

A Passage to India Study Guide

A Passage to India by E. M. Forster

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Plot Summary

A Passage to India is a novel by award-winning author E. M. Forster. The novel begins by describing the city of Chandrapore, British India, the main setting for most of the story.

Dr. Aziz is a young surgeon working in a British-run hospital during the early 1920s, while India is still under the British Raj. Dr. Aziz meets with a few friends for dinner and they discuss the probability of Indians forming real friendships with the British Anglo-Indians; the group decides that it is impossible. During the meal, Dr. Aziz is unceremoniously summoned to the home of his British superior at the hospital. Dr. Aziz summons a tonga, or light horse-drawn carriage, and arrives at the home of Major Callendar only to find that he has already left.

Two British women see Dr. Aziz's tonga and take it without asking him, forcing Dr. Aziz to walk back to town. He enters a mosque where he sees Mrs. Moore, an elderly British woman. Dr. Aziz chastises Mrs. Moore for being in the mosque at all, but at the very least for not removing her shoes. She informs him that she has removed them and understands and respects his customs. They begin talking and quickly form a friendship.

When they part, Mrs. Moore goes to the club—a place that the locals are not allowed—and tells her son, Ronny, about the kind young man she met. Ronny thinks she is talking about a British doctor and gets angry when he learns that it is Dr. Aziz, an Indian surgeon. Ronny doesn't want his mother mixing with the locals. Adela Quested, Mrs. Moore's traveling companion and the fiancée to Ronnie, is intrigued and wants to see "the real India" with Mrs. Moore.

The city tax collector, Mr. Turton, invites the women to a party he will host that will include many of the Indians on its guest list. At this party, Adela meets Cyril Fielding, the British headmaster to the government-run college for Indians. Fielding invites the two women and Dr. Aziz to another tea party. At the tea party, everyone becomes more comfortable with each other and Dr. Aziz invites everyone to an outing at the Marabar Caves, a series of caves about 20 miles outside of town.

Dr. Aziz, Mrs. Moore, and Adela are the only ones to make the trip to Marabar Caves because the others missed the train. The three begin to explore the caves with a guide, but Mrs. Moore becomes disenchanted with the echo, a single "Boum" sound. Dr. Aziz, the guide, and Adela go to the next series of caves without Mrs. Moore. Unfamiliar with the Indian customs, Adela asks Dr. Aziz if he has more than one wife. Dr. Aziz is embarrassed by the question and slips into a nearby cave to regain his composure. When he returns, the guide tells him that Adela is exploring the caves alone. Dr. Aziz angrily chases the guide away and starts searching for her. He discovers her broken field glasses and becomes concerned for her safety. Dr. Aziz looks down at the base of the hill and sees Adela taking with another British woman who has arrived in a car with



Fielding; he goes down to meet them, but Adela and the other woman drive away before he gets there.

Dr. Aziz, Fielding, and Mrs. Moore return to the train station where Dr. Aziz is arrested for sexually assaulting Adela in one of the caves. Dr. Aziz is jailed and denied bail because of his assault on an English woman. Fielding openly supports Dr. Aziz's innocence and is ostracized by the British community. Mrs. Moore also believes that Dr. Aziz is innocent, so her son sends her back to England; she dies of heat exhaustion on the trip.

During the trial, Adela admits that she was confused—also as a result of the cave's echoes—and hadn't been well for a while. She is unable to answer the direct question as to whether Dr. Aziz actually assaulted her and the case is dismissed. The British now consider Adela to be a race-traitor. Adela begins spending a lot of time with Fielding because they both feel unwelcome in the British community and the two become friends. Ronny refuses to marry Adela and she is forced to return to England.

Dr. Aziz is now bitter toward the Anglo-Indians and is insulted that Fielding has developed a friendship with Adela. Fielding, disenchanted with India, leaves the country to travel abroad. Dr. Aziz believes he is leaving to marry Adela in England. Dr. Aziz moves to the city of Mau, a Hindu city far from the British Raj, and starts a new life where he swears ever to befriend a white person again.

Several years later, Fielding returns to India with his wife. Dr. Aziz hears of his return and thinks he is married to Adela, causing his bitterness and anger to return. He learns that Fielding married Mrs. Moore's daughter Stella, and Dr. Aziz and Fielding make amends. The novel ends with both Dr. Aziz and Fielding realizing that they cannot be true friends again as long as India is ruled by England.



Chapters 1-3

Summary

A Passage to India has been a bestseller since its release in 1924. The author is an award-winning writer who died in 1970.

Chapter 1: The novel begins by describing Chandrapore, India, an unremarkable city situated on a portion on the Ganges River that is not considered holy. There is nothing special or spectacular about the city except for the Marabar Caves that are about twenty miles outside of the city.

Chapter 2: Dr. Aziz meets his uncle, Hamidullah, and Mahmoud Ali for dinner. The three discuss whether it is possible to be friends with the British. Hamidullah went to school at Cambridge and claims that it is only possible if you live in England. During dinner, Dr. Aziz is called to the home of the Civil Surgeon, Major Callendar, on an urgent matter. He rushes to get there but discovers that Callendar has already left for “the club” where the locals are not allowed admittance.

Two women come out of the house and take Dr. Aziz’s tonga without even acknowledging him, forcing him to walk back to town. On his journey, he enters a mosque and sees Mrs. Moore, an elderly British woman. Dr. Aziz is insulted that she has desiccated the holy place and begins to scold her for being there and at the very least for not removing her shoes. She informs him that she is aware of and respects his customs, and had in fact removed her shoes in an attempt to be closer to God.

Dr. Aziz and Mrs. Moore begin talking and quickly form a friendship. Dr. Aziz warns her about the dangers of walking alone at night and walks her back to the club. He is not allowed inside so he goes on his way.

