The Colonialists versus the locals: Friendship
in E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*

Glorianne Georgii
C-essay in English Literature
Examiner: Kristina Hildebrand
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**Introduction**

The novel *A Passage to India*, written by E.M. Forster in 1924, was chosen as one of the 100 great works ever written in English literature by the Modern Library, and won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for fiction.

In this novel, Forster seems to observe the English Empire from a critical point of view rather than a nostalgic one (Enos 1995: 88). The theme of the book is the non-superficial relationship of the Indians and the English. It is an attempt at understanding the country India and the Indians from a more personal, positive and meaningful perspective (Enos 1995: 105). However, it holds “out little hope either for social interaction between Europeans and Indians, or for Indian national independence” (Boehmer 1995: 101).

The novel focuses on the three characters: Dr. Aziz, his British friend Cyril Fielding, and Adela Quested. During a trip to the Marabar Caves, Adela accuses Aziz of attempting to rape her. Aziz's trial brings out all the racial tensions and prejudices between Indians and the British colonialists who rule India.
Background

Colonialism has often been regarded as the struggle to determine who is fittest, even in the times before Darwin (Boehmer 1995: 80). According to Darwin it was the Europeans who were the fittest of mankind. It was thanks to this quality that they were able to defend their colonies (Boehmer 1995: 85). According to Boehmer,

[i]f colonization was a struggle for supremacy, not only of white against black, but between European nations, the scramble for territory took on the aspect of a conflict between competing virilities (Boehmer 1995: 80).

In *A Passage to India*, the colonialists are definitely the stronger race and have authority over the locals. This authority gives them power which they use against the inferior race, the Indians (Boehmer 1995: 10). The Indians are considered weak, outcast, and second rate. They are believed to be different from Europeans, especially the English. Even though the British might have their own different categories like social class and religions, they are united as opposed to the local natives (Boehmer 1995: 67). There is very little social integration between the colonialists and the Indians. Yet there are incidents in the novel that show that the Indians are more sophisticated than the colonialists.

Forster had spent a long time in India before writing his book. On returning to England, he related to his friends that he had always felt miserable at the English Club, yet, on the other hand, in the company of Indians he always felt happy (Forster 1979: 11).

Forster is quoted as saying:

> Looking back on that first visit of mine to India, I realize that mixed up with the pleasure and fun was much pain. The sense of racial tension, of incompatibility, never left me. It was not a tourist’s outing, and the impression it left was deep (Forster 1979: 11).

Below is an extract from a letter regarding the novel, written by Masood, an Indian friend of Forster, who resided in England,
When I began the book I thought of it as a little bridge of sympathy between East and West, but this conception has had to go; my sense of truth forbids anything so comfortable. I think that most Indians, like most English people, are shits, and I am not interested whether they sympathize with one another or not. Not interested as an artist; of course the journalistic side of me still gets roused over these questions… (Forster 1979:15).

Ten years after the publishing of his book, Forster confirmed the statement that a Victorian writer, William Arnold, had made that “Until the point of divergence between Eastern and Western mentality has been discovered, co-operation is impossible (Boehmer 1995: 150).”

**Purpose and questions at issue**

The purpose of this essay is to investigate the novel *A Passage to India*. Is it possible for the local Indians and the British colonialists to be friends, and what kinds of friendship are acceptable? I will describe the clash of cultures that occur as a result of misunderstandings between the English and the Indians, and in connection with that discuss what exactly happens in the Marabar caves. Furthermore, I will consider how India is presented as softly and seductively feminine and unreliable, and yet Indian men are depicted as masculine.

**Method and Material**

Reading has always been one of my favourite hobbies. Books about colonialism and slavery have always fascinated me and I always sympathised with the African slaves imported to America. I remember clearly one book, *Roots*, written about these slaves, as well as another book I read recently, *Jazz*. When reading English literature, I always seem to sympathise with the locals in English colonised countries. These colonialists regarded the locals as inferior: my homeland was also an English colony up till the year 1964. When Malta gained its independence, many of my classmates, as well as nuns and teachers at the secondary school I attended, were made to leave Malta overnight.

I first read the novel “A Passage to India” at secondary school, where I studied English literature. I enjoyed reading this book very much and remember clearly that
that it was up to the reader’s imagination to deduce what exactly happened in the caves. I am curious to see whether, after reading the book once again, I still feel that it is up to the reader’s imagination to deduce what happened in the caves. Regarding the literary criticism I refer to in my essay, I have limited myself to texts on post-colonialism, especially post-colonialism in British India. The publication dates of these texts range from the year 1979 to 1999.

