Barclays stage partners with THE ARTS COUNCIL OF ENGLAND



shared experience

# E.M.FORSTER'S TOULOUS

#### **BY MARTIN SHERMAN**

## EDUCATION PACK

WRITTEN BY GILLIAN KING



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## THE PACK

This pack is intended as an introduction and follow up to seeing a performance of *A Passage To India*. I've included background material, such as the history of the time and the political policies and also information specifically on our production; which includes interviews with the creative team.

Although this cannot be an exhaustive account of the whole production, I hope that it introduces some of the ideas and approaches central to Shared Experience and this production. Scattered through the pack are questions and exercises that I hope will be useful to provoke discussion and practical work of your own.

Gillian King

At the heart of our work is the POWER and EXCITEMENT of the performer's physical presence and the unique collaboration between actor and audience - a SHARED EXPERIENCE. We are committed to creating a theatre that goes beyond our everyday lives, giving form to the hidden world of emotion and imagination. We see the rehearsal process as a genuinely open forum for asking questions and taking risks that redefine the possibilities of performance.

'THEATRE DOESN'T COME MUCH MORE EXCITING THAN THIS'



L TO R: ANTONY BUNSEE, AARON NEIL, PRIYANGA ELAN, DANIEL HOPE, NICHOLAS KHAN, GEOFFREY BEEVERS



## SHARED EXPERIENCE EXPRESSIONISM

In our everyday lives we hide much of what we think and feel, for fear we would be considered foolish or even mad. I believe we have a longing to see expressed in the theatre that which we conceal in life; to share our 'madness' and understand that we are not alone.

Central to Shared Experience's approach is the desire to go beyond naturalism and to see into the character's private worlds. There will be moments on stage when we literally enact whatever a character is secretly feeling or imagining. In more realistic scenes the social façade is a thin layer beneath which bubbles a river of suppressed emotion. During rehearsals we encourage actors to allow this bubbling emotional energy to explode and take over. In a scene where someone is secretly feeling very angry, when we allow the inner to erupt onto the surface they may viciously attack the other person; if the other character is feeling afraid they might crawl under the table. Having allowed the inner to erupt, the actor must return to the scene and struggle to conceal it. Although we may see two people drinking tea, we sense that underneath the social ritual it is as if murder is taking place.

This emphasis on subjective experience runs through all areas of the production. For example, the setting of the play will be more expressive of what a place **feels** like than what it realistically **looks** like. In *Jane Eyre* everything on stage was grey or black to express the loneliness of Jane's inner world.



POLLY TEALE

In *War and Peace* the set was a hall of mirrors to suggest the narcissism of the aristocracy in Tolstoy's Russia. In *The House of Bernarda Alba* the house feels like a prison. We decided to make the door colossally large and encrusted it with locks and bolts. It is this emphasis on the 'inner' or the subjective experience which characterises expressionism and it is at the heart of Shared Experience's approach.

Polly Teale



## E.M.FORSTER

Forster was born in 1879 and educated at Tonbridge School and then at King's College, Cambridge, where he was later, made an honorary fellow. Through contacts made at Cambridge he came to be associated with the Bloomsbury Group.

He travelled in Europe, lived in Italy and Egypt and spent some years in India where he was for a time secretary to a Rajah after World War One.

In his novels, Forster's dominant theme is the habitual conformity of people to unexamined social standards and conventions, and the ways in which this conformity blinds individuals to recognition of what is true in what is unexpected, to the proper uses of intelligence and to their own resources of spontaneous life.

Forster also shows how English traditions have on the one hand nourished complacency, hypocrisy and insular philistinism and how on the other hand, humility, honesty, and sceptical curiosity. In *A Passage to India*, British culture is contrasted with Indian culture which shows virtues that the British way of life is without.

#### "At the heart of the Forsterian humanistic frame there is a deep yearning for 'connection', communication of some sort or the other."

#### M. SIVARAMAKRISHNA

(Marabar Caves Revisited - Focus on Forsters' A Passage To India Indian Essays in Criticism Ed. by V A Shahane)



E.M. FORSTER

#### **QUESTION?**

Consider the society or community in which you live, does it affect your personal view of the world and your own personal development?



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### WHY A PASSAGE TO INDIA? BY NANCY MECKLER - THE DIRECTOR

I read *A Passage To India* many years ago as a student and it is a book that has always stayed with me. When Shared Experience toured to India in 1994 gave me the opportunity to experience that vast extraordinary country at first hand, I found myself compelled to re-visit the book and began to imagine expressing it onstage.

The big question: How does one distil this epic story into a dramatic theatrical journey? Very early on Martin Sherman, the adaptor, and I had to decide which characters would be our main protagonists. When Martin discovered deep in the final chapters Godbole's story of the man who gets his head chopped off for "freeing prisoners", it became a valuable key to our storytelling. The unfortunate man is commemorated by a shrine to his head and a shrine to his body, at some distance from each other. Taking this lead, our version would in part be about two separate and different cultures and about their passionate attempts to connect with each other. Also one could see the image of the separated head and body as referring to the division between heart and mind.

From this we saw we needed two protagonists, one from each culture and soon it became evident that Adela Quested and Dr. Aziz would fill that function. Each begins the story confident that they can connect with any human being in a deep and personal way whatever the external circumstances. The fact that one belongs to a ruling state, the other to a subjugated one is something they choose to ignore. By the end of the story both have learnt how difficult it is to have true relationships under circumstances of inequality. As Aziz explains to Fielding in the last scene, they cannot be friends until India is free.







### ADAPTING THE NOVEL AN INTERVIEW WITH MARTIN SHERMAN

**Q**: Was this novel important to you before you considered adapting it?

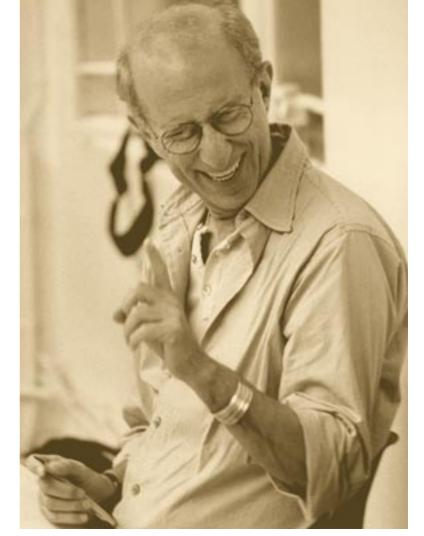
A: No.

