A Passage To India: The Theme Of Colonialism

Traditionally, as discussed previously in lectures and essays, E. M. Forster's novel A Passage to India has been analyzed and unscrambled by its pioneer-like consciousness of empire's colonialism via reflecting imperialistic and colonial ideologies. This way of understanding of this consciousness of colonialism could easily be detected throughout the book's various major and minor characters —— Mrs. Moore's son, the inflexible and indifferent magistrate, Ronny Heaslop; Mr. McBryde, the superintendent of the police who thinks ludicrously that there are a "simple reason" for Indian people to "live south of the latitude 30" (Forster 148) and "the darker races are physically attracted by the fairer, but not vice versa" (Forster 194); Mr. Turton, Chandrapore's power holder who detests India and contemns Indian people; and even on Mr. Cyril Fielding who acts as a bridge between the West and the East there are clear projections and images of the haughty colonists. However, except these straightforward presentations and implications in many male characters, the semi-abstract figure of empire and its colonialism also exists inside three most important female characters: Miss Adela Quested, Mrs. Turton, and Mrs. Moore. Each of these three women emerges the means and methods of empire's process of colonization. It could be stated that these three women are three different epitomes of, in Forster's viewpoint, three different phases of the empire itself.

The novel's main female character, Miss Adela Quested, is portrayed as an extremely aggressive woman by Forster, in which the readers could see a double superposition of the so-called image of the new woman and, more importantly, the image of empire. The primal goal of young Miss Quested's journey to India is to seek her semi-engaged lover, Ronny Heaslop, and in order to decide whether she would marry him, she should be focusing on getting to know Ronny and potentially nurturing their relationship. However, Miss Quested is in no hurry of doing so, obviously, and even forget to contact and communicate with him. Instead, she seems more eager "to see the real India" (Forster 20) and looks for every opportunity to get close to Indians. In her mind, India certainly has become her primary target in this trip, implying that before getting married with Ronny, she needs to somehow "conquer" India and the Indians around her. It seems that her engagement is not done with Ronny, who is a successful man in India, but the entire Indian colony. This is eventually proven at around the end of this novel, when Dr. Aziz finally realizes that "this pose of 'seeing India' which had seduced him to Miss Quested at Chandrapore was only a form of ruling India; no sympathy lay behind it." (Forster 273) Through the thoughts of Dr. Aziz, Forster insinuates the ultimate analogy that Miss Quested's attitude of "see the real India" is essentially the same as empire's govern upon India.

The ideology of colonialism in Miss Quested's character is most vividly embodied in the Marabar Caves incident. The Indian men represented by Dr. Aziz are subjected to the arbitrary provocation and manipulation of Miss Quested, a woman.During the tour of the Marabar Caves, Miss Quested asks Dr. Aziz four questions provocatively: "Are you married, Dr. Aziz?", "And have you children?", "Are they a great pleasure to you?"(Forster 135), and lastly "Have you one wife or more than one?"(Forster 136) These sequential questions coming out of Miss Quested's mouth are an adventurous and invasive tease to the privacy of Dr. Aziz, an Indian man, reflecting her implied character of the conqueror and aggressor, because, in fact, the basis of these questions are fundamentally related to each other sexually, and if conducting a dominant discussion of sexual content could be considered as a means of enforcing one's

authority and power, Miss Quasted’s behavior is then explainable. Relying on the dominant position of empire by using her identity, she applies all of the unequal treatments and latent oppression she has suffered and endured as a woman in her conventionally patriarchal home country onto India, the colonial country of empire, especially its male citizens, in order to seek relief and vent which generate a kind of pathological psychological balance and comfort to herself. In some extent, the insult, contempt, and suppression of Dr. Aziz by this suzerain woman further undertakes the arbitrary rule over the Indians done by colonialists from empire.