Language of silence

The stories of Manoj Das have the fullness of the human psyche. An interview

HILE formulating a story, I think in the language of silence. Let me explain. I allow this experience or inspiration to become a feeling in me, a process that goes in silence. When the feeling is well-formulated, I sit down to write. In which language should I write? Well! that depends on some immediate factors. If I have promised a story to an English magazine, or if the magazine I used to edit till recently, Heritage, needed a story, I would be writing in English. If I have promised a story to my Oriya publishers, I write in Oriya. Most of my stories figure in both the languages," says Manoj Das.

Das is a bilingual Indian author of more than 50 publications, the winner of Sahitya Akademi (1972) and Sarala Awards (1980). He has won the Oriya Sahitya Akademy award twice — in 1965 and 1989, along with several other awards and recognitions. His highly applauded creations include collections of stories and poems, travelogues, novels, children's literature or philosophical writings — in each of the two languages he writes in — English and Oriya.

Storyteller

Ever since his first collection of short stories in English was published in 1967, he has been considered a powerful Indo-Anglican I was pict in Jaco pour full Indo-Anglican I was pack to say how thanking

Yours
Roger H. Klein.

Harper and Row of New York.
They're one of America's most prestigeous publishing houses, and Mr. Klein, I knew, was one of their senior editors. He could hardly have been as overwhelmed by my two books as I had been by his letter.

If there is ever a chance to publish your work in this country, I could assure you of my most enthusiastic efforts to get your books the wide attention they deserve,

of such sweep and yet powerful narrative. I read them through without stopping.

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age, I thought I could present a chunk of genuine India. Well! right or wrong, one is entitled to one's faith in oneself."

Aurobindo bhakta

An acknowledged and authentic interpreter of India's culture and heritage as he is, the elegant drawing room of his cute little cottage in Pondicherry, where he had come to stay in 1963, drawn to the spiritual teachings of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, exhibits in its splendid silence the robustness of his readings through the hundreds of books on diverse aspects kept in an orderly manner. And the man sitting across the glasstopped table is in himself a store-house of information, experiences and creative expressions.

When a student at the Balasore Zilla School he turned a Marxist, for he felt that was the only way to secure a panacea for human misery. In his college days, Manoj Das found himself caught in the political vortex of the '50s — willingly or willy nilly — leading students' and peasants' demonstrations; spending a term in jail at Cuttack and in 1956, taking an active part in the Afro-Asian Students' Conference at Bandung.

I was reminded of all this by the coincidence of my having come upon a letter, discoloured and crumbling at the edges, which I received nearly thirty years ago. It ceived nearly thirty years ago. It ceived nearly thirty years ago. It discoloured and coincidence of my having come crumbling at the edges, which I received nearly thirty years ago. It ceived nearly thirty years ago. It coincidence of my having come coincidence of my having come and in the coincidence of my having come and it is a letter of the coincidence of my having coincidenc

The frontispiece of this commemorative volume bears the date of Sir Jadunath's 87th birthday — May 10, 1957. But the book itself was far from ready. In the event it was ready for presentation to Sir Jadunath only a couple of slas, still not in time. Sir Jadunath alas, still not in time. Sir Jadunath commemorative volume for his commemorative volume for his commemorative volume for his humously.

ish historian, Professor Dodwell, agreed to be editor for the volume.

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Manoj Das: exploring a rich 'reality'

therefore, does not have the right to dismiss the experiences of the other two as unreal.

Dubbing one's freedom of whims, misused as licentiousness, as an illusory one, the writer says that the real freedom is that of the inner spirit, which no social structure or system can curb or deform. In ancient India, one could subscribe to different faiths. One of the world's atheists, Charvaka has been given the status of a rishi in spiritual India. The Avadhutas did not subscribe to any cult at all whatsoever. The tradition has to be revived in the modern context. But two things need to be guarded.

stimulating so many hungers and its survival depends on keeping the hungers alive, for, to satisfy them would be self-defeating to it. In this context, he judges the role of the growing eroticism in literature today. Elaborating on this point, he observes that erotic sculpture is not novel to India. But, interestingly, and intriguingly, it was to be seen either on the outer walls of a temple or in a form where its eroticism was totally subdued by its art. It was never known to have created any law and order problem, unlike today.

