# CHAPTER IV

# E.M.FORSTER'S *A PASSAGE TO INDIA*

## INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, E.M.Forster's *A Passage to India* will be analysed in general, while its position in the postcolonial era will be the specific concern. Major characters such as Aziz and Fielding are of great importance since, together, they reflect a unique relationship between Anglo-Indians and natives. The novel is also a departure from the linear to a modern strategy of narration. It is Forster's greatest novel and it embodies not only the theme of human understanding but also the images of Empire and colony. The encounter between the colonizer and the colonized is artistically portrayed. It is important to trace Anglo-Indian life and work among native Indians, and to see whether they are there to proselytise the natives or only to pretend to do so in order to camouflage the Empire's ungodly designs.

A point of departure for studying *A Passage to India* is to adopt Edward Said's strategies of reading a literary text. This novel makes an excellent case for reading a colonial text to expose its support for and complicity with the Empire. So Forster's novel is to be studied as a work of art with literary, aesthetic, cultural, and political reverberations.

### Biographical

Edward Morgan Forster (1879-1970) was the only remaining child of an architect who died when the child was just one year old. His mother was from a middle class family. Morgan was the product of the English upper-middle class due to his mixing with his father's relatives,

particularly Marianne Thornton, his aunt, and Henry Thornton her father. She also bequeathed him a large amount of money for his educational future. In his biography of Marianne Thornton he refers to the prosperous family life at Battersee Rise. He enjoyed their company but the house did not last long.

He was educated at Tonbridge School (1893-97) and at King's College, Cambridge. After his formal education he travelled for a few years and it is commonly believed that his writing was inspired by his travels. A lonely, fatherless child of shifting residences, he had a devoted mother. The death of his father increased his mother's anxiety and this resulted in his becoming a spoilt child. In Cambridge, King's College, new vistas were opened to Forster in terms of human relationships and a free intellectual atmosphere. The rest of Forster's life and novels were concerned with such relationships and atmosphere. Forster wanted to know Indians and to explore their imaginative universe. His first visit to India was mostly for pleasure and to visit his friend Masood whom he had met in 1910 at Cambridge.

**His Works**

In 1905 E.M.Forster completed and published *Where Angels Fear to Tread.* Then The *Longest Journey (1907), A Room with a View (1908)*, and *Howards End (1910)* appeared. *Howards End* established Forster as an important writer. *The Celestial Omnibus*, a collection of pastoral and fanciful short stories, was published in 1911. In 1912-13

he travelled to India where he met Syed Ross Masood for few months in Aligarh. After returning to England in 1913 he wrote the thematically homosexual *Maurice*, which circulated privately. This novel was published posthumously in 1971. He also went to Alexandria for the Red Cross in 1915. The outcome was *Alexandria: A History and a Guide*, which was published after revisions in 1938. Forster visited India for the second time in 1921-2. This time he worked as private secretary for the Maharajah of the native state of Devas for less than a year. In 1927 the Clark lectures were delivered, and printed as *Aspects of the Novel* the same year. This book proved to be a popular success. *The Eternal Moment*, another collection of short stories, appeared in 1928. He also completed two biographies, *Goldsworthy Lowes Dickens (1934) and Marianne Thornton (1956).* A collection of essays entitled *Abinger Harvest* appeared in 1936 and *Two Cheers for Democracy* in 1931. *The Hill of Devi,* which is in the form of letters and commentary, was written in 1953.[1]

Forster was forty six when *A Passage to India* was published to great critical acclaim in 1924, two years after his return to England. It is a representation of the social interactions in India at the time of the British Empire, which in turn is a reflection of the binary opposition between East and West. This novel can be considered as a fiction in which characters from two different races may be studied. Of particular interest is the writer's viewpoint in picturing the natives. The middle class British administrators in *A Passage to India* ignore all values and

are blind to the Indian culture that surrounds them. Forster visited India twice, in 1912 and 1921. At the end of the first visit he began *A Passage to India* but could not complete it till his second visit was over. He had a hard time completing the novel, and if it were not for the warning of his friend Leonard Woolf, the novel might have been left unfinished. Woolf warned Forster that leaving it unfinished might dissatisfy him forever.[2] The novel is mostly about India, rather than Indian characters; India as a world and not a country, with a profusion of different races, diverse cultures, and numerous religious beliefs. India is pictured as mysterious to the extent that it becomes totally incomprehensible to the reader. Forster took the title of his novel from a poem of the American poet Walt Whitman, published in 1871. The title of both works refers to the quest for spirituality, human relationships, and the possibility of intimacy.

Almost all of Forster's fiction deals with the theme of personal relationships. Here Forster formulates a creed of his own, which is "tolerance, good temper and sympathy – they are what matter really, and if the human race is not to collapse they must come to the front before long."[3] Forster prefers the democratic state to other forms of government at this time. He managed to hide his personal life from public discussion.

Forster's last novel raises an important question which can be answered at both individual and social/political levels: Can the English and the Indians be friends? The answer seems to be "No, not yet." Aziz

attempts to be decent to the English, but the response he gets, his arrest following the visit to the Marabar Caves, and his trial all contribute to Aziz's ultimate disappointment and anti-British sentiments. Throughout the novel, Fielding and Aziz and their friends experience and explore the barriers to inter-racial friendship in a colonial context. Due to his sustained liberal humanist world-view, Forster emphasizes the realm of the personal but actually the personal and the political cannot be two worlds apart. In other words, it is possible to have a political reading of the novel. Furthermore, *A Passage to India* is such a rich and complex novel full of mysterious events, that it makes it possible for the critic to study it from different angles.

This is a novel of encounter. It has been considered as an encounter with death, hostility of nature, and the unconscious. I would rather consider it as an encounter with the "other" or an exploration of imperialism. It goes without saying that the novel is deliberately polyphonic, rather than a thesis novel. It poses various problems and perspectives. Now, if mere aesthetic matters are to be taken into consideration, elements such as structure, language, style, and so on must be considered. It is true that Forster clings to the traditional role of the novelist in writing *A Passage to India*. Nevertheless, there is a balance of traditional and modernist elements, which makes the process of reading challenging for the reader. The novel can be described as modernist since it incorporates the element of polyphony. It avoids final judgment. There are unfinished interpretations, multiple

perspectives, stereotypical and flat, as well as enigmatic and round characters in the novel. Although Forster uses irony and employs the omniscient point of view in his narration, which makes him look like a traditional novelist, he compensates for this by his consistent shift from narration to the character's point of view and vice versa. Therefore, he was not only aware of the modern trend of novel writing, but he was also a practitioner of this trend which tended to find new ways of representing reality by means of being subjective, indeterminate and close to the process of experience. V.A.Shahane describes Forster's position in these words:

> Forster is 'rare' because he is in part a late Victorian or an Edwardian and in part a modern. His life extends over a long period – from 1879 to 1970 – marked by rapid and radical social change ... However, it is not so much this uncommon relationship to the age that makes Forster so unique as the inherent qualities of his personality, mind and art.[4]

**His Critics**

Personal factors should not be ignored, since it was really a personal attraction to Masood, which made Forster come to and consequently take interest in India. The writer explores the relationship between the English and Indians at an individual as well as a social level. The dedication of *A passage to India* to Masood can be considered as proof. Another evidence is the emphasis on the

relationship between Aziz and Fielding, and the significance given to their points of view. Forster is under the influence of his liberal humanism on the one hand, and his friendship on the other. This enables him to find ways to break down barriers such as race, class, and so on.

Jeremy Tambling has suggested three interrelated areas in which recent criticism, "illuminated by critical theory," has focused on Forster. Discussing modernism, he considers *A Passage to India* as modernist to a small extent. It is more or less a retreat from otherness to the ideology of "Englishness."[5] Forster criticizes the Empire for its intolerance, imperialism and lack of liberalism. The use of India or Italy becomes a complicated way of reasserting England's values. The second issue is the relationship between modernism on the one hand and homosexuality and gender on the other. Modernism is supposed to be transgressive. The third area, which is going to be studied in detail in this chapter, is "Orientalism, Empire and the Other."[6]

There is no doubt that *A Passage to India* played a significant role in changing public opinion regarding British presence in India during the thirties and forties. Michael Foucault and Edward Said initiated the idea of how knowledge about others brings power over them. Said's *Orientalism* postulates that the Orient is fabricated by Western discursive practices like anthropology, tourism, fiction and imperialism. Said pinpoints some of the novels of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in *Culture and Imperialism*. In this recent book, he

is able to study the English cultural tradition from an imperialist point of view. For Said, it is really strange that one could read all the novels of this tradition without paying the slightest attention to the Empire or its colonies. He questions the financial sources, abundance, and affluence that make personal and social relationships possible. The novel under consideration raises the topic of empire, race and related issues in a really novel way. When it appeared in 1924 most of the Anglo-Indians were agitated because it was considered a clear attack on British imperialism in India. Kipling's assumption that the British ruling class ruled India for India's own good was challenged so shockingly for the first time by Forster. Forster's criticism of imperialism seems to be based on ethical and humanist, rather than political convictions. However, his stance regarding this matter is intricate. His "friendship" also had a weakening effect on him, so that he could not make up his mind ultimately about the enormity of British rule in India or even about himself and gender issues.[7] As stated earlier, the title of the novel is taken from Walt Whitman's poem. Whitman's "Passage to India" is about a journey that man needs to take to realize the truth. Forster also makes two British ladies undertake a passage "to see the real India." The first part of the novel ("Mosque") shows how Mrs. Moore's journey to India is based on her understanding of personal relationships (specifically her relationship with Dr. Aziz). The second section ("Caves") unveils the weakness of the foundations on which human civilization and particularly the understanding of Mrs. Moore and Adela

rest. Of course, what they saw in the caves was only half of the truth. In the third part ("Temple") there is an exhilarating display of Hinduism, which appears to include the muddle, accept it, and go beyond it too. The last part is an attempt to affirm the possibility of personal relationships. The result is that complete union is impossible unless the elements of time and place are removed or modified.

