



# International Journal of Research in English

ISSN Print: 2664-8717  
ISSN Online: 2664-8725  
Impact Factor (RJIF): 8.36  
IJRE 2026; 8(1): 05-09  
[www.englishjournal.net](http://www.englishjournal.net)  
Received: 08-11-2025  
Accepted: 10-12-2025

**Sangita**  
Research Scholar, Department  
of English, D.A.V. P.G.  
College, Bulandshahr, Uttar  
Pradesh, India

**Dr. Sanjeev Kumar**  
Associate Professor and Head,  
Department of English, D.A.V.  
P.G. College, Bulandshahr,  
Uttar Pradesh, India

## Representation of postcolonial elements in E.M. Forster's novel a passage to India

**Sangita and Sanjeev Kumar**

DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.33545/26648717.2026.v8.i1a.581>

### Abstract

E.M. Forster was one of the most important and renowned British novelists of twentieth century. His novel *A Passage to India* is often regarded as masterpiece. It is a remarkable English novel of the early twentieth century. It is also E.M. Forster's most significant and successful novel. This paper speaks about the novel *A Passage to India* and how the themes of the novel deal with post-colonialism and the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. Colonialism is a form of control that entails the enslavement of one person by another. While the term post-colonialism refers to the representation of race, ethnicity, culture and human identity in the modern era; mostly after many colonized countries got their independence from European powers. In my research paper, I will explore the work *A Passage to India* as post-colonial novel. The novel is a realistic document about the British rule in India. This novel explores the complexity of colonialism and cultural clashes between Indian and British colonists. This research paper investigates the novel's different theme s characters and other narrative elements to highlight the impacts of individuals, societies and demonstrates how it disrupted lives and shape perception of truth and justice. It also discusses Forester's experiences as a British author that influenced his portrayal of colonial India. The paper emphasizes the importance and ongoing discussions about injustice and cultural tensions which is presented inside the novel. It focuses on how India is portrayed in the story, especially since Forster, the author is set in the time when India was under British rule and it talks about the complex relationships between different cultures the power struggles and the political situation during that time. The study fits into the category of post-colonial literature, which means it looks at how literature deals with the aftermath of colonialism. This is especially interesting because Forster is not from India, so it explores how an outsider represents a colonized society. The stud y also looks at how Forster deals with topics like identity, belonging and the clash between Eastern and Western ways of thinking. This paper aims to analyze the psychological barriers and prejudices projected in the novel.

I would like to examine Forster's treatment of the colonial concerns between the East and West through the art of characterization and plot construction.

**Keywords:** Post-Colonial, identity, racism, prejudice, otherness, colonizers, colonized

### Introduction

English writer, essayist and librettist, E.M. Forster is well known as the writer of the iconoclastic novels that challenges the norms and odes of Victorian society. He represented the transforming social aspect of English society and interaction between people from different aspects of life. Several novels were portrayed by the British rule in India. *A passage to India* is most prominent among them. It was written by E.M. Forster on his first-hand experience of India that was published in 1924 which has been read as an important early document of post-colonial. It depicts the colonizer - colonized relationship during colonial rule. Forster pictured cultural and religious differences between Indians and English people who were ruling in India through several incidences in the novel. He also showed the ambivalence in the colonizer - colonized relationship in the novel. This paper sheds light on modernism and modern novel, then what colonialism and post-colonialism is and its impacts on society. Then this paper also talks about what colonial literature is. Lastly, it narrates the life of the author in India which has an important role in writing this novel.

It consists of colonial intricacies and critique of imperialism and racism as it is portrayed with the story. Furthermore explains the role of characters both British and Indian characters and friendship and betrayal by dissecting the interactions and conflicts that arise between the characters.

**Corresponding Author:**  
**Sangita**  
Research Scholar, Department  
of English, D.A.V. P.G.  
College, Bulandshahr, Uttar  
Pradesh, India

### Post-Colonialism

Post-colonialism is about what happens after a country has been under the control of a more powerful one. It is about the struggle for independence and finding their own way of doing things. Talking about the historical development of post-colonialism, it developed from a four thousand year old history of restrained cultural relationships between the colonized Africans and Asians and the Western world as colonizers. Using the political and economic power, Great Britain, the main imperialist power of the nineteenth century dominated her colonies making them produce for them and eventually gave all their powers to the British. By the early twentieth century, England's control over the colonies began to disappear that is decolonization, has started. This event marks the beginning of post-colonialism or "Third world" studies. Broadly a study of the effects of colonialism on cultures and societies. It is concerned with both how these groups have since responded to and resisted these encroachments. In Post-colonial literature which can be in the form of novels, poems short stories and more, we often find discussions about cultural identity. These writings may talk about the changes that have occurred or question the current situation. So post-colonial literature covers everything affected by the colonial process from when colonization started to the present day. Post-colonial literature often deals with a fundamental question: should we try to go back to our original cultures, follow the culture imposed by the colonizers, or create a new culture that combines both? If a novel explores and answers any of these questions it can be seen as post-colonial literature. To figure out if a piece of writing is post-colonial, it is important to see if the former colony is truly independent or if still relies on its former colonizer. Edward Said's book "Orientalism" is seen as the starting point of post-colonial studies. In this book the author looks at how European countries justified colonialism by claiming their own racial superiority.

