Ch V

Mrs. Moore thought him rather absurd. Accustomed to the privacy of London, she could not realize that India, seemingly so mysterious, contains none, and that consequently the conventions have greater force. "Isuppose nothing's on her mind," he continued.
"Ask her, ask her yourself, my dear boy."

"Probably she's heard tales of the heat, but of course I should pack her off to the Hills every April--I'm not one to keep a wife grilling in the Plains."
"Oh, it wouldn't be the weather."
"There's nothing in India but the weather, my dear mother; it's the Alpha and Omega of the whole affair."

"Yes, as Mrs. McBryde was saying, but it's much more the Anglo-Indians themselves who are likely to get on Adela's nerves. She doesn't think they behave pleasantly to Indians, you see."
"What did I tell you?" he exclaimed, losing his gentle manner. "I knew it last week. Oh, how like a woman to worry over a side-issue!"

She forgot about Adela in her surprise. "A side-issue, a side-issue?" she repeated. "How can it be that?"
"We're not out here for the purpose of behaving pleasantly!"
"What do you mean?"

"What I say. We're out here to do justice and keep the peace. Them's my sentiments. India isn't a drawingroom."
"Your sentiments are those of a god," she said quietly, but it was his manner rather than his sentiments that annoyed her.

Trying to recover his temper, he said, "India likes gods."
"And Englishmen like posing as gods."
"There's no point in all this. Here we are, and we're going to stop, and the country's got to
put up with us, gods or no gods. Oh, look here," he broke out, rather pathetically, "what do you
and Adela want me to do? Go against my class, against all the people I respect and admire out here? Lose such power as I have for doing good in this country because my behaviour isn't pleasant? You neither of you understand what work is, or you 'ld never talk such eyewash. I
hate talking like this, but one must occasionally. It's morbidly sensitive to go on as Adela and
you do. I noticed you both at the club to-day--after the Burra Sahib had been at all that trouble
to amuse you. I am out here to work, mind, to hold this wretched country by force. I'm not a missionary or a Labour Member or a vague sentimental sympathetic literary man. I'm just a
servant of the Government; it's the profession you wanted me to choose myself, and that's that. We're not pleasant in India, and we don't intend to be pleasant. We've something more important
to do."
He spoke sincerely. Every day he worked hard in the court trying to decide which of two untrue accounts was the less untrue, trying to dispense justice fearlessly, to protect the weak
against the less weak, the incoherent against the plausible, surrounded by lies and flattery. That morning he had convicted a railway clerk of overcharging pilgrims for their tickets, and a Pathan
of attempted rape. He expected no gratitude, no recognition for this, and both clerk and Pathan might appeal, bribe their witnesses more effectually in the interval, and get their sentences reversed. It was his duty. But he did expect sympathy from his own people, and except from newcorners
he obtained it. He did think he ought not to be worried about "Bridge Parties" when the
day's work was over and he wanted to play tennis with his equals or rest his legs upon a long
chair.
He spoke sincerely, but she could have wished with less gusto. How Ronny revelled in the drawbacks of his situation! How he did rub it in that he was not in India to behave pleasantly,
and derived positive satisfaction therefrom! He reminded her of his public-schooldays. The
traces of young-man humanitarianism had sloughed off, and he talked like an intelligent and embittered boy. His words without his voice might have impressed her, but when she heard the self-satisfied lilt of them, when she saw the mouth moving so complacently and competently beneath the little red nose, she felt, quite illogically, that this was not the last word on India.
One touch of regret--not the canny substitute but the true regret from the heart--would have
made him a different man, and the British Empire a different institution.
"I'm going to argue, and indeed dictate," she said, clinking her rings. "The English are out

here to be pleasant."
"How do you make that out, mother?" he asked, speaking gently again, for he was ashamed
of his irritability.
"Because India is part of the earth. And God has put us on the earth in order to be pleasant
to each other. God . . . is . . . love." She hesitated, seeing how much he disliked the argument,
hut something made her go on. "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."
He looked gloomy, and a little anxious. He knew this religious strain in her, and that it was a symptom of bad health; there had been much of it when his stepfather died. He thought, "She
is certainly ageing, and I ought not to be vexed with anything she says."

