

**Reimagining Empire: Mulk Raj Anand And E.M. Forster  
In Shaping Subaltern Narratives In Colonial India**

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**Abstract**

This research paper abstract undertakes a comparative analysis of Mulk Raj Anand's "Across the Black Waters" and E.M. Forster's "A Passage to India," examining the manifestation of Subaltern sensibilities in 20th-century literature. Exploring the representation of India by Anand and Forster, the study investigates the dynamic evolution of Indian identity, particularly that of the Subaltern Identity, during the Imperial era. The theoretical framework relies on Bakhtin's Chronotopes, focusing on the interplay of Space and Time to elucidate narrative complexities and the emergence of new identities in literary contexts.

Further delving into the protagonists' identity formation, namely Lalu and Aziz, the research employs Bhabha's concepts of Hybridity, Mimicry, and Third Space. These theoretical perspectives shed light on the fractured selfhoods of the characters, emphasizing their colonial identity formation and the continual resituating of their sense of self. The paper anticipates the postcolonial discourse's role in influencing the changing Subaltern identity, thereby contributing to a transformation in National Subaltern Historiography. Both Forster and Anand exhibit a profound inclination towards the subaltern narrative during the Imperial period, demonstrating their dedicated exploration and celebration of Subaltern sensibility.

This commitment permeates and shapes the essence of their literary works, marking a significant contribution to the discourse on Subaltern identities in the context of colonial India.

## **Introduction**

The British Occupation in India was a strategic narrative played by the British to occupy the Indian subcontinent and take over the various reigning kingdoms across the country. The British Empire got a rather strong hold of a rather powerful nation by a strategic construction of the East India Company and its narrative employing that the roles of trading and business are their only need. In the essay, *Train to Pakistan 2007: Decolonization, Partition, and Identity in the Transnational Public Sphere*, Kavita Daiya says “The scale and nature of violence that India’s partition involved thus makes it one of the most violent events in the history of modern nation- formation.” (Daiya)

The rise of the East India Company in India was a vindictive move though a subliminal one by the British to conquer the whole of India- Hindustan. In the essay- *The Idea of Empire from India Conquered* by Jon Wilson says, “Historians often impute commercial motives to the East India Company’s effort to assert greater power in India in the 1830s. After all, this is often regarded as the era of free-trade imperialism.” (Wilson) The Imperial hierarchies were placed within the composition of the societal core and were made sure that the reception by the Indians was pivotal. The dictatorial agenda mapped a process which led to the delineation of the natives as primitive and the British as the saviour. This grand narrative involuntarily created a Subaltern

man, who was gazed at from a rather inferior position. This space, positions the new Subaltern in retrospect with the colonial head and builds a fundamental colonial centre which further built a bridge of Imperialism and destroyed any sense of Identity and Autonomy.

This brought a defining change in the literature of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and gave birth to many Anti-colonial writers. The literary culture gravitated towards a postcolonial comprehension of what it means to be a Subaltern and question 'the very colour of war memory' notes(Das)

Writers such as Rudyard Kipling, George Orwell, E.M. Forster wrote about the English perspective and their experiences in the colony. Some believed in demands of the war service and the need for Imperial legacy in the colony. Many English writer were distinct in their belief of the rather fierce presence of the crown in India, including Rudyard Kipling. But writers such as George Orwell, H.G. Wells and E.M. Forster spoke against the Imperial rule and spoke passionately about the prejudice; including the radical implementation of violent plays to suppress the voice of the oppressed. H.G. Wells said, "no race is fit to have the upper hand over any other race; the possession of the upper hand leads at best to an inconsiderate self-righteousness and at the worst to an extreme contempt and cruelty." (Foot)

While there were English writers who were wrapped in the colonial dilemma- to be for or against the crown; Indian writers partook in the fight against the British. Some were quite radical while the rest believed in the written word. Sarojini Naidu, Rabindranath Tagore, Saadat Hasan Manto and Mulk Raj Anand were the signifying critique of the radical

