



TREATMENT OF CROSS-CULTURAL FRIENDSHIP IN E.M.FOSTER'S A PASSAGE TO INDIA

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KEYWORDS :

Keeping a big nation as that of India with a population of varied culture, religion, language, ethnicity and caste and creed constantly under its sway demanded very many techniques from the imperial power. Hence, the British always sought to supplement their control of the Indian empire through a web of hegemonic practices involving subtle strategies of cultural manipulation. Knowledge of Indian culture, ideology, ethnology, ethnography, anthropology and the geography of India helped the British colonizers to build up a powerful discourse. Very often books of science, fiction, technology and even the Bible were used as epistemological techniques for control. Books of literature also helped furnish the bourgeois epistemological knowledge for colonialists. They were used to exploit the people intellectually. They were also used to shape the style of thoughts of the colonized. Colonial literature mostly reflects the attitude of colonial machinery and encompasses cruelty and violence. The literature misled natives by making them look for a Utopia and not the real world of bourgeois evil practices. Colonial texts usually evaded the issue of contributing to the decadence and decay of native values and ignored the skepticism of the natives towards the colonial forces that were oppressing them. *A Passage to India* depicts both the deterioration and the formation of relationships between Anglo-Indians and natives.

Forster demonstrates how these repeated misunderstandings become hardened into cultural stereotypes and are often used to justify the uselessness of attempts to bridge the cultural gulfs. Forster ends his novel *A Passage to India* with the reconciliation of Aziz and Fielding. The final message of the novel is that though Aziz and Fielding want to be friends, racial difference prevents their friendship. Even if the final lines of the novel are pessimistic, Forster does leave open the possibility of a cross-cultural friendship between Fielding and Aziz to a certain moment in the future.

Forster's message changes throughout the course of the novel. At the beginning of the novel, characters such as Fielding and Aziz are the evidence of Forster's belief that with goodwill, intelligence and respect, all individuals can be front one another. But, in the final scenes, the natural landscape of India itself seems to rise up and divide Aziz and Fielding from each other. Forster suggests that though men may be well-intentioned, circumstances such as cultural difference and the interference of others can conspire to prevent their union.

In the eyes of westerners, India was viewed as a mysterious, but enchanting place, and it was portrayed as a land of riches and a land of mystery. Such a view was especially harbored by Ms Adela Quested, who came "to see the real India" and looked forward for an adventure in India. Quested's "real India," which involved in interacting with and appreciating the natives, served as the antithesis to the India of the British expatriate, as symbolized in the Chandrapore Club, which was in accessible to Indians, as members or even guests. This club was regarded as the symbol of British aloofness among the populace of British India. However, there were some characters in this story like Adela Quested and Mrs. Moore, who wanted to treat the natives equally.

Foster discusses the possibility of interaction between the East and the West. The concept of the West on the East is that they are simply barbarians, uncultured and illiterates and meant to be ruled and controlled. The West considers the East as Orients and literally an

image of the "Other". The basic idea of orientalism is that east is what is not west but it is mysterious, holy, dark, strange, attractive and barbaric. In their concept and perception, The East is unreasonable and primitive people there are not themselves and therefore need to be ruled.

Right from the beginning till the end, "A Passage to India", picturizes India as a holy nation, known for its ageless history, ruled by the British people (the West). The meeting of Aziz and Mrs. Moore displays the distinction between two countries and civilization, in general the Eastern and the Western and the upper hand of one over the other. West cannot identify, understand and agree with the perfection of the East. The British fail to agree with India and Indians that they are perfect in their own style and tradition, on whom the West (British) is just enforcing its power and strength in a brutal manner.