Part two, Caves

Ch 14

As the elephant moved towards the hills (the pale sun had by this time saluted them to the
base, and pencilled shadows down their creases) a new quality occurred, a spiritual silence
which invaded more senses than the ear. Life went on as usual, but had no consequences, that
is to say, sounds did not echo or thoughts develop. **Everything seemed cut off at its root, and therefore infected with illusion**. For instance, there were some mounds by the edge of the track, low, serrated, and touched with whitewash. What were these mounds--graves, breasts of the goddess Parvati? The villagers beneath gave both replies. Again, there was a confusion about a snake which was never cleared up. Miss Quested saw a thin, dark object reared on end at the farther side of a watercourse, and said, "A snake!" The villagers agreed, and Aziz explained:
yes, a black cobra, very venomous, who had reared himself up to watch the passing of the elephant. But when she looked through Ronny's **fieldglasses**, she found it wasn't a snake, but thewithered and twisted stump of a toddy-palm. So she said, "It isn't a snake." The villagers contradicted
her. **She had put the word into their minds, and they refused to abandon it**. Aziz admitted
that it looked like a tree through the glasses, but insisted that it was a black cobra really,
and improvised some rubbish about protective **mimicry**. **Nothing was explained, and yet there
was no romance**. Films of heat, radiated from the Kawa Dol precipices, increased the confusion. They came at irregular intervals and moved capriciously. A patch of field would jump as if it was being fried, and then lie quiet. As they drew closer the radiation stopped.

\*\*\* A Marabar cave had been horrid as far as Mrs Moore was concerned, for she had nearly
fainted in it, and had some difficulty in preventing herself from saying so as soon as she got
into the air again. It was natural enough: she had always suffered from faintness, and the cave
had become too full, because all their retinue followed them. Crammed with villagers and servants, the circular chamber began to smell. She lost Aziz and Adela in the dark, didn't know
who touched her, couldn't breathe, and some vile naked thing struck 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 also a terrifying echo.

Professor Godbole had never mentioned an echo; it never impressed him, perhaps. 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.

\*\*\* "Are you married, Dr. Aziz?" she asked, stopping again, and frowning.
"Yes, indeed, do come and see my wife "--for he felt it more artistic to have his wife alive for
a moment.
"Thank you," she said absently.
"She is not in Chandrapore just now."
"And have you children?"
"Yes, indeed, three," he replied in firmer tones.
"Are they a great pleasure to you?"
"Why, naturally, I adore them," he laughed.
"I suppose so." What a handsome little Oriental he was, and no doubt his wife and children were beautiful too, for people usually get what they already possess. She did not admire him with any personal warmth, for there was nothing of the vagrant in her blood, but she guessed
he might attract women of his own race and rank, and she regretted that neither she nor Ronny had physical charm. It does make a difference in a relationship--beauty, thick hair, a fine skin. Probably this man had several wives--Mohammedans always insist on their full four, according to Mrs. Turton. And having no one else to speak to on that eternal rock, she gave rein to the subject of marriage and said in her honest, decent, inquisitive way: "Have you one wife or more than one?"
The question shocked the young man very much. It challenged a new conviction of his community, and new convictions are more sensitive than old. If she had said, "Do you worship one god or several?" he would not have objected. But to ask an educated Indian Moslem how many wives he has--appalling, hideous! He was in trouble how to conceal his confusion. "One, one in my own particular case," he sputtered, and let go of her hand. Quite a number of caves were at the top of the track, and thinking, "Damn the English even at their best," he plunged into one of them to recover his balance. She followed at her leisure, quite unconscious that she had said the wrong thing, and not seeing him, she also went into a cave, thinking with half her mind "sight-seeing bores me," and wondering with the other half about marriage.

Ch 17

The Collector could not speak at first. His face was white, fanatical, and rather beautiful--the expression that all English faces were to wear at Chandrapore for many days. Always brave and unselfish, he was now
fused by some white and generous heat; he would have killed himself, obviously, if he had
thought it right to do so. He spoke at last. "The worst thing in my whole career has happened,"
he said. "Miss Quested has been insulted in one of the Marabar caves."

"Oh no, oh no, no," gasped the other, feeling sickish. "She escaped--by God's grace."
"Oh no, no, but not Aziz . . . not Aziz . . ."
He nodded.

