

Colonial Attitude and its impact on the colonized community: A Case study of A Passage to India by E. M. Forster.

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Abstract

The psychological terms attitude and prejudice have a conscious link with the behaviour and expression of the individuals. Attitude is an external factor which may be positive or negative, or both at the same time. Forster in his novel, A Passage to India, has identified the root cause of tension and disaffection between the colonizers and the subjugated class. He observes that the colonial attitude has created a gulf between the two communities and they remain apart from each other. The colonial attitude of the colonial rulers keeps them in isolation, away from the colonized. He has also discussed the other psychological phenomena like hysteria, claustrophobia, hallucination, schizophrenia, inferiority and superiority complexes. He further adds that the colonized characters believe in superstitions while the colonizer characters are the victims of hallucination.

Key Words: Colonial attitude, colonized, colonizers, inferiority and superiority complex, impact on the colonized society.

Introduction

The psychological terms attitude and prejudice have a conscious link with behaviour and expression of the individuals. These factors can be termed as integrated factors and are related with each other directly and indirectly. Attitude may be positive or negative, or both at the same time. David Matsumoto in 'The Cambridge Dictionary of Psychology' explains the word prejudice both in positive and negative sense:

- Any judgment arrived at before access to the information necessary to reach such a judgment.
- A set of negative attitudes and beliefs about a group of people which ignores within group diversity and is resistant to contrary evidence.

Prejudice is a preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience. The synonyms of Prejudice are bias and partial.

Hallucination, as explained by Harris (1973) is a phenomenon produced by extreme stress, wherein what was once experienced externally (derogation, rejection, and criticism) is again experienced externally, even though "no one is there" and nothing has happened. A recorded experience "comes on for real" and the person "hears" voices that existed in the past.

Forster in *A Passage to India* portrays the inner and outer feelings of the Indian society and the attitude and behaviour of the English settlers during the colonial period. He tells us about the complexities and conflict that is reflected in the social, cultural, psychological and political life of the British and Indian people. The chaotic situation in Indian society is owing to the colonial attitude where the people are subjugated and living an oppressed life. He criticizes the attitude of the ruling race and the reaction of the Indian people. The novel is an attempt to develop a bridge of sympathy between East and west, however, the aggressive behavior of the English rulers and the hostility of the Indians is the major obstacle. The English are not sensible and sensitive and the Indians are not aware of the civilized manners of interaction and socialization. However, the major responsibility has been put on the attitude and behaviour of the colonizers. A group of English ruling race that settled in India has developed a colonial attitude, behaviour and a point of view of

their own, about the Indian colonized. The Indians, on the other hand, are proud of their glorious history and civilization and do not seem to tolerate the colonial behaviour. The root cause of tension and disaffection between the ruling group and the subjugated class is the colonial attitude, which has created a gulf between the two communities and they remain apart from each other. Kundu (2008) confirms this observation and states that Forster has portrayed the stubborn insularity and the resultant isolation of the colonizers in colonized India.

The English consider that they are superior and are reluctant to develop any link with the Indians. Pirnuta (1973) states that the main focus of Forster, is on the individuals of two societies: the Indians and the British. The ruling race doesn't realize the fact of socialization and communication. They attribute the tension and gap to the stereotype idea that East is East and West is West. The indifferent attitude of the English masters inculcates a sense of disappointment and hatred in the subjugated Indians. Tavassoli and Mirzapour (2014) refer to this point and state that in the beginning of the novel the Indian friends are discussing the negative attitude and arrogance of the rulers. This is not the observation of a layman rather all the three friends are well educated, intellectuals and quite skill in their respective professions, one a medical doctor (Aziz) and two practicing lawyers (Mahmoud Ali and Hamidullah). The Indians think that the colonized and colonizer are not equal in status in a colonized country. Such relation is only possible in a free and independent country.

