

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS MUSINGS

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● *Investor-friendly States*

Is being 3rd enough?

The Chief Minister recently stated that Tamil Nadu had been assessed by a national magazine as the THIRD best State to invest in, in India. And he was very pleased with the rating. But should we be pleased with Third Place? What's wrong with striving for FIRST PLACE?

ing business-friendly State policies, a responsive local administration, a good communication network and an adequate availability of low-cost labour.

In the 1997 Survey, Tamil Nadu retains its third ranking (as in the 1995 Poll) behind Maharashtra and Gujarat. But

what is a matter of concern is that even that position is being threatened by other fast-improving States — Andhra Pradesh, for instance, driven by a responsive, industry-friendly and IT-savvy Chief Minister, has risen 17 places to 5th rank.

(Continued on Page 6)

To get there the *Business Today*-Gallup MBA Research Project also indicates that the power situation and overstrained public healthcare system offering poor coverage needed to be strengthened and power tariffs would have to improve, and the most corrupt local administration in the South had to lose that tag.

On the plus side however — and helping the State to maintain its rankings — investors consider Tamil Nadu to be hav-

ANOTHER STEP TOWARDS A HERITAGE ACT

(By A Special Correspondent)

Further discussions were recently held on drafting a Heritage Act for Tamil Nadu and INTACH representatives who participated in the discussions were struck by the very positive attitude of all the representatives of the various Government Departments present on the occasion. If attitudes reflect action, there'll soon be a draft of an all-encompassing Heritage Act, INTACH representatives seem confident.

Definitions of heritage buildings, precincts and natural heritage were discussed and, it is understood, some sort of consensus was arrived at. Another decision that appears to have been taken is that legislation, not mere supplementary rules, should be enacted and that the proposed Act should cover the whole State.

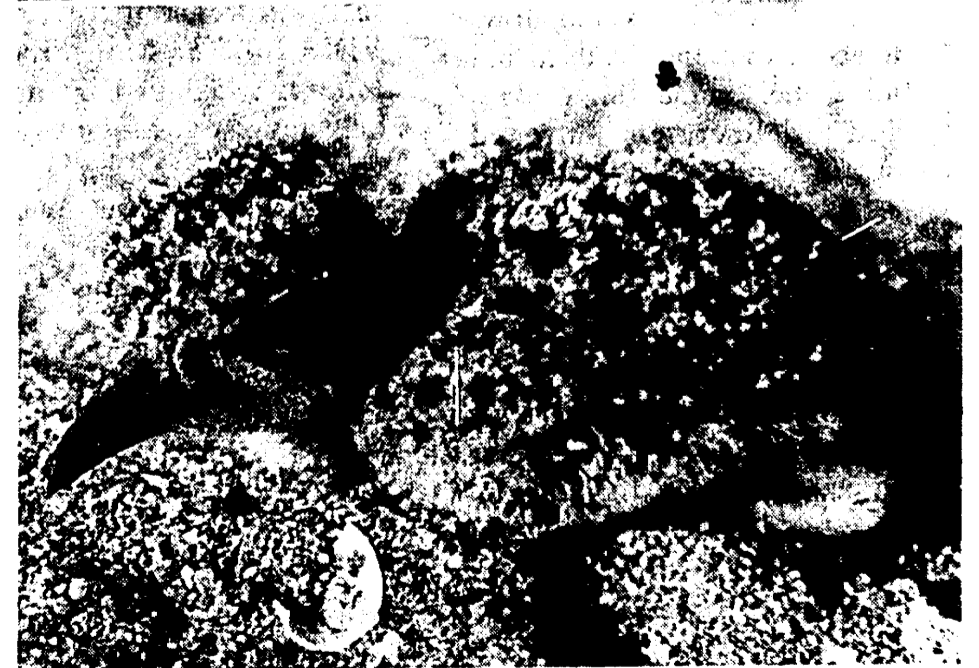
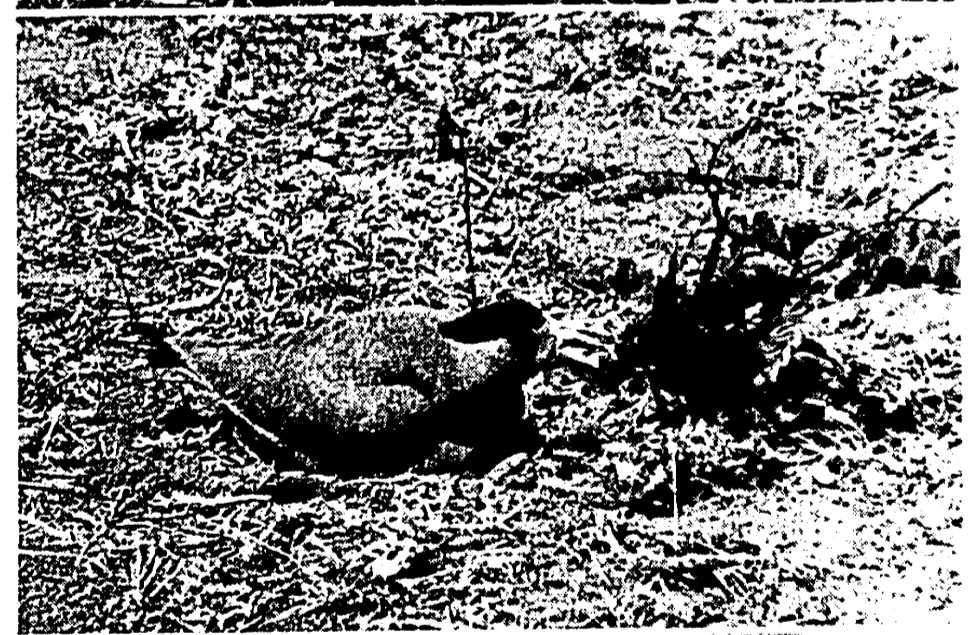
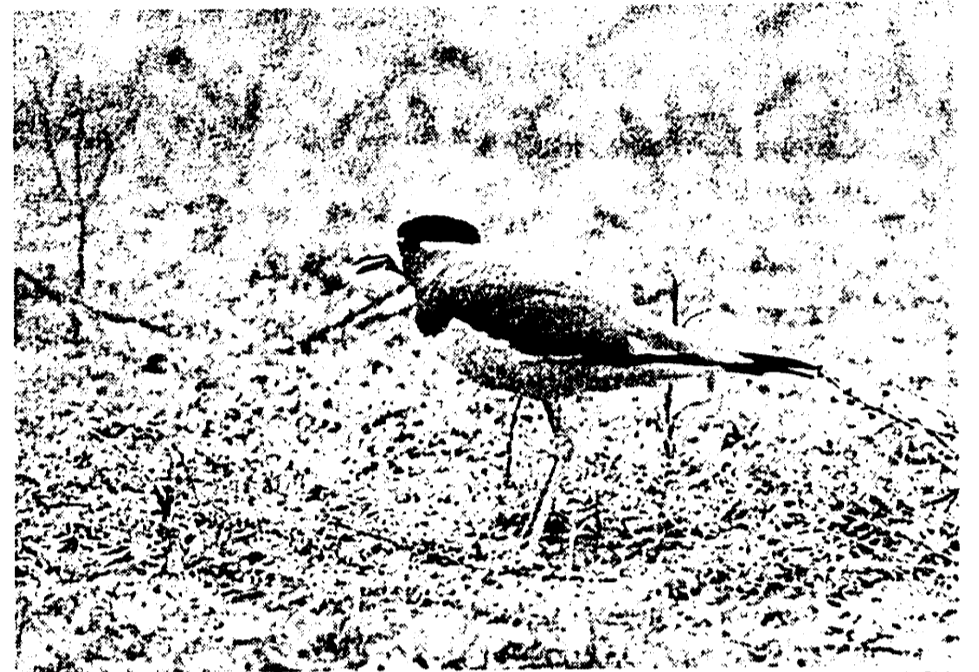
It is also learnt that as a first step the proposed Act will cover Greater Chennai and 38 Heritage Towns which the Town and Country Planners have taken up for planned develop-

ment. A preliminary listing of heritage sites in the capital and the heritage towns will, it is hoped, be ready by the end of February. INTACH has promised to give the Heritage Act Drafting Committee the listing it has been preparing in Greater Chennai during the past year.

