A Passage to India

E. M Foster

Biography of E.M. Forster

Edward Morgan Forster was born in London on the first day of 1879. His father, an architect from a strict evangelical family, died of consumption soon after Forster was born, leaving him to be raised by his mother and paternal great-aunt. Because his mother was from a more liberal and somewhat irresponsible background, Forster's home life was rather tense. He was raised in the household of Rooksnest, which inspired Howards End. Forster was educated as a dayboy at the Tonbridge School, Kent, an experience responsible for a good deal of his later criticism of the English public school system. He then attended King's College, Cambridge, which greatly broadened his intellectual interests and provided him with his first exposure to Mediterranean culture, which counterbalanced the more rigid English culture in which he was raised.

Forster became a writer shortly after graduating from King's College. His first novels were products of that particular time -- stories about the changing social conditions during the decline of Victorianism. However, these earlier works differed from Forster's contemporaries in their more colloquial style and established the author's early conviction that men and women should keep in touch with the land to cultivate their imaginations. He developed this theme in his first novels, Where Angels Fear to Tread (1905) and The Longest Journey (1907), followed by the comic novel A Room With a View (1908), which concerns the experience of a young British woman, Lucy Honeychurch, in Italy.

However, Forster's first major success was Howards End (1910), a novel centered on the alliance between the liberal Schlegel sisters and Ruth Wilcox, the proprietor of the titular house, against her husband, Henry Wilcox, an enterprising businessman. The novel ends with the marriage of Henry Wilcox to Margaret

Schlegel, who brings him back to Howards End, reestablishing the Wilcox land link. When composing this novel, Forster was part of the Bloomsbury Group, a set of unconventional British bohemian thinkers that included Virginia Woolf, John Maynard Keynes, Dora Carrington and Lytton Strachey.

Forster spent three wartime years in Alexandria doing civilian work and visited India twice. After he returned to England, inspired by his experience in India, he wrote A Passage to India (1924). The novel examines the British colonial occupation of India, but rather than developing a political focus, explores the friendship between an Indian doctor and British schoolmaster during a trial against the doctor, based on a false charge. A Passage to India is the last novel Forster published during his lifetime, but two other works remained, the incomplete Arctic Summer, and the unpublished complete novel Maurice, which was written circa 1914, but published in 1971 after Forster's death. Forster specifically requested the novel be published only after his death due to its overt homosexual theme.

Although Forster published no novels after A Passage to India, he continued to write short stories and essays until his death in 1970. He published several anthologies, including The Celestial Omnibus (1914) and The Eternal Moment (1928), two collections of short stories, Abinger Harvest (1936), a collection of poetry, essays and fiction, and several non-fiction works. Forster also wrote the libretto to the Benjamin Britten opera "Billy Budd." The essays by Forster as well as his frequent lectures on political topics established his reputation as a liberal thinker and strong advocate of democracy. Forster was awarded membership in the Order of Companions of Honor in 1953 and received the Order of Merit from Queen Elizabeth in 1969. He died in June of 1970 after a series of strokes.

Today, many people know of E.M. Forster due to the many film adaptations of his work. Titles by Forster that are immortalized not only on the page but also on film include A Passage to India (1984), A Room with a View (1986), Where Angels Fear to Tread (1991), and Howards End (1991). It is ironic that so many of his titles were made into movies, many with great success, as throughout his life he remained adamant about the difficulty of adapting books to stage or film. In 1919,

he contributed regularly to the London literary magazine "The Athenaeum", often criticizing various attempts to convert written work to the stage. For him, the individual experience of reading a book was something that could not be captured in another form of media. Despite his beliefs, many of the film adaptations of Forster's work were met with widespread enthusiasm and praise, including multiple Academy Award nominations.

Summary

E.M. Forster's A Passage to India concerns the relations between the English and the native population of India during the colonial period in which Britain ruled India. The novel takes place primarily in Chandrapore, a city along the Ganges River notable only for the nearby Marabar caves. The main character of the novel is Dr. Aziz, a Moslem doctor in Chandrapore and widower. After he is summoned to the Civil Surgeon's home only to be promptly ignored, Aziz visits a local Islamic temple where he meets Mrs. Moore, an elderly British woman visiting her son, Mr. Heaslop, who is the City Magistrate. Although Aziz reprimands her for not taking her shoes off in the temple before realizing she has in fact observed this rule, the two soon find that they have much in common and he escorts her back to the club.

Back at the club, Mrs. Moore meets her companion, Adela Quested, who will likely marry her son. Adela complains that they have seen nothing of India, but rather English customs replicated abroad. Although a few persons make racist statements about Indians, Mr. Turton, the Collector, proposes having a Bridge Party (to bridge the gulf between east and west). When Mrs. Moore tells her son, Ronny, about Aziz, he reprimands her for associating with an Indian. When Mr. Turton issues the invitations to the Bridge Party, the invitees suspect that this is a political move, for the Collector would not behave so cordially without a motive, but accept the invitations despite the suspicion.

For Adela and Mrs. Moore, the Bridge Party is a failure, for only a select few of the English guests behave well toward the Indians. Among these is Mr. Fielding,

the schoolmaster at the Government College, who suggests that Adela meet Aziz. Mrs. Moore scolds her son for being impolite to the Indians, but Ronny Heaslop feels that he is not in India to be kind, for there are more important things to do; this offends her sense of Christian charity.

