

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS MUSINGS

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Vol. X No. 22

FREE ISSUE

March 1-15, 2001

*Opening up of Tamil Nadu's Deep South*

## Nanguneri the first step

(by S. Viswanathan and Suchitra Srinivas)

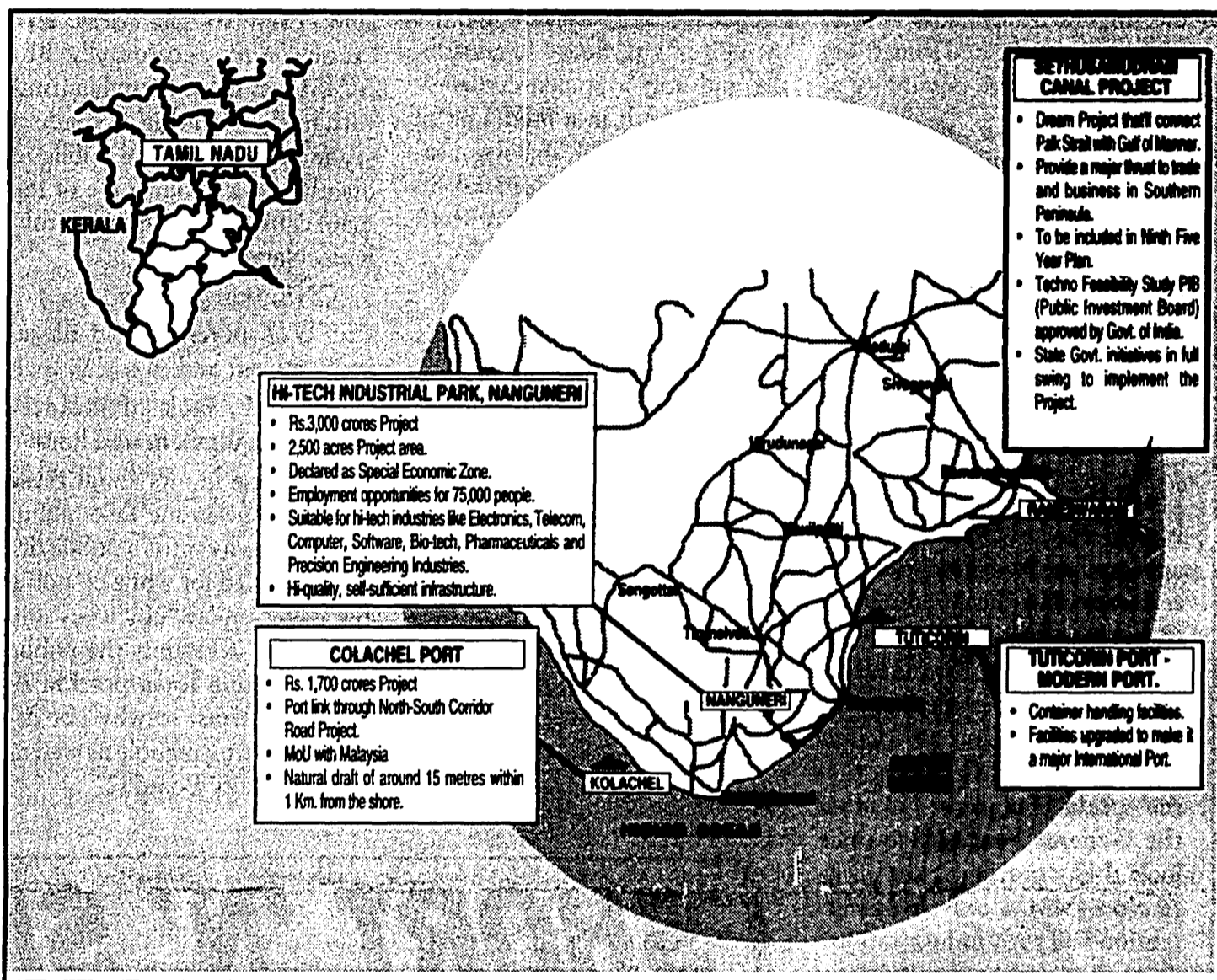
The foundation stone for the first of several export oriented Special Economic Zones (SEZ) proposed by the Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Murasoli Maran, was recently laid at Nanguneri, in Tirunelveli District.

