

WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI

# MADRAS

## MUSINGS

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"This healthy Japanese cola has made my life so easy, no cleaning bottles, handling milk powders and all that rubbish!"

### Things Go Better With...

If you recognise those words, you've probably been at the receiving end of, then as years went by, partaken in endless should-you-shouldn't-you debates over colas.

Guess what?

A new cola has been developed 'There' – (the other 'There', that is). A healthy version of the "carbonated beverage" that was "originally flavoured and caffeinated by the kola nut".

The words 'Healthy' and 'Cola' together?

Cola drinkers – especially the young – are happy. But, with a caution born of watching adults constantly goof up, they prefer to reserve judgment.

"There's still many a slip twixt the...er...cola glass and the lip." They declare.

"First," they point out: "You'll have to convince the parents." True.

Veterans of thousands of battles over colas, children and parents know that the gap between 'It's harmless' and 'It will make your teeth fall out' is a big one.

Next, barring notable exceptions, there is a general prejudice that anything that's 'good' for you is probably lamentably short on taste.

Then, the toughest test of all: Will it be cool to be seen sipping this beverage?

Wouldn't it be great if it all came together?

Taste, image and the 'good-for-you' factor?

You have to admit – when the worlds of taste and health blend – it's the real thing.

Ranjitha Ashok

## Welcome restoration approach by Govt.

### Conservation architect for Khalsa Mahal

(By The Editor)

In what may be the first of its kind, the State Government has decided to rope in a conservation architect to advise on the restoration of the fire-ravaged Khalsa Mahal at Chepauk Palace. This is perhaps an indication that the Government has come to accept that its conventional (read PWD) methods will not work in heritage conservation. If that is so, it is indeed a welcome development.

Initiating the process recently, the Government has invited expressions of interest from conservation architects. The selected professional will have to work on a conceptual plan, architectural and structural designs, and prepare detailed estimates. Tenders will then be floated for the actual execution and the architect will be closely involved in the final work. It is learnt that the Government intends to closely watch this project as a pilot and this may lead the way for future conservation efforts as well.

This is a marked departure from earlier practice. Till now, all conservation projects by the Government have more or less been worked on the same basis as new constructions. The same procedures and rates apply. With the PWD not having any conservation experts on its roles, work on restoration of Government-owned heritage buildings has been shoddy, at best. That these are very hardy and robust structures that manage to survive despite such treatment is another matter

altogether. The strict adherence to Government rates for heritage restoration is also an impossibility. Most often, the true nature and extent of damage reveals itself only after work has actually begun. This calls for a flexibility in cost estimates



Khalsa Mahal.

which is not permissible at present.

Chepauk Palace, which is arguably the first example of Indo-Saracenic style of architecture, was ravaged by a fire in early January this year. Its subsequent story is in itself a tale of how heritage restoration is

gradually acquiring centre-stage. After an initial and hasty announcement that the building was beyond redemption and would be demolished, better sense prevailed. A team of three experts was put together by the

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## Garbage collection plans go awry again

Can a city that generates 4600 tonnes of solid waste each day afford to exist without proper conservancy facilities even for a minute? Apparently yes, if you look at what is happening in our city. Due to various reasons, garbage is once again rapidly accumulating on the streets, in a replay of what happened a few months ago. At a time when cities of international standards are boasting of scientific waste disposal techniques, we are unable to even perfect our waste collection system. This reflects very poorly on Chennai's civic administration.

The city's garbage collection job is divided between the Corporation's own staff in seven zones and a private agency – Ramky Enviro Engineers – in the remaining three, these being Kodambakkam, Teynampet and Adyar. The problems with the Corporation's direct collection are the

usual ones that face any Governmental operations – lackadaisical and excess staff (much of it on leave), outmoded vehicles and indiscipline. The private operator, who began garbage collection in January this year, has problems of low staff strength and a very poor performance record especially

• By A Special Correspondent

in night conservancy. With around 88 sq km in its ambit, it is learnt that it faces a shortage of over 500 workers. What is worth pointing out is that the Corporation has staff in excess and could well contract them out to the private agency. But such out-of-the box thinking is yet to happen.

To add to the city's woes, Ramky Enviro's compactor drivers went on strike demand-

ing a 50 per cent hike in salary. This further impacted severely garbage clearance in the three privatised zones which by themselves account for 1600 tonnes of garbage a day. The Corporation is, it is learnt, mulling over punitive action against the private agency, rather on the lines of what it did to the previous contractor, Neel Metal Fanalca, whose performance was also abysmal. The fact that two contractors out of three – the first, Onyx, being by far the best – have proved failures speaks volumes about the kind of due diligence that is performed by the Corporation on those who bid for its tenders. In fact, the Mayor has gone on record last week to the effect that Ramky was selected because it was the lowest bidder. If that is to be the sole criterion, no wonder we repeatedly end up with poor performers.

(Also see page 2)

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# Giga-sized garbage bins

You couldn't have missed them. The *Man from Madras Musings* certainly did not. They have come up all over the city. MMM alludes to the blue-coloured corrugated sheet containers, each the size of a railway goods wagon, that have been placed at strategic street corners. These, it appears, are the latest gifts of the city's worshipful fathers to their, er, children.

Apparently, this is an idea that has emanated from the very granddad of them all. Having reasoned that the citizens are forever increasing their garbage outputs and the collection agency is forever minimising its conservancy staff, he has, MMM learns, declared that these mega- or giga-sized bins are the only option. They are large and roomy enough to keep the garbage of a week and more. This way, he probably decided, garbage will not flow on to the street, thereby making the roads exactly like Singapore. The new bins occupy half the street anyway.

are officially banned in the city. As a consequence, the citizenry has taken to the big-meg-gig bin.

There are, however, two major deterrents to using the big bin. The first is, of course, its height. The second is that it is never cleared and so the stink from it is awful. Even cows and dogs avoid it, so MMM is told. As a consequence, those who need to empty garbage do so all around the big bins. Result? The garbage tip just gets bigger. The roads get narrower and some are frankly out of bounds for those with sensitive stomachs.

Those who interest themselves in garbage are crying foul. But the erection of the mega bins is progressing regardless. Most probably, a tender, that irreversible Government juggernaut, must have been floated and, irrespective of their impracticality, the bins must be put up. Strange are the ways of the city. But, then, Daddy knows best.

MMM was on one such journey to Nesapakkam and all he can say is that it was fraught with adventure. After a certain distance, signboards completely ceased to exist and it was a case of the visually challenged leading the visually challenged. Every corner shop was stopped at and enquired from and some became so adept at it that they shouted out instructions even before vehicles stopped to enquire.

It is rather a strange situation that the so-called new areas of the city boast of no civic infrastructure whatsoever, and that includes roads, signboards and any kind of pavement. The only signboards that did exist were those put up by property dealers who promise all kinds of dream homes and villas in the vicinity. And the number of constructions in progress indicated that MMM was in a minority in considering that, like St Helena in the eyes of Napoleon, the place was made of the

## SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

But there is always a slip between the muck and the tip, as the expression goes.