Aziz accepts Fielding's invitation to tea with Adela, Mrs. Moore, and Professor Narayan Godbole. During tea they discuss the Marabar Caves, while Fielding takes Mrs. Moore to see the college. Ronny arrives to find Adela alone with Aziz and Godbole, and later chastises Fielding for leaving an Englishwoman alone with two Indians. However, he reminds Ronny that Adela is capable of making her own decisions. Aziz plans a picnic at the Marabar Caves for Miss Quested and Mrs. Moore. Adela tells Ronny that she will not marry him, but he nevertheless suggests that they take a car trip to see Chandrapore. The Nawab Bahadur, an important local figure, agrees to take them. During the trip, the car swerves into a tree and Miss Derek, an Englishwoman passing by at the time, agrees to take them back to town. However, she snubs the Nawab Bahadur and his chauffeur. Adela speaks to Ronny, and tells him that she was foolish to say that they should not be married.

Both Aziz and Godbole fall sick after the party at Mr. Fielding's home, so Fielding visits Aziz and they discuss the state of politics in India. Aziz shows Fielding a picture of his wife, a significant event considering his Islamic background and an important demonstration of their friendship.

Aziz plans the expedition to the Marabar Caves, considering every minute detail because he does not wish to offend the English ladies. During the day when they are to embark. Mohammed Latif, a friend of Aziz, bribes Adela's servant, Antony, not to go on the expedition, for he serves as a spy for Ronny Heaslop. Although Aziz, Adela and Mrs. Moore arrive to the train station on time, Fielding and Godbole miss the train because of Godbole's morning prayers. Adela and Aziz discuss her marriage, and she fears she will become a narrow-minded Anglo-Indian such as the other wives of British officials. When they reach the caves, a distinct

echo in one of them frightens Mrs. Moore, who decides she must leave immediately. The echo terrifies her, for it gives her the sense that the universe is chaotic and has no order.

Aziz and Adela continue to explore the caves, and Adela realizes that she does not love Ronny. However, she does not think that this is reason enough to break off her engagement. Adela leaves Aziz, who goes into a cave to smoke, but when he exits he finds their guide alone and asleep. Aziz searches for Adela, but only finds her broken field glasses. Finally he finds Fielding, who arrived at the cave in Miss Derek's care, but he does not know where Adela is. When the group returns to Chandrapore, Aziz is arrested for assaulting Adela.

Fielding speaks to the Collector about the charge, and claims that Adela is mad and Aziz must be innocent. The Collector feels that this is inevitable, for disaster always occurs when the English and Indians interact socially. Fielding requests that he see Adela, but McBryde, the police superintendent, denies this request. Fielding acts as Aziz's advocate, explaining such things as why Aziz would have the field glasses. Aziz hires as his lawyer Armitrao, a Hindu who is notoriously anti-British. Godbole leaves Chandrapore to start a high school in Central India.

The Anglo-Indians rally to Miss Quested's defense and call a meeting to discuss the trial. Fielding attends, and makes the mistake of actually referring to her by name. The Collector advises all to behave cautiously. When Ronny enters, Fielding does not stand as a sign of respect. Mr. Turton demands an apology, but Fielding merely resigns from the club and claims he will resign from his post if Aziz is found guilty.

Adela remains in the McBryde's bungalow, where the men are too respectful and the women too sympathetic. She wishes to see Mrs. Moore, who kept away. Ronny tells her that Fielding wrote her a letter to her pleading Aziz's case. Adela admits

to Ronny that she has made a mistake and that Aziz is innocent. When Adela sees Mrs. Moore, she is morose and detached. She knows that Aziz is innocent and tells Adela that directly. Mrs. Moore wishes to leave India, and Ronny agrees, for she is doing no one any good by remaining. Lady Mellanby, the wife of the Lieutenant-Governor, secures Mrs. Moore quick passage out of India.

During the trial, the Indians in the crowd jeer Adela for her appearance, and Mahmoud Ali, one of Aziz's lawyers, claims that Mrs. Moore was sent away because she would clear Aziz's name. When McBryde asks Adela whether Aziz followed her, she admits that she made a mistake. Major Callendar attempts to stop the proceedings on medical grounds, but Mr. Das, the judge, releases Aziz. After the trial, Adela leaves the courtroom alone as a riot foments. Fielding finds her and escorts her to the college where she will be safe. Disaster is averted only when Dr. Panna Lal, who was to testify for the prosecution, publicly apologizes to Aziz and secures the release of Nureddin, a prisoner rumored to have been tortured by the English.

At the college, Fielding asks Adela why she would make her charge, but she cannot give a definite answer. He suggests that she was either assaulted by the guide or had a hallucination. Adela seems to believe that she had a hallucination, for she thinks she had a hallucination of a marriage proposal when there was none. Fielding warns her that Aziz is very bitter. Ronny arrives and tells them that his mother died at sea.

After a victory banquet for Aziz, he and Fielding discuss his future plans. Fielding implores Aziz not to sue Adela, for it will show him to be a gentleman, but Aziz claims that he is fully anti-British now. Fielding reminds Aziz what a momentous sacrifice Adela made, for now she does not have the support nor friendship of the other English officials. Fielding tells Aziz that Mrs. Moore is dead, but he does not believe him. The death of Mrs. Moore leads to suspicion that Ronny had her killed for trying to defend Aziz. Although there was no wrongdoing in the situation, Ronny nevertheless feels guilty for treating his mother so poorly. Adela decides to leave India and not marry Ronny.

