

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS MUSINGS

Vol. XXI No. 20

February 1-15, 2012

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"Somehow I get the feeling that I have touched upon a touchy subject in my speech!"

### A Touch Touchy?

63 years, eh?  
Of being what the dictionary defines as "a state in which the supreme power rests in the body of citizens entitled to vote...."

Nice.  
But you seem worried over your particular allotment of citizens. You think they're increasingly becoming like those 'mimosa pudica' plants?

Like thotta sinigi?  
There seems to be a lot of touchiness around these days.

Here a 'strong objection'; there a 'taking exception to'; and, yonder, the media favourite, 'sentiments' being 'hurt'....

In addition, 'They' from 'There' displaying a distinct need to scoff at a people who, dismally unable to guarantee basic necessities, dare to dream grand. Paradoxes – luxury apartments vis-a-vis the homeless; information desks lacking information; cyber cities where you can't get online; oodles of cell phones but pathetically few toilets – are constantly written about.

Well, constructive criticism vs. mere carping – citizens must learn to tell the difference.

Learn to accept the former, and ignore the latter.

Know something?  
Sometimes resentment is but a disguised compliment.

Look, you're still very young. And your people are loud, emotional, undisciplined and easily misled – but they care deeply for you.

Despite a huge chunk of ....er....'notable' exceptions, there really are heroes within. More than a billion of them, actually.

You, and they, will come through.

Ranjitha Ashok

## More fiery requiems for heritage buildings...

(By A Special Correspondent)

Earlier last month, when the city was celebrating Pongal, a 250-year-old part of its history went up in flames. Historic Chepauk Palace, the first building in the Indo-Saracenic style, was partially gutted by a fire. Years of neglect and poor maintenance had taken their toll, though the authorities naturally denied all such charges. If that was not bad enough, what followed thereafter was even worse, clearly indicating that our Government has no policy or action plan when it comes to dealing with our heritage. And this is at a time when the common man is waking up to the necessity of protecting our historic buildings and is demanding action (see related story).

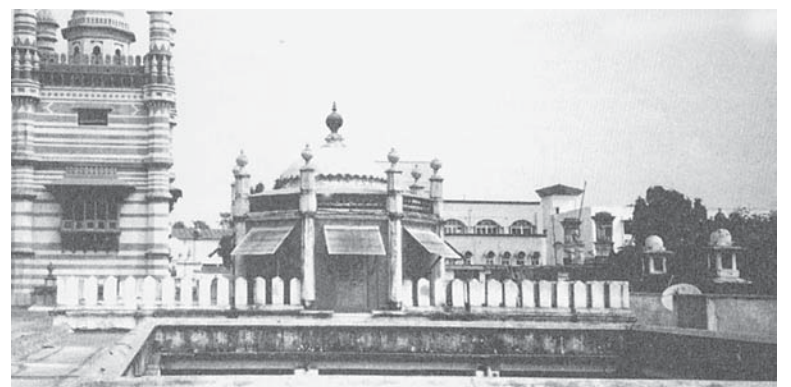
Readers of *Madras Musings* will be no strangers to the poor maintenance at Chepauk. This publication not so long ago carried a detailed article on the subject, complete with photographs. Piles of files, steel cupboards, falling windows, squatters under the entrance portico, garbage bins situated wherever they may please, arbitrarily constructed toilets, and shoddy electric wiring, about sums it all up. Surely all this was a perfect recipe for such a disaster. Even then it had been reported that a part of the roof had caved in and some of the offices in the precinct had been relocated. Since then no action was taken on repairing the building and the fire came as a convenient excuse for those wanting to demolish the structure and erect a multi-storied edifice in its place.

Experts had not been called in and nobody had as yet assessed the damage when, to everyone's surprise, the decision to demolish was announced by the PWD Minister, almost before the fire, which sadly consumed one life, could be put out. The heritage lobby, conservationists and, above all, the Prince of Arcot raised their voices against this and a three-man committee was appointed to go into the question whether what remained could be preserved and what had been destroyed could be rebuilt. Here

(Continued on page 6)



A portion of the Kalas/Khalsa Mahal (above) and a clearer picture of its dome – kalasam/kalasa (below).



## ... They're wake-up calls that public are responding to

The last few weeks have been gloomy on the heritage front. First, there was the Chepauk Palace fire, then came the less disastrous fire at *Agurchand Mansions*, the first 100-foot building on Mount Road. The *Madrassa-e-Azam* was reported to be in a state of near collapse and at the GPO a part of the roof caved in. But like the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel, it would appear that matters are not all that bad, for the public appears to be waking up to its heritage. That there is a groundswell in favour of preservation and restoration is now evident from recent action, but equally clear is that in the absence of proper guidelines on what can be done, such enthusiasm may soon result in misguided action.

(Also see page 2)

That there is a gradual strengthening of the heritage movement is clear from a whole host of recent events. The Government, it is learnt, has given the go ahead for the proper restoration of the Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in George

### • by The Editor

Town. This is being done with an accredited conservation expert at the helm. At the *Madrassa-e-Azam*, those in charge would still like to preserve the place and are looking for guidance. Restoration at the *Victoria Public Hall* and *Ripon Building*, it is understood, is proceeding apace and plans are afoot for formal re-openings in the next few months. Those in

power, always experts at reading public opinion, were quick enough to dissociate themselves from the hasty pronouncement of demolition and called for a panel to study Chepauk Palace. That the composition of the committee is questionable is a different matter altogether. After the fire at *Agurchand Mansions*, it has emerged that owner and tenants alike have expressed unanimously their desire to restore the heritage building. And in the case of the *Gokhale Hall*, the High Court has ordered the restoration of the building. That this was in response to public interest litigation petitions is another instance of growing heritage awareness.

What is needed at this stage is proper guidance on what can

(Continued on page 3)



# What rule-book says on City's heritage buildings

●Ever since Khalsa/Kalas Mahal was stricken with fire there has been a focus on the City's heritage and what we in Chennai are, or are not, doing to safeguard it. In this context, these excerpts focussing on the Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority's (CMDA's) role in heritage preservation should have readers asking how much of what it enunciates is acted upon by it.

Your Editor is a member of the Second Master Plan (SMP) Land Use and Environment Committee which, as far as he recalls, met three times in 2009 and 2010 and, though not dissolved, has not met, to the best of his knowledge, since December 2010. This Committee should have been naming the Heritage Conservation Committee, but the CMDA officials took it upon themselves to do it and informed the Committee of the list that was being sent to Government and the High Court, which had ordered its appointment.

At the third meeting, an Approach Paper on the preparation of Detailed Development Plans (DDP) in the Chennai Metropolitan Area was presented by the CMDA. The Tamil Nadu Town and Country Planning Act, 1971 states that preparation of DDPs is one of the functions of the CMDA. The lengthy presentation offered little time for discussion but, among other things, the paper stressed that the statutory provisions of the TNTCP Act stated, *inter alia*:

"As per Section 20 of the Act, a DDP may propose or provide for all or any of the following matters, namely:

- 7 (m) the demarcation of places or objects and buildings of archaeological or historical interest or natural scenic beauty or actually used for religious purposes or regarded by the public with veneration, or the protection of canal, tank or river side, coastal areas and other places of natural or landscape beauty;
- (n) the imposition of conditions and restrictions in regard to the character, density, architectural features and height of buildings, the building or control lines for roads, railway lines and power supply lines and the purposes to which buildings or specified areas may or may not be appropriated and the provision and maintenance of sufficient open spaces about buildings;
- (o) the advance to the owners of land or buildings comprised within the detailed development plan upon such terms and conditions as may be provided by the said plan, of the whole or part of the amount required for the erection of buildings or for carrying out the works, alterations or improvements in accordance with the DDP."

