

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

MADRAS

MUSINGS

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"You should have listened to me and asked for bottled water!"

Water-ed Down

Horri-fying...
Did you see that recent report carried by certain newspapers on Chennai's horrendous pipe water?
Apparently, a deeply toxic cocktail, pretending to be water, flows through the city pipes, bursting at the seams with various forms of bacteria.
Which means that every time you turn that tap on, a majorly lethal mess gushes (or trickles) out.
(Makes you want to burn that toothbrush, doesn't it?)
Your head swims at the list of diseases that can, and do, result...
...while your stomach churns, when the report adds that these pipes are old, rusted and full of holes, inviting even more filth in, as they wind their way beneath all that terra firma.
Oh, you think 'packaged water' is safe? Think again - evidence has it that several of those involved are frauds. Makes you wonder about those Ma-Baker-like-mothers'-knees where these misguided souls developed their moral framework.
Very sad.
Guys, you cannot seek to be a global-looking (and thinking, hopefully) world presence of a city ... and still mess up on basics like clean water, blithely uncaring of citizens sharing space with those nasty 'gram-negative, rod-shaped bacterium Escherichia coli'... or E coli.
So maybe we start there, before worrying about obvious externals?
Surface gloss without bare-essentials infra-structure?
Meaningless....

Ranjitha Ashok

A good act, but could be better!

(By The Editor)

And so, matters move ahead by way of heritage legislation. The State Government piloted last week in the legislative assembly the Tamil Nadu Heritage Commission Bill, 2012. The primary aim is to constitute a Heritage Commission in the State for protecting the "buildings or premises not covered under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1958 and the Tamil Nadu Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains Act, 1966." It is a positive development for all concerned with heritage and it is to be hoped that it will reach its logical conclusion of a Heritage Act that will protect a set of notified monuments across the State.

For those who have already begun celebrating, let us add by way of abundant caution that this is yet only a Bill and not an Act. It needs to be passed by the Assembly for it to enter the statute book. However, it cannot be faulted on intent. It aims to establish a Heritage Commission with a detailed mandate (refer box) which includes the creation of a list of heritage buildings across the State which will ultimately be protected by an Act. In other words, when this Commission fulfils its objectives, heritage activists will have a law on the basis of which any demolition can be challenged.

From a glimpse of the proposed Bill, it is clear that much will depend on the composition of the Commission. We have the recent example of the Heritage Conservation Committee (HCC) of the CMDA whose functioning was not in many ways up to the mark. Peopled as it largely was with Government representatives, it went about its task in a markedly bureaucratic fashion. The resultant slowness saw several of the mandates of the Committee not

being fulfilled. Several of the listed buildings were demolished and yet no action could be or was taken. And in instances such as the fire at Chepauk Palace, the Committee's silence was deafening, to say the least.

What is interesting to note is that the proposed Commission is to have a composition that is not in any way different from that of the earlier HCC. And on an aside, it is also not clear as to what the standing of the HCC will be once the Commission comes into the picture. But, to revert to the subject of its membership, the Commission is once again proposed to be largely peopled with Government appointees. And with that being so, will there be quick action?

The HCC had a relatively simpler task - of listing the heritage structures within Chennai and here too its task was made easier by the presence of the Justice E. Padmanabhan

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The Heritage Commission's mandate

The Commission will be responsible for:

- Preparing a classification of buildings in certain grades, after due scrutiny of applications
- Advising the Government on any alteration, modification or relaxation of any law for development, control and conservation of any heritage building
- Deciding on whether heritage buildings can be used for commercial purposes
- Framing special regulations for listed heritage buildings
- Advising Government on guidelines for private parties sponsoring beautification schemes
- Deciding on penal measures for defacing or destroying a building
- Advising Government on provision for restoration of buildings and documentation of records concerning heritage buildings
- Helping in gauging public opinion on efforts for creating awareness, preserving and maintaining heritage
- Advising local authorities on the policy of granting development rights for any heritage building
- Regulating the installation of advertising and displays near heritage buildings
- Advising on the costs of repair and the modes of fund generation for the same
- Finalising special designs and guidelines for heritage buildings
- Deciding on incentives by way of rates, taxes and fees as well as water charges for heritage structures

Integrating the City's transport

After years of planning and implementing solutions in individual silos, those in charge of Chennai's transport are finally waking up to the benefits of an integrated transport plan. This may mean that stand-alone solutions with limited impact such as the MRTS may soon be a thing of the past. If the two initiatives of the State Government are implemented well, we may have transport solutions that seamlessly blend into each other.

The first of the positive steps is the breathing of fresh life into CUMTA - Chennai Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority, a corporate body with

21 members under the chairmanship of the Minister for Transport. The primary focus of CUMTA will be the framing of a transport policy for the city, on the lines of the National Urban Transport Policy. The key functions of CUMTA will include monitoring the implementation of various traffic and transportation measures, including promoting the cause of public mass passenger transport systems and regulating their operations, besides implementation of traffic and transportation infrastructure in the Chennai Metropolitan Area.

The second initiative is the

Chennai Comprehensive Transport Study (CCTS) commissioned by the CMDA. The CCTS echoes the founding principles of the CUMTA, for it also demands the improvement of the entire transport corridor and not piecemeal options. The CCTS has called for coordination among the Highways Department, the Corporation, Chennai Traffic Police, the Transport Department, Metrorail and the MRTS. Some of its major recommendations include development of a bus rapid transport system, a network of suburban rail for over 200 km and the construction

(Continued on page 6)

(Also see page 2)

It's time to manage transport in the City

The National Urban Transport Policy 2006 is silent on controlling vehicular growth. On the other hand, the fiscal policy of the Government of India is primarily responsible for the spectacular growth of personal vehicles in the country. Pricing mechanisms can be most effective in controlling the growth of personal vehicles. The Singapore model on Auction Permits will slow down purchases of cars and two-wheelers. The cost of a car in Singapore is four or five times the world price. Amsterdam, London and Stockholm are other cities emulating Singapore. It is high time India also adopted this model.

Reduction of Vehicle Kilometre Travelled (VKT)

Reduction of VKT in the city will help considerably. This could be achieved through the following:

- **Transit Oriented Development:** The Chennai Metropolitan Development Authority (CMDA) has planned to intensify developments along rail corridors through increased FSI and relaxed parking regulations. Higher urban density encourages commuters to shift to public transport from personal transport and, thereby, significantly reduces the VKT. There is ample scope for deliberate strengthening of developments along the three suburban rail corridors and the MRTS. Each railway station has to be upgraded as an institutional and commercial hub.

