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Vol. III. No. 22

FREE ISSUE — EVERY FORTNIGHT

March 1 — 15, 1994

Where next for fair site?

City continues to miss the bus

(By A Special Correspondent)

Who said there's many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip? S/he certainly knew what s/he was talking about, the Tamil Nadu Government is, perhaps, now realising. How it could only suddenly discover — after agreement had been reached on the project — that the Taramani site it had offered the Indian Trade Promotion Organisation for development as a permanent fair site has, in part, been spoken for by the Mass Rapid Transit System and in the other part has been under litigation, is beyond the comprehension of this correspondent. That bloomer, however, has left the country's biggest leather industry feeling threatened.

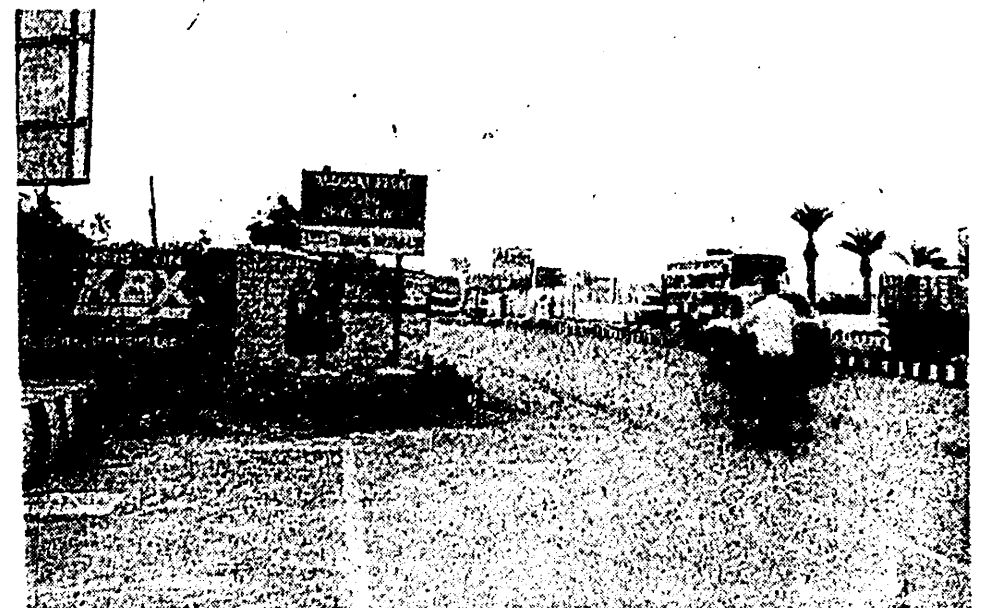
The ITPO strongly feels that unless there is a permanent fair site of the standard of Delhi's Pragati Maidan, with at least 10,000 metres of covered space besides the necessary infrastructure and support facilities, like some accommodation, good restaurants, communication facilities etc., no international trade fair should be held. For some years now, it has been trying to move the annual international leather fair from the world leather capital, Madras. Holding the fair in and around Rajaji Hall is a joke that continues to amuse foreign visitors: How

can you expect quality from India, when you can't even organise a fair to international standards, they wonder. With over 9000 sq m of space occupied by the fair this year, it was not a trade fair but a *mela*. And that continues to be the reason why business is annually not as good as it should be.

Plans of the Printers' Federation to hold its quadrennial fair PAMEX in 1996 and an auto-industry fair in a part of the country which has the largest share of the industry, albeit ancillaries

manufacture, are also on hold because of this absence of a permanent fair site.

Sites at Narayanapuram and Muthukkadu were looked at during the leather fair, when Mahesh Prasad, ITPO Chairman, was in Madras. But nothing seemed quite up to standard. And so the search goes on ... leaving the leather industry wondering what's going to happen next and the automobile and printing industries wondering whether they will continue having to make the pilgrimage to Delhi.



Handsome drive deserves better

The road from the new airport into town — or, at least, up to Kathipara Junction — is turning out to be a magnificent six lane highway, well-kept, well-divided and well-lit with a plethora of sodium vapour lamps. When some of the greenery planned for it reaches for the skies, it will be a truly magnificent entrance to the metropolis.

Sadly, however, such splendour is not blemishless. The walls of the runway and the old and new airports are a sore sight, taken over as they are by poster pasters and graffiti scrawlers (see pictures on right) who appear to feel that the law does not apply to them. Could someone up there ensure that the best face of our city is seen, not its worst, by making sure the walls on this

stretch of highway are as clean as those of the flyover at Gemini?

Two other blemishes are literally pimples thrusting into the road and narrowing stretches of highway into dangerous bottle-necks. On top, the bottleneck is caused by a small tree-shaded shrine and the 'parking lot' of a garage. The word is that the shrine is to be rebuilt further left. But will the tree be 'transplanted' by the side of it, as the Tata's do in Bombay? And will

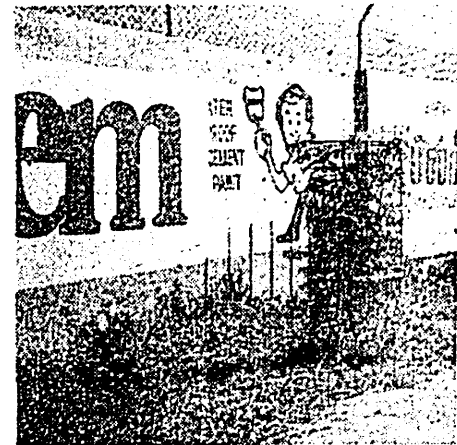
the garage be persuaded not to use the road as 'parking lot'?

In the case of the second pimple, it is a thrusting wall that occupies almost a whole traffic lane, above. The wall and the property appear to belong to an automobile dealer, but isn't all the property in St. Thomas' Mount Cantonment owned by the Cantonment Board? And isn't the Board normally able to foreclose easily its 99-year leases? Whatever the reason, that wall is

an endangering construction, as apparently even the authorities seem to realise, judging by the 'accident prone zone' sign. Or does it refer to the 'ghost' which once used to cause accidents on this stretch?

With posters and graffiti removed and pimples cleared, this will truly become a dream stretch of Tamil Nadu road. When can we hope for that miracle?

(All photographs by V S RAGHAVAN)



Pioneering hope for some childless

(By A Special Correspondent)

For the first time in the world, a medical team has been successful in freezing spermatazoa obtained from the epididymis, a structure near the testes, and bringing them back alive at a later date by cryopreservation. The team, from Madras, reported on this technique at the recent World Congress on In-Vitro Fertilisation and Alternate Assisted Reproduction held in Kyoto, Japan.

The cryopreservation technique assumes great significance with the introduction of the technique of Intra Cytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI) by Andre Van Steirghen and his team in Belgium. In ICSI, a single viable

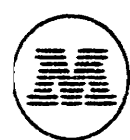
spermatazoa is directly injected into the ooplasm of an egg.

Since 1990, Dr Pandiyan and his team in Madras have practised a technique called epididymal sperm aspiration. In this technique, sperm obtained from the epididymis is used in new reproductive technologies to assist couples in achieving pregnancy.

This provides a possible solution to male infertility in conditions in which no sperm is found in the semen. Of all men reporting infertility, about 10 per cent have been found to have this condition, azoospermia. In 20 per cent of these men, azoospermia has been caused due to a block in the sperm passage. An estimated 300,000 men in India are known to have blocked sperm passages.

Most of the men with obstructive (block) azoospermia now have a realistic chance of attaining fatherhood through a combination of — surgical correction, — epididymal sperm aspiration, — cryopreservation of epididymal spermatazoan, and — assisted reproductive technologies, including Intra Cytoplasmic Sperm Injection, says Dr. Pandiyan.

* Dr Sarat Bhattina — Consultant Gynaecologist; Dr Radha Pandiyan and Dr Jyotsna Mathai — Gynaecologists; Varalakshmi, Murthy and Muthiah — Reproductive Biologists; Dr Padma, Dr Raghavendra and Dr Monica De — Anaesthesiologists; and S/N Saramma and S/N Beulah — Theatre nurses.



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Home Science attracts men in Tamil Nadu

There are five men doing Ph.Ds in Home Science at the Avinashalingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women in Coimbatore, according to its Vice-Chancellor, Dr Rajammal P. Devadas. And that's not all. At PSG College, also in Coimbatore, where a B.Sc. course in Home Science was started just five years ago, there are now hundreds of men applying for seats for the course, says the first Indian to do a doctorate in Home Science.

The syllabus at PSG, says the Vice-Chancellor, who claims to have been instrumental in getting the late MGR to introduce

the midday meal scheme, is tailored to develop 'house husbands'. The men are taught diet and nutrition, cooking, child psychology and housework and interior designing.

With joint families dissolving and the nuclear family becoming the norm, Home Science-trained men will be able to play a greater and more useful role in homes, says Dr Devadas, who recently addressed an enthusiastic audience on the subject at the Indian Science Congress. The *Man From Madras Musings*, however, wonders whether this rush for admission to a Home Science course is because the men in Tamil Nadu really want to become better domesticated or

whether it is due to the Tamil attitude: a degree, ANY degree, by hook or by crook! The lustre for degrees in the state could well have much to do with men storming this hitherto female bastion.