E.M. Forster's finest novel *A Passage to India* is widely regarded as his most brilliant and valuable work of art. It gained instant recognition and high praise when it was published in 1924 and its portrayal of British Indian relationships during the British rule in India. The novel explores the racial tensions between British colonizers and the Indian people of that time, while also exploring broader questions about human relationships.

### Postcolonial Elements in *A passage to India*

E.M. Forster's "A Passage to India" is about the relations between English people and the natives of India during the British colonization in India. The novel shows certain post-colonial features, the major ones are otherness, racism, hybridity, mimicry, prejudice and ambivalence.

### Otherness

In the novel "Otherness" is demonstrated in many ways. From the first chapter of the novel Forster reveals that Indians are inferior to Europeans. He makes himself clear that he belongs to the colonists with his inappropriate selection of words in describing the city of Chandrapore. He says:

.... by the river Ganges, it trails for a couple of miles along the bank, scarcely distinguishable from the rubbish it deposits so freely [...] The streets are mean the

temples ineffective and though a few fine exist they are hidden away in gardens whose fifth detours all [...] Chandrapore was never large or beautiful... (*A Passage to India*, P.9)

He added that the city is devoid of any work of art. India is considered as an 'evil' and 'barbarous' land. Then he compares Anglo-Indian city station which is so different than the native one "Houses belonging to Eurasians stand on the high ground ... Chandrapore appears to be a totally different place [...] it is no city but a forest ...," so his comparison between the Eastern and Western landscape it shows the superiority of the British colonizer and the inferiority of the Indian colonized. In the next chapter, Forster moved from places to characters. The western showed no respect towards the Orientals. The Major Callendar called Aziz to his house, Aziz says:

"Old Callendar wants to see me at his bungalow [...] He might have the politeness to say why [...] He has found out our dinner hour and choose to interrupt us every time, in order to show his power." (*A Passage to India* P.17) but Aziz found neither the major nor message. It is a kind of power and authority of the colonizer over the colonized.

Adela Quested says that she wants to see the real India and real Indians. However, Ronny laughed at her interest about seeing the natives.

In other words, how the British woman who has lived in England is curious about seeing India and meeting the Indians. How an English person whose country has colonized India is important from visiting it. As if Indians are not humans and lesser. Ronny and the other Anglo-Indian thought themselves better than the "Other." The British colonizer treated the colonized as stereotypes. Forster claimed:

..... And Miss Quested announced anew that she was desirous of seeing the real India. Ronny was in high spirits. The request struck him as comic."

Another one said:

"Wanting to see Indians! How new that sounds! Another Natives! Why fancy! Let me explain Natives do not respect one any the more after meeting one, you see (*A passage to India* P-27).

Ronny was upset when he knew his mother's talks with a Native, as he called him "Mohammedan." While he thought that she is speaking and describing an English doctor, he found that the English doctor is one of the Indian Natives. He said:

"Oh, good gracious! Not a Mohammedan? Why ever did not you tell me you had been talking to a native? (*A Passage to India*, P-31).

The Bridge Party that was suggested by Mr. Turtan, it is "..... was not the game, but a party to bridge the gulf between the East and the West." (*A Passage to India*, P-28)

Fielding, the schoolmaster of Government College, when he met the two ladies, Mrs. Moore and Miss Adela Quest, they talked about Dr. Aziz. Fielding claims:

“I know all about him. I do not know him.” (*A passage to India*, P-46). This statement marked what the West has already perceived about the Orient. It represents the concept of otherness in the minds of Westerners. Edward Said: “The orient is [...] its [Europe’s] cultural contestant, and one of its deeper and most recurring images of the other.” (P.1)

In the beginning of the chapter six, the writer had noted that Major Callendar denied

Dr. Aziz proficiency, when he says:

“What can you expect from the fellow? Not grit, no guts” and he blamed him for not doing his duty. “Now do some work from change.” (*A Passage to India*, P-53)

The English people described all the negative characteristics to the Orientals, even if they are not true. They always see them as inferior and backward to them.