● by K.P. Subramanian

- **Promotion of Public Transport:** The modal shift from personal vehicles to public transportation can remarkably reduce the VKT. Chennai city currently has 3600 buses, which cater to about 54 lakh passengers per day on an average. The city has four rail corridors. Their combined length is about 140 km and they carry about seven lakh passengers per day. The modal split (share of modes) between public and personal transport is about 35:65. However, SMP has proposed to increase the share of public transport from the present 35 to 70 by 2026 with a sub-modal split of 60:40 between bus and rail. This would be possible only through radical and far reaching decisions. Patronage for trains can be improved by increasing frequencies. It is ridiculous that the present frequency of MRTS services during non-peak hours is 30 minutes. Peak hour frequencies should be increased from the present 10 minutes to 3 minutes as in the case of Mumbai. It is essential to increase frequencies of MTC buses and improve the confidence level of commuters. In the present scenario, they are overcrowded, inefficient and unreliable. The fleet strength of the MTC was increased from 2700 to 3600 during 2010. However, the MTC has launched 36 new routes to places such as Mamallapuram, Sriperumbudur and Chengalpattu, located well outside the Chennai Metropolitan Area. This misplaced strategy has negated the imminent need to augment frequencies on existing city routes.

- It is necessary to accord priority to buses so as to make public transport more efficient. Bus priority techniques are 'bus lanes', 'priority manoeuvres' such as permitting buses' turning movements which are prohibited to other vehicles, and 'priority at signals'. Bus routes should be thoroughly rationalised to act as feeder modes to trains. Inter-modal connectivity along MRTS suburban trains and the MTC, to ensure well-integrated multi-modal public transport systems to provide seamless travel across the modes is an essential requirement. Patronage of the MRTS can be augmented by expediting the completion of Velachery-St. Thomas' Mount section. Patronage of suburban trains can be enhanced by laying a third line to Korukkupet, quadrupling the existing lines up to Ennore, and quadrupling the Tiruvallur-Arakkonam route. These efforts may yield better results at less cost in relieving the congestion.

(Continued on page 8)

Swimming lessons – Chennai style

The *Man from Madras Musings* took to swimming rather late in life. But having learnt it, he took to it like a (not-so-athletic) fish and enjoys the water. Would he have been any faster (and less fatter) had he learnt it when his age was still in single digit? That may remain an eternal mystery. But what MMM is fairly sure of is that, no matter when he mastered the Piscean art, it would have been a matter of relative indifference to his parents. Not that they would not have felt a passing pride, but nothing beyond that. Those, as MMM is fond of saying, were days when skills of this kind were acquired with no competition in mind.

These days, MMM notices, things are different. The dog days of summer being here, MMM is frequently to be seen in the water, much to the Chief's annoyance for several articles have remained pending for long. And while in the water, MMM has ample time to take in the scene around him. And rather like a whale that is passed by shoals of smaller fish, young children, learning to swim, frequently cross him. That is as far as the kids are concerned. The mothers (and the occasional father) who are on terra-firma, however, have a completely different idea. They are of the view that the children are in a battle to the finish and woe betide the child who lags even a wee bit behind.

To encourage their respective wards, these parents keep up a steady chant. Each one has his/her decibel level and the aim appears to be to shout the loudest. The sopranos of the moms, coupled with the deep bass or the reedy tenor of the pops, merge with the splashing sounds from the water and make for strange orchestra. But to MMM, most of the shouts sound more like threats and commands rather than encouragement. "Don't bring your head up," says one while another demands that his ward breathes a little less. A third shrieks out that the positioning of the left arm is all wrong and a fourth is upset that his child is rather deficient in footwork. Some demonstrate from the shore as to what the ward ought to be doing. In the process they adopt Pavlova-like poses. These parents march up and down the poolside, some of them armed with stop-watches and at the end of a lap (or a certain number of laps), they cluck their tongues disappointingly and announce the time duration taken by the panting child. "Not at all, what an Olympic champion would have done at your age," appears to be the general

verdict and then it is back to the grind for the kid.

There are unspoken but strong undercurrents of competition among the parents, of course. Thus if one child is ahead of the rest, the proud parent is looked at with daggers drawn. Dates of birth are compared and consolation is often sought in the fact that the child moving ahead is a few days older. "Age makes a big difference," is a considered verdict. That is until a litigious parent, probably taking a leaf from the book of the Army Chief's age controversy, suggests that the child is probably in reality much older and ought to be competing in an entirely different age group. That is accepted gratefully and snide remarks are made about how honesty is no longer a virtue.

These competitive manoeuvres reach a new peak every time there is a swimming competition round the corner. MMM and those of his ilk who sometimes swim into, and therefore, delay the advancing hordes are met with a blast of hostility by those on shore and

SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

suggestions are made rather loudly that timings for adults ought to be strictly regulated. Whatever happened to the concept of learning swimming for fun?

Pondering over all this, MMM has come to the conclusion that there is nothing more deadly than the competitive parent. However, MMM's is an inquisitive mind and braving the nasty looks he conducted an informal survey to check how many of these paters and maters, all of them arm-chair experts, knew how to swim. Not one of them had ever set foot into the water.

The Chennai photos

Have you received it as yet? If not, be of good cheer. For, it will soon reach your mail box. The *Man from Madras Musings* is referring to a collection of photographs of old Madras that is doing the rounds on the email circuit. And MMM has received it many times over. The header in the email claims that these are never-seen-before photographs of the city and some of them also give the credit to an individual for having collected them. It is only when you open it that you realise that these are the same pictures that have done the rounds for over ten years now. Several

are from the Vintage Vignettes collection and a few more are those that appeared in periodicals and newspapers. What is interesting is that none of these emails refers to any source or acknowledges copyright or ownership. But that is just the way we operate in this our land. It reminded MMM of the lament of an author who one day found his work being acted out as a play without any credit being given to his ownership. When he wrote a letter to the producer of the play he got a reply to the effect that sufficient copyright credits had been given by the simple expedient of purchasing a copy of the book! What more could an author ask for was what was implied.

To come back to the collection of photographs, MMM is fairly certain that similar collections are doing the rounds for other cities as well. And what amuses MMM even more is the number of phone calls he receives on the subject. Each caller begins by saying that he/she is going to send a mail to MMM (or the Chief) with the subject matter being just what MMM/Chief would enjoy. Enjoy they did but not when the email began re-appearing with unfailing regularity.

And so here is an appeal to those of you who have received such an email and intend to send it to MMM/Chief. Please desist. And to those who have not, who knows it may even now be wending its way to your inbox. The only problem is that having wended, it tends to re-wend, repeatedly.

Let sleeping domestics lie

The *Man from Madras Musings* has received the usual mails referring to his last fortnight's write-up on the problem of domestics. Several have shared their own travails. But the cake must go to a lady who writes as to why she had to dispense with the services of a security guard. It transpired that out for an early morning stroll, she found the guard fast asleep on the porch. If that was bad enough, what was worse was that he had well and truly wrapped himself in a saree that belonged to her (the lady)! It had been put out to dry the previous evening and the watchman found it a convenient blanket. When asked as to why he did that, he replied, with perhaps the intent to flatter, that it was of the colour that repelled mosquitoes!