Less films

The Man From Madras Musings finds that the Indian film industry is in danger of losing its position as the World's No. 1 film producer. The Tamil film industry, in particular, has been faring badly.

While all films released in 1993 were down to 812 against 838 in 1992 (and 910 in 1991), a drop of little over 3 per cent, Tamil film releases decreased from 180 to 168, a drop of a little more than 6 per cent, or double the all-India figure! Telugu film releases declined, but nothing like Tamil films; there were 154 Telugu films made in 1992 and only six less a year later. In fact, the only film industry that showed an improvement was the Oriya industry, which turned out 20 films against the 13 in 1992.

Reasons the film industry attributes for this decline, *The Man From Madras Musings* understands, are illegal screening of films by cable TV networks, losses due to increasing numbers of flops and high entertainment tax leading to the closure of large numbers of theatres all over the country.

One theatre complex about whose possible closure there has been much speculation in Madras these past few months has been the Sapphire-Emerald-Blue Diamond theatre block which, when it opened in 1964, was not only the first theatre complex in the country to have as many as three theatres in one block but was also the most luxurious. Ever since the death of one of the 20 partners, there have been complications and the theatre block has suffered. Now it seems to be badly in need of renovation and new film life if the crowds are to be brought back again.

One persistent story about town that *MMM* hears in connection with this theatre complex is that the AIADMK has been eyeing the property to put up a headquarters complex grander than the DMK's Anna Arivalayam further down the road. A figure of Rs. 6 crore is being bandied about in this connection.

The party, *MMM* hears, also looked at two other properties on Mount Road, one the Union Motors campus and the other the land next to the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board. The former, the word is, has been spoken for by the Udayar Group. So a decision has to be taken on the other two sites. But it is really necessary, *MMM* wonders, for a political party to build its headquarters, a meeting hall, *kalyana mandapam* etc in the heart of the city, on the busiest stretch of the city's main thoroughfare? Why not be different and build it in a location that's central to the whole state in which it is in power?

A second coming

The British seem to be coming back to Madras in their numbers. It was trade that had first brought them here in 1639 and

it is trade which is bringing them back to what was the 'First City of Empire'.

The Man From Madras Musings understands that British United Shoe Manufacturing, Clark's Shoes International and Lambert Howarth and Sons Ltd all intend to set up shop in the leather capital of the country.

Weir Westgarth, in its Indian avatar of Nuchem Welt Ltd., is arriving not only to look into desalinisation but to set up a plant for Madras Fertilizers which will treat three million litres of city sewage, now being let into the sea after primary treatment, and make it water fit for use by MFL. Neighbours Madras Refineries have already

Capitalising on Parry's 'King of Sweets' slogan, King's Ransom offers a rich-looking royal blue and gold tinfal of milk, malt and coffee-flavoured toffees, each twice the size of the normal toffee and weighing around 10 gms. Parry's is aiming with these new launches to increase its share of the Rs. 600 crore Indian confectionery market from its present 20 per cent.

* Mushrooms are becoming big business and India is expecting to increase its production from the present 3500 tonnes to 30,000 tonnes by the end of the Eighth Plan. One of the big players in Indian production is Madras-based Pond's who, as part of diversification, moved into mushrooms in the Tamil Nadu hill country. Today, after eight years of research and learning, Pond's exports about Rs. 20 crores worth of mushroom. Pond's has a hundred per cent buyback arrangement with an American collaborator and that's what several big companies planning to enter this compost-filled field are looking for. The big names with Madras connections include the R P Goenkas, A V Thomas and Tata Tea.

In brief

* *The Hindu*, *The Man From Madras Musings* hears, will soon start printing its facsimile editions from a seventh centre, Thiruvananthapuram, which, till now, had been served by the Coimbatore edition. With Thiruvananthapuram, *The Hindu* will have printing and management facilities in all the southern states. Hoping to capitalise on this is *The Hindu Business Line*, which plans to build up its circulation through reaching the growing number of investors who live in 400 prosperous smaller urban centres in these states. But for such thinking to succeed, it might be well if journalistic rivalry over exclusivity, that *MMM* understands has been rearing its head in Mount Road, doesn't spill over into the distribution field.

* Speaking of *The Hindu*, *MMM* found this too good to ignore. A brief story in it about the first steps being taken to canonise Vaz, a Roman Catholic priest who was revered in Ceylon a hundred years and more ago, referred three times to his BEAUTIFICATION. There appears to be a shortage of dictionaries among the sub-editors and proofreaders in *The Mahavishnu of Mount Road*. Hasn't anyone there heard of BEATIFICATION? If they hadn't, a dictionary would have helped instead of going ahead with repeating meticulously an erroneous bit of editing.

* The word in the communication market is that Rupert Murdoch is very seriously looking at Star TV offering a Tamil channel. And that it might be aimed at taking on Sun TV, which the powers that be see as having DMK links. *The Man From Madras Musings* has heard it said that the initial feelers were made at a political level, but these have now altered to a more commercial approach with at least one city business magnate taking an interest in the proposal. Neat, is the word — or at least part of the phrase — if you're into cryptic crosswords!

— MMM

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

got a plant that meets its needs of water by treating waste water and has set the example MFL plans to follow.

The National Power Corporation of the UK has offered to take the Ennore Thermal Power Station on lease, refurbish and upgrade it, and sell power back to the Tamil Nadu Electricity Board at a mutually agreed price. National Power has also made an offer to Tamil Nadu Industries Power Co. Ltd., the Coimbatore group of 80-90 companies that is setting up a lignite-based 250 MW thermal power plant in Srimushanam, Tiruchchirappalli District. National Power's offer is to invest Rs. 100 crore in TNP's equity in return for a management contract. The construction contract is already with Ansaldo of Italy.

And there are many more British firms drawing up plans for Madras. Obviously the British no longer are one with Kipling in considering Madras a "withered beldame" after Calcutta mushroomed and Delhi bloomed. Perhaps that "ancient fame" he referred to might yet return.

Business briefs

* The roadshow that the Tamil Nadu Industries Ministry took to Bombay recently and which was reported by *Madras Musings* last fortnight is headed this month for Delhi and Calcutta. Reports from Bombay say that about 75 prospective investors — including several big names — attended the presentation and early indications are that about Rs. 200 crore investment might materialise. Manufacturing areas being looked at include computer peripherals, refrigerators, batteries, gelatin etc. Plans to set up a small steel plant, wind farms and horticulture projects were also discussed. *The Man From Madras Musings* only hopes that dilly-dallying and unrealistic requests, as in the case of the Singapore Corridor project, do not lead to projects being shelved or, worse, being shifted to a more accommodating state.

* Parry's Confectionery will shortly be introducing a Mickey Mouse range of toffees, candies and lollipops. *MMM* hears that all Disney's characters will share the range. Another Parry introduction is 'King's Ransom'.

OUR READERS WRITE

Out of turn?

I am at a loss to understand what prompted *The Man From Madras Musings* to comment upon the supposed rumblings in the Kanchi Mutt (MM, Feb. 1, 1994). *MMM* could have afforded to keep aloof from the issue and not offended the sentiments of many of the followers of the *Peetam*. "We care for Madras" — that's what you proclaim in the masthead on the first page of *MMM*. Apparently, you have now started caring for many more things!

Secondly, *MMM* described T N Seshan (CEC) as "baton-wielding Al-Seshan". Simply because somebody called him "Al-Seshan", should *MMM* also follow suit? I am sure *MMM* would have lost nothing, had he printed the CEC's name just as his parents gave him. Certainly, there is something known as professional etiquette in all callings. And again, what is wrong if Seshan, or for that matter, the President, had taken interest in the Mutt's affairs? As devotees of the Mutt, should they not, more so when they possess a fund of experience?

I am a reader of your distinguished paper from Day One. I admire your ceaseless efforts to make Madras a better place to live in. Why deviate from this avowed objective and get involved in issues that are better left alone?

A thousand apologies to you, if I have exceeded the limits of propriety in writing this letter. The matter disturbed me very much. I have now the satisfaction of having got it off my chest!

K Ramamurthy,
SAVZ, Sellin Apartments
Dr Rajamannar Salai
K K Nagar, Madras 600 078.

MMM's NOTE: I'm glad you've got it off your chest, Mr Ramamurthy. I was just as glad to get it off my chest, the unhappiness over the recent goings on in a Mutt where once there lived so revered a personage. Amongst the things I was unhappy about was rough, tough, gruff civil servants being not only anything but civil, but also being not shy of wielding a baton. There are certain norms of behaviour, surely!

Just for the record, may I state that while *MMM* has not deviated one whit from its caring for Madras, it has, from the start, dealt with other matters of concern to people in the city and the State. And this has been especially true of the column I write, which does not necessarily reflect *MMM*'s views. I've been glad to range from what the poet brought to the LTTE's activities, from planters in the Ghats to Tamil civilians in Delhi. Surely, in that context, a little concern over the goings-on in an institution where lived the State's only saint is not out of order.

Remembering Rukmini Devi

February 29th is the birthday of Rukmini Devi Arundale, I wonder how Kalakshetra honours her memory 'annually' with a danciful tribute. Only leap years have 29 days in February.

M S Sundararajan
50/4A Cambræ East
Victoria Crescent Road
Madras 600 105.