Besides *A Passage to India*, Forster wrote another book about his experiences in India entitled *The Hill of Devi (1953).* The latter gives us a clearer idea of the complexities of India from the author's point of view, since it is mostly a collection of letters about the native state of Dewas and its ruler.

When *A Passage to India* was published, Indian nationalism was in the air. Of course, extreme political ideas are not important constituents of the novel. Forster criticized British officialdom in India and this shows his knowledge of the political scene then:

> It would perhaps be wrong to suggest that Forster did not take cognizance of this aspect altogether – his reference to the question of the expulsion of the English people from India occurring in the last part of the novel is an instance – though an isolated one – in the point. Fielding also, in many ways the representative of Forster himself, has both in words and deeds exposed the follies and foibles of British Imperialism in India.[8]

Still, there are distributions of themes and ideas and exclusions in the novel that will be studied in a separate section. There is no final and ultimate word on the novel since dialogue is one important element in the novel and the principle of dialogue is that there are various voices and attitudes. There are a number of characters who have their own unique viewpoints: Fielding, Aziz, Mrs. Moore, Ronny, and so on. As a point of departure, I would not say that Forster attempted to reach a golden mean to "bridge the gap between the East and the West."[9] Rather he made an effort to bridge the difference or the distance between the East and the colonialists. He only wanted to qualify the Empire.

Resistance and opposition to British rule do exist in the novel, and it is reflected through different characters, among them Aziz, Godbole and Fielding, with varying degrees. A reading based on Orientalism would include "the sustained encounter between the English colonials... and India as the crux of the novel."[10] Edward Said postulates that Forster, compared to Kipling who was explicitly for the Empire, "is evasive and more patronizing."[11] This is despite the fact that India is presented as "affectionately personal" and "remorselessly metaphysical" and that Indians contending for their independence are not so conspicuous and serious.

Forster, doubtless, imagines an India mostly populated with colonial civil servants centred around their club. Gandhi's resistance to British colonialism is slighted. Even though he treats the issues of

Anglo-Indian relationships, his passage ends in a gulf between East and West. Whitman's spiritual journeys, on the other hand, are quite optimistic:

> Lo, soul, sees't thou not God's purpose from the first?
> The earth to be spann'd, connected by network,
> The races, neighbors, to marry and be given in marriage,
> The oceans to be cross'd, the distance brought near,
> The lands to be welded together.[12]

Postcolonial criticism coming from the East, particularly India, has attempted to undermine the inherent colonialism in *A Passage to India*. Of course, Forster draws a picture of the incongruent mind-set of the Imperialists. He seems to be opposed to racism and Eurocentricism, but this has to be examined carefully in the text. Nevertheless, his perspective becomes Eurocentric when he attempts to depict the non-European character. Indian natives depicted by Forster are no more than caricatures. They are described as irrational, fatuous, lazy, dishonest, and so on.

In this section, the different attitudes of three different novelists vis-à-vis the imperial myth will be considered. Kipling in *Kim* and in his poems, especially *The White Man's Burden (1899),* claims that the best Englishmen were sent overseas to save the natives from their misery.

He has full-heartedly accepted the imperial doctrines and assumptions and expressed them in a literary frame. Since he is confident of these assumptions, one does not find his treatment and presentation of the imperial myth ironic at all. He is quite at ease with the Anglo- Indian clubs. In *The White Man's Burden,* one can perceive a parody of the Christ myth as regards the natives. In other words, the white man becomes a Christ-figure in Kipling.[13]

Forster's attitude towards the imperial myth is very different. While Kipling is recognized as a sympathetic spokesman for British Imperialism, Forster, and later George Orwell, attempt to qualify, investigate, and judge the stereotypical assumptions of the imperial myth. *A Passage to India* deals with personal/social matters on the one hand, and colonial/ imperial themes on the other. Forster criticizes the "pukka sahib code" of the club. Fielding, who is closest to Forster, also resists Kipling's "white man's burden." There are different viewpoints on the Anglo-Indian club by other characters like Mrs. Moore as well. Forster focuses on the inability of Indians and the English to communicate due to the imperial rules.

George Orwell ridicules the imperial myth, using satire in his *Burmese Days (1934).* There are many parallels between Forster's novel and that of Orwell. The Anglo-Indian club appears in both, while characters of one novel find their counterparts in the other. Orwell's final image of the imperial myth and the Anglo-Indian club is negative and bleak. To sum up, "Kipling's was an eulogistic judgement on the

myth, Forster's a humanistic exposure of it, and Orwell's is a satiric anatomy of the subject."[14] While Forster's voice is calm and logical, Orwell's is unrestrained and angry. But both writers express a feeling of guilt for the continuation of British imperialism in India.

Indian critics started writing on Forster during the 1950s and 1960s. Forster himself, then in his seventies and eighties, encouraged the Indian writers. The most important Indian critics writing on Forster include Vasant A. Shahande, Nirad Chaudhuri, G.K. Das, C.L. Sahni, and Shamsul Islam. There are many others who contributed to Forster scholarship, specifically *A Passage to India.* Indian critics took different approaches in their works but they are mostly interested in the way Forster has represented India and the Indians. It is of crucial importance that the representation of Indians by British subjects becomes a subject for Indian critics to write about. In addition to the attention given to the historical realism of the novel, portraying Indianness, and the use of structural elements from the Hindu or Islamic tradition, the most interesting concern of the Indian critics remains "the establishment of writing positions that alter and revise the relationship between the binary poles of British writing subject and Indian object, that diversify and transform the scope, language, and criteria of the field of English literature."[15]

Indian critics have analysed the novel differently, approaching it from various perspectives. V.A. Shahane and C.L. Sahni write about the religious and philosophical aspects while analysing the characters.

Shahane is concerned with the structure, characters, personal relationships, ultimate truth, and Indian cultural influences, whether Hindu or Moslem. Sahni treats the same themes, connecting Forster to Indian thought. One way of doing so is reflected in his article entitled "The Marabar Caves in the Light of Indian Thought."[16] The essay is intended to complement the mythology and symbolism of the Marabar Caves from the Indian viewpoint. According to ancient Indian mythology the caves represent eternity, and the sound "boum," "bou-oum" or "ou-boum" stand for the Indian mystic symbol "AUM" or "OM" signifying the inexpressible Absolute, which is beyond good and evil. Lisa Lowe, in her *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms,* refers to other Indian critics like M. Sivaramakrishna, H.H. Anniah Gowda, Asim K. Mukherjee, G Nageswara Rao, T.G. Vaidyanathan, K. Natwar-Singh, Mulk Raj Anand, Shahane and Raja Rao who also write about Indian influences on the novel and its author. Among these critics, T.G. Vaidyanathan criticizes Forster's treatment of Professor Godbole and postulates that the detachment of Godbole from human reality is in contradiction with "Forster's avowed affirmation of human commitment and personal relationship."[17] The greater number of Indian critics does not consider *A Passage to India* as a political novel. It is not widely considered as a political allegory of the colonial-imperial relationship. However, there are few Indian critics who deal with the novel politically. G.K. Das is a critic who regards the novel as strongly political. In his *E.M. Forster's India (1977),* Das argues that his

sympathies towards Moslem Indians and his liberal thoughts are aspects of a political interpretation of the novel. Das believes that this novel sympathizes with Indians as the colonized, and hints at Indian independence. On the other hand, Nirad Chaudhuri (1954) and M.K. Naik consider the novel weak in terms of politics:

> Unlike the many Indian critics who laud the accuracy and justness of the novel's portrait of the Indian situation, Chaudhuri and Naik, each in differently emphasized arguments, consider the novel both an inadequate representation of Hindus and Muslims and an oversimplification, and therefore an obfuscation, of the political dimensions of Indo-British relations.[18]

M.K. Naik criticizes the novel for its "severe limitations" in terms of history philosophy, and religion. Characters are also either types or caricatures. The structure of the novel suffers from a state of imbalance, since the "Mosque" and "Caves" sections are substantial while "Temple" seems to be redundant. Naik criticizes the novel for its treatment of race relations. According to this critic, the concept of Anglo-Indian relationships is not disinterested. He refers to "the noncooperation and civil disobedience movements of Mahatma Gandhi, as well as other organized efforts towards Indian independence, which had begun by 1920.[19] He considers them overlooked. Islamic and Hindu beliefs of India are not treated fairly, and Naik regards characters like Aziz, Godbole, and Panna Lal as

stereotypes. Chaudhuri complains that Forster is more interested in personal relationships between different characters in the novel, rather than the Anglo-Indian relationship.