#### Q: Oh.

A: Well - I read it many years ago and thought it was a wonderful book but it wasn't life-changing. Then, when Nancy Meckler asked me to consider adapting it, I reread it and was overwhelmed by its complexity, its complication, its subconscious passion, by the sheer intensity and insight and confusion of Forster's mind, a confusion that spoke to me far more than certainty. When I was younger it seemed beautiful; older it became dangerous and profound. Now I cannot imagine not rereading it again and again, and not being surprised each time.

#### **Q**: The book was written over a long time, wasn't it?

A: He started writing it, I think, in 1913, but dropped it shortly afterward to write Maurice. War intervened and he spent several years in Egypt and then India and didn't return to the novel until about eight years later. He finished it in 1924. As a result it's difficult to pin down exactly when the story happens - it's meant to be post World War One, but often has the feeling of earlier.



MARTIN SHERMAN

Profound political changes were

occurring in India in the twenties, which are not reflected in the book. If you attempt to find historical accuracy, you're in trouble. Forster wasn't very keen on facts. So the book cannot be approached on an entirely literal level. One of Forster's great virtues is his elusiveness. Sometimes there seems to be two Passage to Indias - the conscious one and the subconscious one. I think a good writer arrives at a state where he or she can unlock his or her unconscious and then have the craft to channel it into art. I can't think of anyone who was more the master of that than Forster. His characters exist on so many levels. We were constantly asking, in rehearsal, "Do you think he was aware that he was writing *that!?*"



## ADAPTING THE NOVEL AN INTERVIEW WITH MARTIN SHERMAN CONTINUED...

#### Q: Give me an example.

A: The homoeroticism that exists between Fielding and Aziz. The scene where they meet, for instance, is a classic courtship scene, albeit a rather adolescent one, and yet is entirely unconscious. Unconscious in terms of the characters, and quite possibly unconscious in terms of the author. This informs their relationship throughout the book, and yet at the same time it doesn't, because they are not aware of it. But it makes the relationship very textured. On the other hand, I suspect Forster was very aware of the subtextual impulses driving Adela, although, again, the character is not. Adela's sexuality is always fighting to break through into her conscious mind, but her resistance is fierce.

These kind of complexities constantly occur; they're difficult to dramatise and difficult to act. It isn't easy to act what your character doesn't know. And of course Forster could be so wonderfully devious. Whatever you can say about his characters, you can also say the opposite.

## **Q**: In approaching this adaptation, did you pre-plan certain elements; did you know what themes you wanted to emphasise?

A: I couldn't start until I found a way into it. Nancy and I discussed a number of approaches, and then rejected them as we went along. Finally, there were two factors that enabled me to dramatise it. The first was something I came upon in, I think my fourth reading of the book; a tiny paragraph in the last section that had previously sped by, unnoticed. This told of an ancient legend in Mau of the boy who freed the prisoners and had his head cut off by the guards. The boy became a saint and two temples were erected to him; one of the head and one of the book, certainly in relation to the behaviour of its characters. That opened it up for me. I could begin with that.

And the second factor was the presence of Godbole as a kind of guide throughout the play, which meant the presence of Mau and Hinduism throughout. The last section of the book has been downplayed in previous dramatisations and sometimes in discussions of the novel, and yet I think it is the core of the piece, it is where Forster achieves some kind of spiritual grace and comes fully to the understanding that nothing is understandable.

#### Q: Why do you think Forster chose the title?

A: He uses the word passage in the book in exactly the section I mentioned, in describing the Hindu ceremony in which a god is born and then discarded, albeit temporarily - "a passage not easy, not now, not here, not to be apprehended except when its is unattainable". In other words, a passage of complication and paradox, which all of the characters must go through.

#### Q: Do you think the book is political?

A: Of course. Certainly it had an effect on politics: it was instrumental in opening British eyes to their own behaviour in India. The racism - worse, the patronising racism - of the British is so vile in the book, so unbearable that it is, at times, like most truly painful things, comic. But Forster doesn't shy away from showing the Indians' prejudice towards each other. The book does deal rather profoundly with the clash of two cultures; one an occupying one, the other subjugated. It seems to me that at the end of the novel the person who has suffered the most damage is Fielding. He has, after all, lost his one true friend and he hasn't come to terms with the deepest recesses of his own psyche, and it's just possible that he represents Britain's tragedy on some level.

Perhaps the most profound loss of this imperialist adventure was not the ultimate loss of India, but of something in the soul.



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## THE POLITICS WITHIN A PASSAGE TO INDIA

E.M. Forster wrote *A Passage to India* in 1924, the last completed novel that he published during his lifetime. The novel differs from Forster's other major works in its overt political content, as opposed to the lighter tone and more subdued political subtext contained in works such as *Howards End* and *A Room With a View.* The text deals with the political occupation of India by the British, a colonial domination that ended after the publication of Forster's novel and still during his lifetime.

The colonial occupation of India is significant in terms of the background of the novel. Britain occupied an important place in political affairs in India since 1760, but did not secure control over India for nearly a century. In August of 1858, during a period of violent revolt against Britain by the Indians, the British Parliament passed the Government of India Act, transferring political power from the East India Company to the crown. This established the bureaucratic colonial system in India headed by a Council of India consisting initially of fifteen Britons. Although Parliament and Queen Victoria maintained support for local princes, Victoria added the title Empress of India to her regality. The typical attitude of Britons in India was that they were undertaking the "white man's burden," as put by Rudyard Kipling. This was a system of aloof, condescending sovereignty in which the English bureaucracy did not associate with the persons they ruled, this finds its expression in characters such as Ronny Heaslop and Mr. McBryde in A Passage to India.



Isabel Savory in India, c.1912-14 (*Women of The Raj* by Margaret Macmillan)





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## APA SSAGE TOINDIA

## THE POLITICS WITHIN A PASSAGE TO INDIA CONTINUED...

Indian nationalism began to forment around 1885 with the first meeting of the Indian National Congress. Reforms in India's political system occurred with the victory of the Liberal Party in 1906, culminating in the Indian Councils Act of 1909, but nationalism continued to rise.

India took part in the First World War, assuming that this help would lead to political concessions from the British. But even with the promise after the war that Indians would play an increased role in their own government, relations between the English and Indians did not improve. After the war tension continued; in 1919 ten thousand unarmed Indians were massacred at Amritsar's Jallianwala Bagh during a protest. It is around this time that Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi became a pre-eminent force in Indian politics,

and it is also around this time that Forster would write *A Passage to India.* More than twenty years later, after a long struggle, British Parliament passed the Indian Independence Act in 1947, ordering the separation of India and Pakistan and granting both nations their sovereignty.

