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The Clash between Cultures: Afresh Reading of Forster's A Passage to India and Conrad's Heart of Darkness

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□ ABSTRACT □

This study deals with the conflict between civilizations. It takes Forster's A Passage to India and Conrad's Heart of Darkness as examples to illustrate this phenomenon. In A Passage to India the conflict between the British culture and the Indian culture is manifested in various forms. To demonstrate these differences, Forster presents a wide range of elements particular to each culture. He includes not only people of the two countries as part of the conflict, but also other elements relating to the general make-up of the cultural and environmental context of the two countries. Fielding and Dr. Aziz wish that their friendship might continue, but "the horses didn't want it – they swerved apart," and "the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single file" (Forster, p. 289). This refusal to conciliate, however, seems to be the result of "the whole conflict of civilizations" (Crews, p. 168).

Conrad in his Heart of Darkness highlights the disparity between the Western culture and the African culture by referring to the cultural and dogmatic differences that separate the two cultures. In the novel we stand before a social panorama in which the blame for the failure of communication rests, as is the case in A Passage to India, not only on "the whole conflict of civilizations," but also on the fundamental differences in social structure, religious outlook and temperament.

The study comes to the conclusion that bridging the gap between the social and cultural structures of two different nations cannot be brought about by use of force, "intimidation", "extermination", or submission of the so-called less civilized nations. Similarly, the question of compromise between cultures can be effected only by creating harmony between cultures, rather than integration and annihilation of one culture on the account of the other. Thus, removing the cultural and social barriers between different cultures inevitably demands obliterating the causes which bring about such divisions. Hence, it becomes necessary, in Mrs. Moore's opinion, that conciliation between two different nations requires fulfillment of God's will on earth which recommends that "God has put us on the earth in order to be pleasant to each other" (Forster, p. 64).

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صدام الثقافات: قراءة جديدة في رواية فورستر "الطريق إلى الهند" ورواية كونراد "قلب الظلام"

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(قبل للنشر في 2004/2/19)

□ الملخّص □

يعالج البحث موضوع الصراع الذي تمتد جذوره الى عصور موغلة بالقدم. فالصراع الحضاري في رواية "الطريق الى الهند" يتجسد في عدد من الاختلافات الثقافية، والفكرية، والدينية، والعقائدية وغيرها. وتبرز هذه الاختلافات جلية في الصراع بين مجتمعين، مجتمع غربي متعال في نظرته، متميز في أسلوب حياة أبنائه، وعاداته وتقاليده، ومجتمع شرقي محافظ في عاداته وتقاليده ومفاهيمه للحياة، والدين، والمجتمع.

ومن هنا يأتي الصدام بين المجتمعين، حيث يقف الدكتور عزيز، بطل القصة، عاجزا عن رأب الصدع بين هذين العالمين المتنافرين، على الرغم الجهود المخلصة التي يبذلها في هذا السياق. يحال عزيز إلى المحكمة بتهمة الاعتداء الجنسي على عديلا كويستد، على الرغم من براءته، ثم يتبين لاحقا، بعد صحوة ضمير عديلا، بأن الحادث الذي وقع في كهوف مرابار في مدينة تشاندرابور، كان عرضيا. يعلق إ. م. فورستر في نهاية الرواية على ظاهرة صدام الحضارات بقوله أن جذور المشكلة تكمن ليس في المجتمعات فحسب وإنما بطبيعة المكان، والأرض، والطبيعة بشتى صورها وأشكالها التي يبدو أنها تأبى مثل هذا اللقاء.

