
Golding's Sea Trilogy: Fire Down Below- End for End

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Abstract :

After the publication of the **Paper Men** (1984), Golding thought of giving a direction and a dry land to the ship that is left lolling in the Atlantic in the first novel of the Sea-trilogy, **Rites of Passage** (198). To bring the ship and its characters safely to the shores from the Atlantic, he published his two volumes as an afterthought. He says that he did not foresee volume two and three while writing volume one, ie, **Rites of Passage**. He published **Close Quarters** in 1987 and **Fire Down Below** in 1989 and then the sea trilogy **To the Ends of the Earth** in 1992, comprising the three novels was published. This paper focuses on the thematic intricacies in the novel **Fire Down Below**.

It is generally perceived that Golding portrays life as a 'hopeless affair". Almost of the novels of Golding search for the dark centre in man and they portray life as incorrigible and irrecoverable, however after the publication of **Darkness Visible** in 1979, there seems to be a remarkable shift in the perception of Golding towards life and his characters. Right from his novel, **Lord of the Flies** produced in 1954 and up to **Darkness Visible** in 1979, Golding portrays his characters as incorrigible and beyond reformation. Golding seems to believe that 'man produces evil as a bee produces honey'. A remarkable metamorphosis occurred after 1979 and in his sequel to **Rites of Passage**, he seems to be surprisingly getting preoccupied with the essential virtue in man rather than the essential evil and mortal sin.

Golding inconsonance with his shift in attitude, wanted to deal with "higher languages than that of a toiling mind, deeper intuitions" which require metaphors. It was his conviction that man is a fallen being, but definitely capable of redemption. Edmund Talbot, in his journey to the ends of the earth undergoes transformation, and works out his own salvation with the help of the passengers on board. As the ship crosses the equator in **Rites of Passage**, his world turns upside down and everything puts on a different appearance.

Golding's characters seem to undergo perceptible transformation offering immense hope and possibility of salvation. Golding's attitude to show that "both comedy and tragedy outside books as well as in them are subsumed in an ultimate dazzle". He wanted to show life as an affair where hope and salvation are not distant dreams. Besides depravity and fallen nature of his characters, his novels contain Christ-like characters as well. Simon and Piggy in **Lord of the Flies**, are endowed with intellectual and spiritual potentialities. Mal, in

The Inheritors, Nathaniel in **Pincher Martin** offer some relief through their sacrificial attitude. Matty in **Darkness Visible** is an exceptional character, who is noble and pious. He offers a wholesome relief from the world of sin and crime. He seems to be the incarnation of sacrifice. Colley in **Rites of Passage** is one such character that dies; out of shame, as he fails to make himself comfortable in the world of crime and sin. Almost all the novels of Golding contain characters with a streak of goodness in them. Golding tries to show that this streak of goodness and light can overtake the evil, if only man can strive and work out his own salvation. Thus Edmund Talbot's journey to the ends of the earth is a journey into his own heart, his ego and his will. As realisation dawns on him of his misdeeds, he adopts diligence, suffering and sacrifice and he gets the taste of immense happiness which he is capable of.

After the death of James Colley triggered by shame and suffering, Talbot suffers his own rites of passage as he gets a glimpse of the evil in himself and the world around. He becomes aware of the streak of humanity and goodness in people like Charles Summers. Thus he is of the view that his second volume of the journal would not be a mere continuation of the first, but altogether a new venture. Though it is incidental that his second journal starts with a reference to his birth day, perhaps it has a subtle connotation to the possible new birth and the new beginning of Edmund Talbot after the death of his previous self- the Lord Talbot which results because of the death of James Colley. He starts looking at people from close quarters and it is Summers who appears to him not as an ordinary lieutenant of a ship but as a kind and noble man; and as the journey proceeds; he is all admiration, esteem and affection for Summers. He looks up to Charles Summers as the hero of his journal. Though he tells that the journal is continued to redeem him from his boredom, actually it is like a sea anchor which controls the attitude and movements of Edmund Talbot. He feels shy for carelessly displaying his lofty demeanour as he starts looking at the nobility and the goodness of the people.