What our worshipfuls have not reckoned with are certain practical problems.

Firstly, as MMM notices, the bins have six-foot walls. This is ostensibly to prevent cattle and dogs from foraging in the garbage. But with the height of the average Chennaiite being less than six feet, it would take a basketball player to be able to tip garbage into these bins. Of course, given our population, we could always stand one on the other and manage. And those who live in nearby high-rises can simply fling their rubbish into them.

Of course, to be fair to this Worship, he has declared that this bin is not the day-to-day bin. Those are the small ones on wheels, which are forever being shunted around. The idea was that local conservancy staff would empty the wheeled bins twice a day into the meg-gig bin and then the clearance truck would call once a week to take away the stuff in the meg-gig.

Here again, the idea has sprung a leak and having skidded on a few random banana peels, come a purler. The local conservancy man/woman is frequently AWOL and the bin-on-wheels is either missing or lying on its side, the latter act being done by the cattle which, MMM hardly needs to remind you,

### The great leveller

'Tis the season of college admissions. Parents go around with haggard faces and the air is full of words such as counselling, capitation fees and certification, all terms fairly alien to *The Man from Madras Musings*. But having willy-nilly been sucked into the process, he has been able to observe that if at all anything does away with class distinctions in our society it is the process of admitting children into higher education. Of course, as MMM well knows, school admissions are also a similar process. The only difference is that schools are divided into high society and others, but in colleges the same distinction is not entirely applicable.

What makes colleges greater levellers are the way in which the admission process is conducted. Those on the technical side invite parents and children to entrance exams conducted in out-of-the-way spots such as Nesapakkam, Kelambakkam and other pakkams of which most parents have only vaguely heard, the only pak they being familiar with being Pakistan. Carpools are hastily put together, and those driving around in BMWs happily mix with the more common Maruti 800 and even (horror of horrors!) the tourist taxi Indica.

Then comes the actual task of trying to find out where and how to reach these locations.

Devil's droppings as He flew over the earth.

But, to get back to the journey. Nesapakkam had never seen so many vehicles in its entire existence. The streets, which were meant to be totally pedestrian, gave up the ghost after the first few cars and to MMM it appeared that the only way to get out of the place, if he got into it, was to do the entire distance in reverse gear. But happily there were more enterprising souls and a couple of zigs, a few zags and the chanting of the national mantra, 'Adjust Please', ensured that two-way traffic was established, though not without the occasional snarl.

MMM is now NNN – Never Near Nesapakkam.

### 7 days of the week

Now that the temperatures have dipped a bit, *The Man from Madras Musings* can bring himself to write something about summer. Suffice it to say that in MMM's experience, this was a summer to remember and compare all future summers with. Having been through it, MMM knows what Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego went through in the divine fire.

In Chennai, MMM feels, the seven days of the week in summer ought to be – Sunday, Mean Day, Stew Day, Basting Day, Thirst Day, Fry Day and Sauteed Day.

– MMM

## OUR READERS WRITE



### Growing congestion

The State Government recently announced the proposed setting up of five new factories around Chennai with an investment of Rs. 6000 crore with direct employment potential for 10,000 people.

During the last 10-15 years many large industrial projects, I.T. parks, industrial parks, auto-related projects, etc. have been established in and around Chennai, creating tens of thousands of employment opportunities, resulting in migration of large sections of people from the districts to Chennai and suburbs. As such congestions (of people and vehicles) continue to grow, and problems of large-scale pollution, severe shortages of essentials like water, sanitation, public transport, housing, parking space, etc. have arisen. To reduce the congestion:

- The Chennai Municipal Corporation may consider ways of giving permits to purchase cars only to people having private

parking space, as is being done in Beijing, China.

- The Government may consider taking a policy decision not to allow location of new industrial projects around Chennai, but to disperse them in the districts by providing the requisite infrastructure and incentives, so as to discourage people from migrating to already congested Chennai.

The State Government's recent Vision 2023 document provides for the creation of four or five large cities in the hinterland. The implementation of this recommendation should be given first priority as this will greatly reduce migration of people into the Chennai region.

J.W. Thomas  
9, Ritherdon Road  
Vepey, Chennai 600 007

### The best use

What should be done to spaces beneath the flyovers (MM, May 16th)? There should be no second thought: they should be used for public

# ANOTHER

The complete river above Mullaperiyar Dam, including the dam and reservoir, and the full catchment area of about 600 sq.km. are within the boundaries of Kerala. But it is a fact that Neerar, another tributary of the Periyar, which joins the main river much lower than even Idukki, has its origin in Tamil Nadu. Thus out of the total Periyar catchment area of 5222 sq.km, 115 sq.km is in Tamil Nadu.

According to the 1886 agreement, Tamil Nadu has only leasehold rights over the dam, reservoir and its waters, but not ownership. In 1882-83, there was a proposal for the outright selling of 8000 acres of land and waters to the Madras Government for a cash payment of Rs. 7 lakh and transfer of the British enclaves Anjengo and Tangassery to Travancore. The lease agreement was signed in 1886, only after such proposals and counter-proposals and prolonged discussions. At that point of time, nobody had perhaps heard about ecology or environment. But the present point of view is that diversion of water from the catchment of the Arabian Sea to that of the Bay of Bengal is a great offence against Nature.

When completed in 1895, the dam was of 155 ft height (ex-

pected maximum flood level) and the full reservoir level was at 144 ft (sill of overflow). In 1908, the solid level of the spillway was reduced from 144 ft to 136 ft and ten flood gates, each 36 ft wide and 16 ft high, were installed, raising the FRL to 152 ft.

A dispute regarding the agreement erupted as early as 1937, when the Madras Government proposed to generate electricity from the diverted waters. Travancore objected. The case went on for long and, finally, was decided in favour of Travancore; it was ruled that Madras had no right to use the water for any purpose other than irrigation as contemplated in the 1886 agreement. Subsequently, in 1970, a supplementary agreement was signed between the Tamil Nadu and Kerala Governments permitting Tamil Nadu to generate electricity on payment to Kerala at Rs. 12 per kilowatt year, up to 350 million kilowatt hours, and at Rs. 18 for electricity generated beyond 350 million units in a year. The lease rent of the land was also increased from the previous Rs.5 to Rs. 30 per acre.

In the wake of the Machu Dam failure in 1979, causing the destruction of Morvi town and death of about 1800 people, Kerala became apprehensive regarding the safety of the ageing

toilets, the biggest civic need of Chennai. If the Highways Department needs some space for their maintenance crew, they may take a portion of one wing, but the rest should be for toilets. I suggest:

1. The space under every flyover should have toilets for men and women and some space to park vehicles, carts, etc.
2. The facility should be free and no fee should be charged.
3. They should have good supply of water, 24 hours.
4. They should be constructed and maintained by corporate houses. The maintenance should be round the clock. Neither the Corporation nor any outsourced contractors should maintain them.
5. Telephone numbers to lodge complaints should be prominently displayed and any complaint should be rectified within an hour.
6. Tax benefits can be extended by the Central/State Government to the corporate houses for providing and maintaining the facility.
7. The sponsors can utilise the wall space of the toilets for their advertising.

