Shaping the Culture of Tolerance: A Study of Forster's Humanism in *Howard's End* and *A Passage to India*

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Abstract: This paper attempts a postcolonial reading of Forster's humanism and suggests that the concept of tolerance is central to his conception of humanism. Taking a cue from Edward Said's theorizations on humanism, the paper argues that Forster's humanism is centered upon the agency of human individuality, especially in his novels *Howards End* and *A Passage to India*. Forster sees tolerance as a "force" able to connect different races, classes, and nations. The paper, through an exploration of *Howards End* and *A Passage to India*, emphasizes that Forster's novels articulate and shape the culture of tolerance, which entails the ability to use one's mind "rationally" "for the purposes of reflective understanding and genuine disclosure" and enables the "sense of community" crucial for the sustenance of civilizations and human race. The paper, thus, situates Forster's works in the larger philosophical setting of Said's humanistic beliefs and seeks to demonstrate that *Howards End* and *A Passage to India* may be viewed as a fictionalization of Edward Said's theories of humanism.

Keywords: E. M. Forster, Edward Said, humanism, culture, tolerance, postcolonial

Introduction

Edward Said, in his book *Orientalism*, speaks of humanism as the ability "to use one's mind historically and rationally for the purposes of reflective understanding and genuine disclosure." Humanism, according to him, "is sustained by a sense of community with other interpreters and other societies and periods…. This is to say that every domain is linked to every other one…" (Said 1978, xviii). Said's theorizations seem to be premised on his belief that there exists an interconnectedness between cultures, nations, and societies, which sustains humanism, and which is centered, "upon the agency of human

individuality and subjective intuition, rather than on received ideas and approved authority" (Said 1978, xxiii).

Said's arguments provide an interesting framework for a postcolonial reading of Forster's humanism, which is centered upon the agency of human individuality and lays emphasis on the need to establish connection between races, cultures and nations. In other words, the similarity in the thoughts and beliefs of Forster and Said allow us to situate Forster's works, especially his novels, *Howards End* (1910) and *A Passage to India* (1924), in the larger philosophical setting of Said's humanistic beliefs. My paper seeks to demonstrate how Forster's novels, *Howards End* and *A Passage to India*, may be regarded as a fictionalization of Edward Said's theories of humanism. In his "Foreword" to Edward W. Said's book, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism*, Akeel Bilgrami observes that "right at the outset" Said warns us of "the disasters that will follow…if we conduct our public lives as intellectuals with an indifference to the concerns and the sufferings of people in places remote from our Western, metropolitan sites of self-interest" (Said 2004, x). One can easily discern here a striking resemblance with Forster's views, especially those which he expressed in his essay titled "Tolerance." In his essay, Forster insists on connections between different races, nations, classes and interests for the purposes of rebuilding and, according to Forster, tolerance is the only force that would enable these connections. It is important to note in this context that the concept of tolerance is central to Forster's conception of humanism. He sees tolerance as a "force" enabling the connections between different races, classes, and nations. An exploration of *Howards End* and *A Passage to India* reveals how Forster's novels articulate and shape the culture of tolerance, which, I argue, entails, what Said refers to as the ability to use one's mind "rationally" "for the purposes of reflective understanding and genuine disclosure" (Said 1978, xviii) and enables the "sense of community" crucial for the sustenance of civilizations and human race.

Shaping the Culture of Tolerance

E. M. Forster, the novelist, essayist, short story writer, and literary critic, was at the core of his heart, a humanist. Throughout his versatile career, and especially in his two major novels *Howards End* and *A Passage to India*, Forster displayed a remarkable consistency in his emphasis on the need to connect between races, classes and nations. The concept of tolerance, as I mentioned at the outset,

is central to his beliefs and credo as a humanist. His essay "Tolerance" can be viewed as a footnote to his practice as a novelist especially in *Howards End* and *A Passage to India*. He begins his essay by asserting,

> Surely the only sound foundation for a civilization is a sound state of mind. Architects, contractors, international commissioners, marketing boards, broadcasting corporations will never by themselves build a new world. They must be inspired by the proper spirit and there must be proper spirit in people for whom they are working. (Forster 1951, 44)

