

**WE CARE FOR MADRAS THAT IS CHENNAI**

# MADRAS

## MUSINGS

Vol. XXIV No. 5

June 16-30, 2014

### INSIDE

- Short 'N' Snappy
- Americans & Carnatic music
- Remembering Kalki
- The new I.A.S.
- The Chandhoks of Chennai

## State's sad, sad tech colleges

Becoming an engineer is one of the easiest tasks in Tamil Nadu what with over 570 engineering colleges in the State, of which 520 are affiliated to Anna University. But if that gave you the impression of hardcore technical experts being churned out in a Germanic mode, perish the thought. Most of those who graduate are technically unemployable, thanks to the level of teaching and facilities in most colleges. The latest news is that five more colleges will be added this year. Are we focussing on quantity instead of quality?

A casual survey among headhunters would certainly indicate this to be so. Most students hired from Tamil Nadu's engineering colleges, they aver, have poor communication skills, not even bare minimum technical knowledge, and certainly no practical experience. Those taken on have to be put through intensive training in the organisations hiring them, making it almost a repeat process of education. Companies are grumbling at the cost, especially at a time when margins are under squeeze thanks to the

recession. Consequently, the on-campus placement figures for Anna University colleges are a measly 11 per cent of all those graduating.

Ever since the 1980s, when the State threw open engineering education to the private sector, several promoters have entered the field. Barring very few, all the others have viewed

● by  
The Editor

this as a moneymaking option. The investment is largely in land and buildings, which is why you invariably see only those with large landholdings setting up these colleges. As for the other aspects – an enlightened few go in for high quality equipment and facilities. Most settle for organising a fleet of college buses to ferry the students to the remote locations where the colleges are and leave the rest to chance. The money they rake in, through capitation and regular fees, is considerable. Several promoters go on to fi-

nance other businesses from the income earned!

The Government has over the years been attempting to bring in some regulation into these institutions. In 2001, around 400 of them were brought under the purview of Anna University. The numbers have been added to since then. But the move has not achieved its stated objective of raising the bar. The cause for the failure is chiefly due to the poor quality of teaching faculty at most of the private colleges. Apart from the endemic rot in the Indian education system, wherein there is a complete disconnect with the outside world and its requirements when it comes to syllabus, private colleges, barring the best ones, do not attract top quality teaching staff. This is at a time when even Government colleges are facing the same shortage. A recent RTI query revealed that only four out of ten Government engineering colleges even had principals!

All this is in conjunction with the fact that the demand

(Continued on page 7)

## Madras Landmarks – 50 years ago



● Think 'Oceanic' and it conjures up memories of the 1950s – an empty San Thomé High Road, a pristine Adyar creek teeming with bird life, an art-deco hotel standing at the edge – a world-class facility where visiting international cricket teams were hosted. Today, all that remains is an empty plot of land, fronted by a crumbling welcome arch over which can still be seen some of the letters that once spelt the hotel's name.

The property itself, originally five to six acres, goes back to probably the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Certainly, when lawyer K.R. Shenai bought it in 1917, it had already had an old garden bungalow in its Southwest corner. The evacuation of Madras in 1942 led Shenai to sell his landholdings, and the part fronting San Thomé High Road was purchased by M.S. Ramaswami Chettiar of Mahalakshmi Films.

Chettiar built two hotels on the premises – the 'Oceanic' and the 'Ratnagar'. Completed in 1954 or thereabouts, the Oceanic in particular

was known to be one of the best hotels in India, "equipped with linen, crockery, cutlery, refrigerators, air-conditioners, cooking ranges, electric fans, ice-cream machines, ice-making machinery, light fittings and other moveable and also with tools, implements, lawn mowers, equipments, kitchen and other utensils" to quote from a record in the 1960s. In addition it had a shopping gallery where some of Madras' best known retailers set up outlets. By 1959, the Oceanic started attracting high class tourists – being only one of three hotels in the city to offer air-conditioned rooms must have helped. "Luxurious Oceanic, a most popular hotel of Madras, situated on the sea shore, all single and double rooms air-conditioned," ran an ad in 1958.

Chettiar died in 1964, but five years prior to that, for reasons best known to him, he leased out both the hotels to R. Kapanipathi Rao, who at that time was running Noel's, a well-known restaurant on Mount Road. The lease was renewed in 1965 by Chettiar's son Meyyappan and continued to run till 1970. But by then, the Oceanic was no longer what it was. The fact that lessor and lessee were fighting each other in the Court did not help. In 1973, Kapanipathi Rao, following a High Court judgement, was asked to hand over the property to Meyyappan.

The hotel could have survived had an urban land ceiling case not been filed against the owners during which period it finally shut down. The trial went on till 1993 when judgement went in favour of the owners. There was then talk of the Taj Group of hotels taking over the hotel and reviving it, keeping the art deco main block intact. But that was not to be. The owners demolished the structure early this century and there was talk of an IT Park coming up there. The site remains vacant as on date.

## Guindy National Park under threat

Our city may take pride in the fact that it has Guindy National Park (GNP), one of the oldest reserve forests right in its midst, but if the Government is allowed to have its way, all this will soon be gone. It is learnt that the State Government has written to the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF) that the mandatory eco-sensitive buffer zone around the park be removed. This is ostensibly to facilitate

the construction of buildings by Government-supported organisations and institutions in the vicinity.

The GNP has been a reserve forest since 1910. Originally

its original size. The GNP, in 1978, was declared a national park. Chennai thus became the second metro in the country to have such a reserve forest, Mumbai's Borivali National

the water table and being home to fauna of various kinds.

All this may have been a matter of pride a couple of decades ago. But now with the demand for space skyrocketing, areas such as the GNP are considered nuisances by those who think 'development' is the only way to progress. At the heart of the problem at GNP is the proposed extension of the

(Continued on page 6)

● by A Special Correspondent

spanning over five square kilometres, it was steadily whittled down to make way for several memorials and buildings and, by 1971, was around half

Park being four years older. It has since been a vital lung for the city, keeping summer temperatures down in the surrounding area, conserving



# Decentralise waste management

Chennai, like a number of cities elsewhere in the country, is set to face an unprecedented crisis in Solid Waste Management (SWM) in the coming years. Garbage, and how we deal with it, is something that has drifted in and out of the greater civic consciousness of the city over the past two decades and there are a number of organisations and individuals who have devoted time and attention to this issue in the city. However, successes have generally been short-lived and throughout this period the city has been moving steadily towards a crisis point. The crisis will be one of garbage going uncollected, possibly indefinitely, as it will have nowhere to go once Kodungaiyur and Perungudi, the two massive dumpsites that serve the city, can hold no more.

The Corporation's response to this eventuality has so far mainly been to scout alternative dumpsites – unsuccessfully. There are many voices in the city, however, including the Initiative for Waste, Informal Workers, and Chennai's Future (a coalition of Transparent Chennai, Madras Institute for Development Studies, and Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives) who oppose such a path forward. Dumping/land-filling is both an environmentally unsustainable and socially unjust way of dealing with the ever-increasing output of garbage. The Initiative is one of a number of groups and individuals in the city that advocates instead for a decentralised "Zero-Waste" model of SWM that emphasises segregation at source, maximum resource recovery (through recycling, composting etc.) and protection of the livelihood rights of people currently supporting themselves and their families off the city's waste (rag-pickers and scrap dealers).

A decentralised model would entail that whatever waste is created within a particular geographic area (such as a ward) be dealt with within that area. This is a more sustainable and responsible way of dealing with waste than centralised dumping. Cities such as Bangalore and Pune, as well as numerous small towns, have already adopted such a system and while there have been difficulties, it is the clearest and most favourable way forward.

