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I was furious when V.S. Naipaul casually said that mine is " a country without a mind ". But I knew what he meant, and if we confine that remark to the contemporary scene, I couldn't help but agree with him!

Many people have expressed surprise that I was allowed to get away with the kind of things I said in *As I Please* in a country like Malaysia and in an establishment newspaper like the *New Straits Times*. The fact that an intelligent man and a Malay was chief editor, explains the freedom I was tacitly granted. I personally didn't think it was a matter of courage.

Commonsense - that's basically what's needed.

Born on the stroke of midnight, July 4th 1941, and educated in Australia (where his teacher was the distinguished Australian poet James McAuley), Salleh Ben Joned has been a freelance writer since he left the cosy world of Malaysian academia (English Dept., Univ. of Malaya), ten years ago. His first book, a bilingual collection of poems, *Sajak-sajak Saleh: Poems Sacred and Profane*, was published in 1987. *As I Please* is his second book. A substantial volume of poetry, *Adam's Dream*, consisting of old and new poems (English versions of his Malay poems and new poems) is scheduled to appear in 1995.

Salleh has also written a few plays and film scripts, the most important of these being a play in two languages, *Amuk*

Mat Solo/ The Amok of Mat Solo. For various reasons, among which is the sensitive nature of its subject and treatment, it has never been staged. *Mat Solo* has been completely rewritten in English. For some years, he has been working on an epic novel in English about an apostate, *Mat Zak*.

He is currently in the U.S.A. as a freelance journalist in rural Pennsylvania. His other preoccupations include minding two screaming kids and killing himself trying to be finally done with the burdensome apostate. *Insha' Allah* - God Willing, the challenging ambience of satanic sexually-harrassed America will prove conducive to the much delayed, much anticipated birth of one *Mat Zak* as well as his twin brother, the twice-circumcised *Mat Solo*.

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Salleh Ben Joned

AS I PLEASE

Selected Writings 1975-1994

Introduction
by
Margaret Drabble

Afterword
by
Adibah Amin



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