Imperialism in the country and were celebrated for their work. The Independence movement hadn't gained a momentum in India but the transformation created a unique literary movement. One such influential writer was Mulk raj Anand, who was a son of a soldier, who later went on to earn a doctorate from Cambridge University and became a part of the Bloomsbury group. (Rosner) Anand was vocal about his perspective and support for a socialist system. His novels and their characters capture the emotional rupture of relationships during the British Raj which shows a lamenting need for freedom and identity. It also was a predicator of the fractured relationship of India and the Empire. Before leaving for the south of Spain to join the International Brigades in a resistance against the fascist dominance led by the Nationalist Forces by Franco in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), Mulk Raj Anand had rather made a subsequent choice to write a trilogy which would encompass the Indian Subaltern sensibility of the degenerate peasant class of the Indian strata who had made a definite contribution in The Great War of 1914-1918 (Kumar and Pandya). Anand had talked at the 1936 Anti-Fascist Writers conference in London. While all the being and doing; political and social, had Anand established himself as a strong presence in literary circles in London and was a part of the 'Bloomsbury Group' of writers where he would interact with other writers such as E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, George Orwell and T.S. Eliot. In the November of 1942, Anand along with other writers such as Una Marson, Venu Chitale, Narayan Menon and William Empson had chiefly been on the BBC Eastern service program- Voice, and they discussed the rising tumult in the English colonies. (Hill)

The novel was drafted when Anand was in Barcelona during the first half of 1937 and rewritten in the December of 1939. Across *The Black Waters*, extraordinarily is a singular novel in Literature which contributes to the rare oeuvre of the Indian war experience in an international war theatre. Mulk Raj Anand's imagination is creative and vigorous in implementing the intersection of diverse voices of different class and race while keeping the magnitude of Indian consciousness at the forefront.

In the Literary establishment, there were two writers who had particularly grown a liking towards each other. E.M. Forster had been a friend of Anand and had grown to like him and his craft. Report had spoken of their positive reflections of each other's work and shared the similar disregard for the Imperial rule in the Indian colony. Mulk Raj Anand was vocal about his strong detest for the Imperial rule in spite of the British Government banning his novels in India.

E.M. Forster had previously written the introduction to Anand's book- *Untouchables* (1935), for which he garnered worldwide success and fame. Their friendship blossomed when they were working together on *T.S. Eliot's Magazine-Criterion*. (Harding) He had praised the text for addressing its subject and in its introduction, he wrote: "Avoiding rhetoric and circumlocution, has gone straight to the heart of its subject and purified it". (Forster)

Forster's art has the ability to provide a universal truth of the changing landscape of the 20<sup>th</sup> century politics. The postcolonial praxis has opened its path to capture the truth of the colonial consciousness though Forster had made his observation and predicament with his magnum opus which

was also his last novel: *A Passage to India*. He has been able to put together the comprehension of all the colonized and decolonized sensibilities on the paper- including the emotional and psychological issues. He carved a niche for himself as a writer who made characters who were in search of a concrete identity that they embodied. His characters deal with the inquiry of identity and experiencing the convoluted perception of the changing Imperial world. Being situated on two distinct geopolitical spaces, Forster's novels are regarded as examples of the colonial phenomenon, with subjects who are both colonised and colonisers. Under the skin of a historical drama novel lies histories: of race, violence and cultural shifts. He recreates the coloniser's experience in a different context, recalling ideas of imperial oppression and its consequences. The identity dichotomy which the protagonist experiences provide tremendous insight into the anguish of the rootless and belonging that colonialism awakens. This existence of a big event awakens the true identity within, questions the rigid nature of cultural identity bombarded on the protagonist by the Imperial hegemony.

E.M. Forster was a Cambridge man. It was at Cambridge where he could acquaint himself with his true identity and rather be tentative about the various tones of his individuality and his homosexuality. Upon this juncture, he started his career as a writer- where he burrowed upon regressive social issues and identity with determination. His oeuvre when looked at through a larger lens represent how Forster was a man ahead of his times.