So, on the whole, Indian critics writing on Forster have focused on different elements. Some critics have analysed the novel so as to show the Indian cultural influences on the structure, theme, and the characters. These cultural influences might be Hindu or Islamic. Natwar-Singh, Shahane and Raja Rao have worked on the Indian influences on Forster himself, while critics like H.H. Anniah Gowda and G. Nageswara Rao studied the same influences on the novel. Religion and politics have also been topics for other groups of Indian critics. Generally speaking, there has been comparatively little contribution by Indian critics towards *interpreting* Forster's greatest novel. So, as Lisa Lowe argues, there has been no "Indian dialogue" or Indian critics who address interpretations of other Indian critics of Forster."[20] Lisa Lowe offers as an example, Glen O. Allen's "Structure, Symbol and Theme in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India" (1955).* This American critic's interpretation is based on a Hindu theme according to which she identifies the tripartite structure of the novel. "Mosque," "Caves," and "Temple" are fitted into the Hindu attitude towards life and salvation, which includes the three paths of "action," "knowledge," and "devotion." C.L. Sahni and M. Sivaramakrishna refute this interpretation as contributing nothing towards Forster scholarship. The discussion gets particularly interesting when it is discovered that a distinction is made

between "Indianness" from an Oriental point of view on the one hand, and from an Occidental viewpoint on the other, representing the Indian as "other."

By editing a collection of essays by Indians on Forster, with the title *Focus on Forster's "A Passage to India",* Vasant A. Shahane introduces the notion of the Indian point of view. The main goal in collecting these essays in a single volume is to project the Indian critic's image of Forster's *A Passage to India* after about fifty years of its publication. What is basically important in this approach,

> is to project an Indian's critic's image of Forster's *A Passage to India* after about fifty years of its impact on this country and the English-speaking world. What is basically important in this approach is the Indianness of the native point of view, its process of evaluation and its validity.[21]

This point of view becomes the first constituent of an opposition between Indian and Anglo-American critics. Although Vasant A. Shahane admits that "[n]o Indian has contributed anything significant towards interpreting *A Passage to India,"* this opposition in point of view helps us decide what to include and what to exclude in a contrapuntal reading of the text. It also points to the functional role Indian critics had in altering the dominant tradition of British Orientalism. It is a positive element that heterogeneity functions in the discourse of Orientalism. Resisting the centrality and domination of

Orientalism is a worthwhile the endeavour; however, Indian Forster Criticism is known to be embedded within the discourse of English literature, which is mainly dominated by the British.

As seen above, the bulk of Indian criticism on *A Passage to India* was written during the 1950s and 1960s, after India became independent. American critics, according to Lionel Trilling, showed a curious interest to write about Forster because of "the superiority the American could feel at the English botch of India."[22] American critics have taken a formalist approach and discussed themes, symbols, archetypes, the narrative voice, tripartite structure of the novel, and also issues that are quite remote from literary matters, affiliated rather to historical facts about the presence of Britain in India. Among the Anglo-American critics, one can mention Peter Burra (1934), Frederick Crews (1962), George Thomson (1967), E.K. Brown (1950), who has studied rhythm, Reuben A. Brower's study of irony (1951), and so on.

Early commentaries on Forster's work started from the 1920s. Early criticism of Forster treated him as old-fashioned, and as a novelist who has inherited values from the nineteenth century Edwardian period. There was a sort of ironic humility in his resistance to be a great novelist: "Sometimes irritating in his refusal to be great."[23] Later, he was accepted as a more complex and more modern novelist, especially after his *Howards End* and *A Passage to India* were published. Samuel Butler, Jane Austen and Marcel Proust were the three novelists who regarded Forster favourably. He is much closer to

Bloomsbury than to nineteenth century liberal optimism.[24] The philosophy of this group emphasized personal relationships. Still, critics accused him of being complex and ambiguous, which led to problems with his tone, narration and intentions. But, as a matter of fact, this seems to be an element of the modern novel.

I.A. Richards criticized Forster for being "odd," which he claimed derived from an unusual outlook on life.[25] Peter Burra argues that Forster is interested in abstractness as well as economic and political questions. In Burra's introduction to the Everyman Edition, he focuses on rhythm and pattern in order to create an "aesthetically compact" novel. Burra also writes about the theme of "the clash of opposites" and the friendship of Fielding and Aziz.[26] But Lionel Trilling's book E.M. *Forster* had a decisive role in establishing Forster's reputation. Trilling argues that although Forster is a liberal, he functions against it very frequently. Forster's manner is comic and sometimes playful but finally it aims at a complicated "moral intention." Prior to the Second World War, Forster was a well-known and important writer of the twentieth century. In his book-length study of Forster, *The Novels of E.M. Forster (1957),* James McConkey argues that the hero in Forster's works is not finished since his heroes are in a "chaotic" state. Frederick G. Crews in his *E.M. Forster: The Perils of Humanism* postulates that "Forster's position on every question of theory is a middle one, that is, a novel is in two worlds of "time and value" at the same time.[27] Crews, like Lionel Trilling, also believes that *A Passage to India* "simply restates the

familiar political and social dilemmas in the light of the total human situation."[28]

Malcolm Bradbury in his collection of essays has attempted to show "the essentially unified nature of Forster's varied modes."[29] The conclusion, if it can be called so, is that nobody has arrived at a unified and comprehensive meaning of *A Passage to India.* Bradbury shows the dominance of Western critics in this case, connected to the theme of the Empire. This was routine till the Empire began to write back about a decade later, as highlighted in Shahane's collection discussed earlier in this chapter.

The discourse of Orientalism includes an element of variety. Various conflicting, or converging ideas make the discourse complicated with its discursive formations or positions. Forster's position has been examined with regard to other writers writing on the theme of Empire. Arguments of Indian critics as well as Anglo-American ones have been considered. The fact that Indian critics are doomed merely to follow or react against Anglo-American intellectuals has created a complicated situation which is favourable to the discourse of Orientalism. Lisa Lowe argues that what Indian critics called "structures of argument," in *A Passage to India* is actually inherited from British Orientalists which in turn throws light on "the dynamic of orthodoxy with heterodox conditions."[30] In other words, the similar views and formulations coming from both Anglo-American and Indian critics about Forster are evidence of the dominating orthodoxy of

Orientalism. One such example, which is a proof both of the profound ties between American and English academics, and the similarity of American and English political concerns during the twentieth century, is the attempt to separate the literary from the historical in the novel. Literary and textual matters, such as symbol, archetype, structure, rhetoric and language, were separated from the social, historical, political, and the non-literary in general. In this way the referentiality of the text is limited "– that is, the degree to which it could be a political allegory about the decline of British influence in India, as well as a condemnation of British presence in India during the 1920s."[31]

C.C. Eldridge's book entitled *The Imperial Experience (1996)* is an attempt to clarify the historical aspect of a literary text. The writer is aware of the recent endeavour to separate the literary from the non-literary. In addition to concentrating on elite texts and on political correctness and jargon, Eldridge is concerned with

> placing the literature of the day in its proper social, economic and political context and shifting intellectual climate, emphasizing as it does the intermingling of pro-empire and anti-empire themes, changing perceptions of the role and function of empire, and the divergences, and striking conveniences, of elite and popular culture.[32]

The writer of *The Imperial Experience* then begins to define terms related to British imperialism and contexualise novels concerned from Carlyle to Forster.

G.K. Das's *E.M. Forster's India*, which is a book-length study on the subject, is the only instance by an Indian critic that looks at the novel in the light of British rule. Here history becomes a central trope for the study of the writing process. When the relationship between the novel and Anglo-Indian rule is under consideration, the extent to which the representation is realistic becomes important. India in the novel is presented in a way so as to incorporate both history and imagination. The novel becomes a mix of history and meaningful artistic fiction. Forster's major approach is to define India. Towards this aim, Das refers to different components of the novel, "the complexities of India's past traditions, the great variety presented by the range of her physical nature, the more intriguing variety of her people and the intricacies of the contemporary political situation too."[33] India is represented through the points of view of different characters: Adela Quested, Mrs. Moore, Fielding, English officials in Chandrapore, and even Indian natives. Das realizes the fact that the overall outlook of *A Passage to India* is different from that of Fielding. Fielding "cannot imagine that the British Empire will be abolished or that India can become a nation."[34] The novel, more or less, highlights the Indian political perspective, which is the demand for complete freedom from British domination.

G.K. Das admits that the political scenario of the novel highlights "the lapses in the imperial policies," but instances in the novel to show new imperial policies, which implied sympathy towards the Indians, are abundant. Indians are admitted in English circles at least on some

occasions; they are allowed to accompany English ladies as friends on the trip to the Marabar Caves; Indian characters like Aziz are permitted to stand by English major characters; they are given some space for self-expression and participation in important dialogues such as those between Aziz and Fielding... Nevertheless, Das argues that insofar as native Indians were considered unequal to the English, all reforms and conciliatory attempts were doomed to failure.

E.M.Forster has undeniably made great strides; nonetheless, it is only half the journey to the awaited liberation. He merely allowed the "inferior native" to take part in the dialogue. This matter can be clarified best by drawing an analogy. Consider a member of parliament representing a minority. There is no way for the modern democratic world to exclude minorities in a nation that subscribes to such a system of democracy. But even in a parliament, a minority remains a minority. Its destiny is to be dissolved into a larger party. Despite Said's optimism, the colonizer-colonized divide will remain dominant if not permanent. Although the position of the marginal and the oppressed has changed dramatically, their existence remains sporadic. To have a meaningful dialogue implies the need for two *equal* parties.