Expanding on what was stated in the TNTCP Act, the paper spelt out in greater detail the provisions of the recommended Detailed Development Plan. The corresponding regulations stated:

- "17(m) The demarcation of places or objects and buildings of archaeological or historical interest, of natural scenic beauty or actually used for religious purposes or regarded by the public with veneration, or the protection of canal, tank or river side, coastal areas and other places of natural or landscape beauty.
- (n) the imposition of conditions and restrictions in regard to the character, density, architectural features and height of buildings, the building or control lines for roads, railway lines and power supply lines, and the purpose to which buildings or specified areas may or may not be appropriated and the provision and maintenance of sufficient open spaces about buildings."

It further stated that there would be regulations for enforcing or carrying out the provisions of the plan, which would include restrictions, if any, as regards:

- (i) the character of buildings to be erected, whether residential, commercial, industrial and others;
- (ii) the density of buildings, that is the number of dwelling houses to the hectare or the minimum size of house-sites or both; and
- (iii) open spaces, recreation grounds and areas where buildings are prohibited."

(Continued on page 8)

# The old order changeth...

These are days when heritage buildings are vanishing like dew on a summer morning. If they don't catch fire and then get demolished, they simply get demolished. And those that survive are not doing very well either as *The Man from Madras Musings* noted from what is happening to a particular structure in Mylapore.

The building that MMM speaks of was put up by a legend. And the edifice matched his stature. With three wings that stand around a common area, it was and is a landmark of the city. Over the years, it has become home to several offices, with the legend's descendants putting the structure to commercial use as opposed to the original purpose for which it was built, that line of business long having gone. Maintenance was always good and it was a pleasure to see airy and well-ventilated offices with good parking facilities to boot.

All that was in the past. With real estate skyrocketing, it was but a question of time before the descendants began quarrelling over the division of spoils, their vision not being anywhere near that of the founder of their fortunes which enabled him to build a business from scratch. Consequently, a division of the property was inevitable. The owner of each wing began operating independent of the other two. One put up a new storey to his wing, probably without any thought about its impact on the structure or the pressure it would bring to bear on common areas and amenities. Another one doubled the number of tenants. A third demolished a part of the staircase (a classic period piece) to put up an elevator shaft, wholly uncalled for in a place where everyone was able to manage with the steps. The common area has since become a garbage dump with nobody being certain as to who owns it, each wanting it for him/herself.

When MMM visited the place last week, he was shocked to see the building rapidly going to seed. What had withstood the vagaries of nature was not proof to plain greed. That is the way the cookie crumbles – or is that what happens when the healing touch is forgotten.

## Dance of Royalty

Our political class is not exactly known for its patronage of the arts or, at least, the classical arts. And when they do evince interest, they are careful to let it be known that they prefer the regional variety, most likely with an eye on votes. Therefore, imagine *The Man from Madras Musings'* astonishment when down TTK Road he noticed a rash of posters, kiosks, (temporary) hoardings and what have you, all announcing a

dance programme of a North Indian variety, to be performed by a danseuse with a distinctly East Indian name. Members of Parliament, local leaders, actors and others were to be a part of the event, or so MMM was given to believe, at least from the plethora of names on the walls.

As the date of the event drew closer, the posters and other publicity material grew in number and the encomiums became more flowery. One of these even welcomed "Her Highness". There were photos galore of the performer and even larger ones of those who probably funded the publicity material. Realising full well that D(ance)-Day would have a score of VIPs dancing attention on her, which meant a mammoth traffic jam, MMM stayed clear of the venue, preferring to read a good book. But all the while a question stayed at the back of his mind: Why all this tamasha over a name from far away lands.

The next day, MMM was driving down the same road and noticed that several of the hoardings, what with their temporary nature, had begun to bend over, adopting terpsi-

other, the drivers exchange abuse and certainly not greetings. The expressions thus uttered or, should MMM say, hurled often have to do with the animal kingdom. People are referred to as dogs or pigs and, in case they do not move, as buffaloes. MMM, however, feels that all these are inappropriate references, for he is yet to see an animal on our roads whose behaviour is not exemplary.

Take the cow for instance. Have you ever seen it blocking a road? It invariably rests only on medians or at the periphery. Ditto the buffalo. As for the dog, MMM has to admit that it frequently crosses the road, but when it does, nobody can accuse it of jaywalking. It looks to its left, its right and then left again before it goes to the other side, a practice that the two-legged variety rarely adopts. And when these four-legged creatures, having crossed midway, realise that the oncoming traffic is too much for them, immediately retrace their steps, something that our four-wheelers are reluctant to do. As for pigs, MMM would think they were doing us all a favour by scavenging what we indiscriminately throw everywhere and then wonder as to how that happened and what could be done with it. And have you ever seen any animal bark, low, snort, moo or roar at the traffic? Never, not even those equipped with horns (what an awful pun). Do they ever cover their ears with muffs or stick plugs into them while on the roads? No. Are they intolerant of anyone else on the road? Not at all. Very well then, MMM rests his case.

## Photo of the fortnight

Recently landing at the Chennai Airport, *The Man from Madras Musings* was pleasantly surprised to note that public transport of some kind had been introduced to ferry passengers to various spots in the city. What gave MMM greater pleasure was reading the route chart. Whoever put it up certainly knew of Lord Connemara's proclivities and the legend of his wife staying at the eponymous hotel, miffed with his dalliances with young damsels. As you can see from the photograph below.

– MMM

## SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

chorean poses. That meant some of the finer print was easier on the eye. And it was from one of these that MMM learnt that Her Highness was closely related to one of the most powerful in the Union Cabinet. All was clear, as was the road. MMM drove on. Now who said that Kolkata is the cultural capital?

## Animal farm

Those coming from abroad have often marvelled at our traffic. Some have compared it to an adventure ride, others have called it a functioning anarchy, and yet others have forecast doom just around the corner. But then we all live in hope, and doom has not yet struck, though it is imminent.

But what strikes *The Man from Madras Musings* is that road rage has come to stay and when vehicles pass each







### Let's 'rebuild' it

It is unfortunate that the *Kalas Mahal* in the Chepauk Palace met with fire accident. The silver lining, however, is that the Chief Minister has directed that the possibility of restoring the structure be examined as against the initial recommendation to pull it down.

I have a few suggestions. It was said that 'restoration' may not be possible as many of the wooden members supporting the structure had rotted/burnt away. But if restoration is not possible, why not 'rebuild' it? After all, the foundation should be very strong. The carved granite arches and *jalis* should be safe and intact. So also the ancient bricks. If such a structure could be put up more than a hundred years ago, we should be able to replicate them now with modern technology. Moreover, many of the intricate building materials could be salvaged. No doubt, the process would be expensive and time-consuming, but could be taken up as a 'labour of love' for the sake of heritage. And it has been done elsewhere in the world. Abu Simbel in Egypt was relocated and rebuilt stone by stone, when the Aswan High Dam was constructed.

