

# Mrs moore essay

[Art & Culture](#), [Dance](#)



Mrs Moore Mrs Moore is the most enigmatic of all the characters in *A Passage to India*. An elderly Englishwoman, she, like Aziz, has her precursors in Forster's work, most particularly in Mrs Wilcox of *Howards End* (1910). We see Mrs Moore at her best in the scene in the mosque with Aziz. There she is considerate and sympathetic, light-hearted and completely frank.

Despite his initial roughness, she treats Aziz with easy friendship and as an equal. Her understanding and tolerance are apparent in her acceptance of God's presence in the mosque. The words 'God is here' are a significant indication of her spirituality; when, later, she argues with Ronny about the duties of the English in India she returns to the subject of God's omnipresence, emphasising her belief that God's will is that man shall love his neighbour. Her visit to India brings about a crisis in Mrs Moore's spiritual life. Ronny believes that her religious bouts are always a sign of ill-health; certainly she is tired and dispirited for most of the time and we do not often see the side of her character which so endears her to Aziz. Her second meeting with Aziz at Fielding's tea party is the last time we see her in a carefree mood.

Her problems begin at that party: first, Adela indiscreetly tells Aziz that she does not intend to settle in India; this remark indicates to Mrs Moore that her mission has resulted in failure and Fielding observes that she 'looked flustered and put out'; secondly, Ronny rudely breaks up the party and she realises that the English have no intention of being pleasant to the Indians, whether God is watching them or not; and thirdly, Professor Godbole's song suggests the possibility of the absence of God, that He is perhaps not, after all, omnipresent: 'I say to Him, Come, come, come, come, come, come. He

neglects to come'. The song with its negative conclusion is followed by an almost mystic moment of silence: " Ronny's steps had died away, and there was a moment of absolute silence. No ripple disturbed the water, no leaf stirred". The absence of God is suggested by the reference to the water, for it recalls the biblical story of the troubling of the waters of Bethesda in which the movement of the water indicated the presence of an angel (St John 5.

1—9). From this time Mrs Moore is a changed person; on the way back from Fielding's she is querulous and refuses to go to watch the polo; she appears to be both physically and spiritually sick, out of tune with the life around her. Though the day ends with Adela and Ronny's engagement, she does not recover her enthusiasm for life.

During the fortnight between the tea party and the Marabar expedition little happens to revive her spirits and on the journey to the caves there is again a palpable silence which seems to deny all purpose in life. It is inside the first cave, however, that Mrs Moore's breakdown occurs, when the silence becomes filled with meaningless echoes; she gives way to despair, rejecting ' poor, little talkative Christianity', finding her life empty of understanding, of affection, of all interest. An elderly woman, she is fatigued with the journey, has probably had too much sun and is suffering from the strains and stresses ' of her Indian visit; she is, of course, physically ill and this manifests itself in mental and spiritual sickness. Before the trial she tries to free herself of the burdens of duty and responsibility but she is too distraught to do more than assert Aziz's innocence and thus sow the seeds of doubt in Adela's mind. Though she becomes a cantankerous old woman, Mrs Moore never entirely

loses the reader's sympathy. That she does not bear witness in the court for Aziz can hardly be held against her, for by that point she is a dying woman. It may also be said that she does, in fact, bear more powerful witness than her bodily presence could have done; she had no evidence on his behalf, only her acute knowledge of human character, but in spirit she is with Adela, maintaining his innocence; she is constantly alluded to during the trial scene and it is just after the invocation of 'Esmoor' that Adela speaks 'more naturally and healthily than usual'.

After her death, Mrs Moore gains new significance. Does Forster intend us to believe that in the mystery of India part of her personality survives — to influence Adela, to fill Aziz with happiness, to be worshipped by the Hindus? There is no suggestion that she lives again in a Christian sense but that she has an extra-human awareness is evidenced again and again (see "the mystic element").