It is still early days, and there will have to be at least a couple of more meetings before a draft Act is ready — and then there'll follow all the usual procedures before an Act becomes Law. But INTACH, which has long been pressing for such an Act, particularly in the context of modern history (say within the last 500 years and, more specifically, within the last 200 years), seems more hopeful about such legislation being enacted shortly than it has been for a long time. Particularly so after the interest shown by the officials in several aspects of conservation that INTACH presented in a slide show focussing on buildings and precincts in Chennai.

Improvements needed

	Value	Rank 1997
● Power		
Power Surplus/Deficit (%)	-18.67	19
● Telecom		
Growth Of Exchange Lines (%)	15.23	13
● Roads		
Highways (As % of Roads)	1.87	26
● Railways		
% of Broad Gauge Track	34.16	16
● Labour		
Mandays lost due to disputes	730	15
Value added per worker (Rs lakh)	0.87	10
● Social Infrastructure		
Hospital beds (Per '000 Persons)	0.87	12



THE BEGINNING — OR AN END?

A splendid set of pictures by V. SHANTHARAM shot at the Pallikaranai Marsh, which remains an area under threat by development. This Yellow Wattled Lapwing takes a careful look around before she moves towards her well-camouflaged eggs and settles down to doing a bit of brooding. And after some days there was a new beginning. Hoping that life can be lived without threat.

The Americanisation of India in Chennai?

Wake up! Wake up! To the India that is America. Indeed, that appeared to be the theme from the word 'Go' of the two-day International Advertising Convention organised in the City recently by the Advertising Club, Madras. So much so that pointed mention was made of this by P Chidambaram, inaugurating the Convention, and N Kumar, delivering the valedictory.

The Finance Minister said the first shock he had at Advertising's FUTURE SHOCK was that an Ann Murrli was one of the organisers and not his friend N Murali of *The Hindu*. *The Man From Madras Musings* heard that announcement repeatedly as Ann Morley was the Americanised MC (or WAS she American?) mangled this and every other Indian name that had managed to get on to the programme. She was followed by a short theme film, in which MMM struggled to find Indian types. The only ones he succeeded in spotting were a couple of comic policemen, one undoubtedly from the *Bandra* beat. All the others, and the beat and the 'woids' they swayed to — not to mention the skin tones they emerged in — appeared to have arrived from WASPLAND. The two days of speeches and presentations that followed amidst all the wining and dining had the CII chief conclude in shocked comment, "Where's the Indian experience?". Advertising wizards undoubtedly think that's a state of PAST SHOCK; as far as they are concerned, FUTURE SHOCK seems to lie with Americanising India!

Somewhere in between these views was the MADRAS-nurtured and educated economic guru Prof C K Prahalad who brought a packed house word of wisdom out of his Chair at the University of Michigan. Conceding that Chidambaram's way with words — none of them uttered with a twang — was something he could not match (a bit of false modesty!), he proposed to hold the audience's interest with visual aids. And there was one visual representation *The Man From Madras Musings* was fascinated with. A five-tiered triangle, with small first and second tiers amounting to about 15% and the third and fourth tiers amounting to 25% and a deliberately flattened out fifth tier of about 60 per cent.

In the first phase of liberalisation the investors had paid too much attention to the first tier and parts of the second tier in the marketplace — and the results were disappointing. Prof Prahalad uttered as a revelation, ignoring all that had been said against such investment by many in India from the first days of liberalisation. Now he was suggesting that we concentrate on tiers three and four and the leftovers from two to build a huge market. And so we see the small cars rolling in — to the tune of *Wake Up! Wake Up!* and the sound of advertising

hands clapped with glee. He, however, didn't have a word to say about that ever-expanding fifth tier, 500-600 million people squashed at the base of the triangle, NOT ONE WORD. Not even to say, let's get on with doing a bit of it the Sanjay Gandhi way!

Question of numbers

India's population is its greatest asset, the good Professor kept repeating like some sort of mantra. How he was going to make an asset of that fifth tier, that he did not even mention once, is a little beyond MMM's understanding.

Chidambaram, however, was prepared to face the fact that poverty — which is the lot of most of the fifth tier — is the biggest issue in the country. Not to mention custom and superstition. But poverty can be alleviated, he was confident. Banish poverty, he urged. As for the how of it he cited the Southeast Asian example; they had made themselves 'tigers'. Forgetting for a moment that even as he was speaking the tigers were becoming toothless and forgetting perhaps for even longer that he, more than most in the audience, should know the heritage of these countries as well as vast areas of their present, he emphasised: They did something about their population and virtually eliminated the fifth tier. What has India done to eliminate that burgeoning fifth tier? MMM is constrained to ask. We've even stopped looking at the issue; family planning — and a budget for it — are no longer part of the Centre's scheme of things. Let the States do as they will, is the new scheme. So what does Chidambaram offer? Silence.

None of this is a priority in the world of advertising. So MMM must presume that all the right things were said on the occasion. Why spoil Yankee Doodle Dandy's day as he comes marching into town?

The right things

Amongst the right things said were these:

- In the past we had high taxation rates, tough laws and soft enforcement. After VDIS (to *The Man From Madras Musings* that not only sounds awful but also terrifying!) there'll be lower taxes, softer laws but tough enforcement. (MMM hopes they won't be famous last words.)
- Both advertising men and politicians have one thing in common; they sell dreams. (MMM hopes they're not nightmares some dreams have a habit of turning into!)
- Advertising's loss has been politics gain. (Not to mention the Law's.)
- I couldn't care less if the colour of the cat is black or white so long as it catches mice. Your job (the Indian businessman's) is to catch mice (50 per cent of Indian pro-

duction should be for export). To which MMM might add, "see coincidence below".

- Population is the only positive thing India has. It (tiers one to four) gives India the opportunity to create the world's largest market. (Nothing is said of tier five, the tier the politicians love best, which can sink both economy and country.)

A coincidence

In the morning, *The Man From Madras Musings* had listened to Prof Prahalad tell Indian advertisers and advertising men that India had to create world-class firms. The way to do it is to improve your response time, he advised.

That evening MMM met a medium-scale British industrialist who has been visiting Madurai every year these past eight years to chat with his medium-scale supplier and make sure everything goes well in the year ahead. And as he increases his business every year with the Madurai supplier — to the point where he is now considering closing shop in England and get-

**SHORT
'N'
SNAPPY**

ting all his supplies from Madurai — he says he's been delighted with the way the relationship has worked. Production in Madurai is superb, quality excellent, the engineers able to grasp and supply the most complex of needs. The only fly in the ointment is the paperwork in Madurai and the inability of the local staff to handle it in such a manner as to assure supplies on the assured date. And another European importer listening in added, "Also getting factories to start your production the moment an order is placed; they always seem to be waiting for some kind of raw material or other." And a third importer chimed in, "You can't work the zero inventory principle ever if you work with Indian firms".