– MMM

OUR READERS WRITE



Meter podu

'Meter podu' (MM, May 1st) seeks a solution by arriving at the most prevailing fare which commuters have been paying between two points while travelling by auto. This assumes that meters are now "dead" (which is true) and that they will be so in future too. When meters for autos work in many other cities, as vouched by some letters in your previous issues, and work well to the satisfaction of both the users and the service providers, our aim should be to devise a system which is fair to all. Without belittling the commendable efforts of the tech-savvy group, a few suggestions are offered:

1. Every auto should be owned only by its driver (land for tiller analogy). Only that driver and one more blood relation of his – say, father, son or brother – can be authorised to drive it.

All existing owners will have to sell their autos to the actual drivers within a month. To enable the drivers to purchase the autos, banks can lend money on the mortgage of the autos. A registered Association of Auto Drivers can give collateral guarantee.

2. Photos, addresses, etc of the two authorised drivers should be prominently displayed in the auto along with the registration number of the auto. This should also show the designation, address and telephone numbers of the authority to whom complaints from users could be made.

3. The meter must show very clearly the distance travelled in kilometres and fractions. The fare to be paid should be seen from a validated Fare Card showing the actual fare to be

paid for various distances, the waiting charges and the surcharge, if any, for late night travel.

4. Overcharging or refusal to ply should be treated as a serious violation and three proven violations should result in revocation of the driving licence.

5. An Empowered Fare Fixing Board consisting of an Economist, a Financial Specialist, a representation of Transport Department, an Automobile Engineer, a representative of the Auto Drivers and a representative of the Auto passengers / public should be set up for revising the Fare Card whenever it becomes necessary due to increase in fuel prices, etc.

6. Passengers can also be requested to show their appreciation of the condition of the auto, the courtesy and civility of the driver by 'voting' and the highest vote-winner every year could be declared the Auto Driver of the Year with some appropriate rewards.

If such a scheme is agreed to in principle, a more detailed, practical scheme can be worked out for the benefit of all, avoiding the "negotiating" of fares with much bickering as is the practice now.

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Why European focus?

This is with reference to the article on Heritage laws. I am surprised that the Heritage activists only talk about the legacy of the European invaders and never about the temples dating back one thousand years and more. Citing the model of London Heritage is very unfair

because we are poles apart, both in terms of culture and resources. When the city is bursting at the seams, what good does it do to say Col. Munro visited the place exactly 200 years ago to this day? After all, they were representatives of a colonial power and not missionaries keen to spread the message of love! Some of them were entrepreneurs and the locals associated with them to make money and not with any altruistic motive!

When the Victoria Public Hall or the Senate Hall of the University of Madras is restored, we are happy but should they not be put to regular use all round the year? I wish the authorities wake up and expand the VP Hall and see that it is put to good use for the cultural functions of the City and not locked paving way for some conservationist to do it all over again fifty years later. The Ripon Building, now being restored, is also a case in point.

I have no claims to being a conservation or civil engineering expert but why should the lime and mortar combination be used when the more durable cement mix is cheaper? Why do we always wax nostalgic about the good old days and miss the lessons of history? Can we bring back everything lost to time? If at all, we can preserve the memorabilia in a museum. In any country, utility and people should gain precedence over sentiment, though if the two can be sustained, well and good. Heritage, just for the sake of nostalgia about a few self-serving merchants of yore, is hard to digest.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: 1) Temples are protected and looked after by the HR & CE Department and, in some cases, by National or State Archaeological Departments. The call for heritage laws is to protect other historic constructions not covered by these departments.

2) Cement mix is less durable than lime mortar, we are told.

The hills of Salem

The reference to Salem (MM, April 1st) suggests a link to the Cheras, but it lacks historical corroboration. The local Uttamacholapuram temple (besides its copperplate grant) and the temples of Sukhavanewara and Soundararaja contain more than a dozen inscriptions pertaining to the Chola and Pandya kingdoms in the period 10th-13th Century C.E. Incidentally, the Brahmin settlement of Pandya times in Salem was known as Rajasrayachaturvedimangalam.

Coins that confuse



Who are the people responsible for designing our coins? They only cause headaches to users!

The new one rupee and two rupee coin are of same size and shapes. They are identical except for the lettering.

Similarly, the new 50 paise coin and one rupee coin are of same size and shape. Only the lettering is different. Further, the new five rupee coin is very similar, being only very slightly bigger and thicker.

Interestingly, there are several 'new' coins with variations between coins of the same denomination.

Imagine the confusion, inconvenience and hardship caused to one and all, especially people who deal with coins as part of their job – shopkeepers, bus conductors, cashiers and others.

Sadly, such issues are not raised in any forum.

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Where are they?

The Mail would have been 143 years old now had it been allowed to run. Another Madras daily, *Swadesamitran*, would have completed over 122 years had it been allowed to run.

Many Malayalam, Marathi, and Gujarati dailies have completed over 100 years. In Tamil there are no 100-years-old newspapers. What has happened to the old issues of *The Mail* and *Swadesamitran*, which needed to have been preserved for posterity and would be of heritage importance.

Vijay
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Using the sun

Reader R. Janakiraman (MM, April 1st) has suggested that future civil engineering plans go back in time and build houses with open central courtyards allowing sunlight to fall into the house. It is not advisable these days, with the crime graph going up. While the benefits of sunlight will come in the day time, criminals will have a field day helped by moonlight.

Under the circumstances, solar power should be tapped. Why are the authorities not so enthusiastic about promoting solar energy use?

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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

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Salem from Sailam?

Regarding the origin of the name Salem, my family lived there for a few months in 1957. The town of Salem and its vicinities are surrounded by several hills, such as Yercaud, on one side. The town is situated in the bowl of these hills. Pointing to the hills, my Tamil tutor said that the name 'Salem' is derived from *Sailam* in Sanskrit, which means 'mountain.'

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Elephants over the centuries

In Hindu and Buddhist traditions, the elephant is sacred. In Hinduism, the elephant is humanised and personified as Ganapathi (Ganesha) and worshipped. Recall the Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer film on the albino-elephant calf *Maya*, directed by John Berry in 1966. Even in landscapes where elephants do not naturally exist, these animals have established a positive relationship with humans. For example, according to Pliny the Elder (23-79 CE), elephants are the "closest to man; not only they recognise the language of their homeland, obey orders, and remember what they learned, but also they worship the sun and stars, and purify [themselves] at the new moon, bathing in the river, and invoking the heavens." Pālakāpyā (estimated 1000-1300 CE) wrote *Gaja Sastra (Hastāvurvēdā)*, which provided a comprehensive understanding of elephant's anatomy, illnesses, and different treatment strategies.

