Rethinking Identity: The Coloniser in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*.

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Abstract

This paper highlights the problematic relationship between the coloniser and the colonised in a colonial context as manifested in Forster's novel, *A Passage to India*. It also reveals the stereotypes with which Orientals are depicted and the constant process of 'formatting' or brainwashing to which newcomers are subjected, in order to generate colonisers who are all the same. Further, it deals with the image of the land as being hostile to the colonisers, fighting them and intensifying their feelings of alienation and exile. The article particularly applies Albert Memmi's theories in his book *The Colonizer and The Colonized*, as well as those of other cultural philosophers. Hopefully, this paper would generate further readings into Forster's novels, especially *A Passage to India*, that depict the problematic issues of identity formation, race relations and complexities of colonial discourse in hybrid contexts.

Much has been written about Forster's novel *A Passage to India*. However, the analysis of the text of the novel from a post-colonial perspective reveals the precision with which Forster depicted the socio-psychological dilemma of Anglo-Indians during the period of the British Raj. A close examination of Forster's depiction of India will further our understanding of the psychological dilemma of Anglo-Indians who wish to call India home.

In this article, I will highlight the process of 'formatting' (i.e. the process by which is created the coloniser and his demonised 'other' which is the colonised), without which Anglo-Indians would not be accepted into the community of the colony. I will also highlight those moments when Forster could not help but feel the 'gulf' that separates him from the Indians. Further, I will focus on the problem of race relations. Such analysis is vital for understanding the deep thematic meaning of the literary text and appreciating the problems of identity formation and the complexities of colonial discourse. At a time when the colonial era is showing signs of a strong comeback, highlighting the traumatic effects of colonisation becomes even more critical.

Forster's novel, *A Passage to India*, depicts colonisation as frustrating any chance of friendship between the English and the Indians under the

coloniser/colonised *status quo*. Forster highlights the process of 'formatting', which the newcomers have to go through so that they end up like the other colonial settlers in terms of their ideologies and practices. Clare Brandabur remarks that *A Passage to India* "attempt[s] to deal with colonialism (or post-colonialism or neo-colonialism) with respect to the destructive impact on personal relationships caused by the racist assumptions and psycho-pathology inherent in colonial imperialism" (Brandabur 1993). To Jan Mohamed, *A Passage to India* attempts "to overcome the barriers of racial difference'" (Childs 1999:348). Nirad Chaudhuri, on the other hand, criticised it "for its reduction of political history to a liberal's preoccupation with personal relationships" (Childs, p.347).

Further, Bhupal Singh regards the novel as "a clever picture of Englishmen in India, a subtle portraiture of the Indian (especially the Moslem mind) and a fascinating study of the problems arising out of the contact of India with the West" (Singh 1974:221). To Nihal Singh, however, the novel depicts "how the British in India despise and ostracise Indians, while on their part the Indians mistrust and misjudge the British" (Childs 1999:347). Furthermore, Meenakshi Mukherjee also points out that "[p]erhaps relationship—communication between, and understanding of, men who happen to belong to two races—is part of Forster's theme" (Mukherjee 1971:86). To Diane Johnson, one of the novel's themes is "that people from different cultures rarely understand one another" (Johnson 2000).

Forster himself explains his intention in writing the novel. In a letter to Syed Masood on the 27th of September 1922, he states that:

> When I began the book I thought of it as a little bridge of sympathy between East and West, but this conception has had to go, my sense of truth forbids anything so comfortable. I think that most Indians, like most English people, are shits, and I am not interested whether they sympathize with one another or not (Forster 1985:15).

Forster's novel is generally well received and viewed in a positive light. Indeed, a "semi-anonymous Indian" ('A.S.B.'), wrote in 1928 that "for the first time I saw myself reflected in the mind of an English author, without losing all semblance of a human face" (Forster 1985:22).