Then, by posing the question, "what though is the proper spirit," (44) Forster is able to pursue his thesis about tolerance as he contends,

> In public affairs, in the rebuilding of civilizations, something much less dramatic and emotional is needed, namely, tolerance…. This is the only force which will enable different races and classes and interests to settle down together to the work of reconstruction. (Forster 1951, 44–45)

Forster's Humanism in *A Passage to India* and *Howard's End*

In *A Passage to India*, Forster scrutinizes the possibilities of reconstruction/rebuilding by applying his doctrine of tolerance in establishing connections between races and cultures. Paradoxically, the endeavour to reconcile and connect ends in failure, illustrated through the repeated negation that marks the end of *A Passage to India*:

> "Why can't we be friends now?" said the other, holding him affectionately. "It's what I want. It's what you want." But the horses didn't want it--they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which riders must pass single file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, "No, not yet," and the sky said, "No, not there." (Forster 2005, 306)

Forster makes it clear that the conversation between Aziz and Fielding can never reach a definitive conclusion as long as the racial binaries continue to exist or as long as the British colonialists continue to rule over India and regard themselves as racially superior. Paul Peppis is of the opinion that "Forster's English novels paradoxically resist the reconciliations they render. Death, disconnection, and failure are as common in them as marriage, connection, and success" (Peppis 2007, 59). Peppis' observations cannot be overruled, keeping in view the disenchantments and disappointments that take place in the novel. David Medalie's observations are also worth mentioning in this regard:

> *A Passage to India* deals in many ways with the implications of failure, including the failure of the British Raj, of friendship, of attempts to achieve 'connection' in general; and it is also an exploration of its own failure, of the impossibility, as it were, of escaping the curse of the eclectic. (Medalie 2002, 128)

However, an analysis of the causes of this "failure" is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of Forster's humanism, its similarity with Said's theories and also his doctrine of tolerance. Forster, as is well known, laid immense emphasis on friendship and personal relations. In fact, the desire to see and explore India was awakened in Forster by his young Indian Muslim friend, Syed Ross Masood, to whom he dedicated his masterpiece, *A Passage to India*. Forster met Masood in 1906 as a Latin tutor and, in time, their bond intensified. Forster confesses that before he met Massod, India had been "a vague jumble of rajahs, sahibs, babus and elephants, and that he was not interested in such a jumble: who could be?" (Forster 1951, 299). His friendship with Masood aroused in him the curiosity to explore what was "a new horizon and a new civilization" (299) for him. However, when he came to India, he could not relate with his Indian experience. The land with its people, culture, traditions and customs seemed to elude his comprehension. His first reaction to the country, he notes down in the following words:

> … the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary. Edged rather than washed by the river Ganges, it trails for a couple of miles along the bank, scarcely distinguishable from the rubbish it deposits so freely…. The streets are mean, the temples

> ineffective, and though a few fine houses exist they are hidden away in gardens or down alleys whose filth deters all but the invited guest…. In the bazaars there is no painting and scarcely any carving. The very wood seems made of mud, the inhabitants of mud moving. (Forster 2005, 5)

Forster's friendship with Masood, as discussed earlier, had awakened in him a desire to see India but his visit to India seems to have disappointed him, as is evident from the detailed description of his first impressions of the city of Chandrapore, which, according to him, "presents nothing extraordinary." The deposits of rubbish, the mean streets, the filth in the alleys, the absence of paintings and carvings in the bazars and the mud moving inhabitants of the city, obviously, do not appeal to Forster. The narrative voice's disappointment with the new place finds its way into the description of the landscape, which gradually acquires sinister overtones as the novel reaches the "Cave" section, which Forster casts in a menacing and heavily symbolic landscape.