Because I am from Palghat, I have grown up seeing (tamed) elephants. Their majestic size and disproportionately small, but graceful, eyes have been awe-inspiring to me. The image of elephants decorated with gilt caparisons and colourful silk parasols standing gracefully for hours together – as though enchanted

by the rhythmical resonance of the *panchavadyam* – in my village during festival time is memorable. Watching these pachyderms standing and lazily chewing coconut fronds and resting one of their legs on another is also fresh in my mind.

Sukumar* and I have in the past discussed elephants referred to in Sangam (Tamil) literature (300 BCE – 300 CE). Elephant, *ānai* in Sangam times, has become *yānai* in contemporary Tamil usage; interestingly, in Malayalam, the word *ānai* re-

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mains! The Kurava people of the Sangam period who inhabited the kurinji landscape referred in *veriyattu* (a dance performed at high excitement levels to songs rendered to the accompaniment of percussion instruments such as *tudi*, *parai*, *murasu*) to elephants in their praise of Kumara (see *Perumpānāruppādai*, verse 75 and *Paripadal*, verse 19.2). A copper plate inscription (2nd Century CE) refers to a gift of 500 villages to Paranar by Cheran Senkottuvan (see *Paditru Pattu 5*) and includes the term *umbarkkadu* (*umbar* =

elephant, also *Ficus racemosa* tree; *kadu* = forest).

Information in Sukumar's book is treated under ten themes that variously refer to the cultural aspects of elephants and humans from the Harappan times (c. 3000 BCE) to the present day. He deals with a range of interesting points at an extraordinary level of accuracy.

The chapter on elephants in Vedic and epic literature attracted me immensely. This chapter is exhaustive, supported by appropriate illustrations from different periods. A brief reference to the *ashtadik gaja-s*, I thought, would be exciting. In the Hindu belief of creation, when Brahma, the Creator, 'blew life' into *hiranya garba* (the cosmic egg), the universe started to wobble, unable to bear the power of Brahma's blowing. The Saptarishis recited the *Sama gana*. That recitation resulted in eight super-powered elephants – the *Iravata*, *Pundarika*, *Vamana*, *Kumuda*, *Ancana*, *Pushpadantini*, *Sarvabauha*, and *Supradika* – which assumed the role of stabilising the wobbling universe. They became the *ashtadik gaja-s*, guarding the eight compass points. Returning to the chapter in Sukumar's book: with reference to the famous uttering by Yudishtra "*Aswatāmā hata: kunjara.*" to Dronacharya on the 15th day of the Kurukshetra battle, a partial lie is told by Yudishtra. The intent here was to convey a message that Dronacharya's favourite son Ashwatama was killed by Bhima and thus stun Drona and create time for Drishtadyumna to slit Dronacharya's throat, a plan hatched by Lord Krishna. The truth was that Bhima had killed only an elephant named Ashwatama. Whenever a reference to elephants in Vyasa's *Mahabharata* occurs, the episode of Bagadatta, the king of Pragjyotisha (Kamarna: the present-day northeastern India), who fought in the Kurukshetra battle siding the Kauravas always comes to mind. He rode Supradika, a majestic male, which had a pair of long tusks – similar to a pair of spears – that routed

the Pandava army. According to Vyasa the bonding between Bagadatta and Supradika was something more than what would usually occur between a master and an animal. Reading Vyasa's description of the unprincipled killing of Supradika by Dananjaya would bring tears from the eyes of any reader. Sukumar, of course, mentions of Supradika, and provides many insightful remarks on the weaponry and battle strategies resorted to at Kurukshetra, particularly focussing on the warfare involving elephant armies.

The chapter 'Elephant in colonial Asia' starts with the arrival of Vasco da Gama in Goa in mid-15th Century. Worthy of note is that chained elephants were used as a metaphor in newspaper cartoons to represent enslaved India in the early 20th Century. Most of this chapter alludes to elephant-trapping operations for timber movement in the then rapidly growing forest industry of the subcontinent, including *kheddah* operations in Ceylon. Reproductions of rare, spectacular oil paintings and those of paper engravings support this chapter. Justifying the title of the chap-



Elephants and the Madras Presidency

Sukumar refers to 'footprint' impressions at Attirampakkam (Attirampakkam archaeological site, Madras, 1 km north of River Kortalaray) mentioned by Shanti Pappu *et al*. Sukumar suspects these footprints, to be of elephants. He surmises that elephants could have been either trapped in soft mud along the Kortalaray or slaughtered by the early 'inhabitants' of Madras. Writing of elephants in rural Tamil (Hindu) heritage and culture, Sukumar comes up with examples from Ayyanar worship. Terracotta statues of Ayyanar riding either a horse or an elephant are common in rural Tamil Nadu. The Madras Museum also houses several elegant bronze pieces of Ayyanar. Sukumar suggests that the elephant culture of the Tamils goes back to 1 millennium BCE.

Although elephant culture has remained intimately intertwined with the Tamils, some of the reconciliations Sukumar provides in the context of the Pallavas from 7th Century Tamil Nadu are exciting. One Vaikuntaperumal temple sculpture depicting the ascent of Nandivarma

with George Peress Sanderson's (1848-1892) efforts, *kheddah* method was introduced in Mysore State in 1874. The pit method of trapping of elephants, Sukumar says, existed only in the Madras Presidency; unfortunately, no records of either death or serious injury to captured animals by this method are available. Nevertheless, not everything was deplorable. Two Indian veterinarians, S. Gopalan (no specific dates available) and V. Krishnamurthy (1927-2002) of Madras Presidency played a significant role in managing captive elephant health. I quote Sukumar: "Indeed, the experienced Assam elephant catcher P.D. Stracey, writing in 1963, states that nowhere had he (Stracey) seen elephants so well maintained and so well cared for as in the South." Another positive note on Madras is that the Government of Madras issued an order in 1871 against killing of elephants – the earliest official effort to protect any mammal in British India. In 1873, the Madras Government passed a law and the Elephant Preservation Act of 1879 followed.

have been an enthusiastic veterinarian as well. Gilchrist documented treatment methods for elephant diseases, which remain as unpublished private papers in London. I also recall that the English East India Company issued a half-anna copper coin (today's worth 3 paise) with the image of elephant-headed Hindu deity Ganapathi on the obverse in 1839. I also remember seeing a 1930-dated currency issued by the Bank of Indonesia of Rupiah 20000 value with images of Ganapathi in a Jakarta museum a few years ago. Every chapter in *The Story of Asia's Elephants* is illuminative with fascinating details presented crisply. The final chapter on the ecology and conservation of Asia's elephants is the jewel in the crown. Sukumar – a scientist with the Indian Institute of Science (Bangalore) and an alumnus of Loyola and Vivekananda Colleges of Madras – has elegantly demonstrated through this book how a scientist can be an artist as well; a brilliant book on a charming animal from the deft hands of an extraordinary wildlife scientist of India.