In 'Where Angels Fear to Tread', his debut book, published in 1905, demonstrates his concern that people

should maintain a strong connection to their ancestry. The argument further satiates his talent to amalgamate the identity disposition in his work. Maurice (1971), his final novel, is a powerful condemnation of British society's repressive attitude, as well as a plea for emotional and sexual honesty. The narrative called out the regressive homosexuality space within the British operated which could have given him an insight to empathize with the subaltern sensibilities under the British oppression.

In the history of 20th century literature, E.M. Forster is a celebrated writer. "The Elusive Forster" is the title of John Beer's (1979) introduction to a collection of essays on his centenary, he is counted as a member of Bloomsbury, but he was "on the periphery rather than at the heart of this circle". (Beer)

They both, Mulk Raj Anand and E.M. Forster share the same ideology of responsible collective consciousness when discussing about how we can resist and transcend the hegemony of Imperialism. Both writers achieved a strong friendship foundation and mediated their intellectual connection by creating work that embodied their ideology and challenged the unfair hierarchal systems. Both the texts illustrate a strong

Subaltern character which challenges the symbiotic nature of imperialism. The nuances within the novels- A passage to India and Across the Black Waters, question the subliminal dominance of the British Raj in India and present us with a strong Subaltern hero. The literary connection which both the writers share is sacred as they both belong to the same group of writers and are relentlessly ambitious in the

resistance against the British; but truly demonstrate appreciation for the Other, in fiction and in real.

## Chapter One

### The Beginning: World War One and The Indian Army

George Orwell, a pacifist himself, extensively referred to the disposed evolution of the Raj in India. ‘With the Japanese army in the Indian Ocean and the German armies in the Middle East, India becomes the centre of the war,’ Orwell continued, ‘it is hardly an exaggeration to say, the centre of the world. For a long time to come, possibly for years, it may have to act as a supply base from which men and munitions can be poured out in two directions, East and West.’ (Raghavan)

From 1914 to 1918, Indian military was served as far as 1.3 million expeditionary forces- from Mesopotamia, South East Asia to Europe. (79)

Table 0.1 *Number sent on service overseas from India up to 31 December 1919*

Theatre	Combatants				Non-combatant Indians	Totals		Grand total of all ranks (British and Indian)
	British officers	British other ranks	Indian officers and warrant officers	Indian other ranks		British	Indians	
France	2,395	18,353	1,923	87,412	49,273	20,748	138,608	
East Africa	928	4,681	848	33,835	13,021	5,609	47,704	
Mesopotamia	18,669	166,822	9,514	117,142	148,735	185,491	675,391	
Egypt	1,188	17,067	1,204	107,742	14,047	10,255	143,993	
Gallipoli	42	18	90	3,041	1,819	60	4,950	
Salonika	86	85	132	6,545	3,254	171	9,931	
Palestine	—	4	4	1	28	4	33	
Aden	952	7,267	480	19,936	5,786	8,219	26,205	
Persian Gulf	991	1,059	967	29,408	18,823	2,050	49,198	
	27,251	215,356	16,162	605,062	474,789	242,607	1,096,013	

The above figures exclude 42,430 British of all ranks sent from India to England, all, or nearly all, of whom doubtless proceeded on to service from the United Kingdom. 42,430

1,381,050

(Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914-1920)

The novels- *A Passage to India* and *Across the Black Waters*, both share a unique premise which alludes to a Subaltern protagonist in midst of the colonial dominance who eventually realize the brevity of colonialism and war. *Across the Black Waters*, textures the Indian war experience of World War one, reflecting the wartime experiences outside the subcontinent and *A Passage to India* pays attention to the pernicious revolutionary consequences within the country. The subsequent concoction of the individual embodiment of the colonial vision seems satirical as an Indian writer navigates the former- the intercontinental fury and an English writer navigates the latter, the internal tempest. The representation by Anand and Forster of India has subliminal undertones of reconstruction but mostly it has redirected and resealed the ever-evolving nature of the Indian identity, especially that of the subaltern identity.