أما رواية كونراد "قلب الظلام" فتصور هذا الصراع بين عالمين متناقضين تماما: عالم غربي يدعي الحضارة، ويقوم على أسس إستعمارية بحتة، وعالم إفريقي متخلف، بدائي يقوم على الصيد البري بقصد جمع العاج. يأتي الغربيون إلى الكونغو تحت راية تحرير المجتمع الإفريقي البدائي من التخلف والجهل، ولكن هذا الشعار لا يلبث طويلا حتى ينقلب إلى نقيض ما جاء به. فيتحول المحررون إلى مستعمرين، وعصابات تقوم على سلب ونهب العاج الإفريقي، متناسين الهدف الذي جاؤوا من أجله. يلجأ المستعمرون لتحقيق هذا الهدف إلى استعباد من جاء تحت قبضتهم من الأفارقة، ليبدأ الصراع بين عالمين متناقضين، عالم إفريقي تحكمه القبيلة، والسحر، والعادات القبلية، والخرافات، وآخر غربي يحكمه الجشع، والرغبة في استعباد الآخر بقصد جمع الثروات. يصطدم العالمان، ويتنافر المجتمعان، وتنهار العلاقات بين المجتمعين، ولا يبقى ما يربط المجتمعين من شيء، بحيث يصبح الانفصال بينهما، كما هو الحل في رواية فورستر، أمرا لابد منه.

يخلص البحث إلى نتيجة واضحة، بعد عرض مفصل لهاتين الظاهرتين المشار إليهما أعلاه في رواية فورستر وكونراد، بأن التقارب بين الحضارات لا يمكن أن يتحقق إلا من خلال حوار بناء، يقوم على أسس واضحة من المساواة والعدالة، واحترام متبادل لمصالح كل من الطرفين المتحاورين؛ كما أن استمرار هذا الحوار رهن باحترام حقوق الطرفين السيادية، والمادية، والثقافية، والفكرية، والدينية، والاعتبارية وغيرها، وإلا فأن الفشل وزيادة الفرقة بين الحضارات سيكون هو المآل.

***أستاذ مساعد – قسم اللغة الإنكليزية– كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية – جامعة تشرين–اللاذقية – سورية.**

"Why can't we be friends now? Said the other, holding him affectionately. "It's what I want. It's what you want."

> But the horses didn't want it-they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single-file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, "No, not there."[1]

A Passage to India is set, no doubt, in India in the early twenties, when India was dominated by English colonialism. In this novel, Forster highlights the unbridgeable gap between the Indians and "the Britishers." The above quotation, which concludes the novel, demonstrates clearly the impossibility of reconciliation or compromise between the Indian culture and the British culture. In wider perspectives, it refers to the impossibility of complete agreement between the Eastern culture and the Western culture. Forster includes not only people of the two countries as part of the conflict between the two cultures, but also other elements relating to the general make-up of the cultural and environmental context of the countries: Fielding and Dr. Aziz wish that their friendship might continue, but "the horses didn't want it-they swerved apart," and "the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single file (Forster, p. 289). Other symbolic figures of a particular nation's culture also contribute to the concept of the impossibility of compromise between the two different cultures, including "the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, and the Guest House"(Forster, p. 289); all these elements of culture clash with other elements of the Western culture; this is a symbolic reference to the fact that the majority of the components of the Eastern culture cannot be fused into or even associated with the British culture: each land or nation has its particularities as far as the concept of culture is concerned.[2]

Seeds of disparity and incongruity between the Indians and the British, however, are not restricted to the last scene in the novel. At the outset of the novel, when Dr. Aziz and his friend discuss the relationship between the two communities in Chandrapore, they emphasize that the social ties between them are no more strong, as the two communities in Chandrapore have become more intolerant and cold. This feeling is enhanced further, when the British officials at the civil station in Chandrapore run a club that denies Indians entry and tries to avoid any intimate friendship or relations with the natives. Mr. Ronny Heaslop expresses his opinion in this concern clearly, emphasizing that a "Bridge Party", or the like, cannot bridge the rift between the British community and the Indian community; he says:

> The educated Indians will be no good to us if there is a row, it's simply not worthwhile conciliating them, that's why they don't matter. Most of the people you see are seditious at heart, and the rest'd run squealing" (Forster, p. 54).

Forster attributes the reasons standing behind this rift to the lack of openness and understanding between the two conflicting communities in Chandrapore.

