INTRODUCTION

Ever since the publication of Lionel Trilling's full length study *E.M. Forster* (1944), various aspects of Forster's life and art have attracted serious critical attention. Elements of romanticism, symbolism, liberalism, traditionalism, mysticism and modernism in his writings have been highlighted by various critics in recent years. Forster was himself aware, consciously or subconsciously, of these characteristics of his fiction. However, his explorations into the depths of his own peculiar psyche have not been sufficiently studied so far, although these have been briefly touched upon or obliquely referred to by a few critics. All that is on the surface cannot sometimes be comprehended fully without linking it with the depths below. The unceasing quest for the elusive truth lying obscured in the dark depths of the self can be easily marked if we look at Forster's fiction from this angle. The present study focuses on this hitherto little appreciated aspect of his fiction by examining the pattern of his themes and stories and relating it to the dominating currents and undercurrents criss-crossing his self.

Before elaborating this aspect further a brief reference to the observations made by some noted critics is quite relevant. Rex Warner, for example, perceives in Forster the existence of a vision that goes beyond the ideals of liberal tradition. "The characters mean more than they say;
the plot suggests more than is actually there. His horizons expand beyond the limits he sets for them.\textsuperscript{1} For K.W. Grasden, the uniqueness of Forster's books is their "very unforgivingness which has probably been a stumbling block to their complete evaluation."\textsuperscript{2} Trilling finds Forster in many ways at odds with liberal tradition: "Perhaps no one in our time has expressed so simply as Forster the weariness with the intellectual tradition of Europe which has been in some corner of the European psyche ever since early 19th century."\textsuperscript{3}

Some critics also notice in him a tangible inclination towards romanticism. John Colmer underlines it when he remarks that, "with the English Romantic poets he constantly emphasizes the need to combine 'head' and 'heart',... like them he has the power to seize on symbolic moments of truth."\textsuperscript{4} Similarly J.B. Beer asserts: "to understand Forster fully, one has to see him at the end of that earlier phase, the spiritual heir of Blake, Coleridge and Shelley, of Beethoven and Wagner. He shares their aspirations and their struggles."\textsuperscript{5}

Recent criticisms, however, mostly dwell on the modernistic tendencies in Forster's fiction. Like D.H. Lawrence, James Joyce and Joseph Conrad, Forster exhibits ambiguous and ironical strands of the complex flux called life. Rex Warner comparing Forster with Lawrence says: "in both
writers is present the desire for life and to have life more abundantly. The difference is that while Lawrence, in a religious fervour, plunges forward and invites us to follow him over the great expanses, Forster...seems in this respect to lead us up a long garden path. Lawrence himself called Forster "about the best of my contemporaries in England."

Critics like Katherine Mansfield, F.R. Leavis, Austin Warren, I.A. Richards and Virginia Woolf have variously referred to some 'odd' 'elusive' and 'ambiguous' strains in the novels of Forster. E.K. Brown and a few others have described him as a 'contemplative novelist'. Brown, in a critical reference, wrote, "I believe that Mr. Forster appreciated that his ideas were not only agonizingly difficult to incarnate, but inapprop riate to the novel, and that he elected to retain the ideas... and abandon the novel." This comment significantly evoked a revealing response from Forster, "It is a great novelty to be written about like that. I have been praised for my character drawing, sense of social distinctions, etc., but seldom for the things which really interest me, and which I have tried to express through the medium of my fiction."

Indian critics like V.A. Shahane, G.K. Das, K. Natwar Singh, Chaman L. Sahni and Rukun Advani have made notable contribution to Forster criticism during the last three decades. Shahane writes that "passage of time does not seem to account for any extraordinary difference between the early and later
Phases of Forster's mental life... The Forster of 1905 is, in essentials, the Forster of 1951 and, in spirit, will remain so for ever. Advani says that in Forster's views "life is complex, unfathomable, and in many ways, determined, yet the individual's freedom to make his own choices ought to be determined."11

K. Natwar-Singh pays his tribute to Forster in these words: "Just as he found it impossible to resist India, his friends find it impossible to resist him.... His writings and his personal example have made us aware, if not capable of, higher things."12

Emphasizing Forster's affinity to India and the Indian philosophy as reflected in _A Passage to India_, Das says,

