PREFACE

With the advent on the Indian poetic scene of A.K. Ramanujan and R. Parthasarathy, highly self-conscious as they are about their artistic identity, a process of the unchaining of the Muse in the field of Indian poetry in English in the post-colonial period has begun. The Indian poet's consciousness of his Indianness, the tension arising from his use of English which has no roots in the living idiom and environment of his native language have resulted in a situation where the poet is overawed as it were by the predicament in which he is caught.

Whereas early poets like Toru Dutt were interested in evoking Indian legend in their poetry, Ramanujan addressed himself to the question of using English, "the language of least compromise," in order that in a fusion of the most ancient and the most modern, a distinctive Indian voice is heard. Parthasarathy, seized as he is with the problem of the ecology of language and the process of acculturation to which a poet can subject language, in his attempts to establish an indigenous tradition of poetry in English in India has aligned
himself increasingly with Indian literature. Even in the case of a poet writing in his own native tradition, the conventions at his disposal do not certainly lessen his agony of "self-election." Men of "mixed sensibility." Ramanujan and Parthasarathy reveal the proverbial Indian capacity for assimilation and create in their poetry an image of the challenge the poet faces in a society transforming itself from the agrarian to the urban, industrial ethos. "Whoring after English gods" and seeking to discover their identity in "English chains," these disinherited poets, engaged in a quest for roots, forge an idiom in which they blend two cultural traditions in the discovery of their cultural past, through of course, gnostic odysseys into it. They achieve thereby a secularization of the sacred idiom. In the process, the dialectics of engagement of the self with a variety of familial and cultural institutions, myth, legend, and history is revealed. Also, in subtle ways a variety of images drawn from Indian antiquity insinuate themselves in the poetry. The poetry of Ramanujan and Parthasarathy, with its suggestions of meanings drawn from the impact of multiculturalism on their sensibility, has offered itself as a richly rewarding and stimulating subject of study.
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