The colonial attitude develops arrogance and superiority complex in the rulers, which is expressed through Mr Turton, the administrator of Chandrapore. Mr Turton argues that the interaction and communication between Indians and English is not possible. His observation is put as, "Intimacy (between Indians and English) never, never, the whole weight of my authority is against it" (Forster 1991, p. 147). The victims of colonial attitude are Indians. Their experiences as members of colonized society are quite miserable and bitter. This bitterness prevails at all levels and in every walk of life. Forster has given the example of Hamidullah and the attitude meted out to him. He reveals this fact to his friends as, "The red-nosed boy has again insulted me in Court. I do not blame him. He was told that he ought to insult me" (Forster, 1991, p. 4). The last sentence in the cited reference reflects that the seniors of the ruling race instruct their juniors to insult the Indians. And then with the passage of time they (the juniors) develop the same attitude. Forster observes that the Indians are keen observers with a sharp memory and they record the minute

details about the attitude of the other people, particularly, the English community. Hamidullah also reveals it to his friends that when Turton came to India he was his close friend. The change in attitude takes place after their arrival to a colonized country. Dr Aziz has a calculation of the time, for the alteration of the attitude of the colonizers. He observes, “I give any Englishman two years, be he Turton or Burton. And I give any Englishwoman six months” (Forster, 1991, p. 4). This shows that not only the men but also the women change their attitude in a colonized country and do not like to socialize with the Indians. Pirnuta also observes this fact and states, “Forster’s satire is harsh on Englishwomen, whom the author depicts as overwhelmingly racist, self-righteous, and viciously condescending to the native population” (Pirnuta, 1973, p. 380).

The Englishmen and women, after their arrival, have to pass through the process of formatting. Abu-Baker, in his research article ‘Rethinking Identity: The Colonizer in E. M. Forster’s *A Passage to India*’ explains the process of ‘formatting’ as, “(T)he process by which the newcomers have to go through so that they end up like the other colonial settlers in terms of their ideologies and practices” (Abu-Baker, 2006, p. 69). The process converts the colonized into ‘Other’ and the colonizer settlers into ‘Anglo-Indians’.

In the text the colonizers use the Urdu term ‘Pukka’ for the change of attitude which is used in literal and figurative sense. The figurative meaning of pukka is the changed attitude of the English people after their arrival to India. The characters that don’t change their attitude are criticized by the ruling race. Fielding, for instance, after his arrival, does not change his attitude. He interacts, socializes and communicates with the Indians in a usual manner. Therefore, the ruling class does not consider him Pukka or formatted and always criticize him. Forster writes, “Mrs. Turton closed her eyes at this name and remarked that Mr. Fielding wasn’t pukka, and had better marry Miss Quested, for she wasn’t *pukka*” (Forster, 1991, p. 20). Fielding and Adela Quested are called not Pukka, (formatted) which means not the sort of the people, the colonizers want in India. The basic reasons are:

- Fielding doesn’t change his attitude after his arrival to India.
- Adela Quested, after her arrival demands to see the real India. This is quite unusual for the ruling group.

An individual who becomes Pukka or formatted (with changed attitude) becomes a sahib. Sahib is a title by which all over India European gentlemen are addressed. Ronny Heaslop has passed through the process and thus becomes a sahib. Forster writes about him, “The long and the short of it is Heaslop's a sahib; he's the type we want, he's one of us” (Forster, 1991, p. 18). Major Callendar is also a sahib. The women of the colonizer group become ‘mem-sahibs’. Forster states that during the performance of *Cousin Kate*, in the club, windows are closed so that the servants should not see their mem-sahibs at the stage. However, the Collector, Mr Turton is called Burra Sahib. This title is in the light of his long experience, seniority and authority. He is known by this title among the colonizers and colonized.

Forster writes about the attitude of the English in the other countries in his essay ‘Notes on the English Character’, as, “They go forth into it with well-developed bodies, fairly developed minds, and undeveloped hearts. And it is this undeveloped heart that is largely responsible for the difficulties of Englishmen abroad” (Forster, 1996, p. 3). So the process of formatting does change the feelings and sentiments of the British in the colonized countries. Forster observes this attitude of the English people in his book *Hill of Devi* as well. In *Hill of Devi*, Colonel Wilson, a private secretary to the Maharajah of Dewas, admits the fact about the change attitude of the English people abroad. Forster, in a letter to Colonel Wilson, does not mention his official title. Wilson takes it very serious and writes to Forster, “I know that some people (The English) feel when they get east of Suez (Canal) that not only the Ten Commandments are obsolete but also the obligation and etiquette of English society” (Forster 1953, p. 45). The change in attitude is not only for the common Indian masses. This attitude is for the rulers and princes of the Indian state as well. Forster has mentioned the meeting between the ruler of Dewas state and the Indian Viceroy. He states, “H.H (The Maharajah of Dewas) had his interview with the viceroy-a disappointment on the whole. He found him clever, but shifty and quiet without a charm, and he has never asked him to dinner, which is rude, considering he has come all these hundreds of miles by appointment to see him. It is said that he is most remiss socially and there is great dissatisfaction with him in Simla” (Forster, 1953, p.121, 122). The prince of a ruling state is treated with a colonial behaviour. Forster has mentioned another narrative about the rude attitude of the British officers. He states, “It seems that the A.G.G (Assistant Governor General) had not only been rude but grossly disobedient.” (Forster, 1953, p. 121).

