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MADRAS

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MUSINGS

Vol. I. No. 22

FREE ISSUE — EVERY FORTNIGHT

March 1 — 14, 1992

The promise is in leather goods

(by Lisa Durante)

Has that "unique" four-day "forum", the International Leather Fair, organised by the Council for Leather Exports, at Rajaji Hall, lived up to the grandiose pronouncements made by VIP guests such as P. Chidambaram, Union Minister for Commerce? Or will the

determination to push leather promotion into first gear dwindle with the dismantling of the fair stands of as many as 100 overseas firms and 230 national participating companies?

P. Prabakaran, Director of the Council for Leather Exports, claims not.

"Reforms such as the 20 per cent Rupee devaluation, abolition of long-winded licensing procedures in favour of the Exim scrip at a uniform 30 per cent rate and the rationalisation of the tariff structure are here to stay," he says. There is a genuine will to promote the growth of this industry on the strength of "competitiveness and technological upgradation" he claims.

Footwear has been identified by Government as an "extreme focus" export area. Aims to boost production from the current level of 16 million pairs a year to 45 million pairs a year by 1994-1995 need vital marketing help from importing countries such as Italy or Germany, for instance — world footwear giants prepared to share their expertise with the fledgling Indian footwear sector. "We are well disposed towards India," says Luigi Contardo Cipriani, Foreign Department Manager of the Italian Chamber of Commerce, "but before anything else, we are here for profit; and if that means a mutual gain, so much the better," he claims. All "infrastructural inefficiency," however, "is frowned upon," says Nils Thompsen, his Danish counterpart.

It is, however, evident that world business dynamics in the leather sector are guided by more than straightforward principles of supply and demand or price and quality. The "fear psychosis related to the PCP phenomena," for instance, "caused mass cancellation of

orders last year," says B.D. Bhaiya, Managing Director of Chemcrowm (India) Limited. This year, viable alternatives to the toxic substance used in tanneries has been found and readily adopted in India, "but external factors over which we have no control can, and often do, cause repercussions on the market," he says.

Exploitation by foreign manufacturers must also be curbed if India's leather industry is bent on becoming a force to be reckoned with. "We must

(Continued on P3)

Performance and products

The last decade has seen a dramatic shift in the regions where leather is both manufactured and converted into finished products. The industry's move to the southern hemisphere is evident by India's and the Far East's growing hold on the world market, even though the rate of growing in some parts of the region is levelling off. Europe, with Italy in first place, invariably remains the centre of technological and design innovations.

Leather continues to retain a high consumer profile, with the majority of leather produced today going for use in footwear production, and increasingly towards upholstery and leather garments.

India's export performance has been heartening this past year. Seventy per cent of the total exports during 1990-91 have been in the form of value added products.

	(Value in Million Rs.)		
	1990-91	1989-90	growth %
Semi-finished leather	39.74	210.65	-81
Finished leather	7656.18	6935.27	10
Leather footwear	2404.74	1714.32	15
Footwear components	5559.67	5182.54	
Leather garments	5791.95	3328.82	74
Leather goods	4086.25	2928.75	40
TOTAL	25,538.53	20,300.35	26

EXPORT TRENDS

Exports to the EEC account for approximately 60 per cent, followed by the ex-USSR and the USA 12 per cent each. Indian industry has also developed substantially in terms of high quality leather garment export.

BOTTLENECKS

- restrictions on import of capital goods have hampered expansion and modernisation;
- delay in clearance of imported consignments due to nomenclature misinterpretation;
- shortage of skilled manpower;
- lack of components industry within the country;
- high incidence of exise duty on footwear components.

PROSPECTS

— **FOOTWEAR** in India has traditionally remained a cottage industry. With a total estimated production of 350 million footwear, nearly 65 per cent comes from the cottage or small-scale sector. India's share in the global import of footwear stands at a dismal 0.54 per cent of global import. Major markets for Indian shoes include Italy, USA, France and Germany. It has been proposed to increase footwear exports from the current 16 million pairs p.a. to 45 million pairs by 1994-95 and 195 million pairs by 2000.

LEATHER GARMENTS & LEATHER GOODS: Since South Korea, an erstwhile dominant competitor, has lost its edge due to rising wage scales and currency fluctuations, India's leather garment sector has benefitted enormously. The target production level for 1994-95 stands at ten million pieces, compared to the current four million.

MANAALI RAMAN...



Go and tell your mother to send my breakfast. I haven't had anything since last evening.

IN MAD, MAD MADRAS



Bentinck Building being pulled down was featured in our first issue, April 15, 1991. At that time it had been half pulled down. Now, almost a year later, the wreckers have still not completed the job, though they're almost there. That only goes to show how strongly built this building condemned by the engineers had been. All that's now left to dominate this sad scene is one of the City's several Cornwallis cupolas (right). That's a story to be told on another day.

(Photograph by SUSHEELA NAIR).

A STEP CLOSER

(By A Staff Reporter)

Many — more of them from India than our visitors from abroad — would like to see the second major Trade Fair complex in Bombay. But Chairman of the Council of Leather Exports M M Hassim is determined it will come up in Madras "and take Madras into the 21st century". To do this, the CLE may even participate in the equity of the Rs. 35 crores joint sector project being planned for Taramani and which is expected to be finalised any day now.

In fact, all those connected with the local leather industry are confident that the 1994 International Leather Fair will be held at this complex. And that thereafter the printing machinery exhibition (PAMEX) and fairs featuring textiles, seafood, automotive ancillaries, electronics, hosiery and machine tools will follow at this southern Pragati Maidan.

The 10,000 sq m exhibition space planned at Taramani may be a tenth of what is available at Pragati Maidan, Delhi, but it is expected that this will suffice initially. It is felt that it could be added to later, space being available in the 50-acre plot the Tamil Nadu Government has promised to make available for the fair site and for which only the formalities have to be completed.

The Indian Trade Promotion Organisation (ITPO), soon to be formed with the merger of the Trade Development Authority and the Trade Fair Authority of India (TFAI), is likely to form a joint venture company for the project with the Tamil Nadu Government and the local private sector. This will be the first major project of the new organisation.

The ICICI's Planning Division has drawn up a detailed project report

which is to be discussed shortly and finalised. The project envisages a three-stage development. The exhibition centre will be the first phase and, almost simultaneously, it is hoped, the second phase will be completed. This envisages hotel, convention and restaurant facilities and is earmarked for the private sector. The third phase is also for the private sector and looks forward to an entertainment complex along the lines of Apu Ghar and perhaps permanent state exhibits.

The joint venture company will restrict itself to the construction, maintenance and administration of the exhibition site alone, according to Moosa Raza, TFAI Chairman whose links with Madras go way back and who, with the late Dheenadayalu, the TFAI man in Madras till his death, has worked harder to bring this complex to Madras than anyone else.

Will *The Mail* play Phoenix?

It's a curious thing, but many Indian cities have more English-language newspapers than most similar-sized British and American cities. It has always struck *The Man from Madras Musings* as curious that Delhi had more English-language dailies than London, Washington or New York. In fact, the dozen or so it has are just about what ALL THREE cities put together have! Someone trying to explain this to *MMM* suggested that being in Delhi was to be close to power and that is what all the industrialists owning newspapers wanted when they decided to launch newspapers in this capital. This, *MMM* was told, was particularly so because those in the corridors of power paid more attention to the English-

loyal readership and while being very much a Madras evening paper had a strong national image. Its backers also had the financial clout to keep it going. Will they now give it a chance to rise from the ashes, Phoenix-like? The time would seem opportune with all this flurry of activity in evening journalism and with its old readership still around and wondering whether, when newcomers can dare, why can't the Amalgamations Group.

Deserved honour

No one deserves the Padma Shri more than 44-year-old Shanthi Ranganathan, founder-director of the TTK Hospital and Hon Secretary of the T T Ranga-

afflicted by either drugs or alcohol waiting for admission. To hundreds of homes, Shanthi Ranganathan has brought happiness again, not merely through the hospital but by her personal involvement with every case. Shanthi Ranganathan will be the first to admit that though the successes have been many, there have been failures — relapses — too. But whether she has been able to help them or not, no patient who has been to the TTK Hospital has ever been able to forget Shanti Ranganathan who has dedicated her life to curing people like them.

The Western way

As more and more people from Madras and other parts of Tamil Nadu migrate to the West, they've begun to get Indian traditions to put down roots. In almost every major city in the West, Bharatha Natyam recitals by migrant Indians or their children have become commonplace. But few if any of these talented migrants have tried to break the mould and establish a new tradition.

One who has dared is Shobana Jayasingh, a Madras-born dancer who now lives in Britain. She and three other dancers have been dancing Bharatha Natyam TO WESTERN MUSIC in performances that Shobana has choreographed. In 1988 there was 'Configurations', in 1989 there was 'Late', in 1990 came 'Correspondences' based on the life and letters of mathematics wizard Ramanujan and the latest, now on the boards in Britain, is 'New Cities, Ancient Lands'.