**Sujatha Vijayaraghavan**  
Secretary, Venus Civic Exnora  
20, Murray's Gate Road  
Alwarpet  
Chennai 600 018

### Confusing coins

Reader B. Gautham has raised an important point (MM, June 1st) about the confusing coins. The same situation prevailed in 1994 and I, as Secretary, Consumer Affairs, wrote a letter to the Joint Secretary in charge of this subject in the Department of Economic Affairs to issue coins of different sizes and colours as in the past. Nothing happened. Often, the officers in the DEA do not attach much importance to letters from other departments, particularly those like Consumer Affairs!

After about a year, I moved to tourism and visited Mexico to sign an agreement on tourism promotion between the two countries. Our Ambassador in Mexico city told me that the Joint Secretary from DEA was there and had left only the previous day. The Ambassador also told me that the particular officer was there to inspect the coins which were being produced there according to our order. I told our Ambassador that I wished I had been there a day earlier to tell the JS again about the consumers' problem and get him to do something on the spot! (These coins are produced perhaps even now in other countries according to international tenders as well as in the GOI Mint.)

Mercifully, the new five rupee coin is of different colour. When my wife complains even now that officials cannot do even these simple things, I tell her that I cannot complain about it because I was a part of this system myself.

**Dr. G. Sundaram, IAS (RTD)**  
(Former Secretary to the GOI)  
A-601, 'Dugar Apartments'  
Keshav Perumal Puram  
Greenways Road, Chennai 600 008

### Information wanted

Even after doing a detailed search, I have not been able to find complete information regarding the broken bridge across the mouth of the Adyar River. When was it built and when did it get damaged? All I know is that it was badly damaged during the monsoons, I guess in the 1980s.

**Akhilnandh Ramesh**  
11/8, Kumar's Brindavan  
2nd Main Road, Kasturiba Nagar,  
Adyar, Chennai 600 020

### For princely states

In the item 'A Post Box out of the past' (MM, May 16th), it has been stated that it belonged to a "postal system maintained by the erstwhile Travancore State". It may be news to many that many of the erstwhile princely states had their own postal systems called Anchal

Service. The erstwhile Travancore-Cochin State was one. There was an Anchal System in the Hyderabad State too.

These Anchal services were meant to serve within the State. For places outside the State, the Indian P&T system operated its own post offices. When the princely states were merged with the Indian Union, a special officer was appointed by the Postal Department to oversee the merger of these Anchal Systems with the Indian P&T system.

Similarly, a few princely states like Mysore and Hyderabad had their own narrow gauge railway system which operated within their own territory. In Hyderabad its own currency was also in vogue. These were called Oli Sikka and while enquiring about the prices of various articles, the people had to ask whether the price was in O.S. or in Indian Rupee!

Such was the scenario obtaining at the time of attaining independence.

**S. Chandrasekaran**  
214/8, Sri R.K. Math Road  
Chennai 600 028

### A tragic failure

Standard Motors (SMPI) was one of the three pioneers among Indian auto makers in the 1960s (MM, June 16th). It is indeed tragic that it floundered and, finally, closed down owing

to bad management, poor decisions and lack of foresight that failed to take into account the future of the auto industry in India, while its peers, such as Ashok Leyland, Enfield, Tata Motors and TAFE, among others, have prospered.

Properly handled, it would have been a pillar of today's "Indian Detroit". As things turned out, it failed its investors too.

One should not speak of Maruti and SMPI in the same breath, for, despite its teething problems, Maruti has come out with flying colours, capturing the bulk of the Indian auto market by its ingenuity, foresight and innovation in research and design, among other admirable factors.

**K.P. Mahalingam**  
6-B, The Peninsula  
778, Poonamalle High Road  
Chennai 600 010

### Taylor turned tailor?

Just a small mistake in spelling can distort the whole truth. One example is the way Taylor's Road is spelt on the road sign-board at the junction of the road on the left near the signal point. It is spelt Tailors Road. It's a wonder that it has remained unnoticed for years.

I hope it is rectified soon.

**C.S. Baskar**  
17, Ramarao Road  
Mylapore, Chennai 600 004

# VIEW ON THE MULLAPERIYAR DAM

and leaking Mullaperiyar Dam and the matter was referred to the Government of India and Central Water Commission. After several inspections and studies the CWC directed lowering the FRL to 136 ft and carrying out various measures to strengthen the dam and also to increase the spillway capacity by adding three more vents of 40 by 16 ft. These measures have been more or less carried out and, as it stands now, the dam can be considered safe.

The life of a dam depends greatly on maintenance and upkeep. Mullaperiyar dam has been maintained well from the time of construction. In the un-

likely event of the dam collapsing, it will be more disastrous to Tamil Nadu than to Kerala.

Though some very old dams are still in existence, there have been many instances of failure of old as well as new dams. None of the Roman Dams was of significance and they were less than 40 ft in height. But their aqueducts for conveying water were remarkable. The ten dams said to be in operation for over 300 years are of insignificant height compared to the Mullaperiyar Dam.

The Kerala Government asserts that even with the proposed new dam, the present supply of water will be retained. As such, the FRL of the proposed

Dam will be higher than 136 ft and there will be no difficulty in the diversion of water as the inlet of the tunnel is at 104 ft. The life of a dam and reservoir project is determined not by fixing the longevity of the structure, but by estimating how long the reservoir will be of use as it will be gradually filled up due to settlement of silt. Considering the long period of lease, the dead storage was fixed at up to 104 ft, the inlet level of the outlet tunnel. Fortunately, the rate of silting in Mullaperiyar reservoir is much less than what was contemplated earlier. The storage between 104 and 80 ft contours is a fraction of that above 104 ft.

As such, the lowering of the intake tunnel will not be of much benefit, taking also into account the reduction of head in generating electricity.

Constructing a new dam/spillway of about 80 ft height, creating a protective reservoir downstream of the present dam will considerably reduce the active pressure on the present dam and make it much more safe. Such a dam can be constructed at a cost less than one-fourth of that of a 150 ft dam. This proposal will considerably reduce the additional submergence of lands and forests. The lower reservoir can also be used for fish culture and tourist facilities.

