

tall his experiences in *The Hill of Devi* (1953). This book contains a classic account of a vanished aspect of India which has never before been so adequately dwelt upon. His portrait of India in *A Passage to India* (1924) is both authentic and moving. He helped quite a few Indians in England. It is to be noted that nineteen publishers, one after the other, had turned down the manuscript of Dr. Mulik Raj Anand's *Untouchable*. It was, however, published when E. M. Forster wrote its preface.

Forster published five famous novels—four of them when he was not even thirty-two. His life in Italy formed the background of *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (1905) and *A Room with a View* (1908). *The Longest Journey* (1907) incorporates many autobiographical details. In *Howards End* (1910)—which is considered his best work—the deepest note is seriously felt of moral and social responsibility. *A Passage to India* describes the barriers between individuals of the same or of different races under the British rule in India. The novels are particularly significant for the treatment of social conflict which is raised to cosmic heights and also for the approach to its subject matter.

E. M. Forster was a novelist and an essayist. He wrote essays, collected in *Abinger Harvest* (1936), and *Two Cheers for Democracy* (1951). His stories, in *The Celestial Omnibus* (1914), and *The Eternal Moment* (1918) are effective and powerful in appeal. He also wrote *Alexandria: A History and Guide* (1951). His *Aspects of the Novel* (1927), written in direct and informal style, has unique perspicacity.

Forster's work presents an original and highly consistent view of human nature. His outstanding characteristic was his individualism. He was a pragmatic thinker with a

## E. M. FORSTER : A FRIEND OF INDIA

Edward Morgan Forster was born in London on 1st January 1879. He was educated at Tanbridge school and King's College, Cambridge. Quite at an early stage he developed an inclination to consider afresh old ideas and values. At Cambridge he came under the congenial and permanently formative influences, as he was on good terms with the Bloomsbury group. His visits to Greece, Italy and the Mediterranean world in 1901 fired his youthful imagination, whereas his acquaintance with the oriental world stimulated his maturity.

He was a great friend of India. He visited this country-first in 1912, then in 1921—and described in some de-

good deal of "disbelief in belief". Temperamentally and instinctively opposed to all isms and creeds, he valued individual experiences and insight. He is indeed a grand "deviationist." According to him, a writer has to satisfy himself alone, his aim is to create something. His novels are remarkably powerful and economical in form. This, however, becomes discernible only when one examines the philosophical issues that lie behind their plots.

As a novelist, E. M. Forster may well be compared with Jane Austen. He was perhaps the only active novelist who praised Jane Austen wholeheartedly. In three reviews of Jane Austen novels, now collected in *Abinger Harvest*, he confesses himself to be 'a Jane Austenite.' In Aspects he admires her art of characterisation. As he said in a 1953 interview, published in *The Paris Review*, he was influenced by Jane Austen. He learnt from her 'the possibilities of domestic humour.'" In *A Passage* there are five scenes of social comedy which remind one of the sunny repose of Jane Austen. As a contributor to the birth-day volume, *Aspects of E. M. Forster* (1969), points out, one never finds in his work expressions like "a friend of mine," or "a woman I know," or "as some body said the other day," or "some people I was staying with. Everybody was named with a strange type of emphasis or relish. This holds good for Jane Austen as well. And both writers stress the importance of family and personal relations in life.

After the publication of *Aspect* quite a few books have appeared on the theory of the novel. John Jump (of Manchester) has edited some fine monographs on various elements of the novel and John Halperin's *The Novel : New Essays* (1974) is the latest publication on the subject. But Forster's books are still indispensable for the distri-

ction between "story" and "plot," for the understanding of "people," "pattern and rhythm." His example of "story"—the King died. The queen died—irresistibly reminds one of an Indian folk tale : EK THA RAJA, EK THI RANI, DONO MARGYE. KHATM KAHANI. His arguments are at once, I had better add that "I am sure I am not a great novelist." But he occupied an eminent place among writers of the first half of the twentieth century. His contribution to modern society is "a reminder that it will be an arid and destroying desert if we remove the oasis of private life."

Indeed E. M. Forster was an inspiring novelist of the present world. He felt the pulse of India in books like *The Hill of Devi* and *A Passage*. Though an Englishman, he despised the snobbery and despotism adopted by British rulers in India. In this respect he was a striking contrast to Rudyard Kipling. Forster sincerely sympathised with Indians. On the last page of *A Passage*, he makes Aziz speak out : "Down with the English anyhow. That is certain. Clear out you fellows, double quick, I say. We may hate one another, but we hate you most." For him only personal relations based on equality, true friendship and mutual understanding are enduring. In his writings personal and emotional impulses are, therefore, elevated above social convention.

He was deeply impressed by Indian people and Culture. He helped many Indians in England who became his friends. Forster had great respect for such friends. He was not a narrow-minded nationalist. He once remarked : 'If I have ever to choose between my friends and my country, I hope, my God, that I shall have guts to choose the former.'