A Passage to India begins with a description of Indian bazaars, which are then compared with Chandrapore where the English live. In contrast to the "general outline of the town [which] persists, swelling here, shrinking there, like some low but indestructible form of life", Chandrapore is "a city of gardens. It is no city, but a forest sparsely scattered with huts. It is a tropical pleasance, washed by a noble river" (p.31). The roads in Chandrapore are "named after victorious generals and intersecting at right angles, were symbolic of the *net* Great Britain had thrown over India" (p.39, my italics). The use of the word "net" betrays Forster's disapproval of the British colonisation of India.

Forster's India is hostile to foreigners and attacks its colonisers ferociously, so as to force them to leave. Despite the British attempts to 'tame' India, it remains a 'wild' country. "[T]he destiny of the English seems to resemble their predecessors', who also entered the country with intent to refashion it, but were in the end worked into its pattern and covered with its dust" (p.215). The narrator wonders:

> How can the mind take hold of such a country? Generations of invaders have tried, but they remain in exile. The important towns they build are only retreats, their quarrels the malaise of men who *cannot find their way home*. India knows of their trouble. She knows of the whole world's trouble, to its uttermost depth. She calls 'Come' through her hundred mouths, through objects ridiculous and august. *But come to what*? She has never defined. She is not a promise, only an appeal. (p.149, my italics)

India refuses to give a sense of home to its colonisers. Hence, they remain in "exile". It is hard on them as well and therefore, the houses they build are only "retreats" in which to hide from its aggressive nature. The Marabar Caves serve as an example of this promise/appeal binary. Fielding sees them from the Club as 'beautiful' (p.197). However, seeing them close up makes one notice that "nothing was to be seen on either side but the granite, very dead and quiet." Even the sky there "seemed unhealthily near" (p.153). The caves appear to be "fists and fingers" (pp.32-33) thus exposing their hostility. Indeed, India makes sure that no coloniser can call it home. Hence, when the Anglo-Indians "looked out at the palisade of cactuses *stabbing* the *purple* throat of the sky; they realised that they were thousands of miles from any scenery that they understood" (p.188, my italics).

India and its creatures refuse "refashioning", labelling and framing. "Nothing in India is identifiable; the mere asking of a question causes it to disappear or to merge into something else" (p.101). The bird that Adela and Ronny see at the Club escapes being labelled. "[T]hey would have liked to identify it, it would somehow have solaced their hearts" (p.101). India, however, denies them the satisfaction. It proves to be very elusive. Similarly, Adela's desire to see the 'real' India is never fulfilled (p.66). Further, the attempt to identify the animal which hit the Nawab's car also proves to be a failure. "[T]he road had been used by too many objects for any one track to be legible, and the torch created such highlights and black shadows that they [Adela and Ronny] could not interpret what it revealed" (p.104). It is as if India conspires with earth and light to obscure these tracks.

To the Sahibs, India is quite different from Europe. In Europe, "life retreats out of the cold, and exquisite fireside myths have resulted". In India, however, "the retreat is from the source of life, the *treacherous* sun, and no poetry adorns it, because disillusionment cannot be beautiful" (p.214-15, my italics). Ronny notes that "[t]here's nothing in India but the weather … it's the alpha and omega of the whole affair" (p.68). India's hostility to its colonisers is demonstrated in the heat, which becomes so problematic to the English. "[T]he sun [is] crashing on their backs" (p.158), and they are "pursued by stabs of hot air" (p.169). Hot weather is also depicted as a "monster" (p.203). Lady Mellanby, hence, calls India a "frying-pan" (p.214).

The hostility of India is further highlighted when compared with the depiction of other places in the novel such as Egypt. Egypt is warm and loving. "Egypt was charming – a green strip of carpet". Also, "[w]ith Egypt the atmosphere altered. The clean sands, heaped on each side of the canal, seemed to wipe off everything that was difficult and equivocal" (p.277). This romantic depiction probably stems from the Elizabethan era in which Egypt is mostly depicted as a land of sexual promise and as an embodiment of the charms of the East in Elizabethan plays- Shakespeare's *Anthony and Cleopatra* being an example.