• by Sushila Natraj

Towards this end, the Initiative has, over the past year, endeavoured to build consensus amongst various groups of stakeholders on a well-defined path forward for SWM in the city. In the course of these consultations with members of civil society, workers' groups, the scientific community and the city government, the idea of a sustainable and inclusive Zero-Waste pilot project in one corporation ward was evolved. Since then, it has been engaged in mobilising citizen support as well as creating research and data to help advocate for and anchor a potential pilot project in Ward 173 that would aim at being decentralised, Zero-Waste, and inclusive of the informal sector (rag-pickers who are responsible as of now for almost all recycling in most Indian cities).

Transparent Chennai, on behalf of the Initiative, conducted a detailed mapping and survey exercise in Ward 173 to establish both the number and nature of households and commercial establishments in the ward, as well as to assess the generation and composition of the waste created in the ward.

This extensive study forms the basis of a detailed proposal that will be handed over to the Corporation of Chennai for the planning and implementation of the pilot project. Community participation is a key component of this effort and a number of community meetings have been held in the Ward to disseminate the proposal and receive feedback. It is also available to the general public at [www.transparentchennai.com](http://www.transparentchennai.com) where you can read the proposal and give feedback and suggestions, which might be incorporated into the final output.

As has been mentioned above, the Initiative is also engaged in creating research about, and advocating for, the informal waste sector. Waste-pickers, more popularly known as rag-pickers, are among the most marginalised citizens of the city, yet it is their labour that accounts for the only progressive or sustainable waste recycling in the city. Waste-pickers divert hundreds, of tons of

(Continued on page 4)

# This scorching summer

*The Man from Madras Musings* is visibly melting in the heat. Perhaps it is the onset of old age, or perhaps it is just addiction to air-conditioning. But as the years progress, MMM, who for years considered himself one of those hardy specimens whom the vagaries of the weather affect not, finds himself more and more dependent on artificial means of bringing down the ambient temperature. O for a beaker full of the warm south, sang Keats – and he could not have got it more wrong. What is needed is for the south to cool down. For that matter, so does the north. MMM learns that those in Delhi at 47 deg C are looking enviously at our city which, according to them, is enjoying an unfair advantage at 41 deg C.

Chennai by itself is now broadly divided into two groups – the first complains it is the heat that affects it, while the other says it is the humidity. Not that it has ever snowed in our city, but there is no denying that the summers are getting worse. This is chiefly because of the way we

nai male clad in synthetics during the summer. And given that most of these characters feast rather well at lunchtime on onion- and garlic-flavoured foods, the odour gets compounded. Add smoking and frequent coffee drinking and you have something building up that could eventually blow away the entire ozone layer. It is time we had a movement against this couldn't-care-less attitude towards body odour.

Get on with it, MMM, say the more delicately constituted among his readers. And so MMM will bring this diatribe against stinkers to a close. But not before making a few more observations. Firstly, this particular group has no class distinction – the top-notch executive who recycles clothes smells the same as the AC mechanic who comes home and leaves a rich odour behind. Ditto the chauffeur or a waiter at a restaurant. It all comes under the head of wrong choice of fabric. Secondly, the old lady of Tamil who has a statue on the beach instructed that we rinse our raiment even if it were a rag. That appears to have been given the go-by since

Chennai has given MMM a heightened sixth sense about places where rich pickings could be had for this column and something told him that this spot was one. And so he looked inside.

The place could have been a dioramic representation of the Sahara. It was barren and the only relief features were shards from broken bottles that adults who evidently made merry here at sundown had left behind. A few reed mats also littered the place, indicating that the celebrants at sundown stayed on after the party and left only when the milk was delivered. If these regular party-goers had been in other strata of society, they could have featured in the third page of at least one newspaper of our city.

MMM had assumed that a play area for children would have a merry-go-round, a slide and perhaps a monkey bar/climbing frame, which for some reason is known as a jungle gym in our country. But of these MMM espied none. He, of course, realised that those who frequented this playground at happy hours did

## SHORT 'N' SNAPPY

construct our homes and offices, and the way we dress. Of the first two, MMM will restrict himself to stating that this is not a city that can handle buildings in close proximity, low ceilings, glassed windows and shut-in interiors. But who is going to listen? Perhaps these are circumstances beyond our control; the population being such and the spaces being so insufficient, this would appear to be the construction style for the present and the foreseeable future.

But on the matter of apparel, MMM has much to cavil about. What has happened to the cottons that once made Madras a name to contend with the world over? Why has the populace abandoned that eminently suitable fabric for synthetic ones that are not meant for our climes? MMM wishes that the average Chennai man would give nylons and polyesters the go-by at least in summer and revert to cotton. MMM learns that one of the reasons for the former scoring over the latter is ease of maintenance – they don't crease and wrinkle like cottons. Drip-dry and wear, appears to be the motto. Only the drip is more of sweat which, when dry, hits everyone's nose.

Everything in India smells except the rose was a derogatory comment made during the British Raj. MMM would like to add that nothing smells worse than the average Chen-

her days. Lastly, can we expect the State Government to dispense branded deodorants along with everything else that it is giving?

### Not for children?

When in doubt, go walkabout – this is one of the various maxims that *The Man from Madras Musings* follows. And doubts assail him often, their intensity peaking just when the deadline for this column nears. So it was last week when, keeping company with mad dogs and Englishmen, MMM too walked about in the Indian sun, seeking inspiration for the column.

Having wandered lonely like a clo(u)d, MMM did not come upon a host of golden daffodils (unlikely in Chennai where you could come across terrible things quite easily), but he did spy a raised platform enclosed by railings. A Corporation of Chennai (second oldest Corporation in the world and civic body in charge of the first city of modern India, in case you did not know) plaque boldly announced to the world that this was a playground for children. It also gave the name of the councillor during whose tenure this was inaugurated. And just in case the plaque missed the average passer-by's attention, a large but fading digital banner broadcast to the world at large the name of the benefactor once again and thanked her profusely.

Years of wandering around

not need them – they got the effects of all this equipment from what they imbibed. But what of the children, MMM wondered.

And then MMM saw the sole object that could be remotely classified as a plaything. This was one of those synthetic rubber water tanks that are visible on most buildings and have probably contributed more to the ugliness of our city than anything else. This was being rolled around the place by a couple of urchins. That made MMM realise that our Corporation and its councillor had achieved their stated objective. All other aspects, such as the photo-op during the inauguration of the play area and the obligatory news report, not to mention the more permanent foundation plaque and the semi-permanent banner, were merely incidental benefits, of course.

### Tailpiece

'Pimp up your home' screamed a link on the web edition of one of our ultra-respectable newspapers often compared to a Vaishnavite deity on a once wide thoroughfare. *The Man from Madras Musings* could not believe his eyes. He later learnt that the expression means to make something over-decorative with flashy accessories. MMM realised he had to change with the times, particularly when it comes to language.

– MMM

## OUR READERS WRITE



### Deleted names

Various reasons were cited in your column for low voter turnout (MM, May 16th). Could this be another reason? There were many voters who found their names had been inexplicably deleted, as in my case! More than a month earlier, when it was announced that the voter lists were available for inspection at the regular voting booths, I had gone to check my name, and noted the chapter, page and serial number for reference. I have been voting for the past ten years or so at the Bharath School (off LB Road in Adyar), but this time on voting day I discovered a 'Deleted' stamp across my name.

I noticed other names too had been deleted on other pages. Even if there was anyone to complain to, I felt it would be too late for such a mistake to be rectified and so I just headed home. I have no idea how prevalent this might have been across the city/State, and doubt whether it will be possible for the Election Commission to compare the voting lists on record with those actually deployed at the enquiry counters on voting day. It is always possible for photo copies to exist in multiple versions! In Maharashtra, the deleted names became big news, but here victims like

me may have been too complacent to make an issue of it.

There is no end to the variety of possible election frauds, and even if subsequently detected it will be too late. Electronic voting system itself is a questionable procedure, which even 'advanced' nations avoid because of the ease with which computer programmes and software can be secretly manipulated by those who are stifle on such things.