"Absolutely impossible, grotesque."
"I called you to preserve you from the odium that would attach to you if you were seen accompanying
him to the Police Station," said Turton, paying no attention to his protest, indeed
scarcely hearing it.
He repeated "Oh no," like a fool. He couldn't frame other words. 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: he had
always gone about sensibly and quietly until a difficulty came right. "Who lodges this infamous charge?" he asked, pulling himself together.
"Miss Derek and--the victim herself. . . ." He nearly broke down, unable to repeat the girl's
name.
"Miss Quested herself definitely accuses him of--"
He nodded and turned his face away.
"Then she's mad."
"I cannot pass that last remark," said the Collector, waking up to the knowledge that they
differed, and trembling with fury. "You will withdraw it instantly. It is the type of remark you
have permitted yourself to make ever since you came to Chandrapore."
"I'm excessively sorry, sir; I certainly withdraw it unconditionally." For the man was half mad himself.
"Pray, Mr. Fielding, what induced you to speak to me in such a tone?"
"The news gave me a very great shock, so I must ask you to forgive me. I cannot believe
that Dr. Aziz is guilty."
He slammed his hand on the table. "That--that is a repetition of your insult in an aggravated
form."
"If I may venture to say so, no," said Fielding, also going white, but sticking to his point. "I
make no reflection on the good faith of the two ladies, but the charge they are bringing against
Aziz rests upon some mistake, and five minutes will clear it up. The man's manner is perfectly natural; besides, I know him to be incapable of infamy."
"It does indeed rest upon a mistake," came the thin, biting voice of the other. "It does indeed.
I have had twenty-five years' experience of this country "--he paused, and "twenty-five
years" seemed to fill the waiting-room with their staleness and ungenerosity--" and during those twenty-five years I have never known anything but disaster result when English people and Indians attempt to be intimate socially. Intercourse, yes. Courtesy, by all means. Intimacy--never,
never. The whole weight of my authority is against it. I have been in charge at Chandrapore for
six years, and if everything has gone smoothly, if there has been mutual respect and esteem, it
is because both peoples kept to this simple rule. New-corners set our traditions aside, and in an instant what you see happens, the work of years is undone and the good name of my District
ruined for a generation. I--I----can't see the end of this day's work, Mr. Fielding. You, who are imbued with modern ideas--no doubt you can. I wish I had never lived to see its beginning, I
know that. It is the end of me. That a lady, that a young lady engaged to my most valued subordinate--that she--an English girl fresh from England--that I should have lived--"
Involved in his own emotions, he broke down. What he had said was both dignified and pathetic, but had it anything to do with Aziz? Nothing at all, if Fielding was right.

CHAPTER XVIII
Mr. McBryde, the District Superintendent of Police, was the most reflective and best educated
of the Chandrapore officials. He had read and thought a good deal, and, owing to a
somewhat unhappy marriage, had evolved a complete philosophy of life. There was much of
the cynic abcut him, but nothing of the bully; he never lost his temper or grew rough, and he received Aziz with courtesy, was almost reassuring. "I have to detain you until you get bail," he said, "but no doubt your friends will be applying for it, and of course they will be allowed to visit you, under regulations. I am given certain information, and have to act on it--I'm not your
judge." Aziz was led off weeping. Mr. McBryde was shocked at his downfall, but no Indian ever surprised him, because he had a theory about climatic zones. The theory ran: "All unfortunate natives are criminals at heart, for the simple reason that they live south of latitude 30. They are
not to blame, they have not a dog's chance--we should be like them if we settled here." Born at Karachi, he seemed to contradict his theory, and would sometimes admit as much with a sad,
quiet smile.
"Another of them found out," he thought, as he set to work to draft his statement to the
Magistrate.

\*\*\* "What is the charge, precisely?"
"That he followed her into the cave and made insulting advances. She hit at him with her field-glasses; he pulled at them and the strap broke, and that is how she got away. When we searched him just now, they were in his pocket."
"Oh no, oh no, no; it'll be cleared up in five minutes," he cried again.
"Have a look at them."
The strap had been newly broken, the eye-piece was jammed. The logic of evidence said

"Guilty."
"Did she say any more?"
"There was an echo that appears to have frightened her. Did you go into those caves?"
"I saw one of them. There was an echo. Did it get on her nerves?"
"I couldn't worry her overmuch with questions. She'll have plenty to go through in the witness-box. They don't bear thinking about, these next weeks. I wish the Marabar Hills and all they contain were at the bottom of the sea. Evening after evening one saw them from the club,
and they were just a harmless name. . . - Yes, we start already." For a visiting card was
brought; Vakil Mahmoud Ali, legal adviser to the prisoner, asked to be allowed to see him. McBryde signed, gave permission, and continued: "I heard some more from Miss Derek-- she is an old friend of us both and talks freely; well-- her account is that you went off to locate the
camp, and almost at once she heard stones falling on the Kawa Dol and saw Miss Quested running straight down the face of a precipice. Well. She climbed up a sort of gully to her, and found
her practically done for--her helmet off--"
"Was a guide not with her?" interrupted Fielding.
"No. She had got among some cactuses. Miss Derek saved her life coming just then--she
was beginning to fling herself about. She helped her down to the car. Miss Quested couldn't
stand the Indian driver, cried, 'Keep him away '--and it was that that put our friend on the track
of what had happened. They made straight for our bungalow, and are there now. That's the
story as far as I know it yet. She sent the driver to join you. I think she behaved with great
sense."
"I suppose there's no possibility of my seeing Miss Quested?" he asked suddenly.
"I hardly think that would do. Surely."
"I was afraid you'ld say that. I should very much like to."
"She is in no state to see anyone. Besides, you don't know her well."
"Hardly at all. . . . But you see I believe she's under some hideous delusion, and that that
wretched boy is innocent."
The policeman started in surprise, and a shadow passed over his face, for he could not bear
his dispositions to be upset. "I had no idea that was in your mind," he said, and looked for support at the signed deposition, which lay before him.
"Those field-glasses upset me for a minute, but I've thought since: it's impossible that, having attempted to assault her, he would put her glasses into his pocket."
"Quite possible, I'm afraid; when an Indian goes bad, he goes not only very bad, but very
queer."
I don't follow."
"How should you? When you think of crime you think of English crime. The psychology here
is different. I dare say you'll tell me next that he was quite normal when he came down from
the hill to greet you. No reason he should not be. Read any of the Mutiny records; which, rather than the Bhagavad Gita, should be your Bible in this country. Though I'm not sure that the one and the other are not closely connected. Am I not being beastly? But, you see, Fielding, as I've said to you once before, you're a schoolmaster, and consequently you come across these people
at their best. That's what puts you wrong. They can be charming as boys. But I know them as
they really are, after they have developed into men. Look at this, for instance." He held up Aziz' pocket-case. "I am going through the contents. They are not edifying. Here is a letter from a
friend who apparently keeps a brothel."
"I don't want to hear his private letters." ( MC BRYDE::☺
"It'll have to be quoted in Court, as bearing on his morals.