In Alexandria, Fielding feels the difference between India and Egypt. "[B]right blue sky, constant wind, clean low coastline, as against the intricacies of Bombay" (p.277). Egypt welcomes the West though it is in the East. The statue of Lesseps symbolises this loving relationship between the East and West in Egypt. It "turn[s] to the East" and "re-turns to the West" (p.263). The idea of Egypt welcoming the West is also highlighted when the ghost of Mrs. Moore is "shaken off" the ship as it enters the Suez (p.255).

Venice is also different from 'hostile' India. "The buildings of Venice, like the mountains of Crete and the fields of Egypt, stood in the right place, whereas in poor India everything was placed wrong." Fielding "had forgotten the beauty of form among idol temples and lumpy hills; indeed, without form, how can there be beauty?" (pp.277-78) India has nothing pleasing to offer to its colonisers.

Moreover, India refuses a friendship between a native and a coloniser. The arrival of Ronny during Fielding's tea-party ruins the friendly mood. "It was as if irritation exuded from the very soil" (p.94). The sky also turns "angry orange" to express its objection to the presence of the colonisers (p.149). In the last scene in the novel, Aziz informs Fielding that their friendship is only possible once the British leave India. This scene clearly exposes the land's rejection of such a friendship under the coloniser/colonised status-quo. Fielding asks:

> 'Why can't we be friends now?' …. 'It's what I want. It's what you want.' But the horses didn't want it – they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single-file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, 'No, not yet,' and the sky said, 'No, not there' (pp.315-16).

Indeed, Forster acknowledges the need for India to be free before such a friendship can take place and he knows at the same time the problematic issues involved in the effort to set India free.

Forster highlights the relationship between the coloniser/colonised. The novel begins emphatically with Dr Aziz, Mahmoud Ali and Hamidullah discussing "whether or not it is possible to be friends with an Englishman" (p.33). The three characters

agree that it is impossible for this to happen in India. The novel ends with Fielding and Aziz leaving each other because such a friendship is not possible under British occupation. It unwinds itself and reaches point zero once more. The English and the Indians can become more intimate, but the problems of cultural differences, stereotyping, and colonisation prevent the possibility of having a real friendship between them.

"The colonial situation manufactures colonialists, just as it manufactures the colonised" (Memmi 1974:56-57). Anglo-Indians, the 'experienced' colonists, force their own stereotypes of the natives upon newcomers. The colonisers arrive fresh from England "intending to be gentlemen, and are told it will not do." Hence, "[t]hey all become exactly the same – not worse, not better" (p.34). Ronny Heaslop complains that "[p]eople are so *odd* out here, and it's not like home – one's always facing the footlights …. *They notice everything, until they're perfectly sure you're their sort*" (p.68, my italics). Individuality is problematic in a colony because the people there should all adopt the same ideologies.

Ronny, like Aziz and the others, is aware of this process of 'formatting' newcomers to render them like other colonists. In fact, Ronny himself underwent that process. Hence, Mr. Turton announces that "Heaslop's a sahib; *he's the type we want*, he's one of us" (p.47, my italics). Turton's words invoke Paul Scott who remarks that "in India the English stop being unconsciously English and become consciously English" (Childs 1999:24). Further, Adela "thought of the young men and women who had come out before her … and had been set down to the same food and the same ideas". These young people have "been snubbed in the same good-humoured way until they kept to the accredited themes and began to snub others" (p.67). Clearly, the powerful discourse of the colony guarantees the generation of people who are "exactly the same" in terms of their ideologies and practices.

Ronny adopts the colonisers' model and defends it ferociously. Memmi explains that "the small coloniser is actually, in most cases, a supporter of colonialists and an obstinate defender of colonial privileges", and how can he not be when "[h]e enjoys the preference and respect of the colonised themselves, who grant him more than those who are the best of their own people" (Memmi 1974:10-13)? Memmi

further explains that "many immigrants who, having recently arrived, timid and modest, suddenly provided with a wonderful title, see their obscurity illuminated by a prestige which surprises even them." Title and prestige make them "assume such inordinate self-confidence that it makes them dizzy." The new social status and the privileges make them defend the colony "aggressively" and "end up believing it to be right. In other words, the immigrant has been transformed into a colonialist" (Memmi, pp.46-47).