The Possibility of Friendship

*A Passage to India* is an investigation whether there could be an invisible bond of value rather than an investigation of a political bond. The novel considers whether it is possible for personal relationships between the locals and English to develop to mutual satisfaction. Forster’s text considers whether the English can connect with the Indians, and vice versa (Forster 1979: 26).

Racist attitudes towards the Indians

Throughout the novel there are examples of racist attitudes and oppression by the Anglo-Indians towards the natives. Major Callendar boasts about torturing an injured Indian youth by putting pepper on his shattered face; Mr Mc Bryde expresses supercilious views of the lust the Indians show for white women; Ronny Heaslop is ignorant; Miss Dereck shows anger towards her Indian employers; and Mr Turton is arrogant towards the Indians.

This racism shows in the Anglo-Indians attitudes towards Aziz after the incident in the caves. Mr McBryde feels that Aziz pretends to be a respectable member of society, getting a Government position, while in reality he is leading a double life. His negative way of life takes over his respectable self. In McBryde’s opinion, Aziz behaves cruelly and brutally to an English lady and cannot be forgiven. The policeman is quick to blame the Indians as all the colonialists did. “Quite possible, I’m afraid; when an Indian goes bad, he goes not only very bad, but very queer” (Forster 1979: 177). The District Superintendent of Police is never surprised by the behaviour of any Indian and has his own theory about climatic zones: “All unfortunate natives are criminals at heart, for the simple
reason that they live south of latitude 30. They are not to blame, they have not a dog’s chance – we should be like them if we settled here” (Forster 1979: 176). Mr Turton states that he has “never known anything but disaster result when English people and Indians attempt to be intimate socially” (Forster 1979: 182). Contact, in his opinion, would be allowed, as well as courtesy, but intimacy should not be allowed. Such intimacy is only negative. Only mutual respect and esteem can enable them to socialize with each other.

The British feel that it vital for them to stick to the unwritten rules on how they behave towards the locals. These unwritten rules, which the locals are bound to follow in their relations with the colonialists, safeguard the interests of the British, making them the white superiors. Any modification of these rules would risk the whole system (Boehem 1995: 68).

When Indians live in England, they can be extremely close to and respected by the English. Yet the Indians cannot not return this hospitality when these Englishmen move to India. The Anglo-Indians would already have influenced these fellow Englishmen to put a stop to such friendships. When discussing this with Aziz, Hamidullah, an Indian lawyer, argues that:

“It is impossible here, Aziz! The red-nosed boy has again insulted me in court. I do not blame him. He was told that he ought to insult me. Until lately he was quite a nice boy, but the others have got hold of him” (Forster 1979:34).

Thus, as Hamidullah states, such a friendship between an Englishman and an Indian on an equal basis is only possible in England, “only contend that is possible in England” (Forster:1979:33). Even Aziz feels,

“Why talk about the English? Brrr…! Why be either friends with the fellows or not friends? Let us shut them out and be jolly. Queen Victoria and Mrs Bannister were the only exceptions, and they’re dead” (Forster 1979: 33).

One must also consider the Englishmen who move to India and have never had Indian friends back home. Many of them intend to be gentlemen and befriend Indians in the beginning, yet after a while they are told that this is not acceptable in English society. A significant change can be seen and some of these same Englishmen even begin to insult the Indians. This can also be seen in the behaviour of Mr Turton: he too had been close to the
locals originally and yet, like all the others before him, later on he did not trust any Indian. When Fielding first arrives in India he is extremely friendly, and wishes to be liked and accepted by the Indians. He chooses to befriend Indians. Yet even he, with his positive opinion of the Indians, feels at times that Indians are unbearable (Forster 1979: 184).

**Friendship between races**

The friendship between Aziz and Fielding is based on Indian and Englishmen being equals. Still, the friendship between the local Indian and the Englishman fail to tie the Anglo-Indian union. In a colony, there are no friendships on an equal basis. This issue is discussed on a personal level, through the relationship between Fielding and Aziz. Aziz is against the British at the beginning; however, he begins to alter his opinion after meeting Mrs. Moore in the mosque. This is the beginning of the possibility of a friendship with Fielding. If the British and the Indians treated one another as Aziz and Fielding did, then it would be possible for members of the two nations to be friends. The latter part of the book shows that this integration is not possible. Maybe no member of an occupied race can really be friends with a member of the master race. As long as the colonialists rule the colonised, they will always resent one another.