Another immediate move should be to relocate all the offices functioning in the Chepauk Palace complex elsewhere and restore it as a heritage site. I think all these offices can be shifted to the new Secretariat building.

Additional medical facilities for Chennai are also a must. We

do have the Government Hospitals located in prime localities (General Hospital, Royapettah Hospital, Stanley, Egmore, Triplicane Ghosha Hospital and many more). These can probably be expanded and modernised to high standards, instead of converting the new Secretariat and Anna Library into hospitals.

D. Srinivasan  
11/6, SBI Colony  
Jeevarathnam Nagar  
Adyar, Chennai 600 020

### Preventing the mess

I thought I should share this with the readers. My mother was quite annoyed with garbage all over the street. Instead of complaining about it, she decided to do something about it. She said that at least we will not contribute to this garbage menace. Therefore:

1. We collect all vegetable kitchen-waste, pooja flowers and leftover food, if any, and put them in the pit dug in a corner of the ground (we live in a flat but there is a small open space where we could dig a pit).

2. All the used paper and paper packing material are kept in a plastic bag and given to the old paper collection shop once a week. Whatever money he gives is collected and at the end of the year notebooks are bought for our maid's children.

3. All plastic covers and bottles and glass bottles are disposed of at the old things buying shop once a week.

4. The water from the kitchen sink is collected and poured into the rain harvesting area and so the water gets back into the ground.

5. Of course, we all carry cloth bags with us. We do not use plastic carry bags; so our house is almost garbage-free.

# Will hospital design ensure all this?

● **The Khalsa/Kalas Mahal fire was the perfect opportunity for the authorities to move affected government offices as well as other offices in Chepauk Palace into the New Secretariat, thus converting it into an office block. Further construction could help move all Government offices into this campus – and save the Government a heap of rent. But Government is hell-bent on making the building a hospital. Now it finds itself in courts over this. But whatever the eventual court decision, we publish below an advisory that is also a warning from a veteran doctor with much experience in hospital development.**

– THE EDITOR

- Hospital design today is driven by technology, which is progressing at an astounding pace and any design should lend itself to accommodate future developments.
- The hospital will have to incorporate the latest technologies, including green technologies, to reduce its carbon footprint.
- It will have to provide for patient safety and comfort, with ready access to all the medical services available.
- In a multispeciality hospital there should be made available state-of-the-art ICUs for various specialities, including operating theatres and ancillary facilities to service the above, and all of these have to blend in a way that they are complementary to each other without unnecessary duplication.
- The infrastructural, logistical support required to support such a project would be an architect's nightmare.
- To convert a building whose primary design

was to cater to an entirely different function is a very impractical approach to designing a hospital.

- To design a modern hospital to current specifications which could be upgraded for future needs is a challenge to any designer.
- It would be much cheaper, and the final product better, if the old building is demolished and a purpose-built hospital is set up.
- From the larger perspective, the modernisation and expansion of the present General Hospital, and allocating more space adjoining it, would be a much better option.
- The site of the New Secretariat is not as easily accessible as the present General Hospital, particularly for the poorer sections of the public.
- While the conversion of the New Secretariat building may appear a political masterstroke, I have no doubt the decision will dearly cost the proponents.

My mother is happy that we don't contribute to the mess on the streets.

Mrs. P.V. Rao  
3, 22nd Cross Road  
Chennai 600 090

### Tribute to Swamigal

In MM January 1st issue you have paid Sreelasree Nachiappan a much-deserved tribute to which we would like to add our words of remembrance of his generosity.

As compilers of a book of alumni reminiscences of the Besant Theosophical School, Adyar, as it existed before Independence, titled *South of the Adyar River*, we approached the Swamigal, also an old student, to underwrite its printing and publishing expenses.

He examined the proofs and without a moment's hesitation granted our request for financial and technical help and the book was completed and released at Hotel Savera in his

presence, attended by a large number of alumni. Without his assistance our labour of love, along with that of other alumni, would not have seen the light of day for which we shall forever be morally in his debt.

We hope it will encourage other alumni to record their reminiscences, all of which may add to the social and academic history of our country.

K.R.N. Menon and  
K.V.S. Krishna  
Chennai 600 006

## OUR ADDRESSES

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

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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

## Positive response to wake-up call

(Continued from page 1)

be done with heritage buildings. These cover a wide gamut of action points – from repair and restoration to income enhancement by way of selling space and tourism. None of these is available at present and owners of heritage structures are left to their own devices, not all of which result in a happy ending. Firstly, there is the dearth of

engineers, technicians and artisans who are qualified to work on heritage structures. The average construction professional is quite happy to recommend demolition, failing which a solution completely out of place with early building technology is suggested. Secondly, there are no guidelines on what can be done for maintenance of heritage buildings. In an edifice with multiple tenants and

sometimes several owners as well, each undertakes restoration and repair work as per his own light and sometimes these can be disastrous. Recent fires are proof of this. Lastly, nobody is aware that heritage buildings can generate income as well. You only need to see what is being done in Europe, the U.S. and Australia where there are many towns that survive entirely on heritage.

All this and more needs to be the immediate action at hand for the Heritage Conservation Committee backed by a Heritage Act. But that august body is at present functioning more like a Government department, having meetings once in a while with no action to show for it, and no one in power is talking about that most essential piece of legislation. If at all there is a moment to act, this is it.

## 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.madras-musings.com](http://www.madras-musings.com)

THE EDITOR



# Walking with Krishnaswami Iyer

Our walk during the Mylapore Festival to commemorate V. Krishnaswami Iyer began at the gates of the Mylapore Club, which was one of his creations. He and his friend P.R. Sundara Iyer had been blackballed at the Cosmopolitan Club and so, in 1903, he decided to set up a similar facility in Mylapore itself. He had earlier negotiated a hundred-year lease for a piece of land belonging to the Kapaleeswarar Temple. He intended to build his residence on it. This land on the southern side of Luz Church Road was, however, made over to what was constituted as the Mylapore Club on January 1, 1903.

By the time the club was founded, Krishnaswami Iyer had become a patron of the Suguna Vilasa Sabha, the amateur dramatic society founded by Pammal Sambanda Mudaliar and his friends in the 1890s. Iyer was to initially pour scorn over the efforts of the Sabha in translating Shakespeare's plays into Tamil and staging them. One of its most successful efforts was *Vimabhiya Vidame* (*As You Like It*). The members felt that a play with so much of the action set in a forest would be better off performed in an open area and hence it was once staged in the gardens of *Government House*. Then, in 1904, it was staged in the gardens of the Mylapore Club. It was there that Krishnaswami Iyer saw the play and so impressed was he that he became the President of the Sabha. Writing of this in his memoirs, *Natakamedai Ninai-vugal*, Pammal Sambanda Mudaliar stated that Krishnaswami Iyer began a new tradition at the *sabha* – that all of its presidents would be elevated to the Bench!