A merry predecessor

When *Merry Magazine*, the brainchild of S.S. Vasan, started its rounds in 1933 (*MM*-Jan. 16), there was another English magazine, by name *My Magazine*, that had established a niche in Madras since 1929. It was founded by one P.K. Vinayagam and had a fairly good circulation.

There is reason to suspect that S.S. Vasan started his journal on seeing the success of *My Magazine*. Both periodicals had their offices in Broadway in their early years. Each vied with the other to give good material to lure readers and retain them.

My Magazine had its list of advertisements for dubious goods as did *Merry Magazine*. Things like magic rings, amulets, photographs of French beauties, potions that would give enough strength to fight a lion

or an elephant were advertised regularly. These could be got by v.p.p. too! There were four programmes of sex specialists who toured the districts selling their aphrodisiacs at hefty prices to jaded men who wanted to boost their performances.

One full-page advertisement that appeared regularly was that of a 'Minsara Rasam', a liquid medicine that was a universal remedy. For headaches and muscular pains you had just to rub a few drops on the aching part. A drop on the tooth or gum relieved toothache. A drop in a spoon of sugar taken orally relieved stomach upsets. A drop on a kerchief frequently cleared a stuffy nose. A spoonful of a bucket of bathwater soothed body pain and prevented skin troubles. A veritable cure-all indeed! A bottle of the medicine cost twelve annas (75 paise), packing and forwarding charges extra. If three bottles were ordered, this extra charge was waived. Many in those days had absolute faith in this medicine and swore by its efficacy!

My Magazine survived World War II, while many other floundered in those years. After the death of the founder, it was managed by his family members. The last publication of the magazine was the issue of February, 1962. I have reason to

remember that issue: my first story appeared in it! The editor of the magazine sent me a note that I would be paid a remuneration of Rs. 5/- for my effort. The money never came, as the magazine became defunct.

M. Sethuraman
8, Second Cross Road,
Mahalakshmi Nagar,
Adambakkam, Madras 600 088.

Additional information

With reference to the excellent articles in *MM* Feb. 1, here is some additional information:

1. The name of the other Chinese restaurant E Simpson recalls was the NANKING CHINESE, situated near the present Lawrence & Mayo. Both Chinese restaurants were primarily patronised by military personnel, but a few of the more 'adventurous' Indians went to them. Nanking had an edge on Chungking in its better Indian cooking. Unfortunately there was an unhappy stabbing incident at Nanking that eventually led to its closure for good.

2. With reference to *Dunmore House*, the place was tenanted (then owned) by the late Sir Eardley Norton, the popular Barrister

of his day. There was a ditty current even in the early 1940s:

There is no bed without Cotton,
There is no court without Norton
Sir Eardley earned fame primarily in land disputes, of which he was an authority, and his successes are mentioned in law books of reference valid even today.

The Maharajah of Pithapuram (Sir Rao Surya Rao Bahadur) acquired *Dunmore House* from the legatee(?) of Sir Eardley Norton.

D V Rao
15 Kasturi Ranga Road
Teynampet
Madras 600 018.

Editor's query: But was the picture we featured one of *Dunmore House*?

Taxing CRY

During the last week of Dec. '93, I had been to CRY — the popular charitable institution, CHILD RELIEF AND YOU — to buy a pack of New Year cards. When the clerk in charge handed me the bill, it surprised me to find on the bill sales tax added to it.

It is no news that CRY is an out-and-out philanthropic organisation spending its

time, money and endeavour in working for the welfare of poor children of society. One is at a loss to comprehend the logic behind levying tax on a benevolent movement. The clerk explained that CRY is trying its best to obtain exemption from being taxed. She also said states like Maharashtra do not tax this institution. Will Tamil Nadu take its cue?

RM Subramanian
10, Vidudaya I Cross
T Nagar
Madras 600 017.

Details wanted

In *MM* January 16, there is a letter from readers P Ramakrishnan and P Jayalakshmi of Adyar about Hindus celebrating Christmas. I would like to get more details from the writers.

I am collecting details on the subject — inculturation — to do a thesis later. Would they please forward me any photographs of the two incidents and full details?

A Joseph
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Via: Kurungulam West
Thanjavur 613 303.

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You will get returns

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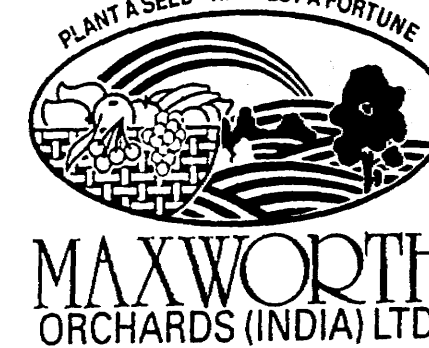
The chart below gives you an indication of your likely returns on a one time investment in one acre. Returns on 1/2 acre and 1/4 acre will be on a pro-rata basis.

Year	1 acre (Rs.)	Year	1 acre (Rs.)
3	12,000	8	32,000
4	24,000	9	29,000
5	26,000	10	39,000
6	29,000	11	34,000
7	32,000	12-40	67,000

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* Not to be confused with NRI

MADRAS MUSINGS SMALLS

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Dealing in exclusive hand-embroidered salwar suits. Also taking orders for any kind of hand embroidery. Contact: URMIL, 7 Lakshmi Colony, Behind Jain Temple, T. Nagar, Madras-600 017. Tel: 8250742.

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Of shirts and bedbugs

One Man's
Madras —
HARRY
MILLER'S

How long ago was it since you (or your husband) brought a ready-made shirt, of the best make? Getting ready for a trip abroad recently, I sent two utterly trustworthy colleagues to buy me two, since I am not very active these days due to health problems. Imagine my astonishment, then, when they returned with two beautiful shirts, but a price-tag of no less than Rs. 430 each! Absolutely trustworthy as I know them to be, I'd have still thought something odd was going on — perhaps THEY'D been cheated — until I saw the bill, and consulted other friends who cheerfully told me that was indeed what shirts of the kind I'd acquired cost these days.

But more surprises were in store for me. Judging by the number of pins, plastic reinforcement under the collar, a cardboard insert in the front, and many other miscellaneous peripherals, oh, and the usual triple set of local taxes, as well as a box fit to keep the Queen's jewels in — well, some of them anyway — the shirt could have cost only a fraction of the total price. My only comfort was the reassurance given that they would gladly be changed if they didn't fit.

And unfortunately they didn't, either. If I'd really tried to button up the collar in front I'd have garrotted myself. Back they went into their luxurious boxes (and how I pined the poor shop assistant who would have the task of restoring all those pins and other items, before sale to another customer would be possible) and next, as per guarantee, they were cheerfully accepted by the retailer and exchanged for the next size larger which, however, the shop assistant asserted was the largest size they made.

Back home I tried again with the new ones, and to the collective dismay of myself and my two devoted friends found the collar still too tight for anyone other than the Grand Executioner of the Spanish Inquisition, who might have found them an amusing variation for the Iron Maiden or the Rack.

But it was when trying on the first one, pure white and beautifully made, that one of my friends uttered a cry of astonishment. Walking up the shoulder

of my brand-new, unblemished shirt, he had spotted another, more lively and entirely unwelcome peripheral. Believe it or not — and I refused to until a strong magnifying glass confirmed it — my friend had found on this snow-white, virginal cloth, that most loathsome of human parasites — a bedbug! 'Moolai poochie!' my young friend yelled, and so indeed it was; and I must leave readers of this most estimable journal to deduce for themselves how a *moolai poochie* — a bedbug — came to be found in the pristine, unopened, elegant box of the highest priced shirt in Madras (or so I judge it).

The offending vermin was, of course, led off to a place of execution the moment I had satisfied myself of its identity, and I can only hope that it had no companions that eluded our subsequent, most diligent search of the container and its contents. However, if they did, and we now have companions less welcomed than our four cats (plus — a recent acquisition — one Jungle Cat kitten — *Ielix chaus* —), we will be faced with a choice of those vicious insecticides, nowadays rightly fallen into gross disrepute, or what a friend of mine, a gentleman of Bengali origin, describes as a *Khatmal Khilai*.

