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## MUSINGS

Vol. I. No. 9

FREE ISSUE — EVERY FORTNIGHT

August 15 — 31, 1991

*A prize-winning film...*

# In search of an audience

*(Editor's Note: A film news-and-views piece for a lead story? And why not? Especially when this prize-winner has been in cold storage for about a year because it can't find a distributor willing to ensure its public screening! In these circumstances, what chance does good, serious cinema have in India?!)*

(By S Muthiah)

It was the first Tamil film to win the All-India 'Film of the Year' Award. It was adjudged the best film made in India in 1990. Yet this powerful film, which won the Swarnakamal even before being seen by the public, continues to languish in cold storage, unseen by the public and with no distributor, as yet, willing to give the public that chance.

*Marupakkam* ('The Other Side' — though I prefer 'Alter Ego'), directed by K.S. Sethumadhavan and produced by the National Film Development Corporation and Doordarshan, is this sadly neglected film. Its fate was mentioned by many a speaker — mostly in passing — at the recent felicitation function organised by the Federation of Film Societies of India in Madras. But none had an answer to

the problem, not even the distributors on the dais.

Which is not surprising, for I've heard it said many in the producers' organisations were also not exactly enamoured with the film when they had first seen it. Sethumadhavan, who had been given a fairly free hand with the film, had apparently been rather disappointed with this initial reaction. But once the jury judged the film as the year's best, he perked up as everyone but the distributors jumped on the bandwagon.

This included the film societies — at least in Madras. They commendably trod new ground by felicitating the makers and screening the Tamil film in a total departure from form. The societies' conventional programmes are 'classics' in a variety of non-Indian (usually non-English) languages, understanding which is often easier than understanding the films themselves.

Mercifully, on this occasion, almost everything was understandable. The speeches — several a bit too long and rather yawn-inducing in their presentation — were in English, the film was in everyday Tamil and the story was simple enough for all audiences to follow. This house-full audience appreciated it all. And even a Frenchman in it got the idea, without the need for sub-titles.

That idea was simple. A Brahmin, an *agraharam* leader, divorces his wife because his mother hates her love for music and dance, a dancer having weaned away her husband from her. The Brahmin remarries. Years later, his son marries a Christian girl and is disowned. When that marriage too breaks up, the Brahmin is stricken with shock (or was it a shock-induced stroke?). It is through the eyes of a man awaiting ultimate release, yet sufficiently aware to re-live his guilt, that most of the film is seen. And that view provides Sivakumar the opportunity to give a performance of a lifetime.

As a stroke-distorted man, pining for what he had lost, Sivakumar acts every bit as movingly as Charles Laughton did in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. In a racking display of emotional power, Sivakumar holds his audience in



Sivakumar and Radha — the wife he divorced — cuddle up in *Marupakkam* (Still, courtesy N.F.D.C.)



The finest performance ever in an Indian film? Sivakumar as the stricken, aging Brahmin in *Marupakkam*.

emotional thrall and wrings from it a sympathetic response to every emotion he goes through. The scene where he casts his daughter-in-law out and, then, the denouement on his death bed must be amongst the most powerful scenes in Indian film history.

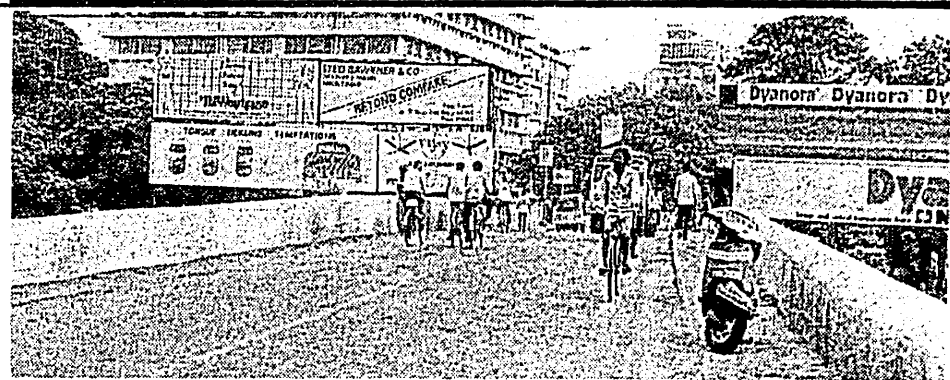
Helping him to create a rare empathy with the audience are Radha, as the fun-loving first wife who is able to ooze sex even in a nine-yard saree, and Jayabharathi, as the lovely and gentle but traditional second wife. The rest of the cast are also-rans in this field, but that doesn't matter a great deal, given the way the unlikely hero and his two wives dominate the film.

What matters a little more is the jerkiness of the film in patches, especially in the beginning, due to some awkward flashbacks that might have been read more easily by art film audiences. The role of the son's friend as an amateur psychiatrist and one half of the twin climax tend to stretch the imagination a bit. And the credits could have done with some proof-reading. But these ripples apart, *Marupakkam* rather overwhelms the viewer like an emotional tidal wave. And few films succeed in doing that as well. Which is undoubtedly why it was awarded the Swarnakamal.

Since powerful emotions are the cornerstones of its cinematic success, why is it that the distributors are fighting shy of it? Surely a good cry draws audiences? Could it be because it is about Brahmins? Yet these Brahmins are Mr and Mrs Everyone; they are part of a story that could have happened

to anyone of any caste anywhere in India in the time-frame of the film. Then why doesn't even Doordarshan, one of the producers, screen this 90-minute tele-film?

It's a mystery I would welcome an answer to, but, meanwhile, may I congratulate D V S Raju, Chairman of the NFDC and the man who signed the contract for the Gandhi film, for agreeing to do this film and break new ground? If, as he mentioned, he succeeds in his negotiations with one distributor, he may yet help take the Tamil film into the 21st Century.



The Commander-in-Chief Road Bridge as it is today, 166 years after it was opened to traffic. Only users know how crowded it gets on working days. The plaque below is found in the retaining wall on the left and won't let you forget when bridges were built to last.

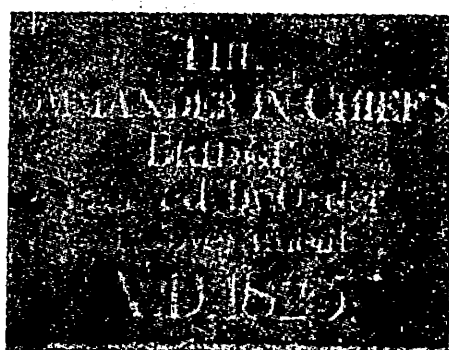
(Photographs by SUSHEELA NAIR)

## Bridges with the past

(By a Staff Reporter)

One of the most congested bottlenecks in the city is to be widened. The Commander-in-Chief Bridge on Binny Road, by the Connemara Hotel, is to be widened from 8.2 meters to 22.7 meters. Users of the bridge will, undoubtedly, put up with the inconvenience gladly till the new bridge is opened in March 1993.

The present bridge had its beginnings in 1796 when a causeway was built across the Cooum on this site, using money collected in the 'Male Asylum and Bridge Lottery.' 'The Merchants of Madras', who had organised the lottery, had plans for a bridge linking Richardson's Gardens and Hart's Gardens, but the Chief Engineer expressed doubts "regarding the security of the foundation in that part of the River". So, they got Col. Gent to build a permanent causeway



with Governor Hobart's permission.

This causeway was replaced by the present bridge which was opened to the public in 1825. Most of the bridges of Madras were built around this time in the 19th century and have been able to stand up to the traffic load for well over 150 years, an achievement that speaks as much for the vision of the planners as well as the skills of the builders who built to last.

It was only last year that another bridge further up the road, linking Graeme's Road and Pantheon Road, was widened. That bridge also belongs to this early 19th century period and its second half was merely added to the first — as will be the case in Binny Road. Obviously the new builders found that the bridges of the 1820s still have a long life ahead of them. Would that the constructions of today could boast of a similar lengthy future!

MANAALI RAMAN...



You said he was non-violent and all that. But how come he FOUGHT all his life?!

IN MAD, MAD MADRAS



With the appointment of Girija Vaidyanathan as Collector of Madurai, Tamil Nadu has got its seventh woman collector. With seven of the state's 21 districts headed by women, this one-third appointment must be some kind of record. The *Man from Madras Musings*, however, won't be surprised if that representation goes up to 50 per cent.

Besides Varadarajan, Susan Mathews, Sheelarani Chankath,

## Women's power at Collectorates

Sheela Priya, Sivakami, Leena Nair and Kutsia Gandhi are the other women collectors, at the time of writing. Who's going to be the next?

P.S. Since these lines were written, Sivakami has been transferred to Madras — and gone on leave. The transfer

follows a disagreement with an M.P., but who is to say the transfer had something to do with disagreement.

### Coats for Courts

Shortly after the *Madras Musings*' feature on the High

Court's new buildings appeared, the *Man from Madras Musings* noticed the old buildings getting a facelift. *MMM* was particularly pleased by this because there had been talk of those buildings being threatened by the wreckers' hammers. Now it would appear that a decision has been taken to let the buildings stand — as perhaps the most recognisable landmark in Madras and as a splendid example of the Indo-Saracenic architectural form this city had helped create in India.

Rs. 11 lakhs have been sanctioned to brighten up the domes, towers and arches of these magnificent buildings. Colour-coating, whitewashing and repair work on the roofs are also being planned.