In Conrad's Heart of Darkness, we also find a lot of confusion and uncertainty in the relations between the African community and the British community. This situation invites Chinua Achebe, the Nigerian writer, to confirm that Heart of Darkness is an "offensive and deplorable book" that "sets Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negations at once remote and vaguely, in comparison with Europe's own state of spiritual

grace will be manifest." [3] Chinua Achebe intimates that the question of integration between the Western culture and the African one is not possible, because the latter is set "as a foil" to the former. This concept is enhanced as Marlow, the narrator of the story, travels from the Outer Station to the Central Station and finally up the river to the Inner Station. Marlow encounters horrible scenes of torture, cruelty and slavery of the Africans. Throughout the novel a sense of confrontation between the African culture and that of the European one permeates the whole scene: the men who work for the company in the various stations of the colonizers describe what they do as "trade" (Conrad, p. 177)- and their behavior towards native Africans as part of a benevolent project of civilizing, educating, and exploring Africa. The master tradesman of the story and the hero of ivory, Mr. Kurtz, makes it clear that he does not trade, but rather takes ivory by force, describing his treatment of the natives with the words "extermination" and "suppression" (Conrad, pp. 207, 208)

For the company, as much as for Marlow and Kurtz, Africans appear mostly as objects. Kurtz's African mistress is held to be a piece of statuary, and Marlow's helmsman as a piece of machinery (Conrad, pp. 225, 199). This kind of dehumanization in Heart of Darkness can also be traced in A Passage to India, especially when the conflict between the Indian people and the English colonists increases in the course of action in the novel. This antagonism between the two cultures is best seen in the trial scene, which brings the poor Indian, Dr. Aziz, face to face with the British Aristocrat, Adela Quested. The confrontation between the two cultures here reaches the apex: all the Indian people side with Aziz, while the British community side with Adela Quested, hoping that "the guilty" will be imprisoned, because "conviction was inevitable" (Forster, pp. 198,199).

The British people consider themselves owners of the Indians, believing that they are culturally and racially superior to them; therefore, they were sure of winning the case against Dr. Aziz. Mrs Moore's son, Ronny, sent his mother, Mrs Moore, who represents the mediator between the two communities, away, because he didn't want her to be a witness in the court at Aziz's trial. Mrs. Moore and more likely, Mr. Fielding, represent the bridge, which is supposed to weld the fissure between the two nations. Mrs. Moore's intended absence from the process of Dr. Aziz's trial and Mr. Fielding's ineffectiveness in changing the proceedings of the trial widen the gap between the two cultures and make it difficult even for the friends to continue their relationship normally: "Why can't we be friends now? Said Fielding. "It's what I want. It's what you want." Aziz replies:

> 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 …(Forster, p. 289).

G. K. Das in his E. M. Forster contends that the novel "puts the contemporary political situation into perspective," highlighting "the British administration at Chandrapore" by showing "the imperialist policies in their worst form" and drawing attention to the Indians' political demand for complete freedom from the British domination.[4]

The same rift can be seen in Heart of Darkness between the native Africans and the Western colonizers. This image is neatly drawn throughout the novel, especially when the two communities come closer to each other in the Outer Station, the Central Station,

and the Inner Station. In the Outer Station, the image of the natives is introduced to us as gloomy and dark:

> Six black men advanced in a file, toiling up the path. They walked erect and slow, balancing small baskets full of earth on their heads, and the clink kept time with their footsteps. Black rags were wound round their loins, and the short ends behind waggled to and fro like tails. I could see every rib, the joints of their limbs were like knots in a rope; each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain … (Conrad, p. 154).

This gloomy picture of the natives is contrasted with a profuse and mock-philanthropic image of the white men who run the station: the accountant is the first white man Marlow meets at the Central Station. He is presented as a ludicrous figure, "well groomed amidst the sordid surroundings."[5] Other fissures appear on the scene, shocking Marlow with their excessive immorality and carelessness; they are the manager and the brick maker of the station:

> They beguiled the time by backbiting and intriguing against each other in a foolish kind of way. There was an air of plotting about that station, but nothing came of it, of course. It was as unreal as everything else-as the philanthropic pretence of the whole concern, as their talk, as their government, as their show of work. The only real feeling was a desire to get appointed to a trading- post where ivory was to be had, so that they could earn percentages (Conrad, p. 168).

