

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

Vol. XXI No. 9

August 16-31, 2011

INSIDE

- Short 'N' Snappy
- Seeds from the UK
- The Tree of Life
- Madras Week Programmes
- By bus and foot



"Lord! If I pick up the phone, he will know I'm watching this hopelessly-romantic soap!"

Look who's watching

Too far.

There really is such a thing as Going Too Far.

And that, you can't help thinking, is just where some of these TV tecchies are going.

Look - what did TV provide all these years? Entertainment, great time-pass; some information for the slightly more high-minded, and a pleasant alternative to family bonding, which more often than not (for some, almost always) led to those distressing family rows that do so much to sour the atmosphere at the dining table.

Perfect.

But now...

Have you heard? Apparently, it's now possible, with a press of a button, to actually find out what your friends are watching.

Just a tad intrusive, don't you think ... even creepy?

And, have these tecchies even considered how tough this will be on those addicted Soapers with image issues who are obsessively paranoid of having their Nat-Geo-watching myths busted?

TV watching is such a private thing, where sharing info is strictly a matter of choice.

Seriously, is TV getting a bit above itself, playing too many roles - entertainer, cooking expert, teacher...?

What next? Best-est friend...with frequent power shortages acting as the perennial fly in the ointment ... or the bone in the kebab?

Too far.

Really ... too far.

Tecchies, do exercise a little restraint.

Let TV just be ... TV?

Ranjitha Ashok

Sign to save City's heritage

Campaign part of this year's Madras Week

(By The Editor)

Madras that is Chennai is the first city of modern India. It is the city where virtually every institution of the India of today - be it municipal governance, jurisprudence, educational systems, engineering, medicine, record-keeping, you name it - had its beginnings. It is a city to be proud of for what it has contributed to modern India.

Many of the buildings where these contributions were made still survive. Others have vanished, but those that stand are commemorations of that contribution and need to be protected and preserved. While the march of time cannot be wished away, what is of concern is that new development in the city is taking place without any consideration for preserving the past or the environment.

A recent example of this is the construction of the new Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly and Secretariat which involved the felling of century-old trees and at least four heritage structures, including *Government House* where more than 200 years of Madras history was written. What in any other country would be seeking World Heritage Site status, Fort St. George, which is nominally under the protection of the Archaeology Survey of India, but has multiple owners, is not immune to unplanned construction and consequent demolition of heritage buildings. Government organisations such as

Metro Rail are merrily contemplating the demolition of a few heritage structures in the name of overall development, overlooking the fact that the needs of modern-day life can go hand-in-hand with heritage conservation. Even as we write this, the fate of two historic buildings, *Bharat Insurance Building* and *Gokhale Hall*, is in the hands of the Courts, the owners having decided to challenge earlier judgements stopping demolition.

The city, the cradle of the unique Indo-Saracenic architectural style and, later, a significant representative of the Art Deco style, teamed with

(Continued on page 6)



The state-of-the-art road meant to be the pride of the city.

A no-man's land beside the IT Corridor

A walk alongside the teaming IT Expressway, outside the Kasturba Nagar MRTS station is generally a very learning experience. On both sides of the median - where you will see manicured and neatly planted/efficiently watered rows of conventional landscaping (courtesy the Tamil Nadu Road Development Corporation, TNRDC) - there are synchronised streams of vehicles of all shapes and sizes; on the left hand side corner, you will see a diversity of tree species planted and raised by a green NGO's young volunteers (initiated by the erstwhile Satyam Foundation); and in between all this you will see neatly attired and deo smelling

software engineers waiting for their travel modes amid the piles of rubbish all around!

Look above at the station roofs, and huge hoardings promise 'Luxury homes in gar-

den cities' and 'bigger homes for little pleasures of life!' A leading hotel chain advertises its 'passion par excellence' while overlooking a heaped pile of discarded chips packets, mineral water bottles, discarded chappals and tetrapacks! And all around, passers-by mill about eagerly, walking through litter,

waiting for the buses that will carry them to their chosen paths. Apparently, the TNRDC's purview ends with cleaning the main roads on which vehicles ply. Sometime last year, when a senior Corporation official was contacted for help, I was told to talk to the Railway. The senior Railway official in charge said that the premises of the Railway were outsourced to a contractor, but his purview did not stretch to the public road or to litter contributed by pedestrians. On going back to the Corporation once again, I was directed to another zonal commissioner who, after much

(Continued on page 9)

• by Shobha Menon

Celebrate 'Madras Week' from August 21st - 28th and beyond (see pages 7 & 8)

Sowing the seeds of change – from a field far away

• Running a café purely for charity! Well, Madras Café in the United Kingdom does so and has provided a new lease of life to many needy women in India's rural South, partnering Action Village India and other agencies in micro-finance initiatives

– Maithreyi Nandakumar, Bristol, England

Wafting in the chill summer breeze as I near this stone cottage in the Cotswolds was the unmistakable smell of frying *pakor*as and the potent mix of spices. Rather a contrast with the very English setting of the party I was attending – in the middle of the bucolic splendour of the countryside, and with the promise of Shakespeare to be enacted later that afternoon in the back garden. *The Winter's Tale* was being put on and you could tell by the passion in the voices of the amateur actors (fellow guests) that The Bard's work continues to feed the souls of his fellow countrymen and women. I was one of a handful of South Asian guests that afternoon enjoying the entertainment and, more importantly, the laden plates of freshly prepared Indian food. On the menu was *dal*, *raita*, delicately tempered vegetables and, of course, generous portions of hot *pakor*as.

So, when I was accosted by a smiling Englishman demanding *payasam pidichutha?* I could hardly pretend that this was an ordinary interchange. What followed was an entertaining conversation in Tamil with Bryan Osbon, co-ordinator of Madras Café, the caterers of the event, and a man whose connection with rural India, especially villages in Tamil Nadu, goes back over forty years. He insisted that he was a true country boy and I must admit to spluttering over my rice pudding when he declared *naan oru pattikaadu!* Guests were asked to donate the amount they would pay in a restaurant for a meal such as this (at least £15) and the proceeds were all for Action Village India and the projects it supports with its partners in Uttaranchal, Orissa, Jharkhand, Bihar, Pondicherry, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

When I arranged to meet Bryan almost six months later for the purpose of this article, the setting was a smart German vegetarian café off Regent Street in central London. Bryan works as a builder when he's not busy fundraising.

Every summer, when it's outdoor festival season in the UK, Madras Café comes into its own.

This unique concept of running a café purely for charity is something Bryan is very proud of. The Café has a popular stall at WOMAD, the famous world music and dance festival each year, cooking *idlis*, *dosas*, and serving *masala chai* and is helped entirely by volunteers who do the cutting, chopping, cooking and cleaning for free. "People here in the UK always ask us why a growing economy like India needs outside funding," Bryan says of the practical challenges he faces, "We tell them that when 400 million of its people live on less than a dollar a day, this is still necessary."

In 2007, a small group of Madras Café regulars went to Switzerland to cook for the ten-day Land for Life march from Bern to Geneva. They provided breakfast, lunch and dinner for between 60 and 100 people for ten days, leapfrogging ahead of the marchers each day after breakfast, catching them up with lunch and then moving ahead to set up a new kitchen for dinner at a new night-stop each evening. This was done as a shadow march to Ekta Parishad's Janadesh.

Recently, private micro-finance schemes that have gone wrong in Andhra Pradesh have received a bad press in the British media. Bryan truly believes that well-run micro-finance initiatives have revolutionised women's lives in rural India. "Our partners ASSEFA (Association for Sarva Seva Farms) and their co-operative bank KOSH provide starter schemes for around 25,000 women. These go towards sewing machines, for example; they won't lend money for wedding dowries." In the project in Perambakkam/Chinglepet, a widow is given starter money to buy a cow. Swedish financing has helped set up a dairy in Madurantagam and the widow is able to milk her cow and take her yield to the collection point every day and get paid.

We were later joined by Alan Leather, who sits on the board of Action Village India and has lived and worked in Bihar with Oxfam for many years in the 1970s. In his view,

Hearty welcomes, past & present

The lady came, saw and then left. *The Man from Madras Musings* refers to the recent visit of the U.S. Secretary of State who once had presidential ambitions. Presumably she wanted to meet others of her ilk who had had ambitions and achieved them as well. But be that as it may, what MMM really liked about the visit was the plethora of wall posters that made their appearance before, during, and after the visit.

"Welcome to Hilary Clinton to Chennai" was the burden of most that were on the walls near the airport. And in that context MMM wonders what happened to a Mayoral statute of not a year's vintage that expressly forbade the defacing of walls with posters on certain important roads of which the airport road was also one? Leaving that aside, the sight of the two 'to's in those posters tickled MMM pink for here, he realised, was the next column served to him on a platter. But he does wonder as to what the foreign visitor thought about our civic sense. Very little, probably, for she must have also heard the incessant honking, tooting and blaring of horns, the absence of lane discipline and the general mayhem that our roads offer.

As to what the lady did during her visit, apart from shaking hands, witnessing dances and giving a speech that was probably tailor-made to suit just about any occasion, MMM cannot tell you. But the visit was a great success to judge by the rash of posters that has since broken out, thanking her for several things that are too small in type for MMM to make out. And almost all of them have her name as Hillaari, in Tamil.

MMM wonders if "thousands lined the streets to welcome the overseas visitor" as he believes the general expression used by newspapers is. These days there are thousands lining the streets on any day anyway, given our population. But not many would have looked up to see our Hillaari making her way through the city. They would get to see her on the telly anyway or on the posters. So MMM supposes that these days it is not de rigueur to hire crowds to line the streets and cheer the visitor.

Anecdotal/dotalage?

On that line of thought, MMM remembers a time in Delhi when Mikhail Gorbachev was visiting. College students were given the day off and asked to line the streets. So were thousands of villagers brought over from the rural hinterland in special buses. They were simple rustic folk and had hardly any idea as to why they had come, who was visiting and whom they had to cheer. They were all asked to

shout out the name of the visitor as the cavalcade passed. Some managed "Gobar Chor" which meant stealer of cow dung, much to their own amusement. Others thought his name was Karva Chout, a ritual that women in the North observe for marital bliss. And so they shouted whatever they felt and laughed raucously, vastly amused at their own creativity. The visitor, had he chosen to lower a glass pane and look out, would have been puzzled but happy to see such cheer, as would our Hillaari at the peculiarly worded but plentiful signs of welcome.

On the same subject, MMM, now deep into anecdotalage (always a sign of dotage) remembers a wonderful book by a man largely unknown for his wit – Lord Curzon, if you please. The imperious and forbidding exterior obviously hid a fun-loving man for he devoted an entire chapter to the way Indians welcome foreign visitors. He noted that at one place an arch to welcome him did not have the requisite space for a long slogan and so it read – A warm WC for Lord C. Another one, also suffering from shortage of space and handicapped by the fact

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

that the original message was probably an undecipherable scrawl, read – Welcome, horrible lout!

Things haven't changed all that much, have they?

New/old/new space

Madras Week is coming along, with plenty in its wake, hey! Jingle Bells. Oops sorry! Wrong song and all that. But this time *The Man from Madras Musings* notices a grim resolution on the part of the heritage conservationists to mount a public campaign for a Heritage Act. They gird their loins (with MMM also doing his bit) even as the Chief urges everyone "once more unto the breach." But there is cause for cheer.