Ronny accepts his role as a coloniser and enjoys the privileges that accompany it. He would fight anyone who tried to take these privileges away from him. He asks, "What do you [Mrs. Moore] and Adela want me to do? Go against my class, against all the people I respect and admire out here? *Lose such power as I have* for doing good in this country, because my behaviour isn't pleasant?" (p.69, my italics). The manner in which Ronny handles the story of Mrs. Moore with Aziz in the mosque clearly demonstrates the extent to which he has accepted his role as a coloniser and his will to do anything to maintain his privileges. He is surprised from the way Mrs. Moore talks about Aziz. He wonders, "Why hadn't she indicated by the tone of her voice that she was talking about an Indian?" Aziz himself realises that Mrs. Moore is a newcomer by the way she addresses him (p.43).

According to Memmi, the coloniser "discovers the existence of the coloniser as he discovers his own privilege". He explains that the coloniser:

> … finds himself on one side of a scale, the other side of which bears the colonised man. …. [T]he more freely he breathes, the more the colonised are choked. … It is impossible for him not to be aware of the constant illegitimacy of his status (Memmi, pp.6-9).

To him, the illegitimacy of colonisation is a double one. The coloniser finds a place to settle into by taking away that of the inhabitant (Memmi, p.9). If the coloniser refuses his role and shows sympathy to the colonised, other colonisers will reject him. If he accepts it, he will enjoy its privileges and will be accepted in the colony.

Ronny realises the illegitimacy of the British presence in India. Yet, to retain his privileges and to remain an accepted, as well as respected part of the colony, he

tries hard to convince himself and others of the legitimacy of the British presence in India. He interrogates his mother:

> "Did you gather he [Aziz] was well-disposed?" Ignorant of *the force of this question*, she replied, "Yes, quite, after the first moment." "I meant, generally. Did he seem to tolerate us – *the brutal conqueror*, the sun-dried bureaucrat, that sort of thing?" (p.53, my italics).

The italicised words reveal Ronny's awareness of the British status as a "brutal conqueror" and his strong desire to protect it from potential threats.

Ronny gets upset because Aziz called out to Mrs. Moore over her shoes. He protests, "it was impudence. It's an old trick. I wish you had had them on." Adela objects to his remark. She asks, "wouldn't you expect a Mohammedan to answer if you asked him to take off his hat in church?" Her logic of equal standings, however, does not work in the ideological framework of the colony. Ronny explains that "[i]t's different, it's different; you don't understand" (p.52). Adela cannot understand because her moral set of values differs from that of colony settlers.

Mrs. Moore is shocked at the metamorphosis of her son. "The traces of young-man humanitarianism had sloughed off". She thinks that "[o]ne touch of regret … would have made him a different man, and the British Empire a different institution" (p.70). She is also shocked to hear her son's adopted ideological stance. She protests, "[y]ou never used to judge people like this at home." Ronny announces that "India isn't home" and relies on "phrases and arguments that he had picked up from older officials, and he did not feel quite sure of himself" to silence his mother and convince her of his adopted new logic (p.54).

Adela, too, notices the change in Ronny. "India had developed sides of his character that she had never admired. His self-complacency, his *censoriousness*, his lack of subtlety" (p.96, my italics). The colony changes the personality of the coloniser in almost every aspect, even aesthetic appreciation. When Adela and Ronny watched the play "*Cousin Kate* in London together in the past, he had scorned it; now he pretended that it was a good play, in order to hurt nobody's feelings" (p.60). Further, Mrs. Lesley considers an "unkind notice" about the play in the local paper a

"sort of thing no white man could have written" (p.60). Her words justify Ronny's pretentious opinion of the play.