Other than *E.M. Forster's India* and the two essays by Chaudhari and Naik, Indian writers on *A Passage to India* (including more than thirty essays and a sizeable number of books – see bibliography) praise Forster as the first British novelist who represented India and the Indian natives as accurately as possible and with human

sympathy. With the advent of postcolonial studies, especially in fiction, the focus of criticism shifted. Generally, there are various themes and motifs in the novel, which can be topics for many critical essays and works of research. Religion and mysticism are two important topics for discussion. Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam are the three religions that respectively belong to characters like Mrs. Moore, Professor Godbole and Dr. Aziz. Religion is important in the novel but it cannot explain all experiences of the characters. A second motif in the narrative is the "mystery." It follows the reader and haunts the characters like a ghost. It is reflected in the images of muddle, chaos, uncertainty, and other inexplicable events. This confused and confusing state is organized and put in order through various devices employed by the author. Language, symbolism, imagery, phrases, and words are the linking elements that altogether build up a complete, unified and organic whole. Thirdly, we can concentrate on the sheer variety of characters; some of them are major and some minor. Forster spent about a decade developing his characters, and at the end he was still wondering whether they are genuine. He sets the characters against the general atmosphere that prevails in the novel, saying, "the characters are not sufficiently interesting for the atmosphere."[35] That is why Forster thinks that atmosphere is important and that the product is "meditation rather than a drama."[36] Another important theme in the novel is friendship, which is treated through the antithesis of connections and divisions. Humanity, friendship, and unity, on the one

hand, and culture, nationality, and groupism on the other, stand against each other. Arrangements for meeting and reconciliation are made, but in vain. But what is of great importance to this study is the now-frequent theme of interactions between East and West. It is true that *A Passage to India* has been acclaimed as a landmark in criticizing British presence in India; but it is also a fact that the same novel can be criticized for perpetuating Orientalist ideas about India and native Indians. Edward Said's postulation concerns the portrayal of the East, in general, and India, in particular, in Western culture. The East or India is shown as erotic, alien, and irrational while the West is portrayed as familiar, friendly, and rational.

Edward Said uses numerous colonial paradigms to make his analysis of Orientalism applicable to most if not all colonial situations. Whether it is Egypt, Algeria, India or Canada the colonial paradigms are the same. Said, in a way, deconstructs the history of the text. He advises the critics to tell the history of the text from the perspective of those characters or people who have been excluded from it before this time. Native Indians, doubtless, demand not only recognition of their identity but also treatment as equal human beings and as a community. This element of exclusion can be applied to different texts, and actually Said has studied the effects of colonialism on peoples of different nations, which have been under the influence of empire. In *Culture and Imperialism,* both the colonized and the colonizer have been studied and their relative perspectives collected in a volume which introduces a

measure for describing colonialism's impact in the past as well as its probable effects at the present time.

Another significant paradigm that has become a pretext for any form of colonialism is the ideological binary opposition of "We," which stands for the colonizers, and "They" which represents the colonized. This presupposition is present throughout *A Passage to India*, which is based on the presumed superiority of the white and the inferiority of the native. This becomes the very basis on which every interaction between Anglo-Indians and native Indians is set. The best example of this in the novel is the trial of Dr. Aziz, around which Anglo-Indians and natives array forces.

In his essay "Resistance and Opposition," Said examines the behaviour and representation of the Anglo-Indians in India, using two different sources, historical references and Forster's imaginary novel *A Passage to India.* Another representative and underlying pattern for Said's analysis of Orientalism implies that it was the colonies and the colonized that gave the West its identity: Europe was built up at the price of native slavery, although it is commonly believed that Europe gave "modernity" to the colonies. At an earlier stage of colonization, as noticed in some dialogues in *Kim,* people talk about the benefits of the railway; native Indians seem to praise the modernity, which is brought into backward India. Later on, the Indians understood that modernity was only an excuse to drain off the country of its resources and be a Trojan horse, rather than an indispensable essentiality. Then Said

argues that the natives could resist and oppose colonialism, most of all culturally, rather than through economics, politics, or military forces. That was because the British used cultural and administrative techniques to control India. "Officialism" and the enforcement of their own rules and regulations to understand and judge Indians, from their own point of view and by their own standards, was a strategy imposed on the Indian social system. Consequently, the colonizer according to the new imperial law controlled the colonized people. Regulations and the law have constantly changed while the colonies were exploited materially. In other words, the law was re-created according to the new colonial conditions manufactured by the colonialists.

The Indian movements, starting with the mutiny of 1857 and culminating in Indian independence, have great importance in uniting different races and groups in India against a common imperial enemy. The sense of nationalism was of great influence then. So, when two "voices" were created in the struggle for independence, Britain, despite its will, consented to give the Indians their freedom.

**COLONIAL DIVIDES**

The crux of the novel, it appears, is the interactions and the divides between Anglo-Indians and Indian natives. These interactions reflect important facts about the nature of the characters on both sides. They both attempt to build dialogues most of which are aborted at an early stage. In this part, an attempt is made to study the dividing

elements and the obstacles that cause, or are caused, by the atmosphere governing the interactions. To mention only few among the many instances, there will be references to different communities especially those of the English people and the Indians; the English club, the physical separation of the two races, and so on. There are also some events, such as the imaginary assault on Adela Quested, the trial of Dr. Aziz, and others that seriously aggravate the situation and spoil relations between the English and the Indians.

**The Separate Worlds of Chandrapore**

It should be considered that such events, situations and character portrayals are informed by the actual society around them and the political realities during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Imperialism has been vastly in action in the development of characters and situations, as well as the encounter between the colonizers and the colonized. In the first place, at the beginning of the novel, there seem to be two completely disparate worlds. The English residents of Chandrapore, except for a few of them, assume a purely imperialistic attitude. Chandrapore is divided into two sections, whose topography is also indicative of the colonial divide. The English section is described as orderly and dominating:

> It is sensibly planned, with a red-brick Club on its brow, and further back a grocer's and a cemetery, and the bungalows are disposed along the roads that cut at right

> angles. It has nothing hideous in it, and only the view is beautiful.[37]

In contrast to the English elevated district, there is the description of the native Indian section, which is situated in a low area. It is monotonous and without order:

> 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.[38]

This contrast is a reflection of imperial dominance and control. Almost every thing is different in the two sections. "The overarching sky" is the only element that connects the two sections. In the English section, "the roads, named after victorious generals and intersecting at right angles, were symbolic of the net Great Britain had thrown over India."[39] Still, the sky is very effective in silhouetting the city and its environs. The narrator states that "when the sky chooses, glory can rain into the Chandrapore bazaars, or a benediction pass from horizon to horizon."[40]

**The Club**

The Anglo-Indians also run a club, which stands for further segregation among the races. Before looking into the club, it should be made clear that the narrator sets the tone at the beginning of the first section as well as the following two sections of the book. The

symbolism employed in the first chapter refers to the nature of the sky that can be more all-encompassing than the two opposing factions of Chandrapore. The club is a place for British social activities. Indians, except for servants, are not allowed in the club. It is a holy place of safety and privacy for the Anglo-Indians. "The club, which was normally private, was one of the most interesting institutions developed by the Raj."[41] Anglo-Indian officials were members of it and they participated in its activities as an act of religious significance. Fielding was considered an outcast when he thought differently about Dr. Aziz's case. So the narrator criticizes its constitution. George Orwell is also aware of this one constituent for the pukka sahib code. The white men say that "We white men must hang together."[42] Therefore, the club in Chandrapore is a symbol for the power of British imperialism. It has the function to institutionalise their behaviour and unite members against native ways. Dr. Aziz remarks: "Indians are not allowed into the Chandrapore club even as guests."[43] The club insists on preserving its identity as a place for the British and not the Indians. Although the political and social conditions started to change, "as a club it declined to change."[44]

The Anglo-Indians hang together because they feel insecure and superior. Everyone is expected to "toe the line." Otherwise, he or she is lost. Once, the Anglo-Indian Turtons invite the Indians for a Bridge Party, which is supposed to unite the two groups. The paradoxical nature of the club is clear: it wants to bring together Anglo-

Indians and natives but it does not want to bring about a reconciliation based on equality. Despite Forster's criticism of the party it remains the symbolic gesture for the final meaning of the whole novel: to exist and not to exist, that is, not to be able to assert one's rights. When Mrs. Moore and Adela Quested arrive in Chandrapore, the Anglo-Indians throw a party. Indians are invited but not really wanted. The Anglo-Indians are not even interested in talking to the natives, although it is impolite to invite a group of people and not treat them humanely. The Indians are humiliated. There is a feeling of mass hysteria, which is targeted at the destruction and disregard of the Indians. When it finds an outlet, it can be very dangerous. Therefore, the club stands for separation despite the primary attempt to bridge the gap between the two races. In this episode of the novel, the writer uses satire to undermine the English pretensions and prejudices. So, the party is almost a failure, since the divisions outlive it.

**Mystery in the Novel**

The second section of the novel, "Caves", opens with Chapter XII, which is a brief meditative introduction to the section. It sets the tone and describes the landscape of the Marabar hills and their caves:

> Having seen one such cave, having seen two, having seen three, four, fourteen, twenty-four, the visitor returns to Chandrapore uncertain whether he has had an

> interesting experience or a dull one or any experience at all.[45]

Parallel to Said's interpretation, one underlying theme in the novel is the absence and lack of meaning in the East, particularly India. The narrator's description of the Oriental landscape is far from being clear. It is beyond concrete interpretation. The caves are unusual and "extraordinary" and the writer cannot capture their finality of meaning. As a part of the East, India is imagined as strange, alien and mysterious. That is why Said states that:

> The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences.... the main thing for the European visitor was a European representation of the Orient and its contemporary fate... [46]

The idea of a romantic and exotic landscape is reflected in Forster's description of the Marabar Hills and their caves. They are extraordinary. Although it seems that Chandrapore in the early pages of the novel is described as "nothing extraordinary" and "barely distinguishable from the rubbish it deposits so freely," the town is described as different from its "other" in Europe. The Indian section is without order while the English section of the town is orderly and magnificently ordinary. Still, physicality is not a basis for mysticism. It

can play a symbolic role. Forster is implying that in the midst of all the exoticism, there is a civil station that "provokes no emotion. It charms not, neither does it repel."[47] It is true that the English are immersed in what they consider to be an exotic and mysterious atmosphere. However, the fact remains that they will never know the Indians as they are, nor India as it is. Therefore, they remain strangers to "the other" people around them.