Thus far everyone has only talked about how the number of heritage buildings in the city

has been coming down. MMM would like to point out that the count has increased in the last one year by a grand total of one – the new/old/new Assembly building to boot. Now our city, always known for several records, also holds a new record for it possesses probably the world's most expensive but the most short-lived Assembly building ever in human history. And judging by its architecture it is a sign of Indo-German ties lasting several years. With a Kaiser-like helmet to top it off, its oil-tank like exterior is symbolic of the bombing of Madras by the German ship *Emden* which, after all, hit only the oil tanks and added a new word to the Tamil lexicon. That it was built by Hindi-speaking natives of our country only adds to the possibilities. Can it not be converted into a World Classical Institute for German/Hindi/Tamil Studies?

On a more serious note, considering that it stands close to the MRTS, and will soon have the Metro passing by, and is just abaft a bus stop, can it not become the headquarters for the Integrated Transport facility that our Governments and babus are so fond of talking about but do little to implement? It has a grandiose and ugly building (always a prerequisite, it would appear, for our railways after independence to go by the MRTS stations), after all. And plenty of space. What more do you want?

Honouring heritage?

The Man from Madras Musings notices the steady march of the new signboards for road names. They are cropping up at all kinds of spots and MMM welcomes them for, when it comes to readability, they are among the best. That has enabled MMM to notice several street names that he did not know even existed. What might be an indication of the Government's interest in heritage, MMM notes, is a road named after the Chief off Cathedral Road. And on that happy, or should it be querulous, note, see you around at the Madras Week celebrations.

– MMM



(Continued on page 10)

**OUR
READERS
WRITE**



Italian 'Madras'

Here's another story about Madras (MM, June 16th). At the outset, I agree with reader C.K. Jaidev that we could restore the name Madras in English and retain Chennai in Tamil in spite of its Telugu tinge. In fact such a suggestion was given when the name-change was effected. International airlines and other commercial organisations still use the abbreviation 'MAA'.

Coming to my story about 'Madras', I reproduce below what I recorded in my autobiography: "We used to participate in quite a few fairs abroad. The Paris Semaine du Cuir was the most important of them all, held every year in the first week of September. One floor was exclusively devoted to footwear. While looking around, I was surprised to see a board, 'Madras'. When I entered, I was told by the proprietor that it was a well known chain of shoe-stores in Italy. Since I did not disclose my identity, he took me for a Latin American. When I asked him why he had chosen the name 'Madras', he told me that it was a place in India known all over the world for good quality leather and, hence, he chose the name. He also told me that he had never visited Madras, but was buying Madras leathers from agents in London and Paris. I disclosed my identity and told him that he could very well buy these good leathers from Madras directly instead of through middlemen. He said that he would visit Madras in response to my invitation and was also anxious to see the place after which he had named his important shoe-chain.

"True to his word, he came to Madras within a few months.

I arranged for his visit to leather centres like Ranipet, Vaniyambadi and Ambur. He was so impressed by the quality of leather and also the abundance that he felt that we could straightaway have at least twenty shoe factories. He wanted to enter into a collaboration with Hafizur Rahman of the South East Tanning Company, which I facilitated when I moved to the Ministry of Commerce. It was practically the first shoe factory in India with foreign collaboration. It is functioning even today, albeit under different management, producing shoes for leading international brands."

Dr. G. Sundaram, IAS (RTD)
A-601, Dugar Apartments
Greenways Road
Chennai 600 028

Strange road name

While travelling by an MTC bus, sitting on a window seat, I spotted a strange road name, recalling neither an Englishman, nor an Indian, but indicating an Imperial measure of distance!

It is Five Furlongs Road in Guindy in the Madhuvankarai area.

Can any reader throw light on this?

N. Dharmeshwaran
(Camp) Plot 21, Kumaran Nagar
Guduvanchery 603 202

Rajneesh & Madras

Another interesting factoid is that Osho Rajneesh's Rajneeshpuram was established in the vicinity of Madras, Oregon, USA (MM, June 16th). It was an active centre till Osho came back to Pune.

C.S. Krishnaswami
padmakswami@yahoo.com

Still on 'Kavu'

On the usage of 'Kavu' in the primary Dravidian languages (MM, June 1st), I found the following notes in a book titled 'Place Names of Southern India' by K.M. George, published by the Dravidian Linguistics Association, Trivandrum.

The author refers to the usage of this word, 'Kavu', and its root in Tamil [ka - meaning forest, garden], Malayalam [kavu - meaning forest, holy enclosure] and Kannada [kavu - small forest].

For each of these, the author provides examples of place names, such as Tiruvanaikka (near Trichy), Tirukkolakka (near Sirkazhi), Bharanikkavu (near Alleppey), Erikkavu (near Alleppey), and Mallekavu (near Tumkur).

M. Ramanathan
rus.cahimb@gmail.com

The cock-headed snake

There is a belief in parts of Kerala that a large cock-headed snake occurs in the deep forests. The story goes that this highly venomous snake, some 15 feet long – that is, about the size of a king cobra (*Ophiophagus hannah*) – black and brown in colour, has a prominent crest like that of a cock. The further embellishment is that it has, sometimes, been heard to crow like a cock, sometimes to cluck like a hen, and, even, occasionally, to whistle. It is also reported to spit venom.

In Malayalam, the snake is called *Kozhippoovan* (cock-headed), *Karinchathi* and *Karinkoli*, the last two being used also for the king cobra.

William Crooke of the Bengal Civil Service – in the days of the Raj – quotes in his book, *Things Indian - being discursive notes on various subjects connected with India*, (John Murray, London, 1906), a Fra Paoline who spoke of the belief that the 'Malabar basilisk' kills by a look. The Malabar District of British times is now part of the State of Kerala. He must have been referring to the cock-headed snake, even though the stories about this snake do not make mention of it 'killing by a look' as the basilisk of Western myths was reputed to do.

There is no such snake known to science. Interestingly, this story is very similar to that of the cockatrice on the legends in the West. The cockatrice, or the basilisk, is a mythical creature born of the egg of a cock (yes, not a hen), hatched by a serpent. It has a cock's head complete with the comb and a serpent's body and it is reputed to kill by a look. The cockatrice finds mention in the Bible (Isaiah 11:8).

One ingenious explanation for the cockatrice has to do with the habit of snakes to shed

their skins. Speaking of the black mamba (*Dendroaspis polylepis*), Vivian Fitzimous (*Snakes of Southern Africa*, 1962) says: "In old specimens, the skin is often incompletely shed, particularly over the top and back of the head, and a loosely attached plume or crest of old skin may remain for sometime before being completely detached; this has given rise to the belief in the existence of a so-called 'crested mamba', as distinct from the normal form. So widely established has this belief become in Zululand that the Zulus have a special name for it, 'Indlondlo' meaning an "old snake with a crest or protuberance at the back of the head." Referring to this account, Sherman A. Minton Jr. and Madge Rutherford Minton (*Venomous Reptiles*, 1969) say: "It is possible that stories of such snakes, carried by word of mouth from deep in Africa to the Mediterranean seaports, formed part of the basis for the cockatrice and basilisk legends."

Similarly, it is not unlikely that a king cobra, incompletely moulted, with part of the dead skin projecting from its head – no doubt a rare sight – has been mistaken for the 'cock-headed snake'. Incomplete shedding, or dysecdysis, can occasionally occur in snakes because of poor health, dermatitis, mite infestation, malnutrition, inappropriate humidity, trauma, etc.

The king cobra, of course, does not spit venom. Nor does it crow like a cock or cluck like a hen or whistle, but it has occasionally been heard to growl! – (Courtesy: *Cobra*, journal of the Chennai Snake Park Trust)

B. Vijayaraghavan
Chennai Snake Park Trust
Chennai 600 022

'Graceful English'

Regarding Dr. A. Raman's letter on the abysmal state of English (MM, August 1st), I agree that English should not be taught in the learner's mother tongue and that politicians should not discourage the learning of English as it has already become a world language. But I would like to remind Dr. Raman that many types of English exist even in the land of its birth. Shaw discussed this in his play *Pygmalion* by showing us how Prof. Higgins took a bet and taught the girl who sold flowers to speak "graceful" English as Dr. Raman puts it. Shaw made fun of American English and said that the Americans don't speak it at all.

I have visited many countries around the world, Spain, Greece, Denmark, Italy, France, etc. and the tourist guides spoke English which I could easily understand.

But the two countries that stumped me were America and England where people were born to the language. On a trip to London by bus, the tourist guide spoke Cockney and was not understood by most of the tourists in the bus who fell asleep. In the US, on a boat trip to the Statue of Liberty, the guide spoke English with a Yankee accent. We tourists from many countries could not understand a word of what he said.

Different varieties of English exist all over the world but King's English or "graceful English" will belong to the very educated class of people.

Radha Padmanabhan
msp1925@gmail.com

Exam no longer

I totally agree with the views of reader A. Raman (MM, August 1st) that the State Government is not bothered about communica-

tive English among its employees. Of late, there is no language paper in the exams conducted by the Public Service Commission. Only an objective type of pattern is followed. As rightly pointed out by Dr. Raman, today, English is the language of global force. Will the State Government look afresh at this?

Krishnan
krishlaw1960@gmail.com

OUR ADDRESSES

For matters regarding subscriptions, donations, non-receipt of receipts etc.: CHENNAI HERITAGE, 5, Bhattad Tower, 30, Westcott Road, Royapettah, Chennai 14.

Madras Musings now has its own email ID. Letters to the editor can be sent via email to editor@madrasmusings.com. Those who wish to intimate change of address can also do so provided the subscription number is quoted. For non-receipt of copies, change of address, and all other circulation matters: Madras Musings, C/o Lokavani Southern Printers Pvt. Ltd., 122, Greames Road, Chennai 600 006.

On editorial matters: The Editor, Madras Musings, C/o Lokavani Southern Printers Pvt. Ltd., 122, Greames Road, Chennai 600 006.

No personal visits or telephone calls, please. Letters received will be sent from these addresses every couple of days to the persons concerned and you will get an answer from them to your queries reasonably quickly. Strange as it may seem, if you adopt the 'snail mail' approach, we will be able to help you faster and disappoint you less.

THE EDITOR

READABILITY PLEASE

Dear Readers,

As letters from readers increase, we are receiving more and more hand written letters, many of them in a hand so small and illegible or large and scrawled as to be unreadable. Often this leads to our discarding a letter, particularly if some part of it is unreadable.

If you wish us to consider your letter for publication, please type it with enough space between lines or write it using a medium hand, clearly dotting the 'i-s' and crossing the 't-s'.

Many readers also try to fill every square centimetre of a postcard space, making reading or editing impossible.

Please help us to consider your letters more favourably by making them more legible for us.

– THE EDITOR

Lil Madras Girl midst well-behaved animals...

... and badly-behaving humans

One balmy Saturday evening, Madras Mom (MM) and Travelling Husband (TH) took Lil Madras Girl (LMG) to the Children's Park in Guindy. They were in for a pleasant surprise! Guindy National Park is home to 400 black buck, 2000 spotted deer, 24 jackals, a variety of snakes, geckoes, over

crowded and teeming with eager evening snackers.

LMG was in a very good mood. She understood that this was 'her special outing' and basked in her parents' attention. She did look curiously at her father who kept gaping around and muttering, "Cannot believe this is in the heart of the city."



The well-maintained Children's Park.

100 species of birds and over 60 species of butterflies, spiders and other insects. Flora includes over 350 species of plants. Prominent animals in the park are the Black Buck, Sambar and Spotted Deer, Porcupines, Hyenas, Jackals and Monkey (reference: http://www.forests.tn.nic.in/WildBiodiversity/np_gnp.html).

The Children's Park was started here with the idea of providing children with a natural environment to learn about animals and conservation at close quarters. In it are a wide variety of birds and animals, all appearing to be well-fed and happy in a tranquil and well-maintained atmosphere.