In the above passage the manager and the brick maker are presented as shallow people and a kind of wasted devils. So, the ideals, which they claimed to have come for, seem here far from being liable to be achieved. Their ultimate purpose is defined to securing "a trading-post" and collecting ivory. This is part and parcel of the colonial culture. In contrast, the ideals of the natives stand in sharp contrast with the ideals of their European masters.

The images of the natives presented throughout the novel show a deeply sad picture of the native Africans: their misery, slavery, helplessness and tragic social conditions point clearly to the purposes for which the colonizers had come: "To tear treasure out of the bowels of the land was their desire, with no more moral purpose at the back of it than there is in the burglars breaking into a safe" (Conrad, p. 177). The natives were "black shadows" lying between the trees, "leaning against the trunks;" they were dying slowly "in all the attitudes of pain, abandonment, and despair" (Conrad, p. 156). This picture of the natives, set against the other picture of the colonizers, highlights the differences between the two cultures: the culture of the colonizer and that of the colonized.

The natives, however, seem to be struggling hard to survive, sustaining themselves by little available sources for survival, while the white man's mind goes in a completely different direction by spending their time in intriguing either against each other, or contriving how to cheat on the price of ivory. Chinua Achebe in his article entitled "An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness" says:

> Heart of Darkness projects the image of Africa as the other world, the antithesis of Europe and therefore of civilization, a place where man's vaunted intelligence and refinement are finally mocked by triumphant bestiality (p. 111). [6]

The racial gap which separates the Africans from the Westerners in Heart of Darkness, a gap represented by the differences in color, habits and customs, in beliefs and tenets, in ways and methods of life is symbolized in A Passage to India by different standards. While Conrad draws this division between the races by using various methods as direct references to the attitude of the colonizer towards the colonized – an attitude summarizing the colonizer's feeling of superiority over the colonized racially and culturally – Forster highlights this division by other allusions: he refers to the social and cultural gaps which divide the two communities rather than the differences in race. Forster is careful to point out the unbridgeable cultural gaps, because his conviction is that the Eastern culture has its own particularities and characteristics, which seem to be incompatible with the Western culture. Forster, throughout the novel, refers to those facts: the bridge party, which he refers to, at the beginning of the novel, is one scene where he draws attention to such probability. Another reference is made when Forster narrates the details of the "so-called rape scene," pointing out that none could make it clear whether or not Aziz has actually attempted to rape Adela Quested in the Marabar Caves. Forster, however, binds "The whole problem with the Anglo Indian misunderstanding, for the occasion of the supposed assault," in F. C. Crews's words, "is a picnic organized by Aziz in the interest of interracial friendship."[7] It seems that Adela's nervous breakdown stands for the "symbolic breakdown of the effort at mutual sympathy between the two countries" (Crews, p. 167). Adela Quested comes to India along with Mrs. Moore to discover the mysteries of India. At the outset of the novel they make sincere efforts to fulfill their desire to "know India" on its own terms. Their efforts, however, did not yield fruits, not because the Indians didn't help them get through their plans, but because "the snobbish colonial officials, including Ronny Heaslop", Miss. Adela's "Intended," thwarted their plans (Crews, p. 168).

This brings us back to the issue of the impossibility of compromise between the East and the West; this fact becomes clear especially when we come to know that even the affectionate relationship between Cyril Fielding and Aziz finally collapses, due to fundamental differences in temperament and religious beliefs of the two friends. A Passage to India, then, finally refuses all bids for "passage" through the national barriers it defines, and it seems that the novel "can have no hero or villain, since the blame for the failure of communication rests on the whole conflict of civilizations" (Crews, p. 168). Aziz's failure to bridge this gap between civilizations, when he decides to invite Mrs. Moore, Adela Quested and Fielding to inspect Marabar Caves, falls into the same line of thought referred to by Crews above; even the private invitation of Fielding to Aziz with the two ladies comes to an unhappy ending; and Ronny, who arrives on the scene later, confirms, by his continuous hostile gestures towards the Indians, that Aziz cannot be trusted with Miss Quested. Adela's fine idea borrowed from Akbar's universal religion that to attain "universal brotherhood," barriers between individuals and communities should be broken down in India, ends also in disaster. The English and the Indian communities of Chandrapore are aroused to bitter hostility against each other. Aziz's case goes through the court and for the surprise of the British community, he isn't found guilty. When Dr. Aziz is released, he finds it difficult to continue his life in Chandrapore.