We moved on to RK Mutt Road, where we stopped at the entrance to Pelathope, the street in which several lawyers and judges lived at one time. It was here that Krishnaswami Iyer lived when he was struggling to make a name for himself. Opposite this street, next to the Tirumayilai MRTS Station, is an unfinished structure. This was where the office of the South Indian National Association once stood. Krishnaswami Iyer was to play an important role in the association in its early years, though what exactly it did is not known. It appears to have been one among several socially conscious associations in which Krishnaswami Iyer took an active part, another being the Ma-

dras Mahajana Sabha on Mount Road.

Further down the same road, and opposite the tank, is Vishwakamal Apartments. This was where *Krishna Vilas*, the house of Dewan Bahadur Raghunatha Rao, once stood. In 1884 a group had met here and resolved to begin a political movement. This culminated in the founding of the Congress Party a year later. Both Krishnaswami Iyer and P.R. Sundara Iyer were to become members of Congress party. Krishnaswami Iyer was to be an active volunteer in organising the 1897 Congress Session in Madras. By 1903, when the next Session in Madras was held, he had grown wealthy and influential. He embarked on a whirlwind tour of South India to collect funds for the Congress. He was of the view that a party

## Looking back with SRIRAM V.

that represented the common man should also be funded by him. This was the seed of the idea that Gandhi later took to great heights – a 25 paise membership fee from every Indian to support the Congress.

Several delegates to the sessions were housed in tents on the grounds of his vast garden bungalow *Ashrama* on Luz Church Road. His efforts were praised by Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who was to become a firm friend and who stayed at *Ashrama* whenever he visited Madras. Krishnaswami Iyer was to become a Gokhale follower, thereby being labelled a Moderate.

At the corner of RK Mutt Road and North Mada Street stands the second oldest branch of the Indian Bank. Here we recalled Krishnaswami Iyer's role in the investigation of the Arbutnot Crash, the subsequent founding of the Indian Bank, and traced his rise in the legal profession, which saw him move from Pelathope to South Mada Street. It was during the South Mada Street years that Krishnaswami Iyer learnt how to ride a horse and it was here that he caught a thief single-handed.

In the shadow of the Kapaleeswarar Temple *gopuram* was recollected his role in matters of the faith. When the Paramacharya of Kanchi, Chandrasekharendra Saras-

wathi, became a pontiff at a very young age, Iyer was worried that the administration of the mutt would fall into wrong hands who would manipulate the child pontiff. He convinced the High Court that the *mutt* needed to be administered by the Court of Wards till the pontiff attained majority. Greatly upset at the way Sanskrit hymns and *slokas* were being recited at temples, he had them compiled and published at his own expense and distributed free to shrines all over the Madras Presidency.

Leaving the four Mada Streets behind, we moved on to Kutcheri Road where, in 1905, Krishnaswami Iyer established the Venkataramana Ayurveda Dispensary to revive the traditional Indian school of medicine. He endowed the institution with a grant of

Rs. 20,000 and it functions till today. Walking down Kutcheri Road to Luz Corner, we had to cross the Buckingham Canal. Krishnaswami Iyer had strongly opposed its extension across Mylapore in the 1890s. He had said that it would eventually wind up as a gutter and a health hazard and, sadly, that has come to pass. He was to play a vital role in saving the Marina too. This was in 1903 when the South Indian Railway decided to build a railway line along the beach. The Corporation gave its sanction and work was all set to begin when, on April 1st, Krishnaswami Iyer organised a massive public protest meeting. Working along with him was George Arbuthnot, the very man he would prosecute three years later! Sensing the public mood, the Corporation withdrew its consent. The railway offered all the standard sops – some of which are still given out – such as that the stations would not be eyesores, there would be a protective hedge that would also hide the track, etc. But Krishnaswami Iyer was to prove implacable. The proposal was abandoned and the Marina was saved.

We next went down Kalvaru Street to the offices of the *Madras Law Journal*. This, the oldest surviving publication to report on legal proceedings, was



Bust of V. Krishnaswami Iyer at Sanskrit College, Mylapore.

set up in 1891 by Salem Ramaswami Mudaliar, C. Sankaran Nair, Krishnaswami Iyer and P.R. Sundara Iyer. In later years, V. Krishnaswami Iyer's eldest son-in-law, R. Narayanaswami Iyer, was to run it. Another legal association that Krishnaswami Iyer gave a fresh lease of life to was the Vakils Association. This was in the 1890s, a time when barristers and advocates, invariably British, looked down on the native vakils. The last groups had to suffer several insults, not the least being the denial of the privilege to wear gowns in court. Krishnaswami Iyer was Secretary of the Association from 1889 to 1902. During his tenure, he spearheaded an agitation demanding equal rights for vakils, and this included the privilege of wearing gowns. The Chief Justice, Sir Arthur Collins, believed in equal treatment of all and decided in favour of the vakils.

During the time when he was a struggling lawyer, Krishnaswami Iyer had spent his surplus energies in a serious perusal of Sanskrit texts. Appalled at the way in which several schools of philosophy, such as the *Purva Mimamsa*, were dying out, he determined in 1905 to set up a Sanskrit College, and this was our next stop. This institution began life in Pelathope and, thanks to the munificent donations of several enthusiasts, including the founder, it moved to its present location in 1910. It was thanks to Krishnaswami Iyer that the College got its library with 800 books in the first year. He was also instrumental in persuading S. Kuppuswami Sastri to give up all aspirations to rise in the Bar and take to Sanskrit. Sastri became the first Principal of the College. Surrounding the old building are several new structures, all built thanks in the main to donations from the descendants and juniors in law of the founder.

Our last stop was opposite the Mylapore Club, at the intersection of V. Krishnaswami and Baliah Avenues. This was where his palatial residence, *Ashrama*,



Sanskrit College, Mylapore

of Luz Church Road was decorated. *Ashrama* was not electrified and so illumination was by Chinese lanterns. Krishnaswami Iyer had lost his wife by then and so his second daughter Subbalakshmi received Lady Lawley and played hostess.

The house was to also receive another distinguished visitor, though his arrival did not catch public attention. That was Subramania Bharati. He was brought there by G.A. Natesan, a neighbour to Krishnaswami Iyer. Krishnaswami Iyer did not like Bharati's radical editorials and had formed a negative view of the poet without ever meeting him. Bharati was, therefore, not introduced and was merely asked to sing at a cue from Natesan. He was hardly into his second poem when Krishnaswami Iyer shed tears at the beauty of what he had heard. He was to become a great admirer from then on. The first publication of Bharati's songs was funded by Iyer.

It was from *Ashrama* that Krishnaswami Iyer set out in December 1911 for Delhi to attend the Grand Coronation Durbar. With him, to be presented for the King Emperor, was the *George Deva Shatakam*, a set of 100 verses in Sanskrit on King George V, penned by his friend Mahamahopadhyaya Lakshmana Suri. On December 10, 2011 as he prepared to attend the full-dress rehearsal, his belt buckle pierced his stomach. Being heavily diabetic, his body could not withstand this and septicemia soon set in. In an era when communications were still primitive, the family came to know only from the newspapers that he could not attend the investiture. He was brought back to Madras where, after a desperate struggle, he breathed his last at his beloved *Ashrama*, surrounded by his six children, on December 28th. The family refused an offer of a state funeral, given their orthodoxy.

Our walk concluded rather appropriately with coffee at the Mylapore Club. He would have liked our enthusiasm, but of the filth and dirt on Mylapore streets, I wonder what he would have had to say.