"Adela wants to see the 'real' India. But this seeming innocuous desire becomes a subtle aesthetic device to articulate the baffling complexity of India for India defies description. There is the version presented by Aziz: urbane, ostensibly sophisticated, yet essentially nostalgic for the past, for the glorious Mughal India. There is Ronny's Anglo-India: the poverty-stricken, superstitious, servile India which needs the British bureaucrat urgently if any semblance of order is to be maintained. Above all. there's the 'mystical' India of Godbole...for whom good and evil are necessary attributes of a God who is beyond attributes."

M. SIVARAMAKRISHNA

### QUESTION?

If you had to choose ten words to describe India, what would they be?

Is it the responsibility of the director to reflect the audiences perceptions of a culture or challenge them?

Do you feel Nancy Meckler has done either in Shared Experiences' production of A Passage To India?





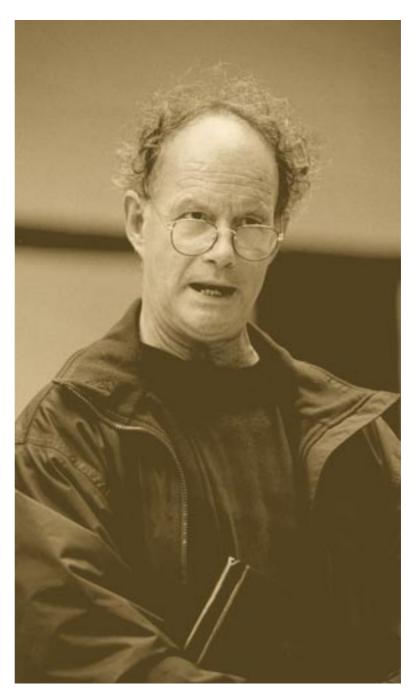
## THE BRITISH RAJ

At the coronation of Queen Victoria in 1840, Great Britain was at the threshold of emerging as the dominant global power, encompassing the largest empire the world has known. The jewel in the crown of Britain's Empire was the mighty south Asian realm known as India. Indeed, British Rule in Indiawas known as the British Raj.

Certainly, the British made positive contributions to Indian life, but colonialism also brought serious negative consequences. When the British Crown took over direct control from the East Indies Company in 1857, it inherited

over 750,000 square miles of Indian territory. Slowly, the British extended their control throughout the region. Moreover, the Crown found itself obligated to support the long list of treaties the East Indies Company had made with numerous Indian Princes and regional rulers. The British government honoured these agreements and India was carved into more than 600 sovereign territories in the sub-continent. These native states had British advisors; the large British provinces such as Punjab, Bengal and Assam also had British Governors who reported to the imperial viceroy of India, who in turn reported to Parliament and the monarch in London.

The framework of government concentrated power over India in the hands of distant British government. The liberal mindset of London at the time, believed strongly in honesty and duty and the accepted belief at the time was that the British would rule over India in a just and honourable way. This much proclaimed self image was in practise very far from the truth, as British rule became increasingly more oppressive throughout the history of the Raj. A collision between rulers and the ruled became inevitable.





## THE BRITISH RAJ CONTINUED ...

The Empire of India Exhibition, which opened at Earls Court in 1895, captivated Londoners. It was a colourful imperial extravaganza, which suited the mood of the

times and both educated and entertained. The overall theme was clear: modern India was the product of British patience and genius.

There was indeed something miraculous about the way in which less than a hundred thousand soldiers and

#### "C IS FOR COLONIES RIGHTLY WE BOAST, THAT OF ALL THE GREAT NATIONS GREAT BRITAIN HAS THE MOST"

administrators held in thrall two hundred and fifty million Indians. India also possessed elements of glamour and mystery that entranced the Victorians and everyone sensed that ruling it gave Britain power and prestige. Furthermore, and this was made clear in Earls Court displays, many British believed that everything that was good in India derived from Britain's influence.

After 1815, the old East Indies Company's "live-and-let-live" approach to the governing of India was replaced by one that set great store on remoulding the country along Western lines. India became a sort of laboratory for current British liberal, evangelical and utilitarian theorists who sought, in various ways to regenerate all mankind. Thus, using their dictatorial powers, "humane" British officials would "sweep away the supernatural encumbrances on Indian thought." The poet and historian Thomas Macaulay, who was chairman of a committee

formed in 1833 to consider future educational policy in India, predicted that Hinduism would wither away as Western learning spread across the country. To accelerate this process, he insisted that all teaching be done in English and based on English texts. With remarkable foresight, he claimed that exposure to British ideas and patterns of thinking would, in time, create an Indian elite, which would demand selfgovernment. Some years later, the Governor-General Lord Ellenborough, remarked to a babu (an English speaking Indian clerk), "You know, if these gentlemen succeed in educating the natives of India, we should not remain in the country three months." "Not three weeks," was the babus' reply.

Roads, railways and telegraph wires symbolized the irreversible march of progress, probably more than the schools, colleges and teaching hospitals, which were springing up in provincial capitals. This remaking of the

#### DEBATE

Form two teams to debate: **'India benefited from the British Raj'** Take an immediate vote prior to the debate and one after to see what changes.

continent epitomized the manner in which British administrators saw their intelligence and technology being dispersed to general Indian society, testaments to Great Britain's patriarchal rule over the country.



## THE BRITISH RAJ CONTINUED ...

That the British wished to maintain control of India against almost any odds was based on one simple calculation. Britain could simply not afford to lose her greatest dependency. The extent of the total British investment in India, and the capacity of the Indian market to take up to 20 percent of British exports by the 1880(s, meant that

Britain would not willingly abandon her rule in the subcontinent. By 1900, India was paying Britain £10 million per year in interest as well as bearing the cost of salaries and pensions for administration. India was an enormously profitable, self-financing

**4T** IS THAT BELIEF IN ГHF AND **PLUCK** FIGHTING SUPERIOR RAG MA STILL BLE IT." HOL US

Garnet Wolseley, Junior Officer, British Army

enterprise, approximating very closely to the Victorian capitalist and imperial ideal.

The Raj was a source of inestimable pride to so many Britons for another reason. It was, in their eyes, an almost philanthropic venture. Good and fair government, an expanding economy and a whole range of improvements from famine relief to irrigation schemes, from the medical assault on cholera to the establishment of a Europeanized education system, all bore witness to the high-minded agenda of British rule. Few in Britain imagined that the handing of power over to the Indian populace would be anything but catastrophic, bringing corruption, misadministration and chaos in its wake.

