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# MADRAS

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## MUSINGS

Vol. II. No. 12

FREE ISSUE — EVERY FORTNIGHT

October 1 — 15, 1992

*Recent tragedies can only make us....*

# Weep for Madras

(By The Editor)

We can only weep for Madras. And we are sure there are thousands of others in the City who would weep with us too. What has happened to this City that once prided itself on its law and order? Today, we can only weep at it slowly becoming part of the killing fields of India where there is no longer respect for the Law and where life has become cheap.

- A youth protests against his dog being stoned and he is beaten to death.
- Another youth kills a young man over a beedi and walks into a police station with his victim's head held triumphantly on high.

- One group of youths argue with another group over cinema tickets and the result is the torching of an entire *kuppam* and the attacking — even unto death — of several of its dwellers and many a passer-by.

- A group taunts the tail-end of a religious procession, tosses a few stones at it even as the police watch, and soon parts of the city are like Los Angeles in Madras, with arson and looting the top priorities.

- Another procession glorifies a proclaimed offender and speaks of him, the man responsible for the death of hundreds of Tamil rivals, many more

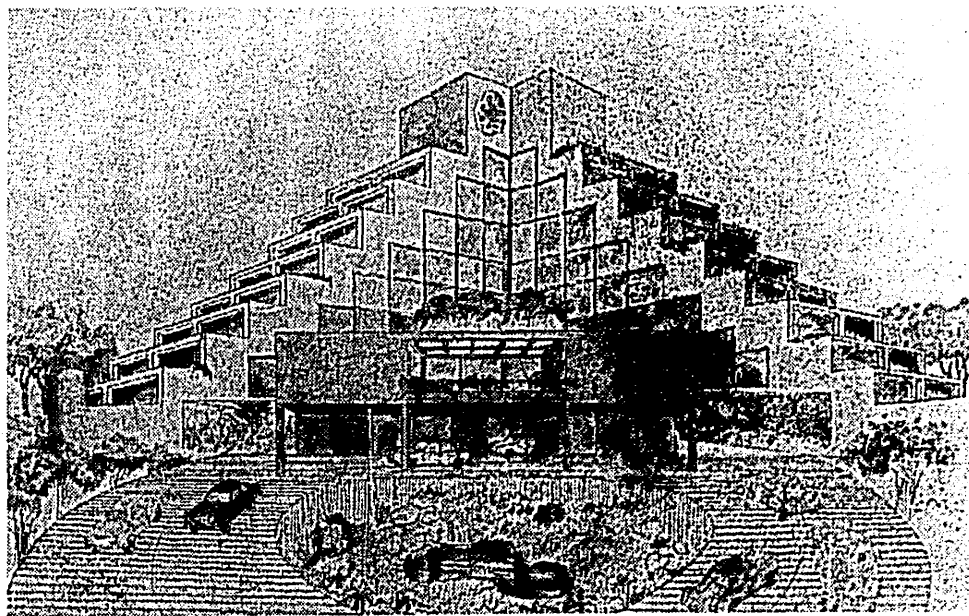
Sinhalese women and children and the death of several Indians, including this country's Prime Minister, as the protector of the Tamils. And the Police watch it all.

What has happened to us? What are we doing to this once-proud city of ours? Are we making it a jungle?

Once, there was a time Madras crowds would shiver at the sight of a 'European' police sergeant or a mounted policeman. Once there was a time when even the sight of a turbaned, baggy-shorted policeman was enough to bring quiet to a mob. The only time the Madras crowds were prepared to take on the police — and that too not over-enthusiastically — was during the Quit India Movement days. Then they were doing the bidding of the politicians. And, today, once again the shadow of the politician looms large.

With increasing political interference, the morale of law enforcement institutions is becoming lower and lower. With tomorrow's leaders leading today's processions, the law chooses the Nelson's eye approach. With the police under-manned and over-stretched as they provide escort, protection and clearways for political leaders, they have little time to make their presence felt on patrols and on the beat — routines of the past. Inevitably, with the police presence on routine work becoming less

(Continued on P2)



An architect's sketch of the Institute of Cardio-Vascular Diseases new home in Mogappair.

## A HOME IN SIGHT

(By A Staff Reporter)

Four thousand open-heart surgeries — over 1500 of them on infants — 13,600 out-patients and 55,000 free medical check-ups later, the Madras Medical Mission has at last begun to see the light at the end of the tunnel. Its famed Institute of Cardio-Vascular Diseases plans to have its own home by the end of 1994.

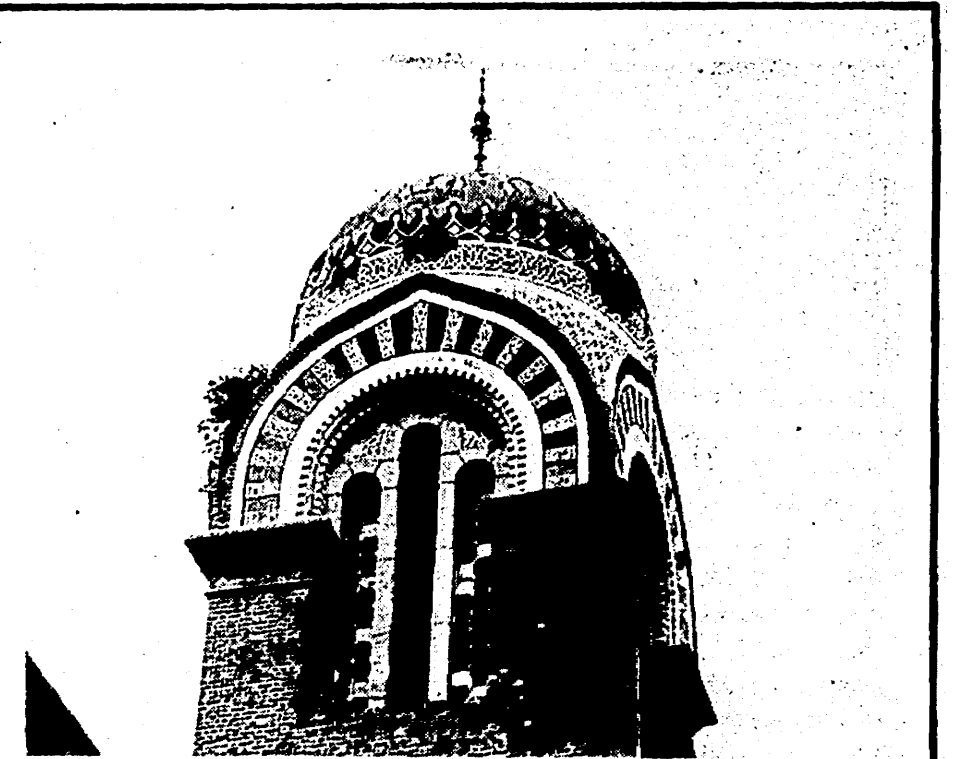
Chief Minister Jayalalitha laid the foundation stone recently for what will be the largest cardio-vascular surgical centre in Asia. The Rs. 35-crore hospital, elegant and ultra-modern in design, will come up on a four-acre plot in Mogappair, just off the Ring Road and near the Anna Nagar West bus depot. Out-facilities, such as accommodation for nurses, training facilities and staff quarters have already come up.

The Institute, which has been functioning since 1987 at the Vijaya Hospital, Vadapalani, will offer 200 beds exclusively for cardiac care and cardiac surgery when it moves into its own campus in 1994-95. It will offer surgery for all age groups, from a one-day-old baby to geriatric patients. Its unique surgical record has been made possible by its Director, Dr K M Cherian, formerly of the pioneering Perambur Railway Hospital, and his team. But as Dr Cherian recently stated, the Institute should be better "remembered as an organisation that pioneered a policy by which the poor also have access to expensive cardiac medical and surgical treatment completely free".

Acknowledging this effort, Chief Minister Jayalalitha called on other

institutions to follow this lead. Medical service has to be a public service, a service that brings relief and happiness to people, she said. There must be an element of spirituality in medical service; it should really be considered equal to service to God, she urged. The Presidential presence on the dais of the Rev Zachariah Mar Dionysius, Bishop of the Orthodox Syrian Church in Madras, reflected the Institute's commitment to that thought.

Making her contribution to the funds still needed, the Chief Minister made a donation of Rs. 5 lakhs and received Dr Cherian's assurance that "our expertise is at the disposal of the Chief Minister for any welfare scheme which she would like to start for paediatric patients suffering from congenital heart diseases".



## A university's shame

(By A Special Correspondent)

Look carefully at the photograph above. The stained glass windows exist no more. The brickwork is gouged. And the splendidly sprouting tree has begun to split a part of the decorative work. Soon, it will attack the building itself. and no one seems to care.

This dome under attack is only one part of the destruction that is taking place at *Senate House* (picture below), the pride and first building of Madras University, one of the country's premier institutions of higher learning. There is much more threatening *Senate House*; in fact, every bit of the building is decaying due to neglect. And there appears to be none to care.