About 3000 acres of barren land between Nanguneri and Vallioor in Tirunelveli district were identified for the development of the Advance Technology Manufacturing and Assembly City (ATMAC). A special joint venture between the Government of Tamil Nadu, represented by TIDCO, and IIG-Mauritius Ltd., a wholly owned subsidiary of INFAC India Group, based in California, was formed to set up the new city.

The city will be a self-contained municipality with its own source of power and water and ultimately have a population of around 1,50,000, according to Madhvan Nambiar, CMD - TIDCO.

Clearance has been obtained for foreign investment. An environment study by IIT-Madras and preparation of the master plan by JTC, Singapore are underway. Multinational consultancy firms like Cushman & Weikfield and Ernst & Young have prepared the feasibility report. And the promoters are in discussion with top companies to set up their facilities in this hi-tech park.

(Continued on Page 6)



## Talk but no action on basic education

(by Shobha Menon)

In 1997, the 83rd Constitution Amendment Bill was introduced by the United Front Government to make schooling compulsory. Tamil Nadu is the only State in India to pass a law making education compulsory.

**Shocking but true!**

- One-third of all children

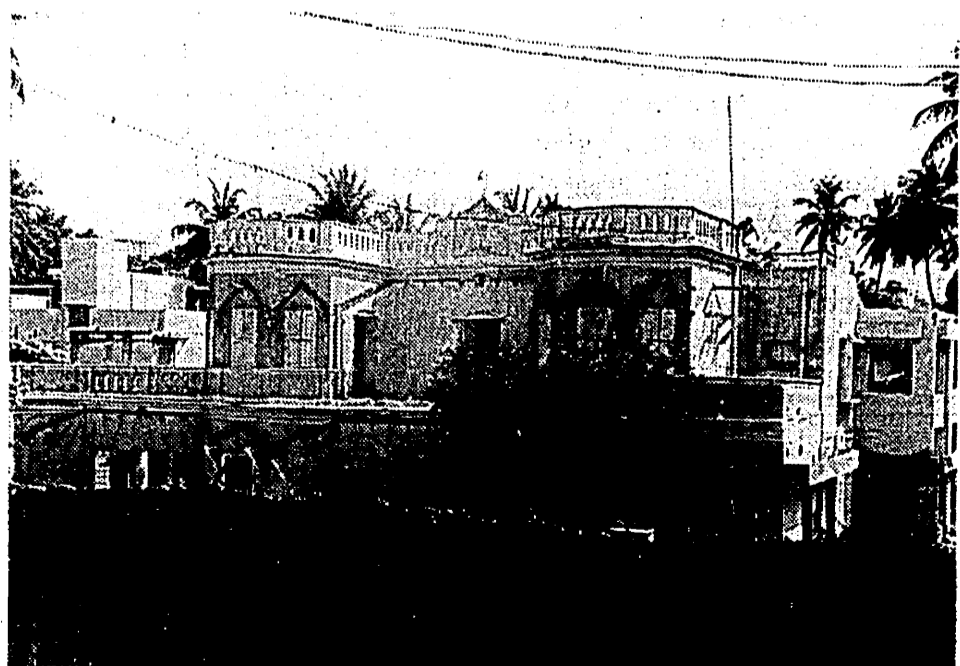
aged 6-14 years (about 23 million boys and 36 million girls) were not in school, according to the 1991 Census.

- Most out-of-school children spend their time playing or idling at home. Only a small percentage work as fulltime

wage labourers. India has 70-80 million child labourers who work 12 hours a day on an average. The rest work as family labourers without wage.

- Though Operation Blackboard (to ensure that all primary schools in the country had at least two pucca classrooms, two teachers and essential teaching material) was launched in 1987-88, the Fifth All India Educational Survey (1993) found that 65% had a pucca building, 4% were run in open spaces, 3% in thatched huts, and 0.3% in tents. The rest had no building at all.
- In 1993, 56% of primary schools did not have a functional water supply, 70% had no toilets.
- The growth in the number of primary school teachers dropped to 1.6% by 1989-90, with an absolute decline thereafter. The shortage of

(Continued on Page 6)



