

Revealing Cultural Conflicts Between British Imperialists and Indians as seen in Forster's *a Passage to India* (1924) and Orwell's *Burmese Days* (1934)

Sidiki DAO

Université Yambo Ouologuem de Bamako

daosidiki810@gmail.com

Abstract

*This article discusses the cultural conflict that daily happens between the British officials and Indian subjects at office as well as in the public life in Forster's *A passage to India* (1924) and George Orwell's *Burmese days* (1934). The issue of this study seeks to analyze: what are the British representatives' perspectives about their domination in India. What are the Indian natives' perspectives concerning the English colonization in their territory? The purpose of the present study elucidates of both the colonized and colonizers' perceptions about the British domination in India. The study runs on qualitative approach as research methodology. Consequently, its data have been collected and analyzed throughout reading of documents (novels, articles and theses that tackle the same theme. As result, this paper accounts for the thoughts and perspectives of the colonized people about the presence of the British raj in Indian Territory on one hand, and the perspectives of the British representatives on the other hand. As research theory, it runs on the psychoanalyst approach.*

Key words: *public life, private live, perspective, cultural conflict, psychoanalytic*

Résumé

*Cet article discute le conflit culturel qui se passe entre les officiers Britanniques et les sujets indiens dans les lieux publics aussi bien que celui du privé dans *A passage to India* (1924) d'Edward Morgan Forster et le *Burmese days* (1934) de George Orwell. La problématique de cette étude vise à analyser ainsi: quelles sont perspectives des colonisateurs Britanniques et les sujets indiens concernant la présence britannique en*

Inde. Cette étude même sur la méthode qualitative comme méthodologie de recherche. Par conséquent toutes les données ont été recueillies à travers analyses de romans, articles et les Mémoires qui traitent le même thème. Comme résultat, l'étude raconte d'un côté la perspective des sujets indiens à propos de l'Empire Britannique sur leur territoire et d'autre côté la perspective des représentants britanniques en ce qui concerne leur présence en Inde. Elle adopte le psychanalytique comme théorie de recherche.

Mots clé : lieu public, lieu privé, perspective, conflit culturel, psychanalytique

Introduction

The British imperialists had changed their undirected rule to direct one in Indian territory in the middle of nineteenth century when they lost thirteen colonies in northern America. Gradually, the Indian subcontinent was becoming a jewel in the eyes of the British Crown not only for the exploitation of the resources (gold, diamond and even wood) of this later, but also for its overseas policies that aimed at the enlargement of the British Empire. Philippa Levine (2007), through her seminal book, *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset*, asserts as follows:

“After the failure of the American colonies and the trade in East Indies (Indonesia and the Spice Islands) India came to the attention and became the principal foothold in Asia for the British colonizers” (Levine, 2007, p. 62). Thus, they had built services like big hospitals, primary and high schools, rail roads, military camps and courts. Consequently, the British raj had deployed officers’ and clerks in different institutions in Indian cities. Those British representatives and subject Indians share different perspectives about the British colonialism in India. It is in this regard that this study runs on George Orwell’s *Burmese days* (1934) and Edward Morgan Forster’s *A passage to India* (1924).

The issue of this research study seeks to discover through George Orwell's *Burmese days* (1934) and Edward Morgan Forster's *A passage to India* (1924) are formulated as follows:

what are the British representatives' perspectives about their domination in India. What are the Indian natives' perspectives concerning the English colonization in their territory? Furthermore, the purpose of the present study elucidates the perspectives of both the colonized Indians and the English colonizers about the British domination in India.

This paper comprises four main sections. The first section accounts for the methodology of the study. The section two tackles the theoretical framework of the study. The third section deals with the thoughts and perspectives of the colonized people about the presence of the British colonialists in Indian Territory whereas the fourth one tackles the perspectives of the British representatives about their presence in India.

1. Methodology

This research study has used the qualitative method as research way. Consequently, the data the current article have been collected and analyzed through reading of George Orwell's *Burmese days* (1934) and Edward Morgan Forster's *A passage to India* (1924) as primary sources of the study any article and thesis that related to this topic. It uses the American Psychologist Association (APA).