The last conversation in the book is between Fielding and Aziz and takes place on their last ride at the Mau jungles (Forster 1979: 314). They are friends once again, yet they have to bear in mind that they will no longer meet. All the misunderstandings have been sorted out between them and yet they can no longer socialise. The cultural and racial differences, and personal misunderstandings, separate them. Also, once married to an English lady, Fielding will withdraw into the English way of thinking, like all the rest before him. He will no longer be ready to defy his fellow countrymen for the sake of an Indian. Indeed, Fielding is already, at this point, feeling surprised at his past heroism.

A great part of this conversation is dedicated to politics. Fielding and Aziz have trusted each other and this could be partly because they are going to go their separate ways. Fielding is of the opinion that once the British withdraw from India, then the Indians will decline. Fielding begins to mock Aziz. Aziz, who gets very excited in this conversation, argues that the Indians had been very keen to have the British colonists up to ten years ago, but that now it was too late. The only reason that the Indians tolerate the British is for political reasons. Towards the very end of the novel Aziz blurts out,
“Clear out, clear out, I say. Why are we put to so much suffering? We used to blame you, now we blame ourselves, we grow wiser. Until England is in difficulties we keep silent, but in the next European war – aha, aha! Then it is our time. . . . Down with the English anyhow. That’s certain. Clear out, you fellows, double quick I say. 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 - he rode against him furiously – “and then,” he concluded, half kissing him, “you and I shall be friends” (Forster 1979: 315, 316).

In these last sentences, Aziz explains that he and Fielding cannot be friends until India is independent and free of the British. Yet it might be possible at the right time. However, the circumstances do not allow it, surroundings do not want it, at least not yet. Likewise, no other Englishman or Indian can be friends until India obtains independence. The last two words in the book are uttered by Aziz, “Not yet” (Forster 1979: 316).

**Friendship and gender**

*A Passage to India* is rather harsh and hostile towards women. They are portrayed as unsatisfactory: they are nags who criticise all the time, continually giggling, mixed-up spinsters. Their only goal in life is marriage. They are depicted as the enemy (Childs 1999: 351). They contribute more to the racial situation in India than their fellow Englishmen.

*A Passage to India* is a novel principally about men, about their attempts to reach across continents, across cultures, across race in order to understand and even to love one another. It becomes interesting when the men are the focus of intimacy (Childs 1999: 352). The novel ignores the presence of women, as can be seen in Fielding’s view; according to him; “The world, he believed, is a globe of men who are trying to reach one another and can best do so by the help of goodwill plus culture and intelligence...” (Forster 1979: 80). Repeatedly, we see incidents confirming this view. For example, the development of the brief affection between Aziz and an unidentified Englishman during a game of polo, and the moment when Aziz and Fielding attempt to embrace each other at the
end of the novel; these indicate that it is only through friendships between men that there can be a union of the two nations. Women do not play any part in this union. The possibility of friendship between women of different nationalities is not discussed at all.

According to the Collector, women complicate their lives. The death of the wife of Aziz enables him to form a friendship with a man of another nationality, Fielding. Aziz’s wife, like all other women in the novel, is of no importance in the men’s life (Childs 1999: 353). The implication that British women could be obstacles to male friendships can be seen in the following quotation when the narrator explained why Fielding was shunned at the club (Childs 1999: 354):

The men tolerated him for the sake of his good heart and strong body; it was their wives who decided that he was not a sahib really. He took no notice of them, and this, which would have passed without comment in feminist England, did him harm in a community where the male is expected to be lively and helpful. Mr. Fielding advised one about dogs or horses, or dined, or paid his midday calls, or decorated trees for one’s children at Christmas (Forster 1979:80).

The women show a more racist attitude than the men do (Childs 1999: 353). It seems that, according to Forster, women should support their husbands’ friendships with Indian men, “trying to reach one another,” but do not do so. Instead, they sabotage these friendships. In spite of this, some of the men are willing to be friends with the Indians. Paradoxically, in the case of Fielding, his marriage to an Englishwoman does enable friendship.