In **Close Quarters**, otherwise may be called as the second journal of Talbot, he looks at everyone with a changed attitude. Jack Deverel appears to Talbot in **Rites of Passage** as an ornament to the service. He is gentleman like, with whom Talbot is eager to make an acquaintance. But Summers shows Talbot the broken mast and explains how Deverel is responsible for the crippled ship. Deverel leaves the charge of the ship for a drink and allows the ship to be "taken aback". Talbot realises that Deverel's carelessness has put the ship in doldrums. Then he is aware of the true nature of Deverel and decides to detach himself from him and refuses to take his representation to the Captain because he is simply not worth it. Later it may be noted as the story advances, Deverel is shifted to Alcyone- a frigate which they meet on the way- in exchange for Mr. Benet.

Charles Summers, the lieutenant of the Ship comes so close to Talbot, that his relationship has a therapeutic effect on Lord Talbot. Talbot's arrogance, his aristocracy and his ego are put to severest tests in the presence of Summers. Summers, a man of virtue, nobility and friendship is a man dedicated to his duty and care of the ship. He is an able

lieutenant who is not a overnight star like Talbot. He comes up in life by his merit, diligence and sheer dedication. Talbot's superficiality and hollowness are exposed when Summers says that the system of education has made the whole class of Talbot's society incapable of fair play extending concern for the suffering lot. His negligence of Colley is hinted at by Summers without mincing words. He, as a real friend never hesitates to make bare the follies and foibles of Edmund Talbot. He keeps on exposing the unfair system and the meaninglessness of the so called aristocracy and rank.

Golding in his novel, **Fire Down Below** (1989) continues to show Edmund Talbot's attempts to purge himself of all his follies and shows how an indecisive aristocrat turns out to be confident representative to serve the people. Talbot is ready to purge himself and this becomes clear through the image of nakedness. The armour of rank, class consciousness, ego are dropped by him unhesitatingly as he appears before Summers, Mr. Prettiman and Miss. Graham. The process of transformation starts during his second journal and continues till he reaches the ends of the earth. Talbot, throws off his upbringing as a man might drop his armour and stands naked, defenceless and free. The imagery of nakedness is to make clean the intentions of Mr. Talbot to expose himself to the nobility of others and to keep all options open to purge himself. Expressions like " I stripped off my oilskins", "A naked man is defenceless" and "stand naked, defenceless but free" show the preparedness of Edmund Talbot to shed all artificialities, snobbery, selfishness, hypocrisy and meanness. Mr. Prettiman and Mrs. Prettiman use a medical term 'specimen' when Talbot goes to them, as they decide to treat and cure Talbot of his weaknesses, prejudices and predilections. It is Mr. Prettiman who tells that Talbot started the voyage with the objectivity of ignorance, and is finishing with the subjectivity of knowledge, pain and the hope of indulgence.

It is interesting to note that, in the beginning he is unmoved knowing the fact that Mr. Prettiman has fallen and is wounded. He wonders at the inclination and devotion of Miss Granham (later Mrs. Prettiman) towards the crippled man. She is beyond his comprehension and her devotion to Mr. Prettiman is looked at with awe by Talbot. However, he is drawn towards her and tries to approach her with ulterior aim of possessing her. For him she is just another Zenobia, who is to be exploited and condemned. However, he later realises that unlike Zenobia, Miss. Granham is free from the usual female weaknesses. When Talbot tries to turn Mr. Prettiman, 'end for end', to find some solace for the suffering man, he falls on his leg and wounds his leg even more fatally. He is held responsible for hastening up Prettiman's death by Mrs. Prettiman and she is lacerating for his clumsy action and says that he has set his foot in a world where he is unwelcome. She finds Talbot unfit for the world of Mr. Prettiman and his Eldorado. But later she invites Mr. Talbot when he is purged of his aristocratic attitude and hypocrisy. Ironically, Talbot's well meant but clumsy action relieves Mr. Prettiman of his suffering.