Fielding gains new respect for Adela for her humility and loyalty as he attempts to persuade Aziz not to take action against Adela. Adela leaves India and vows to visit Mrs. Moore's other children (and Ronny's step-siblings) Stella and Ralph. Aziz hears rumors and begins to suspect that Fielding had an affair with Adela. He believes these rumors out of his cynicism concerning human nature. Because of this suspicion, the friendship between Aziz and Fielding begins to cool, even after Fielding denies the affair to Aziz. Fielding himself leaves Chandrapore to travel, while Aziz remains convinced that Fielding will marry Adela Quested.

Forster resumes the novel some time later in the town of Mau, where Godbole now works. Godbole currently takes part in a Hindu birthing ceremony with Aziz, who now works in this region. Fielding visits Mau; he has married, and Aziz assumes that his bride is Miss Quested. Aziz stopped corresponding with Fielding when he received a letter which stated that Fielding married someone Aziz knows. However, he did not marry Adela, as Aziz assumes, but rather Mrs. Moore's daughter, Stella. When Fielding meets with Aziz and clears up this misunderstanding, Aziz remains angry, for he has assumed for such a long time that Fielding married his enemy.

Nevertheless, Aziz goes to the guest house where Fielding stays and finds Ralph Moore there. His anger at Fielding cools when Ralph invokes the memory of Mrs. Moore, and Aziz even takes Ralph boating on the river so that they can observe the local Hindu ceremonies. Their boat, however, crashes into one carrying Fielding and Stella. After this comical event, the ill will between Aziz and Fielding fully dissipates. However, they realize that because of their different cultures they cannot remain friends and part from one another cordially.

Character List

Dr. Aziz

A Moslem doctor living in Chandrapore at the beginning of the novel, he is a widower with three children who meets Mrs. Moore, an elderly English widow who has three children herself and becomes friends with her. Although he is generous and loving toward his English friends, including Mrs. Moore and Cyril Fielding, after Adela Quested accuses him of assault he becomes bitter, vindictive and notoriously anti-British. A primary concern of A Passage to India is the shift in Dr. Aziz's views of the British from accommodating and even a bit submissive to an aggressively anti-colonial stance.

Cyril Fielding

The schoolmaster of Government College, Fielding stands alone among the British officials in India, for he is one of the few to treat the Indians with a sense of decency and respect. Fielding is an individualist who has no great allegiance to any particular group, but rather to his core set of liberal values and sense of justice. This quality allows Fielding to break with the English who support Adela Quested's charges against Aziz and side with the Indians in support of him. However, the events surrounding Aziz's trial cause Fielding to become disenchanted with India, despite his affection for the nation, and motivate him to leave India and return to resume a different post.

Adela Quested

Adela Quested arrives in India with the intention of marrying Ronny Heaslop, but changes her mind several times and eventually realizes that she does not love him and cannot marry him. She is a woman of conflicting character traits: although an intellectual, she is short-sighted. Although she foolishly accuses Dr. Aziz of assaulting her in the Marabar Caves, she finds the courage to withdraw the charge. She also suffers from hallucinations that are symptomatic of her somewhat

unstable personality. However, Forster finally reveals her to be a woman of character and decency who accepts the difficulties she suffers.

Mrs. Moore

An elderly woman with three children, Mrs. Moore visits India with Adela Quested to see her son, Ronny Heaslop. Mrs. Moore is the paragon of Christian decency and kindness, but she suffers from anxiety concerning her own mortality. During the expedition to the Marabar Caves her confidence in the order of the universe is shaken by an echo that she hears in one of the caves. Afterwards, Mrs. Moore becomes sullen and depressed. When Ronny suspects that she will aid Aziz in his defense, he arranges for Mrs. Moore to leave India. On the journey home, she dies from heat exhaustion.

Professor Narayan Godbole

A Deccani Brahmin who is a professor at the college in Chandrapore, Godbole represents Hindu philosophies in A Passage to India. He is a man of calm character and utter repose, showing no worry for the events around him, no matter how significant. He leaves Chandrapore to start a high school in Central India after the trial of Aziz, who later joins him there.

Ronny Heaslop

The son of Mrs. Moore from her first marriage, Ronny typifies the "sun-dried bureaucrat" and Anglo-Indian. He is condescending and cruel toward the Indians, believing that he is not in India to be kind, but rather to rule over the nation. He becomes a martyr during the trial because of the ill treatment of Adela, but shows himself to be manipulative and callous when he pushes to have his mother leave India when he fears she may hurt the prosecution's case.

Mahmoud Ali

This friend of Aziz serves as one of the lawyers for his defense, and takes a defiant anti-British stance. His behavior during the trial is dangerously aggressive, however, and he threatens to provoke a riot after Aziz's acquittal. Later he refuses to clear up the misunderstanding concerning Fielding's marriage to Stella Moore.

Antony

One of Adela's servants, he was to accompany Adela and Mrs. Moore to the Marabar Caves, but since he was a spy for Ronny Heaslop, Mohammed Latif bribes him not to go. Later he follows Adela as she leaves India and attempts to blackmail her.

Armitrao

Aziz hires this Hindu attorney as his defense lawyer. Since Armitrao is known for his anti-British attitudes, this move highlights the racial and political overtones of Aziz's trial.

