

Good critical thinking on a passage to india: a clash of two cultures

[Literature](#), [Novel](#)



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Written by Forster Edward, *A Passage to India* narrates the ideas and events that unfold around Quested Adela and Mrs. Moore from the point they depart England for India. In India, they meet other English nationals working in the country and with whom they are quickly acquitted. However, the Indians in the novel are not quick to befriend the English people in their area as according to them, “ the English are a comic institution” (25). On the other hand, the English men have a stereotype associated with the Hindus and do not shy away from voicing their views. In the end, the relationships formed between people from the two cultures die while another is postponed to another time.

Throughout the novel, there are different instances of a clash between the two cultures. From the natives’ points of view, the Englishman made no sense while most of the English sought to change the ways of life observed by the locals. It is however hard to change a person and make them adapt to a new way of life and abandon the one with which they are accustomed. Foster shows evidence to this in his novel and allows readers to see the conflicting ideologies and ways of thinking between the two parties.

The geographical setting of the novel is the first hint of a difference in cultural norms. One cannot expect Hindus to behave or think the same as Europeans or vice versa. In addition, the fact that Europe is far from the Asian continent guarantees inconsistency to the traditions and cultures between the two societies mentioned in the novel. The variance in cultures is

acceptable as before the Europeans set foot in India, the natives have a way of doing everything and to them, these ways are normal. Confusion erupts when the Europe nationals move to India and try to influence them with their own ideologies disregarding the possibility that the people will not respond well to this fact. Later, friendships are lost, both sides fail to understand the other, and each side retreats to its motherland.

The rift between the two sides is evidenced during Adela's court case against Dr. Aziz. As expected, the Hindus defend their compatriot while the Europeans seek justice for their own. This is so despite the fact that it is an attempted rape case, with neither side having proof of its legitimacy or invalidity. This incident shows another aspect of culture that dictates support for ones fellow citizen. The Hindus might not know Dr. Aziz at a personal level but they know him as a member of the Hindu community hence the support they offer. The Europeans, except for Fielding, are at the same time aligned behind Adela and offer their full support in her case against the doctor. This happens while the only evidence is Adela's word against that of Dr. Aziz.

The case is in itself a clash between two cultures as the people are divided according to their nationality. While the Europeans had been against the locals and vice versa, going to court was the first confrontation between the two sides. The rift is then seen by the sides chosen. Any person would choose to support the person they are familiar with, especially in the absence of concrete evidence. Throughout the novel, the court case is the first physical confrontation and manifestation of the conflicting societies and their views regarding each other.

Fielding Cyril, as mentioned before, does not offer his support to Miss Quested but opts to believe in Dr. Aziz's innocence. Among all the novel's white characters, Fielding is the only one who has a connection with the locals, has respect for them, and does not have any stereotypes regarding the same. However, the clash of the two cultures prohibits Fielding from maintaining his friendship with the Hindus. In addition, he is seen as a traitor by his fellow citizens after he fails to support Adela in the case. Readers are made aware of the fact that, despite his unwavering belief in Dr. Aziz's innocence, Fielding still loses his friendship. It is because of contradicting cultures that their friendship cannot survive.

The British superiority over the Indian locals is another form of cultural conflict. In most cultures, people have a ruler, are otherwise treated with respect, and have equality. This is not so in the novel as the British have a superiority complex over the Indians due to there being a colonial government in the area. At the same time, the Hindus have stereotyped the Europeans and fail to respect, much less listen to their views. These attitudes cause conflicts because both sides expect to be respected by the other but none is ready to be the first in showing said respect. In the end, readers see some sort of war between the clashing sides that escalates to complete disorientation. In addition, the fact that one side views itself as the other peoples' superior is a major cause of clashing worlds. Besides, no human being appreciates being ruled in their own home by an outsider who shows distrust and disregard for the conquered community.

Contradicting cultures mean a major difference in ideas and actions that each of the involved parties will not appreciate with regard to each other.

While some might try to rise above such differences, it is still impossible to abandon one's cultural norms in favor of others. This means that, a person cannot be changed and the traditions with which said person grows up with is an important aspect of their very existence. Forster seems to have this in mind upon the authorship of *A Passage to India* as he narrates the struggles and views of the characters in the story. In the end, the clash results in broken friendships, an engagement, and the death of a person loved by the English and at least one local, a feat that only Mrs. Moore achieves in the novel.

Throughout the novel, there are different instances of a clash between the two cultures. Between the Hindus and the Europeans, none is ready to make a compromise and attempt to understand the other. Instead, each side sought to hold on to the ideas they have and try to influence the other with the same. In the end, there is confusion and misunderstandings that cause a bigger rift between the people.

With respect, Forster's narration captures reality. This is so in the senses that, to this day people from different societies need to interact and coexist with each other. This brings about the interaction of different norms and views regarding life and could in turn cause the same misunderstandings observed in the novel. Acceptance and respect is important in ensuring a peaceful coexistence.

Work Cited

Foster Edward. *Passage to India*. Michigan: Gale Group, 2005.