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MUSINGS

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Only 17 from State among 300

Chosen 'The Most Respected Companies'

(By A Business Reporter)

Of the 300 'most respected companies' in India in 1996, only one Tamil Nadu-based firm figures among the top 20 — Titan. It just misses a slot in the first 10.

In the pecking order, arrived at by a *Business World-Marg* opinion poll spread over 23 industry categories, Titan is the only Tamil Nadu-based firm to lead a category. In the 'Consumer Durables' section it has edged Philips.

Of the seven attributes considered in the survey, Titan figures 3rd in 'Innovativeness', next only to Hindustan Lever and Asian Paints, and 6th in 'Marketing Orientation'. Good going, considering that HLL, the year's topper, leads the field in five of the seven qualities taken into account — Quality of Products Services, Innovativeness, Quality of Personnel, Community Environment Responsibility, Profitability, Company to Work For, and Market Orientation. The other Tamil Nadu companies finding places in these sections are MRF 3rd in 'Marketing Orientation' and Lucas TVS 7th in 'Innovativeness'.

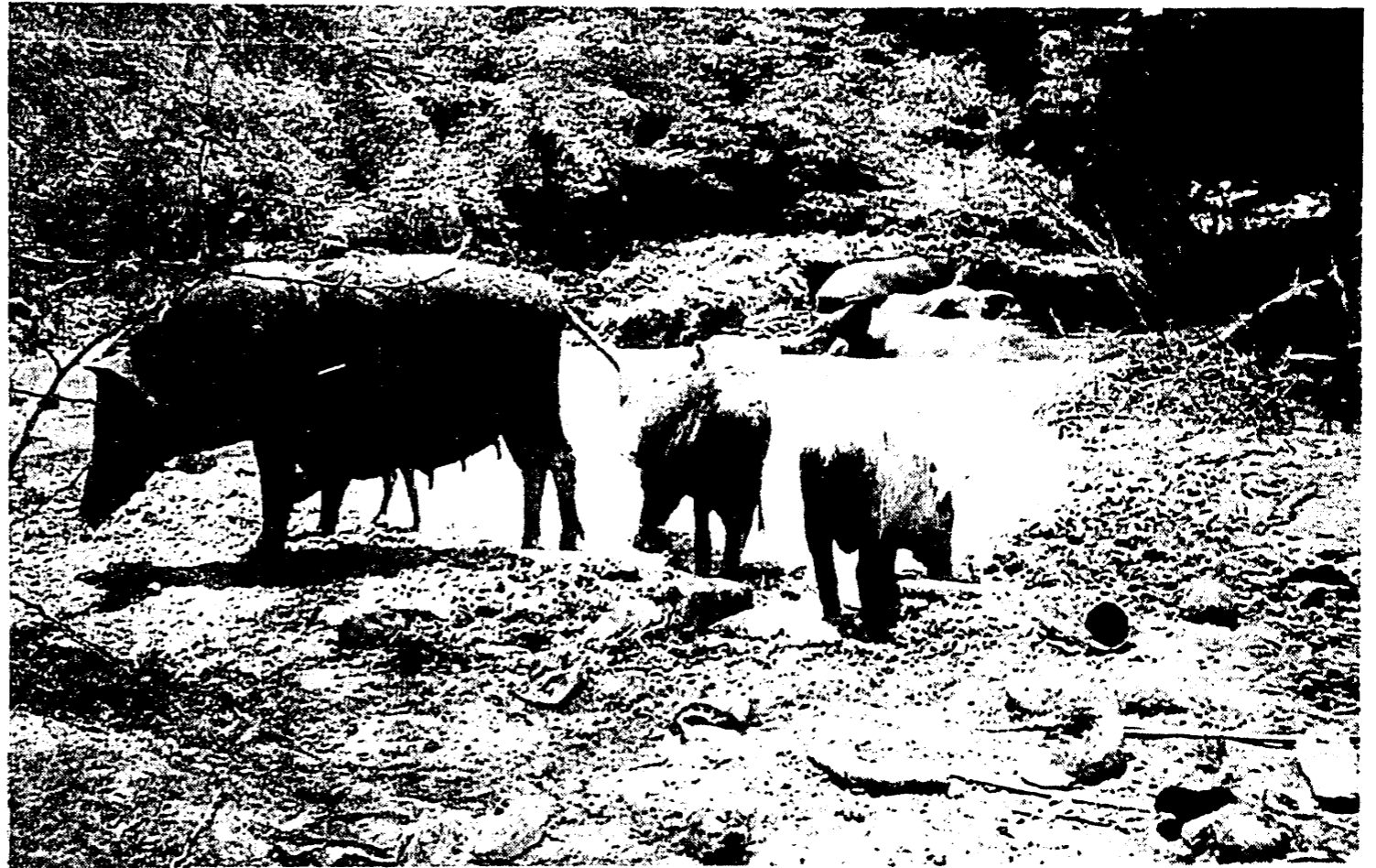
A notable feature of the survey is that 15 of the 17 Tamil Nadu-based companies in the 300 have found places among the first 10 in their respective categories. Of these, Lucas TVS, Lakshmi Machines and Spic enjoy the second spot in the categories of 'Automotive Ancillaries', 'General Engineering' and 'Fertilisers and Pesticides' respectively.