Prof. Subramaniam in his article (MM, May 16th) stated the benefits to the respective states as Rs. 600 crore for Tamil Nadu and Rs.1913 crore plus Rs. 300 crores for Kerala. The diverted waters irrigate about 2.3 lakh arid lands in Tamil Nadu. Besides this huge amount, also assessed at about Rs. 370 crore received by the agriculturists from the increased food production, the Tamil Nadu Government gets lakhs of rupees as water cess. Against this, the amount paid by Tamil Nadu to Kerala is Rs. 2.58 lakh annually on the lease of 8100 acres. An average of 422 million units of

electricity is produced from the diverted waters. For this Rs. 6,40,600 is paid to Kerala as royalty, while Tamil Nadu, at the average rate of Rs. 5 per unit, collects Rs.211 crore. About one-third of this may have to be spent towards production and transmission costs. The supplies of products like vegetables, meat, etc. purchased from Tamil Nadu are not gifts to Kerala. They are commercial deals and, in fact, if Kerala is not purchasing them, Tamil Nadu agriculturists and merchants will get only very much lower prices for their products.

By commendable efforts and methodical operational efficiency, Tamil Nadu has been able to increase the ayacut of 1.7 lakh acres in the pre-1979 years, when the FRL was 152 ft, to the present 2.3 lakh acres even with FRL at 136 ft. The Mullaperiyar diversion offers far higher benefits, to whomsoever it may be, than would have been possible in Kerala.

**A.M. Mathew**  
Chief Engineer, PWD (Retd)  
Adangapuram  
Baker Hill  
Kottayam 686 001

## MORE TO BE DONE

The following information about the Mullaiperiyar Dam (MM, May 16th) may be of some interest. *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, 1908 (Madras, Vol II, pp 252-253), at the close of its entry on the Periyar Project, had this to say: "The most important problem that now remains is concerned with the extension of the system, by forming a second reservoir in which to store the surplus water which still runs to waste."

So, a lot of homework still needs to be done, even after more than a century, regarding the storage in the dam and its safety. All the data left by Major (later Colonel) John Pennycuik and his forerunners, Capt J.G. Ryves and Capt J.L. Caldwell, when re-examined could contribute a lot to the spirit of cordiality (minus politics) that needs to be promoted between Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

**Rev. Philip K. Mulley**  
St. Luke's Church, Kotagiri 643 217  
The Nilgiris

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This correspondence is now closed.)



## • Looking back

After my Inter studies at Pachaiyappa's College I joined the Advertising course of the International Correspondence School (London). I then joined V.C. Sivaswami who had started Epoch Advertising in the premises of Deepak Insurance Co., Errabalu Chetty Street. Later, Vittal Mallya

took over the concern as an unit of his McDowell's group. Epoch Advertising then had very good business with a large number of clients. But then my career changed, as the article reveals.

— V. Theetharappan

# Changing jobs to take on imported products

One Monday morning in the 1950s, at our Epoch Advertising cabin in McDowell's Corporate Office, I was busy with the various advertising schedule sheets which were to be sent to the publication offices. Our artist, R. Natarajan, was preparing a design for Santhosh Trophy advertising. Our boss, V.C. Sivaswami, would be in only at 12.30 p.m. or so after his rounds. Suddenly, at 10.15 or so, a lanky and very diffident person entered our cabin and introduced himself as P. Thangaraj Nadar, from a small village in Madurai District. He wanted to meet Vittal Mallya (our Chairman) or A.P. Herbert (our General Manager) regarding a new energy beverage that he had prepared and which he wanted to introduce in the market through McDowell's.

The Chief Accountant of McDowell's had asked him to meet Sivaswami before speaking to the top brass. We asked him to wait in our cabin. A few minutes later Herbert passed by and, as usual, wished us. I immediately followed him to his room and told him about Thangaraj Nadar. He invited Nadar to his room and asked him to visit McDowell's after 2 or 3 days by when Vittal Mallya would have returned to Madras and his uncle, B.A. Mallya, the senior-most Director of the Company,

would also be there. He also suggested that Thangaraj Nadar bring samples of the product.

On the scheduled date, B.A. Mallya, Herbert, Sivaswami, T.R. Lakshmanan, a senior executive of A. Bush, Boake Roberts (later Bush & Co) and I met Thangaraj Nadar, who distributed his beverage which he had tentatively named *Ovotone*. We found it similar to *Ovaltine*. As Vittal Mallya was still in Calcutta it was decided that Nadar should bring his product

## The Minister's query

One evening, when we met Minister Bhakthavatsalam to get a letter of introduction, the minister discussed the product with Nadar who informed him that, apart from the main ingredients, egg and a herb were also used. Bhakthavatsalam pointed out that only the names of the main ingredients were mentioned on the wrapper of the tin and brochures and not eggs or the herbs. Nadar explained that eggs were necessary for invigoration but if mentioned it would stop pure vegetarians from buying what was an excellent health drink.

# Welcome approach

(Continued from page 1)

Government. Though the composition of the team was a subject of controversy, it did submit a report that recommended conservation and restoration. The exact nature of the restoration is, however, rather nebulously given in the report and it remains to be seen as to how exactly this will pan out on the ground. Much will depend on the conservation architect selected and what weight his/her opinion will carry.

If this project is successful, *Chepauk Palace* can claim yet another first to its credit. It will be the first fire-ravaged heritage building in the State to be

professionally restored. Moore Market, *Gandhi Illam* and Spencers' are all examples of buildings that were gutted but what could have been conserved had there been a vision and a will. Perhaps *Chepauk Palace* will show the way, as it did by way of architecture in the erstwhile British empire for almost two centuries.

One last thought, though. In report about these government plans, the word 'rebuild' has been used several times. We hope **restoration** is what is planned and not pulling it all down and building a replica – which is what 'rebuilding' implies.



## Promoting the product

Epoch Advertising handled Alvitone advertising from the beginning. Nadar knew many of the stalwarts in the advertising, PR and printing fields, like P.S.G. Rao (D.J. Keymer's), Subramanian (Elegant Publicities), Ramachandran (Efficient), M.C. Appaswami Chetti (Blockmakers), G. Umapathi (Uma Printers), Chari (Chari Advertising), Gemkars (a group of young men who left Gemini Studios), V.K.N. Chari (Gemini Studios), R. Madhavan, R. Natarajan and their maternal uncle K. Madhavan who were in the banner and press advertising design business, and Blaze & Central, who made advertising and documentary films!

The annual Congress Exhibitions used to be held in December at the Congress Grounds and were very popular with the people of Madras. The main entrance was just opposite the Sun Theatre, where we now have the memorial to Veteran leader G.K. Moopanar. In those days, the Exhibition used to daily have Carnatic music performances by leading musicians of Tamil Nadu. Stalls of all the leading industrial houses in Madras were hosted here. Alvitone also used to have a stall. Next to us, Mammen Mappillai and his wife used to have a stall for their M.M. Rubber & Co. Their manufacturing unit was then in Tiruvottriyur and they made balloons!