2. Theoretical Framework

As all scientific work claims, the research study has run on the psychoanalytic criticism as research theory which has

allowed this research study to examine Orwell and Forster's novels the perspectives of both the Indian subjects and the British colonialists about the British Raj presence in India.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. British Representatives' Perspectives

In the dynamics of investigating the collaboration between the British representatives and Indian subjects, It has been firstly noticed that the English community disposes its own living styles which seems to be different from indigenous Indians' one. They (British colonialists) have settled the English clubs everywhere in Indian subcontinent in which they hold all their meetings and entertainments in accordance to their cultures in home country. Besides, the clubs also are a place where all the British representatives could acquaint each other. It is also described by both Orwell and Forster as a dwelling where the new arrivals were introduced to other colonial representatives in order to facilitate their social integration. The English club is a secret spot for the British representatives. That is why it is accessible only to British citizens (the Anglo-Indians). For example, at the beginning of *A passage to India* (1924) when Dr. Aziz has asked for Mrs. Moore; the mother of the city Magistrate of Chandrapore city, about her destination. She argues that she has just left their (English club) and that her fellows were playing a game of which she was fond of when living in England.

This point of Mrs. Moore shows that the English club is a spot of entertainment for the British colonialists. It is quoted by Edward Morgan Forster (1984) as follows: "No, but can I call you a carriage?" "I have only come from the club. They are doing a play that I have seen in London, and it was so hot." "What was the name of the play?" "Cousin Kate"

(Forster, 1984, p.21). This fragment sustains that the English club generally receives the colonialist entertainment. Some British representatives also believe that Indians are awful persons that one has to avoid any kind of collaboration with them. About that, Mrs. Callender explains her perception throughout *A passage to India*. She sustains that once you accept to be intimated with the local people that they will never recognize or respect you as a colonizer. This view point of the wife of the chief of 'Minto Hospital', Mrs. Callender is drafted by Edward Morgan Forster (1984) as follows:

But the lady, entirely stupid and friendly, continued: "What I mean is, I was a nurse before my marriage, and came across them a great deal, so I know. I really do know the truth about Indians. A most unsuitable position for any Englishwoman--I was a nurse in a Native State. One's only hope was to hold sternly aloof." "Even from one's patients?" "Why, the kindest thing one can do to a native is to let him die," said Mrs. Callendar. "How if he went to heaven?" asked Mrs. Moore, with a gentle but crooked smile. "He can go where he likes as long as he doesn't come near me. They give me the creeps (Fosrter, 1984, p. 27).

Here again, Mrs. Callender; a clerk at Minto hospital points that the indigenous Indians are awful people. According to her, it is only good to let them die when they come at hospital for medical care. It can be noticed by any reader of Edward Morgan Forster that all British representatives have not the same perspectives and their attitudes towards indigenous people. In many chapters of *A passage to India*; Mrs. Moore has always defended the native people. That reaction of the English old woman, Mrs. Moore during the party arranged by

the family Turtons, shows her kindness, non-racist attitude and generosity toward the indigenous people in Chandrapore city. This perspective of the British old woman is drafted by Edward Morgan Forster (1984) like this:

I think my countrymen out here must be mad. Fancy inviting guests and not treating them properly! You and Mr. Turton and perhaps Mr. McBride are the only people who showed any common politeness. The rest make me perfectly ashamed, and it's got worse and worse (Forster, 1984, p. 46).

From this passage above, one can notice that the manner in which the Indian subjects were treated in the family of Turtons was unbearable. According to Mrs. Moore, the Indian women should be treated as the British guests. As a result, she claims that we cannot invite a human being and dare to treat this latter like others. The perspective of Ronny Heaslop; the judge of Chandrapore city remains very clear concerning how to collaborate with the indigenous people along *A passage to India*. This thought of the magistrate of Chandrapore city is proved via a conversation between him and his mother, through which he claims that the British officials are not in India for missionary tasks or to be pleasant. Ronny argues that they are in India to rule, in other words to make order and justice as the authorities of England instruct them. This colonialist perspective of Mr. Heaslop is drafted by E M Forster (1984) like this:

We're not out here for the purpose of behaving pleasantly!" "What do you mean?" "What I say. We're out here to do justice and keep the peace.

Them's my sentiments. India isn't a drawing room (Forster, 1984, p. 50).