Nawab Bahadur

A distinguished local resident in Chandrapore, he is well-respected and admired among the Indians. However, Miss Derek snubs him when his car crashes into a tree while he takes Adela and Ronny on a tour of Chandrapore.

Mrs. Bhattacharya

An Indian woman whom Mrs. Moore meets during the Bridge Party, Mrs. Bhattacharya postpones a trip to Calcutta to have tea with Mrs. Moore, but abruptly cancels at the last minute.

Major Callendar

Major Callendar is the civil surgeon in Chandrapore and Aziz's boss. He also takes part in the trial against Aziz, attempting to stop Adela's confession on medical grounds.

Mrs. Callendar

The wife of Major Callendar, she typifies the Anglo-Indian mindset, openly dismissing the Indians as uncultured inferiors.

Ram Chand

He is one of Aziz's friends with whom he discusses the consequences of attending the Bridge Party.

Mr. Das

The brother of Mrs. Bhattacharya and Ronny's assistant, he is the judge who presides over the trial of Aziz. After the trial, he approaches Aziz to ask him to write for his journal, which is primarily for Hindus.

Miss Derek

A younger Englishwoman, she assists Ronny and Adela after the Nawab Bahadur's car crashes, but snubs the Nawab Bahadur. Later she brings Fielding to the Marabar Caves after he misses the train.

Sir Gilbert

The Lieutenant-Governor of the province, he visits Chandrapore after the trial to deal with the problems of racial discord precipitated by the charges against Aziz.

Mr. Graysford

He is one of the local missionaries in Chandrapore.

Hamidullah

This friend of Aziz, educated at Cambridge, tells Aziz that one can only be friends with an English person outside of India.

Hamidullah Begum

The wife of Hamidullah, she is a distant aunt of Aziz.

Mr. Haq

He is the police inspector who arrests Aziz after

Mr. Harris

He is the Eurasian chauffeur for the Nawab Bahadur who crashes the car into a tree and is snubbed by Miss Derek.

Panna Lal

A friend of Aziz who was to testify for the prosecution at his trial, he makes a public apology to Aziz and secures the release of Nureddin after rumors circulate that he was being tortured by the English officials.

Mohammed Latif

A friend of Aziz, he bribes Antony not to attend the expedition to Chandrapore.

Mrs. Lesley

This friend of Mrs. Callendar takes Aziz's tonga when he arrives at the Callendar's house upon the Major's request.

Colonel Maggs

The Political Agent in Mau, he is the new adversary of Aziz who keeps him under suspicion because of the events in Chandrapore.

Lady Mellanby

The wife of the Lieutenant-Governor, she aids Mrs. Moore in her attempt to leave India by offering her own cabin on a ship traveling to England.

Mr. McBryde

The District Superintendent of Police in Chandrapore, he is the most reflective and educated of the Chandrapore officials, but like the rest of them he has stern prejudices against Indians. He conducts the prosecution of Aziz.

Syed Mohammed

He is the assistant engineer in Chandrapore and a confidant of Aziz.

Ralph Moore

The youngest son of Mrs. Moore, he accompanies his sister and Fielding on their travels around India. Aziz behaves rudely to him, but soon relents and takes Ralph on the nearby river for a tour of Mau.

Stella Moore

The daughter of Mrs. Moore, she marries Fielding after he leaves India, a circumstance that causes Aziz to believe that he has married Adela Quested instead.

Nureddin

This Indian is rumored to have been held and tortured by the police during the trial of Aziz, but is released unharmed.

Rafi

The nephew of Syed Mohammed, he proposes that something suspicious occurred during Fielding's party because both Aziz and Godbole fell ill afterward.

Mr. Sorley

He is one of the local missionaries in Chandrapore.

Mr. Turton

He is the local Collector who proposes a Bridge Party for the Indians, and other than Fielding is the only British official who treats the Indian guests well during that event.

Themes

The Difficulty of English-Indian Friendship

A Passage to India begins and ends by posing the question of whether it is possible for an Englishman and an Indian to ever be friends, at least within the context of British colonialism. Forster uses this question as a framework to explore the

general issue of Britain's political control of India on a more personal level, through the friendship between Aziz and Fielding. At the beginning of the novel, Aziz is scornful of the English, wishing only to consider them comically or ignore them completely. Yet the intuitive connection Aziz feels with Mrs. Moore in the mosque opens him to the possibility of friendship with Fielding. Through the first half of the novel, Fielding and Aziz represent a positive model of liberal humanism: Forster suggests that British rule in India could be successful and respectful if only English and Indians treated each other as Fielding and Aziz treat each other—as worthy individuals who connect through frankness, intelligence, and good will.

Yet in the aftermath of the novel's climax—Adela's accusation that Aziz attempted to assault her and her subsequent disavowal of this accusation at the trial—Aziz and Fielding's friendship falls apart. The strains on their relationship are external in nature, as Aziz and Fielding both suffer from the tendencies of their cultures. Aziz tends to let his imagination run away with him and to let suspicion harden into a grudge. Fielding suffers from an English literalism and rationalism that blind him to Aziz's true feelings and make Fielding too stilted to reach out to Aziz through conversations or letters. Furthermore, their respective Indian and English communities pull them apart through their mutual stereotyping. As we see at the end of the novel, even the landscape of India seems to oppress their friendship. Forster's final vision of the possibility of English-Indian friendship is a pessimistic one, yet it is qualified by the possibility of friendship on English soil, or after the liberation of India. As the landscape itself seems to imply at the end of the novel, such a friendship may be possible eventually, but "not yet."