# There's a she-fox in an Assian-land

While Subramania Bharati is best known for his national, devotional and epic poetry in Tamil, his English writings have not been widely read. In fact, Bharati was as versatile in English as in Tamil. Unfortunately, only some of his English works are available and even these are not widely known. There are two English publications of note, one a satire, *The Fox with the Golden Tail*, and the other an anthology, *Agni, and other Poems, Translations and Essays* (including 'The Political Evolution in the Madras Presidency') published in 1937. There were also a few Vedic hymns in English, and an attempt at *Azhwars' pasurams* in English. Unfortunately these are not available now.

The *staire* had its genesis in a controversy that broke out on January 24, 1911 with a letter to *The Hindu* from the then well-known physician and popular leader of Mylapore, Dr. M.C. Nanjunda Rao, wherein he questioned the theories and practices of Mrs. Annie Besant and the introduction of J. Krishnamurti as a world teacher. He especially pounced on the theory of the Mahatmas propagated by Mrs. Besant and asked, if the existence of the Mahatmas was true, why was it then that none of the saints of South India, the Alvars and Nainmars, had mentioned them and why was it that the Mahatmas were not present to guide the Theosophists at their conventions.

Bharati joined in the debate and his criticism of Annie Besant was quite fierce in a pamphlet he brought out. Supporting Aurobindo against Besant he wrote to *The Hindu* from Pondicherry: "Mr. Arabinda Ghose authorises me to contradict on his behalf certain statements about him made by Mrs. Besant in her recent letter to the Christian Commonwealth which I have brought to his notice. These allegations are, without exception, inaccurate, misleading or entirely erroneous. It is misleading to say in connection with an attempt to brand as 'seditious' and 'extremist', the opposition of social orthodoxy to Mrs. Besant's more recent developments – that orthodoxy gave Mr. Arabinda Ghose as a leader of the advanced nationalist movement. A convinced Hindu in all matters of religious life and faith, Mr. Ghose accepts in ques-

tions of social conduct the liberalism of Swami Vivekananda.

"The assertion of his bitter hostility to the Central Hindu College, for any cause whatsoever, (is) entirely erroneous. He had always, on the contrary, a sincere sympathy and admiration for Mrs. Besant's works and for the college as an educational institution which he expressed clearly enough to Mrs. Besant with her in Calcutta. His opposi-



## Subramania Bharati's writings in English are looked at by K.R.A. Narasiah

tion at that time was directed against Mrs. Besant's now abandoned scheme of an officially recognised and, therefore, officially controlled University of India and especially for any attempt to include in it the Bengal National College as one of its feeders or centres.

"The reason for his 'hostility', even as regards the University, is inaccurately stated. Mr. Ghose never opposed the cooperation of Europeans and Indians from any feeling of racial fanaticism and hostility, but as a temporary necessity in order to deliver the Indian mind from long subservience and habituate it again to self-reliance and capacity for working out great objects, free from outside control, supervision or tutorage.

"I may add that Mrs. Besant's idea that her present troubles are a martyrdom for her loyalty to the Sarkar and the extremists, as a party, are persecuting her out of political animosity is either a fiction or a self-delusion. She has forgotten apparently that some

at least of the most prominent leaders of the movement and a well known Bengali scholar and politician often conspicuous on its platform, were and still are, I believe, earnest and convinced Theosophists.

"The attitude of these leaders in the present controversy is not known to me but they have certainly not figured among her assailants nor has any 'great leaders' of the advanced party interfered on either side in the Theosophical controversy. This legend will not hold and Mrs. Besant must find some other bludgeon for prostrating her opponents and critics."

Bharati next published the satirical pamphlet (he called it "a fable with an esoteric significance") criticising Besant and her activities. The 10-page article was later brought out in a second edition and Bharati says in its perface, "The second edition of the *Fox* is not my seeking at all. It is, so to speak, forced on me by the impertinence of some local friends whom the spirit of the age impels to do something towards knocking down what has been aptly described as the most colossal spiritual fraud of the ages.

"It is admitted on all hands that the ancient Hindus had scaled the extreme heights of spiritual realisation. But I think, however, that the Hindus of the last generation, especially the English educated men, have been the biggest gulls of any age or country. And we, of the present generation, are resolved that the swindlers shall no longer pursue their trades peacefully in our country. And this is the esoteric meaning of the fable. Pondicherry, 24th February 1914, C.S. Bharati."

Bharati starts the tale with "Once upon a time there was an old she fox whom her fellow-foxes of the Fox-land detested very much, for she was very plain-spoken and proud. And so they cut off her tail as a sort of punishment." He goes on to narrate how the she-fox fixed a golden tail and declared herself as superior to all foxes and other animals. He calls the new movement of the she-fox as 'Assiatist revival' as she was now in the land of asses. The pun is obvious.



Mrs. Annie Besant.

Adding humour to the tale Bharati says, "One morning, the Golden Fox discovered to her amazement that her personal attendant had committed a nocturnal burglary and run away with her golden tail... She now began to humour the Apes, calling them the dearest creatures on earth and delivering a series of lectures on topics which were dear to the Apes' heart, such as the following:

1. The authority of tail-less animals over the tailed ones, always excepting the Foxes.
2. How, even among Foxes, a tail-less one is superior to the rest.
3. The paramount importance to Apes and Asses of voyages to Fox-land.
4. The basest of animals – the Asses. (A jeremiad against long ears, white noses etc.)
5. How to convert an Ass into an Ape.
6. How to convert an Ape into a Fox. Etc. etc."

The pamphlet ends with a highly satirical note: "So, she secretly fled away to the Republic of Bees and Ants, where warrants from Ass-land could not be executed and it is understood that she has started a new cult there whose chief doctrine seems to be that the land of Bees and Asses will become a paradise the day on which they elect an old and tail-less she-Fox as president of their Republic – a cult to which she has given the strange title of *Foxo-Bees-Antism*."

However, while this pamphlet was appreciated by many including Aurobindo, Bharati himself was not happy with it. He deplored the fact that there was no public to appreciate his *Panchali Sabadam*. When people praised his English pamphlet, he remarked: "The numbskulls. Here I have been minting my heart's blood in Tamil poetry – distilling all my soul in *Panchali Sabadam* – and (there's) no one to do it reverence!"

(To be concluded)





(Current Affairs questions are from the period January 1st to 15th. Questions 11-20 pertain to Chennai and Tamil Nadu.)