Going... going... if ever there was a building typical of the architecture of the early 20th Century Mylapore elite, it was the building that till recently housed the Standard Chartered Bank in Royapettah. Ever since the Bank moved into its own premises, this lovely old building with its gables, monkey-tops and balustraded Madras terrace has been under threat, and all Madras Musings' pleas to have second thoughts on that decision have gone unheard. Now, with no Heritage Regulations in place despite agreement on it at the bureaucratic and NGO level for a couple of years, "going... going..." has become GONE. By the time readers see this picture, what's left in it would have gone. And that will be the fate of the Government buildings (Police Inspectors' Quarters) on Wallajah Road too (on right), with similar buildings on Kutcheri Road likely to face the same fate before long. These buildings were typical of official architecture of the late 19th-early 20th Century period and deserved preservation and restoration in at least one complex. (Photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)



# A fine century of Tamil publishing

244, Ramakrishna Mutt Road, is a strikingly inconspicuous building in the midst of the milling crowds and bustle of Mylapore. But as home to the Alliance Company, it is known to thousands, for many pages of Tamil literary history have been written or, rather, printed and published here.

Founded by V.Kuppuswami Iyer, it is the oldest Tamil publishing house in Chennai (actually it was started in 1896, but registered only in 1901). It has published more than 18,000 titles as it gets ready to celebrate its centenary. The Company is still run by the family, the founder's son, K.V.S. Mani and his son V.Srinivasan.

Kuppuswami Iyer, when he arrived in Madras, started out by selling pens, pencils and erasers to children. He later sold notebooks. When he started a small printing unit, it seemed but natural to graduate to publishing books to read, for both serious and light reading.

But always his aim, Mani said, was to bring out books that would make a person a better individual in some way. Many of the books he first published were on freedom fighters and Indian achievers. These biographies were meant to inspire readers to become nationalists.

Alliance's first major achievement was the publishing of a very popular monthly magazine, *Vivekabhini* from 1908. At its peak of success it had a circulation of 35,000, but due to the difficulties Alliance faced ceased publication in 1935. All eminent writers of the day, including U.V.Swaminatha Iyer, wrote for



V. Kuppuswami Iyer

it. A yearbook was also brought out, consisting of the best articles during the year, a forerunner of sorts.

Another path-breaking effort related to popularising the Tamil short story. Four volumes of *Kadhai Kovai* were brought out and in each of these collections of short stories, each story was by a different author. Tamil translations of important books in other Indian languages were also regularly brought out, among them being the works of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, Sarath Chandra Chatterjee, Rabindranath Tagore, Munshi Premchand, V.S.Kandekar, and Endamoory Veerendranath.

Speaking about Alliance's reputation of being associated with nationalist movement, Mani says, "Father was deeply inspired by the freedom movement (coincidentally the Congress' meeting point was the house next door to the press). He

published every leader from Mahatma Gandhi to Subhas Chandra Bose (all of whom praised his courage and commitment) and was constantly in danger of his books being banned. Whenever he learnt that his stock of a particular title was to be confiscated, he would send copies to Pondicherry and destroy the remainder".

The Company had the rare honour of bringing out *Desiya Geetham* on the day of Independence and it distributed copies free to the public, in celebration.

The road to a hundred years has certainly not been easy. The Company has passed through many difficult times. "But, God willing, due to the goodwill earned by my father, good friends have always come forward to help," Mani recalls.