Chapter 3: Mrs. Moore describes meeting Dr. Aziz to her son, Ronny Heaslop, the City Magistrate. Ronny mistakenly believes that she is talking about a British man and becomes indignant when he discovers that she is talking about Dr. Aziz, a local. Several of the guests join the conversation. Cyril Fielding, the headmaster at the government-run college for Indians, suggests that Mrs. Moore meet more Indians. Adela Quested is fascinated with Mrs. Moore’s story and vows to accompany her in meeting more Indians and seeing the “real India.” Mrs. Callendar, the wife of Major Callander, shows her disdain for the Indians, while Mr. Turton decides to throw a party and invite many of the locals so the women can meet them.

Analysis

By opening the novel with a description of the town and not the protagonist, the reader is drawn into the fact that the novel is more about the region than about any one character. Chandrapore is described as if it could be any city in India. The reader gets a



feel for the conditions and the cultural misunderstandings that are everywhere under the British Raj.

Cultural misunderstandings are made evident in the discussion by the natives about inter-cultural friendships, the interruption of the meal for a matter so trivial that Major Callander could not wait longer to discuss it, the taking of Dr. Aziz's tonga, the slight Dr. Aziz felt when seeing a British women in the mosque, the fact that Indians aren't allowed in a club that bears the name of their own city, and the ensuing discussion in the club about the Indians.

Dr. Aziz is shown to be tolerant of the British elite's (Anglo-Indians) behavior. The Anglo-Indians vary in their feelings toward the Indians, from Ronnie's disdain to Fielding's acceptance to Mrs. Moore sensitivity to their plight.

Vocabulary

extraordinary, distinguishable, panorama, ineffective, democratic, abased, monotonous, excrescence, endowed, beckoning, disillusionment, provokes, circumference, feeble, benediction, infused, prostrate, sulkily, coaxed, profound, consequence, angelic, ministration, haughty, venal, interminably, polygamy, invariable, sufficient, lamented, immersed, imprudent, dallied, servile, inevitable, subordinate, commandeered, gracious, contention, exquisite, durable, uncongenial, bewailing, quatrain, vengeance, subordinate, querulous, expatiate, disinclined, accession, picturesque, superficial, dictatorial, imprudently, luminous, burnished



Chapters 4-6

Summary

Chapter 4: Mr. Turton invites several Indian men to his Bridge Party, so named because it is meant to “bridge the gap” between the two societies. Nawab Bahadur, a man of great means, agrees to attend the party, leading many other Indians to accept their invitations as well.

Two missionaries living nearby argue that while no man shall ever be turned away by God, does this divine acceptance also encompass the animal, insects and even bacteria? They agree that not everything should be accepted as equal, even in God’s eyes.

Chapter 5: Most of the Indians at the party are dressed in traditional English garb; they don’t mingle well and the differences in culture become more obvious and apparent. The party is awkward and uncomfortable for everyone. Fielding arranges a smaller tea party and invites Adela and Mrs. Moore to meet Dr. Aziz. Mrs. Moore politely offers to visit an Indian woman who believes the event to be so significant that she will indefinitely postpone her vacation for the visit.

Mrs. Moore chastises Ronnie for his rudeness to the Indians and he responds that he knows how to treat these people after twenty years. Mrs. Moore tells him that God wants him to love his neighbor, but he quickly dismisses her.

Chapter 6: The party is held on the anniversary of Dr. Aziz’s wife’s death so he does not attend. He spends the evening attending to several cases at the hospital. He is sullen and depressed and believes he will never recover from his wife’s death. Dr. Aziz fears he may have offended his superior by not going to the party; when he returns home, he discovers the invitation to Fielding’s tea party.

Analysis

The Bridge Party, although designed to bring the two races together, only serves to push them further apart. Fielding’s decision to hold a similar but more intimate gathering shows him to be sensitive and respectful to the Indian people. The discussion between the missionaries lets the reader see that the whites believe that their treatment of the Indians is justified, as even God is exclusive.

Mrs. Moore attempts to be polite to an Indian woman by visiting her later in the week. The woman also wants to be polite, so she states that she will postpone her upcoming vacation in order to accommodate the visit. In this example, both sides are attempting to be overly polite to each other while not fully understanding each other’s customs.



Dr. Aziz's fear of offending his British superior tells the reader that he is eager to please the British. His failure to attend the party, however, shows that his own personal turmoils outweigh that concern.

Vocabulary

multitudes, reverence, honour, deferentially, approbation, incursion, vigorously, tolerant, deprecation, hitherto, impenetrable, monopolized, consequently, sentiments, behavior, sympathetic, humanitarianism, complacently, omnipresent, efficacious, inoculating, subordinate, gaiety, indispensable, revulsion, submission, sensuous, indubitably, determination, fabricate, complexion, prevalent, miasma, rebuke



Chapters 7-9

Summary

Chapter 7: Dr. Aziz arrives early for the tea party, and Fielding is still getting dressed. When Fielding complains that he lost his collar stud, Dr. Aziz offers him his. Fielding jokes that he doesn't know why people wear collars at all. Dr. Aziz responds that he wears his because the police don't bother Indians dressed like the British.

Mrs. Moore, Adela, and Professor Godbole arrive and have polite conversation over their tea. Dr. Aziz invites the group to explore the Marabar Cave system, a local attraction that he has never seen. Ronny Heaslop arrives and asks Adela to leave with him to see a polo match. Ronnie makes offhanded comments about the Indians attending the party and it breaks up.

Chapter 8: Ronny criticizes Dr. Aziz for his missing collar stud and suggests that it is typical Indian behavior to do things half-right. Ronnie tells the two women that they are to have nothing more to do with the Indian people, and he and Adela drop Mrs. Moore off at home and go to the polo match. Adela tells Ronnie that she no longer wants to marry him. Newhab Bahadur offers the couple a ride in his car, and the chauffeur gets into a minor accident. Miss Derek is driving by and stops and picks up everyone but the chauffeur, refusing him passage in her car. During the ride back, Adela reconsiders marrying Ronnie and once again agrees. They announce their engagement when they return home. Mrs. Moore says she is tired of India and wants to return to England.

