

Dr. Aziz is the Manifestation of E.M. Forster’s Prejudiced towards the British

Nusrat Rikza

Lecturer, North East University Bangladesh, Telihaor, Sheikghat, Sylhet.

Abstract: *E. M Forster’s novel A Passage to India where English characters are presented as superior ‘we’, Indians remain ‘other’. The author’s prejudiced interruption in portrayal the characters actually diminish the oriental values and upgrade the superior ideologies of the English. The central character in A Passage to India becomes the victim of the bigotry and prejudice attitude of the writer. Forster portrays his protagonist Aziz who is showered by all the ordinary features of oriental values that make the whole nation inferior along with him. Aziz is a middle class Muslim with Indian social values under British environment. Again, he is not drawn as a nationalistic hero of extraordinary qualities. Rather he is stereotyped with falsehood, superstitious, lazy, flatterer, illogical, confused, suffering from fake superiority complex (result inferiority complex), his inborn religious prejudices and intellectual shallowness. Apart from European characters (Mrs. Moore, Adela Quested, Cyril Fielding and Ronny Heslop), Aziz is marginalized because of his typical Indianness. The article concentrates on the inferior features of Orientals that proves Forster’s bias attitude towards the main character comparing other four English characters Cyril Fielding, Mrs. Moore, Adela Quested and Ronny Heslop in the novel.*

Keywords: *prejudice, Indianness, immobilization, peculiarities.*

I. INTRODUCTION

English characters in A Passage to India dominate the whole novel that establishes the superior European ideologies. The aim of this article is to explore how the author of this novel prejudice enough in portraying the central character Aziz comparing other four English characters; Mrs. Moore, Adela, Ronny and Fielding. The study further exposes, as a postcolonial writer, Forster is unable to be neutral in assigning and dealing the characters of the two different worlds. Though Aziz is a protagonist, he is immobilized to be a national hero as he is drawn from oriental point of view only. The importance of natural and political geography in much colonial writing lies in its enabling of a crude definition of East and West and the people found in each. For the Europeans, India is an alien soil that becomes a symbol for those who live on it, in that regard, Said notes:

“We are left with a sense of the pathetic distance still separating ‘us’ from an Oriental destined to bear its foreignness as a mark of its permanent estrangement from the west”.
(Said, Orientalism, p.244)

II. AZIZ AND THE ORIENTALS PECULIARITIES

Aziz, the central character, in A Passage to India, is biased by the author, unlike the other English characters in the novel. It seems that Aziz’s attitude is confined totally by the socio-political structure of the subcontinent of the time and he cannot get enough space to free him and make an open outlook to others as well as his surroundings. He makes us disappointed enough when we learn that he gets European education but again he is captivated by his narrow vision.

“... the comparatively simple mind of the Mohammedan was encountering Ancient Night.”
(A Passage to India, P.92)

In A Passage to India, Aziz seems to a mess of contradictions and extremes, embodiment of the concept of Forster’s “root” in India. Aziz is impulsive and fickle, changing views and concerns quickly and without warning, from one moment to another. He is unstable in thought and makes quick decision without logical explanation. Like, he shortly takes decision to visit Marabar Caves along with the two strangers in India from England, and most importantly, he himself has never experienced that place before and for that he meets an extreme experience.

Apparently, the novel offers a notable picture from oriental point of view and shows a positive impression on the Indians. We feel a great deal of sympathy and compassion towards the natives as they are being tortured and humiliated by the British Raj. And, we should pay a huge tribute and respect towards the author as well for his

deep and intimate observation on Indian culture. The readers get the image of racial oppression and deep cultural misunderstanding that make a rift between the Indians and the British colonists. Aziz, only Indian character as well as a central figure in the novel, unable to hold up idiosyncratic oriental values and struggle a lot to avoid humiliation for his manners, to Forster; those are very common in Indian community. And Forster's partial observation to this character and his behavior makes Aziz a typical Indian and through the portrayal of this character the author draws an invisible line between the world of East and West. But the close study of this book exposes the central character; Aziz is sometimes bewildered and confused, sometimes fragmented and sometimes exhausted. This character appears to the readers as if it were itself suffered from holding his real identity and uniqueness. Almost all native characters, those are on higher positions in British administration, are drawn more or less unreasonable and awkward and appear as a 'prey' of so called European education. The protagonist, Aziz, is not an exception. As a leading character, he is expected to have some extraordinary qualities, but unfortunately, he is portrayed as a stereotype and is presented as superstitious, self-effacing, confused, illogical and sometimes broken.