Talbot fails to understand and reach out for help as recorded in all the three journals of his sea-voyage. He fails to see beyond the clownish figure of Mr. Colley and also fails to

experience his own self until the death of Colley, which actually comes as a rude shock to him. Colley's epistle addressed to his sister in **Rites of Passage** actually places Talbot in real perspective and opens up the avenues for Talbot to understand the real Colley. He fails to understand and recognise the real motives of Mr. Wheeler. He is deeply influenced by the suicide of Wheeler, as he looks at his peaceful and philosophic face. He never dares to probe the reasons for Wheeler's suicide as he failed in the case of Colley. Perhaps he is afraid of doing such a probe again, as he found himself involved directly or indirectly in the tragic fall of Colley. He fails to recognise the real self of Miss. Brocklebank, though she is praised as the only tolerable female object and a beautiful woman, Talbot is negligent of Miss. Brocklebank after his sexual encounter with her. Though he comes across his onetime inamorta suffering in a cabin – degenerated and depressed – Talbot never takes pains to reach out for help. When he receives a mysterious letter from Miss. Brocklebank, written just before her death, referring to her love for him and 'crossing the bridge' in a spiritual and mysterious way, Talbot, ignores the letter.

Talbot's class prevents him even to imagine himself hand in hand with a naval man in **Rites of Passage**. But his changed conception of human life and togetherness allows him to accept the naval rig or 'slops' sent by Mr. Summers. Summers besides curing Talbot's 'itch', gives him a pair of dry clothes. When Summers offers him the post of a mid-shipman to relieve Talbot of the drudgery of dark hours in Colley's cabin (where two people had committed suicide). Talbot wears slops like an ordinary midshipman and feels that it is the golden armour presented by Summers. He is filled with love and respect for Summers and promises his own bronze armour of his godfather's favour.

It is interesting find Summers becoming a victim of jealousy in spite of being an extraordinary man with exceptional qualities. When he objects to Benet's idea of pouring hot metal into the shoe of the mast, the Captain overrules him and supports Benet. Benet's idea to push hot metal into the foot of the mast to give steadiness to the mast actually works and endears him to the captain. Interestingly, Summers overcomes his negative feelings and feels sorry for being so naive. He not only composes himself but apologises for being less than a man. According to him, a man should be perfectly free from pride, hatred and hypocrisy.

A careful observation will not allow the reader to miss the point that Mr. Summers is very much concerned about the well being and safety of everyone on board. He offers the wardroom to Mr. Talbot, which is rarely lent to any passenger. He asks Talbot to avoid Colley's bunk after Wheeler's suicide in that bunk. He offers a pair of dry clothes to Talbot and asks him to stand over board. Soaked in rain and helped by dry slops, Talbot is cured of his itch. With all concern, he offers the post of a midshipman to Talbot, only to relieve him of the drudgeries of darkness.

Summers has always his feet firmly planted on the ground, and is highly practical. In spite of the growing friendship between him and Talbot, he objects to Talbot's use of the

word 'faction'. When Talbot supports Summers, openly criticizing Mr. Benet and the Captain, Summers condemns Talbot's idea of faction and the criticism on the Captain as it amounts to mutiny. He asks Talbot, to avoid any word that may cause separation among them. He treats Talbot like any other passenger and obstructs to his possession of a lantern.

Further, one may notice that Summers is unmoved by joys and sorrows easily, and takes life as and how it offers him. He is really a rough cut piece of nautical timber, seasoned very much for the journey of life. When Talbot succeeds to get Summers, his bronze armour-the letter of promotion of Summers- which he had promised- to the post of Captain, Summers remains unmoved. He is never carried away by passions and emotions. He is a dedicated and able lieutenant acknowledged and appreciated by one and all.

The final testimony to his capabilities as a lieutenant, his powers as a seaman, his nobility and humanity, comes when it is revealed to us by the Governor that even Captain Anderson and Mr. Benet, his professional rival recommended the name of Mr. Summers for the Captain's post. Out and out Summers proves himself to be is an able man and a true friend of people with readiness to sacrifice his own personal interests in the interest of others.

Summers never hesitates to put Talbot in the right track of thinking. He comes down heavily on Talbot when he comes to know that Talbot is expecting money and status through marriage. He shows the distinction between Lord Talbot and Talbot. Talbot feels shy when he confesses his affection towards Ms. Chumley and Summers makes fun of his concept of love. Later, his utilitarian aspect of love and life undergoes a sea change, so much so, that he prepares himself to ruin his career for the sake of his love. Talbot expresses his sense of gratitude in Jack Deverel before Summers, for his recklessness in leaving the charge of the ship and losing of the mainmast. According to him, it is the broken mast and the resulting 'null-point' that made them meet Alcyone, and in turn, his fair object – Miss Chumley, Summers, highly criticises Talbot for this hypocrisy and says that he saw a glimpse of old 'Lord Talbot' in Talbot because of such bigotry.

