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MUSINGS

Vol. I. No.4

FREE ISSUE — EVERY FORTNIGHT

June 1, 1991

The dynastic tragedy of our times

(By A Special Correspondent)

In the midst of life we are in death. But few families anywhere in the world have been more in the midst of violent or untimely death than the Nehru family and their kin. Even the Kennedys, that other great political dynasty, or the Bandaranaiques, have not suffered more than the Nehrus, over the last 60 years, as India's 'first family' sought to keep that trust with destiny.

Kamala Nehru died young, keeping a trust with years of illness. She was

37 and had been tubercular ever since her only child Indira Priyadarshani was born.

Her son-in-law, Feroze Gandhi, died long before his time after enjoying too much of the good things of life and too little of a home of his own.

Jawaharlal Nehru lived his Biblical span and more, but throughout those years he saw and lived with more death by violence than almost any other world leader. For a non-violent



movement, the Independence struggle had a long record of bloody violence. And the holocaust that followed, after Nehru agreed to the partition of India in the face of Gandhiji's opposition, tore away once and for all the facade of non-violence that one man had tried to erect in a subcontinent whose history was bathed in blood. The massacres of that bloody convulsion and the constant fear of repetition that lurked behind every communal riot haunted Nehru all his life.

Sixteen years after Nehru's death, his grandson, Sanjay Gandhi, feared by millions, crashed to death as he pursued one of his several obsessions, flying. His mother, Indira Gandhi, fell to assassins' bullets in her own garden in 1984. And now, her elder son, Rajiv, the man who did not want to become a politician, has been killed because he became a successful one.

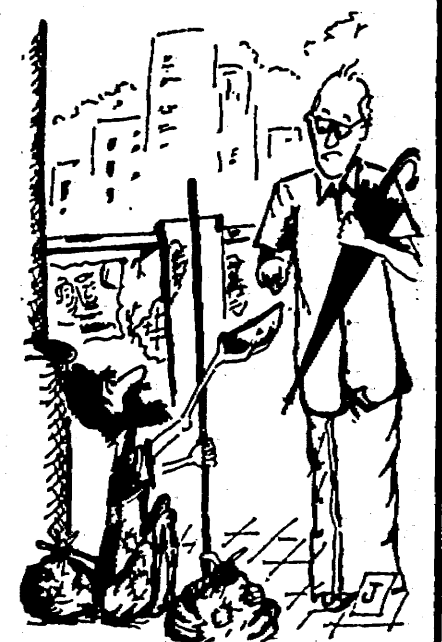
Is that the end of the Nehru dynasty in the politics of India? Sonia Gandhi had hated the idea of Rajiv Gandhi becoming a politician; she would have happily traded all the power that goes with national leadership for life as the wife of a pilot, meeting for the rest of her life only with the families of friends who were pilots, advertising whiz kids, boxwallahs and journalists. But in the last few years, she had appeared to resign herself to what was fated and had become the comfortably Hindi-speaking "Mother of Amethi", nursing her husband's constituency as few other parliamentarians did theirs. Now, unsought by her, she has been summoned to lead her husband's party.

She has wisely refused, but will she be persuaded otherwise? Or will she

choose to contest Amethi and nurse a seat on the fringes of Congress power till her son Rahul and daughter Priyanka finish university and get ready to continue the succession? On the other hand, will she embitteredly pack up and leave with her children for Italy, or the U.S., where Rahul is studying, leaving India to its bloodstained politics and tragic fate as a nation losing its sense of values and making its citizens anguishedly wonder, together with the editorialist, "Is this the country we want to live in?"

As this is written, Sonia Gandhi's decision remains uncertain. But everyone has his or her own version of an answer for her. Only time will tell.

MANALI RAMAN...



Only ten paise, Saar?! Please be generous; I only need another Rs. 50 to buy a colour TV

IN MAD, MAD MADRAS

An Assassin's Strength

(By A Correspondent)

The masses, crazed by the sudden death of a beloved hero, will always heap abuse — and often worse — on those it unthinkingly feels could have prevented it. But do thinking persons have to join this ugly chorus against the Tamil Nadu Police?

That Force has for years had the reputation of being among the best in the country. If medals in competition alone prove excellence, there could be no better Force than Tamil Nadu's in India. But in the last few years its morale has been gradually eroded as the politicians had its leadership playing musical chairs between Law and Order and Tourism, Transport Corporations and other departments.

In this state of partial demoralisation and uncertainty, this Force has, over the past few weeks, been further burdened. There's been election campaigns more bitter and violence-threatening than ever before, visits of campaigning VIPs from all over the country, a watch on the LTTE and other militant groups — including several of Tamil Nadu's own minuscule ones — and more than the usual number of murders and dacoities (several of them in unlikely and high profile middle-class neighbourhoods). A morale-weakened, over-stretched, extra-weary force was unlikely to be at its alertest during the last days of such a hectic electoral period.

But even if it had been wide awake and fully alert, there was no way it could have stopped Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. That is the lesson of History. Political assassination is something the most efficient, most alert security services have not been able to stop from the time of... well, Abraham Lincoln is who first comes to the mind's stage and then the Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria, dying in Sarajevo and exploding on the world World War I.

Gandhiji at a crowded prayer meeting, Bandaranaike in the crowded drawing room of his well-guarded mansion, John Kennedy during a drive down a highway guarded every few yards by security men, Oswald in the Law's own precincts, Robert Kennedy in a crowded hotel corridor, Anwar Sadat while taking the salute at a national military parade, Indira Gandhi in her own garden, Ranjan Wijeyratne, with one of the best trained commando teams to guard him and travelling in one of the most armoured cars in the world on that last drive to his office, ... NONE OF THESE ASSASSINATIONS COULD HAVE BEEN PREVENTED!

If an assassin is prepared to sacrifice his or her life for some higher cause, no matter how misguided it be, there is no security service or police force on earth that can save the intended victim. And that was why they could not stop Rajiv Gandhi being killed. Not because the Tamil Nadu police was careless or incompetent or uncaring, but because someone out there was prepared for the supreme sacrifice to get his or her target. The root of the very word 'assassin' ensures that.

The only way an assassin fails is if the equipment fails or if he or she misses — which is why Reagan lived to tell the tale. But if assassins don't miss, then nations lose their leaders. And there's no use blaming their protectors for the spilt blood. In this instance, several of them laid down their lives, unsung by politicians, the press or the masses, as they bunched around the man whom there was no way they could stop from being killed. In the end, Destiny will have its way. And a happier, greater and more prosperous India was not to be Rajiv Gandhi's. But that leaves the greater question unanswered.

The answer to assassination would appear not to be greater and more improved security but ways and means to negotiate less militancy. But who ever wants to negotiate to ensure that?

ACME — 'Asia's Harvard' by 1993

It's a nice feeling to be able to say that, new as we are, we were there first. Now we can add more of the details to that advance notice. Like, Madras's challenger to the IIMs (MM — 15.5.91) will very likely be called the Academy for Management Excellence, appropriately abbreviated to ACME. Also that V Narayanan has called it a day with Pond's and Lever's and is concentrating on making ACME a reality. And that A. L. Mudaliar, of that distinguished Madras academic family, and Vaghul, Chairman of the Industrial Credit and Investment Corporation of India (ICICI) and a Madras man, will, together with Narayanan, constitute the steering committee.

ACME, which will be associated with the Institute of Financial and Managerial Research — a part of ICICI — will start functioning from July 1993 on the IMFR's campus. Meanwhile, it's hoping for about 100 acres of land from Government. ICICI will participate in the funding, adding its muscle to the industrial backing. A Rs. 10 crore seed funding is Narayanan's aim.

Setting ACME the task of becoming "Asia's Harvard", Narayanan plans to get the Academy going with an 18-month MBA programme. But he hopes

to introduce doctoral programmes and a three-year BBA course as well. London Business School, Wharton in the US and a leading Japanese business school are likely to be linked with all these programmes.

No arches again?

(By a Staff Reporter)

The arches won't go up again, consumer activist Sriram Panchu told *Madras Musings* the other day. He was referring to those towering arches of casuarina poles and painted cloth that block the city streets every time there is a political VIP visiting or a Party celebration.

The consumer movement had got a stay against the erection of such arches in the city. A magistrate had ruled that they were not only dangerous but also inconvenienced the public.

But when *Madras Musings* pointed out that giant cut-outs and hoardings were still standing, blocking the sidewalks of the city, he said the consumer movement had tried to get them removed too. But the magistrate, contrary to what had appeared in some newspapers had not upheld the consumer activists' view on this.

If only that cut-out that fell on a vehicle and damaged it — but fortunately caused no harm to its passengers — if only it had fallen ten days later, the magistrate would have taken our point, Panchu raved. But there'll be another day, he promised.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Tamil Nadu prides itself on being different. And so what is Mahatma Gandhi Road in all other cities of India is Uththamar Gandhi Road in Madras, the new name for Nungambakkam High Road. Similarly:

Sriperumbudur may be the name recognised by the Survey of India, the final authority on geographical names

in India, but many of the milestones in the area read THIRUPERUMBUDUR.