Forster portrays Aziz as a provocative. Forster says that: “But nothing in India is identifiable.” (P.83) He means that Indians have no identity. They are living in their country with an unknown identity. Throughout the novel all the Indians are portrayed as ashamed of themselves of their culture and of their “identity.”

### **Cultural Clash and Superiority**

The novel illustrates the deep-seated cultural conflicts between the British colonizers and the Indian colonized and the Indian colonized, emphasizing the British belief in their own cultural superiority and the resulting injustice towards Indian.

### **Distorted Discourse**

Post-colonial studies analyse how colonial discourse shapes perceptions and creates barriers to genuine understanding. Forster’s depiction of the “net” the British dominion is often interpreted as critique of this oppressive structure.

### **Identity Crises**

This Research paper examines the creation of the other in the colonial encounter, how individual’s identities are formed and challenged with the imperial framework, and the tragic consequences for both the colonizer and the colonized. The novel explores the complex process of forming an individual identity in the context of a foreign colonial power, as seen in Dr. Aziz’s assertion of his Indian identity.

### **Cultural Ambivalence**

Characters experience internal conflict and external tension due to the imposition of British culture on Indian society leading to feelings of superiority and inferiority.

### **Critique of Colonialism**

Forster’s work is a powerful examination of the destructive impact of colonialism on interpersonal relationships and the inability of individuals to truly understand one another across cultural divides. It also provides a critique of Western feminism by highlighting the limited and prejudiced worldview of the British women showing how privilege can lead to a one-dimensional understanding of “third world” women.

### **Flowed Search for the “Real India”.**

The efforts of the British characters to find an authentic, untainted India are ultimately unsuccessful, revealing the superficiality and limitations of their colonial perspective.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

*A Passage to India* is a seminal work in post-colonial studies. Two English women the young Adela Quested and the elderly Mrs. Moore travel to India. Adela expects to become engaged to Mrs. Moore son Ronny, the British Magistrate in the Indian city of Chandrapore. Adela and Mrs. Moore each hope to see the “Real India” during their visit. At the same time Dr. Aziz, a young Muslim Doctor in India is annoyed with Major Callendar the civil surgeon, who has a tendency to summon Aziz for frivolous reason in the middle of dinner. Aziz and two of his educated friends, Hamidullah and Mahmoud Ali had lively conversation about whether or not an Indian can befriend of an Englishman in India. That night Mrs. Moore and Aziz happen to turn into each other while exploring a local mosque and the two become friendly. Aziz is moved and surprised that an English person would treat him like a friend. Mr. Turton the collector who governs Chandrapore hosts a “Bridge party,” to give Adela and Mrs. Moore the opportunity to meet specially some of the upper class Indians. At the event, Adela meets Cyril Fielding, the Principal of the government college in Chandrapore. Impressed with Adela’s friendliness to the Indians, Mr. Fielding invites her and Mrs. Moore to tea with him and the Hindu Professor Godbole. He invites Aziz as well. At the tea Aziz and Fielding immediately become friendly. Later that evening, Adela tells Ronny that she has decided not to marry him. But later after an incident she changes her mind about the marriage. Not long afterwards, Aziz organizes an expedition to the nearby Marabar Caves for those who attended Fielding’s tea. Fielding and Professor Godbole miss the train to Marabar, so Aziz continues all alone with the two ladies, Adela and Mrs. Moore. Inside one of the caves, Mrs. Moore is unnerved by the enclosed space and by the uncanny ‘Echo’ that seems to translate every sound she makes into the noise “boom.” Aziz, Adela and a guide go on to the higher caves while Mrs. Moore waits below. Adela suddenly realizes that she does not love Ronny, asks Aziz whether he has more than one wife a question he considers offensive. Aziz storms off into a cave and when he returns Adela is gone. Back at the picnic site, Aziz is unconcerned to learn that Adela has hastily taken a car to Chandrapore, as he is overjoyed to see Fielding. Back in Chandrapore however, Aziz is unexpectedly arrested. He is charged with attempting to molest Adela Quested while she has been in the caves, a charge based on a claim Adela herself has made. The bureaucracy accepts Adela’s accusation without question. For Fielding his connection with Aziz brings pressure from the group, fostering an ‘us other mindset’. Similarly, Aziz unable to break free from being seen as different, gives up trying to fit in and instead feels resentment and anger. He asks to Fielding:

“Then you are an oriental: He unclasped as he spoke, with a little shoulder. Those words he had said them to Mrs. Moore in the mosque at the beginning of the cycle from which, after so much suffering, he had got free. Never be friends with the English.” (P-306)

The response of Indians to Aziz's trial is significant. They all unite against the English to support Aziz whom they believe is innocent. The divide between Indian and the English is evident. The crucial statement is when Adela is asked to speak. When asked if Aziz followed her into the cave. She responds.