Narration and Point of View The narrative method of *A Passage to India* is neither innovative nor complicated. It employs a third person omniscient narrator who is, for the most part, completely non-intrusive; at only one point in the novel does Forster step into the story, acknowledge its novelistic character and, in Dickensian style, address his 'dear reader' (Chapter 23). For the rest, a discreet anonymity is observed. The plot is unfolded chronologically, though explanations are sometimes given after the event, rather than before; so we learn that the Nawab Bahadur had once run over and killed a drunk man only after the motor accident and his display of fear; again, Aziz is arrested before we learn what crime he is accused of. Yet neither of these incidents may be seen as a deliberate stylistic inversion of the order of events for, in the first instance

the Nawab Bahadur has deliberately suppressed his unpleasant memories, whilst in the second the narrative has remained with Aziz and his party who are ignorant of Adela's accusations.

The action of the novel is introduced by and interspersed with sustained descriptive passages and philosophic discussions. The plot progresses through a series of incidents centring on groups or individuals as they react with each other. Our sympathies are engaged with some characters and not with others by the simple device of allowing us to view some from outside and others from inside.

The principal characters are seen in varying lights; what they do and what happens to them is put into focus by an insight into their reasons for action and their reactions to events. Furthermore, they appear to have a life apart from the plot of the novel, as they muse on poetry, religion, philosophy and other subjects which affect and reflect their innermost thoughts; it is from their point of view that we comprehend the tensions of the action. When, for instance, in Chapter 2, Aziz is called to report to Major Callendar, we are immediately aware of the lack of civility in the Civil Surgeon's note and we feel the young doctor's humiliation when Mrs Lesley and Mrs Callendar slight him.

This incident, though ostensibly told by an omniscient narrator, is seen through Aziz's eyes and the reader becomes sympathetically involved with him. Conversely, there is no attempt to let us understand the point of view of Callendar and the womenfolk and we thus remain opposed to them. The narrator does not often describe characters, rarely refers to what they are

wearing and never directly tells us what to think about them or the action they are involved in. In so far as our sympathies are manipulated, they are so through the characters themselves. This, however, is a fairly traditional method of narration and has been used in the conventional novel, certainly from Jane Austen onward.

Introduction There is little action in *A Passage to India*. The two banner headlines ‘ Indian doctor accused of assault on English girl’ and ‘ Case against Indian doctor dismissed’ could be said to sum up the whole of its plot. Yet much happens in the realms of the mind and the spirit: friendships form and dissolve; connections are made and broken; the intangible soul of India is approached but remains at the last inviolable. To the readers of Forster’s earlier novels the basic outline is familiar: individuals and groups are set in opposition to one another and our interest lies in seeing how things sort themselves out.

The book is made up of three parts — Mosque, Caves, Temple — corresponding, as Forster himself explained, to the three Indian seasons, cold weather, hot weather and rains. There are three major settings, Chandrapore, the Marabar and Mau. The whole of the first short chapter is devoted to describing Chandrapore and the Civil Station, introducing the Marabar Caves and simultaneously showing us the barriers which divide Indians and Anglo-Indians and preparing us to understand the subtle power of the weather and the seasons. The physical features of the landscape are brought vividly before us.

The filthy, sprawling, unhygienic Indian city of Chandrapore, with its sordid bazaars and mean houses, lies in the valley along an uninviting stretch of the Ganges; it is looked down upon by both the Eurasians and the English, seeming to fit in with the moral climate which labels the Indians as inferior. The description helps to establish the tone of the novel; the city is dull and ugly, human life of little account; the Civil Station above is neat and prosaic, clean, orderly and ‘sensibly planned’, sharing ‘nothing with the city except the overarching sky’. The surrounding countryside is flat and uninteresting, except where the Marabar Hills seem to add a little excitement to the scenery. Even native India itself is filled with rifts and dissensions, ‘a hundred Indias’ which cannot easily be reconciled with each other. It is the disunity within the Anglo-Indian camp, however, which sparks off the trouble. Despite the differences in wealth, comfort and social standing, subjugators and subjugated in Chandrapore live together in an uneasy peace. The British never question their own superiority and the Indians have learned to live their own lives apart, working with and for their rulers and withdrawing in their leisure time into the company of their own kind.