Therefore, he decides to leave for the state of Mau, outside the limits of British India. Adela returns to Britain, getting "the worst of both worlds" (Forster, p. 230). Thus, the distance between the two worlds of the East and the West ever widens. Instead of bridging the gap between them, they find themselves farther off from each other than ever before.

Mrs. Moore's and Adela's general outlook on India become, to a large extent, sensitive, due to their experiences in India; in contrast, the rest of the 'Britishers' who call themselves officials, including the Collector, the Superintendent of Police, the Civil Surgeon, and the City Magistrate, remain insensitive, because their main interest is restricted to governing India; they have no interest whatsoever in Indian art, literature or culture, or even Indian social life. Moreover, the officials' wives were presented as more indifferent to India than their husbands. They were portrayed by Forster as dull, insensitive, disgusting and loathsome: they express their racial enmity towards the Indians openly, and they are happy about it: Mrs. Callender, the Civil Surgeon's wife, thinks, "the kindest thing one can do to a native is to let him die" (Forster, p. 44). This issue brings us back again to the attitude of politically awakened Indians, like Aziz, who emphasizes that reforms and attempts at reconciliation are useless as long as the Indians are not treated as equals by the British. Lionel Trilling in his "A Passage to India" supports the same idea above, confirming,

> The theme of separateness, of fences and barriers…, which runs through all Forster's novels, is, in A Passage to India, hugely expanded and everywhere dominant. The separation of race from race, sex from sex, culture from culture, even of man from himself, is what underlies every relationship. The separation of the English men from the Indians is merely the most dramatic of the chasms in this novel.[8]

The same concept runs throughout Conrad's Heart of Darkness. We hardly find one situation or occasion in the novel where the native Africans are considered by the invaders as equal. It seems that the "Britishers" Marlow meets in the Central Station, the Inner Station, and the Outer Station, including the Brick maker, the Manager, and at a later stage, Kurtz, have "kicked themselves loose of the earth."(Conrad, p. 186) Metaphorically, this implies that they have broken themselves free from all the restraints of basic morality. They have one purpose in view, namely, to collect as much ivory as they can, regardless of the interests of the native Africans. In this respect, Kurtz's practices seem to be the most cruel and uncivilized: he is able to accumulate more ivory than any other agent, because of his single-minded obsession to get ivory, regardless of the effects it has on people and environment. The natives had to suffer as a result of this policy of the colonizers; they had to die slowly out of disease and starvation, as those who came as missionaries of peace and enlightenment had nothing to care about but beguiling "the time by backbiting and intriguing against each other in a foolish kind of way" (Conrad, p. 168). Furthermore, the only desire and feeling of the white Man was "to get appointed to a trading post where ivory was to be had, so that they could earn percentages (Conrad, p. 168). As such, the chances to reach a compromise between the colonizers and the colonized seem to be rare, if not impossible, in the light of the cultural and racial differences that divide them.

Kurtz does not hide the fact that he takes ivory by force, and that he rules through violence and intimidation. Kurtz's realization that his practices with the native Africans were wrong came too late. He discovers that his own dark self has corrupted him, and his lust, which drove him to exploit and harvest as much ivory as possible, has made of him a cruel despot. This is the voice of primitive savagery, creeping silently and slowly with the abysses of his "nether" self. He is sacked with lust for ivory and corrupted with the consuming darkness of his own self, pursuing his evil of his nature to excess. His last words in the novel demonstrate, probably, this knowledge of oneself. Marlow shares us the belief that Kurtz did establish the true knowledge about himself when he exclaims at the end of the novel "The horror! The horror!" (Conrad, p. 293).Marlow finds in this cry a lot of meaning which moves on a wide terrain of expectations:

> "Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision- he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath- "The horror! The horror!" (Conrad, p. 293)