Ch 19

"Ah, it's all very well for you to speak like that, but we have to live in this country." **The leading barrister of Chandrapore, with the dignified manner and Cambridge degree, had been rattled. He too loved Aziz, and knew he was calumniated; but faith did not rule his heart, and he prated of "policy" and "evidence" in a way that saddened the Englishman. Fielding, too, had his anxieties--he didn't like the fieldglasses or the discrepancy over the guide--but he relegated them to the edge of his mind, and forbade them to infect its core. Aziz was innocent, and all action must be based on that, and the people who said he was guilty were wrong, and it was hopeless to try to propitiate them. At the moment when he was throwing in his lot with Indians, he realized the profundity of the gulf that divided him from them.** They always do something disappointing. Aziz had tried to run away from the police, Mohammed Latif had not checked the pilfering. And now Hamidullah !--instead of raging and denouncing, he temporized. Are Indians cowards? No, but they are bad starters and occasionally jib. **Fear is everywhere; the British Raj rests on it; the respect and courtesy Fielding himself enjoyed were unconscious acts of propitiation.** He told Hamidullah to cheer up, all would end well; and Ham idullah did cheer up, and became pugnacious and sensible. McBryde's remark, "If you leave the line, you leave a gap in the line," was being illustrated.

\*\*\* "Is Aziz innocent or guilty?" "That is for the Court to decide. The verdict will be in strict accordance with the evidence, I make no doubt." "Yes, yes, but your personal opinion. Here's a man we both like, generally esteemed; he lives here quietly doing his work. Well, what's one to make of it? Would he or would he not do such a thing?" "Ah, that is rather a different question from your previous one, and also more difficult: I mean difficult in our philosophy. Dr. Aziz is a most worthy young man, I have a great regard for him; but I think you are asking me whether tile individual can commit good actions or evil actions, and that is rather difficult for us." He spoke without emotion and in short tripping syllables. "I ask you: did he do it or not? Is that plain? I know he didn't, and from that I start. I mean to get at the true explanation in a couple of days. My last notion is that it's the guide who went round with them. Malice on Miss Quested's part--it couldn't be that, though Hamidullah thinks so. She has certainly had some appalling experience. But you tell me, oh no--because good and evil are the same." "No, not exactly, please, according to our philosophy. Because nothing can be performed in isolation. All perform a good action, when one is performed, and when an evil action is performed, all perform it. To illustrate my meaning, let me take the case in point as an example. "I am informed that an evil action was performed in the Marabar Hills, and that a highly esteemed English lady is now seriously ill in consequence. My answer to that is this: that action was performed by Dr. Aziz." He stopped and sucked in his thin cheeks. "It was performed by the guide." He stopped again. "It was performed by you." Now he had an air of daring and of coyness. "It was performed by me." He looked shyly down the sleeve of his own coat. "And by my students. It was even performed by the lady herself. When evil occurs, it expresses the whole of the universe. Similarly when good occurs." "And similarly when suffering occurs, and so on and so forth, and everything is anything and

nothing something," he muttered in his irritation, for he needed the solid ground. "Excuse me, you are now again changing the basis of our discussion. We were discussing good and evil. Suffering is merely a matter for the individual. If a young lady has sunstroke, that is a matter of no significance to the universe. Oh no, not at all. Oh no, not the least. It is an isolated matter, it only concerns herself. If she thought her head did not ache, she would not be ill, and that would end it. But it is far otherwise in the case of good and evil. They are not what we think them, they are what they are, and each of us has contributed to both." "You're preaching that evil and good are the same." "Oh no, excuse me once again. Good and evil are different, as their names imply. But, in my own humble opinion, they are both of them aspects of my Lord. He is present in the one, absent in the other, and the difference between presence and absence is great, as great as my feeble mind can grasp. Yet absence implies presence, absence is not non-existence, and we are therefore entitled to repeat, 'Come, come, come, come.'" And in the same breath, as if to cancel any beauty his words might have contained, he added, "But did you have time to visit any of the interesting Marabar antiquities?"

