

"A Passage to India" - By E. M. Forster

"Title & Theme"

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Ques:- Discuss the theme or the title of Forster's novel "A Passage to India"?

Ans:- "Passage to more than India"

Are they wings plumed for such far flights?
O soul, voyagest thou indeed on voyager like those?
Disportest, thou on waters such as those?"

The title which has been taken from 'Walt Whitman's' famous poem "Passage to India". Where as 'Walt Whitman' seeks poetically his "Passage to India", Forster's artistic and spiritual conquest is only for "A passage to India". The addition of an indefinite article in the title of Forster's novel is both linguistically and symbolically important since it implies that there are a multiplicity of 'Passages' to India. This is Forster's own individualistic, distinctive and liberal 'Passage' to this great sub-continent.

The progression of the quest is marked by a steady transformation from the material to the spiritual, the concrete to the abstract in Whitman and Forster alike, though the model of expression in the romantic American poet and in the comic irony British novelists are indeed widely divergent;

"A Passage to India" has several themes or the layers which contribute to its structure. Belief in the efficacy of 'Personal relations' is an important element of Forster's credo, and attitude is closely linked up with the novel's theme. The value

of friendship, exploration of the possibilities of friendship, is central to the novel and in chapter II, Aziz and his friends are shown discussing whether or not it is possible to be friends with an Englishman. The personal association between Aziz and Fielding is the core of the novel, which embodies and unfolds the theme of union and separation, fusion and fission, love and hate, sympathy and apathy, affirmation and negation.

Forster believed that personal relations based on friendship, tolerance and understanding fructify every hour of human life. The theme of the possibilities of love between man and fellowman and between man and God are intricately explored by Forster's "A Passage to India". Thus, a novel which apparently seems to be concerned with the personal relationship between two individuals from England and India, is in reality concerned with the basic human predicament in a complex world. The novel is mainly concerned with a seemingly inexplicable universe, a cosmos which cannot be discerned by a rational intellect or even by a sharp sensibility. The reading of Forster's fiction may work on various planes; it in fact presents many deeper realms of reality. Than what appears at first sight: a simple narrative to the main reader, a parable for the wise or a subtle revelation of reality to an intelligent and sensitive person. His fiction

is moral metaphysical, social and symbolic, comic and deeply disturbing its implications all the same time. "A Passage to India", at a deeper level, presents Forster's subtle awareness of his Indian universe, a world through which his self has tried to understand, interpret and aesthetically project his vision of a mysterious, muddled and baffling civilization in its relationship to the West. The physical landscape or the natural world in "A Passage to India" is sometimes beneficent and other time hostile to human craving and Forster's naturalism, so paramount in "The Longest Journey" (1907), is no longer the ever-growing source of the good. "Giuno Casella" ("where Angels Fear to Tread") and "Stephen Wonham" ("The Longest Journey") appear to be a kind of Forsterian 'Noble Savage', but they do not find a place in "A Passage to India" since the view of nature has undergone a basic change. "A Passage to India" is a novel of his dimensions and deeper realism compared with the earlier novels. It reveals Forster's cosmic vision, a complete engagement of his imaginative self with the Indian world. Its finest achievement is its aesthetic unity which emerges from its threefold division, its deep humanism, its striking realism, its baffling muddles and subtle mysteries. In this novel, Forster achieves the finest form and the greatest beauty of his created world.

Forster's "A Passage to India" may be

interpreted in various ways and on many levels: as a liberal classic, a sociological work of fiction, a predominantly political novel, a creative work about the mysterious East, a symbolic syndrome, a mythical archetypal work and the expression of art of a liberal Englishman's interpretation of the seemingly incomprehensible and baffling India. It is in this novel that Forster has found his own distinctive path from the finite to the infinite, from the real to the visionary, from England to Europe, the locales of his earlier novels, to India and the East. These unfamiliar horizons challenged his imagination and sensibility. It is in this truly great work that he has offered his considered comment on the complexities of life, as he saw it steadily and as a whole.