Children's Park is very clean and observes a no-tolerance approach to the usage of plastics. More importantly, the officials seem to be sticking to their policy and there were really no PET bottles or litter lying around. MM wondered if there was a secret band of little elves that helps maintain this litter-free zone. How wonderful if they would extend their services beyond the Park. The information boards outside the animal enclosures and cages are clear and comprehensive and tell us which species are endangered.

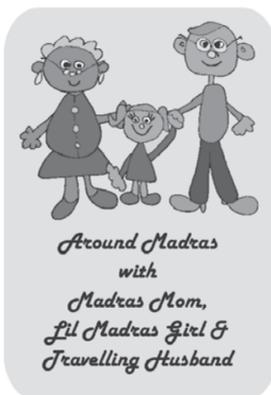
The snack counters are situated outside the Park's main entrance, near the parking lot. A dilapidated-looking popcorn machine and a rather muggy food counter were nonetheless

He chose to remind MM not fewer than 800 times that Guindy Park was a 'national park', beaming with pride one would reserve for the current wildlife warden.

MM let him dwell on his moment of patriotism. After all, he was carrying LMG and a giant flowery diaper bag, leaving MM to walk around clicking photos with her Sony Cybershot, for which she paid Rs.20 to use within the premises. MM was taking her 'photo-journalist' assignment very seriously. Feeling as cool as *Ko's* dashing photographer hero, Jiiva, she paid a great deal of attention to capturing the right shots through the wire nettings! LMG was a bit confused seeing the Park's famed deer. She seemed to think they were funny (and *slimmer*) looking versions of her grandfather's

Children's Park is very clean and observes a no-tolerance approach to the usage of plastics. More importantly, the officials seem to be sticking to their policy and there were really no PET bottles or litter lying around. MM wondered if there was a secret band of little elves that helps maintain this litter-free zone. How wonderful if they would extend their services beyond the Park. The information boards outside the animal enclosures and cages are clear and comprehensive and tell us which species are endangered.

The snack counters are situated outside the Park's main entrance, near the parking lot. A dilapidated-looking popcorn machine and a rather muggy food counter were nonetheless



Around Madras
with
Madras Mom,
Lil Madras Girl &
Travelling Husband

Labrador Retriever and kept pointing at them and calling them by the dog's name!

The 'Vedanthangal Birds' section within the Park deserves special attention. LMG watched with amazement as Sarus Cranes, Grey Herons, White Ibises and Egrets flocked together in an environment perfectly designed for them. They looked at home in the midst of a large water body with tall trees and many branches on which to perch pretily.

The peacock spreading his feathers in all his glory was a remarkable sight. No blue Kanjeevaram saree can compare with the beautiful shade that could be found on his neck.

MM noticed that the food given to the animals was fresh and sufficient. Mr. Hyena seemed pleased with the chunks of raw meat in his cage, the birds had a buffet of fish, and the monkeys were happily gobbling fresh fruit. The cages were clean and airy.

While the animals were perfectly well-behaved, MM wished she could say the same for her fellow park-goers. The signage outside clearly instructed guests not to feed the animals. However, most visitors had sneaked food into the premises and threw it into the animal cages. Many tried to squeeze their hands into the barbed wire and call out to the animals while trying to touch them. Some foolishly tried to make their children enter the area between the barbed wire

(Continued on page 10)



The 'Vedanthangal Birds'. (Both pictures by the author.)

The Tree of Life

The sappy tale of the Indian Laburnum

With the exception of the occasional, capricious squeak from a babbler, no bird calls can be heard. The sun towers above the dense scrub, its carefully directed rays appearing to have contracted jaundice. To the late risers of the natural world, this unsounded alarm is as audible as an orchestra of cicadas in the monsoon. Having carefully selected the leafless tree of his choice, a young *Calotes* lizard positions himself onto it, his limbs in a sort of spreadeagle – a ritualistic affair. Presently, a rather large Black Rajah lands on an adjacent branch. The lizard quickly shifts his attention to this food item... a little *too* noticeably, perhaps. The butterfly immediately relocates to another branch – a higher one that is out of the reptile's reach. As the dejected garden lizard trudges back to his tanning bed, he notices something – the thing that had drawn the insect to the stumpy tree in the first place. *Never mind. That was only one of them*, he assures himself, the main course won't be long now.

Now, I've been particularly fortunate in actually *knowing* the lizard in question – quite well actually. What I've described is a standard scenario. Pretty much the same thing happens every day, and yet there will always be variation... which is what got me hooked for almost a year. I would never miss the eight-thirty show, for, not only would the lizard's order arrive, it would turn up in the twentieth or thirtieth helping, continuing to replenish itself.

So how *on earth* did the tree manage to pull this off? How was this even possible?

The Black Rajah's peculiar taste in seating furniture was not driven by mere temerity. He was, in fact, here to indulge in an all-you-can-eat-buffet of his own; one that (a closer inspection revealed) served up a rich and balanced menu of sap, sap, and ...you guessed it... *more sap*. The diners were far from bored by the variety, though. To say that the Rajahs lived to eat is saying *much* too little. High customer satisfaction didn't keep them coming back for more, it just kept them; an individual who began working on the tree's exudations one particular morning would, with remarkable predictability, go on for the rest of the day, and perhaps next day or two as well, sometimes even ending his short existence that way. The reason behind this ceaseless excavation of the tree's vascular fluids is still unclear to me – the species *has* been reported to con-



sume nectar, and yet I've never seen Rajahs anywhere else but near the generous tree. It would seem (at least in this curious case) that their entire adult lives revolved around this nutrient-rich fermenting sap. As a health food, nectar probably pales in comparison.

I owe the tree big time; it isn't only the Black Rajah that it introduced me to; but for its gaping wounds, I would never have formed the buzzing, swarming acquaintances that I did. These were a diverse lot, unified by nothing more than a crazy, unquenchable thirst for sap, a craving marked by a very unusual, um, imperativeness, if you will. There are, for example, butterflies (some of the Blues, and most Nymphalidae) that just can't seem to get enough of the rich liquid, and then there are those Swallowtails, yellows and skip-pers included, that, well, can – species that wouldn't set wing within a mile radius of the plant juices even in a million years of evolution – the only difference between the two being that any other substance these were

bound to consume would inevitably be taken for granted, and treated with, to speak comparatively, *plain indifference*. How often do you come across, say, a Swallowtail or a Yellow drinking from a flower like it would ill-be-fit the world grievously if it were to stop feeding? Well, you wouldn't, but with a species that's taken a fancy to tree sap, it's pretty much drink or die. I strongly believe that fermented sap will prove to be the most popular alcoholic drink in the future of mankind; its soporific (or 'sap'orific, should I say) effects on the Rhopalocera speak for themselves.

The standard fare: a butterfly's original interaction with the liquid would usually be met with excessive, frantic, excited flapping. But come a few more minutes of this elation, and intoxication would begin to set in. It wouldn't be uncommon to find, on a secluded corner of the tree, a subdued specimen struggling to maintain his balance, clearly hammered beyond relief.

Ownership over this munificent tree of providence was, at all

times, vagrant and unpredictable. If I were to have randomly walked up to the tree one day, I might've come upon a large concentration of Common Castors. The Black Rajahs would've been there too, of course – they were permanent fixtures – but not too many other insects of the scaly-winged kind. Now suppose that I were to make another visit to the tree a week later, heck, no, a *day* later, I would have probably



A Black Rajah orgy



The Indian Sunbeam downing specially manufactured Spittle Bug sap froth.

found the Black Rajah, yes, but also a new bunch of colonisers, say, the Common Sailor or the Indian Sunbeam, but most remarkably, no Castors at all.

Competition for the tree's precious resource would customarily be raw and ruthless. The manner in which territory could be gained or lost here is reminiscent of one of the late *Age of Empires* video games, offering an explanation for the unusual fervour with which most customers would dine. Not the Rajah, though. *Charaxes's* killer attitude more than compensated for a timid and frail appearance. In a way, the species was the landlord of the sap patches – the corrupt, lazy type that is usually too flushed with its own success to care enough about anyone else who might have happened upon its property. And, funnily enough, his "guests" seemed almost capable of sensing this, and stayed well clear of trouble.

There is much scope in the study of such competitive insect behaviour. Research on these lines, apart from being of great ecological value, is, let's face it, *extremely entertaining*; a scientific paper on sap-attracted insect hierarchy would probably make for more melodramatic reading than the script of a 20th Century Bollywood movie. There's just no telling what might happen on a sap-exuding tree.

One particularly memorable episode was my chance encounter with the Apefly. Named after the supposed resemblance of its larval stage to the face of an ape,

this is a denizen of the wetter forests of India; Chennai leaves much to be desired for a moisture-lover, I'm afraid. And yet *there he was*, not drawing very much attention to himself, but still hitting me in the eye as something quite out of place ... and the sky, a moment later, never to be seen again.

So while on the topic of rare visitors, it's worth also mentioning the sudden, obscure appearance of the lone owlet moth (*Lacera* sp.) This was an exciting discovery, not just because of the moth's outright bizarreness, but because, up until then, I'd never crossed paths with a moth sipping sap. I did know that certain species were known to consume sap, of course, but I also knew that absolutely nothing was known about the attraction of Indian moths to the substance. Well, one thing was, for sure to find out, I had to sneak in a visit to the tree at night. Much easier said than done. I resolved to do this at the very next opportunity. Whatever else I did or didn't do, at least I kept my word. No such

With the sap aficionados parrying on the trunk day in and day out, it is easy to overlook anything beneath it, for in the degraded, hollow interior, was prime real estate up for grabs – most of the grabbing having been done by a miniscule bee of a brilliant azure hue. Introducing... the Dwarf Carpenter Bee, a sub-social construction worker specialising in all things wooden, rotting and hollow. Dragonflies, on the other hand, would opt for the room with a view, finding in the receding hairline of the tree a most convenient basking spot. And not unlike the lucky lizard, they would be guaranteed the finest cuisine during their stay here.

Other predators, of course, were of no shortage on the tree either. Two of the most prolific predators in Bug land, the Two Striped Telamonia, and the Ant Mantis, are both drawn to the tree for its abundance of prey. Well, they've clearly missed the point.

At some vague point during the course of my six-month relation with the tree, I remember having wished that I knew its identity (a rotting stump devoid of leaves doesn't offer too many leads, to be frank) to add to my growing list of observations made here. I can't admit to regretting anything more. On one oppressive, sultry, occasion in April, I strode up to the tree confidently expecting a crowd equal in magnitude to the gathering outside the only restroom at a gastroenterologist's... only to find that!.. and a discerning lack of activity. The Garden Lizard was nowhere to be seen. Not even a Black Rajah remained. The Golden Shower had woken up after a long, long slumber, putting dozens of tiny vascular fluid buffs to sleep. Now only time can tell the future of the sap junkies. So, in the meantime, I shall just have to continue to live in the hope that the "Tree of Life" decides to spring a leak again, and come back to life. – (Courtesy: Madras Naturalists' Society Bulletin)

Editor's Note: This extremely well-written, sensitive and knowledgeable article is by a XI Standard student. We wish there were more like him.

• by PRANAV
BALASUBRAMANIAM

opportunities came my way. The nature of nocturnal sap attraction (if at all it exists) is still anybody's guess.

The temperament of the dialogue so far has, in all likelihood, misled you to the impression that this was a lepidopteran-only bar. If it has, fair enough... butterflies have been the subject matter of the article. Your take on the issue's still wrong, though. Fauna of all classes and orders thrived on the damp wood. Of these, the most obvious residents were those specialised sap extractors – the scales, the aphids, and the spittle bugs. Only here they weren't so much extracting as they were just merely engulfing, a process in which their usually useful piercing organs (rostra) actually came in the way. So, when, over the course of the next billion years or so, a new Paraneopteran order of sap-consuming insects with vestigial rostra props up, I guess you'll know why.