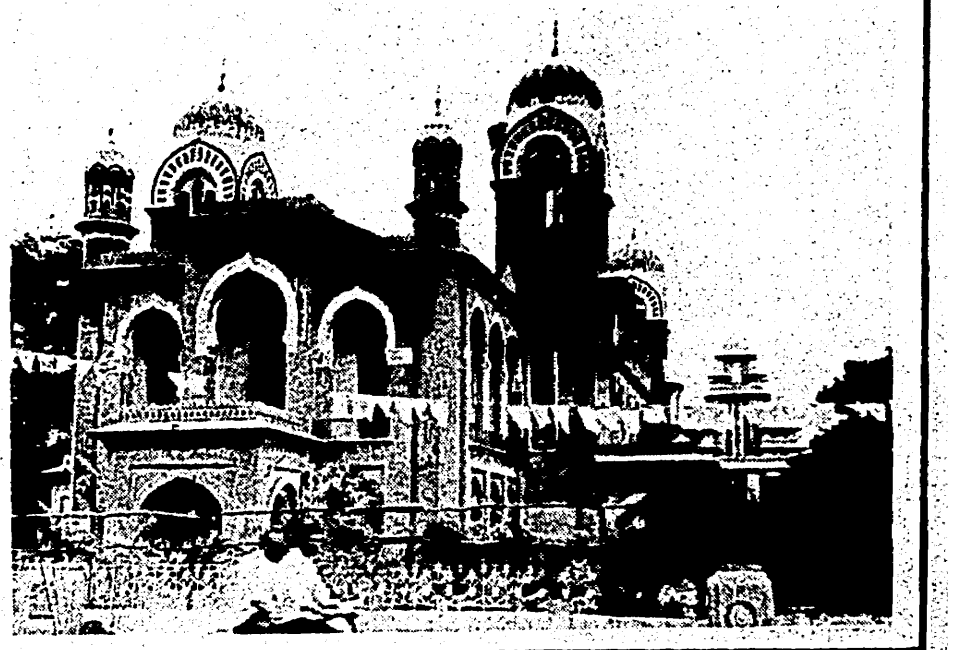
Designed in 1864 by Robert Chisholm, one of the fathers of Indo-Saracenic architecture, it became ready for occupation in 1879 when the Madras University's offices and examination facilities moved in. Generations of Madras University graduates received their degree in its splendidly decorated hall. Looking the Byzantine-styled building over in the 1980s, Douglas Insall of the British Historic Buildings Council described it as the finest example of Indo-Saracenic architecture in the country; "it's a work of sheer genius," he exclaimed.

It was shortly after this that INTACH got involved in trying to save the building and, working with both local architects and visiting conservation experts from Britain, drew up a project report to reclaim and make *Senate House* a living building again.

One alumnus, the head of a leading business house, volunteered to match rupee for rupee every contribution made by other alumni to save the building. One Vice-Chancellor promised to find the money to put through the INTACH suggestion. The present Vice-Chancellor pleads lack of funds and, while he keeps busy giving away so many things, he keeps hoping the PWD will do something. With V Sundaram, an administrator with a sense of the past, now Secretary to the PWD, will the Vice-Chancellor's hopes be fulfilled?

If they are, INTACH's S Visveswaran would be the happiest person somewhere up there. He had worked hard on putting together the plans to save *Senate House* and he had ceaselessly campaigned for that cause, visiting official after official. But just a few weeks ago Death suddenly struck, and his dream remained unrealised. But *Senate House* remains, crying for the attention Visveswaran wanted it to get. It's time it got it.

(Photographs by V.S. RAGHAVAN)



# THE COFFEE HOUSES

The recent news that 30 per cent of the coffee crop will be freely saleable — not that part of the crop was already NOT being sold freely — and the concern expressed by several growers over what they might have to spend on promotion in these circumstances, took *The Man From Madras Musings* back, many years, to the time when the Coffee Board's most successful promotional effort were the scores of India Coffee Houses.

Long before fast food became the in-thing, the Madras ICH, somewhere above India Silk House and adjoining buildings in Mount Road, used to serve the best dosais, vadais and omelettes in town, all to the accompaniment of the best cup of coffee in the city and impeccable service by turbaned bearers resplendent in red and gold trappings on sparkling white uniforms. Many were the happy evenings MMM spent in this Coffee House with journalists from the neighbouring institutions. It was nice to discover recently, on an occasion hosted by the Coffee Board, that the coffee was as good as ever and there were still handsomely turbaned and liveried bearers offering those cups with a smile.

But no one on that occasion had an answer to what had happened to those Coffee Houses which used to be found not only in major cities but also in several smaller towns. The general answer appeared to be that labour problems had killed the majority of them and those that HAVE HAD TO survive due to political compulsions — like the SIX in Delhi — suffer heavy losses, though they are full all the time!

The popularity of the Delhi Coffee Houses and the few others that survive — there is even one in Fort St George, MMM thinks, though it is rather decrepit — would indicate that revival of these Coffee Houses (with their fast food accompaniments) might be the way to go to promote not only the coffee habit, but also the BETTER coffee brew. If labour frightens the Coffee Board, franchising in the Macdonald manner, down to uniforms and food quality and weight specifications, might be appropriate. But whichever way it decides to go on a large scale, *The Man From Madras Musings* hopes that the Coffee Board will at least bring back a Coffee House to

## Where have they gone?

Madras that will echo that Mount Road coffee house culture of the past.

### Forgotten heroes

On a recent visit to Coonoor, *The Man From Madras Musings* had an opportunity to visit the splendidly maintained Madras Regimental Centre and its Museum. Here — and in the

surrounding cantonment — was a living example of how India can keep its surroundings spick and span, if only there is a will — or an enforcement of discipline.

The nearly 150-year-old Wellington Barracks has been home for the oldest regiment in the Indian Army, the Madras Regiment, from 1947. Few people in Madras, leave alone the rest of the South and India itself, remember that the beginnings of today's Indian Army were in Cuddalore and Madras and the subsequent raising of this regiment in 1758. The Museum at the MRC tells that story evocatively, especially when it narrates the deeds of derring-do of a later period. But, sadly, it neglects the founders.

Major Stringer Lawrence, whom the Regiment's own published histories describe as the 'Father of Indian Army' (1747), does not figure in the portrait gallery of heroes. Robert Clive's handling of Madras troops at Arcot and in the Carnatic in 1751 deserves better recognition. But, above all, Yusuf Khan, the Nellore Subedar, should be remembered. Made the first Commandant of Indian troops in 1754 and awarded the first medal given to an Indian by the British (for his mastery of guerrilla warfare), Yusuf Khan was the true father of the modern Madras soldiery.

It is possible that these three are not honoured in the gallery because they belonged to an age before the Regiment was founded. But it was from their levies that the Regiment was raised — and they deserve to be remembered in portraits, at least in a separate section that might be called 'The Beginnings'.

Incidentally, it is possible that Khan Bahadur is also not re-

membered because, as Col. Daniel points out in his recent history of the regiment, "it played a gallant part in the ...suppression of Mohd Yusuf Khan's Rebellion 1763-64". Yusuf Khan would, thus, have been looked on as a traitor by the early officers of the regiment; but it is time his achievements as a British soldier and then as leader of the FIRST rebellion against the British (long before 1857) are reassessed by not only Indian officers but by India itself.

### Computer buff

It was also in Coonoor that *The Man From Madras Musings*, wearing a different cap, caught up with General K Sundarji. Behind the high fence of security, here was a genial general thoroughly happy playing with the latest multi-colour display computer systems, while he chattered away about books, writing and the book he is writing — a fictionalised Asian nuclear warfare scenario.

As fascinating was the story he had woven on the computer for presentation to a group of American college students spending a semester at his *alma mater* catching up on India. Scheduled to talk to them on the relative military strengths of India and its neighbours, he had a whole lot of graphs and charts prepared for them. "Watch me floor them with information from American sources themselves," he chortled, and proceeded to run MMM through the presentation.

It was a revelation — not merely of startling data but of a sharp analytical mind drawing conclusions from that data. What was startling was how little, per capita as well as GNP percentage-wise, India was spending on its armed services and weaponry. What was perceptive was that India may have been able to whip Pakistan up to about 20 years ago, but this was no longer possible; Pakistan's armed strength had gone up enormously, but how? — the country's accounts did not reflect growth, so it could only be through aid. On the other hand, 1962 could not happen to India again in the eastern sector.

Those Davidson College students would have got an earful of all this and more; what MMM got was the impression of a brilliant mind being wasted in a Coonoor aeyrie.

### In brief

★ A picture recently featured in the 'Old and New' columns of *Madras Musings* was of 'RV Towers'. *The Man From Madras Musings* has just woken up to the fact that the RV in those initials is none other than R Venkataraman, the former President of India, and who, as Madras State's Industries Minister, was responsible for the country's first industrial estate being established in Guindy, on the edge of which the tower now stands. While naming the tower after the former President and industrial pioneer was an appropriate gesture, especially as the Centre is to be devoted to advising on small-scale entrepreneurial development, it struck *The Man From Madras Musings* as rather curious that former President Venkataraman himself was not present on the occasion of the inauguration by Chief Minister Jayalalitha. What could have kept him away?

★ As mentioned in these columns last fortnight, former President R Venkataraman is busy writing his memoirs, most of which will concentrate on his years in Delhi. *The Man From Madras Musings* hears there is a hotly contested battle going on for publication rights between Viking-Penguin India and Rupa-HarperCollins, the two leading Indian firms into popular publishing. What's holding up a final decision would, surprisingly, appear to be the question of royalty and advances. With the former President never having shown too great an interest in such a mundane subject as filthy lucre, MMM wonders who is being hardballed about the negotiations. And why.

★ Yet another reference to material that first appeared in the columns of *Madras Musings*. This time it is about that garbage dump at the top of Vijayaraghavachari Road that's been removed after blocking, and stinking up, most of that thoroughfare for weeks. The new location of the dump is near Valluvar Kottam — and here too the residents are up in arms, while Civic Exnora shrugs its shoulders in despair, wondering what will please everyone. *The Man From Madras Musings* sympathises with Exnora. Where to dump the garbage it so meticulously collects from members is indeed a problem. But it is going to be an insoluble problem unless the Corporation leaves garbage collection to the private sector or gears itself up to collecting the garbage itself from every doorstep, every day.