Does this discovery of Kurtz at the end make other colonists, including Marlow, revise their plans in South Africa, as did some of the British in A Passage to India? Adela Quested, in a moment of great lucidity, and a supreme knowledge of herself, realizes her mistake by declaring that Aziz was innocent. She feels, in some way or another, that she has committed a crime, and that she becomes puzzled by what she feels and what she knows, and says incoherently:

> "I'm afraid I have made a mistake."
> "What nature of mistake?"
> "Dr. Aziz never followed me into the cave."
> …….
> "you withdraw the charge? Answer me," shrieked the representative
> of justice.
> Something that she did not understand took hold of the girl and pulled her through. Though the vision was over, and she had returned to the insipidity of the world, she remembered what she had learned. Atonement and confession-they could wait. It was hard prosaic tones that she said, "I withdraw everything" (Forster, p. 210).

Forster describes this moment of vague knowledge of the self, suggesting, "something that she didn't understand took hold of the girl and pulled her through." (Forster, p. 210). Cyril Fielding, who was extremely affected by this revelation, escorts Adela to the government college to condole her. Adela's new social status compels her to return to England, and Fielding decides later to follow her. Fielding's decision to return to England is similar to Marlow's decision to return to London. Marlow is finally fed up with the greedy pilgrims and the insensitive conspiring company agents, so that he makes up his mind to return to Europe as soon as possible. He is thankful that he didn't follow the road that the conspiring Company Agents, including Kurtz, had taken. They were all

consumed by the evil heart of darkness they found in the primeval jungle of Africa. The same image was repeated in A Passage to India in the characters of Mrs. Moore, Fielding and Adela Quested. They realize, as finally did Kurtz and Marlow, that only mutual understanding and love for one another, rather than using tyrannical or racial discriminative means, can bring about a compromise between two different nations, races, or sexes. Fielding at the end of the novel suggests to Dr. Aziz that they should be friends:

> "'Why can't we be friends now?' Said the other, holding him affectionately. 'It's what I want. It's what you want.' But the horses didn't want it they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders pass single file'" (Forster, p. 289).

Dr. Aziz's answer seemes to be shocking to Fielding, when he says: "Clear out, you fellows, double quick, I say. We may hate one another, but we hate you most (Forster, p. 289). Similarly, Marlow in Heart of Darkness makes it clear that the colonizers in South Africa failed to make any true friendship with the native Africans. He recognizes that they had to quit Africa sooner or later, as did Fielding in A Passage to India though this knowledge comes too late. The culmination of Marlow's knowledge comes in the last chapter of the novel when he contends:

> Life Droll thing is-that mysterious arrangement of merciless logic for a futile purpose. The most you can hope from it is some knowledge of yourself-that comes too late-a crop of unextinguishable regret (Conrad, p. 240).

Forster's account of the general atmosphere and many details of the actual occurrences in Chandrapore refer crucially to the particular tragedies suffered by the Indians. Forster's detailed account of Mrs. Derek's uggestion, the English District Collector's wife, on how to punish Indians, reminds us as readers of the most sordid punishments that had actually been inflicted on the people of India. She remarks in Ronny's private room adjacent to the court upon Aziz's trial that his cruelty to Adela should be met with a cruelty tougher than his; she says responding to a remark made by Major Callender, "Nothing is too bad for these people," because the Indians are senseless persons.

> They ought to crawl from here to the caves on their hands and knees whenever an English woman's in sight, they oughtn't to be spoken to, ought to be spat at, they ought to be ground into dust, we've been far too kind with our Bridge Parties and the rest (Conrad, p. 200).