ch XX

When the smoking-room was clear, the Collector sat on the edge of a table, so that he could dominate without formality. His mind whirled with contradictory impulses. He wanted to avenge

Miss Quested and punish Fielding, while remaining scrupulously fair. He wanted to flog every native that he saw, but to do nothing that would lead to a riot or to the necessity for military intervention. The dread of having to call in the troops was vivid to him; soldiers put one thing straight, but leave a dozen others crooked, and they love to humiliate the civilian administration. One soldier was in the room this evening--a stray subaltern from a Gurkha regiment; he

was a little drunk, and regarded his presence as providential. The Collector sighed. There seemed nothing for it but the old weary business of compromise and moderation. He longed for the good old days when an Englishman could satisfy his own honour and no questions asked afterwards. Poor young Heaslop had taken a step in this direction, by refusing bail, but the Collector couldn't feel this was wise of poor young Heaslop. Not only would the Nawab Bahadur and others be angry, but the Government of India itself also watches--and behind it is that caucus of cranks and cravens, the British Parliament. He had constantly to remind himself that, in the eyes of tile law, Aziz was not yet guilty, and the effort fatigued him.

XX. Fielding resigns and wonders

"Mr. Fielding, what has prevented you from standing up?" said the Collector, entering the fray at last. It was the attack for which Fielding had waited, and to which he must reply. "May I make a statement, sir?" "Certainly." Seasoned and self-contained, devoid of the fervours of nationality or youth, the schoolmaster did what was for him a comparatively easy thing. He stood up and said, "I believe Dr. Aziz to

be innocent." "You have a right to hold that opinion if you choose, but pray is that any reason why you should insult Mr. Heaslop?" "May I conclude my statement?" Certainly.'' "I am waiting for the verdict of the courts. If he is gt'ilty I resign from my service, and leave India. I resign from the club now." Hear, hear! " said voices, not entirely hostile, for they liked the fellow for speaking out. "You have not answered my question. Why did you not stand when Mr. Heaslop entered?" "With all deference, sir, I am not here to answer questions, but to make a personal statement, and I have concluded it." "May I ask whether you have taken over charge of this District?" Fielding moved towards the door. "One moment, Mr. Fielding. You are not to go yet, please. Before you leave the club, from which you do very well to resign, you will express some detestation of the crime, and you will apologize to Mr. Heaslop." "Are you speaking to me officially, sir?" The Collector, who never spoke otherwise, was so infuriated that he lost his head. He cried, "Leave this room at once, and I deeply regret that I demeaned myself to meet you at the station. You have sunk to the level of your associates; you are weak, weak, that is what is wrong with you--" "I want to leave the room, but cannot while this gentleman prevents me," said Fielding lightly; the subaltern had got across his path. "Let him go," said Ronny, almost in tears. It was the only appeal that could have saved the situation. Whatever Heaslop wished must be done. There was a slight scuffle at the door, from which Fielding was propelled, a little more quickly than is natural, into the room where the ladies were playing cards. "Fancy if I'd fallen or got angry," he thought. Of course he was a little angry. His peers had never offered him violence or called him weak before, besides Heaslop had heaped coals of fire on his head. He wished he had not picked the quarrel over poor suffering Heaslop, when there were cleaner issues at hand. **However, there it was, done, muddled through, and to cool himself and regain mental balance he went on to the upper verandah for a moment, where the first object he saw was the Marabar Hills. At this distance and hour they leapt into beauty; they were Monsalvat, Walhalla, the towers of a cathedral, peopled with saints and heroes, and covered with flowers. What miscreant lurked in them, presently to be detected by the activities of the law**? Who was the guide, and had he been found yet? What was the "echo" of which the girl complained? He did not know, but presently he would know. Great is information, and she shall prevail. It was the last moment of the light, and as he gazed at the Marabar Hills they seemed to move graciously towards him like a queen, and their charm became the sky's. At the moment they vanished they were everywhere, the cool benediction of the night descended, the stars sparkled, and the whole universe was a hill. Lovely, exquisite moment--but passing the Englishman with averted face and on swift wings. He experienced nothing himself; it was as if someone had told him there was such a moment, and he was obliged to believe. **And he felt dubious and discontented suddenly, and wondered whether he was really and truly successful as a human being. After forty years' experience, he had learnt to manage his life and make the best of it on advanced European lines, had developed his personality, explored his limitations, controlled his passions-- and he had done it all without becoming either pedantic or worldly. A creditable achievement, but as the moment passed, he felt he ought to have been working at something else the whole time,--he didn't know at what, never would know, never could know, and that was why he felt sad**.