1. According to a recent news item, which South Indian university offered its Vice-Chancellor's post to Albert Einstein?
2. In which media group did Reliance Industries make a huge investment recently?
3. Who recently won FIFA's Ballon d'Or for best footballer of the year for the 3rd consecutive time?
4. Who recently became the first recipient of the Music Academy's 'Natyala Acharya'?
5. What recent news did WHO term as 'India's greatest public health achievement'?
6. Whom did Leander Paes partner in his triumph at the Aircel Chennai Open recently?
7. On January 14th, which African country marked the 1st anniversary of a revolution ending the Zine El Abidine Ben Ali dictatorship and triggered democracy movements in Africa?
8. Which southern State has become the first to put in place the 'Special Tiger Protection Force'?
9. Which of India's neighbours joined the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member on January 1st?
10. What record was set by a species of frog, *Paedophryne amauensis*, recently discovered in Papua New Guinea?
11. Which bustling area of Chennai came up in the 1920s after draining the Long Tank?
12. Which political organisation's seeds were sown at Dewan Bahadur Raghunatha Rao's home in Mylapore in 1884?
13. Which academic institution of repute in Chennai was inaugurated 50 years ago on Jan. 3rd in the Presidency College campus?
14. What tradition, synonymous with the Tyagaraja Aradhana at Tiruvaiyaru, came about at the suggestion of Harikesanallur Muthiah Bhagavathar?
15. Which famous man was responsible for the Venkatramana Ayurvedic Dispensary & College, Kutchery Road, Mylapore?
16. Which Mount Road institution was founded by A.K. Ramachandra Iyer, the owner of Midland Theatre and the man behind brands like Coca Cola and Parker coming to India?
17. Which area in Chennai is said to get its name from the local term for 'ruler's district'?
18. What was the name of the South's only 'Princes' College', which was on Mount Road, opposite where the Kamaraj Memorial was built?
19. Which T'Nagar auditorium owes its name to a pharmacy?
20. Narasimhan Road, T'Nagar, once bore the name of a Dadasaheb Phalke awardee. Who?

(Answers on page 8)

# A way to make a better city

● With all the garbage gathering on the road, with the indifferent manner in which we look at, and look after, public spaces, and with the way we seem to care little for cleanliness and hygiene outside the home, this feature by SARITHA RAI that appeared in *The New Indian Express*, Bangalore, should make some of us in Chennai ask ourselves: 'What can we do to help create a better city?'

We litter the streets, spit *paan* everywhere, paste posters on empty walls, pee on the streets, and dump garbage around the corner from our houses. We are ugly Indians. Not every day, not everyone. But even occasional transgressions can add up to a lot in a country of 1.2 billion.

A faceless, mysterious Bangalore group calling itself 'The Ugly Indian' is going about slowly and stealthily changing the dreadful streets in the city. The group, which proclaims itself a "random, unorganised" group, is media-averse and operates only through an anonymous email address. It has a three language motto "Maalu beda Kelasa madu", "Kaam chalu mooh band", "Only work, no talk".

The Ugly Indians seem to be Bangalore's answer to the Anna movement. But rather than pointing out all that is wrong with the system, the low-key group members are going about simply showing how things can be righted. There is no finger-pointing, period. Instead of cribbing about the filth and blaming the lower-rung civic staff, the Ugly Indian has been busy 'Spotfixing' in Bangalore. Self-funded volunteers who aggregate through the group's website, e-mail and Facebook page descend on a particularly neglected (read, filthy) corner of the city where they proceed to plough in and mend the spot.

The anonymity of the group has worked in its favour. "No names are exchanged, no introductions are made, no socialising, no networking. Everyone gets it," the Ugly Indian described in an email to this column. And so the group quietly goes about clearing garbage, fixing pavements, providing litter bins (quirkily named "tereBin", designed small to save pavement space and keep stray dogs out), painting walls and righting road medians.

The Ugly Indian's approach is refreshing. The Indian explanation, "We are like that only", is cute but does not help, says their website; accepting that "we" are part of the problem and only "we" can help fix the problem is more like it, they say.

In Spotfixing, the group makes over a chunk of a busy Bangalore street or corner in a way that engages local storekeepers, civic agency cleaning staff and the public, without apportioning blame or expecting recognition.

If downtown Bangalore's restaurant hub Church Street has regained its chic look, it is the handiwork of The Ugly Indian. If

the city's Central Business District is looking neat with cheerful garbage bins, it is the group's effort. A couple of days before the Namma Metro was launched, the group "fixed" the MG Road metro station.

The group operates in stealth mode. Once Spotfixing is done, it details the task in whodunit-like detail through photos and video on its website and Facebook page.

A Spotfix at a narrow but busy street in Bangalore's Koramangala neighbourhood began like this first. The Ugly Indian spends time observing the spot. "The best time to observe a dump is between 7.30 a.m. and 8.30 a.m. - that's when people generally dump garbage." The Ugly Indian studies the spot, makes a list of possible culprits, but never confronts them. The group pieces together the story of the dumping spot with evidence from the dump; approaches the culprits with tact after the clean-up and, befriending and drafting local retailers and civic agency staff, helps to keep the place spotless, post the fix. A complete change-over could take concerted and repeated clean-ups, which could take up to a year.

A financial analyst who volunteered at a Spotfix said she was inspired by the group's philosophy of not telling people what they should do but showing people what a sincere group can achieve. "I didn't know who they are they didn't ask me who I was ... we worked together to clean up and it felt good."

Bangalore seems to have adopted this faceless, silent revolution-in-the-making. The group has thousands of admirers on Facebook. Hundreds of anonymous people have volunteered for clean-up tasks and to sponsor the tereBins. Anonymity has indeed been the strength of this small initiative. No faces means no labels and no critics. The group has rebuffed the media and refused to meet local politicians, who want to get involved for obvious reasons, they say. All those who have joined The Ugly Indian movement have been committed to a strict code of conduct. It is "almost like a secret society," the Ugly Indian said in a further email.

This is one honest, if mysterious, public-private joint venture that seems to work. India needs more Ugly Indians.

-saritha.raai@expressindia.com

# A fiery requiem for heritage buildings

(Continued from page 1)

again, the team constituted did not inspire confidence; after all, there was every reason to believe that all the members of the Committee might foe the Minister's line.

What was overlooked in all this is the Heritage Conservation Committee (HCC) appointed by the Government last year in response to the High Court's judgement on heritage buildings. That the Committee has done precious little is open knowledge and not a single member has ever visited Chepauk Palace or for that matter any of the heritage buildings listed by the Court in its orders. Had this been done and had the Committee listed guidelines for the maintenance of heritage buildings for which it surely had enough time, this fire may have never taken place. That after the fire the Committee was given a tour of the gutted parts of the palace must be a matter of some small satisfaction to its members. However, the complete silence of the Committee since the fire, speaks volumes about its effectiveness.

It is now understood that the three-member committee appointed to study Chepauk Pal-

ace has filed its report. It is also understood that the report may have recommended a partial preservation as its solution. This may not be entirely acceptable, as the study was completed in less than a week, surely a very short period of time for a monument of such undoubted historicity. Also, the absence of structural engineers and archaeological and conser-

vation experts weakens the status of such a committee. Even now it is not too late and the Government must look at appointing a larger team with, if possible, specialists from IITs all over the country and the Central Institute of Structural Engineers.

While the ultimate decision on the palace now rests with the Government, the usual stories

have begun to abound. One of which is that the powers-that-be are mulling over a plan to demolish and build an exact replica of what was pulled down. You only need to look at Singaravelar Maligai on Rajaji Salai, constructed after a similar assurance while pulling down *Bentinck's Building* that earlier stood there, to be taken in by such promises.

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● Since Volume XIV, No.1 (April 16, 2003), Madras Musings has been priced at Rs.5 a copy, ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION: Rs.100/-. Please make out your cheque only to CHENNAI HERITAGE and send it, together with the COUPON, to CHENNAI HERITAGE, 5, Bhattad Tower, 30, Westcott Road, Royapettah, Chennai 600 014 or C/O LOKAVANI SOUTHERN PRINTERS PVT. LTD., 62/63, GREAMES ROAD, CHENNAI 600 006.