Chapter 9: Dr. Aziz contracts a fever and is bedridden. During his illness he has many visitors, including Fielding. The group has a discussion about England's holding of India and the spirituality of India. Everyone departs, but the servants have not brought Fielding's horse so he is forced to stay a while longer. Fielding learns that Dr. Aziz instructed the servants not to bring Fielding's horse with the others.

Analysis

Dr. Aziz' mention of police tolerance to Indians in English dress suggests that the Indians may not be conforming of their own free will. The discussion about England's hold on India leads the reader to believe that England wants to change India into another England with all of its customs and traditions, and fully expects the Indians to comply. Ronnie's attempt to break up the gathering for a more traditional English pastime of polo is indicative of his attitude toward the Indians. After they leave the party, he continues to criticize the Indians and Dr. Aziz in particular. He equates the missing collar stud to a stereotypical Indian habit of not being fully prepared; he is unaware that the missing collar stud was given to Fielding, a British man who lost his own stud. Adela reacts harshly to Ronnie's racism and breaks off the marriage.



Vocabulary

analogies, verge, distressingly, disruptive, impropriety, connote, superficial, intimidate, venerable, dispense, babuism, ascribed, stability, vivid, optimist, subtle, unpunctual, gratified, detestable, cultivation, benevolent, surmised, emancipated, enigmatic, eloquence, feigned, magnificent, disloyalty, ornamented, forewent, relevant, capriciously, enthralled, deference, impertinent, genial, tranquility, censoriousness, exasperating, conclusive, slackness, debauched, improbable, curtness, ludicrous, spurious, disproportionate, restraint, humorous, oration, licentious, wedlock, procrastination, artificially, complacent, contrition, compensation, effeminate, diverted, voluptuousness, nucleus, pedantry, tabulates, diminished, tirade, consolidated, ignoble, explicit, consolidate, beneficent, conveyances



Chapters 10-11

Summary

Chapter 10: An empty home next to the home of Dr. Aziz has no occupants other than a squirrel. Other animals can be heard in the night. India is made up of mostly animals and these animals don't care how India is governed.

Chapter 11: Dr. Aziz shows Fielding a photo of his dead wife, breaking the custom of purdah. Dr. Aziz tells Fielding that they are now brothers. The two discuss marriage and having children and Dr. Aziz suggests that Fielding marry Adela. Fielding states that she is a prig and sexually unattractive. Dr. Aziz joins in and insults her as well.

Analysis

The author uses animals and vacancy to show the difference between a more rural India and a more industrial England. The mention of the animals suggests that very little would change even if England were not ruling India.

Dr. Aziz solidifies his friendship with Fielding by breaking purdah and showing him a photo of his dead wife. At that instant, the two become brothers. Cultural misunderstanding is not an issue between these two very different men.

Vocabulary

catastrophe, prominent, accumulated, convenient, intoxication, indulgence, indifference, admonitory, morality, unconventional, inelegant, harmoniously



Chapters 12-14

Summary

Chapter 12: The Marabar Caves are a series of caves that are all similar in size, shape and appearance. Each cave has an entrance tunnel that is about three feet wide, five feet tall and eight feet long. The tunnel leads to a circular chamber about twenty feet in diameter. Visitors leave without a firm grasp of whether the experience was exciting or boring.

Chapter 13: Adela and Miss Derek discuss the possibility of a trip to the caves, but Miss Derek says that the Indians are forgetful so the trip will most likely not occur. A servant tells this to Mahmoud Ali, who tells Dr. Aziz. Dr. Aziz arranges the trip, planning for every detail. On the day of the trip, Fielding and Professor Godbole miss the train, upsetting Dr. Aziz because he wanted the women to see that he is a responsible host.

Chapter 14: Once the train reaches the station, the group rides elephants to the base of the caves. None of the group is very interested in seeing the caves, but Dr. Aziz pushes on. While exploring the first cave, Mrs. Moore is disturbed by the dull echo and decides to leave the caves and let Dr. Aziz and Adela continue without her. She attempts to write a letter to her children in England but is so disturbed by the echo that she can't concentrate.

Analysis

The description of the caves is not unlike that of the city of Chandrapore: they are uninteresting and don't stand out in any way. While they are supposed to be a major tourist attraction for the area, they turn out to be quite unremarkable.

Dr. Aziz goes out of his way to impress the English women with his planning and responsibility, even worrying about their food and drink being different from what he likes. Mrs. Moore's preoccupation with the empty sound of the echo symbolizes her departure into despair and emptiness as she ages.

Vocabulary

immemorial, antiquity, renunciation, interpose, exquisite, voluptuous, excavated, stupendous, accreted, facile, acquit, malingering, precedence, consorted, elated, anecdote, gesticulated, pessimists, exaggerate, obligation, insincerity, vexed, sublime, disconcerted, carnal, recumbent, insignificance, regal, feeble, venomous, capriciously, munificence, surmounted, inevitable, lamentable, astride, desirous, vigorous, forbade, repose



Chapters 15-17

Summary

Chapter 15: Dr. Aziz and Adela continue to explore the caves without Mrs. Moore. Adela reflects upon her love, or lack thereof, for Ronnie and wonders if she should marry him. She asks Dr. Aziz if he is married, he tells her that he is, and she asks if he has more than one wife. This question deeply affects Dr. Aziz, not only because it is apparent that Adela knows nothing about the Indian people and their customs, but because he believes his dead wife was the only woman in the world for him. He quickly steps into a nearby cave to regain his composure.

Chapter 16: Dr. Aziz stays in the cave for a few minutes. When he comes out, the guide tells him that Adela has journeyed on by herself to explore more of the caves. Dr. Aziz becomes furious with the guide and chases him away. He starts to search for Adela and finds her field glasses, broken, at the entrance to one of the caves. Looking down, he sees Adela standing next to a car talking to another English woman. Fielding, having just arrived, is near the car. Dr. Aziz rushes down the path only to discover that Adela and the other woman have driven off without him. When the group returns to Chandrapore, Dr. Aziz is arrested and imprisoned.