His interpretations of India do not constitute an exclusive compartment in his total work as a writer but for a one integral part of the whole body of his writings, reflecting a total vision of life which is also embodied in his non-Indian writings.13

Similarly, discussing the Indian background of this novel, Chaman L. Sahni comments:

_A Passage to India_ is a philosophical novel with cosmic overtones. It reflects, in ample measure, Forster's remarkable knowledge and understanding of the challenging variety (sic) of Indian thought and his extraordinary insight into India's cultural problems.14

D.D. Jyoti, who had a few personal interviews with
Forster, sums up his mystical leanings in the context of Indian influence upon this great novelist in the following words:

"Forster finds materialism a doubtful good and favours broad-based humanism with a strong accent on sound human relationship ensuring consciousness about the brotherhood of mankind. His concept of good-and-evil brings him closer to mysticism, especially Indian mysticism. As a contemplative artist he believes in the divine conception of art, and discusses the triumph of inner life over the outer life."

Almost all critics and scholars of Forster now agree that he is as serious and complex a novelist as Conrad, Joyce and Lawrence. Like them, he has set in motion quite a few literary trends in modern fiction. He shares with them the art of bringing out the dilemma of modern man in today's complex world constantly threatened by the dangers of war, violence, economic uncertainties, emotional bankruptcy and narrow racial and religious creeds.

The self has been one of the most fascinating subjects of human interest since the dawn of reflective enquiry into the process and meaning of existence. 'Know thyself' has been the constant refrain of all philosophies since the earliest times, and the ancient Greeks and Indian civilizations doggedly pursued this enquiry to the farthest possible frontiers of knowledge. Although knowledge of the self has remained one of the most difficult and elusive problems faced by man, it
has occupied the central focus of all his speculative explorations. The searching mind of Forster could not be unaware of the universality of such an important quest. The quest for self, therefore, constantly informs his characters, who pass from a state of innocence or ignorance to self-awareness through a process, at times long and tortuous, of self-development. This search not only helps him bridge the division within the self but also reconciles the two seemingly contradictory strains in his work: his Liberal inheritance and his Romantic leanings. He is traditional because he recognizes the universality of the human self and yet the latest psychological insights into the workings of the self make Forster look at this universal entity as the most complex and baffling object necessitating a modern approach to life and literature.

Evidently Forster did not write for a particular faith, creed or literary movement. It was his own self, and his own identity of this self that worked at the core of his total creative endeavour. The terms 'self' and 'identity' have been defined by dictionaries as almost synonymous words. The New Collins dictionary defines self as "distinct identity or character" and identity as "the individual characteristics by which a person or a thing is recognized." Oxford dictionary, on the other hand defines the term self as "person's nature, special qualities, one's own personality." However, while
using these terms in the present context, it is important to recognize the subtle difference between the two. Norman N. Holland in his essay "Unity Identity Text Self" has closely analysed the implications of identity recreating itself in the form of a writer's style. While the author presents his self in the narrative of the work, the reader works at another level to identify the pattern emerging out of the given work and tries to reach a kind of unity. Holland gives a useful analogy to describe self and identity: "Unity is to text as identity is to self." According to him, 'self' is like the complex, varied and sometimes ambivalent text of a great book which is elusive, inscrutable and difficult to define and comprehend. Identity has same relation with the self as unity has with the text. We have to approach the self to arrive at its identity just as we analyse a text to reach its unity. "Identity is the unity I find in a self if I look at it as though it were a text," says Holland. In the present study, the overall pattern emerging out of the fiction of Forster has been seen as a basic clue to the quest that the author attempts to arrive at the identity of his self. But before coming to this central question, it will be pertinent here to underline some of the basic elements which went into the making of Forster's individuality and his selfhood.

The first and most important fact to be remembered about Forster is his disbelief in organized religion and his
doubts on the capability of science in providing any salvation to mankind. He discounts the contribution of science to any real progress of mankind.

For the same reasons Forster casts his doubts on the achievements of civilization in the name of progress and advancement. He believes that the only things that may lead us to truth and redemption are man's intuitive faith in the existence of order in the universe and recreation of a similar order in the works of art. The riot inside his self caused him to give it an aesthetic order and what he wrote is nothing but objectification and externalization of what lay within him. An artist is in search of some order in the universe but he cannot achieve it unless he re-orders first of all his own mind and heart. Harmony and tranquility can be obtained only when the order within corresponds to and synchronizes with the order without.