To advertise ALVITONE at railway stations Nadar contacted the Chief Commercial Manager, one T.A. Taylor (if my memory serves me right), and in his office there was one Varadharaja Mudaliar who helped us a lot (he died in 2007 or so at the ripe old age of 105). Almost all the side walls of the platforms of suburban stations from Beach to Tambaram had huge Alvitone advertisements painted on them. Certain road bridges crossing train lines (like the bridge in Guindy near the King Institute) had on its side walls, over the railway lines, large advertisements for Alvitone. At Central Station, above the second floor on the front wall, two large panels of Alvitone advertisements were painted. They really caught the eye as you entered the station premises!

delivery of the car, the Standard Ten I referred to earlier. It served us well and we sold it only in 1955 – for the fabulous sum of Rs. 4500! So it was possible for me to use it for Alvitone Laboratories' erection work from 1954 to 1955 December! I used to take it to the St. Thomas' Mount laboratory site, the Metal Box factory in Tiruvottriyur, and to fabrication units in T'Nagar and Triplicane.

\* \* \*

Meanwhile, I felt the product needed a new name, as *Ovotone*, the name tentatively fixed, would clash with those of existing products *Ovaltine* and *Ovomalt*.

Epoch Advertising artist Natarajan was the brother of the

well-known artist R. Madhavan and was entrusted with the work of designing the product's new name for the container. I suggested the name ALVITONE. It contained all the letters of Ovaltine and, as a promotional gimmick, the name was split as All Vitamins in One and also as All Vitamins Toned. Natarajan did two or three rough designs for the container label and we decided to take the rough designs to Kaligambal Temple and choose the final design by placing them before the deity!

Before that, Sivaswami, Thangaraj Nadar, Natarajan and I went to Ramakrishna Lunch Home and, after an hour, we came out to pay the bill. As we came out we saw the proprietor, V.R. Ramanatha Iyer. As VRR

# What a difference in engineering!

(Continued from last fortnight)

When I was in Delhi once, I ran into the Sales Manager of Pan American World Airways, Seshadri. I tried to impress upon him the focussed readership of Mobile in South India and asked for Pan Am's advertisements. Pan Am was then the largest global airlines. Seshadri pointed out the difficulty of advertising in all newspapers and magazines across the globe. I offered him a barter: 12 colour advertisements for a return ticket to Europe; I had long been intent on visiting industrial facilities abroad. And lo, Seshadri agreed!

The Press Bureau of German industry representing six major German corporations agreed to host me for a week in Germany to look at the production facilities of the six companies that built the Rourkela Steel Plant. The German Consulate agreed to provide another week's tour of Germany to cover several automobile plants, including Daimler Benz, VDO and Volkswagen. The topping was the offer of a visit to the Hanover Fair. The programme took care of travel, stay as also the services of a guide, and even a visit to East Berlin.

H.B. Stanford, a British engineer who worked for Simpon's, provided a reference to a senior manager of British Leyland who, in turn, introduced me to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders Ltd (SMMT), the organisation that represented the British auto manufacturers. SMMT offered a three-week programme that took care of my visits to several leading British

auto companies, including Rootes Motors, Leyland Motors, Standard Triumph, British Motor Corporation, and also component manufacturers like Forte Dunlop, Joseph Lucas, Tube Investments, York Trailers and Edbro Tippers. SMMT stated that I was the first non-European journalist to have such a close look at the British auto industry with such rich facilities.

Of course, it was not the best of times for foreign travel. The foreign exchange position was extremely tight. Also, remember the country suffered a steep devaluation of the Rupee just a year earlier! The RBI would not clear my travel until late Saturday. I was to leave for Delhi and catch the flight to Frankfurt on Sunday night. The Exchange Control Chief at last relented and permit-

ted the single model Beetle for the global markets at the rate of 6200 cars a day! Those were the years of centralised production of large capacities and shipments to different markets. This changed over the next two decades to having assembly plants nearer to consumption points.

The experience both elated and depressed me. Elated in looking at cutting edge technologies in the engineering sector and the heights of engineering excellence and productivity. Depressed in looking at India's screw driver technology and the low scale of production. India's annual production of 50,000 vehicles distributed amongst three manufacturers was the equivalent to a week's production in a single company, Volkswagen. I understood the long haul before

## • Driving Down Memory Lane with S. Viswanathan

ted my travel with a P form clearance that permitted around 3 Pound Sterlings and 10 Shillings of foreign exchange to cover my travel in Germany!

I got the clearance for my trip to London with more foreign exchange while I was in Germany.

It was boom time for Europe, Germany and UK were enjoying unprecedented prosperity and growth. I could see production booming in the dozens of factories I visited. Among the best of them was the visit to Volkswagen. It was producing

India to catch up with the developed countries. I decided to phase out *Mobile* and launched the *Industrial Economist* (IE) with wider focus on industry and economic development.

\* \* \*

When I re-visited SMMT a few years later, I noticed the full impact of globalisation experienced by the Western countries.

The several household names of the auto industry in the UK had vanished. None of the large British-owned automobile manufacturers had survived: BMC,

## Our Cars, 1962-2011

Rootes, Standard Triumph, Leyland and Rover were all dead and gone. Even in the component sector, there had been mergers and acquisitions by global giants. Interestingly, UK retained her yen for design, research and development.

The limited volumes of production in India did not provide for any great interest in research or innovation. For years, the industry was content to buy technology and continue with repeat production, paying royalty for dies, tools, components and sub-assemblies that had to be imported.

When the collaborations initially entered into had ended, auto manufacturers scrambled to continue with production on the limited endowments and skills assimilated. Falling demand and limited resources came in the way of interest towards quantum growth.

I cite a Chennai experience: Standard Motors (SMPI) was built on the initial healthy relations with Standard Triumph of UK. SMPI entered into collaboration for progressive manufacture. The initial models like the Standard 10 and the Standard Herald were sleek and reliable. With sizeable import content, the quality was also consistent. When the collaboration ended, SMPI designed the Stanard Gazel with several modifications over the earlier models. But, the Gazel did not attract much attention. The company concentrated on the Standard 20 light commercial vehicle which enjoyed better custom.

I expressed interest to buy a Gazel. The then Managing Director K.V. Srinivasan initially told me that there were no plans to manufacture cars in the immediate months. A couple of days

later he phoned and informed that if he got orders for 20 cars with full payment of on-the-road price, the car would be delivered in three months. I persuaded S. Ramayya, working for SPIC, to join me. We ordered two Gazel cars, handing over the full payment. Three months elapsed but there was no delivery in sight. When pressed for it, the company's legal advisor sent a terse note that there was no firm commitment on the delivery date!

I took up the matter with the then Secretary for Heavy Industry V. Krishnamurthy (VK). He was nice in asking a colleague of his to enquire with SMPI.

I noticed electrifying action. The company galvanised its purchase team to procure components, obviously not from major vendors as the volumes were low and the time was short. I heard from a paints dealer about the company procuring a few litres of paints from him! Ramayya and I did receive our cars in the next few weeks!