Zachary Nunn

"The Almighty has placed your hand on the greatest of His ploughs, in whose furrows the nations of the future are germinating and taking shape, to drive the blade a little forward in your time, and to feel that somewhere among these millions you have left a little justice or happiness or prosperity, a sense of manliness or moral dignity, a spring of patriotism, a dawn of intellectual enlightenment or a stirring of duty where it did not exist before - that is enough, that is the Englishman's justification of India"

Lord Curzon, Viceroy for India 1899-1905



## **A PUKKA VOICE WORK OUT!**

The cast had a few sessions with Patsy Rodenburg, who is one of the top voice coaches in the world and has published the well known book 'A Right To Speak'.

Patsy believes the stereotype that the British are emotionally repressed was partly due to the Raj. It contributed to the idea that one should not show ones' feelings in front of the natives, or indeed at all. Prior to this period, we (the British) were viewed very differently; you only have to think of Dickens and Shakespeare. Indeed the Spanish Ambassador to Queen Elizabeth described us as a 'most emotional people!'



NICHOLAS KHAN

Working the muscles in your face, all in isolation:

- Description Move just your forehead
- Eyes and eye lids
- Cheeks
- Lips
- Chin
- U Wobble the whole face
- **Remembering to keep breathing!**
- □ Squeeze the face onto an imaginary pin (all screwed up)
- Now splat it onto a large platter (everything very wide)
- Smile and yawn this opens the throat

### Actors used to be trained to speak on the edge of a yawn - try it and see how it sounds!

The upper classes use a lot of range;

- Find a point to look at above your eye line and on an 'aah' sound slide up and down the scale five times.
- **Now say a line:** 
  - `Ah, there you are wrong. They're priceless. They're all quite eccentric you know' (Miss Derek)
  - The line should sound 'perkier' and more poetic.
- Repeat the 'aah' exercise but with an 'ooh' sound.

#### The upper class accent has a lot of energy, words or the end of words aren't swallowed. Try words like:

#### No, away day, there and how now brown cow.

Speak every syllable and try not to de-voice at the end of words. Try mouthing the text first with no sound and then with text. Try these examples:

(Miss Derek) 'I've stolen the Maharajah's car. I'm companion to a maharani, Miss Quested, in one of the native states. She's an absolute dear, but he'll be very put out.'

(*Mrs Turton*) '*Natives don't respect one any the more after meeting one, you know. I was a nurse before my marriage and came across them a great deal, so I know. One has to stay firmly aloof'* 

(*Ronny*) 'It's difficult. People are odd out here. They notice everything until they're perfectly sure that you're their sort'





## **RELIGIONS IN INDIA**

### India known as the land of spirituality and philosophy, was the birthplace of some religions, which still exist in the world today.

The most dominant religion in India today is Hinduism. About 80% of Indians are Hindus. Hinduism is a colourful religion with a vast gallery of Gods and Goddesses. Hinduism is one of the ancient religions in the world. It is supposed to have developed about 5000 years ago. Later on in ancient period other religions developed in India.

Around 500 BC two other religions developed in India, namely, Buddhism and Jainism. Today only about 0.5% of Indians are Jains and about 0.7% are Buddhist. In ancient times Jainism and specially Buddhism were very popular in India. Indians who accepted Buddhist philosophy spread it not only within the Indian sub-continent but also to kingdoms east and south of India.

These three ancient religions, Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, are seen as the moulders of the India philosophy. One comparatively new religion in India is Sikhism and it was established in the 15th century. About 2% of Indians are Sikhs.

Along with the religions that developed in India, there are followers of non-Indian religions. The largest non-Indian religion is Islam. They are about 12% of India's population. Christians are more then 2% of India's population. There are also a few thousand Jews in India. Judaism and Christianity might have arrived in India before it arrived in Europe.

"What race is there should claim superiority to peoples that gave the world a Buddha, an Asoka and an Akbar, religions and philosophies that embrace every religion that has ever existed, an epic literature perhaps unrivalled, and some of the greatest masterpieces in the realm of human art?"

Machonachie (District Officer)







## ISLAM IN INDIA

The Muslims are about 12% of India's population. But their influence on the Indian society is much stronger. The main reason for this is that there were many Muslims rulers in different parts of India. Most of the Muslim rulers of India were invaders from the west.

Islam was established in Saudi Arabia. But most of the people who spread the teachings of Islam in India, arrived from non-Arab countries. The first of these were individuals who saw spreading Islam as a holy precept. They began coming to India from the 11th century. They arrived in India from Bukhara, Turkey, Iran, Yemen and Afghanistan. But the accepted assumption in India is that most of India's Muslims were converted to Islam through the sword. Meaning the Indians were given an option between death or adopting Islam.

In general the Muslims of India like the Muslim world are divided into two main sects, Sunni and Shia. And just like in the whole Muslim world there is tension between these two sects. Each sect has many different schools.

In the beginning of the 20th century, some reformist Muslim organisations evolved in India who wanted to adjust Islamic philosophy to the modern world. These organizations wanted to cancel polygamy and were in favour of education for women.

The majority of the Indian characters in *A Passage to India* are Moslem.



PENNY LAYDEN



## AN INTERVIEW WITH PAUL BAZELY (DR AZIZ) AND IAN GELDER (FIELDING)

#### Do you do much research?

**Ian** - It depends on each job, for this play, no. I obviously read the book and it has helped that I spent a lot of time working and living in India, but if I hadn't had that experience I would have done some more research.

**Paul** - Not specifically -if something interests me then I would read or research further, likewise my character is really interested in the Mughal Emperors, so I read about them, almost as much for my entertainment as for 'character research'.

### Dr Aziz' and Fieldings' alleged homosexual relationship often crops up in discussions on the novel -how do you feel about this?

**Ian** - The writer was gay with gay sensibilities so therefore there may be something of that in the novel. Indeed there are also similarities between Fielding and Dr Aziz' relationship and Forsters' and Mahsouds' (the unrequited love of Forster's life).

In rehearsal we have played about with our scenes together, exploring the scene on a surface level and then playing the scene again as if there was a strong sexual connection between them -we're still discovering what works best! I don't think Fielding realises and certainly wouldn't be able to put it into words that he is falling in love with Aziz. He wouldn't have the vocabulary or a context to explain being in love with someone of the same sex. It's hard for an actor to play a character that has sexual feelings for someone but doesn't realise it.