Like Aziz, other native educated characters suffer from inferiority complex, "The complexion of his (Aziz) mind turned from human to political. He thought no longer, 'Can I get on with people?' but 'Are they stronger than I?' breathing the prevalent miasma."

(A Passage to India, p.78)

This confusion prevails in that time and Aziz is the victim of that situation. Forster delineates the character Aziz to focus on the contemporary political and social condition and its impact on the individual character. Like all colonial arenas, the Indians like Aziz suffer from dual identities, on one hand, they are stereotyped by the colonizers and on the other hand, they mimicries themselves in order to cover up the gap between the colonizers and the colonized. Bhaba's concept of mimicry can be demonstrated by the character Aziz in which he always show his efforts to be a British, but every time he fails to grasp the super 'Other' and he becomes what Bhaba calls a 'mimic man', 'as a subject of a difference almost the same, but not quite'.

(Homi Bhaba, 'Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse', 381).

Indians like Aziz can mimic but never exactly reproduce English values and to the author this incapability is because of Indianness dragging them behind.

"The effect entailed in Aziz acts of imitation and accommodation inevitably marks him as Other —a man must work to produce what the Englishman does naturally, what the Englishman inherits as his birthright and observes through an internalized code of behavior".

(Edited by Peter Childs, E.M. Forster's A Passage to India, p.85)

Characters like Mrs. Moore and Fielding are presented in the novel as legendary figures, equipped as the preacher of peace and goodness of humanity and Forster decorates them as symbol of high morality and generosity. Those universal appeals and qualities are absent from any Indian character, even from our protagonist as if it were a faraway concept in Orient or they were not capable of holding those qualities. And definitely Mrs. Moore and Adela are from the west and they are able to enthrall others because of their universal appeal of wellbeing and goodwill. The natives are highlighted synecdoche and reductive. The motif behind this supremacy is that they (in the west) have a monopoly on rational, democratic liberty that they can share with or enforce on the rest of the world. So, the native Indians are represented as naturally savage, chaotic and lesser. The portrayals of some masculine Indian figures in the novel explore this savage, chaotic and lesser characteristics of the native as imposed by the British colonizers. As an Englishman, Forster is inevitably influenced by British social and culture surroundings. Apart from the ambiguities of different political perspectives, there has been a great deal of problem in the treatment of different Indian characters in the novel. Forster justifies through the character Ronny that it is necessary to rule India under British domination as "India likes Gods (British) to be there to do justice and keep peace"

(A Passage to India, p. 45)

It is clear that Forster is a colonialist who fails to evade the shackle of colonialist attitude and penetrates India and Anglo-Indians from imperialist perspective of dominance. He ignores distinctive and idiosyncratic exquisiteness Indian culture and its people.

E.M. Forster is not neutral in portraying characters in his novel. If it is so, it may not be true in the portrayal character Aziz in A Passage to India. Though Aziz, the protagonist of A Passage to India, is one of the most important and magnificent characters drawn by E.M. Forster, he is shown as an archetypal middle class Indian, who fails to subdue his typical intrinsic identities. Though he is a central character of the novel, Aziz disappoints many Indian critics and booklovers for being treated Indians stereotypically as 'Other'.

“Aziz’s character disappoints the Indian critic, Nirad C. Chaudhuri, an important post-colonial critic, who thinks that Forster ought to have chosen for his protagonist in the novel an Indian of the stature of Rammohun Roy or Bankim Chandra Chatterji... Chudhuri’s criticism might have been apt if Forster’s intention behind the portrayal of Aziz was to present the image of a great Indian national figure, and to present him within the specific context of Indo-British relations. ...he tried (not limiting his study to the particular environment of British India) to look at Aziz as modern, **average**, individual Indian whose abstract qualities are not highly extraordinary, but are deeply interesting and attractive personally”.

(G.K. Das, *Through the Ruins of Empire*, ch. xxvii, p.261)

But Forster is successful in the field that he makes Aziz an interesting and attractive character and he is able to draw our attention and sympathy as an inferior citizen of the subcontinent only. As a protagonist and only important character of Indian culture, Aziz is, in the simplest way, the representative of Oriental values and norms. Aziz’s code of behavior, suspicion, falsehood, hypocrisy, flattery, and parasitic tendencies are signified as lesser and substandard stereotyped Indian practice. Often he is mistreated and humiliated by the British officials because of exercising these practices as the colonizers consider those are very common in contemporary Indian culture. Aziz shares with Mrs. Moore about some complaints against Major Callender at the very first meeting, and Ronny draws the conclusion of the conversation by stereotyping Aziz as,

“It’s the educated native’s latest dodge”.