(Current Affairs questions are from the period July 16th to 31st. Questions 11 to 20 pertain to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

1. Which Asian country won the FIFA women's World Cup recently?
2. What three-decade old space mission ended officially on July 21st?
3. Cadel Evans became the first Australian to win which famous sporting event in Paris on July 24th?
4. Name the British singer, famous for the multiple Grammy winning album *Back to Black*, who was found dead recently.
5. Recently, the three reels of a 1923 film *The White Shadow* were discovered. It is thought to be which iconic filmmaker's earliest surviving work?
6. Which F1 driver and former champion celebrated his 200th F1 GP by winning the Hungarian GP recently?
7. According to a UN report, which African country's government was planning a massive attack against the African Union summit earlier this year?
8. Recently, in a big breakthrough in an ambitious experiment, scientists said they had got a glimpse of the 'God Particle'. How is it officially known?
9. Who has been appointed India's new Ambassador to the USA?
10. Asia Pacific Exchange and Cooperation Foundation, a Beijing-based organisation, has unveiled a \$3 billion plan to build a "special development zone" in Nepal to transform which historic site?

* * *

11. Name the engineer responsible for building both St. George's Cathedral and St. Andrew's Kirk in Chennai.
12. Since its founding in 1639, the city saw its first instance of which major epidemic only in 1905 and has been free from it since then?
13. What is the name of the Shiva deity at the famous Thirukazhukundram temple?
14. Which famous author of a religious work was born in Kunnattur, near Tiruneermalai?
15. Which place near Chennai is also known by the euphonic Sanskrit title of Nitya Kalyanapura?
16. Where is/was the Harris Bridge in Chennai?
17. What well-known institutions are on the greater part of where the Lawrence Asylum Press once stood in Chennai?
18. In today's Chennai, how would the locals call what the Portuguese referred to as Monte Piqueno?
19. Apart from San Antonio, which other U.S. city is a Sister City of Madras/Chennai?
20. What was the first 70 mm Tamil film?

(Answers on page 10)

Sign to save heritage

(Continued from page 1)

enough and more examples of native styles as well, is fast losing its built heritage. Grand public edifices and houses built with indigenous technologies such as Madras terrace roofs, Madras plaster, red-oxide flooring and wooden staircases are a rarity, most of them having made way to faceless highrise, an inevitable transformation, given the population and the pressure on housing. What were once bungalows housing a few have made way for multi-storied homes with hundreds of residents.

This is why conservationists have long been seeking the enactment of a Heritage Act to protect the surviving monuments and edifices in the city, which do not come under the purview of the Archaeological Survey of India or the Tamil Nadu Department of Archaeology. For, in the absence of a heritage law, everything depends only on the sympathy of those sitting in judgement.

The wrecking of Moore Market, Spencer's and *Bentinck's Building* is still being talked about as though they happened yesterday. Had there been legislation to protect these buildings, such mindless wrecking would not have occurred.

And yet the situation is not as hopeless as it looks. In a judgement a couple of years ago, the High Court of Madras ordered the listing of 400 and odd heritage buildings in the city and directed the Government to ensure their protection. It also ordered the Government to form a Heritage Conservation Committee to look into the conservation of these structures.

But Government has also ensured that the Committee is largely populated with bureaucrats and others connected with Government. As a consequence, very little proactive action has been forthcoming. So it once again has to be back to the people. A public signature campaign seeking heritage protection seems to be the only way to get Government to pass a Heritage Act and save the city's heritage. Your participation is important in this. Even if you don't care for the monuments but feel that the Marina Beach or the Park where you go for your morning walk is important and needs to be passed on to the next generation, PLEASE SIGN THE APPEAL. For elevated roads are already being planned on the beach and parks are being looked at for Metro Rail stations.

Come, be a part of Madras Day/Week

If you live in Adyar or in Besant Nagar, would you like to organise a Heritage Walk on Besant Avenue?

If you own a restaurant in Egmore with space to accommodate at least 40 people, would you lend this space for a talk on the Gujaratis of Madras?

Welcome to Madras Day. Welcome to the spirit of this celebration of the city. It is all about people to people, this Madras Day thing that comes up every year during late August (August 21 to 28 this year). And we as the catalysts are amazed at the manner in which this event grows.

Dr. S.N. Nageswara Rao is Associate Professor of the P.G. and Research Department of Historical Studies at Sir Theagaraya College in North Chennai. His email says it all –

"A few years ago I participated in a small way. This time, we at the college are eager to participate. We would like to support you with volunteers and also borrow exhibition material and display the same in our college library so that more students will become aware of their own heritage.

"On our part the Department is planning to host talks and walks focussing more on North Madras. We have asked our students to collect old photographs from their relatives and friends featuring old buildings and famous personalities."

Arjun Ranganathan from Infosys has been in touch. And his e-mail reflects the enthusiasm that corporates are showing in this unique celebration.

Writes Arjun: "We would wish to organise the Madras Week celebration in our company. The idea is to make our fellow employees from northern states to understand the spirit of this city and appreciate it and also bring a sense of pride for the people from the state and this city."

Banu is doing her Master's programme in Arts Management at DakshinaChitra. This is her support: "I wish to volunteer for the events, especially Heritage Walks."

Wrote T.S. Padmapriya who blogs at <http://aalayamkanden.blogspot.com> – "I am a great fan of Madras and would love to volunteer in some way in the Madras Day events – especially heritage walks."

Wrote Reena Rajan, a manager at the Residency Towers Hotel: "It gives me immense pleasure to invite your association with our hotel. We confirm our venue availability for the meet... this would be accompanied by a hi-tea session."

Come, be a part of Madras Day. You have to start now. www.themadrasday.in has all the details. (Courtesy: *Mylapore Times*)

– Vincent D'Souza

Masters of 20th Century Madras science

– An occasional article in a series by Dr. A. RAMAN

He promoted experimental botany in an inter-disciplinary manner

Toppur Seethapathy Sadasivan was born in Madras on May 22, 1913, the son of Toppur Seethapathy, a Mylapore medical practitioner and also the first Indian director of the King Institute for Preventive Medicine. After his undergraduate degree from the Madras Presidency College and Master's from Lucknow University (when the famous palaeobotanist Birbal Sahni was the Professor), Sadasivan went to England to do his doctorate with Frederick Charles Bawden at the Agricultural Experimental Station in Rothamsted. He returned to India in 1940. After short stints in the Punjab and Lucknow, he joined the University of Madras as a Reader in the newly started University Botany Laboratory under the leadership of Mandayam Osuri Parthasarathi Iyengar.

Sadasivan pioneered in investigating the physiology of crop diseases caused by soil-borne fungi and bacteria. He earned the degree of Doctor of Science of the University of London in 1955. Sadasivan and his research team investigated host-pathogen interactions at physiological and biochemical levels and was the first to demonstrate fusaric acid, a metabolite produced by *Fusarium* in wilting cotton plants. Studies made by Sadasivan and his team have been published as more than 600 articles in world journals of class. In spite of his close association and involvement in the execution of research work by his students, Sadasivan never insisted on having his name included as an author when his students published their findings.

Sadasivan strived to promote experimental botany in an inter-disciplinary manner. His team included botanists, agricultural scientists, organic- and bio-chemists, and biophysicists. In spite

of his high standing as a university academic and leading scientist, he was enthusiastic in improving quality in school education; he led NCERT teams reforming school curricula. He gifted a substantial part of his family estate in Kodaikanal to establish Gandhiji Vidyasram (Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan) and served as its chairman for nearly a decade and a half to shape the school. In the 1990s, he helped start the Madras Science Foundation in Madras, which harnessed the power and talents of recently retired scientists and enabled them to pursue their research interests and write books on complex scientific themes in plain English.

Recognising his immense contributions to Indian and world science, the Government of India awarded him the Padma Bhushan in 1974. Sadasivan was decorated with the Bhatnagar Award for Biology (1960), the Birbal Sahni Medal (1962), the Jubilee Medal of the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany (1971), and the Sunderlal Hora Medal of the Indian National Science Academy (1973). He was the Birbal Sahni Professor at Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeobotany, Lucknow, from 1977 to 1980.

The 50-odd PhD students of Sadasivan remember him as a profound teacher, who radiated grace and simplicity. An elegant aura of academic aristocracy surrounded his personality. His leadership and the scientific contributions to applied botany he marshalled enabled the Madras University Botany Laboratory to be recognised as a Centre of Advanced Study in Botany, matched only by those of Banares Hindu University and University of Delhi in the 1960s. He died in Madras in 2001.



MADRAS WEEK '11

21st to 28th August

Updated till August 12th

August 16-19

Traditional games and Paatti Kada Sole – grandmas will tell 5-6 minutes' long short stories to children in Tamil. Children can join in and play traditional games. Bamboola
Details: 24611779

August 16, Tuesday

Talk: Information Technology in Chennai by Pradeep Chakravarthy. Organised by Rotary Club, Madras South. Rotarians & their guests. Hotel Savera.
6.30 pm

August 17-19

● **Exhibition:** An exhibition on *Our Heritage in Brick and Mortar*, featuring models and charts prepared by the Social Science Department and the Heritage Club. ● The inaugural function at 10 a.m. on **August 17th** will have as guest speakers the **Nawab of Arcot, Dr. Meena Muthiah** and **Gopika Verma**. ● The valedictory at 2 p.m. on **August 19th** will have **Shreekumar Varma** as chief guest. Asan will also have an **inter-school heritage quiz** on August 18th, Preliminary rounds at 9.30 am; finals at 11 a.m. Asan Memorial School, Egmore

August 19, Friday

Heritage Walk at the beach for students of Asan Memorial School conducted by **Major Raghavan** 8.30 am

August 20-25

● **Exhibition:** An exhibition of paintings by **A. Ananda Kumar** and photographs by the late **M.K. Rangaswamy Aiyangar** of Madras and its environs. **Prof M.S. Swaminathan** will inaugurate at C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation on **August 20th**

August 20-27

● **Exhibition on Early Tamil Imprints** from the Roja Muthiah Research Library collection. ● **20th August:** lecture by **Prof. V. Arasu**, Professor and Head, Dept. of Tamil Literature, University of Madras on *Tamil ariya nulkal patukappu: cila uraiyatalakal* (5:00 pm). ● **24th August:** lecture by **Dr. A. Sathish**, Senior Research Fellow, International Institute of Tamil Studies, Chennai on *Avanankal: patippu – patippaciriyam – patippakam* (5:00 pm) Roja Muthiah Research Library
10 am-7 pm

August 20, Saturday

● **Chennai Heritage Tour: The Wallajah Trail** – a tour by van and foot for two hours in Triplicane and surrounding areas conducted by **S Anwar**, well-known photographer and documentary film-maker who has been studying the contributions of the Nawabs of Arcot. Tour will conclude with breakfast. Contact:
editor@madrasmusings.com

● **Walk: The Sweet Smell of Engineering.** A tour tracing the 200+ year heritage of the College of Engineering, Guindy, arguably the oldest technical institution in India. Starting point: Main Building (Bell Clock Tower), COE, Guindy, Anna University. Hosted by the **Alumni Association of COE, Guindy** 90 minutes. Starts at 6.30 am.
Register:
walk@darkbrand.com
+91 9840959730

Drawing and Painting Contest: Theme: *Namma Chennai*. For children ages 5-9: Drawings in crayons or colour pencils. For children of age 10-15: Drawing and painting using water/poster colours. Participants should bring all the materials required for their drawing & painting. Drawing sheet will be provided. Last date to register **August 18, 2011**. The Children's Club, Mylapore
9 a.m.