Mrs Moore and Adela Quested, fresh from Britain, with their liberal and Christian ideas unshaped by any realistic awareness of life in Anglo-India, provide a catalyst. Adela claims that she wants to see ‘the real India’ but what she is seeking is a figment of her own imagination, an Indian version of her own life in suburban England, where visits are exchanged and outings undertaken. She believes that it is possible to establish social contacts which can give her an insight into Indian life, so that ‘catching the moon in the Ganges’ (Chapter 3) will no longer symbolise her only genuine experience of

India. Mrs Moore, on the other hand, more tolerant, with fewer expectations, is more open to accept the impressions which offer themselves.

When she goes into the mosque and meets Aziz she accepts him at his own valuation as a human being; retelling her encounter to Ronny, it does not occur to her to indicate 'by the tone of her voice' that the young doctor she had met was an Indian. Nevertheless, both Adela and Mrs Moore are at variance with the prevailing British attitudes, for they have not understood the compulsions and fears which decree that the two nations must remain divided. Every formal attempt to connect appears to be doomed to failure. The deliberate replication of the accidentally forged link between Mrs Moore and Aziz proves impossible though, it would seem, not for want of trying.

Yet, when Mr Turton arranges his Bridge Party it is designed to 'amuse' Adela, not to bring the two nations together in genuine friendship. Even so, from it spring two further opportunities for connections to be made: the first of these, the proposed visit of Mrs Moore and Adela to the Bhattacharyas is a non-starter, a face-saving invitation not meant to be taken seriously; the two English ladies have not been in India long enough to understand the niceties of Indian social behaviour; the invitation itself is a polite gesture and therefore a connection of sorts; the Bhattacharyas do not expect it to be followed up. The second opportunity is more realistic, for Fielding's carefully planned tea party is designed to bring together English, Anglo-Indian, Moslem and Hindu in an informal atmosphere and on personal terms. Success appears possible: Aziz is articulate, Godbole affable and the English both charmed and responsive; Fielding has no hesitation in leaving Adela to



smoke and talk with his two Indian guests whilst he himself takes Mrs Moore on a tour of the College. Such harmony, perfectly acceptable in England, is, however, unconventional on the soil of Anglo-India and the party is rudely broken up by Ronny Heaslop before friendship and understanding can be cemented. Despite the inimical atmosphere at the end of Fielding's tea party, it has, in its turn, opened the way for Aziz to make overtures. He rashly invites Mrs Moore and Adela to visit him at home but, like the Bhattacharyas, he does not expect them to respond. Though lively and intelligent, his role as Westernised man is confused with his Indian identity — whilst the Europeans expect scrupulously to adhere to arrangements made, the Indians are satisfied with the gesture itself.

Thus, the invitation to the Marabar Caves is likewise tossed off with little forethought, a procrastinating measure which Aziz immediately relegates to an obscure corner of his mind. When he feels forced to follow it through the problems which arise make him unhappily aware that he has 'challenged the spirit of the Indian earth, which tries to keep men in compartments' (Chapter 13). The Bridge Party and Fielding's tea party had taken place in the cold weather when life in India is at its best. Now the approaching hot weather begins to make people nervous; the possibility of an outbreak of cholera fills the inhabitants of Chandrapore with fear and the increasing heat lies over them as a threat. It is an inauspicious moment for Aziz's expedition. The grains of comfort held out in Part I by the various religious creeds — Moslem, Christian and Hindu are snatched away in the nihilism of the first chapter (Chapter 12) of Part II. Whilst the Mosque appeared to allow the hope of friendship, the Caves are empty, hollow, inimical to Man; they reject

individuality; they reject relationship; they add nothing ‘ to the sum of good or evil’. The attempt to defy their indifference becomes a catastrophe which rocks Chandrapore to its foundations; yet the cause of the trouble seems to be a non-event.

In Chapter 1 the caves appeared to excite interest as something extraordinary; they were given a sense of life by the humanising effect of their ‘ fists and fingers’. Before Aziz’s expedition gets under way we are invited to consider the Marabar, and particularly the caves, in greater detail. Again the tone is set by the description: not only are the caves hollow and empty but they also negate all life that enters, them. However, the expedition has been planned and must go ahead.