The women who refuse to be quiet are resented both by the male characters in the novel and the narrator. Already before the publication of the novel, Forster expressed his disapproval of the treatment of the locals by the Anglo-Indians; however, his main disapproval was directed at women. Forster, in an article for the journal “The Nation and the Athenaeum” had the following to say about the female characters in the novel:

If the Englishman might have helped the Indian socially, how much more might the Englishwoman have helped! But she has done nothing, or worse than nothing. She deserves, as a class, all that the satirists have said about her, for she has instigated the follies of her male when she might have calmed them and set him on the sane course (Childs 1999: 354).
The English women only hinder friendships and encourage the men to choose sides. This is clear to Fielding, as we can see in the following quotation,

He had discovered that it is possible to keep in with Indians and Englishmen, but that he who would also keep in with Englishwomen must drop the Indians. The two wouldn’t combine (Forster 1979: 80).

Fielding too chooses to “keep in with” Englishwomen at the end, as can be seen after his return to India; yet, as mentioned above, this is not a problem in Fielding’s case. Fielding’s friendship with the Indian doctor, Aziz, has been the closest friendship ever existing between an Englishman and a local Indian. Yet Aziz becomes both angry and bitter with Fielding after the incident at the caves and a rift is created between them. Aziz feels that the English have frightened him permanently. He also feels that he has betrayed his fellow Indian men by making friends with an Englishman, and decides to avoid them in the future. Yet in spite of his resolution, the return of Fielding to India with a wife enables a positive turning point of their friendship.

The novel is mainly focused on the interracial dialogue between Aziz and Fielding. The narrator also shows deep respect and admiration of the punkah wallah and the temple servitor. It is only the Englishmen and the Indian elite who form the interracial dialogue in the novel; the Indian elite consisting of Aziz, the Indian doctor and Hamidullah, the Indian lawyer. Even though the punkah wallah and the servitor contribute to an important message in the novel, they do not qualify to participate in this his interracial dialogue (Childs 1999: 361).

The Clash of Cultures

As mentioned above, A Passage to India focuses on the problem of integrating the colonialists and the locals, as well as the racism shown by the colonialists towards the Indians. It shows misunderstandings and misinterpretations between the colonialists and locals, the division between East and West. Clashes occur when the racist English colonialists and the local Indians do not see eye to eye (Ashcroft 1995: 19). There are numerous misunderstandings, for example Mrs Bhattacharya’s invitation; Aziz’s collar
stud; the organisation of the bridge party; the choice of the woman Fielding marries; and, most importantly, what happens in the Marabar Caves (Childs 1999: 349).

There are things that Englishmen fail to understand about Indian customs. An example of this is seen in the attitude Aziz has towards appointments he has made with the English. He proposes outings to his English acquaintances without actually intending to carry them out, something that these acquaintances cannot comprehend or accept. While Aziz is just talk, the English stick to their promises and make sure that these are carried out. Besides, punctuality is not the rule among the Indians, especially Aziz shows a nonchalant attitude. Yet at the same time, even when Callendar invites Aziz to his home, Callender is not there to greet him: English colonialists have privileges.

The visit to the Marabar caves is an attempt to show two British ladies the real India. However, a misunderstanding on this trip has tragic consequences due to cultural differences, which bring about uncontrollable anger between the British and Indians. The incident brings out all the racial tensions and prejudices between the Indians and the British colonialists who rule India:

The English always stick together! That was the criticism. Nor was it unjust. Fielding shared it himself; and knew that if some misunderstanding occurred, and an attack was made on the girl by his allies, he would be obliged to die in her defence. He didn’t want to die in her defence. He didn’t want to die for her; he wanted to be rejoicing with Aziz. (Forster 1979: 235).

By takings Aziz’s side, Fielding steps over this line. This is because an Englishman should never take the side of an Indian, irrelevant of whether he is guilty or not. He is advised to stick with his own kind. In stepping out of line, he not only loses his own self, but he puts his fellow Englishmen at risk.

Through the victory of the Indians after the trial, for the first time in the history of the English colony in the novel, the English are proved not to be always superior. The Indians finally get some power. Yet Nawab and Bahadur, the wiser of the Indians, realise that they would gain nothing by attacking the English. The English have fallen into their own pit, and are well aware of this. These two Indian men feel that it is better not to provoke the English colonists.
The Marabar Caves

The incident in the caves is the central moment in the novel. It is a muddle or a mystery that shows that India can only present confusion of morals, misunderstandings and misreading between the colonialists and the locals (Childs 1999: 349).

