

J.M.S. COLLEGE, MUNGER
(A Constituent Unit under Munger University, Munger)
Department of English
B.A. Part-III, English (Hons.), Paper-VI

**IMPORTANCE OF ECHO AND THE MARAABAR CAVES IN
FORSTER'S *A PASSAGE TO INDIA***

Importance of Echo:

The echo begins at the Marabar Caves: first Mrs. Moore and then Adela hear the echo and are haunted by it in the weeks to come. The echo's sound is "boum"—a sound it returns regardless of what noise or utterance is originally made. This negation of difference embodies the frightening flip side of the seemingly positive Hindu vision of the oneness and unity of all living things. If all people and things become the same thing, then no distinction can be made between good and evil. No value system can exist. The echo plagues Mrs. Moore until her death, causing her to abandon her beliefs and cease to care about human relationships. Adela, however, ultimately escapes the echo by using its message of impersonality to help her realize Aziz's innocence.

Importance of the Marabar Caves:

The Marabar caves do not exist. One of the most potent and compelling locations in modern literature, the caves are the creation of E.M. Forster and form the dark heart of his 1924 novel *A Passage to India*. However, the infamous caves are not without a basis in fact. Forster modeled them after the Barabar Caves, which are located 35Km north of Gaya, in the state of Bihar. A further veneer of reality was provided when David Lean produced a film adaptation of Forster's novel in 1984, utilising locations that allowed him to bring the Marabar Caves to life on the silver screen.

The core event in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* is the 'assault' experienced by Adela Quested in one of the Marabar Caves, where Aziz has taken Miss Quested and Mrs Moore for a day's excursion despite his scarce knowledge of the Hindu caves. The central chapter of the section begins with Aziz, Mrs Moore, Miss Quested and a guide from the local village having climbed up the hills and being away from the rest of the expedition party. Aziz has separated himself from Adela since he lost his emotional balance because of her insensitive questioning. The narrator follows Aziz, who goes into one of the caves where he waits and lights a cigarette in order to recover his equilibrium. When he comes back, Aziz finds the

guide who is alone and says that he has heard a noise, the whine of a motor car. Aziz and the guide try to get a better look at the oncoming car. At this moment Aziz runs back to tell Miss Quested that a car is approaching, and realizes that she has disappeared. The guide says that she went into a cave and Aziz berates the guide for not keeping track of her. Aziz is confused and a few seconds later sees that Miss Quested had joined her friends at the base of the hill. His relief is followed by disquiet as he finds Adela's field glasses with a broken leather strap lying at the edge of a cave.

In the course of the novel, Adela Quested claims that she has been sexually assaulted in the Marabar Caves by the young Indian doctor Aziz and the subsequent court case polarizes the two communities - the Indian and the English - until Adela admits that she was mistaken and that Aziz is innocent.

Courtesy: Web Source, DDCE, Utkal University