This identity formation goes through a tumultuous modification- which this essay shall navigate through Bhabha's understanding of Hybridity, Mimicry and Third Space with further interrogation through Bakhtin's Chronotopes. The centre of the protagonist's identity- Lalu and Aziz- keeps resituating. They hold a fractured sense of selfhood. The foundation of colonial identity formation is interrogated in the novel. The influence of space and time in the birth of subaltern identity transformation was a revolutionary fundamental in the postcolonial discourse.

*A passage to India*, brings in reservations when it comes to interrogating the colonial discourse propagated by the British Raj and rather chooses to arrive at the resolution of navigating through multiple voices. Forster not only chooses an Indian protagonist-but rather a subaltern minority protagonist. He is sensitive to the notion of him looking at the narrative from the top- down and is conscious of his English disposition; but does a rather holistic work at legitimizing his creative capabilities. Moreover, Forster delivers the internal state of affairs adequately.

Mulk Raj Anand's character's arc of the protagonist hops from a young enthusiastic sepoy to an anti- colonial subaltern; showing the reader an epiphany of one's identity and liberty of autonomy. The historiography of Imperialism and war studies have been primarily been accounted from almost an ideological and neo-colonialist view. However, the literature by Anand and Forster brings forth the uprising of the anti-colonialist consciousness.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **CHRONOTOPES: COMPREHENDING SUBALTERN IDENTITY THROUGH THE BAKHTINIAN READING OF TIME AND SPATIALITY**

In the book, "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," the third essay of *The Dialogic Imagination*, Mikhail Bakhtin defines Chronotope as "the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships ... in literature." (84). The term, which literally means time-space, has been inculcated in

physics and is in conjunction with Einstein's theory of relativity.

This Bakhtin theory uses an illustration to show how a genre develops during the creative process. The book structure of *A Passage to India* and *Across the Black Waters* is governed by the historical period—from World War One to the Indian Independence—and the geographic locations—Chandrapore, Marabar Caves, and the French Trenches. Bakhtin claims: "time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot, and history. This intersection of axes and fusion of indicators characterizes the artistic Chronotope." (15-24). Subaltern geopolitics then needs to learn from postcolonialism, drawing on Spivak's call for "learning from below" (I 56)

*A PASSAGE TO INDIA*: Except for the outlying Marabar Caves, Chandrapore is an unremarkable Indian town. Forster's language used to describe the town creates a sense of monotony and infinity. The English settlement and the Indian settlement are as distinct in character. Forster employs the sky as a symbolic arch, which serves as almost the only link between the two national groups. By implication, he contrasts the vast sky's infinite power and mystery with the discordant affairs of earthbound men. The novel's plot, which is specifically the path of the hero's life in its pivotal moments, is a blend of adventure-time and ordinary time. We only witness one or two

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key events that decide a man's fate and shape his entire course of action. The protagonist goes through spiritual rebirths. This argument requires turning points since progress is not viewed as continual and mundane. It has a profound and irreversible impact on the person and every aspect of his life. It is, however, unmistakably adventure time: a time of exceptional and unusual events..." (p. 116). The Marabar Caves are described by Forster. Though he describes them physically—their great geological age, lack of shrines, perfectly polished walls, rough-hewn, manmade entrances—what remains in the mind is a sense of mystery that Forster suggests but does not attempt to explain. They contain "something unspeakable"; visitors leave with mixed feelings; if the unopened caves were excavated, "nothing would be added to the sum of good or evil." Godbole is hesitant to describe the caves because he understands their enigma. "Not heard of them?" both cried. "The Marabar Caves in the Marabar Hills?" "We hear nothing interesting up at the club. ... What are these caves?" (36)

The criminal trial, in both its direct and indirect manifestations, as well as legal-criminal categories more generally, had a significant organisational impact on the novel's later history. "The significance of legal-criminal categories in the novel, -- is an interesting and important problem in the history of the novel" (p. 124). The Trial in the *A Passage to India*, can be traced to the Caves and how they both influence the structure of the story. The trial's verdict makes the English

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unhappy since it undermines their political dominance and their prestigious reputation. Colonialism as a type of subjugation was a spatial imposition (Said) because it involved the conquest of ethnic groups and political entities, and the consequent deprivation of African and other indigenous people of control over their 'territory', a concept which, as Michel Foucault notes, 'is no doubt a geographical notion'. (Gordon) The concepts of space and time manifest in Chronotope's memory quite differently than they do in reality. Memory appears to telescope space and time, with the normal spatial and temporal markers that measure these notions in reality either absent or radically altered in memory, and as a result, particular events become much more marked in their significance.