The 'Automotive Ancillaries' section has, as only to be expected, three Chennai-based units in the top 10, with MRF 3rd and Sundaram Fasteners 5th. The others making a mark in the different categories are India Cements and Madras Cements, 3rd and 4th in 'Construction and Cement', Pond's 6th in 'Consumer Products', Madras Refineries, 9th in 'Petroleum and Derivatives', TVS Suzuki and Ashok Leyland, 8th and 10th in 'Automotive Vehicles', EID Parry, 7th, 'Diversified', TVS Electronics, 9th in 'Office Automation and Software', and Essar Shipping and Skyline NEPC, 3rd and 6th in 'Shipping and Transport'.

Tamil Nadu companies following Titan in the overall rankings are Lucas TVS (23), MRF (24), India Cements (36), Lakshmi Machines (43), Sundaram Fasteners (46), Madras Cements (52), Pond's (53), Spic (66), Madras Refineries (143), TVS-Suzuki (176), Ashok Leyland (191), TVS Electronics (205), EID Parry (229), ESSAR Shipping (266), Skyline NEPC (286) and Tube Investments (300).

The survey also took a look at the prospects for the companies in the year 2000. In this, MRF moves up to the fourth place, while Titan at 15 is the only other Tamil Nadu company in the 20 companies listed.

What is surprising about this listing is the number of Tamil Nadu business organisations NOT finding a place in the top 300. Which makes the assessment procedure seem rather curious.



A VANISHING SPECIES?

Can we take a bow and say that this picture, which appeared in *Madras Musings*, 16.9.96, has been responsible for the banning of pigs in the City? A Chennai Corporation notification says that persons rearing pigs in the city must remove them from Corporation bounds before March 7th. The Corporation echoes what MM had said, reiterating that pigs are the source of 'brain fever'. This picture by RAJIND N CHRISTY was taken at a 'pig farm' near the upmarket Boat Club area. May we now, as a follow-up, expect a notification soon on the removal of CATTLE from the city?

THE EDITOR.

Blue Cross's A...B...C...

An Animal Birth Control Programme for stray dogs

(By A Staff Reporter)

Since April 1, 1995, the Corporation of Madras has been handing over all dogs caught by dog-catchers in the area south of the Adyar River to the Blue Cross. The dogs are then vaccinated, sterilised, marked and returned to the same area from which each one was picked up. When the scheme started, about 30 dogs were captured each week in the designated areas, but now the numbers caught have come down to less than ten a week and on many occasions to less than five. The dog squads do not collect animals already 'treated'.