The issue of what happens in the caves is not solved in the book, but left up to the imagination of the reader. In a letter to Forster in 1924, Dickinson suggested that maybe even Forster had no real solution or explanation as to what happened there. According to Dickinson, Forster deliberately chose not to convey any clear answer to his readers (Forster 1979: 26).

The Marabar caves are depicted as mysterious. No matter how many of these caves the visitors have seen, they usually want to visit them again. They feel unsure as to whether or not such a visit is an interesting experience, are reluctant to talk about their visit, and usually try to put such experiences aside. They feel that the pattern of the caves repeats itself (Forster 1979: 138).

Adela’s recollection of what exactly happened in the caves seems to fade away. After a suggestion by Fielding, Adela begins to believe that the whole accusation could have been based on a hallucination; “the sort of thing”, she concludes, “that makes some women think they’ve had an offer of marriage when none was made” (Forster 1979: 140). Later on, we see that Adela comes to the point where she seems to have completely lost interest in the incident and is no longer willing to discuss it further. The novel tells us that: “the question had lost interest for her suddenly” (Forster 1979: 242). Even though Fielding tries to convince everybody that it probably was the guide that tried to assault Adela, he is opposed by Hamidullah who retaliates “I gather you have not done with us yet, and it is now the turn of the poor old guide who conducted you round the caves” (Forster 1979: 243). One cannot fail to notice that all the opinions expressed in the novel regarding the incident do not seem to be given significance. This could due to the indifference towards women that is portrayed throughout the novel. Even though both Mrs Moore and Adela are central characters, they are only important through their roles in patriarchal and imperialist structures as white English women, rather than through their personal relationships with other characters in the novel, irrelevant of whether those other characters are male and female (Childs 1999: 357).

Although, as stated earlier, the personal relationships of Adela are given no importance, she is still the one who gives Fielding the chance to meet Aziz. Even later on
in their friendship, she provides the opportunity for their relationship to be put to the test. The accusation makes Aziz and Fielding draw closer to one another, and secures the friendship between two men, who are the two main male characters of the novel. Fielding chooses to side with his dear friend, Aziz, rather than with Adela, to the astonishment of the Anglo-Indian community (Childs 1999: 356). As a result of this, the bond between Fielding and Aziz becomes stronger. It is Adela’s withdrawal of the accusation against Aziz that enables them to continue their friendship. The incident in the caves is thus only important up till this point when Adela withdraws her accusation. After this, it is no longer important what actually happened (Childs 1999: 357). According to Fielding, what happens in the caves could be one of these four things,

Either Aziz is guilty, which is what your friends think; or you invented the charge out of malice, which is what my friends think; or you have had an hallucinat... I’m very much inclined … I believe that you yourself broke the strap of the field-glasses; you were alone in that cave the whole time (Forster 1979: 240).

It is never clear to the reader which explanation is the correct one.

Adela’s admittance of error in accusing Aziz is a let down for the English community. It is a welcome victory for the Indians, as for the first time in history an Englishman takes their side. The colonialists feel that he is a disgrace to the English community and that he has let them down. Fielding suggests that Adela has made a wrongful accusation against Aziz. No English person had ever before stated publicly that he had wrongly accused an Indian. Fielding and Adela are rejected by the English community due to their friendships with and loyalty towards the Indian community.

Femininity and Masculinity in India

There are many issues of gender and sexuality in A Passage to India: the novel includes an “alleged sexual assault on a British woman by an Indian man” (Childs 1999: 348), and the intimate, homoerotic, relationship between Fielding and Aziz, plays an important part. As Childs states, the novel analyses issues of control and resistance in terms of gender, race and sex (Childs 1999: 348.).
Colonisation has, as mentioned above, been described as an example of the survival of the fittest, where the colonialists, the strong ones, use their power over the inferior, colonized people. The colonized people were perceived as secondary, abject, weak and feminine. Colonisation could be seen as a struggle of the British to become the superior race. It was not only the struggle of the white against the blacks. It was also a conflict of masculinity. The local Indians were assumed to be docile, submissive, receptive, gentle, seductive, dull, and effeminate, especially when compared to the male colonisers. India is portrayed as feminine. Boehmer describes it as a “woman country” (Boehmer 1995: 86).