This town by any name will, however, go into history as the place where one woman brought into this world one of the three great Hindu philosopher-saints of South India and another took away from it one of India's most secular leaders.

A film of no help

NTR's *Brahmarishi Vishwamitra* was the film that the Telugu Desam leader hoped would bring the National Front back to power. But, according to all reports, the rishi NTR cavorting with scantily clad Meenakshi Seshadri of Bollywood, the numerous other titillating sequences and the "gross essay in crudity that the film is", not only failed to draw the more sophisticated crowds of today but also proved an embarrassment to other members of the Front. No wonder V P Singh and our own M Karunanidhi did not want the Hindi and Tamil versions released at polls time. They were convinced the dubbed versions would harm their efforts more than help them.

Cricket diplomacy

Former Sri Lanka Minister, ardent J R Jayawardene supporter and Presidential contender Gamini Dissanayake is being charged with kidnapping in Colombo. But in Madras he should be better remembered as the man who made the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord possible through a bit of cricket diplomacy.

Dissanayake was at that time President of the Sri Lanka Cricket Control Board and the Board had an unofficial representative living in Madras. Chandra Schaffter, a Sri Lankan Tamil who had opened bowling for his country and captained its hockey team, had settled in Madras after the trauma of 1983. And Schaffter was in touch with N Ram of *The Hindu*, a cricket enthusiast who was once a potential state wicket-keeper.

This three-way cricket link led to the Sri Lankan President on one side and Rajiv Gandhi on the other. And those two hammered out the Accord using this cricketing conduit. It's a backroom story that Ram might yet write one day.

Fracturing a link

Prince Charles may be separated from Princess Diana — nowadays the Press talks not of separate bedrooms but even of separate houses — but he doesn't let that sad end to a fairytale romance stop him from continuing to tilt at windmills — which, by the way, is said to have been one of the things that first irked her.

He has apparently been worrying about the worldwide spread of "broken English" and, while revealing his fears of its becoming an international language, to a British Council audience in Brno, Czechoslovakia, he quoted someone else

who had feared for the same language. Nehru, he said, had worried that the English spoken in Bombay would one day be so different from that spoken in Madras that the people of the two cities would be unable to communicate in any language at all. Perhaps the answer might be an Indian English dictionary.

What's in a number?

The daily Sri Lankan scoreboard — Ours killed, Their's killed — has perhaps made numbers somewhat meaningless to its citizens. Perhaps that's why newspapers there recently reported that 1.5 million people had gathered at the city's famed lung, Galle Face Green, to hear

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

Vani Jayaraman sing. They appear to have gathered for the concert which was part of Government's May Day rally. The same papers reported that only 300,000 assembled in Beijing for its May Day Celebrations!

The curious thing about the Colombo figures is that the city's population is just about that! No wonder Vani Jayaraman said that the audience was the biggest she had sung before!

Perhaps the Madras singer is the answer not only to the Sinhala-Tamil problem but also the Indo-Sri Lanka one!

Baby Ashram

Meena Muthiah started the Chettinad Vidhyashram, strengthening Western-oriented education with Indian-oriented cultural training in the manner J Krishnamurthy did at Rishi Valley. Now it's become the way to go in up-market education in Madras and the latest to join the stream is filmstar Rajnikanth's wife Latha.

Her school, The Ashram, starts this June in Abhiramapuram and offers something different as well: A 'Baby Sitter Class'. It is presumed the class is for the "age group 6 months to 2 years" that's advertised and not for the training of sitters.

Trees for health

Madras Refineries' campus in Manali is about 600 acres in extent. About 400 acres more are being added to it to provide space for its many extension activities. And all this space will, if MRL also meets with horticultural success, become parkland. Already 100,000 trees have been planted on the campus. Now another lakh of trees are scheduled to be planted

this year. And still more trees will be planted in the years ahead. These trees, says Chairman and Managing Director H Krishnamurthy, will promote environmental health — and that's the need of the industrial belt in north Madras. Imagine factories in a forest!

Training for Service

Did you know that presidents of Rotary Clubs undergo training for their post before they accept office? President-elects of 85 clubs in the Madras region district had a two-day training session at Silver Sands on public speaking, communicating in Tamil, public relations, project planning, fund raising etc. But what surprised an outsider who

attended was the information that Rotary District Governors-elect also have to undergo a similar training programme — only it is an intense three-week one held somewhere in the US annually! And if you're not at the sessions that start at 8 sharp every morning throughout the training period, the Sergeant-at-Arms will be after you! There must be easier ways to participate in club management.

Bargain proposal

OVERHEARD: A public sector executive visited his kin, a senior Tamil Nadu education officer, and requested a favour. 'Uncle' somehow had to get a college seat for the son of the executive's boss. No problem for you, Son, said the EO, but I want a favour in return. There's this girl who's related to my wife and we must find her a husband soon. No problem, said the executive, and returned the next morning with a proposal from someone in his family. And marriages, they say, are made in heaven!

MMM

Number in school

I feel *Madras Musings* fills a definite gap in Madras Society. Among the articles I read with interest in your issue of 15.5.91 was 'Awesome Power of Primary Schools'. Apropos this article:

Tamil Nadu's population today, as per 1991 census, is over 5.56 crores. Its population will cross the 6.5 crore mark easily by 2000. It is estimated the number of children in primary schools will increase to 65.47 lakhs and the number of children in middle schools will be 35.08 lakhs. The demand for additional teachers by the turn of the century will be 81,850. One per cent of the population and 12 per cent of the population working in the sectoral group 'Other Services' will be teachers by 2001. We require corresponding additional investment in buildings and equipment-also. This would run in to astronomical figures. How are we preparing for this?

Dr K Venkatasubramanian
(former Vice-Chancellor,
Madurai Kamaraj University &
Annamalai University)
2 Judge Jambulingam Rd — 600 004.

No Teutonic detail

Madras Musings — sophisticated editing, aesthetically satisfying and informally informative without reflecting a Teutonic overthrust for detail.

A Ranganathan
852 Poonamallee H. Rd-600 010.

Will this tragic loss spell a changed future?

The single most important contribution Rajiv Gandhi made to the Indian economy was to try and free it from its traditional archaic mindset. Those industrialists and businessmen who got the opportunity to meet him and have discussions with him talk about his genuine commitment to progress, his refreshing ideas and his receptiveness.

Although the diehard socialists disagree, the liberalisation of the economy set in motion by Rajiv in the mid-eighties did make the country progress much faster than ever. A huge backlog of pent up demand was beginning to be satisfied. Not only was the middle class dream being fulfilled, but an entirely new middle class was being created. Suddenly the concept of competition was introduced in the economy. People woke up to the fact that they had a choice. They could buy two-wheelers and colour televisions off the shelf.

When broadbanding of the automobile sector was announced (being allowed to manufacture an entire range of vehicles without running around for licences), the Madras-based TVS group, which was making mopeds, shook off its conservatism and went in for the manufacture of motor cycles with Japanese collaboration. In fact, TVS Suzuki was the first 100 motorcycle to hit the market. Enfield also followed suit with its German two-wheelers. Dyanora and Solidaire TVs could think of becoming national brands for the first time. When MRTP restrictions (putting a freeze on growth depending on the value of the assets of a company) were relaxed, family-controlled groups like Sanmar and TTK could take off. They very fact that they grew rapidly shows what the unleashing of restrictions can do to entrepreneurs.

With liberalised imports to aid exports, the Tamil Nadu cotton spinning industry grew rapidly. Textile mills were modernised and now the State accounts

for forty per cent of yarn exports in the country. The state also now plays a lead role in leather and granite exports.

As is well known, many things went wrong later in his regime. Rajiv did not see the liberalisation process through. His political advisers made him pay lip service to the public sector and socialist principles. His government got bogged down by controversies and scandals. And one justifiable criticism against him is that not enough attention was paid to agriculture.

Creating a middle class alone is not enough. If the agricultural sector could be encouraged to create more wealth and, in turn, have access to more purchasing power, the economy can really come into its own. And if that had happened, Tamil Nadu, with its agricultural tradition, could have gone places.

BUSINESS REVIEW by THE SHROFF

Why did Rajiv fail to do the many things that he wanted to do? According to a Madras industrialist who met him a few months ago, Rajiv candidly admitted that he had found it difficult to change the set ways of bureaucrats and had difficulty handling them.

May be, Rajiv later learnt some lessons from past mistakes. Certainly his stint as an opposition leader would have provided him with some new insights. He would have been the better for that experience when, as was expected, he returned to power. And with his ally Jayalalitha also expected to romp home in the State, one can now only speculate on what Tamil Nadu has missed. Will the equations so tragically changed spell a different future for commerce and industry in the State?