The second important thing almost universally noted in Forster is his treatment of his subject matter at two levels simultaneously, the existence of what several critics call 'double vision' in him. At one level he presents the world of his characters in the mundane, day to day, set up, describing in realistic terms the outer life of his characters living in the ordinary world. At another level, he gives spiritual meaning and significance to their inner life depicting their internal struggles, latent desires and subtle feelings.
This is the symbolic world where the characters live their life not in time alone, they live life by value too. This aspect of Forster's art makes his world both complex and elusive. The ambiguous elements of modernism in him, if properly understood, describe the condition of man in the rapidly changing scenario. This is also the reason why his work stands apart from the other writers of his age. To comprehend the intricate human condition, one can turn to some reputed thinkers of the century. McCall and Simmons, for example, describe their view on human situation in the following words:

The most important thing about man's situation is that he lives simultaneously in two very different worlds. In the first place he is a mammal of quite ordinary properties, yet at the same time he lives in a symbolic world.21

Thus at the one level, man is an organism with physio-biological needs, instinctual drives, and psychological responses binding him to his physical environment, but at another level he possesses feelings, emotions, language and capacities to create and understand symbols pointing towards a metaphysical and paranormal existence. While most naturalist writers treat man and his society in bare mechanical aspect, others emphasize too much the man's symbolic and spiritual aspirations, repressing the basic physio-biological needs of the human body. Forster, in his unique way, strikes a balance between these two aspects. Hence his emphasis on
the importance of body, and the demands that the body makes on human faculties for its healthy development. The body's needs, its reflexes and responses, its instincts and desires have an exceptionally important place in Forster's works. He believes that only the Greeks, with their open, spontaneous and instinctual life, had the capacity to look straight into the things. 'Cherish the body and you will cherish the soul' (AH, 197) was the belief he shared with the Greeks.

Thus, it was to celebrate this kind of exuberant life and to bring out the joys and fulfilment inherent in such a celestial existence that Forster created the world of his fiction. Forster, as U.A. Shahane puts it, "is indeed not one man, but a combination of selves of many men." When we place one part of self in relation to the other parts, a dialectical tension ensues resulting into a kind of self-dialogue. A person's thoughts are what he is saying to himself, that is, what he is saying to that other self which is just coming into life in the flow of time. But the 'Saying to himself' is also a rationalizing which man comes into contact with himself as well as with others. The immutable laws force it to come into contact with others. So Forster placed himself in relation to others - in his celebrated phrase 'personal relations' - and it is through this relationship that the self discovers its own identity. The self, therefore, becomes the subject, the knower, the observer, and the selector.
as well as the object of its own study.

Apart from the introduction and a brief conclusion, the present study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter defines the concept of 'self' and discusses the short stories in the light of Forster's early attempts to realize the potentials of creative writing within himself. The second chapter deals with the two Italian novels showing the impact the Italian experience had on young Forster's sensibilities and how this experience helped him mature into a novelist of original talents. The third chapter, analysing the two autobiographical novels, attempts to show the novelist's self at its barest and elemental level. The relevance of the actual experiences, especially the homosexual upheavals in the author's life, to the thematic contents of these autobiographical novels has been stressed.

The fourth chapter deals with Howards End, the universally acclaimed first major novel of Forster. The conscious and unconscious cravings, emotions and the overwhelming desire 'to connect' the self to the outer world have been shown to mark the author's quest for his own self through his alter-ego, Margaret. The logic and reasoning, the greatest forte of the Forsterian protagonists so far, begin to crumble before the might of the unseen, and the unknown. The yawning vacuum can be filled with only one thing, love. The fifth and final chapter, therefore, explores in A Passage to India...
the possibility of knowing and comprehending the seemingly incomprehensible dimensions of life in the unknown universe through the all pervasive and all embracing force of love. This kind of universal love lifts the person's self to the highest mystical level, where the personal self and the universal SELF merge into each other and become one. This ultimate search for self-knowledge is, therefore, the subject of the study that follows.
NOTES AND REFERENCES


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22 V.A. Shahane, E.M. Forster: A Study in Double Vision
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