Attempting to take religion out of the dance and, simultaneously, "communicate to an alien audience", Shobana has been breaking new ground. Purists might condemn her efforts, but she is confident that she is on the right track as she tries to establish Bharatha Natyam as PURE DANCE in the West rather than as a story-telling, semi-divine medium.

MMM

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

language Press than to newspapers in any other language.

These thoughts struck *The Man from Madras Musings* when he heard that Madras had got yet another English daily. This one, launched last fortnight, is called evening MADRAS. *MMM* has not yet seen a copy, but then he has not seen a copy of another city evening launched more than a year ago, *Madras Times*. For that matter, the *Indian Express* and a Tamil newspaper group a few years ago launched eveningers with names that sounded like *Indian Post* and *Indian Sun* and *MMM* didn't see them either. The reason for not seeing any of these is very simple; no effort was made to reach the potential reader. And that is probably because all these, including the *Express's* experiment, were shoestring ventures.

With the former Editor of the venerable *Illustrated Weekly of India*, A.S. Raman, at the helm of evening MADRAS, *MMM* hopes a greater effort will be made by *eM* to reach the readership than his successors have made with the fast-vanishing *Illustrated Weekly*. It is also to be hoped that *eM* will care for Madras more than any other daily being published in this city and at least as much as *Madras Musings* does.

An evening paper *MMM* does see is *News Today*, which appears to have come to stay. But with it having suddenly taken the avatar of a "National Daily", it is fast forgetting Madras. So *eM* certainly has a slot.

But that's a slot many would like to see filled by the ill-fated *Madras Mail*. There's a paper that had a great heyday, that had

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Taming SEBI — and how!

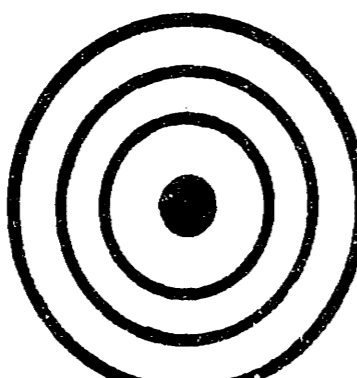
We bid adieu to the SEBI that was. The Ordinance conferring statutory powers on the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has outmanoeuvred its ambitions to independence. SEBI's trailblazing effort in the direction of regulating the capital market is laudable. In its own words, it aspires "to promote a fair and healthy securities market, protect investors rights and prevent malpractices so that mobilisation of resources through the capital market is done effectively and channellised."

But the efforts have fallen flat, making a mockery of its original intentions.

According to Sections 4 and 5 of the Ordinance, the Board of Directors of SEBI will be appointed by the government. The government will have a right to terminate the service of the Chairman or a member at any time before the expiry of the period prescribed and it also has the right to even supersede the entire Board and

reconstitute it. This is just the tip of the iceberg.

The Central Government will frame rules under provisions of Section 23(1) for the registration of all the intermediaries in the securities market.



BULL'S EYE

SEBI will frame regulations with a prior nod from the government — Section 30(1) of the Ordinance.

And the death knell — under Section 16(2) — "the decision of the Central Government on whether a



Mallika, Sita and Vanita emphasise the point Mrinalini Sarabhai makes in her letter. (Photograph by NIRMALA PATEL).

OUR READERS WRITE

The potential of the dance

In the January 15-31 issue, was an interesting reference to new dimensions in Bharatha Natyam, something I began in the Sixties, when I used the technique in new ways to speak of atrocities on women. Since then I am glad others have followed. At that time it was a shock to audiences, but also an eye-opener to the great potential of our marvellous heritage. Editorials in leading newspapers were written on my dance piece (a rare honour) and since then we've never looked back.

I enclose a recent picture of the same dance (above), with Mallika Sarabhai in the role of the young bride, who finally commits suicide. Unfortunately the subject is as vital today as it was so many years ago.

P.S.: I enjoy especially the photographs by Susheela Nair on the old and new buildings.

Mrinalini Sarabhai
Darpana Academy of Performing Arts
Ahmedabad 380 013

A better XI?

Ramachandra Guha's (mentioned in your issue No. 20), all-time Tamil Nadu XI is not a correct choice. The only Iyer in this XI, V V Kumar, would have no place as against the old timer C R Ganapathi. Bharat Reddy, but for his public relations, was no patch on SVT Chari.

A G Satwender Singh was a better batsman than even Kripal Singh or Milkha Singh; because of knee-trouble he could not give of his best. Two Sikhs would have been enough, A G Ram Singh and Kripal Singh, both all-rounders.

Venkataraghavan was never a good captain. Gopalan or Gopinath would have been the better choice.

The first and only batsman in fifty years of Ranji Trophy to have scored 5000 runs in Ranji Trophy and ten centuries (equalled this year by Robin Singh) is, as per Guha's

own description, the long serving Iyer, V Sivaramakrishnan, who perhaps for the same reason, "a self-effacing personality", according to Guha, does not find a place in his Tamil Nadu XI. Siva played continuously for over 12 years for Tamil Nadu — the copy-book opening batsman whose technique was the grammatical prose to the poetry of his elegant and graceful style. His maiden 169 against the world's best spinning duo, Prasanna and Chandrasekhar, was a class by itself.

V Narayanan
Narasimhan Avenue
Madras-600 018

Fact and fiction

'A Chamber in Crisis' by 'Movieman' in your issue of February 1-14 was amusing. Being an experienced moviemaker, he has made up a good script by mixing a good deal of fiction with a little bit of fact. The reasons which led to the boycott of the Film Festival by this Chamber and several other Associations, some of whom were not even affiliated to us, are well known.

We feel, however, that 'Movieman' is a little unfair in his comment that "watching all those uncensored films" and "attending dinners and cocktail parties" is the major attraction in these festivals — when you consider that, leaving aside a few informed critics like him, other delegates are predominantly directors, sound recordists, students of Film Institutes, film appreciation bodies, artists etc. What we have heard from these delegates is that, apart from a few moviemakers, few are privileged to be invited to all those "dinners and cocktail parties".

We are obliged to 'Movieman' for drawing our attention to "linguistic chauvinism", "regional fanaticism" etc., which apparently stalks this body. We are sure that if we search long enough, we shall find traces of what is so obvious to him and about which he has shown so much concern! As we said, 'Movieman's' musings contain a lot of fiction with a little bit of fact!

Sv. Rm. Ramanathan
Honorary Secretary
The South India Film Chamber
of Commerce
Madras-600 006

Laughing her way to 'Secretary of the Year'

What is the identikit of a model secretary? This is precisely what the National Institute of Professional Secretaries (NIPS), tried to ascertain in a nationwide contest held in Calcutta recently.

Does a remarkably youthful looking woman, with a first in English Lit, two small boys, a marketing director husband, a distinguished career in humanitarian agencies and an infectious laugh fit the bill? She obviously did, for the NIPS panel, entirely composed of professional PAs, voted Sukeshini Sigamani "Secretary of the Year".

Sukeshini Sigamani resists the claim that the contest, with over 180 contestants, is a mere spot-the-best-in-the-business publicity stunt — lavishing winners with prizes and positioning the mainly female group for their best profiles in the inevitable PR photo-session. "We are not just pretty faces," she claims, "We want to professionalise this occupation."

NIPS' collective determination to make the secretary an integral part of any office, and not just an "and-also",

is paying dividends. Judging by the successful activities they are promoting for PA improvement — hundreds of welfare projects, assistance to the needy in secretary training, placement assistance and a cohesive programme to encourage secretaries all over India to stand up for their rights and "stand



IN PROFILE
by
Lisa Durante

proud" in their occupation — they mean business.

Young children and the demands made by a husband and home invariably put many working women in a quandary about how best to pave their career paths. Often, some fall into being a secretary by chance, or through a process of job elimination. They are, therefore, not necessarily committed to the job as "incentives and satisfaction

don't rate highly in the job description profile," says Sukeshini. Even though her rich and varied career has been helped along the way by the saving presence of her mother, who lives with her and lends a hand, the eleven years at CARE and, more recently, at UNICEF's Madras branch have been no "joy ride", she claims. Sukeshini is nevertheless committed to encouraging all secretaries to view their jobs as "something more than a pay packet," although for that, "the bosses' help needs to be elicited too," she laughs.

Wages can represent several things in all occupations, not least the well-earned fruit of a person's monthly labours. But from the glint in her eyes and the expanse of unfurrowed brow, disclaiming her years and burden of responsibility, it is possible to believe that for Sukeshini Sigamani it is a convenient by-product of something bigger and more satisfying. At the contest, — a highly-charged competition held during alternate years—"we were not tested on our secretarial skills," she says: "We were rated according to our

personality and overall charisma," things that, unlike money, cannot be quantified, but "shine through all the same," she explains.