The areas covered by the Scheme are Gandhi Nagar, Sastri Nagar, Indra Nagar, Besant Nagar, Kalakshetra Colony, Tiruvanmiyur, Taramani, Kotturpuram, Guindy, Saidapet (south of Marmalong Bridge), Ekkaduthangal (east of Adyar River), St. Thomas' Mount and Velachery. The majority of street dogs in these areas will be sterilised by March

1997 and it is hoped that there will thereafter be a noticeable drop in the street dog population.

To ensure that the programme is properly implemented, a Blue Cross supervisor accompanies the dog van. Each dog caught is carefully tagged with the exact location from which it is picked up. After neutering the males/spaying the females, the animals are housed and fed till the sutures are removed. Each dog is then dewormed, vaccinated and released from where it was picked up. Operated dogs are identified by tattooing/ear-notching. While Blue Cross prefers to stick to tattooing only, the Corporation dog squads insist on marking by which operated animals can be identified from a distance.

Blue Cross has now requested the Corporation of Madras to hand over to it the dogs in the sector north of the Adyar River and bounded by Radhakrishnan Salaj and

Mount Road. It is also coordinating with People for Animals and SPCA to take over for sterilisation and release all dogs caught north of Poonamallee High Road.

It is expected that by the end of 1997, the area between Mount Road and Poonamallee High Road (Egmore, Chintadripet, Chetpet, Nandambakkam, Kodambakkam and Mambalam) will be covered.

All over the world, it has been found that catching and killing of stray dogs has never led to a long-term reduction of the stray dog population. The only way that a lasting, long-term solution can be found is by a system of mass sterilisation of animals while, at the same time, protecting the animals against rabies.

It is important, say Blue Cross officials, that the animals taken from any area for sterilisation and vaccination are released in the same area. Releasing them in strange sur-

(Continued on Page 4)

Auto components industry to restructure?

The entry of a new generation of car manufacturers from abroad could well result in the restructuring of the Rs.9,000 crore Indian auto ancillary industry. Such a possibility has been received with mixed feelings by the industry.

While the domestic component units are happy at the prospects of increased sales, streamlining of operations and consequent improvement in quality and prestige, they are also worried over the entry of several new Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEM) in quick succession.

Becoming a supplier to the new generation OEMs is not easy for the ancillaries, as they will have to drastically change their style of operations. Says L.Lakshman, Chairman, Rane Group, "It was not just fine-

ties which the new entrants talk about will depend on the market situation in the long run. In the short term, they will be producing only around 25,000 cars a year each."

These might be comforting words, but then there is the threat of foreign ancillary units tailing their clients to India.

Says Ye Hwan Kim, Deputy General Manager, Hyundai Motor India Ltd, "Indian ancillaries are 16% costlier than their Korean counterparts, forcing us to invite them here". Of the 17 Korean component manufacturers supplying Hyundai, the entry of Mando, Halla and Donghee, to produce steering and brake systems, air-conditioners, and press parts respectively, seems certain. Given Hyundai's plans to manufacture 1,20,000 cars initially, the 16%

variance in component cost will make a lot of difference in their pricing strategy.

Shetty refutes this point of view. "Indian manufacturers are really competitive, proved by the fact that Maruti, commanding 70% of the car market, sources 85% of its component needs locally." And an industry official adds, "It is strange that Hyundai is castigating Indian ancillaries as cost-inefficient even prior to finalising what car it is going to roll out and in what numbers. How can Indian ancillaries work out their quotations without this information? It would seem Hyundai are playing the Korean ancillaries card to force Indian units to reduce their prices."

Shetty further asks, "How can our constituents be termed as expensive when the ancillary industry is a net foreign exchange earner, shipping out Rs 800 crore worth of cargo last year and which it plans to increase to Rs 2000 crore by the turn of the century?" And he adds, "Further, the cost of finance here is high, starting from 19%, whereas it is in single digits abroad. So even if foreign ancillary units come here, their cost of production will be similar to ours unless they come here as a 100% subsidiary of a parent company with deep pockets."