I did not witness much interest on the part of even larger manufacturers like Ashok Leyland Ltd. (ALL) to spend on R&D. For decades, ALL was making bus chassis on the Comet truck chassis which meant that a chassis designed for a 10-tonne payload was being used for building buses for a payload of 3 tonnes and less. Almost till 2000, for full five decades, R&D spend by leading manufacturers like ALL and Bajaj Auto was negligible. They spent about 0.17 per cent of sales; contrast that with Daimler Benz and Japanese and South Korean manufacturers who were spending about 10 per cent of their much larger sales on R&D. — (Courtesy: *Industrial Economist*)

(To be concluded)

## SUBSCRIPTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

• 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 2012-13 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

(Continued on page 6)





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

1. Who won the Orange and Purple Caps in the latest edition of the IPL?
2. Robin Gibb, who died recently, was part of which famous band that was named after him and his brothers?
3. Which popular online entity had the third biggest IPO in U.S. history on May 18th?
4. On May 22nd, how did the Falcon 9 rocket, launched by SpaceX, make history?
5. Name the inventor of the wireless remote control who passed away recently.
6. Name the edifice in Dubai, 413.4 metre tall with 101 storeys above ground, which was declared the world's tallest building recently.
7. Which news-making African nation formally ended on May 31st a 31-year state of emergency, which had given security forces broad powers to suppress civil unrest and detain dissenters?
8. Name the Hindi classic, produced by a legendary thespian, that has been recently included in the All-Time 100 Greatest Films by *Time* magazine?
9. For what 'crime' was Pakistan's Dr. Shakeel Afridi sentenced to 33 years' imprisonment on charges of treason?
10. Jean-Marc Ayrault, sworn in on May 16th, is the new Prime Minister of which European nation?

\* \* \*

11. Which Chennai resident made front page news on May 30th because of his exploits at the Moscow's State Tretyakov Gallery?
12. Name the first President of Madras when the Presidency of Fort St George was created in 1652.
13. Name the famous writer who, influenced by Ramana Maharshi, wrote an essay titled 'The Man On The Hill' in his praise.
14. Name the small village near Perambalur where you can see half-a-dozen Buddha statues dating from the 11th Century and later.
15. Which respected Chennai institution was founded in 1927 by the siblings Vedantam and Rajam?
16. Which building on Mount Road was designed by a United Kingdom firm Brown and Moulton and constructed by Coromandel Engineering in the 1950s?
17. Dr Abraham Pandithar's Sangita Vidya Mahajana Sangam was the first to organise what type of event in Thanjavur on May 27, 1912?
18. In which town would you visit the Pennington Public Library founded in 1875?
19. Which place's famous *jamukkalam* has got the GI tag?
20. Which place inside Fort St. George was solemnly opened on May 28, 1680?

(Answers on page 8)

## Masters of 20th Century Madras science

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

# Entomologist par excellence

**T**ara-k-kad Vythianathan Ramakrishna was the first Indian to give a formal structure to insect science in India. During the first few years of his service, he was the First Assistant to the British Imperial Entomologists at the Imperial Agricultural Research Institute (now the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, New Delhi) in Pusa (Bihar). Born in 1880, his schooling and early college education were in Palghat. He graduated with BA Honours in Zoology from Madras Christian College (University of Madras) and excelled by winning the prestigious Buckie Prize. Ramakrishna went to Stanford University, California, thanks to the initiative of the American Entomologist Dudley Moulton (1878-1951), who was then working at the Santa Clara County office in California pursuing minute insects called thrips (Thysanoptera) that were pestiferous to several economically useful plants. Ramakrishna got his PhD from Stanford University for his thesis on Indian Thysanoptera (Ramakrishna's doctoral work was not, for the record, supervised by Moulton).

On his return to India from Stanford with a PhD, Ramakrishna went back to his earlier position — First Assistant to Bainbridge Fletcher, the Imperial Entomologist. When the post of Imperial Entomologist fell vacant subsequently, Ramakrishna was denied the position, although he had a PhD earned from Stanford, which none of the senior British entomologists of his time had!

Frustrated, he returned to Madras Presidency to become Professor of Agricultural Entomology at the Madras Agricultural College in Coimbatore (now Tamil Nadu Agricultural

University). In addition to several scientific articles on varied groups of insects of agricultural importance, his masterpiece was the *Handbook of Economic Entomology for South India*, which was published by the Madras Government in 1940 and which is consulted even today. This book includes the unique 'paddy-pest calendar' designed and developed by him. He studied all groups of insects, although his principal interest revolved around thrips, coccids, and parasitic wasps. During his time, prickly pear (a plant introduced by James Anderson, MD, in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century Madras to raise populations of scale insects from which a dye could be extracted) turned into a nuisance plant in southern India. Ramakrishna's letter entitled 'Control of prickly-pear by the cochineal insect' to the editor of *Nature*, London (published in vol. 128 [1931], page 837), created an international storm. He followed this letter with a full-fledged research paper in 1931 on Agriculture and livestock in India titled 'Coccidae of the prickly pear in South India and their economic importance'.

When I did an Internet search to write this piece on Ramakrishna, I was pleasantly surprised to note that several of his articles published in the 1930s are being cross-cited by entomologists of today throughout the world. This amply testifies to the quality of the observations and inferences Ramakrishna made during his time, relevant as they are even today.

He was honoured with the title 'Rao Sahib' by the British. He died in Coimbatore in 1952. I had heard from my teachers that Ramakrishna never spared words whenever he was slighted. His knowledge was so extensive that he could wield that pride, which was routinely mistaken for arrogance.

## Changing jobs

(Continued from page 5)

the gems trade. He was well known as Subbu & Co. Palaniappa Chettiar. We visited him to rent a big shed he owned on the Cooum bank in Aminjikarai for our factory. We agreed to a rent of Rs.150 a month and we gave him an advance of Rs.150. The place later became Arun Hotel and Palaniappa Theatre and his son Arunachalam managed the concerns till his premature death. Now his grandson A.M.P.A. Palaniappan is running Ampa Sky Walk mall there.

We used the shed just for a month or so. We realised that transport from Aminjikarai to our dealers in various parts of India would be difficult as we had to send the products to Basin Bridge Station for the northern market and for the southern districts, Egmore Station. I met Palaniappa Chettiar and he understood our predicament. He returned the advance given — even though I didn't ask for it. Moreover, he said wherever we started the laboratories we shouldn't forget to send him an invitation for the inauguration function!

(To be concluded)

## Garbage collection

(Continued from page 1)

In the meanwhile, the city's civic body continues to dither on two other crucial aspects — waste segregation at source and waste disposal.

The former has remained a non-starter and all garbage is now indiscriminately mixed and sent to landfills in areas such as Kodungayur and Perungudi. The latter, incidentally, abuts the Pallikaranai Marsh which is a reserved and protected natural habitat. Both landfills are now encircled by residential areas that are exposed to unscientific methods of disposal, including burning, which releases toxic gases.

At a time when the city is literally sinking under the weight of its garbage, a senior team from the Corporation has set off to Shanghai to study that city's waste disposal techniques. The inappropriateness of the timing apart, it is questionable as to whether Shanghai is the best example given that it has a vast hinterland for setting up waste disposal facilities, which Chennai does not have. A city such as Tokyo with a high population density would have been more relevant to Chennai.