In the beginning of the journey, Mr. Prettiman is viewed indifferently by Mr. Talbot. According to him Mr. Prettiman is a comic philosopher. He has no significance of any sort in the eyes of Mr. Talbot. He is not even of any danger to the state, as feared, though he is a proletariat and has his concept of Eldorado, and reforming the criminals. Talbot feels comfortable as Mr. Prettiman is a crippled man, and incapable of doing any harm to the Crown. He is wicked according to Mr. Talbot, as he is ill-disposed to the government of his own country, to the Crown and the system of representation.

But, Mr. Prettiman assumes a serious posture and his character pervades all through the novel **Fire Down Below**. When Talbot comes close to Mr. Prettiman, he understands the ideal philosophy of Mr. Prettiman, his determination, his humanity and sacrificial attitude. As he understands the philosopher in Mr. Prettiman, and the need of love and

companionship, he goes to Mr. Prettiman to find some solace. Mr. Prettiman's ideology and philosophic conceptions, make Talbot, drop his distinctions of class and rank. He feels shy for his lofty demeanour, selfishness and carelessness for human suffering and for being haughty and snobbish. He becomes sensitive to human suffering as the journey progresses.

Golding continues to employ the imagery of lanterns and pendulum movement even in **Fire Down Below** whenever Talbot's hubris and ego try to assert. Talbot never wants to give up his own edifice of prideful self. But later he feels guilty of his role in Colley's death and feels sad for Wheeler's suicide. He is able to see the pain and agony and decides to take a share in the pains of the common lot, and care for them. But his prideful and selfish will asserts itself and he says that he is a 'rational man' akin to Pincher Martin who cries "Look! Here is thought. Here is man!" Pincher Martin, threatens to spit on the noble spirit and rejects the 'dark centre' or the apparition that comes to relieve him of the agony. He is proud of his intelligence and thought processes. He challenges the forces of nature and says that he will impose his own pattern and order over everything, as he is a rational thinking man. His rational thinking obstructs him in choosing the spiritual world. Talbot, whenever feels pity and is sentimental, he decides to share and care for the human lot. He wants to be human and feels sad at the tragic death of Colley and Wheeler. But wherever his prideful will asserts itself; he says that, he is a rational man who cannot entertain noble sentiments of suffering and sacrifice.

When Mrs. Prettiman looks at Talbot with contempt for injuring Mr. Prettiman and hastening up his death, Talbot feels restless. For him it was like falling into the darkness of a merciless pit. He finds himself mouthing prayers. Again he is haunted by the pendulum movement and the balletic dance of the lanterns and searches a place of oblivion and rest. Webber quotes Wheeler as saying about the cabin:

"It's kind of a hole and you know that if the weather gets too rough you can use the hole, get into the hole, hide and sleep"

Even Talbot finds oblivion and rest in Colley's cabin in the face of the dilemma inside and the imminent danger outside. Colley's bunk has a sort of healing effect, where both Colley and Wheeler find rest and peace. Golding mystifies the life and death of Wheeler but it is clear that Wheeler wanted to follow the suit of Colley in getting peace and achieving rest.

In the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Prettiman, Talbot becomes aware of his personal meanness and the 'self knowing' is so shameful that he gives up his armour of hypocrisy and pride and stands naked to purge himself. As the voyage advances, Mr. Talbot becomes sensible and sensitive. He partakes of the pains of the Pike girls, Willis and Mr. Prettiman. When Mr. and Mrs. Prettiman use a word 'specimen' with precise medical connotations, their intentions become clear to purge Mr. Talbot of all his follies and also give him a realistic picture of his so called government, country and the system of representation.

When Mr. Prettiman puts him on the right track of thinking, the light of self knowledge was too great for him to bear. In the presence of Mr. Prettiman he is in a place lit by a savage light. When he returns to his cabin, he is aware of his offhand ability to cause destruction. He realises, what selfless service is, what sacrifice is and what is meant by humanity.