Map Ur Way – Map workshop/walk/competition: Learning session on how to construct and read maps followed by a walk in the neighbourhood and a presentation contest. Open to first 25 registrations only. For children of 12 years and above. Organised by **Kalaa Manjari** and **Bambaram Toy Library**. Kalaa Manjari, Alwarpet
3 pm-6 pm
Contact: 99623 87624

● **Presentation: A Brief History of Engineering in Madras** – traces the history of what is arguably the oldest technical institution in India, the College of Engineering, Guindy. Register: talk@darkbrand.com or phone: +91 9840959730. Hosted by **Alumni Association of College of Engineering, Guindy** Conference Hall, Alumni Center
College of Engineering
5.00 pm

August 21-28

● **Exhibition:** An exhibition of *Photographs of Chennai City* by **Abhishek Dadhech**. Also a **drawing competition** for children in the 8-12 age group on *Monuments of Chennai*. Entries in 12"x16" (A3 size). Works could be in any medium like crayons, ink, charcoal, watercolours or poster colours. And a **photography competition** for children in the 13-15 age group on *Bazaars of Chennai*. Entries in 12"x 8" (A4 size) Details:
Sharath Nambiar
27472603/2783

● **Madras through the eyes of children** – An exhibition of photographs taken by children during the photowalk hosted by **YOCEE** Bamboola
10 am-4 pm
Details: 24611779

● **Exhibition: Madras – Perspectives**, an exhibition of photographs by **Raul Cohn** and **Mohandass Radhakrishnan**. Inauguration on **August 21st** 6 pm followed by *Conversation*, a dialogue with Paul Cohn and Mohandas Radhakrishnan Bamboola
11 am-7 pm

August 21, Sunday

● **Chennai Heritage Tour: The Studios of Kollywood** – a tour by van and foot for two hours in Kodambakkam and Vadapalani. Tour includes going into some of the great studios as well. The tour will be conducted by **Mohan V Raman**, veteran actor, who has been studying the history of Tamil films and speaks frequently on the subject. The tour will conclude with breakfast. Contact:
editor@madrasmusings.com

● **Nature Walk** at Pallikaranai Marsh led by **Gnanaskandan K of Madras Naturalists' Society**. 7.00 am-8.30 am. Reporting time: 6.45 am
Contact: Vijay Kumar:
98400 90875.

NOTE: ● = Open to all, but terms apply. Limited seating at all venues. Freemasons' Hall: seating available only for one hundred persons, on first-come, first-served basis. All Chennai Heritage tours require booking and payment in advance. Limited numbers. Please make your bookings through email (editor@madrasmusings.com). Charges for all tours is Rs. 450 per head.

● **Heritage Walk:** Fort St. George led by **Vincent D'Souza**, Editor, *Mylapore Times*. Assemble in parking lot opposite main gate of Fort at 7.45 am. Carry ID cards, water, light snacks. Ends at Fort Museum (those who wish to visit the Museum may do so on their own - it opens at 10 am). This Walk is free.

Walk: Led by **Pradeep Chakravarthy** in the Bronze Gallery. From 3 p.m. to 3.45 p.m. For registration and other details contact pradeepandanusha@gmail.com.

● **Tree Walk:** Nizhal, the 'Tree NGO', leads a tree walk at **Semmozhi Poonga**. Registration: nizhal.shade@gmail.com. (4:30 to 5.30 p.m.)

● **Chennai Heritage Lecture:** The *Life of V. Krishnaswami Aiyar* – a death centenary tribute – by **Justice Prabha Sridevan**. Chamiers.
6.30 pm

● **Photowalks:** Royapettah Clock Tower to *Chepauk Palace* via Zam Bazaar. Assembly point: Royapettah Clock Tower 6.45-7 am. Sample the world-famous Lassi in the market. Organised by
Chennai Photowalks

Contact: Chandrachoodan Gopalakrishnan on phone: 98844-67463 or email chandrachoodan@gmail.com or call/text or leave a comment on the blog <http://www.selectiveamnesia.org>

● **Finals of the oratorical contest** (Prelims held on August 15th) **Villupattu** – *Netru, Indru, Naalai* by children of Besant Theosophical School (morning, at the Indira Nagar Youth Hostel) and **Koothu** – Lecture demonstration on *Influence of folk elements in today's art and culture in the capital of Tamil Nadu*. The Yellow Bus
Contact: Revathi
45511819
(7am to 8am)

August 22-28

● **Madras through the eyes of children:** An exhibition of photographs taken by children during the photowalk hosted by **YOCEE** The Children's Club, Mylapore
10 am-4 pm

Aug. 22-26

● **Mylapore Walk:** Starting point Luz Church and ends at Kapali temple (daily – 90 mins). Conducted by **K.J. Suriyanarayanan** Starts at 6.30 a.m.
Register: 98415 97750

August 22-24

● **Exhibition: Madras – Through the painter's brush**, organised by **India Post** and **Madras Heritage Lovers' Forum**, featuring coins, paintings, pen-and-ink drawings by **Manohar Devadoss**, and Madras memorabilia. Speakers at inauguration (2 p.m. on **August 22nd**): **S. Muthiah**, **Nalli Kuppuswamy**, **M.S. Ramanujan**, **Mrs. Y.G. Parthasarathy** and **A. Natarajan**. Also, a **competition for children**, *Why I like it*, based on essays, paintings and photographs of Madras. Also *kolam*, philatelic workshop, power point presentation and quiz. Padma Seshadri School, KK Nagar.
(Open from 9.30 a.m. to 3 p.m. on August 23rd and 24th).

August 22, Monday

Art Contest: An art contest for children
Themes: *Clean Green Chennai* – 5-10 years.
Places of Interest in Chennai – 11-16 years. Kalaa Manjari
4 p.m. to 6 p.m.
Contact: 24312676.

● **Presentation: Ancient Light: Madras through the eyes of a Photowalker** by Chandrachoodan Gopalakrishnan The Gallery Sri Parvati
6.30 pm

● **Chennai Heritage Lecture: Tamizh Theatre in Madras** by **Y.G. Mahendra** and **A.R. Srinivasan**. Taj Club House.
6.30 pm

August 23, Tuesday

● **Inter-school Power Point Presentation Contest:** Organised by **Mylapore Times** and supported by **L&T**. Srinivasa Sastri Hall.
9 am-3 pm

● **Presentation: Ancient Light: Madras through the eyes of a Photowalker** by **Chandrachoodan Gopalakrishnan**. Jaigopal Garodia School
Anna Nagar, 4 pm

Presentation: Madras: Its past and its present, by **S. Muthiah** and **D. Krishnan**. Organised by **The Public Relations Society of India**, Chennai Chapter. At Stella Maris College, 6 pm

Talk: Chennai, Crazy Chennai by **Sriram V.** Organised by Rotary Club, Madras South. For Rotarians and their guests only. TAG Centre.
6.00 pm

● **Talk: August 23rd Lesser known temples of Chennai** – some more by **Chitra Madhavan**. The Gallery Sri Parvati, 6.30 pm

● **Chennai Heritage Lecture: The story of Horse Racing in Madras** by **R. Mohan**. The Residency Towers. 6.30 pm

August 24, Wednesday

At Department of Indian Music, Room 32, University of Madras
S. Muthiah tells the *Madras University Story*
Sriram V. speaks on *Life and times of C. Saraswathi Bai Swarnamalya Ganesh* speaks on *If you don't have much, a little would do... but only if you have the money – Madras Presidency and Javalis* 11 am
11.30 am
12.00 noon

● **Book Release:** Release of C.P.R. Environmental Education Centre's *Survey of Air, Water and Noise Levels in Chennai City*.

● **Tour:** To **DakshinaChitra**. Led by **Chithra Madhavan**. Organised by **Namma Mylapore**. (For reservations and details: call 99414 50776 or mail nathanlatha@yahoo.com). 10.30 am to 12.30 pm

● **Chennai Heritage Lecture: Some Women Film Directors of Madras** by **Mohan V. Raman**. Hotel Savera.
6.30 pm

Asan Memorial College of Arts & Science, Pallikaranai is celebrating Madras Week with the following programmes:

Heritage visit: 1000-year old temple at Madambakkam (Dhenupuriswarar Temple). 9 am from Asan College

● **Photo Exhibition** - Glimpses of Chennai and pictures of the Heritage site visit (by the Viscom Dept.) at Asan College From 9.30 am to 4 pm

Intercollegiate Drawing Competition: Theme: Create a Currency/Coin/Stamp. 10 am-12 noon

● **Nalabagam** - Traditional Chennai Cuisine - preparation and sale, organised by the Hotel Management Dept, Asan College. Contact: Mr. Milton
9884143887

Quiz and Oratorical competitions for school children, organised by the Literary Club, Asan College To register for the contests contact Dr. Raja at drabelraja@gmail.com. Cell: 93800 77257 From 10 am-12 noon

August 25, Thursday

● **Talks & Presentation:** (5.30 pm) *New Madras Musings* by **Shreekumar Varma**; (6.15 pm) *Ancient Light: Madras through the eyes of a Photowalker* by **Chandrachoodan Gopalakrishnan**; (7 pm) *Kodambakkam is the centre of Madras*, in the 9th-12th centuries by **Pradeep Chakravarthy**. Organised by **Namma Arcot Road**. At Hotel Green Park
Vadapalani
5.30 p.m.

● **Storytelling: Storytelling by the Sea**, an evening of Rajah-Rani stories, especially about the sea, told by members of Chennai's sea-fishing communities, and others The World Storytelling Institute
6.30 pm-8 pm

● **Chennai Heritage Lecture: The Madras Art Scene. Geeta Doctor** in conversation with **Vishwanathan** (artist) and **Ashvin Rajagopal** (Ashvita Art Gallery) The Park Sheraton.
6.30 pm

August 26-28

Exhibition: Coins & memorabilia relating to Madras. Organised by **D.H. Rao and Madras Heritage Lovers' Forum.**
From 9.30 am-3 pm

Everwin Mat. School
Kolathur

- **Exhibition:** *Madras – Past, Present, Future*, as seen by students of architecture

School of Architecture
and Planning, Guindy

August 26, Friday

Quiz: An inter-club quiz conducted by V.V. Ramanan, the well-known quizmaster. Members of competing clubs welcome.

Madras Boat Club
7 pm

- **Chennai Heritage Lecture:** *The English Theatre in Madras* by **P.C. Ramakrishna.**

The Madras
Gymkhana Club
(Open to all).6.30 pm

The Department of Architecture, School of Architecture and Planning, Anna University invites entries from students of architecture in Tamil Nadu for *Chennai 2040 – Ideas Design Competition and Going, going, g...? Photography/Sketching/ Painting Competition.*

(Submission by
3.00 pm

August 25)

The Department of Architecture, School of Architecture and Planning, Anna University celebrates Madras Day with a day-long programme. Inaugural session: Speakers: **Dr. P. Mannar Jawahar** - Vice Chancellor, Anna University, Chennai and **S. Muthiah.**

11.00 am - 12.30 pm

Presentations: *Chettiar Heritage in George Town, Chennai* by **Dr. Raneer Vedamuthu**; *Architectural Styles of Madras - From the Colonial to the Post Modern* by **Dr. K.R. Sitalakshmi** and *Impact of Globalisation on the Architecture of Chennai* by **Dr. Suresh Kuppaswamy.**

1.30 pm - 3.00 pm

Panel Discussion: *Architecture of Chennai - Where is it heading?*

3.15 pm - 4.45 pm

August 27-28

Nature Walk (guided by **Dr. Susy Varughese**) and a visit to **IITM Heritage Centre** (guided by **Dr. Ajit Kumar Kolar**) 7.30 am to 8.30 am. Free bus facility from the IITM Main Entrance (the In Gate) to Gajendra Circle (GC). Please register with prakriti@iitm.ac.in

from 6.30-7.30 a.m.
Contact Prof. Ajit
Kolar
944400 8700.