Once this is completed and the new buildings also become fully functional, there'll be enough halls and chambers available to warrant the

consequently, on the 'hit list'. Would her employer ensure that she was kept safe and sound in a secure place?

Of course, he would; Madam had only to ask. And off he whisked Prema alias Mangalam to a posh hotel where she'd be safe. A month later he deposited her in another five-star hotel, where she continued to live, what the Americans would call, the life of Riley.

But then the bubble burst and Bhagat caught up with the truth. The call that Prema had made him cost him Rs.1 lakh! And that's a story that gets better with every telling in the Press outside Tamil Nadu.

### Homes in Hosur

The downs of Hosur, where they used to ride to the hounds and rear some of the finest cattle in the country, are

# Will more Tamil Nadu industries go public?

The last fortnight was full of momentous events for the business community. But the excitement of the new industrial policy and the balancing socialistic budget were somewhat diffused in Tamil Nadu which was preoccupied with the Cauvery issue.

If one sifts through the bouquets and brickbats the new policies have received, the picture which emerges is that the government is on the right track. Briefly, the indications are that there is going to be fewer controls, more liberalisation and a greater market orientation.

One of the most dramatic changes has been to do away with the Monopolies in the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act (MRTP). New investment will no longer be prevented because of a company's market share or asset size. What it means is that large companies can expand in areas they are best at and achieve economies of scale. In the past they were forced to diversify into unrelated areas, in which a lot of them flopped. Imagine Brooke Bond, the tea giant, going into the manufacture of two-wheelers! Such projects consumed a lot of capital and were non-starters.

The other dramatic new direction has been in the reduction of fertiliser subsidies. The 40 per cent reduction in subsidies has now been pruned down to 30 per cent. But even then, it is a very brave step for the government to take, considering the strong farm lobby that exists in the country.

Another interesting new policy is the raising of the foreign share holding in Indian companies to 51 per cent for a wide range of capital-intensive industries. This has taken several companies like Hindustan Lever and SKF out of the ambit of the Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA). But whether this relaxation will bring the multinationals knocking at our doors is yet to be seen.

While the atmosphere has been created for industry to expand, grow and compete, it has also been constrained by the increased cost of borrowings. Because of high inflation,

As mentioned earlier in this column, tea, the major agro-based industry, is expected to do very well because of the devaluation and the new trade policy. The share prices of tea companies are booming. Companies like Kothari Industrial Corporation and the Murugappa Group will be beneficiaries.

The cement industry is undergoing one of its periodical boom periods. The fact that the budget has not imposed any fresh excise duty on cement has brought more cheer to the cement companies. Happy days are ahead for India Cements, Madras Cements and Chettinad Cements.

Although the fertiliser subsidies have been cut, and, consequently, fertiliser prices have gone up, it may not affect the demand on fertilisers. But it depends on the monsoon. If there is a good monsoon, then the farmers cannot do without fertilisers. In that case, fertiliser demand will be price inelastic. The next few months will show what will happen to the fortunes of companies like SPIC and Parrys.

The ones who have taken a beating in the latest budget are those in the consumer electronics business. How local manufacturers like Dyanora and Solidaire will cope in a highly competitive market, which is getting increasingly dominated by national brands like Onida, Videcon and BPL, will be interesting to watch. Will they fall by the wayside or emerge triumphant?

higher interest rates and devaluation the costs of new projects will be substantially higher.

The only way now to raise resources quickly is to enter the capital market. The Tamil Nadu industrialists have always showed a great reluctance to go public. Will they now change their thinking to exploit the new liberalised atmosphere or will they wait and watch and stand still, true to their image?

It is too early to say what the outcome of all the changes is going to be. Considering everything, Tamil Nadu may not fare too badly. One of the major industries in the state is auto components. The automotive sector, with the exception of passenger cars, is not expected to do badly. The auto component industry in the South mainly sprang up to cater to the heavy vehicle manufacturers, Telco and Ashok Leyland. Both have showed improved sales in the first quarter of the year. As the auto-ancillary industry in Madras is not Maruti-oriented (which is expected to see a setback), it is not likely to suffer.

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# Conquer thyself

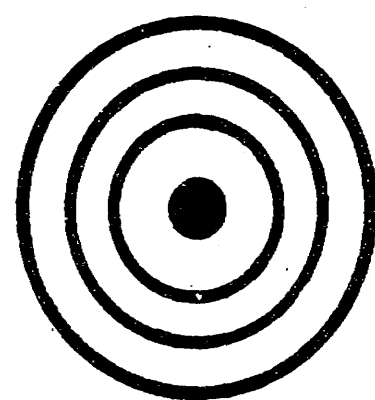
— To rule the market

A purchase decision is one that is difficult to make: Bargain-hunters are ever looking for the 'high and mighty' names available at dirt cheap prices or 'for the diamonds in the rough' which are slated to record big gains. A share selling well below par and thought of as one not worth a hill of beans' is picked up because of information received from a little bird. Others, who consider themselves wise, chase a winner and pick them up at high, high prices.

So, what does one do? How is a purchase decision to be made? The right course is to justify the price of a share fundamentally and technically and then buy it when the prices are still near the prices that are well justified by these studies. Do not buy them at the high water mark, for once the die is cast and the ding dong battle in prices begins, it is the cool calculator that wins.

KOTHARI INDUSTRIAL CORPORATION LTD. (Current Market Price:

Rs. 79): This company with diversified interests in cotton textiles, collee, tea and SSP fertilisers has announced good results for March '91. A hundred per cent EOU for granite monuments and a joint venture with TISCO for a pig iron project are on the cards.



BULL'S EYE

The company is also planning to expand its activities in the field of textiles and fertilisers. The outlook for 1992 is good. The technicals are also promising. Buy for a target of Rs. 100/- in the short term and Rs. 120/- in the medium term.

SHANTI GEARS LTD. (Current Market Price: Rs. 144): This low-profile

company is engaged in the manufacture of gears, gear boxes and other equipment for the textile, cement and sugar industries. The results for March '91 indicate an EPS of Rs. 15.36. The equity capital of the company is small, at Rs. 1.09 cr. while reserves as on 31st March '91 amounted to Rs. 3.83 crs. Thus, there is scope for issuing bonus shares at an early date. The share price movement indicates that the trend has now turned upwards after consolidating at the Rs. 130/- level. Good buy for a target of Rs. 180/-.

LORCOM (PROTECTIVES) INDIA LTD. (Current Market Price: Rs. 113/-): This TTK Group company, which is engaged in the manufacture of condoms, has been consistently reporting good performance. The outlook for the current year is good as export-oriented plants for the manufacture and export of disposable needles and syringes are also in the pipeline. The technicals indicate that the share is steady at current levels. Buy for a goal of Rs. 150/- by March '92.

K. Gopalakrishnan

## OUR READERS WRITE

### 'Fairlawns' 150?

I may interest you to know that the garden house where the Presidency Club is now situated was called Fairlawns, whose previous owner was, I think, during the 20's. Dr P Subbarayan (the grand-father of Rangaraja Kumaramangalam, M.P.)

The building must be more than 150 years old. I reckon.

C A Reddi  
57 Rundall's Road-600 007.

### Rising popularity

We are aware of the rising popularity of *Madras Musings* in the city and also of your plans to enlarge your existing pattern of 8 pages to 12-16 pages.

A. Ayyappan  
Branch Sales Manager  
The Gramophone Co. of India Ltd  
6-B Nungambakkam High Road-600 034.

### Lessens monotony

Discovering *Madras Musings* was a surprise. I found its get-up superb, with scintillating news features.

As a regular commuter by PTC 5-E route, if vehicles ending 'F series' are put, the commuter's monotony can be lessened and thereby the tedium.

J Krishnamurthy  
8/10 LIC Staff Quarters  
K K Nagar-600 078.

### What a variety!

I thoroughly enjoy reading your *Madras Musings*. What a variety! Politics, special reporting, Madras old & new, crime, business review, investment tips, quiz, entertainment, sports, book-reviews and what not? — really a remarkable tabloid!

S Vadivelu  
Public Relations Officer (Retd)  
Integral Coach Factory  
27 Muthamman Koil St-600 025.

### Aspects of the city

*Madras Musings* is excellent. It covers all aspects of the city and I am sure it will become a very good city magazine.

A P Seshadhri  
17, II Main Road  
M C Nagar, Chitlapakkam-600 064.

### Educative value

I happened to see a copy of your *Madras Musings* at a friend's house and was much impressed by its condensed all-round news and information and its educative value for the juniors and, in fact, people of all age groups.

Dr G N Rajagopalan  
AK 28, Plot 2758  
11th Main Road  
Anna Nagar-600 040.

### High eloquence

I came across *Madras Musings* and I am very impressed with the contents and the highly eloquent manner in which the articles appear. Congratulations for such a nice publication of a high standard.

J M Rajan  
72 Fourth Avenue  
Ashok Nagar-600 085.

### Good reading

I happened to come across your fortnightly *Madras Musings* in a fellow-writer's reception room. I found it good and some of the pieces make very good readings.

P Raja  
2/6, Poincare Street  
Olandai-Keerapalayam  
Pondicherry-605 004.

### Amusing and interesting

I find *Madras Musings* highly informative, amusing and interesting reading.

