

An Archetypal Evil: A Passage to India¹

The present analysis is intended to shed light on the archetypal evil in E. M. Forster's A Passage to India in the light of the Jungian archetypal criticism. In his development from fantasy to prophecy, A Passage to India is Forster's last word. The shift from fantasy to prophecy can be followed in Forster's use of various types of mythology and archetypes. The archetypes develop over a period of time into usually more advanced ones, although nature and earth archetypes are the basic materials of all his later works. Forster's progression from a narrow and shallow context to a wider and universal scope occurs in parallel with his development from fantasy to prophecy. While uttering his final word, Forster does not act as a preacher, but he tries to show life as it is lived and known by all men. In order to achieve his goal, Forster makes use of a prophetic tone of voice and expands and extends the scope of his archetypes, from the nature and earth archetypes to universal archetypes. Forster's archetypes in A Passage to India stand for more than themselves.

Forster's search for an appropriate medium led him to employ universal archetypes which suit his prophetic voice. The old harmony which stems from earth no longer exists. The sterility of the post-war period is the main source of the underlying complaint of his masterpiece. Man and nature were considered as related parts of a more or less harmonious whole. Alienation from nature is now shown to be one of the most important consequences of the separation between man and nature. In A Passage to India nature plays little or no part, rather than having a unifying effect. James McConkey remarks on this shift, saying that: "A Passage to India ... finds that earth can function no longer as a unifying element because man has become an alien upon its surface, which does not give to the world of human relations any

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achieved harmony.” (54) Man gets no help from the earth. This idea is similar to the one summed up by Wordsworth in his famous sonnet: “The world is too much with us; late and soon, /Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:/Little we see in Nature that is ours.” (in The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Volume 2: 220)

The preliminary sentence of the novel expresses nothingness straightaway. “Except for the Marabar Caves – and they are twenty miles off – the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary.” (29) The emphasis on nothingness is a clear proof of Forster’s prophetic voice. This wasteland, this prostrate earth is hostile as well. Although Aziz is an athletic man, walking fatigues him, “as it fatigues everyone in India except the newcomer. There is something hostile in that soil.” (37) Nature has a great effect to control man, which indicates a certain antagonism between man and nature. The archetypal sun-god oppresses mankind unfairly and cruelly, and turns the place into a catastrophic hell. Everything is antagonistic and indifferent. As Molly A. Daniels comments, “man is oppressed by nature, social intercourse is not possible; man is reduced to being inarticulate and indifferent.” (32) The ones who come in contact with India are captured with an illusory charm as embodied in the Indian earth, unaware of the emptiness, horror, and panic lurking in India.

Forster’s principal concern is to express the questions that are universal by using universal archetypes. The malicious, unfriendly and uncongenial Indian soil appears to be part of man’s archetypal awareness of his existential condition. The malevolent and hostile powers emerge when you interfere with the privacy of the spirit of the soil. These powers have existed since the dawn of the consciousness. An archetypal evil has dominated the Indian earth. It struggles up from autochthonous beginnings into the free air, from darkness into light, moving from low to high. As pointed out by Jung, “evil belongs to the family of figures which describe the dark, nocturnal, lower, chthonic element.” (1959: 234) It is threatening and ominous. It exceeds its normal boundaries, and it moves outwards in all directions so that it

covers all life in India. Fielding's view is in line with this: "evil was propagating in every direction, it seemed to have an existence of its own." (177) The unfiendly, vicious and antagonistic Indian earth even lets the spreading of evil start.

The evil archetype has a conspicuous function in creating the drastic plight of human beings. The lives of all the characters are threatened through Forster's use of archetypal evil. Aziz lets evil emerge since he challenges "the spirit of the Indian earth, which tries to keep men in compartments." (129) Everybody has to be in his own compartment. Compartments stand for man's isolation. He tries to bring men together in one compartment, in a cave. The harmonious unification of men in one compartment is impossible in India. Everybody lives in a cave of his own. The Cave symbolizes man's solitariness in the universe. Each cave stands for the inferior level of existence that must be overcome to attain the desired wholeness of mankind.