As a safeguard measure, ACMA advocates a cap on foreign equity holdings when MNCs set up operations here. "The percentage of foreign equity should be linked to export commitments, as is being done



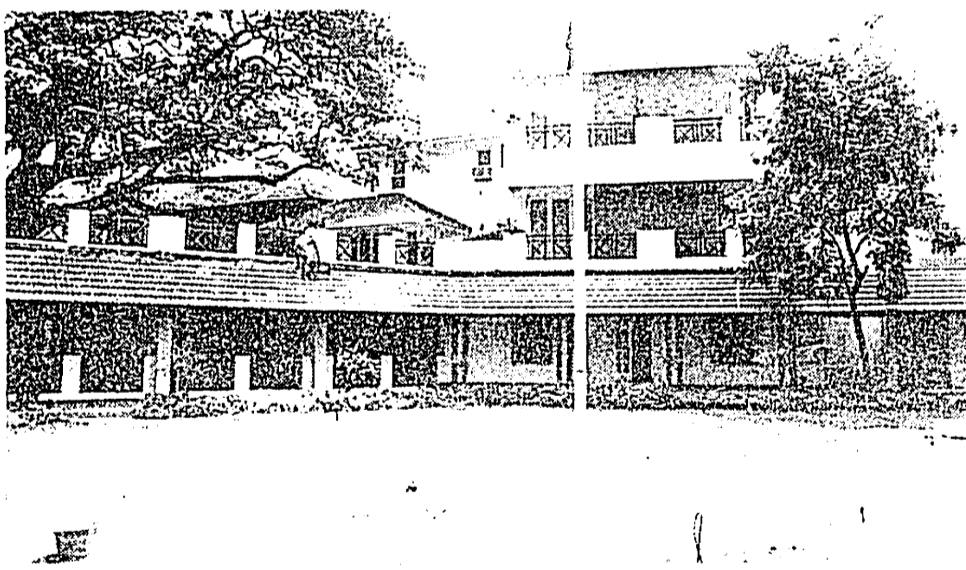
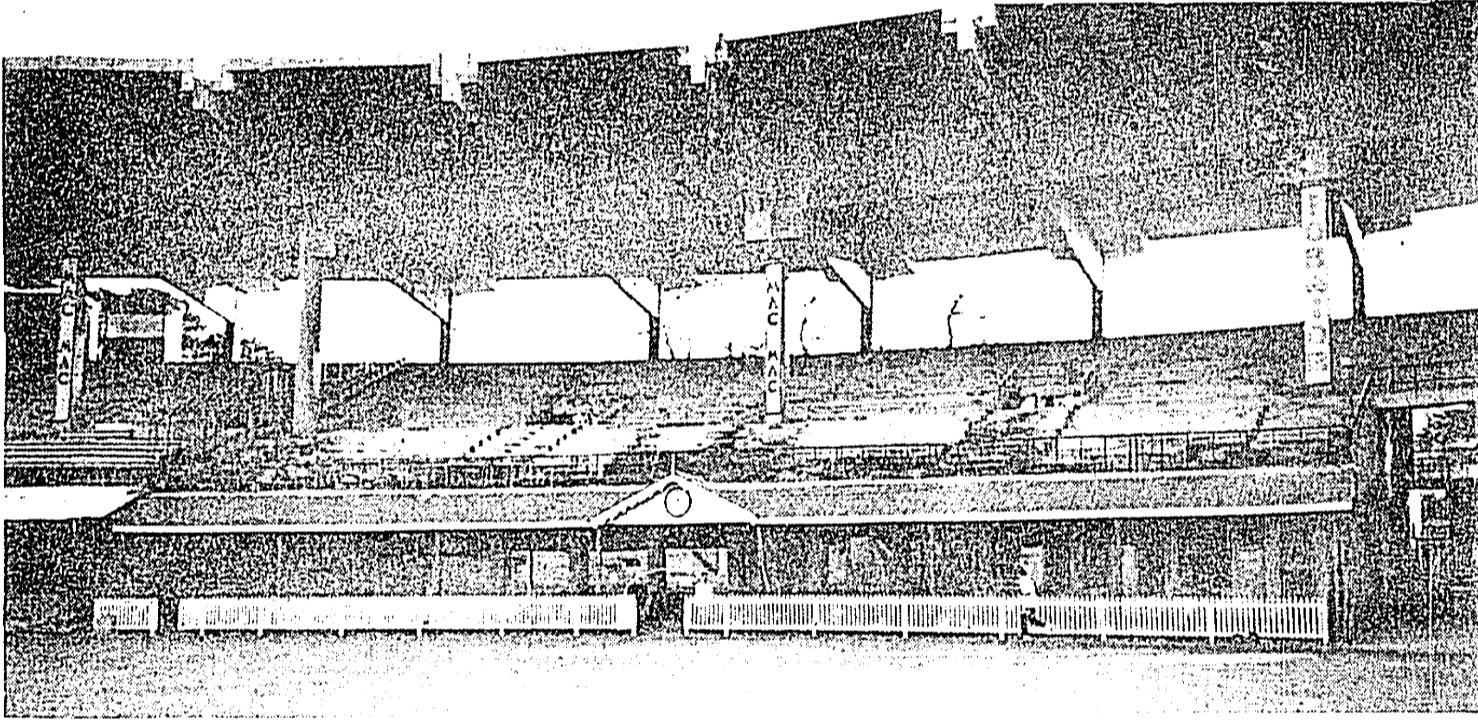
The Madras Cricket Club should have celebrated its 150th birthday last year, but, like India, it has decided to mark the occasion from its Jubilee birthday. 'MCC 150' will therefore be celebrated throughout this year — and the celebrations will feature a variety of sports events, befitting a Club that was "the cradle" of cricket, hockey, tennis and squash activities in South India. The one mark established during the Club's 150th year, however, is our NEW today. The Club's groundlevel 'stand' and its new bar are fronted with this projecting bit of roofing that reflects — and commemorates — the famed 1891 Henry Irwin pavilion — with its Long Bar — seen in our OLD, taken in the early years of this century. Where the old pavilion stood has been developed a badminton court and other facilities. Indeed, the Club began to wake up to its grand history only last year, after a spell of pulling down much of its built-up past.