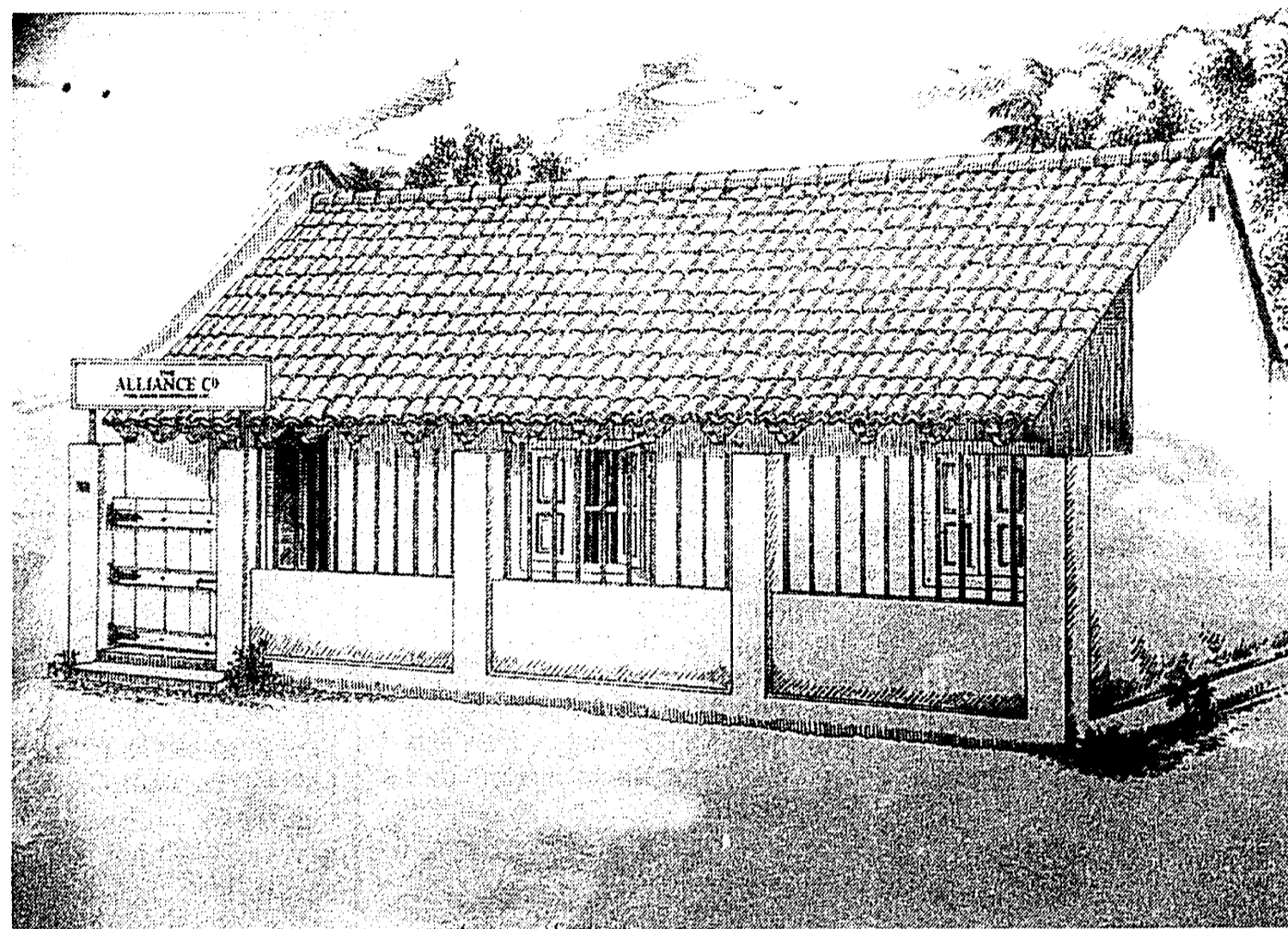
In the 1930's, during one particularly trying period, Rajaji stepped in by offering a few of his books, like *Kannan Kaattiya Vazhi*, *Rajaji Kuttu Kathaigal* and *Atmasandanai*, to be published by Alliance. More recently in 1992, Cho Ramaswamy gave them the publishing rights for his writings.

As Alliance prepares to celebrate its centenary, Mani spoke to me about Tamil publishing and the future of the firm his father founded.

Your thoughts about the publishing scene, then and now?

It is more competitive now, therefore more difficult. With the costs of raw material escalating and the commissions to be paid, profit margins are less. But then, Alliance has never been run with the profit motive in mind, so...

# A CENTENARY & A BICENTENARY



Alliance & Co, Mylapore, the Tamil publishing house that V. Kuppuswami Iyer founded a hundred years ago, has not moved from the Mylapore locality — what is now R.K. Mutt Road, across from the Kapaleswarar Temple — where he put down roots. The building, where the publishing house and its press were, once looked like what is seen in our OLD this fortnight, the sketch above. It was in 1956 that it was 'renovated' to take the shape of what exists today our NEW — a renovation certainly not for the better, no matter how much more user-friendly it has become. (Photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)



What do you think about the current quality of writers?

There are good writers and bad ones too. But I find the emphasis these days generally borders on the obscene, which many feel is the road to literary success. However, we don't think so. In fact, good literature can touch any generation.