MMM is no industrial expert, but obviously all three British importers seem to be confirming Prof Prahalad's point about response time. And if that is so, getting around to export 50 per cent of production will have to depend not so much on engineers and factories as suppliers, purchase officers, clerical staff and Government officials. And that calls for a different educational focus, something apart from the maths, physics, chemistry or commerce and accountancy outlook, which we are focussed on in India. Taking another look at our educational pattern is something MMM has long advocated.

Preventing Eelam

The recent attack by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam on the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy, one of the most sacred places to Sri Lanka's Buddhists, emphasises still more forcibly the outcome of a discussion that took place a few days earlier at the University of Madras. It was yet another meeting hosted by the Department of South and Southeast Asian Affairs and N Ram of *Frontline* led a discussion on Assignment Colombo, a recollection by Ambassador Dixit who had been called "The Viceroy" in Colombo during those days in 1987-89 when an Indo-Sri Lanka treaty had placed an Indian Peace-Keeping Force in the Island and then put it in the position of having to fight the 'Tigers' to prevent them from succeeding in their secessionist plans against the then weak Sri Lankan Armed Forces.

Ram, who had played a considerable role in bringing about the pact, after disillusionment with the Tigers whom he had strongly favoured in the immediate aftermath of the 1983 ethnic violence, may not now be as positive about the treaty as he once was. And M K Narayanan, the police officer with Intelligence perhaps most closely connected with the Tamil problem in those days, may echo those views. But what they both seem convinced of today is that there'll be "no peace in our time". Which is a sad thought. They both see Tiger leader Prabhakaran as a stumbling block and find it impossible — in the light of sad experiences in the past — to believe that he will ever stand by his word on anything less than Sri Lanka conceding Eelam.

A particularly pertinent observation during the too brief discussion was made by a retired General who had in a lower rank served with the IPKF. It was amazing, he said, how very little everyone concerned on the Indian side knew about the LTTE, their thinking and the support for them not only in the early days but even later. But that, according to MMM, would have been because no one asked the right people. Indian Viceroy and Mandarins, both in the Foreign Service and in other corridors in Delhi or in postings abroad, seldom get down to grassroots. Perhaps an example of this is the factual errors about other countries that are so often found in books of this ilk.

Be that as it may, a question not asked, time having run out, was "What after Prabhakaran?" (whenever that is). Judging from what had been said, there was unlikely to be another leader like Prabhakaran. In which case there might be a less rigid LTTE when it came to negotiations. A rather more uncomfortable question that was asked was what the current status of the Indo-Sri Lanka Accord (drafted, according to what was said, almost entirely by Sri Lankans) was. With neither side having

abrogated the Treaty, it would seem to MMM that it is a valid document and that a Sri Lankan Government now or in the future could ask for a helping hand from India in a broad spectrum of matters. Would that happen? And what would India do if it did? Dodge — as fast as the question was dodged by all?

In brief

★ The setting was beautiful, the spacious, airy, multi-verandahed house of Chandra Sankar in Injambakkam. The occasion was lunch with "an international group of Trustees and art collectors from The Guggenheim Museum, New York". But what interested *The Man From Madras Musings* most was how the Museum worked and how the tour of South India was arranged. The Museum, MMM was told, has a permanent fund-collecting set-up that is formidable to say the least. They rope in donors in the thousands who pledge to pay X, Y or Z every year, the size of their donations putting them in different categories and entitling them to varying privileges. Amongst the privileges are different cultural tours arranged annually to different parts of the world. Those wanting to go on one of the tours, and if eligible, have to pay the tour costs PLUS a premium to the Museum. Last year, most of this group had gone to North India and were only too eager to visit South India this year — even if the premium was \$3000 a head. MMM wonders whether the Madras Museum, or an organisation like Dakshinachitra, will pick up on the idea.

★ By the time you read these lines, the first volume of author Sivasankari's *Knit India Through Literature* would have been released. A monumental work, this part deals with the South; three other parts to follow. She has already taken five years travelling throughout India, interviewing scores of men and women of letters, and reading up on the literature of 18 languages and whatever translations in them are available. It's an amazing odyssey, for which support comes only in the final stages when translations and production are necessary. The first volume includes the literature of Malayalam, Kannada, Telugu and Tamil. Each section includes a travelogue by Sivasankari of the State where the language is predominant, interviews with authors writing in that dominant language, a translated example of his or her work, and a review by an eminent literary person of the literature of the language in that part. The volume has been released in English and Tamil and what came as a surprise to *The Man From Madras Musings* was the fact that Sivasankari's writing in English is not one whit behind her Tamil work. Which is reason enough to look forward to the next three volumes over the next three years.

— MMM

OUR READERS WRITE



Holy smoke

13th January 1998, Chennai, 7.00 a.m. No. These are not subtitles to the latest sci-fi blockbuster. They refer to a day of reckoning.

I happened to be driving at the time on that morning and I observed that the whole metropolis (or was it the entire State?) was covered with fumes, billows of dense smoke, obnoxious gases, ash, dust particles etc. emanating from countless fires, seeming to re-enact the 'scorched-earth' policy of the Gulf war.

People were covering their faces with handkerchieves, in order to avoid irritation to their eyes and noses. In fact, the pollution was so bad that visibility was very near zero.

Amidst this scenario, the rising sun appeared like a dull red ball on a dark horizon, and I could clearly stare at it without batting an eyelid. It suddenly struck me that perhaps this was how it must have been when the dinosaurs were annihilated from the face of the earth.

It was the occasion of Bhogi, and people were revelling in this ritual, which religiously occurs year after year. I am not against any practice or ritual, but if nothing is done to tone it down, how long can one hope to breathe freely in the prevailing poisonous atmosphere is anybody's guess.

I understand it is next to impossible to convince the multitude. But if an awareness is created to get people to perform a symbolic ritual, so that not much damage is done to the environment, history of sorts can be achieved in Chennai.

We have no right to vitiate the atmosphere of this earth. We have borrowed this planet from our future generations, and we are duty bound to bestow on them a much better place to live in.

Hemant M. Nahar,
Nahar Nivas,
13/1, Habibullah Road,
T. Nagar,
Chennai 600 017.

No Greyhounds these!

I refer to Mithran Devanesan's article on bus travel (*MM*, December 16). It is true that the Metro Transport Corporation (previously Pallavan Transport) is the best bus service in India. Thanks to the incentive scheme introduced some years ago, both drivers and conductors allow any number of passengers to board the bus, if the passenger can adjust between themselves for space. This is indeed a boon to passengers travelling in buses in Madras.

But regarding government buses plying to mofussil areas, many facilities, like good seats, window shutters, and adequate leg space are lacking. Unfortunately even in those buses some standees are allowed, causing even more inconvenience to passengers.

The correspondent's statement that the executive coaches run by

some transport organisations put Greyhounds into the shade is a bit too much. When I travelled by Greyhound, what I experienced was almost like travelling by plane, without jerks and bounces, with single door entry, no conductor and all works done by only the driver who closes the door as he moves the bus out. One need not have a strong bladder while travelling by Greyhound, since several buses provide a tiny loo in a corner for the convenience of passengers. It is time that all mofussil buses are provided these essential amenities.