August 27, Saturday

- **Chennai Heritage Tour:** *The Magnates of Mount Road* – a tour by van and foot for two and a half hours on how Mount Road developed as a downtown for the city with newspapers, jewellers, cinema theatres, restaurants and business houses making it their home. The tour will be conducted by **Sriram V**, Associate Editor of *Madras Musings*. The tour will conclude with breakfast.

Contact:
editor@madrasmusings.com

- **Heritage Walk:** A heritage walk in Alwarpet around the C.P. Ramaswami Aiyar Foundation campus. Organised by **Lollypop**, an activity centre for children in Alwarpet.

9 am.
For details, contact:
8754405577.

Quiz: *Madras Quiz in Tamil* for city Tamil medium schools. At P.S. School, Mylapore. Organised by **Mylapore Times** and supported by **L&T**. Schools must register at 98405 44629

P.S. School, Mylapore
2.00 pm

Walk: Led by **Pradeep Chakravarthy** in the Bronze Gallery. From 3 p.m. to 3.45 p.m. For registration and other details contact pradeepandanusha@gmail.com.

Government Museum,
Egmore

Cultural Programmes: *Experience your cultural heritage* – a programme for children (5 and above) to create exquisite products using the potter's wheel and palm leaves. Organised by **Spring and Zoom**, KK Nagar, with resource support from **DakshinaChitra**. Also, *Madras: Then and now*, a poster presentation by students.

Hotel Green Park
Vadapalani
3.30 – 5 p.m.
Contact 9940450495/
9940286740.

- **Chennai Heritage Lecture:** *The Anglo-Indians of Madras* by **Harry MacLure & Richard O' Connor.**

The GRT Grand.
7.00 pm

- **Exhibition:** Photos of different *Trees of Chennai*. Organised by **Nizhal**. Certificates are assured! Each photo must be 8"x11" and mounted. Last date for submission: **August 25th**. For further details and registration call 90030-11372/ 98402-21241 between 10 am-5 pm or write to nizhal.shade@gmail.com.

At Kadamba Galleria,
Royapettah
(Opp: Pilot Theatre)

- **Photowalks:** *Pachaiyappa's College to Taylor's Road*. Assembly point is the petrol pump next to St. George's School opposite Pachaiyappa's College, at 5.45 to 6 am. Contact: Chandrachoodan Gopalakrishnan on phone: 98844-67463 or email chandrachoodan@gmail.com or call/text or leave a comment on the blog <http://www.selectiveamnesia.org>

Organised by
Chennai Photowalks

August 28, Sunday

- **Chennai Heritage Tour:** *Meandering down Mint Street* – perhaps the city's longest street, it is one of the oldest thoroughfares. Come and see what makes it an area buzzing with life and is a melting pot of several communities. Tour by van and foot for two and a half hours conducted by **Sriram V**, Associate Editor of *Madras Musings*. Will conclude with breakfast.

Contact:
editor@madrasmusings.com

- **Tour:** Bronze Gallery, led by **Chithra Madhavan**. 10 a.m. to 12 noon (For reservations and details: call 99414 50776 or mail nathanlatha@yahoo.com).

Government Museum
Egmore

- **Heritage Walk:** Mount Road, led by Vincent D'Souza, Editor, *Mylapore Times*. The walk starts at *The Hindu's* gate, ends at Murray & Co. (Auction starts at 10.30 am here). Walk is free.

Register at
themadrasday@
gmail.com.
Walk starts at 8 am

- **Tree Walk:** **Nizhal**, the 'Tree NGO', leads a tree walk at Independence Day Park, near Valluvar Kottam. Registration: nizhal.shade@gmail.com.

4:30 to 5.30 pm

- **Quiz:** *Madras Open Quiz*. Open to teams of two, at P.S. School's Dakshinamurthy Hall. Organised by **Mylapore Times** and supported by **L&T**. Register at 98405 44629

Prelims at 2 pm.

- **Chennai Heritage Lecture:** **K.R.N. Menon** and **P. Unnikrishnan** in conversation with **Sushila Ravindranath** on *A Boxwallah's Madras*.

Amethyst
6.30 pm

Madras 372 Quiz for Schools with Quizmaster **Naveen Jayakumar**. Organised by **The Murugappa Group.**

Lady Andal School
Venkata Subba Rao
Auditorium, 2-6 pm

- **Photowalks:** *Thousand Lights to Tarapore Towers/Dams Road*. Assembly point Thousand Lights Mosque, 6.45-7 am. Walk along Mount Road. Contact: Chandrachoodan Gopalakrishnan on phone: 98844-67463 or email chandrachoodan@gmail.com or call/text or leave a comment on the blog <http://www.selectiveamnesia.org>

Organised by
Chennai Photowalks

August 29, Monday

Chennai Heritage & Freemasons Sight & Sound event – *A Tribute in Dance to Tamil Cinema* by **Radhika Shurajit and her troupe**

Freemasons Hall
6.30 pm

- **Film Show:** *Vintage Heritage* and **Arkay Convention Centre** present a film show made on Madras based locations featuring **Madras Bhashai** and a talk by film director, **Sp. Muthuraman.**

6.30 p.m.

August 30, Tuesday

Talk: *An Indian-American's impressions of Chennai* by **Anand Krishna**, Public Affairs Officer, American Consulate-General. Organised by Rotary Club of Madras South. For Rotarians and their guests only.

Hotel Saveria.
6.30 pm

- **Chennai Heritage & Freemasons Sight & Sound event** – **Sargam**, a children's choir led by **Sudha Raja**, will sing songs by composers from Chennai such as **Subramania Bharatiyaar**, **NV Srinivas**, **Sadagopan**, **Thamizhanban.**

Freemasons Hall
6.30 pm

August 31, Wednesday

Chennai Heritage & Freemasons Sight & Sound event – **Presentation:** *Raj Bhavan's of Tamil Nadu* by **S. Muthiah**

Freemasons Hall
6.30 pm

September 1, Thursday

Chennai Heritage & Freemasons Sight & Sound event – Students of the **Department of Indian Music, University of Madras**, sing Tyagaraja's work on Kovur and Tiruvottriyur (both suburbs of Madras)

Freemasons Hall
6.30 pm

September 2, Friday

Chennai Heritage & Freemasons Sight & Sound event – **Presentation:** *Humour in Tamil Cinema over the Ages* by **Mohan Ramani**

Freemasons Hall
6.30 pm

September 3, Saturday

Chennai Heritage & Freemasons Sight & Sound event – Stand-up comedy night by **Evam's** team. Event producer – **Bhargav Ramakrishnan**

Freemasons Hall
6.30 pm

September 4, Sunday

Chennai Heritage & Freemasons Sight & Sound event – *Madras Namma Madras*, a rehearsed reading by **Theatre Impresario** who find much humour in Madras.

Freemasons Hall
6.30 pm

Other Walks

Chennai Heritage is also organising two other Walks, one along the **Marina** and the other in **Park Town**. Both Walks will be available on **August 20th, 21st, 27th & 28th**, starting at 6.30 a.m. The Marina Walks are by van and foot for an hour and a half, beginning at the Lighthouse and ending at the War Memorial and back. They will be led by **Nandini Arun**, **Shama Prasanna** and **Sundari Sidhartha**. The Park Town Walks, mostly by van for about 2 hours, will begin at the SDAT Complex opposite Egmore Station and proceed to *Ripon Building*, *My Ladye's Garden* and back, and will be led by **Lakshmi Kishore**, **Kavita Srinath** and **Sundari Sidhartha**. Rs.200 per head for each Walk. For more information and registration for both the Walks, call Susha Natraj 98840 72433 or email susha1952@yahoo.co.in

Other Programmes

INTACH, Chennai is hosting several programmes during Madras Week 2011. Schools and Colleges will act as Hubs in their neighbourhood. Themes: (1) Conservation of Heritage; (2) Coins, Currency and Stamps

Conservation: 1) **Debate:** *Impact of Metro/Mono Rails on Heritage*; 2) Representation of a Conservation Project; 3) **Heritage Walks** conducted by students in their locality; 4) Conservation represented through photo exhibition, skits, *villupattu* and composed poems; 5) **Essay Contest:** Topic: *Is Mono Rail our Future Heritage?* 800 words..language English/Tamil

Coins, Currency, Stamps: 1. Exhibitions; 2. Creative art; 3. Quiz

Programme for NGOs: Arrangements by **Altrusa**, Madras Chapter. "Reaching out in friendship...providing a helping hand to our rural folk from Chennai." **Highlight:** Presentation of *Madras Week* song by students of **Brihaddwani** composed under the guidance of **Anil Srinivasan**, Director, **Brihaddwani**. I Presentation of booklets on Chennai to 100 schools and institutions.

Dates and Venues to be announced on the Web. For details contact: **Prema Kasturi:** 43060479; **Bhuvanawari:** 9840021332; **Nimmi:** 9841788038 Email: prema1941@gmail.com

Madras Week Contests

1. **Mylapore Times**, with support of **L&T**, is organising a contest for students of city schools in which teams of three will choose a heritage spot/ trend/milestone, research, record and jot down all that helps to create a great **Power Point production**. The teams will then meet on **August 23rd** at **Srinivasa Sastri Hall**, Luz, Mylapore, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Prize distribution at 3 p.m. (approx.). Entry has to be made at the school level. Information at www.themadrasday.in or 98405 44629.

2. **Frames of Chennai – Documentaries on our City.** Invitation to film makers / students to produce films in English / Tamil on Chennai. About its people and places, its landmarks and its institutions, its life-trends and its communities. The selected films will be screened at a festival in September.

A funding of Rs. 12,000 to four film-makers to make their docu-film is available. Selection is on submission of any form of creative material that proves your interest in the city / film documentation / media. State in 100 words the subject on Chennai you would like to document on film. Last for submission: **August 25th** More details on: www.themadrasday.in. Organised by **Mylapore Times & L&T**.

3. **Drawing and Letter Writing Contests: Drawing competition:** theme *My Chennai*. Open to children in two age groups 5-10 years and 11-15 years. Organised by **YOCEE** (www.yocce.in). Post your entries to YOCEE. **Letter Writing Contest:** Write a letter inviting your friend to Chennai to visit places of interest and say why you recommend the places. Letters to be written only on an Inland Letter. Open to children 10-15 years.

More details on
www.yocce.in
Last date:
August 24

List of Venues

Amethyst: White's Road, Royapettah (entrance next to Corporation Bank); **Asan Memorial Senior Secondary School:** Egmore; **Asan Memorial College of Arts & Science:** Velachery - Tambaram Road, Jaladampet, Pallikarai; **Bamboola,** 73, Venkata Krishna Road, R.A. Puram; **Chamiers:** Chamiers Road (near Park Sheraton); **Children's Club,** 213 (96), V.M. Street, Mylapore; **C.P. Ramaswamy Aiyar Foundation:** Eldam's Road, Alwarpet; **DakshinaChitra:** East Coast Road, Muttukadu; **Everwin Matriculation School:** 12, Red Hills Road Kolathur Chennai, 600099; **Freemasons' Hall:** Ethiraj Salai, Egmore; **Gallery Sri Parvati:** Eldam's Road, Alwarpet; **GRT Grand:** 120, Sir Thyagaraya Road, T. Nagar; **Hotel Green Park:** Vadapalani; **Hotel Saveria:** Dr. Radhakrishnan Salai; **INTACH Office:** For details contact: **Dr. Prema Kasturi** (E-Mail: prema_kasturi79@yahoo.com; prema1941@gmail.com and Tel.No. 43060479) or **Nimmi:** 9841788038 or **Bhuvanawari:** 9840021332; **Jaigopal Garodia Senior Secondary School:** New No.6/ Old No. 44, 7th Street, Anna Nagar; **Kalaa Manjari:** 6/12, First Street, Venus Colony, Alwarpet; **Mutha Venkata Subbarao Auditorium:** Harrington Road, Chetpet; **Raja Muthiah Research Library:** Taramani; **Srinivasa Sastri Hall:** Luz; **Studio Palazzo:** 7 Seethamma Road, Alwarpet; **TAG Centre:** No. 69, T.T.K. Road, Alwarpet; **Taj Club House:** No. 2, Club House Road; **The Yellow Bus:** E-35/2, 2nd Avenue, Besant Nagar; **The Residency Towers:** Sir Thyagaraya Road, T. Nagar; **YOCEE:** 15, Karpagam Garden First Main Road, Adyar, Chennai 600 020.