*ACROSS THE BLACK WATERS*: Lalu's feelings are expressed through the brutal and terrible unfamiliarity of Europe. 'This land', said Kirpu with an amused smile, 'this land is like all the others, it came to be with the coming of life, and will go down with death'. (12) Although he is eager to embark on an adventure in Europe, he is also terrified of it. On the other hand, his own body can serve as a familiar anchor for this metaphoric language that compares the environment to physical processes. It is clear that he is focused on his own body and senses since he perceives that he may be ill, smells "the rich sunny smell which was in the air," feels the "wonder" of the "entry to the port," and hears the guns fire on the ground (9). He is observing the surroundings. He becomes overwhelmed

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by its novelty. His usage of bodily analogies in his vocabulary is not just a result of the novelty and unfamiliarity of Europe. "Winters, it was the intense misery which assuredly God had sent to the warring world... till all mankind was either frozen or just scorched to death." (245) A premonition to the motif of time, space and trauma. "Chronotope thus serves as a useful concept for understanding the interaction between the text and its socio-historical context and between the text and its historical referents." (McInerney)

There is an Identity Metamorphosis. There is no disjunction between the Chronotopes link and the character development. The way this novel combines the course of an individual's life with his actual spatial course is its most distinguishing feature. Thus, the metaphor the path of life comes into fruition. Everyday life is presented to us as the underside of real life. The themes of metamorphosis of identity are drawn from the treasury of pre-class world folklore. The "folkloric image of man is intimately bound up with transformation and identity" (Bakhtin 111)

The moments of crisis show how an individual becomes other than what he was. There isn't real evolution in the traditional sense; instead, we experience crisis and rebirth. A notion known as the literary Chronotope (which translates to "time-space") demonstrates how such temporal and geographical presumptions play significant roles in establishing the nature of fictional genres, notably their themes and

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structures. "Metamorphosis or transformation is a mythological sheath for the idea of development -- but one that unfolds not so much in a straight line as spasmodically, a line with 'knots' in it, one that therefore constitutes a distinctive type of temporal sequence" (Bakhtin 113)

The beginning of the novel- the soldiers proudly shout along when they reach the French coast- "We have reached Marsels! Hip Hip Hurrah!" (1). The same jubilation is observed in the, ironically, climax of the novel- A Passage to India. In a satirical manner, both the novels call out the underlying desire of the subaltern characters and their internal change of emotional and intellectual arc. "India shall be a nation! No foreigners of any sort! Hindu and Moslem and Sikh and all shall be one! Hurrah! Hurrah for India! Hurrah! Hurrah!" (20) The world doesn't change; only the individual goes through a transformation; the world itself stays the same. It is an active sequence, determining the very metamorphosis itself, that is, the shifting appearance of the hero.

Hence subaltern geopolitics is not an attempt to delineate and define a new approach from critical geopolitics per se, but instead is an attempt to privilege and focus on one aspect of the that needs greater attention. (Richard)

### **CHAPTER THREE**

## **AZIZ, LALU AND THE RISE OF THE ANTI-IMPERIAL SUBALTERN HERO**

In essence, the Third Space is the rift between seamless and stable locations. It takes place in-between. The lives of the people in the novels have been altered by this in-between reality in a way that either illustrates achievement in reaching the beyond, or represents the negotiation processes that take place in Bhabha's Third Space. The third space is not merely something that exists between two different cultures. In this Third Space gives rise to a new identity- an amalgamation of unique sensibilities- an Anti-Imperial Subaltern Hero.