And shares too!

Madras Musings is informative, interesting and covers a wide range of subjects, including the Share Market.

V K Padmanabhan
(former President, Madras Stock Exchange)
8/3 Second Street
Kasturi-Estates-600 086.

Keep batting

Madras Musings caters to all needs of a reader — Sports, Politics, Cinema, Human Interest, Health — and this trend should be kept up. After seeing a few more issues I might pass on some suggestions. You have started very well. As you are on a good batting wicket, stay in and pile up as many runs as possible.

R Vasudevan
127, 5th Avenue
Kalpakam-603 102

Initial interest

I found Quizzin' very interesting. All up to date questions; nothing old. It will only reveal how well we read our daily newspaper. Incidentally, the answer to Question No. 23 (15.4.91), Nobel Laureate, is Dr Paul A Samuelson, not D as printed. Meena Reddy
41, 7th Avenue
Ashok Nagar-600 083.

OUR READERS WRITE

Fascinating Spectrum

Your fortnightly is most delightful to go through, what with its fascinating spectrum of meaty news, informative articles, candid comments on current topics, interesting anecdotes, snappy asides etc. I am sure it is being read with avidness by all types of people — the politician, the economist, the young and the old alike. With its wit and humour it is mirth-provoking and with its critical observations it is thought-provoking.

A guard & saviour

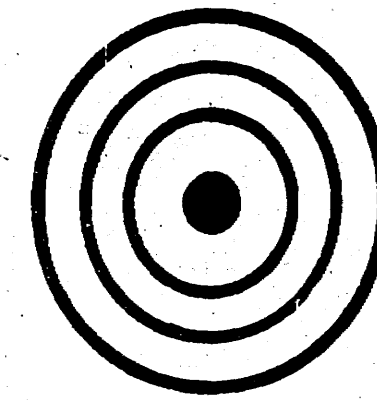
I enjoyed reading all the columns of *Madras Musings*. Some of your timely nudgings might save a monument or two in the city and guard a few trees from the builder's axel. Preema Nandakumar
91 South Chitrai Street
Tichy-620 006.

Invest in companies, not the market

We had counselled against the buying on impulse of any name that is discovered through a tip. The discovery of a name is not a buy signal. It is merely a lead to a story that needs to be developed. A share should be bought only after the name identified has been fully evaluated and explored. However, it should also be remembered that, in matters related to the market, decisions often have to be taken without complete or perfect information. Things never become clear until it is too late. It is true to state that if a person needs to know all the facts, he will be denied profits in the market. All that we are warning readers against is following gut feelings. A happy *via media* between perfect information and 'gut feeling' needs to be worked out. Speculating is investing without examination or conviction, while investing is purchase of stocks with a conviction. The stock market victimises the unconvinced and rewards intelligent decisions.

Once good stocks are picked up, they go up without relevance to the predictions about the market. When prices remain depressed due to poor sentiment, an opportunity to buy stocks that can appreciate becomes available. Pick the right stock and let the market take care of itself. The rule is "invest in companies and not in the market". If this concept is understood, the present time should be thought of as an excellent opportunity to buy stocks that are growth-oriented. The uncertainty of the elections has been compounded with the assassination of our former Prime Minister and this is sure to keep the market greatly depressed.

We advocate the buying of the best grower — not necessarily the strongest name. Growth in net profits is reflected in the appreciation of the share's price. Stocks that have "arrived" and which are thought of as standard stocks need not necessarily be good growers. Even among them, growth becomes possible



BULL'S EYE

only when there is a significant increase in turnover and profits. Cash rich companies that trundle along with a steady turnover and profit are unlikely to record significant capital growth in their share's prices. Further, the share price of some of the largest and best managed companies in the country, known to the public for periods of 5 to 20 years, are known to have fallen if the businesses that they are in are cyclical. In other words, the key to identification of a good "grower" is not the strength of the company, but its plans for profit and growth and, the likelihood of these plans materialising.

Good growers can also be identified from among 4 to 5-year-old companies which have struggled to establish their business and are now about to realise their dreams. They may also be found among newer corporations that have

not yet definitely established their position in their particular field in the industry, but are now about to do so. Small, aggressive new enterprises are another type.

That can make for the buyer phenomenal profits. A fast-growing share could also belong to a turnover candidate — often a situation in which a bankrupt company finds itself positioned inside another perfectly good company. If purchases are made among any of these fast growers, then, you just have to be patient, keep up with the news and await a price growth with dispassion. Prices of these shares will grow without relevance to the gyrations of the market. Precept number three is, therefore, "Buying the best grower, not necessarily the strongest name".

Here are three suggestions for this fortnight:

Gujarat Lease Financing Ltd. (Current Market Price — Rs. 35.75): This leasing and hire purchase company promoted by GITC, which went public recently at a premium of Rs. 5/-, was oversubscribed 27.5 times. It has been listed recently. The performance of the company has been excellent over the years, with steady growth in business despite severe competition. The shares are quoted at the Rs. 30/- level (MSE). It is expected to rise at the Rs. 60/- level in a year's time.

Autolex Industries Ltd. (Current Market Price — Rs. 42.75): The public issue of this company engaged in the manufacture of water pumps, oil pumps, fuel pumps, tensioner assemblies etc. was oversubscribed 15.2 times. The track record of the company is good. The company is currently implementing its expansion-cum-modernisation plans. On completion, turnover and profits are expected to increase considerably. The shares are actively traded in MSE. A price of Rs. 60/- is expected in a year's time.

Switching Technologies Gunther Ltd. (Current Market Price — Rs. 55.50): This 100% EOU promoted jointly by RRL, Madras, and W. Gunther GmbH of West Germany for the manufacture of reed switches went public in May, 89 and was oversubscribed over 26 times. For the 15 months ended March '91, the results are good. For the year '92 a dividend of 20% is anticipated. Buy now for a target price of Rs. 100 in a year and half.

K. GOPALAKRISHNAN

Quo Vadis, Tamil Cinema?

During a recent filmland function in the city, an annual event to honour a genius of South Indian cinema, K Rammoth, a top bracket Tamil film lyricist and poet, admitted, much to the delight of a large audience, that the Tamil movie industry was in reverse gear. With losses the order of the day and financiers being wiped out fast, it was high time for all those concerned with the industry to get together and seriously think about what the defects and deficiencies were and seek solutions to them. But, strangely, Tamil film people refuse to think. A person should think and then refuse, not refuse to think; the poet wisecracked in his mellifluous, alliterative Tamil. Someone later cracked, film chaps never think and thinking fellows never come into Tamil films — and if they did, they never stayed long, preferring to stray into greener pastures, like politics!

Joking apart, Tamil Cinema during its great and grand 60th year faces a serious situation. One, and only one, of every ten films earns a profit, one or two break even and the rest sink without raising a ripple. Cost-of-film production has zoomed skywards during the past few years. Skyrocketing star prices (Rajnikanth's asking rate is said to be close to five million rupees!), increasing prices of raw film stock, petrol, diesel, food — indeed everything has gone up a hundred-fold in the recent past. Not so long ago it was

possible to make a picture within a million. Today, even with rank newcomers, it is next to impossible to bring out a movie in less than Rs. 2½ million. And it is extremely tough to sell a movie with new faces.

The success of rape

One of the surprise successes of recent months is *En Rasavin Manasiley*, with a new face in Rajkiran, who is the producer too. The film music



wizard Ilayaraja has not only composed the music but also bought the distribution rights of the film. Even the titles pay homage to this inexplicable phenomenon of Indian cinema. He is the second, the first being that weaver of cinematic magic, M G Ramachandran.

A crudely made, loud film about rural life and a ruffian (who has plenty of colourful underwear to show!) marital adventure, it is packing the crowds. What makes it tick? The story is nothing to rave about, and, as usual,

there is plenty of violence; the hero has to rape his wife every time he wishes to go to bed with her.

Some critics feel it is this factor — the degradation of women, the female considered as a disposable commodity — which has contributed to the success of the film. If those critics are right, we unto Tamil cinema and *Thai Kulam*.

The reasons why

Many big budget films with superstars like Rajnikanth, Bhagyaraj and Satyaraj have not fared as well as expected at the box office and many film pursewallahs are licking their wounds.

What are the causes of these failures? The absence of a story element, the prime essential for the success of a motion picture. And the visual clichés, such as the songs, the dance numbers and the locations, all being very similar and familiar, making most Tamil films look alike! With alternative media of entertainment available, like TV and video, people are not willing to be fooled so easily as before.

The faults and follies are too many, obviously. The sooner the Tamil film industry leaders gather round the fire and begin to think about their problems, it would be the better for them, the movie business and all the Queen's men!

Sand in the spinach!

Art follows life, they say, but, occasionally, life too follows art. An instance of this is, an incredible tale of lust, and brutal murder, that shocked Tamil Nadu some time ago.

