

Editorial

... I am Indian, very brown, born in
Malabar, I speak three languages, write in
Two, dream in one. Don't write in English,
they said,
English is not your mother-tongue. Why not leave
Me alone, critics, friends, visiting cousins,
Every one of you? Why not let me speak in
Any language I like? The language I speak
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses,
All mine, mine alone. It is half English, half
Indian, funny perhaps, but it is honest,
It is as human as I am human, don't
You see? It voices my joys, my longings, my
Hopes, and it is useful to me as cawing
Is to crows or roaring to lions, . . .

(Kamala Das, "An Introduction")

The inwardness of Indianness, we are told, cannot be captured by a language essentially foreign; the subtlest and the most vital nuances are accessible only to a living speech with its roots in the soil and in the organic past. This may be so, but those capable of using language with the passionate precision which this argument suggests, must have discovered in the very act of using it that the real requirement is not to provide evidence of a theory however plausible, but to establish one's identity in the language of least compromise. If that language happens to be English the creative choice must be respected and one should judge by results rather than by dismal prophecies of what the result must fail to be. By now the results are sufficient to suggest that certain generalizations should in all honesty be revised.

(Balachandra Rajan, "Identity and Nationality")

We take it that the controversy or debate over the use of English language for creative purposes or national business, mainly

sparked by the non-users of the language or the anti-English element in post-Independence Indian society, has now been settled. Kamala Das and others are free to write in whatever language they speak; for any language belongs to those who can use it effectively and creatively. Even the writers who express their creative experience in the other regional languages of India have realized the usefulness of English, because many of their works are now being translated into English, reaching larger audiences through domestic and foreign markets. When a poet like R. Parthasarathy broods about his "tongue in English chains," he is simply referring to the dual problem of Indian sensibility and the "foreign" medium of expression, which an Indian writing in English has to come to terms with and resolve as best as he or she can.

Indians of all types, the educated travellers abroad and the expatriate, culturally alienated and the culturally rooted, have used English for more than 150 years for a variety of literary and non-literary purposes. In the exclusive and special area of letters, however, most Indo-Anglian writers have demonstrated their ability to use English creatively, communicating with precision and clarity the subtlest nuances of their emotive and intellectual experience, and they have produced a large body of distinctive literature in the heart of India's "pluralistic literary landscape," to use Iyengar's phrase. The works of Indo-Anglian novelists such as Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, R. K. Narayan, Bhabhani Bhattacharya, Manohar Malgonkar, Khushwant Singh, Kamala Markandaya, Ruth Praver Jhabvala, Anita Desai, Balachandra Rajan, Chaman Nahal, Arun Joshi and Salman Rushdie, of poets such as Rabindra Nath Tagore, Nissim Ezekiel, A. K. Ramanujan, Kamala Das, Keki Daruwalla, Arun Kolatkar, Jayanta Mahapatra, R. Parthasarathy, Gieve Patel and Shiv K. Kumar, of playwrights like Aurobindo Ghose, T. P. Kailasam, Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, Bharati Sarabhai, Gurcharan Das and Asif Currimbhoy, and the non-fictional prose writers such as Swami Vivekananda, M. K. Gandhi, J. L. Nehru, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, S. Radhakrishnan and Nirad C. Chaudhuri, all bear ample testimony to a rich tra-

dition of Indian writing in English and to India's impressive contribution to world literature.

Historical and critical studies of Indo-Anglian literature which have appeared in the last thirty years speak candidly about its strengths and shortcomings. The monumental and shrewd works of literary historians such as K. R. Srinivasa Iyengar, V. K. Gokak, M. K. Naik and C. D. Narasimhaiah have been responsible for greatly improving our understanding of Indian literature in English. In the last decade or so, many useful critical studies of individual authors and genres, collections of critical essays, and bibliographical guides have been published by such eminent houses as Arnold-Heinemann, Oxford University Press, Allied Publishers, Vikas, Macmillan, Vimal Prakashan, and Gale Research Company. There is growing evidence that Indo-Anglian literature is being subjected to established critical standards, and that Rajan's advice of "judging by results" has been taken seriously by both Indian and foreign scholars.

This special issue of *ARIEL*, like many special numbers of other academic journals devoted to Indo-Anglian literature, is a small but sincere tribute to the creativity of Indian writers in English and the concomitant critical activity in this field. Our selection of critical articles and the poems can be by no means comprehensive. But we have been able to examine the works of two major writers of fiction, Raja Rao and R. K. Narayan, two highly promising younger novelists, Arun Joshi and Salman Rushdie, two widely acclaimed poets, Nissim Ezekiel and Keki Daruwalla, and one famous playwright, Asif Currimbhoy. For want of space, we were not able to include two excellent but lengthy studies of Indo-Anglian poetry and drama which we received. Our poetry selection has been determined primarily by our desire to represent a variety of Indian themes, depicting India in its immense beauty and its equally immense squalor; its mythopoeic heritage and its modern reality. We hope that this special issue, in spite of its enforced limitations of space, will help to give some insight into the vitality and health of an impressive literature and culture.

I.N.K.

C.S.W.