This female India can be seen in the cave section in the novel when Adela expresses her feelings of what her life would be if she were to decide to continue living in colonised India;

> How can the mind take hold of such a country? Generations of invaders have tried, but they remain in exile. The important towns they build are only retreats, their quarrels the malaise of men who cannot find their way home. India knows of their trouble. She knows of the whole world’s trouble, to its uttermost depth. She calls ‘Come’ through her hundred mouths, through objects ridiculous and august. But come to what? She has never defined. She is not a promise, only an appeal (Forster 1979: 148,149).

Even though it is Adela talking, Forster is expressing her thoughts through a masculine voice.

_Aziz_, the primary example in the novel of an Indian man, is portrayed as feminised. He is more emotional than his best friend, Fielding. He makes friends easily. His chief drawback, as with all other Indians, is that he views every situation emotionally. Irrationality, which is a trait normally perceived as feminine, strikes when he “goes bad”. He becomes like a woman.

Initially, Fielding, the English headmaster, chooses to befriend Indians, and in becoming intimately involved with the Indian doctor, is in danger of being feminised by India. However, he withdraws from this temptation by returning to England, and coming back some time later with an English wife. In this way he is establishing his masculinity through marriage, enabling him to pursue a friendship without being feminised.

_A Passage to India is a narrative in which it is nearly impossible to discern any perspective but a western perspective or any gender but the masculine gender”_ (Childs
Forster sees India “as a seductive female, through his eyes, she is all appeal and not substance, and her meaning is made dependent on the masculine mind that apprehends her” (Childs 1999: 358).

However, Forster also sees Indian men as explicitly masculine: for example, the punkah puller and the servitor symbolise Indian males. Their appearance plays an important part in bringing the novel to a conclusion. It is the duty of the servitor to bring the celebration of Krishna’s birthday to an end by pushing the clay images of Krishnas’s family into the water. At this point, the two boats containing Fielding and his wife, Aziz and Stella’s brother, collide with each other and these boats drifted towards the servitor; “who awaited them, his beautiful dark face expressionless, and as the last morsels melted on his tray it struck them” (Forster 1979: 309).

The capsizing of the boat leads to Aziz and Fielding becoming friends again. “That was the climax, as far as India admits of one” (Forster 1979: 310). However, it is the punkah puller who represents more power and knowledge. Even though officially he has the least important role in the court proceedings, he appears to Adela as “he seemed to control the proceedings” (Forster 1979: 220). He can be interpreted as controlling the court even indirectly as can be understood by the quotation “Pulling the rope towards him, relaxing it rhythmically, sending swirls of air over others, receiving none himself, he seemed apart from human destinies, a male Fate, a winnower of souls” (Forster 1979: 221). This male Fate image is what makes Adela doubt her judgement of Aziz, and it is this doubt that leads her to withdraw her false accusation.

The narrator sees the punkah puller and temple as masculine figures and describes them with a sexual and erotic touch, “naked, broad-shouldered, thin-waisted- the Indian body again triumphant” (Forster 1979: 309). The “again” in this quotation refers to the punkah wallah. The following quotation is taken from the part of the court proceedings through the eyes of Adela:

Almost naked, and splendidly formed, he sat on a raised platform near the back, in the middle of the central gangway, and he caught her attention as she came in….. He had the strength and beauty that sometimes come to flower in Indians of low birth. When that strange race nears the dust and is condemned as untouchable, then nature remembers the physical perfection that she accomplished elsewhere, and throws out a god…. This man would have been
notable anywhere; among the this-hammed, flat chested mediocrities of Chandrapore he stood out as divine (Forster 1999: 220).

Even though this is supposed to be Adela’s observation, one can interpret is as the narrator speaking from his male point of view (Childs 1999: 360). While India is feminine, and men risk becoming feminised by going there, masculinity is also present in Indian men.

**Conclusion**

The clash between the colonialists and the local Indians, at the beginning of the novel, appears to be a racial one. The novel also addresses the issues of colonialism, rape and nationalism. There is a distinction between the political passions of the British in India, and their social issues. The political passions are only brought up every now and again in the novel. We read of these again at the end of the novel during the incident of the English at Mau.

However, this incident only emphasises the real theme of the novel, the friendship between the Englishman, Fielding and the Indian, Dr Aziz. The setting on their ride symbolises the differences significant between the two men. The main difference is the difference of race. Friendship between coloniser and colonised cannot work.

India is presented as soft, seductive, and feminine, feminising its men. However, there are also masculine men in India, and they fulfil important functions in the narrative.
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