Thomas Tharu  
Kasyap A-7  
Nehrunagar Fourth Street  
Adyar  
Chennai 600 020

### Raja & Rahman

Reference Dr. A Raman's letter on etymology (MM June 1st), the popular song, *Porale Ponnuthayee*, was from Bharathiraja's *Kizhakku see-maile*. The composer was A.R. Rahman.

Bhilai Gopalan  
1/6 Sankara Flats  
1, 6th Cross Street, Sastri Nagar  
Adyar, Chennai 600 020

### Author's name

In the article 'SPEED, thy name is Blackbuck' (MM, June 1st) the author's name – **Ahana Lakshmi** – was inadvertently omitted. The error is regretted.

– The Editor

## CHENNAI HERITAGE

No. 5, Bhattad Tower, 30, Westcott Road,  
Royapettah, Chennai 600 014

I am already on your mailing list (Mailing List No.....)  
/ I have just seen *Madras Musings* and would like to receive it hereafter.

• I/We enclose cheque/demand draft/money order for Rs. 100 (Rupees One hundred) payable to **CHENNAI HERITAGE, MADRAS**, as **subscription** to *Madras Musings* for the year 2014-15.

• As token of my support for the causes of heritage, environment and a better city that *Madras Musings* espouses, I send Chennai Heritage an additional Rs..... (Rupees.....)

Please keep/put me on your mailing list.

Name : .....

Address: .....

All cheques to 'Chennai Heritage'. DD/Cheque should be sent by Speed Post only.

## Seetharama Rao & Shama Bhat

There are a few additional points to reader V. Theetharappan's letter (MM, May 16th).

Seetharama Rao lived in *Dasaprasad*, which was on Gangadeeswarar Koil Street, an extension of Raja Annamalai Chettiar Road towards the temple tank, nearly opposite the Gangadeeswarar-Pankajakshi Temple in Purasawalkam. He was 'K' Seetharama Rao. As a primary school student in the late 1950s in the adjacent Chidambaram Chettyar Memorial Preparatory School, I had always been intrigued by the chiming of multiple cymbals and bells between 10.30 and 11 a.m. every day. Later, I learnt they used to be times of *aarti* in Seetharama Rao's house, which was next to the primary school I was studying in. His mother was Ganga, to whom Seetharama Rao was attached immensely. Ganga lived 100 years and that was a big story in old Purasawalkam!

Sanjeeva Rao (who used to live by the Kelly's-Balfour Road junction), one of the elder sons of Seetharama Rao, named his new restaurant in George Town 'Ganga' in honour of his grandmother. *Thayir vadai* was a speciality of the Ganga restaurant and just to enjoy the 'embellished' *thayir vadai* at Ganga, I used to go all the way from Purasawalkam-Kilpauk to George Town once a week.

I can still recall the anniversary of Madwacharya being celebrated with pomp by Seetharama Rao. Led by him, all the males of his family would go dancing, chiming cymbals, in front of the decorated portrait that was carried in procession by his family members through Lawder's Gate Road, Adiappa Mudali Street, Vellala Street and, then, enter Purasawalkam High Road, before returning to *Dasaprasad*. It is so difficult for me to imagine that such a well-knit family has fragmented and the giant landmark of Madras Dasaparakash has been pulled down to accommodate apartments.

Ananda Rao (Manager, Hotel Dasaparakash; he was 'P' Ananda Rao) lived in Anand Villa on Raja Annamalai Chettiar Road, opposite M Ct Muthiah Boys' High School. He was the younger brother of the radiologist P. Rama Rao, who practised radiology on Poonamallee High Road (later named as the Rama Rao Polyclinic), which was later run by his son Bujanga Rama Rao as a nursing home for several years, and is now run by the latter's son, Manohar Rama Rao, a UK-qualified surgeon.

Rama Rao's Polyclinic is close to Lakshmanaswamy Mudaliar-Venugopal's Kensington nursing home, which was used by the famous Madras obstetrician-gynaecologist-surgeon Sarukkai (Srinivasa) Rangachari before Lakshmanaswamy acquired it. Ananda Rao's only son Hari Ananda Rao, a qualified medical practitioner, ran a pathology laboratory for several years in the 1980s and 1990s.

I understand that Hari and family have now shifted to Bangalore. Bujanga Rama Rao's sister (P. Rama Rao's daughter) married K. Sripathy Rao, an MS by qualification, who practised in Barnaby Road, which is geographically exactly behind P. Rama Rao's house and clinic on Poonamallee High Road. Sripathy Rao, a gentle and skilful surgeon, was the doctor-in-attendance during the last days of K.V. Al. Rm. Alagappa Chettiar, who lived in Krishna Vilas on Raja Annamalai Chettiar Road, opposite the now decimated, triangular Bank Manickam Mudaliar Park, which hosted a congested reading room supported by the Corporation of Madras.

Ramakrishna Lunch Home owner V.R. Ramanatha Iyer's (VRR) adopted son was Ramakrishnan (after whom the hotel was named by VRR), who was also a qualified medical practitioner. He and his wife Jayam – a qualified obstetrician-gynaecologist (an MBBS, DGO holder) – practised in a large house opposite the now defunct Roxy (previously Globe) cinema house on Purasawalkam High Road. Jayam had a roaring practice in Purasawalkam. Next to the Ramakrishnans lived K.C. Nambiar, a British qualified surgeon with an FRCS, who was the family physician of the late actress Savitri Ganesh.

VRR was the Mayor of Madras. The following is a humorous story I have heard from my father. When VRR's term as Mayor of Madras ended, he acquired two healthy oxen auctioned by the Corporation to use them for his (bullock) cart. As the story goes, whenever these oxen saw (or smelt) a rubbish bin (those concrete structures on streets we had in the Madras of the 1950s and 1960s), they would stop because they had been used earlier in the rubbish carts of the Corporation. I am not sure of the veracity of this story; nevertheless, it provides a laugh.

Dr. A. Raman  
Charles Sturt University  
PO Box 883, Orange, NSW 2800

To reader V. Theetharappan's recollection of unforgettable fare in old Madras (MM, May 16th), I wish to add I was a regular customer in the 1960s of Shama Bhat who ran Udupi Home at Halls' Road. I used to walk from my workplace in Casa Major Road to enjoy the *masala dosa* he served for tiffin. It used to cost eight annas (fifty paise) and was deemed, the costliest in Madras. My friends used to look at me with respect for spending so much on that dish.

Shama Bhat looked to me like an amalgam of Madurai Mani Iyer and Lal Bahadur Shastri. Clad in spotless white khadi he used to go round the tables keeping a sharp eye on the customers. One day as I took a sip of coffee after my mandatory *masala dosa* he

materialised near me and asked if the coffee was OK. I hesitated but, on his prodding, confessed it could have been hotter. He immediately ordered a fresh cup of piping hot coffee. When I asked him how he found out that the coffee was not up to the mark, he beamed at me and said that I winced after taking the first sip which spoke volumes. Such proprietors with attention to customers did exist in those days.

His family now runs Matsya, a deluxe eatery, at the same place. I enjoy the status of being an old customer with a record attendance of more than 50 years, with inevitable breaks.

J.S. Raghavan  
Flat E, Balu Flats, 21 Mahadevan Street  
West Mambalam, Chennai 600 033

## OUR ADDRESSES

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

*Madras Musings* now has its own email ID. Letters to the editor can be sent via email to editor@madrasmusings.com. Those who wish to intimate change of address can also do so provided the subscription number is quoted. For non-receipt of copies, change of address, and all other circulation matters: Madras Musings, C/o Lokavani Southern Printers Pvt. Ltd., 122, Greames Road, Chennai 600 006. On editorial matters: The Editor, *Madras Musings*, No. 5, Bhattad Tower, 30, Westcott Road, Royapettah, Chennai 600 014.

