

The Vengeance and other Stories.

By Manoj Das. (Sterling, Rs 35).

THIS is yet another collection of short stories by the Orissa-born Indo-Anglian writer who has made a deserving name for himself. This anthology proves once again that he can empathize with the human condition as well as he can narrate a story. The heroes of his tales are anti-heroes and all the more real and lovable for it. Among others, there is the General, veteran of glorious battles, reduced to the level of a nervous adolescent with stage fright when called to play a small part in a college play; there is Binu who has basked in his role as the murderer of the village's hated money-lender till the day his victim suddenly reappears, there is the dear old Miss Moberly living out memories of past loves as she flings crumbs to her pets named after the men who had wooed and deserted her, and there is Vilas Singh of the title story, deprived of his vengeance by a trick of destiny. Manoj Das's stories are told well, directly and simply, and often with tongue firmly in cheek. Though he writes often for a foreign readership, he does not self-consciously cater to it by casting the Indian ethos in the expected mould which perhaps explains the universal appeal of his characters.

—B.J.K.

The Statesman

29-03-1981