Mallika Rangan  
101-A K H Road, Kamdar Nagar,  
Nungambakkam-600 034.

# The tell-tale bangle

A yawning watchman walked up the gravelly pathway leading to one of the bedrooms of a lonely, seaside Traveller's Bungalow a few miles from Muthupalli. The door was wide open. Under a tree stood a motor-bike. It belonged to the Excise Department officer who had checked into the TB — the previous morning on inspection duty. Standing near the door, the watchman called out, 'Sir, Sir'. The officer had asked him the previous night to call him at 7 a.m. to take his breakfast order.

There was no response from the bedroom.

Where could he have gone this early in the morning, leaving his bike behind? And why was the bedroom door open? Somewhat confused, the watchman knocked on the door twice, then stepped into the room. Shock almost overpowered him.

On the bed lay the Excise Officer. His head had been bashed in and lay in a pool of blood. Jasmine flowers were strewn on the bed and also on the floor around it. A blood-stained

crowbar lay on the cement floor a few feet from the bed. There were broken pieces of yellow glass on the bed and the floor. A brief-case on a side table was wide open and empty.

The watchman cycled furiously to the Muthupalli police outpost and reported the gruesome find. Soon, a Circle Inspector, a police surgeon and the rest of the posse descended on the TB.

## CRIME NOTEBOOK BY RANDOR GUY



The police team found used contraceptives thrown near a window. It seemed obvious that the murdered man had dallied with a female visitor during the night. The flowers, the contraceptives and the yellow pieces of glass, which seemed to be from a bangle, clearly indicated an amorous adventure. Who was the woman? Had she killed him using the crowbar, obviously the murder weapon, for

during every visit, but, at the officer's request, he had never brought the same woman twice.

The woman who had been at the TB the previous night was easily traced by the police. She was Kannamma, a professional entertainer. On questioning, she readily admitted that she regularly visited the TB and had spent an unusually long session with the officer the previous night. However, she

vehemently denied having anything to do with his death or the missing contents of the brief-case. She was emphatic that when she left, around midnight, the man was very much alive and had even suggested she return later.

The police made a thorough search of her modest two-room, tiled house in Muthupalli, but nothing incriminating was found. No unaccounted cash, no valuables other than her meagre glass bangles.

Kannamma was fingerprinted, but while her fingerprints were found in the bedroom in several places, there were none on the crowbar which the pathologist confirmed was the murder weapon.

The scene then shifted to the murdered man's home town. The police found he had many a female companion there. But all these women had watertight alibis.

The dead man's house was then searched. And there, in an old box under the bed, the police found about a dozen yellow glass bangles. Forensic examination confirmed that the pieces found at the TB were of similar material. A torn bus ticket from this town to Muthupalli was also recovered from a dust heap in the kitchen.

Confronted with these tell-tale pieces of evidence, the murdered man's widow confessed to the killing. She was aware of her husband's amorous adventures and had reconciled herself to them. However, she could not tolerate her husband's continued refusal to make her a mother. She had always longed for a child. But the husband denied her this privilege by using various contraceptive techniques. She could stand it no longer.

She was brought to trial before the East Tanjore sessions court and found guilty, but in view of the circumstances of the case, she was given a five-year prison term.

by R.K.K.

invariably means that the hand when it comes up will brush against a young, bare midriff! Or say the bus has to turn a corner. Even before the corner comes up, the man will be leaning against the girl nearby. The conductor is helpless. For the general travelling public, who dislike getting involved, it is part of the

daily travel 'tamasha', a way to while away time till one's destination.

Car-borne Romeos on city roads and streets are another species. They try their luck near bus stops — but always with white collar girls. These Romeos are afraid of working class girls whose epithets can be really choice.

Which brings me to an incident of years ago. An elderly woman and her granddaughter were at an exhibition when I saw a fiftyish man try to make advances to the girl and fail. Two days later, I saw the same man in the corridors of justice, berobed and demanding justice. It takes all kinds to make Madras!

"You b — d," she shouted, then repeated it several times before a helpful person from the crowd supplied the Tamil equivalent. She picked it up and used it a couple of times, before explaining, "You know what this fellow did? Several others and I had stopped to allow temple-goers to cross the road. The b — d brushed against my breast and before I could react, was gone." With her earthy vocabulary exhausted, she snatched a file from the young man, threw it down and spat on it.

"Beat him," "Hand him over to the Police," suggested the watchers. But he was not beaten. He was not handed over to the Police. When restless horns began hooting, he escaped down a side street. "If this had happened in Calcutta, he would have been lynched," said an onlooker. "Madras people are tolerant of everything."

The fact is, sexual harrassment of young women and girls is on the increase. And only one in a thousand is brought to light by the victim protesting.

Government and other offices are no exception either. Says a middle-aged woman, a Government employee: "Sexual jokes, leers and physical gestures are not uncommon. You rarely complain because the answer would be, 'She must have encouraged it' or else 'She would have imagined the whole thing'."

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# Worth a million words

In literature, it is the conflict between the Sea, the wild untameable Sea, and the human beings who defy it, that is emphasised. The valiant protagonists are often men, like Captain Ahab of Melville's *Moby Dick* and Hemingway's memorable "Old Man," but for those writers who have actually lived with the fisherfolk, like the Frenchman, Pierre Loti, and the South Indian Thakazhi Sivasankara Pillai, it is the lives of the women waiting at water's edge that provided them heart-stirring tales.

By way of contrast, the pictures, pencil drawings, water colours and photographs, as well as the educational video films presented at an exhibition entitled *Fisherfolk of the Bay* and organised by the Bay of Bengal Programme and the Alliance Francaise.

## by GEETA DOCTOR

brought out the romantic aspect of the Sea. The multi-national Bay of Bengal Programme (BOBP) seeks to upgrade the lives of the fisherfolk of the Bay, through education and technology designed to enhance traditional methods of fishing and harvesting, help create a commercial network that will benefit the fisherfolk, and encourage them to develop a common platform of support.

The pictures are therefore meant to be a documentation of a traditional way of life faced with change. The artists and photographers, E. Amalore, S. Jayaraj, S.R. Madhu, Harry Miller and K. Vijaykumar from India, Hassan from the Maldives and the Swedish artist Signar Bengtson, capture the many moods of their subjects. The early morning rays of the sun gilding the waves as the men of the Tamil Nadu coast put out to sea in their frail *kattumarams*, as they have been doing through the centuries, the catch laden boats of Bangladesh glimpsed from a bridge, the attractive women of the coast, the Indonesians, the Thais, the Sri Lankans, the Orissans hurrying with their catch in baskets fashioned out of up-turned turtle shells, the Telugus and

the Tamils, the Maldivians and the Bangladeshis, who even after being battered in the recent cyclone manage to smile, are all on view. It is not just the poetry of the Sea but the hard work that is depicted in these pictures.

The conflict is now not so much that of Man against the elements, but of human beings against each other, as the better equipped commercial fishing interests cut the lines of survival of the traditional fisherfolk. In the process, the seemingly infinite resources of the Sea are in danger of being depleted.

The intention of the BOBP is, however, to foster a spirit of solidarity. The videos (taken by K. Vijaykumar and his team) show how the fisherwomen of Madras have rallied together to build a new market for themselves at Besant Nagar; or how the community at Mandapam, further down the coast, is trying to harvest seaweed to make agar, a product used in the manufacture of gelatine. The methods used by the Thais to dry their anchovies, simple techniques of storing fish in ice while at sea, better methods of marketing using an aluminium container as against the old baskets, are some of the other suggestions being promoted in film and print.

Each picture provides its own story. As Amalore takes me around, they come to life. He points to the portrait of the timid Bangladeshi woman with a child as golden-skinned as a young Buddha and describes how the women are so shy they melt away at the sight of a stranger and yet he was able to take a portrait with his long distance lens of the young mother as she sat watching him from the door of her hut. The boat people of Kakinada have a unique lifestyle. They live in narrow barges that are nicknamed "shoe boats" because they resemble a shoe. It is all the home that a family has and they live on the shells that they can scoop out of the water at high tide when the boats float out to the mouth of the creek.

The pictures provoke a million questions. One day perhaps we will find the answers.

# ASIAN VIEWS OF ENGLAND

England is the common theme of two major titles this fortnight. Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (Faber, £ 2.50) and Firdaus Kanga's *Heaven on Wheels* (Viking, £2.50). Kureishi's protagonist, Karim Amir, is one among a new breed of Englishmen, born and bred in England but of Asian origin. His dreams of escaping from his boring suburban existence are realised when Karim's father (The Buddha of the title) moves to London with his lover Eva.

Through Karim, the author attempts to explore the state of not quite belonging to any one culture. On the one hand, the ugly head of racism is never far from the surface and, on the other, is pressure to conform to one's cultural roots. Those who have seen

Kureishi's films, such as *My Beautiful Laundrette*, will know quite what to expect from this writer. But the reader will nevertheless be struck by his irreverent humour and sense of the absurd that seems to work better on paper than on the screen.