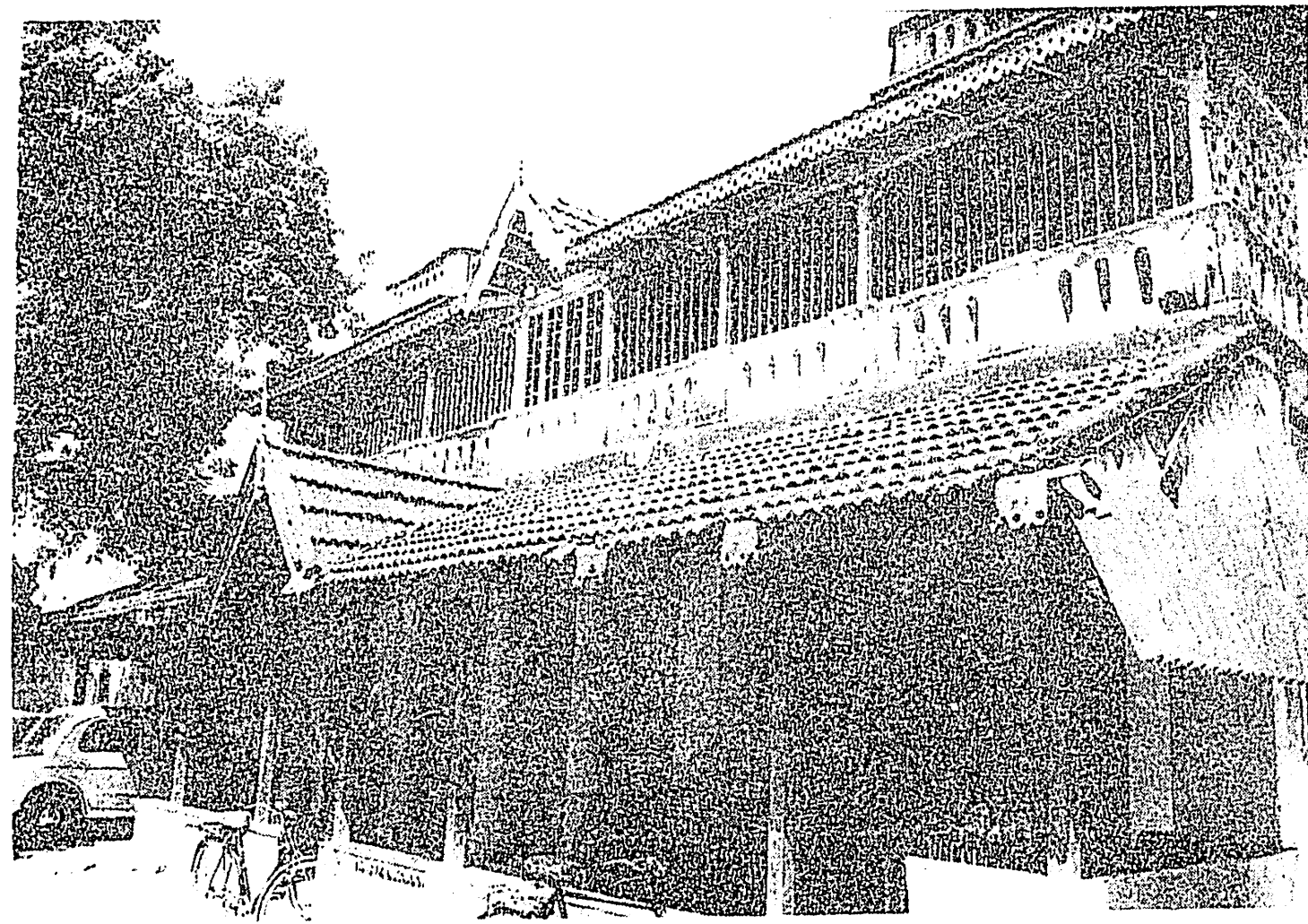


There's a return to the Imperial age of architecture all over the city. Pediments, triangular-roofed porticos, pillars and deepset verandahs are all part of the NEW, the showroom and office of a Hindustan Motors unit on the Grand Trunk Road in St Thomas' Mount. The pink brick work walls and the cantonment touch all echo Brooke Bond headquarters in ... & THE OLD

THE NEW... Bangalore where this revival of the imperial style began a little over a decade ago.

THE OLD shows the British touches of a hundred years ago! The gabling, the triangular roofed entrance, whose tiling is echoed in the NEW, the pillars, the deepset verandah and the wide frontage. The OLD is in a tree-shaded complex in Mylapore and the Madras Law Journal office has been in occupation here for the last four or five years, but they will say no more about the history of the building, playing as coy as the NEW about details.

(Photographs by V S RAGHAVAN)



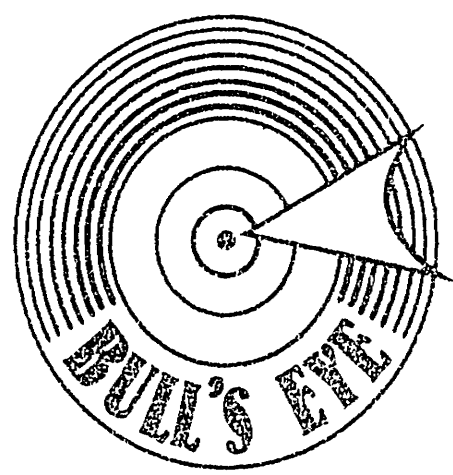
WHOLESALE AH-OY!

Change, it is said, occurs when there is a confluence of both changing values and economic necessity. And our primary market, which is currently undergoing a metamorphosis to mould itself to the needs of the investor (high liquidity, easier access and quick payments and delivery) and companies (reduced issue costs and better access), will more than vouch for this. This fortnight we address some new trends in it.

We had discussed *proportionate allotment* in detail in our previous article: if you had applied for 800 shares of an issue which later gets oversubscribed four times, you will be allotted 200 shares. In tandem with this is another guideline which stipulates the minimum application of shares for an issue. Proportionate allotment has induced corporate players and large investors with financial clout to enter the market in a big way, which brings us to the second face of the changing primary market — *Corporate Investment*. The debenture issue of Lupin Labs, which flagged off proportionate allotment, received applications from as many as 1550 corporate applicants. With more and more corporate investors virtually rendering the chance of allotment to small investors remote, the latter have no choice but to pool in funds and make joint applications or approach *Mutual Funds*.

Since Mutual Funds mobilise savings from individuals or small institutions and invest in corporate instruments, its rapid expansion with the advent of the private sector funds has

been inevitable. While Mutual Funds represent a very good investment avenue for risk averse investors, OTC is emerging as the most investor-friendly opportunity for the retail investor.



The Over the Counter Exchange of India (OTCEI) has appointed members and dealers who have counters at various places where investors can buy or sell shares and debentures by flashing an INVESTOTC card. Application for INVESTOTC card can be made at any of the counters of OTCEI or while applying for new issues on the OTC. A market-maker will offer 'buy and sell' quotes for the same scrip. Thus, the OTCEI listed shares can, with certainty, be sold/purchased on any day without relevance to whether or not there is an opposite buyer/seller. The OTC currently has around 1.2 lakhs registered investors and this is expected to go up.

Two other innovations are bought-out deals and layered premia. In bought-out deals, the issuer may sell the entire issue to the merchant banker,

who in turn will appoint underwriters before offering the issue to the public. Layered premia implies (i) fixing a floor rate of the premia by leave of the general body of shareholders, (ii) giving the underwriters the option of underwriting from the lowest to the highest premia, (iii) auctioning the issue and offering allotment first to the one offering the maximum premia. The auction continues till the issue amount is collected.

The future primary market clearly belongs to corporate players, financial institutions, Mutual Funds and high net worth individuals. Against this backdrop, the retail investor has to sharpen his investment analysis to stay and reap benefits. Meanwhile, knowing SEBI and its penchant for investor protection, he can hope that it would come up with a reservation for him, say by stipulating that a certain amount of the total issue be reserved for the minimum application category.

Here are some recommendations for this fortnight:

Venky India (CMP Rs. 42.00): VIL, in existence since 1978, has the largest network of halcheries in India and its bulk customers include five-star hotels and flight kitchens. True to tradition, it has declared encouraging results for the six-month period Sept: 1993 a turnover of Rs. 18 cr and a PAT of Rs. 1.24 cr. For March 1994, a turnover of Rs. 45 cr and a PAT of Rs. 2.70 cr is projected. This will yield an EPS of Rs. 3.65, which will support Rs. 52. For March 1995, the full benefits of its Pellet Feed Mill and solvent extraction plants are expected. Therefore, we expect the turnover to be Rs. 67 cr and PAT of Rs. 4 cr, yielding an EPS of Rs. 5.30. A price is expected in the range of Rs. 70-75. The shares are

currently, after making a saucer-like formation, moving sideways between Rs. 40-45. Buy.

Rank Aqua (CMP Rs. 70.00): Rank Aqua, set up in June 1990 as a 32-hectare fully integrated shrimp farm project on a pilot-scale basis, was India's first such project. Since then, it has moved from strength to strength and has expanded its farm to 172 hectares, financed through a public issue in Jan, 1993. The results declared for 1992-93 were in line with its projection. Besides, it has declared excellent results for the six months ended Sept. 1993 — a turnover of Rs. 12.30 cr and a PAT of Rs. 2.35 cr. For the year ended March 1994, we project a turnover of Rs. 35 cr and a PAT of Rs. 5 cr, giving an EPS of Rs. 5.60. Assuming a P/E of 13, the share is fully priced. However, for March 1995, we project a turnover of Rs. 50 cr and PAT of Rs. 7 cr. The resulting EPS of Rs. 7.80 will support a price of around Rs. 100. Buy.