THE OLD...

That past began in 1846, when Alexander J Arbuthnot (a young civilian from the civil and military side of the family, not the better and rather bitterly remembered business side of the family) founded the Club. In his Memories of Rugby and India he not only states "I founded the Madras Cricket Club" but also recalls that, when the Club celebrated its Golden Jubilee with a grand dinner at the Madras Club(1), the menu bore his portrait on the cover. Arbuthnot, who went on to become Chief Secretary, Acting Governor of the Madras Presidency and a member of the Viceroy's 'cabinet', was knighted for his services to India. The Queen (Victoria) might well have honoured him for his passion for sport too.

When the Club brings its celebrations to a close at the end of this year, with the release of its history, it is to be hoped that Sir Alexander's portrait will find an honoured place in the Club together with those of such forgotten stalwarts as Richmond, Denniston and Johnstone who really made Madras cricket what it is. It is also to be hoped that the Club will organise a cricket tournament with the Calcutta Cricket Club (now Calcutta Cricket and Football Club) and the Colombo Cricket Club, against whom its earliest 'tests' were played, starting from 1864. (Photographs: The OLD courtesy VINTAGE VIGNETTES; the NEW RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

...& THE NEW



This picture by V S RAGHAVAN shows the new facilities that have been raised at the Madras Cricket Club on the place where the old pavilion had been. This new block houses rooms, a modern, four-cuisine kitchen and the dining area. The small, patchwork lawn is where a bit of the handsome lawn of yesteryears was.

in China and Malaysia," Shetty suggests. The Chinese Government, while expediting the clearances, makes the foreign investor develop roads leading to the factory and employ a certain number of locals, irrespective of qualification.