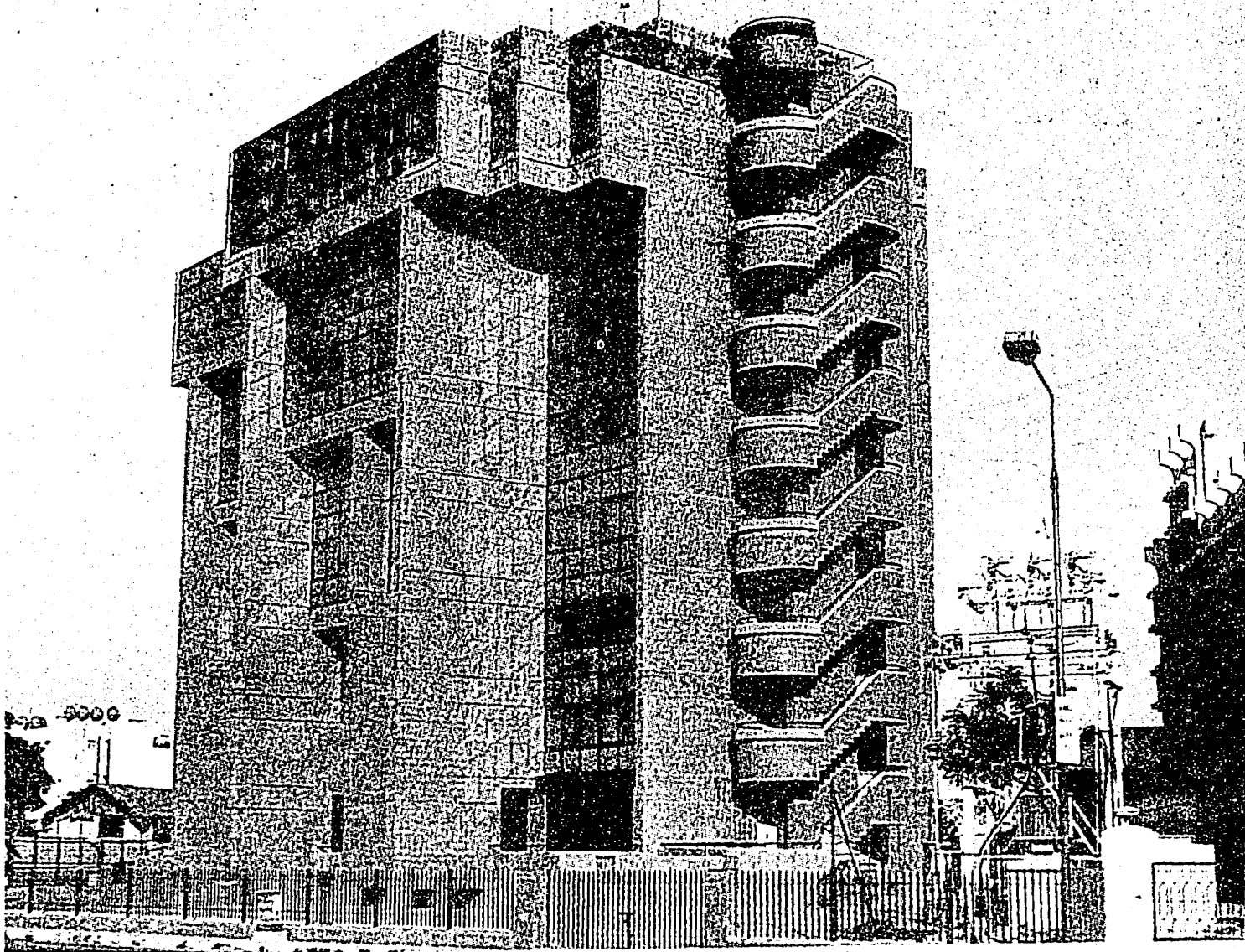
*Heaven on Wheels* is a travelogue on England by an outsider looking in. Firdaus Kanga states in the introduction that his view is gained "from one eye misted with Anglophilia and the other clear and wide open". He constantly compares what he sees with life back home in Bombay. As a disabled person and a homosexual, he finds greater freedom and acceptance than can ever be experienced back home. Thus, Kanga's view of England



*Pinks and reds were once the favourite colours to embellish the public buildings of Madras. So the sandstone pink of Jaipuri-Jaina architecture was used for the local headquarters of the 100-year-old YMCA. Once one of the most striking buildings on what was called Esplanade Road and is now NSC Bose Road, neon signs, hoardings, the barrows of pavement hawkers and a general neglect have all contributed to the rather woebegone look it wears these days. Perhaps it awaits another American contribution like the one that got it started.*

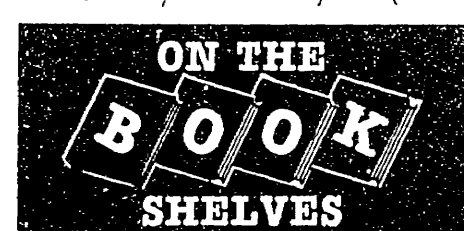
**THE OLD... & THE NEW**

*A much darker red that helps it to stand out in rather isolated splendour amidst the new highrise on Mount Road, near the Cenotaph Road junction, is the Karumthu Building. Its dark glass windows, the deep red and the irregular 'blocks' piled up one on top of the other might not be everyone's concept of architectural elegance, but the building's most striking feature is also its most welcome one. The twisting brick stairway that's the building's firescape is as pointed a reminder as one could wish to other builders that, for highrise, outside firescapes are mandatory! (Photographs by SUSHEELA NAIR)*



is of a kinder, gentler nation than what Kureishi would have you believe.

While a lot has been written about J R D Tata the industrialist, little is known about his contribution to Indian Aviation. *Aircraft and Engine Perfect* by Murad Iyze (TMH,



Rs. 120) is a book that is exclusively devoted to this aspect of J R D's career. Drawing extensively from his light log books, letters and personal interviews, Iyze chronicles J R D's pioneering achievements in aviation that led to the setting up and development of Air India.

The book is written in a style that would appeal to the lying enthusiast as well as the lay reader.

When Benazir Bhutto was sworn in as Pakistan's prime minister, it seemed like a new dawn in her country's chequered history. Two years later the dream lay shattered with her dismissal and the subsequent charges of corruption against her government. *Waiting for Allah* by Christina Lamb (Viking, Rs. 250) is an attempt to analyse the events that led to Benazir's downfall.

During those two years, Lamb was Pakistan correspondent for the *Financial Times* and a friend of Bhutto. Thus, she was uniquely placed to witness the intrigues of the military as well as the mistakes made by the government.

*Waiting for Allah* is also an examination of Pakistan today as Lamb enquires into the role of women, urban life, the relationship with India, the drug problem and the Afghanisthan question.

The Guru of Futurology, Alvin Toffler, returns with his latest predictions in *Power Shift* (Banlam, Rs. 140). As the title suggests, it deals with shifts of power not only at the global level, but also in the everyday world we live in. According to Toffler, the massive restructuring in power relationships will result in a revolution in the very nature of power itself. Out of all these changes shall arise a new system of wealth creation based on innovation, individualism and information.

**Gautam Padmanabhan**

# A bit of this & that on the AIR

We are a long-suffering people. We accept without much complaint whatever — whether it is civic failures or whether it is the excesses of politicians. Essential services may break down, garbage may collect, drains might overflow, we take it all in our stride, mildly grumbling and grudging. But I would have thought that we would kick up a fuss about radio, which is supposed to provide us entertainment and instruction, but which behaves as erratically as the crazy clock that strikes thirteen times.



I must admit that I hardly listen to the radio, and have hardly given it a thought, but recently one of the inmates in my house has suddenly become a radio bug, keeps it on all hours, and it is difficult to escape its pervasive presence. I listen in spite of myself and I am amazed at how faulty the system is. Let me make it clear that I am talking about the Madras station of All India Radio only.

This station has been in existence for 50 or 60 years, yet it is the most amateurish broadcasting outfit I have known. The most irritating aspect is the way the transmission goes off the air several times a day, for durations ranging from several seconds to several minutes. To add insult to injury, at the end of one of these lapses, a bored voice usually announces: "An announcement. We wish to inform listeners that due to electrical failure in our studios, we were off the air during..."

I find two things interesting about the statement. First of all, there is not a word of apology or regret in it, and, please believe me, I have listened to this statement so many times in the last several weeks that I have it word perfect. The second thing is, what have 'the authorities' been doing to make sure that such failures do not occur, at least in such regular and painful intervals? I would think that the radio station's equipment would be frequently upgraded, but obviously the station appears to be using the same transmitters and electrical wiring with which it started out.

Another aggravation AIR Madras constantly provides is caused by one of its studios, which presumably has a generator (I am assuming this, since I have not been inside the station in nearly a decade and a half). This studio comes into play when there is a protracted break in a particular programme, and usually fills in the interim with anything ranging from mourning music to pop. Suddenly the regular transmitter gets activated and, for a while, at least a minute or so, you have the dubious pleasure of Carnatic music trying to make itself heard over

the other cacophony. An even jollier thing is when the two wavelengths come through simultaneously through the transmitter, creating a science-fiction effort. I am astonished at how often this happens.