Premier Auto Electric (CMP Rs. 70.00): The company manufactures, distributes and markets automobile parts and components. Although manufacturing auto-components contributes only about 5 per cent to the total income at present, this division's income is likely to receive a boost. Already it is supplying equipment to Telco and there is an MoU with Best and Crompton. The company has diversified into equipment leasing and granite exports for tax shelters. Gas Authority of India has authorised it to fit conversion kits in vehicles that use compressed natural gas, which will boost its service division's income in the coming years. For 1994 we anticipate a PAT of Rs. 4 cr giving an EPS of Rs. 7.85. For 1995, the PAT and EPS are expected to touch Rs. 6.60 cr and Rs. 12.90 respectively. The share price would touch Rs. 80 for 1994 results and Rs. 130 for 1995 results. The share is a good bet at current prices and technicals also confirm the same. **K. Gopalakrishnan**

The Masala Dosa goes hitech — to become a fast food

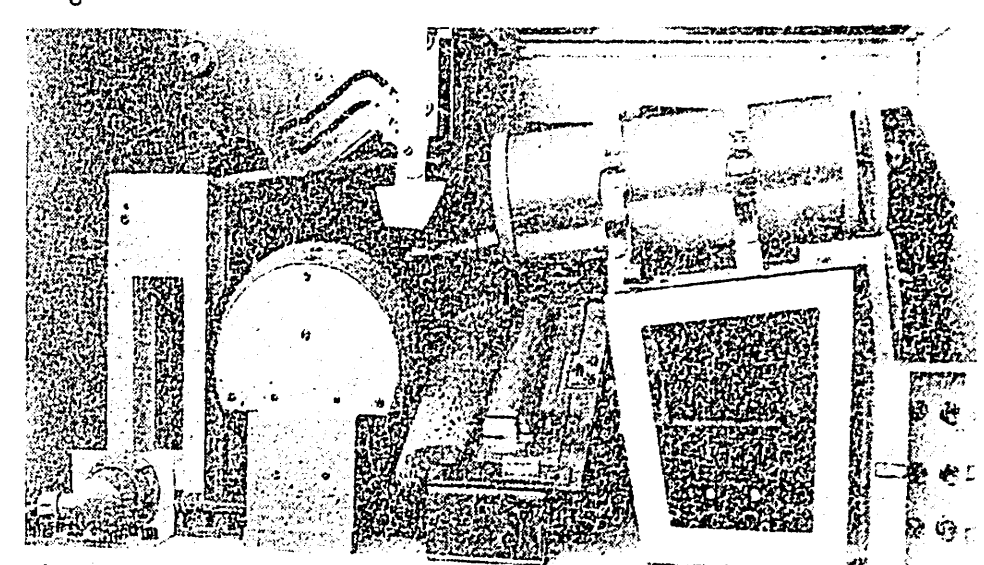
With the modest assumption that *masala dosa* 'awareness' would be something like 30 per cent, India Foods and Fermentations Ltd. (Madras) ran a snack food trade-and-consumer survey in the North, starting with U.P. They were amazed by the findings: — A 100% 'awareness' of the *masala dosa* as a snack food; a 98.1% 'ever tried' *masala dosa* across the whole of U.P., and *masala dosa* ranked as the third most popular snack item (*jilebi* topped the list at 11.1%, *samosa* was second by just a fraction). By any standard, the humble, Madras-born *masala dosa* was an exotic, desired snack item in the North.

So India Foods and Fermentations (IFF) set to work on their Dosa King Range project — which envisions delivering the *masala dosa* through automation at fast food outlets. The delivery system involves fermenting, pre-packing and dehydrating the *dosa* batter and the potato *masala*. On premise, these are reconstituted on the spot and fed into the *dosa*-making/vending machine which takes the skill out of *dosa*-making by taking over the preparation of the *dosa*. The electronically-controlled machine, which can comfortably create one perfectly rolled *masala dosa* every minute, looks

much like a table-top, mid-sized photocopying machine — well, sort of! Viewed at from the side, where the operator stands, it provides a fascinating sight 'not unlike a mini-chemical plant'.

Dominating the view is a hollow metal drum, slowly rotating along its axis. This is the machine's version of the *lava* on which the *dosa* is spread and cooked. The 'lava' is heated from within by infrared lamps — the temperature measured and controlled electronically by a heat sensor, also placed within the drum. Exactly 45 grams of the reconstituted batter is

When the rectangular (energy-efficient and space-saving) *dosa* rotating on the drum is half-cooked, a perforated pipe releases 12 drops (1 ml) of oil onto it. The drum then goes through a second cycle, completing the cooking operation. A *masala*-dispensing nozzle now moves up against the *dosa*, spreading potato *masala* onto it. Almost simultaneously, a knife edge moves up to the drum at an angle and, in one motion, scrapes the *dosa* off the drum and rolls it up (like the good old-fashioned pencil sharpeners did).



pumped into a rectangular movable trough' from the batter-container above the drum and is laid on the drum surface.

The rolled-up *masala dosa* slides down a chute on to a folded paper cone held at the chute-end by the operator. The consumer then has a



The Dosa King men (Narayanan in the centre, above) and their magnificent machine (below).

choice of chutneys, also pre-prepared and re-constituted. The *masala dosa* is crisp, light, tasty and truly fun.

The micro-processor perched top right can precisely programme the machine and work an amazing number of process changes without rearranging or modifying the basic machine. It also enables the collection of data: How many *dosas* were sold during a given period of time? When was the machine in use? When was it not?

Each one of these units developed by IFF will be owned by a franchisee. As Raghunandan, a director, sees it, "For all practical purposes, the franchisee is our partner in the business. If he does well, we do well. That is the fundamental assumption."

R Narayanan, the Chairman of the company, looks at their potential eater as "any individual who is on the move. Any guy who has a reasonable amount of money and goes by public transport anywhere is good enough for us".

Heal the Earth, families fair

Twelve-year-old Tuhin Mehta, who had successfully spearheaded a campaign to halt the construction of a five-star hotel by the Varkala Beach in Kerala, was given the honour of inaugurating the Green Earth '94 Family Fair in Madras recently. The young boy's role was appropriate, for the Fair's exhortation was, "If you care for your child, care for their Earth".

The underlying message behind the Fair was brought home pictorially at the very first stall. Every living being has its own ecological niche. Witness the food-chain, which is an example of the need and importance of inter-dependence among all layers and aspects of Nature's creation. Man alone is responsible for breaking this chain of inter-dependence in the name of progress. At the exit of the stall was a large mirror bearing the words, "The solution to the Earth's future" — and an arrow pointed to the word "YOU".

The Fair drew attention to several forms of environment protection, such as eco-friendly refrigerators, the use of solar energy and bio-villages. The

essence of a bio-village is a fusion of advances in biotechnology with the best and most suitable in traditional techniques. The programmes include rabbit-and-goat-rearing, coir-rope weaving and the nurturing of nutrition-oriented kitchen gardens. Kizhar, a village in the Union Territory of Pondicherry, is an example of a bio-village. As for solar energy, there were demonstrations and explanations of the conversion of such energy to electrical power to run pumps etc, to be used for cooking and to run desalination plants.

Green Earth '94's appeal, that development and progress, cannot, and should not, be made at the cost of the biosphere and quality of life, was amply illustrated by the stark pictorial saga of the village of Devadahanam. This village has paid a very heavy price for the indiscriminate mushrooming of tanneries in the area. One stallholder pointed to a picture of a lovely green field and said, "That was what the village was like..." and then turned to another picture at the end of the stall which showed a grey, stony

area with an emaciated forlorn child in the foreground, and sadly announced, "... that is what it has become!"

The CRY stall emphasised the fate of the child, one of the most tragic (and innocent) victims of environment abuse. A CRY poster poignantly points out that the real wages earned by working children are tuberculosis, blindness, burns and asthma.

Two stalls that drew attention to India's ancient heritage were the CPR Educational Centre's and that of the Centre for Indian Knowledge Systems. The former focused on sacred groves near or around areas of worship and pointed out that they were part of the ecological heritage of India, for, in them, medicinal plants were grown and protected. IKS, on the other hand, revealed the research into Vrkshayurveda (traditional Indian Plant Science) it had done and reported on its exploration of the use of nature's bounty for pest control and crop protection.

The Fair also had stalls selling hand-made paper, terracotta, wood and stone carvings,

handicrafts and textiles. There was also a large fresh vegetables and fruit stall organised by Maxworth Orchards Ltd. The stalls were all erected keeping in mind a rustic ambience, complete with thatched roofs.

As you walked among the various stalls, listened to various explanations, read the posters and placards, and watched the demonstrations, there in the background were the soft strains of Michael Jackson's "Heal the world...", and you began to realise that we will have to evolve a society that will bring together tradition, technology and ecological prudence to achieve that. And to succeed in bringing them together, there has to be a 'greening of the mind'.

Green Earth '94 was aptly named a 'Family Fair', for the 'greening of the mind' has to be a process in which the entire family has to be involved. We are all part of the Earth Family, and as the mirror at the entrance pointed out, the solution for Earth's healing process lies with everyone of us, each one a member of this Family.