> They are dark caves. Even when they open towards the sun, very little light penetrates down the entrance tunnel into the circular chamber. There is little to see and no eye to see it ... An entrance was necessary, so mankind made one. But elsewhere, deeper in the granite, are three certain chambers that have no entrances? Chambers never unsealed since the arrival of the gods ... Nothing is inside them...one of them mirrors its darkness in every direction infinitely. (Forster 2005, 116–117)

The Marabar Caves emerge as an ominous player in the novel, bringing chaos and disruption in a setting already beset with racial tension. The caves may be viewed as a representation of forces which destabilize and weaken the human attempts for connection and reconciliation. Hamza Karam Ally rightly says that "the caves, in their darkness and indifference, represent a stark delimitation" to the "notion" of "love" advocated by characters like Mrs. Moore (Ally 2019, 567). The territories Forster now seems to be charting are more overtly the mysterious spheres of the world. The Marabar caves, it is pertinent to note here, may also be viewed as a passage to normalcy, light and life. The mystical and religious take the place of the mysterious and uncanny with the description of Gokul Ashtmi

in the "Temple" section, which is located "some hundreds of miles westward of the Marabar Hills, and two years later in time" (Forster 2005, 269).

The three-part structure of the narrative with its gradual movement from establishing personal relations and friendship in the "Mosque" section, to chaos and disorder in the "Cave" section and eventually to peace and order in the "Temple" section, provides the context necessary for Forster to explore his deeply felt thesis about the possibilities of establishing connections between races and nations. In the second chapter of the novel, Forster introduces Aziz, the Muslim doctor who practices at the government hospital in Chandrapore. Aziz is shown in the company of his friends who are debating whether it was possible for an Indian and an Englishman to become friends. Friendships or personal relationships, it is imperative to note here, were of immense importance in Forster's life and it would not be an exaggeration to say that it was central to his credo and beliefs both as an artist and as a human being. In fact, in his much-celebrated essay "What I Believe" Forster declares: "if I had to choose between betraying my country and betraying my friend I hope I should have the guts to betray my country" (Forster 1951, 66).

Forster's question, "whether or no it is possible to be friends with an Englishman" (Forster 2005, 8), posed at the outset of the novel, performs many functions. It enables Forster to forge a link between the two races, Indian and the English. It also becomes a means for Forster to acknowledge his debt and gratitude to his friend and, at the same time, his question seems to cast a shadow and create doubt over the possibility of friendship between the English and the Indians in a colonial setting. The conflation that Forster creates here is between his philosophy and ideals of humanism and the impossibility of achieving these ideals due to the empire's practices of domination and racial discrimination. The question, thus, reveals the fundamental contradiction in its postulation as the readers recognize the accompanying threat of its impossibility in a situation characterized by racial hatred and prejudices.

Forster uses the "Mosque" section to acquaint his readers with the principal characters of the novel, Cyril Fielding, the English Principal of the Government College, Ronny Heaslop, the City Magistrate of Chandrapore, Mrs. Moore, mother of Ronny Heaslop, Miss Adela Quested, Ronny's fiancée, Professor Narayan Godbole, Fielding's assistant at the College. Besides them, Forster introduces many other minor English characters, whose presence becomes necessary to show the existence of racial complexities and absence of social cohesion.

Forster presents Aziz as a person with a limited outlook and who is emotional, impulsive and excitable by temperament. The narrator describes him in the following words:

> As for Miss Quested, she accepted everything Aziz said as true verbally. In her ignorance, she regarded him as "India," and never surmised that his outlook was limited and his method inaccurate, and that no one is India. He was now much excited, chattering away hard, and even saying damn when he got mixed up in his sentences. (Forster 2005, 65)

The text is replete with instances which demonstrate Aziz's haste in pronouncing judgments and taking decisions. He is quick to make friends with Fielding, Mrs. Moore and Miss Adela Quested, he is quick to criticize the Hindus and express his hatred of the members of the British Indian community. After the cave episode, he never tries to clear up the misunderstanding between him and Fielding, with whom he had nurtured a friendship in British India, and who had stood against his own community during Aziz's court trials. He refuses all communications with Fielding and he does not even read the letters sent by him. The narrator mentions in the "Temple" section:

> Subsequent letters he destroyed unopened. It was the end of a foolish experiment. And though sometimes at the back of his mind he felt that Fielding had made sacrifices for him, it was now all confused with his genuine hatred of the English. (Forster 2005, 278–279).