In contrast to Ronny's conforming opinion of the play, the individualism of both Adela and Mrs. Moore is criticised because it presents a threat to the stability of the social system of the colony. Mr. McBryde notes to Fielding that:

> …during those twenty-five years I have never known anything but disaster result when English people and Indians attempt to be intimate socially. Intercourse, yes. Courtesy, by all means. Intimacy – never, never …. if there has been mutual respect and esteem, it is because both peoples kept to this simple rule. Newcomers set our traditions aside, and in an instant what you see happens, the work of years is undone. (p.174)

Similarly, Mr. Callendar remarks that Fielding's "shirking" of responsibility, which led to the alleged sexual assault on Adela, "was what is to be expected when a man mixes himself up with natives; always ends in some indignity" (p.193). The attempts of Adela and Mrs. Moore to be socially intimate with Indians will disrupt the racist hierarchy of the colony. It will also disturb the colonisers who will realise how inhuman they have become once they compare themselves with newcomers.

Stereotypes are extremely strong, and hence, their lifespan is long. Ronny tries to promote stereotypes and racial discourses to his mother using "phrases and arguments" of senior colonisers. He almost succeeds in making her adopt that same logic. "In the light of her son's comment she reconsidered the scene at the mosque …. Yes, it was all true, but how false a summary of the man; the essential life of him had been slain" (p.55). The discourse of the colony is strong, but Mrs. Moore's strong Christian beliefs, which have not been contaminated by colonisation, make her resist the imposition of this foreign discourse on her mind, although she acknowledges its "truth".

Colonisation dehumanises and demonises the colonised. Ronny notes that most Indians "are seditious at heart, and the rest'd run squealing …. The Pathan – *he's a man if you like*. But these people – don't imagine they're India" (p.59, my italics). Memmi notes that "one after another, all the qualities which make a man of the colonised crumble away". To the coloniser, the colonised "is hardly a human being.

He tends rapidly toward becoming an object" (Memmi, p.85-86). Hence, and to the surprise of Mrs. Moore, Ronny considers the way the British treat the Indians as being a "side-issue". He objects to Adela's impression that they treat the Indians badly. He protests to Mrs. Moore, "Oh, how like a woman to worry over a side-issue!" Mrs. Moore is surprised it is a "side issue" because her ideological background has not been corrupted yet by colonisation which considers the colonised inhuman.

Further, Ronny tries to convince both himself and Mrs. Moore of the British important presence in India. The colonisers claim that they have the mission of "bringing light to the colonised's ignominious darkness" (Memmi 1974:74-76). This "mission" legitimises the colonisation and enslavement of other races. Edward Said also notes the depiction of colonised races as being "naturally subservient to a superior, advanced, developed, and morally mature Europe" (Eagleton *et al.* 1990:72). Hence, Ronny announces that "[w]e're out here to do justice and keep the peace. Them's my sentiments." Mrs. Moore, however, can see through his words. She protests:

> 'Your sentiments are those of a god,' …. Trying to recover his temper, he said, 'India likes gods.' 'And Englishmen like posing as gods' [Mrs Moore] '…and the country's got to put up with us, gods or no gods …' …. We're not pleasant in India and don't intend to be pleasant. We've something more important to do' (p.69).

Colonisation always hides its true objectives behind the mask of bringing knowledge and civilisation to the colonised race. "It is here that the astonishing mental attitude called 'paternalistic' comes into play. A paternalist is someone who wants to stretch racism and inequality farther—once admitted" (Memmi, p.74-76).

Ronny's words are described as "sincere" because he daily tries in court "to decide which of the two untrue accounts was the less untrue, trying to dispense justice fearlessly … surrounded by lies and flattery" (p.69). Edward Said explains that white men believe that it is their "human prerogative" to "manage" and "own" the non-white world (Said 1987:108). It is here where the "stretch" of "racism and inequality" occurs. Further, the "paternalistic" role of the colonisers justifies and explains their shock at the colonised's rejection of their so-called sacrifices. Ronny believes that his

services are not appreciated. He is happy, however, when the Mohurram troubles take place "for it proved that the British were necessary to India; there would certainly have been bloodshed without them" (p.110). His desire to legitimise his presence in the colony is evident here as well.