**Paul** - There is a difference between the English Literature approach and the theatrical approach. Just because Forster was gay it doesn't necessarily follow that Fielding and Aziz are. It's like Woody Allen films, he always professes that his films are not about him but of course they are! To great art, you bring your own agenda- the more subtle the piece, the more subjective the experience.

Aziz does not interrogate himself in a modern psychoanalytical way. He is very instinctive, if he wanted to touch



PAUL BAZELY



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## AN INTERVIEW WITH PAUL BAZELY (DR AZIZ) AND IAN GELDER (FIELDING) continued...

someone with love, I don't believe he would try and rationalise the want, or understand why he felt that way. But how much does he feel? I know he needs to feel love and a sense of betrayal towards Fielding, but then he also has to feel that for Mrs Moore and Adela.

In India men hold hands, touch and cuddle much more freely than western men, perhaps the fact that being gay in India is less socially acceptable than it is here allows men to be freer with their physicality towards each other in a non sexual way.

### Are there any lines in the play that particularly resonate with your ideas for the characters?

Ian - 'I am roughly speaking not after anything. I jog on as decently as I can...'

**Paul** - I like the passion, extremity and the instinctive quality of: 'But you've come after all. How very kind of you. This is the happiest moment of my life'

### What are the main differences between working with Shared Experience and other Theatre Companies?

Ian - There is a way of working that is unique to Shared Experience -very expressionistic, physical and at times abstract. Unlike other companies before rehearsal you always warm up physically and vocally before you start working. Nancy as a director also creates a strong company of ensemble playing and she brings a lot of knowledge of different styles and teaching methods into the rehearsal room too.

**Paul** - I agree, she loves actors and is very good at building an ensemble company. She creates theatre that can't be replicated by any other medium. It's not the type of theatre that you could call out dated or obsolete in any way -its theatre that works.

'You must understand that some Europeans of the old school would not allow a lady to accept an Indian gentlemen's proferred hospitality. They would not permit her to drive through an Indian town, or receive an Indian

as visitor, far less dine with him. They would, in short, prefer her to be as wholly absent from every kind of Indian society... Their argument is that until an Indian gentleman will allow them to meet his wife, they will not allow him to meet an English lady"

ANN WILSON, 1900

#### QUESTION

Why does Aziz show Fielding the picture of his wife? Does their relationship change because of this? If so, how and why?



## HINDUISM



Hinduism is a religion that originated in India and is still practised there, as well as in those countries within the Indian cultural sphere. The word Hindu is derived from the Sanskrit word *sindhu* ("river", more specifically, the Indus); the Persians in the 5th century BC called the Hindus by that name, identifying them as the people of the land of the Indus. The Hindus' own definitions of their community are "those who believe in the Vedas" or "those who follow the way (*dharma*) of the four classes (*varnas*) and stages of life (*ashramas*)".

Hinduism is a major world religion, not merely by virtue of its many followers (estimated at more than 700 million) but also because of its profound influence on many other religions during its long, unbroken history, beginning about 1500 BC. Hinduism has an extraordinary tendency to absorb foreign elements. Moreover, the geographic and cultural, rather than ideological, basis of the religion has given Hinduism the character of a social and doctrinal system that extends to every aspect of human life.

#### **Fundamental Principles**

Hinduism is basically defined with regard to what people do rather than what they think. Many Hindus worship Shiva, Vishnu, or the Goddess (Devi), but they also worship hundreds of additional minor deities peculiar to a particular village or even to a particular family. Traditions that have developed with the religion, such as vegetarianism (especially the avoidance of beef) and marriage within caste have collapsed rapidly in recent times. Although Hindus believe and do many apparently contradictory things-contradictory not merely from one Hindu to the next, but also within the daily religious life of a single Hindu - each individual aspires to create an orderly pattern that gives form and meaning to his or her own life.

Godbole is the only featured Hindu in our production.



## AN INTERVIEW WITH AARON NEIL (godbole)

#### What are the main differences between working with Shared Experience and other theatre companies?

The main difference that I've noticed is that everyone's ideas are welcomed in the rehearsal room -you feel that every opinion is valid even if you're not in the scene! It creates a safe place to rehearse in. Also it seems that all the departments are pulling together for the same goal.

#### Do you do much research?

Not particularly. It helps that my parents are Indian, although they are Moslems, whereas Godbole is one of the only Hindus in the play. I also speak Urdu.

I've also had an interest in Eastern spirituality for some time. The eastern mystics and poets such as Rumi talk about the relationship between man and God in the same way we would write love poetry. Rumi's poems are all about the lover and the beloved - man and God.

Godbole encapsulates this idea in the line 'I love all things equally for I imitate God'. He is on a lifelong quest to become a better human being; to be at one with himself and as such he is the character most at peace in the play.

#### Are there any lines in the play that particularly resonate with your ideas for the characters?

Well the line above and at the end Godbole says:

'I am myself most inadequate. I have said to the God come, come, come. At the same time I have tried to place myself in the position of the God and to love whoever my mind touches upon.'







### AN INTERVIEW WITH AARON NEIL (GODBOLE) continued...

#### Which scene have you found most challenging to rehearse so far?

The scene I play with Fielding; he wants to know if I think Aziz is guilty and he is consumed with his own emotions about Aziz and the events surrounding the arrest. My character Godbole wants to ask Fielding about a school and possible names for the school. You could play this scene a million ways, on the surface it just seems like he's being very rude. We played the scene through a number of times in different ways trying to keep it subtle and flexible. It works best so far when Ian (Fielding) really drives the scene.

#### You sing and create music in the play. How have you found this?

Well Indian classical singing is a new challenge for me. My parents used to have musical nights when I was growing up, so I have heard the style before. It's impossible to sing in a western voice -it has a delicacy that is very eastern. There seems to me to be smaller variations between notes and they slide much more than western songs.





## THE COMPOSER AN INTERVIEW WITH PETER SALEM

#### How do you arrive at creating the sound and music for the play?

For this production there obviously had to be a predominantly Indian flavour to the music. Indian music consists of three elements melody, rhythm and 'drone'. Rhythm is provided by drums - by the tabla in North Indian music or the mrdangam in South Indian music - melody by the voice, sitar, sarangi, flute, violin etc... and the drone, a constant sounding almost always of the 1st and 5th note of the scale, by tanpura or harmonium. I am using on-stage musicians to provide most of the melodic and rhythmic elements but rather than use a traditional drone I am using recorded sound as a kind of static and sometimes not-so-static background. Sometimes this will create a change in harmony (not a feature of Indian classical music) sometimes it might be the sound of wasps .... And sometimes the recorded material will take over, the background, overwhelming the foreground in the darker moments of the play.