What is seriously lacking is professionalism of any kind — technical or programmatic. The talk-shows in Tamil, if they can be called that, are invariably routine and unimaginative. No effort seems to have been made to train people in the art of interviewing. Admitted that the questioners are

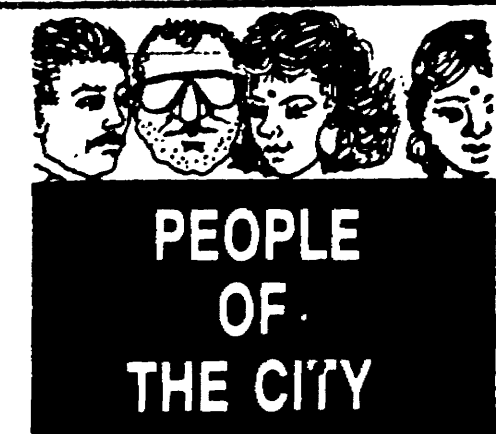
usually themselves amateurs, a set of guidelines could have nevertheless been evolved and given them in advance, since programmes are usually lined up weeks ahead, to familiarise themselves with the practice of conducting interviews. It is also a matter of some interest that as much English as Tamil is used in the Tamil interviews.

One final beef, though this does not relate to the Madras station. At the end of the English news bulletin, both in the morning and in the evening in the national programme, there is a plug for

## No Waterloo this

With the Geography Departments of Madras University and Waterloo University, of Canada, agreeing to work together, Dr R Ramesh, Head of the Department of Geography, Madras University, has been successful in negotiating an agreement which will not only benefit considerably Geography students in Tamil Nadu but will also generate interest in the much-neglected field of Cartography. The Canada International Development Agency will grant the Madras University Rs. 1 crore over four years through its Canadian partner as part of this protocol.

This is indeed a windfall for a vital subject yet one which is paid little attention to in India's schools and colleges. In fact, there was even a stage when a Tamil Nadu Education Minister wanted Geography removed from the syllabus. Fortunately, he faded from the



political scene before he could implement his decision. But that did not particularly help Geography. A subject which plays an important role in national development, international trade and commerce, protection of the environment, preparation for natural disaster control and several other fields continues to be taught in schools as the poor relation in Social Studies and as little better in higher studies.

the lottery programmes conducted by the Manipur or Nagaland states. What justification there can be for this I do not know, unless it comes under the category of helping along the two distant states.

As I say, we just take it all lying down. I have been astonished to see that not a word of complaint ever appears about AIR Madras's programmes. On the other hand, the radio has a regular programme of audience reaction in which are read letters complimentary to it. Perhaps Doordarshan has robbed radio of some of its interest and taken away its audience. But as radio goes merrily on its own way, and on the tax-payer's money, a few questions would seem to be in order. But don't send them to the radio-station, for you will be most unlikely to get a response. I know because I have tried. **S.K.**

Dynamic Professor Ramesh is one of a small group in this country fighting to get Geography the recognition it deserves. The Canadian recognition is his due reward. That the largest component of assistance from Waterloo will be for remote sensing, computer and digital mapping, mapping equipment and training faculty and graduate students in these fields will be particularly gratifying to him as the cartographic aspects of Geography have always been a passion of his.

It was out of that passion that he created the Resource Atlas of Tamil Nadu, a magnificent document that Government paid little attention to. Also attracting little support was the country's first opportunity for Cartography specialisation that he established in his department. It is to be hoped that the new winds that blow from Waterloo and through the corridors of Government in the state will ensure the revival of the latter and the production of an updated edition of the former which the state's planners could use as an everyday tool.

## A tax-paying child

Former chartered accountant G Venkateswaran, who has now made a successful business of film-making and whose GV Films was the first cine-company to go public, has had a rather empathetic influence on those who work with him. Child star *Shamili*, who, as a two-year-old, made his *Anjali* the success it was, is now, as a four-year-old, an income-tax payer! Which could be a world record of sorts!

Shamili, who won a national award for her role as the spastic child in *Anjali*, has also won the Kerala Government's award for child artists, following in the footsteps of elder sister Shalini. Film cameraman Babu, their father, however, saw a greater screen future for his younger daughter and, today, she's the one who is making almost a full-time career of films.

After her successes in *Anjali* and *Durga*, she is now starring in *Senthooora Devi* and is working on the sets of TEN other films. All her directors agree with Manirathnam, who guided *Anjali*, that she's a "natural" blessed by the Gods. Hailed as a "superstar among superstars", they say her success is due to the fact that she is not at all camera-shy. Manirathnam recalls that when, in *Anjali*, she had to slap her mother, she really smacked Revathi and then applauded herself.

Babu, meanwhile, continues to yet scripts for his daughter and looks for those films which have a strong appeal for women; especially the housewife. His search is sure to keep Shamili among the income tax-payers for ever. **The Recorder**

## QUIZZIN' WITH NAVIN-9

The response to the quiz keeps growing every fortnight. But we are sure it will get still better. Meanwhile, try and answer the first twenty questions on your own, before turning to the answers on PAGE 8. Remember, Quizmaster NAVIN JAYAKUMAR takes all his questions from the local newspapers of the fortnight mentioned in the coupon.

To win a prize, all you have to do is answer Question 21 correctly. Fill in the coupon given below — which leaves space for your answer — and mail it to MADRAS MUSINGS QUIZ - 9, C/o Lokavani Hall Mark Press, 62-65 Greaves Road, Madras-600 006 before 5 p.m. on August 24th. The first three correct answers drawn will be entitled to a prize of Rs. 100 each. We can't make it any simpler than that, can we? So get to it; here are the questions and your coupon.

- The fortnight started with the headline "Government wins trust vote" by 241 — 111. How many MPs abstained from this crucial vote that was decided in favour of the P V Narasimha Rao Government?
- What is unusual about the Jeevan Rekha (Life-Line) Express that was recently flagged off from Bombay?
- Which Indian dramatist was awarded the Magsaysay award for Journalism, literature and creative communication arts?
- The Madras City Police seized 7,500 copies of a book partly printed here, denigrating the IPKF operations in Sri Lanka. Name the book.
- Max Muller Bhavan and the Madras Philharmonic and Choral Society presented a concert on July 21, commemorating the bi-centennial of which famous composer and child prodigy?
- Who was the 'mirasdar' of Kodiyakadu near Vedaranyam who was found hanging from a tree?
- Why were Moses Samson Chariker, K Soundararajan and Rina Panigrahy in the news recently?
- What is the sole aim of the Samarjit Dal?
- Whom did UP beat to win the McDowell Herberstson National junior hockey championships?
- Which organisation, along with VST Industries, presented the three-day 'Spirit of Freedom' concerts in Madras recently?
- Which movement found itself at the centre of controversy following reports of secret state funding of it to the tune of \$ 125,000 by the South African Government?
- Who is the founder-chairman of Exnora International?
- Which Madras school is referred to in the Limca Book of Records as the oldest school in India?
- What could be one of the most important discoveries about the universe was made by Prof. Andrew Lyne and Setnam Shemar at the Jodrell Bank Radio Observatory and recently announced in the *Nature* magazine on July 25. What was this discovery?
- Art Mela '91, an exhibition-cum-sale of paintings by well-known Indian artists, was organised by the Rotary Club of Madras South-West for Matru Mandir. To what cause is Matru Mandir dedicated?

- By what percentage have LPG, petrol and aviation fuel prices gone up following the Budget?
- During his concluding remarks at the Budget presentation, Dr Manmohan Singh, the Finance Minister, said, "No power on earth can stop an idea whose time has come". Whom was he quoting?
- The following phrases featured in the news during the fortnight. What are they: (a) Goa gold, and (b) The Black Network.
- As a fallout over the Cauvery water dispute, the AIADMK announced a boycott of all functions in which two Union Ministers might participate. Who are these ministers?
- Two well known personalities passed away this fortnight. Identify them.
  - Writer well known for his tales of ghetto Jews in Eastern Europe and Jewish immigrants in USA. He won the Nobel Prize in 1978 (July 24).
  - Economist, former Union Education Minister and founder of the prestigious Delhi School of Economics (July 25).

## PRIZE QUESTION

- A bandh over the Cauvery waters dispute was observed on July 26 by Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and ..... Fill in the blank.

## QUIZ COUPON-9

NAME .....

ADDRESS: .....

Ans. to Q. 21 .....

(The Fortnight of July 15 to July 31)

We now look forward to a real big response. Meanwhile, here are the lucky winners to Quiz-8 and the correct answer:

## PRIZE WINNERS

- M R V NATHI, K-24, First Avenue, Madras-600 102.
- ANITHA ISAAC, Plot No. 4531, Y-134, Annanagar, Madras-600 040.
- HIMANT JAGGI, 20, 1st Street, Gill Nagar, Madras-600 094.

## ANSWER TO QUIZZIN'-8

Saraswathi Mahal Museum and Library.



# At the Chinese Iyengars'

What are three nice Iyengars doing in a Chinese restaurant? Answer: they happen to own the place!

RANGI's is the untypical name (from "Rangaswamy") — the name of two of the three owners of a rather pleasant little eating-place, tucked away in a quiet corner in a shopping complex near the Gemini flyover, but with, surprisingly, plenty of parking space. RANGI's is the brainchild of two brothers, both graduates of the Catering Institute and experts in Chinese cooking, following a stint at the Taj Palace in Delhi. The third member of the team is their auditor-cousin.

The cuisine (in the Calcutta "Hakka" style, as one of the friendly and articulate waiters informed us) is mildly spiced and considerably less greasy than elsewhere.

The dishes come in ample portions, each with a different exotic flavour. I would specially recommend their Dragon Soup and Fish in Oyster Sauce. Considering the excellent value for money — the bill for four of us came to Rs.160 — it is not surprising that RANGI's has become the favourite haunt for young people who are often on a shoestring budget. But you will also see some families about the place, including staid-looking mams, who tuck into their vegetarian dishes with no less gusto than the younger crowd.