On what criteria do you base your selection of books?

We believe in selecting books that are either informative or provide good, clean, fun, the sort that can be read by a grandparent, parent, or child in front of each other without offending anyone's sensibilities. We have an expert panel who review books by new authors before we publish them.

Has the advent of TV affected the sale of books?

I don't think so. People who want to read books still do so. And good books are always popular, all over the world. With reasonable prices and assurance of quality, we have customers from as far away as the U.S. and the U.K. who seek us out for their copies. Unfortunately, the modern generation prefers what I call 'throwaway' books, just as they prefer instant foods.

What has your focus been all these years? Has it changed in any way?

I'm 75 now, and being the son of a man with such tremendous values has been a wonderful experience. Money has never been our focus; rather, it has been a

personal commitment to excellence, sincerity, and honesty in all our endeavours. I think that's what has got us to a hundred. When you do your best, wonderful things will ultimately begin to happen.

On the future...

During the centenary year, we plan to bring out 100 new titles on different subjects. We hope to continue and develop into specialised book publishing, of even better quality. With my son, Srinivasan, taking active efforts to uphold his grandfather's legacy, I'm positive we'll be able to do even better.

Shobha Menon

# The first rebellion

The 'discovery' of the South Indian Rebellion of 1800-1801 by Prof.K.Rajayyan in the 1960s was path-breaking. His book on it published in 1971 was a turning point in the historiography of the Indian National Movement. Unfortunately, historians of the national movement, particularly those based in Delhi, failed to take note of the significant findings of Rajayyan and continue to describe the revolt of 1857 as "the first major challenge" to British authority in India. This is in line with the general approach of most historians, to belittle the contributions of South India to major historical events in the country. It is time to embark upon a re-assessment of the role of South India in order to correct the existing imbalance in Indian historical studies.

Historical controversies are nothing new. Back in the 1950s when the Government of India appointed a Committee to bring out a volume on the freedom movement in 1957, to celebrate the centenary of the revolt of 1857, Professor R.C.Majumdar resigned from the Committee unable to agree with the view of the then Minister for Education, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, that the revolt was "the First War of Indian Independence". Majumdar, who published his volumes on the Freedom Movement in 1963, characterised the "First War of Independence" as "neither first, nor war, nor for Independence". At that time, he did not, perhaps, anticipate that another historian, Rajayyan, would tell the world about an earlier rebellion which could well claim to be "The First War of Independence".

It is true that there were several rebellions in India in areas where British rule had been established. From 1763 to 1856, there were more than fifty major rebellions in the country. For instance, there was the much publicised 'Sanyasi Rebellion' led by monks that dispossessed zamindars. There were rebellions in Eastern India, in Rangpur and Dinajpur in 1783; in Vishnupur and Birbhum in 1799; in the coastal regions of Andhra led by the Raja of Vijayanagaram in 1794. What makes the rebellion

Rajayyan has written about different, and more significant, I shall try to explain under these six heads:

- The ideas of freedom, rebellion,
- Their organisation and methods,
- Their achievements,
- Their failures, and
- Their legacy.

Rajayyan relies on the letters of Marudu Pandyan of Sivagangai, Sevathiah of Tirunelveli and Ezhambalan Kunjan of Malabar to bring out "the exalted political concepts" of the rebel leaders. He observes: "As a reaction against Western imperialism and princely collusion, the Peninsular Confederacy symbolised a self-strengthening movement. In

EDITOR'S NOTE: This was the introductory theme paper at a Symposium at the XXI Session of the South Indian History Congress held recently at the Madurai Kamaraj University. The Symposium, chaired by the author, marked the 200th anniversary of 'The South Indian Rebellion, 1800-1801 - The First War of Independence'.

South Indian rebel leaders made use of the first method. At that point of time they had no alternative. Their efforts towards forming a Peninsular Confederacy deserves our admiration. The betel leaf was one medium of communication between the rebel leaders. The superior war machine of the British, particularly under Wellesley (who later defeated Napoleon at the Battle of Waterloo), was an important factor in the failure of the Rebellion.

It is a tragedy that in the ultimate analysis, the rebel leaders could not realise their dream of putting an end to British rule in South India. This appears to be a recurring fact during the violent phases of our freedom struggle.