C. Lakshmi Narain
11, Kandappa
Achari Street,
Purasawalkam,
Chennai 600 007.

Take care of your readers

May I request you to form a circle consisting of the lovers of *Madras Musings*. Hundreds of admirers of *Madras Musings* can get together and exchange views. Some valuable ideas may come forth to improve Madras.

Shantilal Nahar
15, Kanakasi Nagar
Cathedral Road
Chennai 600 086.

Tamil in English

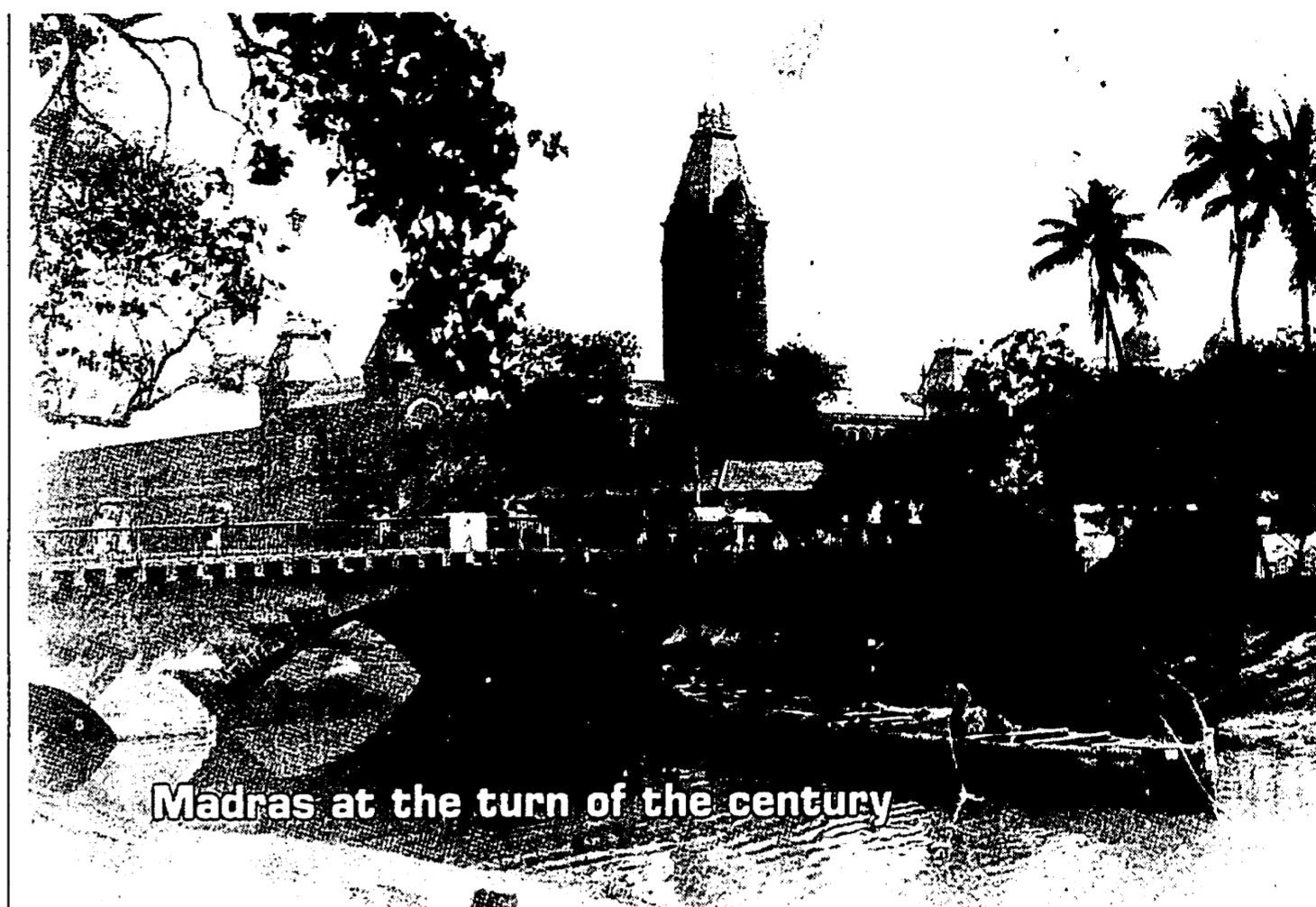
Isn't it nice to learn that government officials read *MM* and, more important, act upon it. But must it be this way?

A few months ago this writer raised the issue of the language in which Government must communicate to the people and opined that it must be in the language preferred by the recipient of the communication (within reason of course) and that language chauvinism should not prevail. Thus, a bilingual policy (Tamil and English) will serve the needs of communication much better than a unilingual one (Tamil only).

The State Government seems to have taken the message to heart — with a vengeance. Government advertisements are now appearing in Tamil in English language newspapers. Examples are the bus fare increase, engineering college admissions and the Anna renaissance scheme. Not all readers of English newspapers are likely to know Tamil. Doesn't the government want the people to know why bus fares were raised, the commendable manner in which admissions to engineering colleges are handled and the developments schemes launched?

It is certainly reasonable to assume that all readers of English newspapers know English. But Tamil? Surely publishing Tamil advertisements in English newspapers is taking regionalism to the extreme.

B. Gautham
122 Wallajah Road,
Chennai 600 002.



Madras at the turn of the century

The Buckingham Canal by Central Station early in the 20th Century. That's when its water flowed and could be used for travel. (Photograph from VINTAGE VIGNETTES COLLECTION.)

Let the water flow again

The plight of the urban poor in Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh is pitiable at the best of times. For millions of families, it becomes appallingly worse when the surface runoff from rainstorms enters their homes, huts and surroundings laden with decaying garbage and human waste left in the open as the result of a lack of waste disposal provisions and sanitation facilities. This aftermath of the storms also leaves behind new open ditches and surface drains in many urban settlements, which get clogged with all sorts of waste, filth and debris. This leads to flooding during rains and causes pollution of the water courses, or aquifers, which receive the filth-borne water. This will worsen in Chennai if the over 6.5 km stretch of the Buckingham Canal is not desilted.

The Buckingham Canal, the total length of which is 940km, starts from Beddaganjam in East Godavari District in Andhra Pradesh and ends at Marakanam in Cuddalore District in Tamil Nadu. Within Tamil Nadu, its length is 165 km and it takes in a lot of floodwater during the Monsoon.

The Buckingham seawater canal in the city was dug during the great famine of 1878 to give work, food and water for the people. It is still a clear waterway from the Pulicat Lake on the Andhra Pradesh-Tamil Nadu border, but pollution is acute near the industrial suburbs and it becomes a constricted drain near Madras Central (railway) station. The Railways have taken over a stretch

of the canal for platform extension, further reducing the width and now waste from Central Station is dumped under the old and new bridges.

The Ennore Thermal Plant discharges about 600 cusecs of water and all this is, at present, discharged into the sea. There was a proposal to let about 150 cusecs into the Buckingham Canal, the maximum the canal can take. If this is done, the Canal will become navigable upto the Cooum crossing and will also get flushed. As the

● By F A Ryan

Cooum and the Buckingham Canal will then have about 5 feet depth of water, they can be used for mass transport by regular ferry service using pedal or power boats and country boats.

In 1993, the Municipal Corporation of Madras prepared a detailed and comprehensive plan to deal with floods and cyclones and identified several low-level areas within the city prone to water-logging. These included 58 in Kilpauk, 30 in Tondiarpet, 46 in Pulianthope, 20 in Basin Bridge, 26 in Nungambakkam, 10 in Ayana-varam, 15 in Kodambakkam, 12 in Triplicane, 41 in Mylapore and 21 in Saidapet. The easiest and cheapest way of raising these low-lying areas is to fill them with the sand removed from the Buckingham Canal while deepening and widening the Canal for inland water transportation.

