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The passage concerns the journey of a young woman, Amrita, to an arranged marriage, and her associated sense of alienation and lost identity. Of a wealthy family – Amrita travels in a 'palanquin' with an 'embroidered curtain' accompanied by servants – her marriage is solely in the gift of her uncle and her body will become her husband's property. There is a sense of community and familial influence, controlled by elders – the 'old women' discuss her dowry. For Amrita, this is 'her last journey', the end of her former life; she views the bondage of impending marriage not as a new life, but as a loss of physical and mental freedom comparable to death. At its core, the extract studies separation and division where there should be unity. For Amrita, this is the detachment of body and mind – for Forrester, this is unsuitability to an unfamiliar country which he cannot understand or connect with.

Amrita's transition to womanhood and marriage causes her to question her own selfhood. Anticipating ownership of her body passing to a stranger, she has lost touch with her physicality and experiences it as something grotesque and animalistic: she sees her hand move as if independent of her will, 'a snake sliding across a flagstone floor', a 'crab-like object'. It is almost an out-of-body experience: her body and mind no longer coincide to give a coherent identity.

The sense of expiration is ironic. Amrita is nineteen and conventionally at her physical peak, about to blossom into womanhood. This pervades the extract; 'the hanging gardens [...] ripened' and the 'swollen droplets' give an impression of growth and fertility, whilst the 'darkening red silk in her lap' connotes the loss of virginity. This reflects societal position as a woman newly of marriageable age, and therefore an asset based on wealth and physical appeal. However, Amrita sees her body as something disgusting, indicating her reluctance to sacrifice her mind and her placing of thoughts over material attributes.

The recent loss of her parents increases her isolation: the emotional ties of childhood have been cut and to those around her she is a mere object for transportation, symbolised by her abandonment in the rain when 'no one has come for her'. The shared imagery of the curtain (Forrester stands behind 'grey, solid curtains of water', Amrita is hidden behind the 'soaked curtains' of the palanquin) links Amrita and Forrester in this theme of alienation and duality.

The extract also gives an insight into British-occupied India. Moti Lal and Forrester meeting in the desert reflects how the two cultures have blended whilst maintaining a clear distance. Forrester, although civil, is uncomfortable with Moti Lal, who 'keeps up a steady stream of conversation' which the Englishman struggles to engage with. The rain separates 'Forrester's army tent from the Indians' contraptions of tarpaulin and bamboo' – this gives a sense of a modern, military society and a more ad hoc culture based on native understanding of the land, forced to combine and co-operate whilst never entirely integrating.