Ch XXII

Adela had stopped crying. An extraordinary expression was on her face, half relief, half horror. She repeated, "Aziz, Aziz." They all avoided mentioning that name. It had become synonymous with the power of evil. He was "the prisoner," "the person in question," "the defence," and the sound of it now rang out like the first note of a new symphony. "Aziz . . . have I made a mistake?" "You're over-tired," he cried, not much surprised. "Ronny, he's innocent; I made an awful mistake." "Well, sit down anyhow." He looked round the room, but only two sparrows were chasing one another. She obeyed and took hold of his hand. He stroked it and she smiled, and gasped as if she had risen to the surface of the water, then touched her ear. "My echo's better." "That's good. You'll be perfectly well in a few days, but you must save yourself up for the

trial. Das is a very good fellow, we shall all be with you." "But Ronny, dear Ronny, perhaps there oughtn't to be any trial." "I don't quite know what you're saying, and I don't think you do." "If Dr. Aziz never did it he ought to be let out." A shiver like impending death passed over Ronny. He said hurriedly, "He was let out--until the Mohurram riot, when he had to be put in again."

Ch 24: the trial

The Court was crowded and of course very hot, and the first person Adela noticed in it was the humblest of all who were present, a person who had no bearing officially upon the trial: **the man who pulled the punkah. Almost naked, and splendidly formed, he sat on a raised platform near the back, in the middle of the central gangway, and he caught her attention as she came in, and he seemed to control the proceedings**. Fle had the strength and beauty that sometimes come to flower in Indians of low birth. 'When that strange race nears the dust and is condemned as untouchable, then nature remembers the physical perfection that she accomplished elsewhere, and throws out a god--not many, but one here and there, to prove to society how little its categories impress her. This man would have been notable anywhere: among the thinhammed, flat-chested mediocrities of Chandrapore he stood out as divine, yet lie was of the city, its garbage had nourished him, he would end on its rubbish heaps. **Pulling the rope towards him, relaxing it rhythmically, sending swirls of air over others, receiving none himself, he seemed apart from human destinies, a male fate, a winnower of souls. Opposite him, also on a platform, sat the little assistant magistrate, cultivated, self-conscious, and conscientious**. The punkah, wallah was none of these things: he scarcely knew that he existed and did not understand why the Court was fuller than usual, indeed he did not know that it was fuller than usual, didn't even know he worked a fan, though he thought he pulled a rope. Something in his aloofness impressed the girl from middle-class England, and rebuked the narrowness of her sufferings. In virtue of what had she collected this roomful of people together? Her particular brand of opinions, and the suburban Jehovah who sanctified them--by what right did they claim so much importance in the world, and assume the title of civilization? Mrs. Moore--she looked round, but Mrs. Moore was far away on the sea; it was the kind of question they might have discussed on the voyage out before the old lady had turned disagreeable and queer. While thinking of Mrs. Moore she heard sounds, which gradually grew more distinct. **The epoch-making trial had started, and the Superintendent of Police was opening the case for the prosecution. Mr. McBryde was not at pains to be an interesting speaker; he left eloquence to the defence, who would require it. His attitude was, "Everyone knows the man's guilty, and I am obliged to say so in public before he goes to the Andamans."** He made no moral or emotional appeal, and it was only by degrees that the studied negligence of his manner made itself felt, and lashed part of the audience to fury. Laboriously did he describe the genesis of the picnic. The prisoner had met Miss Quested at an entertainment given by the Principal of Government College, and had there conceived his intentions concerning her: prisoner was a man of loose life, as documents found upon him at his arrest would testify, also his fellow-assistant, Dr. Panna Lal, was in a position to throw light on his character, and Major Callendar himself would speak. Here Mr. McBryde paused. He wanted to keep the proceedings as clean as possible, but Oriental Pathology, his favourite theme, lay around him, and he could not resist it. Taking off his spectacles, as was his habit before enunciating a general truth, he looked into them sadly, and remarked that the darker races are physically attracted by the fairer, but not \_vice versa\_--not a matter for bitterness this, not a matter for abuse, but just a fact which any scientific observer will confirm.

**"Even when the lady is so uglier than the gentleman?"**The comment fell from nowhere, from the ceiling perhaps. It was the first interruption, and the Magistrate felt bound to censure it. "Turn that man out," he said. One of the native policemen took hold of a man who had said nothing, and turned him out roughly. Mr. McBryde resumed his spectacles and proceeded. But the comment had upset Miss Quested. Her body resented being called ugly, and trembled. "Do you feel faint, Adela?" asked Miss Derek, who tended her with loving indignation. "I never feel anything else, Nancy. I shall get through, but it's awful, awful." This led to the first of a series of scenes. Her friends began to fuss around her, and the Major called out, "I must have better arrangements than this made for my patient; why isn't she given a seat on the platform? She gets no air."

