

# Friendship in light of british colonialism in a passage to india

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A Passage to India by E. M. Forster is one piece of literary work that questions the possibility of an Indian and an Englishman ever becoming friends. From the beginning to the end of the novel, the central theme is relationships and friendship in light with British colonialism. On a more personal level, Forster explores the British colonial rule using the friendship theme. The main relationship in the novel is centered on Aziz (and Indian) and Fielding (English). The first half of the story presents what can only be classified as liberal humanism between Aziz and Fielding characterized by a connection based on good will, intelligence and frankness. However, the aftermath of the story's climax brings the friendship to a sudden halt. Aziz and Fielding's relationship is evidently strained by external forces influenced by the tendencies of their individual cultures as well as the prevailing political circumstances. The mutual stereotyping of the English and Indian culture continually pulls their friendship apart. Evidently, although friendship may be possible, colonialism, religious differences and the role of human nature make it "not yet."

Colonialism, as the prevailing political circumstances, in many ways, thwarts any possibility of friendship. Apparently, from only reading the A Passage to India, one could easily tell that Forster's work is profoundly mystical or symbolic. However, it is a realistic documentation of the attitudes that British colonial official had in India. Their negative, unwelcoming, standoffish and unreceptive attitude towards Indians creates two opposite worlds that can rarely be brought together in the name of friendship. Forster spends lots of time especially using satire to harshly condemn British women who are self-righteous, overwhelmingly racist and viciously condescending to the Indians.

Forster criticizes the British rule suggesting that they should be kinder and sympathetic to the Indians to create a society that largely depends on one another.

The harsh colonial rule is characterized by myths and misconceptions between the Indians and the Englishmen. For instance, The Englishmen presume that they are better-off, above and more important than their Indian counterparts. According to Forster, the superiority of Englishmen puts them above Indians which makes them more trusted (10). For instance, Adela accuses Aziz of assault. She goes ahead to disavow the accusation at the trial which brings the friendship and relationship between Aziz and Fielding to an end. The end of the novel is a clear indicator that the political landscape of India had a hand at the end of the friendship. Forster's ultimate vision in the possibility of any friendship between an Indian and an Englishman is pessimistic. However, there is the possibility of friendship after India has been liberated or on the English soil. The implication is that, under the colonial rule, a friendship between the two sides is a dream. The mere fact that one side is in control while the other remains subject to the control eliminates any possibility or chances of friendship.

Religious differences are characteristic of the tendencies of the individual cultures as well as mutual stereotyping which evidently pulls a relationship apart. In this novel, Forster establishes characters that are mainly Muslim and Christian. However, Hinduism also has a major thematic role in the story. Forster brings out the Hindu religion as defined by the ideal of all living things, whether small or large, united as one in love. Forster's establishment

is presented through Professor Godbole who happens to advocate for the unity of all living creatures. Mrs. Moore buys into this idea and is quite dissatisfied by the “smallness of Christianity. Nevertheless, the values and principles of each religion have a daunting effect on any possibility of friendship. Indians happen to be open and ready to unite with everyone in love and harmony. This is evident when Godbole refuses to take any sides during the conflict. However, Christianity, the main religion of the Englishman does not accommodate any aspects of Hinduism or Islam.

Differences in religious values, beliefs, systems, and principles are negatively consequential to the possibility of friendship especially when the parties are not in harmony with one another. Aziz is a Muslim while Fielding is a strong Christian. Fielding even laments that his Indian counterparts do not recognize or appreciate Western architecture. Christianity in the novel is presented as inclusive. Those who embrace it, though, use it to silence the other people (Forster 5). Although tolerance is the primary element preached by Islam and Hinduism, the followers use it to separate themselves from each other. In other words, religion happens to be the baseline of exclusion. It means that there cannot be any chances of friendship when parties of different religions are always trying to exclude each other. Aziz and Fielding’s relationship is destroyed by the different religious belief system. Remarkably, if people are separated or accepted basing on their spirituality, there cannot be a single chance of friendship. Religion, according to Forster, is like the sky; although it embraces everyone, individuals always use it to

support their own courses and hence, keep others out, which, destroys friendships and relationships.

Apart from cultural and political dominion in the novel, Forster emphasizes that the co-existence of nature with human life has an influence on the relationships that people have with one another. Evidently, Forster knows, understands and appreciates the many beauties of India's landscape including the architecture of both Eastern and Western cultures. Forster uses nature to describe and delineate not only the setting of the story but also the relationship between Aziz and Fieldman. There is mud, there are buzzing flies, there are evil caves, the sky is dun-colored, there are floods and even relentless and fierce heat. All these characteristics and elements of nature signify a harsh, unyielding and unreceptive atmosphere that negatively influences the existence of friendship between humans. Forster describes Chandrapore as a place of cheerless plains and lumpy hills (1). The place, according to him, contains fists and fingers of the Marabar and there is nothing which fits. In essence, man is absolutely out of harmony with nature.

Plainly, Forster intentionally chose an obnoxious and detestable location in India to depict the disharmony and lack of friendship among the residents. In the entire novel, Forster explores and delineates the extremes of malevolence and benevolence while using nature to help with both. For instance, the beauty of the moon depicts and characterizes the beautiful friendship between Aziz and Mrs. Moore. However, the incident at the cave is forecasted by the pale sun in the insipid sky. Furthermore, the wasp in Moore's room illuminates the concept of God's love and the need for unity

and love among His creations. While the bee sting brings Aziz and Ralph together; the rocks force Aziz and Fielding apart. In other words, Forster tries to imply that nature has a say in human friendship and affairs. It is what determines the kind of relationship that exists between people.

Conclusively, from the beginning to the end of the novel *A Passage to India*, the theme of friendship is greatly explored. Several influencing factors come into play throughout the entire story. Cultural stereotyping and political dominion are the main factors that affect how people interrelate in the novel. Friendship in the story is depicted through Aziz's relationship to Fielding. Colonialism defined by political control negatively impacts friendship. Similarly, different religious values and belief systems are also negatively consequential to human-friendly relations. Nature, however, as depicted by Forster in the novel, seems to have a unique role in influencing human relationships.

## **Work Cited**

- Forster, E. Morgan. *A passage to India*. Pearson Education India, 1929. Print.