A tiny village in the Madurai district. An elderly man, Janakiraman, was found dead in bed in his lower middle-class home. He had gone to bed as usual the previous night and his health was as good as any male of his age. In the morning, his wife, Sundari, had found him dead and her screams brought the other members of the family — their sons Sami and Raju, and daughter Thayi — to the bedside. Then came the neighbours.

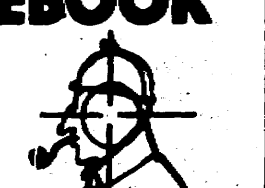
did not possess the kind of assets to cause murder.

The first break the police got came from some neighbours. They spoke of hearing vociferous quarrels between the father and son Sami. Curiously, such quarrels took place mostly at the dead of night! Never during the day, evening or early morning. Was the time of some significance, the police wondered. And decided to dig deeper.

Pressed, Thayi, the daughter of the family, stated that she too had witnessed such quarrels in which highly obscene words had been exchanged between father and son. What were they quarrelling about at that unearthly

CRIME NOTEBOOK

BY RANDOR GUY



Soon, whippers filled the grief-heavy atmosphere. The old man had not died a natural death! He was done to death. Murdered. As the whippers grew, someone in the village informed the police in Theni. And the police officer who rushed to the scene seized the body and sent it for post-mortem.

Yes, Janakiraman had been murdered. Strangled to death after being suffocated with an old pillow. The pathologist found fluffy material, cotton fibre and dirt in the nose and windpipe of the dead man. These were traced to the pillow with which the victim had been suffocated.

Who could have suffocated Janakiraman? The police got nowhere for a while. The murdered man had no enemies, not in his village or anywhere else. He was known to be a kind-hearted person, fond of children. Why then was such a man murdered in cold blood, in bed, in his own home? The police presumed that, as the murder had taken place in the victim's home and there were no signs or evidence of any intruders having forced their way in, it was obviously an inside job. Who?

Understandably, the police felt that dispute over property was the possible motive for the murder. But Janakiraman

hour? She would not say. Why not, the police wondered.

Every member of the family was now interrogated at length. Finally the mocking truth burst from the bag. The obscene, abuse-filled midnight quarrels were over a woman. The mother. To Sami, she was not only mother, but also mistress! Incredible! Yet true.

Janakiraman had found out that he and his son were sharing the same woman's bed, Sundari's. He nearly went mad and took his son to task. But the son would not change. Then came the unkindest cut.

Sundari was the motivating factor in that strange, searing sexual relationship! As the father was the sand in the spinach, the son and mother conspired to silence him for ever.

The 25-year old son and 40-year old mother were arrested and brought to trial before the Sessions Judge, Madurai. The younger son and daughter were the main prosecution witnesses. The judge found Sami guilty and sentenced him to death. The mother was acquitted.

Many refused to believe such things could happen in the land of Sathya and Savitri. But it did in this strange case of an Oedipus complex.

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What the stars foretold

(By a Staff Reporter)

This is a General Election which has had, besides its share of psephologists, a host of star-gazers. The latter breed, in full cry from early May, do not, however, appear to have got it right first time. Those who almost filled **The Telegraph's** Sunday magazine on May 12, just ten days before Rajiv Gandhi's assassination, almost to a man echoed Madras astrologer R Narayanan's view that "Rajiv Gandhi will scrape through and form a coalition government, but will have to watch out after 1½ years".

Several of these astrologers, however, foretold danger to a political leader, Prayag Bandopadhyay of Calcutta even going so far as to predict that "a sensational political assassination is likely before the elections — an attempt at it a certainty". However, he also forecast that "Rajiv Gandhi will head the country as the Prime Minister".

Other prophets of doom included J C Luthra and Lachman Das Madan, both of New Delhi. Luthra predicted that "violence will escalate...in the middle of May and stretch up to the first week of July... (with) a possibility of attacks on some political leaders". But he rather blotted his copybook by saying that "Rajiv Gandhi's horoscope is very strong.... After five or six months....attempts may be made to dislodge him from power, but after this, for the next four years, everything will run smoothly for him".

Madan, on the other hand, was the only astrologer who did not fancy Rajiv Gandhi's chances. "The possibility of Rajiv Gandhi becoming Prime Minister is very remote and even if he does it will be for a short period....Today the Congress (I)'s horoscope is very strong, but Rajiv Gandhi's is a drag (and

Congress may), just after the elections or little later have to accept the leadership of a person other than Rajiv Gandhi to be the PM". Madan also ruled out Chandrashekhar's chances of becoming PM again and warned "he faces a great physical risk between May 15 and July 5 and he must take care against this".

Jyoti Basu is Madan's prediction for PM. He said, "The astrological chart....shows that the people of the states will dictate terms....We will have a kind of national government.... Therefore the ultimate choice will be Jyoti Basu (who will) be elevated before the end of July 1991".

Bejan Daruwalla of Pune also saw a few clouds and warned that "elections may be postponed because of violence in the country or health problems — either indisposition, accident or operation — to L K Advani or Jyoti Basu". But he saw Rajiv Gandhi's future somewhat brighter — "this time he could have the edge over VP" — and stated categorically that "the worst phase for India (was) over in February 1991".

Echoing the same careful but bright note on Rajiv Gandhi's future was Acharya Raj of Bombay who predicted "Rajiv Gandhi will be the Prime Minister (and) will rule for a year-and-a-half or two". Shiv Shankar Bharti of Calcutta, however, struck the brightest note of all, saying "Victory is certain for Rajiv Gandhi — he is going through a bright phase of his career — (but this) does not necessarily mean victory for the Congress (I)".

That then is the scene in the country seen by seven "of our leading prediction pundits". The next few weeks will reveal how much further out — or in — the rest of their predictions will be.

With this issue's column I had hoped to exorcise myself of my morbid interest in politics after turning out a few well-worded barbs against the clowns who for the most part form its cast, but who would have expected that the circus would suddenly turn into a horror of Grand Guignol dimensions?!

It doesn't really require one to be an admirer or supporter of Rajiv Gandhi to be shocked by his death and horrified by the manner of it. The simple fact is that a young man in the prime of his life, with his own conception of what was good for the country — which he had every right to have — presentable in the extreme, blessed with a devoted wife and two handsome children, has been cut down in the most gruesome manner possible. If he was a threat to anyone, he was one only in the political process. It has become customary in our public life for our "leaders" to abuse one another at the drop of a hat. He was abused and reviled by a group of people all the time, but he hardly ever paid back in the same coin. His most noteworthy quality was decency, as most of the distinguished mourners at the funeral repeatedly stated, and as those close to him knew.

If any evidence were needed of the worth of the man, it was provided by the mourners who came from all over the world, and who included heads of states and leading statesmen. It was not just because Rajiv Gandhi had been a Prime Minister once, it was because of the stature he had acquired internationally for his country and for himself.

One felt a mild concern when one read about Rajiv Gandhi exposing himself to the crowd in the cow country and elsewhere north, unmindful of security, in his new-found realisation of the need for reaching out to the people. But it was given to him to come to his end at our own door-step, a few miles outside Madras, in a state where he

A horror of Grand Guignol dimesions

had always felt secure, where he had always felt welcome, where the warmth of the people toward him was unique. Can we ever live this down?

What about the role of the Tamil Nadu police? They are, of course, busy giving one another good chits, and cringingly trying to obtain them from Central officials. But there is enough evidence to show there was laxity from a security point of view. There was also that crowning accomplishment of theirs — running away from the spot when the bomb exploded — all of them

Others went about saying there would be no sympathy wave. The National Front objected to tributes being paid to Rajiv on AIR and Doordarshan, and shrilled that they were tantamount to propaganda. All this before the man's body had turned into ashes! We can expect no decorum and it will be a no holds barred fight from now on — even more so than before. The only mildly amusing episodes the tragic event provided were nearer home: there was one group screaming itself hoarse for the expulsion of the Sri Lankans, whom its late — departed leader had welcomed and championed, and there was the rival group, which had, just a week earlier, threatened to unleash a "class war" if it was not elected, now pleading abjectly with the Governor to call the army in to protect it and its cohorts.

There will be inquiries, investigations, many questions, but the answer will not bring the young leader back. That is the chilling core of truth.