Pallava (720-797 CE) to the throne, Sukumar says, resembles an elephant head, which is similar to the 'crown' used by Kings of Bactria (2nd Century CE) and also those depicted on coins issued by Demetrius (3rd Century BCE, Greece). The life-size rock-cuts of elephants at Mamallapuram are another imposing Pallava contribution to world heritage. Sukumar reinforces that we need to remember not only them, but also the *gaja-prista vimana* (the roof resembling elephant head) of the Nakula-Sahadeva *ratha* at Mamallapuram.

A satirical caricature entitled 'Good news from Madras' done by the British cartoonist William Holland in London in 1791 depicts the victorious Tipu (Sultan of Mysore) riding an elephant and receiving the sword of the defeated Cornwallis; Tipu's elephant, in the Holland illustration, is seen trampling the British soldiers.

Wild elephant ravages in Coimbatore were recorded by the Collector of Coimbatore in 1822: "Nearly half of the area was subject to the ravages of the elephants." Similar situations prevailed in the villages adjoining forests of the then Madurai District and the Madurai Collector sent a note of advice to the Coimbatore Collector on how to trap elephants. Sukumar records that, at that time, the services of 7-8000 guards solely employed by the Government to keep wild elephants away from cultivated areas were dispensed with. Appeals made by the Collector of Coimbatore to restore forest guards were unheeded; instead, elephant trappers from Chittagong were brought in to train people in Coimbatore in capturing elephants following methods practised in Northeastern India.

In the context of elephant capturing in forest management, Sukumar says that the number of elephants captured in the Madras Presidency was just 10 in the 1930s, whereas in Bengal the annual trappings were close to 300. At that time, elephant trappings in Mysore numbered 20;

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*The Story of Asia's Elephants by Raman Sukumar. Marg Foundation, Mumbai. 2011.

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

• The man who made it possible

Vivekananda's Chicago visit

M.C. Alasinga Perumal was born in Chickmagalur in 1865 in an orthodox Vaishnavite family, the eldest of two brothers and a sister. His father, Chakravarthy Narasimhacharya, was employed with the local municipality. With his job unable to sustain the family, Narasimhacharya left Chickmagalur in the 1870s and reached Madras, where he managed to get a job with the Customs Department.

The family settled in Triplicane near the residence of Yogi Parthasarathy, Alasinga's maternal uncle. Alasinga continued his education at the Hindu High School, then joined Presidency College for his pre-University course. It was around that time that he married Rangamma, a girl from a Karnataka Iyengar family. Alasinga then entered Madras Christian College, where he caught the eye of the Rev. William Miller, then the Principal. Thanks to Miller, Alasinga got a scholarship. He graduated with a B.A. degree in Science in 1884. He then started pursuing Law course which he, however, discontinued due to family circumstances.

In 1885, leaving his family behind in Madras, Alasinga moved to Kumbakonam and then to Chidambaram, working as a school teacher in both towns. He returned to Madras in 1889 on the death of his father and joined Pachaiyappa's School in George Town as a teacher. He was soon promoted to the post of Headmaster, a position he held almost till the end of his life. Just a year before his death in 1909 he was appointed Professor of Physics at Pachaiyappa's College.

* * *

It was around 1890/91 that Alasinga learnt of the upcoming Parliament of World Religions from Yogi Parthasarathy Iyengar who, by virtue of his connections with the Hindu League of America and scholarly reputation, had been invited to participate. Representatives from various communities except the Hindu community had been named. Alasinga and his friends saw the Parliament as a good opportunity for the Hindus to present their faith to the world, but the question of who would travel to Chicago and represent Hinduism remained undecided even after days of discussion. The answer came with the arrival of



M.C. Alasinga Perumal.

Swami Vivekananda in Madras in early 1893.

Alasinga Perumal and his friends met Swami Vivekananda, who was then a guest of Manmathanath Bhattacharya, the first Indian Accountant-General of Madras, at his residence in San Thomé. Swamiji was introduced to the Madras public at the Triplicane Literary Society, where Alasinga

• by
Karthik A. Bhatt

was an active member. It was a place the Swamiji was to later frequent and deliver many lectures. Swamiji was impressed by Alasinga Perumal, who shared his ideas and concerns about the motherland. Alasinga thus became a close confidant and disciple of Swami Vivekananda.

Alasinga felt that Swami Vivekananda should be sent to Chicago as the representative of Hindus. When the idea was put to him, Swami Vivekananda readily agreed, having earlier been requested by the Maharaja of Mysore, the Raja of Ramnad and others to travel to the West and propagate the ideals of Hinduism. A subscription committee was formed under the leadership of Alasinga to raise funds, which did not always come easily. Alasinga even had to resort to door to door begging at times to raise the money. Soon, the princely sum of Rs.500 was collected. However, this sum was returned to the donors as Swami Vivekananda had second thoughts about his participation

in the Parliament, when he took it as a bad omen that the Raja of Ramnad had failed to make the contribution promised by him for the purpose. Alasinga was disheartened that his efforts had gone waste.

However, much to Alasinga's joy, the whole idea was revived, as Swami Vivekananda, encouraged by the reception accorded from the people of Hyderabad during his visit there, showed renewed interest in going ahead with the trip. The Nizam too offered a sum of Rs.1000 towards meeting the costs. Swamiji also had a vision of his Guru, Sri Ramakrishna, which he took as a divine command to make the journey.

Alasinga then renewed his efforts to collect subscriptions and, soon, nearly Rs.4000 was collected. He spared no efforts for the cause, even going as far as Mysore to meet the Maharaja and getting contributions from him. Swami Vivekananda sailed to Boston from Bombay, where Alasinga saw him off.

Throughout his stay in America, Swami Vivekananda wrote letters to Alasinga and his other close disciples, keeping them informed of his activities. When he once wrote that he was running short of funds, Alasinga immediately borrowed Rs.1000 from a merchant which, along with his monthly salary and money raised from selling his wife's gold ornaments, he sent by cable immediately.