The Unity of All Living Things

Though the main characters of A Passage to India are generally Christian or Muslim, Hinduism also plays a large thematic role in the novel. The aspect of Hinduism with which Forster is particularly concerned is the religion's ideal of all living things, from the lowliest to the highest, united in love as one. This vision of the universe appears to offer redemption to India through mysticism, as individual differences disappear into a peaceful collectivity that does not recognize hierarchies. Individual blame and intrigue is forgone in favor of attention to

higher, spiritual matters. Professor Godbole, the most visible Hindu in the novel, is Forster's mouthpiece for this idea of the unity of all living things. Godbole alone remains aloof from the drama of the plot, refraining from taking sides by recognizing that all are implicated in the evil of Marabar. Mrs. Moore, also, shows openness to this aspect of Hinduism. Though she is a Christian, her experience of India has made her dissatisfied with what she perceives as the smallness of Christianity. Mrs. Moore appears to feel a great sense of connection with all living creatures, as evidenced by her respect for the wasp in her bedroom.

Yet, through Mrs. Moore, Forster also shows that the vision of the oneness of all living things can be terrifying. As we see in Mrs. Moore's experience with the echo that negates everything into "boum" in Marabar, such oneness provides unity but also makes all elements of the universe one and the same—a realization that, it is implied, ultimately kills Mrs. Moore. Godbole is not troubled by the idea that negation is an inevitable result when all things come together as one. Mrs. Moore, however, loses interest in the world of relationships after envisioning this lack of distinctions as a horror. Moreover, though Forster generally endorses the Hindu idea of the oneness of all living things, he also suggests that there may be inherent problems with it. Even Godbole, for example, seems to recognize that something—if only a stone—must be left out of the vision of oneness if the vision is to cohere. This problem of exclusion is, in a sense, merely another manifestation of the individual difference and hierarchy that Hinduism promises to overcome.

The "Muddle" of India

Forster takes great care to strike a distinction between the ideas of "muddle" and "mystery" in A Passage to India. "Muddle" has connotations of dangerous and disorienting disorder, whereas "mystery" suggests a mystical, orderly plan by a spiritual force that is greater than man. Fielding, who acts as Forster's primary mouthpiece in the novel, admits that India is a "muddle," while figures such as Mrs. Moore and Godbole view India as a mystery. The muddle that is India in the novel appears to work from the ground up: the very landscape and architecture of the countryside is formless, and the natural life of plants and animals defies identification. This muddled quality to the environment is mirrored in the makeup

of India's native population, which is mixed into a muddle of different religious, ethnic, linguistic, and regional groups.

The muddle of India disorients Adela the most; indeed, the events at the Marabar Caves that trouble her so much can be seen as a manifestation of this muddle. By the end of the novel, we are still not sure what actually has happened in the caves. Forster suggests that Adela's feelings about Ronny become externalized and muddled in the caves, and that she suddenly experiences these feelings as something outside of her. The muddle of India also affects Aziz and Fielding's friendship, as their good intentions are derailed by the chaos of cross-cultural signals.

Though Forster is sympathetic to India and Indians in the novel, his overwhelming depiction of India as a muddle matches the manner in which many Western writers of his day treated the East in their works. As the noted critic Edward Said has pointed out, these authors' "orientalizing" of the East made Western logic and capability appear self-evident, and, by extension, portrayed the West's domination of the East as reasonable or even necessary.

The Negligence of British Colonial Government

Though A Passage to India is in many ways a highly symbolic, or even mystical, text, it also aims to be a realistic documentation of the attitudes of British colonial officials in India. Forster spends large sections of the novel characterizing different typical attitudes the English hold toward the Indians whom they control. Forster's satire is most harsh toward Englishwomen, whom the author depicts as overwhelmingly racist, self-righteous, and viciously condescending to the native population. Some of the Englishmen in the novel are as nasty as the women, but Forster more often identifies Englishmen as men who, though condescending and unable to relate to Indians on an individual level, are largely well-meaning and invested in their jobs. For all Forster's criticism of the British manner of governing India, however, he does not appear to question the right of the British Empire to rule India. He suggests that the British would be well served by becoming kinder

and more sympathetic to the Indians with whom they live, but he does not suggest that the British should abandon India outright. Even this lesser critique is never overtly stated in the novel, but implied through biting satire.

Motifs

The Echo

The echo begins at the Marabar Caves: first Mrs. Moore and then Adela hear the echo and are haunted by it in the weeks to come. The echo's sound is "boum"—a sound it returns regardless of what noise or utterance is originally made. This negation of difference embodies the frightening flip side of the seemingly positive Hindu vision of the oneness and unity of all living things. If all people and things become the same thing, then no distinction can be made between good and evil. No value system can exist. The echo plagues Mrs. Moore until her death, causing her to abandon her beliefs and cease to care about human relationships. Adela, however, ultimately escapes the echo by using its message of impersonality to help her realize Aziz's innocence.