Mystery plays a pivotal part in *A Passage to India*. It stems from the contrast between Indian and Western culture. The differences in terms of cultural, social, economic, and religious issues are the cause of the contrast, which creates an atmosphere of mystery in the novel. This mystery can be confusing for a (Western) reader. The principal effects of such a mystery within the novel is reflected in the personal relationships between Eastern and Western characters, and also the social encounters and codes which are different from those of Western society. The point is that the clash between Indian and Western social codes, when looked at from a Western point of view, causes a sense of mystery in *A Passage to India*.

One example of this kind of mystery occurs in the scene where Mrs. Moore encounters Dr. Aziz in the mosque. This scene shows the sentimental tendencies of the Orient. Aziz is emotional and thoughtful. At the beginning, he objecs to Mrs. Moore's presence in the mosque. But when he realizes that she had already taken off her shoes, he calms down and is pleased to find someone who will lend him a

sympathetic ear. So this change of attitude and temper creates a sense of mystery. A second instance that illustrates that Aziz is basically an Oriental, is when he and Mrs. Moore converse about Mrs. and Major Callendar. Aziz tells the elderly English lady: "You know what others feel. Oh, if only others resembled you!" She retorts: "I don't understand people very well. I only know whether I like or dislike them." Dr. Aziz responds, "Then you are an Oriental."[48] So again this scene proves a sense of mystery, in conjunction with a Western perspective. This leads to an understanding of the contrast between the Easterner and the Westerner. Throughout the novel Indian characters are portrayed as concerned with feeling, emotion, morality, honesty and matters of the heart. On the other hand, the English, except for a few of them, are concerned with logic and practicality, and are inattentive to matters emotional. Ronny, for instance, fails even in building up a personal relationship with his fiancé Adela. He is depicted as a man of business and indifferent to the world of personal relationships. Unlike Ronny, Dr. Aziz and the "Oriental" Mrs. Moore, possess the wisdom of the spirit. Both of them have an Oriental "ideology" about relationships. A parenthetical statement should be made here regarding Aziz's comment that Mrs. Moore is like an Oriental at the heart. According to Edward Said,

> [The] imaginative examinations of things Oriental was based more or less exclusively upon a sovereign Western consciousness out of whose unchallenged centrality

> Oriental world emerged, first according to general ideas about who or what was Oriental, then according to a detailed logic governed not simply by empirical reality but by a battery of desires, repressions, investments, and projections.[49]

Orientalism is doubtless a Western ideology, according to Said. Then why should Dr. Aziz, himself an Oriental, describe a Westerner by means of the same trope? The answer is that Aziz is educated at Cambridge and the Western ideology has conquered his mentality. Therefore, Aziz as an Oriental has been under the influence of the West.

Thus there is a sense of mystery in the text which results from the way the English look at India. This mystery is associated with, and based on Orientalism. The Orient is considered mysterious and exotic and sometimes romantic. On the other hand, the Indians in the text are viewed by the English as merely subjects. They consider the Orientals as subjects because they want to maintain their power over the natives. Adela repeatedly complains about not seeing "the true India" at the beginning of the novel. Fielding is the only English-man who advises her to get out and meet the Indians. There are only a few English characters that understand the natives; others consider them merely as subjects.

As a matter of fact, mystery is exaggerated in *A Passage to India* and most other literary works about the Orient. This is exactly

what Orientalism tells us. When Adela Quested and Mrs. Moore arrive at the Bombay harbour they see less mystery than they expect. So mystery becomes the excuse that gives the imperialists the right to rule! The Bridge Party is a failure because it is only an attempt to place the two sides in close proximity to one another. They might exchange some superficial pleasantries, but the end result would be the same. To overcome the obstacles, there should be a sort of intellectual or spiritual connection that aims at understanding the fundamental unity of creation.

Forster mystifies India. There is a sense of mystery in *A Passage to India.* The Marabar caves mystify the whole novel. At Fielding's tea party, for instance, Godbole talks about the caves so vaguely that the English feel baffled. Fielding and Adela are not interested in mysteries and they cannot accept anything without the intervention of reason or intellect. On the other hand, Mrs. Moore, as an "oriental," does not possess a rigid mentality. She somehow manages to understand mysteries, particularly Indian ones.

Mystification of India and the mystery of different aspects of life is definitely one of Forster's aims throughout the narrative. There are many incidents that serve merely to obscure India. There is no definition of India; neither is there an attempt to define India as it is. During the ride with Nawab Bahadur, Adela thinks that the car ran into a hyena. The Nawab is too bewildered to comment. He is so excited that a sense of mystery is created. At the same time Adela cannot

recognize the animal. She says: "I don't know the animals any better than the birds here...."[50] The Nawab's character is portrayed as someone who thinks that their car has been hit by the ghost of a man who was killed by the car. Another instance of the mystification of India occurs in Chapter VIII. While Ronny and Adela converse hoping to arrive at a better understanding of one another, they suddenly notice a little bird up above them. They cannot identify it but they hope to do so:

> The bird in question dived into the dome of the tree. It was of no importance, yet they would have liked to identify it, it would somehow have solaced their hearts. But nothing in India is identified, the mere asking of a question causes it to disappear or to merge in something else.[51]

Once more, Oriental phenomena are used by the narrator to bring an element of mystery into the Western reader's mind: India is mysterious.

The caves themselves remain the most effective mystery of all. Sometimes, the description of the caves includes cultural imagery. The caves have a transforming effect on those who visit them. Mrs. Moore's character takes a new shape after the visit. She becomes a disinterested and pessimistic character. Adela is completely confused and the result is that she accuses Aziz of molesting her.

Physical mystery and symbolism are used to highlight the cultural mystery of India and the Indians. Professor Godbole is characterized as "polite and enigmatic."[52] When Dr. Aziz asks him to

explain the nature of the Marabar Caves, he talks in a roundabout way: "no doubt not willingly, he was concealing something."[53] The omniscient narrator knew better than Adela that Godbole is not as simple-minded as Aziz, and that Godbole resembles the "Ancient Night."[54] Another puzzling cultural event is the Hindu celebration of the birth of Krishna. The ceremony creates an atmosphere of uncertainty, exoticism, and mysticism. The element of mystery in the novel brings India, Indians, and the English together. Nevertheless, Forster exploits the element of mystery for specific purposes, about which we shall say more in the following pages. Forster has harmonized the structure of the novel in terms of the interaction between India and the West. The misunderstanding between the British and the Indians is the result of no single cause. It is significant that this problem is illustrated well in *A Passage to India.* The author is not after any resolution at all. Nevertheless, the novel encompasses the essence of Anglo-Indian relations and human understanding. The Marabar Caves are one important element in creating a mysterious atmosphere. Of course, there are important consequences resulting from the mystery created by the caves. Two among them are the matter of Adela's rape and the trial of Aziz. Although both these are the result of the visit to the caves, they in turn, only fuel the mystery.

Mystery is a major motif in reinforcing the colonial divide between the East and the West. Human as well as natural elements are portrayed as irrational and thus mysterious. This is a part of the

Orientalist process that aims at creating an "other" from whatever is Oriental. Whether it is Aziz, Godbole, the Moslems, the Hindus, or the natural Marabar Caves, all stand incomprehensible in the eyes of the Orientalists. Colonial writing, ranging from Macaulay to recent Raj novels, rely heavily on the Orientalist discourse as delineated by Edward Said. This discourse is two-sided with no sharp edges about India: India as the European object of discovery and India as an incomprehensible phenomenon. The Marabar Caves in *A Passage to India* reflect the incomprehensible India. This leads to the image of the Indian (or Oriental) as irrational. It also shows the interaction between geography and society.

**REPRESENTATION**

The image of India in narratives would constitute a nation, which is described as an "imaginative geography" by Edward Said. This concept "helps the mind to intensify its own sense of itself."[55] The idea of a nation, and especially India as a nation, is never fixed; it is a process of not being but becoming. The concern of this section is to examine the ways in which Forster represents native Indians, Anglo-Indians, and India in general. The treatment of interactions between the two different races, and the causes of misunderstanding in the novel are significant issues towards explicating the text and arriving at a true understanding of Anglo-Indian relations in the context of the novel.

**Depicting the Non-European**

It is clear from the previous chapter that Kipling was the most outspoken apologist of imperialism. His contention is that the British are burdened to rule over native Indians. Ashish Nandy maintains that Rudyard Kipling has created the greatest number of and the most creative myths that were necessary for the Empire to maintain its power and self-respect.[56] Actually, the image of India in the works of the Anglo-Indian writers was minimized to a bunch of stereotypes and caricatures. Every literary product had to adjust itself to the dominant trends in imaging India and Indians. Forster was no exception, despite the fact that he was known to be a sympathetic writer on India.