There is nothing chivalrous, however, about Sukeshini. She is aware of her worth. "I always knew I was smart, but didn't realise that I was this smart," she chortles again, delighted by her recent success. There is an undisguised mirth at the prospect of her return ticket to Amsterdam and London plus the wealth of shoes, beauty kits, jewellery and other goodies the Calcutta prize-giving has brought.

"Where will you be five years from now?" I ask. "Oh, I don't know, I really don't know." The room rings out with that inimitable laugh — and don't you just believe her!



Sukeshini Sigamani, Secretary of the Year. (Photograph by SUSHEELA NAIR)

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Budget blues!

Business is obsessed with the budget. Every businessman is waiting with bated breath. Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Finance Minister, is really in the hot seat. He took over and presented a long overdue budget seven months ago, and when the government followed up the budget with the announcement of a liberal industrial and trade policy, several things were expected to happen. The measures worked out by the Narasimha Rao government helped bring in hard currency from the International Financial Institutions. Which, in turn, was supposed to help increase industrial input, and employment and contain inflation.

However, these things have not happened. Inflation has reached double digit figures. Industrial output has visibly

BUSINESS REVIEW by THE SHROFF

slowed down. And, worse, exports have not taken off. As the Commerce Minister, P. Chidambaram, explained in another context, "We have various conflicting aims this year. Fiscal deficit has to be balanced. Inflation has to be contained. Exports have to register a double digit growth and imports have to be depressed." It is impossible for anyone to reconcile these conflicting interests.

Not many realise that the restructuring of an economy cannot be a painless affair. It is unfortunate that in any process of structural adjustment, some people do get hurt. It is even more unfortunate that it is the poor who suffer most. But the hard reality which has been proven elsewhere is that only in an economy where market forces determine investments made and the products sold, results happen, even if they take time. And this is what brings prices down ultimately. But every time a measure of liberalisation is proposed, the immediate reaction is one of panic. It is expected to hurt a section of the people or certain sections of industry. It is going to take us years to shake off the subsidy syndrome.

With so many rumblings about the changes taking place in the economy, it is difficult to gauge whether the Finance Minister will cave in and slow down the process of liberalisation, or carry on where he left off last year. Restructuring programmes are not for the chicken-hearted.

Randor Guy

PROMISE IN LEATHER GOODS

(Continued from P1)

stop being tempted into short-term and relatively minor rewards by offering cheap leather production capacity for others to manipulate and reap real benefits from," says N. Ghai, Marketing Manager of the Punjab State Leather Development Corporation Limited. "We must have the courage of our convictions and win markets through our own designs or by equitable foreign collaborations for brandname use," he claims. "Compromises will get India nowhere," he warns.

India accounts for a mere 3.5 per cent of the total global trade in leather and leather products and several deep seated causes underlie this sluggishness:—
— Raw material supply is inelastic and a more efficient system of cattle

rearing and avoidance of premature cattle slaughter is needed to bring India on a par with international competitors.
— The necessity to import hides from countries such as USA, Indonesia and Bangladesh, to increase domestic supplies, must be recognised and encouraged.

— A widespread development of leather ancillaries — unit soles, insoles, accessories, lining materials and fittings — that meet exacting foreign standards and trends is tantamount to export success.

— Indigenous leather manufacturing machinery needs to be strengthened, making use of India's well-developed engineering know-how.

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K. Gopalakrishnan

(Continued on P6)

Madras remembered

— But better late than never

When Madras turned 350, two years back, there were few cheers for the birthday. Among the few who remembered was the History Department of Loyola College, which began planning a symposium to celebrate '350 years of Madras'. For one reason or another, the planning dragged a bit and when the symposium became a reality it was January 1992. Well, better late than never.

the efforts to educate Hindu girls 150 years ago. Attendance was dismal and girl students would drop out when they attained puberty. To encourage regular attendance, the school authorities gifted the girls a few pies a month. When the turnout became regular, the schools started demanding a fee of one anna per month. (Those were the days! It is inconceivable today that studying

• by K. SUBALAKSHMI

The seminar was attended by many eminent academicians and the papers they presented detailed various aspects of Madras. But even such clinical analysis aroused a sense of nostalgia for the Madras that was, among a rather limited audience.

The all-day seminar ended on a note of appeal. The historians pleaded for preserving buildings of historical value in the city, introducing text-books and academic courses on local history and removing history from the list of 'non-utility subjects' issued by the Government of Tamil Nadu. It is to be hoped that their voices will be heard in the corridors of power as plans for 'Madras 2001' cannot hope to succeed without an understanding of the City's past.

As Professor U Munuswamy, Head of the History Department, Loyola College, observed, no intellectual exercise can be effective unless it has the support of the public and the backing of the Government. The million rupee question is: Do either of them care?

Amongst those who cared were: — S Suresh, a research scholar, who suggested that ancient 'Madras' had active links with the West. Roman coins have been found in and around the city, he pointed out, to make the link.

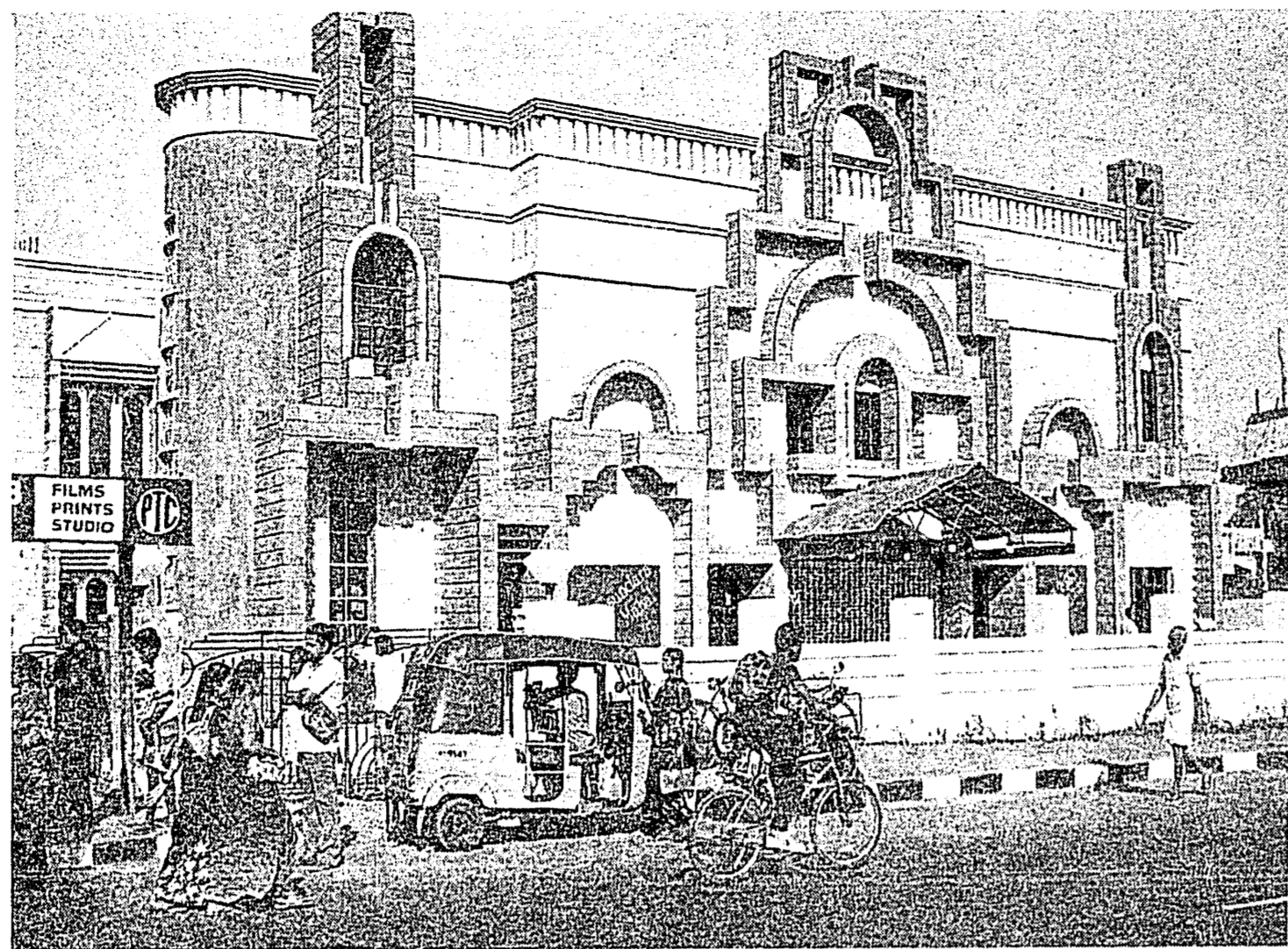
— Anne M Dayanandan, who recalled

in a city convent could work out so cheap!