— Ranjitha Ashok

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NOTABLE BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Bennett, Steven J.
Corporate Realities and Environmental Truths.
John Wiley & Sons, Inc. c1993. (658.408 BEN)

Economic Conference (1992): (Little Rock, Ark.)
President Clinton's New Beginning.
Donald I. Fine, Inc., c1993. (338.973 ECO)

Fishbein, Betta K.
Making Less Garbage: A Planning Guide for Communities.
Inform Inc., c1992. (363.728 FIS)

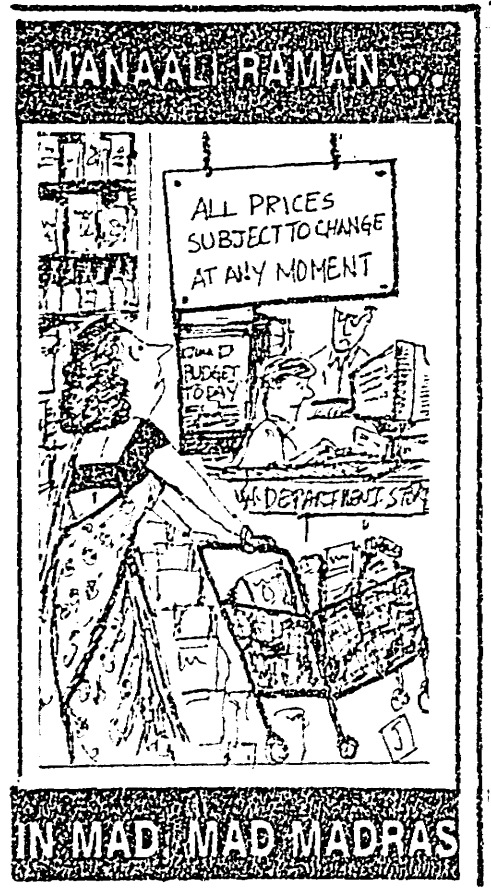
Heilbroner, Robert L.
21st Century Capitalism.
W.W. Norton & Company, c1993. (330.122 HEI)

McCall, Jack
The Small Town Survival Guide: Help for Changing the Economic Future of Your Town.
William Morrow and Company, Inc. c1993. (658.11 MCC)

Sarason, Seymour Bernard
The Case for Change: Rethinking the Preparation of Educators
Jossey-Bass Publishers, c1993. (370.71 SAR)

Schaffer, Howard B.
Chester Bowles: New Dealer in the Cold War.
Harvard University Press, 1993. (327.2092 SCH)

Silverstein, Michael
The Environmental Economic Revolution: How Business Will Thrive and the Earth Survive In Years to Come.
St. Martin's Press, c1993. (363.731 SIL)



The issue has also been addressed at another level as well. The survey revealed that 99% of the households, even in the traditional areas, rarely make a *masala dosa* at home. A *masala dosa* is out-of-home consumption, while a *dosa* is in-house consumption. So, necessarily, the project was conceived with the NTDEs (non-traditional-*dosa*-eaters) in mind. "Even in the NTDE areas, a *masala dosa* is perceived as a meal supplement, normal consumption occurring between 12-2 pm or 6-8 pm. So we are going

by
**ELIZABETH
ROY**

in there offering a smaller product at a comfortable price, competing against the *samosa*, *batura* and the *vadas* and trying to position the *masala dosa* as a snack. There will be some dissonance for a while, but we feel the demand for the *masala dosa* will soon be there," Narayanan explains.

Narayanan and his team have done an in-depth study of the *dosa*, eating habits and the *dosa* market. What he has to say about the findings is fascinating:

"A *dosa* is normally eaten in a horizontal format. It is laid out on a plate and visually your eye is used to taking in an expanse which goes outward; you, thus, see a certain size. Optically, it will never look the same size if I were to deliver it to you vertically, standing on end. In fact, our *dosa* is not the same size. Yet we are asking customers to receive our product in a vertical format. Straightaway the first dissonance has taken place.

"Then, normally, the first tactile contact with the *dosa* is with the hand and the customer exercises the choice of whether to have potato in it or not, whether to have chutney with it or not. In our case, the first contact is directly in the mouth.

"These are important issues according to us, and we have to change the way people perceive *dosas* in terms of manner of consumption, time of consumption, place of consumption... and that is our task. If today I can sell 75 *dosas* a day per outlet, then I know I'm well within the 200 reach." An interesting argument evolving out of market strategy.

Indian Foods and Fermentations is a public limited company with Narayanan and Raghunandan as major promoters. When the total project outlay reached the Rs. 8.9 crore range, they decided to take the company public and it is now being quoted on the Madras, Bombay and Ahmedabad stock exchanges.

The commercial launch of the IFF *masala dosa* is scheduled for the very near future in Bombay and Pune. The product has already been test-marketed very successfully in Nagpur and a couple of other places. In Madras, it was introduced last October at the

(Continued on P6)

Going green — with vegetables

I don't whether you've opened one or those glossy coffee table cookbooks (Indian edition) and been stumped on page one by a recipe calling for broccoli, leeks or brussel sprouts — at which point you sneaked a look at the string bag holding woebegone carrots, tomatoes and potatoes, and decided to make pasta with tomato sauce instead. The cookbook, of course, goes (obviously) to the coffee table, to impress the guests with the gastronomic catholicity of mine host.

Although the latter is a good enough reason for buying more cookbooks, the four JUST PICKED outlets in the city may provide added incentive. The one in Shastri Nagar has plastic trays of vegetables, labelled neatly, with just enough space for the unsophisticated to gawk or be transported into raptures at the sight of Hungarian Wax Chillies — which is rather unfair, since they are instantly recognisable as the *milaga bajji* variety that can be had at the beach any time.

Continental cuisine faddists can pick up brussel sprouts, compact and firm, or pep up dishes with genuine parsley instead of *kothamalli*, which is also available. Occupying pride of place, however, are the trays of broccoli, leeks, in big and small sizes, and lettuce, the last-named a bit limp despite the air-

conditioners. Although they haven't got round to truffles yet, the selection of fungi displayed — oyster mushrooms at Rs. 8 a packet and button mushrooms with enough soil on them to start a farm — should give Madras chefs food for thought.

Palak and all kinds of *keerai*, the inevitable staples, abound, with a thoughtful selection of more mundane stuff — corn on

FOODS & FADS

the cob, cauliflower, capsicum, cabbage, butter beans, kno-kohl, radish and the like from Ooty. The prices are reasonable, given the star status enjoyed by most of the vegetables. But you cannot help missing the bustle and haggling of Kothavalchavadi and its like — sanitised vegetable hunting needs some getting used to, but, mercifully, it has come here to stay.

True-blue Indian

The true gourmand never scorns good fare, however unlikely the surroundings may be. Which is why the *KHADI* outlets exert a fascination over me for more reasons than one. *Desi haute couture* apart, they house some of the nicest traditional stuff, rarely made at home for various reasons — *polis*,

adhirasams, *rava laddoos*, 'mixture' and the like, all at throwaway rates.

The one on R.K. Mutt Road has a variety of *podis* for pickles, ghee, syrups and miscellaneous snacks fit for an Indian Gargantua. The neatly packaged sweets were being snapped up by hawk-eyed *maamis*, who also took in the unbelievably pink and orange *sago vadahams*.

The cookies are a world apart — ragi ones, jam-centred scallops, salt and sweet butter biscuits — at prices rarely topping Rs. 7 a packet. A fastidious friend makes a pilgrimage every once in a while to pick up the milk rusks, one of the prime casualties of today's slick-food-joints-only permissible culture. Ragi malt, another time-tested survivor, and porridge mix still hold court here. *Nannari* (palm) syrup, honey and dry fruit *halwa* (the latter is a must) are the other recommended buys.

Why everyone who has ever waited for festival days to gorge on traditional fare hasn't stormed the shop yet is a mystery. Anyway, the crowded shop, with a couple of hard umbrella-end jabs thrown in for good measure, is certainly worth braving.

Bhavana Kay

An unusual Continental spread — hot *Potato Soup*, cheesy *Baked Eggs*, firm *Tomatoes Stuffed* with fragrant rice. Finish the meal with an exotic cake made with unbelievable ingredients: ridge gourd and pineapple.

POTATO SOUP

2 potatoes, peeled and chopped into thin strips
1 onion, chopped fine
Pepper, nutmeg powder and salt to taste
4 cups stock
2 tbs butter

Method

Heat butter and fry onions till transparent. Add the chopped potatoes and fry for a couple of minutes. Add the vegetable stock and simmer for 15-20 minutes. Add the seasoning and serve hot.

BAKED EGGS (COUNTRY STYLE)

4 eggs
2 onions, chopped fine and sautéed in 1 tbs butter
½ cup grated cheese
2 tbs butter
Pepper and salt to taste

Method

Sprinkle the sautéed onions in a baking dish. Break the eggs carefully over the onions. Sprinkle pepper and salt. Sprinkle the cheese. Dot with butter and bake in a moderate oven till the eggs are set.

STUFFED TOMATOES

4 large firm tomatoes
Filling
¼ cup cooked rice
½ cup shelled peas



1 carrot, peeled and chopped fine
½ capsicum, deseeded and chopped fine
2 tbs grated cheese
1 tbs breadcrumbs
1 tbs butter
Salt and pepper to taste
Sauce
Reserved tomato pulp
1 green chilli
1 small onion, chopped fine
1 small celery stalk, chopped fine
Sugar, salt and pepper to taste
2 tbs butter

Method

Stem the tomatoes and carefully scoop out the pulp. Keep aside the pulp. Sprinkle salt, invert to drain the tomatoes.

Melt one tablespoon butter, sauté the onions for filling. Add the chopped capsicum, peas, carrot. Sprinkle some water. Cover and simmer till vegetables are done.

Add the cooked rice, salt, pepper and cook till well blended. Cool and fill each tomato and place in a shallow baking dish. Sprinkle the grated cheese and breadcrumbs over the tomatoes. Melt butter for the sauce, sauté the

onions. Add the tomato pulp, celery and green chillies. Add salt, sugar and pepper to taste. Cook covered till mixture is soft.

Pour this sauce over the tomatoes and bake in a pre-heated moderate oven for 20-30 minutes. Serve hot.