#### IDENTITY FORMATION AND SUBALTERN HERO

In *A PASSAGE TO INDIA*, Aziz is a quintessential subaltern character. He is not only an Indian in the dynamic but also a Muslim. We see that in the beginning of the novel, Aziz chooses to become friends with fielding and open up the relationship for the betterment. “It is important to correct misrepresented histories in order to secure the identity and culture of a nation” (Bijral) But as the novel advances, the character dynamics change drastically as everyone’s job comes into the picture- the British have responsibility of settling down in this colony, while the Indians have to subjugate their own necessities for the sake of the British.

Aziz watched him go with amusement. When his spirits were up, he felt that the English are a comic institution, and he enjoyed being misunderstood by them. But it was an amusement of the emotions and nerves, which an accident or the passage of time might

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destroy; it was apart from the fundamental gaiety that he reached when he was with those whom he trusted. “Finding a voice and political conscience for the working-class soldier as he encounters Europe and war and desolation... such encounters are not just vignettes of the past but actively continue to haunt the present” (Das)

“India likes gods.” “And Englishmen like posing as gods.” (91) Mrs. Moore even argues with Ronny when he says that his only job over here is to make sure that the British complete their trade. The heated discussion further leads to the understanding that there are two very distinctive viewpoints that Ronny and Mrs. Moore hold. The following dialogue accounts to show us that since India is a country that reaps in religious sentiments and the British like being powerful associating them like Gods as Ronny says.

“What do you and Adela want me to do? ... Lose such power as I have for doing good in this country because my behavior isn't pleasant? ... We're not pleasant in India, and we don't intend to be pleasant.” (91-92). Ronny's aggressive behavior tells us that the British have always wanted to create havoc within the country and do so by creating religious war between the Hindus and Muslims. Which is why our protagonist being a Muslim is an important aspect- women, children and other religions are a minority in India. Aziz is a Subaltern in this narrative. Forster does a smart decision by casting a Muslim character as we can not only see the rise of an Indian when the need be but he also inculcates the value of subaltern within him. Aziz goes through an identity upheaval when his integrity as

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an honorable man and as an Indian is questioned. “Attempts by outsiders to transform the risings into broader struggles for national liberation were impeded by the insiders' strong sense of territoriality and community identity.” (Currie)

“His impulse to escape from the English was sound... A rift had opened between them after the trial when Cyril had not joined in his procession”. (138) Aziz feels extremely humiliated after the legal trial. Even Fielding indirectly proclaims that he does not trust him- his only good friend he had befriended in India. The detest from the unfair treatment by the British, the court and especially Fielding brings out a new emotion within Aziz. He becomes aware of his subalternity. Which becomes extremely susceptible now to the unfair doings by the Imperial power.

“Suspicion in the Oriental is a sort of malignant tumor, a mental malady, that makes him self- conscious and unfriendly suddenly; he trusts and mistrusts at the same time in a way the Westerner cannot comprehend. It is his demon, as the Westerner's is hypocrisy. Aziz was seized by it.” (131) The emotional and humane part within Aziz which believes Fielding to be his friend wants to figure out a way to resolve the situation. But he has to take the brunt of it. The Subaltern sensibility takes a place within his conscious persona. After the trial we are made aware that Adela may have been hallucinating. One is never not sure. Which is why when Aziz bares his friendship before Fielding, he proudly accepts his subalternity. Like it is a badge.

The Subaltern, according to Guha becomes a “conscious subject of his [sic] own history”. (Guha) The underlying tone isn't the one where India is a colony which needs the Imperial power to bring it some order or that Indians and British could come to the same page and be friends but rather that there needn't be any reason for an

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honorary relationship unless the English leave. “What is friendship without confidences? He himself had told things sometimes regarded as shocking, and the Englishman had listened, tolerant, but surrendering nothing in return.” (128)

“They trusted each other, although they were going to part, perhaps because they were going to part.”