The main spring of the universal archetype, evil, is the Marabar Caves in A Passage to India. The archetypal evil emerges from these caves and spreads to the whole universe. These dark caves represent the archetypal evil, disillusionment and disappointment. The caves have primordial nature having existed before time and space. Their primordial nature is combined with the entire archetypal structure of the novel. They can be described as uncanny, but "to call them 'uncanny' suggests ghosts. They are older than anything in the world." (125) We are never told what their mystery is: "There is something unspeakable in these outposts. They are like nothing else in the world, and a glimpse of them makes the breath catch." (125) The enigma and obscurity about the Marabar Caves begin with Godbole's disturbing attitude when they are for the first time mentioned. Godbole intuitively feels the secrecy concerning the caves, but his disturbing approach turns them into much more mysterious. When Aziz invites his guests to see the Marabar Caves, he realizes that Godbole "was keeping back something about the caves. ...It was rather that a power he couldn't control capriciously silenced his

mind. ...no doubt not willingly, he was concealing something. The comparatively simple mind of the Mohammedan was encountering Ancient Night” (84)

The secrecy and mystery about the Marabar Caves go on throughout the novel. They are beyond the reach of human understanding and grasp. The dialogue about the caves hangs in the air, and it seems impossible to discuss them. As pointed out by the narrator, it is futile to try explaining what they are: “Nothing, nothing attaches to them, and their reputation – for they have one – does not depend upon human speech. It is as if the surrounding plain or the passing birds have taken upon themselves to exclaim ‘Extraordinary!’ and the world has taken root in the air, and been inhaled by mankind.” (126)

The archetypal evil which stems from the Marabar Caves and spreads to the whole universe is a clear indication of particular conditions about the universe. At the centre of this microcosm is nothing inside, but “the imprisoned spirits.” (126) Man is confined in any way to himself, to his own cave. To liberate himself, he has to accept what lies in his own depths. He should be able to get into the deeper parts of his unconscious. Man should have self-awareness of his spiritual emptiness, and of his nothingness. The emphasis on the nothingness shakes the reader: “Nothing is inside them, they were sealed up before the creation of pestilence or treasure; if mankind grew curious and excavated, nothing, nothing would be added to the sum of good or evil.” (126-127) The only fact which man can sense in the depths of his cave is the archetypal evil. Stressing this point, Claude Summers comments: “Containing nothing, they imply a stark truth about the universe more disappointing than the sun’s failure of apotheosis and more devastating than Krishna’s repeated refusals to come. At the core of the universe may be the primal void, nothingness itself.” (211) The Marabar Caves represent more than themselves. They have something deeper than their physical charm. They hold a truth concerning the universe which causes a great horror: the emptiness and hollowness of the universe.

The universal archetype evil which emanates from the Marabar Caves moves through the echo over the whole universe. It starts attacking more and more of the world and more and more people. Professor Godbole's song and the echo of the song suddenly begin affecting the surroundings after the original sound has stopped. The echo of Godbole's song is always in Adela and Mrs. Moore's ears while going to the Marabar Caves: "It so happened that Mrs. Moore and Miss Quested had felt nothing acutely for a fortnight. Ever since Professor Godbole had sung his little song, they had lived more or less inside cocoons." (133) They encounter a much bigger roar which spreads out from the depths of the Marabar Caves. It is a terrifying echo. When Mrs. Moore and Adela intrude the privacy of the caves, the peaceful atmosphere of the unconscious, the contents of the unconscious erupt, come out suddenly in a surprising and frightening way. The universal archetype evil which is hidden in the depths is disturbed by a sudden plunge into the cave and begins to spread in great waves.