GETTING ABOUT MADRAS

Back to buses – but will it work?

With traffic congestion only increasing, Government, which rarely moves unless forced to, has begun mulling over alternative proposals to enable activate mass rapid transport. While the Metro Rail is developing fast and there is talk of reviving the Monorail, another idea, long on the back-burner, has also been dusted and put up for consideration: exclusive corridors, also known as Bus Rapid Transport System (BRTS). While this is to the good, it must not be forgotten the BRTS has been mooted several times and each time bus lanes have been sacrificed to enable cars to speed along. So will it translate into reality this time?

A BRTS proposal was made as early as in 1967 and the most recent proposal was in 2009 when such a system was planned along the Lighthouse-Adyar-IT corridor-Kundrathur-Madhuravoyal-Ennore-Vyasarpadi-Chennai Port-Lighthouse route, a distance of 70 km. It was expected to be extended to

cover 110 km in its final phase. The plan was opposed on several counts, not the least being the problem of those who were likely to be displaced. Somewhere along the line, the BRTS was transformed into an elevated road corridor (read, meant to benefit private vehicles) and a feasibility study was initiated in 2010. It is not clear if a final report was ever produced.

With over 50 per cent of the city's passenger traffic on arterial roads being catered to by

Bogota, a city that has made a success of its BRTS, said in a speech in Chennai a couple of years ago that buses were any day preferable to an underground Metro network. Closer home, Ahmadabad has already successfully implemented the BRTS.

In a related development, the State Government has also come out in favour of operating minibuses on 100 different routes in the city, especially covering the outlying areas, which are not well served by the

• By A Special Correspondent

the buses of the Metropolitan Transport Corporation, it has become clear to the powers-that-be that the interests of those using buses cannot be overlooked. Hence this sudden revival of interest in buses. With bus speeds now down to 6 kmph, ways and means are being looked at to improve their standing as suitable transport alternatives. And it has been proposed that a BRTS service ought to be implemented along the IT Expressway aka Rajiv Gandhi Salai, a road that incidentally lives up to its promise of providing a world-class travel experience only in the first 3 km of its length. Interestingly, a study has revealed that a good BRTS could cater to the same number of passengers as a Metro Rail network, with much less difficulty and investment in setting it up. The mayor of

MTC. Anna University has been entrusted with the task of preparing a feasibility study. Red Hills, Tiruvottriyur, Tambaram and Kelambakkam are a few areas that are expected to benefit. These minibuses will be operated by the MTC. However, it must be pointed out that minibuses are notorious for lane violations and their introduction can only mean added chaos.

For that matter, none of these solutions is going to reduce congestion in any way. For one, the rank indiscipline that prevails on the roads (and this includes everyone from the pedestrian upwards) is a major cause. Secondly, with no curbs being placed on the addition of vehicles to the city's roads, any solution will soon come face to face with a saturation point. What after that?

Can we develop walkable communities?

Sixtyfive-year-old Chokkalingam was killed on the spot on the Grand Southern Trunk Road in Pallavaram when he was knocked down by an unknown vehicle in a hit-and-run accident. Such reports are published in the newspapers all over the country everyday. About 55 per cent of the persons killed on the road in the country are pedestrians. Unfortunately, the problems of pedestrians are not considered seriously by the authorities concerned. On the other hand, pedestrians also tend to be a careless lot; they do not follow traffic rules, they are always in a hurry, and though it is dangerous, they swerve in and out through the traffic.

Though belated, there is a growing realisation that much of the planning work at present is 'vehicle oriented' and is at the expense of pedestrians, who are reduced to a suffering majority. This situation would not have arisen if the practice of regarding the pedestrian as a 'traffic unit' was followed. It is, therefore, imperative to evolve suitable measures based on systematic surveys of both inventory of facilities and pedestrian counts in order to ensure efficiency, comfort and safety in pedestrian movements and also smooth and safe flow of vehicular traffic.

There is an inspiring trend in The Netherlands and a few other countries to improve overall walkable conditions in selected areas, and thus develop walkable communities. A walkable community makes a residential area or a neighbourhood a place where many people may walk, ride bicycles and use the transit facilities, and also where drivers of cars and other vehicles moderate their behaviour in such a way that it does not affect the environment and safety of the area concerned. Thus, it encourages people to walk safely and in peace. Some of the ways of improving the walkability of an area include:

- i) Reallocation of road space to increase the part of the right-of-way allocated to pedestrians.
- ii) Design shorter blocks and narrower streets and develop minimum infrastructure in a pedestrian scale.
- iii) Provide street furniture and pedestrian facilities such as benches, lawns, flower beds, pedestrian-oriented street lighting, areas protected from rain, and other such facilities.
- iv) Create more pedestrian-oriented streetscapes and, thus, encourage livable communities.
- v) Traffic calming, vehicle restrictions and speed reductions.
- vi) Develop walkable shopping areas and recreational places.
- vii) Improve overall the quantity, quality and connectivity of sidewalks, cross-walks and paths.

It is stressed that the pedestrian should be given a place of eminence in planning at city-level similar to that of motor vehicular traffic. This can be achieved not only by increasingly fitting the whole mechanism of pedestrian facilities into the overall pattern of traffic circulation, but also by a series of intensive education and enforcement measures. On the other hand, at the level of residential areas, neighbourhoods, recreational areas and environmental areas, there is an urgent need to have a bold approach of giving priority to pedestrians over motor vehicles, and develop facilities in a human scale to en-

(Continued on page 10)

Madras Musings on the web

To reach out to as many readers as possible who share our keen interest in Madras that is Chennai, and in response to requests from many well-wishers – especially from outside Chennai and abroad who receive their postal copies very late – for an online edition. *Madras Musings* is now on the web at www.madrasmusings.com

THE EDITOR

A NO-MAN'S-LAND BY THE IT CORRIDOR

(Continued from page 1)

deliberation, agreed that it did fall within his zone's purview, but...! And after many phone calls and many days, the official in Zone IX indicated that he would send a 'gang' to immediately clean up the area. Ah, we all heaved a sigh of relief, in eager anticipation of the area's better fortunes. But a week later, on a monitoring visit, my heart sank... there was more litter – of different composition, though. Obviously, they didn't imagine we would follow up!

Truth is, the left hand side stretch is neglected all along the IT Corridor, but the litter is the maximum at the MRTS Kasturba station corner since it is where floating populations come and go. A contract worker employed by the Railway says, "We clean up within our borders. Why should we be expected to clean up the litter thrown around by pedestrians who board buses outside the station? Also, TNRDC labourers regularly dump the rubbish cleared on their roads on this stretch, because there is

nobody to question!" He smiles knowingly at all the sweet-smelling, white collared professionals who are deftly hopping onto their company's vehicles.

24-year-old Arvind was talking into his hands-free mobile near a conglomerated mess beside the roadside, when I asked him if it bothered him. "Oh, well, it does sometimes, but who has the time to follow up with the powers-that-be, and I don't think they will even if I do, anyway!" he shrugged the issue off. Auto driver Muniswamy, busy soliciting passengers for his

share auto, is apologetic, "*Paatha varuthamathan irrukku, naanga enna pannalam?* (I do feel sad when I see this, but what can I do?)."

Lending a rare beauty and colour to the dismal ambience all around, however, are the trees – the *Thaneerkai* in orange bloom, and the *Manjal Konmai* in brilliant yellow along with the *Thangapetti*. The *Punnai* saplings are lovely strapping youngsters, and the *Iyalvagai* and the *Mandharai* will burst into flower in a month or so! As for the pretty pink *Arali* buds

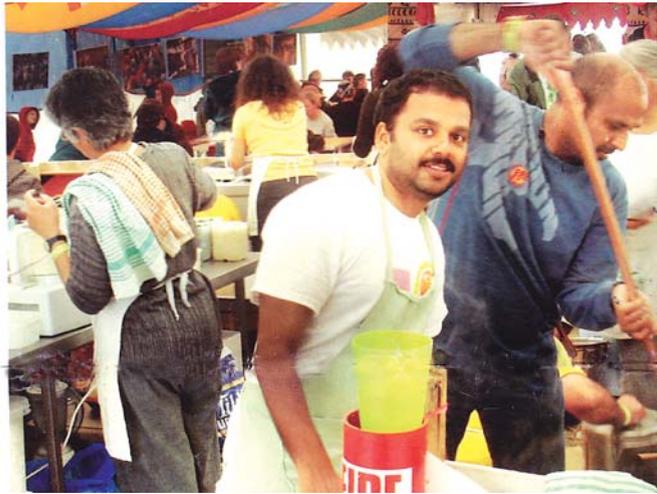
which bloom throughout, they are greedily plucked by all the early morning walkers for their home poojas, denying them to the butterflies. Thankfully, at least the birds have a quiet place to rest this side of the magnificent expressway ... in no man's land!

Now the NGO is trying to put in a system for checking on the station front by a volunteer and by another volunteer who will call and keep reminding the official to send his 'gang', which is a bit too much. Is there any other option?

Sowing the seeds of change

(Continued from page 2)

"Rural poverty boils down to land ownership and bonded labour. There is a situation that exists where anything you give to the poor ends up benefiting the rich." There is also a worry when mutual credit schemes have to deposit their accumulated savings in a commercial bank for safekeeping, and this money is then inadvertently used to finance schemes outside of the rural areas. This displaces potential rural economic activity. In the four decades he's been visiting India, he says, there's been plenty of change for good – for example, mobile phones, watches, and more auto-rickshaws in the rural areas. "But," he says, "I'm not sure how civic organisation has improved. The caste system is much the same." Alan says, "The focus for us has to be on



Madras Café caters to visitors at WOMAD, the World of Music & Dance Festival held every year near Malmesbury, England.

the tragedies – though the condition of women has improved, there is still a significant amount of abuse and exploitation."

The Violence Against Women campaign is run by the

Village Services Trust in Theni. Bryan's connection with the trust is a longstanding one. It's where he first began as an 18-year-old back in 1968. It has empowered Dalit women to understand their rights (Do-

mestic Violence Act 2005) and to be able to complain through the right channels.

Bryan's wish is to arrange a visit with the education officer of the local police force in Essex to visit the campaign in Theni, "There's a lot the British system could learn from the way this campaign has been run. Rural Indian women now understand their reproductive rights and matters relating to their sexual health." And perhaps there's the possibility of a reciprocal visit from Theni to the UK.

The stark realities of life in rural India continue to be fundamental – absentee doctors, lack of medicine and corruption in the country's health service. Bryan believes that NGOs doing good work in these regions will continue to need the support they get from foreign charities such as Madras Café / Action Village India and those needs will have to be met – (Courtesy: Grassroots).