He has outsoared the shadow of our night;

Envy and calumny and hate and pain,

And that unrest which men miscall delight

Can touch him not and torture not again;

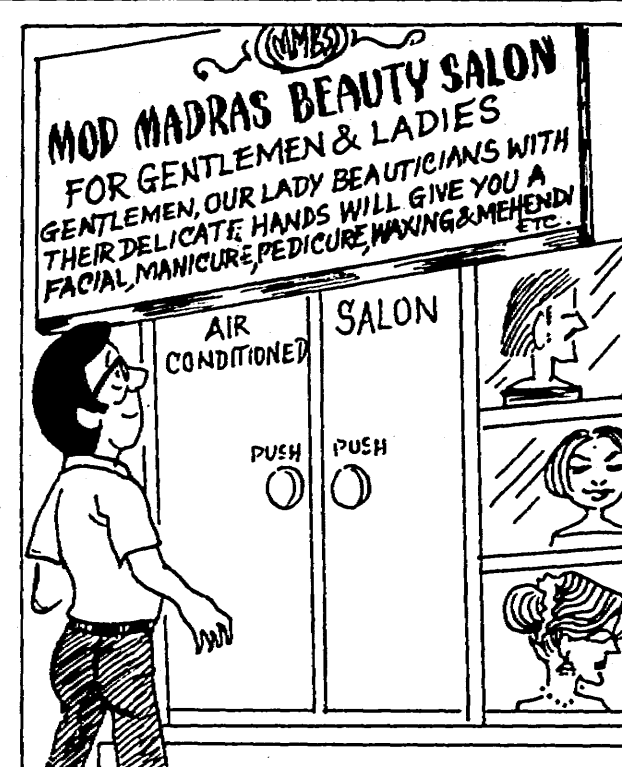
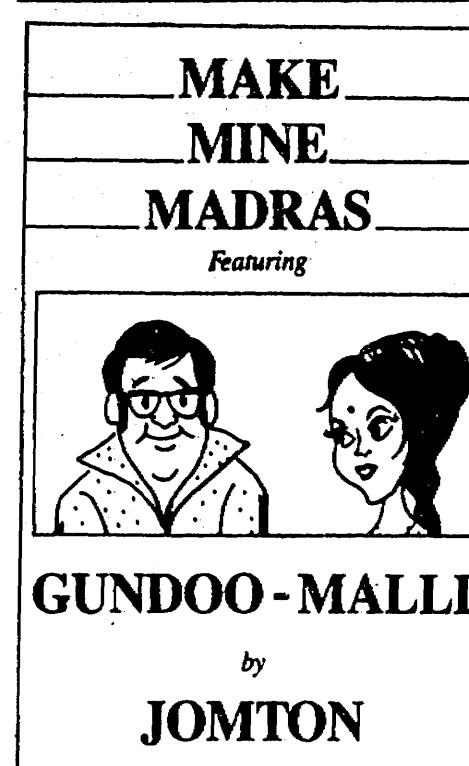
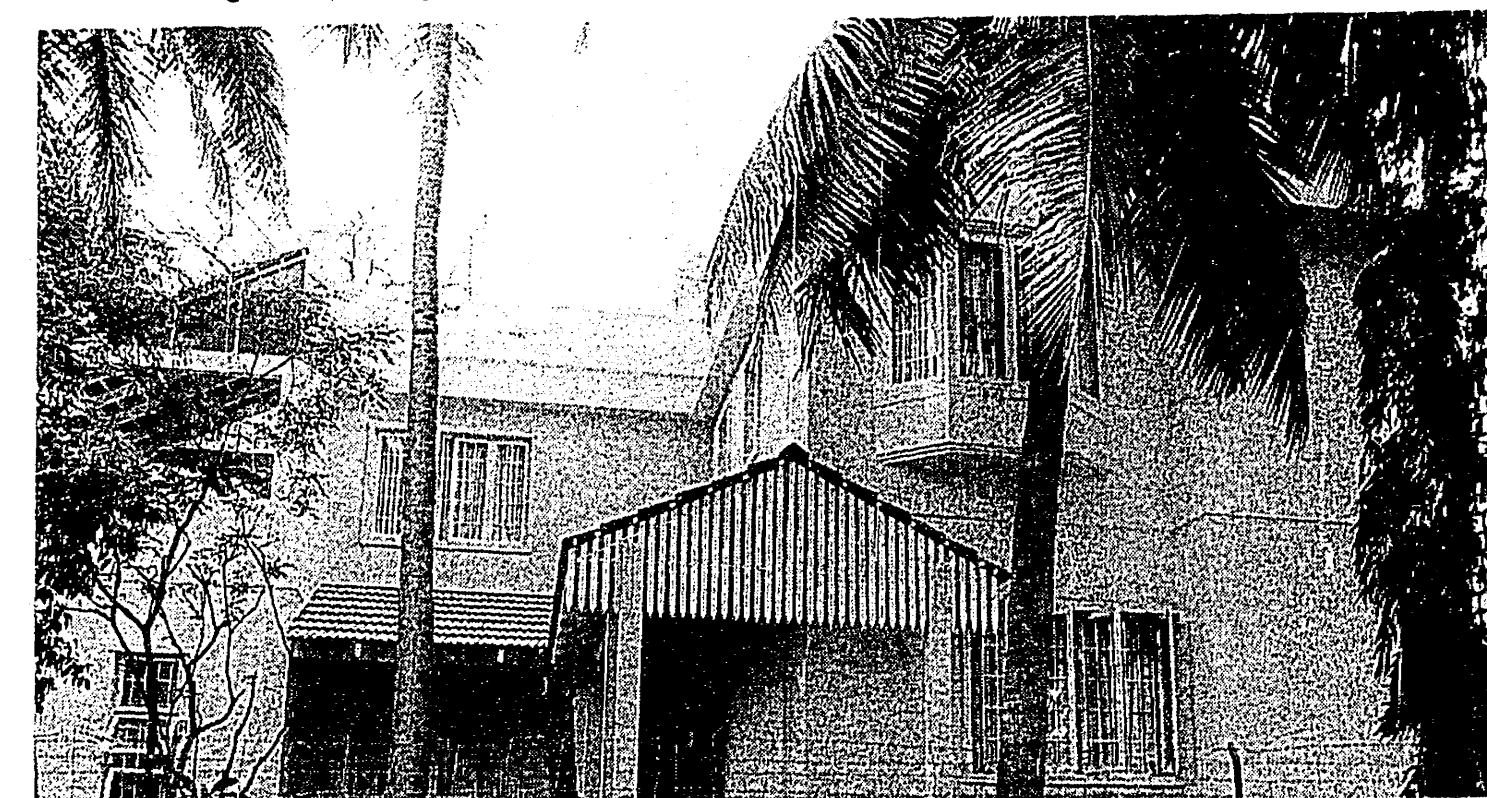
From the contagion of the world's slow stain

He is secure.....

S.K.



This twin-towered building (above) was once one of Royapettah-Mylapore's 'garden houses'. Now it is a branch of the Standard Chartered Bank. Preserved here are the 'monkey-tops' that were a feature of post-1857 imperial architecture. What were once plain, pointed shades or canopies over windows became embellished with tassel-like grills and other ornamentations. When monkeys used these as perches in the shade, they became known as 'monkey-tops'. In the picture below, the 'monkey-top' concept has been used to shade the veranuum of a new house in T'Nagar. — (Photographs by SUSHEELA NAIR)



Pampering the male

Beauty parlours for men are such a routine affair these days that men don't hide behind a hot towel any more. "I'm off to have my fortnightly facial," they say, giving their rubbery cheeks an appreciative pat. Hotel rooms come equipped with long retractable mirrors with the potential of magnifying every pore and nostril hair, so that before you can shout "Blackhead!" you can make a quick dash to the beauty shop and get your face steamed to a state of idyllic freshness.

The same men smooth themselves with the tang of lemongrass, or juniper, or lavender scent or, if they are "widely travelled", they sash themselves down with the lotions that sing and shout "New York" or "Paris". It's all very confusing now; before, you could smell a man's place of birth before he walked into the room. If he were a Keralite, he would come in smelling of Culicura powder and coconut oil, the unruly head of curly hair made into a smooth carapace by securing it under a large white pocket handkerchief lightly knotted at the four corners to make a helmet after the morning bath. Then there were the users of castor oil, which

and make deep raking strokes that would remove the stubble and the foam to froth together in swirls of black and white in a waiting mug of hot water.

Then would follow ministrations of a more intimate nature. Stray hairs to be clipped from ears and nostrils. Small facial warts removed by tying them at their roots with a single strand of hair. All the while there would be a continual patter of conversation between the two men, followed by a vigorous "maalish," or rub down, that would reduce my Father to a state of total repose, punctuated by my gentle snores

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SAY 'CHEESE'!

De Gaulle, in one of his less chauvinistic moments, is believed to have despaired of France — as a country which boasts more than a thousand varieties of cheese! Be that as it may, it cannot be denied that some of the world's most savoury cheese (like the very popular Camembert, with its white powdery crust and pale yellow, satini-like inside) are produced in France.

The Madras market for cheese is, as yet, a very poor relation of its Western counterpart. Still, it is fairly obvious to any regular customer of the larger departmental stores in town, like Nilgiris, Suzanne's and Lakshmi Land, that there are more kinds of cheese available today than, say, five years ago.