(A Passage to India, p. 54)

"Educated natives" such as Aziz and Hamidullah are, according to Ronny, only seeking personal gain. Educated Indians such as Aziz may have valid goals such as civil rights or an independent nation is unthinkable. Even to Mrs. Moore, Aziz cannot get a confident impression of him; "... had been unreliable, ;inquisitive, vain. Yes, it was all true, but how false as a summary of the man; the essential life of him had been slain”.

(A Passage to India, p.55)

Through the characters the author himself discriminates the two sides of the world and diminishes the oriental principles on the one side and increases occidental ideologies on the other side. The occidental characters prove themselves in the novel as grander and dignified human being, well administrators and rational.

Four British figures are going to be focused in this paper in order to comprehend how the author slightly, but powerfully separate the worlds based on the standards and ideologies. A study on Cyril Fielding is clearly stands alone for his principal set of prolific ethics and sense of uprightness. The protagonist lacks this specific type of quality that Fielding has. This type of liberal and open-minded character is hardly found in Indians community. That’s why he is introduced; “This Mr. Fielding had been caught by India late.”

;After few next lines, “By now he was a hard bitten, good tempered, intelligent fellow on the verge of the middle age, with a belief in education”.

(A Passage to India, p. 79)

He is showered by excellent humanistic and rational qualities. Aziz, on the other side, unfortunately lacks those characteristics. Another contrast is drawn in between these two characters;

“He had no racial feeling—not because he was superior to his brother civilians, but because he had matured in a different atmosphere, where the herd-instinct does not flourish.”

(A Passage to India, p. 80)

The words ‘racial feeling’, ‘superior’ and ‘herd-instinct’ should be focused. These lines show the author’s submission to the ‘superior’ and the environment where is flourished and exercised. Fielding has no racial feeling but in spite of that he has tenderness towards his own native culture.

Forster makes this character more glorious for his easy-going approach towards the native and he is the first person in the novel invites an Indian (Aziz), but stereotyped Aziz fails to prove himself as sincere and heartfelt as he overlooks the invitation, even does not show any courtesy to reply. Fielding gets hurt when he learns that Aziz is not interested in Adela because of her less attractive physical structure, though he is educated and considered himself as a modern man but he cannot move further because of his Indianness. Fielding is appeared as a true friend of Aziz, who tries to help him in his extreme destitute situation, but Aziz, in return, shows nothing except the hollowness and suspicious nature on which he breaks the friendship on the assumption that Fielding marries Adela Quested. Forster makes Fielding more humanist, open minded and balanced character overpowers the protagonist Aziz in every step. Aziz hurts all the feminist critics of 20th century,

“Oh, it’s nothing, she was not a highly educated woman or even beautiful, but put it away..... she is of no importance, she is dead. I showed her to you because I have nothing else to show”.

(A Passage to India p.128)

He admits that it is not because of him, but the accomplishments of his wife make his conjugal life more important and acceptable. Though she is not educated, she makes her life easy and adjustable with an educated man like Aziz. But his gratefulness is gone with the parting of his wife.

In the tea party offered by Fielding where Aziz’s impulsiveness and Fielding’s goodwill dissolve the racial barriers between them and at the same time Englishness is predominant.

A surprising character Adela Quested appears in the middle portion of the novel, increases tension of the action by charging Dr. Aziz of assaulting her in the Marabar Caves. But she astonishes the readers by withdrawing her charges that she brings against Aziz and shows the courage to reveal the truth though it diminishes her importance and dignity both in India and in England community. Finally, she is dignified as a courageous woman than a hypocrite or a traitor to her race. Aziz oriental notions sack his insights to assess the fact that what she has sacrificed for him, rather suspects that she marries Fielding. Actually ‘colonial other’ is always alive and active and proves that it is more important than personal relationship.

The character Ronny tries to convince both his mother and the readers the importance of British Raj presence in India. He, as a colonizer, claims that they have the mission of “bringing light to the colonised’s ignominious darkness”. He is a modal of typical conqueror standards and he is well aware about his duty and he does not like to part with his principles. It proves that he is much more chauvinistic and responsible to his duty. On the side, Aziz proves himself less responsible to his duty. He takes break from his official duty making silly excuse of fever and rests at home. Even he does not feel ashamed for his falsehood when it comes to light. If he has patriotism and respect towards duty, he would not ignore the invitation of the Bridge party, the so called party where mimicked natives get a ‘valuable opportunity’ to make a ‘bridge’ with the superior conquerors.