The failure of the South Indian Rebellion has been sometimes attributed to the lack of support from other parts of India, as well as to the failure of the French to render timely support. However, failure does not rob the rebellion of its significance in India's long march towards freedom.

In his chapter, *Revenge and Embers*, Rajayyan writes poig-

by S. Gopalakrishnan

fact, the movement represented a violent reaction against alien sway for the attainment of a radical, yet legitimate objective".

The ideas of freedom motivating the South Indian rebels is perhaps best reflected in the famous pronouncement of Patrick Henry: "Give me Liberty or Death". To my mind, the concept of 'freedom' is not synonymous with that of 'nationalism'. The South Indian rebels might have had the idea of freedom, but the period during which they lived and fought might have precluded them from possessing the idea of nationalism. It may therefore be rather difficult to agree with Rajayyan's conclusion that "In the destruction of British Imperialism in South India the insurgents found the possibility of preventing the fall of Jambu Dweepa to alien control and of preserving the freedom of the entire country".

Moving on to the leaders of the Rebellion, they were outstanding leaders such as Kattabomman, Marudu Pandyan, Oomathurai, Gopala Nayak, Keralavarma, Krishnappa Nayak, Dhoondaji Waug and others. Many of them had humble beginnings. For instance,

nantly about the manner in which the lives of these heroes came to an end. In doing so he quotes extensively from J.Welsh's *Military Reminiscences*, Vol. I, p.p. 133-4.

Examining the methods and organisation of the rebels, we must understand the two basic features of our freedom struggle — one, traditional, revolutionary and violent; two, gradualist, constitutional and non-violent. The

What is the significance or the legacy of the South Indian Rebellion? Though confined to South India, it was indeed massive in its totality. In terms of duration, areas of operation, leadership and organisation, the outbreak of 1857 is a pale shadow of the South Indian Rebellion. It is no exaggeration to state that the South Indian Rebellion, by establishing a tradition of revolt, inspired the subsequent struggle for India's freedom.

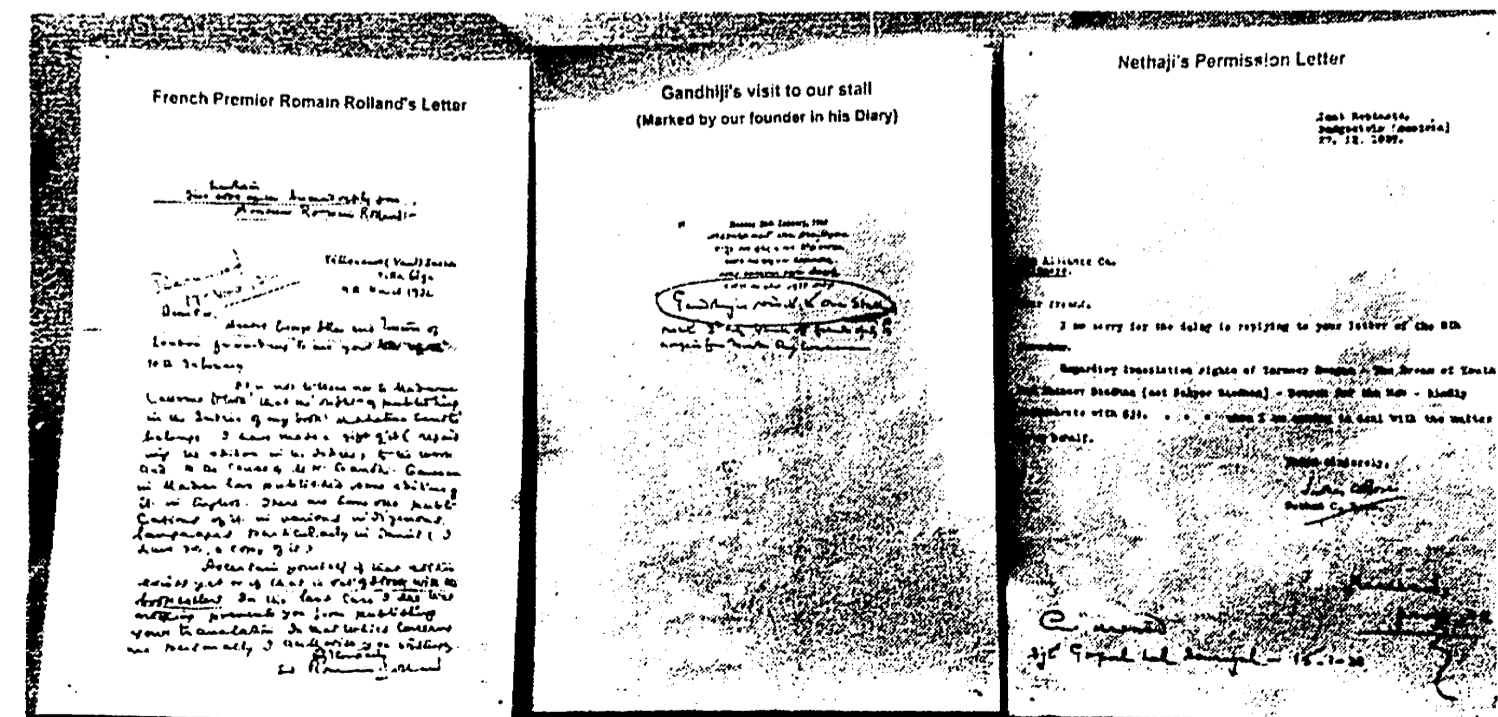
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Some of the old letters preserved at century-old Alliance & Co., Tamil publishers. Romain Rolland's letter dates to 1932, Gandhiji's remarks to 1946 and Subhas Chandra Bose's letter granting permission for a translation goes back to 1937. (Photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)