What happened at the Parliament of World Religions is now history. Swami Vivekananda became a hero and started drawing large crowds wherever he spoke. But the papers in India gave lukewarm coverage to the whole event, making Swami Vivekananda disappointed. He wrote to Alasinga asking him to convene a public meeting in Madras to pass a resolution expressing utmost satisfaction with Swamiji's representation at the Parliament and send the resolutions for publication in various newspapers in the USA. Alasinga accordingly convened the meeting on April 28, 1894 at Pachaiyappa's Hall. Present at the meeting were many dignitaries of Madras, such as Rajah Sir Savalai Ramaswamy Mudaliar,

(Continued on page 7)



Nellikuthra at Wellington Zoo entertaining New Zealand children: photo by John Pascoe (1943). Nellikuthra died of intestinal ulcers in Wellington (NZ) on August 15, 1944. Source: National Library of New Zealand (<http://www.natlib.govt.nz/collections>)

Quizzin'
with
Ram'nan

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

1. The largest-ever sale of a professional sports franchise was finalised on May 1st for \$ 2.1 billion. Name the sporting club.
2. Name the Edvard Munch's painting that fetched a record \$120 million at a recent auction.
3. Name the new French President.
4. Who scored the winning goal that secured Manchester City the English Premier League title ahead of Manchester United on goal difference.
5. Name the child actress, who starred in the award-winning *Paa* with Amitabh Bachchan, killed in the recent plane crash in Nepal.
6. The Supreme Court recently halted a plan by the Indian Government to re-introduce which graceful predator after experts said the idea was 'totally misconceived'?
7. Which tech major recently got a licence to drive self-driven cars in a U.S. state?
8. According to a recent announcement by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India, what is the cap on the duration of advertisements per hour on Indian television?
9. On May 13th, the Diamond Jubilee of which solemn event in India's democracy was observed?
10. In which Scottish city was a centre dedicated to the life and work of Rabindranath Tagore launched on the occasion of the Nobel Laureate's 151st birth anniversary?

* * *

11. Which edifice in Egmore sits on the place which once had a bungalow called Haslemere?
12. After which freedom fighter is the Wall Tax Road renamed?
13. In 18th Century, to what use was put the soil got from flattening Hoghill, an elevated piece of land near Chennai Central?
14. Which political party had its genesis at Robinson Park in September 1949?
15. Which influential leader from the State was described by the UNESCO (in a citation) as 'the prophet of the new age and the Socrates of South East Asia', among other things?
16. Which famous eatery in Chennai, synonymous with a type of idli preparation, is owned by one Rajendra Gupta?
17. Of the five places, the first was Volgograd in 1966 and the fifth and the latest San Antonio in Texas in 2007. What am I talking about?
18. After whom is the Bangaru Ammal Koil Street in Mylapore named?
19. Which postal jurisdiction in Chennai has a palindromic pin code?
20. As per the currency issued by the Madras Presidency until 1815, how many Fanams made up one Rupee?

(Answers on page 8)

• Nostalgia

The day the Don had us nearly run out

My initiation into cricket began in 1949 – a year after Don Bradman had bid farewell to cricket. I was a student of St. Joseph's College, Trichy, and a resident of the once famous Clive's Hostel (alas, this edifice, which should have been preserved as a National Monument, has been turned into a vulgar commercial complex). Coming as I did from a predominantly rural area, I soon realised that in order to earn even a modicum of respect from my peers it was necessary to know all about cricket, if not as an active player, at least as an armchair one. And so I, along with other neophytes like me, went through a crash course of cricket catechism and at the same time lapped up all that was written on the game by Fingleton, Swanton, Cardus and others.

Very soon we had picked up all the cricket jargon and could easily tell the difference between Silly Mid-on and Deep Third Man; a Beamer and a Bouncer; a Flipper and a Top-spinner; and a Googly and a Chinaman! We had also read all about the life and deeds of Grace, Ranji and Trumper; Hobbes, Hammond and Headley; Larwood and Verity; Lindwall and Miller; Grimmet and O'Reilly and, of course, Donald George Bradman. The more we read about the amaz-

ing record of Bradman, the more we began to pine for at least a glimpse of the Don in action.

Our chance came when a local theatre arranged an exclusive show consisting of half-a-dozen short films on sport. One of them was *How to play Cricket* by Don Bradman, based on Bradman's own book with the same title, but one that was later changed to *The Art of Cricket*. What was of special interest to us was that the film included rare clips from some of

• by

G. Gururaj

former Station Director
All India Radio

the innings played by the Don. There was, however, a snag. Our hostel rules were very strict and all inmates were required to return to the hostel premises before eight p.m. If by chance we were late we could be in serious trouble, ranging from a heavy fine to expulsion from the hostel. So, hoping against hope that we would be able to watch the Bradman film and reach the hostel in time, we booked our tickets for the evening show.

Our luck held. It was the third item of the evening. The opening shot which showed a still of Bradman in the act of executing a square cut was greeted



Donald Bradman

with thunderous cheers by the audience. For the next half hour or so we were in the seventh heaven. What impressed us most was Bradman's footwork. There was a rhythm about his movements that reminded us of Fred Astaire doing one of his tap-dance routines.

We saw him returning to the pavilion amidst a standing ovation at the end of his monumental feat of scoring a triple century in a day! We watched him on the field arranging his men much like an army general marshalling his forces on the battleground. We shared the anguish of the Oval crowd when he was clean-bowled by Hollies for a duck in his last ever test played on English soil (just four runs would have given him a test average of 100!). Of that enchanted half-hour replete

with moments of sheer thrill and joy, one shot in particular stands out. It was a hook played to perfection. The ease with which Bradman placed himself in position, the split-second timing with which he executed the shot, and the flourish of the final follow-through – all these combined to draw an involuntary gasp of admiration from the entire audience. Little wonder then that Neville Cardus described Bradman's hook as the most dramatic shot seen in cricket since Jessop!

Like all good things in life the film came to a close with a sickening suddenness that left us greatly disappointed. We did not stay to watch the remaining films. Our sole aim was to reach the hostel in time. And, so, on a cloudless night we ran through the streets of Trichy as if our lives depended on it and even as the massive wooden gates of the hostel were slowly closing for the night, we managed to streak past a startled door-keeper and reached the safety of the hostel quadrangle. We had just made it. (Courtesy: *Straight Bat.*)

Integrating the City's transport

(Continued from page 1)

tion of a 62 km multi-modal outer ring road.

Within the city, the CCTS has stipulated certain much-needed standards. It has stated that pavements of not less than 1.5m width must be provided in all residential areas and the footpath width on major roads ought to be 3m. It has suggested a uniform code for pavements, gradients, drainage, ducting of utilities and activities along curbs. It has also underscored the importance of a safety audit for all transport solutions. And it has said that the current practice of relaying road surfaces on top of the earlier surface must be stopped forthwith. Scraping of the top surface will be mandatory.

Will all this actually come to be a reality? Much depends on the attitude of those in charge of the various concerned departments. It is understood that the first meetings have already taken place and matters are moving ahead. If that is so, it certainly augurs well for the city.

Tamil Nadu's Iyengars of Cricket

(AUTHOR'S NOTE: As an Iyengar I am proud to write about Iyengar cricketers who have made a mark in this prince of games. This brief article is in no way intended to downsize others who have represented Madras/Tamil Nadu and India with distinction.)