Aziz lacks, what Said calls "reflective understanding" and "subjective intuition," and, thus, fails to establish a connection with the members of the other race or culture in matters of public or social significance. Cyril Fielding, on the other hand, with his sound and mature mind, provides Forster with the main aesthetic framework through which he proposes and shapes his ideals of humanism. "Fielding, a liberal humanist," to quote Mohammad Shaheen, "believes that tolerance, free will and education are the basis for any passage to cross-cultural contact (Shaheen 2004, 3). Fielding displays all the characteristics of a humanist, which are in accordance with Edward Said's ideals of humanism. He believes, to use Said's words, that:

> the task of the humanist is not just to occupy a position or place, nor simply to belong somewhere but rather to be both insider and outsider to the circulating ideas and values that are at issue in our society or someone else's society or the society – of the other. (Said 2004, 76)

He tries to understand the world rationally and represents the type/force, which is, according to Forster, needed to "enable different races and classes and interests to settle down together to the work of reconstruction" (Forster 1951, 45). The following passage illustrates the narrator's view of Fielding:

> The world, he believed, is a globe of men who are trying to reach one another and can best do so by the help of good will plus culture and intelligence – a creed ill-suited to Chandrapore, but he had come out too late to lose it. He had no racial feeling – not because he was superior to his brother civilians, but because he had matured in a different atmosphere, where the herdinstinct does not flourish. (Forster 2005, 57)

Elizabeth Langland rightly emphasizes that "all of Forster's characters – whether Maurice Hall or Margaret Schlegel or Fielding – aspire beyond themselves and genuinely yearn for some kind of integrative, transformative connection" (Langland 2007, 103). Fielding, undoubtedly, aspires beyond himself and genuinely yearns for connection, as is evident through his proposal to Aziz offered towards the end of the novel, "Why can't we be friends now?" (Forster 2005, 306). His appeal for friendship aims at eliminating the racial differences and divisions and furthering connections. But friendship, Forster makes it clear, is a two-way process and connection between individuals, races and nations can only be accomplished when both sides possess a sound mind and practice tolerance. Aziz, as the text illustrates, is hyper-sensitive, emotional and gets excited very easily. At a personal level, he likes or rather loves Fielding. But as Forster asserts in "Tolerance," "Love is a great force in private life; it is indeed the greatest of all things: but love in public affairs does not work" (Forster 1951, 44). So, love is a strong force in personal relationships, but love alone is not enough in public affairs. The union of Fielding and Aziz, thus, requires the practice of tolerance on both sides, the presence of a rational mind and a proper spirit on both sides. Tolerance, the quality that Forster advocates passionately and

returns to frequently, through his essays, for establishing a connection between races, classes and nations, is found missing in Aziz, who, nonetheless, remains the most life-like character, possessing energy, vitality and spontaneity. He serves as the life force in the narrative/plot of *A Passage to India*. Forster has been much appreciated for his creation of Aziz's character. Philip Gardner observes that "Forster was also generally praised for his creation of Aziz, who struck both Leonard Woolf and the Birmingham Post as 'the most absolutely "real" Indian to be found in fiction'" (Gardner 1973, 22). His excitability and impulsiveness may be perceived as failings which real-life like people possess.

Miss Adela Quested, Ronny's intended fiancée, is yet another character shown to act by desire and impulse, especially at the beginning of the novel. She is unable to restrain her desires and wants to see the real India. Her desire to see India lands her in trouble when, during an expedition to the Marabar caves, Adela has a hallucination, and she accuses Aziz of sexual assault, which she withdraws during the court trials. Her accusation and Aziz's subsequent trial enhance the racial divide and creates chaos. But as she gains maturity and wisdom through her experiences and learns to discipline her desires and becomes tolerant, peace prevails, and order is regained. Ronny Heaslop represents the British in India. He possesses the imperialist mind, which believed that the British were not in India to "behave pleasantly." The text reveals: "How Ronny revelled in the drawbacks of his situation! How he did rub it in that he was not in India to behave pleasantly, and derived positive satisfaction therefrom!" (Forster 2005, 46).