As Talbot's consciousness pricks him for his role in the death of Colley and Wheeler, voices start crying from within that he is responsible for the death which he could avert. But like Colley and Matty, he does not want to indulge in physical punishment, but he thinks of dedicating himself to the service of the nation and the act of reformation of 'Rotten Borough'. He wants to indulge in the reform of an insane and unfair system. He decides to serve his own Eldorado. Though Mr. and Mrs. Prettiman believe that through transformation Talbot has qualified himself to enter their Eldorado, Talbot has his own 'spark' and his own "scintillans Dei" which provokes him to cleanse the elaborations and knaveries of his government.

Mr. Prettiman exposes Talbot's theatricalities, weakness and hypocrisy. Talbot feels that he himself is a victim of "sinuous genuflection" of which he charges Colley. Mr. Prettiman condemns his aristocracy and acquired qualities of a noble. Throughout the novel **Fire Down Below**, it appears as though Talbot is playing Colley. A man who used to keep himself to his ivory towers, comes so close to everyone that he is no more looked upon as 'Lord Talbot'. He is 'Colley-like' in his behaviour and theatricalities. He imposes himself on Miss. Graham, mistaking her for a seaman. When he goes to meet Mr. Prettiman, in his cabin, he is nervous and feels his arms and legs. In his anxiety, he is theatrical in his disposition and Mr. Prettiman condemns Talbot for his mannerisms, his grandiloquence and the habit obstructing, while someone speaks. Like Colley, he is excessively romantic and sentimental as the journey progresses.

Through his earlier two journals it becomes clear that his attitude towards women is very mean as he believes that they should not be given a right to vote. He groups women with children and madmen. In **Rites of Passage** he looks down at Ms. Zenobia merely as his sexual exploit, whom he can seduce and dismiss. But his advances towards Miss Granham meet with little success. When she criticises him and exposes his follies, he looks down upon Ms. Granham as a trollop. He fails to understand the relationship between Mr. Prettiman and Ms. Granham. But later he realises that Miss. Granham lacks those female weaknesses of Zenobia Brocklebank and other ordinary women. At a point of juncture, Talbot judges the merit and value of Mr. Prettiman because of Miss. Granham's affinity towards him. Merely because she is inclined towards Mr. Prettiman and has selected him as her life partner, he must be great; according to Talbot. Talbot assumes that a woman of Miss. Granham's stature can never commit error in judging the merit of a person.

It is the personality and grace of Mrs. Prettiman that changes his attitude towards women. Miss Granham is ready to marry Mr. Prettiman even when he is crippled. She wants to follow him to his Eldorado through thick and thin. Mrs. Prettiman protects herself

from people like Mr. Talbot who pose to be aristocrats but do not hesitate to seduce hapless women. When Mr. Prettiman asks Mrs. Prettiman to leave the ship along with others in the life boats, when they expect a collision with the ice bergs; Mrs. Prettiman is firm and decides to share either joys or woes with her husband. The selfless service and devotion of Mrs. Prettiman towards a crippled man shows Talbot; what a woman is capable of. By her elderliness, charm and dignity she makes him feel like a nipper. When Talbot catches hold of Miss. Granham, mistaking her for a seaman, she is very much contemptible, and relieves herself from Mr. Talbot. According to her, he is intelligent enough to impose himself on others. She warns him to be at post. She warns him neither to take her for granted nor, treat her like a governess. She aptly encounters all the moves of Mr. Talbot. She never gives him any opportunity to over reach her and exploit her. She is sympathetic towards Mr. Benet, but ably manages with Mr. Benet, who is a romantic at heart. She accepts, Benet's 'billet doux', but looks at him as a small boy. According to Benet, "she is all that the ages have looked forward to!"

Mr. Prettiman's idea of a human being is that of a divine being and he believes in the absolute. According to him everyone can look at that fire of love and he refers to the people as "a fire down below here – sparks of the Absolute – matching the fire up there – out there!" Any person, acceding to him, capable of love and sacrifice is a spark of the absolute. In his sleep he utters that he is able to bless and is capable of benediction.

The description of fire by Summers is in consonance with Mr. Prettiman's conception of human beings as the sparks of the absolute. The spark of humanity and the fire of love, buried deeply in the psyche of Mr. Talbot is flared up by people like Mr. Summers. His explanation of putting hot metal and his fears over putting fire in the shoe can be symbolically interpreted as the fire sparked off in Talbot. He asks:

"Have you never seen a fire, apparently dead,
brought to life again and flare up? It will be shut in
there ..."