The overall impression at RANGI's, both in terms of decor and of cuisine, is that it is unpretentious and functional. The modest number of tables (nine in all), the stucco walls, the sloping roof in pagoda style — are all designed not for sophisticated elegance but for comfort

and coziness. And, most important, instead of the usual cacophony blaring away at most restaurants with a predominantly youthful clientele, the

## FOODS and FADS

music at RANGI's is confined to the more sedate notes of blues and jazz.

### Lopping it up

Now what could be better than concluding a satisfying meal at RANGI's with a liberal dose of ice-cream at the LOP STOP — one of the larger Dollop outlets at walking distance from the Music Academy? This is a fairly

wide and spacious place with seating arrangements inside as well as outside, on the pavement.

In addition to the various flavours (including my favourite black currant and blueberry, whose unappetising appearance should by no means discourage you), there are the special "lops" that are stiffly priced, but plainly irresistible. They comprise of massive helpings of ice-cream, sundae, fruits and nuts. If you are at a loss to decide between the innumerable flavours on offer, check with the kiddies, who certainly don't miss a trick as far as the TV. advertisements are concerned!

### Safer dyeing

How many of us who are plagued with the agonies of ageing have fantasised about a hair dye that is both effective and

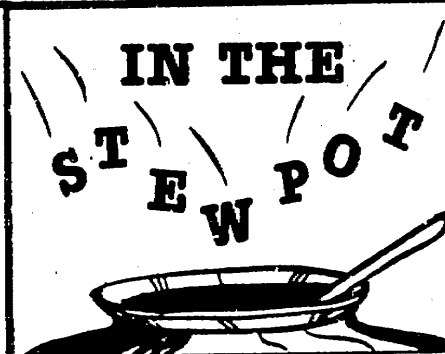
completely safe? Now there is a local product called BLACK ROSE KALI MEHANDI (priced at Rs.7/- per packet) that might just about be the answer to your dreams.

This product (produced by Henna Export Corporation and marketed by Shanti Enterprises, Faridabad) is a mixture of mehandi (or henna), amla, shikakai, katha, paraphenylene diamine, barium peroxide, citric acid and magnesium carbonate.

Although kali mehandi does contain some chemicals, it is expected to inflict less damage on your hair than the ordinary chemical dyes in the market, probably due to the addition of so many natural conditioners. If this proves to be true, this product is likely to emerge as the most popular hair dye in the Indian market.

V.K.

Spruce up the humble poori by lossing in mashed potato. It makes an interesting, delicious variation. Ever thought of serving snake gourd with pooris? Try Snake Gourd Sukhe. It is nothing short of inspired. The Chicken Masala Fry is a time-tested family recipe, so quick and easy to make. Serve the Mixed Vegetable Salad on the side. It is an excellent cooler.



### SNAKE GOURD SUKHE

1/2 kg snake gourd — chopped fine  
1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder  
1 tbs powdered jaggery

Ground Masala  
6-8 red chillies  
1/2 teaspoon fenugreek seeds (methi)  
2 teaspoon coriander seeds (dhanिया)  
1 1/2 teaspoon black gram dhal (urad dhal)  
2 teaspoon oil  
4 tbs coconut, grated  
Lemon size tamarind

Fry in 2 tbs oil and grind into a fine paste adding coconut and tamarind.

For Tempering  
2 teaspoon oil  
1 teaspoon mustard seeds  
Few curry leaves

Method  
Heat oil and add mustard seeds and curry leaves.

When the mustard seeds splutter, add the chopped snake gourd. Add the turmeric powder and salt.

Add enough water to cover the vegetable. Simmer till done. Add the ground paste and powdered jaggery. Simmer till well blended.

Serve hot with pooris.

### MIXED VEGETABLE SALAD

1 carrot peeled and chopped fine  
1 cucumber peeled and chopped fine  
1 tomato chopped fine  
1 green chilli chopped fine  
1 small bunch coriander leaves chopped fine  
2 tablepoons lemon juice  
Salt to taste

For tempering  
2 teaspoons oil  
1 teaspoon mustard seeds  
1 teaspoon black gram dhal  
1 red chilli halved  
1/2 teaspoon asafoetida powder  
Few curry leaves

Method  
Mix all the vegetables. Add salt. Heat oil. Add all the ingredients for tempering. When the mustard seeds splutter, add to the vegetables.

Add the lemon juice and mix well. Serve cold or at room temperature.

Chandra Padmanabhan  
CHICKEN MASALA FRY

750 gms chicken  
2 large onions finely chopped  
2 large tomatoes cut into halves  
6 pods garlic  
2" piece ginger  
1" cinnamon  
3 cloves  
2 cardamoms  
1 teaspoon black pepper  
1 teaspoon cummin  
1 seed (jeera)

1/2 teaspoon turmeric powder  
1 teaspoon chilli powder  
2 teaspoon dhanिया powder  
1 cup fresh coriander and mint leaves mixed

1 sprig curry leaves  
3 tbs oil  
Salt to taste.

Method  
Clean the chicken and cut into medium pieces. Wash thoroughly and drain off all the water. Add all the ingredients and mix well with the chicken.

Add 1 1/2 cups of water and cook till done.

In a kadai heat the oil, add the curry leaves and the cooked chicken. Fry for a few minutes on medium heat, turning occasionally.

Remove from fire when it is a rich golden colour.

Just before serving decorate it with onion rings, chopped coriander leaves and sliced tomatoes.

Serve with plain rice or pooris.

Mrs P Raghupathy

# Stars in the making

A child prodigy and two young sisters, the youngest participants in the recent Spirit of Freedom concerts in the city, attracted considerable attention with their performances.

Vidya Mandir is the alma mater of this talented flute-playing twelve year old studying in the Eighth Standard. This child prodigy, Master Shashank, gave his first public recital in Adelaide, Australia, in September-October 1990 and has played in over a hundred concerts since.

The boy's talent was first discovered by his father, M N Subramanyam, a concert performer himself on the flute and, till recently, an Assistant Professor of Bio-Chemistry in the Agricultural University, Karnataka. Subramanyam had initially trained his son in vocal music, but when Shashank was just six, he stunned everyone by picking up his father's flute and playing, on the spot, the difficult *Alta Tala Varnam* in Kannada Raga.

The late T R Mahalingam, who was astounded by the youngster's potential, advised him to train in vocal music alone, perhaps to preserve his spontaneity on the flute. No wonder Shashank's instinctive style enralls audiences wherever he performs. Subramanyam says he resigned his job in order to concentrate on his son and ensure that, while he perfected the art, he did not neglect his studies.

The teenagers who impressed were the Andhra Sisters, V Shanmukha Priya and V Hari Priya. Both are in their late teens and are studying in SIET College and Queen Mary's respectively for B.Sc. (Zoology) and B.A. (English) degrees. They are from Amalapuram in Andhra Pradesh and began their training in vocal music at the age of five, under the tutelage of their father V V Subbaram, a post-graduate in vocal music and teaching in the Government High School in Chittoor.

The Priya sisters made their debut at the Sri Raghavendra Swamy Mutt in Triplicane in 1987, then took a break for two years to concentrate on learning their art better before singing publicly again all over Andhra and Tamil Nadu. Endowed with golden voices, the pair have carved a niche for themselves in the realm of Carnatic Music. But though music is their first love, these disciples of Radha and Jayalakshmi would like to do post-graduate work.

These three young artists participated in the Spirit of Freedom Concerts at the Music Academy in July. The concerts were organized by VST Industries, in association with the Madras Telugu Academy, to promote National Integration.

N. Meera Raghavendra Rao



## GRAPHIC COLOUR PROCESS

Screen Negatives for Offset-Printing

149, Peters Road  
Madras 600 086  
Phone: 861759

# A homage to be proud of



Vaidyanathan

Kannan

Sudha Raghunathan, Sowmya, Vijay Siva and Unnikrishnan are stars of the young Carnatic vocal scene in Madras. Each has a fan following and each has a different style of singing and pitch. But sing together successfully they did in Anjali to Y.G.P.

All of them have the title of Yuva Kala Bharathi, an award instituted by Bharath Kalachar to the brightest music and dance talent discovered in their annual festivals. Others with this title are B Kannan (veena), G J R Krishnan (violin), J Vaidyanathan (mridangam) and the dancers Sumitra Vijayaraghavan, Karpagavalli, Pavithra Prasad, Satyajit Dhananjayan and Saraswathi.

Kannan, a nephew of dancer Padma Subramaniam, a brilliant veena

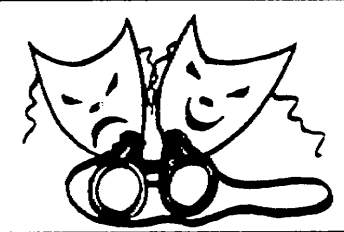
exponent and an expert organiser, hit upon the idea of getting all the Yuva Kala Bharathis together to offer a music and dance tribute to Y.G.P. who had passed away recently. Y.G.P., popular Tamil theatre actor and director, was the founder of Bharath Kalachar (which functions under the auspices of Padma Seshadri school).