★ MMM seems unable this fortnight to get away from stories that have appeared in its columns. A few weeks back MMM had mentioned Kamal Hasan's plans to make a comeback in Bollywood, to which end he had set up a new Hindi film production company. Now *The Man From Madras Musings* hears that the first film the company will make might also star Kamal Hasan's wife Sarika who'd also like to make a comeback. Sarika was one of the popular rising stars in the Bombay firmament when she gave up films for Kamal Hasan. Since then she's also been his costumes and set designer.

MMM

## OUR READERS WRITE

### Vivekananda cricket

It is heartening to note that the Vivekananda college ground received a much needed face lift thanks to M/s. Chemplast Ltd. Syndicate Bank RC owe much to the PD of the College for allowing practice as well inter-branch matches.

YSCA Trophy matches are a happy hunting ground for Vivekananda players. I still remember the inaugural year, when a strong Standard CC lost to a scintillating Vivekananda. The match had a nail-biting finish. Four runs were required from the last over by Standard CC, but their best batsman got run out in a mix-up. Gurusurthy, the organiser, recalled it as the best match of the 22-year-old tournament.

C K Subramaniam  
TNCA Umpire, Madras-40.

### Postponed performance

Permit us to apologise through these columns to your readers who might have tried to obtain tickets for our production of *The Winter's Tale* which we had advertised in your issue of August 16th. At the last minute, we had to postpone the show due to the fact that the Government had requisitioned the theatre and we were unable to find an alternative venue.

We are, however, staging the play in the first week of January, 1993 and assure theatre lovers that it is a play worth waiting for.

Mithran Devanesan  
MTC Productions  
14 Ramanathan Street  
Madras-600 010

EDITOR'S NOTE: Will such requisitioning always be a problem for private groups booking the Museum Theatre?

## WEEP FOR MADRAS

(Continued from P1)

and less, more and more victims have begun to take the law into their own hands. Especially, when such 'vigilantes' feel they have the necessary political support. And that support is only too often willing to swing its weight in police stations. The end result: No one cares for the Law.

Will this ever change now? Will we see again the Madras of the Thirties and Forties and Fifties and Sixties? Will we ever see sanity in civilisation again? Or will we have to weep for now and ever more? The answer lies entirely in the hands of the politicians. Or in the Law being strong enough to take all it represents in its own hands.

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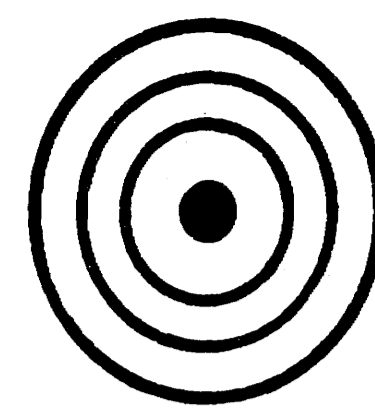
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Will Govt. goof with its next disinvestment attempt too?



BULL'S EYE

## It's a reluctant salesman still

The government obviously does not comprehend market dynamics. This is to be seen in its hurry to disinvest the second tranche of PSU shares after goofing with its first. It will indeed be most difficult to excuse a second disaster. It should have waited to grasp the market fancy to estimate the 'real' price for the second round of scrips. In fact, according to the latest reports, it has given up its plan to sell shares by auction and has invited tenders instead. And it is being widely speculated that the amount raised in the second phase of disinvestment will be even less than what could have been realised through an open auction.

I wonder what prevents the government from approaching the market directly. Shying away from market forces is at odds with its much vaunted strides towards liberalisation. Doubts could have been laid to rest by off-loading a small portion of its shares like any other corporate entity. This would not only have provided an inkling of the possible market price, but would also have served as a stimulus to market activity, which is a sign of health. Subsequently, the small sales could have been followed up with larger disinvestments. Instead, it has chosen to solve the problem through elementary means.

The auction that it had resorted to earlier was criticised on the grounds that, being open only to a select group who would bid above the reserve price, it would still be as conservative as possible in estimating the scrips' worth, since they would have to provide for

themselves profits and insurance against possible price fluctuations. Now, with its proposal to invite tenders, it has reverted to its old ways.

A direct approach would entail the need to educate the market. This could have been effected through the medium of brokers serving as market-makers, active in the role of buying and selling. Beyond them are the financial analysts who provide reasoning and the explanation for the high and the low in market trends. Of course, the role of the media in propagating news about the companies, good or bad, cannot be underrated. It is to these agencies that a Government should look to reach the masses with its commodity for sale. Not the way it's been going.

Meantime, let us make the best of what the market has to offer:

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# SECRECY, not sorcery

There has always been a lot of talk about Free Masons and their black art. No sleuthing, however, is required to find out more about our own home-grown variety, right here in Madras.

Tucked away from the public eye, on C-in-C Road, is the Free Masons' Hall of Madras. Regulars on C-in-C Road have often seen and wondered what or who these Dress-jacketed perspiring men were, who converged on this stately Ionic-pillared building. Madras, the seat of the old Presidency, has long had a large number of Free Masons. These men are drawn from all walks of life, from all faiths and political beliefs and are cemented in a bond so secret, that it's never been penetrated by wife or sweetheart. It is this very secrecy cloaking their activities that has caused the slanders Free Masons face.

There has been renewed interest in Free Masonry with the Duke of Kent throwing open the holy of holies, the Grand Lodge of England, to the public and to the ladies — for one night only. This was telecast live on BBC and the world witnessed the grandeur and magnificence of the opening ceremony for the first time. The Duke, in his speech, said that the secrecy which shrouded the activities of the Lodge was not ominous or indicative of dark deeds; it was only a need for privacy. And that, of course, meant no women!

Initially, the Free Masons of Madras were mainly officers and soldiers from Fort St. George, with the occasional merchant also inducted. Their Lodge was called the Lodge of Perfect Unity. The beginnings of the Lodge were exciting and, like the times, tumultuous. A warrant was lost in the campaign

against Hyder Ali and another lost at sea.

The first Indian to join the Lodge in Madras was the Prince of Arcot, Omrah ul Omat. Writes as early as 1785 record that the Masons owned their own building. The first building of the Lodge, it is believed, is what is today occupied by Murray's the auctioneers, Pioneer Laundry and the old offices of OBM. This property, next to the LIC Building, had a gate on the Smith Road side too. The Pioneer Laundry still shows vestiges of its old occupants. The towers that play such

The Free Masons in Madras today have had very illustrious Indian predecessors, like Chakravati Rajagopalachari, Sir C P Ramaswamy Aiyar, Dr. P V Cherian and Sir T V Muthukrishnan Aiyar to name a few. (On the national scale there was Swami Vivekananda.)

The main objection to Free Masonry, today is, covertly, from the Church. Not so much from the higher-ups but from the more ignorant clergy. Yet many Anglican priests, led by an Archbishop of Canterbury, have been Masons.

Free Masonry has always been a household word at home, never one associated with sorcery and skulduggery. One of my earliest memories is of my rather Anglophile father going off for Lodge meetings. However, first hand information about their rituals was only at the funeral of one of my father's not-too-beloved brothers. He may have been a dashing swashbuckler who lived life in the fast lane and ended it rather quickly with a lethal mixture of wine, women and horses, but he had apparently propelled himself rather high up in the hierarchy of the secret brotherhood. At the grave, after the priest had recited his prayers and kith and kin had thrown in a fistful of soil and urged him to return to dust, the Brethren in their black coats drew near. They circled the open grave three times clockwise and three times anticlockwise while throwing acacia leaves on the coffin. One of the Masons was then elected to descend into the grave and lay a diploma(?) tied in a yellow ribbon. He was then hauled out by many ready hands and only then did the labourers shovel earth over the grave. Why acacia leaves? Why circle the grave? Why? Why? All these questions have remained unanswered all these years.

• by N.K.

a prominent role in Masonic ritual still grace the corner, albeit they are a little tawdry and sometimes draped with dirty linen. Later, in 1839, they moved into their new premises on the Marina, what are now the DGP's offices. And then to C-in-C Road.

Masons believe they have done much to bring people of different castes and creeds together. Where else would you find a blend of Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs and Christians cheek by jowl, breaking bread. The principles of Masonry, if followed diligently, will make for better human beings, they believe. In times of need, a fellow Mason is always helped but with no one knowing about it — practice of the old adage, 'let not your right hand know what your left hand does!' They support a number of worthy causes in the city, without any tom-tomming.

# Jeevan Kishor

LIC's new policy for your little darlings



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## Our Museum

# As antique as the antiques

I visited the Madras Museum for the first time during the 1940s as a student. Since then, I have been dropping in there off and on, keeping an eye on the place, so to say, and watching its growth and development with interest. Strike that out. I would have watched its growth and development with interest, had there been any.

For the lovers of the antique, the good news is that the Museum is as antique as any of the antiques it houses. In the forty-odd years I have been visiting it, it seems to have sealed itself in a lime-warp. I may be exaggerating, but I don't think there has been a single change for the better. Even the dust in some corners seems to have been preserved for posterity.

This is not a subject to be satirical about, really. The Museum itself is

## Looking aSKance

nearly over a hundred and fifty years old, though it has been in its present location only from around the turn of the century. Its collections are magnificent, and some of its exhibits are as rare as they come. Its bronzes and its assemblage of Buddhist sculpture are world-famous. In fact, it has the best of everything that a connoisseur of art would want to see. Probably thrown in for light relief, a large collection of stuffed animals and birds, with a skeleton of a whale hanging perilously from the ceiling, provides entertainment for, as they say, the young of all ages. Nothing to complain about the contents of the Museum. The only problem is that the Museum still looks as it must have on January 1, 1900.