(151). Fielding accepts that he has lost a dear friend. There is a sense of guilt but also that of ego. The acceptance comes along as Aziz does not mediate the situation like he usually would. Fielding’s awareness that Aziz would rather choose his principles and stick to his subalternity to fight back, than choose their friendship. Aziz has an epiphany after the trial that in a survival situation- his Subalternity shall come through and friendship would not be there to save him. Aziz wears his subalternity with fierce passion and questions his close friend who is a Brit. “In fact, as Guha shows, the subaltern is an integrative knowledge... the whole experience...” (Pandey)

Forster writes the rise of the Subaltern Hero- Aziz’s character arc tells us that Forster had a keen eye to what was happening in the country. The birth of Aziz as a Subaltern hero seems very heroic almost that of an anti-hero for whom the readers root for. The particular situation- the incident in Marabar caves and the legal trial renders a very specific hero, an Anti-Imperial Subaltern which caters to the time and space- Imperial rule in India. But, E.M. Forster finishes the narrative by leaving a sense of hope for an amiable friendship in the distant future between the two characters. “If it’s fifty-five hundred years we shall get rid of you, yes, we shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea, and then”—he rode against him furiously— “and then,” he concluded, half kissing him, “you and I shall be friends.” (152)

In *ACROSS THE BLACK WATERS*- The Subaltern movement has made an effort to reclaim a history from below that reveals the acts of the hitherto unheard masses. The recovery of lost experiences and silent voices was the subaltern quest. The phrase comes from an examination

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of Italian history by Gramsci in Prison Notebooks- 1971. (12) Gramsci's delineation of ruling class hegemony clarifies his deft and convincing analysis of the lower classes. Subaltern groups exist inside this hegemonic system and are both a part of and susceptible to it.

The creation of an anticolonial identity was emphasized in the pursuit of liberation. *Across the Black Waters*, blurs the lines between a travelogue, war story, and a coming-of-age novel. These in-between spaces relate to hybridity as they hold a mezzaterra to engage in various discourses; for the 'interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy' (H. Bhabha)

Anand's novel offers the most potent proclamation of the sepoy's inner world because it is sounique and is the only book in English about the Indian combat experience. The novel can be read as one of the most acute conceptions of sepoy sensibility. The book also explores the intersecting histories of race, class, war, social relations, and empire. "These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—that initiate new signs of identity". (H.Bhabha)

The Indian sepoy was a center to the intensities of war and trauma. He was reduced to the very inhumane position under a very stimulating environment. From the trenches of World War one to the detention in the POW camps in Germany- the soldiers had experienced what had it been- to be a subaltern. The hierarchy was very much visible within the groups and different nations- The English soldiers were amongst the higher ranks. The Brown- Indian soldiers were deemed to be weak and the African soldiers were subjugated to racist treatment. "And yet here he was thousands of miles away from home, ... he asked himself what happen next. As on More pain? Sorrow! Death? was in his kismet, what was his destiny? Return home safe? "(220) The Indian soldiers after realising the brevity of war had wanted to go back home. The gradual character arc of the soldier goes from being a brave young soldier who wants to fight for the Sarkar to very much being aware of their place within the narrative that was fed to them. Most of them felt like pawns

and had a strong realisation of their subalternity. In the essay, S. Khan question the 'Subalterns existence and its meaning'. (Khan)

"What happened? Why did he do it?... And Uncle Kirpu, so sensible, so wise -committing suicide!", The words flowed out of Lalu, like half-screams waiting for an explosion of anger and indignation. (194). The power and nuance of Anand's art lie in the knowledge that such moments are never completely determined by histories of race and empire; our multiple identities at any given point intervene. Lalu becomes for us a center and a micro-history of what many sepoy's would have thought, felt, and behaved. When he explores the sepoy's consciousness' ambivalent structure. 'Where are our guns', Lalu asks with desperation, to which Uncle Kirpu hisses back, with 'red hot anger', 'Where are our guns? Where are the guns? We haven't got any guns' (147). As soon as the idea of Indians being used as cannon fodder is brought up, Kirpu dismisses it. Anand builds a strong world where the thin veils of fiction seem to merge into reality.