…. While the prosecution continued, Miss Quested examined the hall--timidly at first, as though it would scorch her eyes. She observed to left and right of the punkah man many a half-known face. Beneath her were gathered all the wreckage of her silly attempt to see India-- the people she had met at the Bridge Party, the man and his wife who hadn't sent their carriage, the old man who would lend his car, various servants, villagers, officials, and the prisoner himself. There lie sat--strong, neat little Indian with very black hair, and pliant bands. She viewed him without special emotion. Since they last met, she had elevated him into a principle of evil, but now he seemed to be what he had always been--a slight acquaintance. He was negligible, devoid of significance, dry like a bone, and though he was "guilty" no atmosphere of sin surrounded him. "I suppose he is guilty. Can I possibly have made a mistake?" she thought. For this question still occurred to her intellect, though since Mrs. Moore's departure it had ceased to trouble her conscience. Pleader Mahmoud Ali now arose, and asked with ponderous and ill-judged irony whether his client could be accommodated on the platform too: eveii Indians felt unwell sometimes, though naturally Major Callendar did not think so, being in charge of a Government Hospital. "Another example of their exquisite sense of humour," sang Miss Derek. Ronny looked at Mr. Das to see how lie would handle the difficulty, and Mr. Das became agitated, and snubbed Pleader Mahmoud Ali severely. "Excuse me--" It was the turn of the eminent barrister from Calcutta. He was a fine-looking man, large and bony, with grey closely cropped hair. "We object to the presence of so niany European ladies and gentlemen upon the platform," lie said in an Oxford voice. "They will have the effect of intimidating our witnesses. Their place is with the rest of the public in the body of the hall. We have no objection to Miss Quested remaining on the platform, since she has beeii unwell; we shall extend every courtesy to her throughout, despite the scientific truths revealed to us by the District Superintendent of Police; but we do object to the others." "Oh, cut the cackle and let's have the verdict," the Major growled.

(nb travesty of the judicial ritual – The English’ attempt to put themselves on the same level as the magistrate

But the little excursion had a good effect on Miss Quested's nerves. She felt easier now that she had seen all the people who were in the room. It was like knowing the worst. She was sure now that she should come through "all right "--that is to say, without spiritual disgrace, and she passed the good news on to Ronny and Mrs. Turton. They were too much agitated with the defeat to British prestige to be interested. From where she sat, she could see the renegade Mr. Fielding. She had had a better view of him from the platform, and knew that an Indian child perched on his knee. He was watching the proceedings, watching her. When their eyes met, he turned his away, as if direct intercourse was of no interest to him. The Magistrate was also happier. He had won the battle of the platform, and gained confidence. Intelligent and impartial, he continued to listen to the evidence, and tried to forget that later on he should have to pronounce a verdict in accordance with it. The Superintendent trundled steadily forward: he had expected these outbursts of insolence--they are the natural gestures of an inferior race, and he betrayed no hatred of Aziz, merely an abysmal contempt. The speech dealt at length with the "prisoner's dupes," as they were called--Fielding, the servant Antony, the Nawab Bahadur. This aspect of the case had always seemed dubious to Miss Quested, and she had asked the police not to develop it. But they were playing for a heavy sentence, and wanted to prove that the assault was premeditated. And in order to illustrate the strategy, they produced a plan of the Marabar Hills, showing the route that the party had taken, and the "Tank of the Dagger" where they had camped.

But the crisis was still to come. Adela had always meant to tell the truth and nothing but the truth, and she had rehearsed this as a difficult task--difficult, because her disaster in the cave was connected, though by a thread, with another part of her life, her engagement to Ronny. She had thought of love just before she went in, and had innocently asked Aziz what marriage was like, and she supposed that her question had roused evil in him. To recount this would have been incredibly painful, it was the one point she wanted to keep obscure; she was willing to give details that would have distressed other girls, but this story of her private failure she dared not allude to, and she dreaded being examined in public in case something came out. But as soon as she rose to reply, and heard the sound of her own voice, she feared not even that. A new and unknown sensation protected her, like magnificent armour. She didn't think what had happened or even remember in the ordinary way of memory, but she returned to the Marabar Hills, and spoke from them across a sort of darkness to Mr. McBryde. The fatal day recurred, in every detail, but now she was of it and not of it at the same time, and this double relation gave it indescribable splendour. Why had she thought the expedition "dull "? Now the sun rose again, the elephant waited, the pale masses of the rock flowed round her and presented the first cave; she entered, and a

match was reflected in the polished walls--all beautiful and significant, though she had been blind to it at the time. Questions were asked, aiid to each she found the exact reply; yes, she had noticed the "Tank of the Dagger," but not known its name; yes, Mrs. Moore had been tired after the first cave and sat in the shadow of a great rock, near the dried-up mud. Smoothly the voice in the distance proceeded, leading along the paths of truth, and the airs from the punkah behind her wafted her on. . . .