#### Were there any specific challenges to overcome?

Yes. I have had to learn A LOT more than I already knew about Indian music and have learnt how much more there is to learn. Some of the music cues will be much closer to traditional Indian music than others but I have always tried - by studying ragas, their characteristics and by having my material checked over by Chandru and Sirish who are the violinist and tabla player respectively - to be as informed as possible by the real thing in whatever I have written.

#### How does the notion of physical expressionism influence your work on sound?

It means that I use sound effects in a non-naturalistic way and frequently combine them with more musical elements so that the line between music and sound is not very obvious. I often combine them to try to create a heightened sense of a character's emotional state (for example) so that the sound is helping to express what's going on in someone's head rather than just creating a naturalistic environment.

#### Do you do any historical research?

Not so much historical as cultural and musicological - though this has a historical dimension in the sense that the music is based on classical North Indian music and not film songs or Bangra.

### What are the main differences between working with Shared Experience and other theatre companies?

The difference between SET and other companies is the physical content, coming away from the text to express something purely physically or counterpointing sections of text with physical work. This is always particularly interesting from the point of view of sound as these are heightened non-naturalisic moments which can use sound very effectively.

#### QUESTION?

When in your opinion was the most effective use of music, sound or song in the production? Why?





### AN EXCERPT OF POETRY of hafez spoken by aziz

Yaari andar kass nemibinam, yaaraan raa cheh shod? Doosti kaiy aakher aamad? Doost-daaraan raa cheh shod?

Aab-e heyvaan tireh-goon shod, khezr-e farrokh-pey kojaast Khoon chekid az shaak-e-gol,abr-e bahaaraan raa cheh shod?

#### Translation

Love has vanished. Where are lovers? What became of them? When did the bonds of friendship tear? Where are friends? What became of them?

The 'Water of Life' is clear no more. Where is the Prophet Khezr? What became of him? Blood has drained from the rose. Where is the wind of spring? What became of it?

#### Meaning

The sonnet was written most probably at the time of the devastating Mongol raids of Timur. It refers to a time of political chaos and social upheaval.

The 'Water of Life', a source of immortality, is a reference to the mythical spring which is eternal and clear and whose whereabouts is only known to the Prophet Khezr - the prophet whose every step turns the earth to green.

The poet laments the lack of order and leadership, the social stalemate and that the field is devoid of honour and worthy men.

In the final line the poet turns to God for answers.



L TO R: GEOFFREY BEEVERS, PENNY LAYDEN, ANTONY BUNSEE



## KARMA

Some people ask why they are born in poverty and suffering, while others are born in fortunate circumstances. Some people believe that it is due to fate, chance, or an invisible power beyond their control. Buddha the God of Budhism was able to explain why people differ in their circumstances and why some are more fortunate in life than others. Buddha taught that one's present condition, whether of happiness or suffering, is the result of the accumulated force of all past actions or karma.

#### **Definition of Karma**

Karma is intentional action, that is, a deed done deliberately through body, speech or mind. Karma means good and bad volition. Every volitional action is called Karma.

## INDIA

### QUESTION?

Do you believe in Karma? Could you argue that the caste system in India is just karma in action and therefore acceptable?

In other words, Karma is the law of moral causation. It is action and reaction. It is a natural law that every action produces a certain effect. So if one performs 'good' actions such as donating money to charitable organisations, one will experience happiness. On the other hand, if one performs 'bad' actions, such as killing a living being, one will experience suffering. This is the law of cause and effect at work. In this way, the effect of one's past karma determines the nature of one's present situation in life.

The Buddha said, "According to the seed that is sown, So is the fruit you reap The door of good of will gather good result The door of evil reaps evil result. If you plant a good seed well, Then you will enjoyed the good fruits."







## AN INTERVIEW WITH **GUY LANKESTER (RONNY) AND PENNY LAYDEN (ADELA)**

#### What are the main differences between working with Shared Experience and other theatre companies?

Guy: The whole approach to rehearsal is different, other companies start almost immediately on text work, whereas with Shared Experience, the first step is the creation of the company. The emphasis is on creating a company that speaks the same language, physically, emotionally and textually -it's a very holistic approach.

Penny: The physical approach for me is the main difference, working in a far more abstract way, especially the work we do with Liz Ranken (Movement Director).

#### Do you have a favourite scene?

Guy: I think I like the first scene that involves Adela, Mrs Moore and Ronny - you have the three characters being introduced to the audience; they all have very opposing wants and yet it's not confrontational, and by the end I think you have a very clear idea of their different trajectories.

Penny: I agree, it is a very complex scene -there's so much to discover, so many layers. On the other hand, the scene after the caves when Adela returns to the bungalow with Mrs Moore and Ronny is I think a very difficult scene. It's a challenge for an actor - how do you play a character who is repressing an emotion that she (Adela) doesn't even know she's repressing?!





## AN INTERVIEW WITH GUY LANKESTER (RONNY) AND PENNY LAYDEN (ADELA) continued...

#### What do your characters both expect from their proposed marriage?

**Guy:** He (Ronny) is hoping for 'a wife'. A wife to fit in with his community, keep him company and support him and his work. It is more important that she fit in with the 'set' than he falls in love with her.

**Penny:** I think that Adela is slightly past the optimum marriageable age - for the time she lives in. She and Ronny spent time together in the Lake District and she feel she knows him 'at play' but she wants to discover how he is 'at work'. She hopes that he is of equal mind and sensibilities to herself. Going to India to marry Ronny is an attempt to achieve greater meaning in her life.

#### Are there any lines in the play that particularly resonate with your ideas for the characters?

Guy: Two lines I like:

'How like a woman to worry over a side issue. We're not here to make pleasant comments. Are we all supposed to lose our ability to do good in this country because our behaviour isn't always pleasant? I spend my days in court trying to decide which of two untrue accounts is less untrue, trying to protect the weak against the less weak, indeed trying to dispense justice and keep the peace, and it is because we have something far more important to do.' ... and ...

Mrs Moore: 'God...is...love' Ronny: 'Yes. I quite see that. (pause) You must tell me if you're feeling unwell.'

Penny: I like:

'I'm not fit for personal relationships'

and

`..besides I'm not convinced that love is necessary to a successful union...'

"The army wife was not expected to do anything or be anything except a decorative chattel or appendage of her husband... It didn't even matter if she wasn't beautiful, so long as she looked reasonable and dressed reasonably and didn't let her husband down by making outrageous remarks at the dinner table"

Lady Birdwood 1930

#### QUESTION?

\* When does Adela question her relationship with Ronny? Why does she do this?