The train takes the party across the plains, circles round indeterminately, and drops them an elephant-ride away from the caves; an oppressive, echoless silence accompanies them as they approach their goal, only to be translated in the caves themselves into a meaningless echo which, because it destroys individuality, also destroys hope and renders life hollow and pointless. The reader is thus prepared for the catastrophe which occurs there, a catastrophe which lacks reality but which nullifies the dream of friendship between Indian and English. What happens to Adela Quested in the cave? If we are to trust the narration (and nothing else occurs to put it in doubt), Aziz is certainly innocent of any assault for we remain with him as he enters a cave, lights a cigarette and, now calmer, goes out to find the guide standing alone, listening to the sound of Miss Derek’s car. Adela we do not

follow as she too goes into a cave; what experience she has there we can only surmise and, ultimately the actual physical experience is unimportant.

Later, after the trial, she and Fielding analyse the situation as they see it. Of the four possibilities they propose they are left with two: either some other person, perhaps the guide, committed the assault, or Adela had an hallucination. Yet at the trial when under cross-examination, Adela watches with her mind's eye for Aziz to follow her into the cave, she sees no one behind her, not Aziz, not the guide, not anyone. If we must have a solution to the mystery, then some sort of hallucination appears to be the only answer. The atmosphere of the journey, the heat, the strange echoless silence of the Marabar plains culminate for Mrs Moore in her uncanny experience within the first cave. There she feels that she is being attacked; she loses control and fights her way out of the cave, only to be left with the memory of an annihilating echo which gradually destroys her hold on life. Her faith seems to recede from her and she knows that she is going to be ill.

This experience has much in common with Adela's: both believe that they are being attacked; both feel ill; both are left with an echo which undermines their normally sane approach to life. Whatever happens in the cave, however, certainly destroys any fragile connections that have been made. The real catastrophe is spiritual, not physical. Though Aziz is vindicated at the trial, doubt and suspicion cause the budding friendship between him and Fielding to fade; Mrs Moore dies on her voyage homeward; even the engagement between Adela and Ronny Heaslop is broken off. Fielding and Adela return separately to England and Aziz leaves Chandrapore.

Part III of the novel takes place two years later and several hundred miles to the west of the Marabar Hills. From the nihilism and spiritual aridity of the caves it recalls us to a consciousness of the religious life of India. Just as Part I is entitled ‘ Mosque’ after the Moslem place of worship, this part is called ‘ Temple’ for the Hindus. It is set in the princely state of Mau where a number of the protagonists from the earlier parts now gather: Professor Godbole is Minister of Education, Aziz is Court Physician and Fielding is on an official tour to inspect the education of the States of Central India. Here, in this Hindu region, British influence is negligible and the mystery and muddle of India is given free rein. At a time of festival the confusion is accentuated; the elegant palace is crudely decorated with coloured rags and glass balls; the Hindu crowds spill over from the corridor where the festivities are taking place into the palace courtyard and adjoining corridors; everywhere is ablaze with light; the noise of drums and cymbals accompanies Professor Godbole’s choir, which finds itself in competition with a Europeanised band playing a waltz. The religious ceremony of the Birth of Krishna is a signal for games and jollity. Though the physical features are unclear, the chaotic events of this part set the scene.

Yet, behind all the outward show, the ancient Rajah is dying, indeed dies before the celebrations are over, emphasising to us the closeness of birth and death; likewise, the thoughts of death and afterlife are brought firmly before us when Godbole impels into his mind the image of Mrs Moore.

Nevertheless, the foreboding and disaster of the two pievious parts are completely dissipated in the carefree happiness which is part and parcel of the religious rejoicings. The arrival of Fielding and his party, however, recalls

us to British fastidiousness: the State Guest House is clearly neglected, its mosquito nets torn, stocks of food inadequate; the oars from the boat are missing; Ralph is stung by bees. The confrontation between Aziz and Fielding brings about a change in the atmosphere which threatens the possibility of reconciliation between the two nations. But it is a time of hope; the rains will result in a bumper harvest; the Birth of Krishna is a festival of love; and the spirit of Mrs Moore hovers around Aziz, recalling the warmth of his affection for her and transferring it to her son Ralph. She is present with Professor Godbole in his religious dance; she lives again through the chants of the Hindu worshippers as they call upon the names of their gods.

