



A Passage to India (RosettaBooks Into Film)

E.M. Forster

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E. M. Forster's 1924 masterpiece, *A Passage to India*, is a novel that tackles the thorny notions of preconceptions and misconceptions through characters' desire to overcome the barrier that divides East and West in colonial India. Here we see the limits of liberal tolerance, good intentions, and good will as we try to sort through the common problems that exist between two very different cultures. But Forster's India is a country where the English and Indians stare at each other across a cultural divide and a history of imbalanced power relations, mutual suspicion, and ill will. A fresh reader must wonder whether connection is possible at all.

A Passage to India begins simply enough: with people genuinely desiring to connect and to overcome the stereotypes and biases that have divided the two cultures. Mrs. Moore accompanies her future daughter-in-law, Adela Quested, to India where both are to meet Mrs. Moore's son Ronny, the City Magistrate. From the outset, Adela makes it clear that she wishes to see the "real India" and Mrs. Moore soon befriends an Indian doctor named Aziz. Cyril Fielding, an Englishman and the principal of a local government college, soon becomes acquainted with everyone and it is his tenuous friendship with the Indian Dr. Aziz that really constitutes the backbone of this novel.

While it is true that the primary characters take great pains to accept and embrace difference, their misunderstanding, fear and ignorance made that connection far more difficult than they expected. Getting to know the "real" India proves to be a daunting and challenging task. The bulk of this perhaps falls to Dr. Aziz, who soon learns that the indignities of life under British rule and the insults--unintentional and intentional--of his English acquaintances make him suspect that although genuine friendship may be desired, the two cultures are not yet ready.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

E. M. Forster published his first novel, *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, in 1905, which was quickly followed in 1907 by *The Longest Journey* and then in 1908 with *A Room with a View*. However, Forster's major breakthrough came in 1910 with the book *Howard's End*, which is often still regarded as his greatest work. Forster was associated with the Bloomsbury Group: a collective of intellectuals and peers, among them Virginia Woolf, Benjamin Britten, Roger Fry, and John Maynard Keynes. The 1924 publication of *A Passage to India* firmly cemented Forster in the literary firmament as one of the most important writers of the twentieth century with this being one of the most important novels of the twentieth century. It was, however, the last novel Forster ever completed.

Forster seems to have harbored a growing disillusionment with traditional liberalism and instead turned his attention to teaching and criticism, beginning with the Clark Lectures he delivered at Cambridge in 1927, which were gathered into a much-admired collection of essays published as *Aspects of the Novel*. In 1946, Forster accepted a fellowship at Cambridge where he remained until his death in 1970.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

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