All said and done, we are nowhere near a solution. How does this tally with Singara Chennai and other such grand visions?

## A big 'Thank You' to 30 of you

We publish below the list of donors who have, between 16.5.12 to 15.6.12, added to the support Chennai Heritage and its voice, *Madras Musings*, have already received. We thank them for their support for the causes Chennai Heritage espouses.

— Chennai Heritage

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## • Three looks at heritage

# How Conan Doyle's house was saved

Sherlock Holmes fans are celebrating the foiling of an attempt to convert the Victorian house of the great detective's creator, into eight separate homes.

*Undershaw* is a Grade II listed building at Hindhead Crossing near Haslemere in Surrey. During the decade he lived there from 1897, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote 13 Holmes stories, including *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. The building was later turned into a hotel, but has lain empty and dilapidated since 2005.

In 2010, Waverley Borough Council decided to allow the owner, Fossway Ltd., to divide the property. Campaigners trying to save the house as a single entity launched a judicial review, and have now won their case at the High Court in London.

Lawyers representing John Gibson, a Conan Doyle scholar and co-founder of the *Undershaw* Preservation Trust, turned to one of Holmes's favourite words in lambasting the "elementary" errors of the Council in its consideration of the plans.

Hailing victory in "a long and difficult battle" to save *Undershaw*, Gibson said: "This is a place which is steeped in history and should be treated with reverence. Conan Doyle's life and works are a fundamental part of British culture and arguably their stock has never been higher. We have been absolutely delighted to see enthusiasts from across the world get in touch and pledge their support to our efforts."

"We are very hopeful that this decision will signal a sea change in attitude towards this historic property and that it will lead to it being rightly preserved as a single building – hopefully as a museum or centre where future generations can be inspired by the many stories which have been created within its walls."

Andrew Lockley, head of public law at Irwin Mitchell, who represented Gibson, said: "The local authority failed to ensure that it received English Heritage's views on the plans before taking its decision, despite consultation with EH being a legal requirement due to the property's Grade II listed status."

"In addition, the Council failed in its duty to reconsider the Fossway development plans following the submission of a

second application on the property which would see it maintained as a single dwelling.

"The decision means it is now back to the drawing board in terms of the future of *Undershaw* but, like John, we hope to see this property of huge cultural and historical significance preserved and treated in the manner it deserves."

The trust's website used Conan Doyle's words to galvanise its supporters for the fight: "The pressure of public

### ● Preserving heritage the UK way

opinion can do in the town what the law cannot accomplish" (a quote from *The Copper Beeches*) and "I shall be proud that we shall be acting together, Mr. Holmes" (*The Dancing Men*).

Conan Doyle chose the location for *Undershaw* in accordance with the needs of his wife, Louise, who suffered from consumption. Before Louise's death

in 1906, the author entertained friends here, including *Peter Pan* author J.M. Barrie and *Dracula* creator Bram Stoker.

In a 1907 article, Stoker described *Undershaw* as having "all the elements of home" and said the view from the drawing room was one of "a never-ending sea of greenery" to the South Downs. Conan Doyle did not sell *Undershaw* until 1921 and, in 1977, it was listed as being of special architectural and historic interest because of its literary association.

Justice Cranston said Fossway had clearly bought the property in 2004 for its development potential and its scheme for the house included a gazebo within the grounds, which would be open to the public and provide information about Conan Doyle.

The judge said lawyers for the Council had made it clear that it wanted to preserve *Undershaw* and spent substantial sums to make it secure. But the Council had not adequately met statutory requirements to pay special regard to the preservation of heritage assets and planning policy.

## The plight and the challenge

My eyes were drawn to the little box item on the top left corner of a recent Sunday edition of *The Hindu* which said, 'Temple island endangered'. Just the day before, I had put the finishing touches to a picture feature on Rameswaram and Srirangam, and read about Srirangam's historic structures being on the brink of collapse and about rapid demolition and rampant unauthorised construction that had endangered the temple island.

The State Government had as far back as 1993 declared Srirangam a heritage town. A consultant was appointed to work out proposals to conserve the heritage structures and plan the future growth of the town. But heritage is no more valued, it would appear. Important old buildings have been systematically destroyed and apartments have sprung up in their place in gross violations of rules. New constructions have been put up right inside the Kollidam riverbed. Areas around the temple designated for residential use by the local planning authority are

now home to commercial ventures.

Clearly, the recommendations have not been followed. INTACH, set up for this very purpose, to protect our natural, cultural and architectural heritage, unfortunately, does not have the powers to prevent this from happening, and happening it is rampantly all across the country. National bodies like INTACH need the support of the local community as well as the local government.

People have to first realise that what is being destroyed is our heritage, our history, golden moments in our past that should be teaching us how to prepare for the future. It is not for some emotional nostalgic reason that we need to preserve these monuments of the past. They are our physical link to the culture which has made us, just as what we create today will become the physical link for the generations yet to be born. Everything that existed before does not need to be replaced; some things need to be preserved, as there is much to be

## There's heritage in idlis & sundal

The idli has taken many avatars. I got to know one recently.

The Ramasseri idli.

To enjoy a couple or a plateful of these idlis you will have to travel all the way to Palakkad in Kerala, then branch off some eight kilometres away to get to this place and, if luck is on your side, chance to feast on the idlis at one stall that is said to carry on a legacy that colours India's food heritage.

The idlis are fluffy, round but flat, and look more like little bloated *dosas* or tossed up *idi-appams*.

They are best had with *idli podi* soaked in oil, though foodies who must have chicken curry for breakfast opt for the curry.

I am told that this food is a legacy which the Muthaliyar community, once of Kanchipuram, carried to Palakkad and it now remains in the hands of a few families who have chosen to run food stalls in this little place.

I got to know much of this while sitting and evaluating projects of the Mass Communications students at Pondicherry University, most of which were either PSAs, documentaries or short films.

As a student's docu on the Ramasseri idlis rolled on I wondered if I would have the occasion to chance on something similar during a visit to Kalpathy, a well-preserved Tamil Brahmin settlement in the same district, during its famed temple car festival.

Nooks, heritage spots and local traditions make for fascinating indulgences when we chance to explore a place.

With a bit of adventure and licence, you will discover these experiences even in your backyard.

If you turn off one or two less frequented beachside spots on the East Coast Road (ECR) outside our city you will chance on shacks where local women of the fisher community offer you a simple but tantalising plate of fresh fried fish or spicy fish curry.

The tangy curry is unique to this east coast region and is best enjoyed with steamed rice.

Friends who frequent Bessie Beach (Elliot's Beach, Besant Nagar) often end their weekend evenings with a visit to the fish hawker for plates of fried fish and crab masala.

The salty *sundal* and green mango slices dipped in chilli powder are part of Marina beach lore. So is softball cricket.