When the canal is deepened, widened and, all obstructions on the way are removed or bypassed and when the low-lying areas, pits and potholes in the City are raised all the surplus and runoff water of the City will flow into the canal as in the past. Closing the Canal even in small stretches will only create additional problems, as even broad and long stretches of built-up rain- and drainwater systems cannot receive and conduct all the rainwater that now goes into the Canal, without flooding the surroundings and slums. If more seawater is let into the canal, the rain and seawater mix in the Canal can be let into lower lying areas outside the city for saline or semi-saline agriculture. It can be mixed with filtered city sewage and used for cultivation as is done in Dubai and in Coimbatore nearer home.

It will not be possible in our lifetime to remove completely and permanently the slums and squatter settlements on the banks of the Canal, as most of the dwellers there have no other source of water even for washing their feet or cattle. It is also not possible to stop them from throwing their garbage and debris into the Canal! Under such circumstances, the Corporation of Madras would be well-advised to consider maintaining a regular flow of water in the Canal and keeping its banks clean and healthy as suggested in reports of the two British teams sent to Madras to study the problem of the inland waterways of the City.

TIDCO has new focus

The development of infrastructure to speed up the State's industrialisation process is what the Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO) is now looking at.

TIDCO has shortlisted five consortia for the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project to be set up in Ennore. By May/June, it will choose the lowest bidder from amongst Power Gen and Shell, UK; Mitsui, Japan and National Power, UK; Petronas, Malaysia; Gail and two Malaysian companies; Siemens, CMS Power Machine Energy, Woodrites, Australia, Unocol, USA and Grasim India; and the Enron, USA-Mitsubishi combine.

The total investment from the Indian side for the LNG project is expected to be to the tune of \$1.8 billion, of which \$1 billion will go into prospecting for gas. Meanwhile, it is reported that Petronas, Malaysia, Indian Oil Corporation and

ated there. It is stated that Van Ommeran of the Netherlands and a public sector company would be building the tank terminal there.

An additional cracker plant is also planned at Ennore. Cuddalore and Nagapattinam are other locations being considered for cracker plants.

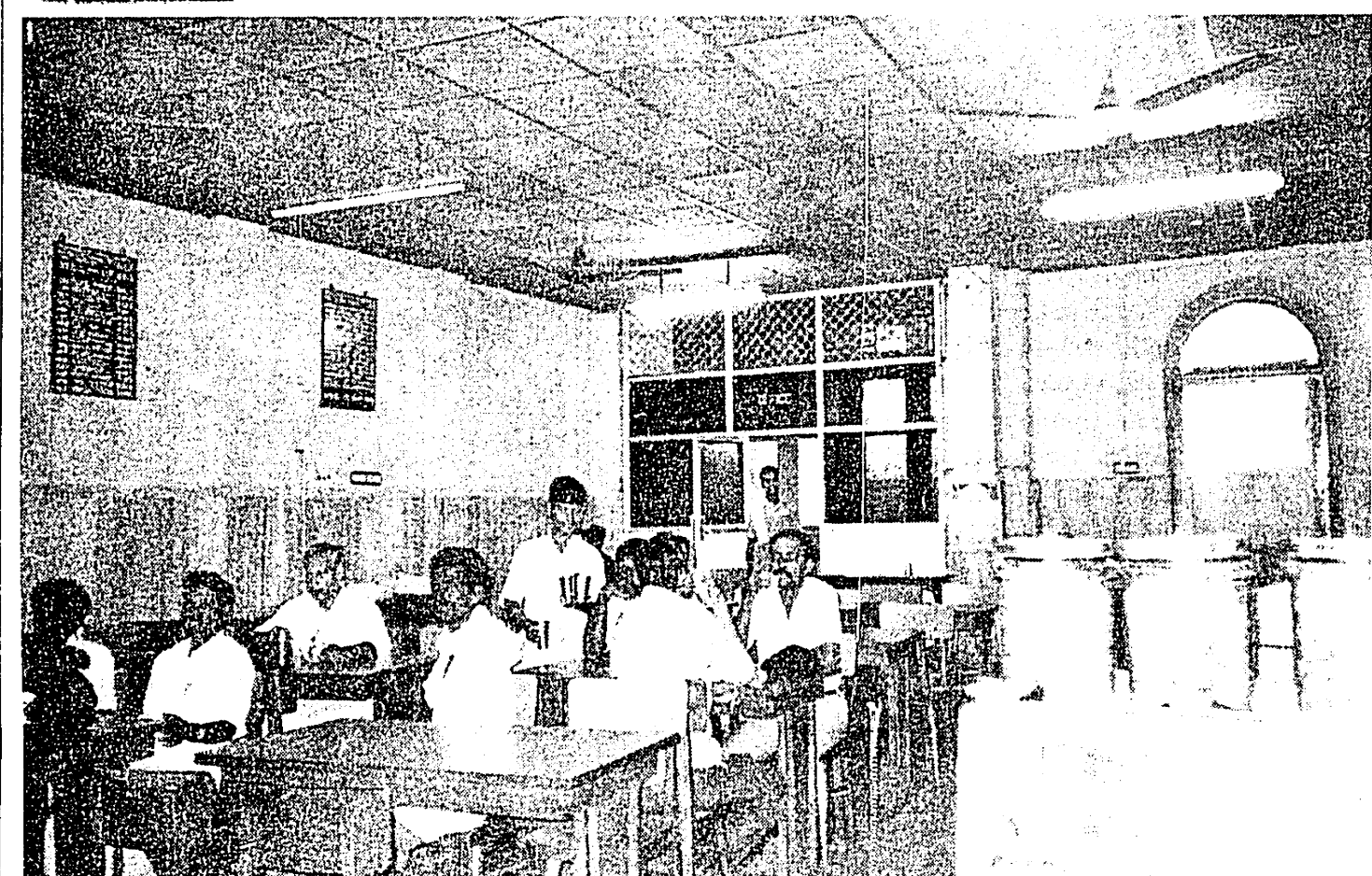
In addition to the Ennore petrochem park, TIDCO is also active in promoting industrial parks in the State. One such project is the hi-tech park planned for the Tirunelveli District in collaboration with three companies. The proposed park is likely to attract an investment of Rs.6,000 crore. TIDCO is also promoting an auto ancillary park near Chennai, joining hands with Mahindra Real Estates Infrastructure Developers Ltd. and Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services Ltd. (IL&FS) in the associate sector.

In tune with its revised focus on development of infra-

structural facilities, TIDCO is also promoting the power and road sectors, states R. Gopalan, Chairman and Managing Director of the Corporation.