The irony is that some of the colonizers are also rude and impolite to the other English people and thus not care even for the members of their own community. The warning of McBryde to Fielding, when the latter wants to support Aziz, is, “The man who doesn't toe the line is lost” (Forster, 1991, p. 156). McBryde, a police officer, merely warns Fielding, however, Mr Turton threatens Fielding as, “You can't run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, at least not in this country” (Forster, 1991, p. 169). This is a warning from a colonizer to another colonizer. Hochschild has put the phrase as, “It is better to be with the hunters rather than with the hunted” (Hochschild, 1998, p. 127). In this regard, Forster has shared a personal experience as well. He states that once while travelling in a train he came across another passenger, an army chaplain. His attitude was quite hostile. Forster wished to talk to him, “I said to him, “it looks as if we are going to have the carriage to ourselves. He closed his little eyes and said “apparently” and we spoke no more. (Forster, 1953, p. 120, 121). The attitude of the women is also criticized. At the occasion of Bridge Party, Mrs Turton doesn't like to go to welcome the Indian women on the pretext that these women prefer Purdah. However, Adela protests against the attitude of the English, and says, “This isn't a purdah party” (Forster, 1991, p. 33). She observes that Indians are guests so they should be attended by the British. However, the ruling group ignores the Indians at the Bridge Party. This colonial attitude has inculcated hatred in the hearts of the colonized. They want to live on the rumours about the ruling race. Mahmoud Ali criticizes the behaviour of various individuals of the ruling group as, “Red-nose mumbles, Turton talks distinctly, Mrs. Turton takes bribes, Mrs. Red-nose does not and cannot, because so far there is no Mrs. Red-nose” (Forster, 1991, p. 4). Naghshbandi and Zarrinjooee (2015) argue that the main issues are colonialism, rape and nationalism in the novel. The reason for the tension is the attitude of the ruling group. However, the friendship between an Indian and Englishman is possible in England. This conditional relaxation is explained through the character of Hamidullah and in the light of his personal experience, interaction and stay in England with the English people. His personal experience in England was quite pleasant. Forster has mentioned his (Hamidullah) reception at Cambridge by the English fellows, his stay and interaction with the other people. Forster has given an example of the relation of a colonized and colonizer in an independent country. However, such relation is impossible in a colonized country. The members of the ruling group change their attitude after their arrival. Forster observes that the rude attitude is against the religious spirit (Christianity) as well. The religious discourse is justified through the character of Mrs Moore during her

conversation with Ronny. When she observes the haughty and prejudice attitude of her own ruling community, she asks her son (Ronny) that the English should be pleasant with Indians. She advocates that India is a part of the earth and God has put us on the earth in order to be pleasant to each other and love our neighbours. She reminds her son that God is omnipresent; however, Ronny ignores her remarks and doesn't like to consider religion a part of his administration. Pirnuta (1973) suggests that the British would have been well served by becoming kinder and more sympathetic to the Indians. He argues that the changed attitude of the rulers created the problem and widened the gulf between the two communities. The arrogant attitude of the colonizers has compelled the colonized to revolt against the ruling group and to get rid of them.

In *A Passage to India*, the good omen and the bad omen are reflected. "The itinerant musicians, came from far flung areas, were considered the messengers of good luck by Nawab Bahadur" (Forster, 1991, p. 173). Naghshbandi and Zarrinjooee (2015) trace the effect of the echo upon Adela Quested and Mrs Moore in the caves and states that Adela is not affected by the Marabar Caves as Mrs Moore.