# The return of rugby

Chennai could be witnessing the return of rugby after a gap of several years. For three reasons.

For one, the Tamil Nadu Rugby Football Union (TNR-FU), formed last December, is affiliated to the Indian Rugby Football Union. Starting off with just one team, *The Chennai Cheetahs*, the TNRFU now has five more — *The Sharks*, *The Dragons*, *The Rams*, *The Flying Khukris* and *The Old Boys*.

For another, two rugby players from Tamil Nadu, Satish and Sharif, represented India in the under-19 Asian Rugby Football Union Tournament held in Colombo recently. The Indian side acquitted itself well against teams from Kazakhstan, Malaysia and Singapore. The team's good showing is likely to provide a boost to the sport in India.

And for a heart-warming third, especially for lovers of the sport in Chennai, the city will, for the first time, host a seven-a-side national rugby tournament. Twenty teams from all over the country have confirmed participation in the tournament which will be held on March 3rd and 4th at the Sri Ramachandra Medical College grounds in Porur. The special attraction will be *The Armenians* from Calcutta, led by their manager-cum-coach, Arsham Sookias, who last played at the home of Madras Rugby, the Madras Gymkhana grounds, in 1954.

Calcutta and Mumbai have always remained the strongholds of rugby in India. In fact, the Calcutta Cricket and Football Club (which celebrated 125 recently) is the only place in the world where rugby has been

played for so long, except for a few clubs in Britain. *The Armenians* and *La Martinere Old Boys* (LMOB, as they are more popularly known) from Calcutta and the *Bombay Gymkhana* are other household names in rugby circles in India.

In England, rugby as a sport was developed among the Public School segments of society — India followed the elitist British model of the pre-independence years. However, New Zealand, which boasts of probably the best rugby team in the world, the *All Blacks*, followed a different school of development — popularising the



Satish (left) and Sharif

sport among the not-so-elite sections, like farmers, for example. And that has, over the years, reaped rich dividends TNRFU hopes to follow the New Zealand way of popularising rugby — among the less privileged.

Playing a major role in setting up the TNRFU and encouraging/developing the sport in Chennai has been Patrick Davenport, Secretary, TNRFU. Davenport is elated by the excellent response from the small-built but hardy kabaddi players and boxers willing to give the sport a try.

TNRFU hopes to get more youngsters to take to the sport and raise 15 teams to form a competition league. "One of our focus areas would be to

develop the sport in schools and get the physical training instructors involved in the game" says Davenport.

With sponsorship slowly coming in, TNRFU plans to set up a fund to ensure the perpetuity of the development of the sport in Tamil Nadu. Although a few corporates have come forward to help — NIIT, Microsoft and Nittany Decision Services — greater sponsorship is still needed. "If only 15 corporates each would sponsor a team..." dreams Davenport.