Chapter 17: Fielding learns that Adela has accused Dr. Aziz of sexually assaulting her in one of the caves. Fielding defends Dr. Aziz and suggests that Adela is mad. An informal meeting is conducted at the club and the tensions between the British and the Indians increase.

Analysis

The beginning of this section is not written from the omniscient viewpoint that is prevalent in the novel. It is unknown what exactly happened to Adela and who was involved. The reader knows that Dr. Aziz is innocent because he is in a cave alone and later discovers Adela's field glasses where she had dropped them. Dr. Aziz's viewpoint allows the reader to know what he was doing at the time of the incident, but the actual events are vague.

The informal meeting about the situation shows the attitude that the Anglo-Indians have against the Indians. Dr. Aziz is considered guilty by everyone in attendance except Fielding. Fielding is expected to side with Adela, but he does not.

Vocabulary

tedious, isolated, persuaded, succumb, precipitous, orifices, sufficient, disquieted, suspicion, incurably, apathy, unassailable, surmounted, conveyance, contagion,

perorated, fanatical, grotesque, overwhelm, infamy, subordinate, dignified, avenge,
infrequent, extinction, appropriating



Chapters 18-21

Summary

Chapter 18: Fielding discusses Dr. Aziz's case with Mr. McBride, the District Superintendent. Fielding tells McBride that Dr. Aziz is innocent and would not have kept the field glasses with him if he were guilty. Mr. McBride says that Dr. Aziz has a friend who owns a brothel and has pictures of women in his home; these things prove he is immoral, and therefore guilty. McBride suspects all Indians are criminals at heart. Fielding asks to see Adela but is told she is in a delicate state and cannot receive visitors.

Chapter 19: Hamidullah tells Fielding that he wants to hire a notoriously anti-British lawyer for Dr. Aziz, but Fielding thinks it too extreme. Fielding then talks with Professor Godbole and learns that the professor is moving to central India to start a school. Godbole does not concern himself with the trial or with Dr. Aziz's guilt or innocence.

Chapter 20: Another meeting is held at the club and Fielding tells the other members that he believes that Dr. Aziz is innocent and he fully supports him. He says that he will resign his position and leave India forever if Dr. Aziz is found guilty. Fielding resigns from the club and refuses to acknowledge Ronny when he enters the room. He is asked to leave the club and not return.

Chapter 21: Fielding is labeled an outsider by the British and he spends the evening with a small group of Indian men. He feels that he made a mistake by being rude to Ronny and wishes that he had not done so.

Analysis

Even the superintendent is biased against the Indians and refuses to admit the flaws in his own reasoning when they are pointed out to him by Fielding. All Indians will be essentially put on trial through the trial of Dr. Aziz.

While Fielding supports Dr. Aziz and has made several rash decisions that have labeled him a race-traitor, he still wants to be careful not to over-alienate the British by hiring an antagonistic lawyer. He joins the Indians in their defense of Dr. Aziz but deeply regrets the decisions that forced him away from the British.

Vocabulary

courtesy, contradict, disposition, psychology, complications, incredulous, deferential, prejudice, calumniated, anxieties, propitiate, profundity, pilfering, pugnacious, intimidated, interminable, catastrophe, expedition, vernacular, appalling, isolation, illustrate, esteemed, contributed, implies, commemorate, culminated, coherent,



grievous, adulterated, periphrasis, subdued, compassionate, contradictory, scrupulously, martyr, implicated, indignity, integrity, confidence, deference, creditable, frivolous, hysteria, vile, impertinence, superannuated, emanated, detestable, retorted, consequence



Chapter 22-24

Summary

Chapter 22: Adela recuperates from her ordeal at the McBrides' home and is treated as if she were fragile and could break at any moment. Ronnie tells her that she must identify Dr. Aziz in court and be questioned by the defense. Adela asks him if his mother, Mrs. Moore, can be there to support her and he tells her that his mother is angry about what happened and has withdrawn from all aspects of the case. Ronnie tells her that there will be an Indian judge presiding over the trial and that Fielding has turned against her and is a witness for the defense.

After her fever drops, Ronnie takes Adela to his house where she sees Mrs. Moore. Mrs. Moore won't touch her and tells her that she will attend Ronnie and Adela's wedding but not the trial. Ronny and Mrs. Moore decide that she must return to India. Adela recounts the events on the day of the attack and realizes that Dr. Aziz is innocent. She wishes to withdraw the charges, but Ronnie will not hear of it.

Chapter 23: The Lieutenant Governor's wife helps Mrs. Moore secure a cabin and return to England.

Chapter 24: Adela prepares for the trial without Mrs. Moore. During the trial, Mr. McBride states that darker men are always attracted to lighter woman but it is not reciprocated. Mahmoud Ali claims that Mrs. Moore was sent back to England so that she couldn't testify for the defense. The courtroom begins chanting her name until the judge admonishes the defense.

When Adela testifies, she is unable to answer whether Dr. Aziz assaulted her. She states that she was wrong and that the assault did not occur. The major tries to get Adela's testimony stricken on the grounds of her delicate medical condition, but the judge dismisses the charge and releases Dr. Aziz.

Analysis

Adela feels emotionally dependent upon Mrs. Moore and becomes distraught when she can't see her. It is unclear whether Mrs. Moore stays away on her own or if Ronnie keeps the two women apart so that his mother will not sway Adela from her course. While isolated, Mrs. Moore becomes depressed and angry. Once the women are reunited, Mrs. Moore breaks out of her depression and fully supports Dr. Aziz's innocence.

