International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Research
ISSN: 2455-2070
www.socialresearchjournals.com
Volume 2; Issue 1; January 2016; Page No. 01-03

Cultural conflict in the fictional plots of E.M Forster

Aasif Rashid Wani
Research Scholar School of Languages, Dept. of English DAVV Indore M.P (India).

Abstract
Cultural Conflict is a type of conflict that occurs when different cultural values and beliefs clash. It has been used to explain violence and crime. Difference in cultural values and beliefs that, place people at odds with one another. Cultural conflict as one that occurs when the expectation of a certain behavior coming from there, cultural backgrounds are not met, as others have different cultural backgrounds and different expectations. It is fluid and dynamic, overlapping and adapting. Culture is indeed everywhere. It forms our belief systems, frame, and perceptions, formulates understandings and guides behaviour. Culture is not about painting music theatre or dance. Culture is seeped into all activities and expressions that extend below the surface and unite individuals under a common sense of self. On a continuous basis, culture gives meaning and currency to our lives. It is not merely a tool for development, nor a means to an end but a virtue that is learned, adopted and constantly evolving.
Conflict is a normal part of human interaction. It is even necessary to a certain extent. It must not always presume war. It can manifest at multiple levels including behavioral, emotional or prospective dimensions. Conflict can include segregation, discrimination, and exclusion. Whatever the root of the problem, it is manner of handling differences that either provoke or diminish a situation. In conflict resolution, tolerance and passion are key factors. Conflict is competition by groups or individuals over incompatible goals, scarce resources, or the sources of power needed to acquire them. This competition is also determined by individuals' perceptions of goals, resources and power and such culture, the socially inherited, shared and learned ways of living possessed by cultural boundaries thus is also occurring across cognitive and perceptual boundaries and is especially susceptible to problems of intercultural miscommunication and misunderstanding These problems exacerbate the conflict, no matter what the root causes of it----including strict material interests-may be. In this sense culture is an important factor in many sorts conflicts that at first may appear to be exclusively about material resources and negotiable interests.

Keywords: Friendship, Religion and Faith, Cross-Cultural Conflict, Mystical Aspiration and Oppression of colonized.

Introduction

A Passage to India is rich in its thematic content as it explores the themes like-Friendship, Religion and Faith, Cross-Cultural Conflict, Mystical Aspiration and Oppression of colonized. This chapter undertakes a close reading of *A Passage to India* to reveal how Forster has woven the variety of themes in a single narrative space. *A Passage to India* is inspired mainly from Forster's own experiences in India. Hisinteractions with the Indian masses, the British officials and Anglo-Indians make him to enrich with the experience of literary potentials.
These experiences helped him in shaping *A Passage to India*, written in 1913, and published until 1924.
Postcolonial studies achieved importance in the 1970s and have been developing until today; hence, postcolonial theory can be more readily attached to a text such as A Passage to Indiaby Forster. Edward Said (1935-2003) is the forerunner of critics who challenges Orientalizing the Orient as a considerable issue in the colonial territories. The source of the stereotypes is a collection of prejudicial assumptions about the Orientals that Said calls it Orientalism. The details and disciplines of Orientalism that are often codified based on unauthentic and unreal sources are imposed on the natives. In this way, Orientalist principles characterize the Eastern world based on stereotypes "as an inferior world, a world of irrationality, savagery, backwardness and uncivilized, but identify themselves as a superior world, a world that is rational, progressive and civilized" [1] that best serves their political, social, and military objectives. Said believes that the Europeans gained knowledge about non-Europeans and used it to maintain power over them. They presume that there are two worlds: the world of "us" and the world of "them." Said maintains that it is not a true division because it causes to separate countries from each other more and more. Said points out that the Europeans see the non-Western people as inferiors. In Forster's A Passage to India(1925) stereotypes such as savage and uncivilized are applied strongly to the characters. According to Said, such stereotypical images of the Orientals legitimize the presence of the 'West' as appropriate administers.
A Passage to India is a story of cross-cultural resonance in postcolonial discourse, *A Passage to India*, plays on imperial misinterpretations and misunderstandings. Throughout the novel Forster employs a kind of cynical realism to highlight the impossibilities of cross cultural male bonding, between Aziz, the protagonist, an Indian Muslim doctor and Fielding, the English professor. As his biographer P.N. Furbank notes in his biography on Forster,E.M Forster: A Life, using Forster's own words, "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"[2]. Such a statement made by the author himself, removes any ambiguities as to the imperial engagement of the narrative which serves as a wry dismissal and futile exploration of a transcultural dialogue. As Sara Suleri notes in her book, The Rhetoric of British India, "Forster's discourse of friendship becomes a figure for how the imperial eye perceives

race: the literal minutiae of pigmentation and physiognomy serve to rupture a more general vision of an Oriental culture"[3]

In other words, the novel serves to reiterate a patronizing representation of a colony in which the imperial gaze at once takes pride in and yet refuses to offer a more forthright exchange of colonial intimacy. Cross-cultural friendships, like that between Aziz and Adela Quested, and Aziz and Fielding, can provide only misinterpreted notions and cross cultural conflicts, thus no transcultural reconciliation is ever achieved in the narrative. Forster's experiences with India were first forged in 1912-13 and later in 1921 when he was appointed with invaluable material as he wrote A Passage to India. They offered him a panoramic and analytical setting of colonial epistemology, in all its myriad contradictions and diversity.

