

MADRAS MISCELLANY. 75 YEARS OF THE RANE GROUP.

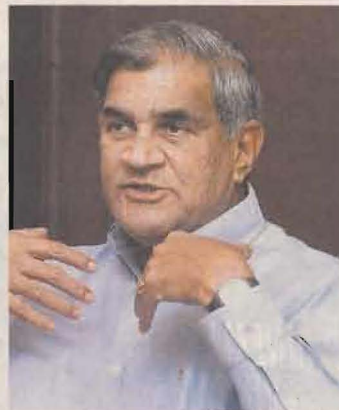
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MADRAS MISCELLANY

S. MUTHIAH

The real dharma of industry



T.R. Ganapathy Iyer (1892-1946) and (right) Suresh Krishna

When the Rane Group recently celebrated the 75th year of its founding, I at last learned how a South Indian-owned industrial house got a Maharashtrian name. Apparently, T.R. Ganapathy Iyer went from Trichur (Kerala) to Bombay in 1920 to seek his fortune with his shorthand and typewriting skills. A few years later, he joined Rane Automobiles, a firm founded by Vamanarao Rane to deal in imported commercial and passenger vehicles. The firm became Rane Limited in 1920 and it wasn't long before Ganapathy Iyer became one of its Directors.

When in 1928 the Board decided to set up a Madras branch, to add to those it had in Delhi, Calcutta and Lahore, Ganapathy Iyer was chosen to head it. And in 1929 Rane, Madras (Ltd) was founded with Ganapathy Iyer and his family and Rane, Bombay, the major shareholders. Five years later, Ganapathy Iyer and Bombay parted company. The company struggled for a couple of years, but in April 1936 the company was restructured — and Rane (Madras) Ltd. was on its way, slowly moving from auto and auto spares dealership to manufacture of auto parts in the late 1950s. Today, the Group's several factories employ 5000

persons, a long way from the couple of hundred when it got into manufacturing — a way it has traversed in fifty years.

The number of persons the Group today employs was the theme of Suresh Krishna's moving keynote speech at the 75th Anniversary function. It was helping workers who had come from backgrounds where they had earned a pittance, if anything at all, to gradually grow into family men living in some comfort and having children going to college and then, in the case of some, to handsome incomes overseas, that has been the greatest achievement of India's growing industrialisation. This has been the most significant contribution to the nation by Groups like Rane. That is the real dharma of industry, not its products or its profits. Lifting the standard of living of thousands and helping them to realise their dreams is what many industrialists are proudest of — not the bottom line or spiralling growth. This should be the dharma of every company in the country: "raising families from abject poverty to a level of substantial social acceptance," Krishna urged.

Rane's, like TVS, Amalgamations, Murugappa's, TTK's and many others, have done exactly this in South India over the years.