Eastern and Western Architecture

Forster spends time detailing both Eastern and Western architecture in A Passage to India. Three architectural structures—though one is naturally occurring—provide the outline for the book's three sections, "Mosque," "Caves," and "Temple." Forster presents the aesthetics of Eastern and Western structures as indicative of the differences of the respective cultures as a whole. In India, architecture is confused and formless: interiors blend into exterior gardens, earth and buildings compete with each other, and structures appear unfinished or drab. As such, Indian architecture mirrors the muddle of India itself and what Forster sees as the Indians' characteristic inattention to form and logic. Occasionally, however, Forster takes a positive view of Indian architecture. The mosque in Part I and temple in Part III represent the promise of Indian openness, mysticism, and friendship. Western architecture, meanwhile, is described during Fielding's stop in Venice on his way to England. Venice's structures, which Fielding sees as

representative of Western architecture in general, honor form and proportion and complement the earth on which they are built. Fielding reads in this architecture the self-evident correctness of Western reason—an order that, he laments, his Indian friends would not recognize or appreciate.

Godbole's Song

At the end of Fielding's tea party, Godbole sings for the English visitors a Hindu song, in which a milkmaid pleads for God to come to her or to her people. The song's refrain of "Come! come" recurs throughout A Passage to India, mirroring the appeal for the entire country of salvation from something greater than itself. After the song, Godbole admits that God never comes to the milkmaid. The song greatly disheartens Mrs. Moore, setting the stage for her later spiritual apathy, her simultaneous awareness of a spiritual presence and lack of confidence in spiritualism as a redeeming force. Godbole seemingly intends his song as a message or lesson that recognition of the potential existence of a God figure can bring the world together and erode differences—after all, Godbole himself sings the part of a young milkmaid. Forster uses the refrain of Godbole's song, "Come! come," to suggest that India's redemption is yet to come.

Symbols

The Marabar Caves

The Marabar Caves represent all that is alien about nature. The caves are older than anything else on the earth and embody nothingness and emptiness—a literal void in the earth. They defy both English and Indians to act as guides to them, and their strange beauty and menace unsettles visitors. The caves' alien quality also has the power to make visitors such as Mrs. Moore and Adela confront parts of themselves or the universe that they have not previously recognized. The all-reducing echo of the caves causes Mrs. Moore to see the darker side of her spirituality—a waning commitment to the world of relationships and a growing ambivalence about God. Adela confronts the shame and embarrassment of her realization that she and Ronny are not actually attracted to each other, and that

she might be attracted to no one. In this sense, the caves both destroy meaning, in reducing all utterances to the same sound, and expose or narrate the unspeakable, the aspects of the universe that the caves' visitors have not yet considered.

The Green Bird

Just after Adela and Ronny agree for the first time, in Chapter VII, to break off their engagement, they notice a green bird sitting in the tree above them. Neither of them can positively identify the bird. For Adela, the bird symbolizes the unidentifiable quality of all of India: just when she thinks she can understand any aspect of India, that aspect changes or disappears. In this sense, the green bird symbolizes the muddle of India. In another capacity, the bird points to a different tension between the English and Indians. The English are obsessed with knowledge, literalness, and naming, and they use these tools as a means of gaining and maintaining power. The Indians, in contrast, are more attentive to nuance, undertone, and the emotions behind words. While the English insist on labeling things, the Indians recognize that labels can blind one to important details and differences. The unidentifiable green bird suggests the incompatibility of the English obsession with classification and order with the shifting quality of India itself—the land is, in fact, a "hundred Indias" that defy labeling and understanding.

The Wasp

The wasp appears several times in A Passage to India, usually in conjunction with the Hindu vision of the oneness of all living things. The wasp is usually depicted as the lowest creature the Hindus incorporate into their vision of universal unity. Mrs. Moore is closely associated with the wasp, as she finds one in her room and is gently appreciative of it. Her peaceful regard for the wasp signifies her own openness to the Hindu idea of collectivity, and to the mysticism and indefinable quality of India in general. However, as the wasp is the lowest creature that the Hindus visualize, it also represents the limits of the Hindu vision. The vision is not a panacea, but merely a possibility for unity and understanding in India.

Social Picture in "A passage to India"

A passage to India is a realistic portrayal of the contemporary Indian society of the colonization period. It gives more or less an accurate picture of life in India in the 1920's. This novel gives us the fruitful picture of local customs and beliefs, Hindu – Muslim conflict and historically true account of the conflict of the cultures of the East and West which were prevalent in that society.

One of the most important issues in that is portrayed in A Passage to India is the arrogance of the British ruling class in conflict with the native pride of the Indian people. The ruling people always feel superior to themselves and tries to keep themselves aloof from the native and the result is the hatred and bitterness that are generated in the minds of the native people against the ruling class.

The beginning of the novel reveals the wide gulf existing between the white rulers and the brown Indians. The town of Chandrapur is divided into two parts, the English civil station and the native section. The civil station shares nothing with the city except the overarching sky. The railway line divided the European locality from the Indian locality. Thus the city is tensed with antagonism, of class and race. They separate themselves from the population, declaring their own superiority over the masses as they build their walled compounds content to be out of sight and sound of any Indians, with the exception of their servants (of course) (Kurinan 44). They seek to make Britain in India, rather than accepting and glorifying the resident cultures. They remain strangers to it, practically living in a separate country they provided for themselves, yet ruling one that they remained aloof from (Eldridge 170).