Apart from the processed cheeses, with such brand names as Amul, Aavin, Verka and Vijaya (the last, by the way, is excellent for grating purposes), we can now buy different kinds of flavoured farmhouse cheese from Kodaikanal, namely pepper, chilli, jeera, garlic and, of course, cheddar. Most of these are made with cow's milk, but you can also get goat's cheese. Incidentally, more adventurous palates must also try the new "runny" Pondicherry cheese which somewhat resembles Camembert.

FOODS and FADS

it may be added to sauces or to dishes in the final stage of their preparation, before being placed under a grill or in a hot oven. In whatever form, cheese invariably adds flavour to a Western-style meal.

...to appetiser

Here is an appetising way to begin a well-planned dinner (for 4 persons):

Ingredients for cheese soufflé: One tablespoon soft butter, one tablespoon grated hard cheese, 3 tablespoons butter, three tablespoons flour, one cup hot milk, ¼ to ½ teaspoon salt, a pinch of ground pepper, 4 egg yolks, 6 egg whites, 1 cup grated hard cheese. (If you can get imported cheese,

Mix in the grated coconut and lemon juice. Garnish with chopped coriander leaves and serve hot.

CUCUMBER KOSAMBRI

2 tablespoons moong dhal
1 large cucumber, skinned and chopped fine
2-3 tbsp grated coconut
1 green chilli, chopped fine
1 small bunch chopped coriander leaves
1 tsp juice of a lime
Salt to taste

For tempering
2 tsp oil
1 tsp mustard seeds
1 tsp cumin seeds
1 tsp black gram dhal
1 tsp bengal gram dhal
1 red chilli, halved
A few curry leaves

Method
Soak the moong dhal in a cup of water for an hour.

Mix the cucumber, coconut, chilli, coriander, salt and lemon juice in a serving bowl. Mix the moong dhal.

Heat oil in a frying pan and add all ingredients for tempering. When the mustard seeds splutter, add it to the salad.

Mix well and serve.

MASALA BEANS CURRY

½ kg beans, chopped fine
½ tablespoon oil
Salt to taste

For masala
2 tablespoons bengal gram dhal
1 tablespoon black gram dhal
2 tablespoons coriander seeds
4 red chillies
1 small piece asafoetida (½ teaspoon powder)
3 tablespoons coconut, grated
Marble size tamarind

Place the pan on a tawa (griddle) and cook, covered, on a low fire till done.

use ¼ cup each of grated Swiss and Parmesan.)

Pre-heat the oven to 400°. Grease the bottom and sides of a deep soufflé dish with the soft butter and evenly sprinkle the tablespoon of grated cheese on the bottom and on all the sides. Set aside.

Now, melt the butter over moderate heat. Stir in the flour with a wooden spoon and cook over low heat for one to two minutes, without allowing to brown. Remove from heat and pour in the hot milk, beating vigorously until well blended. Add the salt and pepper and cook the mixture to a boil on low heat, until smooth and thick. Remove from heat and beat in the egg yolks, one at a time, whisking until each one is thoroughly blended before adding the next. Set the sauce aside.

With a large balloon whisk, beat the egg whites (at room temperature) until they are so stiff that they form small points which stand straight up without wavering. Stir in a big spoonful of beaten egg white into the sauce to lighten it; then stir all but one tablespoon of the remaining grated cheese. With a spatula, lightly fold the rest of the egg whites. Gently pour the mixture into the prepared soufflé dish (the dish should be three-quarters full). Lightly smooth the surface and sprinkle the remaining tablespoon of cheese on top. Place the soufflé on the middle shelf of the oven and turn down the heat to 375°. Bake for 25 to 30 minutes, or until the soufflé puffs up about 2 inches above the rim of the dish and the top is lightly browned. Serve at once.

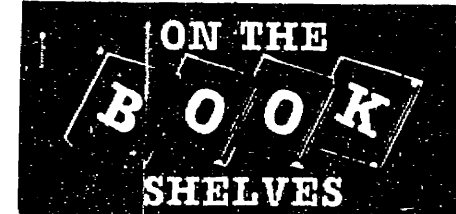
V.K.

Autobiography dominates, with Raj & Raja

Autobiography dominates the shelves this fortnight, with books by Raj Thapar and Dr Raja Ramanna. As the active years of their lives coincided with the first four decades of Independent India, the authors of these books provide us an opportunity to analyse and relive different aspects of our immediate past.

During their lifetime, Raj and her husband Romesh Thapar had two major political involvements, first with the communists and, later, with Mrs G's Congress. Raj Thapar's *All These Years* (Seminar, Rs. 275) is a moving memoir of how both these involvements ended in disillusionment.

As one time members of Indira's kitchen cabinet, they closely observed the metamorphosis of a shy person, unsure of herself, into the confident and triumphant P.M. of the early Seventies. They were also witness to her decline as her desperate bid to cling to power brought on the Emergency. Raj Thapar's writing is at its most powerful and poignant when describing the 'Emergency' years. She captures the sense of rage mixed with guilt and despair, as the Thapars and others were spectators to the excesses and atrocities committed during those years. She also gives her impressions of an astonishing range of people whom she and her husband knew, from poets, writers,



with the Madras Philharmonic Orchestra.) A major part of the book naturally deals with India's nuclear programme, from the early days with Dr Homi Bhabha to the building of India's first fast breeder reactor and the explosion of a nuclear device at Pokhran. He concludes with his experiences as a minister in the V P Singh cabinet.

For many Westerners, India is a land of elephants, Maharajas and palaces. Thus, it was with a sense of *deja vu* that I picked up *Travels on My Elephant* (Cape, Rs. 95) by Mark Shand. I was pleasantly surprised to find it a humorous and well-informed travelogue that is, mercifully, free of colonial overtones. As the title suggests, the book is about a journey that Shand undertook on elephant back; Tara the elephant, the true star of the book, and Shand travelled a thousand miles, from Konarak to Sonapur (near Patna).

Shand writes with self-deprecating humour of his trials and tribulations in becoming a *Ferengi mahout*. On a more sober note, his book is an impassioned plea to the government to concentrate more efforts on saving the Indian elephant.

In bestselling fiction, the clean Number One is Jeffrey Archer's *As The Crow Flies* (Coronet, Rs. 85). It is a vast, sprawling saga of rags to riches that spans seven decades of this century. Advance notices indicate that Archer's fans will not be disappointed.

Over the last couple of books, 'Romance Queen' Danielle Steele has been trying to cross over to general fiction. In fact, she has recently forbidden her publishers from promoting her as a romance writer. The jacket of her latest book, *Heartbeat* (Corgi, Rs. 90), has no blurb describing its contents. But this, I am sure, will not prevent Steele fans from grabbing it.

Lastly, to answer a reader's query. The books described in this column are available in all good bookstores in this city. Fortunately Madras can boast of several good bookshops and, hence, it is not proper on my part to single out any.

GAUTAM PADMANABHAN

THE VIEW FROM THE WINGS... V.R. DEVIKA

Visitors in search of dance and religion

There has been a steady flow of visitors to Madras. Apart from the multitude of journalists who descended on the city from every part of the globe (there was even an Italian journalist looking at the cultural side of the aftermath of the Rajiv Gandhi assassination!) meticulously following every lead, meeting everyone they could meet and also trying to take in some Bharatha Natyam ... not that there were many performances.

There was Rhoda Grover, the director of the Arts and Humanities Programmes of WNET 15 who is producing a massive, eight million dollar 'Dance of the World' series for her television network, being charmed by small Tamil children more than the exotic dancers she was talking to... 'Dance and Religion' forms a small part of the big dance series and where do you go when you are talking about dance and religion but straight to the homes of Bharatha Natyam dancers who say dance is the highest form of yoga and a form of worship... And of course to Chandralekha, who clearly wants to look at the form of Bharatha Natyam in relation to the way the other related arts, like Kalaripayattu and yoga, look at the body, while other dancers claim the body is only a means for communicating the content... It is interesting to talk to dancers about their

philosophies ... each has quite contradictory views and each is completely convincing ...

Meeting the Devadasis

Bharatha Natyam is at an interesting crossroads now. After fifty and odd years of Kalakshetra's purifying process, every modern dancer seems to want to meet with a Devadasi, fall at her feet and learn something from her... Rhoda Grover and I met a charming 65 year-old Tilakam, a Devadasi, in Thanjavur. She filled us in, with great dignity, on the customs and traditions of the Devadasis and we came back with reverence filling our hearts...

After the great revival of the devotional in the dance by Rukmini Devi, it has now become fashionable to look for the most outrageously "non-vegetarian" of erotic poems to enliven a charmingly middle class-patronized programme....



Rhoda Grover, who is including 'Indian Dance and Religion' in an 8 million US\$ film, receives a garland from an *Oyilattam* artist in a small village near Madurai.