The above remarks of the Collector's wife give a clear image of the British community in India, whose members seemingly remain insensitive towards Indians: they do not show any interest in understanding the Indians socially, nor are they interested in Indian art, literature, or culture; in contrast, their main interest in India is to rule her. A review of Edward Morgan's E. M. Forster: 1879-1970 confirms the above attitude that Forster wants to drive home to the reader the concept that "The English will never understand the Indians and can never be friends with them." [9]

Thus, the remarks made by the Collector's wife, or the principal figures in the novel, including the Collector, the Superintendent of Police, the Civil Surgeon, and the City Magistrate, echo the remarks of the major figures in Heart of Darkness, including

the Manager of the Central Station, the members of the Eldorado Exploring Expedition, the Brick maker and Kurtz. They express their views towards native Africans openly and declare that they came to Africa for "trade" and Kurtz goes a step further when he doesn't hide the fact that he doesn't trade like the others working for the company, but rather takes ivory by force, describing his treatment of the natives in words like "suppression" and "extermination" (Conrad, p. 243). Like fielding, Marlow is thankful that he didn't follow the road that colonists had taken. Kurtz's last word, R. A. Gekoski states,

> seems inevitably to lead, in Conrad's vision, either to a feeling of self-pity or an assertion of the will to power… They might represent Kurtz's final desire to return to the scene of those abominable satisfactions… or a vision of eternal damnation. [10]

In the light of this interpretation of Kurtz's words, then, we can evaluate the moral status of Kurtz. Similarly, the last words of Fielding to Dr. Aziz, "'Why can't we be friends?' 'It's what I want. It's what you want,'" (Forster, p. 289) bring us back to the central issue of this topic, namely, whether or not it is possible to reach a compromise between the East and the West, or between two different cultures! Firstly, the immorality of the colonizers seems to be a major obstacle in the way to achieve such a purpose; secondly, Fielding's, Marlow's, and Kurtz's desires to establish genuine friendships with the colonized lack a true understanding of the condition of the political and social aspirations of the colonized. The masterminds of the colonizers' policy could not imagine that occupation cannot last forever and colonized nations can become independent nations. When Aziz declares that India should be a nation, like other independent nations, Fielding makes fun of Aziz: "India a nation! What an apotheosis! Last comer to the drab nineteenth-century sisterhood! Waddling in at this hour of the world to take her seat!" (Forster, p. 289). Similarly, Kurtz's pamphlet (written for the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs) epitomizes the policy of the colonizer in raising the "natives" to a "civilized" state; ironically the method to be followed to raise the natives to "a civilized" state is by itself uncivilized and brutal: "It was very simple, and at the end of that morning appeal to every altruistic sentiment it blazed at you, luminous and terrifying, like a flash of lightning in a serene sky: 'exterminate all the brutes!'"(Conrad, p. 208) These ideas show the imperialist policies at their worst, and draw attention to the fact that attempts at conciliation between cultures are useless, as long as the colonized people are not treated as equals by the colonizers. [11]

Forster and Conrad, however, make it clear that the obstacles, which hinder the compromise between two different cultures, are subtler than mere cultural differences. The life of the Indians in A Passage to India, their eating habits and ways of thinking are, to a large extent, different from the lifestyle which the British community is leading in Chandrapore; similarly, the image of the life of the native Africans in Heart of Darkness is strikingly different from the way the colonizers live. Aziz feels worried about the Marabar expedition about food for his guests, because the eatings of the Indians, especially Hindus, impose restriction on beef, ham, eggs and alcohol, a practice that inhibits the choice of food. Furthermore, Muslim women are kept in 'Purdah' and rarely mix up with the British women. The image of divisions and discord in both A Passage to India and Heart of Darkness goes a step further when the various elements of nature are included to highlight this division, such as the weather, the rivers, and the land itself on which both "colonizer and colonized" live. In hot weather "a barrier of fire" separates

the mountains in the north from the sea. Rivers flood with the rains in the Monsoon season and render communication difficult throughout the country. The land itself is rocky and full of fissures, which force riders to "pass single file" (Forster, p. 289). Similarly, in Heart of Darkness the same elements play a similar role, to some extent, in creating the divisions between natives and colonizers: fog, for instance, is a sort of a mystic device used in the novel to allude indirectly to the gap which divides two different cultures: it does not only obscure, but also distort; Marlow's steamer is caught in the fog, and he does not know what dangers are lying ahead of his trip.