RIDGE GOURD — PINEAPPLE CAKE

2 eggs
1 cup oil
1 cup sugar
3 cups flour
½ tsp baking powder
2 tsp baking soda
1½ tsp cinnamon powder
¾ tsp nutmeg powder
2 tsp vanilla essence
1 tsp salt
2 cups, peeled grated ridge gourd
1 cup canned pineapple (crushed with reserve)
1 cup raisins
1 cup chopped walnuts

Method

Sift flour with baking powder, baking soda, cinnamon powder and nutmeg powder.

Beat the eggs with oil and sugar till thick and foamy. Add the vanilla essence. Fold in the flour, chopped pineapple and ridge gourd.

Fold in raisins and walnuts. Pour into a greased 9 x 5 pan and bake in a moderate oven for an hour. Cool for 10 minutes in the pan and turn onto a plate.

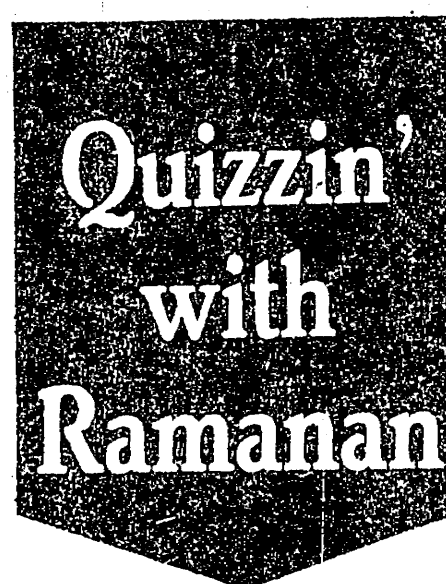
Chandra Padmanabhan

Masala Dosa

(Continued from P5)

CFTRI Food Expo. IFF's intention was to put up a total technology capability statement to the scientific community from whom they expected creative criticism as response. They got little exposure to that community and less feedback. But their stalls were chock-ablock full with the lay crowd snacking their lips: "Very good, Very good."

Narayanan then decided to open the market almost immediately — a 50-franchises test market — a market they never intended to target for the next two years. "We'll be into serious test marketing in Bangalore by February. But Bombay is my priority. After that we stay put. We are not going to Madurai, for instance!"



(Quizmaster V.V. RAMANAN's ten general questions are from the fortnight Feb. 1-15.)

1. What world record has Bombay's Amol Mazumdar set in cricket?
2. Where was the World Economic Forum held recently?
3. Why is the Tamil film (under production) *Patitaku Paatukari* embroiled in controversy?
4. Which popular TV programme completed 100 episodes on February 8th?
5. What new experiment is being tried out by IAAI to scare birds from airport runways?
6. Why was 12-year-old Tuhin Mehta of Madras in the news recently?
7. Which popular boy's toy turned 30 recently?
8. Capt. Durga Mathur is the new....?
9. Where is the XVII Olympic Winter Games being held?
10. Who are the new national badminton champions?

(How much of Madras Musings Feb. 1-15 do you remember, wonders RAMANAN is these ten questions)

11. The first Armenian newspaper in the world was published in Madras 200 years ago. Name the paper.
12. What 'évic' coup has Pondicherry recently accomplished?
13. Why was Madras-based Australian nun, Sister Mary Asmar, in the news?
14. Name the acclaimed documentary which focuses on child labour in the factories of Sivakasi.
15. Name the forthcoming fully indigenous electric car on scooter wheels produced by Coimbatore-based Eddy Current Control (India) Ltd.?
16. Name the veteran American director, maker of classics like *Meera*, *Sakunthalai* etc., who visited Madras after nearly four decades?
17. A tribute to which legendary dancer was specially organised at the Music Academy on February 7th?
18. Mallika Sarabhai's latest opus performed recently in Madras was...?
19. Which blockbuster was considered by 'The Man from Madras Musings' as full of 'Violence, Vengeance and Vigilanteism'?
20. Jennifer Carter-Cross was in Madras recently to study a romantic poet who lived and committed suicide in Madras. Name the poet.

(Answers on P. 8)

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Till March 12: An exhibition of paintings by Vasudha Thozhur. At Sakshi Gallery, 11 Khader Nawaz Khan Road (11 am to 6 pm, except Sunday).
March 11: An evening of Ghazals by Jyoti Bellappa, in aid of 'Roofs for the Roofless' at Museum Theatre. 7.00 p.m. Tickets at Landmark.

Shooting with Dungan in India

Ellis Dungan became a 'name' director in 1937 when he made the box-office hit *Ambikapathi*, starring the first superstar of South Indian cinema, M.K. Thyagaraja Bhagavathar. *Ambikapathi* was the second super hit of the year for the legendary Bhagavathar, the first being Y.V. Rao's *Chinthamani* which also starred that singing star, the 'Kamataka Cuckoo', K. Aswathamma.

Y.V. Rao was the first choice to direct *Ambikapathi*. The affluent Salem-based silk merchants who planned to produce it, called on Rao, who was then living in Bangalore. Basking in the sunshine of the success of *Chinthamani*, the ego-rich Rao did not even offer the visitors chairs. Touched to the quick, the young merchants drove straight to Madras and called on Dungan who was then living in Spencer's Hotel. (NOTE: The hotel was situated on a sprawling site just behind where the Head Office of the Indian Overseas Bank now stands. After Spencer's gave up the hotel, a Madras-based racing-world figure, P. Srinivasan, popularly known as 'Karuppu Srinivasan', took it over and ran it under a new name, Hotel Ambassador. Later, the site was acquired by IOB who built their skyscraper in front of it. The old-world-style hotel building survived until recently.)

Finding the American a pleasure to deal with, the producers immediately engaged Dungan to direct *Ambikapathi*. When the famed love story of the blue-blooded princess Amaravathi and the legendary poet Kamban's son Ambikapathi was narrated to him, Dungan at once noticed the strong parallels between *Ambikapathi* and Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. He not only read the play, but also saw the movie version of it in Madras and asked his

writer Elangovan, the first star writer of Tamil Cinema, to include in *Ambikapathi* several scenes from Shakespeare, such as the famous balcony scene, and some of the dialogue. The dialogue made an impact on moviegoers and, for the first time, dialogue became an attraction in Tamil cinema. This was to have far-reaching consequences not only for Tamil cinema but also for the politics of Tamil Nadu.

by Randor Guy

With the success of *Ambikapathi*, Dungan came to be recognised as one of the top film-makers of South Indian cinema. His reputation reached greater heights when he made *Sakunthalai* (1940) and *Meera* (1945) with M.S. Subbulakshmi in lead roles. Both were excellent musicals, which came to be hailed as classics of Indian cinema.

During the making of one of his mythologicals, a sequence had to be shot inside a temple and, as a foreigner and Christian, Dungan was denied admission to the shrine. On the first day, Dungan stood on the outer walls and directed the film. But he was not satisfied. He wanted to get inside the temple and shoot. And, so, he applied dark make-up on his face, neck and arms and, dressed in a Punjabi costume, with a turban adorning his head, he walked into the temple along with his crew and cast! People stared at him and when some of them asked questions the production manager told the Doubling Thomases that the man with the turban was a Kashmiri Brahmin!

While shooting *Meera* on the banks of the river Yamuna, Dungan, who loved swimming, took a dip in the sacred river. Suddenly he found the earth beneath him swaying and rocking, as if a mild earthquake was in progress. Wondering, Dungan looked around and, much to his surprise and shock, discovered that he was standing on a turtle!

On another occasion, while shooting a jungle film, Dungan, camera in hand and all alone, walked through the jungle. He noticed a wild monkey on a treetop and began taking shots. For some reason, the monkey took a strong dislike to him and, screaming in rage, began to chase him. Dungan ran for his life, but the monkey was gaining fast. And then, suddenly, the pith hat on Dungan's head flew off and fell near the monkey. Obviously mistaking that hat for a part of Dungan's head, the monkey pounced on it, tearing it to bits, screaming the while in victorious rage! Meanwhile, Dungan made good his escape and returned to his car. "But for the hat on my head, I would have been torn to pieces by the monkey and wouldn't be living now to tell you the story," Dungan recently recalled.

During the late 1940's, Dungan joined the South Indian movie mogul T.R. Sundaram and made two films for Salem-based Modern Theatres. *Ponmudi* (1950) did not fare well at the box-office. Dungan's portrait of the love sequences between Narasimha Bharathi and Madhuri Devi came in for strong criticism, being described as 'vulgar.' "The press and critics accused me, saying that, as an American, I was corrupting the local population!" Dungan remembers. (By today's standards, those sequences hardly look like love scenes!) (Continued on P8)

Not worthy of Kamal

I was inspired to see *Mahanadi* on reading the adulatory press notices in the leading newspapers. Now, I am inclined to agree with the views of the 'Man from Madras Musings'. May I comment?

Nalini Rajan

The making of *Mahanadi* is an exercise in mass appeasement. Santana Bharati, the director of *Gunaa*, has learnt his lesson well — authenticity and pragmatism of vision don't sell. Most important, the peanut gallery is simply not interested in a defeated and cowed Kamal Hasan. So what we get here is a mish-mash of needless violence and implausibility. Another Kamal Hasan starrer, *Devar Magan*, directed by Bharatan, had its flaws, namely, a superfluous song or two and a mostly underdressed Gautami. Mere details in an otherwise outstanding film — in any case, nothing that couldn't be corrected by more stringent editing.