Edward Said's analysis of Orientalism is connected to Michael Foucault's statement that knowledge about the other can amount to power over the other. Said's analysis is relevant here, because according to him the Orient was created by Western knowledge. This knowledge, Said argues, is in the shape of various discursive formations such as art, tourism, anthropology, literature, and so on. Thus, the "other" is created and used by the West according to its own formations and practices. The East is inferior to the superior West. This is an important blind spot of the Westerner. They cannot "read the English cultural tradition for its overt imperialism."[57] Forster is only partly aware of the "enormity" of imperialism. There is no doubt that Forster is aware of his hostility towards imperialism. However, the

ultimate point of view of the text is beyond the control of even the writer. There is a "political unconscious" which is outside the intention of the writer." [58]The problem of representation in *A Passage to India* is a serious one with its unique characteristics. Said's interest in the novel arises from its unique quality:

> Forster's using India to represent material that according to the canons of the novel cannot in fact be represented – vastness, incomprehensible creeds, secret motions, histories, and social forms. Mrs. Moore especially and Fielding too are clearly meant to be understood as Europeans who go beyond the anthropomorphic norm in remaining in that (to them) terrifying new element.[59]

In studying the intricacies of representation in the novel, the writer's strategies, his ironies, the narrator's point of view and the different characters conversing with one another or contemplating through the narrator's omniscient point of view must all be taken into account.

As is well known, Forster was the first British writer to sympathize with Indians in his narratives. But he endorsed the discourses of the Raj to some extent. In other words, the novel under review has both inherited and questioned the legacy of Orientalism. It differs from traditional British Orientalism towards India; but it also retains particular elements of that literary tradition. Both Indian and British elements are present in the novel. The narrative perspective includes both points of view at different moments.

The narrator may take different positions to assume different attitudes towards the characters in the narrative. Representing Orientals, a Western writer faces a perplexing situation. Even if the writer exerts his utmost caution, his attitude will remain distant, one that represents the "other." In general, Western representation of the Orient is problematic. Lisa Lowe introduces two narrative perspectives in the representation of India and Indians. To one perspective, the narrator assumes the traditional British position of the Orientalists who have followed in the footprints of their ancestors. There are moments, on the other hand, when the narrator is in a paradoxical state; every detail should be Oriental, but the narrator remains British. So in this part we shall consider these two positions, general statements about the Orientals, statements for colonialism and statements against it.

Like Kipling's works, but to a lesser extent, Forster's fiction is symptomatic of the Orientalists' general statements about natives, inherited from an earlier tradition. The Orientalists define characters, for instance, as different or even opposite to dominating Westerners in the narrative. In *A Passage to India,* Dr. Aziz is represented as a typical Moslem Indian according to Orientalist perspectives:

> Like most Orientals, Aziz overrated hospitality, mistaking it for intimacy, and not seeing that it is tainted with the sense of possession. It was only when Mrs. Moore or Fielding was near him that he saw further, and knew that it is more blessed to receive than to give.[60]

Aziz as an Oriental is suspicious too. He is destined to be in a state of uncertainty. The two opposing concepts of "suspicion and belief could in his mind exist side by side." So this is another characteristic of the Oriental character:

> Suspicion in the Oriental is a sort of malignant tumor, a mental malady, which makes him self-conscious and unfriendly suddenly; he trusts and mistrusts at the same time in a way the Westerner cannot comprehend.[61]

So Aziz is imagined as contrary to the Western character. But why generalize? Is Aziz emotional, or is it an attribute that can be applied to all Orientals? Surely, Aziz is an individual who has the right to posses his own unique personality. So do other Orientals. There are so many other similar instances that show Aziz as an immature human being. He is shown to be superstitious when he relates the story of Babur and his son. He reports that Babur's son got rid of his fever after his father walked round him three times.[62] Another passage in the novel paints Aziz as emotional and even illogical. When he receives the news about Mrs. Moore's death, he starts to weep. His weeping is natural, but ordering his children to weep is far from being logical.[63]

Other Indian characters are treated in the same way. Professor Godbole is also an Oriental. Like other Orientals he is "enigmatic" and hideous. He is more conservative than Aziz and seems to reconcile the

values of East and West. While speaking, Godbole appears to be "concealing something." He is imagined as "Ancient time."[64] In addition to his mysterious features, he becomes illogical at the end. In one instance, he relates a legend about the Tank of the Dagger. The narrator believes that it might have been welcome at Fielding's tea party two weeks ago. Another image of Godbole is one whose "conversations frequently culminated in a cow."[65] Although traits of Godbole's character are the reflection of his religion, his overall portrayal by Forster is a stereotype similar to the traditional caricatures of Orientalist literature.

Other minor Indian characters are still less developed. They remain flat characters, and fail to display common sense. Actually, Ronny, according to the narrator, is aware of all "types" of Indians. At Fielding's tea party, he reflects that "he knew the type; he knew all the *types*, and this was the spoilt westernized."[66] This generalization about Orientals is characteristic of Orientalism. Thus, Dr. Aziz is branded. While ill in bed, Aziz wishes that Major Callendar were an Indian to grant young people a few days leave to go to Calcutta, without making a fuss. There are so many issues embedded in this scene. First of all, Aziz's wish is an indication of Indian interest in feeling slack. Secondly, Aziz has Calcutta in mind, since he has a friend there who keeps a brothel. Thus, the Oriental licentiousness, despite Islamic rules and conventions, is also hinted at. The last point concerns the general Western perspective of employed Easterners falling ill. They disbelieve

them. The authorities investigate and send deputies to make sure that Aziz is really ill and not pretending. This is rather ironic, since the Orientals themselves were accused of suspicion in Chapter XXXI. Major Callendar suspects Aziz of pretending to be ill. That is why he sends the Hindu Dr. Panna Lal to inquire. The narrator tells us that Aziz is slightly ill, but he pretends to be very ill. The narrator's and Major Callendar's views amount to the same, as regards Oriental behaviour. "Major Callendar always believed the worst of natives," [67]while the narrator's belief is hardly different. If suspicion is a common human trait, why magnify it for the Oriental and naturalize it for the English? The ultimate inference is that Major Callendar is justified in his suspicions, since the narrator too believes that Aziz is pretending: his action is considered to be criminal or at least immoral. But Major Callendar, apparently the more vicious character, is not only justified in doubting that Aziz is ill, he also seems to be acting morally. It is his official duty. On the other hand, Aziz is wrong in his suspicions regarding Fielding. He was suspicious that Adela is spared the twenty thousand rupees, and that Fielding asked Aziz for the favour in order to follow her to England and marry her. Therefore, at the end the Oriental character comes through as suspicious and negative, while the Occidental is justified in suspecting the Oriental. The unconscious impact on the reader's mind, whether Eastern or Western, would be that the Oriental is an inferior character. The narrator's role, which is the closest to the author's voice, is significant here. The technique of

repeating the statement "Is he ill or isn't he ill?" about Aziz, testifies this claim. It is interesting that even Fielding, the character closest to the narrator and consequently the author's spokesman, reiterates this question: "Well, are you ill, Aziz, or aren't you?"[68] The narrator sums it up by stating: "What they [Indians] said and what they felt were seldom the same."[69]

The overwhelming atmosphere, which makes derogatory statements about Orientals, makes even the Orientals wary of their inferiority. Mr. McBryde attempts to speak scientifically (because Orientalism is also a science) about Oriental Pathology. He is the most educated among the Anglo-Indians and he seems to be a typical example of the Orientalist:

> Taking off his spectacles, as was his habit before enunciating a general truth, he looked into them sadly and remarked that the darker races are physically attracted by the fairer, but not vice versa – not a matter for bitterness this, not a matter for abuse, but just a fact which any scientific observer will confirm.[70]

So here again, the narrator generalizes about Oriental attraction to fair skin as a racial and ethnic trait. This generalization – especially in Aziz's case – cannot be true; still, it is treated as a gospel that has been inherited from the earlier tradition.

Indian characters in the novel are also sometimes affected by Orientalist scientific formulations. Hamidullah, for instance, admits to

defects in his own race in statements that seem to be plagiarized from the Orientalists. Hamidullah, in fact, becomes a mouthpiece for them:

> 'We can't co-ordinate, we can't co-ordinate, it only comes to that. We can't keep engagements, we can't catch trains. What more than this is the so-called spirituality of India? You and I ought to be at the Committee of Notables, We're not; our friend Dr. Lal ought to be with his patients, he isn't. So we go on, and so we shall continue to go, I think, until the end of time.'[71]

Here also, the narrative perspective is indicative of British Orientalism. The Indian characters have grown so reactionary that they seem to have lost self-confidence. Dr. Aziz as a "typical" Indian character wants to seem pleasant in the eyes of the British; but little by little, and especially after the Marabar Caves incident, he grows cold and finally becomes anti-British.

**India under Western Eyes**

Once again Adela insists on seeing "the real India."[72] While this remains a mystery for Ronny, Fielding suggests that Adela should see Indians. We have examined India through Indian characters, but there is much more to British India. In this part, answers should be found to a number of questions about India: what is India? Is it real or imaginary? What about its inhabitants? India exists; I live there. It exists in its different colours, languages, religions, races, and so on. It is for the

writer to discover it in its interesting variety. India in fiction is a puzzle; it does not exist. It evades the reader's senses and baffles all those who write about it. Vastness, mystery, confusion, and misunderstanding have escaped final interpretation. Penetrating the Indian world is a hard job. Ashish Nandy argues that India invites the writer "not only to project on to it one's deepest fantasies, but also to reveal, through such self-projection, the interpreter rather than the interpreted."[73] Forster has introduced the themes of human relationships in the context of the Raj. In this regard, the problem of communication and the lack of it between individuals and ethnic groups is highlighted in the novel.