Mrs. Moore contests Ronny's discourse using the discourse of religion. She explains that "India is part of the earth. And God has put us on the earth in order to love our neighbours and to show it, and He is omnipresent, even in India, to see how we are succeeding" (p.70). Ronny's religion only conforms to the needs of the Empire. He "approved of religion as long as it endorsed the National Anthem, but he objected when it attempted to influence his life" (p.71). Religion is a weak discourse facing a strong racial discourse. Mrs. Moore urges Ronny to "love" his Indian neighbours, but he knows that such a discourse will not function in a colony where racism governs the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised.

In contrast with Ronny, Fielding, who shows sympathy towards the Indians and who mixes with them, is not the "type" nor is he "one of us". "Having discovered the economic, political and moral scandal of colonisation", the coloniser "can no longer agree to become what his fellow citizens have become; he decides to remain, vowing not to accept colonisation" (Memmi 1974:19-22). Mr. Turton, therefore, warns that "India does wonders for the judgement, especially during the Hot Weather; it has even done wonders for Fielding" (p.49). Fielding refuses colonisation, and according to Bhupal Singh, "[i]t is through Fielding that Mr. Forster speaks" (Singh 1974:229).

Fielding is fought against because he refuses to be 'formatted'. "[H]e appeared to inspire confidence until he spoke". Forster's narrator warns of an "evil of brains in India, but woe to him through whom they are increased!" (p.80). Fielding realises the complexities and hatred he has to account for his sentiments towards the Indians. "He regretted taking sides. To slink through India unlabelled was his aim. Henceforward he would be called 'anti-British', 'seditious' – terms that bored him, and diminished his utility" (p.183). He is worried about the process of "labeling" which affects the way people think of each other (Sarup 1996:14).

Fielding's individualism makes him "a disruptive force, and rightly, for ideas are fatal to caste". His belief that the world "is a globe of men who are trying to reach one another and can best do so by the help of goodwill plus culture and intelligence" was "a creed ill suited to Chandrapore" (p.80). Hence, he felt that "the gulf between himself and his countrymen … widened distressingly" (p.79) because he would not conform to their standards and adopt their ideology. Anglo-Indians try to 'format' him to make him the same as they are, "but he had come out too late to lose" his "creed".

Fielding "had no racial feeling… because he had matured in a different atmosphere, where the herd-instinct does not flourish" (p.80). The "herd-instinct" makes itself felt when Fielding sides with the Indians against the English in Aziz's case. The Collector warns him that "[y]ou can't run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, at least not in this country" (p.194). McBryde is also surprised that Fielding "had not rallied to the banner of race" (p.175) following the alleged rape of Adela. He warns him that "there's no room for – well – personal views. The man who doesn't toe the line is lost" (p.180).

Memmi notes that "humanitarian romanticism is looked upon in the colonies as a serious illness, the worst of all dangers." Consequently, to the other colonisers, a coloniser who has this "illness" "is nothing but a traitor …. His friends will become surly; his superiors will threaten him; even his wife will join in and cry" (Memmi, p.19-22). Indeed, Anglo-Indians suspect Fielding of being a "Japanese spy" (p.218), and they blame him for the Mohurram troubles. Further, Fielding's attitude towards the Indians changes once he marries Stella. He wonders if he could "defy all his own people for the sake of a stray Indian" again (p.313). Ronny also writes him a letter welcoming him to their camp. "I'm relieved you feel able to come into line with the Oppressors of India to some extent. We need all the support we can get" (p.302).

Despite suffering from "humanitarian romanticism", the coloniser who refuses colonisation "cannot help judging" the colonised and their civilisation. "How can one deny that they are under-developed, that their customs are oddly changeable and their culture outdated?" Hence, the coloniser "admits to a fundamental difference between the colonised and himself" (Memmi, p.22-25). Fielding, for instance, declares his love for the Indians. "I have never felt more happy and secure out here. I really do get on

with Indians, and they do trust me" (p.261). Yet, he cannot get over his racial superiority complex. He feels the presence of this "fundamental difference".