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



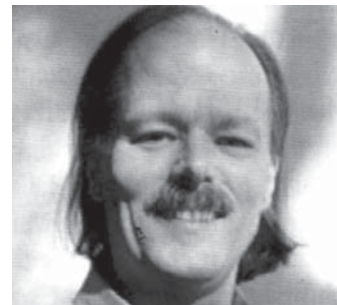
# Carnatic music and the Americans

“I would have loved to hear John Coltrane explore the Pancharatna kritis,” said American writer Mike Marqusee, a man better known for his writings on politics and cricket. He was referring to Tyagaraja’s five gems.

Marqusee, is modest when he speaks of his credentials to write on Carnatic music, but his insights are brilliantly direct and praiseworthy in a Westerner attracted to but hardly expert in it. He says of Carnatic music, “Its history is a history of innovation and broken taboos relating to gender and caste, public and private. The kutcheri as we know it dates only from Ariyakudi Ramanuja Iyengar, a famous vocalist, and the 1930s. In a single evening it can include compositions with lyrics in Tamil, Telugu, Sanskrit, Kannada, Marathi and Hindi. I can’t think of another musical culture with a comparable spread.”

Closer home, V.S. Narasimhan, an accomplished Western classical violinist who has pioneered the performance of the great Carnatic music compositions by Western musicians – his own Madras String Quartet – dreams of being around when symphony orchestras in Europe and America perform the masterpieces of Tyagaraja and other South Indian composers.

On May 1, 2012, the California-based Sacramento Youth Symphony (SYS) Orchestra collaborated with Chitravina Ravikiran to play a Tyagaraja composition rearranged for the orchestra. According to one report, “The repertoire, carefully chosen by conductor Michael Neumann, kept the Indian spirit even in traditional Western pieces such as *The Crown of India* suite by Edward Elgar and Kromsky’s *Song of India*.”



Dr. Stan Scott

The day Dr. Stan Scott arrived in Calcutta one day in the 1970s, he received the shocking news of the death of the guru he had come all the way from the USA to learn Hindustani music from. Earlier in the US, he had learnt vocal music from sarod maestro Ali Akbar Khan and Sushil Mukherjee, director of fine arts at a Massachusetts school. In India, his tutelage included lessons from gurus like Krishna Chandra Banerjee, Sugata Marjit and Mohan Singh (at Santiniketan) in classical



Matthew Allen

on South Indian music with Bala’s brother, the incomparable flautist T. Viswanathan, who headed the ethnomusicology department of Wesleyan University, Connecticut. Allen has also written on *padams* and other dance music of South India as well as recent history of Bharata Natyam.

It was with Jon Higgins that T. Viswanathan entered into his most enduring, productive collaboration. Born in Andover, Massachusetts, Higgins, a Western classical vocalist who com-

pleted a double major in Music and History in 1962 and an M.A. in Musicology in 1964 from Wesleyan University, earned a Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology in 1973.

He founded the Indian music studies programme at York University in Toronto with *mridanga vidwan* Trichy Sankaran in 1971, and returned to Wesleyan in 1978 as a professor of music and director of the Centre for the Arts. Higgins had attended several concerts of Sankaran’s with Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer, and seen him teach an American student of Viswa.

Sankaran had earlier turned

down an invitation from American *mridanga* student Robert Brown – who will figure later in this narrative – to join Wesleyan University as a research scholar.

Sankaran was apprehensive about making any long-term commitment in view of his family responsibilities and fearful of jeopardising a flourishing concert career in Madras. “I told Jon I would go only for a year or two. The rest is history!” remembers Sankaran, who has since made York University and Toronto his home, visiting Chennai annually during the music season to perform, teach and do lecture-demonstrations.

Viswa studied ethnomusicology at UCLA on a Fulbright scholarship from 1958 to 1960, and headed the Department of Music at Madras University from 1961 to 1966. He taught at UCLA and the California Institute of the Arts before joining the Wesleyan faculty in 1975 and earning his Ph.D. there.

Training under Viswa, Higgins became the first non-Indian to perform Carnatic music at a high level of proficiency. Higgins continued his studies under Bala and wrote his dissertation on the dance music of Bharata Natyam, returning to India as a Senior Research Fellow of the American Institute of Indian Studies, and making a name for himself in Carnatic music as Higgins Bhagavata.

Born in Rising Star, Texas, USA, in 1935, David Reck, a child prodigy in Western music, is a familiar figure in Carnatic music circles in Chennai. A Fellow of the Princeton Seminars in Advanced Musical Studies in the late 1950s, he pursued a successful career in New York as a composer with performances at Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Centre, Town Hall, and Tanglewood. Drawn to Indian classical music and dance by the concerts of Ravi Shankar, Ali Akbar Khan, K.V. Narayanaswamy, Palghat Raghu, and others, he studied Indian philosophy, yoga, and Sanskrit.

Coming to India in 1968 through a grant from the Rockefeller Arts Foundation, David and his wife, photographer Carol Reck, moved to Madras, a life-changing decision. David studied Carnatic music theory and practice, specialising in playing the *veena*, learning from, among others, Kalpakam Swaminathan – at the Central College of Carnatic music.

David Reck returned to the United States in 1971, earning a Ph.D. in World Music from Wesleyan University, and joining the faculty of Amherst College as professor of Music and Asian Studies. He continued *veena* lessons in the US with Karaikudi S. Subramanian and, in 1991, became a student of Ranganayaki Rajagopal, a disciple of Karaikudi Sambasiva Iyer – Subramanian’s grandfather and ‘founder’ of the Karaikudi *bani* or school of *veena* music – under a grant from the American Institute of Indian Studies. A regular visitor to Chennai for *veena* practice as well as performances on the concert circuit, including *kutcheris* at the Music Academy, he is a well-known author of books and articles on Carnatic music.

A survivor from cancer and a heart attack, Reck believes in the healing qualities of Carnatic music and the *veena*.

Robert Edward Brown (1927-2005) was an ethnomusicologist credited with coining the term “world music”. He was also known for his recordings of music from Indonesia, which inspired several musicians to study Indonesian gamelan music.

Brown grew up in Clinton, New York, studied music theory and piano at the Utica Conservatory. Playing the piano and organ and performing popular music with his own band *Bobby Brown and His Swingsters* through his youth, Brown started his doctoral studies at UCLA as a piano major in 1953. He eventually received a doctorate in ethnomusi-



David Reck



T. Viswanathan



Jon Higgins

cology from UCLA. His dissertation was titled “The Mridanga: A Study of Drumming in South India.” In 1964, Brown founded the world music/ethnomusicology programme at Wesleyan.

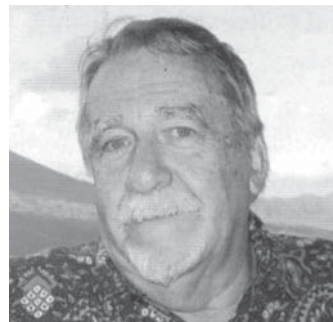
One of the organisers of the American Society for Eastern Arts (ASEA), Brown also founded the Centre for World Music in 1973. He remained president of the organisation until his death and bequeathed his extensive collection of instruments, recordings, books, paintings and artefacts to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The Robert E. Brown Centre for World Music opened there in April 2008.

How did the interest in Carnatic music take root in the West? Hindustani music spread there mainly through the efforts of Ravi Shankar and Ali Akbar Khan, though there had been others before them. Possibly the first Carnatic musician to make a major appearance in the US was the iconic vocalist M.S. Subbulakshmi. Her most celebrated concerts in America were at the United Nations General Assembly (1966) and Carnegie Hall (1967).

After her UN concert, *The New York Times* said: “Subbulakshmi’s vocal communication transcends words. The cliché of the voice used as an instrument never seemed more appropriate. It could fly flutteringly or carry on a lively dialogue with the accompanists. Subbulakshmi and her ensemble are a revelation to Western ears. Their return can be awaited only with eagerness.”