". . . the prisoner and the guide took you on to the Kawa Dol, no one else being present?" "The niost wonderfully shaped of those hills. Yes." As she spoke, she created the Kawa Dol, saw the niches up the curve of the stone, and felt the heat strike her face. And something caused her to add: "No one else was present to my knowledge. We appeared to be alone." "Very well, there is a ledge half-way up the hill, or broken ground rather, with caves scattered near the beginning of a nullah." "I know where you mean." "You went alone into one of those caves?" "That is quite correct." "And the prisoner followed you." "Now we've got 'im," from the Major. She was silent. The court, the place of question, awaited her reply. But she could not give it until Aziz entered the place of answer. "The prisoner followed you, didn't he?" he repeated in the monotonous tones that they both used; they were employing agreed words throughout, so that this part of the proceedings held no surprises. "May I have half a minute before I reply to that, Mr. McBryde?" "Certainly." Her vision was of several caves. She saw herself in one, and she was also outside it, watching its entrance, for Aziz to pass in. She failed to locate him. It was the doubt that had often visited her, but solid and attractive, like the hills, "I am not--" Speech was more difficult than vision. "I am not quite sure." "I beg your pardon?" said the Superintendent of Police. "I cannot be sure . . ." "I didn't catch that answer." He looked scared, his mouth shut with a snap. "You are on that landing, or whatever we term it, and you have entered a cave. I suggest to you that the prisoner followed you." She shook her head. "What do you mean, please?" "No," she said in a flat, unattractive voice. Slight noises began in various parts of the room, but no one yet understood what was occurring except Fielding. He saw that she was going to have a nervous breakdown and that his friend was saved. "What is that, what are you saying? Speak up, please." The Magistrate bent forward. "I'm afraid I have made a mistake." "What nature of mistake?" "Dr. Aziz never followed me into the cave." The Superintendent slammed down his papers, then picked them up and said calmly: "Now, Miss Quested, let us go on. I will read you the words of the deposition which you signed two hours later in my bungalow." "Excuse me, Mr. McBryde, you cannot go on. I am speaking to the witness myself. And the public will be silent. If it continues to talk, I have the court cleared. Miss Quested, address your remarks to me, who am the Magistrate in charge of the case, and realize their extreme gravity. Remember you speak on oath, Miss Quested." "Dr. Aziz never--" "I stop these proceedings on medical grounds," cried the Major on a word from Turton, and all the English rose from their chairs at once, large white figures behind which the little magistrate

was hidden. The Indians rose too, hundreds of things went on at once, so that afterwards each person gave a different account of the catastrophe. "You withdraw the charge? Answer me," shrieked the representative of Justice. Something that she did not understand took hold of the girl and pulled her through. Though the vision was over, and she had returned to the insipidity of the world, she remembered what she had learnt. Atonement and confession--they could wait. It was in hard prosaic tones that she said, "I withdraw everything."

"Enough--sit down. Mr. McBryde, do you wish to continue in the face of this?" The Superintendent gazed at his witness as if she was a broken machine, and said, "Are you mad?" "Don't question her, sir; you have no longer the right." "Give me time to consider--" "Sahib, you will have to withdraw; this becomes a scandal," boomed the Nawab Bahadur suddenly from the back of the court. "He shall not," shouted Mrs. Turton against the gathering tumult. "Call the other witnesses; we're none of us safe--" Ronny tried to check her, and she gave him an irritable blow, then screamed insults at Adela. The Superintendent moved to the support of his friends, saying nonchalantly to the Magistrate as he did so, "Right, I withdraw." Mr. Das rose, nearly dead with the strain. He had controlled the case, just controlled it. He had shown that an Indian can preside. To those who could hear him he said, "The prisoner is released without one stain on his character; the question of costs will be decided elsewhere." And then the flimsy framework of the court broke up, the shouts of derision and rage culminated, people screamed and cursed, kissed one another, wept passionately. Here were the English, whom their servants protected, there Aziz fainted in Hamidullah's arms. Victory on this side, defeat on that--complete for one moment was the antithesis. Then life returned to its complexities, person after person struggled out of the room to their various purposes, and before long no one remained on the scene of the fantasy but the beautiful naked god. Unaware that anything unusual had occurred, he continued to pull the cord of his punkah, to gaze at the empty dais and the overturned special chairs, and rhythmically to agitate the clouds of descending dust. CHAPTER XXV Miss Quested had renounced her own people. Turning from them, she was drawn into a mass of Indians of the shopkeeping class, and carried by them towards the public exit of the court. The faint, indescribable smell of the bazaars invaded her, sweeter than a London slum, yet more disquieting: a tuft of scented cotton wool, wedged in an old man's ear, fragments of pan between his black teeth, odorous powders, oils--the Scented East of tradition, but blended with human sweat as if a great king had been entangled in ignominy and could not free himself, or as if the heat of the sun had boiled and fried all the glories of the earth into a single mess. They paid no attention to her. They shook hands over her shoulder, shouted through her body-- for when the Indian does ignore his rulers, he becomes genuinely unaware of their existence. Without part in the universe she had created, she was flung against Mr. Fielding.