\* How does the staging help to clarify that it is inner thoughts and not external words that we are hearing?

> \* Does Adelas' physical situation prompt these thoughts?



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## APASSAGE TOINDIA

#### FOOD FOR THOUGHT - A MENU FROM THE LATE 1880'S

#### Adela:

I thought I would go out of my mind this evening at the Club. That dreadful play, *Cousin Kate*. I saw it last year in London with my play discussion group, and we had nothing to discuss there were no issues involved. And then the meal after sardines on toast, peas, cutlets, trifle, we might as well have been in Surrey. There were no spices. I long for, yes... that's it flavour!'

#### DISCUSSION

Discussion: Considering what happens to Adela (or what she thinks happens)when she experiences the 'real' India, the 'flavours' at the caves - could you argue that it was wise to keep the English women as separate as the Indian women?

Menu Potages Almond Soup • Clear Gravy Soup Poissons Pomphlet (pomfret) Tinned Salmon Entrees Croquettes of Sweetbreads Beef Olives with tomatoes Quennelles of Partridge Releves Boiled Turkey . Haunch of Mutton Rots Teal • Quails Entremets Maraschino jelly • Burnt cream Meringues (sic) filled with mango cream Cheese Fresh Stilton Ices Lemon ice cream • Coffee ice cream Dessert Fruits in season • Cakes, biscuits, etc.



shared**experience** 



## MOVEMENT DIRECTOR

#### What were your starting points for working on this production?

What the experience in each cave meant to Mrs Moore and Miss Quested, and discovering a way of depicting this which leaves room for interpretation. And at the same time connecting physically with the spiritual energy of the writing.

#### Were there any specific challenges to overcome?

Yes, creating a reference to Indian Dance and culture without trying to 'imitate' either, as our rehearsal period doesn't allow us to become technically masterful. I also wanted to allow room for ambiguity in the staging, which is very present in the writing.

## What is the difference between working for Shared Experience Theatre and other theatre companies?

More time is spent training the actors to develop physical strength and to develop physical techniques. Staging often involves creating a physical scenario which comes directly from the point of view of the protagonists.

#### **QUESTION?**

Do different colours have meanings to you? Do the meanings of colours change around the world?

### EXERCISE

Lie on the floor, take some time to think of one colour, think how it may affect your movement, energy and voice. When you are ready begin to move around the room. If you choose another colour, what are the differences?







## THE MARABAR CAVES

## "The caves... represent nothing - and therefore probably everything - and consequently transcend the normal rational categories of good and evil."

M. SIVARAMAKRISHNA

#### An Excerpt from A Passage To India

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 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 guivers up and down the walls until it is absorbed into the roof. 'Boum' is the sound as far as the human alphabet can express it, or 'bou-oum', or 'ou-boum' -utterly dull. Hope, politeness, the blowing of a nose, the squeak of a boot, all produce 'boum'. 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.

#### **QUESTION?**

\* How do you interpret what happened to Mrs Moore and Adela in the caves? \* How have Shared Experience interpreted the two women's' experiences?

#### EXERCISE

How would you adapt this section of text for a play? Carefully script and set stage directions for this piece (work in groups or individually.)

Using your new script, create a piece of drama. Consider ways in which you could involve dance, movement and song.

"No one who has entered the caves in *A Passage to India* has escaped unscathed. This fate has attended not only Forster's characters but also nearly every Western commentator who has written about this novel"

SUJIT MUKHERJE



shared experience



## - AN INTERVIEW WITH NIKI TURNER

#### What were your initial thoughts on reading the play?

That I would really love to design it. I read the play before I had been offered the design. I thought that it would be a fascinating and inspiring piece to work on. I was looking forward to working with Shared Experience and immersing myself in the research of the project.

#### What scene was the hardest to design?

There were lots of scenes in the play that proved challenging. The elephant ride, the train and the fast movement from one location to another location. It was important for us to come up with a design that would give freedom in rehearsals for things to develop and one that would enable the play to keep its movement.

#### Do you plan to watch many rehearsals?

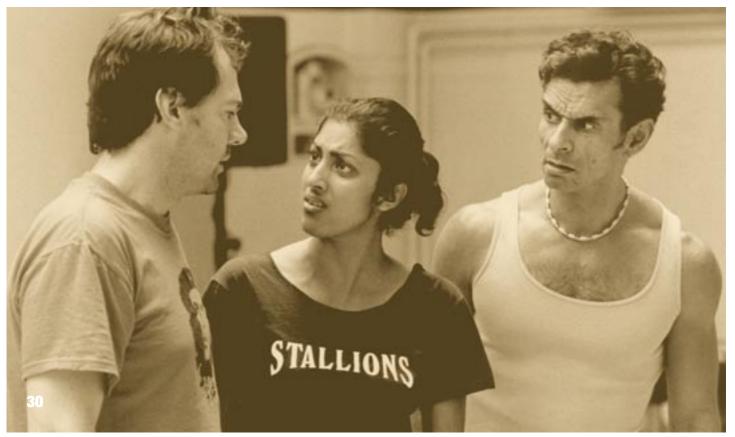
It is always exciting to watch the rehearsal process and see everything develop. It also helps me to be aware about changes in ideas that develop in the rehearsal room. Unfortunately fittings and buying for the production can also be time consuming, but I watch as many as I can.

#### Do you have a favourite image or scene?

I have always been fascinated by the cave scene and the use of people to create the feelings and emotions at the caves at that moment.

#### QUESTION?

How effective is the set in illustrating the different locations in 'A Passage to India'?







## WHAT DO I WANT?

Each character in the production has a 'want', something that drives them through their lives and the play. This is called the Super Objective. Also there is an 'obstacle' that stops them from achieving their objective.

During rehearsals, Nancy, the director and the actors discussed what each character's objective and obstacle might be. These are never carved in stone as through the rehearsals ideas grow and change.

Super Objective: Obstacles: Useful Words:	Adela Quested: I want a meaningful life. Being cut off from her emotions/sensuality means she generally experiences things intellectually/scientifically -therefore not fully. To investigate, to understand, to seek out, to probe, repression, self self self! Youth, trying, unripened/unopened fruit (or untried fruit)
Super Objective:	<b>Ronny:</b> I want to belong to a family. (For the plays purpose this family is the British Station. He has never been part of a family - disconnected from Mrs Moore )

	IVITS MOOTE.)
Obstacles:	Adela and Mrs Moores' unpukka attitude (external). His need to be in
	control (internal)
Llas Cul Manalas	

Useful Words: `Their sort' `it's not done' `India isn't home!'