— M Dharmarajan, who recalled that the Buckingham and Carnatic Mills were responsible for the founding of the first trade union in India, the Madras Labour Union. It was followed by a host of other unions — the PWD union, the Scavengers union, the Police union and the like, all complaining about inhuman working conditions and unreasonable hours of work.

— P Suma Bala of University of Madras, who pointed out that the Telugus have had a special relationship with the City from the first. Contacts between Tamil Nadu and Andhra started in Pallava times. Later, the Raos, the Reddys, the Naidus were everywhere. They invested heavily in Madras, livened up the social scene and spoke up for the city's problems. Some individuals, like T Prakasam, shaped the destiny of Madras. Some others, like Durgabai Deshmukh, gave the city a healing touch with the Andhra Mahila Sabha. Today they surpass all other groups put together in numbers.

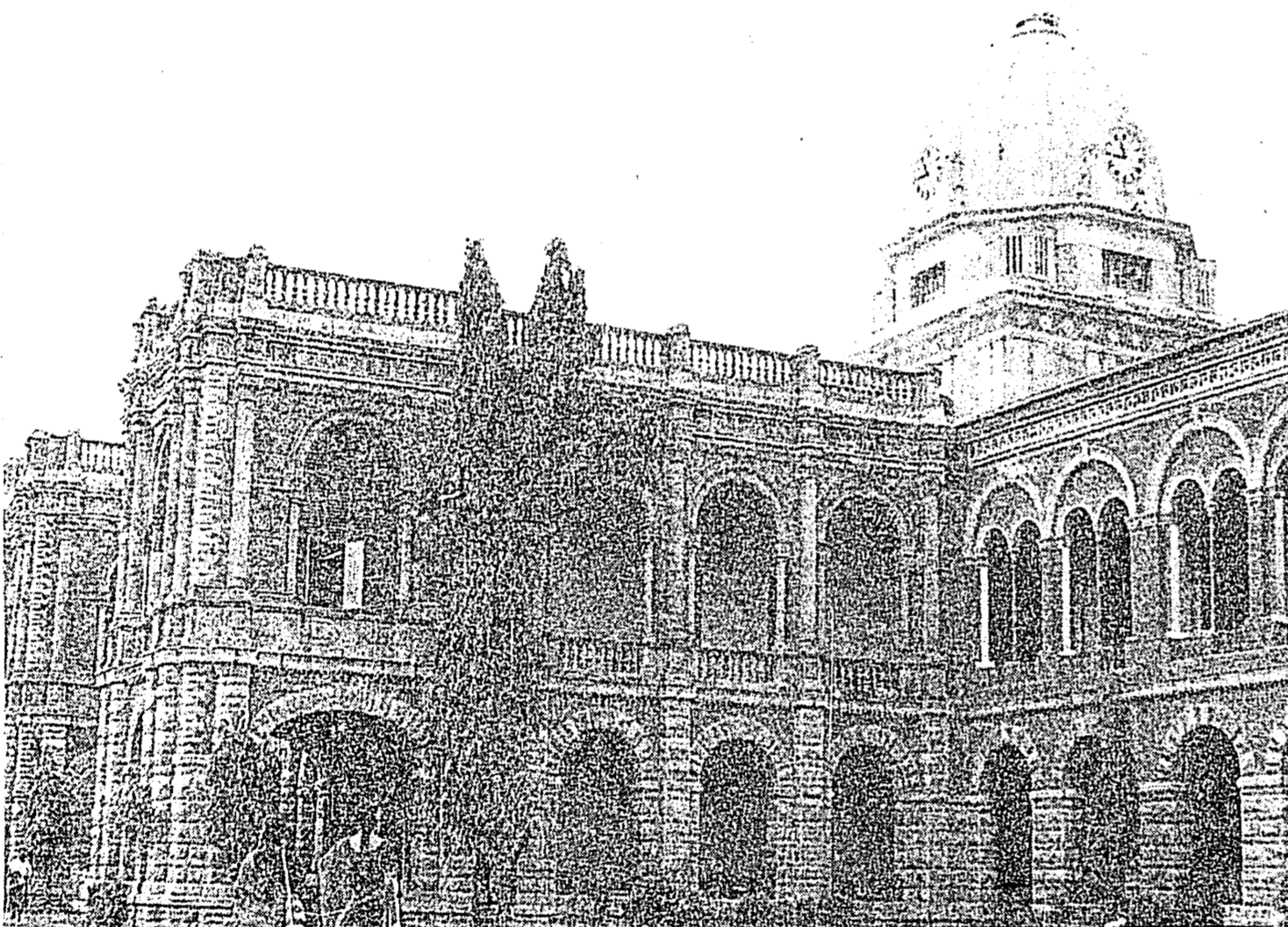
And there were many more speakers with fascinating anecdotes, each with a message that underlined the necessity to REMEMBER MADRAS and its contribution.



The cinema business may have its ups and downs, but the marriage business is always good business, especially in the South, where the bigger the crowd the better the nuptials. Which is perhaps why Adyar's first cinema theatre, the Eros, has decided to choose marriage in preference to films and has taken on a new look as a kalyana mandapam. The face-lift has involved giving itself a new facade in Jaina-Jalpuri style with pink Dholpur stone and modernising Indo-Saracenic in a blend of toy building blocks and futurism.

THE NEW... & THE OLD
It is striking how the arches and the balustrade on the roof reflect the architecture of Presidency College, work on which started in 1867 and ended in 1870. This was Robert Chisholm's first major work and, since many consider him the father of the Indo-Saracenic style, in which the Italianate was combined with the Hindu and Muslim styles, this might be considered a pioneering effort in this style. However, Paul Benfield's contribution to Chepauk Palace a hundred years earlier might lay a claim to leading the way. Be that as it may, Presidency College's buildings are in a sad state of repair and the decrepitude is only emphasised by pink that has been shockingly daubed on the crowning dome of the main block.

(Photographs by SUSHEELA NAIR)



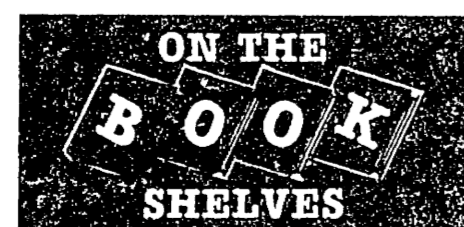
THE YEAR OF J R D TATA

1992 is proving to be the year of J R D Tata. First came the announcement of the Bharat Ratna, followed almost immediately with the release of his official biography. Both events have propelled J R D once again into the limelight.

Beyond *The Last Blue Mountain* by R.M. Lala (Viking, Rs. 295) is divided into four parts, each dealing with important facets of the man. Part I is about the early years, from his birth in France to his accession to the chairmanship of Tata at the age of 34. Part II deals with his lifelong involvement with aviation. Part III with his stint at the helm of Indian industry and Part IV unearths hitherto unknown details about the private man and his friendships with the likes of the Mahatma, Nehru and Indira Gandhi.

M G R, another Bharat Ratna awardee, is the subject of M S S Pandian's *The Image Trap* (Sage, Rs. 190). In this sociological study of the M G R phenomenon, an attempt

is made to understand the link between his films and his political career. While unravelling the complex terrain of Tamil politics, Pandian studies the social, economic and religious factors that went into the marketing of the larger-than-life image.



When Kuldip Nayar writes a book you can bet that controversy is just round the corner. In *India House* (Viking, Rs. 150), a memoir of his stint as India's High Commissioner to the UK, Nayar rakes up the controversies surrounding the death of Chief Justice Mukherjee in London. Apart from this, there are accounts of the several initiatives taken on the diplomatic front,

as well as his impressions of notable personalities whom he met in the course of his stay. Legal complications forced the publisher to withdraw copies before they went on sale and now a new edition, minus the offending passages, has been released.

For those of you who bought Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* and were afraid to ask what it was all about (this columnist included), here's a second chance. Kitty Ferguson's *Stephen Hawking* (Bantam, Rs. 150) is a partly biographical work that attempts to understand this great physicist's quest to find the 'Theory of Everything'. Written with the cooperation of Hawking, this is a story of paradoxes, in life and in science.

We return to the problem of separating the real world from that of the theatre and cinema in Michael Korda's *Curtain* (Rupa, Rs. 60). This is a thinly disguised *roman-a-clef* that tells the story of the turbulent love affair of

Sir Lawrence Olivier and Vivien Leigh. Theirs is a sordid tale of complex emotions that included love, rivalry on the stage and screen and an inability to differentiate their lives from the roles they played.

