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**SIGNIFICANCE OF GODBOLE'S SONG IN FORSTER'S
*A PASSAGE TO INDIA***

Godbole's poignant song reverberates throughout E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*. The melody is baffling yet potent. Godbole places himself in the position of a lowly milk-maiden who pleads with her God for unity and connection. Godbole recites this plea to the God Shri Krishna in the form of a *raga*, a rhythmic pattern where the musical notes are repeated over and over, as Godbole reprises, "Come, come, come, come, come, come." The repetition of "come" is in essence an echo. While this motif is most directly associated with the Marabar Caves, it is seen throughout the novel and is first introduced in the form of Godbole's song. The refrain speaks to the root of tension in the novel and uncovers the underlying source of disunity amongst the characters as well as between England and India. Each character responds uniquely to the echo of the song, which demonstrates their ability to grasp the multiplicity of India to find unity.

Like the numerous echoes in the novel, Godbole's "come" keeps repeating, yet receives only silence in response. Krishna's silence represents what Gertrude M. White calls "the problem of separation" between matter and essence. His song "signifies man's attempt to forge unity between the material and the spiritual" and each character responds to this attempt differently. The nature of each character's relationship with transcendent powers is inherently distinctive because each character grapples with different aspects of doubt and confusion. It is through their responses to the echo of Godbole's song that "Forster's characters reveal their multiple and often contradictory assessments of the cosmos and the human condition. Forster's use of the characters' "contradictory assessments" demonstrates not only the separation between the material and the spiritual, but also the separations within the social and political world.

Forster shows each distinct culture (British, Muslim, and Hindu) to have an opposing response to the echo in Godbole's song. Forster asserts that "no one is India," as he uses Mrs. Moore and Adela to symbolize the English, Aziz the Muslims, and Godbole the Hindus. The English cannot understand the echo, the Muslim ear is indifferent, and the Hindu strives—and appears to succeed—in grasping the elusive significance of the song.

Despite attempts to comprehend Krishna's response, the English ultimately fail in their quest for greater understanding. To the English, Godbole's song is a mystery; they do not know why Krishna responds with silence or why the milk-maidens seek a sexual union with the God. The English struggle to connect to one another, let alone a higher power. The notion of transcendental powers frightens and baffles the English because there do not appear to be distinct answers, but rather open-ended questions that appear to lack a complete answer. Mrs. Moore even says, "We, the English. . .hate mysteries." They instead seek definite, concrete answers. For instance, Adela wants to "see the *real* India" manifested in one singular person, such as Aziz. She cannot grasp the plurality of an India that is made up of "a hundred Indians". The English "excel at the practical life, but are lost in the spiritual."

While the Anglo-Indians are distressed by the significance of Godbole's song, Aziz has no reaction. When he first hears the song, it sounds like "a maze of noises" to his Muslim ear. Godbole's language baffles Aziz, emphasizing the divide between Islam and Hinduism. Forster portrays Aziz as baffled by India, his own country, throughout the novel. Through this ambivalence, we see that Islam's tenets do not equip Aziz to encompass the significance of the song. As a result, Aziz fails in his attempts to connect both with the other characters and with India.

The sexual message of Godbole's song demonstrates his desire for complete unity with Krishna. Rather than interpreting Krishna's silence as an absence of meaning, Godbole sees the silence as "a sign of hope which not only allows but encourages one to beckon divinity." For him, the absence of response does not equate to indifference, but rather serves as a symbol of unity through cosmic confusion. According to Shusterman, Godbole himself is baffled because his plea for religious clarity and unity is answered with silence. However, Godbole welcomes this confusion instead of balking in disillusionment. He realizes that the absence of Krishna's response implies a form of existence that finds value in nothingness. Godbole, through his Hindu beliefs, accepts the confusion, which Hinduism celebrates.

By the end of the novel, we realize that "the way of Godbole is the only possible way: love, even though to exist it must maintain a detachment from the physical world and human relationships, offers the single upward path from the land of sterility and echoing evil." Krishna's response to Godbole's song is provided during the Birth ceremony of Krishna in the form of "infinite love" that came to save the world from sorrow. But the human ability to accept this love is inhibited by the confines of concrete knowledge. Despite Godbole's Hindu beliefs, it becomes clear that no one can achieve unity through "infinite love." During the British ceremony, Godbole "remembered a wasp seen he forgot where, perhaps on a stone. He loved the wasp equally. . .he was imitating God. And the stone where the wasp clung—

could he, no, he could not, he had been wrong to attempt the stone, logic and conscious effort had seduced.” If the significance of the song is unity through infinite love, then the only way India and England will be unified is if they interact in a loving manner.

While Godbole, through his Hindu beliefs, comes closest to grasping the concept of infinite love, he fails to fully comprehend its significance. Despite his attempt to love everything equally, he still cannot achieve unity with Krishna and instead finds himself standing opposite to him at the Birth ceremony. Godbole’s failure to love the stone equally demonstrates that the ideals of Hinduism are simply too great and abstract for the human mind to grasp. After all, “no one is India”—neither the English, nor the Muslims, nor the Hindus, and no one can have India. India, the symbol of infinite love, calls “come,” to achieve unity, but it is not a promise, only an appeal.

Courtesy: Web Source, DDCE, Utkal University