Dr. W. Adriaansz, Professor of Music, University of Washington, wrote, “For many, the concert by Mrs. Subbulakshmi meant their first encounter with the music of South India and it was extremely gratifying that in her the necessary factors for the basis of a successful contact between her music and a new audience – highly developed artistry as well as stage presence – were so convincingly present ... without any doubt (she) belongs to the best representations of this music.”

The late James Rubin, a close associate of MS and her family, was an American who travelled to India several times to attend the annual music festival at Madras. Rubin who, with the help of C.V. Narasimhan, Under-Sec-



Robert Edward Brown

● With *Ponniyin Selvan* just having been staged in Chennai on an epic scale, it seems apt to be...

## Remembering

### Kalki

Kalki Krishnamurti occupies an eminent place in the annals of Tamil literature and journalism. A trendsetter in racy Tamil prose, his vast literary output included all categories of literature, except drama. He also raised the status of Tamil journalism. He was a connoisseur of the performing arts. His critiques of music and dance recitals appeared in *Ananda Vikatan* and, later from 1931, in *Kalki*. His reports were unbiased and humorous and were eagerly anticipated by music lovers.

A commemorative postage stamp was issued on Krishnamurti on September 9, 1999 to mark his birth centenary. The postage stamp and First Day Cover designs depicted the author against the background of visualisations from his works – *Ponniyin Selvan* (stamp) and *Alai Osai* (FDC); the latter won him the Sahitya Akademi Award.

Ramaswamy Aiyar Krishnamurti was born on numerically interesting day 9.9.99 in Puthamangaslam village, Tanjore district. After primary education in his village, he joined National College School, Trichy, but left it after three years to join the freedom movement.

In 1922 he underwent imprisonment for the first time while serving twelve months in Trichy jail. There he met another young political prisoner, T. Sadasivam, who was to become his life-long friend and associate. On release, he worked as a clerk in the Congress office, where he made acquaintance with C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji), then General Secretary of the Indian National Congress. Krishnamurti was to accept him as his mentor and worship him as a hero throughout his life.

Krishnamurti moved to Madras, and in October 1923 joined *Navasakti*, a magazine devoted to nationalism, as a sub-editor. It was there he learned the alphabet of journalism from its editor,

retary of the UN, arranged MS’s UN concert and two coast-to-coast tours of the US, donated his impressive collection of Indian classical – mainly Carnatic – music to the Archive of World Music, Eda Kuhn Loeb Music Library, Harvard College Library, Harvard University.

No account of Americans interested in and performing Carnatic music can be complete without mention of the rising number of young Americans of Indian origin, born and brought up in the US – many of them



The Kalki memorial stamp with a Ponniyin Selvan background.

V. Kalyanasundara Mudaliar (Tiru Vi Ka), who was a scholar and essayist. Krishnamurti also wrote regular columns, adopting a style that approached the spoken form. In March 1924 he got married. Four years later, he left *Navasakti* as he found the salary insufficient to manage a family.

Towards the end of 1931 he joined S.S. Vasan’s *Ananda Vikatan* as its editor. Besides writing the editorials, he also contributed short stories and serials. In a matter of two years,

Krishnamurti made *Ananda Vikatan* the largest circulated home magazine in Tamil. He wrote under the pen name of ‘Kalki’, which became so popular that thenceforth he came to be known by that name.

Kalki started writing reviews of music and dance recitals as well as of records in his column *Aadal Paadal* under the pseudonym ‘Karnatakam’. His writings were laced with humour. (A collection of his articles in *Aadal Paadal* was brought out in a book form *Kalki Kalanjyam*, by Vanathi Publications.)

One strong thread that ran

speaking no Indian language – who are making rapid strides as musicians and dancers. The hugely popular festivals of South Indian classical music and dance, such as the Cleveland and San Diego festivals, annually showcase some of this outstanding talent along with some of the leading lights in the field from India. The dedication of these first generation Americans is to be seen to be believed. They must be among the best products of Indo-American cooperation. (Courtesy: Sruti)

through his writings on music was his intense love for Tamil Isai. In the beginning of 1941, Raja Sir Annamalai Chettiar, R.K. Shanmugam Chetty and a few other eminent persons launched the Tamil Isai Movement – a campaign for the inclusion of more Tamil songs in music concerts held in Tamil Nadu. Along with T.K. Chidambaramudaliar (TKC), Kalki took an active part in leading the movement. He wielded his powerful pen to create public opinion in its favour. The book *Sangeeta Yogam*, another Vanathi publication, contains Kalki’s articles on Tamil Isai.

In 1941 Kalki resigned from *Ananda Vikatan* to join the ‘individual satyagraha’ movement. He was arrested and imprisoned for three months. In August that year, Krishnamurti launched a fortnightly with financial aid and managerial support from his friend T. Sadasivam. As Kalki was already known by his pseudonym, he gave that name to the new magazine. *Kalki* was an instant success. In 1944, it was made a weekly. In a comparatively short time the magazine’s circulation increased manifold.

● by S. Sankaranarayanan

Kalki continued writing reviews of the performing arts in the magazine. It is said that he used as many as 13 pen names for his articles on different subjects.

Through his columns, Kalki led a crusade against drinking, untouchability, superstitions, oppression of women, and other decadent practices in Brahmin families of those days. He also reviewed plays and films. His film reviews were a class by themselves.

The thirteen years that he spent with *Kalki* saw Krishnamurti at his creative best. His prodigious literary output included more than a hundred short stories, nearly twenty novels and novelettes, hundreds of articles on a variety of subjects, and innumerable reviews of music concerts, dance recitals, dramas and films. Most of his short stories, serial novels and historical romances turned out to be masterpieces.

Kalki took an active part in many public activities. I note here some of the more important ones. In 1935, he organised the celebration of the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of Mahamahopadhyaya U.Ve. Swaminatha Aiyar. The appella-



Kalki Krishnamurti

tion ‘Tamizh Thatha’ (Grand Old Man of Tamil), by which Swaminatha Aiyar later came to be known, was given by Kalki in an editorial in *Ananda Vikatan* on the eve of that event. Kalki also played a leading role in the first literary festival organised in honour of Kamban at his birthplace. Kalki was also responsible for erecting the Bharati Memorial mandapam for Subramania Bharati at his birthplace in Ettayapuram.

All the songs but one sung by M.S. Subbulakshmi in *Meera* (1945) were written by Kalki. The music was set by S.V. Venkataraman.

A Kalki song which needs special mention is *Desa sevai seyya vareer* for the film *Tyagabhoomi* (1939) directed by K. Subrahmanyam. The film was based on a novel by Kalki and serialised in *Ananda Vikatan*. The patriotic song was sung by D.K. Pattammal. The response that the film and the song generated led to the film being banned by the government.

In October 1954, Kalki suffered a severe asthma attack and had to be hospitalised for two weeks. The following month he suffered a heart attack from which he did not fully recover. He passed away on December 5, 1954. He was only 55.

Announcing his demise, *The Hindu* observed: “Krishnamurti, as a writer, was among the widest read in this part of the country. His novels bore the imprint of a vivid, romantic imagination which could plan a story on a vast scale, and a mastery of style which could keep the reader interested from the first page to the last.”

All periodicals brought out special issues dedicated to Kalki. *Ananda Vikatan* too published a memorial issue and, as a unique homage to its former editor, it continued to publish select writings of his every week for one full year. Kalki was instrumental in chiselling a generation of successful humorous writers.