To a bureaucrat (Ronny), “...he knew the type, all the types, and this was the spoilt westernized”.

(A Passage to India, p.93)

Aziz is being stereotyped as those who get western education, but fail to use it in a right way. He makes himself confrontational and aggressive spoiling his own hard labor educational values. Here, chapter vii, he appears as ‘provocative’, everything what he says trying to instigate Ronny to a verbal conflict against east and west. But Ronny remains conservative avoiding all the instigation that Aziz offers to him. As, “...he (Ronny) was a servant of the Government; it was his job to avoid ‘incidents’.”

(A Passage to India, p.93)

There is no doubt that a spiritual character like Mrs. Moore, who belongs to the white community, wins the heart of the readers through her influential presence in the story. Though she is an aged woman, she is above all for having extraordinary excellence to move other characters psychologically. This is the only character presented in the story without any question. Aziz worships her and finds her a lovable character. She remains alive and plays an active role even after her death; Aziz withdraws his amount of twenty thousand rupees from Miss Adela and writes an apology to her that turns his sense of revenge into friendship. Because of her grander personality, she becomes a legend. Some Indians begins to treat her as goddess.

So, the above mentioned British characters are stronger in their temperament and outlooks than the Indian character Aziz. These characters play important roles in exposing superior ideologies of the White men.

“ [Aziz's] mind here was hard and direct, though not brutal. He had learnt all he needed concerning his own constitution many years ago, thanks to the social order into which he had been born, and when he came to study medicine, he was repelled by the pedantry and fuss with which Europe tabulates the facts of sex.”

(A Passage to India, p.116)

Here, the narrator is speaking, not an individual character, so it gives us some insight into the novel's attitude toward

race. What is interesting about this passage is that the novel seems to agree with the stereotype of the "Oriental" as being more in touch with his sexuality than the British. This brings up the further question of whether the novel has its own racist baggage to deal with characters.

Forster decorates those western characters to introduce English culture as master one through which colonial and imperial powers have the opportunity to tag the colonized as uncivilized and unreal which help them to rule over and control the natives.

III. THE CONFINEMENT OF AZIZ AND THE EAST:

Aziz is an Anglicized modern Indian. He gets his education in England and settles his career as a physician in India. So, his personality embraces an attractive mixture of foreign and traditional features. He is a widower with his three children though he is happy in his private life. He still deeply feels his dead wife like as he has a soft corner and reverence to the glorious history of Muslim community in India. He owns some wonderful abstract qualities such as impulsiveness, generosity, friendliness, talkativeness, and loves for Muslim poetry and tradition mark his character though those qualities do not sound extraordinary, but for these qualities he is able to raise our attention and sympathy. Again to Forster, Aziz is "...the comparatively simple mind of the Mohammedan was encountering Ancient Night" (Page 92).

But a study of his character exposes that he is suffering from fake superiority complex (a result of inferiority complex), falsehood, and obstinate and flattering features in his character. His character is disappointing in a sense that unconsciously he plays double role as he thinks himself as a proudly Muslim native and he is not aware about the culpabilities within himself. Though Forster's intention is apparently more modest, he tries to look at Aziz as a modern, average, individual Indian, not limiting his study to the particular environment of British India. So ultimately this figure becomes the archetypical of the oriental values. The typical Hindu-Muslim clash and the hatred towards each other are highlighted in the novel and it ultimately exposes the lack of national unity and harmony among different religious groups of this subcontinent. They cannot see eye to eye with each other and there are conflicts between them for insignificant reasons. One religious group, in meeting, deliberately use abuse words regarding the religion and custom of other religious group. Even our 'modern' protagonist, who had been educated in England, proudly consumes this super abstract quality. He shows his snobbish attitude towards his own native race.

"Slack Hindus – they have no idea of society: I know them very well because of a doctor at the hospital. Such a slack, unpunctual fellow! It is as well you did not go to their house, for it would give you a wrong idea of India. Nothing sanitary, I think for my own part they grew ashamed of their house and that is why they did not send."