Adela comes to the realization that Dr. Aziz is innocent and conveys this to Ronnie, but he tells her the wheels are already in motion and they can't stop the trial now. It is not made clear whether Ronnie forces Mrs. Moore to leave the country or she chooses it herself, but her lack of attendance at the trial is beneficial to the prosecuting team.

Adela's admission that she was wrong is considered honorable but it alienates her from the other Anglo-Indians and casts her as an outsider just like Fielding.

Vocabulary

conspicuous, endeavor, entail, profundity, pinnacles, endured, disastrous, expectorate, insipid, reticence, meticulously, consequence, desolate, reverent, inevitable, condescending, entourage, conscientious, conceived, enunciating, aloofness, exquisite, eminence, humiliation, prestige, culminating, premeditated, redemption, enraged, consequently, monotonous, catastrophe, atonement, culminated



Chapters 25-28

Summary

Chapter 25: Adela is carried out of the courtroom on the shoulders of the Indians. Once outside, Fielding tells her that she cannot walk in the streets or a riot will occur. He puts her in his carriage for her protection. Mahmoud Ali shouts disparaging comments about several British officials and the Indians nearly riot.

Chapter 26: Fielding takes Adela back to the college with him and they discuss the accusation, the trial and the aftermath. Adela admits that she was not well for some time before the incident. Ronnie visits to tell Adela that Mrs. Moore died during her return to England.

Chapter 27: The Indians throw a victory celebration for Dr. Aziz. Dr. Aziz and Fielding talk about the future and Dr. Aziz says that he is now anti-British. Fielding offers to secure an apology from Adela, but Dr. Aziz wants her to claim that she is an awful hag for her actions. They discuss this in depth and Dr. Aziz asks to speak with Mrs. Moore about it; Fielding tells him of her death.

Chapter 28: Rumors surfaced that Ronnie had Mrs. Moore killed so she couldn't testify on Dr. Aziz's behalf. While claiming his innocence, Fielding still feels bad about the way he treated her. Adela breaks off the marriage and leaves India.

Analysis

Adela and Fielding are outsiders after the trial. The pulling of the couple into the procession suggests that the happenings around them and the riot that nearly occurs is out of their control. The trial has further separated the British and the Indians. The disparaging remarks about the British prove that the Indians are all on the same level of misunderstanding.

Adela and Fielding become social outcasts from both the British and the Indians. This allows them to be alone together and to discuss the events in the Marabar Caves. Fielding admits that Aziz hates Adela for her accusations. Dr. Aziz's troubles with Adela and Fielding mirror the unrest between the Indians and the British.

Dr. Aziz wants to consult Mrs. Moore about his feelings but learns that she is dead; this signifies the death of the possibility of a friendly interaction between the two cultures. Aziz becomes more anti-British after learning this news. Rumors start that Ronnie killed Mrs. Moore for trying to help Aziz. These unfounded rumors are parallel to the unfounded accusations that Aziz assaulted Adela.



Vocabulary

obediently, derision, bewilderment, maltreat, mutinous, degradation, indifferent, premonition, numerous, desirable, hallucination, triumph, derived, interposed, recanted, creditable, considerate, communion, incidental, sustained, diffidence, formidable, interminable, annoyance, exasperating, grotesque, postponed



Chapters 29-32

Summary

Chapter 29: Sir Gilbert, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province, hopes of repairing the relationship between the British and the Indians. During their time together, Fielding and Adela develop a strong friendship.

Adela realizes that she isn't in love with Ronnie and decides to leave India. Antony attempts to blackmail her by saying that she and Fielding had an ongoing affair while she was in India, but she ignores him. She leaves for England and thinks about seeing Ralph and Stella Moore upon her arrival.

Chapter 30: The judge asks Dr. Aziz to write poetry for a magazine that he publishes, and Dr. Aziz is indignant and asks why he should help someone who tried to send him to prison. The judge speaks of a unified India but Dr. Aziz still considers it divided between the Hindu and the Moslems. The judge relays the gossip that Fielding and Adela are having an affair.

Chapter 31: Dr. Aziz confronts Fielding about the rumor of the affair, and Fielding becomes angry that his friend would believe such rubbish. They talk it through and seem to settle things, but Fielding has an uneasy feeling that Dr. Aziz still believes the rumor.

Chapter 32: Discontent with India, Fielding leaves the country to travel abroad. He thinks that every place he visits is beautiful and exotic when compared to the way he now perceives India to be.

Analysis

The need for a high-ranking official to visit Chandrapore after the trial suggests that the trial will deepen the division between the Indians and the British. The Indians use the acquittal as a stepping stone to complain about the British and their treatment of them.

Aziz is revered among the Indians after the trial. The judge's request for Aziz to write for his magazine, a magazine that Aziz incorrectly thinks is for Hindus only, suggests a greater political unity amongst the Indians of different religions.

The rumor about the affair between Fielding and Adela strengthens the quarrel between Fielding and Dr. Aziz. Aziz broaches the subject with Fielding who denies any impropriety. Aziz does not believe him and assumes the two will eventually marry. Fielding leaves India and travels to other countries hoping to find fulfillment. His experiences in India have made him bitter to the country and to its people. By traveling to other countries, Fielding attempts to distance himself from Indian culture and the misunderstandings they provided him.

Vocabulary

exempted, charitable, concocted, sanctimonious, trivial, sufficient, immense, equivocal, prominent, sympathetic, articulate, multitudes, acclaimed, assistance, treacherous, amusement, tolerant, dalliance, licentious, intonation, recapitulate, compulsion, innocuous, epitomized, consequence, intermingle, malignant, malady, delicacy



Chapters 33-35

Summary

Chapter 33: Professor Godbole, now the Minister of Education in Mau, attends a rebirthing ceremony.

Chapter 34: Dr. Aziz, also at the rebirthing ceremony, sees Professor Godbole outside of the palace. They talk and Godbole tells Dr. Aziz that Fielding has returned to India with his wife. Fielding had written letters to Dr. Aziz about his marriage to someone he knew, but Dr. Aziz destroyed them after reading no further. Dr. Aziz is being investigated by Colonel Maggs, the area's Political Agent, because of his charges in Chandrapore.