They tried to remove the catamarans; they banned the cricket ... but the two have survived.

Living heritage, either on the decline or being wiped out, is also about idlis and *sundal*. (Courtesy: *Mylapore Times*)

– Vincent D'Souza

learnt from them. These lessons from our past are very relevant to us today as they tell us how to live in harmony with everything around us. The solutions to so many of the problems that face us were as much in the past as they are in the present.

The challenge is for our generation to understand this and to do something about it. The challenge will also be how to manage the balance between our needs and wants, leading perhaps to a simpler but richer and more meaningful life. I am sure none of us would like to live in a concrete jungle and

miss out on the fragrance of flowers growing on plants in the earth. We would all like to be able to walk on the street without fear of being run over, to breathe clean and fresh air and enjoy a beautiful sunset, sit by the river bank and hear the waters gently flow and the song of the birds, or stand on the beach as the waves lash against our feet. Then, we may come to understand the value of our priceless heritage. – (Courtesy: *Sri Aurobindo's Action*)

– Nini

### 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



## More Iyengars of cricket

There was a heap of letters on the article 'Tamil Nadu's Iyengars of Cricket' (MM, June 1st), all pointing out several omissions. The most interesting letter was from A. KRISHNAWAMY, E-7, 28 (Old 12-B), M.G. Road, Tiruvanmiyur, Chennai 600 041, who selected an All-Time Iyengar Test Team (in batting order):

K. Srikanth  
Dr. S.V.T. Chari (wicket-keeper)  
Sadagopan Ramesh  
T.E. Srinivasan  
W.V. Raman  
Robin Singh  
S. Venkataraghavan (Captain)  
M.J. Gopalan  
M.O. Srinivasan (another wicket-keeper who had represented India in unofficial Tests)  
C.R. Rangachari  
T.A. Sekhar

As Robin Singh is married to an Iyengar, I have added him to the list, writes Krishnaswamy.

Able administrators Chinnaswami (hailing from Tamil Nadu but settled in Karnataka) and S. Sriraman served with distinction as Presidents of the BCCI. And Venkataraghavan and K.B. Ramaswamy stood as Test Umpires, Krishnaswamy adds.

To this list, S. SAMPATHKUMAR of B-17, Vijay Avenue, 37 Venkatramam Street, Triplicane, Chennai 600 005 adds M.O. Parthasarathi, R. Vasudevan, Murali Vijay and P. Mukund.

And G. RAM MOHAN, 'Akshaya', 1, Sriramnagar South Street, Alwarpet, Chennai 600 018, contributes a note on the "two great Iyengar wicket-keepers of Madras." He writes:

Dr. SVT was a member of the Madras Ranji Trophy team during the 1930s and played one 'Test' against Jack Ryder's Australian team. After retiring from cricket he went back to his medical practice, opened a clinic in Mambalam and commanded a flourishing practice. He was our family doctor for some time, and I remember a visit to his clinic as a little boy when I stood on my toes on the benches in the waiting room to have a better look at the cricketing photographs displayed on the walls. I was running 103° F fever at the time and was scolded by my mother and asked to behave.

I saw 'Money Order' Srinivasan in action during the 1940s, playing for the Madras Ranji Trophy team. He would stand so close behind the wickets even to Rangachari's 'rude' bowling (as we used to call fast bowling in those days) and expertly gather the ball. He was stone deaf in one ear. It used to be said that he had to be prodded by the fielder at first slip to appeal when he took a catch coming off the outer edge of the bat and wouldn't know that there had been a 'snick'. When I last heard of him in the 1990s, M.O. had settled in Bangalore and was spending his time teaching Sanskrit slokas to schoolchildren.

A common factor Dr. SVT and M.O. shared was that both were full-time wicket-keepers and were very poor batsmen who usually batted at No. 11.

## Butterfly tricks

Butterflies have never really been particularly shy members of the natural world. As they flutter by, flaunting their vibrant and sometimes downright outrageous hues, overlooking them often proves to be exceedingly difficult – nearly impossible. And once sighted, turning away from the magnificent show-offs becomes a task fraught with an arduousness of even greater proportions. It should come as no surprise, then, that these scaly winged day-fliers were the first invertebrates to tickle the human being's fancy... and not in a particularly non-invasive way either. The only specialist equipment that a hobbyist required was a net and a misplaced sense of wall decoration. After all, these 'objects of art' were fairly abundant, and pretty easy to net (especially during specific times of the day – late mornings, for example). And if middle-aged blokes with nets could do it, it should be a real breeze for a predator, right?

Wrong. Innocuous though they may seem, in reality butterflies have some surprising tricks up their sleeves. Be assured, there are two very different sides to this coin – quite literally – a radiantly coloured upper-side coupled with a dull, prosaic underside, permits a butterfly to selectively attract, to assume different wing positions with varying levels of conspicuousness; a useful trait, no doubt, but not nearly as effective a predator deterrent as most would hope for.

A few butterfly lineages have taken that next step, by evolving eyespots, a curious representation of vertebrate eyes, on their wings. For a long time, scientists were unsure of the exact

purpose that these served, leading to an abundance of hypotheses, from auto-mimicry to intimidation and predators, especially the smaller insectivorous birds (an experiment involving Great tits and *Junonia* butterflies – Kodadaramalah, 2009).

Now, most butterflies have extremely tight schedules. What with the most frugal lifespans and very fixed objectives (nourishment, reproduction), it is but natural that they should exhibit what they do best at least twice a year, which is why many species dress for the occasion, always sporting the latest trends in pigmentation.

Seasonal polyphenism (the term for the phenomenon described above) expresses itself

in multiple 'forms', often greatly confusing a novice to butterfly identification. It is currently believed that such variable pigmentation provides appropriate camouflage throughout the season – another handy antipredatory mechanism.

Anti-predatory drills begin at a tender age – butterflies in their early stages exhibit many ways of cleverly blending in with their surroundings.

Butterflies may be, in more ways than one, masters of disguise and concealment, but this is certainly not life insurance of any sort. Would invulnerability be a realistic possibility? – (Courtesy: *The Bulletin of the Madras Naturalists' Society*.)

Pranav Balasubramaniam



**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 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.).

## Answers to Quiz

1. Chris Gayle and Morne Morkel; 2. Bee Gees; 3. Facebook; 4. It became the first non-governmental spacecraft to launch and dock with the International Space Station; 5. Eugene Polley; 6. *Princess Tower*; 7. Egypt; 8. Raj Kapoor's *Awaara*; 9. For helping the CIA track down Osama bin Laden by collecting DNA samples from residents of bin Laden's compound; 10. France.

\* \* \*

11. Viswanathan Anand; 12. Aaron Baker; 13. Somerset Maugham; 14. Thiyaganur; 15. Murray & Co.; 16. LIC; 17. Carnatic music conference; 18. Srivilliputhur; 19. Bhavani; 20. St. Mary's Church.

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