The art and science of the proper care and maintenance of museums has developed beyond belief in the last few decades. Proper lighting, positioning, aggregation, in fact every aspect of display in a museum, have been developed to a fine art in most countries, not necessarily in Western ones only. In our own country, though I have not seen many museums, the National Museum in Delhi is pretty nearly of international standards.



IN MAD. MAD MADRAS

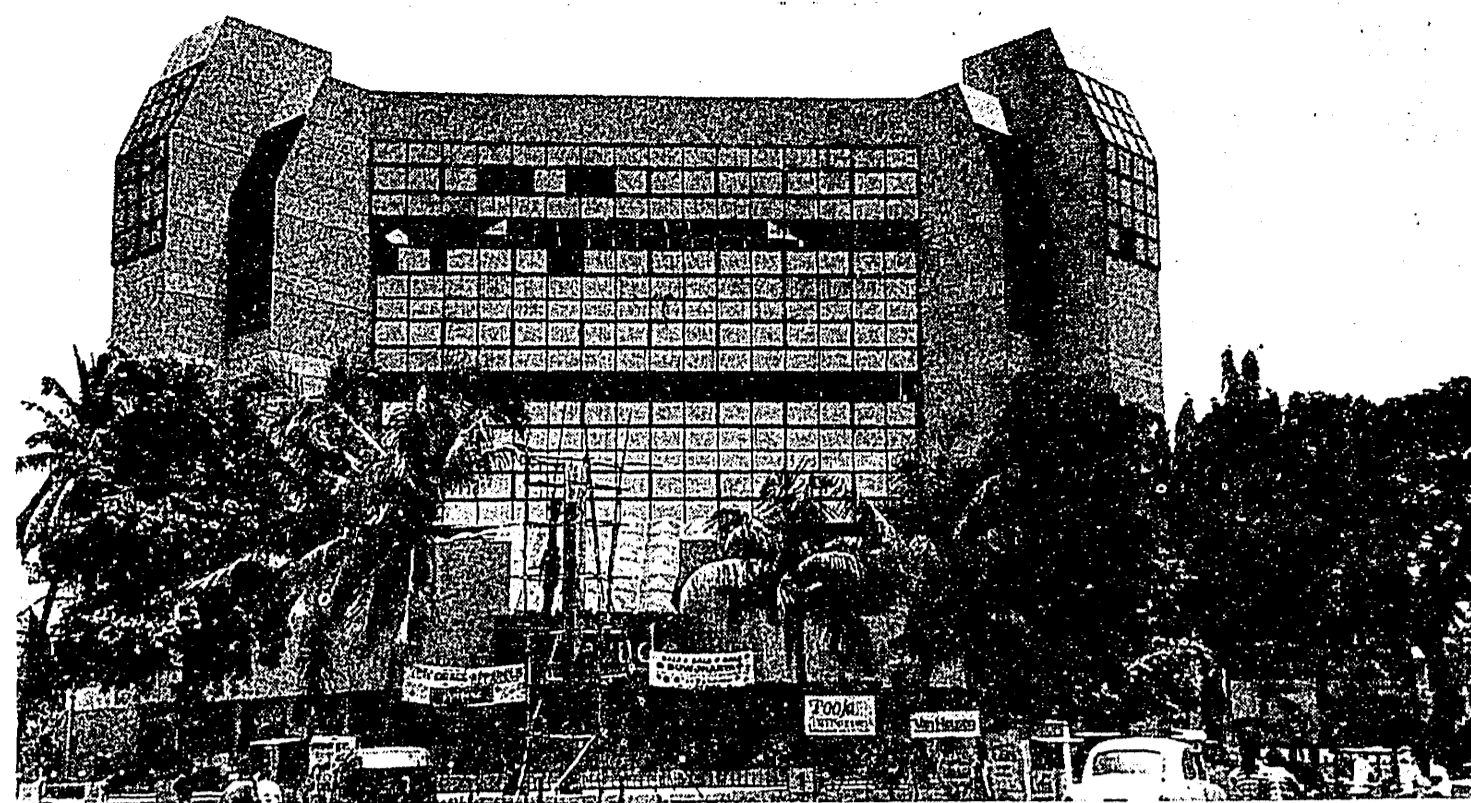
What, then, is wrong with the Madras Museum is two things. The first is poor maintenance, which is due to two things also — inadequate resources and inadequately trained staff. I know there is a technical staff with different degrees of expertise, but I am talking about the people who actually man the galleries. Most of them are the equivalent of the liveried orderlies of an older day, with little or no interest in keeping things clean, capable only of warning young people not to touch the exhibits, and extending a palm at every passing visitor. If the Museum had the funds to hire people with at least a moderate education, could put them through a minimal training course and appoint them as the attendants in the galleries, the transformation in the kind of experience the Museum can offer the visitor will be remarkable.

The second thing that is wrong with the Madras Museum is that it does not have a Number One curator, with the highest professional qualification in museum management, in charge. The Director of the Museum is a bureaucrat, an IAS officer. I do not want to say a word in criticism of this officer, whom I do not know any way, and people who do know him vouch for his dedication and deep interest in his work. But I am afraid that is not enough, for the one thought that I imagine he must be constantly living with is: Where am I likely to be transferred next? (A lady-friend of mine tells me caustically that IAS officers are actually advised not to get attached to the jobs they hold — today you can be in charge of Information and Publicity, and tomorrow you might find yourself responsible for Weights and Measures!) No, it is not a job for a bureaucrat, however knowledgeable and well-intentioned he might be. It is a full-time job for someone whose full-time career is going to be in Museums.

There are other aspects about the Museum complex I would like to talk about, but perhaps not now. I must mention though that the Museum has a theatre as an adjunct, a beautiful Victorian structure based on Elizabethan aesthetics. Now the theatre has been recently air-conditioned, which is a very fine thing, though it was done only because the Chief Minister got interested in it as a possible arts centre. Be that as it may, a theatre is not just the area in which people sit and watch a performance. It has a whole microcosmic world back-stage, in which there should be changing rooms, facilities for the technicians' work, rest rooms and so forth. In a sense, the Museum Theatre has all these in the most extraordinarily rudimentary fashion. The time for air-conditioning the theatre was also the time for making improvements back-stage also, but that has not been done.

The Museum complex is one of the very few fine large green areas left in the heart of the city. It has already been fouled up by the construction of new ugly additions which my friend, the MM Man, calls PWD architecture. There is a children's museum which I did not even care to enter because of the hideous representations in cement of pre-historic monsters outside. A campus of aesthetics, did someone say?!

SK



The city's newest shopping arcade is Kasi Arcade, with the emphasis on the K. All darkened plate glass and concrete, it dominates the Pondy Bazaar-Boag Road Junction and promises to have some of the most decorated up-market shops in town. But with all its dark glass and dull stonework, it tends to look a rather foreboding rock monolith till it is lit up at night. Must we have such gloomy architecture in a city as bright and sunny as ours?

**THE NEW ...** Right next door is a once-upon-a-time mansion (seen on left), now deserted and forlorn but nevertheless offering a sense of brightness compared to the gloom surrounding its neighbours. Located in a large compound, this is certain to be the next victim of the wreckers' hammers and it can only be hoped that the new highrise sure to replace it will prove a still brighter contrast to K Arcade. Meanwhile, who can shed light on this residential building constructed in a style typical of the prosperous Thirties and Forties? Who was 'Krishnas', or is that this once-proud home's name? And what could that crest above indicate (it looks like SC)?

**& THE OLD** (Photographs by V S RAGHAVAN)

# Just a matter of time

It was a hotly contested case of arson, rioting and murder in a district headquarters town near Madras. Two groups in a prosperous village had clashed one bloody night and after the carnage there came the police. Not long afterwards, a group of rich men and a woman, a wealthy widow, were arrested and brought to trial for many an offence under the Indian Penal Code. All the top lawyers of the town were engaged. One of them, the leader of the District Bar, was essentially a civil lawyer, but as his clients had been charged for murder, he had no option but to take the case.

The star witness for the prosecution was an elderly farmer who was not particularly well off, but who was quite influential in that rural area. The murder had taken place on a dark night, close to the New Moon Day, when there was hardly any light. How could he identify the culprits in the dark? He deposed on oath that he had gone into the fields that fateful night with a 'hurricane' lantern and saw it all with the light shed by it. So the lantern became an important material object (known in legal jargon as 'MO').

The leader of the local Bar rose to cross-examine the witness, and in the process he took a good look at the all-important MO. He examined the lamp closely and something made him rather uneasy. Everyone in court wondered what the lawyer was upto. His observant eyes had noticed a small bit of paper stuck inside the kerosene tank under the glass-dome, and on it were some unintelligible scribbles. Casually he copied it all in his notebook and asked the court for an adjournment. The judge gave it and the lawyer returned to his chambers to set to work.

What were those undecipherable scribbles on that bit of paper? he

wondered. Pondering over the problem, he realised that they were some kind of code, usually written by merchants to indicate the selling price of an article. So he made copies of the writing and sent his men to all the shops selling lanterns in the town and neighbourhood. Nobody was able to identify the writing, but the lawyer did not give up. He persisted, and, in a town some forty miles away, his clerk struck pay dirt; a small dealer claimed the writing as his and produced a notebook in which he kept the details of his daily sales. From the book, he was able to date the sale of the lantern. He also said he was quite confident of identifying the man who had come to his shop to buy it!

The lawyer's bushy eyebrows went up when he saw the date of purchase

of the MO. It was some six weeks AFTER that bloody night of arson and murder!

Back in court, he tore the prosecution's case to bits by putting the lantern-dealer in the box as a defence witness. He identified another witness, NOT the elderly farmer, as the lantern buyer. The accused were acquitted.