Fielding feels the presence of a barrier between him and his Indian friends when he sends them picture postcards from Venice. He feels that "all" of them "would miss the joys he experienced now, the joys of form, and that this constituted a *serious barrier*" (p.278, my italics). Further, when his Indian friends express their worry that his name "will entirely die out" since he has no children, he feels that his "indifference" also constitutes a barrier because it "is what the Oriental will never understand" (p.130). Furthermore, when Fielding "was throwing in his lot with Indians, he realised the profundity of the gulf that divided him from them" (pp.181-82).

Fielding feels the differences between him and the Indians in several other occasions. For instance, Aziz's remark that Adela practically has no breasts makes Fielding feel a touch of bad taste because "this derived sensuality … was alien to his own emotions, and he felt a *barrier* between himself and Aziz whenever it arose" (p.242). Also, he objects to Aziz's adopted proverbs which are different from British ones and which signify the presence of another barrier (p.170). Forster, like Fielding, felt this barrier. He states that "[t]he sense of racial tension, of incompatibility, never left me" (Forster 1985:11). The implication is that no matter how blurred the borderlines separating races get by hybridity, they end up being more emphasised because no native can escape his nativity and no white man can escape his white blood.

Fielding denounces colonisation yet he benefits from it. "[T]o refuse an ideology while continuing to live with its actual relationships" makes the coloniser live "his life under the sign of contradiction". Contradiction deprives the coloniser "of all coherence and all tranquility" because "[h]e participates in and benefits from those privileges which he half-heartedly denounces" (Memmi 1974:19-22). Fielding, as a result, argues with Aziz about who will rule India and how, since there are so many different sects and religions. He questions the possibility of India ever becoming a "nation" (p.315). His love for the Indians is well-established and so is his love for the country. He could be, whether consciously or subconsciously, trying to convince Aziz

of the futility of such a dream, since its realisation means his departure from the country and the loss of his privileges as a coloniser.

Fielding deploys tactics and discourses similar to those adopted by colonial powers aimed at making the colonised races lose any hope of independence and freedom. He uses what Ngügï calls "the cultural bomb" which creates "serious doubts about the moral rightness of struggle" and makes the "[p]ossibilities of triumph or victory" appear "as remote, ridiculous dreams" (Ngügï 1986:3). He tries to prove to Aziz that they are inferior to the British. "Away from us, Indians go to seed at once. Look at the King-Emperor High School! Look at your poems... Free our women and India will be free. Try it, my lad" (p.314). Fielding uses the imperative tone to remind Aziz that he is inferior to him.

Aziz is aware, however, that his friendship with Fielding has to retain the colonial hierarchy of the coloniser and the colonised. He "sketched a comic salaam …. 'I tremble, I obey,' the gesture said, and it was not lost upon Fielding" (p.296). His 'comic salaam', alludes to the 'salaaming-order' that the British imposed after the Amritsar massacre of 1919, which required "all Indians to 'salaam' or respectfully salute an English civil and military officers" (Dolin 1999:180). He is not even allowed to feel superior to the "imbecile" Ralph (p.303).

Further, Fielding tries to convince Aziz that India is not Indian property. He claims that "it's nobody's India" (p.273). He aims to make him despair and see the chances of Independence as impossible. He also tries to convince Aziz of the impossibility of India ever becoming free. He jeers, "Who do you want instead of the English? The Japanese?" He implies that the British are better rulers than any other colonial power since they understand the Indians better. Furthermore, Fielding realises how hard it is for India to be a nation because of its different religions and cults. He, therefore, tries hard to undermine any possibility of India ever becoming a nation.

Despite Fielding's attempts to frustrate Aziz, he remains determined:

> 'India shall be a nation! No foreigners of any sort! Hindu and Moslem and Sikh and all shall be one! … *India a nation! What an apotheosis! …. Fielding mocked again.* And Aziz in an awful rage … cried: 'Down with the English anyhow …. We may hate one another, but we hate you most. If I don't make you go, Ahmed will, Karim will, if it's fifty or five hundred years we shall get rid of you, yes, we shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea, and then' – he rode against him furiously – 'and then,' he concluded, half kissing him, 'you and I shall be friends.' (p.315-6, my italics)

Clearly, Fielding goes to great lengths to convince Aziz that India will never become a united nation. Fielding and Forster denounce colonisation yet they simultaneously gain privilege from it, and this explains the contradiction in their attitudes towards colonisation.