Kalki left this world six decades ago, but he lives on in the magazine which bears his name, and in his immortal creations like *Sivakamiyin Sapatham*, *Parthiban Kanavu*, *Ponniyin Selvan*, *Alai Osai* and *Kalvanin Kadali*. (Courtesy: Sruti)

## Decentralise waste management

(Continued from page 2)

waste from the dumps every day, buying time for the rest of us who only create waste and do little to lessen its impact on the environment outside our own doorsteps. However, waste-pickers are socially stigmatised, work in extremely unsafe circumstances, and are vulnerable to police and other types of harassment. The safeguarding of their livelihood rights (continued access to waste/jobs) and improving the quality of their lives are an

equally important challenge facing the city and its policy makers. There is currently an ongoing effort to get the Corporation of Chennai to recognise the labour and benefits these people make available to the city and to issue them I.D. cards that would both validate their labour as well as make it possible to lift them out of the poverty and marginalisation they currently endure.

To conclude, it is apparent to anyone who pays attention that Chennai is at a critical point as far as SWM is concerned. It is

essential that citizens around the city begin to hold the city government accountable for chronic poor service delivery and insist on better planning and implementation. Decentralised, Zero-Waste SWM, emphasising segregation at source, is especially something we as citizens must open our minds to, as the continued refusal to take individual responsibility for one’s own waste is most unbecoming of a citizenry that claims to aim towards an evolved civic consciousness.





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

1. Which video by an Asian artiste recently became the first video to reach two billion views on YouTube?
2. The heads of which three countries have signed a treaty to form the 'Eurasian Economic Union'?
3. How did two Indian-American teenagers, Sriram Hathwar and Ansun Sujoe, make news recently?
4. In which African nation did scientists recently announce the discovery of a remote mine the size of England?
5. In a big deal, Apple Inc. has paid \$3 billion to buy which popular headphone and music-streaming service co-founded by rapper Dr. Dre?
6. Russia and China recently vetoed a UN Security Council resolution that would have asked the International Criminal Court to investigate war crimes in which embattled Asian country?
7. How is the 'Congregation of the People of Tradition for Proselytism and Jihad', which is wreaking havoc on ideological grounds in Nigeria, Niger, Cameroon, Chad, etc. better known?
8. Name the world-famous African-American author, poet, dancer, and singer, known for her first book *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, who passed away on May 28th.
9. To what sensitive and strategic post has the former chief of IB, Ajit Doval, been appointed?
10. Name the new index, launched by Asia Index, that comprises the top 30 companies based on market capitalisation from five sectors (Energy, Transportation, Non-Banking Financial Institutions, Telecommunications, and Utilities).

\* \* \*

11. Apart from the Puzhal prison, where in Chennai can you shop at the outlets of 'Freedom Prison Bazar'?
12. Where in Mylapore can you pray at the chapel named after St. Rita and built by the Armenians?
13. Which knight, a VC of the University of Madras, was the first recipient of an honorary doctorate from the University. It was a Doctor of Law degree awarded in 1908.
14. Which institution started functioning at *Locock's Garden*, Kilpauk, from May 1871?
15. What name would connect famous film-maker Shakti Samanta to the popular drive-in theatre 'Prarthana'?
16. The name of which building located on the Marina would roughly translate to 'essence of grace'?
17. What once stood where Prince Kushal Towers is on Mount Road?
18. What claim to fame does Benjamin Schultze, a German Lutheran, have with regard to Madras' religious fabric?
19. Which prominent place's name in Madras derives from an amalgam of sodium chloride and the Telugu word for 'godown'?
20. What is the present name of Esplanade Road?

(Answers on page 7)

## ESSAY

I have often been fascinated by the *Street Frame*. May be it is because it is S.K. Chettur's book, *The Street Frame and I*, most of which was filled with narration of funny incidents that had happened in his official life. Having joined the Indian Civil Service in 1939, he had to work with a good number of British bureaucrats who enjoyed hunting tigers, panthers and bears. He reports of the superiority complex of these officers. However, Chettur himself was not free of the weakness as when he ordered the pulling down of a *pandal* put up in Kalpathi (Kerala) at Rama Dhyana Matom during 1939 for the Tyagaraja *aradhana*. When the solemn function was going on presided over by senior vidwans, Chettur attended the function with his wife. Half way through, he started smoking. A young man politely objected to this, but Chettur went on with his smoking and, after returning home, ordered the demolition of the *pandal* which had been put up after getting due permission from the municipal authorities. I guess, as Lord Acton said, power tends to corrupt even the most civilised being. The Kalpathi citizens couldn't do a thing about it except lament vociferously. This is power.

All the same, in my younger days, the IAS remained a fascinating term. Parents looked for an IAS boy, if they had plenty of money to give as dowry for their daughter. Parents puffed

up with pride if their son had cleared the IAS. They began the great adventure of choosing a bride who would be as beautiful as Venus and as rich as Croesus. A day came when my brother, who had done his post-graduation, hesitantly asked my father whether he could go ahead with IAS coaching classes. "What for?" "To become a Collector, Appa, and I could do such good work for the people." "Really?" came the voice from the depths of the

• by Prema Nandakumar

easy-chair. "You will end up opening the car doors for this and that politician. With your flair for teaching, it is better you take to an academic life."

And that is what happened. Meanwhile, I had not dared to mention my thoughts to my father, but I had some romantic notions of the *Steel Frame* too. Not as married to one, but as an IAS officer myself. After all, just a few years earlier the first woman had joined the IAS and I had read avidly how Anna Rajan George from Kerala had become a SDO in Tamil Nadu. But I kept silent; surely there would be another birth, and I will become an IAS officer.

# A member of the I.A.S.

We are told that intense aspiration does bring down the answering grace sooner than later. But what form it will take, we have no idea.

Recently I met a dear friend in one of our well-endowed cities. She was the devoted mother of six children and had seen them through the rising tiers of the Indian educational system. I was leisurely choosing some scarves in a wayside shop when Sujji's unmistakable screech made me look up. "Hey, Burru!

guru. Before I knew what was happening, I was set up in a chair and found an Aerial's Feast. Sujji filled my plate with a kilo of *gajjar halwa*, some *kichidi* and a couple of *jalebis*, not to mention guava juice. I protested. Suppose my husband should see his Burru, alias Brihadkuchambal, sitting in this expensive hotel, he might think his ancient wife had gone mad. I slithered in my seat which was a replica of the Peacock Throne (the entire room was in peacock motif) and muttered that I just would not be able to share the bill as I did in olden days where we both would go to a wayside eatery and order ourselves a couple of *dahi vadas*. That was an unparalleled luxury for us.

"Who is asking you to share? It is my treat!" Sujji laughed. "I am no more the Sujji you know, managing to run a house with needle-and-thread in hand to repair all those hand-me-downs. All children are grown up and I have joined the IAS..."

"IAS?"

"Yes. Pappu and Sweetie are both in Minneapolis. Yes, it gets to be very wintry there but, then, that is where the pay is high, they say. What do I know? Rajan and Ranjan are in Muscat, of course. Remember my son Sahasranamam? Sahasu in Saudi. Can you believe it? But he is the highest earning member. The last one? Yes, Shivvi, she is the only one in India and is in Chennai. Her husband is a globe-trotting IT person. I am so happy that they are all fine, need me and so I am now in the IAS."

"Oh! But you are past retirement age..."

"Aw, where is retirement in this Indian Ayah Service? I do the rounds to Muscat, Minneapolis and Saudi to look after the grandchildren. The children keep my purse filled up. It is good Shivvi is in India. I am able to squeeze in a fortnight now and then to come and have *masala dosai* at Hotel Agni and mango pickle special in Restaurant Satyavageeswara. How about some ice cream topped with Sharad grapes now?"

With her green-and-blue Conjeevaram silk unfurled at the *zari pallu*, Sujji looked a colourful goddess on her peacock mount. I began to chew the exclusive Sharad grapes ... so firm, so blue, so true!" (Courtesy: Sri Aurobindo's Action)

**\*Editor's Note:** There's a different version of this, the IAAS. And that's the Indian Ayah and Aduppadi (Kitchen) Service!