And, finally, to literary fiction where two major international successes have just been released.

Amy Tan's *The Kitchen God's Wife* (Ivy, Rs. 108.50) is the follow up to her successful debut, *THE JOY LUCK CLUB*. Once again Tan explores the Chinese American experience in a story that begins in Shanghai in the 1920's and carries on through World War II to the events that lead to a family migrating to America.

Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* (Vintage, £ 2.00) was the novel that won the 1991 Booker Prize. The book fuses reality with the world of the supernatural in its story of a Spirit Child's sojourn on this earth.

Gautam Padmanabhan

MAKE MINE MADRAS

Featuring



GUNDOO - MALLI

by JOMTON

MALLI, AREN'T YOU GOING TO TAKE DRIVING LESSONS THIS YEAR? ...

OH! HOW I WISH I COULD CHECH!,... BUT.....



...THE DRIVING SCHOOL PEOPLE CAN'T FIND A WAY TO BRING THEIR CAR INTO OUR STREET... HOW CAN THEY WHEN ALL OF THE STREETS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD ARE BLOCKED WITH THE GRAVEL AND STONES OF THE FLAT BUILDERS!...



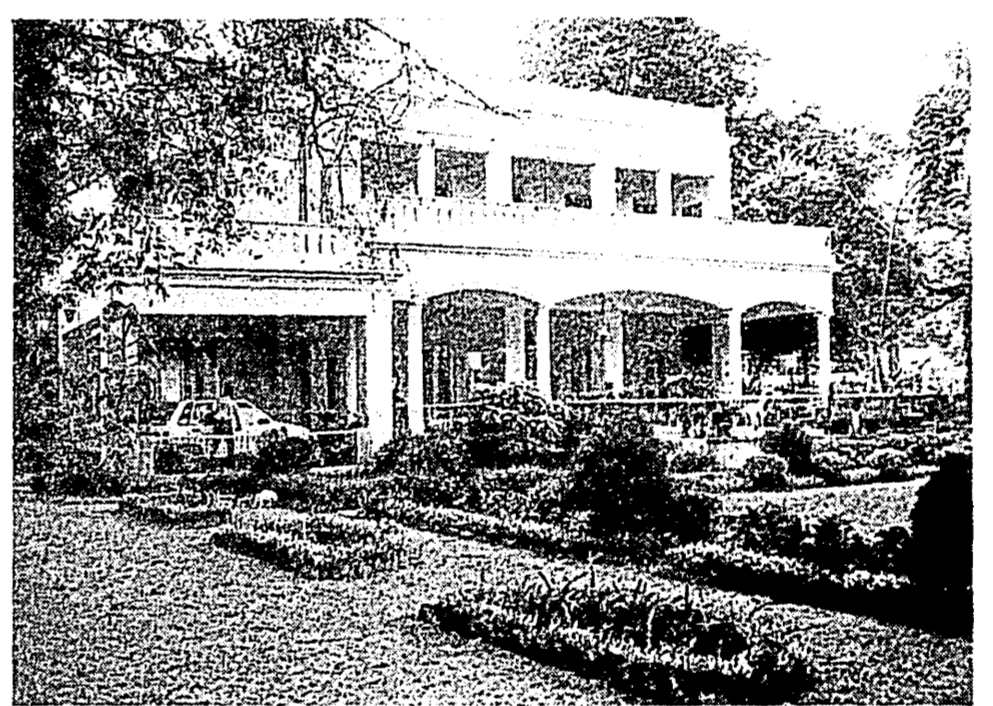
The road where I live

• by PUSHPA CHARI

run into! For a local Harrington Road joke had it that thieves and law-breakers would be chased all the way down the road by (my future father-in-law) Post Master General Chari's menagerie of fierce Alsatians, to seek shelter, at the other end of the road, in the sprawling lawns of Swaminathan's house, where, but naturally, their deliverance would

be assured by that brilliant criminal lawyer.

Another vanished landmark fondly remembered by older residents is the public reading room and library which



On left, handsome Rosemere on Harrington Road, and, on right, a "ghost" of a house on the same road where a person or two still rattles in. Both houses are splendid examples of houses built to LIVE IN, in a more leisurely age.

(Photographs by SUSHEELA NAIR).

The View from Fort St George... ..by R.K.K.

A show of firmness, reason and understanding

The short session of the Tamil Nadu Assembly in the first half of February, which is a kind of prelude to the Budget Session, should in every way be considered a success for Chief Minister Jayalalitha. With some Opposition parties anxious and waiting for moments to pick holes, Ms. Jayalalitha's troubles and sorrows, both inside and outside the House, come in battalions. But she showed firmness, understanding, reason and, at times, emotion in meeting the attack on her, and for the onlooker there was no surprise at the prolonged applause at the end of her 124-minute reply to the Governor's Address.

"I've come to power when the State's deficit was Rs. 900 crores. This is a challenge I've accepted, knowing full well that 'explanations will not satisfy those who refuse to see reason,"

she said. Quoting former American President Lyndon Johnson to explain her predicament, she said: "Even if I walk across the river, these people would say I don't know how to swim."

Opposition leader Congress(I) S.R. Balasubramaniam's comments that the Governor's Address (which some had thought of as a complaint sheet against the Centre) had nullified arguments that the Governor is an agent of the Centre was as much a tribute to the Chief Minister as his party's determination to cooperate with her party where it is most needed.

AP1TMK's S. Thirunavukkarasu saw in the frequent references to the State's critical financial situation "coming events casting their shadows", in the form of new taxes to burden the

public, PMK's S. Ramchandran complained of inadequate relief operations in several parts of the State, and Janata Dal's Dr Kumaradas wanted directions to the Police not to resort to firing at the slightest excuse. Twelve instances of firing in the six months of AIADMK rule were far too many, he said.

In her reply, the Chief Minister urged the Centre to import rice to bring down prices. Other essential commodities in short supply should also be imported. She assured the House of efforts to insulate the poor from further burdens during implementation of the annual Plan for 1992-93. She noted with satisfaction that the Police had effectively put down the 'gun culture' that was stalking the State. The State would seek World Bank aid for planning permanent solutions to places

supermarket, a couple of swimming pools, three bustling schools, an exclusive saree shop and an ethnic eating joint "For Gourmets and Good Eaters", the intriguing word salad symbolic of the 'pukka' and the not-so who now make up the changing tapestry of the road whose residents once read like something out of the local "Who's Who".

But in the street where I live, in places, avenue trees still form a lovely canopy overhead, people still greet each other and their dogs when out "eating the air", and, in the welter of rushing Marutis and Contessas, yuppies, professionals, bureaucrats, chai and lottery wallahs, snooty ayaths and the odd ICS koi hai, Harrington Road continues to fulfil its being in the changing, shifting, vibrant fortunes of Madras.



On left, handsome Rosemere on Harrington Road, and, on right, a "ghost" of a house on the same road where a person or two still rattles in. Both houses are splendid examples of houses built to LIVE IN, in a more leisurely age.

(Photographs by SUSHEELA NAIR).

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Fast food contrast

If the existence of fast food outlets on virtually every main road is a sign of modernity, then surely Madras has come of age! The range is wide, from the simplest 'snacks' to the very chic 'joint', frequented by yuppies and the executive class.

Recently, I had the opportunity to visit two different kinds of restaurants. The first, HARRISON FAST FOODS, situated on Spurtank Road, is well known to local residents. At this eating-place, you have the choice of Chinese food, South Indian snacks, Punjabi cuisine, Western-style 'quickies' like burgers and rolls, and, finally, ice-cream to complete the meal. The food comes to you from different caravan-like structures, which are housed in a large compound, while the small dining tables (which could be tidier) are placed in the middle and also on the verandah of the main building. I can't vouch for the quality of all the food on offer — but I certainly enjoyed the

noodles, fried fish and ginger-chicken (from the Chinese stall) that I shared with a friend. The bill, incidentally, came to less than Rs. 50/-.

CHEF SUZANNE, situated in the basement of the Ceebros Arcade opposite the Adyar Bus terminus, is rather different. First of all, the decor is simply

FOODS & FADS

dazzling — all done in yellow and gray, interspersed with a few green (artificial) plants. The deep gray granite tables, the yellow painted chairs, the matching prints on the walls, the modernist clock, the salt-and-pepper cubes — all these blend rather nicely with the colourfully-attired youthful clientele. I enjoyed their 'Kukku flips', which come with a delectable sauce, and thin steak. They also offer sandwiches, fried prawns, fish and chips, spring rolls, burgers and a variety of pizzas.

But don't expect HARRISON FAST FOOD prices here!