When that fire is flared up by Mr. Prettiman, Talbot visualises the universe as a bubble afloat in the incommensurable golden sea of the Absolute, and the myriad sparkles of fire. He decides to dedicate himself to that Absolute and exercise his powers for the betterment of his country and the people in general.

Benet, the sea Adonais substituted from Alcyone for Jack Deverel, impresses upon the Captain and puts hot metal in the shoe of the mast to fasten up the mast and adds speed. Summers fears explosion but the ship safely reaches the shores of Australia. Summers busy in his duty and care of the ship is devoured by the fires that are sparked off by Benet's hot metal.

Through the professional rivalry and trying to over reach each other, Summers and Benet enact the theme of conflict, between science and conscience, between the spiritual and the materialistic. The world of science besides all positive values has even a destructive side. Benet and Summers, remind us of Nick Shales and Miss. Pringle in **Free Fall**, another novel of Golding. Nick is rational and scientific and denies the spirit behind the creation. For him “what is nearest the eye is hardest to see” and for Mr. Benet “Seeing is Believing”. Both are materialistic. Miss. Pringle believes in the world of spirit and nobility. They both represent the world of materialism and spiritualism. Benet puts hot metal in the shoe of the mast, and Summers becomes a scapegoat and a sacrifice in the scientific process of Mr. Benet.

Benet’s character is in quite contrast to that of Charles Summers. Summers is realistic and is a Methodist. Benet is ruthless to achieve worldly success and is a persuasive man who easily succeeds in impressing upon the Captain. Summers, more than anything is a humanitarian. He is praised by all as a good man. He is a good Samaritan of the sea-trilogy. Mr. Benet is proud of his engineering proclivity and puts hot metal in the shoe of the mast, careless of Summer’s warning.

Summers is a devoted lieutenant, and a caretaker of all the passengers. He is all concern for Colley in **Rites of Passage**. He criticises Mr. Prettiman as he is working against the establishment. He believes in unflinching devotion towards the Crown. He is devoted to the establishment and is a sincere officer. He believes in selfless love, and finds fault with Talbot, who looks at marriage with utilitarian view. Mr. Benet is purpose serving. He is allegedly engaged in an amour with Lady Somerset, wife of the Captain of Alcyone. He is a romantic and thus a passionate lover of beauty. He is never sincere in his love, but believes in worldly success. He never spends time suffering the pangs of separation as Talbot does, but for all the loss, he has one compensation- his intellect, according to his own account. He confesses that he adores Lady Somerset, but does not make clear whether he really had any amour.

Summers’ loss leaves Talbot in a depressed state, besides the pain caused by his godfather’s death. Talbot’s future becomes bleak. Like Summers, who once worked out his own prospects, Talbot decides to work out his own passage. The arrival of Alcyone gives some relief to Talbot and shows the undaunted love between Chumley and Talbot. Soon the story takes a turn into a fantastic world as Talbot himself mentions. A letter reveals, Talbot’s selection to the Parliament through his godfather’s constituency Rotten Borough. Talbot seizes upon the opportunity and proceeds to take up Parliamentary duties. Chumley encourages Talbot in his noble cause of reforming an insane and unfair system.

Mrs. Prettiman’s description of the journey as neither a paradigm, nor a metaphor; gives Talbot a way to detach himself from the experience of ruminating over the past and do something meaningful. He realises that the journey actually is a journey into his own self to be aware of the meanness, the measureless pit of wickedness and the attempts to come clean

out of it. As a considerable time span separates the actual happenings and the writing of the journal, Talbot is not sentimental and possessive while recollecting his friends and foes.

Talbot, acknowledging the artistry of Colley in the composition of the journal says that much of its skills, coherence, order and freshness is due to the suffering that Colley has undergone. While his first journal is composed haphazardly and carelessly with all negligence to chronology, order and coherence is much amiss even in **Close Quarters** and **Fire Down Below**. According to his own account, his second and third journals lack much of the order. The second and particularly the third journal is composed at a very later stage in his life and thus, at a juncture, when he is free from any suffering and pain. He is at leisure piling up episode on episode in the last two journals. As a considerable time has elapsed from the actual happenings and the record of them in the journal, Talbot is free from any influence of the journey. As a man of social status and enormous comfort, he leisurely composes the journal and even at times comically treating some issues. Thus the last two novels of Golding have become non-serious or even comical as critics find them to be. Anyhow Golding's justification is that, it is the work of Edmund Talbot, an intelligent but rash and optimistic young man.

