

Current Topics

YET another Indian-born novelist, Mr. Venkatesh Kulkarni, is now making waves in the literary magazines of the United States and Britain. His maiden novel, "Naked In Deccan", has received critics' attention and has got reviews whose language borders on hyperbole. "With spare and passionate language the author shows us the great complexities of India and presents them with searching philosophical intensity," says the *Bloomsbury Review*. The *Baltimore Sun* calls it "a... brilliantly crafted... classic". Alan Paton says it is "an extraordinary book" and the magazine *Bestsellers* recommends: "read this novel—twice!"

"Naked In Deccan" has been called "stunningly original". Mr Kulkarni has been compared with Ignazio Silone and even Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and described as a writer whose talent "may become a force in shaping fiction in both India and the West". Whatever the truth of

these claims, the book has been a great success commercially. The first edition, which has had a run of 60,000 copies, will soon be followed by a second in November; and according to Mr. Kulkarni's publishers, it is expected to be translated into 34 languages. Interestingly, the novel was rejected over seven years by as many as 375 publishers before a small humanities publishing firm in the U.S. decided to risk printing it. It soon claimed the BCF American book award for "literary excellence" and since then there has been no looking back for the author and his publisher.

Third World Novel

Mr. Kulkarni's success, preceded by the better known case of Mr.

World novel written by a Third World writer, contemporary and with a wide compass. The latest

Another Rushdie? New Literary Genre

example of this is that of a New Delhi-based social scientist, Mr. Amitabh Ghosh, who has signed a handsome contract with a British publisher for a novel that is expected among literary circles to make a big splash within a few months. Apparently the release of the book is being timed to coincide with both a seasonal market upturn and the listing of possible candidates for book prizes. Ironically—and regrettably—no Indian publishers have played even a marginal role in promoting the new, young talented writers or risked publishing any of their works. While this does underscore the sorry state of publishing in the country, now in a deep crisis, it also reveals the existence of a mechanism for recognition of Indian writers which, it would appear, must be routed via the West. For few Indian writers of English seem to receive any kind of recognition here unless they have made a name in the First World to start with.