The reference to the "Whited Sepulchre" in Heart of Darkness (P. 145) is also another sign of division. This reference is made to Brussels, where the Company's headquarters are located. A sepulcher signifies death and confinement, and indeed Europe is doing the same to the natives and colonizers alike. The principles that Europeans brought along with them are beautiful on the outside, but they are horrible from within: these principles allow cruelty, dehumanization, and evil, but prohibit change. The Congo River, moreover, signifies the major natural elements which divide the Europeans from the natives: it allows the colonizer access to the center of the continent, without having to physically get in touch with the natives. Furthermore, the river seems to want to expel Europeans from Africa altogether: its current makes it difficult to travel upriver, while the flow of water makes travelling downriver, back toward Europe, fast and seemingly compulsory: "Going up that river was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings" (Conrad, p. 183). The main idea implied in these symbols is perhaps the impossibility of conciliation between two different cultures belonging to two different nations. Similarly, A Passage to India finally rejects all attempts for "passage" through "the national barriers it defines." This refusal seems not to be the result of personal reasons, but rather the result of "the whole conflict of civilizations, indeed upon human nature in general" (Crews, pp. 168, 169). The same view seems to be adopted by Conrad in his Heart of Darkness, where we stand before a social panorama in which the blame for the failure of communication rests, in Crews' terms, on "The whole conflict of civilizations," including "fundamental differences in temperament, social structure, and religious outlook" (Conrad, p. 168).

Bridging the gap between the social and cultural structures of two different nations, thus, cannot be brought about by use of force, "intimidatation", "extermination"(Conrad, p. 208), or submission of the so-called less-civilized nations; this conciliation can be rather effected by establishing mutual understanding and respect for each other's interests.[12] Similarly, the question of compromise between cultures can be promoted by harmony between cultures, rather than incorporation and total destruction of one culture on the account of the other.[13] This is why we find Forster and Conrad powerfully condemning the hypocritical operations of the colonists in both India and South Africa, and strongly inviting nations to obliterate cultural and social barriers to bridge the gaps dividing one culture from another. Thus, those who claim that superior cultures, races, ethnicities, congregations, or social formations, should have the upper hand over inferior cultures, races, or ethnicities seem to be catastrophically mistaken; their suggestions lead up to nothing but more divisions and hatred among nations, rather than to conciliation and love about which Mrs. Moore says in chapter five that "God is love" and "God has put us on the earth in order to be pleasant to each other" (Forster, p. 64).

NOTES:

1. E. M. Forster. A Passage to India. London: Penguin Books, 1979, p. 289. All further references to this novel will appear in the text.

2. For further details about the purposes of the colonial project, go through Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness and Other Tales. London: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 170-190. All further references to this book appear in the text.
3. Quoted in Spark Notes: Heart of Darkness. 14 March. 2003 [http: 11. www. Spark Notes. Com./lit heart/study. Html]
4. G. K. Das. E. M. Forster. London: Macmillan Press, 1977, pp. 85-86; for further discussion on this point, see the rest of the argument on pages 87-90.
5. For more details relating to such ideas, see R. A. Gekoski's Conrad: Novelists and Their World. London: Elek Books, 1986, especially pp. 74-90.
6. Andrew Michael Roberts ed. Joseph Conrad. London: Longman, 1998. p. 111.
7. For further discussion of these ideas, see Frederick C. Crews' article "A Passage to India", in Malcolm Bradbury, ed. E. M. Forster: A Passage to India. London: Macmillan Press, 1970, especially pp. 166-170.
8. Bradbury ed., E. M. Forste: A Passage to India, P. 84.
9. Edward Morgan. E. M. Forster: 1879-1970. Modern Library Top 100 Novels of the 20th century. 23 April 2003 [http://www.Brothersjudd.com/index.Cfm/fuseation/reviews.detai/book id/889]
10. Gekoski, p. 86.
11. Marianna Torgovnick. Gone Primitive: Savage Intellectuals. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990. For further details on these ideas, please see Chapter VII: "Traveling With Conrad".
12. See Edward Said. Culture and Imperialism. London: Chatto and Windus, 1993, Passim.
13. See Hawkin Hunt's "Conrad's Critique of Imperialism in Heart of Darkness." PMLA, 94 (March 1979), pp. 286-99.

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