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If in the coming year Chennai Heritage receives repeated support from those of you who have already made contributions, and if many more supporters join the bandwagon, we will not only be able to keep Madras Musings going, but also be able to continue awareness-building exercises on on-going projects as well as undertake one or two more such exercises.

Therefore, please keep your contributions coming IN ADDITION TO YOUR SUBSCRIPTIONS. If, say, you send in a cheque for Rs.500, we will treat Rs.100 of it towards subscription to Madras Musings for 2011-12 and the remaining Rs.400 as contribution towards the causes Chennai Heritage espouses.

We look forward to all readers of Madras Musings, and those newcomers who want to receive copies, sending in their subscriptions.

- THE EDITOR

# Setting Quizmaster Navin Thinking

● The Murugappa Group's connection with Dr. Navin Jayakumar goes back to 1989 when the city was gearing up to commemorate 350 years of Madras. Dr. Jayakumar was invited to host a quiz show as part of the events which were planned for this milestone occasion. The Murugappa Group was the sole official sponsor of what was the first large-scale quiz show ever organised in the city, with the stage set up by Chennai's famed art director and set designer, Thota Tharani. (Until then quiz competitions were mostly confined to being school and college affairs.)

**THINK**, the house journal of the Murugappa Group, caught up with Dr. Jayakumar for his take on the city of Madras, his link with the Murugappa Group and, of course, quizzing as a passion.

**THINK:** A doctor and a quizmaster – are the two interests at odds? When were you bitten by the quizzing bug?

**Dr. Jayakumar:** Actually, quizzing helps me in practising ophthalmology. The mental exercise keeps you sharp. Quizzing has always been a passion. In college, I would be a regular on the quiz teams. I would wait eagerly for the Bournvita Quiz that was on radio those days. My first encounter on the other side of the microphone happened in Madras Medical College when a senior got me to conduct a campus quiz.

**THINK:** How about your first external quiz show? When and how did that come about? And what was the Murugappa connection?

**Dr. Jayakumar:** S. Muthiah was the driving force and one of the main organisers of the events to celebrate 350 years of Madras in 1989. He asked me if I would conduct a quiz as an event. That was my first exposure to professional quizzing on such a big platform. The venue was Narada Gana Sabha Hall on TTK Road, and the hall was packed

There were close to 1000 teams that participated over the 4-day mega event – 400 college teams, 300 school teams and the rest were open teams, i.e. friends and family members who got together and formed teams to participate. It was the first time that a quiz of this scale was taking place in the city! So the city's first major public quiz event ever was the Madras 350 Years Quiz sponsored by the Murugappa Group. All the questions had to be related to Madras.

**THINK:** How did you go about preparing the questions for such a large scale quiz event?

**Dr. Jayakumar:** I used Muthiah's books as a starting point for the questions. He has written so much about Madras. And there were so many topics to cover from the fields of arts, history, literature, geography, sports, music, movies ... the list was endless.

A lot of work went into the preparation of questions. I wanted to make it an illustrated quiz. I spent a lot of time with

Mini Menon of Artig Advertising who coordinated the event of the Murugappa Group. There was also a memorable two-day trip round the city with photographer Murali Bhasker shooting pictures for questions – that was before the days of the internet! We went around taking photographs of various landmarks of the city, right from the old railway station in Royapuram in the extreme North all the way to St. Thomas Mount in the South.

I referred to *Aside* magazine which is no longer in print. It used to carry many articles about Madras. One of the writers was Randor Guy who was a storehouse of information on Tamil cinema. I also spoke to many friends, relatives, grandmothers to get unique insights on the city. *The Hindu* helped a lot with old photographs as well.

**THINK:** And all that hard work paid off?

**Dr. Jayakumar:** We were celebrating a landmark – 350 years of Madras – but the Madras 350 Years Quiz as it was called itself became a landmark event! The questions I asked were brought out as a book, which was also sponsored by the Murugappa Group. So, yes, the response I got was truly overwhelming!

**THINK:** This year you were roped in again...

**Dr. Jayakumar:** It was a case of history repeating itself. A. Vellayan, Chairman, Murugappa Group, agreed to sponsor a quiz on Madras during Madras Week and I was called upon to be the quizmaster! 22 years after the first Madras Quiz, I had to prepare for the Murugappa Madras Quotient Quiz. I had a month to prepare for the quiz which was to be held in August (2011).

**THINK:** How did the MMQ Quiz 2011 compare to the one you had done all those years ago?

**Dr. Jayakumar:** This time we restricted the quiz to schools but with a twist. I had 3-member teams, each consisting of 1 adult (teacher or parent) and 2 students. The idea was to give it an across-the-generations twist – it was a representation of the old Madras and the new Chennai. There were some par-

ents present in this year's MMQ Quiz who had participated as young college students in the quiz I had done 22 years ago and had come to accompany their children taking part this year. That made it two generations that I have quizzed! So that was a wonderful connect – that the 1989 generation students were now parents of the 2011 participants!

The difference, of course, is that the current crop has a lot more access to information. Thanks to technology, they are more clued in.

**THINK:** Please tell us a bit about how quizzing evolved here...

**Dr. Jayakumar:** In 1983-84, quizzing was restricted to schools and colleges. Modern quizzing started in Calcutta with the support of Bata and Round Table. Then Siddhartha Basu came up with Quiz Time on Doordarshan, and that one programme brought quizzing to the drawing rooms. That made it accessible, helped to bring in sponsorship, and brought it into the public fold.

It was very difficult getting sponsors those days. The first quiz I did had a budget of a princely sum of Rs. 200! Of which Rs. 80 was used to buy the winner's shield. The remaining money went in posting letters, procuring the mike, etc. Public acceptance of quizzes went up after Siddhartha Basu's show and parents began to see it as an intellectual activity to be encouraged.

**THINK:** You have seen the city closely. Do you see changes in all these interim years?

**Dr. Jayakumar:** In the course of my research for quizzing, I have seen parts of Madras which I would never have seen otherwise. The city has changed. Many things have disappeared.

Have you noticed the railings round St. George's Cathedral on Dr. Radhakrishnan Salai? You'll see they are arrow heads. But do you know why? Because earlier the railings were made of actual arrows collected by the British from the Battle of Seringapatam where they defeated Tipu Sultan!

Jafar's Ice Cream Shop near



Dr. Navin Jayakumar seen against the backdrop and stage for the Murugappa Madras Quotient Quiz 2011.

Casino Theatre was famous for its Peach Melba. In fact we served the actual dish as a quiz question during the Madras 350 Years Quiz! Sadly the shop has disappeared into history now.

Moore Market, an iconic landmark of the city, had mysteriously burnt down some years before the Madras 350 Years Quiz, but we had a nice replica of it in the Central Station parking lot that was photographed as a visual question. Unfortunately, the city has not treated even the replica kindly and that is in a shambles.

**THINK:** Has your quizzing style or technique itself undergone any change?

**Dr. Jayakumar:** I have revamped the format to include mixed audio-video clips, etc. It is a lot slicker, at times taking cues from the *Kaun Banega Crorepati* quiz format.