As this final chance of reconciliation between East and West is offered, the misunderstandings of the past are sorted out and the tolerance and love of Mrs Moore reassert themselves. The novel ends without positive harmony but in hope; though the time and the place are not propitious for friendship between Aziz and Fielding, one day and somewhere their successors may achieve it. Style and Language A Passage to India is a skilfully crafted novel both in its overall pattern and in the details of its language. Its tripartite form — Mosque, Caves, Temple — is reflected by trinities of groupings within the body of the novel: three settings, three seasons, three religions, three attempts to form bridges, three children for both Aziz and Mrs Moore, three Moslem friends (Aziz, Hamidullah and Mahmoud Ali), three English who cannot be considered as Anglo-Indian (Mrs Moore, Fielding and Adela). The subtle insistence on the idea of 'threesomeness' emphasises separation and connection; the three parts of the novel are separated from each other not

only geographically but also emotionally, yet each part is repeatedly brought to life iii each of the other parts.

So Part I begins with the caves and ends by recalling Aziz's mosque; Part II begins with the caves, recalls the mosque and looks forward to Mau; Part III, though taking place in Mau, simultaneously looks back to the events, characters and ideas of the earlier parts. The method of reference and cross-reference, of simultaneity within variety, results in a novel that is highly structured yet not confined, a novel that opens out, rather than closes in. Not only the ending but the novel itself may be seen as illustrating one of Forster's own precepts in Chapter 8 of *Aspects of the Novel*: 'Expansion. That is the idea the novelist must cling to. Not completion. Not rounding off but opening out.' The most striking feature of the language of *A Passage to India* is its use of what Forster himself, again in Chapter 8 of *Aspects of the Novel*, has described as 'rhythm'. He rejects the word 'symbol' because he feels that symbols are inclined to take over a novel and deflect the reader from the novelist's main purpose; for him, any motif a novelist uses should sometimes mean everything and sometimes be forgotten and mean nothing.

With these caveats about Forster's own ideas, let us look in more detail at his use of symbol, image, rhythm, call it what you will. The caves are central both to the whole pattern of the novel and to the imagery. Round, hollow, empty, they are without adornment, without beauty, without religious significance. The sky dominates but the caves set the tone of the novel.

In their nihilism they hint at a nihilism at the heart of the universe; even physically they resemble the empty dome of the sky reaching out to infinity;

the flame of a match reflected within their shining polished walls, like the stars in the vault of the sky, illuminates nothing but itself; a sound made within one of the caves is infinitely echoed until it loses its own identity. In *The Cave and the Mountain* Professor Wilfred Stone has shown how significant the circular pattern is in Forster's work. Here, in *A Passage to India*, the concept of circularity is present in the form of the novel, which constantly returns to previous starting points, in the caves themselves, in the snakes with their tails in their mouths, in the repeated references to circles within circles which touch every aspect of Indian life — nature itself, the social framework and the political set-up within the country. The vocabulary reinforces the idea with the repeated use of words such as 'dome ...vault ... circle ...circumference...arch...globe ...bubble...ball...cycle'. Basic to the circular image and to the caves is the echo — not merely auditory but visual and conceptual as well. It appears in the first chapter when the distance between earth and stars is echoed by the ever- widening circles of distance behind them and by the faint memory of the blue-tinted daytime sky. The more usual echo of sound does not occur until the novel has progressed into the second part. By that time, however, the echo image is well established and confirmed by the methods of its musical equivalents (again, see Chapter 8 of *Aspects of the Novel*).

A word or phrase apparently randomly used and abandoned is picked up later, dropped again and again occurs: Mrs Moore's wasp which is first seen at the end of Chapter 3 is reintroduced at the end of Chapter 4 in the passage about the missionaries; it is then left behind, forgotten, until it is recalled together with Mrs Moore by Professor Godbole in Chapter 33. The

subsequent references to bees leave us slightly uneasy; this variation on the theme opens the novel out at the end, connecting Mrs Moore with her son Ralph and again with Aziz in a mystic communion. Similarly, the phrase first used by Aziz to Mrs Moore in the mosque, ‘Then you are an Oriental’ is echoed later in Chapter 27, again by Aziz referring to Mrs Moore; it is recalled in Chapter 34 when Aziz uses it to Ralph Moore and it is finally used by Fielding to Aziz in the last chapter of the book; Aziz does not reply to Fielding’s remark but the significance of this echo is not lost on him and it is underlined for us by the narrator’s words, ‘Something — not a sight but a sound – flitted past him’; what flits past is, of course, the memory of his first use of these words to Mrs Moore and it leads him to add an affectionate comment about her in his letter to Adela.