Cassette fantasies

I recently discovered two fantastic cassette stores in town. The SARASWATI cassette shop is situated next to Shankara Hall on T T K Road. This store

has the most incredible selection of cassettes — mainly Carnatic music, but also a wide range of film and pop music. However, don't make the mistake of asking the shop assistants for Western Classical music — they are likely to fish out something by Bhimsen Joshi or Pandit Jasraj! The only way to go about your business is to lean persistently across the counter and pick up the cassettes yourself. Unfortunately, the choice is limited to about a dozen or two cassettes, most of which are produced by

the Madras-based SUPER MUSIC COMPANY, which faithfully reproduces the music from the better known Western brands. Apart from the more popular music of the masters, like Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* and Schubert's *Trout Auintet*, there is a selection of semi-classical music by Richard Clayderman. Clearly, this is not the place to indulge in your more obscure tastes in Western classical music.

The other shop is GALAXY, next to Ganpat Hotel, which specialises in audio and video cassettes. Again, there is a large selection of labels to choose from — EMI, HMV, CBS, Coney, Echo, Sangeeta, Magnasound and Music India, to name a few. Here, too, Western classical music lovers will find shop assistants looking the other way, when confronted with obscure titles. So look around yourself — you may come up with some surprising finds!

V.K.

For a change, why not make a complete Chinese meal? No, you don't have to be that adventuresome and eat with chopsticks. All the recipes are adapted to suit Indian palates. The *Fried Rice* is subtly flavoured and perfectly blended. Serve with *Prawns in Sweet and Sour Sauce*, a crunchy seafood delicacy. The *Capsicum-Cucumber Salad* adds a wholesome goodness. Complete the meal with *Spring Rolls*, fried to a golden crispness.

FRIED RICE

1 cup basmati rice
¼ cup shelled peas
6 stalks spring onions, chopped fine including the green tops
1 carrot, diced fine
1 onion chopped fine
1 capsicum chopped fine
½ cup stock
1 tbs soya sauce
¼ tsp ajinomoto
2 tbs oil
2 eggs (either scrambled or made into an omelette and cut into strips) — optional
Salt to taste

Method

Wash rice thoroughly. Add four cups of water and cook till almost done. Spread on a platter and cool completely. Heat oil, fry spring onions and chopped onions till transparent.

Add chopped carrot, capsicum and peas. Add salt. Sprinkle some water and cook till done.

Add the rice and stock. Cook covered on a low heat till rice is tender. Add soya bean sauce and ajinomoto. Mix well. Garnish with omelette strips and serve hot.

A SUGGESTION: As a variation, scramble the eggs while frying the vegetables.

CAPSICUM — CUCUMBER SALAD

1 large cucumber, peeled and chopped fine
3 or 4 medium-sized capsicums, deseeded and chopped fine
Juice of 1 lemon
Salt to taste
FOR TEMPERING
1 tsp oil



1 tsp mustard seeds
1 tsp cumin seeds
1 red chilli, halved
A few curry leaves

Method

Mix the chopped vegetables in a bowl. Add lemon juice and salt. Heat oil and add all the ingredients for tempering. When the mustard seeds splutter, add to the salad. Mix well. Serve cold.

SPRING ROLLS

FILLING

¼ kg cabbage, chopped fine
2-4 spring onions, chopped fine
½ inch piece ginger, scraped and chopped fine
1½ cups bean sprouts
2 green chillies, chopped fine
¼ teaspoon ajinomoto
2 cloves garlic, chopped fine
Salt & pepper to taste
3 tbs peanut oil
Oil for frying

BATTER

1 cup flour
2 eggs beaten
Sufficient water
Salt to taste

Method

Batter
Blend eggs with flour. Add salt and sufficient water to make a thin batter. Set aside for an hour.

Filling

Heat oil. Add chopped spring onions, ginger, garlic and green chillies. Cook for a minute or two. Add bean sprouts and chopped cabbage. Cook on a high flame for 3-4 minutes, adding salt, pepper and ajinomoto. Set aside to cook.

The rolls

In a *tawa* make a pancake by pouring a ladleful of batter. Cook till done. Turn the other side. Make all the pancakes.

Heap about two tablespoons of filling in the centre and roll the pancake to cover the filling. Fold the ends and secure with a tooth pick. Shallow fry the rolls till golden.

Remove tooth picks and cut in halves. Serve hot.

Chandra Padmanabhan

PRAWNS IN SWEET AND SOUR SAUCE

½ kg prawns
1 tsp ginger paste
2 tsp garlic paste
¼ tsp turmeric powder
Pepper and salt to taste

BATTER

4-5 tbs cornflour
Salt to taste
Water to make a thick batter
Oil for deep frying

SWEET & SOUR SAUCE

4 tbs tomato sauce
2 tbs vinegar
1 tbs sugar
1 cup water
1 tsp oil
2-3 tbs cornflour
2-3 tbs pineapple chopped

Method

Clean, wash and devein prawns. Cook in a shallow pan along with all other ingredients for a few minutes till crunchy. Remove immediately and keep aside.

Make a thick batter with the cornflour and adequate water. Add salt to taste. Dip the prawns and deep fry them till golden brown. Serve with the sweet and sour sauce.

SWEET & SOUR SAUCE:

Place tomato sauce, vinegar, sugar, water, oil and chopped pineapple in a pan and as the mix comes to a boil, add the cornflour mixed in a little water. Reduce flame and stir till mixture thickens. Remove from fire.

Neela Prabhakar

BUSINESS REVIEW

(Continued from P3)

University. His father M.A. Chidambaram was appointed Chairman of fertiliser giant SPIC. And Standard Motors began getting underway. Muthia had a big fall out with the earlier DMK government when they removed Chidambaram from the Chairmanship. That was the beginning of a two-year acrimonious relationship. But, obviously, his equation with the present AIADMK government is excellent. It helped him reopen Standard Motors. Of course, the ultimate honour is getting his father chairman again.

QUIZZIN' WITH NAVIN

(Quizmaster NAVIN JAYAKUMAR's questions are all from Feb. 1-15)

- Who is the LTTE Intelligence Chief who has been directed to surrender by Judge of the Designated Court S M Siddick, along with LTTE Supremo V Prabhakaran?
- While unveiling MGR's portrait in the Assembly on Jan. 31, the Chief Minister said, "Nothing can harm a good man either in life or after death". Which Greek philosopher was she quoting?
- Where in India was the International Short Film Festival featuring 700 films from 50 countries held?
- What National Institute will be set up at Muthukadu in Chengalpattu-MGR district, according to the Union Minister for Social Welfare?
- Which two Southern cities are proposed to be linked with New Delhi by Rajdhani Expresses?
- Marutham* on Boat Club Road is the headquarters of which elite group?
- Name the ship of reeds made according to ancient Sumerian design and piloted by Capt. Akira Iwata to prove cultural and maritime links between ancient Mesopotamia, India and Japan.
- Who was the reluctant victim (lbw) of Kapil Dev's 400th Test wicket?
- What momentous announcement was made by General Colin Powell, Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff, USA, on Feb. 3?
- What is the claim to fame of the Konanakunte Police outpost near Bangalore?
- Which procedure for sex determination is Tamil Nadu planning to ban in order to curb female infanticide?
- One of the longest standing democracies (since 1958) in Latin America, was recently shaken by a coup bid. Which country?
- Why were the Brahmatheertham, Bageerathatheertham, Kubera-theertham and the Eesaana-theertham in the news?
- Who was the last American to be No. 1 in the ATP rankings before Jim Courier reached that peak?
- Which classical musician was honoured by Iran when it named a cultural complex after him?
- Border problems in brief. Expand: a) Pok b) LAC c) JKLF d) JM
- Upto how many years in prison could Mike Tyson possibly face after he was found 'guilty' on one charge of rape and two of deviant conduct?
- US space shuttle *Discovery* landed safely after the first successful mission of the International Micro-gravity Lab (IML-1). The next mission will shoot powerful beams of electrons into the atmosphere. What phenomenon will they create in the night sky around the South Pole?
- What new step is the CBSE taking in the forthcoming class X and XII exams to prevent candidates from prying into each other's answers?
- Two new 5-star hotels are due to come up in Madras over the next two years. Where?

(Answers on Page 8)

Is sex giving way to rough stuff?

Something unusual happened in a city cinema house recently: The prints of a 1992 Pongal release were seized by the Film Censor with the help of the Madras City police! The reason for the seizure had an unusual twist to it.