Forster makes it abundantly clear that the members of the British-Indian community, except Fielding, Adela and Mrs. Moore, did not believe in establishing connection with the natives as they regarded them as inferior. Peter Childs notes,

> What remains strong for most of *A Passage to India* is a belief in 'goodwill' as the best expression of religion and love in personal relations. The goodwill that is so important to Forster signals the difference between impressions and between people in the novel. (Childs 2007, 193)

In contrast to her son, Mrs. Moore believes that:

> The English are out here to be pleasant…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 … God has put us on earth to love our neighbours and to show it, and He is omnipresent, even in India, to see how we are succeeding...The desire to behave pleasantly satisfies God … The sincere if impotent desire wins His blessing … Goodwill and more goodwill and more goodwill. (Forster 2005, 46–47)

Forster presents Mrs. Moore as an apostle of love and goodwill. She visits the mosque, develops intimacy with Aziz, an Indian Muslim, and despite her old age and ailing health, she accompanies Adela and Aziz to the cave expedition. But as Forster warns, "love in public affairs does not work" (Forster 1951, 44), and all her endeavours to establish friendship and connection with the Indians end in failure. The cave episode shatters her and, devastated and defeated in her purpose, she dies on her way to England.

It also needs to be noted that the only person who remains immune to all the contradictions conflict and failures is Professor Godbole. His "elusiveness and inscrutability" (Medalie 2002, 190) is in sharp contrast to Aziz's "quirkiness and impulsiveness" (Medalie 2002, 172). Professor Godbole's mysticism places him at the same level as Mrs. Moore and enables him to establish a connection with her, albeit in her absentia, which underscored in the text, by Forster's representation of the Gokul Ashtami celebration in the "Temple" section.

> Professor Narayan Godbole stands in the presence of God. God is not born yet … but He has also been born centuries ago, nor can He ever be born, because He is the Lord of the Universe, who transcends human processes.… He and Professor Godbole stood at opposite ends of the same strip of carpet.… He was barefoot and in white… He and the six colleagues who supported him clashed their cymbals, hit small drums, droned upon a portable harmonium, and sang.… They loved all men, the whole universe.… Thus Godbole, though she was not important to him, remembered an old woman he had met in Chandrapore days … it was in this heated state, he did not select her, she happened to occur among the throng of soliciting images, a tiny splinter, and he impelled her by his spiritual force to that place where completeness can be found. Completeness, not reconstruction. (Forster 2005, 269–272)

In his moments of ecstasy during the ceremony, Godbole, the good Hindu, remembers Mrs. Moore, an old British woman, and he is even able to love her in the same manner as he loves the whole universe. A connection is thus established between the two but this connection has elements of mysticism rather than reason, and thus remains confined to those mystical/mysterious spheres.

David Medalie notes in this connection:

> The gradual eclipsing of rationalist virtues in *A Passage to India* is the result, in part, of the power that the novel grants to characters whose methods of cognition would frustrate any rationalist. There are characters who may be called 'prophetic' – 'prophecy' being Forster's catchall term for forms of inscrutability in fiction. They include Professor Godbole and Mrs Moore (particularly in her post-Marabar condition) … Reason and the conscious will give way in them to oracular and cryptic pronouncements… In Forster's 'prophetic' characters the sheer elusiveness of identity is conveyed; what is more, there is a reconfiguration of the self – both ontologically and in its dealings with others. (Medalie 2002, 57)

In fact, several critics have been disturbed by "the air of mystery" (Gardner 1973, 22), which surrounds Mrs. Moore and conveys, what Medalie calls her "elusiveness of identity." However, to be very precise, this trait of Mrs. Moore's personality, which places her in an inscrutable frame, is a post-Marabar development and it does not, in any way, mar the beauty and memory of her early appearances in the novel. The "Mosque" section is replete with instances of her compassionate and kind attitude towards the others. Her first encounter with Aziz in the mosque remains the most memorable scene for the intensity and spontaneity of emotions expressed by both characters. An instantaneous bond is established between the two, which is revived, to a certain extent, when Aziz meets Ralph Moore, Mrs. Moore's son from her second marriage, in the "Temple" section. But both these relationships, it needs reiteration, are founded on a personal level and their basis is the sentiment of love. A similar sentiment finds expression in Aziz's bonding with Fielding. Aziz's spontaneity makes him connect with Fielding at a personal level, but his affection for Fielding could not be transformed into a "socially dynamic force" and, hence, it ends in failure. Forster acknowledges this fact in "What I Believe" that