Who was this Indian Perry Mason? He rose later to high positions in Independent India. He was the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and also Governor of Bihar. He was Madabushi Ananthasayanam Ayyangar, one of the leaders of the Chittoor Bar.

RANDOR GUY

## BULL'S EYE

(Continued from P3)

**Kunal Engineering Company Ltd** (Current Market Price Rs. 140.00): The company has proposed a rights issue of equity shares in the ratio of 3:5 at a premium not exceeding Rs. 30. The performance during 1991-92 is lack-lustre due to recession in the user industry. However, the current year prospects appear to be changing for the better with the improvement in the supply position of raw cotton. Further, the long-term prospects should be viewed with optimism as the company is implementing a modernisation and expansion programme and increasing the capability of its plastics engineering division. Our projections indicate an EPS of Rs. 10 for the next year, supporting a price of around Rs. 120 (XR). The share is certainly buyable now.

**Harrisons Malayalam Ltd** (Current Market Price Rs. 147.50): The company is all geared up to extend its tentacles overseas through its various export projects. It has invested Rs. 18 cr to tap the greenfield area of biotechnology. For the current year, this division's turnover is likely to touch Rs. 12 cr

on the sale of seeds alone. The company has recently set up a Rs. 1 cr tissue culture laboratory in Hosur. It plans to export both flower plants and foliage plants from this facility, for which the company had received many enquiries from abroad already. A Rs. 8 crore plant is also being set up to produce button mushrooms near Hosur, for which a MOU has been signed with a Dutch company for technical support and buy-back arrangements. Also on the anvil is a Rs. 3 crore floriculture project in collaboration with the Meiland group of France. The entire production is on a 100 per cent buy-back basis. A new company, Harrisons-Agrisaaten has also been incorporated to develop seeds for both the domestic and the export market. With these lucrative export business plans, we project a price of Rs. 270 for the year ending June 1993. The share price, after making a low of Rs. 127 in early August 1992, consolidated at Rs. 140-150 levels. A good buy at current levels.

K. Gopalakrishnan

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# Kodi, where Man's taken a heavy toll

'Kodi' — one of the last outposts of the Raj, and that's fallen too! How do I know? This year they didn't have the Annual Cake sale. That's how. The Miss Hendersons and Miss Robertsons — dear old English ladies who stayed on in '47 and baked cakes for the sale year after year — just couldn't do it any more; old age takes its toll; even of outposts of empires...

Kodi is 'K' Dayk'naal' to the uppah class koi-hois and 'Kodaikaanal' in native Tamil. Nestling at 6000 feet plus in the Palani Hills near Madurai, this picturesque paradise was until recently a little England down to its capricious weather. The Jesuits were the first to go up there in the seventeen and eighteen hundreds; they had a monastery at Shenbaganur which is almost near Kodi. But it was Caldwell, yester-century Bishop of 'Tinneveli', who really established the tradition of the summer pilgrimage from the plains to the cool heights of Kodi. In those pre-motorcar days, he used to trundle up by bullock-cart from 'Tinneveli' to Madurai and then make it to Kodi on horseback.

While Ooty was the political and administrative summer capital of the erstwhile East India Company, Kodi was the missionary capital. There were schools there for children of missionaries; a Swedish school (now no more); an American school (now called the International School) and so on. The lakeside was dotted with bungalows and retreats belonging to missions of various denominations. Kodi was where the missionaries took a breather from soul-saving. It meant a spell of the genteel life: cake sales and dances, plays and musicals at the schools, boating on the Lake and sitting down to tea and



ABOVE LEFT: Mist rolling up denuded slopes. ABOVE RIGHT: Silver Cascade now reduced to a silver trickle. BELOW LEFT: Lake Berinjiam (behind the children) once nestled in a rain-forest valley; now it is surrounded by bald, deforested mountain slopes. And BELOW RIGHT: Kodi Lake, poisoned with sewage these days. (All photographs by THE AUTHOR.)



## • BY HIRAMALINI SESHADRI

cucumber sandwiches after Bridge at the club. The Good Life.

The Fifties, Sixties and Seventies saw brown faces gradually replace white ones. Yet it is a shock to hear that even in the 'Sixties a private hospital here catered exclusively to "Europeans"; later, Indians were also accepted for treatment, but in separate

rooms. Priorities have, of course, changed today and dedicated doctors at the same hospital are trying to build a medical service for the people of the hills. These days, the Western-ness of Kodi is restricted largely to name boards: 'Innsbruck', 'Franklin', 'Hawthorne Cottage', 'Hiawatha'... houses displaying names of a bygone era.

The first time I'd been to the place was in the Sixties. Kodi was silent, tranquil and majestic; the lake was mirror clean and I watched the cumulus drift by, reflected in the clean waters. Pretty collages with lovely gardens and gay white wicket gates beckoned on the hill sides. The path around the lake was a heavenly place for walks; stone benches here and there invited day dreamers; little children went for pony rides. Only the rustle of leaves, an occasional bicycle bell, the clippety-clop of horses' hooves, children's laughter and 'bird hoots broke the silence. Not any more. This year I wished I was wearing a mask as yet another Swaraj-Mazda van belched smoke in my face; cars, buses and omnibuses rushed around like mad; vendors, parrot-palmists, souvenir sellers, pony-ride extortionists, paan-wallahs and rent-a-bike joints jostled for space; and there were people, people everywhere.

Apparently in the Eighties Bombay businessmen stumbled on Kodi; and nothing has been the same again. Thereafter "Kodi romba develop aachu", to quote my boatman. Hotels mushroomed and tourists poured in. The Nineties added romance to the mix, what with the honeymoon vales of Kashmir, Shimla and Darjiling in strife. This summer, all the newlyweds in the land were there. In our guided tour van, we were the only parents — with three rowdy kiddies in tow; shape of things to come, you greenhorns, we seemed to warn.

The tourist boom produced the inevitable waste water problem, which was solved in typical Indian fashion. Dump the sewage into the lake quietly and pump water from the lake into tankers for the hotels, eateries etc. The bacteria never had it so good, says a public-healthman pal of mine. The typhoid bugs here are resistant to almost every antibiotic, and for gut viruses

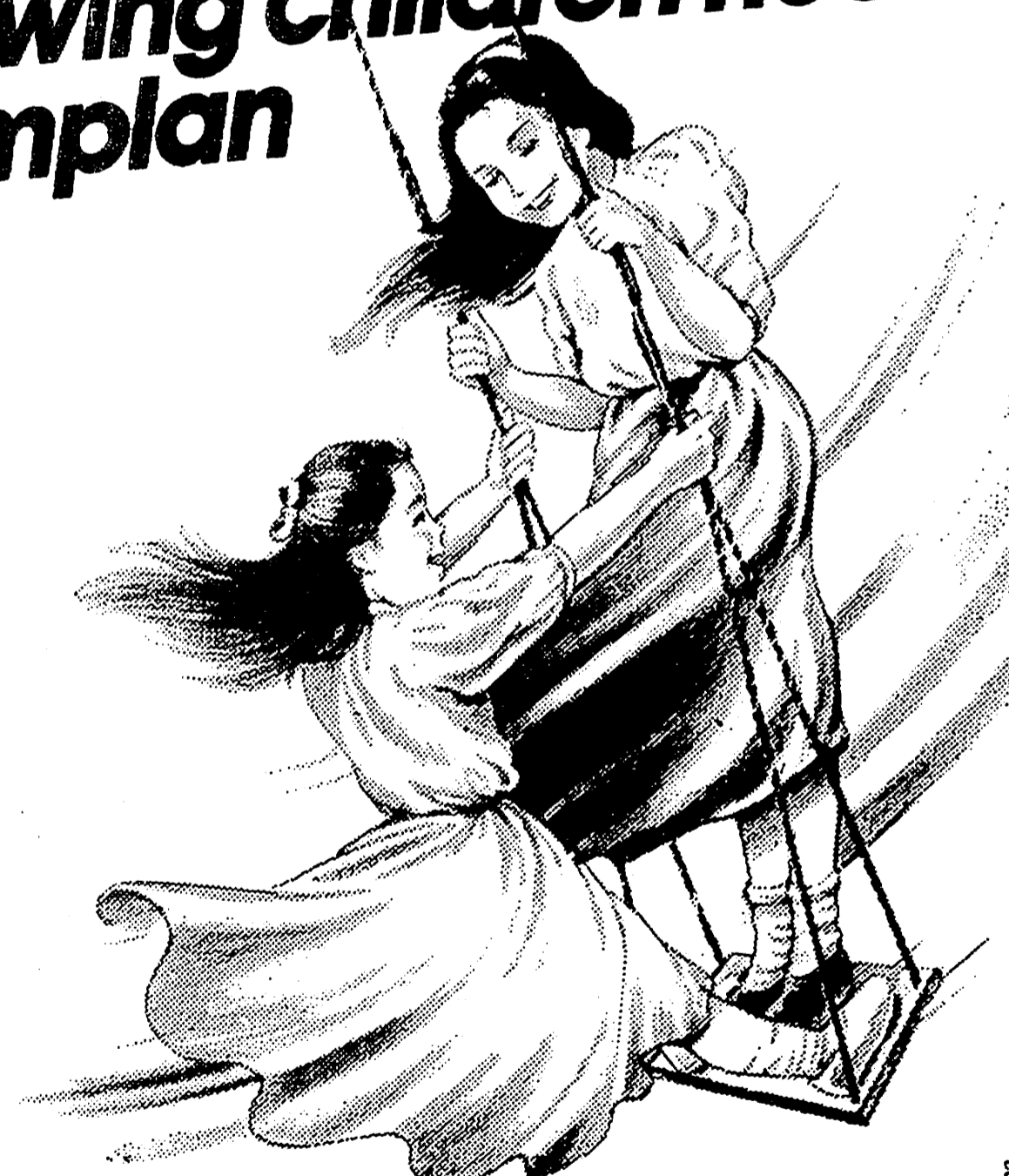
Kodi is a celebration. At teatime at his house I was aghast to see brown milk. "It's just a colour change", reassured my hostess; you see, they pressure-cook their milk and water. With three tiny tots they are not taking any chances.