This Tamil film, said to be the most violent of them all, had undergone the usual statutory exercise of being approved by the Censors. They had deleted quite a few sequences on account of their excessive violence and issued a certificate subject to those deletions. However, the authorities

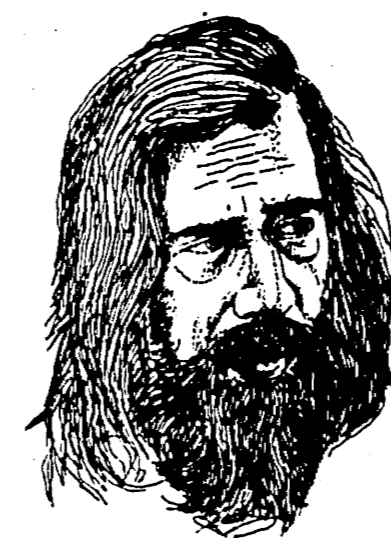
MOVIEMAN

received information from reliable sources that the deleted portions had been put back into the film when it was screened in Madras. Under the law, the Censor officer has the authority to seize any print of a film if it contravenes the legal provisions and, accordingly, the Censor officer, in association with the City police, attended the shows at city cinema houses and, after making sure that the excised blood and gore sequences had indeed been added, seized the prints. This unusually prompt action sent waves of shock throughout the film industry, which is quite used to some of its members indulging in this kind of activity and getting away with it.

Usually this kind of 'interpolation' of deleted sequences is regularly done only in erotic and sex-filled films, mostly in Malayalam. In Malayalam cinema there is a genre of films oozing with soft core and hard corish pornography. Explicit sequences of sex are shot and kept separately by the producer, never to be shown to the Censors. Such sequences, known in the local film bazaar as 'bits', are a great attraction. Invariably these 'bits' are handed over to the exhibitors who add them on for the viewing pleasure of their patrons! Such 'bits' are really clippings from 'blue cinema'. Occasionally prosecutions are launched, but the 'interpolations' go on merrily, despite the punishments meted out.

Interestingly, during the 1978 International Film Festival held in Madras, a South American film with countless sequences of explicit sex, *The Two Husbands of Dona Flora*, was screened exclusively for the press, delegates and film world personalities from India and abroad. But a large part of the audience was law enforcers and politicians. This film was later rehashed into a very successful, but much milder Tamil movie, featuring the superstar, Kamal Hasan, in a double role. Yes, that was *Kalyanaraman*.

But to get back to the present story, this is the first time in the history of Madras film exhibition that such 'interpolation' has been done to add NOT sex, but raw violence. This has generated a lot of discussion in film circles here. Is the Indian moviegoer becoming obsessed with scenes of sadistic violence too? If the answer is 'yes', this is a very disturbing trend. As a wit put it, "Sex keeps you healthy and wise, but what does violence do for you?"



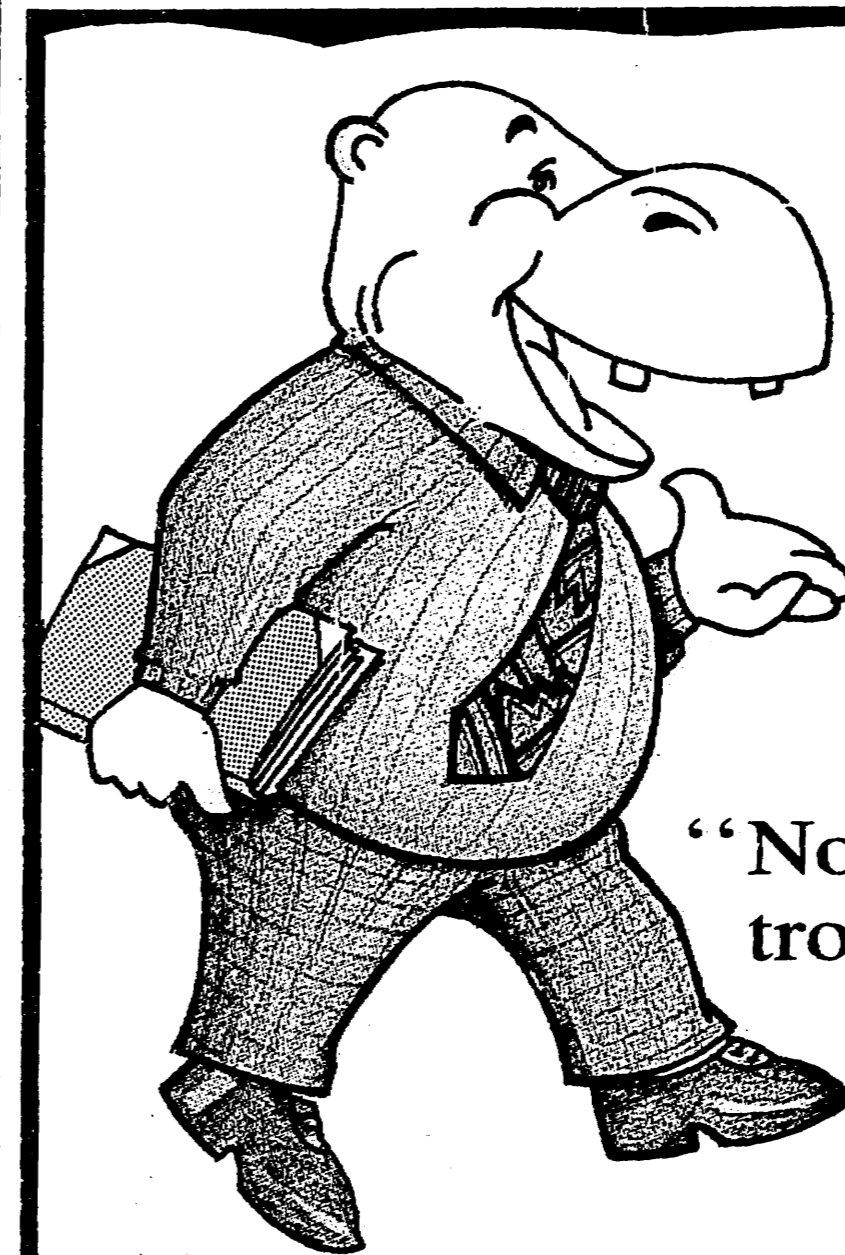
Swaminathan's paintings that are paintings

If this reaches you in time, you may be able to catch the last few days of J. Swaminathan's water colours show at The Gallery in Wallace Garden. The journalist-turned-painter-poet had got the sack when the political bigwigs interfered with his work at the Bharath Bhavan in Bhopal. He was the director there. He now has more time for painting.

Swaminathan is showing water colours involving a negation of the smooth, brushless paintings which he terms as 'cooked'. He has said that the concern of the folk paintings which negate perspective is not the image of reality but the reality of the image. A painting is a painting, not a chunk of the physical world. In Swaminathan's works, the background is as frontal as the foreground, with lines causing the divide between image and background, lines which hold the entire composition together.

Celebrating Mozart

If you are into music, the Max Mueller Bhavan is celebrating the Mozart bi-centenary the whole of March. You can walk in and make a request to see any of the Mozart operas. There are also films on Mozart being shown.



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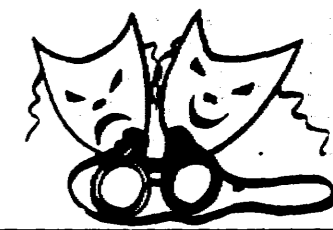
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THE VIEW FROM THE WINGS



They also have a Santoor concert by a German artist with Visweswaran, our own wizard, on the instrument.

MMB has much else to give film buffs. Films of German directors who have made it big in Hollywood are being shown all through March, each American effort being compared with a German effort by the same director.

Paz and Kathakali

It was fun helping in the production of the Madras Players' latest play(?!).

his ideas, but all credit to the young man that he was able to pull it off.

This was perhaps the first time that *The Hindu* carried a big review on its Friday page and also a half page colour feature on Sunday on the same play!

with the Kathakali group of Kottakkal before coming to Madras to teach Kathakali. He has a firm grip on the technique of the dance form and is a very good singer. He is now struggling to establish himself as a Kathakali teacher and dancer here in Madras.

Dancing in South Africa

Madras' young dancer Priyadarshini Govind is just off on a tour of South Africa. One of the first dancers on an official tour of once forbidden territory, she is making a threesome with Madhavi Mudgal, the Odissi dancer, and Washathi Sen, the Kathak dancer. Priyadarshini is a dancer beautiful to behold and dances with total sincerity and involvement. Her grace and dignity will surely captivate her audiences in South Africa.

Discussing theatre

The American Centre of the U.S.I.S. is holding a colloquium on cross-cultural influences in theatre. Irene Fornes, an important playwright, avant-garde dramatist and director is the keynote speaker at the colloquium which is being coordinated by the Madras Players and Women's Christian College. Well known names in theatre, like Prof. Ramanujam and Mahesh Dattari, are taking part and there will be readings of Irene Fornes' plays by the Madras Players and Koothupattari.

The American Center will also be showing some all-time great films every Wednesday through March at 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. Films like *Lean on Me*, *Around the World in Eighty Days* and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* are on the cards.