There is a multiplicity of such echoing phrases: Godbole’s song with its yearning plea to the god who never comes; Mrs Moore’s assertion that ‘God is love’; the idea of ‘Kindness, kindness and more kindness’; the smell of cow-dung connected with Hindus; jackals; friezes; ghosts; ‘the real India’; ‘Esmis Esmoor’; the colour red; nothingness. Each can be traced as it wanders through the novel, accumulating references and building up a wealth of contextual significance. Delicately handled leitmotifs, they never stand firmly as symbols but they serve to enrich the whole fabric of the novel for the percipient reader, calling to mind the context of the earlier references to add subtle layers of meaning as the novel progresses. Try to investigate some of these yourself. More firmly set up as images are the snakes, the owls and the kites. It should be remembered that, while for us in the West the snake is a symbol of evil, it is often in the east an object of veneration, to



be feared, perhaps (are not Christians bidden to fear God? ), but also to be worshipped.

Hindus associate the snake or serpent with the god Siva and it is often prominent in their festivals; here, in the naming ceremony of the god Shri Krishna, a ‘ cobra of papier-mache’ appears suddenly on the red carpet, simultaneously with the appearance of the cradle of the infant god. In reading *A Passage to India*, then, we must rid ourselves of any prejudices connoting the snake with evil. Mrs Moore is warned by Aziz about the danger from snakes but snakes do not constitute the threat to her in India. Likewise, the deadly poisonous Russell’s viper found crawling round a classroom in Government College is of less concern to Fielding than the monstrous accusation made against Aziz. Forster does not use the serpent as a religious symbol; it is neither evil nor good. Tail in mouth it reflects the circular pattern and the empty 0 it forms echoes the nothingness, the nihilism of the caves.

Through it can be seen the contradictions of India, ‘ the serpent of eternity made of maggots’ (Chapter 23). Kites too, preying upon human disaster, are woven into the pattern of the book. Hovering over the Bridge Party, they are in their turn hovered over by a vulture, above which, like the reverberations of an echo, is the sky. At the caves a Brahmmy kite is introduced in a similar context of echoes, reminding us that previous attempts to connect have failed. Yet, earlier, before the party leaves Chandrapore, kites are mentioned in the same sentence as the stationmaster and owls, so that our mind drifts back to the evening that Aziz first met Mrs Moore, when he heard owls and

smelt the fragrance of flowers from the stationmaster's garden. The actual echo which dominates Part II of the novel is another thread of the intricately woven pattern of the book, just as every repeated image or phrase becomes in turn part of the echo. It manifests itself first through its absence on the plains before the Marabar Hills, emptying life of its meaning because nothing has any consequence.

In the cave a reversal occurs; there, the presence of an echo intimidates and takes away hope: life has consequence (in that sounds no longer lie dead) but it is still without meaning as the echo reduces everything to 'the same monotonous noise'. Long after the sound has died away the echo remains; it destroys Mrs Moore who feels that the props supporting her spiritual life have been withdrawn. It stays with Adela, haunting her with an indefinable malice; in the presence of Mrs Moore it becomes less threatening but returns with all its force just before the trial, perhaps at the moment of Mrs Moore's death. Not until she affirms Aziz's innocence does Adela's echo disappear; certainly in this context the echo has been entirely associated with evil. Later Fielding is to reflect that though the 'original sound may be harmless.

. . the echo is always evil' (Chapter 31) but his thought progresses no further. The echo of the caves remains a strange phenomenon, adding to the mystic dimension of the novel. Just as phrases and images flit through the pages, so matters of import in the plot are often referred to briefly, recalled and apparently forgotten until the event they have prepared us for occurs.