Chapter 35: During a visit to a shrine in Mau, Dr. Aziz sees Fielding and a man he identifies as his brother-in-law. Still holding to the belief that Fielding married Adela, Dr. Aziz calls the man Mr. Qusted. The man corrects this by stating that his name is Ralph Moore, and Dr. Aziz learns that Fielding married Stella Moore, Mrs. Moore's daughter.

Analysis

Professor Godbole sees a wasp during the rebirthing ceremony and thinks about Mrs. Moore. The rebirth and the unity of all living things are directly tied together in this chapter. Mrs. Moore was the only Anglo-Indian capable of fully interacting with the native Indians.

Godbole tells Dr. Aziz that Fielding is back in India and that he is married. Dr. Aziz still assumes that Fielding married Adela because he didn't finish reading the letters. His stubbornness allows him to still be angry at Fielding.

The political differences between Chandrapore and Mau suggest that the cultural clash is not just between the Indians and the British, but in the different factions of Indians as well. When Dr. Aziz and Fielding meet at the shrine, Aziz thinks Fielding's brother-in-law must be Adela's brother. When he learns of his mistake, he is relieved but his embarrassment over the whole incident doesn't allow him to completely let go of his resentment. Dr. Aziz's promise to Mrs. Moore to be kind to her children allows him to be sociable and kind during the meeting.

Vocabulary

iridescent, radiant, harmonium, soliciting, impelled, proportioned, bewilderment, rending, annihilated, inclusion, irradiating, threshed, rousing, vividness, indicated, fissures, nominally, inoculation, agitate, genuine, formidable, arrogating, fruitful, accomplished, scornful, rebuked, impervious, numerous, distinguish, embrocation, convenient



Chapters 36-37

Summary

Chapter 36: Dr. Aziz and Professor Godbole follow the birth procession out of town. Godbole admits that he knew Fielding had married Stella Moore for quite some time. Upon returning to town, Dr. Aziz goes to the guesthouse where Fielding is staying and reads some of his private mail. Ralph Moore walks in on him and Dr. Aziz makes an excuse for being there and attempts to leave. Ralph tells him that his mother loved Dr. Aziz very much, and Dr. Aziz confesses that he looked on her as his best friend. He offers to take Ralph to the river to celebrate the life of his mother and to mark Ralph as her son. While on the river, their boat collides with Fielding and Stella's boat.

Chapter 37: After the boat accident, Dr. Aziz and Fielding put their differences aside. Fielding admits that Adela was right in admitting that Dr. Aziz had not assaulted her, but he also states that he cannot be friends with Dr. Aziz under the current British Raj because of the attitudes concerning cultural differences from both sides.

Analysis

The rebirthing ceremony is symbolic of the rebirthing of Dr. Aziz into the person he was in the beginning of the novel. Dr. Aziz's attitude and kindness to Ralph Moore reflects the attitude and kindness he showed Mrs. Moore in the gardens of the mosque.

The crashing of the boats represents the clashing of the cultures. The fact that the two men do not look at this accident as a tragedy suggests that India and England can put aside their differences and live together in harmony.

Vocabulary

discomfiture, revelation, consecrated, protruded, victorious, improvised, radiance, acquiesced, remarkable, diagnosis, illumination, inverting, detestable, embroidered, agitated, hospitality, complications, manifestation, secular, triumphant, flourished, reconciliation, myriads, abstract



Characters

Dr. Aziz

Dr. Aziz is the protagonist of the novel. He is a young Muslim doctor working at the British-run hospital in Chandrapore, British India. He is a widower with three children. In the beginning of the novel, Dr. Aziz is kind and caring toward the Anglo-Indians but later turns against them after he is accused of assault.

Cyril Fielding

Cyril Fielding is the British schoolmaster of a government-run college for Indians in Chandrapore, British India. He is unmarried and prefers the company of friends over that of a wife. Fielding is tolerant and understanding to the locals and makes friends with them easily. Like Aziz, Fielding undergoes changes after the trial that alienate him from both the local Indians and his British counterparts.

Adela Quested

Adela Quested is the fiancée of Ronny Heaslop, the city Magistrate in Chandrapore. She comes to India with Ronny's mother, Mrs. Moore, to marry Ronnie but changes her mind about the marriage several times.

Adela falsely accused Dr. Aziz of sexually assaulting her at one of Marabar Caves. She later recants her accusation, admitting that she was confused about what happened. The other Anglo-Indians turn against Adela for her "betrayal" and she returns to England.

Mrs. Moore

Mrs. Moore is an elderly English woman. She is the mother of Ronnie Heaslop and comes to India with his fiancée in hopes of seeing the "real India." While in the garden of a local Mosque, Mrs. Moore meets and befriends Dr. Aziz. She becomes friendly with several of the native Indians and has a deep respect for their beliefs and customs.

Mrs. Moore supports Dr. Aziz against Adela's charge of sexual assault but becomes sullen and depressed after the incident at the caves. She leaves India before the trial and dies on the passage back to England.



Ronny Heaslop

Ronny Heaslop is the city Magistrate for Chandrapore. He is the son of Mrs. Moore and is initially engaged to Adela Quested, but breaks off the engagement at the end of the novel. Ronny is suspicious of and cruel to the Indians and has adopted the attitudes of the older British officers about the inferiority of the natives.

Major Callendar

Major Callendar is the British head doctor at the local hospital and is Dr. Aziz's superior. He is openly racist and tries to stop Adela's confession that the assault did not happen.

Professor Narayan Godbole

Professor Narayan Godbole is an elderly professor at the government-run college in Chandrapore. He does not concern himself with the events unfolding around him in the novel and eventually leaves the city to start a high school in Central India.