The inferiority complex is reflected through Aziz. He is ashamed of his environment. He is criticizing himself for unhygienic home and the gathering of the flies in his house. Naghshbandi and Zarrinjooee (2015) have criticized Forster for describing the Indian landscape as poor without any charm. The English characters are presented as calm and in control at the time of crisis and the Indians are depicted coward and lazy. The colonizers inculcate a fright in the colonized which is reflected through the characters and situations. When Dr Aziz is summoned by Major Callendar a past incident haunts him upon his entrance to the Callendar residence. He stopped the driver (tongawallah) at a distance, away from the gate of Major Callander. The compulsion and compromise of the youngman is the past event and attitude of the colonizers. His reluctance and confusion is due to the haunting and striking of that event which occurred a year back. "There had been a case last year-an Indian gentleman had driven up to an official's house and been turned back by the servants and been told to approach more suitably" (Forster, 1991, p. 9). Naghshbandi & Zarrinjooee (2015) make an analysis of this situation and add that upon receiving Major Callendar's summoning note, Aziz visits the Major's bungalow, the approach to which occasions his fear of "a gross snub". To avoid being scorned, he compromises the Indian habit by having the driver stop the Tonga outside. But as if to prove his fearful premonition, Aziz is received by the

English ladies with the exact “gross snub” he has dreaded. This feeling of inferiority hurts him so deeply that he must visit the mosque to regain his lost dignity.

The Indians feel themselves to be strangers in their own country when they enter into the locality where the colonizers are living. This situation depicted by Forster and states that when Aziz enters their locality depression suddenly seized him. The roads, named after victorious generals and intersecting at right angles, were symbolic of the net Great Britain had thrown over India. He felt caught in their meshes. Dr Aziz becomes a victim of empathy when he observes an official letter on his table. The letter is sent by Fielding. However, Dr Aziz opens it with a great reluctance.

Koponen in his research paper ‘Krishna at the Garden Party: Crises of Faith in *A Passage to India*’, finds a link between the Marabar caves and hysteria. He states, “The Marabar Caves, where the hysteria begins, are established in the opening and closing sentences of the first chapter” (Koponen, 1993, p. 39). The psychological experience of Marabar caves is different for the visitors. They experience hallucination, claustrophobia and diplomacy. Koponen (1993) states that Adela collapses when attempting to fathom her feelings and her fear of sex as she enters the cave. She is terrified by her inchoate feelings, which blend in her mind with the echo. The echo leaves her only after she confesses at the trial that she was mistaken. With this release from the echo comes a newfound resignation to the limits of knowledge and words. Similarly, Aziz distorts the truth to maintain the right feeling. He tells a lie to Adela that his wife is alive and she can see her at home. However, her hallucination takes her away. Her coldness disorients her as she enters a cave in the Marabar, pondering love and realizing she does not love her fiancé. Her feelings at the entering of the caves are very strange. Upon entering the cave, Adela becomes unhinged, suggesting a rejection of sexual union. In terms of hallucination, there is an interesting coincidence, a real example from *Hill of Devi* and fictional one in *A Passage to India*. Forster visits a village in Dewas Senior along with two other officials, Malarao and Deolekr. The villagers point out to him, at the bank of river Sipra, a black snake about three feet in length. Forster tells the local inhabitants that it seems a small dead tree. However, the crowd insists that it is a snake and hit it with stones. When the people go near, it is confirmed that it was in fact a small dead tree. Adela becomes a victim of hallucination after the Marabar Caves incident. The major conflict is due to the mental condition of Adela Quested. She was engrossed in deep thinking and thus becomes a victim of hallucination.

Discussion

Forster argues that the colonial attitude hardens the hearts of the colonizers. The colonial barriers between the European and Indians do not allow the communities to come close and socialize with each other. On certain occasions, the people of the two communities come close and think that they have crossed all the barriers of colonialism; however, they forget the reality that the colonized cannot cross “the sense of possession” of the colonizers. The colonial attitude is quite fatal for the human values and norms, social interaction, intellectual capability and spirit of equality. The Europeans claim was based on the logic and argument that they came to the colonized countries to free them from ignorance and to inculcate in them the virtues of civilization and culture. However, in the garb of civilizing the people the policy of colonialism played havoc with the feeble nations. Colonial attitude is responsible for the genocidal horrors and global hegemony. Forster observes the impact of the savagery on both the communities. This impact is depicted physically and psychologically. This physical and psychological change is the result of colonialism, which is reflected in the colonial discourse.