For instance, the attentive reader should not be taken by surprise by Mrs Moore's death. At the very outset Aziz observes that she is old 'with a red

face and white hair' (Chapter 2); a little later (Chapter 5) Ronny recognises the religious strain in his mother as a 'symptom of bad health'; she tires easily and needs to rest after visits such as that to Government College; in the train on the way to the caves she falls asleep and we are told that she is 'in rather low health' and after her experience in the cave she thinks, 'I am going to be ill'; later she mentions that she gets headaches and puffs when she walks. When we gather all these references together we realise that we have been given the picture of a rather sick elderly woman who is constantly trying to do more than her state of health makes possible. The 'brief episode of pain' she experiences as she approaches Bombay is the final warning; Mrs Moore's death follows soon after, though the trial intervenes before we learn of it. In a similar way we are prepared to meet at Mau the characters who had been involved in the action at Chandrapore. Another aspect of Forster's language that is of special interest is his use of quotation and allusion. Some quotations, such as the quatrain of Persian poetry quoted by Aziz in Chapter 3, are used principally to enrich the texture of the novel.

The series of biblical quotations, however, serve to underline the spiritual content and, particularly in Part III, to universalise the religious mythology. Prominence is given to the mystic side of Mrs Moore by subtly equating her with a god or Christ-figure. When in Chapter 22 she complains about being held up from her business, the strange use of the word 'business' at this point recalls Christ's words to his mother in St Luke 2. 9 that he must be about His Father's business; Chapter 23 parallels her with the sorrowing God of Lamentations 1.

12 as she thinks ‘ there is no sorrow like my sorrow’; during the trial, Adela remembers her sitting ‘ in the shadow of a great rock’ (see Isaiah 32. 2) and when Mahmoud Au calls upon the Anglo-Indians to bring Mrs Moore into the court in order to ‘ save’ Aziz it is ultimately her name that saves him. Certainly in Part III Aziz is to hear her name chanted by the Hindu worshippers and to interpret it as ‘ the syllables of salvation’. Yet this identification is not insisted upon. References to it again wander through the novel, are lost, picked up and dropped again. The very last mention of her in the book; however, is Aziz’s’ . . .

the name that is very sacred in my mind, namely Mrs Moore’. The Gokul Ashtami festival in Part III is given wider significance by being repeatedly referred to in biblical terms so that, whilst it retains its Hindu origin, it is also placed in a Christian context. The birth of Krishna is at one and the same time the birth of Christ; Gokul is Bethlehem, King Kansa is Herod and Krishna’s salvation that of Christ.

Echoes of biblical stories tantalise the reader with doubts and memories: ‘ God so loved the world that he...’ gave His only begotten Son (St John 3. 16)? — No — ‘ . . . that he took monkey’s flesh upon him’.

There are references to the ‘ Ark of the Lord’ (see, for example, I Kings 2. 26), to the ‘ Despised and Rejected’ (see Isaiah 53. 3); sorrow is annihilated (see Isaiah 35. 10); the freeing of prisoners takes place. The hope brought to men by the Birth ceremony is thus for all men and, together with the abundant rains, it contains a promise for the future, again opening the novel on? expanding it rather than seeking completion.

Forster uses quite a number of specialised Anglo-Indian, Hindi or Arabic words in the novel. In many cases their meaning is self-evident or apparent from the context. The Penguin Modern Classics edition, however, contains a useful glossary of such words and should solve any difficulties. In general, Forster's Indian characters speak excellent standard English Aziz's grasp of idiom impresses Fielding in Chapter 7, though in Chapter 2 he twice uses the un-idiomatic 'in the same box' to Mrs Moore.

When they talk among themselves Aziz and his friends would probably, in fact, speak Arabic but Forster has not fallen into the trap of translating this into a kind of 'pidgin English' to indicate that it is not their native language. Only Mohammed Latif speaks the English of the stake-Indian, such as 'You spick a lie' (Chapter 13) when Aziz teases him and this is at least partly because he is considered to be the comic turn of the Marabar expedition. Aziz himself speaks of his 'imperfect English' but his imperfections are hardly noticeable to the reader.