In *Mahanadi*'s case, there is something rotten in the script itself. The melodramatic zenith is reached in the Calcutta brothel scene — admittedly brilliantly photographed by a deftly relentless camera. The rest of the film is fitted into this Procrustean plot

involving the hero's daughter winding up in the brothel.

Kamal, who had progressed in *Gunaa* and *Devar Magan* to the inspired realm of portraying human frailties and real-life ambiguities, has inexplicably tumbled into the formula-bound celluloid world of good and bad archetypes. Consequently, the villain and his perverted boss are unremotely wicked. Do we ever encounter such a concentration of evil outside the cinema hall? Life is surely more ambivalently complex than that? Excess of this kind has another name: overkill (literally, too, as it happens in this film). Kidnapping a child for employment in the flesh trade is not unheard of. Generally, however, the perpetrators of such high-risk crimes are anonymous and arbitrary agents. Kamal's problem is that he needs to identify his tormentors in order to prepare himself, and his gleeful fan-club, for the orgy of violence in the penultimate scene. So, despite his professed intention of unequivocally propagating the message of *ahimsa* to his audience — as stated in a recent interview — the outcome is garbled and confused: might as well be hanged for a sheep as for a lamb, he seems to be saying. When one is falsely accused of

murdering one man, why not commit a couple of real, gruesome murders?

Is *Mahanadi*, then, wholly bad, in the manner of Kamal's villains? Not exactly. The dehumanization and brutality of prison life (which have justly aroused the ire of human rights activists in this country), the attractively credible demeanour of the vamp, Kamal's paternal anguish when his daughter attains puberty, his tentative advances to his betrothed culminating in the tender kiss (which so titillated the frontbenches), his agonized cry regarding his child's plight — all these are indeed remarkable. There are shades of *Nayakan* here and there. There's also a combination of excellent acting and taut camerawork and editing (especially in the prison shots). But all this cannot completely atone for a flawed story. And this is the annoying part, for the second half of the film could have been redeemed in so many different ways.

Ultimately, a choice has to be made between the goals of making sublime films and box-office hits. The two don't often coincide. *Mahanadi*, a likely box-office hit, is not worthy of Kamal Hasan.

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FIRST TIME IN INDIA

Unsung and unnoticed — Tamil Nadu Cricket, R.I.P.

The Tamil Nadu cricket flag is flying at half-mast. W.V. Raman and his team failed to make the quarter-finals of the Pepsi Ranji Trophy championship and, as a result, the former champion's status has taken a nosedive. It has given Tamil Nadu cricket lovers food for thought. The question is being asked whether the state will, in the foreseeable future, regain the national title it has won but twice.

Never before indeed has this cricket-crazy southern state passed through such a blank

season as the current one. Tamil Nadu not only figured among the Ranji Trophy also-rans but had to eat the humble-pie in the national scene. No Tamil Nadu player could find a place in the India team that made short work of the touring Sri Lankans in their three-Test, three-one-day series just ended.

Perhaps the wet start Tamil Nadu had to their Ranji Trophy campaign was a pointer. Their first two home matches were virtually washed out by rain. Really short of match practice, the state proved no match for

their ancient enemy, Karnataka, in a crucial tie at Bangalore. Goa

by
JAICI

came to the State's rescue in Madras, and when eventually Raman and his team made the pre-quarter-finals, they made Tamil Nadu fans see visions and dream dreams. These were, however, shattered by their

mediocre performance against Baroda on the latter's home pitch. Understandably, they returned home unsung and unnoticed.

It was an unbelievable fall for a state, particularly its capital of Madras City, where cricket is played throughout the year, even in the dog days of May, and where more tournaments are held than in any other Indian metropolis. The latest addition to the ever-growing list is the Khumbhat trophy tournament, launched by the house of Khumbhats at a cost of Rs. 3 lakhs.

More than tournaments, Tamil Nadu cricket is sorely in need of revitalisation by a team of knowledgeable officials to spot talent and give promising and dedicated youngsters all the encouragement, financial and otherwise, they need. For a state that has produced so many stars from M.J. Gopalan to Krish Srikanth, who recently announced his retirement, to go so bankrupt and fall by the wayside is unbelievable. A challenge is clearly on hand for the TNCA. It is up to it to rise to the occasion, instead of swallowing its pride.

She is the top ranked Australian junior tennis player. But she has her roots in Madras.

A winner of the under-14 Australian title in 1991, runner-up in the Australia under-16 nationals in 1992, she was a member of the Australian team which came second in the World Youth Cup in 1991. In the ITF circuit too she has an impressive record — winner of the Colombo leg in 1993, second in Brunei, semi-finalist in Thailand and a quarter finalist in China. Ranked 80th in the world juniors list,



Aarthi Venkatesan, the budding champion from Australia

(Photo: V S RAGHAVAN)

The Aussie junior from Madras

this young talented Australian player is 16-year-old Aarthi Venkatesan, daughter of yet another Indian Davis Cupper from Madras, Rabi Venkatesan.

Taking to tennis at nine, she grasped the rudiments of the game quickly and went on to win the under-10 title in Madras. Later, Aarthi went to Australia with her mother to stay with her elder brother who was taking a degree in Brisbane. There she joined the Institute of Sports and trained under John Foley.

Though there were initial disappointments for her, Aarthi didn't lose heart and strived hard. Her parents not

only didn't exert any pressure on her, but Rabi Venkatesan taught her that success or failure is all part of the game. Thus motivated, Aarthi began to give of her best and, soon, she was winning, despite the crowds rooting for native Australians. But it wasn't long before

by Venkatachari
Jagannathan

Aarthi became 'Arts' and a favourite with all.

A strong mental approach is what her father taught her to achieve success on and off the court. And stressing the

importance of this approach, she cites her own experience as an example. In the Brunei ITF finals, she was serving for the match and became overconfident. "I lost concentration and finally the match itself," she remembers.

Unlike most girls, Aarthi does not stick to the baseline game and comes to the net often to finish a rally. This helped her succeed in the ITF circuit, which now enables Aarthi to compete in junior 'Grand Slam' events. To improve her game for that circuit, she now plans to shift her base from Australia to the US and train in the Rick Macay Academy which produced Tracy Austin.

Despite successfully pairing with Annabel Ellwood, ranked 20th in the world, Aarthi loves playing singles more than doubles. Her training schedule consists of two hours tennis practice, running and doing weights. "I do not overwork and like to enter the court with a fresh mind," she says.

"It is no use being No. 1 in the juniors and just someone amongst the seniors. Stepping into the women's circuit in a year or two would be better for me than entering early and burning out quickly," she feels. She is practical even in her ambitions. Aarthi aims to be in the top fifty bracket among the seniors by 1995.

Aarthi intends to join journalism or business law school in the US while continuing to play tennis. "I don't want to discontinue my education and get stuck with being a coach for life if I fail in the seniors. I need a profession to fall back on," she explains. But this Grade 11 student has already one profession as fall back: Standing 5½ feet tall, this slim girl with brown eyes and a photogenic face has already done some modelling work in Australia for designer garments. But though modelling is a lucrative profession, it is tennis which is her first love and it is in it she wants to earn a name and fame.

innuendoes and biting satire and irony thrilled the Tamil moviegoers of 1950.

Dungan returned home after a long innings of 15 years in India, but came back intermittently as technical adviser and associate producer of foreign films shot in India, like *Harry Black and the Tiger*, *Tarzan Goes to India* and *The Big Hunt*. *Jungle* was one such film, made in English in collaboration with Modern Theatres. Along with Hollywood stars of the day, like Rod Cameron, Caesar Romero and Marie Windsor, Tamil filmstars like M. N. Nambiar and comedian A. Karunanidhi acted in it. The film did well in America, but not in India.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1. The highest individual score on debut in first class cricket (260 runs); 2. Davos, Switzerland; 3. It proposes to have scenes from the recent rendering of *Pancharatna krithis* at Thiruvaiyyaru, which many feel infringes the sanctity of the event; 4. Surabhi, the India cultural show; 5. Falconry; 6. He successfully wrote to the PM to halt the construction of a hotel at Varkala Beach, Kerala, a natural haven; 7. G.I. Joe; 8. Chairman of Air India;

9. Lillehammer, Norway; 10. Deepankar Bhattacharya and Manjusha Pawangadkar; 11. Azdardar; 12. It has rehabilitated all nightsoil scavengers there; 13. After procrastination, the Australian government made a one-time payment, in lieu of long-due monthly pensions; 14. *Kully Japanin Kuzhandaigal* by Chalam Bannuraker; 15. Lovebird; 16. Ellis R. Dungan; 17. Balasaraswati; 18. *Sita's Daughters*; 19. *Mahanadi*; 20. Laurence Hope.

Shooting with Dungan

(Continued from P7)

"On the other hand, *Manthiri Kumari* (1950), written by Mu Karunanidhi and directed by Dungan and T. R. Sundaram, turned out a hit as well as a cult film. Even though it had an impressive cast, with M. G. Ramachandran, G. Sakunthala, M. N. Nambiar and Madhuri Devi, a not-so-well-known actor, S. A. Natarajan, stole the show with his impressive performance as the priest's son by day and bandit by night. The star of the film was, however, its writer, Mu Karunanidhi, whose brilliant dialogue, rapiersharp punches, political

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