A first that I have introduced this time around was the Audience SMS Quiz. A software tracked audience responses to questions directed at them and determined which member of the audience got the most correct answers in the least time. So, yes, technology has been responsible for the changed nature of the quiz.

**THINK:** Your advice to budding hopefuls in quizzing?

**Dr. Jayakumar:** Quizzing stems from an interest in reading, acquiring new information, a natural heightened sense of

curiosity to dig deeper into facts.

For example, Anna Hazare at the Ramlila Ground was all the news everywhere. But does anyone know that the idea of a public celebration of the burning of the effigies of Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Indrajit was promoted by none other than the last Muhgal Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar!

I have this little red book I carry everywhere with me. And the moment I come across anything interesting I jot it down at once, which can then become the basis of a quiz question.

**THINK:** And last, the Chennai you love, and the Chennai you love to hate?

**Dr. Jayakumar:** The thing about Chennai is that the people here are a wonderful mix of being traditional but having a modern outlook. Which is also the quality that the Murugappa Group reflects.

There is an understated elegance, the pace of life is not too frenetic, and while it is not averse to change, it is not modern to the point that you throw away old values. Also, which other city but Chennai has a month and a half of music season?!

As for pet peeve, it has to be the traffic, and especially the autos here. They come at you from 360 degrees! But I'm an optimist at heart. Hopefully things will get better. (Courtesy: **THINK**)

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## Dates for Your Diary

**Till February 5:** *Visual Feast*, 3rd Group Show of V. Dakshinamurthy, A. James Manickam, Shalini Geetha, N.K. Radhakanalan, Thimothy Tilak Kumar, N. Muralidharan, S.K. Rajasekaran, M.P. Balasubramaniyam and P. Devan



The artists ....



... some of their works.

Thiruvengadam – ‘Young Artists’ batch 1982, College of Arts and Crafts, Chennai (at Lalit Kala Akademi).

**Till February 13:** Photography exhibition on Wildlife by Madras Photographic Society (at DakshinaChitra).

**Till February 15:** *Eternal Elements*, recent works of A. Viswam (at Focus Art Gallery).

**From February 3:** *Quiet Conversations from the Courtyard*, an exhibition of the work of Kim Kyoungae, Sonatina Mendes, Malavika Rajnarayan, and Karishma D'Souza (at Ashvita).

**February 6-12:** *Contradicting equilibrium of the existing senses*, an exhibition of the work of C.



Krishnaswamy (at Lalit Kala Akademi).

**February 8-17:** *Memories of a Beautiful Mind*, an exhibition on *Bamboo Blues*, the last dance theatre performance in India by Tanztheater Wuppertal Pina Bausch, photographed by Dev Nayak (at Goethe-Institut).

**February 14-21:** *Earth Matters*, an exhibition of work done by six



Beautiful clay works on display.

Korean artists and six Indian artists during a month-long Indo-Korean ceramic residency project in Chennai (at Lalit Kala Akademi).

**February 15-18:** *Spaces of Chennai, 24 hours of documentation*, a group photo essay led by the Travelling Lens team that aims to activate citywide photographers to participate in a synchronised 24-hour photo project. Photo workshop led by Yannick Cormier in association with Travelling Lens (For registration mail to prog@chennai.goethe.org).

**February 15-27:** Group Show by Vinay Kumar, S. Suresh Kumar, S. Kaliselvan and V. Saravana Raghavan (at DakshinaChitra).

**February 22-March 2:** *125 Auto Motifs*, a photo exhibition that features the work of top international photographers, who take a surprising, radical and occasionally challenging look at cars, an invention that first emerged 125 years ago, and has been unstoppable ever since (at Goethe-Institut).

**March 1-9:** Exhibition by Vennimalai (at DakshinaChitra)

**March 11-18:** *Art Chennai* – M. Senathipathi's works. One of the

founding members of Cholamandal Artists' Village, Senathipathi is also one of the most individual figurative painters in Chennai (at DakshinaChitra).

\* \* \*

### DakshinaChitra Workshops

For Children	Dates	Age
Nature walk & photography	Feb 19	8-14

For Adults	Dates
Lac jewellery	Feb 5
Silk thread jewellery	Feb 18
Pattachitra on canvas	Feb 25-26
Arabic mehendi design	Mar 3,4
Terracotta jewellery	Mar 10, 18
Glass-sculpting	Mar 10, 11
Palm leaf decorations	Mar 24

Call Ms. Lakshmi at 98417 77779 to register.

**Terracotta Horses for Singapore**



The past few months at DakshinaChitra have been very busy for Ramu Velar and his team – his son Palani and another family member, also Palani. They are from Viriyaniipatti in Pudukottai District and are fulfilling an order given to DakshinaChitra by the Singapore National Parks Board. The potters who traditionally made huge terracotta offerings for Ayyanar temples in Tamil Nadu are making ten horses and two elephants (7 ft tall) for the Tamil Nadu section in the horticultural parks in Singapore.

The art of firing such huge mud ob-

# The rule-book on heritage...

(Continued from page 2)

At the same meeting, Dr. A.N. Sachithanandan, former head of the School of Architecture and Town Planning and now with MEASI, who had at the previous meeting been requested to suggest specific areas of architectural value that require preparation of renewed urban design within the Metropolitan Area, presented a proposal on 'Urban Design for CMA'. Dr. Sachithanandan urged in his paper that the following, amongst others, be looked into:

**“Regenerative intervention:** A city celebrates its growth magnets. The focal crux of Chennai, George Town, has to be revitalised and regenerated. There is need to reshape its image between old and new, heritage and contemporary value. There is need also to render this in other areas like Purasai, T'Nagar, Triplicane and Mylapore.

**“Memorialisation and redefining the Blue Axis:** Preservation of open spaces, resources and remnants of pristine, virgin nature (marshlands) has to be taken up on a war footing. The Adyar Estuary and Pallikaralai wetlands need to be addressed with development plans, including cleaning the waterways and creating waterfront development guidelines.

Water bodies should be revived as a conscious step towards urban design. Generating waterfront development with its adjunct facilities would celebrate the city-nature nexus.

**“Pride of place – Urban Art:** Urban design of Marina, Mount Road, Raj Bhavan stretch, Velachery, etc. to be consciously created and nurtured for posterity.”

What has happened on these presentations since is anyone's guess.

jects has been mastered by the traditional potters of this region and remains unique. If you would like to witness a firing session or the making of the huge artefacts: Call Vishalam at 98414 23149 for the exact dates.



Firing at DakshinaChitra.

## Answers to Quiz

1. Travancore University in 1937; 2. TV18 group; 3. Lionel Messi; 4. Padma Subrahmanyam; 5. No polio cases in the past one year; 6. Janko Tipsarevic; 7. Tunisia; 8. Karnataka; 9. Pakistan; 10. Measuring just 7 mm long, it has been described as the world's smallest vertebrate.

\* \* \*

11. T'Nagar; 12. Indian National Congress; 13. Institute of Mathematical Sciences, or Mat-science; 14. Group rendition of the *Pancharatnam*s; 15. V. Krishnaswami Iyer; 16. Madras Auto Services; 17. Royapettah (Raya + Pettah); 18. Newington College; 19. Vani Mahal; 20. B.N. (Bommi-reddy Narasimha) Reddy!

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