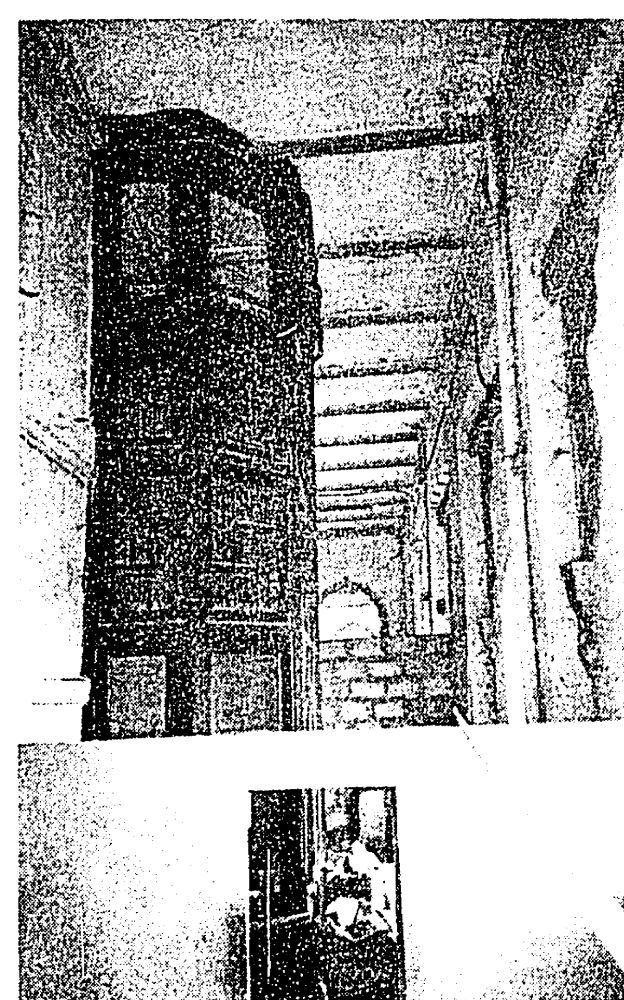
TIDCO is proceeding fast with acquiring land for its 500 MW Jayamkondam Power Project. TIDCO, it might be recalled, had earlier invited private bids for short gestation naphtha-based power plants in 20 locations in the State. It is also looking at playing a major role in a 2,000 MW power project being planned for Ennore.

"With regard to the development of roads, we have entered into a joint venture agreement with Transroute International, France, and IL&FS to establish toll-based roads", states Gopalan. TIDCO will be staking 26 per cent in the equity of the new company to be formed for the purpose, while the French partner and IL&FS would chip in 30 per cent each. A French bank, Credit Commercial de France, will contribute 10 per cent. A beginning is being made with feasibility studies for the Ennore Express highway, Cuddalore highway, Coimbatore Bypass Road and Tirunelveli-Tuticorin road.



THE OLD...

...& THE NEW



The Southern Railway constantly astounds us. It hides its splendid heritage bungalows behind hoardings. It cares nought for the City's first railway station, that magnificent building in Royapuram. It's constantly in two minds over its rack railway in the Nilgiris. And it commits a hundred other sins against heritage. Then it suddenly springs a surprise on us with a delightful set of TEN greeting cards in postcard format, the photographs on the lot of them being from its archives which must be a treasure.

Among these splendid but rather poorly printed photographs is our OLD, which shows the handsome Nonvegetarian Restaurant Room at the Egmore Station in Madras c.1920, when it was, like almost every other railway refreshment room in the country, run by Spencer's. Gleaming floors, stained glass windows, polished teak furniture, spotless linen, immaculately laid-out tables and magnificently turned out staff, made this a restaurant worthy of the best hotels in the country.

The same room in our NEW has been partitioned off on left and rear — the wall on the left creating an office room, entry to which is through the archway seen in the OLD behind the waiter without a cummerbund. The alcove in the rear of the OLD has been 'walled' off and made into an 'office' — seen in the centre of the NEW. If you go out, you'll still see the woodwork and stained glass that have now been hidden from view if searched for from inside the present Nonvegetarian Restaurant that might pass for a roadside 'military hotel'. The Southern Railway may occasionally do something heart-warming, but most of the time they seem to prefer doing — or not doing — things... in their inimitable way.

(Photographs: The OLD — from a Southern Railway greeting card received by Madras Musings; The NEW by RAJIND N. CHRISTY.)

Taking advantage of the new airport infrastructure policy of the Centre, TIDCO is now exploring the possibility of constructing a new international airport near Chennai or a modern international airport facility contiguous to the existing airport. The corporation has invited consultants or consortia of consultants to do the techno-economic feasibility study, including environmental impact

assessments and analysis of traffic, both passenger and cargo. The selected consultants will also have to prepare proposals for inviting bids from private promoters for the airport projects through International Competitive Bidding and assist TIDCO and the State Government in their negotiations with the bidders.

Apart from infrastructure projects, TIDCO is looking at

several industrial projects. Gopalan, who acquired some experience in the paper industry, when he was head of Tamil Nadu Newsprints and Papers Ltd., is looking at a mega paper project for the State. TIDCO is negotiating with Indonesian paper major Sinar Mas to get it to locate its industrial paper project in Cuddalore. The proposed \$15 billion project, to be

(Continued on Page 5)

Does the Raj still live in Snooty Ooty?

"At the Ooty Club we still like to maintain our traditional standards!" the Secretary, Mrs Nergish Patel, told me firmly through a cloud of cigarette smoke, while handing me a warming brandy-and-hot-water.

Ooty may be only 11 degrees north of the Equator, but at 7,400 ft high above the baking plains of Southern India, it can be so cold that my Raj-era hotel, the Savoy, has log fires in its cottage bedrooms.

Mrs Patel was quite shocked that I should imagine that standards might have slipped since Independence. I mean, just because the Raj disappeared 50 years ago, that's no reason why the Ootacamund Club — once the most prestigious institution in 'Snooty Ooty', the 'Queen of the British Hill Stations' — should let any old riff-raff through its grand white portals.

"Oh, we're still very strict here!" Mrs Patel had even thrown out the novelist and British media-world power-broker Farrukh Dhondy. The distinguished Mr Dhondy, on a trip to India, fancied a *chota-peg* among the moth-eaten tiger-skins and jackal heads of the club.

"But he was not wearing a jacket and tie!" said Mrs Patel. He was wearing a *salwar kameez*! So "of course I threw him out — even though he is one of my cousins!" ...

The Ooty Club's rules are the rules of the Raj — and that's the way its Indian members like it... In fact, had I not had a formal 'Letter of Introduction' from a club member, the feisty Mrs Patel, on behalf of her 'more-British-than-the-British' Indian members, would have thrown me out, too. She'd have been quite untethered by

the fact that the Ooty Club, founded in 1841 and once the social hub of the Raj's oldest hill station, is completely empty for most of the year — as it was that night.

In the sepulchral dining room, a club servant, with great formality, served Mrs Patel and me a glumly-English five-course dinner, carefully typed on a menu card bearing the Ooty Club antlers.

The ghostliness of the dark-paneled room was enhanced by the unsettling presence of endless photographs of past Masters of the Hounds of the Ootacamund Hunt once the most famous in all the Raj...

The Ooty Club staunchly prefers to preserve its ghosts, even though, confesses Mrs Patel, "When I first came here I did wonder whether I could live in a place full of these old dead men and so many dead animals on the walls."

Adding cheerfully, as yet an-

When the Hot Weather arrived memsahibs, like my mother, of the nowgone Raj — like their sisters before them — would pack their tweeds, their white cardies and their gardening gloves and, in a cloud of mothballs and small children like me, pile into long-distance trains, and head up into some corner of that foreign field which was forever Esher.

The annals of the Ooty Hunt, I noticed, still adorn the Ooty Club. But surely, I thought the Ooty Hunt must now be defunct. I was wrong. 'We still have seven or eight meets a year!' according to the only surviving European member, Bill Craig-Jones. And who keeps it going? The Indian army, based at nearby Wellington barracks. "Tremendous riders, these chaps. Oh, yes, of course they wear the traditional hunting pink! And we have the stirrup cup — which is provided by the Indian army as well!"