The environment and culture was totally unfamiliar to him India was to later prove a 'muddle', a mystery. As John Colmer notes in his critique of the author's works, E. M. Forster: the Personal Voice: "It (India) offered him new dimensions of history, religion, and philosophy, and gave fresh insights into personal relations. The latter came largely from intimate friendships with Indians but also from observation of the strain placed on personal relations by the clash between rulers and ruled, Moslem and Hindu"[4].

Interpreted in postcolonial discursive fields, the narrative offers a bleak hope for any social interaction between the two races as is obvious by the Bridge party held by the Turtons at the very outset of the story. Given ostensibly in honor of Indians, the British at this gathering do all they can to unnerve and belittle their Indian guests, with their intermittent highbrow chatter and complete ignorance of the impact of such behavior on their 'Othered' and the 'marginalized' guests. The narrative offers the reader a complicated hegemonic British colonialism with India as one of its most prized colonies. Exploring the fiction under the rubric of a paradigmatic colonial text, a nuanced eye discerns that the story is indeed a careful 'revisitation' of such a corpus of writing. Forster's novel, having established a relatively modernistic approach to such colonial configurations, reinforces such a theme. Analyzed in postcolonial terms, it presents a retake of a darker colonial rhetoric.

Forster's story is set in the early twentieth century in the fictional town of Chandrapore, British India. The main protagonist Dr. Aziz, a Muslim doctor who strikes up a friendship with Cyril Fielding, an English School Headmaster of an Indian College. Adela Quested and her elderly friend Mrs. Moore arrive around this time in India and befriend Aziz as well. What follows is a cultural misreading of invitations and eventually accusations of rape by a delusional Adela in the controversial Marabar Caves. It is interesting to note how Forster completely disregards the over-glorifying of the 'exotic' in his geographical and architectural representations. As the narrative opens with an account of the nondescript town, Chandrapore, the writer employs a condescending and "anti-exotic"[5] stance as to the formlessness of the landscape and temples, rendering stereotypical colonizer features void. Forster instead resorts to quite the opposite, and draws the fictional town with a kind of horror and disgust:

"Except for the Marabar Caves-and they are twenty miles off-the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary. Edged rather than washed by the river Ganges, it trails for a couple of miles along the bank, scarcely distinguishable from the rubbish it deposits so freely. […] The streets are mean, the temples ineffective, and though a few fine houses exist they are hidden away in gardens or down alleys whose filth deters all but the invited guest. Chandrapore was never large or beautiful, but two hundred years ago it lay on the road between Upper India, then imperial, and the sea, and the fine houses date from that period. […] The very wood seems made of mud, the inhabitants of mud moving. So abased, so monotonous is everything that meets the eye, that when the Ganges comes down, it might be expected to wash the excrescence back into the soil. Houses do fall, people are drowned and left rotting, but the general outline of the town persists, swelling here, shrinking there, like some low but indestructible form of life"[6].

In evaluating such a description, the reader is deliberately shifted from exotic and colorful narratives about British India which featured picturesque and exalted discourses about the colonial exchange. But the description is still largely Eurocentric.

As Sara Suleri asserts, it is a mundane geographical appropriation of the colonized land, rendered as a hollow space through which the imperial dialogue is articulated in its imperial ideologies. It is this striking feature of the novel that locates it on the cusp between colonial and postcolonial narrative, in Suleri's words: "the touristic experience of colonialism is deglamourised into mathematical computations of how literally banal the exotic may be"[7].But if detouring from eroticizing India offers an escape route from a colonial paradigm, Forster relies on other stereotypes to reiterate his theme as essentially Orientalized. The manner by which all his Indian characters are portrayed, starting with the protagonist himself, echoes an undercurrent of unauthenticity, simulating, in this regard, old colonial narratives, where the Other was hardly understood.

Hinduism and its myriad mythologies, NawabBahadur's persona is exaggerated as to the whimsical frailties which might accompany an Indian of good social and financial standing. Rudyard Kipling's classification of Indians as inscrutable, exhibits strange behavior in an even stranger land from which a white man must eventually return. Over such unconvincing characterization, Suleri acutely notes: "over Forster, the discursive ghosts of Burke and Kipling shake hands"[8].

