

FROM THE EDITOR

MADRAS: THE CITY OF GRACE AND PEACE

What has been the biggest loss to India during the recent years? I do not know the answer our readers would give to this question. I expect several answers and not one. Let me share with you the answer I would readily give. The biggest loss has been the destruction of India's village.

The village is neither dead nor in a coma. It has just been driven crazy. Its harmony, serenity and beauty have disappeared or is fast disappearing, giving way to a bizarre life style marked by ecological ruination and exploitation of caste sentiments by politicians, intrusion by commercial enterprises-ranging from arbitrary establishments of factories to opening up of liquor shops. Let it be emphasized that the extension of technology and new amenities to the village (including electricity) are not at fault. That was necessary and the village has got it as a matter of its right. It is the demoniac hunger for false prosperity and lack of respect for the rural grace, along with an inability to see the consequences of certain kinds of developmental activities on the part of the entrepreneurs, planners as well as the villagers themselves (at least some of them) that have brought about the sad state of affairs.

If the village has lost, who has gained? Is it the city? The answer, unfortunately, is No.

Someone described Los Angeles as seventeen suburbs in search of a city. In the Indian context, we will not be very far from the truth if we describe any of our major cities (New Delhi excluding) as seventeen hundred slums in search of a city. C G Darwin writes in *The Next Million Years:* "Life in the crowded conditions of cities has many unattractive features, but in the long run these may be overcome, not so much by altering them, but simply by changing the human race into liking them."

Perhaps what Darwin means is, the city-dweller will be obliged to adjust himself to the prevailing conditions. But such compulsory adjustments will have their negative impact on the mind and will one day surface suddenly. As Thoreau said- and that in the last century- the city-life means millions of people being lonesome altogether. The lonesomeness is worse today.

But Madras in the last century was different. It was a homely city. Even twenty five years ago it breathed an atmosphere of peace and trust that now tends to disappear? On a memorable occasion like this, when we are observing the 350th year of this great city, it is necessary that we reflect on this question. Madras has given India some of her celebrated sons-philosophers, intellectuals, litterateurs and creative talents in different areas of culture. We owe it to them to maintain the heritage of the city built by them.

Let the people of Madras resolve to restore and retain the grace and peace of their great city.

THE HERITAGE is happy to step into the 5th year of its publication with a number of features on Madras in its New Year number. Over the years we have already carried the story of several Madras institutions like Mount St, Thomas..Fort St. George, San Thome Church, the Museum, the Corporation etc. In this issue we present significant scenes of yesterday's Madras culled from rare sources- both textual and pictorial-which, we are sure, will inspire sweet nostalgia in many. Much more, of course, is left out- its great temples, moques, art galleries, etc. but a single issue of the magazine has its limitations and we admit the fact. However, we can focus on some important institutions of the city later.

In preparing this issue we have received ready co-operation from many wings of the Government, the Archaeological Survey of India, Madras Circle; Department of Tourism and Department of Information and Public Relations, Government of Tamil Nadu, the Corporation, as well as the Connemara Library and the Theosophical Society. It has been possible to reproduce the invaluable paintings by the Daniells, only with the help of Shri Champlak Chatterjee, the director of

the Eastern Zone cultural Centre and the authorities of the Victoria Memorial and Shri Harinarayan, Director of the Madras Museum. We are grateful to them and many other friends and well-wishers.

ON THE TIDES OF TIME

WELCOME TO 1989

After many years we are in a position to say that the year taking leave of us, 1988, was a year of great promises, despite a number of natural and man-made calamities. The year almost began with the two super-powers agreeing to check their propensity of the nuclear bomb-making. The year saw the Russian withdrawing from Afghanistan; Iraq and Iraq, after nearly a decade of bloody confrontation, recognised the need for peace. The year is ending with the PLO announcing its basic change of attitude towards the reality that is Israel. In the internal spheres, epoch-making changes are witnessed inside the Soviet Union and the East European countries.

THE HERITAGE welcomes this spirit of goodwill that is struggling to make itself felt amidst hatred and violence. Let us resolve to extend our support to this spirit in whatever way we can. But let us also remember, that hatred and violence thrive on anarchy in culture. In our spheres let us do our best to forestall the invasion of our society by false values, decadent culture and commercial exploitation of aesthetics.

THE HERITAGE is with the sensitive readers in this struggle and it appeals to the readers to be with it.