"no device has been found by which ... private decencies can be transmitted to public affairs" (Forster 1951, 71). The bond that is established between Aziz and Mrs. Moore or Aziz and Fielding at the beginning of the novel emanates from their personal liking for each other. It has the elements of instinct and emotion rather than reason and rationality, which is why it fails to survive when transmitted to the public sphere. Love, affection and friendship, thus, emerge as forces which connect people in their private lives; however, for the civilizations, nations, cultures and races to connect, the practice of tolerance becomes necessary. In Forster's view, this is the only force that would enable "different races and classes and interests to settle down together to the work of reconstruction" (Forster 1951, 45).

David Medalie is of the opinion that "One of the recurring questions in Forster's fiction, most notably in *Howards End* and *A Passage to India*, is whether love, especially as expressed in the 'personal relations' doctrine, may be converted into a socially dynamic force" (Medalie 2007, 40). In fact, Forster's abiding preoccupation with humanism takes different forms in different contexts in his novels but his concern remains the same: "Only Connect," which takes the form of an epigraph to *Howards End*, published in 1910. David Bradshaw says in this connection:

> The epigraph to *Howards End*, 'Only connect . . .', is almost as well known as the novel itself. It most obviously refers to Margaret's efforts to unite the (supposed) spirituality and culture of the Schlegels with the grounded commercial nous of the Wilcoxes and it turns out to be an abbreviation of the novel's most heartfelt donnee´: 'Only connect!' (Bradshaw 2007, 169)

In *Howards End*, Forster emerges as a passionate champion of the values of humanism, which he advocates through Margaret Schlegel, the central female character. It is important to note that places and landscapes occupy a great significance in Forster's scheme of fictionalizing his beliefs and ideals. David Trotter in his essay, "Rethinking Connection: The Edwardian Novels" rightly asserts that "place constitutes a primary source of meaning and value in novels which oppose 'England' to the suburban sprawl produced by rapid social and industrial modernization" (Trotter 2021, 124). In fact, it is Forster's technique as a novelist to use place as a major fictional tool to impart "meaning and value"

to his novels. It is not surprising, therefore, to see that both *Howards End* and *A Passage to India* begin with physical description of the places where the novels are set. Helen's letter to Margaret describes Howard's End, the mythic English house, which becomes the center as well as the symbol of Forster's efforts to establish a connection between the different fragments of society: the materialism, pettiness and greed of the Wilcoxes, the culture, idealism and philanthropy of the Schlegels and the hardships and the struggle of the Basts. David Medalie notes in this connection:

> In *Howards End*, Forster scrutinises the promise of an organic society (which is, of course, also a form of 'connection')." He does so by considering the pragmatic value of the New Liberal agenda within a society which he represents as increasingly fragmented and divisive. (Medalie 2007, 39)

Medalie quotes Hobhouse to explain the notion of "organic society" as perceived and formulated by the New Liberal theorists and strategists:

> No one element of the social life stands separate from the rest, any more than one element of the animal body stands separate from the rest. In this sense the life of society is rightly held to be organic, and all considered public policy must be conceived in its bearing on the life of society as a whole. (Medalie 2002, 5)

Forster's exploration of the possibility of establishing an organic society begins with Helen's letter to Margaret. This directs us to the importance of letters, which have always served as an important means of establishing a connection between people, owing to their status and emblematic importance as carriers of messages and information. Helen's letter to Margaret, written at the opening of the novel, contains a graphic description of the place, Howards End, and also its inhabitants, the prosperous Wilcoxes: Henry Wilcox, his wife Ruth Wilcox and their sons Charles Wilcox and Paul Wilcox, and their daughter Evie Wilcox. The money making, business-minded, self-loving Wilcoxes represent, with the exception of Ruth Wilcox, the materialistic values of the society. Their egotism is in sharp contrast to the Schlegels, though it is Margaret Schlegel who vigorously supports and defends the humanist ideals. Given below is the

much discussed and oft-quoted passage from the text where Margaret, married to Henry Wilcox after Ruth Wilcox's death, vehemently condemns him for his egotism, ruthlessness and hypocrisy:

> You shall see the connection if it kills you, Henry! You have had a mistress – I forgave you. My sister has a lover – you drive her from the house. Do you see the connection? Stupid, hypocritical, cruel – oh, contemptible! – a man who insults his wife when she's alive and cants with her memory when she's dead. A man who ruins a woman for his pleasure, and casts her off to ruin other men… These men are you. You can't recognise them, because you cannot connect … All your life you have been spoiled…. No one has ever told what you are – muddled, criminally muddled. (Forster 2007, 326)

Margaret's outburst is in tune with Forster's vision of "connection and wholeness" seeking to "connect without bitterness until all men are brothers" (Forster 2007, 285). What is, however, a very surprising development is Margaret's intimacy with Henry Wilcox. But again, this directs us to Forster's deeply felt values of humanism, which, in an increasingly disintegrated society, were only feasible for men and women who possessed proper spirit or a sound state of mind. Margaret, by all means, possesses a rational mind, or what Said calls, "reflective understanding and genuine disclosure," and, hence, succeeds in actualizing Forster's ideals of humanism. Margaret's gradual intimacy with Henry Wilcox brings her closer to the "depths of his soul" (Forster 2007, 194) enhances her understanding and enables her to create a sense of community, kinship with the Wilcoxes. Randall Stevenson opines in this connection:

> Margaret stresses that English life may be re-equilibrated through the interconnection of Wilcox values with her own … By the end of the novel, with Margaret and Henry married and settled in rural retreat at Howards End, much of this connection seems achieved, fragmentation resisted, and the commercial and industrial forces threatening English life for the moment successfully contained. (Stevenson 2007, 210)

Conclusion

Love, personal relationships and friendship lie at the heart of the novel. Margaret's bonding in friendship with Ruth Wilcox brings her closer to the Wilcoxes and makes Ruth Wilcox leave Howards End to Margaret. Margaret's marriage with Henry enhances their intimacy and their understanding of each other and ultimately enables her to inherit Howards End. Margaret's humanism, like Fielding's, is based upon the ideals and beliefs postulated by Said, that is, the "agency of human individuality and subjective intuition, rather than on received ideas and approved authority" (Said 1978, xxiii). However, while she succeeds, Fielding almost fails to achieve reconciliation, owing to, as discussed earlier, the immaturity and sentimentality of Aziz. *A Passage to India*, it is pertinent to note, was published after the First World War. The grim realities of the war, it seems, had dimmed Forster's optimism, but his humanistic impulses, his unwavering faith in his humanistic beliefs lead him to imagine the possibilities of establishing a connection between different races, nations and culture. "Not yet" limits the scope of total failure and leaves the readers hoping for a syncretic future where there will be no barriers of race, class and culture. *Howards End*, on the other hand, despite all oppositions and contradictions, concludes on a positive note. Both Henry Wilcox and Margaret Schlegel possess, what Said calls, "reflective understanding and genuine disclosure" (Said 1978, xviii), which are also aspects of tolerance, and this enables Margaret to establish connection between two opposite forces of the society.

To conclude, it can be said that both *Howards End* and *A Passage to India* may be read as the fictionalization of Said's theories of humanism. Both novels reflect Forster's constant preoccupation with the values of humanism as well as his awareness of the ambiguities involved in the achievement of these values and ideals in a "complex world, full of conflicting claims" (Forster 1951, 87). It is imperative to emphasize that Forster's humanistic beliefs continue to be very much useful and relevant in contemporary times. It would not be an exaggeration to say that his ideals have assumed the form of a continuum, and, therefore, it is no surprise that critics and scholars, like Said, keep on reiterating those beliefs through their writings. Gardner rightly asserts that, "his message of the importance of personal relationships and of the need to 'connect' has never gone unnoticed." Krzysztof Fordoński also observes that "his belief in the value of friendship … is just as valid today as it was when he first presented his creed in

'What I Believe' in 1938" (Fordonski 2020, 30–31). Forster cherished these beliefs and ideals throughout his life, both as a writer and as an individual, and thus offered to the world as "little light … that is shining" (Forster 1951, 66).

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