Forster depicts that there was no sign of friendship between the English and the Indians. At the very outset of the novel, Dr. Aziz shows his scornful attitude to the English, wishing only to consider them comically or ignore them completely. He shows his distrust by saying to Hamidullah "whether or not it is possible for Indians to be friends with Englishman." Another native contends that it is impossible but

Hamidullah believes that this friendship is only possible in England. He remembers how he was treated cordially by the English. But their attitude totally changed when the colonial rule is established. Aime Cesaire states, "it is simply the savage nature of colonization that changes man into their most primal state.

At that time the British people used to treat the Indians with disrespect. It is demonstrated by Major Calleneder's summon to Aziz and his wife's oblivious attitude towards Aziz. This sense of superiority had a tremendous impact on the native people and they remarked bad comments against them.

However, Miss Quested, Mrs. Moore and Fielding are among the minority of Britons who actually appreciated "the real India" We see in what way the Anglo-Indian think about the Indians when Adela expresses a wish to see the real India. One woman in the gathering says that when she was a nurse to Indians, she "remained sternly aloof from them." Nihal Singh says, " the British in India despise and ostracize Indians (Ibid)

The English officials and their wives are suspicious of Indians. They are furthermore distant and reserved in their behaviour towards the Indian. Mrs. Turton says "Britons are superior to everyone in India except one or two of the Rani's." The attitudes of the city Magistrate, Ronny Heaslop is typical of the entire white bureaucracy. He holds a low opinion about Indians and can't develop any understanding with them. He fulfills the characteristics of the administrative class. … caring only about his superiority over the Indians (Kurinan 43).

Any attempt of making friendship with ruling class results in disaster as it is seen when Dr. Aziz is accused for the suspect of following Miss Quested, none of the ruling class, with the exception of Fielding and Mrs. Moore, has the least doubt that Aziz is guilty. The collector takes the incident as confirming the view that the English and Indians should never try to become intimate socially because there is nothing "but disaster result when English people and Indians attempt to be intimate socially." On the incident of Aziz's arrest, the colonized people shows their hatred

which they cherished in their mind for many years. The Indian servants make no secret of their dislike for their English Masters.

Another important issue that was seen at that time was the mutual prejudices of Hindus and Moslems against each other. Nor are the relations between Hindus and Muslims very cordial. It is true they get closer to each other as a result of their common stand against the English on the occasion of the trial of Aziz. But otherwise the two communities are poles apart. Godbole reminds Aziz of cow-dung, and the rhythm of Hindu drums is uncongenial to Aziz. Aziz thinks that Hindus in general are slack and have no idea f society or punctuality. All illness proceeds from Hindus, says Haq. Syad Mahmoud describes Hindu religious fairs with biting scorn. The annual riots among Hindus and Muslems on the occasion of Mohurram prove to Ronny "that the British were necessary to India; there would certainly have been bloodshed without them." Godbole thinks it necessary to have another wash if he has been touched by Moslems at the time of a religious ceremony. In short, Hindus and Moslems represent two different cultures and cannot become one. Then there are the divisions among Hindus themselves. For instance, in the Hindu state of Mau, "the cleavage was between Brahman and non-Brahman; Moslems and English were quite out of the running. In short, the native Indian scene too offers a spectacle of social conflict and lack of understanding.

By analyzing the above discussion we can say that Forster's *A Passage to India* is the portrayal of the mutual prejudices of Hindus and Moslems against each other, The nationalist feelings of both the communities and their antagonism towards the English officials, the arrogance and the sense of racial superiority of the white people which were the prevalent issues of that time in India.

Racial and Cultural Conflict in A Passage to India

"Why can't we be friends now?" said the other, holding him affectionately. … But {the horses…the earth…the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House… didn't want it,} they said in their hundred voices, "No, not yet," and the sky said, "No, not there."

This extract is from the ending part of A Passage to India where meet two of the representatives of the British and the Indians who were friends early in the novel. The British one wants to reconcile but the whole situation opposes it. Thus it clarifies how evident the racial conflict was.

E.M. Forster's A Passage to India was written at a time when the end of the British colonial presence in India was becoming a very real possibility. And as a result, racial conflict between the British and the Indians was a recurrent happening in India.

As part of the ideology of colonialism, throughout the novel, the English demonstrate their belief that they are superior to the Indians.

"Forster draws an unforgettable picture of the tensions between colonial rulers and the Indian professional class (Critical Survey of Long Fiction.1141)."

The comments and treatment that the Indians receive from the English characters in the novel show the common attitude toward the Indians during this time.

In order to legitimize their colonizing India, not legally obtained, the British colonizers set up a "degenerated" image of native people partly through imagination

or misunderstanding The new coming British people in India are injected such notion by the early comers. Mrs. Turton tries to convince Mrs. Moore:

Don't forget that. You're superior to everyone in India except one or two of the Ranis, and they're on an equality.

Most of the English characters, especially females, always keep a neglecting distance from the Indians. For example, an English lady doesn't reply to Dr. Aziz's

"You are most welcome, ladies."

rather takes his carriage without asking him. Even,

"Indians are not allowed into the Chandrapore Club even as guests,"

On the contrary, the Indians have a differing attitude towards the English. Actually they want their association but the British don't. The action of the novel begins with the Indians' discussion on

"as to whether or no it is possible to be friends with an Englishman."(chaper 2).

But, the novel ends with the conclusion that it is not possible until the British leave India, as quoted in the beginning of our discussion.