"I'm not quite sure."

Presses further, she admits,

"I'm afraid I have made a mistake. Dr. Aziz never followed me into the cave." (A.P.T.I.P-223). The magistrate asks Miss Adela Quested if she wants to take back the accusation and she replies, "I take back everything."

The whole case falls apart. The Magistrate, exhausted from the trial declares Aziz innocent without any stain on his reputation. Forster explains that Adela's actions were based on cold justice and honesty. When she withdrew the accusation, she did not feel any affection for the person she had accused.

The novel talks about how the desire during colonial time were expressed between men, ranging from close friendships to subtle romantic feelings. After two years, Fielding comes to Mau for work and Aziz who works there as a doctor, isn't happy about it. He remembers how Fielding supported Adela Quested and believed in her side of the story during Aziz's trial. Fielding had married Miss Quested, but later learns, to his embarrassment that Fielding married Stella, Mrs. Moore's daughter. Aziz had ignored Fielding's letters that explained everything, so he was mistaken all this time. However, Aziz is in no mood to resume his friendship with Fielding and so he says to him:

Please do not follow us

Whomever you marry. I wish no Englishman or Englishwoman to be my friends. (P.-288)

Aziz firmly declares that he does not want Fielding or anyone associated with him involved in his personal life, even saying it would be his dying wish. Yet, memories of Mrs. Moore bring him some comfort, as she had always been kind to him.

So this is how Dr. Aziz realizes the change. Fielding meets him and says we are still friends and then Dr. Aziz speaks the last line of the novel:

"I can't say ..... we shall be friends. We may not be friends. But in the spirit, all things are possible." followed by the cryptic.

"But the land and the sky seem to say: No, not yet." (A.P.T.I.) as their horses part signifying the impossibility of immediate friendship under colonial rule according to this source. Dr. Aziz saying "India shall be free. Free, Free, Free." on his horse ride with Fielding at the end of the novel, following Fielding's question about their ability to remain friends despite the colonial separation.

Even though they take pleasure in sparring over politics, the novel's last paragraph emphasizes how distanced they have become. Despite promising beginning of the chapter, the novel ends with the earth itself uttering with "its hundred

voices, "No, not yet." and the sky chiming in, "No No not there."

## Conclusion

The relationship between Hindus and Muslims is not portrayed as friendly. While they unite against the English during Aziz's trial generally, they remain distant. There's mutual discomfort between them - Godbole's reminders of Hindu customs clash with Aziz's sensibilities and there are negative stereotypes exchanged between their communities. The novel's central message is the unbridgeable gap between the English and the Indian, rooted in their instinct cultures. Despite various instances highlighting this divide, the clearest declaration comes from Aziz at the end. He firmly states that there can be no true friendship between the English and the Indians until India gains independence. It is significant because Aziz says this to someone he genuinely likes, despite not harbouring personal dislike towards him. His affection for Fielding, forgiveness of Adela and respect for Mrs. Moore cannot overshadow his deep seated hostility towards the English as a whole. Conflict is indeed the central theme of *A Passage to India*.

*A Passage to India* beautifully captures the complexities that arise when different cultures collide and fail to understand each other. Despite Fielding's efforts to bridge the gap between himself and Dr. Aziz, societal prejudices and differences - whether social, religious, or political-prevent this connection. The novel's simple yet profound message is about the complexity of life and the necessity of shedding pre-conceptions and social conditioning to truly understand and connect with others. While this harmonious connection does not materialize in Forster's India, the novel remains an uplifting and enriching read, inviting readers to ponder the challenges and rewards of genuine human connection despite societal barriers.

The present study is in its very essence an endeavour to highlight the post-colonial elements in E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* (1924). In so doing it was quite significant and methodological to deal with an overview on the field of post-colonial studies and therefore discussing its specificities particularly colonized relationship. In the deeper sense and in order to get insight into the reflection and depiction of these post-colonial aspects namely otherness, ambivalence, mimicry, hybridity, racism and prejudice, it is necessary to bring into play post-colonial theory that provides a clear understanding of how the relationships between the powerful and the powerless is manifested in literature. It is a post-colonial novel because it transmits the idea of otherness, subordination, prejudice and racism between the master and the slave, in which the latter demonstrated the Indians, the former, obviously referred to the British Raj.

To conclude, it is hard to decide whether the friendship between the colonizer and the colonized world ever be possible. Forster leaves this as an ambiguity, leaving it on the reader to decide. Forster fairly portrays the passage where the English and the Indian can meet and live together respecting to each other. Writer prays to god to establish friendship between two races and to eliminate the prejudices among people from two races.

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