Citizens of Kodi are waking up to these unsavoury facts. Environment groups and save-Kodi groups are clamouring for saner "development". "But no use", shrugged my boatman, "MLAs, ministers come; hotel owners give big party; big dinner; drinks; much other things and MLAs, ministers go back; nothing happening thereafter".

The lake was a dirty brownish green this May, and swampy in parts. But all around the 'mela' atmosphere thrived. "Season" is a magic word for Kodities. Every hotel is out to make a quick buck. Even some residents of the place are known to move out in the Season to let out their houses and make a little nest egg. Our boatman was happy with the financial aspect of development. Earnings had improved. His grandfather and father had been butlers for the white sahibs; on the other hand, he was self-employed and his own master. Yet I was surprised to find a sneaking anglophile in him. "One thing about Englishman", he told me, "They never spit in lake. Englishmen never throw rubbish in lake. Even if they eat banana," and at this point he demonstrated in admiration, "Sister, they cover peel in kerchief, put in pocket and take it home and throw in waste-basket; never throw in lake; NEVER," he was emphatic. "But our Indian richmans not like that," he nodded sadly. I could't agree with him more. That really summed up the tragedy of Kodi; indeed the tragedy of India itself; the attitude of "our Indian richman".

Kodi, beautiful Kodi. Will some one take pity on you before next Summer? Hope you will survive despite us all.

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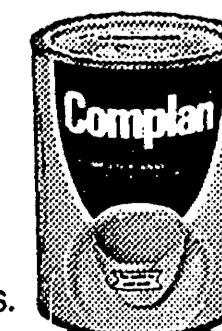
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# A quick bite — with hot water!

Although people are getting wary these days about consuming anything bought outside (it might contain hydrogenated vegetable oils or nickel), it doesn't stop them trying something new. And the Madras culinary scene is not devoid of interesting opportunities.

For those with no time to grab a bite, the Bangalore-based Indo-Nissin Foods' CUP O' NOODLES may come in handy. The latest to jump on to the instant foods bandwagon, it was introduced a couple of months ago on long distance trains and hit the City shelves more recently. It is now available in selected departmental stores and grocery shops where you should look for those large white plastic cups with green — Vegetable — or orange — Chicken — labels.

The nicest thing about these noodles is that they require no cooking at all — just pour some boiling water into the cup, cover for a couple of minutes, and the soup-style noodles are ready. If

you prefer your noodless less watery (like I do), reduce the quantity of water.

Where CUP O' NOODLES really scores over its rivals in the market is the real chicken or vegetable pieces that it contains.

## FOODS and FADS

There is no separate sachet with a taster, but rest assured the noodles are far from bland. The vegetable flavour, is, however, preferred to the chicken.

Priced at a reasonable Rs. 12/-, CUP O' NOODLES has the somewhat exotic name, Oriental Ramen, printed on the side. Whatever that means, it's quite a tasty dish inside.

## Chips to taste

The latest food shop in town is HOT CHIPS, at the Village Road-Wheatcroft's Road Junction. It offers a wide variety of fresh chips — *nendhirangai*, *vazhakkai*, yam, tapioca, jak and, of course, the ever-popular potato. The chips are fried while you wait, and it is a treat to see them sizzling in the large, wonderfully old-world *kadais*. You can also pick your flavouring — chilli, pepper or plain salted.

The *nendhirangai*, potato and yam chips are the pick and are the couch-potato's dream come true. (No pun intended.) And for cholesterol watchers, go ahead and indulge, because the oil is changed every day. Western and continental cuisine buffs would do well to bypass the pepper and try the chilli instead for a delicious change. The *nendhirangai* and jak alone are fried in coconut oil

and are refreshingly different from the stale and oily specimens usually available elsewhere. The only drawback is that HOT CHIPS offers only take-away packaging.

The price range is from Rs. 70/- to Rs. 90/- per kg, depending on the variety, and that compares quite well with packaged chips, considering the freshness and quality. All the chips have that elusive home-made flavour, and so a trip to HOT CHIPS is well worth it.

## Wooden buttons in

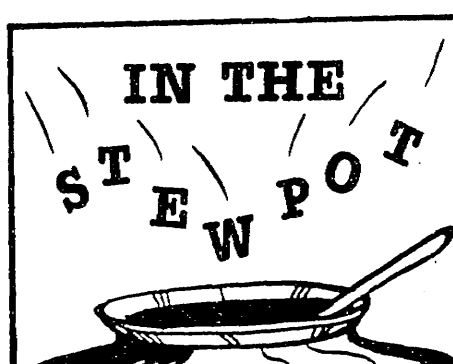
Those who follow the dip and swoop of the Madras hemline with an eager eye are advised to grab their moneybags and run to the nearest 'ethnic' shop (try CRAFT BASKET opposite C P Arts Centre on Eldam's Road, or Fountain Plaza) and grab a handful of wooden buttons, preferably

carved ones embellished with cowrie shells.

The age of chunky brass and metal is definitely passé. The young woman-about-town, though not averse to blue jeans and fluorescent T-shirts is going *swadeshi*. Swirling *salwar kurtas* are definitely here to stay — festooned, of course, with stunning printed *dupattas* and wooden buttons. A totally *au-courant* wardrobe, however, makes a couple of *khadi* mix 'n' match ensembles mandatory. Especially in vogue are the dark browns and greens and pale lavender shades.

Incidentally, if you missed KHADI-KRAFT's discount sale (upto 30% off) at all its outlets, there are still some *khadi* vests available at them. No longer at sale prices, but inexpensive nevertheless — and fashionable.

— Bhavana Kay



## CREAM CHEESE APPLE SALAD

1 apple, peeled, cored and grated  
2 cups fresh curd  
½ teaspoon mustard powder  
½ teaspoon chilli powder  
3 tbs grated cheese

Salt to taste

### Method

Tie the curd in a muslin cloth till the whey is completely drained off.

Add to the cream cheese the grated apple, mustard powder, chilli powder and two tablespoons of grated cheese in a bowl. Mix well.

Sprinkle the remaining cheese, chill and serve cold.

## CHEPALA PULUSU (Fish curry)

Seer fish — 2 thick slices, cut into 4 pieces  
2 medium sized onions, chopped fine  
2 tomatoes, chopped fine  
8-10 cloves of garlic (crushed)  
1 lemon sized tamarind  
1 teaspoon mustard seeds  
1 teaspoon cummin seeds (*jeera*)  
½ teaspoon fenugreek seeds (*methi*)  
1 tbs chilli powder  
2 tbs coriander powder (*dhaniya*)  
½ teaspoon turmeric powder  
½ tbs gingelly oil

A few curry leaves  
A small bunch coriander leaves, chopped fine  
Salt to taste

### Method

Soak the tamarind in three cups of water and extract the juice. Add salt, *dhaniya* powder, chilli powder and turmeric powder. Mix well. Set aside. Heat oil in a broad-mouthed vessel (preferably a well seasoned mud *chatti*).

Add the mustard, cummin and fenugreek seeds. When the mustard seeds splutter, add the chopped onions, garlic, curry leaves and chopped tomatoes.

Fry for a few minutes. Add the tamarind *masala* mixture. Cover and let the sauce boil for 10-15 minutes till the raw smell disappears.

Add the fish slices carefully. Cover the vessel partially and simmer for 10 minutes.

Shake the vessel once or twice. Do not use a ladle, lest the fish breaks.

Cook till sauce consistency. Garnish with fresh coriander leaves and serve with plain rice.

Mrs P Raghupathy

## POTATO CAPSICUM VEGETABLE

½ kg potatoes, boiled, peeled and chopped into ½-inch pieces  
½ kg capsicum, deseeded and chopped into ½-inch pieces  
½ teaspoon cummin seeds (*jeera*)  
1 teaspoon chilli powder  
1½ teaspoon *amchoor*  
1 teaspoon *garam masala*  
¼ cup oil

Salt to taste

### Method

Heat oil and add the cummin seeds. When they splutter, add the potatoes and capsicum. Add salt and turmeric powder. Fry on a low fire, turning the vegetables carefully till the potatoes are golden.

Sprinkle chilli powder, *amchoor* and *garam masala*. Mix well and serve hot.