- August 20-28: Onam festivities (at DakshinaChitra).
- August 20-September 15: Exhibition of paintings by Thejo Menon (at DakshinaChitra).
- August & September: A retrospective – Artist Perumal (at DakshinaChitra).
- DakshinaChitra workshops for both adults and children. Transport to DakshinaChitra is available from the MCF office at Besant Nagar.
- Timings for adults: 10.00 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.
- Timings for children: 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.
- Call Ms. Lakshmi at 98417 77779 for more details and to register.
- For adults
- August 19-21: Kerala mural painting
- August 27: Traditional desserts of Kerala



- August 28: Palm leaf Ganesha making
- September 3, 4: Recycled paper products
- September 24, 25: Macreme
- For children
- September 10, 11: Residential theatre art (age 8-13)
- September 17: Pyrography (age 8-14)

LIL MADRAS GIRL AT THE CHILDREN'S PARK

(Continued from page 4)

and enclosure in a bid to help them see the animals more closely!

However, *Samosa* Family took the cake! Or *samosa*, however you may like to phrase it! The parking lot is adjacent to

the forest area where you will find free roaming deer. A family which was leaving in a fancy sedan insisted on sharing their *samosas* with a gentle looking deer with rather formidable antlers. After the *samosas* were over, the deer, which clearly wanted more, kept circling their

car and proceeded to do an *Oliver Twist* on them. The scared look on their faces was priceless!

Why do parents encourage their children to touch the animals and disobey the instructions on the signage? Wonder who will receive a tranquilliser dart if the animal was to retaliate. Not the pesky human, for sure.

Note to parents: Please do take your children to this wonderful park. There is no charge for children below the age of 10 and the adults are charged a nominal fee of Rs.10. How wonderful to have the opportunity to spend an evening in the midst of nature and well protected animals in our very own city.

Readers, do share your raves, rants, waves and wants with Madras Mom at madrasmom@gmail.com.

If you know of any relevant place of interest or activity that you would like Madras Mom to write about, please do mail her at the above address.

Developing walkable communities?

(Continued from page 9)

courage the development of 'walkable communities'. Such a compact, fresh and invigorating community will help people enjoy their streets, parks, shopping areas, plazas and other physi-

cal spaces. Is it possible to develop such a community in our country? Or will it remain a dream?

Dr. N.S. Srinivasan
Chairman, Transport Advisory Forum, Chennai

Answers to Quiz

1. Japan; 2. The Space Shuttle programme; 3. Tour de France; 4. Amy Winehouse; 5. Alfred Hitchcock; 6. Jenson Button; 7. Eritrea; 8. Higgs Boson; 9. Nirupama Rao; 10. Lumbini, the birthplace of Gautam the Buddha.

* * *

11. Major Thomas Fiott de Havilland; 12. Plague; 13. Vedagiriswarar; 14. Sekkilar of *Periyapuranam* fame; 15. Covelong; 16. The bridge over the Cooum from Komaleswaranpet to Mount Road; 17. Higginbotham's and Associated Printers; 18. Chinna Malai or Little Mount; 19. Denver; 20. *Maaveeran*.

Madras Musings is supported as a public service by the following organisations

Amalgamations Group

ASHOK LEYLAND
ENGINEERING YOUR TOMORROWS

Bata India Limited

Brakes India Limited

CavinKare

Dax Networks
Go Placidly

FLSMIDTH
F.L. Smidth Limited

GRUNDFOS

THE HINDU
The Hindu Group of Publications

KONICA
COLOR LAB AND STUDIO

LARSEN & TOUBRO
It's all about Imaginering

LOKAVANI

murugappa

NIPPO
BATTERIES TORCHES

Rane
Rane Group

SAINT-GOBAIN
The future of glass. Since 1665.

SANMAR

SUNDARAM FINANCE
Enduring values. New age thinking.

Sundram Fasteners Limited

TAJ
Hotels Resorts and Palaces

TATA
TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES

TVS
TVS MOTOR COMPANY

UCAL
UCAL AUTO PRIVATE LIMITED

YAMAHA
MUSIC SQUARE

Since 1856,
patently leaders
— A WELLWISHER

GETTING ABOUT MADRAS

Back to buses – but will it work?

With traffic congestion only increasing, Government, which rarely moves unless forced to, has begun mulling over alternative proposals to enable activate mass rapid transport. While the Metro Rail is developing fast and there is talk of reviving the Monorail, another idea, long on the back-burner, has also been dusted and put up for consideration: exclusive corridors, also known as Bus Rapid Transport System (BRTS). While this is to the good, it must not be forgotten the BRTS has been mooted several times and each time bus lanes have been sacrificed to enable cars to speed along. So will it translate into reality this time?

A BRTS proposal was made as early as in 1967 and the most recent proposal was in 2009 when such a system was planned along the Lighthouse-Adyar-IT corridor-Kundrathur-Madhuravoyal-Ennore-Vyasarpadi-Chennai Port-Lighthouse route, a distance of 70 km. It was expected to be extended to

cover 110 km in its final phase. The plan was opposed on several counts, not the least being the problem of those who were likely to be displaced. Somewhere along the line, the BRTS was transformed into an elevated road corridor (read, meant to benefit private vehicles) and a feasibility study was initiated in 2010. It is not clear if a final report was ever produced.

With over 50 per cent of the city's passenger traffic on arterial roads being catered to by

Bogota, a city that has made a success of its BRTS, said in a speech in Chennai a couple of years ago that buses were any day preferable to an underground Metro network. Closer home, Ahmadabad has already successfully implemented the BRTS.

In a related development, the State Government has also come out in favour of operating minibuses on 100 different routes in the city, especially covering the outlying areas, which are not well served by the

• By A Special Correspondent

the buses of the Metropolitan Transport Corporation, it has become clear to the powers-that-be that the interests of those using buses cannot be overlooked. Hence this sudden revival of interest in buses. With bus speeds now down to 6 kmph, ways and means are being looked at to improve their standing as suitable transport alternatives. And it has been proposed that a BRTS service ought to be implemented along the IT Expressway aka Rajiv Gandhi Salai, a road that incidentally lives up to its promise of providing a world-class travel experience only in the first 3 km of its length. Interestingly, a study has revealed that a good BRTS could cater to the same number of passengers as a Metro Rail network, with much less difficulty and investment in setting it up. The mayor of

MTC. Anna University has been entrusted with the task of preparing a feasibility study. Red Hills, Tiruvottriyur, Tambaram and Kelambakkam are a few areas that are expected to benefit. These minibuses will be operated by the MTC. However, it must be pointed out that minibuses are notorious for lane violations and their introduction can only mean added chaos.

For that matter, none of these solutions is going to reduce congestion in any way. For one, the rank indiscipline that prevails on the roads (and this includes everyone from the pedestrian upwards) is a major cause. Secondly, with no curbs being placed on the addition of vehicles to the city's roads, any solution will soon come face to face with a saturation point. What after that?

Can we develop walkable communities?

Sixtyfive-year-old Chokkalingam was killed on the spot on the Grand Southern Trunk Road in Pallavaram when he was knocked down by an unknown vehicle in a hit-and-run accident. Such reports are published in the newspapers all over the country everyday. About 55 per cent of the persons killed on the road in the country are pedestrians. Unfortunately, the problems of pedestrians are not considered seriously by the authorities concerned. On the other hand, pedestrians also tend to be a careless lot; they do not follow traffic rules, they are always in a hurry, and though it is dangerous, they swerve in and out through the traffic.

Though belated, there is a growing realisation that much of the planning work at present is 'vehicle oriented' and is at the expense of pedestrians, who are reduced to a suffering majority. This situation would not have arisen if the practice of regarding the pedestrian as a 'traffic unit' was followed. It is, therefore, imperative to evolve suitable measures based on systematic surveys of both inventory of facilities and pedestrian counts in order to ensure efficiency, comfort and safety in pedestrian movements and also smooth and safe flow of vehicular traffic.

There is an inspiring trend in The Netherlands and a few other countries to improve overall walkable conditions in selected areas, and thus develop walkable communities. A walkable community makes a residential area or a neighbourhood a place where many people may walk, ride bicycles and use the transit facilities, and also where drivers of cars and other vehicles moderate their behaviour in such a way that it does not affect the environment and safety of the area concerned. Thus, it encourages people to walk safely and in peace. Some of the ways of improving the walkability of an area include:

- i) Reallocation of road space to increase the part of the right-of-way allocated to pedestrians.
- ii) Design shorter blocks and narrower streets and develop minimum infrastructure in a pedestrian scale.
- iii) Provide street furniture and pedestrian facilities such as benches, lawns, flower beds, pedestrian-oriented street lighting, areas protected from rain, and other such facilities.
- iv) Create more pedestrian-oriented streetscapes and, thus, encourage livable communities.
- v) Traffic calming, vehicle restrictions and speed reductions.
- vi) Develop walkable shopping areas and recreational places.
- vii) Improve overall the quantity, quality and connectivity of sidewalks, cross-walks and paths.

It is stressed that the pedestrian should be given a place of eminence in planning at city-level similar to that of motor vehicular traffic. This can be achieved not only by increasingly fitting the whole mechanism of pedestrian facilities into the overall pattern of traffic circulation, but also by a series of intensive education and enforcement measures. On the other hand, at the level of residential areas, neighbourhoods, recreational areas and environmental areas, there is an urgent need to have a bold approach of giving priority to pedestrians over motor vehicles, and develop facilities in a human scale to en-

(Continued on page 10)

Madras Musings on the web

To reach out to as many readers as possible who share our keen interest in Madras that is Chennai, and in response to requests from many well-wishers – especially from outside Chennai and abroad who receive their postal copies very late – for an online edition. *Madras Musings* is now on the web at www.madrasmusings.com

THE EDITOR

A NO-MAN'S-LAND BY THE IT CORRIDOR

(Continued from page 1)

deliberation, agreed that it did fall within his zone's purview, but...! And after many phone calls and many days, the official in Zone IX indicated that he would send a 'gang' to immediately clean up the area. Ah, we all heaved a sigh of relief, in eager anticipation of the area's better fortunes. But a week later, on a monitoring visit, my heart sank... there was more litter – of different composition, though. Obviously, they didn't imagine we would follow up!

Truth is, the left hand side stretch is neglected all along the IT Corridor, but the litter is the maximum at the MRTS Kasturba station corner since it is where floating populations come and go. A contract worker employed by the Railway says, "We clean up within our borders. Why should we be expected to clean up the litter thrown around by pedestrians who board buses outside the station? Also, TNRDC labourers regularly dump the rubbish cleared on their roads on this stretch, because there is

nobody to question!" He smiles knowingly at all the sweet-smelling, white collared professionals who are deftly hopping onto their company's vehicles.

24-year-old Arvind was talking into his hands-free mobile near a conglomerated mess beside the roadside, when I asked him if it bothered him. "Oh, well, it does sometimes, but who has the time to follow up with the powers-that-be, and I don't think they will even if I do, anyway!" he shrugged the issue off. Auto driver Muniswamy, busy soliciting passengers for his

share auto, is apologetic, "*Paatha varuthamathan irrukku, naanga enna pannalam?* (I do feel sad when I see this, but what can I do?)."

Lending a rare beauty and colour to the dismal ambience all around, however, are the trees – the *Thaneerkai* in orange bloom, and the *Manjal Konmai* in brilliant yellow along with the *Thangapetti*. The *Punnai* saplings are lovely strapping youngsters, and the *Iyalvagai* and the *Mandharai* will burst into flower in a month or so! As for the pretty pink *Arali* buds

which bloom throughout, they are greedily plucked by all the early morning walkers for their home poojas, denying them to the butterflies. Thankfully, at least the birds have a quiet place to rest this side of the magnificent expressway ... in no man's land!

Now the NGO is trying to put in a system for checking on the station front by a volunteer and by another volunteer who will call and keep reminding the official to send his 'gang', which is a bit too much. Is there any other option?