This statement indicates that Mrs. Moore, contrarily to her son (Ronny Heaslop) believes that the Indigenous people and the English representatives should deserve the same consideration and human rights in public life as well as in the offices. One can assume that Mrs. Moore' perspective seems to be God's one. That is why during a conversation with her son, she refers herself to the speech of God. She argues that the Bible claims that all the races on earth are created by God so that they could live in together without any racism, discrimination or even hatred. She also argues that God has created the man on earth so that we can love each other, and that He is omnipresent, that he is even in India, to monitor how people are living or treating each. This thought of Mrs. Moore; a British old woman is quoted through *A passage to India* by Edward Morgan Forster (1984) as follows:

How do you make that out, mother?" he asked, speaking gently again, for he was ashamed of his irritability, because India is part of the earth. And God has put us on the earth in order to be pleasant to each other. God . . . is . . . love." She hesitated, seeing how much he disliked the argument, but something made her go on. "God has put us on earth to love our neighbors and to show it, and He is omnipresent, even in India, to see how we are succeeding (Forster, 1984, p. 51).

Ronny Heaslop; the city magistrate of Chandrapore city remains one of the greatest hegemonic and racial oppressors throughout *A passage to India* (1984). He always advises his fellowships to make a small distance between them and the

indigenous people. The rudeness attitude of Ronny Heaslop is proved here the by the fact that when Mr. Cyril Fielding has gathered some of his Indian friends such as: Professor Godbole; a teacher of Chandrapore city college and Dr. Aziz in one side, and in other side Miss. Quested; an English lady and Mrs. Moore, the mother of the city magistrate. During this invitation, Mr. Ronny Heaslop comes and accuses the the principal to gather the British and Indians at the same place. According to him, the English are superior to talk with the native people. This racial attitude of Ronny is quoted through *A passage to India* (1984) like that:

Don't trouble to come, mother," Ronny called; "we're just starting." Then he hurried to Fielding, drew him aside and said with pseudo-heartiness, "I say, old man, do excuse me, but I think perhaps you oughtn't to have left Miss Quested alone." "I'm sorry, what's up?" replied Fielding, also trying to be genial. "Well . . . I'm the sun-dried bureaucrat, no doubt; still, I don't like to see an English girl left smoking with two Indians" (Forster, 1984, p. 78).

The passage above sustains Ronny Heaslop; judge of Chandrapore city and other more other British officers hatred towards the native people. Reader can they dislike any intimacy with Indian subjects in private life.

3. 2. *The Indian Subjects' Perspectives*

The Indian subjects have also their own perspectives and cultures that are different of the colonizers' ones. For instance, once the Indian Muslims desire to pass a hobby time together. Contrarily to the British representatives, who come in the English clubs, the Indians meet each at one of their

friends' compound where they could do their dinner, having some tea, talking, jogging and even playing card there. This oriental attitude of the Indian representatives is detailed through *A Passage to India* by Edward Morgan Forster (1984) as follows:

Illah, Hamidullah! Am I late? He cried. “Do not apologize,” said his host. “you are always late” “kindly answer my question. Am I late? Has Mr. Mahmoud Ali, how are you?” “Thank you, Dr. Aziz, I am dying.” “Dying before your dinner? Oh poor Mahmoud Ali! ”(Forster, 1984, p. 9).

The above illustration indicates the difference that exists between the Indians' hobby moment to British representatives' one. The Indian subjects also share difference perspectives concerning their intimate collaboration with the British representatives. For instance, Hamidullah, a cousin of the protagonist (Dr. Aziz) on *A passage India* believes that it is only possible to collaborate with the English people in England. He refers to his own case that when he was in Cambridge, Great Britain that he used be intimate with white men in England. According to him, they are less arrogant there than in India. This point is quoted through *A passage to India* by Edward Morgan Forster (1984) like that:

Well look at my own experience this morning. I only contend that it is possible in England, and no trouble happening. Hamidullah, who had been to that country long ago, before the big rush, and had received a cordial welcome at Cambridge (Forster, 1984, p. 10).

At this step of our study, Dr. Aziz and some of his

fellowships (Native Indians) believe that a friendship between the British colonizers and colonized Indians is only possible in England. According to them, once the colonizers came or arrived in the indigenous lands that they become very arrogant and rude. This conversation between Hamidullah and his Indian fellows about a good intimacy between the colonialists and the Indians was tightened. Consequently, he tries to convince them of a possible right relationship and intimacy. It was in this context that he gives another argument asserting that there was a great collaboration between the family Bannister and him in England. This perception of Hamidulah is quoted by Forster (1984) as follows:

But take my case--the case of young Hugh Bannister. Here is the son of my dear, my dead friends, the Reverend and Mrs. Bannister, whose goodness to me in England I shall never forget or describe. They were father and mother to me; I talked to them as I do now. In the vacations their Rectory became my home. They entrusted all their children to me--I often carried little Hugh about--I took him up to the Funeral of Queen Victoria, and held him in my arms above the crowd (Forster, 1984, p. 12).