Evil is loose, and it begins affecting the lives of people. It has to be shoved back into its pit, but nobody knows how to do it. The echoing nothingness, meaninglessness, emptiness penetrates the universe. The first wave of the echo strikes first Mrs. Moore, who is the first victim of the archetypal evil. Her encounter with the evil lying in the depths is the most exasperating thing in her life. Mrs. Moore's experience in the cave is "a tight passage, a narrow door, whose painful constriction no one is spared who goes down to the deep well." (Jung, 1959:21) Mrs. Moore who is not accustomed to wandering in the depths of the cave is disturbed and unbalanced. She encounters the void which lurks in the depths. She discovers with terror that she is "the object of the unseen factors." (Jung, 1959: 23) She finds herself in a primitive panic-stricken condition. Her consciousness breaks down under the strain, and she loses all her ties with life. Her encounter with a meaningless universe shakes her beliefs, hopes and confidence. She is powerless against the nothingness of the universe. Mrs. Moore experiences a terrible disappointment.

The universal archetype evil and its echo shatter Mrs. Moore's hold on life. She is captured by an agonising silence, and she estranges and alienates herself from the outer world. Mrs. Moore is neither willing to see someone and talk about her experience in the cave nor to help anyone. "She escapes the trial, the marriage and the Hot weather" (193) She herself says: "I'll retire then into a cave of my own." (187) She becomes indifferent to the happenings around her. All the ties that bind her to her surroundings suddenly snap. "Her character undergoes a strange metamorphosis, in which all her loyalties to religion, race and family are shaken to the roots." (Stone, 330) Mrs. Moore thinks that "It is time [she] was left in peace." (187) Her values are destroyed. All her religious thoughts gain a new impetus with the echo 'boum' of the cave. It is the sound which comes from the depths indicating the hollowness of the universe. The horrifying echo ruins all her life by making her so depressed that there seems to be no hope for her in the future. Mrs. Moore cannot stand against the terrifying reality. As George Thomson remarked, "Mrs. Moore is the one character among the visitors to the Marabar who has the spiritual capacity to grasp the full horror of its meaning. ...Mrs. Moore has an overwhelming awareness of the absence of God, an awareness of evil." (231-232)

The archetypal evil has started affecting not only Mrs. Moore, but those around her as well. Adela also experiences a painful breakdown in another cave. The source of the evil is the same in that they come from the same primordial void. Although they are fed on the same source, the nature of the responses to the echoes differs. Adela's disillusionment in the cave results from her personal unconscious, her shadow. Her encounter with herself is the cause of her projection her unconscious contents into the people and relationships. When Adela experiences the echo of the universal archetype evil, her shadow sees it as an opportunity to exert its power over her ego. Her shadow contains her basic animal instincts. She encounters her unconscious contents which she has never shown to the world. Her persona has covered

and suppressed all the manifestations of her shadow until she encounters the primal void in one of the Marabar Caves.

Adela may have thought that when the evil elements in her shadow are removed from her consciousness, they do not exist once and for all. She later learns that this is not the case. They have simply withdrawn into the unconscious. In the depths of the cave, she meets with herself, with her own shadow. However, she cannot bear knowing about it. Then the problem arises. As Jung pointed out, “anyone who descends into the unconscious gets into a suffocating atmosphere of egocentric subjectivity, and in this blind alley is exposed to the attack of all the ferocious beasts which the caverns of the psychic underworld are supposed to harbour.” (1959: 20) Before entering the cave, her mind is preoccupied with the problem of marriage. Whenever she thinks of the Marabar Caves, or sees them from afar, her future life with Ronny comes to her mind suddenly. Before going to the Marabar Hills, at the beginning of the novel, she contemplates the hills: “How lovely they suddenly were! But she couldn’t touch them. In front, like a shutter, fell a vision of her married life.” (60) She is not certain whether she wants to marry Ronny. Shuttling forth and back, she cannot decide on what she wants. While talking about her spurious experience in the cave, she says dryly: “I went into this detestable cave, and I remember scratching the wall with my fingernail, to start the usual echo, and then as I was saying there was this shadow, or sort of shadow, down the entrance of the tunnel, bottling me up.” (182) The shadow she asserts seeing at the entrance of the tunnel is the Jungian shadow in which her repressed manifestations are stored. The entry into the cave, into her shadow is a terrifying, and painful passage. The echo of the universal archetype, evil, arouses evil in her personal unconscious. Her repressed sexual instincts are not overtly explained, but covertly implied. Stone states that “In clinical terms, Adela no doubt suffered a form of sexual hysteria.” (335) This confusion in her mind and her body results in her accusation of Aziz as attempting to rape her. Her delusion of being assaulted by Aziz is the result of her being

