

WHEN SIR CP OPENED TEMPLE DOORS TO ALL & SUNDRY!

Historian V Sriram gave a talk on legislator C P Ramaswamy Iyer, who was known for his administrative skills and major initiatives in law and order and the city's infrastructure. The event was organised by C P Ramaswamy Aiyer Foundation as a part of the Madras Week festival



● Gokul M Nair

It is a time-honoured tradition to give hallowed statesmen of the city of Madras their due during the annual Madras Week celebrations. In the same vein, the C P Ramaswami Aiyer Foundation organised a talk on the Sir C P Ramaswamy Iyer, the administrator who strode the corridors of power as one of the most brilliant men of his time. The talk delivered with aplomb by historian V Sriram shed light on his major achievements during his time in Madras and elsewhere in South India and his not-so-known contributions in making India what it is.

"During the beginning of his career, he staunchly supported women. He even suggested that it was high time for the Corporation to have women councilors, thus paving the way for women solicitors in court," said Sriram. "He was definitely way ahead of his time."



The talk delved into CP's rise as a legisla-



Audience at the guest lecture ● R Satish Babu

tor as he stood for limited franchise elections to the legislative council from Triplicane, subsequently becoming advocate-general of Madras. "In 1923, he was made law member of the Executive Council of the Governor of Madras, a post under which he held wide-ranging portfolios not just law and police but also electricity and irrigation," said Sriram.

CP also believed in the power of electricity and hydel power schemes, laying the groundwork for two flagship electricity schemes —

the Pykara dam built between 1929 and 1932 and the Mettur dam over the Cauvery River. "The Mettur dam was a result of his constant liaison with the then Dewan of Mysore, with whom he was very close. Today, the Mettur dam and its surrounding infrastructure are all because of his foresight," he explained.

Another milestone for CP was the proclamation of Travancore Temple Entry Act 1935 (when he served as the Dewan of Travancore State), which threw open the temples in the State to the lower strata of society as well. "Though people hailed it as a progressive step in Kerala and all across the country, in Madras, people were incensed and several even burnt effigies of him in the city," recalled Sriram.

CP was also a patron of music inaugurating The Music Academy and was instrumental in bringing back the compositions of Swathi Thirunal with the help of the Junior Maharani of Travancore, Sethu Parvathi Bayi. "However, he left his imprint in independent India in 1950, when the Dravidian movement was at its peak, agitating for a separate homeland, it was CP who suggested (as member of the National Integration Com-

mission) that every elected representative should take an oath on the Constitution and the integrity of the nation."

The call for secession was dropped by the DMK founder Annadurai overnight thus paving the way for a united Tamil Nadu. "Few political leaders had the moral courage to stand by what they thought was right. And CP was one of them," said Sriram.