Lakshman, however, offers a different view. "Once the economy is opened up, there should not be any fetters, even partial, as it will not help at all. As long as the foreign companies do not bring in screwdriver technology and do some value-addition here, they should be permitted without any restraints. The market is growing at a fast pace and there's room

for a couple of foreign manufacturers."

With the entry of the new generation of vehicle manufacturers, the ancillary industry may well witness structural readjustments. World over, OEMs source their needs as subassemblies, whereas in India the component manufacturers sell directly to the vehicle manufacturers. Under a proposed structure, component manufacturers would be categorised as Tier I players, who would sell to the vehicle manufacturers as aggregates, while Tier II and III members would supply to Tier I companies. Following the global trend, Indian majors like Rane

are changing themselves into Tier I suppliers by integrating operations forwards and backwards. "Talks within the industry are going on as to who will become Tier I companies and who will be in the other tiers. A decision will be made soon," Shetty stated.

Meanwhile, M. Raval, Executive Director, Telco, talking about the company's small car project, points out that it is the Indian ancillary units that have encouraged Telco to come out with what he calls the 'national car' — a car without any foreign component — and even reduced their prices for the project. "We can do it in India," he was confident.

TWO GREAT DOCTORS

The doctor whose home was a Rolls



Dr S Rangachari
Whose home was a Rolls
(Photograph courtesy Ragami.)

Geniuses are not born every day. Those who become legends in their own lifetime are rarer still. One such person was Dr. S. Rangachari. He belonged to that old world of values which believed that a doctor of medicine was essentially a servant of society, and the profession was a noble calling to alleviate pain and suffering, not for making money.

In his day, medical facilities in this part of the world were rather primitive and five-star hospitals and mega-buck nursing homes were still in the womb of time. He spread sun-

shine and cured his patients, big and small, rich and poor, by making uncanny diagnoses merely by tapping with his fingers the stomach and chest regions of a patient (known as 'percussion' in the profession, a method that's almost vanished today). Sometimes he could diagnose by merely looking at a person! Sounds incredible, but it's true...

One of his relations, a newly-wedded young woman, had been in England with her husband for some time and returned to Madras by air. Dr. Rangachari and his family had gone to meet the couple and as she walked towards him, he smiled broadly and remarked rather loudly in Brahminical Tamil, "Endee, undayirukke polirukke?" (in effect, "you seem to be pregnant!"). Everyone around was astonished, including the young woman! A few days later, when she consulted her doctor, it was learnt that she was about 45 days pregnant! When the surprised husband asked "Doctor Maama" how on earth he had diagnosed his wife's condition from a dis-



The Rangachari Statue in front of the General Hospital. The '1966' at the top of the picture might indicate the date the cupola was raised over this 1939 statue. Also, a close-up of the plaque at the base of the statue. (Photographs by RAJIND N CHRISTY.)

and wealthy businessmen. Among the few who owned this expensive car were the glamorous barrister V.L. Ethiraj, the leading private banker of Madras, Gocooldoss Jumna-doss, and the Maharaja of Mysore, whose Rolls was of solid gold! Many of his friends asked Dr. Rangachari why he wanted to buy a car which was then priced at around Rs.50,000. Rangachari replied, "Don't people spend money to build houses? Likewise, my car is my house. I eat and sleep in the car. That's why I bought a comfortable car, a Rolls Royce."

Soon, Dr. Rangachari took everyone by surprise by buying an aeroplane to visit patients outside Madras. He created history, for even today no doctor in India has a plane of his own!

Dr. Rangachari was an excellent student of human psychology, which he used abundantly in his practice. The leader of the Nellore bar, Madabhushi Narasimhachari (this writer's grandfather), had a rich client, a landlord. One day, while resting after a heavy lunch, the landlord yawned loudly and, to his shock, found he could not close his mouth! All the doctors of Nellore could not set him right. Narasimhachari then suggested that he go to Madras and consult Dr. Rangachari, the Madabhushi family's doctor and friend.