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It happened in Madras

Objections to neutral umpire

One cornerstone of the game of cricket is the umpire. Once, his neutrality was not questioned and his decisions were accepted with grace by everyone concerned with the game. However, we have moved far from that wholesome concept, for a variety of reasons, such as gamesmanship and crass commercialisation of the game, and, today, umpires appointed from the host country are regularly suspected of bias. This has led to the demand for the appointment of neutral umpires, 'neutral' here meaning those whose nationality is not the same as those of the contesting sides. And that is what will be happening in the World Cup limited overs championship being jointly hosted by Australia and New Zealand.

Curiously, the presence of a neutral umpire for a 'test' match was once objected to by one of the captains and he was removed and replaced by another umpire. Three 'tests' were played between Douglas Jardine's England team and India in 1933-34 in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. Bill Hitch of England and Frank Tarrant of Australia, who had also played in the English county championship, were coaching in this country at the time. Being men of repute, they were appointed umpires for all the 'tests'. England won the Bombay 'test' and the second was drawn, so the Madras match became crucial for the rubber.

On the eve of the Madras 'test', Jardine objected to Tarrant officiating as umpire on the ground that he was an Australian! After the body-line series in the earlier season, relations between England and Australia were not parti-

cularly cordial, and, perhaps, Jardine felt that Tarrant, being an Australian, might be biased against his team. Tarrant, who had arrived in Madras for the match along with his wife, then watched the match from the pavilion, while J B Higgins, a local police official, took his place and umpired with Hitch!

Many of those like me who witnessed that Test at hallowed Chepauk

by
P.N. Sundaresan

will cherish its memory. All the trappings of the imperial age were there; the Englishmen moving about with an air of superiority, the princes holding court in their distinctive *shamianas* near the pavilion, and, believe it or not, the Yuvaraj of Patiala, who was making his test debut, receiving the Indian players' *pranams* to him, as he went out to have a pre-match knock at the nets.

It was a great match against the strongest England side ever to come to India and led by the cleverest captain, whose imperious mien was in tune with the times. The events of the match were also in keeping with the traditions of Chepauk.

On the first day, a brilliant century partnership before lunch, between Walters, a stylist *par excellence*, and Bakewell, was followed by a devastating spell by the great Amar Singh, which twisted the lion's tail and caused a near collapse. Jardine, with disciplined batsmanship, rescued England, which

reached 335 runs the next morning. Amar Singh's 7 for 86 were his best figures in his brief test career.

India collapsed for 145 runs against the wiles of Hedley Verity, the greatest left-arm spinner in the game till then. It was amazing to see Jardine post himself at silly mid-off at handshake distance from the great C K Nayudu, evidence of Jardine's confidence in Verity's control. Walters then came with a delightful 102 in England's second innings and England declared at 261 for 7. India did better in the second innings, but could muster only 249 runs. Verity bagging 11 wickets in all for the match.

The highlight of the last day was a memorable duel between the Yuvaraj of Patiala, bedecked in a colourful turban, and the left arm Nobby Clark, who unleashed vicious bumpers. How we enjoyed the prince punishing him with brilliant cover drives! However, it was not all enjoyable; Jeomal Naomal was struck near the temple by a ball from Clark at the start of the Indian first innings and tension followed when someone from the crowd threw a stone at Clark as he resumed his position in the outfield. It was a tense moment as Clark slowly walked back, picked up the stone and, to the relief of all, quietly placed it outside the boundary.

Jack Hobbs, the celebrated England batsman, covered the match for an English daily and also for *The Hindu* and to accommodate the great Englishman, the press box, till then a ramshackle affair on the western side, was moved to the pavilion and made a pucca one!

Motor sports gets a word of encouragement

"I am an I.A.S.," boasted C.N. Ramdoss, I.A.S., presiding over the Madras Motor Sports Club's annual all-India meet and McDowell Rally prize distribution function at the Trident Hotel recently. The Commissioner for Revenue Administration, Government of Tamil Nadu, stunned the gathering with his opening remark. But he hastened to add, amidst laughter, that "I mean, I am a substitute!"— for

S. Krishna Kumar, Union Minister of State for Defence, Petroleum and Natural Gas, who was held up.

The laughter Ramdoss provoked was in keeping with the festive atmosphere in which the race meet and

by
JAICI

rally winners and runners-up, headed by N. Leelakrishnan of Team MRF, received their trophies from Mrs Ramdoss. Leelakrishnan was the overall winner, with 27 points, of the two-day (February 9-16) meet held on the MMSC's Sriperambudur track, India's lone track of international standards.

More heart warming than the wit and humour, and even the warning the speakers indulged in, was Ramdoss's emphasis on the need to encourage motor racing. "The fuel spent on motor racing is very small indeed, not at all a waste," he said amidst cheers. Praising the MMSC for having made Sriperambudur India's Indianapolis, he said Tamil Nadu had been a trendsetter in several fields, and it had now stolen a march over the rest of India in motor racing. This sport, he said, needed every encouragement, including "free Air India flights for foreign competitors.

The warning came from K.D. Madan, the meet chairman. Appealing to motor-racing fans to unite to make the annual meet "truly great", he said "we will not, however, tolerate any indiscipline on the track". Little light was shed on the provocation for the warning. It was perhaps a sequel to the protests and counter-protests that somewhat marred the February 16 programme, leading to the results of three events being withheld.

Welcoming the gathering, S. Muthukrishnan, the MMSC president, thanked the sponsors, especially McDowell, MRF, Castrol, Lucas-TVS and Lakshmi Mills. Stating that a Hong Kong squad's participation made the 1992 meet truly international, he hoped more foreign teams would come in the future.

Dr (Mrs) Poornima Sastry, Deputy Director-General, Union Ministry of Tourism, dwelt at length on the "need to promote sports tourism", and concluded her long speech by saying that "with these few words I thank you".

Mathew Birch of the Hong Kong squad confessed that he had the previous night spent over an hour "rehearsing the pronunciation of such names as Muthukrishnan, Madhusudhan and Kariyavandan".

The barefoot owner's day

Ever seen, or heard of, a barefooted racehorse owner?

Well, there was one in India, in Madras to be precise — the late A. I. M. Muthukaruppan Chettiar. His name comes to mind on the eve of the 30th running of the Indian Turf Invitation Cup on March 1 at Bangalore, for he had the distinction of leading in the winner of the inaugural Invitation, Mount Everest, at Mahaluxmi (Bombay) in 1963.

Mount Everest's triumph gave the Madras turf an unprecedented boost. It did more. By winning the race that the Indian turf authorities had framed to decide the country's champion four-year-old each year, Muthukaruppan Chettiar's colt made amends for his controversial short-head defeat by Rocklie, a Bombay filly, in the Indian Derby on his Mahaluxmi debut a fortnight earlier — made controversial by the failure of the Royal Western India Turf Club camera soon after the judges decided to consult it to judge the winner!

The Madras colt's historic win also led to the unique scene of a dhoti-clad, barefooted owner walking up the Mahaluxmi turf for the first time to lead in a winner. It was stated to have stunned the RWITC aristocrats. But the popular, unassuming Madras owner did not care a damn for the audible voices of protest he heard and led in his wonder colt, smiling and waving to the crowd all the way.

Only four other Madras horses, Esquire at Guindy in 1965, Prince Royal at Bangalore in 1973 and M.A.M. Ramaswamy's pair of Own Opinion and Own Beauty at Bombay in 1979 and at Hyderabad in 1988, respectively, have had their names inscribed in the invitation Roll of Honour. Will

a fifth Madras-owned winner emerge on March 1?

(EDITOR'S NOTE: By the time these lines appear Madras will have the answer to that one, but our distribution schedule can't prevent that happening.)

The Department of Racing, Government of Tamil Nadu, has nominated a squad of four, of which only two, My Pet and Admiralty, have genuine claims to represent Madras. The others are the Bangalore-based Boodles and the Hyderabad-based Striker. They have earned nomination on the basis of their performances in two of the Madras classics, Boodles having won the S.I.2000 Guineas and Striker having finished second in the S.I. Derby. Ramaswamy's My Pet, winner of all the Guindy classics open to her sex, thus emerges as Madras's main hope. But can she maintain her winning streak in a field comprising the country's best, spearheaded by Bangalore's wonder filly, Bugs Bunny? This is the topic of discussion wherever Madras racegoers meet.

My Pet is not Ramaswamy's lone hope. His got-abroad colt, Flirting Vision, is a Bangalore nominee. During the Bangalore summer season he won all his four races, including the Bangalore Derby, but disappointed in the 2,000 Guineas and the Derby in Bombay, both of which the Pune-based Astonish won.

Astonish is also expected to be in the Invitation Cup field, but, barring accident, Bugs Bunny, who has won for Messrs Vijaya Mallya, Raghuvendra Singh and Yadavendra Singh six of her seven races, will be the runner to beat on her home course. But My Pet may yet boost her owner's world record classics tally to 170.

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