## THREAT TO GNP

(Continued from page 1)

Indian Institute of Technology's (IIT) facilities. The IIT came up on land carved out of the GNP in the 1950s. Though it was walled off in the 1980s, it has always been understood that the Raj Bhavan campus, the IIT campus and the GNP are one integrated natural preserve with any deforestation in one having a detrimental effect on the whole.

IIT Madras has for the past few years had expansion projects put on hold due to its location within the GNP area. The MOEF's 2011 regulations stipulate that buffer zones be set up around reserve forests to act as shock absorbers between areas of high protection and those where normal development can take place. The IIT falls within a buffer zone and has, therefore, not been able to go ahead, with the MOEF stalling its proposals.

Last year, in a bid to obviously help the IIT, the State Government wrote to the MOEF suggesting that the buffer zone around GNP be eliminated completely. The reason given was that there was no area around the GNP for creating such a buffer. The IIT is all for it, with its Director going on record to state that any development on the campus would have no impact on the GNP because "we are completely walled off" – an amusing explanation from the head of an institution meant to promote science and technology.

The MOEF has in turn asked for the views of the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) for his views on the subject. In the meanwhile, the Special Secretary (Forests) of the State Government has written to the PCCF stating that in the light of the stance taken by the Government in 2013 that the buffer zone be

done away with, a nod may be given to IIT to go ahead with its plans.

These developments have had wildlife activists up in arms. They point out that the entire area is one ecosystem and such a move will be detrimental in the long run. The presence of the highly endangered black-buck in the area is also to be considered, they add.

The battle is one that promises to be long drawn. It is also typical of what is happening all over the country, with those in favour of development in the modern sense coming into conflict with the environment. What is surprising is that an institution like the IIT is not able to come up with a creative solution that will solve its problems and at the same time not harm nature. Can it not think out of the box, thereby evolving a paradigm that other institutions located the world over in similar natural preserves can follow?

## Nostalgia

# Car loan for the asking

After a couple of years at Madras Christian College, I entered the profession of journalism in 1962. It was the pre-nationalisation era of class banking.

Small, especially new, businesses had no access to funding by commercial banks. In that era, banks were essentially a collection entity. They used to collect financial instruments, charge for the service and strictly no over-drawing was permitted.

I had stabilised the business venture that included the publication of the transport monthly *Mobile*, a bi-monthly for two-wheelers *Trade Wheel*, and a Tamil monthly *Cycle Seidhi*. I launched *Industrial Economist* as a fortnightly business journal from South in March 1968 and began phasing out the smaller publications.

I was getting ready to graduate to a four-wheeler. My bank, the second largest at that time, would have nothing to do with that. I approached the Manager of Indian Bank, T Nagar, A.P. Anantharaman. He said only the head office could decide.

In the pre-nationalisation era, the chief executive of the bank was all-powerful Secretary, with the Chairman not handling executive functions. I rang up the Secretary of Indian Bank, Balachandran, and sought an appointment. He suggested 11 a.m. the next day.

I reached the Indian Bank head office in the Indian Chamber building, Esplanade, ten minutes ahead and greeted him in his stately room.

Balachandran returned the greeting and motioned me to sit down. I submitted: "I am interested in buying a Standard Herald car priced at a little over Rs. 18,000. Here is the invoice from Union Motors. I need a term loan of Rs. 12,000 repayable in four years at a monthly instal-

ment of Rs. 250. I can pay Rs. 6,000 as margin money and also the monthly interest.

"The bank releases advertisements worth Rs. 3000 annually in *Industrial Economist* and so, not much of risk is involved."

The Secretary looked at me for a minute and said: "Take it!"

I thanked him. Before I was back at my office, Anantharaman had already telephoned twice. In an excited voice, he said that the Secretary had instructed him to hand over the cheque. At the time, I didn't even have an account with the bank!

### ● Looking back at banks, loans and Heralds at a time when the Ambassador has just said 'goodbye'

The next morning, I opened the current account, deposited the margin money and collected the full payment for the car in a matter of a few minutes. I then mildly enquired whether I could also ask for an overdraft for a modest Rs. 5000. Anantharaman sanctioned it instantly!

This development was just before the nationalisation of the 14 major banks on July 19, 1969. Nationalisation marked the transformation from class banking to mass banking.

The 1970s witnessed a spectacular expansion: banks went on a recruitment spree inviting young, qualified men and women on a scale not witnessed earlier. The nepotism and the lack of professionalism witnessed before gave way to system-based recruitment. The new generation of staff was fired by a spirit of reaching out. I remember the Monthly Service Agency division of Bank of Baroda manned by young men constantly on the move to reach out to segments till then unreachable. Small businesses,

agriculturalists, street vendors of vegetables and other such were provided bank loans for the first time! Small barber shops received big facelifts through modest loans for decor, special chairs and simple tools.

Of course, the course was not smooth. There were sticky loans and accumulation of non-performing assets. Some banks were also involved in scams.

But the two decades after nationalisation witnessed spectacular expansion and reach. Large sections of the population till then unable to access bank credit, were wooed and provided loans.

In our own case, the growth was possible thanks to the priority status accorded to the small sector and the availability of bank funding on modest terms. In the 1970s, we took over a dozen loans for importing printing machinery and also for acquisition of equipment from within the country. We could also access funding for a variety of our needs – machinery, margin money for land and buildings, cars, two-wheelers, computer systems, etc.

The opening up of the economy in the 1990s brought about fundamental changes not all of them beneficial to the small and medium sectors. Importantly, the sector lost its priority status, lower rates of interest enjoyed by the sector compared to the large sector vanished. While the large sector could access funding from the market, from the foreign sources and numerous other avenues, the SME sector could not do so. We witnessed a peculiar paradox: large companies could borrow with interest at

rates much lower than the prime lending rate of banks while for the small sector it was often PLR plus up to 4 per cent. One witnessed the large sector accessing loan at 6 per cent as against a small unit being extended loans at 16 per cent. Yet the small sector is still described as part of the priority sector.

The years since 1998 witnessed a spectacular expansion of retail lending. This in turn triggered demand for housing, cars, higher education... The aggressive entry of Indian commercial banks with the lower rates of interest edged out strong international players.

However, commercial banking is still predominantly in the public sector ensuring security of the assets. But, the system suffers from the lack of an aggressive and competitive functioning is. The rates and practices are uniform with little leeway for differentiation. The public sector culture of a slow grind and bureaucratic functioning are still major characteristics. Technology induction is high, but management practices are still archaic. Most importantly, transaction costs are high.

Through the last 50 years, I have seen massive changes. Yet the penetration level is still low. A high portion of monetary transactions is still by cash, contributing to tax evasion and generation of humongous quantities of black money. It is common to see in large jewellery shops in T Nagar transactions of several lakhs of rupees concluded in cash. (Courtesy: *Industrial Economist*)

– S. Viswanathan

## Dates for Your Diary

### DAKSHINACHITRA WORKSHOPS

For children

June 21: Decoupage – Paper Art

For adult

June 19 & 20: Glass Fusing Jewellery

June 28: Athangudi Tile Making

\* \* \*

Till June 23: Exhibition of paintings by Madhini Nirmal and Christeena Shaju (at Achalam Art Gallery).

Till July 25: *The Sacred Space* – an exhibition of sculptures and installations in a palette of whites by Pierre Legrand (at Apparao Galleries).

Till July 30: *The Horizon Line*, an exhibition of paintings by Agathe Patil and Rajesh Patil (at Sandy's, Cenotaph Road) and Rajesh Patil (at Sandy's Nungambakkam).

Till July 30: 24/7/365, an exhibition featuring N. Ramachandran, M. Siva, Farhan Mujib, Dhasan, Bhavna Sonawane and Manish Nai (at The Leela Galleria).