Ancient and modern

An interesting workshop is being held for children as we go to press. A workshop on ancient science and technology has been organized by PPST (Patriotic People-oriented Science and Technology) with lectures on the scientific aspects of Vedic mathematics,



Ayurveda, folklore, theatre, architecture and yoga, and chanting by experts who have known and studied modern science. The weeklong (May 26 -



'The Winged Woman', an acrylic on board - 3'x3' - one of the exhibits at the Sakshi Gallery

June 2nd) workshop is being held at the Hindu Senior Secondary School in Indira Nagar. Almost forty children enrolled.

Art from Bombay

May has been a dull month performance-wise and galleries have taken a breather to wait for the affluent to get back from their hill station hide-outs. Sakshi Gallery is opening with a show of two outstanding artists.

The great mobility in recent times has affected the arts in a big way. All artists are either performing or showing their works all over the country. And artists from all over India have shown a great eagerness to hold a show in Madras. Sakshi is presenting the works of Rini Dhurnal and Rekha Rao of Bombay from June 3rd to 18th.

End of Tradition

We mourn the death of Savitri Rajan (83) who was a binding link with a great tradition of the past. She was considered the only true inheritor of the Veena Dhanammal style of music. A respected scholar and educationist, she did not believe in public performances and recordings. Instead she wished to share her wealth of knowledge with those interested in turn-of-the-century music and her work with Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy for women.

Savitri Rajan added great fragrance to the music scene of Madras

GEETA DOCTOR

Moplah was Poplah at Dakshin

The Moplahs, as the Muslim community of Kerala is known, are famous for the beauty of their women, the readiness of wit in their native Malayalam tongue, and the excellence of their Biryani.

At least one of these qualities was in evidence during the Moplah food festival organised at the Dakshin, Park Sheraton, by the Welcomgroup people who have perfected the art of discovering and promoting little known regional cuisines. The Moplah Biryani was lightly textured and layered and redolent of the different spices that have made the Kerala coast famous through the centuries.

During the evenings, the hostesses at the Dakshin were attired in the colourful headdress, long sleeved bodice and slim sarong that the Moplah women traditionally wear. All those who have visited Kerala will remember the familiar sight of tiny, almond-skinned, dark-eyed, Muslim girls going to school with their brightly coloured headdresses fluttering like butterflies in the wind. The women also wear very distinctive jewellery, some of them in multiple strands of gold chains, all the way down to their knees, others with tiny shimmering sequins that are worn in the form of glittering 'chokers', and still others in the form of gold sovereigns.

It was an inspired idea of Prathima Vasan, the Public Relations person with the Welcomgroup, to enlist the support of Ummi Abdulla. She is not only the author of two original cook books (in English) on cuisine (especially the Moplah) of North Malabar, but is a petite, self-effacing person of great charm, who has a real interest in food. For a long time she used to supply a select clientele with pearly, blanched cocktail onions. Now she was able to guide F & B Manager, Deepak Chopra, in all the subtle nuances of Moplah cuisine, which amalgamates the influences of West Asia, from where the earliest ancestors of the Moplahs came, with the strong coconut-based traditions of Kerala. Other Kerala Muslim families living in Madras, the great merchants of timber, also gave their advice to the project.

The first test of a good Moplah cook must be in the lightness of a *Pathiri*, as the white rice *chappathi* is known. Not only has the consistency of the rice dough to be just right, but there is a knack involved in cooking it on a hot flat griddle, so that it is as light as a fine muslin handkerchief. The *Pathiri* is used as a foil against the fiery curries, though, as Chopra, explained, his endeavour was to see that the curries remained pungent without being too fiery.

Moplah cuisine not only incorporates meat dishes, like the darkly enamelled chunks of chicken, named *Kozhi Varattiyathu* and the rich tender mutton curry, *Erachi Porichathu*, but also a variety of sea-food specialities from Kerala's bounteous coastline. Both the psychedelic yellow fish curry and the sweet-sour, mango-based prawn curry were gravy-based delights.

The *Thali*, served Dakshin style on banana leaves within a silver tray, with matching *katoris*, was balanced with a

wealth of vegetarian items. Amongst these, the dishes made out of the famous raw green banana of Kerala were the most typical, though there were gravy based dishes — such as a lady's finger curry in tomato, and a thick stew of tomatoes alone — which were also interesting. Again, I was reminded of West Asian dishes, which use tomatoes as a base, the only difference being the addition of chillies and spices. The accompaniment for a typical Kerala *thali*, made out of *toovar*, flavoured with aniseed and ground coconut, was a light ghee rice — *Nei Choru* and *Paripu Thalichathu* (one quailed to see the 5-star prices of these very simple items) — and the round, airy *pappad* which puffs out like an air pillow. Ummi Abdulla had also included a number of small relishes, the best being a carrot salad, marinated in vinegar and chillies.

The dessert variety provided a dilemma. There were those wonderful dark slabs of halwa, for which Calicut,

with its "Halwa Market", is famous. Then Ummi Abdulla was inclined to display the delights of *Moola Mala*, literally a garland of eggs, made from the yellow of the egg alone, which is dribbled through a tiny hole made in a half coconut shell, cooked straight in oil and then doused with sugar syrup. But in the end it was the simpler items that attracted, like the Kerala version of *Kheer*, or rice pudding, cooked lightly in milk and sugar, a semolina pudding not unlike *kesari bhat* but flavoured instead with rose-water, and a delicious conical wedge of bananas and rice stewed together with jaggery and steamed in a twist of banana leaf — *Kayada*.

By introducing this little known but distinct cuisine to a wider audience, the Park Sheraton added one more chapter in its discovery of the culinary heritage of India.

A Family that graced the Madras Turf leads Sri Lankan racing revival

With four days of racing in the hill centre of Nuwara Eliya, racing got underway in Sri Lanka again in April after over thirty years. And the leading trainer of the meet, living up to his pedigree, was Aditian Selvaratnam, scion of a family Madras once knew well.

It was during the War years and early years of Independence that A Selvaratnam and his sons Renga and Raja used to send their strings to Madras for the winter. The two boys, Balu Alaganan will remember, played good cricket for St Thomas and Renga looked All-Ceylon material. But they chose racing, and father and sons sent out to Madras such winners as Ariel and Jervis Bay, Highmax and Troutbrook — the latter still holding the old Governor's Cup course record.

They also gave Madras possibly the best jockey seen at Guindy, Australian

Ted 'Ride 'em Out' Fordyce. Ted married Dhanalakshmi Selvaratnam, one of the most beautiful women anywhere. After Fordyce retired, he and Dhanalakshmi got down to running a flower and antique business in Bangalore. And it was during those years that Dhanalakshmi Fordyce's beautiful

ten out of his 12 years there. Add to that his ten years as champion trainer in Sri Lanka in succession to his father and the 3500 winners he has saddled in his 42 years of training, and it would be fair to say there have been few more successful trainers in this part of the world.

When Renga retired in 1989, he handed over his Kuwaiti stables to Aditian. But Aditi, who had as a youngster worked his father's horses and who later assisted him in Kuwait, had hardly got settled in when the Iraqi invasion forced the family back to Sri Lanka — just in time to see thoroughbred racing being revived in the island.

Adi's brothers are also in the same business. His eldest brother, Dhruv, was assistant for over ten years to Vincent O'Brien of Ireland, one of the great trainers of the world. Then the Dubai royal family asked him to take over their string in Dubai and, today, he heads the Dubai trainers' list. Meanwhile, Renga's second son, Gopi, is assistant trainer to John Oxx, who's second only to O'Brien in Ireland. Oxx's string includes the Aga Khan's horses and those of the Dubai royal family who are among the leading owners in Britain.

Meanwhile, Adi in Colombo looks forward to year-round racing in Sri Lanka where there'll also be younger racers than the present crop of 8-and-9-year-old Indian thoroughbreds. Until then, West Asia or Ireland might beckon. But would Madras welcome a Selvaratnam again?

by THE CORNER FLAG

Purple prose for a purple patch

So India meets Brazil to qualify for the Davis Cup competition proper. Meanwhile, it has got past the zonal round, but not before making heavy weather of the match against a Korean team whose best had found other interests and whose leftovers had little familiarity with grasscourts.

During this hard-fought contest, the Indians displayed little of the form promised by the purple prose used to describe its defeat of a nondescript Indonesian team in an earlier round. That prose, in retrospect, promised us the world; we've only got Brazil to chew on for the time being — on their own claycourts, not our favourite home turf. There, and if there is a thereafter, I hope Ramesh Krishnan and Leander Paes will live up to the promise much that follows foretells.

A "lean and hungry" member of the Krishnan family I've yet to see. Nor have I ever seen the superman qualities attributed to Leander Paes. That young man, I learned, is a "marvellous blend of athleticism and skill" and plays a game that's "all fire and thunder". He "brought the Indonesians under machine gun fire". His "lightning reflexes helped him fire volley after volley..." There were "no half-measures in his play. No commas, no semi-colons." Instead, "he tried to punctuate everything with a full stop".