The novel's main action begins after two English women's coming to visit India. They intend to know India through close observation. The Turtons arrange a "Bridge Party" in their honour in order "to bridge the gulf between East and West." But the irony is that the bridge attempt leads to misunderstanding and racial conflicts.

Actually cultural misunderstanding is an important reason behind the racial conflict. Differing cultural ideas and expectations regarding hospitality, social properties and the role of religion in daily life are responsible for misunderstandings between the English and the Muslim Indians, the English and the Hindu Indians, and between the Muslims and the Hindus.

The racial conflict reaches its climax in A Passage to India when Adela Quested accuses Dr. Aziz in court of attempting to seduce/rape her in Marabar Caves. It seems that Chandrapur is preparing for a war: it is divided into two groups. However, Fielding joins the Indians, for he believes and knows that the accusation is false.

Even their hostile attitude to each other becomes evident in the trial/court room. McBryde while presenting Aziz's crime, makes a strict racial comment generalizing the common tendency of the Indians as "Oriental Pathology",

"the darker races are physically attracted by the fairer, but not _vice versa_ this, not a matter for abuse, but just a fact which any scientific observer will confirm.

{However, this racial attack was not without a counter attack: Adela's physical structure is satirized by onme of the Indians

"Even when the lady is so uglier than the gentleman?"}

Actually, we find McBryde's predecessor in William Shakespeare's The Tempest where Prospero, a racist, treats Caliban in the same way accusing him of ravishing Miranda:

"…thou didst seek to violate

The honour of my child."

Longman Dictionary of Modern Literature sees Dr. Aziz episode as "a tragedy of racial tensions and antagonism" in the following quote:

The novel is essentially a tragedy of racial tensions and antagonism, in which the case of Dr. Aziz is a symbolic episode' (Longman, 2000:410).

In the novel, the British characters repeatedly mention the influence of the landscape and climate in forming the national characteristics. In this respect also they seem to be superior. The reviewer of Harcourt Brace published Forster's A Passage to India(1984) summarizes their Orientalist idea,

First, the idea that the climate forms the national characteristics. In the case of India, the characteristics is the colorless heat, that drives British crazy, and that make Indians "born" as the irrational. Second, the idea that the land represents its people, and vice versa.

{That is by birth, Oriental Indians are stereotypically considered to be exotic, sensual, passive, and backward, as opposed to the intellectual, civilized, progressive Westerners who have come to civilize and rule the Indians. }

To draw a conclusion of our discussion, racial conflict is one of dominant themes of A Passage to India. The final message of the novel is that though Aziz and Fielding want to be friends, historical circumstances prevent their friendship. Paul Armstrong suggests that A Passage to India reflects Forster's

"recognition of the impossibility of reconciling different ways of seeing"(365).

His argument is fairly accurate, for Forster leaves us a very uncertain ending. In colonial India, cultural difference indicates a kind of superiority or inferiority, the centre and the periphery, {the dominating and the dominated, order and disorder, the authentic and the inauthentic, the powerful and the powerless}m who cannot be reconciled. But in post-colonial world, this colonial mentality has been rooted out, and the central position of the West destructed by writers like Kiran Desai who with her novel The Inheritance of Loss(2006), challenges the dominance of the West and the "reality" of an orderly, civilized "center" told by the West.

Fosters Use of Symbolism in "A Passage to India"

"A passage to the India" contains different types of symbols. The principal symbols are the mosque, the caves and the temple. The subsidiary symbols are the ceremonies connected with the birth anniversary of Sri Krishna the figure of Mrs Moore the Punkhawallah the image of the wasp and the collision of boats.

In the first part of the novel we are brought to a mosque where an English old woman and a young Indian meet together. Being all treated by the Anglo Indians Aziz the Muslim doctor enter the mosque to get peace of mind. Similarly Mrs. Moore bored by the dull entertainment at the British club has escaped into the mosque. Thus both of them have entered the mosque to seek shelter from the oppressive surroundings. After conversation Mrs Moore finds that Aziz is a warm and sensitive man and ultimately an understanding of each occurs. This understanding of the heart in other words friendship is the dominant urge at this stage and expresses the most general meaning of the mosque symbol of the novel. The mosque with its serene beauty its combination of light and shade represents a belief in the oneness of God as well as oneness of India and therefore comes to symbolize a possibility of understanding and friendship between people of different races and colour. But this friendship established between the east and the west as represented by the friendship between Aziz and Ms Moore is undercut by the ironical message of the bridge party which proves to be a failure.

In the second part of the novel the Marabar caves stand for chaos darkness, mystery and evils. The dark and empty caves reveal the hollowness of life and the vaccum produces an echo that is frightening. The echo suggests a unity but it is a unity which does not have any qualities of love, goodness and understanding. It negates all their values.

The temple the last section containing the essence of the novel, stands for love, harmony and happiness. It opens with Godbole presiding over a festival the celebration of the birth of Sri Krishna in a temple at Mau during the monsoons.

Amid all the noise and confusion of celebration the god is born, symbolically, and love celebrated. In celebrating the birth of the god the Hindus led by the wise Brahmin Godbole assume that all creation is one and shares in joy. It is a vision of god as a universal friend who embraces all the people and things of this earth in his divine love.

To sum up, "A passage to the India" is a complex work of art based on the evil of the British imperialistic rule in India. In it the symbolic devices are very much important because they heighten the meaning of the novel.