In Madras, Dr. Rangachari had the landlord sit in a chair and, while talking to him, asked his assistants to bind the farmer tightly to the seat. Meanwhile, he put an immersion heater in a vessel without water and heated it. When the heater turned flaming red, Rangachari carefully brought the heated instrument closer and closer to the patient. The terrified pa-

tient screamed loudly and shut his mouth at once!

Dr. Rangachari was also kindness personified. He treated poor patients free and often; if they were from the mofussil, he met the expenses of their stay in Madras and their travel.

After a life of dedicated service Dr. Rangachari passed away on April 24, 1934. He was only 52. A grateful citizenry of Madras erected in his memory a statue at the entrance of the General Hospital, Madras, with the following words inscribed beneath: "For his rare medical skills, and boundless human-

ity."

Dr. Rangachari had three brilliant juniors who, in later years, made a mark in the profession. They were Dr. C.R. Krishaswami, Dr. V.Rama lyengar and Dr. R. Sankaran. Dr. Sankaran established the Ranga Nursing Home, naming it in memory of his senior. Such was the regard Rangachari was held in by those with whom he worked.

To Sir, with love

Over the past decade and a half, come Monday afternoon and it has become a tradition for the more serious-minded undergraduate and postgraduate medical students of MMC, Stanley Med, KMC and, lately, of Sri Ramachandra to make a beeline for the quiet, unpretentious Railway Hospital at Perambur. Reason? To attend Prof KVT's clinic. Padmeshri Krishna Varadachari Thiruvengadam, or simply KVT to generations of Madras-medicos, is one of those rare persons who has become a legend even in his life-time. Physician, teacher, researcher and human-being, he continues to stride the medical firmament like a colossus even today, 50 years after he entered

But for the timely intervention of destiny, it was narrated on the occasion, Medicine might have lost Prof KVT! After a brilliant academic career at the Muthialpet High School in George Town, where the only wrong he did was "not allowing anyone else to come first", KVT did his B.Sc. He was then selected for both Engineering and Medicine, but had set his heart on becoming a chemical engineer. Fortunately for us, the then Vice Chancellor, who was so impressed by the young KVT, convinced him to do medicine. There was, however, to be another slip between the cup and the lip.

KVT joined MMC, but, unknown to him, he was transferred to Stanley Medical College in exchange for a footballer student whom MMC wanted. The transfer letter somehow never reached KVT. One fine day, he was served with an urgent summons from Stanley Medical College stating that if he did not join right away he would lose his seat!

Perplexed, KVT rushed to Stanley, where he learnt about the transfer etc etc. It was the last day and he was told he had to pay the fees then and there and join or else...! His entreaties that he had already paid the fees at MMC were of no use; and he had no money on him! Luckily for him — and for all of us — the kindly Vice Principal, Prof K S Viswanathan, came to his rescue and lent him the money needed.

In retrospect, KVT feels that the move to Stanley was the best thing that happened to him. It was just a mile away from his home in George Town; commuting was easy and he could devote all his time to his studies. At Stanley, he topped throughout and graduated in a blaze of glory. He had the unique distinction of securing the nigh impossible FIRST CLASS in first year AND final MBBS and then won the Rajah of Panagal Gold Medal for being the Best Outgoing Medical Student among ALL the Medical Colleges of Madras University.

Soon after he passed out, he took the Service Commission exam and topped the list. He then studied for his MD in Medicine under Prof. Sanjivi who became his role-model. After his MD, he went to England on a Commonwealth Fellowship. On his return, he was posted as Professor of Therapeutics, Stanley Medical College. He was just 32 — the

(Continued on Page 8)



Dr K V Thiruvengadam
Fifty years of caring medicine
the profession. At a function recently organised to felicitate him on that anniversary, he was presented the 'Maruthuva Maha Guru' or Teacher of Teachers award.

The teenage champ in a man's world

The girl from Chennai eroded a male bastion and walked away from the recently concluded Commonwealth Chess Championships in Calcutta with not only the men's International Master's (IM) norm but also a women's grandmaster's (WGM). Vijayalakshmi is the first Indian woman to get a men's IM norm.