Other key aspects of the novel which follow a colonial paradigm are Forster's subtle but firm dismissal of India's complex cultural and religious ideologies. Here, Forster shows a pattern for making a mockery out of the cultural and social nuances of the 'Other'. It is intriguing in its analytical approach to a White man, how a country with diverse cultures and religions functions becomes a "muddle". Based on Eastern mysticism and mythology, the sound "om" or "aum" has a special significance as it connotes a spiritual connection amongst all living beings. It was the sound created when the universe was created and will be made when the cosmos is annihilated. Hence it is an original sound that permeates all sounds, all words and all languages and all mantras. The sound is uttered reverently before the start and chanting of any prayer or mantra and at its close. In Hinduism, the sacred sound denotes as a signifier of one ultimate supreme truth that all beings are one. It connotes oneness with the Supreme Being as well. But the writer lampoons such a sound a "boum" and this

sound emanates when Adela and Mrs. Moore are at their most vulnerable inside the claustrophobic Marabar Caves. Forster uses Hindu doctrine in his corruption of “aum” and introduces this sound in the fictional caves to highlight his belief of India as a “muddle.”

Adela and Mrs. Moore come out of the caves after going through the lowest ebbs of their lives. Forster uses this sound to reiterate his theme of the utter failure of such complex religious ideologies and beliefs. The Anglo-Saxon race is the master race and there can never be equality with other races except for the role of master and slave, colonizer and colonized, civilized and uncivilized. In keeping with the themes of imperial narrative, Forster emphasizes the friendship between the two characters, Aziz and Fielding, as essentially nationalist in character. Fielding is patronizing in his attitude as befits an Englishman in Anglo-Indian society, and Aziz is too quick to judge and easily offended by trivial slights, which Forster seems to argue, is an Indian trait. Even Mr. Turton, the collector, as he testifies against Aziz in the Court, reiterates as much:

“I have had twenty five years experience of this country, and 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. The whole weight of my authority is against it”[9].

This sense of English pride coupled with a patronizing stance towards India is all-pervading in the narrative, though he himself takes an anti-imperialist stance in certain sections. The most prominent metaphor is the fictional Marabar Caves, a complex of dark and mysterious spaces, which house secrets that are paradoxical to the human psyche. They stand for an India which is inscrutable to Westerners. As Adela Quested and Mrs. Moore explore the caves, their experiences are varied but for both, very negative. This misunderstood appropriation of India, like the mystical cave complex, renders it a geographical, cultural and spiritual hollowness. But such a negation also brings resignation to the colonizer.

The clash between Hinduism and Christianity in A Passage to Indiaparallels the conflict between the Indians and the English. Hinduism is best represented in the novel by Professor Godbole, and Christianity is epitomized in Mrs. Moore. Mrs. Moore comes to India with the kindness and understanding heart of a devout Christian but leaves morose and peevish. Perhaps she is haunted into this state by Professor Godbole’s strange song:

“At times there seemed rhythm, at times there was the illusion of a Western melody. But the ear, baffled repeatedly, soon lost any clue, and wandered in a maze of noises, none harsh or unpleasant, none intelligible[...] The sounds continued and ceased after a few moments as casually as they had begun apparently half through a bar, and upon the subdominant”[10].

To conclude, Forster is not able to come up without solution for these problems and to eliminate these obstacles between people. So, his questions remain unanswered and his aspirations for universal connection and unity becomes, then. Nothing but a utopian idea. lt is possible to reduce from, the above descriptions and the quotations we have already taken from his novels that none of the characters have attained happiness of constructed friendly relations with each other. The British family lost their daughter and her baby. The young Italian was not able to make a good husband and lost his son. The Moslem sand the British people fell into trouble and were not able to turn their friendship into intimacy. Aziz is not a pious masıem, narGodbale is a devoted Hindu, nar Mrs. Moore is a devout Christian. Forster seems unsatisfied with the teaching of Christianity, nor he is able to know and understand the real spirit and the universal message of Islam. He never identified himself with Hinduism. He is disappointed attaining friendship through any religion, Particularly Christianity. He also falls to see Islam as a way of life.

References

1. Edward Said. Orientalism, London: Penguin Classics, 1978, 2.
2. P.N Furbank, E.M Forster. A Life, London: Sacker and Warburg, 1977, 106.
3. Ibid. 137.
4. J Colmer. The Personal voice, London: Routledge, 1975, 137.
5. S Suleri. The Rhetoric of British India, London: The U of Chicago, 1992, 144.
6. E.M Forster. A Passage to India, Cambridge:Penguin Classics, 2005, 5.
7. S. Suleri. The Rhetoric of British India, London: The U of Chicago, 1992, 45.
8. Ibid. 132.
9. E.M Forster. A Passage to India, Cambridge: Penguin Classics, 2005, 153.
10. Ibid. 72.