Hamidullah

Hamidullah is Dr. Aziz's uncle and friend. Although educated in England, he tells Dr. Aziz that it is easier to be friends with an Englishman in England than it is in India. This suggests that he was treated better by the English while he was attending Cambridge University than since his return to India.

Mahmoud Ali

Mahmoud Ali is a lawyer and friend of Dr. Aziz. He serves on the defense during the trial and is openly defiant and hateful to the British.

Mr. Turton

Mr. Turton is the British city collector for Chandrapore. He treats the Indians well but doesn't always effectively hide his contempt for them.



Objects/Places

Chandrapore

Chandrapore is a predominantly Muslim city in India that is governed by the British. It is within a train ride's distance from the Marabar Caves, a local attraction of underground caves.

Marabar Caves

Marabar Caves are a series of caves outside of Chandrapore. They are the source of the mysterious echo that plagues Mrs. Moore and Adela Quested. They are also the place that the supposed sexual assault occurred between Dr. Aziz and Adela.

Mau

Mau is a predominantly Hindu city in central India with no British government.

Echo

Any sound made in the Marabar Caves returns as a monosyllabic echo sounding like "Boum." This echo haunts Mrs. Moore and confuses and distresses Adela Quested to the point that she falsely accuses Dr. Aziz of sexually assaulting her.

Photo / Purdah

Purdah is the custom of separating and veiling Indian women. Aziz shows Fielding a photo of his late wife, an act that is forbidden except between brothers. Fielding suggests that Purdah would no longer be needed if all men treated each other like brothers.

Wasp

A wasp appears a number of times throughout the novel. The wasp is the lowest creature on the Hindu vision of oneness of all living things.



Themes

Culture Misunderstanding or Clash

Cultural misunderstanding or clash is the main theme of this novel. Fundamental differences in race, language, sexual equality and religion separate the Indians from the British sent to govern them. Although the British are living in India, they stay in their own community and have their own “club” where locals are not allowed; they perform British plays and have British parties, only inviting native Indians as showpieces for the new arrivals to view.

Several Anglo-Indians consider Adela a race-traitor for admitting that she was wrong about an Indian (Dr. Aziz) sexually assaulting her. The Indians resent the British rule and their foreign customs and attitudes. There is further culture clash within the Indian culture. The Muslims and Hindus are separate and Dr. Aziz, the protagonist, insults the Hindu culture on several occasions. At the end of the novel, Dr. Aziz is living in a Hindu region and considers himself to be an outsider.

Unity

Unity is another main theme in *A Passage to India*. While a unified culture within British Raj colonial India is thought to be impossible, unity shows up in the inter-cultural bonds and friendships that develop through the narrative. Dr. Aziz shows Fielding a photo of his late wife, defying the custom of Purdah. The claim that the two are now considered brothers unifies them.

The Hindu spiritual belief that all living things are united as one in love is stressed several times. The wasp is on the same plane as the highest entity on earth. Race, sex, religion and class structure have no meaning in the afterlife as all things are united in love. The echo in the Marabar Caves also hints to the unity of everything, as all sounds are returned as the same “Boum” sound. This realization has a profound effect on both Mrs. Moore and Adela.

Friendship

The novel begins and ends with the question of whether it is possible for the British and the Indians to be friends. Although initially anti-British, Dr. Aziz forms a friendship with Mrs. Moore in the gardens of the mosque. This connection allows Dr. Aziz to be open to a friendship with Fielding.

The friendship between Dr. Aziz and Fielding is a mutual bond of respect and admiration suggesting that the English and Indian people could share a similar relationship if they shared similar bonds. After the trial, the friendship dissolves and is pulled further apart

by the clash of their cultures. At the end of the novel, Dr. Aziz and Fielding are tentatively testing these bonds again.

Style

Point of View

The novel is written in a third person point of view that switches between characters when needed. It is written from an omniscient viewpoint, allowing the reader to visualize the setting and understand the thoughts of the various characters. Although omniscient, the narrative displays a certain amount of ambiguity in regard to certain characters and events that later unfold in the novel. The point of view of this novel is an impersonal point of view but allows a reader to connect closely with both the characters and the setting.

Setting

The novel is set in the cities of Chandrapore and Mau, India, in the 1920s. The setting of this novel is important because the time period is during the colonial period in which India is ruled by Great Britain. The main characters of the novel are intermixed between native Indians and British Anglo-Indians.

The settings work well with the plot as Chandrapore is predominantly Muslim and governed by the British while Mau is predominantly Hindu with no English forces. A switch between cities changes the setting and people, but still adds to the main cultural misunderstanding or clash theme of the novel.

Language and Meaning

The language of this novel is somewhat stiffer than the language readers of modern novels might be accustomed. Although the language of the novel is not formal, the author employs language that has begun to go out of modern daily usage. This language structure is from the early twentieth century when the novel is set.

Structure

The novel is divided into three sections and thirty-seven chapters. Each chapter is two to twenty pages long with an average of eight pages per chapter. The chapters tell the story both in exposition and dialogue.

The novel contains one main plot and several subplots. The main plot follows the cultural differences and ensuing clashes between the Indians and the British. One subplot follows the developing friendship between Dr. Aziz and Fielding. Another subplot follows Adela Quested's accusation of sexual assault against Dr. Aziz, the resulting trial, and the loss of friendship between Dr. Aziz and Fielding. All of these plots culminate by

asking the same question that was asked in the beginning of the novel: Can Indians and the British be friends?