Riding high on her latest achievement has in no way robbed the petite 17-year-old of the view of her immediate goal — to acquire the WGM and the IM titles by next year. If anything, it has made her more determined.

A first year B.Com student, 'Viji', as she is affectionately called, was initiated into the game by her father, who saw in his first-born the ideal channel for his own unfulfilled dreams. And she has come a long way since; from the toddler following her father into the Tal Chess Club in Madras, curious eyes focussed on the wonder-world that was to unfold before her, to her history-creating performance.

The eldest of three daughters, Viji's burning ambition to excel in the game has been spurred on by the encourage-

ment of a supportive family. For a father nurturing an ambition, Subbaraman's choice of the Tal Chess Club was ideal as it had the right atmosphere to hone his daughter's budding talent. And, to his credit, he learnt the game before taking on the role of Viji's coach and mentor.

The going has, however, not always been smooth and Subbaraman, an employee in a

• by A Staff Reporter

transport organisation in Chennai, has had to make many a sacrifice. The long absences from work have been a strain on his career and income. But for a man whose obsessive dream of becoming a champion in some form of sport has now vicariously been fulfilled, it has been worth the effort. And with his younger daughters too taking to the game, his ambition is likely to be achieved three-fold.

With Meenakshi already an international level player and Bhanupriya all set to follow in

her sisters' footsteps, the proud parents find themselves hard pressed for time, chaperoning the girls to the various tournaments and seeing to their needs, both on and off the field.

* * *

Viji's first brush with celebrity status was when she won her maiden title, the national under-10 girls' title, in 1988. She retained the crown the next year and, to the family's joy, her younger sister, Meenakshi, bagged the title the next two years. Viji's star was on the ascent and she went on to win most of the age-group events. At 15, she became the country's national women's chess champion.

Proficient in Tamil, Telugu, French, English and Hindi, Viji has tried her hand at Russian but found the going tough. She, however, knows enough of the language to follow chess books.

She idolises world champion Gary Kasparov but her real inspiration has been Judith Polgar, a Hungarian Woman Grandmaster and a fellow teenager. It was from her that Viji learnt that with hard work you can fight the men on equal terms.

Viji's days are full; with practice sessions under the guidance of her father taking up most of her time, coping with regular studies is a difficult task but nevertheless one religiously undertaken. The rest of her time is spent on updating her knowledge through books with illustrations of moves, different variations and styles.

The gift of a laptop computer by Sportstar has, however, changed her rigorous home routine. No longer does she have to set out the pieces for each game; this is done at the touch of a key. The two programmes between them have over 2,00,000 games, played by players in international tournaments, and demonstrations of various styles and techniques.

Never having thought of chess as a hobby, Viji has given everything to the game which is the mission of her life. The demanding game that it is, requiring high levels of mental and physical stamina, fitness is a must. This is where Viji's mother, Rani, takes over, carefully monitoring the diet of her three daughters. She sees to it that they have their dhal and vegetables and daily doses of multivitamin tablets.

Viji may be missing out on the carefree life of a teenager, but the easy companionship among the siblings makes up for the time she does not get to spend with girls her own age.






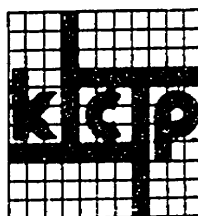






S Vijayalakshmi
Aiming to be a WGM
(A file photograph by
V S RAGHAVAN)

And the indulgent father looks on as Viji 'engages in battle' with Meenu; but his critical eyes do not miss much. The children share a comfortable rapport with their father, who is at the same time a serious and demanding coach. But what makes the relationship special is that he is their friend, philosopher and guide.

Focussing on chess to the exclusion of everything else around, Viji plans for the future. She intends to stop playing in women's championships after she gets her WGM title and concentrate only on men's tournaments. Meanwhile, Viji remains the same gregarious person she has always been, the girl next door, ever-modest about her growing list of achievements.

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