#### Mahmoud Ali:

Super Objective:	I want to overcome my oppressors and emancipate my people.
Obstacles:	The British Raj/ The occupation of my country/ the rape of my culture
	and its' traditions/ the culture of Kowtow -The Facade. Fear of losing
	his job, has a family to support.
Useful Words:	Agitate, sedition, cynical, bitter 'I am dying', the fraternity of my faith -
	muslim, moral authority over legal.

#### Turton:

Super Objective:	To keep Chandrapore running smoothly for Britain
Obstacles:	Disruptive forces of all kinds. Those who favour force at any
	opportunity. His wife hates India and his job.
Useful Words:	To reassure the womenfolk, to restrain and calm the men, to punish the
	wrongdoer





## AT DO I WANT?

#### Fielding:

**Obstacle: Useful Words:** 

Super Objective: To connect to and understand other individuals. His inability to be in touch with his true feelings To teach, to reach out, unconventional, goodwill, honesty, culture, intelligence, untidy 'I travel light', hand-bitten, good tempered, sensible. He wishes that he could be carried away on waves of emotion; travelling light is less easy as soon as affection is involved.

#### Dr Aziz:

Super Objective:	'I want to connect with everyone who'll let me.'
Obstacle:	Racism, A political system whereby one race rules over
	another.
Useful Words:	Passion, Impulsiveness, Bitterness (towards the end).

#### **EXERCISE**

Using just two chairs in a space, two actors and no dialogue, how can you physically show each characters' opposing super objective and how they affect each other? Partner A makes a physical action with the chair to express his/her want (at its' simplest, by merely moving his/her chair and sitting on it while expressing his/her want)and B then responds, again physically with the chair, by expressing his/her own conflicting want. This is continued until a physical dialogue ensues.

#### Try:

\* to seduce and to repel \* to punish and to seek forgiveness \* to excite and to tire



## IMPORTANT DATES IN THE HISTORY OF INDIA TO 1948

- **1526** Mughal empire established
- 1600 Foundation of British East India Company
- 1740's British East India Company gains control of much Mughal territory
- 1857 Indian Mutiny: Rebellion of sepoys in Bengal Army
- **1858** British government takes over East India Company
- **1885** Indian National Congress founded
- **1906** Foundation of Muslim League
- **1919** Amritsar massacre: On April 13th, a large crowd of villagers who had come to Amritsar for a fair was fired on by a group of soldiers. Officially the dead numbered 379, although many more were probably killed.
- **1920** Mohandas Karamchand (Mahatma) Gandhi begins his satyagraha (non-violent campaign) against British rule with Jawaharlal Nehru
- **1935** Government of India Act secures election of Indians to law-making assembly, although Britain retains control of central government and reserves power of veto over all legislation
- **1939-45** Indian troops fight on Allied side in desert campaigns during WW2
- **1940** Muslim League begins demanding a separate Islamic state

#### QUESTION?

A Passage to India was first published in 1924. It illuminates the Indian characters desire for political control of their own country and the novel seems at times to predict the important events of the next three decades.

What events from 1948 do you feel have most impacted on Indias' History?

- **1942** Congress leadership is arrested and detained until the end of the war
- 1943 Requisition of food supplies by the army causes severe famine in Bengal1945 Muslims increase demands for partition: widespread riots: India joins UN
- **1946** Muslim League's 'Direct Action Day' results in many deaths
- **1947** India partitioned as independent nations of India and Pakistan: Nehru becomes Prime Minister; widespread violence between Hindus and Muslims; Kashmir accede to India
- **1948** Gandhi assassinated; Democratic Republic of India declared





## **INDIA TODAY -FACT FILE**

Area	3,165,596km″2/1,222.332sq mi.
Currency:	Rupee
Capital:	Delhi
Physical Features	: Himalayan mountains in North; Deccan plateau in South; flat to rolling plain along river Ganges; desert in West
Climate:	Varies from tropical monsoon in South to temperate in North
Time zone:	GMT +5.5h
Political System:	Federal Republic
Prime Minister:	Atal Bihari Vajaybe
President:	Abdul Kalam
Main Exports:	Textiles, jewellery, coffee, tea, chemicals
Resources:	Coal, Iron ore, manganese, gas and oil
Languages:	16 official languages including Hindi (national), English, Bengali, Telugu, Kannada, Oriya, Punjabi, Assamese, Kashmiri, Sindhi and Sanskrit
Religions:	Hindu 83%, Muslim 11%, Christian 3%, Buddhist and other 1%
Literacy rate:	48%







## **GLOSSARY/USEFUL WORDS**

Hammans	Turkish Baths
Maharanis	Wife of a Princely Ruler or occasionally ruler in her own right
Rani	Hindu Queen
Begums'	Moslem women of a high rank
Purdah	The custom of some Moslems (also adopted by some Hindus) of keeping women in seclusion
Salaam	Salutation/Greeting of Moslems to each other, meaning peace
Babar	Founder of the Mughal line
Alamgir	Also known as Auranzeb -Mughal Emperor 1658- 1707 Last of the great Mughals



L TO R: AARON NEIL, GEOFFREY BEEVERS, DANIEL HOPE, PRIYANGA ELAN, NICHOLAS KHAN



## WRITING A REVIEW

#### **GUIDELINES FOR WRITING A REVIEW**

Say what you saw Say what you think Reflect on your responses Write freely from the heart

Don't worry about given theories Create your own theories

Describe the tiniest moment that remains vivid Question that moment Find out what it says to you Say why it spoke to you

#### CONSIDER

The light, the sound, the movement, the colours and textures of the play The words, the music, the rhythms of the text The set, the costumes, the style of the production

The Objects: The cloths/fabric The chairs The candles The moving platform The hookah (smoking apparatus) The petals The pack of cards The photo of Aziz' wife

The themes The characters The story The ending...

(and try to say everything you want in just 300 words!)

Send your review to: REVIEWS Shared Experience The Soho Laundry 9, Dufour's Place London W1F 7SJ

Or e-mail: youththeatre@setheatre.co.uk



## FURTHER READING

The Men Who Ruled India E.M.Forster - Passion and Prose Morgan A Biog of E.M.Forster Focus on Forsters' A Passage To India Indian Essays in Criticism Women of the Raj

Philip Mason Arthur Martland Nicola Beauman

Edited by V. A. Shahane Margaret Macmillan



L TO R: ANTONY BUNSEE, IAN GELDER