Quotes

So abased, so monotonous is everything that meets the eye, that when the Ganges comes down it might be expected to wash the excrescence back into the soil. (Chapter 1)

On the second rise is laid out the little civil station, and viewed hence Chandrapore appears to be a totally different place. It is a city of gardens. It is no city, but a forest sparsely scattered with huts. It is a tropical pleasaunce washed by a noble river. (Chapter 1)

They all become exactly the same, not worse, not better. I give any Englishman two years, be he Turton or Burton. It is only the difference of a letter. And I give any English woman six months. All are exactly alike. (Chapter 2)

He has found out our dinner hour, that's all, and chooses to interrupt us every time, in order to show his power. (Chapter 2)

A Mosque by winning his approval let loose his imagination. The temple of another creed, Hindu, Christian, or Greek, would have bored him and failed to awaken his sense of beauty. Here was Islam, his own country, more than a Faith, more than a battle cry, more, much more. (Chapter 2)

Islam was an attitude towards life both exquisite and durable, where his body and his thoughts found their home. (Chapter 2)

That makes no difference. God is here. (Chapter 2)

As he strolled down hill beneath the lovely moon, and again saw the lovely mosque, he seemed to own the land as much as anyone who owned it. (Chapter 2)

I want to see the real India. (Chapter 3)

Come on, India's not as bad as all that...Other side of the earth, if you like, but we stick to the same old moon. (Chapter 3)

Adventures do occur, but not punctually. (Chapter 3)

In England the moon had seemed dead and alien; here she was caught in the shawl of night together with earth and all other stars. (Chapter 3)

It is easy to sympathize at a distance. I value more the kind word that is spoken close to my ear. (Chapter 4)

We must exclude someone from our gathering, or we shall be left with nothing. (Chapter 4)



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. (Chapter 5)

[H]e did not realize that 'white' has no more to do with a colour than 'God save the King' with a god, and that it is the height of impropriety to consider what it does connote. (Chapter 7)

A mystery is only a high sounding term for a muddle. No advantage in stirring it up, in either case. Aziz and I know well that India is a muddle. (Chapter 7)

Aziz was exquisitely dressed, from tie-pin to spats, but he had forgotten his back-collar stud, and there you have the Indian all over; inattention to detail, the fundamental slackness that reveals the race. (Chapter 8)

And when the whole world behaves as such, there will be no more purdah? (Chapter 11)

But he himself was rooted in society and Islam. He belonged to a tradition, which bound him, and he had brought children into the world, the society of the future. Though he lived so vaguely in this flimsy bungalow, nevertheless he was placed, placed. (Chapter 11)

All the love he felt for her at the Mosque welled up again, the fresher for forgetfulness. (Chapter 13)

You keep your religion, I mine. That is best. Nothing embraces the whole of India, nothing, nothing and that was Akbar's mistake. (Chapter 14)

But suddenly, at the edge of her mind, Religion appeared, poor little talkative Christianity, and she knew that all its divine words from 'Let there be light' to 'It is finished' only amounted to 'boum. (Chapter 14)

I have never known anything but disaster result when English people and Indians attempt to be intimate socially. (Chapter 17)

[W]hen an Indian goes bad, he goes not only very bad, but very queer. (Chapter 18)

Great is information, and she shall prevail. (Chapter 20)

Evil was loose...she could hear it entering the lives of others. (Chapter 22)

Her Christian tenderness had gone, or had developed into hardness, a just irritation against the human race; she had taken no interest at the arrest, asked scarcely any questions, and had refused to leave her bed on the awful last night of Mohurram, when an attack was expected on the bungalow. (Chapter 22)

As soon as she landed in India, it seemed to her good, and when she saw the water flowing through the mosque tank, or the Ganges, or the moon caught in the shawl of



night with all the other stars, it seemed a beautiful goal and an easy one. To be one with the universe! (Chapter 23)

Ronny's religion was of the sterilized Public School brand, which never goes bad, even in the tropics. Wherever he entered, mosque, cave or temple, he retained the spiritual outlook of the fifth form, and condemned as 'weakening' any attempt to understand them. (Chapter 28)

If God himself descended from heaven into their club and said you were innocent, they would disbelieve him. (Chapter 30)

Suspicion and disbelief could in his mind exist side by side. They sprang from different sources, and need never intermingle. (Chapter 31)

The buildings of Venice, like the mountains of Crete and the fields of Egypt, stood in the right place, whereas in poor India everything was placed wrong. (Chapter 32)

My heart is for my own people henceforward. (Chapter 35)



Topics for Discussion

Topic 1

Describe the setting of Chandrapore. What does this description signify about it? Where are the Marabar Caves? How are they described in the narrative? During what time period does the story take place?

Topic 2

Who is Dr. Aziz? What is his occupation? What is his relationship with the Anglo-Indians like? Why is this important? How does this change and why?

Topic 3

Who is Mrs. Moore? Discuss her interaction with Dr. Aziz in the Mosque. Why is this important? What does their encounter signify for the protagonist?

Topic 4

Discuss the relationship between Dr. Aziz and Cyril Fielding. Are they friends? What obstacles does this relationship face?

Topic 5

Who is Adela Quested? Why is she in India? How does her character evolve throughout the novel? What are the main relationships that Adela has in the narrative?

Topic 6

What sound does the echo in the Marabar Caves make regardless of the initial sound? Discuss the ramifications of this sound on Mrs. Moore. How does the sound affect Adela?

Topic 7

What does Adela Quested say happened to her at Marabar Caves? What impact does this accusation have on the British/Indian relationship within the city of Chandrapore? How does the accusation impact the narrative's protagonist?



Topic 8

List the main characters that believe Dr. Aziz is innocent. Why do they believe this? List the main characters who believe he is guilty. Why do they believe that?

Topic 9

What steps does Fielding take to prove Aziz's innocence? How is he treated by the other Anglo-Indians after this? What does he do to get ostracized from them completely?

Topic 10

After the trial, what happens between Aziz and Fielding? Why? Who becomes Fielding's unlikely ally?

Topic 11

What happens to Mrs. Moore during her trip from India back to England? Why is this important to the story? How does Aziz react to this news?

Topic 12

Where does Aziz move after the trial? Who else lives there?

Topic 13

Who are Stella and Ralph Moore? How does the author describe these characters in the narrative? What is their significance to the novel's plot?

Topic 14

What happens between Aziz and Fielding at the end of the novel? Why is this important? What does this shift signify?