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Triplex of Spirituality, Disillusionment and Strength Formation of *Bharatiyata* Identity in E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India*

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“East is East, West is West, and never the twain shall meet,” (Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*, qtd. Childs)

The celebrated statement from Kipling's *Kim*, is very suggestive in understanding E. M. Forster's modern classic about colonial India, complex British-Indian relationship and their consequences.

E. M. Forster- a “profound observer of India” (Amartya Sen, “Inequality, Instability and Voice”) has written *A Passage to India* from his experience of a visit to India as a “curious” and “exotic” explorer (Sen). He has made Dr. Aziz- the protagonist of the novel as an epitome of *Bharatiyas* who turn from being mere mysterious spiritual or attracted toward Western people to be rational preservers of *Bhartiyata*.

Forster has structured his novel in classical pattern of three parts: Mosque, Caves, & Temple; to give a systematic record of how colonizers came to India for its natural resources and gradually distorted *Bhartiya* history, culture and society to the extent that ‘The Golden Bird’ (pre-colonial *Bharat*) turned into a struggling or entrapped bird or India- an ‘oriental’ country invented by occidentals in form of ‘Other’ than European (Edward Said, *Orientalism*). They exploited India economically, politically, socially, culturally, religiously and the most importantly mentally. They imposed English language and culture on Indians with the pretence that whatever is Western is superior and that's why west is a prosperous & dominating power. Like Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Joseph Conrad's *Kurtz*, Forster's *Ronny Heaslop* and other Anglo-Indian people in authority claim that they have come to the third world to do the “real work” of civilizing ‘irrational, inhuman’ “Others”. Expansion of education and industrialization, transportation etc. impressed Indians to predict that colonialism is really good for India. The newly emerged Europhon such as Dr. Aziz got caught in colonial strategies too immensely that everything European was thought to be followed blindly. This is reflected in Aziz's lovelessness towards his wife during her life time just because she was a typical, illiterate, dark colored Indian lady whereas he liked to be fair, educated, well mannered Europhon. No doubt, trauma of her death taught him the value of her unselfish, in compliant love. However, magnetism of ‘white’ people didn't let him free at least when it is the case with humanistic values in Mrs. Moore & Mr. Fielding, and rationality of Miss Adela Quested.

Akin to Forster himself Mrs. Moore along with Miss Adela Quested-her would-be daughter-in-law comes to meet her son *Ronny Heaslop* and to see the real India. With their very arrival in India they perceive hues of life where there are big buildings & gardens for Anglo-Indians while a few big buildings of elite Indians among suburb of other Indians belonging to different socio-religious and economic strata. In the party of Mr. Fielding they are unaware of underlying truth of Indians being too humble and respective to Westerners. Mrs. Moore takes it as natural tenderness of Indians rather than considering its dubious reasons i.e. fear and inferiority complex. This notion initiates her to walk around for finding mysteries of Indian spirituality as well. So she enters into a mosque where she meets Dr. Aziz. Aziz's friendly behavior convinces her to have Aziz as a guide for her further expedition in India. Aziz- a widower is astonished by

her “oriental” and liberal attitude. His obvious pull towards “white race” is increased by Fielding, another white “oriental” whom he addresses as “brother” and doesn’t hesitate even in breaking rules of purdha in form of showing his wife’s photograph. Occidentals look down at him as one of the “Others” where he recognizes them as ‘Big Others’ (Said) whom he aspires to be like. Hence, he accepts Mr. Fielding’s proposal for tea party and Mrs. Moore & Miss Quested’s suggestion for giving a party. His act of offering his own tie-pin to Mr. Fielding and spending hard-earned money on arranging for these friends’ visit to caves in the Malabar hills; is an adequate example to make out his impulse for having association with white people. His efforts to make them feel comfortable remind the readers of Morris, a character in Athol Fugard’s play *Blood Knot* (1963), who says that the whiteness is related not simply with color of skin, instead it is whiteness of thoughts or way of behavior or life style as well.

Here, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s question “can the subaltern speak?” emerges forcefully when Dr. Aziz loses Mrs. Quested and consequently is charged of molesting her. Before that when they enter into the cave and hear the same echo of “boum-boum” for every word they speak there; Mrs. Moore’s illusion regarding different gods for Christians and Hindus, and belief in God as creator of things is dismantled.

Nonetheless, despite Mrs. Moore and Mr. Fielding’s arguments about innocence and blamelessness of Aziz, Ronny and other Anglo-Indians exercise their “white man’s burden” (Kipling) that results in Aziz’s imprisonment. His “name” doesn’t matter for white men. Mrs. Moore & Fielding are greatly disturbed. For the first time they visualize cruelty of their own people. This disillusionment promotes Fielding to squabble with white people and in addition he resigns from their club. Mrs. Moore doesn’t attend Aziz’s trial because of possibility of Aziz being subjected to injustice in the court of white men before whom her own voice might be mere murmuring. Fortunately, Miss Quested’s verdict saves Aziz. The irony is that a white man is appointed to give judgment on Aziz-Quested case, and that judge being under greed for money and fear tries to support white people against Aziz. There, Aziz’s advocate’s critique, “We both are black” heightens conflict and alienation in both the victims. Contrary to it, Aziz’s disenchantment for white race endorses him to fight against whatever is Western. Thus, he is full of disgust with her and demands for 20,000 rupees as compensation. Mrs. Moore is dead, Ronny wouldn’t accept her because of favoring Aziz and Aziz himself has become an enemy; subsequently in the foreign land (India) her condition is like “lost children” of Jayant Mahapatra’s poem “Lost Children of America”. Finally, Fielding provides her refuge. The misconception that Fielding is providing shelter to Quested enrages Aziz in opposition to Fielding too. Though, this doubt is sorted out on later meeting with Fielding, Stella and Ralph.

In this way, harsh practice of life has instigated rationality in Aziz. He who himself has been an emotional or spiritual person having strong belief in mysteries, superstitions, and outwardly love and fairness of white race, now doesn’t want his own children “to be grown up superstitious”. Now he is not ready to compromise with whatsoever outsider things or people try to encroach upon innate *Bhartiyata*. He uses the same English language to understand and rebuke Britishers. In Frantz Fanon’s words, he feels extreme need of formulating “national cultural identity” that will be totally different from that of the identity of Bharat as British India. Forster states,

...he remembered that he had, or ought to have, a mother-land... he shouted: ‘India shall be a nation! No foreigners of any sort! Hindu and Moslem and Sikh and all shall be one! Hurrah! Hurrah for India!’” (306).

And again,

We may hate one another, but we hate you most. If I don't make you go, Ahmed will, Karim will, if it's fifty or five hundred years we shall get rid of you, yes, we shall drive every blasted Englishman into the sea, and then...you and I shall be friends. Fielding asks, "Why can't we be friends now?". In response, Forster creates an image of natural aspects such as birds, rocks, buildings, river, sun, trees and sky to advocate impossibility of this friendship or meeting echoed in powerful voice "No, not yet." "No, not there." (306) From the above discussion, it is confirmed that colonialism corresponded in generating *Bharatiya* identity on which no undesirable scratch is bearable (Partha Chatterjee). *Bharatiyas* are always liberal to acquire good things from foreign which never means that they are just a bundle of borrowed things, rather the reality is that whatever is *Bharatiya* is just *Bharatiya* and borrowed things are additional Indianised version. E. M. Forster has succeeded in handling this complex phenomenon because of double benefits of his having firsthand experience of colonial India from an outsider as well as insider's point of view (Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homeland*). In short, *A Passage to India* is a thought provoking, postcolonial and anti-colonial text written in much advance during colonial period.

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