A Passage to India is set at the beginning of India's movement towards independence, in a time when "Congress abandoned its policy of co-operation with the British Raj to follow Ghandi's revolutionary call for non-violent revolution". (Wolpert 301) By 1921, some 20,000 Indians were in prison (Wolpert 303). Interestingly, Forster's novel seems, to a great extent, to have little sense of this instability, and as much as several characters may provide a voice of dissent, the position of the British Raj in India is at no point challenged *per se*. This may be due to the fact that though Forster's interest may have been in cultural India, the recognition of a Colonial Other, on which the narrative tensions are based, depends upon a perspective from one side of the divide. Novels such as Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, which describes the independence movement from the perspective of Indian villages, present the agents of the British Raj as the Other. Indeed, there is a very little personal presentation of the British at all, presented as they are as a remote power:

And from the bamboo cluster the voices of women are heard, and high up there, on the top of the hill, the Sahib is seen with his cane and his pipe, and his big heavy coat, bending down to look at this gutter and that.

(Rao 55)

For Forster's novels, which are confined to a British perspective, the Other will inevitably remain the Indian. India is really ancient. They present caves as "dark caves". Even when they open towards the sun, very little light penetrates down the entrance - tunnel into the circular chamber. This states that the country is still in darkness without light of freedom and selfhood. Cave represents the country. While Aziz talks to Mrs. Moore and Miss Quested, they converse about the Mughal emperors, Babur, Humayun, Akbar and Aurangzeb.

"Akbar never repented of the new religion he invented instead of the Holy Koran."

"But wasn't Akbar's new religion very fine?"

"Miss Quested, fine but foolish, you keep your religion, I mine."

Here, Forster brings to light the mindset of the Indian who with the

character of Aziz, strongly condemns the imperial power of the rulers, because, the British people want to enforce their culture and civilization, but through Aziz, Forster openly brings out the idea of the natives that their own practice and ideology is far better than the ruler's (British) concept and practice.

The echo from the caves is like the voice of the oppressed native people. They try to convey their emotion that no where the natives remain silent, definitely they will rage against their difficulties. The reference to Chandrapore as a place of immense heat dramatises the consequences or the impact of the rulers over the natives.

The novel talks about the possibility of friendship between an Englishman and an Indian, which will bring the possibility of friendship between the East and the West. The rulers do not have any real sympathy for the sufferings of the people meant to be ruled. They simply oppress the natives with their language, showy culture and influencing tactics. They never concentrate on empowering and enhancing the lives of the natives, instead they wish and plan to loot the wealth, enduring knowledge, etc.

When Aziz and Fielding meet one another again in the last section of the novel, there is no joyous reunion between the friends. Even when the misunderstanding is cleared, the conversation goes badly and the meeting ends with a complete separation between the two men. Aziz is paradoxically the instrument of reconciliation between himself and the British people.

In the last section, Aziz and Fielding start talking frankly and intimately about politics. They realize that their characters and way of life have changed radically for them to be able to continue as close friends. They have never been closer than now; and they speak more as an Englishman and an Indian than as Fielding and Aziz; both are angry and excited. Aziz begins to shout, Fielding mocks at him and Aziz is enraged. They bring their horses nearer to embrace each other, but the horses swerve apart. This suggests that sub-human India is hostile to inter-racial friendships and therefore their union is transitory.

Conclusion

A Passage to India can be roughly divided into three long sections, which correspond, in Forster's viewpoint, to the three seasons of the Indian year-Mosque (the cool weather), Caves (the hot weather), and Temple (the rains). A Passage to India is an emotional and deeply personal story of love and class -struggle in 1928 of India. Adela Quested travels to India to visit her fiancée who was the city Magistrate of fictional city of Chandapore. She is on an adventure accompanied by his mother, Mrs Moore, an elderly woman who is appalled at the treatment of Indians by the British who rule and occupy Chandapore. Both women befriend with a young Indian man; Dr. Aziz, who overstepping the accepted boundaries between the classes, invited the women on a picnic excursion to the Marabar Cave. In a strange turn of events, the young doctor is accused of attempting to rape Miss Quested. What actually did happen in the Marabar Cave remains the central riddle of this lush engrossing novel.

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