The story ends in his marriage with Chumley in India. Chumley's cousin a Bishop, refuses to allow them to travel together without matrimony: as that would be a bad example of licence. Talbot in the beginning of the journey negligent and careless of the Churchmen accepts the condition of the Bishop to marry her in India. Talbot's arrival on the Indian soil is symbolic culmination of his journey. The process of transformation is complete in the spiritual land- the land of Buddha and Nirvana. His visit to India is symbolic of his Nirvana. Talbot decides to dedicate himself to the service of the nation and its people.

He becomes aware of his hypocrisy and weaknesses. Self-knowledge fills him with shame but he feels that self knowing cannot come wholly between a man and his stomach. He intends to help others, at the same time helping himself. A glimpse at the Absolute, makes Talbot prepare himself to dedicate to the fire of love. He intends to serve the people, refine and sacrifice for them. He feels that he has his own style, and so instead of following Mr. Prettiman to his distant Eldorado, Talbot wants to serve his own Eldorado, his immediate world. His words "The world must be served, must it not?" make his intentions crystal clear.

Golding shifts the view points in the novels, presenting two different views of two different characters. There is no change in view point at the end in **Fire Down Below**, but changed point of view of one and the same character is presented. The change in view point is gradual during the voyage and his journals. In **Rites of Passage**, the whiteline that separates the people of the forecastle with that of the elite, has all significance. It is to be maintained at all costs by Talbot. He looks down upon the people of the forecastle, as they drink and spend their time in unspeakable debauchery, crossing the limits of dignity and decency. But in **Closer Quarters**, the whiteline is diminishing, whereas in **Fire Down**

Below, Talbot goes at once to assume parliamentary duties to serve the people of 'Rotten Borough' who are wretched drunkards and are debaucherous.

Miss. Granham is looked down upon as a Trollope by Talbot who ill-treats all women and believes in subjugating and exploiting them. But in **Fire Down Below**, his attitude towards women, dramatically changes through the character of Mrs. Prettiman. Instead of judging women and their morals, as he did earlier, he is eager to present himself as thoroughly reformed. He feels very much sad when she condemns him for wounding Mr. Prettiman. She treats him as a nipper and an unworthy fellow, exposing his hypocrisy and weaknesses, thus forcing him to play an elderly man and shed his hypocrisy.

Initially, Talbot looks down upon Mr. Prettiman, as comic and his ideology as meaningless. His nationalism and selfishness, never present him with an opportunity to realise the defects of the system and try for reformation. Mr. Prettiman, not only exposes the unfair system but convinces Mr. Talbot through his ideology and personality so much so that Talbot looks up to Mr. Prettiman as his mentor. He visits Mr. Prettiman again and again, though he is exposed by Mr. Prettiman, and his system criticised as meaningless and unfair, of which he is so proud. He starts believing in the ideology of Mr. Prettiman and at the end decides to serve his own Eldorado.

In **Rites of Passage**, his view of a parson, is very mean and he is very much contemptible of any clergyman. For him sermons and ceremonies are a matter of drudgery and monotony. For him Mr. Colley, a parson, is not more than a juggler and a bare-headed clown. But in **Fire Down Below**, one can see a drastic change in Talbot. He comes all the way to India to marry Miss. Chumley, only to obey a Bishop's order. Being a member of the powerful parliament, Talbot unhesitatingly comes to India to marry Miss Chumley. His view of a parson is completely changed.

Initially, Talbot looks at the seamen as mere servants of the Crown. He fails even to imagine himself walking besides a seaman. But one can see a bond of friendship flourishing between Talbot and Summers in **Close Quarters** and reaching fruition in **Fire Down Below**. They are inseparable friends and share joys and sorrows of each other. In **Fire Down Below**, it is evident that Talbot's attitude is thoroughly changed, as he himself wears the naval rig. Talbot contemptible of the common people at the beginning goes to the Pikes, to relieve their girls of sea-sickness.