● Ann Leslie, of *The Daily Mail*, London, was born in India during the last years of the Raj. She recently returned to the land of her birth to see whether any of that Raj still survives in the hearts and minds of those millions the British ruled.

other portion of over-boiled Brussels sprouts (introduced to India by the Brits) was served, "but it's full of wonderful old books, first editions of Charles Dickens, the Brontes and so on"...

Once Ooty became the summer headquarters of Britain's Madras Presidency, its hill sides were covered with little gabled and fretworked Victorian villas, with names like *Ivy Cottage*, *Westbury Villa* and *Sunnyside*, which — shabby and stained with monsoon moss — still survive in the now-cacophonous Indian town...

The courtly Mr Mahendra Ahluwalia, manager of the Savoy, lays on the traditional Hunt Breakfast. But why bother? After all, there's nothing to hunt these days — overpopulation, and the growth of industry, have largely driven the wildlife out of these once idyllic hills. Even the jackals, which the British hunted instead of foxes, have retreated: there's not been a 'kill' of anything, apart from the odd rabbit, for years.

"But the Ooty Hunt is part of our tradition", exclaims Mr Ahluwalia, shocked, like Mrs

Patel, at my assumption that modern India would reject her Raj heritage.

The present Huntsman, called Pakyanathan, speaks no English, but is still intensely proud of his tattered hunting-pink coat, his tinny hunting horn, and his pack of foxhounds, descended from those imported here in the last century. Even the names remain relentlessly English: Albert, Gallant, Unicorn, Amanda.

And astonishingly for me, my old Ooty school, St Hilda's School for Girls — once all-English, now all-Indian — carries on as if the past 50 years of Indianisation had never happened. Same grey uniform, same 16-bed dormitories, even the same Sunday breakfast of puffed rice and boiled eggs. The same compulsory services in chapel — even though 90 per cent of the children are non-Christians. And the same school magazine, *The Clarion*, still issues hearty "Congrats to Carmichael House for their horse-like stamina that won them the Cross Country Cup! Whew, what a run!"

"Why," asked one of the sari-clad teachers, "should St Hilda's change just because India is independent?" Why indeed? St Hilda's is 100 years old — and independent India a mere 50. Where once bossy little prefects called Sarah and Penny dished out 'lines' to the juniors, now bossy little Sangeetas and Sonalis do the same.

Mrs Bessie Collison, the Indian headmistress — who delighted in showing me, 'an old Hildite' around — may wear a sari, but Miss Hall, my old headmistress, would feel she was a worthy successor to 'Hildite' tradition.

To my further amazement, Higginbotham's the bookseller still exists — where, I'm told, one can still order a copy of *First Steps Tamil*, published in 1922 by missionaries and still reprinted. It contains such immortal 'conversations': 'Yonder I see an elephant standing. How did it come here?' Second Person: 'It is not a true elephant. It is a monolithic sculpture.' First Person: 'My eyes deceived me. The deftness of the hands of the sculptors is something marvellous.'

My own Indian idyll came to an end four years after Independence because of a panther and a rabid dog. The panther had streaked out of the mossy woods where I was taking a friend's small Maltese terrier for a walk.

The terrier's lead was dragged from my hand, his little



Ann Leslie in her Ooty days... Leaving was heartbreak.

body was never found, and I suddenly felt a terrible sense of foreboding. Not about the panther, panthers were always eating assorted Fluffs, Fidos and Freddie, the pedigree dogs so beloved by Ooty's British memsahibs, and we all had to be very stiff-upper-lipped about these tiny tragedies.

But I'd recently been bitten by a pariah dog in Charing Cross, the centre of Ooty, and had to endure three weeks of agonising anti-rabies injections.

And I knew that the hungry panther and the rabid dog meant that I would probably now be sent 'Home' — as the British in India always called England — never to live in India again, never to smell woodsmoke in the night villages, never to play with my pet mongoose, never to see the pale gold dust at twilight.

Never to sneak into the servants' compound (forbidden to the *chota-sahibs*, the *missy-babas*, the sons and daughter of the Raj) and roast cashew-nuts with them in the courtyard fires. And never to see my parents again except for once a year at most.

And thus it happened. I was nine-and-a-half years old, had been at boarding schools all over India since I was four. But those schools were in India: now I was going 'Home' into exile. And my heart broke. As it broke for so many who earlier had to leave India, and who never felt truly at home anywhere else again.

Some even returned, like tea-planter Bill Craig-Jones, who bought a farm near Andover in Hampshire in the Sixties. "And then one day I told my wife Dorothy: 'I'm going to pack now.' And she said: 'Where are you going?' — and I said 'Home.' And she said: 'I'm coming, too!' Because 'Home' was no longer England for us, it was India."

For a moment, my eyes filled with tears, because here, in what's left of the old eucalyptus-and-mimosa-scented Snooty Ooty, I knew exactly what he meant. — (Excerpts from *The Daily Mail*, London.)

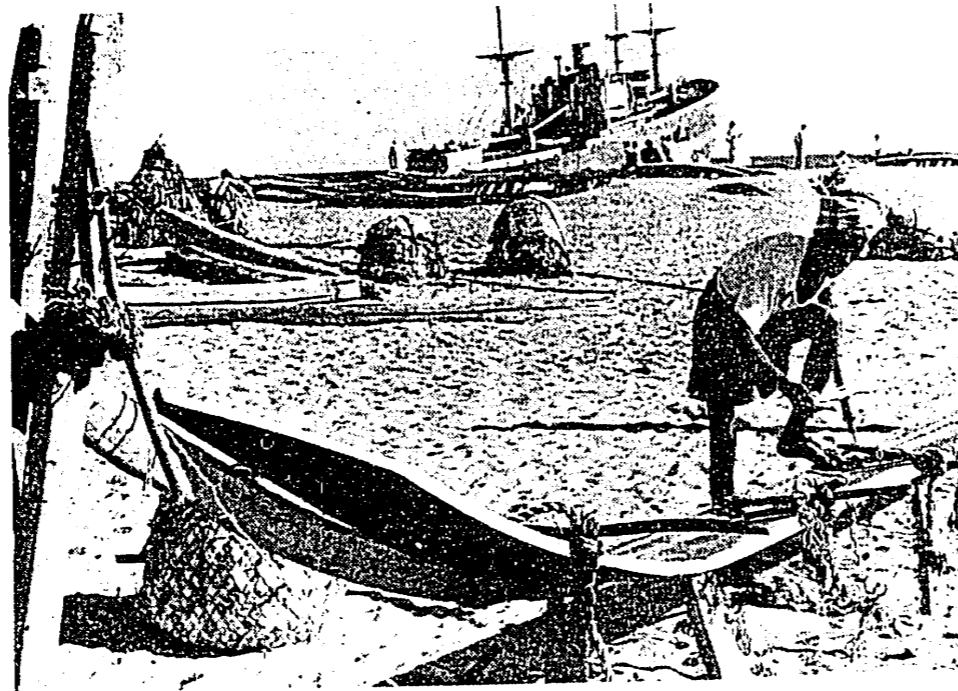
Of catamarans and masulas

I've tried several times, but I've never been able to discover how the pure Tamil word *Kattumaram* has come to be applied as 'catamaran' in the western world to boats with twin hulls. As most people reading these words will know, *maram* in Tamil means tree, or by extension, a log of wood; while the prefix of the word means tied. The anglicised word catamaran therefore means, literally, tied logs, in other words a raft. It has no connection whatsoever with vessels that have twin hulls. (Western sailing fans even have what they call trimarans, vessels with three hulls!)