## COLOCASIA CHIPS

1 kg colocasia, pressure cooked, peeled and chopped into ½ inch pieces  
1½-2 teaspoon red chilli powder  
½ teaspoon turmeric powder  
½ teaspoon asafoetida powder  
1½-2 tbs *besan*  
Salt to taste  
Oil for deep frying

### Method

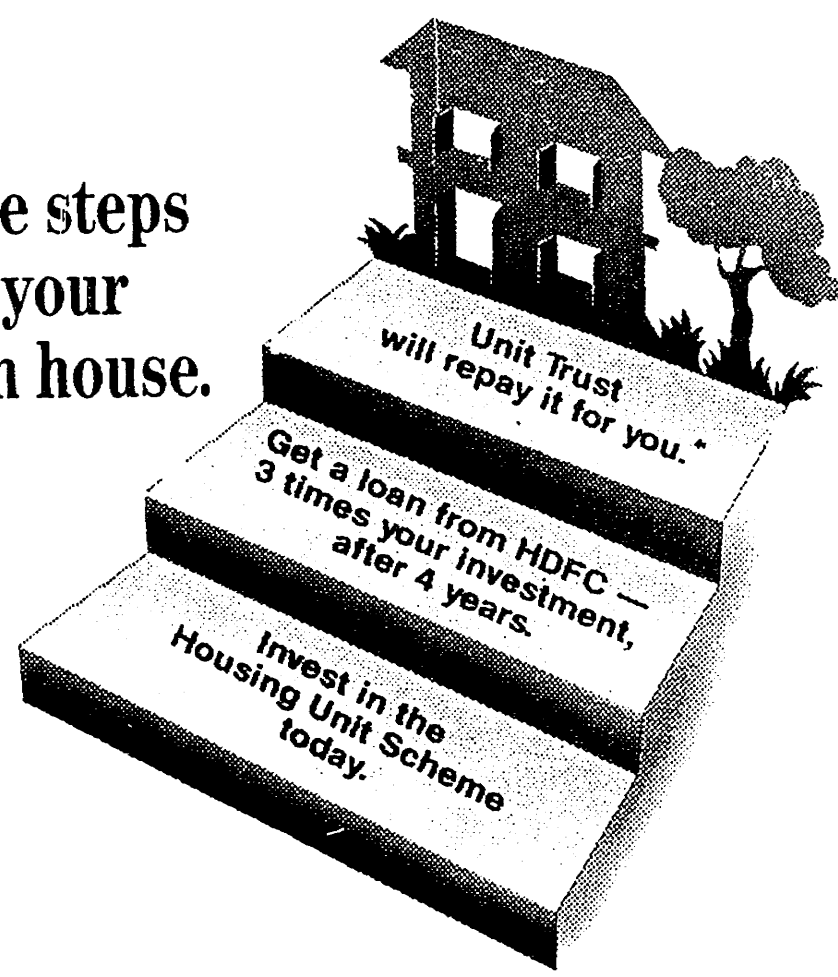
Sprinkle the chilli powder, turmeric powder, asafoetida powder, salt and *besan* on the colocasia. Mix well.

Heat oil and fry the colocasia till golden and crisp.

Serve hot.

Chandra Padmanabhan

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# The flame & the moth

Multi-cultural performances in dance and music, sights and sounds, arrived with a bang in Madras during the second half of September.

Magnificent, mercurial, multi-talented Mallika Sarabhai led the audience through an exhilarating romp of folk tales from the world at the Kamaraj Hall, with *Ilan Kahani* or 'The story of stories'. If Mallika was a flame in her orange-coloured costume, half tunic, half harem pants and her tigress eyes and Sophia Loren smile, her partner, the Nigerian actor, Peter Badejo, in flowing brown robes, was a splendid moth.

They arrived on the open stage in a flourish of drum beats and performed against a painted white backdrop, that, at times, became a semi-transparent screen for shadow puppets. The stories came flowing out of each one of the two performers — and their three

musicians, who sat behind a medley of musical instruments — in an effortless stream that mocked and shocked, teased and dazzled the audience into listening. The stories ranged from the old to the new, sometimes carrying the sting of a doubt in its tail, at times smothered with the joy of music and laughter to hide the pain. There were tales from the Vikram-Vettal cycle, the *Panchatantra*, or maybe a neo-*Panchatantra*, stories of why women are circumcised in parts of Africa, and why a Goddess is sometimes seen as a Witch, and even a fable from Aesop.

If you could not take your eyes off Mallika, Peter proved to be unforgettable in some sequences. While she was always poised and in control, he was as spontaneous as the wind. They had a great time miming the male-female relationship through the centuries, culminating in a mock tango, and though the acoustics of the vast auditorium left much to be desired, Peter's gifts as a born story-teller proved to be irresistible.

While all this was going on, behind, or, rather, below the stage, manipulating the scenes with a hawk-like presence, you could just see a mop of golden curls. They belonged to John Martin, the director, who master-minded the show.

## Natya in Greek

Carl Jung, the great Swiss psychoanalyst, talked of archetypes, or patterns of thought and images that are common to different cultures. Lydia Shantala, a Greek dancer from a family of Greek poets and performers, came to India to study Bharata Natyam as though to prove this.

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Her recital at the Bharat Kalachar auditorium wove the Greek myth of Theseus and the Minotaur as a battle with the Ego. She told the story in dance, using a mask at certain moments, movements from Chau and the basic Bharata Natyam repertoire, which she performed with authority. While a brief introduction was provided, the story itself was recited in Greek along with the taped music. Two young girls, draped in white, swanned onto the stage at the start of the performance to light the brass lamps with two candles. A Greek-style *amphora* stood alongside the offering of fruit and flowers in one corner, and the dancer herself wore a judicious selection of robes that suggested both the Indian and Greek traditions.

The effect of all these cross-cultural references was both grand and faintly ridiculous. The *abhinaya* and well-known heroic poses, associated with Bharata Natyam, looked familiar, yet false, when transported to the Greek milieu. There were some fascinating moments though (particularly when the dancer, stepping gravely to one corner, put on her mask, a white faun-like face with a cherry red mouth and glittering slit eyes, and a laurel wreath), that seemed to make the leap across the cultural barriers seem quite natural. At such times, the action seemed dream-like and, yes, archetypal.

## Love at the Sabha

It was Show Business at the Narada Gana Sabha when the four performers of the "Paradise Island Express" put on their top hats and twirled their short canes while belting out the best love songs from Broadway and elsewhere. The great musical composers and lyricists, Ray Henderson, George Evans, Irving Berlin, followed by George Gerstwin, Cole Porter, Lerner and Loewe, Rodgers and Hammerstein appear to have defined the way people in love are supposed to feel and behave with their show-stopping songs and lyrics. 'The Paradise Island Express', courtesy USIS, did them proud.

Each one of the performers, two white, two black, two women, two men, whether in individual numbers, as pairs, trios or foursomes made memorable music. It was a triumphant parade down memory lane for those old enough to remember the great era of musicals such as *West Side Story*, *Annie Get Your Gun* and *My Fair Lady*.

# Sridevi says no to Spielberg

In years gone by, Hollywood remained a mere dream to Indian actors and actresses, a celluloid fortress, into which nobody from this Land of Phalke, not even Devika Rani, Raj Kapoor, Sivaji Ganesan or even Rekha, could step. An exception was the elephant boy from Mysore, Sabu; but till the last few years that was all.

In the Eighties, however, some artists from north of the Vindhyas, like Amrish Puri, Om Puri, Victor Banerjee, Kabir Bedi, Persis Khambatta and a few others, did manage to get a foot in the door. But their impact has been negligible. Now comes the news that the former child artiste of Tamil cinema and the current superstar of Hindi movie-dom, Sridevi, has been approached

with a whopping movie contract by no less a person than that whiz-kid of the new Hollywood, Steven Spielberg, the 'movie brat' whose films have not only created history but have also raked in billions around the world.

by Our Cinema Correspondent

Sridevi, however, has rejected the stunning Spielbergian offer. The Hollywood film-maker had insisted that the Indian superstar should live in Hollywood for at least a year, be available 'on call' (this expression, 'on call', is the origin of the familiar movie-land term

'call sheets') and report for work whenever needed. Sridevi obviously found this condition very inconvenient, especially as she has on hand innumerable films in Hindi in various stages of completion. Another condition which perhaps weighed heavily on the star was the definite possibility of having to do sequences involving frontal nudity and on-screen lovemaking, which today are 'musts' in most movies made in the West.

Recently, this correspondent was walking past a shopping complex in Anna Salai when he saw the superstar standing beside her car in front of a well-known jewellery shop. Her mother, Rajeswari, was still inside, talking to the owner of the shop.

The other small but elegant vignette of dance in the modern idiom, using a few of the movements, or the moods, that she had learned from Bharata Natyam, was performed by Elizabeth Petit, interpreting a *haiku*, in music composed by Mohan Narayanan. It was called 'Egmore Crossing' and lasted only six minutes, but in that tiny space, a whole world of sounds and associations was evoked.

The earlier part of the evening was much more stark and *avant-garde*, with Mathilde de Monnier and Christian Trouillasse moving with ferocious concentration across a bare stage, hung dramatically with a sequence of hanging light bulbs that flared to attention in consort with the music that grumbled and muttered, sighed and soared with a solitary splendour. Unfortunately for the dancers, the audience in the balcony disrupted their hard-won efforts with catcalls and lewd comments. The young job element in the city is now invading the sanctuaries of culture with their crude behaviour picked up from the cinema theatres, where no one is in a position to protest. It makes you wonder about what "Culture" we are talking about, when using terms such as "multi-culture".

G.D.

## Dates with Sellers



Peter Sellers

Critic Alexander Walker called him 'the screen's greatest comic actor', but when he died on July 25, 1980, Peter Sellers was as famous for the lurid details of his personal life as he was for his 25 year-long acting career.

He was an artist whose abilities encompassed slapstick comedy, dazzling satire, Goonish surrealism, inspired improvisations and impersonations, and the 'most delicately shaded revelations of human nature'. He was also one of the greatest mimics on the planet — and Indian accents was one of his specialities.

Eight films of this great comic genius will be shown at the British Council in October. They will be screened at 2.30 and 6.30 p.m. on the listed days:

October 12: *Smallest Show on Earth*, narrating the battle over a cinema.

speaking and other communication skills.

The YAPpers are organising an Inter-Collegiate Debate Competition on October 3rd at the Sankoori Hotel from 8.30 a.m.

Education being an issue relevant to all, youth and education have been chosen as the themes to be debated by twelve city colleges teams. They will line up as listed (the pros first) to debate the following topics:

Law vs Loyola: Private Institutions — Is education for sale?

Law vs Ethiraj: Is the study of Humanities an exercise in futility?

Vivekananda vs MMC: Uncultured college culturalists — Should they be banned?