Internationally, rugby is a very popular sport. It is played virtually in every country in the world. After the Olympics, the Football World Cup and, perhaps, Wimbledon, the Rugby World Cup has the biggest fan following.

The Indian Rugby Football Union believes that rugby can be developed and made popular in India. And the national seven-a-side tournament coming up in Chennai is perhaps just the tonic the sport needs. In the shorter, much faster version of the game (in the regular game, teams are 15-a-side and play is for two halves of 40 minutes each), teams will battle it out for seven minutes in each half, with a minute's break.

Last year, in the seven nationals held in Pondicherry, where 16 teams participated, the Chennai team had one of its best showings, losing in the Cup Final to *Bombay Gymkhana* (Plate and Bowl were won by teams from Pondicherry and Delhi).

That rugby will be developed a lot more systematically after the setting up the TNRFU, there is no doubt. At its behest, the England Rugby Football Union is sending one of its senior officials to conduct an international rugby course for Indian coaches. The TNRFU has also brought out a basic rule book in Tamil, thanks to



## An American is Chennai rugby's future hope

Rugby Football, the quint-essential English game that Tom Brown created, is being revived in Tamil Nadu thanks to, believe it or not, a fast-talking AMERICAN, Patrick Davenport, Secretary, Tamil Nadu Rugby Football Union (TNR-FU). Rugby is a minor sport in the U.S. but is fast gaining popularity, particularly in the universities. Davenport played both college and club Rugby in Detroit.

A student of international studies at Michigan State University, Davenport first visited Chennai in 1988 while prospecting for a leather business. It was love at first sight — he fell in love with the city, the people and the food. Today, the Davenport family have adopted Chennai as their home. And Patrick runs his leather business, Khyber & Co, in Ekaduthangal. He is also a partner, with two friends, in Kipling & Co, which deals in furniture reproductions and Chettinad artefacts and sarees.

If the leather business provides Davenport his bread and

butter, TNRFU is his passion. But he says that TNRFU would not have been possible without the contribution by Mohan Krishna, Chairman, TNRFU, A. Dinakaran, Development Director, Jeremy Tebbett, CFO, Syngenta, and the authorities at YMCA, Nandanam, who have allowed TNRFU to use their grounds.

But more than anybody, Davenport said that it was Tim Grandage of *Future Hope*, Calcutta, who was his inspiration. Grandage was an employee at the Hongkong & Shanghai Banking Corporation in Calcutta when he started providing street children a home. He later resigned from HSBC and set up *Future Hope*. Using rugby as a tool, Grandage went on to knit the street children, belonging to various backgrounds, into a cohesive whole. Today, *Future Hope* is amongst the best rugby teams in the citadel of the sport in India, Calcutta. In more *Future Hopes* lies the future of India in rugby, Davenport is convinced

S.N.

Dr. Dasarathan of the Institute of Tamil Studies. An English-Tamil newsletter is next. If rugby is to become popular, there is a need to educate people about the game.

"Did you know that rugby was being played in Madras and South India until about two decades ago?" Davenport asks. Indeed, the game was played primarily by the young planters and expatriate members of the Madras Gymkhana. The stumps of the rugby posts of yore, still to be seen at the Madras Gymkhana, provide rugby enthusiasts like Davenport nostalgia as well as inspiration to rejuvenate the game.

Sashi Nair

## Answers to Quiz

1. NEAR (Near Earth Asteroid Rendezvous); 2. Pankaj Roy; 3. The pigeons and their feeding; 4. Ariel Sharon; 5. The National Census; 6. Vijay Amritraj; 7. Rs.20,875 crore; 8. P. Gopi Chand and Aparna Popat; 9. The Kiwi bird

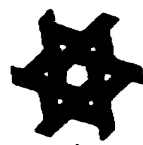
\* \* \*

10. Tiruvallur town; 11. Ennore; 12. Pleasant Hotel. It is now called Trident

\* \* \*

13. Saavi; 14. Nanguneri, near Tirunelveli; 15. Dindigul; 16. Indigenous dog breeds of the State; 17. Manicka Naicker; 18. Coom and Adyar; 19. Lakshmi for *Sila Nerangalil Sila Manithargal*; 20. A.R. Rahman.

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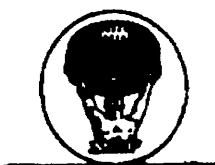
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