The scene of the boats promises a fresh start, a form of rebirth, for Aziz and Fielding. It coincides with the festival of Shri Krishna in which the whole world is delivered from their pains and sorrow. The boats collide and capsize (p.310). Water in Jungian psychology symbolises birth-death-resurrection. It also symbolises purification and redemption. To Jung, rivers also symbolise "death and rebirth (baptism)" (Guerin 1979:157-58). The fall of the characters into the water becomes a sort of rebirth. They 'die' and are born again. They lose their "doubt" and "sorrow" and are "saved" or "baptised" as if by Shri Krishna. "After the funny shipwreck there had been no more nonsense or bitterness, and they went back laughingly to their old relationship as if nothing had happened." Aziz also forgives Adela (p.311).

The fall into the river generates a paradise-like environment. The land itself appears beautiful now. "Presently the ground opened into full sunlight and they saw a grassy slope bright with butterflies, also a *cobra*, which crawled across doing nothing in particular, and disappeared among some custard-*apple* trees" (my italics). India now appears to give the English a sense of home. "There were round white clouds in the sky, and white *pools* on the earth; the hills in the distance were *purple*. The scene was as park-like as England, but did not cease being *queer*" (p.311, my italics). The italicized words generate sexual images to suggest that temptation is showing its face once more.

The image of the cobra in relation with the apple invokes the Great Fall of Adam and Eve from Paradise. The pool of water suggests the female womb and hence sexuality and Eve. The colour "purple" also suggests sexuality. The threat of being cast away from heaven is foreshadowed by the word "queer". Temptation will wreck the temporary paradise-like atmosphere. It will cast away both Fielding and Aziz from this paradise. They eventually realise, after their painful journey of self-discovery, that no friendship can be attained, and a paradise like this one can exist only momentarily, as long as the coloniser/colonised *status quo* remains effective.

Fielding realises the complex problems involved in befriending the colonised while simultaneously being one of their oppressors. He also realises the presence of a "gulf" between the races which is a serious barrier that casts shadows at the possibilities of friendship and equality between them. Adela and Mrs. Moore also realise that personal relationships, faith, and knowledge all amount to "nothing" in a country that defies reason and rationality.

To conclude, *A Passage to India* is clearly a novel that defies the premise that friendship can be maintained between the English and the Indians in a coloniser/colonised status quo. Fielding's criticism of the British imperialist colonisers, of their racism and of the fear they base their regime upon is clearly evident in the novel. Based on inequality and racism, colonisation frustrates any attempts towards having a friendship between Aziz and Fielding. "[P]ersonal relations cannot be perfectly achieved because the barriers that are there cannot be easily overcome …. The idea of unity cannot therefore be adapted to reality." Forster "does not end up as a pessimist for, though in the present time and space these obstacles may come in, there is hope in the future" (Satin 1976:69).

To Edward Said, however, it is "a disappointing conclusion" since "[w]e are left at the end with a sense of the pathetic distance still separating 'us' from an Orient destined to bear the mark of foreignness as a mask of its permanent estrangement from the west" (Childs 1999:383). By using the words "not now, not yet", Forster "displaces the estrangement the permanence of which is premised on racial grounds and relocates it on the axis of power." Further, "Forster pleads for a dialogue with those who believe that friendship between individuals is possible within structures of

power in which they are unequally placed because the individual is capable of transcending these limitations" (Pathak *et al*. in Childs, p.383).

Said's view is the more valid of these accounts. Both Pathak and Satin suppose that the *status quo* of coloniser/colonised is the *only* hindrance that stands between the friendship of the English and the Indians. However, the gulf that separates the two races, and which Fielding and Forster felt, forms a serious barrier that endangers the friendship between them. In effect, even if the English leave India, friendship would still be unattainable because the Orient *is* "destined to bear the mark of foreignness as a mask of its permanent estrangement from the west".

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