After meeting Mrs. Moore and Mr. Fielding, he shows an effort to make a friendly relationship with the white men. But his attempt to make a good term with Hindu (his native) is not up to the mark. He is not interested in making alliance with Hindu, then how could it be possible they make a bridge between the native and the conqueror. The term 'unity' is differently highlighted in the novel when the native themselves are unable to keep harmony within them. So indirectly it is shown that bond is impossible in India as Indians as a race fails to prove united. And Aziz is the victim of the writer who makes him as a stereotyped Indian, is unable to break the chain of the contemporary social concept. Aziz is fascinated with the goodwill and responsiveness of the characters like Mrs. Moore and Fielding; it means he indirectly admits the supremacy to the western values. He never shows this type of intimacy with the Hindu natives. The fact is exposed in the scene with Panna Lull where Aziz shows his utmost avoiding tendency and breaking commitment to this person of other religion by making silly untrue excuses. Aziz prejudiced even gets its expression through his attitude to the domestic world; "A Brahmany bull walked towards them and Aziz, though disinclined to pray himself, did not see why they should be bothered with the clumsy and idolatrous animal. He gave it a tap with his polo mallet". (A Passage to India, p. 76)

The protagonist disappointed us again when he invites and takes out his invitation at the same time. It can be assessed in two ways – he is a hypocrite and his statement is contradictory with his previous statement. The situation is like that Adela and Mrs. Moore are very upset and disappointed because they are invited guests to a Hindu family but the host do not send their carriage for them and keep Adela and Mrs. Moore wait a long time. The whole situation makes the two newly arrived guests in our country upset and saddens and they are unable to comprehend the whole situation. In order to take the situation under his control and to make himself as a Muslim superior to Hindu race, he immediately proposes without thinking much his guests to his bungalow, but soon he recovers and realizes he makes a grand mistake because his house is not less 'slack' than that of Hindus to whom he considers 'a unpunctuated fellow' and points out that it is better for the guests not to go to that Hindu house otherwise they would get 'a wrong idea'. But unfortunately he falls a prey to his own trap when the horrible condition of his house is visualized to his mind and for the awful condition of his bungalow bound him to divert the invitation from his bungalow to the Marabar Caves. Aziz thinks of his bungalow with horror – it is

a detestable shanty near a low bazar. There is practically only one room in it, and that infested with small black flies. That's why, he suddenly changed his topic, 'Oh, but we will talk of something else now'. But the sad thing is that few minutes before he criticizes Hindus for slackness and sanitation. Regarding cleanliness, Forster makes a clear distinction between oriental and occidental values where he shows even house decoration is a matter of identity to which world a person belongs;

".....and the Englishman had not spoilt it, whereas Aziz in an occidental moment would have hung Maude Goodmans on the wall. Yet there was no doubt to whom the room really belonged....."

(A Passage to India, p. 87)

Certainly he is not a 'nationalist hero' and there is no proof of it as well, rather he is a stereotype figure through which one will get the common oriental flavor.

"Sometimes, to the exasperation of Major Callendar, he would pass over the one relevant fact in a position, to dwell on the hundred irrelevant. The Major accused him of disingenuousness, and was roughly right, but only roughly".

(A Passage to India, p.72)

Bringing 'irrelevant' things and 'lie'ness seems a common thing in Aziz character. Those things are frequently seen in Aziz character. Apart from above mention experience, he does this with his native race as well, in order to avoid Panna Lull constant inquiries he makes something like mentioned below:

"Yet you promised me, and then fabricate this tale of a telegram. Go forward, Dapple."

(A Passage to India, p.77)

Tendency of flattering and showing excitation in A Passage to India points out as a practice of Indian culture.

Aziz shows his talkativeness and excitation whenever he is with Mrs. Moore and Fielding, maximum time it is full of irrelevant and unnecessary topics focused his less dignified personality and swing like pendulum.

IV. CONCLUSION

The author of the novel is seemingly very emotional and sympathized towards the native characters. But the study has shown that the author has worked hard to highlight the colonialist philosophy of supremacy and marginalized the native through the character Aziz. Forster concentration is not to make a nationalist hero, though it might have been possible to draw a revolutionary character who strongly holds patriotism and heroism like 'an epic' hero. Rather it is seen that Forster has chosen an ordinary man like Aziz to whom the author does not hesitate to add silly, odd features in his character in order to emphasis the inferior principles of orientalism. The character Aziz seems so insignificant in front of the other characters like Mrs. Moore and Fielding who possess semi god ideologies. Through the portrayal of native character Aziz, Indian distinctive and unique culture is suppressed, and through the portrayal of English characters (Fielding, Mrs. Moore, Adela and Ronny) by the author superior western values are highlighted.

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