The Yuva Kala Bharathi dancers are all from different schools of Bharatha Natiyam. They had the daunting task of visually interpreting such heavy concert pieces as the *Jagadananda Karaka pancharatna Kriti* of Tyagaraja, Dikshitar's *Ananda natana prakasam* and a *tillana* brilliantly composed by Kannan.

Vaidyanathan on the mridangam was on stage every moment of the concert. Kannan's veena solo was captivating. And all the singers were restrained, providing music for dance as never before. Obviously there'd been more work off the stage than on.

The young musicians had obviously realised the challenge of singing for dance as an exciting one. Perhaps others will show less disdain

## THE VIEW FROM THE WINGS



for such activity in future. Perhaps the prima donnas of the dance scene will look again at their own performances and choreographic standards. And, perhaps, also, events like this one will make people who have given up dance and music for dead sit up and take notice. Whatever happens, this was an event Madras can be proud of.

### A tale to tell

Another performance, which did not have the overflowing audience of the Bharath Kalachar one, but which still captivated was a story-telling by Vayunaidu. Remember her? She had acted in quite a few English plays here. Now she is telling stories all over England, offering *Katha Kalakshepa* in

narrated at literary and folk festivals as well as in libraries and art galleries.

At these performances, Vayunaidu integrates story-telling with the written word and the visual arts. Her performances have accompanied the touring exhibitions of the Hayward Gallery's *The Other Story* etc. She has also directed story-telling performances in theatre for the Education Departments of the Universities of Leeds and Loughborough.

Now married to an Englishman, Vayunaidu is visiting Madras to look again at our own traditional story-telling forms. As a performance in The Gallery, she used artists from Kalakshetra to provide background music. The mridangam kept step with her narrative and provided sound effects that added to the drama. Vayunaidu's little niece, who kept time to the music marvellously,

V.R. Devika

# A dream of Shakhapuri from the Anamalais

Each generation exercises the privilege of interpreting Shakespeare in the light of its own beliefs and attitudes. The somewhat shy dreams of many an English-speaking educated South Indian middle class turned into palpable reality in Mithran Devanesen's production of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at the Music Academy on the 30th and 31st July. The play was interpreted as one which holds up to its viewers a faithful mirror of life, of universal realities and, as such, an exquisite blend of three diverse, yet similar, worlds held together by a single dramatic idea. The fare would have been more sumptuous had Devanesen considered the play also as comment on the government.

The dominant theme of the production, then, was the sense of celebration and festivity. Devanesen resorted once again to a dominantly black stage. A well-proportioned platform with staircases running down on either side created not only levels but also suggestions of different orders of life — the use of it was restricted to the Fairy World. A couple of black rectangular boxes beat the stage into balance. Six cricket nets hung against the wings, with little loud handkerchiefs in delightfully crass colours winding their way up to form trees, leaves, flowers and what you may, completing a splendid stage of myriad possibilities. A muted lighting design in low tones of light and shade worked in the ethereal quality of a mortal world. A retreating ellipse of modest stars on the backdrop enhanced it further and

blended into the sets in quite a phenomenological way. The deliberately cultivated crassness swayed Nanda Devanesen's costumes. They were well designed and festive and simply "Indian" at its robust best.

It was perhaps a combination of these factors, together with an outpouring of Shakespeare's poetry in its original and undiluted glory, which seemed to have confused the youthful section of the audience. They had no stock response to fall back on or, may be, they had never quite believed a Shakespeare teacher who told them to accept as dead normal a lovely love-struck Gujarati lass named Helena or Hermia. Clouding confusion was further confounded when Puck lit a "diya" and the play began with an invocation to the muse. The citizens of the morrow called it an evening and sought refuge in the only other known response — catcalls and throaty comments and agitated consumption of popcorn. Intertwined with it were the rebukes and exhortations from the more sober of the audience who had paid good money to critically appraise a breakthrough in Madras English Theatre.

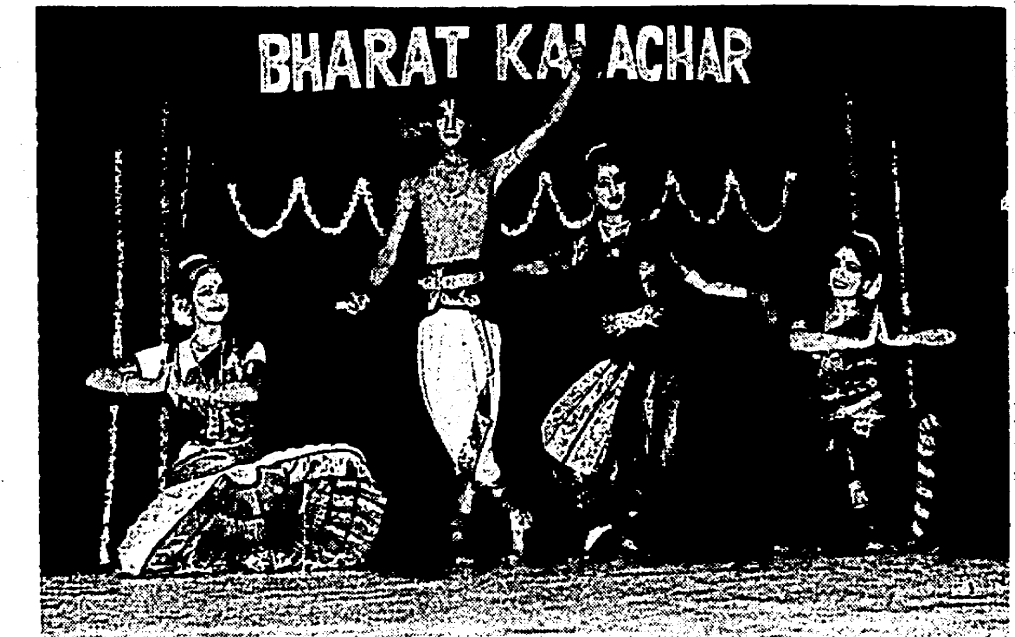
Undaunted by the audience, a cast that had matured into seasoned acting proceeded with the play. Sameer Rao as Puck was a rewarding experience and made a great team with Michael Muthu as the stately Oberon/Theseus. Russel Stevenage with his legendary "stag mark" umbrella took the evening to its point of fulfilment. A stunning

*chapai* and a great clatter of local accents lent character to a hilarious subplot led by Sudhir Ahuja as Bottom. A forty-second *pulitattam*, which replaced Shakespeare's Lion, was elegantly choreographed and an instance in restraint. Humour in the scene was built on gross hysteria and local hyperbole.

Now, the question to be raised is, should Devanesen be forgiven some of the loose ends the production accepted. Should a cast, however young or inexperienced, be allowed imperfections? It's a shame that some of the lead parts approached the dance moves choreographed for them with evident inhibitions and, at times, succeeded in nearly ruining a play which is dependent on total abandon. A lack of clarity in the delivery of Shakespeare's lines can move one to tears, albeit for other reasons!

But then *Dream* is a play about forgiveness and celebration. And we celebrate Devanesen's gumption in venturing into a hitherto untried area on our soil — a venture after Shakespeare's own heart, had he been the Shakhapuri he is fabled to be who created beautiful poetry among the verdant green of the Anamalais. It was an affirmation that the production, formed by Indian responses and based on Indian sensibilities, is simply Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Elizabeth Roy



Homage to Bharat Kalachar ... from r to 1 Sumithra Vijayaraghavan, Karpagavalli, Satyajit Dhananjayan, and Pavithra Prasad.

English. Her stories are derived from Indian oral traditions and have been

also lent enchantment to the dramatic proceedings.

### A Shilpi speaks...

*The Living Traditions: A Shilpi Speaks* is a documentary film that everyone in Madras is talking about these days. The film, produced for the Research Academy of Science and Art, Mamallapuram, by Bala Kailasam, won the Rajat Kamal award for the best arts/culture film 1990.

The film opens a window into the mind and world of a *shilpi* (sculptor) and explores his attempts to discover the oneness of mysticism and mathematics, of science and lyricism, of skill and sensitivity. The view through the window is provided by a series of monologues by V Ganapathy Sthapathi, that grand sculptor, designer and builder from Mamallapuram.

This film that evokes awe for our traditions is now being shown at teachers' meetings (Banyan-centres for educators), schools and art gatherings. A viewing is a must for all interested in art and tradition.



The poster that reminds you of the OASIS at BITS

## An oasis that's a bit of Madras

October heat and Madras. Imagine slipping away one October afternoon from the vicious cycle of everyday life and dreaming of an oasis called Pilani.

On the fringes of the desolate desert of Rajasthan, about 200 kilometres west of Delhi, lies this isolated, non-descript town. But thanks to the 26-year-old Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS), Pilani has become a lodestar for some of the brightest young minds of India, more so of Madras, seeking careers in engineering, science and the humanities.

A stroll through the BITS campus will make you feel that you are somewhere in serene Madras. Almost 40 per cent of the student population is from Madras city schools. To be more specific, about 250-300 students from Madras wrestle their way into BITS every year. Tamil heard on the near-fringed roads or in the corridors of a hostel. Ilayaraja masterpieces and Carnatic music make the atmosphere home-like for anyone from Madras. The cuisine in the mess offers a variety of South Indian delicacies ranging from *kesari to medu vadai, arial and puliyodarai*, contributing further to the Madras atmosphere. So why don't you join us there for a week's break, all you Madras collegians?