In fact, "he belted the ball in such a deadly manner that the worms flourishing under the Jai Club grass must have decided to evacuate the ground instantly. What could the poor things do without any patriot missiles to intercept the Leander scuds?" Certainly, neither they nor anyone else had a chance when Ramesh let "Leander use his club" and found him as ready for the kill "as a caveman who had not had a good lunch for a long while".

Not to be outdone, another writer had this new-look doubles team as a combination of "fire and ice", as "imperturbable anchor" and "fiery executioner". If they stood across the net from each other, he wrote, their rivalry would contain all the ageless dramatic elements!

A third writer compared them to a dance of "fire and audacity... balance and grace", called them "the stiletto assassin and the grenade bomber... the landscape painter and the raw graffiti artist" and wrote of Paes' "earthy splendour and sizzling cobra speed" and Ramesh's "ice to Paes' fire".

ANSWERS TO QUIZZIN' WITH NAVIN-4

- 859 million.
- Because they already have a mark on their index finger made during the recent district council elections.
- It is the local word in Bangladesh for the worst type of local tornado.
- Shah Jahan.
- 9.
- A double sided bat, flat on either side.
- Ludhiana.
- A country where anyone can have access to arms.
- Deng Yaping of China.
- Kiran Kedlaya.
- To raise money for Kurdish refugees stranded near the border of Iraq.
- PWG (People's War Group) of Andhra Pradesh.
- Krishna Prasad Bhattarai.
- Robert Gates.
- 6.
- Morarji Desai.
- Manchester United.
- Nathuram (Godse).
- Shariat Bill.
- 20.

By Registered Post!

And a fourth wrote, "The Indonesians, we understand, are left standing, binoculars in hand, waiting for a rescueship that would rescue them from a sandstorm called Leander Paes". The "spunky Paes," with a "physique of just the right proportion" is, we are told, "a phenomenal happening" with the right mix of "technique, temperament and thunder". And this writer goes on, "No one has, in the Davis Cup (since 1979), punched his volleys more powerfully or smashed more forcefully than Paes." So much for Vijay Amritraj!

by SPORTSWATCH

Now, all this is high fun and I enjoy reading such delightful extravagance. In fact, the rest of the columns of our newspapers could do with such enlivening. But what worries me is the way the achievement of beating the Indonesians was made out to be "a stunning victory" by "two world class players".

For one thing, if we can't beat Indonesia, or any other Asian team for that matter, there must be something

dreadfully wrong about our tennis. Our heritage from the days of Saleem and Ghaus Mohammed, Misra and Bose, Krishnan and the Amritrajs, has always made us No.1 on the continent but nowhere near that in the world. To have slumped and begun a recovery again — a performance which does not even warrant comparison with the champions of the past who could only make it so far and no further — is no reason to trumpet a triumph in Coliseum style.

For another, no matter how well they play, both Ramesh and Paes are far from world class. Ramesh will be the first to admit that he didn't make it even to the middle and is now on the decline. As for Paes, he still has miles to go.

With a few victories — after a famine — India may have hit a purple patch and might deserve columns of purple prose, but need the achievement be made something more than it is? Why, to mix metaphors like the rest of the clan, don't Anand and Ali Sher, Tarapore and Kelly Rao deserve some of this treacle? May I hope that the pens continue to flourish but that the perspectives improve?

Even this won't save Madras hockey

By launching an annual Grade I all-India prize money tournament recently, Eagle Flask Industries Ltd gave Madras hockey its biggest-ever boost. This was not lost on the intelligent Madras fans. They mustered in strength to witness the Border Security Force (Jalandhar)-Indian Bank final of the inaugural Eagle Flask Trophy tournament at the Mayor Radhakrishnan stadium. Though the final was, unfortunately, a flop, everyone in the holiday crowd had a word of praise for the Padamsee Group for having given the sticks game in Madras a professional touch.

The crowd was at the same time critical of the prize money pattern, with Rs. 60,000/- going to the winners, Rs. 40,000/- to the runners-up and the rest drawing blank. To their credit, the promoters took note of the criticism, and there is every chance of the losing semi-finalists in future tournaments receiving a share of the purse.

It was indeed unfortunate that the first-ever prize money tournament in Madras ended on a tame note. This was because more talented sides than the finalists, like an Indian Army XI and South-Eastern Railway (Calcutta) were not in luck's way. The fact that Lalhuma of the Army XI earned the Best Player's Award was indicative of the Army team's standards. S.E. Railway were no whit behind. But both fell by the wayside, edged out in tie-breakers. Their exit let mediocrities into the final, which provided an ironic climax to a tournament which had attracted teams from Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Punjab and other centres. The BSF proved a little too good for Indian Bank, the local senior division league runners-up, and the crowd that turned out to cheer the home side found occasions to jeer them.

The Bank's performance was in keeping with the fall in Madras standards. Hockey in Madras, which had produced such giants as M.J. Gopalan, R. Francis, Munir Sait,

by JAICI

V] Philip, V Bhaskaran and others, has now hit rock-bottom. It has lost much of its popularity and it has been virtually bidden good-bye by schools and colleges. Unless the powers-that-be wake up and take the game back to the

One-way Racing

M.A.M. Ramaswamy has done it again. India's leading race-horse owner, who a few years ago won a place in the Guinness Book of World Record with his century of Classic winners, hit the headlines on May 12th when Royal Verse, Admiralty and Ace of Diamonds, in that order, carried his famed gold and brown belt jersey to the first three places in the Nilgiris Derby (Grade 1).

The world turf has no Wisden. It is not known if any other owner, anywhere else, has ever bagged the first three places in a Classic. In India, at any rate, Ramaswamy is believed to be the first owner to have made a clean sweep of a Classic.

Ace of Diamonds, mount of the stable's first jockey, Robin Corner, was a 10-8 on favourite in the Guindy ring. Royal Verse was second favourite at 4-1. Ace of Diamonds' defeat was thus a bitter blow to Guindy off-course backers. Even so, they acclaimed Ramaswamy's feat. Royal Verse, incidentally, took his

world record Classics tally to 160. He and his trainer, Robert Foley, are now poised to shatter all Ooty records.

By the end of the 1990-91 Madras season, Ramaswamy had set an all-time Indian record by winning over Rs. 25 lakhs in prize money, and Foley had set a world record with a century of winners in less than four months of a five-month season. The owner-trainer combination has now swept nearly everything before it at Ooty. The fact that by the end of the 14th meeting of the 26-meeting season on May 19th, Foley has taken his tally to 49, as against the beggarly six of second-placed Mandanna, speaks for itself. He may better his world record, and Ramaswamy may improve on his stakes record! It is no wonder that the Ooty Season has been dubbed the world's first-ever one-way racing traffic!

AJAX

Hints in The Hindu, not tips

(By a Sports Reporter)

The Hindu has once again begun to hint at an iceberg in the racing footnotes it has been recently publishing instead of tips. When it wrote, early in May, that it would stop publishing its selections for the time being, because its selections during the Ooty season

had proved meaningless, it was adopting an attitude of protest it had first displayed in 1988.

At that time, The Hindu announced that it was stopping publication of all Tamil Nadu racing news because all was not well with the sport in the state. It resumed publication of news about a sport it pays much attention to after a few weeks; the authorities by then had given it an assurance that the smell it had mentioned would be investigated.

Now the paper appears to smell something rotten again in the state of racing in the state.

It is believed that The Hindu might not, this time, adopt a conciliatory attitude as quickly. In fact, there are reports that it might even attempt a Bofors style investigation of racing in Tamil Nadu and publish its findings as prominently.

The Hindu's involvement in racing is a family one that goes back to times long before the present first families of Tamil Nadu racing took to the sport. Its present chairman is an owner and several of the family are keen racegoers. It's that pedigree that's got the paper all heated up now, the hints it is dropping being, possibly, only a beginning.

For allround hospitality...

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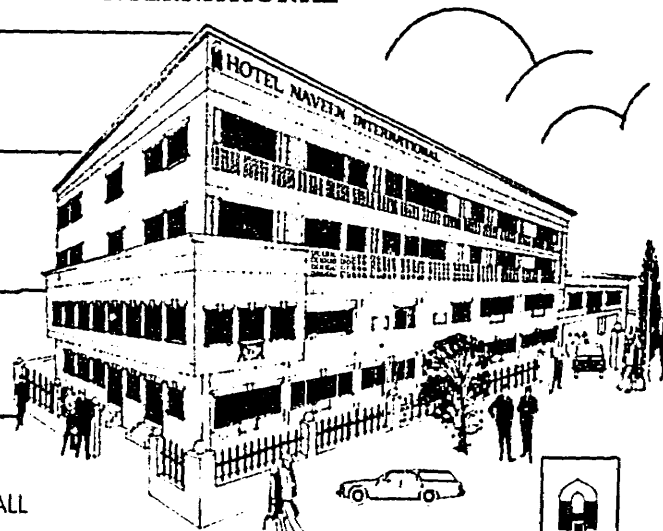
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