The first name that comes to mind is of M.J. Gopalan. In his early days, this medium-fast swing bowler of distinction sported a tuft – *kudumi* as it's called. Often, this tuft would get untied and when Gopalan tied it up again into a neat bundle and went on to bowl, some of his ardent fans predicted that it was a signal that a wicket would fall! Gopalan was a popular figure, especially in the Presidency cricket matches in which the Indians were pitted against the Europeans. The matches were played during Pongal and were played in a festive atmosphere. Gopalan was included in the team that toured England in 1936. He was also a skilled hockey player – a double International.

You can't talk of Gopalan without mentioning another name – C.R. Rangachari both of them being from Triplicane Cricket Club. A jolly person, this speed merchant represented India on its first Australian tour and had bowled against the great Donald Bradman and other worthies. I remember reading a sports report (by A.L. Hassett, if my memory serves me right) that Rangachari missed Bradman's off-stump by

the 'proverbial varnish' – a metaphor that had stuck to my mind. He played for Madras State in the Ranji Trophy and the Delhi cricket authorities still have on display a stump broken into two with a Rangachari whizzer in an international match.

Then there is Venkataraghavan, the great off-spinner. His jaw-breaking name was too much of a mouthful for an English commentator who called him 'Ventacaravan'! He captained the Indian team and was a part of the famous Indian spin quartet (the others were Prasanna, Chandrasekhar and Bedi). He went on to become a highly regarded cricket umpire. Another spin bowler of merit was A.K. Sarangapani.

The jaunty cricketer of Madras, K. Srikanth was a dashing batsman who saw the 'red' ball as a red rag, meant to be 'attacked' mercilessly. He has played a notable part in Indian cricket and was made Captain of the team that went to Pakistan. His dashing forays and devil-may-care attitude were greatly admired. He is now a cricket administrator, being the Chairman of the Selection Committee.

Then there is Sadagopan Ramesh who showed much promise, but was sidelined because of injuries. (Courtesy: *Straight Bat.*)

– Vengrai Parthasarathy

• DRIVING DOWN MEMORY LANE

Our cars, 1962-2011

For fifty years I have been looking at the Indian automobile industry. It has grown from a volume of 54,800 vehicles in 1961 to over 3 million today. In this travel down memory lane, I recall a few vignettes and watersheds.

In the early 1960s, I was teaching at Madras Christian College. The automobile industry was a fledgling infant. There was heavy dependence on imports for tools and stampings, as also for a wide range of components. Small production capacities were dictated by licences, permits and quotas. And, of course, there was a severe shortage of foreign exchange.

Yet, there was a fascination for the automobile. I quit my teaching job and decided to publish a transport monthly. I travelled to Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi and other cities to visit automobile plants before launching *Mobile* in September 1962.

I started on a clean slate without any knowledge or expertise either of the industry or of journalism. But travel and interactions with leaders and professionals in the industry, and the compulsion to survive in an entirely new field, helped establish the magazine in quick time. Over the next six years, I focussed on sharpening the information presented in *Mobile*.

Car production in India was

distributed among three manufacturers, namely Hindustan Motors (Ambassador), Premier Automobiles (Fiat) and Standard Motors (Standard). In the early 1960s, C. Subramaniam (CS), then Union Minister of Steel, Mines & Engineering, expressed concern over the low production of automobiles. A production volume of 28,000 was miniscule and CS felt that unless the volumes were scaled up, the industry would not become viable. He suggested that one of the three units could be taken over by the govern-

ment and integrated with the other two for expanding production.

About that time, George Turnbull, then Director, Standard Triumph International Ltd of UK, with whom Standard Motor Products of India Ltd (SMPI) collaborated, visited Madras. SMPI invited a few pressmen to meet Turnbull. Asked for his reaction to CS's proposal, Turnbull replied that he would welcome the prospect of expanding the output of Standard Motors, and indicated that at a volume of 20,000 the company could bring in some economies (SMPI was turning out less than 2000 cars per year).



Of course, Turnbull missed the implication: that in the event SMPI became a government company, K. Gopalakrishna would be out of it!

KG promptly called the pressmen that evening and informed them that the views expressed by Turnbull were totally his and that SMPI did not subscribe to it! He also stated firmly that in the Indian context, scale

I reminded Turnbull about his press conference in Chennai. After a hearty laugh, he reminisced over the prospects of producing cars in India and said: "We offered Talbot's Scotland works, which were closed down, on highly attractive terms to Maruti. But V. Krishnamurthy preferred the Japanese Suzuki."

There was understandable disappointment.

I quipped: "The Maruti deal was one of the rare decisions to leap-frog on technology. In India, we produce cars that belonged to the 1950 genre; and little has been done to update the design or to make it fuel-efficient. If the Maruti experiment succeeds, and there are good prospects for its doing so under Krishnamurthy, it would do a lot of good to upgrade technology down the line – at the ancillaries level. And for the first time the Indian public will have a fuel-efficient automobile comparable in its performance to those elsewhere."

Thanks to the then Industry Minister, R. Venkataraman, Chennai was rapidly emerging a strong centre for automobile manufacturers. There were

Ashok Leyland Ltd, Standard Motor Products India Ltd, Enfield India and Tractors & Farm Equipment Ltd (TAFE). Dozens of component manufacturers and ancillary units sprang up and grew as flourishing vendors to these mother units. Amalgamations, Rane Group, Tube Investments and later TVS took up manufacture of a vast range of components in collaboration with well-known manufacturers in Europe, US and Australia. (Courtesy: *Industrial Economist*)

(To be continued)

• by S. Viswanathan

Tail piece

Back then, there were only two types of cars. Not Ambassador and Fiat. But, cars that ran, and cars that did not. The first lesson in driving schools was how to start a car when it got stuck on the road for no rhyme or reason. Someone would push the car from behind and you would have to shift into the second gear. Things changed in 1983 with the arrival of the Maruti. Today, you hardly see cars stall, except perhaps for lack of petrol.

VIVEKANANDA'S CHICAGO VISIT

(Continued from page 5)

Sir S. Subramania Iyer and Dewan Bahadur Raghunatha Rao. A resolution was passed thanking Swami Vivekananda for the work he was doing and this was widely covered in the Press. Similar meetings were

organised by Alasinga in Kumbakonam, Bangalore and Mysore.

* * *

In 1894, Alasinga started the Young Men's Hindu Association. His literary contribution started the next year, when, at

the behest of Swami Vivekananda, he launched *Brahmavadin*, a journal dedicated to Hindu religion and philosophy. Assisting him in his efforts were fellow disciples of Swami Vivekananda like Dr. M.C. Nanjunda Row and Venkata-

ranga Rao. The first issue came out in September 1895 from the *Brahmavadin* Press, which had been set up in Broadway. Swami Vivekananda himself contributed articles regularly to the journal and also helped get overseas subscribers. The *Brahmavadin* Publishing Company was also established by Alasinga, through which he edited and published titles under the 'Brahmavadin Series'. In July 1896, Alasinga was instrumental in starting the *Prabudha Bharata*, or *Awakened India*, a journal that has been in uninterrupted publication ever since, making it the oldest magazine of its kind in the country.