This quote above indicates that it is possible between an Indian and a British to be friend only in England. The Indian subjects never hide their perception regarding to the English domination in their landscape. Some of them think that the only solution is to chase out the entire British representatives in India. For instance, throughout *A passage to India*, Dr. Aziz tells his fellowships (Indian friends) that the colonialists can be their friends or not, but that the only solution remains their departure from India. He also tells that the good persons among

the colonialists were Queen Victoria and Mrs. Bannister that both of them are dead. Edward Morgan Forster (1984) drafted as follows:

Aziz joined in. "Why talk about the English? Brrrr . . . ! 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 (Foster, 1984, p.12).

Inversely some Indian subjects like Dr. Aziz believes that it is not possible to be intimate with the British colonialists in India. Dr. Aziz argues that he knows how difficult it is for him to work with them. According to him, the British colonialists are very arrogant and that Indians cannot collaborate with them except some persons among them. For example, Dr. Aziz refers to Ronny Heaslop, a young magistrate who has insulted him during proceeding. Forster (1984) declares as follows:

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, 1984, p. 10).

Besides, some Indian subjects also think that the British colonialists are just good on the eve of their arrival in India. They claim that once the British imperialists spent two or three years in India as colonial representatives that they become more racists toward those people (Indian subjects). This point is proved by Edward Morgan Forster's protagonist, Dr. Aziz that when Mr. Turton came in Chandrapore city that she was very social with the indigenous people especially he himself.

Dr. Aziz affirms that Mr. Turton trusted until him at his arrival in India until he has shown him his stamp. This is quoted by Edward Morgan Forster (1984) as follows:

I remember when Turton came out first. It was in another part of the province. You fellows will not believe me, but I have driven with Turton in his carriage, Turton! Oh yes, we were once quite intimate. He has shown me his stamp collection (Forster, 1984, p. 11).

In *A passage to India*, the Indian subjects have not hidden their perspectives about corruption and arrogance done by the British administrators in the offices and even in schemes in India. For instance, one of Edward Morgan Forster's characters, Mahmoud Ali tells his friends that the British representatives like Mr. Turton, his wife Mrs. Turton do bribery without being suing by the court. He claims that if an indigenous Indian does the same act that he will be arrested by the colonialist jurisdiction. He also said in his term "Mr. Red nose", he means in other words that Mr. Ronny Heaslop, the judge of Chandrapore city is very arrogant that he insults the Indians in the court during the trial and that his fellows never blame him. Edward Morgan Forster (1984) refers to this idea when he states:

...for my own part I find such profound differences among our rulers. Red-nose mumbles, Turton talks distinctly, Mrs. Turton takes brides, [...] Brides? "did you not know that when they were lent to central India over a canal scheme, come Rajah or other should run through his state?" "and does it?" "No, that is where Mrs. Turton is so skillful. When we poor blacks take brides, we perform what we are bridged to perform, and the law discovers us in

consequence. The English take and do nothing (ibid).

One can notice through this assertion above that the British imperialists' justice treats the case of the colonizers differently of the indigenous people's one. If you take and analyze this assertion, you will realize that the corruption done by the colonial officials in Indian cities remains unsanctioned at that period whereas the Indian subjects are arrested without any evidence. In the private life, the colonizers and colonized people get different cultures and perspectives or taboos.

Conclusion

To conclude, the research has shown through E M Forster and George Orwell's novels that there is a serious cultural conflict between the British imperialists and Indians in public life as well as in private life. In the dynamics of investigating about the collaboration between the British representatives and Indian subjects, It has been firstly revealed that the English community disposes its own living styles which seems to be different of indigenous Indians' one. They (British colonialists) have settled the English clubs everywhere in Indian subcontinent in which they spend all their meetings and entertainments in accordance to their cultures.

. This study has also revealed the Indian subjects have their own perspectives about the British presence in India. It also describes that the Indian cultures are different from the colonizers' one. For instance, once the Indian Muslims desire to pass a hobby time together. Contrarily to the British representatives, who meet each other in the English clubs, the Indians meet each at one of their friends' compound where

they could do their diner, some tea, talking, jogging and even playing card there

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