June 20-July 13: Photography exhibition by Kushboo Bharti (at DakshinaChitra).

June 20-July 31: Exhibition on Contemporary art from its museum collection (at DakshinaChitra).

## Answers to Quiz

1. Psy's *Gangnam Style*; 2. Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus; 3. They jointly won the prestigious 87th Scripps National Spelling Bee in the USA; 4. Republic of the Congo; 5. Beats Electronics; 6. Syria; 7. Boko Haram; 8. Maya Angelou; 9. National Security Advisor; 10. India Infrastructure Index.

\* \* \*

11. At the CMDA Office in Egmore and near the Saidapet Metropolitan Magistrates' Courts; 12. San Thome school campus; 13. Sir Subramania Iyer; 14. Institute of Mental Health, Chennai; 15. Aradhana, a theatre; 16. *Ezhilagam*; 17. 'Alankar'; 18. In 1726, he became the first Protestant missionary in Madras; 19. Salt Cotaurs; 20. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Road.

## 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.

An ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION of just Rs.100 covers only a part of our costs. Corporate support and YOUR support will continue to be essential for Chennai Heritage and Madras Musings to play a greater role in creating awareness about the city, its heritage and its environment. We therefore look forward to your sending us your contributions IN ADDITION TO your subscriptions.

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 2013-14 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

## SAD, SAD TECH COLLEGES

(Continued from page 1)

for engineering colleges has been coming down in the State. With Tamil Nadu being one of the most urbanised States of the country, there is increasing awareness of alternative professional courses. Gone are the days when engineering, medicine and CA were the only

three 'respectable' options. Add to this the fact that increased earnings in many middle class families means parents are willing to send their children abroad for even undergraduate courses. The costs may appear daunting, but the child is at least assured of a good education, appears to be the popular view.

As a consequence of all this, the number of vacancies in engineering colleges in the State has been skyrocketing. The State has over two lakh seats on offer and last year saw around 80,000 not being taken! This year, the figure is expected to reach one lakh. Is it not time to set the alarm bells ringing?



## The Chandhoks of Chennai – 1

# From Upper India to Madras

Most of the Punjabis and Sindhis who have settled in Madras came to the city as refugees, post-Partition. The Chandhoks of Chennai were different. Lalaji, an uncle of Indu Chandhok, the present patriarch of the family, came to Madras in 1931 to open a branch of Upper India Trading Co. which was started in 1920 in Rawalpindi (now in Pakistan) where the family has its origin. Upper India was dealing with automobile spare parts at the time.

Indu's father Indersain Chandhok was sent to Madras in 1934 to look after the branch which was then in *Bharat Building* on Mount Road. As nobody came to relieve him, Indersain was forced to make Madras his home. He was to leave an indelible impression on the Punjabis settled in Madras and also contributed extensively to the educational and social sectors of the city.

From 1920 till World War II, Upper India dealt mainly with imported car parts from Japan and Germany. These were mar-

keted in India under the brand name 'Auto Friend' and were available till the 1950s. The Company later marketed indigenously produced car parts under the brand name 'Carex'. Upper India became a training ground for many future dealers of automobile spare parts in what is now Tamil Nadu.



Upper India's Golden Jubilee in Madras in 1970.

With business doing well, Indersain decided to do something to help the local Punjabi community bond better. Along with Nazeer Hussein, a leather

merchant, and Lt.Col.Gurdial Singh Gill, IG of the Prisons, he started the Punjab Association in 1938. Another well-known Punjabi of the time, Prem Dhawan, Manager of Uberoi Sports, soon joined them in their efforts. The Madras Punjabis used to meet every Sunday morning at Indersain's sprawling bungalow to play games like badminton and enjoy a leisurely lunch. Sushila, Indersain's wife, was not only a charming hostess but a social activist too. During the War, when there was shortage of food items, particularly rice, she taught the locals how to use wheat in place of rice in a series of radio talks. She was also actively involved in the committee formed to help War veterans with medical and other requirements. The Punjabi refugees from Pakistan who, about 5,000 in numbers, came to the city after Partition through the warm relationship between Lt. Col. Gill and Chief Minister C. Rajagopalachari who had, not so long before, been the former's prisoner, were also given help to settle in Madras and Coimbatore.

Meanwhile, Indersain also involved himself in a couple of community projects which were to later become landmark institutions in Chennai. He was one of the Founder Trustees of the Cancer Institute, Adyar, founded by the legendary Dr. Muthulakshmi, along with her son Dr. Krishnamoorthy,



Lala Indersain and Sushila.

Nanalal Bhat (of Corks India) and T.S. Santhanam (of TVS).

His next effort was to start a school on behalf of the Punjab Association together with D.C. Malhotra, another prominent Punjabi settled in Madras. The school, Adarsh Vidyalaya, with Hindi as its medium of education, was to become very popular among the North Indians settled in Madras. Located on a spacious property on Peter's Road (where the school still flourishes) it had Visharda Hoon, another Punjabi, as its founding Principal; she went on to become a prominent educationist in India.

• by R.V. Rajan

Indersain was an ardent Arya Samajee and would organise *satsangs* on weekends at the school premises for devotees of Arya Samaj. When the Sikh members of the Punjab Association objected to religion being brought into the school, Indersain, along with friends Jaidev and Satyadev, quit the Adarsh Vidyalaya committee to start the Tamil Nadu Education Society. Under the auspices of TES, the Dayanand Anglo Vedic (popularly known as DAV) School was started. The team persuaded T.S. Santhanam of the TVS group, with whom Indersain was close, to donate some land on Lloyd's Road, where the School still

stands. Balakrishna Joshi was the School's first Principal.

Around this time, Indersain became associated with a project to encourage camping in Madras. When Wallace Forgie, a Canadian YMCA camper, wanted to start a camping facility near Madras, it was Indersain along with W.R.G. Ratnam, F.B. Pithavadian and Pitchandi, who together helped, the Canadian establish Camp Tonakela on a 15-acre site in Avadi bought for Rs. 15,000. They developed facilities for swimming and conducted residential programmes with the objective of providing camping experiences to children to help build character.

Indersain was associated with Tonakela till he died in 1984. After him, his son Indu took over the Presidentship of the Camp. Currently, the camp enables over 1000 schoolchildren from different schools to enjoy and learn from camping experiences every month.

Indersain's biggest strength was his ability to silently network with the who's who of Madras. This ability enabled him to raise funds easily for any of the projects he was involved in.

An ardent sports enthusiast, Indersain was a cricket and badminton buff. He was also fond of travelling by car on holidays with his family. His business dealings as a marketer of automobile car parts also led him to take an interest in motor sports which was just beginning to put down roots in India.

He would never have imagined that one day his second son, Indu Chandhok, his grandson Vicky, and great-grandson Karan would put Madras on the international map of motor sports with their initiatives and achievements!

(To be continued)

### 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](http://www.madrasmusings.com)

THE EDITOR

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



Amalgamations Group



ASHOK LEYLAND  
ENGINEERING YOUR TOMORROWS

**Bata**

Bata India Limited



Brakes India Limited



Go Placidly



F.L. Smidth Limited

THE HINDU  
The Hindu  
Group of Publications



Konica  
COLOR LAB AND STUDIO



LARSEN & TOUBRO  
It's all about Imagineering



MARG  
Spirit of Visioneering



murugappa

**NIPPO**



Rane Group



SAINT-GOBAIN  
The future of glass. Since 1665.



SANMAR



SUNDARAM FINANCE  
Enduring values. New age thinking.



Sundram Fasteners  
Limited



TAJ  
Hotels Resorts  
and Palaces



TATA CONSULTANCY SERVICES



TVS MOTOR COMPANY



UCAL AUTO  
PRIVATE LIMITED



YAMAHA  
MUSIC SQUARE

Since 1856,  
patently leaders  
— A WELLWISHER