For all such horrible consequences and chaos the responsibility is upon the rude attitude of the ruling group, their uncivilized behaviour and colonial system. The study reveals that the voice of the sensible and sensitive people like Fielding, Mrs Moore was not given any heed. Forster predicts that the harsh attitude brings the split and hatred; the rude attitude in a society, personal or collective, damages the relation and social strength. The rude attitude of the rulers compelled the Indians to revolt against their British masters. The Indian started protests against the harsh attitude of the colonizers, which, later on, organized into a movement of freedom and thus they were forced to leave India in 1947.

The approach of Forster to colonialism is more vivid and based on actual observation. His actual (Dewas Senior) and imaginary (Chandrapore) states are in colonized India. The main stress of Forster is on the narratives and the discourse of real and fictional characters who express the mentality of the Europeans and their modus operandi in the colonized India. The colonial attitude, behaviour, narratives, point of view, and ideologies are expressed through the characters. The colonizers characters, who are specially trained for ruling the colonized subject, are the settlers

(Anglo-Saxons) who controlled India and Indians by force. They have adopted a formatted behaviour and neither follows a missionary spirit nor care for any human rights. They are not giving any serious heed to the miseries of the colonized. Forster has written about their policies and behaviour in the light of his personal experiences during his visits to India. Ideologically, the Indians are quite sensitive to their culture and religion (Hinduism and Islam) which have outshone their abilities and capabilities. They integrated religion and culture and the texts reflect several narratives and events about the religious sensitivity and prejudices of the Indian characters. Though some of the characters are educated in Great Britain, for instance Hamidullah; who got his education in Cambridge; however, the western education does not play any active role in transforming their personalities from a cultural perspective. They remain Indian Muslims and Indian Hindus as far their cultures and traditions are concerned. The colonizers consider their culture and civilization quite superior but give less importance to religion. Majority of them are non-believers and argue that religion should not be a part of any administrative or political system. Certain religious characters raise their voice for the rights of the Indians; however, these characters like Mrs Moore, Graysford and Soreley are not so dominant as compared to the authoritative Mr Turton, Ronny Heaslop, McBryde and Major Callendar. Colonial administrative system doesn't consider religion a part of authority; and keep the religious matters separate from administrative and political issues. The ruling group doesn't support any political or administrative reforms in the country. The seniors of the ruling race instruct their juniors to insult the Indians; and then with the passage of time they (the juniors) develop the same attitude. Foster argues that in homogeneous societies, the patch up or reunion of the individuals is possible; the obvious example is his novel *Howards End* where society is homogeneous (English) and thus the patch up takes place among the characters of different classes. However, the relationship between the individuals of heterogeneous societies is not possible. In such societies the intensity of social tensions is greater among the individuals and various sects.

Conclusion

The repercussions of the colonial attitude are quite horrible for all, for every individual, colonized and colonizer. This colonial attitude destroys the social fabric of the society. The engagement of Adela and Ronny is broken, Mr. Turton, Ronny Heaslop, Major Callendar and a number of other officials are transferred as punishment, Mrs Moore is sent back to England where

on her way she died, Dr Aziz resigned from the government job, left Chandrapore and his friends, and settled in Mau, another Indian state. Adela is disowned by her own community and went back to England with a broken heart. Nawab Bahadur becomes Mr. Zulfiqar as he returns the official title of Nawab Bahadur to the government. The riots break out in the city, and the dream of friendship between Indians and English is shattered forever. The logical reason is the colonial attitude of the English ruling class. The irony of fact is that the colonized and colonized are not aware of the horrible consequences of their attitude and behaviour. Owing to this peculiar altered attitude the communities turn against each other; they are living under the imposed attitude, which made them rotten, sick and psychic and their expressions do not reflect their feelings. The main reason is the Occidental and Oriental norms and values, social etiquette, religious and cultural differences. The ultimate consequences are disaster, collapse and split and are quite horrible for the colonizers as well as colonized.

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