The elements of the colonial divide cause presuppositions in the mind of the two sides. Fielding "felt that we exist not in ourselves, but in terms of each other's minds – a notion for which logic offers no support..."[74] This is the reason behind most, if not all, misunderstanding. One such instance is at Fielding's house, where Aziz offers to give his own collar stud to Fielding as a sign of intimacy and sacrifice. Here is what Ronny feels about Aziz's appearance:

> Aziz was exquisitely dressed, from tie-pin to spats, but he had forgotten his back collar-stud, and there you have the Indian all over: inattention to detail; the fundamental slackness that reveals the race.[75]

What happens is that the Oriental is misunderstood: his sacrifice and kindness is interpreted as "inattention to detail." A worse offence is to

pass judgment on a whole race, based on individual inadequacies. Ronny is too preoccupied with general notions about Orientals to correctly judge them. Now even if Ronny knew this, he would interpret it as illogical because Eastern civilization is something that the West can disrupt but will never truly comprehend.[76] Orientals are capable of elevated human conduct that Westerners lack the spirituality to experience; they thus interpret them as illogical or even inhuman. This is an interesting irony. The text is replete with examples of lack of communication. Mrs. Bhattacharya does not send her carriage for the two English ladies, after she invited them to visit her house. Aziz thinks that Fielding has saved Adela's money, and then got married to her. The policeman McBrdye regards the photograph of Aziz's wife as proof of his immorality, and so on.

So because of the imperial assumptions that govern the text, the colonizer and the colonized fail to understand each other. As a matter of fact, many of the characters in the novel are at a loss to represent the Empire, although conscious that they are in a foreign country or among exotic people; they, more often than not, internalise the British imperial assumptions wholly. Thus, the psychological stress of the English civil servants is quite evident. Thus two significant factors are involved in fuelling confusion and misunderstanding in British India: personal issues such as language, experience, education and so on, on the one hand, and imperial obligations on the other. The high-ranking officials of Chandrapore, such as the Callendars and the

Turtons, are perfect examples of the systematic British attitude towards the natives. They are conscious that they are superior and that Europeans, like Mrs. Moore and Miss Quested should not mingle with the natives in a socially intimate way. The incumbents of posts of authority imply that even the European characters' misbehaviour is a result of the natives' moral degradation. The Collector himself addresses Fielding, when the latter resigns from the English club, in this way: "You have sunk to the level of your associates; you are weak, weak, ∴."[77] Thus, the Westerners are "virtuous" since they are the antithesis of the "criminals:" "All unfortunate natives are criminals at heart, for the simple reason that they live south of latitude 30."[78] The English people have thought of Indians as demoralized by the climate, social customs and habits, and corrupt Oriental Kings. Moreover, Albert Memmi argues that "to be a colonizer means to be a non-legitimate privileged person.... transforming his usurpation into legitimacy."[79] Thus, the more the colonizer convinces himself of the weakness of the colonized, the more he becomes strong. The colonizer cannot judge, let alone rebuke, himself since the native is the most reprehensible. This is a process through which the English attempted to justify their own ways primarily to themselves, and to the world on a larger scale.

It is the contradistinction between what the Empire claims to be and what it really is, that transforms Mrs. Moore and Miss Quested. It becomes a sort of revelation when these two characters, and especially the former, understand British India for what it really is. They

are disillusioned when they discover the difference between what colonialism pretends to be (a moral mission), and what really goes on in the colonies. After what happens to her in the Marabar Caves, Adela is slowly transformed. She rejects colonialism because her understanding of it is that it changes those who are involved. Mrs. Moore, on the other hand, loses her equilibrium and mentally breaks down. She was the most human of them all. She concludes that colonialism is not a noble mission; it is good for neither the British nor the Indians. This mental blow aided by her bad health, and her age, were the cause of her death on the voyage back to England.

But we need to ask whether *A Passage to India* contributes to or undermines Said's analysis of Orientalism. Does the narrator speak for or against colonialism in British India? In general, Forster's image of India seems to be bleak and perplexing. People cannot get in touch with one another, they misunderstand each other, and there is still the dominating group, which governs India. Character portrayals are still far from realistic. Dr. Aziz, for example, is presented as childish and emotional, stereotyped partly as a flat character in Anglo-Indian fiction. Furthermore, Forster is not interested in India's independence. He believes in the goodness that the British might bring to India. He looks at the British presence in India as a job proposition. Nevertheless, Forster treats his subject matter, India, with tenderness and delicacy. He takes an anti-imperial stance. He displays sympathy and sensitivity in terms of his Indian character portrayals. The Indian social

atmosphere is warmer than the English club, which proves to be cold and monotonous. Forster has done something revolutionary, in the sense that he was the first to criticize the imperial machinery in India in his fiction. Perhaps he was clever enough to tailor his writing to the new historical changes taking place in Britain's most important colony, the jewel in the crown.

But to return to the question, it is necessary to examine other instances of the Orientalist perspective in the text. It seems that Forster thinks lowly of Indians when his narrator ponders on their relations: The nationalist committee includes members from different religious groups: Hindus, Moslems, Sikhs, Parsees, a Jain, and a Christian. They

> tried to like one another more than came natural to them. As long as someone abused the English, all went well, but nothing constructive had been achieved, and if the English were to leave India the committee would vanish also.[80]

It is clear that the author looks at natives with imperial eyes. Why shouldn't the Indian nation, crystallized in the committee, be able to survive the Empire? The writer of the novel, in Said's words, exploits the "structure of attitude and reference" to reflect the same inherited portrait of Indians. However, the Indian characters are made more tangible and approachable.

For Forster, it is still the Empire that is the ideal condition imaginable for India. "The overarching sky" is still considered the only "common" and connecting factor between the British and the Indians. The sky is doubtless the symbol of dominance, which stands for the Empire in the novel.

**Untold Stories**

It is a little worrying that despite the author's knowledge of corruption and insensitivity among the British officials in India, he seldom rebukes them. If he does so, the language is feeble and mild. Mrs. Moore, to illustrate this, finds fault only with Ronny's "voice" not his "words." She believes that

> One touch of regret – not the canny substitute but the true regret from the heart – would have made him a different man, and the British Empire a different institution.[81]

Flaws in the English character are limited to a sort of misunderstanding, according to Forster. He describes and shows only their conception of their "superiority" and Indian "inferiority." Other faults are related to this focal misconception. However, native Indians or even Orientals in general are represented as naturally and innately lacking in common sense and human dignity. "Indians were sometimes unbearable."[82] Such statements, which appear very often in the text,

are applied only to the Indians, although they may be said to apply to all human beings. Thus, the statement might have been replaced by "people were sometimes unbearable." This is what Said calls the "structure of attitude of reference."

Compared to history, one advantage of fiction is that while the former tells us what happened in a particular era, the latter offers other possibilities. Stories refer to untold events as well. Jenny Sharpe argues that Forster has been sympathetic in the rendering of native voices; but within this Indian frame, the major voice is that of the "educated colonial." There are other, less vocal characters that are processed into the plot very telegraphically and sometimes symbolically. Sharpe mentions the overlooked role of the sweepers who go on a strike, the Moslem women who go on hunger strike and the students who stage a demonstration. The untouchable who plays the role of a punkah wallah functions symbolically in the novel.[83] Minor representatives of Indian society exist on the periphery. It appears that the British were not interested in getting rid of the caste system; on the contrary, this system parallels the colonial divide propagated by British imperialism. Needless to say, great nationalists like Gandhi were against the social hierarchy in India. Gandhi attempted to bring about changes, especially as regards the lowest castes of society, that is, the untouchables. What the present researcher is trying to arrive at is the significance of exclusion in the text. Forster excludes elements in the text that, at certain times, can have a crucial effect on the

consequences. The punkah wallah represented in the figure of the untouchable affects Adela's final decision concerning the charge against Aziz. Adela's uncertainties also vanish after she hears the chant " Esmiss Esmoor" recited by native Indians outside the court. Natives think that Mrs. Moore could have saved Aziz; they invoke her name and turn her into a sort of goddess. Despite her invocation, she is excluded from the material presence. The fate of Mrs. Moore is like that of the natives, living and dead at the same time. Natives exist physically but they do not count in the imperial mind. On the other hand, Mrs. Moore counts despite her material absence. This attitude of exclusion is imposed on the colonial writer by the imperial system. Since one major theme and probably the most important one in *A Passage to India* is the encounter between the East and the West, key social events of the 1910s and 1920s might have been included in the text. There are merely two brief references to the Mutiny, but no important clues to Mahatma Gandhi's activities and political unrest during the period. Nor is the Civil Disobedience movement of 1920 mentioned. A general view about this imaginary work is that the history of British rule and that of Indian opposition is obscured to a great extent. A final word in this regard is that the realism of the novel is controlled by the dominant Western discursive formations.

## FORSTER'S ACHIEVEMENT

So far, it has been made clear that Forster employs his narrator's voice in the novel in an oscillating way. The narrator's worldview is Orientalist at times, while at other times it becomes sympathetic with the Indian characters, at the expense of undermining them and uplifting the Empire. As a matter of fact, the imperial agents had to review their policies and replace them by more humane ones. Fiction, as a signifier of social happenings, moves to adjust its components to the real surroundings. The British become affable to the natives, the myth of the real India comes into vogue, India is demystified, and the concept of the "other" is treated more seriously. The British "fair" people start a campaign to reform India, through the application of English liberal ideas. Western representation of the Orient was growing into a conscious process. The colonialists strived to strengthen what they regarded as Indian traditions. The instruments and strategies of imperial control in India changed dramatically, and an inclusive campaign for the "orientalization of British rule" in India was underway.