Talbot goes to Mr. Prettiman, to turn him end to end, to find some solace to the suffering man, while turning him 'end for end', both Talbot and Benet wound his leg fatally. Ironically or rather evidently, Talbot's attempts to turn him end for end pay off, as Prettiman records dramatically. While turning him end for end, Talbot provides the physical help necessary to get some relief. But, it is Mr. Talbot, who turns himself end for end. His mind and spirit are at loggerheads and need proper change. When Mr. Prettiman realises that Talbot needs to be reformed and turned end for end, he turns Talbot and puts him in a

proper and necessary way to make his life meaningful and worthwhile. Mr. Prettiman gives him a glimpse of the absolute and the myriads of fire of love; that Talbot decides to put himself in a proper track of thinking and life as he indulges in introspection. Mrs. Prettiman provokes him to do something meaningful and needful instead of ruminating over the past, as she describes the journey as mere physical journey, but not a paradigm or metaphor. Talbot should draw lessons according to her from the voyage and turn himself end for end to put himself in a proper direction.

Golding for the first time successfully has written a story with no tragedy at the end. He leaves the question unanswered as to what made Wheeler to commit suicide. The mysticism and leaving things in between, all fall in line with Golding's style. Golding for the first time has attempted to create a rounded woman character in his sea trilogy. Mrs. Prettiman is the only female character fully developed by Golding in all his works. She is capable of love, dignity, grace, determination and sacrifice. It is true that Golding somehow allowed himself to portray Mr. Talbot in the vein of too much romantic hero, but his love for Chumley is unquestionable.

The flame and the lanterns symbolise the benign passion in Talbot to undergo transformation. In Colley's cabin he comes across a mysterious experience because of the eyebolt, holding which Colley willed himself to death. Mysterious voices start crying from within, holding him responsible for the misery of Colley and Wheeler. Further, the leaping and sinking flame also acts as a symbol to externalise the internal trauma of Talbot. His wavering bent of mind is symbolically suggested through the lanterns and the criss-cross of light and darkness. In the face of dilemma and dichotomy, he observes the lanterns performing strange balletic dance. But in the light of security and constancy, the lanterns are observed still. After his encounter with Mr. and Mrs. Prettiman, he returns to his room and finds the lantern emanating savage light as against the candle which he had. The flames and fire symbolise the wisdom and the fire of love that is sparked off in him. Even, weather, the sudden shifts in the sky and the sea are intended by Golding to enact the intentions of Talbot. They stand testimony to his dichotomy and dilemma.

Though Talbot's love for Chumley is undoubtedly boundless, he is sometimes driven by 'a Dionysian Energy' which makes him an excessively romantic love sick fool. Mr. Talbot, is so passionate in his love for Miss. Chumley, that there is a lurking desire of passion, in his expression of love. He is undaunted and daring, in their second meeting, when he kisses her openly leaving dignity and decorum to the four winds. Boyd observes that:

“Beneath the civilised virtue of Talbot's belief in romantic love, exclusive and undying, there is the naked truth of desire, which is capricious and lawless, a Dionysian energy”

Sammy Mountjoy in **Free Fall**, is attracted by the musk of the white body of Beatrice. He says that his love for Beatrice is chaste and pure “But the musk won” as he sexually exploits Beatrice careless of her emotions and feelings. Even Talbot is overpowered by the beauty of Ms. Chumley and sees her very much “breathing lavender”. But in the case of Talbot lavender cannot win because he is under the supervision and treatment of people like Summers and the Prettimans.

To conclude, Golding has emerged successful in getting Captain Anderson’s ship out of the Atlantic and the protagonist Mr. Talbot out of the doldrums. A hypocrite and a snob of first class, Talbot purges himself of all his follies. From doldrums to the null-point, he makes violent efforts to move towards the fire of love as he visualises the fire down below, the fire of love and sacrifice and prepares himself to surrender to the mystery of the cosmos “to which man would be admitted. From Doldrums in **Rites of Passage** to Null-point in **Close Quarters** and End for End in **Fire Down below**, Talbot turns himself upside down from being his old self to the new self who is capable of love, sacrifice and service. Thus Golding’s vision also turns end to end from portraying the vicious human self to the self less love and noble soul.

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