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There is a resounding sense of conflict in this extract: the battle of nature's forces in 'opposition'; the clash between various societal groups; and the psychological turmoil experienced by an orphaned woman of the Indian aristocracy. It is a perilous expedition; fraught with danger and foreboding as rain droplets splash 'into the dust like little bombs'.

We are 'struck' with the immense omnipotence of the monsoon, which threatens to devastate the landscape as 'the forked lightning divides the sky into fleeting segments', bringing down an 'unimaginable shock of water' upon the somewhat insignificant sprawl of people on earth below. These sovereign elements appear to be attributed to a divine-like force: they are 'mere aspects of the great unity of things whose name is God'. This acute sense of nature's domination is evoked through the violent, forceful vocabulary; the 'burning' air and 'battering' wind establish a shockingly raw and turbulent atmosphere as the protagonist, Amrita, is escorted to her 'uncle's house in Agra'.

A clear shift of focus sets Amrita apart from the 'trusted family retainers', as she seems to be not only socially distinguished by virtue of the 'palanquin'; but also physically isolated, since she has not even 'ventured a peek' to assess her surroundings. Once inside the palanquin, the third person narrative exhibits her 'bitter' tumult due to being 'only a woman': she swallows 'opium pellets' as a means of escaping her fate in a patriarchal society where even the fundamental authority over her own body is compromised. Indeed, Amrita experiences a spiritual disembodiment when she watches her hand 'as she would a snake sliding across a flagstone floor'; she appears to be disgusted with this 'crab-like object' that does not belong to her. This tone of repulsion continues towards the end of the excerpt, when Kunzru suggests with sarcasm that Amrita should 'thank God' for having a 'good dowry' to present to her designated husband when she is 'delivered' to him. Such is the destiny of an eligible young woman in India, whose 'energy' deficit renders her incapable of overcoming her docile acquiescence.

The distinction between the Indian culture and foreigners such as Forrester is indicated through the contrast in the direct speech of the characters and Kunzru's use of free indirect discourse, which allows us access to their innermost thoughts. Despite Moti Lal's 'steady stream' of inconsequential prattle concerning these 'extenuating circumstances', Forrester simply fails to comprehend what the 'bloody fool [is] on about'. The discrepancies between the characters evince an almost hostile rift between the 'Englishman' and the 'Indians': a rupture which is further accentuated by the 'trickle of muddy water' which separates Forrester's 'army tent' from the Indian 'contraptions of tarpaulin and bamboo'.

The culmination of the volatile atmosphere is marked by Moti Lal's ominous reaction to Forrester's enquiry about his 'mistress'. As his face 'darkens', we are left with an ultimate impression of uncertainty while the congregation are 'huddled together forlornly' in anticipation of the trials and tribulations of their imminent journey.