Alasinga was actively involved in the various celebrations and meetings that were held across the city during the nine-day stay of Swami Vivekananda on his return from the West. He also played an active role in the early years of the Madras Mutt

that was established by Swami Ramakrishnananda in 1897.

The death of Swami Vivekananda (July 1902) and the passing away of his wife (in 1905) were setbacks that only made heavier the toll on his health that years of selfless public work and service had taken. He passed away on May 11, 1909.

Brahmavadin continued to be published until 1914, when it was finally wound up. It was succeeded by *Vedanta Kesari*, a magazine that has been uninterruptedly published ever since. The Ramakrishna Mutt has digitised all the issues of *Brahmavadin* and *Vedanta Kesari* (up to 2009) and made them available for sale. In a way, it is an act perpetuating the memory of Alasinga, the man who played a vital part in Swami Vivekananda's overseas mission. A biography of Alasinga Perumal has also been recently released.

A better Heritage Act

(Continued from page 1)

Committee list. Yet it could not make much progress. Can the new Commission be more successful with a more difficult agenda – listing and protecting buildings across the entire State? And let us face it, monuments in the mofussil are faced with greater and more immediate threats than those in the city where greater awareness and publicity ensure a modicum of protection.

What is, therefore, needed to make the proposed Commission more effective is to change

its composition. It needs to get more independent heritage activists on board. A whole host of NGOs across the State are involved in heritage conservation. Some of them need to get representation. The Commission also needs to broaden its base by forming Heritage Sub-Committees in each of the Districts. These must be given the task of preparing lists and recommending structures worthy of protection. The ultimate decision on which of these will make it to the protected list will, of course, rest with the

Commission in Chennai, which will also focus on matters of policy. Once the policy is laid down, the task of implementing it must also be passed on to the Sub-Committees. It is only under these circumstances that the formulation of the Heritage Act and its implementation will both be successful.

India has sufficient laws. It largely fails only in implementation. Can this Heritage Commission and its resultant Act be different from the start and aim for effective implementation?

Sounds you do not hear

– on the Guindy campus today

- Rhythmic roar of waves on Elliot's Beach lulling you to sleep at nights, now muffled due to the concrete jungle in between.
- The rattle of trains over the steel bridges across the Adyar River, as bridges have been converted to prestressed concrete girders and fully ballasted.
- The whistle of steam locomotives from the Saidapet Railway Station, now replaced by hooters of electric and diesel locomotives.
- The booming bell from the clock tower, now replaced by electric bells in the corridors.
- The yapping and howling of jackals at night.
- The rallying cry of "Parpu Masi Singa Masi Hoi, Hoi" during matches with other colleges.
- The thup-thup of boxing gloves during sparring and on punching bags while training for the Lalita Sastri inter-collegiate boxing tournament. (Courtesy: Alumni Association College of Engineering Guindy Newsletter).

– T. Adhiraj

Managing our transport

(Continued from page 2)

CUMTA (Chennai Unified Metropolitan Transport Authority) was formed in 2007 with the Minister for Transport as its Chairman. However, it is yet to make a breakthrough in bringing an effective coordination between trains and MTC buses. Such integration will go a long way in promotion of public transport, reduction in number of personal vehicles, and production of a positive impact on the air quality. A study had testified that a 5 per cent increase in public transport share has reduced about 8 per cent VKT in 25 years and 12 per cent VKT in 50 years. The CUMTA could be more effective if the Chief Minister is made the Chairperson as recommended by the Ministry of Urban Development.

• **Transport Demand Management (TDM):** TDM aims at curtailing travel demand by increasing the cost of travel by private transport through taxes on the use of public roads and parking places. The philosophy of TDM is that those who are responsible for causing traffic congestion should be made to pay extra. Such techniques are:

- Parking control
- Road pricing
- Staggering office hours
- Banning particular classes of vehicles

- Car pooling
- Pedestrian precinct

• **Traffic management and enforcement:** Traffic management is an art. It calls for an interdisciplinary approach, managerial ability, transparency and integrity, socio-economic outlook and environmental consciousness.

Therefore, a monitoring team comprising traffic engineers, police officials, social activists, elected councillors and representatives of community-based organisations could be constituted. All traffic management measures may be decided by such a committee with wider consultation.

An exclusive team of young personnel with competence and commitment, specially groomed and trained on the nuances of traffic rules and regulations, may be entrusted with the responsibility of enforcement and public education.

Conclusion

The transport system in Chennai has reached a point of no return. Therefore, it calls for out of the box and radical thinking and decisions through political will and professional skill. The Government may build more flyovers, widen roads, unveil mono/metro rail plans, and augment the bus fleet. However, these are all only pull factors. In addition to these, push factors are also required in the form of disincentives to discourage the use of personal transport. This will not brook any delay, for otherwise cars will cause grid locks. – (Courtesy: *Our Building and Construction*)



May, June & July: Sakti Burman Retrospective, a travelling show by Apparao Gallery on Sakti Burman, a well-known contemporary artist who was born in India and lives in France. There will be over 100 paintings, water colours, drawings and lithographs (at DakshinaChitra).

June 9 and 10: Children's Theatre: *Jujubee*, a production by PERCH. A kingdom of rules. An evil king. An unlikely heroine. A Jujubee... (at Goethe-Institut).

June 15-17: *Colours of Sexuality*, a three-day series of feature films, shorts, a panel discussion and a photo exhibition showcasing lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender (LGBT) issues (at Goethe-Institut).

June 21-23: *Fete de la Musique* to celebrate World Music Day: Stunning live events at unique venues performed by both amateurs and professionals and in all musical styles.

July 24: Children Theatre: *Duck, Death and Tulip*. A theatre production by Martina Couturier and NalandaWay Foundations (at Museum Theatre, 6.30 p.m.).

CHENNAI HERITAGE

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Answers to Quiz

1. The American baseball club Los Angeles Dodgers; 2. 'Scream'; 3. Francois Hollande; 4. Sergio Agüero; 5. Taruni Sachdev; 6. African cheetah; 7. Google; 8. 12 minutes; 9. The first sitting of the Parliament; 10. Edinburgh.

* * *

11. The Tamil Nadu Archives; 12. V.O. Chidambaram Pillai; 13. To fill up the drain that became Popham's Broadway; 14. The DMK; 15. Periyar; 16. Ratna Café; 17. Sister cities of Chennai (Madras); 18. The wife of Buchi Babu (of cricket fame); 19. Grems Road (600006); 20. 12 Fanams.

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

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