BITS and OASIS are like MADRAS and TAMIL: inseparable. OASIS is the all-India inter-collegiate festival organised by BITSians every October, when the weather is pleasant (Pilani, like Madras, is notorious for its scorching heat in summer). OASIS involves over 300 like-minded people for 120 hours non-stop and consists of entertainment and competition ranging from Debate to Drama, Carnatic Music to Creative Writing.

OASIS can be a lucrative outing for participants too. Prize money for events amounts to over a lakh of rupees. Participants in the past have come from IIT Madras, College of Engineering, Guindy, and several colleges affiliated to Madras University. OASIS now looks forward to active participation from more and more colleges in and around Madras. Come join us this year between October 22nd and the 26th.

Shivendu S Nadkarni & Ramesh B.



# Hooray! A woman in the TNCA!

"Damn the M.C.C.!" This could well have been every Commonwealth cricket fan's reaction to the Marylebone Cricket Club's recent decision throwing out, for the umpteenth time, the renewed plea of London suffragettes for honorary life membership of the club. This last bastion of male supremacy, and Eve's vain bid to break into it, came to mind when I went through the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association's record number of 38 committees and sub-committees and found another record!

Hats off to the TNCA! For better, or for worse, it has broken new ground, whatever its reasons for doing so. For the first time in its 60-year history, the TNCA has included a woman in one of its committees. The honour has fallen on one who bears the world-famed name of Teresa. A Professor of Physical Education at Presidency College, only a stone's-throw from the TNCA, Mrs R.K. Teresa, B.Sc., M.P.Ed., N.I.S., is on the 31-member grounds committee.

The TNCA is stated to be the first Indian cricket controlling body to have a woman adorning one of its committees, or holding a responsible post. It may have been promoted perhaps by the emergence of a woman as Tamil Nadu's Chief Minister, but the gesture may well induce other State bodies to follow suit and may even make many an Eve dream of occupying higher posts than Mrs Teresa's.

Whatever the post, the TNCA could not have picked a more deserving woman for the unique honour. An all-rounder in her college days, Mrs. Teresa had competed in inter-University and inter-State athletics, basketball and volleyball championships, and, before joining Government service in 1970, had worked as Physical Instructress at Church Park in Madras and Holy Cross College in Tiruchi.

## ANSWERS TO QUIZZIN'-9

1. 112. 2. It is the world's first mobile hospital on rails to dispense free medical aid throughout the country. 3. K V Subbanna 4. *The Satanic Forces*. 5. Mozart 6. Shanmugam. 7. They won silver medals at the 32nd International Mathematical Olympiad in Sweden. 8. A suicide squad that will dare the rising waters of the Narmada at Mainbeli, the first village to be submerged in the valley under the controversial Sardar Sarovar project. 9. Tamil Nadu. 10. Madras Telugu Academy. 11. Zulu Inkatha movement. 12. M B Nirmal. 13. St George's School and Orphanage. 14. The discovery of an earth sized planet in orbit around another star. 15. Down's Syndrome research. 16. 20%. 17. Victor Hugo. 18. a) Gold kept by Indians in the vaults of the Banco National Ultramarino till December 1961 and seized by the fleeing Portuguese following the liberation of Goa. Mr Eduardo Faleiro formally received the gold on July 26. b) Global intelligence network of the BCCI which dealt in gold rugs and arms shipments. 19. P. Chidambaram and M. Arunachalam. 20. a) Isaac Bashevis Singer; b) Dr V K R V Rao.



Prof. Teresa

The TNCA, fittingly enough, made history in its Diamond Jubilee year. Unfortunately, there is still no knowing when its much-postponed main Jubilee celebration will be held. It has had more than one disappointment in its search for a VVIP to preside over it. But knowing its priorities as it does, it has not allowed its setbacks to come in the way of going through a record number of tournaments, spearheaded by the prestigious Buchi Babu Trophy all-India competition.

Jaici

## Flirting with a Blue Riband

It was Flirting Vision's turn. By outstaying even-money favourite Misty Heights to win the Kingfisher Bangalore Derby last month, the got-abroad Vision-Flirting Feather colt helped M.A.M. Ramaswamy take yet another step in his non-stop record-breaking expedition. MAM's Classics tally is now 161.

Flirting Vision, like so many other before him, from Silver Jet to Oxford Blue, did more than add to his owner's record. The Jim Foley-trained colt's manner of winning underscored MAM's horse-sense. He has, over the years, given ample evidence of it with his shrewd choice of horses.



From the vanquished to the victor: Vijay Mallya, the liquor baron and owner of Misty Heights, presents the Kingfisher Bangalore Derby trophy to M.A.M. Ramaswamy, whose Flirting Vision won it beating Misty Heights.

But none of his winners emphasised it more decisively than Flirting Vision. The fact that the colt was his longest-priced Classics winner (6-1 at Bangalore and 7-1 in the Guindy ring!) told its own tale of his owner knowing a thing or two more of the world of the horse than most of his compatriots.

MAM's venture into the bloodstock market, whether in the open ring or in private deals, has not been smooth sailing all the way. He has, at times, burnt his fingers, as when, a decade ago, he paid Rs. 10 lakhs for a colt called Ataturk, who turned out to be a flop. But his successes have so outnumbered, nay, eclipsed his setbacks that he has

had no difficulty whatsoever in staying on top of the Indian turf scene for decades.

There is, however, one gap in his record. He has yet to lead in a winner of the Indian Derby, considered by many the Blue Riband of the Indian Turf. It is one of the Indian turf's ironies that its kingpin, the first Indian to earn a place in the Guinness Book of World Records with his century of Classics winners, has drawn blank in its *piece de resistance*. All that he can boast of is a late quarter share in the 1989 winner, *Exhilaration*, who won in the colours of three Western India owners.

More than once he has tasted the bitter cup of defeat. But a never-say-die owner, who can take even the costliest of setbacks with a smile, as he did when his *Star Contender* was outclassed by the Bangalore-based *Captain EO* in the 1991 South India Derby at Guindy, MAM has not given up his Indian Derby hope. In a recent chat with him, this writer gained the impression that the Derby would be Flirting Vision's main winter target.

With an eye on acclimatisation, the Kingfisher Derby winner would be raced at Mahaluxmi during the next Bombay season. Mahaluxmi is admittedly no Bangalore. Misty Heights, for instance, is certain to be there to seek revenge, and so will be her stable-mate, *Classic Conquest*, generally rated the most promising Western India colt.

The Derby is still a long way to go. But Flirting Vision is so full of promise and is in the hands of such an experienced and dedicated professional as Foley that it is quite on the cards that the fashionably-bred colt will fill the surprise gap in MAM's Classics tally.

AJAX

## Gollywood in Gobi

Hollywood is synonymous with the world of movies. Kodambakkam in Madras has the distinction of being the Hollywood of South India. Within the confines of less than a square mile, there are several movie studios in what was once a little populated hamlet where the Nawab of the Carnatic stabled his horses. The first studio in Kodambakkam was Star Combines, established in the mid 1940s. (This studio, which does not exist today, was situated on the site of the present Kodambakkam bus terminus.)

During World War II, the Madras Electric Supply Corporation (MESCO), a private joint stock company incorporated in England which was then distributing electrical power in the city, had built a large substation for use by the Army. As the fury of the war subsided, MESCO found itself with electrical power going begging and sent its salespersons to hawk electrical energy! A Mr Chari and his team met several film producers and offered abundant electrical power at concessional rates for bulk consumption, if they built motion picture studios in sleepy Kodambakkam.

There were not many takers, in view of the unsettled conditions in the South Indian movie business. But one enterprising person, A Ramaiah, educated in England and involved in films, took advantage of the offer. In association with some friends, he founded Star Combines.

Land was then dirt cheap, and with power plentiful, B N Reddi followed suit and built Vauhini Studios which was to become a legend in his lifetime. Thus began the story of the Hollywood of Madras.

During the past few years, for several reasons, such as changing trends in film-making techniques etc, the new generation of film-makers has begun to move away from studios to make its films on actual locations where a wall is really a wall and not plywood and cheap cloth.

Film-makers began to look for picturesque locations and Gobichettipalayam near Coimbatore is reputed to have been discovered by that mercurial but brilliant film-maker K Bhagyaraj,

who is from Coimbatore District. Even though there are several other places in Tamil Nadu of great natural beauty and scenic splendour, Tamil film folk took to Gobichettipalayam and its surroundings.



Imitation is the name of the game in the movie business and once Gobichettipalayam contributed to the success of Bhagyaraj's films, every other film began to be made in this area which film persons claim has 'nativity' (whatever that means!)

As this activity snowballed, the smart men of Gobichettipalayam saw

a new venue of prosperity opening up. Some smart Alec 'Gobichettis' jumped into the business of providing facilities required for film-making and film-makers. Houses to shoot...food and beverages of all kinds to be provided for the large battalions of film companies...generators for electrical power...private taxis and vans for transport...creature comforts, and other facilities for film persons during 'rest hours' — all these were made available to the filmfolk from Madras, often at a stiff price. The economy of Gobichettipalayam began booming and prosperity of an unexpected kind visited the area. This continues unabated, with more and more films now being made in this area.

Gobichettipalayam, according to one film scribe, is now more active than Kodambakkam. Another Hollywood in Tamil Nadu, he exclaimed, re-living the liquid delights of his recent visit to Gobi!

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