Anna Adarsh vs Vaishnav: Teachers should know the way, show the way and go the way — Do they?

Stella Maris vs Madras U.: Education — Is it a prerequisite for success?

MCC vs Meenakshi: It is parental neglect that is responsible for student indiscipline.

## Youth debate education

The Youth Association for Public Speaking is a 3-year-old student group interested in promoting the art of public

Meanwhile, a couple of Anna Salaiurchins' hanging around the shop kept staring at her and, suddenly, one said: "Dai ... does she not look like Sridevi?"

"Poda ... poda... somberi... Sridevi is in Bombay sleeping on a velvet bed at this hour... why would she be standing here in this filthy Mount Road area in this burning hot sun?"

The superstar listened to the exchange with a smile. And when her mother joined her, went her way.

**Talipattu:** A Telugu producer paid a token advance to Sridevi as soon as she came of age, engaging her to play the heroine for the first time. The film did not get 'shot'. But the producer in real life was an astrologer.

# Tall bankers aim high

In a game where height makes a considerable difference, there are few teams in India — and not even the Indian team — with FIVE players over 6' 4" and three more players around six feet. That's what makes the Indian Bank, Madras, team the best basketball squad in the South today and has it aiming to be the best team in the country. In fact, it won't be surprising if, in a year or two, the greater part of the Indian team is from the Indian Bank.

Unfortunately for the team, its best playmaker, G Devadoss, a fighter if ever there is one, is only 5' 4". And that's a height that's little help in the highest class today. But those behind the Indian Bank team still dream.

"Dreamers," it is said "are great achievers." It was the dream of Lakshmanan, K Gopinathan, M K Rangarajan, R Chandran and N Kasi to make the Indian Bank team the top basketball team in the country. And with that aim in mind they began planning from 1977.

Tournament fees and cost of kit were met out of their own pockets in those early days. A victory in the first or second round used to be considered a great achievement. But then their dream was rudely interrupted; the team was disbanded in 1979.

However, in 1980, the dream was resurrected with a few recruits from

• by Venkatachari Jagannathan

the sports quota. And in 1984, its greatest day dawned when, in Kottayam, it defeated its *bête noire*, the Indian Overseas Bank team. The rivalry between these two South-based bank teams can be compared to the rivalry which prevails between the Indo-Pakistan cricket teams!

From then on, the Indian Bank team has gone from strength to strength.

In 1992, it figured in ten finals in the twelve tournaments it participated in, winning eight of them. It was third in two tournaments. Among its tournament victories were two in Rajasthan over the strong Western Railways team, which included the country's two best players, Ajmer Singh and Ram Kumar. The team went on to win both tournaments, the first time a South-based institutional team won major basketball tournaments in the North.

The major disappointment, however, has been the team's failure to win the prestigious Federation Cup, competed for by the best club and institutional teams in the country. In this year's championship, it was placed third, and in 1990 it came second. The team's determined to remedy that situation next year.

The Indian Bank team has in its ranks internationals like Jai Shankar Menon and D Senthureswaran as well as pivots Ramesh Babu and B Saravanan (Captain), all over 6' 4" and players who can rule the backboards.



The all-conquering Indian Bank hoopssters with yet another trophy.

Anand Francis (5' 11") and M Praveen Kumar (6' 4") are good under the basket. Teaming with them are G Manoharan (5' 9") with his accurate jump shots, G Devadoss, known for his speed and his willingness to tackle tall opponents by jumping with them, P S Dakshinamurthy (5' 6") who feints well and shoots accurately from 'zero angles', S Hari (5' 6") and Suryasekhar (6'), both stylish dribblers, Sainath with his tricky passing, and D S Manoharan (5' 11"), a good ball handler and an expert in 'drawing' fouls. G Manoharan, B Saravanan, and Suryasekhar have donned the country's colours at one time or another, while Sainath and D S Manoharan have played for the Tamil Nadu State team.

Hard practice for three hours a day is the formula for the team's success. Every team member considers a practice session a tournament final. Coach Mathew Satya Babu, a former Indian captain, combines ball practice with body fitness at every practice session. For instance, he sets a target of five baskets for each player and those who fail, are asked to run around the court the number of times they fail. Apart from this, the players do beach running

and weightlifting to keep themselves fit. And there's a lot of video-watching of matches the team's played, to study weaknesses and strengths.

Another characteristic of Satya Babu, which endears him to his players and which causes much heartburn among opponents, is that he gives a chance to every team member in every match by judicious rotation. This motivates each player to give his best at all times. It is to his credit that a pure vegetarian was converted to a non-vegetarian diet in order to increase his stamina. This shows the extent to which the coach and players are prepared to go for the sake of the team.

All the sweating on the court is amply rewarded after tournaments. Whenever a player is chosen to represent the country, he is immediately promoted. There are also attractive cash awards. Funds for the team is not a constraint, M Gopalakrishnan, Chairman and Managing Director of the Indian Bank, backing it unstintedly.

The support has made the players think even beyond the Bank's corporate slogan; from 'Indian Bank — Adhu Oongaladhu Bank' to 'Any Basketball Trophy — Adhu Yengaladhu Trophy'!

## REMEMBERING RAMASWAMI

One late September morning in 1985, I got a phone call from my friend V R Lakshmiratan, living a hundred yards from my place, that C Ramaswami was in his house and wanted to meet me immediately. I hastened to meet the octogenarian sportsman, who greeted me in warm friendship, but then erupted angrily against a former Test cricketer from Madras who had written a letter to *The Hindu* on a question of neutral umpires. Ramu soon cooled down and we had half an hour's chat on cricket and cricketers punctuated with the biting sarcasm for which he was famous.

As he got up to leave, I promised to meet him again at his son's place in the same neighbourhood, where he was staying temporarily. But before I could do this came the shocking news on October 15th that Ramu had left his Adyar home that morning and had not returned. Despite frantic searches by his family and friends, he could not be traced.

As the years passed, Ramu was presumed to have really walked out of this world and the 1987 *Wisden* recorded his name in its "Births and Deaths of Cricketers" column as born on "June 18, 1896, presumed dead". However, a doubt was recently raised about his fate and *Wisden*, in its 1992 edition, removed the words "presumed dead". But his family members offer no clue to his whereabouts, nor do they confirm that he has passed away.

My acquaintance with Ramu, the youngest of the three sons of M V Buchi Babu Naidu, went back over fifty years. As an aspiring young cricketer in the same Mylapore Recreation Club he played for, I held him in awe not only as a stalwart of a famous cricketing family but also for his bold, aggressive approach to batting. Ramu was a left-hander like his immediate older brother M Baliah, but unlike him he had no style; he used his overheavy bat like a sledge hammer to smash sixes and fours.

I also recollect Ramu the tennis player playing against my uncle PS Venkatraman, who had the fastest serve in Madras then. They met on the court in *The Grove* (C R Pattabhiraman's residence) in Teynampet and both strongly-built six-footers hit the ball really hard; it was power tennis at its best long before today's game. Ramu



C Ramaswami

represented India in Davis Cup matches in England in 1922, and became the second double international in India sport, the first being M J Gopalan (cricket and hockey). In official life he retired as Director, Department of Agriculture.

Ramu was a dominating person with a positive approach to life, which is why I was surprised when he once remarked, "There were so many unthought-of changes in my life that I am forced to the conclusion that a human being may propose to do so many things but for each and every individual the whole programme of his life has already been chalked out and things will happen only according to that." A fatalist indeed!

Ramu then set forth the providential circumstances that led to his debuts in Test cricket and in Davis Cup matches. A shy, young man in his student days, he never dreamed of what awaited him in England. Though more devoted to cricket than to tennis, Ramu reached Cambridge University in the winter and was forced to take up the latter game. His innate talent blossomed and led to him being awarded a Tennis 'Blue'. When India was unable to send a team to England to play in the 1922 Davis

Cup matches, because of lack of funds, Ramu was asked to make up the Britain-based Indian team. He had never dreamt that he would represent his country in tennis.

No did Ramu reckon that he would be in the Indian Cricket team to tour England in 1936, much less play in the Tests. Vizzy, the least favoured of the candidates for the captaincy, was honoured on purely "political considerations", to satisfy the whims of a high personage. It was luck that only a few months earlier Ramu had impressed Vizzy in a couple of matches while on a casual visit to Waltair and Vizianagaram, and so he was picked over the heads of deserving younger players like A G Ram Singh. That Vizzy, hailing from Andhra, hoped to get the support of another Andhra also worked in Ramu's favour.

On the tour, Ramu was not faring well and, one day, was packing his bags to go to Aldershot to play for the Army in accordance with the wishes of his manager, Britten-Jones, when Vizzy, piqued at the manager's action and determined to demonstrate his authority, "ordered" Ramu to stay back and included him in the Indian team to play Derbyshire. That proved a blessing as Ramu did well in that match, and when he followed it up with two more good knocks against Lancashire, he was chosen for the second Test at Manchester. He performed beyond all expectations in that Test and the rest of the tour was an unqualified success.

As a believer in pre-ordained fate, Ramu expressed no disappointment with the way life had dealt with him. However he was sad that he was "leading a purposeless, aimless life, good for nothing". "What is it I am doing which is useful either to me or to my family or to anybody else?" he once remarked. It was perhaps such repeated introspection that led Ramu to walk out of this world without waiting for the hand of Providence. Or was there a call? —P N Sundaresan

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Published by ANU VARGHESE for Lokavani-Hall Mark Press Pvt. Ltd., 62/63 Greaves Road, Madras 600 006 and printed by T J GEORGE at Lokavani-Hall Mark Press Pvt. Ltd., 62/63 Greaves Road, Madras-600 006. Edited by S MUTHIAH.