dishonest to her unconscious contents. Her meeting with her true self frightens her off. Nothing is more exasperating than the discovery of her repressed sexual fantasies. This situation gives rise to primitive panic, and she accuses Aziz. Adela fails to understand the echo and its significance. As remarked by Frederick C. Crews, “the echo that is metaphorically sounded in Adela’s hallucination (if it is a hallucination) of sexual attack is that of her unvoiced desire for physical love.”(159) The universal archetype evil shows itself in the accusation of Aziz.

Evil widens its circle and spreads everywhere, covering the whole universe. The reverberations widen in waves. The first one who becomes aware of the situation is Fielding. When he learns that Aziz has been accused of assault, he senses that something is wrong: “He felt that a mass of madness had arisen and tried to overwhelm them all; it had to be shoved back into its pit somehow, and he didn’t know how to do it, because he did not understand madness.” (157) Nobody understands the nature of it, and nobody can even find the right word to describe it. Their limited capacities are not enough to grasp what it is. The power of evil spreads inexorably and reaches Aziz and the people around him. Its menacing and sinister nature is so strong that both the Indians and the Anglo-Indians undergo its effect. The universal archetype evil is so firmly linked to the whole universe that it is endemic to all mankind. Adela is aware of the echo and its ominous power which is spouting after her. It “was going on still like a river that gradually floods the plain. Only Mrs. Moore could drive it back to its source and seal the broken reservoir. Evil was loose...she could even hear it entering the lives of others.” (183)

Adela Quested sees Mrs. Moore as a redemptive person who will clear evil out. Forster presents Mrs. Moore as the symbol of goodness. Adela thinks that it is Mrs. Moore who will send evil away: “You send it away, you do nothing but good, you are so good.” (191) Adela is sure that Mrs. Moore will be able to explain to her the nature of the echo in the Marabar Caves. She wants only Mrs. Moore as a visitor, but she keeps away. However, Mrs. Moore is not

willing to tell Adela what it is: "If you don't know, you don't know; I can't tell you." (187) Although Mrs. Moore is taciturn, she implies that Aziz is innocent. When Adela insists on hearing the right answer, she, for the first time as pointed out by the narrator, answers: "Of course he is innocent" and then she goes on: "I will not help you to torture him for what he never did. There are different ways of evil and I prefer mine to yours." (191) Mrs. Moore knows what the problem with Adela is. She is also aware of the different nature of the evils they encounter. Adela cannot grasp the significance of her echo in the cave. She cannot decide where it happened: "I shouldn't mind if it had happened anywhere else; at least I really don't know where it did happen." (187) She fails to understand that nothing has happened in the Marabar Caves, but in her own cave. Her loneliness and isolation are the main sources of the evil in herself. She cannot grasp that she is suffering from a deep sense of alienation. She is alienated from herself, from her body, from her sex, from her feelings of love and tenderness. She is not aware of the fact that she is hollow. That is why Mrs. Moore is not willing to explain to her that what she encounters in the cave is nothing, but herself.

Forster bases his questioning of the limitations of modern civilisation and human nature on the universal archetypes. His going back to the primeval times and his attempt to find the harmony, peace and love among people which existed before their corruption is an attempt to make a parody of the human achievements. The old harmony between man and nature, man and man, and lastly between man and the universe no longer exists. This is the main plight of the modern man. There is an incredible gap between the achievements of his mind and the achievements of his heart. The gap between the two poles is getting wider and wider. The lack of communication between mind and heart is the main problem which should be dealt with as quickly as possible. Man is trapped in a cave, in a universe in which he finds only panic and emptiness. The solution to this human predicament lies in man's nature itself. It is futile to look for the solution somewhere outside the nature of man.

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