinct experiences in India. Eventually, Mrs Moore is determined to part company with Adela as Adela’s accusations of Aziz become unbearable for her. The same perspective of travel that has united them also sets them apart; thus, the experience of travel compels them to pursue different paths to come to terms with their cultural and emotional dilemmas.

During the first stage of her travel, Mrs Moore differs dramatically from Adela despite enjoying a companionship. Mrs Moore does not look at India like wide-eyed Adela, whose approach to experiencing India is superficial: “As for Miss Quested, she accepted everything Aziz said as true verbally. In her ignorance, she regarded him as ‘India’, and never surmised that his outlook was limited and his method inaccurate, and that no one is India” (65). In contrast to Adela, Mrs Moore applies her own insightful knowhow: “India is part of the earth. And God has put us on the earth in order to be pleasant to one another. God...is...love...god has put us on earth to love our neighbours and to show it, and He is omnipresent even in India to see how we are succeeding” (46). For she finds God “increasingly difficult to avoid as she grew older, and He had been constantly in her thoughts since she entered India, though oddly enough He satisfied her less” (47). However, Adela despite her close friendship with Mrs Moore is not able to share her own deep-rooted insecurities, the whole process of self-discovery and soul searching with her;

consequently, their companionship abruptly ends as Mrs Moore chooses to leave India and Indians with their problems. Although Aziz never forgives Mrs Moore for not being on his side as he forgives Adela for making a mistake about accusing him, Mrs Moore still stays a figure of affection in his imagination: "What did this eternal goodness of Mrs Moore amount to? To nothing, if brought to the rest of the thought. She had not borne witness in his favour, nor visited him in prison, yet she had stolen to the depths of his heart, and he always adored her" (297–298). Hence, even after her demise, Mrs Moore's goodness stays on, showing the power of her goodwill despite being passive in her acts.

Before the Marabar expedition, Mrs Moore has genuinely believed in love and the institution of Christianity, especially Christian values of kindness, which has dominated the first stage of travel. The echo in the caves, however, shakes these views just as the atmosphere in the dark caves shatters the idealism of travel, pushing her into the second stage of travel. For a moment, travel turns out to be the most terrible experience that can rob her of sanity: "Everything exists, nothing has value" (139). Henceforth, she first begins to question the fuss over love and marriage throughout the history of mankind and to doubt her religious views, concluding: "All this rubbish about love, love in a church, love in a cave, as if there is the least difference, and I held up from my business over such trifles!" (190). As India compels her to question her set views on religion and mankind, she is increasingly confused and in conflict with her surroundings. As Malcolm Bradbury observes, she is haunted by meaninglessness, namely the spiritual nullity in the caves which she is unable to overcome (1970, 224–243).

The trip to the caves, which induce an inner journey, seems to break down Mrs Moore not only physically but also spiritually as she loses her faith in Western rationalism. It is extremely difficult for Mrs Moore to face that not all can be explained rationally, that the nuances of foreign culture and aspects of human psyche and perception cannot be understood with the faculty of reason. As Aziz loudly calls out Mrs Moore, the echo of which lingers on in the narrow confines of the caves for a long time, Mrs Moore begins to suffer from claustrophobia, disgust, and consternation:

She lost Aziz and Adela in the dark, didn't know who touched her, couldn't breathe, and some vile naked thing stuck her face and settled on her mouth like a pad. She tried to regain the entrance tunnel, but an influx of villagers swept her back. She hit her head. For an instant she went mad, hitting and gasping like a fanatic. For not only did the crush and stench alarm her; there was a terrifying echo. (137)

The same echo that mars Adela's will to continue travelling in India and to settle down there also ruthlessly shatters Mrs Moore's who suddenly feels as if she "journeyed too far" (139). The conflict within her surrounding religion and mankind overpowers her in the horrid caves to such an extent that all she feels is "horror" (139) as every noble sentiment, comforting her throughout her life, appears to be an empty sound: "Religion appeared, poor little talkative Christianity [...] only amounted to 'boum'" (139).

Space and place are somewhat crucial to Mrs Moore's travel experiences as the events in the foreign space and unfamiliar place seem to change the course of her existence. Having felt terribly bored in the Club as a microcosm of colonial hegemony in the company of her vain fellowmen, she seeks refuge in a mosque where both the tranquillity and her chance encounter with Dr Aziz raise her spirit. However, both space and place during the Marabar expedition become hostile to her in the wake of the breakdown of her humanism, so is her will to continue travelling with anyone. Consequently, she declares to "retire then into a cave on my own" (188) in the third stage of travel. Finally, she seems to get caught up with India as a muddle willingly or unwillingly to such an extent that a passage back home, like that of Adela, is no longer possible as she expires on her way back. Her death on the ship seems to reverberate with her regret that her visit to India has been incomplete.