The Tamil fisherman's catamarans, as some have said, may be stone-age technology, but the fact that this technology has not only survived to the end of the second millennium but still widely flourishes is solid proof of its viability. People often wonder why such primitive craft are still in use, and very widely used too, all around the Bay of Bengal. The reasons are obvious when you consider the nature of the craft.

To begin with, since it consists of solid logs the catamaran is unsinkable. Heavy breakers can and often do over-turn them but, like the fishermen themselves, they don't sink and our incredibly sturdy Tamil fishermen soon have the catamaran the right way up and clamber back aboard, to paddle away through the breakers and out to sea. Sometimes out there they are a danger to shipping. An experienced Master Mariner who lives in Madras tells me it is not unknown to find a cata-

maran far out to sea with the solitary fisherman on it sound asleep! It is well-known that they often take jars of toddy or some other intoxicant with them and if the fishing is a bit slow, they refresh themselves liberally and drop off to sleep.



Beginning to make a masula boat on the Madras Marina beach. Though of design thousands of years old, masula boats and catamarans are still being made.

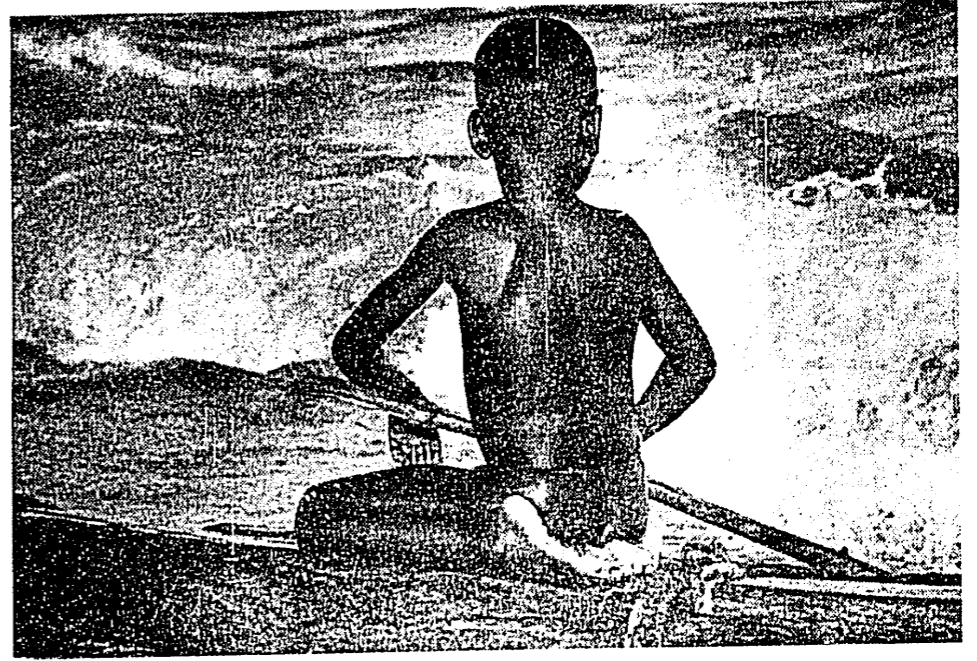
Their amazing affinity with the sea, their confidence and rugged physiques inure them against constant exposure to sea-water and the blazing sun, which would be lethal to ordinary folk, even experienced seamen.

Then again, being unsinkable and made of separate logs of wood, catamarans do not require harbours. Coming ashore after a day's fishing, the catch is handed over to the women for sale, while the men untie the logs and carry them separately one by one up the beach to above the high tide line (though there is very little tide in the Bay of Bengal, no more than a metre or so) and of any possible storm waves.

Apart from our catamarans, there is another even more curious craft common in Madras and other part of India's eastern coasts which early Europeans called *masula* boats, presumably after Masulipatnam (Machilipatnam, today) where

they may first have become familiar with them. My picture today — which must have been taken as long ago as the 'Seventies, since the wreck of the s.s. *Stamatis* can be seen in the background — shows an elderly fisherman at work on the beginning of a *masula* boat. The picture shows how the wide thick board that is to form the boat's bottom has been bent in an upwards curve by the application of pressure and heat.

Early engravings of Europeans landing at or disembarking from Madras (which have been published in this journal) show that before the harbour was built, ocean-going ships had to anchor well beyond the dangerous breakers, for which the East



How do you sit on a catamaran? It's obvious from this picture of the little boy forming a seat with his own heels that this is something you must learn from early childhood. I've seen fishermen far out to sea sitting on their catamarans like this all day. You try it.... I bet you'll not manage to sit like this for two minutes, if at all. (All photographs by Harry Miller.)

Coast is notorious, and passengers had to reach the shore through the heavy surf in just such *masula* boats as still ply today, though now only for fishing.

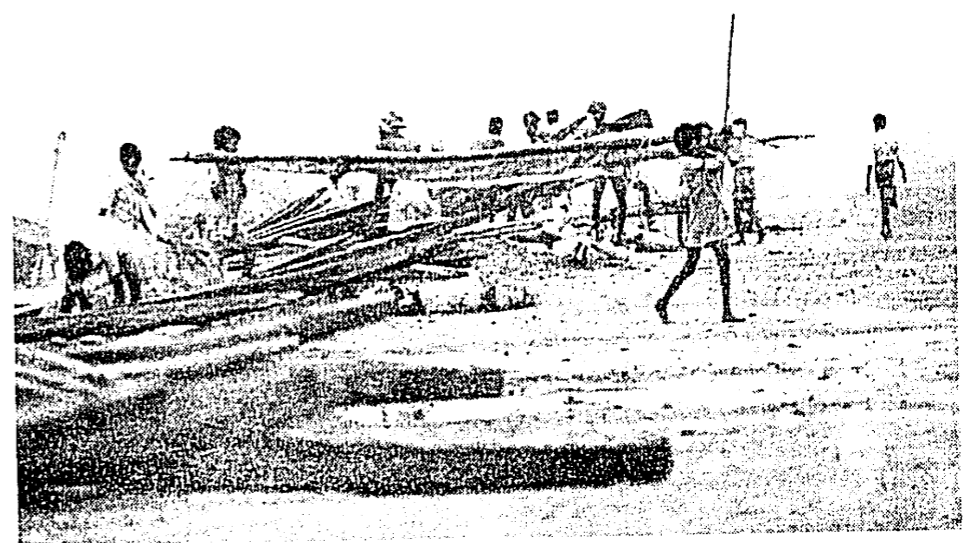
The curious construction of the *masula* boat calls for deep sides of planks stitched together and then made watertight by caulking the spaces between them with coconut fibre. Soaked by the sea, the fibre swells and provides a reasonably water-tight hull for these curious vessels, while the fishermen sit on cross-boards far too high for their feet to reach the bottom, so that they have to rest them on the cross-boards in front of them. This also gives

them the leverage necessary to pull on their oars.

We belong to a generation spoiled by the ease and comfort of travel by giant jet aircraft, and we can only marvel at those Europeans, arriving in the tropics for the first time, being hurled through the surf onto the burning tropical sands of our shores in those strangely built *masula* boats, still dressed (as the engravings attest) in the clothes they were accustomed to wear in the chill of temperate climates.

Little wonder the graveyards show the average expectation of life for Europeans in those days was not much above 35!

Harry Miller



Fishermen dismantling their catamarans and bringing them ashore, piece by piece.

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