*A Passage to India* has to be considered as a turning point in the tradition of British Orientalism. Although the novel is a part of the tradition, it is not stereotypical, like *Kim*. The interesting thing about the novel is that it creates an atmosphere for critical debate and analysis, by means of the differing viewpoints. Heterogeneity is present throughout the novel. There were other novels written at the same

time; novels such as Edmund Candler's *Abdication (1922)* and Edward Thompson's *Indian Day (1927).* These too are critiques of British imperialism, but they did not have the impact of Forster's novel. There is a change in attitude towards Indian characters, and there is a new definition of characters that so far had been treated conventionally. Moderate attention has been paid to Hinduism and Islam as two Eastern religions. There is mutual misunderstanding between the British and the Indians, and friendships develop between members of these two groups. All these show Forster's slight departure from British Orientalism, or rather his modification of it. In other words, although the novel contributes to and is situated within the tradition of British Orientalism, it also differs from the mainstream attitude. What is important is the presentation of conflict between the British and Indians. The colonial voice is heard through the narrator while Indian characters are portrayed as stereotypes.

Forster's position is equivocal. Major Callendar tells Fielding: "You can't run with the hare and hunt with the hounds, at least not in this country."[84] Fielding criticizes the British officials who run Chandrapore, but he never questions the validity of British Empire. Neither is he interested in the independence of India. He goes out of his way to condemn, contradict, and even abandon his fellow English people; still this does not mean he rejects the imperial presence in India. While Fielding interacts socially with the Indians, Forster does not cease to be a writer writing in the British Orientalist tradition. He

builds up a close and faithful bond between Aziz and Fielding, but it is not a lasting one. Forster, and Fielding in a sense, appear to be condescending and patronizing in their treatment of Indians. The novel is ambivalent in this regard: it neither condemns nor defends British colonialism. It has the same dithering attitude towards Indian nationalism. Edward Said argues that considering the political events of the 1910s and the 1920s:

> *A Passage to India* nevertheless founders on the undodgeable facts of Indian nationalism. Forster identifies the course of the narrative with a Britisher, Fielding, who can understand only that India is too vast and baffling, and that a Muslim like Aziz can be befriended only up to a point, since his antagonism to colonialism is so unacceptably silly.[85]

There is a great strain on the friendship of Aziz and Fielding when it comes to politics. Fielding forsakes his English people because he believes in the innocence of Aziz. However, he becomes conscious of the divide between the two races later:

> At the moment when he was throwing his lot with Indians, he realized the profundity of the gulf that divided him from them. They always do something disappointing.... they are bad starters and occasionally jib.[86]

Fielding has no solutions to the deteriorating Anglo-Indian relations. He is neither completely anti-imperialist, nor a propagator against British rule in India. On the contrary he favours British presence, but prefers it to be based on liberal and friendly policies. Forster also implies that British rule and British administration are indispensable to India. The court scene for the trial of Aziz shows, at the end, that "justice" is accomplished through British law and by the Indian Das who is a subordinate to Ronny, and who acts well according to his wishes.

Forster is interested in the British presence in India. He means to improve the system only by improving the minds of people. He views the colonial problem subjectively and not objectively. In other words, Forster also believes in the burden imposed on the white man to save the natives. His protagonist Fielding has the right to cross boundaries, like Kim, and he is given a human and sympathetic status in the novel. It seems that Forster, in *A Passage to India*, has geared his treatment of the subject to a specific stage of Indian nationalism.

At a literary level, he has made a big departure from his predecessors; the omniscient voice of the author, notwithstanding. English as well as Indian characters are given the right of expression. The outcome is the possibility of creating a functional dialogue. Voices are heard coming from different sides, interacting and exchanging ideas and emotions. The resultant conceptions in the minds of the imaginary characters would help evaluate the dialogues largely. The ideal dialogue here is the one that occurs between the main

characters, Aziz and Fielding. A close examination of the interlocution between these two important characters brings the reader to the conclusion that in the British India of that period, even the most tolerant men would be at a loss to tie in with each other. Characters are given their rights, although unequal, to speak. The narrator, reflecting the author's view, takes sides in the novel sometimes. The characters in the novel are polyphonic. Because of the way they are represented, their relation to the narrator and the autonomy of their voices in the text, they appear to be polyphonic. Characters are represented as objects and subjects. They are stereotyped, manipulated and commented on by the omniscient narrator; they also present themselves in a direct way. On a single subject, there are diverse views. Fielding is for the Empire, but he would like to modify the executive. Aziz changes from a sympathizer with the Empire to an anti-British nationalist. Mrs. Moore and Miss Quested are transformed. Having an idealized picture of the missionary objectives of the Empire, they were disappointed with India. Godbole has his own interest in Hinduism and acts accordingly.

It is in such a dialogic situation that characters are given (limited) freedom to express themselves within the framework of the authorial structure. Thus, the reader also makes inferences from the statements by characters, the narrator, and the dialogue in general. This is further evidence to prove that the novel is a modern one. The writer has moved away from presenting a centralized viewpoint.

Meaning is not rendered through a single vantage point. On the contrary, it is the product of a plural discourse, which is a sign of modernity:

> Languages of heteroglossia, like mirrors that face each other, each reflecting in its own way a piece, a tiny corner of the world, force us to guess at and grasp for a world behind their mutually reflecting aspects that is broader, more multi-leveled, containing more and varied horizons than would be available to a single language or a single mirror.[87]

Thus, meaning is constructed in the novel momentarily. This sort of meaning can be pursued and constructed only in modern novels, in which different characters are given the right to have different voices, the omniscient point of view of *A Passage to India* notwithstanding. Therefore, Forster can be discussed as a modern writer, treating a modern subject, while having his own ideology of the Empire.

# NOTES

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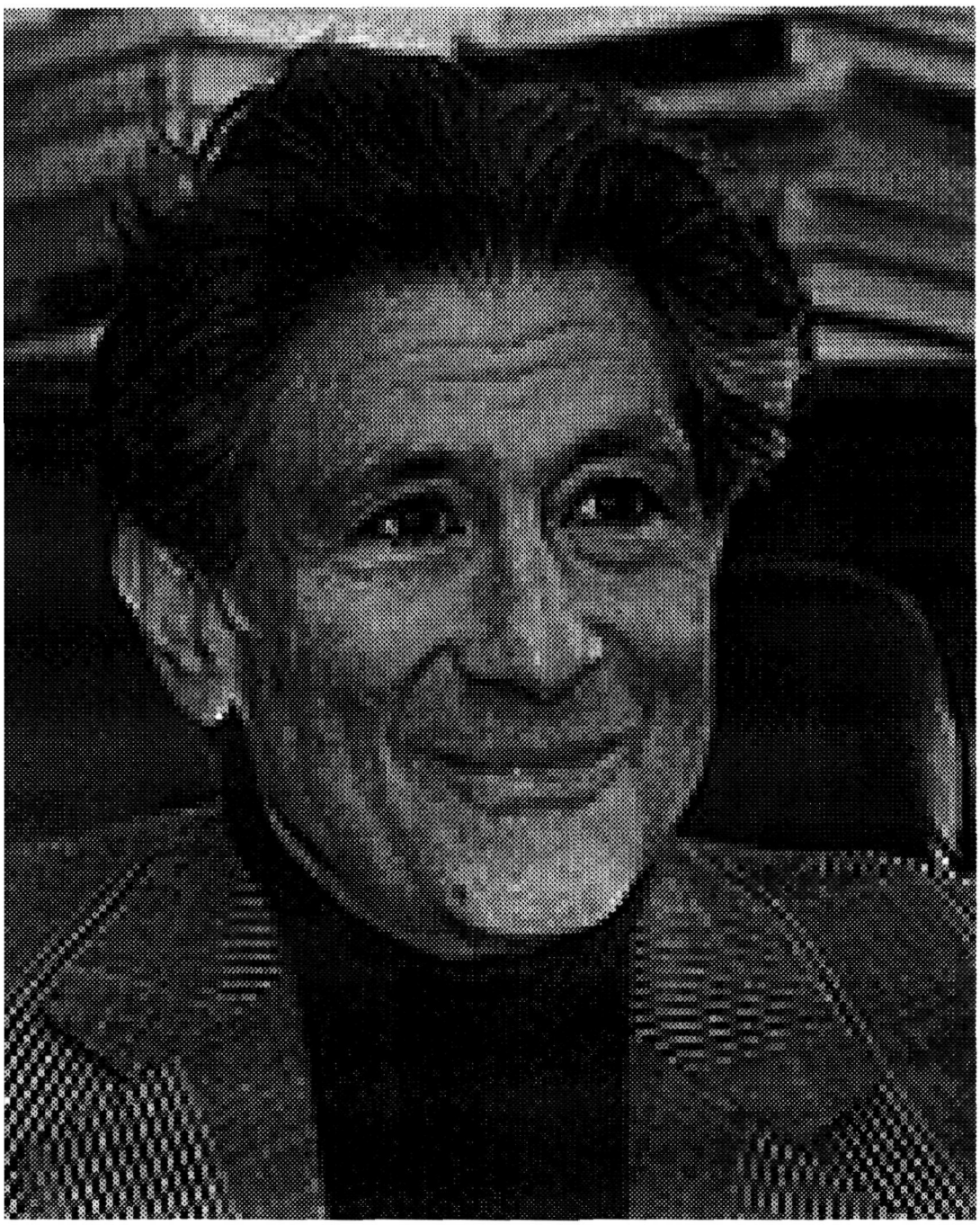

ward W. Said ( 1935- )