In fact, as soon as Mrs Moore is in India, she exists in a state of limbo between two worlds, that is England and India, between which she is unable to achieve harmony despite her good will. In several ways, Mrs Moore is neither East nor West as traditionally defined since she clearly seeks to think beyond these neat and clean categories. However, age is apparently against her despite giving her more wisdom than Adela; as a result, she seems to succumb to those who are determined to keep these categories intact. Her spiritual experience in the caves with a loss of faith in Christianity causes a loss of her identity, which is perhaps a reason behind her disappointment with everyone and everything around her. She seems to die in transit between these two worlds, namely Indian spirituality and Western rationality, as she cannot hope to exist in either of them. As she has lost faith in humanism, she fails to show readiness to take sides in a crisis like Adela's and Aziz's. A journey back home into a comfort zone becomes the only hope to regain harmony in existence, which is, however, brutally terminated by death: "She had come to that state where the horror of the universe and its smallness are both visible at the same time – the twilight of the double vision in which so many elderly people are involved" (195). Nevertheless, as John Beer claims, "Mrs Moore is destroyed in body [...] but her spirit lives on in the lives and spirits of others; and in the last section of the novel it is

actually reincarnate in physical form, when her children Ralph and Stella visit India" (1962, 131). Also, her death is presented in a more positive way, as she seems to have left behind her goodwill in India, acknowledged by Aziz himself, as mentioned above.

However, travelling for both Adela and Mrs Moore is a disturbing and unsettling experience as it makes them out of sorts. A passage to India for Mrs Moore is a passage to a disappointing phase, devoid of religion and moral values, which pushes her into a vacuum that seems to suffocate her and accelerate her demise. Even the echo does not seem to leave her as it eventually leaves Adela but appears to take its toll on her later. Thus, both these travellers are emotionally and physically transformed by dislocation and cultural 'otherness' encountered during their travels – the same 'otherness' they have hoped to enjoy and relish with true honesty. Therefore, Parry rightly infers:

The awakenings of two Englishwomen dislocated by an India that confutes their expectations take cataclysmic form and result in derangement and delusion, the one mimicking in her feelings and behaviour the ascetic stance of isolation from the world but misunderstanding its meaning as meaninglessness, the other assaulted by knowledge of sexuality and misinterpreting it as a sexual assault. Both are negative responses to their perceptions of India's otherness: Mrs More shrinks the august ambition of quietism to the confines of personal accidie, while Adela Quested experiences cultural differences as a violation of her person. (1985, 35)

Thinking along Parry's observation, it is important to point out that the novel is not as nihilistic as it appears to be at first, which underlines the crisis of the two female tourists in an extraordinary geographical domain. Travel certainly compels Adela to re-navigate her life in a different direction, as Beer claims "Adela becomes a person" (1962, 131) and makes Mrs Moore come out of the nullity of religious comfort. Hence, travel proves absolutely crucial to self-knowledge, however nerve wrecking or deathly such knowledge turns out to be. In short, both women travellers learn that travel is not a means to relish 'oriental fantasies' but can turn out to be a dark undertaking, shaking the comfort of illusions about the universe and God, native and foreign culture, as well as power and submission.

5. Conclusion: The New Woman Traveller

Although Adela and Mrs Moore genuinely wish to bridge the cultural gaps between the colonial and colonised cultures, the imperial space versus native space as epitomised by the caves seems to overshadow the noble ideal of connecting cultures. The desire to “only connect” (Forster 1910, 198) remains a fantasy of a naïve mind in the final stage of travel for both women travellers. At the same time, by staging the plight of Adela Quested and Mrs Moore, Forster introduces the aspect of women travellers in the larger debate of travel and colonialism, which are hard to find in the works of other prominent writers of colonial literature such as Rudyard Kipling and Joseph Conrad. By making two women central to the main conflict in the novel unfurled in the caves, Forster seeks to connect the theme of imperialism to female tourism. A trip to the caves, hence, turns out to be a journey not only to the heart of imperial darkness but also a journey to the internal void expanding increasingly within, which eventually seems to envelop the female travellers mentally and physically. Hence, Forster as a modernist is not only engaged with the breakdown of religious and social norms as well as the limits of Western rationalism in the frames of his (anti)imperial fiction, but the condition of the ‘new woman traveller’ as represented by the characters of Adela Quested and Mrs Moore. The cultural and emotional dilemmas apparently confuse and crush these two women who give up the hope of getting to know the myriad aspects of India and the Indians. Yet, they exercise their free will beyond the spheres of colonial masters in India, which urges the reader to acknowledge their role outside the domain of men.

A journey to India for both female travellers proves to be a journey to self-discovery as Forster breaks the fantasy of imperial travels as a romantic undertaking. Thus, by presenting the cross-cultural conflicts of female travellers and by gendering travel, Forster offers different ways of experiencing and understanding travel and transformations in his novel. So, despite failing to achieve their travel aims and facing the transcultural predicament, both Adela and Mrs Moore reach a different status in the eyes of the reader. As Harold Bloom observes, since Adela wants to see India, “Forster too wishes to make us *see*, in the hope that by seeing we will learn to connect, with ourselves and with others” (2005, 251; italics in original).

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