Anand combines his anti-colonialism with his socialism by portraying both working-class Tommie's and sepoy's as victims of the war and the empire. In *Across the Black Waters* - The voices of the soldiers echo through the narrative and form a strong voice as the plot unfolds. The satire within the narrative is the diligent unfolding of the unconscious uprising of every Subaltern. It brews for a long time before it overflows, tainting the clean soils showcased by the British. "Oh, I won't fight! I will not fight for this dirty Sarkar" (200). The contribution of Indian soldiers was not duly celebrated by the nationalist historiography. Subalterns' often- overlooked contribution to history has been underlined by Edward Said. (Said) According to him, a substantial portion of Indian history was created by the lower classes, although it has been written from a colonialist and aristocratic point of view (9) Distinguished out from the white European soldier by their otherness, the Subaltern soldiers moved through a liminal space. The Mezzaterra they roam around in creates a space where identities merge and new ones are created. The Indian Subaltern soldiers lack influence in

social relations due to their personal inferiority, imperial rules, and the caste system in India that the British empire maintained. In Lalu's opinion, the war acts as a leveler in the cross-cultural encounter between colonial and non-colonial troops, making it simpler to breach barriers set up by the British Empire.

Dhayan Singh says: "But now after having some of fruits of Vilayat ... it isn't the paradise he had hoped for." (246-247). Lalu's joyous response to finally receiving fair treatment makes it obvious that he does not consent to being treated as racially inferior. He even goes so far as to compare Tommies and Sepoys on an equal footing. He states that he feels different from them, but not because of their relationship as white troops and non-white troops; rather, he feels different from them because of their shared experience of living in the trenches throughout the war (152). "Indian history has been written from a colonialist and elitist point of view, whereas a large part of Indian history had been made by the subaltern classes." (Guha and Spivak)

Lalu becomes the Subaltern Hero as he quietly realizes that he is a second-class citizen and his effort in the war should equally be appreciated. Anand brings forth before us a new version of Indian characters which were hardly talked about during the pre-Independent India.

### **Conclusion**

The essay navigates a comparative analysis of the novels, *Across the Black Waters* by Mulk Raj Anand and *A Passage to India* by E.M. Forster. It studies the discourse of Subaltern sensibilities and its emergence in 20<sup>th</sup> century Literature. The representation by Anand and Forster of India has redirected and resealed the ever-evolving nature of the Indian identity during the Imperial era, especially that of the Subaltern Identity. The core of Identity formation goes through Bakhtin's Chronotopes. We look at the examples of Space and Time, which as per Bakhtin's claims tell us that the Space-Time conundrum helps us to comprehend the narrative better and further simplify the complex puzzle of the emergence of new identities in

literary spaces and time eras. And further with tumultuous modification-through Bhabha's understanding of Hybridity, Mimicry and Third Space we interrogate the centre of the protagonist's identity- Lalu and Aziz- which keeps resituating. They hold a fractured sense of selfhoods. The theory interrogates their colonial identity formation. The postcolonial discourse anticipates the influence of the changing Subaltern identity in bringing a transformation in the National Subaltern Historiography. Both,

E.M. Forster and Mulk Raj Anand, had the affinity towards the subaltern narrative which emerged during the Imperial period in India. Their untethered diligence to write about, and celebrate Subaltern sensibility and their contribution, colors the very existence of their literary works.

#### Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> In *Conversations in Bloomsbury*, Anand provides a fictionalized portrait of his interactions with key literary figures, including Forster. After their initial introduction described in Chapter 8, Anand addresses Forster as "Mr. Forster." Forster gently corrects him, asserting that his friends call him "Morgan" (69).

Although Anand initially hesitates in calling Forster by his first name, he is able to cross the barriers of cultural hierarchy and refer to Forster as "Morgan" by the end of the chapter.

<sup>ii</sup> These publications are part of wider collaborations between British left-wing publishing and Indian intellectuals, such as C. P. Dutt's editing of writing by Marx and Engels for Lawrence and Wishart. See also Nicholas Owen, *The British Left and India* (Oxford, 2007).

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